It is all about integrity, stupid
IT IS ALL ABOUT INTEGRITY, STUPID

Studies on, about or inspired by the work of Leo Huberts

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The Legacy of the Scholar Leo Huberts

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Leo’s Legacy

This book brings together contributions related to or inspired by the work of Leo Huberts, the famous integrity scholar who formally retired in September 2019. What exactly is the legacy of Leo Huberts?

As will become clear in the first two chapters, Leo Huberts’ early work was on power and influence, and the so-called intensive process analysis. This research received considerable attention, as several contributors to this book regard this as among his best, some even hope he will pick it up again in his retirement.

Yet – as will become very clear in parts II, III and IV – Leo’s legacy lies first and foremost in his publications on administrative ethics, which are all about integrity. Starting in the mid-1990s, his research focused more intently on the essential role of integrity in establishing and expanding the field of public ethics internationally. Leo Huberts contributed heavily to this burgeoning movement with his prolific body of publications, his numerous public speeches, his administrative role in international conferences, including his role as a professor, colleague and mentor. He has authored more than twenty books and over 200 articles in such prestigious journals as Public Integrity, Public Administration Quarterly, Public Administration Review, American Review of Public Administration, Administration & Society and Crime, Law and Social Change. Empirically, his work on integrity violations, especially corruption and fraud, has created new benchmarks that other scholars have emulated.

In regard to publications, not only is Leo’s own work well known around the world, but he also founded and led a study group at the Vrije Universiteit (VU), which built a large international reputation. ‘Leo’s group’ became a common phrase among scholars of international public administration and catalysed a host of studies on the quality and integrity of governance.

Leo Huberts successfully supervised twelve PhD studies (and several more will finish over the next years). Another important element of Leo’s legacy is supervision and training of researchers, and through them he will have a lasting influence on the field. In this book alone, authors klaartje Peters, Emile Kolthoff, Karin Lasthuizen, Carel Peeters, Ronald van Steden, Zeger van der Wal, Anne-Marie Reynaers and Hester Paanakker – whose PhD studies were supervised by Leo Huberts
(except Carel Peeters, who wrote his Master’s thesis under Leo’s supervision) and who all now have thriving academic careers on their own – attest to the importance of Leo’s guidance, inspiration and teaching. Many of them give Leo Huberts in this book much praise and credit for their later academic successes.

Yet a large part of Leo’s contribution to administrative ethics is to be found not only in his publications and those of his group members, but in his extraordinary ability to inspire and bring people together. As Graycar notes, “Huberts is keen to share knowledge and pass ideas between the old dinosaurs and the young dinosaurs, as he calls them.” Or, as Jurkiewicz puts it, “Leo’s passion for the topic of integrity, and his skilful leadership, has created an army of integrity researchers and practitioners spreading across Europe to multiple continents.”

In 2002, impressed by the Ethics Section of the American Society of Public Administration (ASPA), Leo co-founded the Permanent Study Group (PSG) Ethics and Integrity of Governance of the European Group of Public Administration (EGPA), which is flourishing today (under the name Quality and Integrity of Governance, reflecting the trend Trommel calls for in this book). Through the study group, Leo achieved his goal of establishing a European network on public sector ethics and integrity. Yet, not satisfied with merely a European network, he engaged the larger world. Soon after becoming co-chair of the PSG, he started lobbying to devote the First Transatlantic Dialogue (organized by both ASPA and EGPA) to the theme of ethics and integrity of governance – and he succeeded: the first so-called Transatlantic Dialogue was held in Leuven (co-chaired by Jeroen Maesschalck and Carole Jurkiewicz and organized by Leo as co-chair of the PSG) in 2005. For eight years, Leo co-chaired the PSG, always maintaining close ties with the American sister organization, including a yearly visit to the ASPA conference. Yet even a transatlantic dialogue was not enough. Leo was the driving force behind the idea of the First Global Dialogue on Ethical and Effective Governance, organized in 2009 at the VU in Amsterdam. Furthermore, after stepping down as the co-chair of the PSG, Huberts founded a new Study Group on Quality and Integrity of Governance within the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS), of which he is still the co-chair.

Huberts’ scholarly activities also helped to lay the foundations of other subfields in public administration such as good governance and public values (PVs) research; part III of this book attests to that. A good example would be the field on public values, which has mushroomed in the 21st century (Van der Wal). Masters and Van der Wal explore that area in this book.

