

# The barrage to a New Content of Work in the public sector

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## 2.1 Introduction

Even though working at the government or working at semi-governmental organisations may know a different logic compared to the private sector, also the public sector is facing a new working reality. The complex issues government agencies are dealing with, need to be aligned with political interests. These interests, rather than the content itself, often overtake the perspective on the particular issues. Also internal considerations and keeping track with the views from external stakeholders do not make the work easier. An organization as Philips may score with its slogan 'sense and simplicity', for a governmental agency, however, only the first part of the slogan applies. In the public sector, bureaucracy seriously slows down the working processes. Fortunately, governors still realise the need to organize the work in a different manner. The outside world demands the process to be speeded up and to be more efficient (Van der Kooij, 2006). Internally, pressure is kept high by young, ambitious knowledge workers, who are ready to leave the organization, when renewal and innovation is lacking. The public sector knows it needs to revive, but the process is slow and arduous. More and more often decisive and strong people decide to leave the public sector, because their ideas of working are not matching with their daily experiences. They initially were appealed by the interesting content of the work for the public good, but got entangled in rules, bureaucratic procedures and the monitoring of processes. People miss the opportunities to make own, unique contributions. The need for a modern government, which better fits the current societal needs, is recognized throughout the different governmental departments.

In this contribution we start discussing 'the New World of Work', which is very appealing to innovators within the government. Many top HR civil servants for example have visited Microsoft at the international airport Schiphol, or passed by the new head-office of the Rabobank. We are taking a critical perspective, as we believe in a new working style going beyond both fancy furniture at the office as well as the '*any time, any place*'-working attitude, as these elements are not changing the nature and content of the work. By changing the focus to the

content of the work and how networking may contribute to enrichment of knowledge, however, the nature of the work *will* change. For this we would like to coin the term ‘the New Content of Work’. We put these transitions in the perspective of Taylor and Fayol, two founding fathers of modern management in the start of 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this way, we would like to emphasize that many supposed innovations in the working environment during the last decenniums have been mainly cosmetic in nature, but that we at this moment are in the eve of a transformation in which working *content* and working *climate* will go hand in hand. ‘The New World of Work’, and in its extension ‘The New Content of Work’ are in transition to this point.

In this contribution we posit that the Dutch government needs to take a big hurdle to transform to The New Content of Work. We will discuss four paradoxes which illustrate well how within the government the recognition is present that change is needed, but at the same time it is hard to come to concrete actions. Rather than an accelerated transition, a stand-still is looking around the corner.

Several departments within the semi-government experiment with new working styles, including the New World of Work, different working styles, working in a networking fashion, and new models. We want to give the reader a view in some of the projects we lead during the last years in governmental agencies. The motivation is certainly present, but old routines appear persistent and difficult to change. The will is there, but the treacly old routines make that interventions are needed to force breakthroughs.

## **2.2. The New Content of Work**

After the introduction and euphoria about the New World of Work, it is already showing its first imperfections. The time has come to look beyond the fancy equipment of an (head) office, where everyone is being stimulated not to appear too often at the work place. Working can be any time, any place, and thus especially outside the office. Actually, many New World of Work initiatives have been received enthusiastically because they are foremost cutting costs for office space.

We are now ready for a new paradigm: the New Content of Work. The New Content of Work represents a new direction in which the most important themes are the content of the job and the manner of supervision. It is not only about “me”, but about “we”. It is about achieving results together by learning from each other and by working on continuous changing but meaningful issues. Time and place are still flexible, because that is what many people want. In the New Content of Work the focus is on working jointly and interdisciplinary. Working interdisciplinary also means working intergenerational. Meeting each other during working hours is useful, because this enhances informal learning. It is however not always needed to gather at a fixed place and time. The possibilities to work flexibly have increased substantially, at

for example places as 'Seats2Share', independent flex-places available on different places in the Netherlands (Cohen, 2011). Supervisors should not be waiting on the side, looking forcefully for controlling moments, but should fulfil an inspiring, coaching role. She or he is a professional and has knowledge on the *content* of the job. The focus on the content and joint results require that leaders make connections with other people and organizations in a networking way. There is no need for bureaucracy and shuffling off tasks and powers, it is about taking responsibility.

