

CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP IN A FLAT COUNTRY

- The case of The Netherlands -

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0. Summary

Dutch GLOBE data are presented in this chapter with a view upon the history of Holland and, later, The Netherlands. From the Middle Ages on Dutch cities got quite some local autonomy, which led their educated citizens and merchants to rule themselves to a large extent. This relative autonomy stimulated also to think and to judge rather independently, which climate favored Protestantism to gain much ground. Foreign trade facilitated the occurrence of a liberal culture. Later on, religious denomination became an important societal organization principle. After the Second World War industrial relations were characterized by an economic order that emphasized mixed capitalism (in which the government has a strong role), consultation among major parties, and a welfare state.

GLOBE data on societal and organizational culture show that collective economic interests, low power distance, gender egalitarianism, and group loyalty are still endorsed, although values like achievement, and assertiveness are gaining ground. This may reflect a process of cultural transition in which individualization and flexibility are becoming more dominant values. Dutch middle managers' perceptions of outstanding leaders stress the importance of consensus, support, power sharing, but also of visionary, motivating, and decisive qualities.

This chapter ends with ten commandments on what leaders from abroad should not do in The Netherlands.

1. Overview

When descending by aircraft into Amsterdam airport, the traveller gets a characteristic picture of the

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Netherlands, regardless the direction of approach. Green meadows are orderly intersected by rivers, canals and lakes; growing cities and towns surround agricultural areas; roads and highways expose heavy traffic; and the country is clean and flat. Actually, a large part of the country is below sea level: the Dutch are well known for their technical expertise in building dikes and dams to protect vulnerable areas and in gaining land from the sea. Also, some parts of the country are slightly hilly, but that feature is not visible to the air passenger: it reveals itself only to the traveller with a slower pace of transport. All in all, the country looks very organized.

Having read KLM's in-flight magazine, the air passenger knows that The Netherlands covers 13.433 square miles. It houses slightly more than 15,5 million inhabitants, as an effect of which it is the country with round about the highest population per square mile in the world. The Dutch language is spoken throughout the country, but there are remarkable differences between regions in pronunciation. Even bordering villages or towns may sizably differ from one another in their vocabulaire. Often, historical and cultural factors may explain most of these differences, such as the extent to which a community was exposed to French influences during the French Revolution, or the religion (Protestantism or Roman Catholicism) most inhabitants adhered to. Dutch is also spoken by the Flemish people in Belgium. Not only their pronunciation, but also their construction of sentences is different; some Dutch words originate in Belgium, and are only used in Flemish. When somebody from South Africa, speaking Afrikaans (which root is 17th century's Dutch), is interviewed on Dutch TV, undertitles are shown. In one of the 12 counties, Friesland, also the Fries language is spoken, and most names of towns in that county are spelled in both Dutch and Fries. Major minority languages are Turkish, Maroccean, Surinam, and Papiamento (Dutch Antilles). Larger cities, like Amsterdam and Rotterdam, are home to former inhabitants of many other countries, as an effect of which many other languages are heard as well, making Dutch culture in these areas multi-coloured and pluriform in nature.

Remarkably, The Netherlands is the home base for larger multi-national enterprises, like Philips, Shell, Unilever, AKZO/Nobel, DSM, Hoogovens, KLM, ING-Bank, ABN/AMRO-Bank, and Ahold. Yet, company (and political) leadership is not a very hot item in the country. Many people find it even difficult to mention an outstanding Dutch leader, not because good leaders are lacking, but much more since a leader tends not to be recognized as such. A leader should remain to be an ordinary person, as a well-known saying goes. Much emphasis is put upon training and educating the work force, and upon keeping them employable. Quite some commercial and non-commercial training institutions are active on the Dutch market. Many

companies are making use of the help of organizational consultancy agencies to a rather large extent. The average productivity level (combining both labor and capital productivity) is comparatively very high; yet, a sizable part of the employable population is partly or fully disabled to work, while not more than around 25% of the people between 55 and 65 years of age are still employed. The country was successful in reducing its unemployment rate to less than 5% (in 1998), primarily through increasing the amount of part-time jobs. Characteristic to the country is having an organized, business-like climate rather than a powerful leader-oriented atmosphere. To a certain extent there is even an anti-hero attitude. The last parliamentary elections in 1998 provide for some examples. The prime minister, Wim Kok, is also the leader of the Social-Democratic party. Both in office and in campaigning for votes he doesn't show any stardom: rather, his image reveals trustworthiness, thoroughness, a focus upon the general interest (not that of his party), commonness (shopping like the next door neighbor), while his private life is kept secret. His past performance is widely recognized. His party won the elections: although it is most obvious that this success is mainly attributable to his personal qualities, the hero is not recognized. The same theme applies to the second party in the Dutch Government, the Liberal party: its leader during the elections, Frits Bolkestein, doesn't show any stardom either. He is an intellectual person, critical to many members of the Government (including ministers of his own party), not afraid to open discussions on societal taboos, being rather long ranged in his view. Also his party gained many votes more than previously. Without him, his party would have been much less successful; but the success tends not to be attributed to a particular person.

The air passenger with whom this introductory overview started, made the ground successfully. Inside and outside the airport the country looks orderly and clean; the Dutch language provides the passenger with mysterious feelings, but luckily most people master the English language. The country looks flat, and the passenger wonders whether this impression holds beyond its literal, geographical meaning. Let's expose our guest first with an essay about some historical features of Dutch societal culture, (section 2). Then the Industrial Relations system is described (section 3), in particular as it developed itself after the Second World War. Section 4 highlights current characteristics of societal culture, including data assembled in the GLOBE study, while section 5 describes results relevant to the organizations participating in the Dutch GLOBE study. Section 6 returns to the theme of leadership, subsequent to which its main outcomes are confronted with some current challenges of organizational leadership (section 7). In the concluding section 8 the guest should at least have learned which behaviors leaders from abroad should perhaps not engage in when exposed to Dutch employees.

2. Dutch societal culture and politics: a brief historical perspective.

The Dutch are not known as people that regularly commemorate figures of historical importance. Suppose, you as a reader would ask a Dutch citizen living in one of the cities, which of his/her past or current countrymen is considered to be a person of historical importance. Probably, the first reply would be in terms of another question: "what is meant with "historical" importance? Assuming that this problem would be solved satisfactorily, the second reply would probably also embody a question: "Why commemorate him or her?" One of the "solid" ways to commemorate historical figures and to support the societal values they modeled is to erect a statue for them. Statues in The Netherlands are scarce, but there are some, like e.g. the one for William, Prince of Orange, murdered in 1584 in Delft; Van Oldenbarnevelt, influential legal consultant to the Counties of Holland, also murdered (1619); Michiel de Ruyter, famous Navy commander in the 17th century; William III, King of the Netherlands, 19th century; Van Heutsz, army general and colonial ruler in the Indies, 19th and 20th century. Perhaps because of her role during the Second World War Queen Wilhelmina, grandmother of the current Queen Beatrix, got more than one statue. Interestingly, some philosophers are also "petrified", like Erasmus (Rotterdam), Spinoza and Comenius (from Czech decent). Quite a few statues are to be found along the Dutch coast, such as the one showing a small boy keeping his thumb in the hole of a dike, thus preventing the inundation of a larger part of the country. Some other statues picture an old woman, sadly stretching her arm to the vast waters. These latter statues express the constant concern of the "low countries" with the North Sea: a fishing area for many, a graveyard for too many, an unpredictable nibbler of the coast line, causing a continuing fight for land.

Yet, the "harvest" of statues relevant to historical people is modest. But not because there weren't Dutch persons of historical importance: time and again Dutch inhabitants gained prominence in whatever domain. Painted portraits of some are to be seen in museums and castles. Rather, in Dutch culture outstanding individuals are usually not *identified* in terms of a hero: it runs counter to important values and habits to attribute unusual performance mainly, let alone exclusively, to individual characteristics. The root of this conception probably dates back many centuries. To gain more insight we briefly review the political and economic culture of "Holland" from the early 14th century on (cf. Langedijk, 1948 a,b; Rijpma, 1952; Blonk, Romein & Oerlemans, 1967, 1978; Braudel, 1979; Schama, 1987).

2.1 Citizens and merchants

Although the terms "Holland" and "The Netherlands" are nowadays used interchangeably to identify the same nation state, there is a vast historical difference. Holland refers to the Western part of the country, roughly encompassing the current counties North-Holland (capital: Haarlem) and South-Holland (capital: The Hague). During the ages Holland sometimes made war against neighboring counties, but more often cooperated with them (like Friesland, Zeeland and Utrecht), and established a small nation state for quite a long period of time. Some counties that currently belong to the state of Belgium joined the cooperation with Holland for a while, but other counties opted for temporary liaisons with enemy states like France or Spain. Holland got its fair part of wars, against or in cooperation with England, Prussia, France and, for quite a period, Spain. During Napoleon's regime Holland and other counties were made part of France for a couple of years. Shortly afterwards, as King William I was inaugurated (1814), The Netherlands was established as a country, also encompassing current parts of Belgium (the so called South-Netherlands) as a consequence of the ruling by the Viennese Congress (1815). Belgium got its independence in 1831. We turn now to ancient Holland.