The most important concept introduced by Leo during his academic career featured in one of his inaugural lectures (Huberts, 2005): the concept of ‘integritism’.

This significance not only makes integrity important and special, it also makes it crucial that questions and doubts about integrity be focused, through a clear reference to the moral values
and norms violated, and especially about the object being judged. The term ‘integritism’ refers to analysis and evaluation that does not comply with these criteria. (Huberts, 2014, p. 62)

The concept was enthusiastically received in the Netherlands (see Maesschalck’s contribution to this book). My hope is that this book will contribute to its use in the rest of the world.

Leo Huberts has also made numerous media appearances; the media know how to find him and are certain that they can count on him as an integrity expert, as Addink (among others) notes in this book. Yet Huberts turned down many requests by newspapers and television for interviews and comments because these were often questions about individual integrity scandals, and he is always averse to commenting on single integrity cases. Rather, he is always willing to paint the broader picture or to put things in (theoretical) perspective, but sees much danger in commenting on individual cases. Every case has many contingencies, many of which are not known unless the case is thoroughly studied. Furthermore, the media loves to hear from the ‘expert’ about what and who is right and wrong. And it is not up to the academics – not even (or especially) those in ethics domains – to be judges and deliver personal normative verdicts. I know of just two cases in which Leo made an exception, the first related to Fred Spijkers, one of the best-known whistle-blowers in the Netherlands. As a social worker for the Dutch Ministry of Defence, Spijkers was assigned the task of giving aid to the relatives of an army employee who died in a mine accident in 1983. Spijkers was ordered to tell the widow that the accident had been caused by the soldier’s own conduct, but he declared that he did not believe this to be the case (Berndsen, 2015). The widow received a very low pension. Much later, the minister was found liable because the landmines were faulty. Huberts did study this case thoroughly, thereby earning the confidence and assurance needed to publicly comment on it.

The second single case concerned some minor remarks with colleague Hans Nelen, in the newspaper De Limburger, about an alderman in Roermond. Nelen writes extensively about this incident in this book, recalling how the alderman was so angry that he complained on the website of his (then) political party, VVD, that Huberts and Nelen were ‘prostitutes of the media’ – always eager to give a quote to the media in order to have their names in the news. What Nelen does not mention, by the way, is that Michel van Eeten, Professor Governance of Cybersecurity at the University of Delft, wrote in his blog that he was sure that Huberts was not paid for his quote in the newspaper, making Huberts a slut rather than a prostitute.

A few more things are notable about the contributions in this book. First of all, in keeping with the standards of an academic book, along with all the praise for Leo Huberts, scholars engage with him and do not always agree. Interestingly enough, most criticism comes from Leo’s (former) VU colleagues; prophets are seldom honoured in their own country (Mark 6, 4-6).
Also notable is that scholars do not expect Leo to stop with his academic activities. Many mention in this book that they look forward to future collaborations and publications. And several scholars (e.g. ‘t Hart, and Van Montfort and Van den Heuvel) are still trying to chart the course of Leo’s future work.

2 The Moral Responsibilities of a Scholar

What about the societal influence of Leo’s work? Interestingly enough, it does not get much attention in this book. Surely, that is largely because only scholars were invited to contribute to it. If practitioners had been asked, the picture would have been different. And certainly, Lawton addresses ethical implications in academia, and there is some attention to more practical organizational issues, like moral leadership. Also, Trommel calls for a reflexive and critical public administration, especially in the subfield of good governance. Yet scholars hardly mention Leo’s societal influence here, and there is little attention to scholars’ (moral) responsibilities; current developments are also hardly mentioned – not a word, for example, on the words and actions of the current American president, arguably the most powerful person in the world. What is the moral responsibility of scholars, particularly of those dealing with ethics? Maesschalck writes: “Good scholars think about the normative implications of their research and aim at making a difference in the real world by proposing interventions.”

When I speak to colleagues about why we do the job that we do – why we get up in the morning and go to work – I often hear two reasons: a) I like to do research and teach, and b) it is satisfying to contribute to society. Yet when scholars look critically at their job, where exactly is their societal contribution? What, in the end, is the influence on actual governance of Journal of Public Administration and Theory (JPART) or Public Administration Review (PAR) publications? The biggest societal contribution of most public administration scholars is undoubtedly through teaching, not writing.