In the New Content of Work, organizations are networking organizations which are explicitly open for productive cross-sectional connections and knowledge relations, inside and outside the organization. Employees' functioning is judged by customer satisfaction and results. The employee is also responsible for his or her own path of development. This implies that the worker needs to show initiative and is willing to invest in knowledge enrichment, possibly also outside working hours. The company or organization creates a climate where there is sufficient room for personal development. No big HR-apartments, formal programs, or fixed MD-trajectories, but tailor-made programs. For further knowledge development, it is strongly stimulated to cooperate with colleagues from other companies. Hidden agendas are undesirable. Employee performance appraisal is also based on, next to the result of the work, personal commitment for knowledge development and knowledge diffusion towards others. Required is a direction which puts content, knowledge and networking in the spotlight, rather than an emphasis on working from home. The New Content of Work demands a more thoughtful strategy for work content and work relations (Zonneveld, 2008).

### **2.3 The imperfections of the New World of Work**

The New World of Work is currently being positioned as being the perfect solution, as people may work from home in a flexible manner and may organize their own time, in order to create a better work-life balance (De Pous & Van der Wielen, 2010). Less presence at the office, not being forced into traffic jams at fixed time slots and more responsibility. These are valid points that make sense. However, reality shows something different. The New World of Work already shows some imperfections (Effectory, 2010; Haets, 2009; Wietsma, 2010). This is related to the difficulties supervisors experience in leading from distance and the disappearing of safe bureaucratic structures, but also in the learning process to lead yourself as an employee. Self-employed freelancers already know that they need to keep in touch with other professionals, employees who now work at home in line with the New World of Work, often do not. Working at home may be lonely, and besides the family may not know how to deal with a home-working spouse or parent. Modern, high-tech means of communication enable home-workers to be 'in touch'. However, the informal learning and development requires interaction and 'high touches'.

Especially when issues being worked on are getting more complex, cooperation and fine-tuning become more important in comparison to routinely, repetitive work. It is the question whether in the discussion about the New World of Work, the changing content of the work has gotten sufficient attention.

It is the doubtful whether the New World of Work intrinsically changed the content and relations at work. A few dimensions, such as time and location, have changed, but the nature of the work seems to remain the same. Also, it is questionable whether the work-life balance always profits from the New World of Work (Donders, 2010; Eizema, 2010; Van Lookeren Campagne, 2010). Although the supervision may have changed, the amount of controlling mechanisms (on a distance) have not decreased compared to the old situation. Software-programmes enable managers to control employees also from a distance, thus, managers hardly see their employees but still check them. How inspiring is that? Employees are increasingly required to keep a detailed time registration of their activities, even more as before, as a consequence of the urge to keep control rather than creating space. In this way, the New World of Work is biting itself in the own tail.

## **2.4 Taylor, Fayol and the New Content of Work**

The classical Taylorism seems to still hold for, counter-intuitive, the New World of Work. Taylor (1911) early last century took the lead in the analytical approach of work, with his book *The principles of scientific management*. Measuring performance indicators was central to this approach, resulting in the rational approach of supervising and controlling people. Fayol (1916) nuanced this in his *Administration industrielle et générale*, by saying that sufficient room needs to be available for own initiatives of employees. By this he laid down the foundations for modern management. Currently, we are going to make a new leap forward, namely to the New Content of Work, where creating knowledge networks in and between organizations are getting increasingly important (Roobeek, 2006).

Also regarding innovation this Taylor-Fayol division is a valid one: in organizations we may distinguish *deliberate innovation* and *emerging innovation*. The first type of innovation is more based on the Taylorist' theory, where experts are consciously put together to force innovation and progress. This is based on the idea that innovations may be executed in a task-oriented way, and may be planned in advance. The second type of innovation is more in style of Fayol, where people by the presence of an open working climate, that is shaped through the interaction between employees and management, get room for new ideas and insights. This second type is less controlled, ideas may come up in unexpected combinations from people with

ideas, and in this way also leaves more room for unplanned innovations, the so-called serendipity (Roobeek, 2008a).