Around Anno Domini 1300 the cities of Holland got *municipal rights*. These rights allowed a city to govern itself and to determine its own jurisdiction. If a plan for action would be very expensive, good custom held that citizens were consulted. Generally, merchants favored the high extent of the cities' "local autonomy". As merchants became more prosperous through effective trading, they asked the Count for protection against gangs of robbers or foreign invasion. Perhaps because of this, but also since an increasing number of counties became involved (Holland and other counties as well as French Burgundy), a strong centralized government was favored in the time that Jacoba van Beieren was Countess (early 15th century). Each region got a *stadtholder* (the word probably being a combination of the Dutch "stad" (city) and the English "holder"), representing the authority of the Count. The nobility, the clergy and the cities were consulted in the Regional Estates (Gewestelijke Staten). All counties together convened every now and then in the Estate General (Staten Generaal).²

These developments strengthened the position of the citizens (and the farmers) at the expense of the power of the nobility and the clergy. Trade and commerce flourished. The position of merchants was an issue of debate, however, since some people held that the price of a product would be lower in the case the producer

²Until the present day Dutch Parliament (which is composed of two Chambers) is called the "Estate General". Each of the current 12 counties is ruled by the "County Estate" (while each city or town is headed by the City Council)

and the customer dealt directly with one another without the interference of a "third (merchant) party". So the government took care that products were bought and sold for a *fair price*. This early capitalism was also practiced in the early 16th century in North Italy. Dutch trade focussed on fishing (in particular herring), while freight was taken when the fishing season was over. Gradually, Dutch merchants started to trade on their own account (e.g. in grain). Also, wage laborers were attracted in the clothing industry (cloth was purchased in Calais from English merchants). As the printing art was developed (Gutenberg, in Germany, 1450), citizens in the wealthy cities founded their own schools, and reduced the power the clergy traditionally enjoyed in this domain. Pupils were educated in book keeping and other applied subjects, which prepared them for a merchant career. Wealthier cities also raised their own mercenary armies, thus controlling the power the nobility usually possessed there. It is small wonder that the onset of the Renaissance met fertile soil in the cities in Holland with their relatively wealthy, educated, and independent citizens. These citizens were used to carry personal responsibility and to make their own judgement, being rather independent from the clergy and the nobility.

Yet, it is not so much the Renaissance as it is the onset of Protestantism which is most important to our subject. Early 16th century found Luther with his 95 "statements", attaching these to the chapel in Wittenberg, Germany (1517). In Holland and adjacent counties Calvinism became more influential, as this diffused from Switzerland to France and other European countries from 1560 on. Holland was ruled during that period by Roman Catholic Spanish Kings: Karel V reigned for a rather long time, who was succeeded by his son Philips II. The leader of the opposition in Holland became William, Prince of Orange, a nobleman. Also, lower nobility joined the opposition, since they had adopted the Calvinistic faith. Moreover, the Bartholomew night (1572) in France in which many protestants were killed, had brought quite some protestant survivors to Holland. Major issues for the opposition to contest were:

- The introduction of new (Roman Catholic) dioceses;
- A change in civil administration;
- The presence of the Spanish Army.

A long period of strenuous fights followed, partly underground. Groups of "Geuzen"³ battled repeatedly with the Spanish army. When a city joined the Orange opposition, it meant that its citizens would adopt

³The word "Geus" probably stems from the French term "des gueux", which means "beggar" or "vagrant", a term perhaps used by an underling in the Spanish court to identify the "protestants" from Holland. Interestingly, the English word for "geus" is "protestant". In Dutch, "geus" has the connotation of a courageous man.

Protestantism. Usually this implied that a new government was appointed from the lower classes, which did not tend to obey the nobility and the Catholic Church. William, Prince of Orange was excommunicated by the Pope in 1580, and was killed in 1584. His son Maurits became the new stadtholder. Battles with Spain continued every now and then until the peace treaty of Münster in 1648.

Let's briefly recapture the key ideas in the preceding sections. The cities in Holland enjoyed a large amount of autonomy already at the end of the Middle Ages. They took care of their administration as well as of their jurisdiction. Trade prospered, while there was a concern to achieve fair prices. Wealthier cities founded their own schools and raised mercenary armies. The role of the Catholic church and of noblemen was much weaker than in many other countries: the educated citizen was capable to *judge for himself* how to behave and what to think, and was not inclined to accept somebody else's authority. Protestantism, in particular the Calvinistic faith, was very much in line with most of these values: each citizen should read the Bible him- or herself, should make his/ her own judgement, and may practice faith in the local parish where "Presbyters"⁴, and not priests, should have influence.

⁴Senior, recognized church members, appointed or elected by the parish community.

It is this background against which the 17th century - the Golden Age - took off. The Republic of Holland had prospered by and large during the war against Spain. Merchants established trading societies with shares for each participant, thus sharing profits and losses with one another. In 1602 the East Indies Company was founded, followed by the West Indies Company in 1621. Their shares were traded in at the stock exchange. New Amsterdam (the later New York) was established in 1625. Holland was the sole country with a permanent foothold in Japan (Decima). The Northern Company ruled the whale fishery around Scandinavia. Sea traders sailed the world seas⁵. Sciences, arts and literature were cultivated at a high level (e.g. Huijgens, Spinoza, Vondel, Rembrandt van Rijn). The Republic ruled itself through the Estate bodies mentioned earlier: the county of Holland had most power (interestingly, the clergy was not represented in the States of Holland; the nobility had one vote). It is a matter of debate whether the Estate General of the Republic or the stadtholder wielded most power. In the domain of religion a divisive subject beared upon the extent to which the Bible should be understood "literally", e.g. as to whether personal salvation is predetermined by God⁶. Yet, many pleas were made to be tolerant and "liberal" to people with other beliefs or opinions (among those the people without a particular faith or religion), and "equal rights" were advocated for the "common people", the handicapped and the poor. Such pleas were the more important as the seizure of the Edict of Nantes in France (1685) expelled again many French protestants. As many of these "Huegenots" were skilled craftsmen, the economies in the countries to which they fled profited sizably (e.g. parts of Germany, Holland). In the 18th century the Republic showed a tremendous amount of decay in many domains which had flourished during the Golden Age. Wealthy merchants showed off their possessions and lived from the interests and rents. Regents divided the best jobs and positions among them and their offspring. The army was corrupt, and debate continued about the required size of the army. Moreover, many foreign countries became strong economic competitors, outperforming the Republic in many ways. Yet, trade remained a strong sector. Humanism strengthened the dislike of authority. Rousseau's ideas about the people's sovereignty and

⁵Even nowadays a strong characteristic of the Dutch economy is the transport sector for international trade.

⁶the so-called "predestination"

Montesquieu's conception about the "trias politica"⁷ were attractive to many regents. Then France occupied the Republic in 1794-1795, shortly before Napoleon started to battle many other European countries.

Holland - the so-called Batavian Republic (until 1806) - had to pay heavy duties to France. Trade collapsed, civil administration changed drastically, and the country became engaged in a war against England. Yet, various innovative laws were enacted, e.g. on taxes and on basic education. Between 1806 and 1810 Napoleon's brother - Lodewijk Napoleon - was King of Holland. From 1810 on Holland became a part of France. But in 1814 King William I of Orange - was inaugurated and a new Constitution was introduced: the country of The Netherlands was born, including major parts of Belgium until 1831. Trade started to flourish again. Again, this newfound unity did not lead to a centralized power structure. Very important for the administrative structure of the country was the new Constitution of 1848, primarily designed by the liberal politician Thorbecke who was appointed as Prime Minister shortly afterwards. It marked the onset of the *parliamentary aristocracy* (cf. Blonk, Romein & Oerlemans, 1978). The Constitution addressed e.g. direct election of the Second Chamber (Parliament), the rights of both Chambers, the public (open) character of all governmental institutions, and the inviolability of the King. Counties and cities acquired again quite some autonomy in order to administer their own affairs. Next to the liberal party there was a conservative party, a protestant party and a Roman Catholic party. In the second part of the 19th century social and socio-economic issues became main points of concern, like e.g. child labor, industrial nuisance, and the self-organization of workers in labor unions. Manufacturing industries were innovated, and transport by train and by boat was provided with a better infrastructure. Farm produce was not protected against cheaper foreign imports, since the government favored free world trade.

In sections 3 and 4 some main trends and characteristics of the 20th century will be signalled; here, a few issues should suffice. First, foreign policy of The Netherlands continued its neutrality in international conflicts. This kept the country largely outside World War I. But it didn't offer protection against German occupation in World War II, which left the country devastated in 1945. Second, life and work of many were organized along *denominational segregation lines*. These lines applied primarily to the Protestant and to the Roman Catholic denominations: many societal organizations and institutions belonged to a particular denomination,

⁷The *trias politica* holds that the legislative power, the judicial power, and the executive power should be independent from one another.

implying e.g. that shops (for daily purchases), leisure time pursuits, health care, the political party, cultural events, the union, and even the employer were selected by citizens more or less according to their "religious" color. Often, it is held that this kind of segregation has hindered societal development, as the principles of "sovereignty in one's own circle" (Protestant) and "subsidiarity" (Roman Catholic: what is better done down the hierarchical chain should not be handled at a higher level) would make citizens less open to developments in other societal domains. More recently, the perspective is taken that denominational segregation may not only have facilitated the "emancipation" of minority movements, but may also have contributed to balancing parties in conflict and to integrating citizens in society. Probably, denominational segregation has reinforced the occurrence of a large *middle class*, which even stabilized the country and led to continued modernization.