In almost all accounts of good governance, the public value of honesty is included (De Graaf & Paanakker, 2014; De Vries, 2002). The United States currently has a president who does not seem to agree on the importance of this value in public governance. According to Daniel Dale, journalist and fact checker of the Toronto Star, “Trump is up to 4,325 false claims for his first 745 days in office, an average of 5.8 per day.” (http://projects.thestar.com/donald-trump-fact-check/index.html). Dale writes further on this website:

The Star is keeping track of every false claim U.S. President Donald Trump has made since his inauguration on Jan. 20, 2017. Why? Historians say there has never been such a constant liar in the Oval Office. We think dishonesty should be challenged.
I agree this is the task of a journalist, but also that of scientists. When President Trump tells blatant lies or admits to potentially illegal conspiracies, why is it that scholars in the field of administrative ethics hardly engage with it in their scholarly journals and a book like this? And, of course, it is not just Trump. In Europe we have the example of the Brexit campaign, which had the same levels of dishonesty, with rather dire consequences. When the integrity of governance is so ruthlessly shredded as it is today, is there not a danger that it makes our work incongruous? Do we not fail as scholars of ethics and integrity in governance in dealing with this unfortunate reality?

The value of ‘truth’ is important. To develop and preserve knowledge and the transfer of that knowledge to students is why I believe the universities are on earth. Since the 6th century BC the value of truth has steadily climbed on the societal value ladder (Braeckman & Boudry, 2011), yet it seems more and more under pressure. Also because of the social media it is harder and harder for politicians to communicate realities that are based on knowledge; the influence of non-negotiable symbols has become larger. Populism is the world of symbols, not of morality or truth. See, for example, the discourse on global warming. Especially in our times, in which truth and knowledge are under increasing pressure, universities should be the bastion of knowledge (De Graaf, 2016), especially among scholars of administrative ethics. And these scholars should be – much more than we are today – engaged in telling truth to power (Wildavsky).

3 Overview of This Book

This book consists of several parts. Part I is about Huberts’ Early Work on Power and Influence. Both contributions in this section remind us that Leo Huberts had another line of research before he started his work on the integrity of governance. Paul ’t Hart looks at the puzzle of government inaction. Klaartje Peters discusses the legacy of Leo Huberts in the field of power and influence on political decision-making.

Part II is about Conceptualizing Integrity. Scholars in this section first focus on the work of Leo Huberts and discuss possible directions for administrative ethics. Willem Trommel begins the section with an interesting critique he wrote in 2008: “Leo conceived integrity too much as just another value that could be measured (‘efficiency is fine, but do not forget to measure ‘integrity’, also very important…” His piece was meant, in 2008, to get Leo to broaden his research and lead to a fundamental critique of the governing systems of modern societies; a more critical and reflexive approach. Trommel concludes with the assertion that he succeeded in his goal. Fred Fleurke and Rudie Hulst take a critical look at Huberts’ usage of the concept of integrity. They discuss the advantages and disadvantages of what they consider to be Leo’s broad view on the concept of integrity. In the next chapter Henk Addink looks at Leo’s work on the concept of integrity and its interrelation with
good governance. He places some remarks from a legal point of view. Jeroen Maes‐
eschalck studies the most important concept introduced by Leo Huberts: integri‐
tism. He looks at what happens when integrity is taken too seriously and when
integrity management is taken too seriously. Next is Erwin Muller, who discusses
integrity as one of the core values of public and private organizations, as well as
society as a whole. He revisits some propositions on integrity he formulated 7
years ago. In the final chapter of this part, Paul Frissen and Arthur Ringeling also
start with the most important concept in Leo’s work, integrity. More specifically,
they discuss the eight different views on integrity, a classification by Leo Huberts
on which he has published extensively. Frissen and Ringeling conclude that judg‐
m ents on integrity always have a political character.