In a working climate that is shaped from a Fayol-perspective, own initiative and commitment to the content of the whole (of a department or organisation) is important. It requires people to be engaged with the direction the organization is going; employees do not only need to know what is the strategy, but to work on it actively themselves and to know the background. In a knowledge economy where it is no longer about executing of routines, but about real understanding of the underlying issues, a transition to the New Content of Work is most appropriate.

In the New Content of Work, the old, narrowly predefined job roles change to playing several roles at the same time in the same organization. Previous pre-outlined tasks change to working on underlying questions. This has the implication that the supervision needs to be fundamentally different. It needs to be based on trust in employees, because they know what should be the direction and will come with unique contributions which strengthen the results. Also the structure of organizations needs to change. In order to be able to solve the complex issues of our time, we will need more space to cooperate beyond the current structures, both within as well as between organizations. We call this *intercompany networking* (Roobeek, 2008b). Experience shows that by intercompany networking and intercompany labs, in a relatively short time room may be created for new combinations of people and insights, resulting in faster achievements. You may think about subjects around innovations, but also about security or sustainability. Fast exchanges, (virtual) cooperation in an associative way, and common business propositions are characterizing the New Content of Work. Island-thinking is over. Competition is good, cooperating in a networking fashion will make the work more substantive and interesting.

## **2.5 Comparing the “Old” World of Work, the New World of Work, and the New Content of Work**

In table 2.1 the “Old” World of Work, the New World of Work, and the New Content of Work are being compared on different dimensions, in order to get insight in the differences between the different styles and paradigm-shifts.

One of the biggest challenges of the coming years is to change the content of the work with different generations at the same time. The New World of Work is foremost a topic of generation X (born between 1970 and early eighties). This generation hoped to realize a better work-life balance. However, for both generation Y (born around 1985 and busy looking for a place at the labour market) and for the older generations, working at home is not the most

important issue. For these generations it is attractive to meet each other physically, because in this way they may not only work with each other but also learn from each other. The intergenerational aspect brings a different outlook to the New World of Work. Evidently, flexibility and working on diverse locations stay of great importance. However, when working at home almost becomes compulsive and employees are forced to work at a flex-place at the client's office, this is the wrong direction. This is not anymore about the changing content of the job, but says more about the company's urge to economize. In practice, there is an increasing necessity for a stimulating, intergenerational working climate. This is especially the case in our current aging society, in which elderly are asked to retire later, while at the same time they get increasingly isolated from young people and new knowledge.

*Table 2.1 The Old World of Work, the New World of Work, and the New Content of Work*

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>The Old World of Work</b>	<b>The New World of Work</b>	<b>The New Content of Work</b>
<b>Location</b>	office	anywhere	anywhere
<b>Time</b>	fixed (9.00-17.00)	any time	any time
<b>Task</b>	simple and predefined	complex, but still predefined (Taylor)	complex, own interpretation on how to perform the task
<b>Performance appraisal mechanism</b>	process and registration of hours	palette of indicators	result and customer satisfaction
<b>Supervision</b>	hierarchical layers, manager(s) on location; bureaucracy	several control mechanisms in ICT-systems	coaching and personal interaction based on knowledge
<b>System</b>	physical	virtual	sustainable ICT
<b>Office</b>	small, closed workplaces, fixed working place	flexible workspaces for tasks, supplemented with creative office furniture	'office spaces' as meeting places and cooperation; may also take place in 'rough' areas.
<b>Stereotypes</b>	babyboomers	generation X	intergenerational
<b>Culture</b>	"me"-culture	bonus-culture	"we"-culture
<b>Structure</b>	closed	intra-organizational	inter-organizational

## **2.6 The Government has a large barrage to overcome**

The government is often labeled as a bureaucracy, where hierarchy is dominating and efficiency is lacking. The internal political game (Minister, alderman, council) seems to be of greater importance than serving the citizens and companies. Both businesses and individual civilians, but also government officials themselves, have been complaining for ages about the regulatory burden and endless checks, which are very time-consuming. Not only in the government, but