2.2 No heroes?

Why is it that the Dutch usually do not tend to recognize countrymen of particular, "historical" importance as heroes, or even manifest an anti-hero attitude? Why is it that they frequently detest to observe outspoken symbols of officialdom, resent prerogatives of leaders, sometimes even question the acceptability of persons in more powerful positions? And why do they tend to disregard high performers or prefer to discourage outstanding achievers (as highlighted in the typically Dutch saying: "being ordinary is sufficiently awkward")? There is, of course, not one, single, fully adequate answer to that. But the historical perspective taken in the preceding section has identified some core themes which may jointly apply:

- * From at least the Middle Ages on the cities possessed or gained much power to settle their own affairs in various respects. They were most often not subject to a strong, single person type of leadership: the Count or the King usually resided abroad and left affairs to be handled by a *remplacant*, e.g. a stadtholder. The more educated citizens were thus used to a relative large amount of autonomy and shared their power, to a certain extent, with others. Thus, these citizens were never very dependent upon emperors, the clergy and/or the nobility. Also, Holland never had very distinct class differences; in later centuries, a large middle class developed itself.

- * Merchants created a lot of wealth for the cities. This strengthened the opportunities for cities and their citizens to regulate their own affairs, e.g. through founding their own schools or setting up an army of mercenaries. As merchants went very often abroad and foreign traders frequently visited the Republic of

Holland, a liberal, tolerant climate was developed, open to different views (and, sometimes, some variety in religion).

* This culture of self-determination, of decentralized administration and of relative wealth for the "cultured", educated citizens was very open to the protestant faith, in particular as represented by Calvin. It is probably a bit too simple, as Weber (1947) tended to say, that calvinism provided fertile ground for capitalism (also as many other, non-Protestant countries adopted capitalism). Rather, a certain embarrassment with the visible prosperity of many may have been more characteristic, as Schama (1987) has put it. The problem how to reconcile a luxurious living with the endorsement of values of soberness and charity was coined by Schama as the "moral ambiguity of prosperity".

* Children were usually raised at home and not in a boarding school. Generally, women were aspiring to a housewife status, including the full-time care for their children. As far as a boarding school would be typical of a more masculine environment (stressing values like disciplined behavior, obedience, courage, achievement, and so forth), such values were not dominant. Moreover, the people of Holland were not used to royal courts with pomp and circumstance.

* Taken together, these core themes may have cradled the "germs" of the shared perception, in Dutch society, that the "person of historical importance" should be looked upon in terms of the social network - the *context* - (s)he is embedded in. Favorable *situational conditions* should be considered rather than outstanding individual qualities.

* The emphasis on decentralization and local autonomy got re-established in the Constitution inspired by Thorbecke in the midst of the 19th century. This "tradition" was definitively changed immediately after World War II. The national government gained a very important role in rebuilding Dutch society and contributed to a "mixed economy" in which capitalism meets government interference. The next section on Industrial Relations highlights some of these features.

Translated to the dimensions of GLOBE research the preceding description suggests the following dimensions to be characteristic of past developments in Dutch society:

- (Societal and organization) Culture: relatively higher scores on individualism, femininity, tolerance of uncertainty, power egalitarianism and humane orientation. A relatively lower score on achievement orientation. There is no particular expectation regarding future - present orientation.

- Leadership: higher scores on attributes as being humane, integer, collective and diplomatic. Lower scores on autocratic and status conscious behavior.

3. Dutch Industrial Relations after World War II.

3.1 The first part of the 20th century: some features.

The Kingdom of The Netherlands - with Queen Wilhelmina and the two Chambers of Parliament - was not heavily affected by the First World War, also since the nation maintained its neutral foreign policy. During the Great Depression many people suffered from unemployment, sudden loss of wealth and property, and a gloomy outlook of the future. Certainly, the government provided for some relief work projects. And vocational guidance was started (also initiated by some non-governmental institutions and groups) to facilitate job openings for unemployed people through additional education, and to match abilities and skills of those who entered the labor market with the requirements of available jobs (e.g. Van Strien, 1988). But the country did not have much industry. Of course, there were exceptions, like e.g. the ship building sector, agriculture, textile, the Philips company. But many employers were rather traders than industrial entrepreneurs.

The country suffered severely during World War II from the German occupation (1940 - 1945). The Royal Family and the Dutch Cabinet went abroad. During the last years of the war representatives of different political parties secretly met to consider opportunities for joint political action when the war would be over. A new era began in May 1945: the government got a strong "centralized" position in rebuilding the country, in reshaping civilization, and in raising a strong industrial infrastructure, the latter soon with the help of the U.S. Marshall Funds. *Mixed capitalism*, (in which governmental control and market forces are the main factors), a *consultation economy*⁸ (which means that major interest groups are frequently consulted about their views), and a substantial *welfare state* were to be the main characteristics of Dutch (socio-)economic policy for many years to come.

⁸Some favor the term "consensus" economy.

3.2 Industrial Relations

Dutch Industrial Relations after World War II were largely influenced by the need to rebuild the society. The government, the major political parties, the employers' federations and the unions worked together (initially harmoniously) to achieve rapid industrialization (cf. IDE, 1981a). As said, the government played a dominant role, first through its authority to control wages and prices: for more than 15 years wage and price increases were set (and usually controlled and maintained) at a national level. Second, the government enacted legislation in various domains, e.g. concerning industrial democracy at the level of the enterprise. Yet, most decisions that were eventually taken at the national, sectorial or individual organization level were discussed and prepared in *councils* and *committees* composed of employers federations' and unions' representatives. During the 1950's some major characteristics of Dutch Industrial Relations were (IDE, 1981a):

1. *Differentiation*. Both employers federations and workers' unions were patterned according to industrial sector, and, in addition, also split into three segregated "denominations": Roman Catholic; Protestant; Non-denominational (employers), respectively Social Democrats (union).
2. *Integration and Consensus*. Despite the segregation, the unions and the employers federations cooperated closely, and rather harmoniously, with one another. They held similar, or at least compatible, views on the goals of socio-economic policy as well as on the objectives and the ways to implement the industrial relations.
3. *Centralization*. A rather unique feature was the emphasis on (collective labor) agreements at the national level, in which the government was a powerful party (mostly mediating between employers federations and unions).

In that post Second World War period objectives included rebuilding the national economy, full employment, and a strong expansion of social legislation to further the development of a welfare state. The latter led to a comparatively high level of social security coverage, e.g. a base pension for all citizens of 65 years or over, allowances in the case of sickness, unemployment, disability, and so forth. The consensus on objectives caused discussions and bargaining to focus primarily on ways and means. The three parties maintained frequent and intensive communication, in particular in the "Social and Economic Council" (SER) and the "Foundation of Labor". This Foundation was established in 1945 by employers federations and the unions, and was accepted by the government as an important advisory body on socio-economic subjects. The SER took shape in 1950

and became the main institution for advising the government on social and economic problems⁹. It was composed of 45 members: 15 each from the employers federations and the unions, and 15 independent experts appointed by the government.

Major conflicts were rare during the 1950s and early 1960s; if one occurred, a solution was reached by consultation. In order to establish the level of wages for the next year a government planning bureau performed econometric calculations and estimated the wage increase the national economy could afford (e.g. Windmuller, 1968). Institutions and industrial firms were stimulated to adopt a system of job evaluation (cf. Thierry & De Jong, 1997), which would facilitate company-internal equity as well as conformity to external market rates. In stead of free bargaining, government control (and consultation with parties concerned) prevailed.

At the level of the enterprise two formats for workers participation became important. In 1950 the first Works Council Act was enacted. This Act describes the Works Council as a consultation body primarily concerned with the general, common interests of the enterprise, having the managing director as its chairperson. The second format refers to the introduction of job consultation ("werkoverleg", cf. Koopman & Wierdsma, 1997) at the shop floor level in an increasing number of work organizations.

⁹The Social and Economic Council is an example of the so-called *Corporate Industrial Organization* (Publiekrechtelijke Bedrijfsorganisatie), which was implemented at the level of an (industrial) sector. Its aim is to let the relevant employers federations and unions concerned arrange the infrastructure of that sector. Like the SER, some of these CIO's are nowadays still in existence. Possibly, the increasing socio-economic interdependence among countries within the European Union will make the CIO obsolete.

The early 1960s saw the onset of a drastic change in the Industrial Relations climate. The national economy did rather well. The standard of living had risen sizably. The labor market was very tight, in particular in areas of the country bordering Germany: the economic boom in the rebuild German industry allowed companies to pay rather high wages, thus attracting e.g. many Dutch workers. The former forces pressing for integration, like rebuilding the economy and providing for full employment, were burning out. Industrial relations tended to become slightly more decentralized. Unions adopted a more independent attitude, were less concerned about economic growth, and focused more on workers' interests. This was apparent not only in the field of wages and employment conditions, but also in the domain of participation and power relations within the company. Moreover, around 1966 employers federations and unions agreed to eliminate the traditional distinction between white and blue collar workers and, consequently, to "harmonize" the differences in employment conditions. The growing diversification in jobs (and job requirements) had blurred this distinction, while it was widely held that most employment differences¹⁰ did not keep up with shared conceptions on social justice.

