

**REFLECTION on “Civil Leadership as the Future of Leadership. Harnessing the disruptive power of citizens” (Amazon, 2018)** in follow up to the series of international lectures, debates, and meetings of the past six months.

Dr. S.P.M. de Waal, Utrecht, The Netherlands, October 5, 2019

Released on Amazon at the end of 2018, the book and my lectures aim to prevent the disruption of democracy, citizenship, and public services and thus to increase the "strategic intelligence" of the right people in time. Only then is there a basis for the hopeful perspective offered in the book, namely that the new technology gives the citizen more power, influence, and authority, on the one hand, but while maintaining the values of honest open public debate, good governance, fair consideration, protection of the vulnerable, and a stable institutional order, on the other.

Intended for an international audience of private sector executives and public officials and administrators - those whose decisions and actions have a significant impact on public affairs, the public debate, and the social and economic affairs of a country - the book's **key message** is that new technologies are leading mankind into a new totally new era - the Digital Civil Revolution - which generates the “disruptive power of citizens” and leads to an entirely new institutional order of society, civil society, and democracy. A phase that requires new leadership: civil leadership.

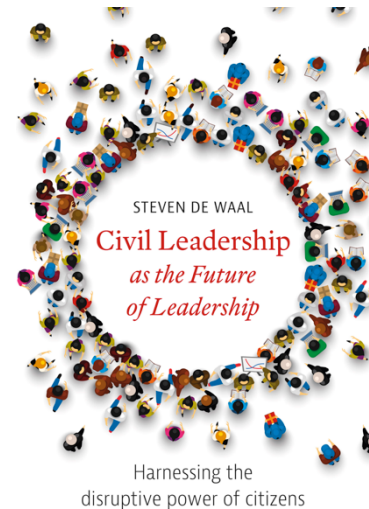
The following **new concepts** are introduced and explored in the book:

- **Digital Civil Revolution**
- **Disruptive Power of Citizens**
- **Disruption of Civil Service and Public Services**
- **Disruption of Democracy**
- **New Media Landscape, leading to a Battle for the Eyeballs**
- **Permanent Public Grandstand**
- **Swarm Behavior**
- **Civil Leadership<sup>1</sup>**

In addition, the analysis is also based on related concepts that have already been introduced in literature, such as strategic intelligence, platform organizations, commons, and civil society and, therefore, their strategic importance in the new age.

This paper aims to offer an abridged version of a public and more systematic reflection on the six-month intensive international "book tour" that followed the launch of the book and included lectures, discussions, and meetings in Helsinki (Finland), San Francisco (U.S.A.), and Wellington (New Zealand). This tour is still ongoing, and this reflection will also help to further develop my analyses in the upcoming lectures.

Many of the strategic analyses presented in the book on the impact of the new technology on the public arena were often recognized as good and coherent explanations for (often alarming or at least disturbing) news or issues that people had already observed in many countries I visited. The book thus offers a meaningful and coherent frame for many of the individual phenomena, observations, and initial indications that are already at play and visible worldwide.



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<sup>1</sup>Introduced in and subject of my dissertation, “The Value(s) of Civil Leaders”, Eleven 2014

This also demonstrates the importance of the mission and vision of Public Space as an independent thinktank from the triad of 1. modern strategic analysis, 2. the call for and belief in powerful citizenship and social entrepreneurship and 3. the need for a new, value-driven civil leadership.

**Outline:**

- I. Key issues raised
  - II. Remarkable findings from the recent encounters in Wellington (New Zealand), San Francisco (U.S.A.), and Helsinki (Finland)
  - III. Initial conclusions
- Appendix: Overview of the book tour related lectures and debates during the 1<sup>st</sup> half of 2019

**I. Key Issues Raised**

- a. The book's analyses and direction were found to **apply mainly to democracies and countries with a level of prosperity, public services, and civil society similar to that of OECD countries**

Which in themselves are 3 separate variables, in which The Netherlands occupies a very specific international position through the public/private model of "societal enterprise" I introduced (2000, Dutch, see Footnote 5 in the book). So, there is undoubtedly a connection between prosperity and democratic institutions as a context, on the one hand, and my strategic analyses on "disruptive citizenship," leading to a fundamentally new public arena and the necessary answer through "civil leadership" on the other.

While dictatorships, fake democracies, or one-party-state systems will primarily misuse the technology to better control "their" citizens, in such countries the new technology can still help citizens to protest, by enabling them to connect, unite, and take coordinated action (as I called "swarm behavior" such as in "Twitter revolutions", but also in the flexible street protest in Hong Kong).

- b. The book's conclusion that **disruption of democracy** starts with **disruption of political parties** was doubted at times.