Part III, entitled The Inspiration of Leo Huberts, takes a more personal look at the
impact of Huberts’ work on the area of administrative ethics, especially on the
authors’ own work. Adam Graycar begins the section by praising Huberts’ work
on corruption, especially the qualitative studies on the nature of corruption in rich
countries. Carole L. Jurkiewicz praises Huberts for his worldwide inspiration and
pays attention to the person behind the scholar. Andre van Montfort and Hans van
den Heuvel also begin with personal remarks about Leo, noting that he grew up in
a religious – Roman Catholic – family, and go on to show that Leo’s work on the
integrity of governance is mainly about the integrity of procedural norms. Then
they call – partly on the basis of a Roman Catholic social doctrine – for a more sub‐
stantive approach to integrity of governance: more attention to the moral quality of
the content of public policy and its resulting social effects. Hans Nelen – in the con‐
cluding chapter of this section – reminisces about the studies he did with Leo
Huberts, and especially shows us their experiences with a specific case – the earlier
mentioned former alderman of the Dutch city of Roermond.

In Part IV, Broadening the Scope to Values and Virtues, the authors build on Leo
Huberts and propose different additional directions and concepts. Hester Paanak‐
derker and Anne-Marie Reynaers study how Huberts’ value framework relates to spe‐
cific types of administrative service delivery and show, in two case studies on the
identification and attainment of values in street level craftsmanship and in Public
Private Partnerships (PPPs), how values acquire meaning only in the specific con‐
text in which they are used, and they stress that value frameworks are useful only
when their universality is not overestimated. Remaining in the area of public val‐
ues, Zeger van der Wal also praises the pioneering work of Leo Huberts and its
importance for the 21st century mushrooming Public Value Perspective. Van der
Wal continues to list four avenues and types of research that are underrepresented
in his opinion and merit further scrutiny. Adam Masters explores the role of the
value of compassion in public values scholarship and unlocks compassion’s role as
private value in a public sphere. Ronald van Steden then makes the move from val‐
ues to virtues. He states that the absence of integrity violations does not necessarily
imply morally good behaviour. He goes on to stress the importance of intrinsic
normativity and makes a connection between virtues, normativity and public craftsmanship.

From Part V, *Bad Governance*, onwards we see chapters that draw inspiration from Huberts’ work and topics rather than directly engaging with his publications or with him as a scholar. In section E the dark sides of governance are treated. Emile Kolthoff looks at the phenomenon of ‘undermining’ of local and regional governance by criminal organizations. Stephan Berndsen studies cases of public organizations involved with fatal accidents and examines the question of whether we can speak of error or evil. Suzanne Piotrowsky and Marissa Van Ness tell us all about an incredible case of embezzlement in governance in Illinois, USA. Carel F.W. Peeters notes that studies of corruption often use network terminology, but rarely use tools stemming from network science and actively engages with this problem. His chapter is a call to arms to use the tools of network science more widely in administrative ethics.

The final Part VI is entitled *Relating Ethics to Societal Issues and Administrative Trends*. Geert Bouckaert states that in analysing the shifting realities of the public sector and its reforms, monitoring could follow a double logic of consequences and appropriateness. He develops both logics and then combines – and even meddles with – them. Christoph Demmke also looks at governance reforms, focusing on human resource (HR) systems. He finds that there is little research on the link between human resource management (HRM) and ethics and discusses the relationship between destandardization and delegation trends, ethical leadership, perceptions of organizational fairness and workplace behaviour. Ethical leadership is also the central focus of Karin Lasthuizen. She revisits a seminal article by Trevino and Brown and discusses five myths of ethical leadership. Frank Anechiarico and Lydia Segal focus on the relatively unexplored administrative mechanisms used by public and private organizations to ensure appropriate workplace conduct. They set out a conceptual framework for the ways in which ethics management systems develop, and they operate in different settings in governance organizations. The last chapter of this book is written by Alan Lawton. He takes us back to universities and a theme discussed above: the role of the modern scholar, especially the normative side. He asks whether, in the light of the unethical practices at universities, scholars, especially those with a passion for integrity, should do anything about them? Lawton ends by thanking Leo Huberts for the passion that he brought to his endeavours and the passion that he ignited in others to engage with the same issues, a passion communicated with civility and modesty and with respect for the views of others and that encouraged a community of scholars to flourish.

In summary, the diversity of the contributions in this book reflects the diverse influence of Leo Huberts. He played a crucial part in establishing and enlarging the field of administrative ethics, both through his publications and through his inspiring leadership, and prepared the ground for many research avenues and subfields.
for years to come. We are all curious about what role Huberts himself will continue
to play in this.

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