In France, a "cultural revolution" surfaced around 1968, primarily among students at universities (e.g. Paris, Nanterre). It reverberated rather strongly at Dutch universities: the student movement protested against what they perceived to be authoritarian attitudes and rigid, bureaucratic structures (Albeda, 1984). The new ideology called for "democratization" and a less unequal power distribution. Dutch government reacted rather quickly and enacted a new law on the administration of the university - which ruled e.g. that students would be represented in committees and boards - as an effect of which the aftermath of the "revolution" took much longer than in any other European country. But the new ideology also affected industrial relations. Unions put more emphasis on activities at the shop floor level at the expense of the role they played at the industry and national level. The notions about a more equal distribution of power geared to the widely shared idea that income differences should be less steep. Remarkably, unions bargained with many industries in order to expell

¹⁰White collar employees got a monthly salary, while blue collar workers were paid a weekly wage. White collars usually got a flat salary, while blue collar pay was often partly based on performance. Regulations on absenteeism, pension schemes, and so forth also differed sizably. This harmonization movement took off much later in other European countries.

performance related pay, and achieved success (cf. Koopman-Iwema & Thierry, 1981). *Job evaluation* was considered to be a more fair strategy. In the 1970ies the government enacted a law to further the use of job evaluation, extending its application not only to higher management and senior executives in work organizations, but also to the free professions (like lawyers, accountants, medical doctors, etc.) and self-employed people. It sought to achieve both nation-wide control of incomes and fairer income distributions. These developments can be characterized as a change in industrial relations from a "harmony model" to a "coalition model" (Peper, 1973). As a harmony model is known for its consensus on goals, a large degree of cooperation, a low level of conflict, and the use of consultation as the main mechanism for the resolution of a conflict, a coalition model features partial consensus, cooperation only in some domains, a moderate level of conflict, and the use of bargaining as the main vehicle to solve conflicts. Some evidence in support of this change in those years is (IDE, 1981a):

- a larger number of employees and firms was involved in strikes;
- the content of collective labor agreements was shifting, as non-economic issues got more emphasis (like the "*quality of work*");
- the process of bargaining was becoming tougher;
- the demand was made that the managing director should no longer be a member, let alone the chairperson, of the Works Council.

The new Act on the Works Council (1971) stated in particular that the task of the Council is consultation and the representation of *employees'* interests. Research on how works councils operated in practice in the 1970ies showed a considerable number of them having potential influence upon the company's decision-making process. However, this influence proved to be rather limited in practice (cf. Hövels & Nas, 1976; IDE, 1981b). Decisions about appointments of senior executives, investments, and reorganization were hardly influenced by works councils (Andriessen & Coetsier, 1984; Koopman, 1992). Yet, most key informants at all levels of organizations believed that the works council had made a contribution to getting people better informed about what was going on in their organization. Also, they held that decisions were more easily accepted after having been discussed in the works council (IDE, 1991b).

The Works Council Act was amended in 1979, and again in 1982. The 1979 amendment made works councils more independent of the employer in organizations that totalled 100 or more employees: the managing director was no longer the chairperson, and the works council got more discretionary power on some subject matters. In 1982 the works council was made obligatory for organizations that employ 35 or more employees.

Job evaluation schemes were still very much in use, if not at an increasing rate. Yet, its objective changed: rather than effecting distributive justice, the *acceptance* of its results by employees (and their representatives in the works council) was emphasized. Consequently, the order of job values (and of corresponding basic salaries) which was considered to be acceptable in one organization, could be held as unfair in a neighboring company. This was one of the early signs of the need for decentralization, deregulation and company-tailored conditions, which would manifest itself more in the years to come.

Also in 1982 the coalition of political parties represented in the Dutch Cabinet of Ministers changed: the Christian Democratic party constituted a new government jointly with the Liberal Party, while the Social Democrats went into the opposition. The new government was less interested than its predecessors in regulating industrial relations and furthering industrial democracy. Like in several other countries, the era of "no-nonsense policy making" took off. The economy - which faced a severe recession in that period - was stimulated by cutting back government spending and decreasing state intervention in trade and industry (IDE, 1993). In practice, it proved to be hard to reduce the role of the government in the industrial relations domain. Cabinets in later years did not drastically alter the main line of policy set in the 1970ies. Remarkably, the current coalition of Liberal and Social Democratic parties - while Christian Democrats (and others) are in the opposition - strongly favors a *market* economy in which the role of the state is modest (more facilitating in nature), service organizations and state firms go private, flexibility in employment conditions (and various other areas) is pursued, decentralization and deregulation are enacted, and so forth. To a certain extent, these values seem to be reminiscent of some major themes in Dutch history until the early 20th century, making the post World War II period with a strong centralized position of the government an exception to the rule.

3.3 Interpreting evidence

How should Dutch Industrial Relations in the past 15 years be qualified? Hofstede's data (1984) on national culture show that the Dutch, in the early 1980ies, scored high on individualism, and low on power distance, and masculinity. Average scores were reached on tolerance of uncertainty, and long term orientation. The "leader" was seen as somebody who is *modest*, favoring consultation of employees, work autonomy, training, the use of skills, the support of his group, and the contribution of all towards the success of the organization. Interestingly, these observations are in support of the GLOBE dimensions suggested to be characteristic for

the Dutch in the historical overview (section 2.2).

As outlined, centralized control prevailed until the early 1980ies: the government was active in enacting new legislation on employees' participation in decision making. Pleas and initiatives to increase the opportunities for participation were also brought forward by companies, unions, and academicians. However, one of the consequences of the economic recession in those times was a severe weakening of the position of the main unions in The Netherlands as an effect of both the loss of many members and diminishing bargaining power. Also, "competing" unions (e.g. for executives and managers) were gradually gaining power, sometimes at a sectoral level, but mostly at the organization level. Democratization and participation did lose their position on the public agenda. Nation-wide agreements and initiatives regarding Industrial Relations subjects have become scarce: formerly held societal values are wearing out and are getting fragmented or are replaced by norms and values of interests groups which operate on all levels of the society. Yet, research evidence shows that the extent of participation in practice, both direct and representative, was not smaller in the 1980ies than in the 1970ies (cf. Pool, Drenth, Koopman & Lammers, 1988).

In the 1990ies the Industrial Relations climate is becoming more and more an issue at the sectoral and organization level. The use of job evaluation (in an earlier decade advocated with an eye on nation-wide objectives and values) is recommended since it allows to order jobs (and thus base salaries) in accordance with the particular, if not *unique*, conditions of each company. Employers federations are merging, and are tuning their activities much more to local companies, regional markets and international conditions. Also, major trade unions are in a merging process. Collective Labor Agreements are set at an increasing rate at the company level, containing "boundary conditions" the framework of which is to be elaborated within a firm or business unit: it is here that the role of the (local) works council is getting emphasis. Quite some firms, e.g. in the commercial services branch, tend to do without the involvement of unions, favoring individual labor contracts. Indeed, an important question is whether the current Dutch Industrial Relations system is still to be characterized as a consultation economy.

In terms of GLOBE research this overview suggests that the following dimensions characterize the post war period until the early 1990ies:

- Cultural practice: relative high scores on collectivism, gender egalitarianism, uncertainty avoidance, and humane values, and a very high score on power egalitarianism. A moderate score on achievement orientation as well as on future - present orientation.
- Leadership preference: a relative high score on attributes like team orientation, diplomatic, and humane, and

a rather low score on autocratic, self-centered, and status-conscious.

The next three sections deal in particular with data from different sources - most of which were gathered in the context of the GLOBE study - on how societal culture, organizational culture, and outstanding leadership are perceived to be in The Netherlands during the second part of the nineties.

4. Contemporary Societal culture.

During the pilot phase the tentative GLOBE questionnaires were carefully translated in Dutch and back-translated into English; the final version in English was again diligently translated in the Dutch language. The questionnaires were administered to 287 middle managers, randomly selected in three companies in the food sector, and three companies in the banking/insurance sector. All items appeared to be clear and provided no observable problems in interpretation. The six companies had cooperated at an earlier occasion in a project with a member of the CCI-team; within each sector the three companies differed greatly from one another in size, location, products and services, and the like. A total of 146 managers filled out the national culture questionnaire (and a total of 141 completed the questionnaire on organizational culture).

Table 1: Societal culture scales (AS IS version)

	ACH	FUT	ASS	COL.I	GEN	HUM	POW	COL.II	UNC
NL:	4.32	4.61	4.11	4.46	3.50	3.86	4.11	3.70	4.70
Group	b	a	a	b	b	c	c	c	b
Max.	4.94	5.07	4.97	5.22	4.33	5.23	5.80	6.36	5.37
MIN.	3.20	2.80	2.79	3.25	2.50	3.18	3.59	3.18	2.85

ACH: Achievement/ performance orientation Scale anchors: 1 - 7.
 FUT: Future orientation
 ASS: Assertiveness
 COLL.I: Collectivism I (I-C continuum)

GEN:	Gender egalitarianism
HUM:	Humane orientation
POW:	Power distance
COLL.II:	Family Collectivism
UNC:	Uncertainty avoidance

Table 1 shows, in the first row, the mean scores of Dutch managers on current societal culture *practices*. The second row lists the group category: the scores of all countries participating in GLOBE were assigned to categories, in which a is highest and c (or d) is lowest. The third and fourth row contain the highest, respectively lowest score of any country. Thus, the first column indicates that Dutch managers rate achievement orientation in their societal culture as slightly above the mid-scale point (running from 1-7); in comparison with all other countries this score is neither very high nor very low (group b), which is also shown by the maximum and minimum score mentioned.