In the book's analysis, recruitment and candidacy of persons for political positions is no longer the monopoly of political parties but takes place through the new direct channel of the Internet, social media, and news apps. Just as with market disruption, newcomers from outside the existing political organizations are increasingly winning the political battle. If constitutionally application for candidacy must go through a political party, this is circumvented by the founding of new parties (like Macron in France or Zelenski in Ukraine) or by using the (visible and measurable) public support on the new direct media channel to put pressure on existing parties (like Trump in the USA).

This - now visible - popularity of the up-and-coming politician is also the reason that both strategies work instead of the old selection from within internal circuits, interests, and networks in existing political parties, after which the public support still needs to be won. The next disruption of democracy, after that of political parties, will, therefore, concern the often "behind-closed-doors" appointment procedures for top government positions (as can be seen in the political resistance against the way Ursula von der Leyen was appointed as chair of the EU Commission).

The primary problem as I see it is that the current group of professional politicians too often fails to defend democracy due to their learned behavior and internal culture: "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." The sitting politicians are mostly imprisoned rhetorically: they have no training in drama and theater, no rhetorical skills, no credible "appropriate" biographical background. That is the main reason why I called in the book "populism" an abusive boomerang word. Blaming others with this

'name' is primarily a striking marker of your own weakness - they apparently understand "the people" better than you and demonstrate and communicate it better.

"Victimization" is another effective and dramatic maneuver related to "populism". As Trump (USA) and Baudet (Netherlands, earlier also Wilders) repeatedly demonstrate successfully: their victimhood "proves" that incumbent politicians (and other influencers, like press and experts) are a caste that sustains itself. It gives their position as new 'kids on the block', that is basically made possible by the new technological era, a respectable and legitimate explanation. Although there is also the hopeful phenomenon, that new public leaders passionate about democracy are also emerging from outside of the professional political organizations, like Flavia Kleiner, who used her citizen rights to initiate a referendum in Switzerland against a right-extremist law proposal and – surprisingly for the political incrowd - won.

- c. The book's analysis of the **success of public leaders** caused some confusion as to whether their success simply now stems from their strong rhetorical skills (which are necessary in the new public arena) and their typical better credibility (what Aristoteles called in his description of rhetorics "ethos": the connection between biography and message), or because of their appealing, substantive message. This of course also leads to **doubts if my appeal to a new kind of leadership, civil leadership, will be successful in this new arena and competition about public leadership?**

It certainly is encouraging that the public attitude of certain recent successful leaders, such as Jacinda Ardern (Prime Minister New Zealand) and Imamoglu (Mayor of Istanbul, Turkey), closely match my definition of "civil leadership":

- Open and growth mindset
- Attitude of "one-of-us, citizens"
- Values based on connected citizenship
- Passion for the public good and public value

When measuring and assessing the success of public leaders and public leadership, there is a fundamental distinction between public leadership arising from a political function versus from private positions (what I called "private-for-public" leadership in my dissertation). The **disruption of the public arena** leads, exactly as we saw in markets, to the entrance of new public leaders from diverse backgrounds which differ from those of the members of traditional political parties. As I analyzed in the book democratic politics offers the clearest, hardest, and most accountable battlefield for formal positions. This makes it comparable to the market and this is now further proven by the analogous phenomenon of disruption! Of course, this comparison will always be denied by politicians: for ideological and political reasons, in their view democracy must never be called a market!

In short: the strategic force fields, especially around the entrance to (potential) public leadership, differ greatly between government/democracy on the one hand, and private on the other, but the new public arena does certainly increase the opportunities for many types of people, citizens and executives, to be recognized as public leaders.

Many agreed that this new public arena and this disappearance of the "political" monopoly on public leadership, will lead to a much wider range of public leaders and that the playing field for public leadership is opening up and growing. The *permanent public grandstand* continues to harshly assess and deal with elected politicians and "being elected" means less and less in public opinion. Once elected, officials still have to prove themselves to the public grandstand.

On the other hand, a private leader can act on behalf of an increasingly large group (“*swarm behavior*”) and his/her private background is regarded as a rhetorical plus by the public grandstand: he/she protests or expresses on my behalf regarding an important issue or injustice, and he/she does this out of his/her free will and purpose. He/she even runs a personal risk for that message, because it often leads to open conflict with the responsible politicians. This open conflict pays off in the new public arena and people often choose the private party! After all, politicians are attributed with more self-interests in public performance and debate than their private counterparts in the public arena.

**Summarized: the three-way disruption of democracy**

So, we can now see how this internationally provoked reflection on the strategic analysis in the book leads to three different ways in which the disruption of democracy will happen or is already happening:

1. **The disruption of political parties** because persons from outside these organizations can now successfully obtain top government and political functions
  2. The broadening of the public arena leads to **many more persons from private backgrounds like active citizens and private executives being able to obtain public leadership**, without even being in or striving for political or government functions. The political arena is now part of an open public arena and has lost its monopoly on “solving” public issues and, so, on public leadership.
  3. Both changes lead to a clear **disruption of democracy** because there now is a much more open, turbulent, and uncontrollable battle for public leadership, in terms of followership, authority, and influence and impact. In this battle, for the first time, being elected or appointed to top government positions from within existing political organizations is no longer an advantage and may sometimes even be a disadvantage because of the already existing mistrust in politics and government.
- d. **The most significant doubt was whether private people**, like active citizens and private executives and public services administrators, **are able and want to take up this challenge by competing in this new public arena about public leadership.**

In many countries, this doubt was certainly supported by the lack of enough good examples, while, at the same time, it was acknowledged that the new technology enormously increases public visibility.

This doubt was partly due to the expectation that professional politics will counter this competition by tackling the underlying issues faster than before, so that “the state” remains in the lead in claiming that the government is the best vehicle for solving public issues. In this way the increased competition in public leadership leads to better results. Partly also because that new, more intense public arena leads to no CEO or administrator of public services or active citizens wanting to play that role.

- e. Of course, **public services** were a recurring theme partly because a good number of my administrative and executive audience came from sectors such as healthcare, energy, and infrastructure.

Almost everywhere it was recognized that citizens want and are able to do more. The main subject of discussion of almost all meetings focused on how the main changes that were going on and were implemented, were anticipating enough on this new power of citizens, like:

- Decentralization to municipalities (New Zealand and the Netherlands)?
- Professionals in the front line (Finland)?
- Socially responsible companies or actions by social enterprises (San Francisco)?

Most of my audience witnessed the disappearance of many monopolies in public services that the book announced. In the current climate of globalization, interconnectedness and individualization combined with an improved cooperative exchange by citizens undermine such 'official' monopolies.

If this is not anticipated in time, this will lead to what I have called **"silent" privatization** in a number of lectures: internationally, the platform economy will facilitate exchange and ranking between demand and the best supply in areas of classical public services such as education and healthcare for "the citizen" with some purchasing power. The strategic added value of platforms is their ability to drive exchange and ranking with ownership no longer being a requirement. So, the ownership of staff, money, buildings, and equipment, remains in the publicly funded public services. The platforms will increasingly introduce better ranking and exchange between public services like hospitals and doctors, educational institutions and diplomas or career opportunities, and attractive cities and housing. Platform technology can greatly increase this possibility of "pick and choose" for anyone with a little extra purchasing power - the middle class in a broad sense - and will eventually undermine the collectiveness and solidarity in many public service areas.

- f. Often raised was the question as to **whether I am not too optimistic about modern citizenship?** Is this modern citizen spontaneous and self-inclined towards solidarity and involvement in public and social issues? Now that new technology increasingly facilitates this, will citizens really organize themselves to solve public issues or to contribute to public services via co-production? Or is the new technology mainly used for traditional grandstand behavior: scolding, name-calling, and calling for others to behave differently, and thus to reinforce the classic non-citizenship behavior such as Not In My Backyard protest? This is also reflected by the *"swarm behavior"* manifested in protest towards politics and government, such as in the case of the Yellow Jackets and many more examples worldwide.

In my optimistic philosophy, active citizenship is always present, but unlearned by overly pretentious politics and government and thus replaced by an addiction to those same politics and government as problem solvers.

This analysis calls for a mutual withdrawal program – as painful and difficult as it is. "Politics" and "government" must kick their addiction to always being the public point of contact in charge of solving public issues. The "citizen" must kick his/her addiction to always expecting the responsible political leaders or "the government" to solve each problem or injustice. For "politics" and "government", the biggest withdrawal symptom will revolve around the phenomenon that they get NO attention and are IGNORED. The "battle for the eyeballs" is all about new competition on all media and success in drawing the attention of citizens/voters. The old illusion was that journalists' attention also generated public attention, an intermediate step that has now disappeared: public opinion now belongs to the public.

## **II. Remarkable from a country perspective (as a clarification of the earlier analysis)**

### **New Zealand**

- Their public administration is in a downward spiraling vicious circle. Municipalities are currently weak due to a lack of authority, and the government is strongly centralized. This, in turn, leads of citizens lacking faith in municipalities. Both make it difficult to secure capable administrators. All of this results in a further decrease in confidence in municipalities and a minimal tendency towards decentralization in national politics.

### **San Francisco, California, U.S.A.**

- Major effects of the enormous growth and success of the Silicon Valley Internet industry while meanwhile, entire neighborhoods have been taken over by homeless people due to a tremendous rise in the cost of housing. Directly attributed to the new industrial reality of the city

this leads to a major call for CEOs to show social responsibility in how they influence the labor market, cost of housing and city life.