So Table 1 reveals that Dutch managers consider societal cultural practices as higher on uncertainty avoidance, future orientation, and societal collectivism (I), in the middle on gender egalitarianism, and lower on humane orientation, and family collectivism. They understand Dutch society as being characterized by rules and orderliness, planning ahead, collective economic interests and group loyalty, but not so concerned with and sensitive to people. A society, moreover, in which individual accomplishments of children are favored, and moderate equal opportunities exists for female citizens. The comparative scores add to this picture that Dutch people are seen as dominant and tough (assertiveness), and not so strongly inclined to accept hierarchy (power distance). The emphasis on self reliance and individual autonomy (Participant Observation Questionnaire, items 9 and 10), collective economic interests, and consensual decision making is in accordance with a part of Dutch history (section 2) and the industrial relations system described earlier. But the data on gender egalitarianism are to some extent in contrast with Hofstede's study (1980), in which Dutch society was found to be feminine. Also the results from the POQ (items 40, 60, and 88) indicate that occupations of females are predominantly of lower status, like home making, child caring, and serving others, while national heroes are predominantly men. Yet, the percentage of females among politicians at the highest two levels of government is increasing (around 25-30%).

It is interesting to compare these results with the middle managers' scores on societal cultural *values*, which reflect how the dimensions should look like. Table 2 contains these data.

Table 2: Societal culture scales (SHOULD BE version)

	ACH	FUT	ASS	COL I	GEN	HUM	POW	COLII	UNC
NL	5.49	5.06	4.23	4.55	4.99	5.20	2.45	5.17	3.24
Group	b	b	a	b	a	b	d	b	d
Max	6.58	6.20	4.94	5.65	5.17	6.09	4.35	6.52	5.61
Min	2.35	2.95	2.40	3.80	3.18	3.39	2.04	4.06	3.16

ACH = Achievement, performance orientation

Scale anchors: 1 - 7

FUT = Future orientation

ASS = Assertiveness

COL I = Collectivism I (I-C continuum)

GEN = Gender egalitarianism

HUM = Humane orientation

POW = Power distance

COL II = Family collectivism

UNC = Uncertainty avoidance

According to Table 2 Dutch managers have higher scores on achievement orientation, humane orientation, family collectivism, and future orientation, and lower scores on uncertainty avoidance and in particular power distance. Thus, they value in their society an emphasis on innovativeness and effective performance, a sensitive and tolerant concern for people, loyalty to one's family and organization, an eye on future events and longer term planning, a climate of experimentation and freedom, and a concern for sharing power. The comparative scores show in addition that Dutch managers stress the importance of feminine opportunities, but also of dominance and toughness.

When cultural practices (Table 1) are confronted with cultural values (Table 2) it appears that values like sharing power, feminine values, family and organizational loyalty, experimentation and freedom, sensitivity to

people, and achievement should be emphasized more than they are now¹¹. These results suggest that Dutch society is involved in a process of *cultural transition*, in which more classical values like collective economic interests, loyalty, being humane, sharing of power, and gender egalitarianism are still endorsed, while values as individual achievement, autonomy, and assertiveness are gaining prominence. Let s see whether the perspectives on organizational culture reflect a comparable dual emphasis.

5. Organization culture

As indicated, 141 managers completed the questionnaire on organizational culture. Table 3 contains the scores on *practices*.

Table 3: Organization culture practices in the food and banking/insurance sector

The Netherlands (N = 141)	AS IS (Mean of scale)*
achievement orientation	4.59**
future orientation	5.46
collectivism I	4.67
gender egalitarianism	3.90
humane orientation	4.80
power distance	2.98
uncertainty avoidance	3.83

* scale mean divided by amount of items

¹¹All t-values concerned are significant.

** all scale anchors 1-7

Table 3 shows that organization cultural practices are characterized by higher scores on future orientation, humane orientation, collectivism, and achievement orientation, and by a lower score on power distance. Thus, middle managers describe cultural practices within their organization largely in accordance with their views on societal culture practices, as a comparison with Table 1 learns. Yet, more emphasis is put on future events and longer term planning as a characteristic of organization practices. Table 4 lists the middle managers scores on organization culture values.

Table 4: Organization culture values in the food and banking/insurance sector

The Netherlands (N = 141)	SHOULD BE (mean of scale)*
achievement orientation	5.90**
future orientation	5.75
collectivism I	4.65
gender egalitarianism	4.29
humane orientation	4.88
power distance	3.08
uncertainty avoidance	2.98

* scale mean divided by amount of items

** all scale anchors 1-7

The results mentioned in Table 4 indicate that achievement orientation and future orientation get higher scores, whereas power distance and in particular uncertainty avoidance get lower scores. In comparison with Table 3 on organization culture practices it appears that values as achievement orientation and gender egalitarianism receive higher scores, while uncertainty avoidance gets a lower score. Thus, middle managers prefer their organization culture to be more focused upon innovation and effective performance, on planning for the future, and on equal opportunities for females. With a view on the relatively high scores on a humane as well as a

collective orientation, the suggestion put forward at the end of the preceding section is supported: Dutch societal and organizational culture seems to be in a transitional phase. Classical values concerning loyalty, collective economic interests, being humane, sharing of power, and gender egalitarianism are still endorsed, while individual achievement and innovation are becoming more important. This transition occurs against the background of the change-over from the post-Second World war political and industrial relations climate - which was rather collective in nature - towards the contemporaneous more individualized and flexibilized climate (as described in sections 2 and 3). An interesting theme is which leadership attributes are considered to qualify outstanding leaders in this transitional phase. This is the subject of the next section.

6. On Leadership

In this section the results from some qualitative and quantitative data sources are discussed. First, the outcomes of Dutch media analysis are presented. Then the main themes of a series of interviews in a major Dutch daily with Dutch CEOs on decision making and leadership are summarized. Next, the responses given in individual as well as focus group interviews on characteristics of outstanding leadership are highlighted. Subsequent to this, data of GLOBE questionnaires on preferred attributes of outstanding leaders are analyzed. In conclusion, some data from a recent Dutch study on leadership characteristics are discussed.

6.1 Media analysis

One of the qualitative sources for learning more about contemporary leadership values and required leader characteristics is provided by the *analysis of media*. Data for this analysis was collected in week 32 (August 4-11), 1996. It started with NRC/Handelsblad (a prominent national newspaper, with a liberal character). Then Het Financiële Dagblad (the Dutch equivalent of the Wall Street Journal) was added, as well as Intermediair (including its postings of management vacancies), Elsevier, HP/De Tijd and Vrij Nederland (i.e. four weekly magazines with a wide distribution throughout the Netherlands). Supplemented was one monthly-appearing glossy management magazine: Quote. All these weekly and monthly magazines are especially popular among people in middle-managerial positions.

In these media we found hardly any article on good leaders; moreover, in Dutch media very few leaders are associated with events in society or in organizations. Probably, this observation relates both to Dutch culture in general and to Dutch media culture. Journalists tend to be factual and fairly neutral in their reporting style

with little speculation about possible managerial or leadership influences. Also, details about a leader's private life are not made public or only to a moderate extent (a similar reservedness is taken by most media regarding the private life of the Queen and the Royal Family).

The media portray good Dutch leaders/managers as fulfilling a modest role; they tend to be trustworthy, down-to-earth, well-organized, hard working, competent and inconspicuous. At the same time, they are strong willed, ambitious, inspirational, pragmatic and demanding on their personnel and on suppliers. They feel they should take time to consult major parties before implementing plans; they tend to mediate well between various stakeholders and they attribute success to teamwork. Dutch leaders are considered mostly as intellectually mediocre and some critics think they should say that in public; often, leaders get more public criticism than praise in the Netherlands. Perhaps that explains, in part, why most leadership figures are slightly inconspicuous or non-flamboyant.

Table 5 lists leadership attributes which are specified in managerial job postings.

Table 5: Leadership attributes listed in Intermediair's managerial job postings

<u>In all postings:</u>	<u>Often listed:</u>
leadership experience	Good communicator
expertise (that fits the particular job)	Flexible

Remaining attributes (grouped in four categories):

Consideration:

- motivator
- empathy
- convincing
- tactful/diplomatic
- coach
- trustworthy

Achievement orientation:

- self confidence
- independent, yet teamplayer
- commercial skills
- hard working
- entrepreneur
- strong personality
- decision maker

Change/Innovation:

- creative negotiator
- innovator
- international experience/interest
- experienced change-manager
- vision-implementator
- initiating capacity
- inspiring.

Planning and Control:

- risk controller
- planner
- organizing talent
- eye for detail.

Table 5 shows that expertise is emphasized as a major required leadership attribute. Managers need to have a particular background in the contents of the jobs they will be managing; in addition, they should have gained some managerial experience, in order to be capable of leading others. Moreover, they need to be socially astute. Less frequently mentioned attributes relate to consideration, achievement orientation, consideration, and planning and control respectively.

It should be kept in mind that the postings refer to a rather large variety of leadership positions and managerial jobs. Many of the requirements just mentioned change from time to time and are prone to (especially Anglo-Saxon managerial) fads and fashions; after all, Dutch people have a great interest in (popular English) managerial literature which has, of course, an impact. Yet, this impact does not seem to pervade the media culture very strongly, as these requirements are rather general in nature. Let us see how Dutch CEOs are characterized by several journalists.

6.2 Interviews with Dutch CEOs

In the spring of 1994 NRC/Handelsblad, the daily newspaper, ran a series of feature articles entitled the decision makers. This 15 part series consisted of 14 interviews with Dutch CEOs of diverse and rather large companies. The smallest organization, DTZ Zadelhoff, is a brokerage agency still led by the entrepreneur who started the business in 1961. It had 1.700 employees in nine countries at the time of the interview. With 96.000 employees at the time of the interview KPN, the Dutch telecommunications and postal giant (which was recently privatized), is the largest independent employer on the Amsterdam stock exchange. Other well-known companies whose CEOs participated in the series, include Heineken (beer), KLM (Royal Dutch Airline), ING (banking) and Akzo-Nobel (chemicals).

The interviews aimed to highlight the opinion of Dutch business leaders on topics such as unemployment, government regulations and competition from low-wage countries and to get an impression of how these CEOs lead their own organization. The series concluded with one article comprised of more general comments on Dutch business leaders by the journalists as well as business consultants who outline the demands faced by Dutch business leadership in the past as well as the next decade.

In general, several points are noteworthy. First, it is remarkable that the articles do *not* give much personal information about CEOs. Some prior work experience is mentioned for all CEOs, their educational background and age for most, but further personal details, income or family are hardly discussed. This seems

consistent with Dutch tradition (as we also noted in the media analysis; section 6.1), where even royalty and public figures are 'entitled' to some privacy and in which leaders are not considered or treated as heroes (section 2).

All CEO's interviewed are *men*. This reflects the current situation in which only very few women are found in the higher echelons of large corporations. Recent figures also show, for instance, that Dutch universities are among the lowest ranking countries in the world in regards to women as versus men holding a full professorship. Most of the interviewed CEO's commented on political issues in the interviews and several were actively involved in national politics and political decision making, mainly through their role in political parties or employers' federations. All 14 have a *university* degree. However, they were educated in diverse fields such as economics and business, engineering or law. Most started their career in another organization, earning their merits before taking over as CEO in their current organization. Two of the CEO's started their own business and are still in charge.

Another striking aspect in the articles is the strong *international* focus of all CEO's and of the company strategies they represent. Asia and especially China are seen as offering many new and important business opportunities, and the same goes (to a lesser extent) for Central or Eastern Europe. It is not surprising that Dutch business often has an international orientation; the Netherlands is a small country with a limited domestic market. The tradition of intensive trade with many other nations started centuries ago (see section 2). Even more in general, an international orientation seems a typical feature of the Netherlands, which is reflected, for instance, in the fact that most Dutch speak two or often even three languages to a certain degree (Dutch, and usually English and/or some German). The educational system emphasizes the importance of *learning* these different languages. Also indicative of this international focus is that newspapers and broadcasts present much international news, especially regarding other countries in Europe, the USA, Asia and the Middle East.

The interview with each CEO's includes many company specific situational elements. For instance, in companies that had recently experienced a crisis, restructuring or turnaround in which many employees had to be fired, this provided the background for the interview; in companies that recently merged or were taken over by others, this provided the primary background.

CEO's often refer to the company in terms of a collectivity '*we at ..*'. Other elements that were often mentioned regarding leadership and decision making were the necessity of *support, consensus and acceptance* of lower level managers and employees. Remarks such as 'consensus is an important prerequisite to realize goals' and 'ideas need acceptance, otherwise they will not be realized' reflect this emphasis. This emphasis on a

combination of *autonomy and consensus* is a feature strongly associated with the way in which the Dutch have been governed for many years. Hofstede (1991;1993) has also described this Dutch emphasis on consensus (see section 3.3 as well).

If an organization faces a crisis, leaders need to show optimism, vision, *credibility*, care about the people they work with and decisiveness, and they should emphasize team building. Examples of remarks made are: 'In crisis a leader must be energetic and decisive and be the one to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Such a period of restructuring is always unpleasant. The credibility of leadership is increased immensely by pulling an organization through a crisis. One must display a certain optimism; for if the organizations feels their leaders don't believe in the future, you cannot expect them to believe in it' and 'In such a period you have to brace yourself. Eat in the works canteen with everyone. Show interest in the people they work with. One should not lock oneself in an ivory tower to be pampered, but show you are one with the organization. Demonstrate trust. 'We do it together' .

Other remarks on the demands crisis places on management were: 'A clear agreement on goals of the reorganization is very important, and so is making people *responsible* for goal attainment'. Followed by the remark: 'A second element is working as a *team*, gaining consensus'. Another translated quote: '(..) In the team we listen well and keep talking until everyone agrees. That goes for the board of directors but also for the levels below that. Of course 'knots must be cut' (i.e. hard decisions made). That is my role. Everyone understands that at a certain point talk is over'.

According to the CEO's, *visioning* is part of the job. Many talk about their ideas for the future, new markets, a new strategy as well as what they learned from the past. A more general remark reflecting the importance the CEO's place on vision is: 'Having a certain vision is an important asset for leaders and entrepreneurs: where is my organization positioned on the market, what is my dream. You also need tenacity, like a terrier. And love people a little. Not only sit in your room, but get out there, motivating they call that. You can't motivate people if you do not care about them'. People skills, motivating and social responsibility are also mentioned several times as important leadership skills.

In the concluding article the journalists show that until recently the top echelon of Dutch business was recruited from a small 'reservoir'; a sort of old boys network. Many companies were also still run by the family that had once started the corporation. However, in the 1980ies the situation changed. The barriers of the 'silent ruling class' in business were broken and the influence of families in their businesses diminished to make way for what one of the CEO's describes as '*professional management*'. The appealing entrepreneurs, the immensely

committed heads of the family business, and the social reformers in top administrative positions were replaced with hard working, analytical and careful problem solvers. These new top managers had an almost mathematical method to lead, in which communicating with the outside world is hardly done except where company figures and acquisitions are concerned. However, according to the journalists the coming years will place new demands on leaders. These ever faster changing times call for more inspirational 'stimulators', who are willing to take risks and have a vision that integrates the activities of the many business units the modern corporation is comprised of. The writers summarize their impression with remarks such as 'after the shepherds, technocrats and caretakers we now need *pioneers* to run large businesses in the Netherlands .

We assume that the final conclusions of the journalists concerned are in accordance with the ideas expressed by the CEO s. Remarkably, then, is the agreement with the results of the media analysis (section 6.1) regarding managerial job postings. It seems that *in addition* to traditional practices and values concerning consensus, acceptance, support and work autonomy, an outstanding CEO is expected to be a decisive team player, tenacious and dreaming, motivating people and pioneering the organization. In section 3.3 several leadership dimensions were suggested as characteristic to the Dutch post war period until the early nineties. The preceding qualitative findings are only partly in agreement with these. Against the background of the transition in Dutch societal and organizational culture (section 4 and 5) these findings may suggest the beginning *demise* of a leadership pattern that seems to have been developed during the post-war period. This pattern combined two distinct, though interrelated, features:

1. Leadership behavior is not very personalized : the leader s behavior is not particularly outspoken, and not primarily tuned to a group member s particular behaviors or attitudes. Rather, the leader s actions are usually oriented upon creating *conditions* for influencing the group members. The behaviors of many leaders are focused upon fairness for the group members, equality in treatment and, as a consequence, leadership behavior is often a bit bureaucratic in nature. Power is obviously enacted, but subdued, not blatant; rule making and rule enactment prevail rather than personal views and preferences.

The new emphasis upon the tenacious, motivating, and pioneering leader signals perhaps that personal qualities are becoming more acceptable .

2. Leadership behavior (and policy making in institutional settings) is oriented at combining different viewpoints. Balancing between opposite stands, compromising between different plans, making a coalition with an opponent party, socializing with the enemy : these themes seem to qualify many acts of leaders. Such behaviors serve, to some extent, to make leadership less based on personal choices and decisions (see 1).

They are legitimized by the constituents to the extent that they recognize some of their own interests and goals. Yet, they also tend to underrate, if not to suppress, the *counter - voice*, the critical point of view, the deviant opinion and action.

The new emphasis on risk taking, decisiveness, creative negotiation, and vision indicate perhaps a trend towards less compromising and more assertive leadership behaviors.

6.3 Focus interviews and questionnaire data

Individual interviews were held with five middle managers; focus group interviews involved an additional 15 managers. Table 6 indicates which aspects are mentioned more and less frequently as characteristic of outstanding leadership by all 20 respondents.