- Effects of the Internet on the new public domain clearly visible via the "Twitter-in-Chief" Trump. Although most of the people I spoke to here are not Trump fans they do share my analysis that Trump is better at understanding the new public arena and has stronger rhetorical skills than many of his political competitors.

### **Helsinki, Finland**

- A common appreciation and influence of all types of private think tanks that put difficult topics on the agenda and realize innovative solutions that cut through established interests.
- Finland finds itself at the forefront of the Internet industry. In Helsinki, there is a neighborhood where people are consciously trying to create a "Silicon Valley of Europe." In Scandinavia at large, the ambition seems more explicit and systematic, as was clear from the example in the book that Denmark has now sent an ambassador to Silicon Valley, both for political and economic reasons.
- At the start of an exercise on "transformation of the welfare state" Finland is decentralizing to municipalities with the aim of also combining and focusing tasks and facilities more towards vulnerable citizens and related issues.
- Associations, such as patients' associations, are experiencing comparable strengthening and horizontalization because of the new technology. Platform technology becomes leading within organizations, resulting in the elimination of separate functions for "managers" and spreading "management" as a function shared by multiple people in the organization.

### **III. Initial Conclusions**

The analysis and main developments concerning the impact of the technological revolution on the public domain and citizenship are frequently recognized internationally. There is also a great need worldwide for this kind of broad interpretation, precisely because we are in the midst of a revolution that affects all mankind and of which we are only just starting to gain a good understanding.

The strategic term of "disruption" applies fully - analyses show that the reaction of the "incumbents" has often not been "strategic intelligent" by any means. Their attitude was too much wait, deny, disparage, or dismiss as negativity, as I now often observe in political and public domains. In other words, incomprehension of the inevitability and impact of this new revolution and its impact, on your own business but especially on the behavior of your customers (in this case to be designated as patients, students, voters) and the emergence of completely new competitors.

Encouraging is that the learning process of citizens, politicians, and public leaders is ongoing around the world and the book and my lectures contribute to that by highlighting that the new technologies behind disruption of markets, are also giving power to citizens and, so, are threatening to disrupt democracy and public leadership.

Utrecht, The Netherlands, October 5, 2019

Dr. S.P.M. de Waal, Founder and Chairman, Public Space Foundation

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'*Civil Leadership as the Future of Leadership*' by Steven de Waal is available as e-book and paperback on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) and in local (online) bookstores worldwide. To invite Dr. de Waal for lectures or other contributions please contact Public Space office management at: +31 (0)30 231 22 82, [info@publicspace.nl](mailto:info@publicspace.nl) [www.publicspace.eu](http://www.publicspace.eu)

## APPENDIX Overview Book Tour

The book "Civil Leadership as the Future of Leadership. Harnessing the disruptive power of citizens" was released on Amazon at the end of 2018.

The book is partly based on many lectures I gave as part of different leadership and governance programs in the Netherlands and across Europe (Munich, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Zurich, Helsinki, Berlin). During the first half of 2019, these lectures were continued based on invitations that followed the book's release.

The book tour during the first half of 2019 included:

### The Netherlands

- Continuation of the series of contributions to various executive and non-executive courses (such as Avicenna, NVTZ (Healthcare), VTW (Social Housing), VTOI (Education), National Register of Commissioners (Industry))
- Special events where I delivered keynote lectures based on the book allowed me to contribute actively:
  - Launch in The Netherlands at Pakhuis de Zwijger (January 30)
  - TV interviews with RTL Z and Tegenlicht Meetup
  - Congress of the Institute of Philosophy in Leusden
  - Congress of Zorgvisie to nominate Care Manager of the Year
  - Contribution to Board class of Texel/Regio Noord
  - State of Leadership Annual Congress Avicenna, simultaneously with Alex Brenninkmeijer on "Moral Leadership"
  - VTOI/NVTK Annual Congress
  - Circle of Economists of Amsterdam
  - Private conference of healthcare administrators
- A review appeared in the Financieel Dagblad newspaper on January 19: <https://publicspace.nl/in-het-spoor-van-john-lennon-fd-19-januari-2019/>

### New Zealand, Wellington (April 3 – 17)

- Meetings with Dutch ambassador Woldberg
- Think Tank New Zealand Initiative
- Lectures for Public and Political Leadership Association (PUPOL) Annual Congress and Think Tank Local Government New Zealand

### San Francisco (May 18 – 27)

- Meeting with Dutch consul Kunst
- Lecture at Dutch consulate for American-Dutch network
- Visit to Silicon Valley, including to Facebook, Google, and Apple

### Helsinki (June 13 – 20)

- Meetings with Dutch ambassador Bansema
- Meetings with international event organizers Management Events and SpeakersForum
- Meeting with Think Tank Helsinki Think Company
- Lecture at the European Health Care Management Association's (EHMA) Annual Congress, with discussion led by Prof. Kim Putters, director of the Dutch Institute for Social Research