Table 6: Characteristics of outstanding leadership

Mentioned most	Score
visionary	19
creativity/ innovative behavior	17
inspiring	12
risk-taking/ courage/ nerve	11
self-insight/ knowing one's limitations	11
open communication	10
calm	9
open to situation/ environment	8
creating group-feeling	8
attention to private life of follower	7
long-term oriented	7

trustworthy	7
expressiveness/ radiating	7

Almost all respondents say that an outstanding leader should have a clear vision of the direction in which the organization ought to go and of the way to achieve the objectives and goals set. The leader should moreover continuously adapt to organization internal and external changes, solving occurring problems creatively. In doing so the leader must be able to inspire his followers, motivating them to work hard and to go for their job. That requires also the courage to stick out one's neck, accompanied by a good self insight and sense of his/her own limitations. Half the respondents refer to open communication, which includes the discussion of policy matters with followers, the clarification of difficult issues, the ability to listen, and honesty towards followers. Briefly captured: the outstanding leader should be a *visionary* and *decent* person, who involves his/her followers incisively. Remarkably, an attribute like *integrity* was not mentioned at all: when asked, respondents indicated that all human beings should show integrity (and not only outstanding leaders). Also, *achievement* was hardly stressed. Slightly different from the results of the media analysis (section 6.1) it appears that change/ innovation is strongly emphasized, while achievement is not.

The same respondents also rated ten leadership dimensions (derived from performance appraisal instruments) regarding their importance to outstanding leadership or management. Table 7 lists these dimensions and the mean scores.

Table 7: Importance of leadership dimensions

Dimensions	Mean score*
Creativity and innovative behavior	3.0
Quality of output	3.3
Interpersonal relationships	3.3
Planning	5.1
Cooperative attitude	5.9
Cost control	6.0

Expertise	6.1
Reliability	6.3
Quantity of output	7.3
Work habits	8.7

* 1 = most important.

Creativity and innovation are considered to be most vital to outstanding leadership, according to the results of Table 7. Interpersonal relationships is rated second (as is quality of output), getting a slightly more prominent place than open communications in Table 6. Reliability is among the less outspoken dimensions (as is trustworthy in Table 6). All in all, these outcomes support the main conclusions derived from the interviews with middle managers.

As indicated earlier, 287 middle managers from the food and the banking/insurance sector took the questionnaire on leadership attributes. Table 8 shows the results, also in comparison to the scores of all other countries.

It appears, according to Table 8, that Dutch managers consider characteristics like integrity, inspirational, and visionary as important for success as a leader. On the contrary, attributes as malevolent, self-centered, and autocratic get very low scores. In comparison with all other countries, also team integrator, decisive, diplomatic, and humane orientation are attributes characterizing Dutch perceptions of an outstanding leader. Comparatively low scores get malevolent, autocratic, and face saving.

Table 9 shows the results of an exploratory factor analysis¹² on the Dutch data.

¹²Principal components with varimax rotation.

Table 8: Outstanding leader attributes (N = 287)

	Mean (NL)	Group	Maximum	Minimum
Integrity	6.52	a	6.79	4.83
Inspirational	6.38	a	6.63	5.04
Visionary	6.30	a	6.50	4.62
Team integrator	6.01	a	6.43	4.10
Performance orientation	5.95	b	6.64	4.51
Decisive	5.87	a	6.37	3.62
Diplomatic	5.43	a	6.05	4.49
Admin.competent	5.43	c	6.42	4.53
Team orientation	5.42	b	6.09	4.42
Humane orient.	4.98	a	5.68	3.29
Self sacrifice	4.79	b	5.99	3.98
Modesty	4.71	b	5.79	4.14
Status-conscious	3.93	c	5.93	2.37
Autonomous	3.53	b	4.65	2.27
Conflict inducer	3.26	c	5.01	3.09
Procedural	3.22	c	4.89	2.82

Non-participative	2.41	b	3.68	1.86
Face saving	2.23	d	4.53	2.05
Autocratic	2.08	d	4.16	1.89
Self-centered	1.75	c	3.41	1.55
Malevolent	1.62	d	2.67	1.33

Table 9: Four leadership factors: attributes and factor loadings

I		II		III		IV	
Group oriented		Intellectual stimulation		Individualistic		Orderly	
humane orient.	.75	visionary	.76	self-centered	.72	procedural	.79
team orientation	.73	decisive	.72	autonomous	.71	administratively competent	.73
modesty	.71	inspirational	.69	autocratic	.71		
integrity	.53	performance or.	.67				
diplomatic	.50						

Jointly, these four factors explain 55% of the variance. The higher loadings on Factor I reveal that a generous, *group oriented*, modest, and sincere style characterizes one pattern of leadership. A second pattern combines foresight, *intellectual stimulation*, willfulness, enthusiasm, and a concern for excellence; interestingly, the attribute *face saving* (which represents evasive, indirect behaviors) has a negative loading on the second factor. The third pattern is characterized by a non-participative, *individualistic*, domineering style. The fourth pattern reflects a formal, cautious, and *orderly* style of leadership. Some attributes have rather high loadings

on more than one factor (like self sacrifice, and face saving); other attributes (e.g. status-conscious) have rather low loadings on all factors.

In the typical Dutch polder model, a group-oriented leadership style is important, in which consultation of other parties and integration of different opinions stands out. Therefore, a relatively low score on the orderly leadership style (which represents a focus on attributes as autocratic, self-centered, and non-participative) could be expected. Also, status-consciousness is not very helpful to become an excellent manager in The Netherlands. Sharing visions and being a team player are more required. Observations in line with these results can also be found in the Unobtrusive Measurement Questionnaire (UMQ), like: burial places are not separated according to the status of the deceased (item 3). Supporting evidence is also found in the Participant Observation Questionnaire (POQ), such as: Pictures of living political leaders are not normally displayed in shops, bars during non election times (item 4), nor displayed on postage stamps (item 16). Eating places in large companies are mostly *not* separated according to the status of the employees (item 22). And individuals are generally expected to voice their personal opinions, even when in disagreement with the majority of the people with whom they interact.

A separate study done in the Netherlands (Koopman, Den Hartog, Van Muijen, 1996; Den Hartog, 1997) asked a nationwide sample (N=2161, at least 19 years old, with work experience) on characteristics seen as important for Dutch top- and middle managers. Results show that the most important characteristics for *top managers* in the Netherlands are: eye for innovation, long term oriented, vision, convincing, trustworthy, communicative, confidence builder, and courage. Dominant, formal, but also modest behaviors are not considered as characteristic of successful topleaders. For good Dutch *middle managers* important characteristics are: trustworthy, communicative, concern for subordinates' interests, teambuilder, participative, and confidence builder. Again, dominant and formal behaviors have very low scores.

In other words, this confirms again that the Dutch culture seems to be a bit aversive against a large power distance and strong leaders. Formal leadership does not guarantee commitment. Leaders have to consult, and to convince in order to be trusted and followed. As was shown in Table 6, characteristics mentioned most in the interviews and the focus group interviews were: visionary, creativity/innovative behavior, and inspiring leadership. Dominant, formal, and authoritarian leadership is less accepted in the Netherlands, maybe with the exception of special situations, such as crisis and decline of operations. Yet, it is important to keep in mind that there seems to be a trend in Dutch societal and organizational culture to put at once more emphasis upon values like individualism and flexibilization (sections 4 and 5). Apparently, outstanding

leaders with a strong group orientation, an emphasis upon intellectual stimulation, orderly in nature, but low on individualism are considered to be able to cope with these upcoming changes.

7. Current challenges

The trend towards more individualism and flexibilization confronts Dutch society with values and practices which are slightly at variance with the dominant societal and organizational culture outlined in previous sections. Here this trend is briefly discussed under two headings: flexibilization, and action organizations. Some potential implications for outstanding leadership values and practices will be touched on.

7.1 Flexibilization

The term has gained momentum in the past 10 years. The original meaning of flexibility is that the core of something remains unchanged, while the particular form or application of that something is tailored to specific, local conditions or requirements (cf. Thierry (a), in press). Current usage is quite different: flexibilization has become some container concept, referring to many domains of what is commonly understood to be organization change. At least 7 areas of flexibilization in organizations may be distinguished:

- a. *Work content.* This area is often referred to as work structuring, job redesign, quality of work, and the like. It covers changes in the content of somebody's work as an effect of job rotation, job enlargement, and job enrichment, but also as a consequence of moving towards a second or third career. It highlights the management of competences and of multi-skills, intending to increase and to support somebody's employability.
- b. *Work place.* This area bears literally upon the geographical location of somebody's place(s) of work. In addition to the fixed or stable location we distinguish the mobile work place (such as when technical maintenance is done at the client's home), the flying brigade (whose members are assigned to units with a temporary shortage of manpower), and tele-work (where the employee or manager is working at home or at a particular shop, communicating electronically with his/ her company).
- c. *Labor relations.* Both internal and external relations constitute this domain. Internally, it covers themes like the less hierarchical organization chart (with less layers than previously) and self-steering units (semi-autonomous workteams). These examples reflect that the locus of power, in particular concerning

knowledge, is moving downwards in many organizations. Externally, we refer to what was said earlier regarding Collective Labor Agreements: they tend to become decentralized (towards the firm level), deregulated (defining merely boundary conditions), or even traded for individual agreements.

Increasingly, company-internal and -external groups tend to negotiate about working conditions tailored to their own interests.

d. *Work time*. Many changes are occurring in this area, like e.g. an increase of the application rate (and of the diversity) of shift work and irregular work schedules (Thierry & Jansen, 1998), of part time arrangements, and of compressed schedules (working more hours per day and less days per week). There is also a slight increase in flextime schedules (core and optional work hours), in permanent night- and weekend-shifts, in work hour budgets that specify the annual amount of hours (allowing much variation per day or week), and the like.

e. *Labor contract*. This area borders the preceding one. Until recently, contracts mirrored the tradition of having permanent employment (in most cases after a probation period). More and more, contracts are made that limit employment to a fixed period, e.g. the min - max contract (in which merely the minimum and the maximum amount of hours per week or other time period are specified), and the zero hours contract (a worker may work no hours at all in one week, and full time with overtime additionally the next week), and so forth. Recent OECD figures show that flexible contracts apply to around 12% of the employed people in The Netherlands. But two out of each three new contracts are flexible, which involves a sharp increase of flexible contracts.

f. *Work conditions*. Flexible pay usually concerns employee benefits, allowing employees and managers some choice on how to spend a part of their income, like in the Cafeteria Plan (Langedijk, 1998; Thierry (b), in press). Yet, a more recent usage also includes gain sharing (making a relatively large proportion of base salary dependent upon the organization's financial results), performance related pay, and reducing social security provisions to a smaller core package.

g. *Personal career*. As an outcome of changes in the preceding areas the working life of the individual executive, manager and employee is showing increasingly a diversified pattern. Continued education and training are necessary to make up for the increasingly rapid obsolescence of acquired skills and abilities. Periods of work and care taking (e.g. parental leave) alternate. Two or more careers per individual are going to be the rule rather than the exception.

This flexibilization of work and private life occurs in some sectors (as well as in some countries) much

faster than in others. Yet, it will probably pervade industrialized countries to a great extent. Flexibilization seems to be the visible, manifest outcropping of incisive, partly latent societal changes. Here it must suffice to mention just a few determining factors. One factor seems to be, at least in The Netherlands, the gradual change-over to a round about 24 hours economy: economic values appear to be more pre-eminent than a decade ago. This requires at least a partly different *legitimation* process of leadership decisions on both company strategy and policy implementation. Partly related to this is another factor: markets are becoming more global, competition is increasingly on an international basis, and technological innovations occur more frequently, one of the consequences of which is the need for flexible organizational adaptation, involving one reorganization after another.

It is far from evident which *outstanding leadership* practices and attitudes are required to manage this flexible life. Probably, they differ according to different segments of an organization's workforce. Thus, it might be argued that a visionary, change oriented, and consulting style would apply to the core, highly educated, employees in organizations which are facing much uncertainty. Transactional leadership behavior would suit best for managers and employees, who are hired from employment agencies. A more formal, orderly oriented style would qualify the approach to workers on a hire and fire basis. Career planning would be facilitated by a humane, collaborative style. This theme - the mix of outstanding leadership practices - is hopefully a major subject for comparative future research, in which one important question would be whether outstanding leadership should be conceived in terms of simultaneously needed, *contradictory* practices (e.g. visionary *and* transactional, change oriented *and* an emphasis upon more formal control).

7.2 Action organizations

In the mid 1990ies the Dutch - British multinational Shell Petroleum Company intended to dump the worn out oil platform Brent Spar at the bottom of one of the deep seas. Greenpeace, very well known because of its stands and actions to protect the ecological environment, objected heavily. Greenpeace held e.g. that the platform would severely pollute the sea water, and that Shell greatly underrated the amount of oil and other substances left in Brent Spar. Shell management disputed Greenpeace's point of view, e.g. with expert data, but Greenpeace maintained its stand, supported by much publicity in various countries. Gradually, members of parliament started to pose critical questions; regular customers of Shell (i.e. at gas stations) made a change-over to competing oil companies, and so forth. Eventually, Shell gave in and agreed to search for another solution for Brent Spar, while a joint Shell - Greenpeace committee of experts would reanalyze the

debris within the former platform. This was widely acclaimed as a Greenpeace victory; incidentally, the joint committee reported later that Shells initially published data were correct.

Of course, this account does not accuse or applaud any of the parties mentioned. It serves as an example of what seems to become a major change in the (Dutch) industrial relations system and climate in the 1990ies: the onset of *action organizations* confronting larger enterprises with their points of view (cf. Tieleman et. al., 1996). Current action organizations cover a great variety of themes, like e.g. human rights, the policy towards a particular developing country, social policy, child labor, anti-racism, baby nutrition, DNA-manipulation, peace-keeping, the aged, and so forth. Of course, action or interest groups are nothing new: Olson (1982) made the intriguing argument that the decline of large nations - such as the Roman or the British Empire - might have been brought about by the falling apart of the society in a multiplicity of action groups. What appears to be new is that more and more action organizations¹³ voice very particular concerns against larger companies - like *protesting* against specific policy measures or putting *pressure* in favor of a stand or action - as a consequence of which they usually become involved in bargaining processes with companies. An action organization expresses a particular concern (e.g. manipulated soja beans) as a theme of *general* interest (i.e. health risks for the population at large); it has a smaller or larger constituency whose members are usually well educated. The action organization embodies and expresses to some extent the counter - voice (cf. section 6.2).

Although action organizations deal primarily, until now, with larger companies, medium-sized organizations may be affected as well in the near future. Traditionally, a large (multi-)national enterprise enters into agreements with the government and the unions of one or more countries (and, obviously, with banking corporations and perhaps transnational political authorities). This continues to be the case. But it doesn't suffice: agreed upon plans for action (e.g. investments, or a new plant) do not reach the operational phase; more bargaining is needed. Why? The national government occupies a more peripheral position than in the 1970ies and 1980ies, and has lost quite some power and legitimizing authority. The same argument applies to many unions: they have moved from a natural counter vailing power position towards the role of discussion partner (cf. Tieleman et. al, 1996). Action organizations - sometimes called single issue non-governmental organizations - question indeed the *credibility* of the company in some particular subject matter, and require at least public recognition of their particular concerns. As a consequence, the company

¹³The term action organization stems from Cor J. Lammers (*Organiseren van bovenaf en van onderop; Organization downwards and upwards*, 1993, Utrecht: Het Spectrum).

enters new territory: facing particular actions, being engaged in tense debates, negotiating for an agreement with one or more counter-parties who are able to commit many resources. In other words: the company has to search for *legitimation* of its policy and activities from other, and more, sources than they were used to. How should the company go about to achieve this? Should they act quickly, and engage immediately into negotiations with action organizations representatives? Or is it more recommendable to avoid rapid action? Is one governance structure (e.g. the divisional form, cf. Mintzberg, 1983) more suited than another? Tieleman et. al (1996) suggest that a company should not focus its business plan exclusively upon financial results: this implies of course a serious discussion with the shareholders about their concerns. Rather, major subject matters of action organizations could be made part of the company's business policy (cf. Ackerman, 1975). Shell's former CEO seems to have followed Ackerman's advice: he testified in 1996 that his company had been rather arrogant in reaction to environmental, and other, concerns of action organizations. Thus, Shell enacted early 1997 an *ethical statute*, outlining norms and lines of conduct applying to top managers in any country where Shell has economic interests.

How come that the government has lost much of its power and legitimizing authority? Various perspectives may be taken here: one line of explanation holds that the increased role of the market economy, jointly with the globalization and internationalization of doing business, has more or less *caused* the decrease in governmental authority. Self-steering work teams are the contemporaneous expression of the historical trend of Dutch educated citizens to rule themselves as much as possible: as a consequence, the government's primary role is being reduced to facilitate this. Another explanation stresses changes that reverberate both at the societal and the individual citizen level: the increasing individualization (and flexibilization) reflects that almost no values and norms are societally shared by all, but rather by members of interest groups, clubs, committees, action organizations, and the like. Moral behavior, according to Tieleman et. al., is democratized. Thus, there is hardly any moral authority left for the government. At the individual level, people are usually engaged in many different activities: yet, these activities are kept quite apart from one another. The loyalty felt for one activity (e.g. being an employee of a construction firm) does not relate to the loyalty felt for another activity (e.g. being a member of an action organization fighting the construction firm's activities in a particular neighborhood). Moral behavior is thus *individualized*¹⁴. Within this perspective, action organizations are filling a moral gap.

¹⁴It is an interesting question whether individualized behavior can acquire a moral quality by definition.

8. In conclusion: Ten Commandments

This chapter started with presenting the viewpoints of an air passenger descending into Amsterdam airport. One concern of the passenger proved to be whether the initial impression of a flat country would also apply to its culture, politics, leadership, and achievements. The journey through the preceding sections has shown how misleading first impressions might be. Summarizing in a way the discoveries made during that journey the passenger has some clear notions on what (s)he, as a foreigner, should *not* do, were (s)he planning as a next step in the career to manage and to provide leadership to Dutch employees and supervisors. Having learned quite a bit about Dutch history (s)he voices these notions in the form of Ten Commandments.

The Ten Commandments:

As a leader from abroad THOU SHOULD NOT

- * *hesitate to consistently search for consensus with all stakeholders*
- * *engage in joking on gender discrimination*
- * *negate the strong need of Dutch employees and workers to experience autonomy*
- * *behave autocratically without adequate consultation of others and sharing of power*
- * *control closely the behavior of co-workers*
- * *focus on personal qualities in stead of situational conditions*
- * *publicly announce and list the top achievers*
- * *take pride in status symbols, extravagant spending, and manifest use of power*
- * *reward your co-workers very unequally in terms of their pay*
- * *forget that agreements made on courses of actions may be interpreted as a contribution to a still ongoing discussion.*

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