also in the semi-government the bureaucracy has a strong presence. For instance, former mayor of Amsterdam Job Cohen complained in 2009 about the fact that about half of the municipal subsidies are spent on administration costs (Cohen, 2009). The same is being heard elsewhere, for police chiefs are complaining about the huge amounts of administration for police officers. Also in healthcare, doctors and nurses feel forced to spend more time on bureaucratic checks instead of professional care for patients. Furthermore, concerning education, teachers spend less and less time in front of the class while they spend increasingly more 'class-hours' on keeping records. Thus, it may be said that bureaucracy is one of the greatest frustrations of the public sector (Jansen, 2009). In a recent research by ADV Market Research, commissioned by Abvakabo FNV, it shows that that eight out of ten officials find bureaucracy the most negative aspect about working for the government (Abvakabo FNV, 2010). According to those 850+ respondents, the primary reasons for the bureaucracy are the complicated working procedures and protocols. The constant need for reporting to (higher-placed) others is an important cause of this bureaucracy, according to four out of ten officials. It also appeared from the research that civil servants think that bureaucracy can be tackled by simplifying procedures. Furthermore, the civil servants need to get more freedom and trust to enable them to do their jobs. 43% of the respondents think that in this way the work can be done more efficiently, with fewer civil servants.

## **2.7 Paradoxes at the government**

Bureaucracy is related to the urge to measure and control, which always signalizes distrust towards the other. Whether measuring is actually meaningful is mostly not even a topic of discussion. Numbers need to be generated, in order to enable 'politics' to supervise and direct. The money needed for these constant measurements cannot be spent anymore on innovation or improvement. In the end, expertise deteriorates and target groups are not served appropriately. It seems as if the concept of professional workers is unknown in the working style of the government. Professionals want to apply their knowledge, specific expertise, and experiences to the content of their work. They want more than working on predefined tasks according to fixed routines and protocols, to subsequently report in pre-set formats. The bureaucratic way of working is frustrating everybody: ranging from professionals, civil servants and policemen to teachers and nurses.

At the government, several paradoxes may be distinguished:

- Societal issues are becoming increasingly complex and require more interdisciplinarity and working in a networking fashion. However, in practice fragmentation increases in the work of governmental agencies, as a result of the bureaucratic regulatory burden.
- The government knows a lot of ‘window seaters’, referring to ‘lazy’ civil servants who are not achieving anything, but rather ‘look out the window’. However, at the same time it is claimed that the work cannot be done more efficiently, according to the report of Interior Affairs in 2006. of Binnenlands Bestuur [interior governance] from 2006. From the 1500 civil servants (policy offers and managers) who participated in this research it appeared that half of them is familiar with the phenomenon of ‘window seaters’ and 40% knows someone one in his or her direct working environment. Still, 80% of the civil servants believe it to be impossible to work more efficiently with less people (de Volkskrant, 2006).
- The government is eager to cut costs but the labour costs remain high. Next to ‘window seaters’ there is the problem of ‘ceiling stickers’. This refers to the fact that there are relatively many civil servants which are at age and/or are at their maximum salary, and show no initiative to change jobs. This is especially the case in the provincial areas. In for example the provinces of Gelderland and Overijssel (two provinces in the East of the Netherlands) we have at least 70% so-called ‘ceiling stickers’. This is also the case for the police and the education sector. As a consequence, these governmental agencies are relatively expensive and less productive (Bouwman, 2009).

The government does not have problems to *attract* recent graduates and ‘young professionals’ for management traineeships. However, the outflow of young people is high and the government has difficulties to *bind* and fascinate young people. It is expected that despite the need for new knowledge and networking skills of the younger generations, the number of young people (for the government that is below 35 years old) will be less than 15%, with exception of the Ministry of Defence and scientists in research institutions (Ministry of Interior Affairs, 2009). Klaas de Vries, former civil servant, former minister, former chairman of the Social Economic Council, former governor, and now senator, says in an interview that the government is not a good employer (Bouwman, 2007). He posits that the government does not like its people and is therefore unable to create civil servants with heart for the public sector. He believes the government regards civil servants as ‘costly’, without considering the question how talent may be optimally used. He illustrates:

*“As a minister I also heard this experience from trainees. They have high expectations at the start. They also have positive experiences in their first period as trainee, when they are able to experience working at different places within the government. However, when you meet them a few years later, it seems all their inspiration has disappeared. Then they say, ‘yes I*



have adapted and work on my dossiers'. People are not sufficiently engaged with their work" [Trans. from Dutch].

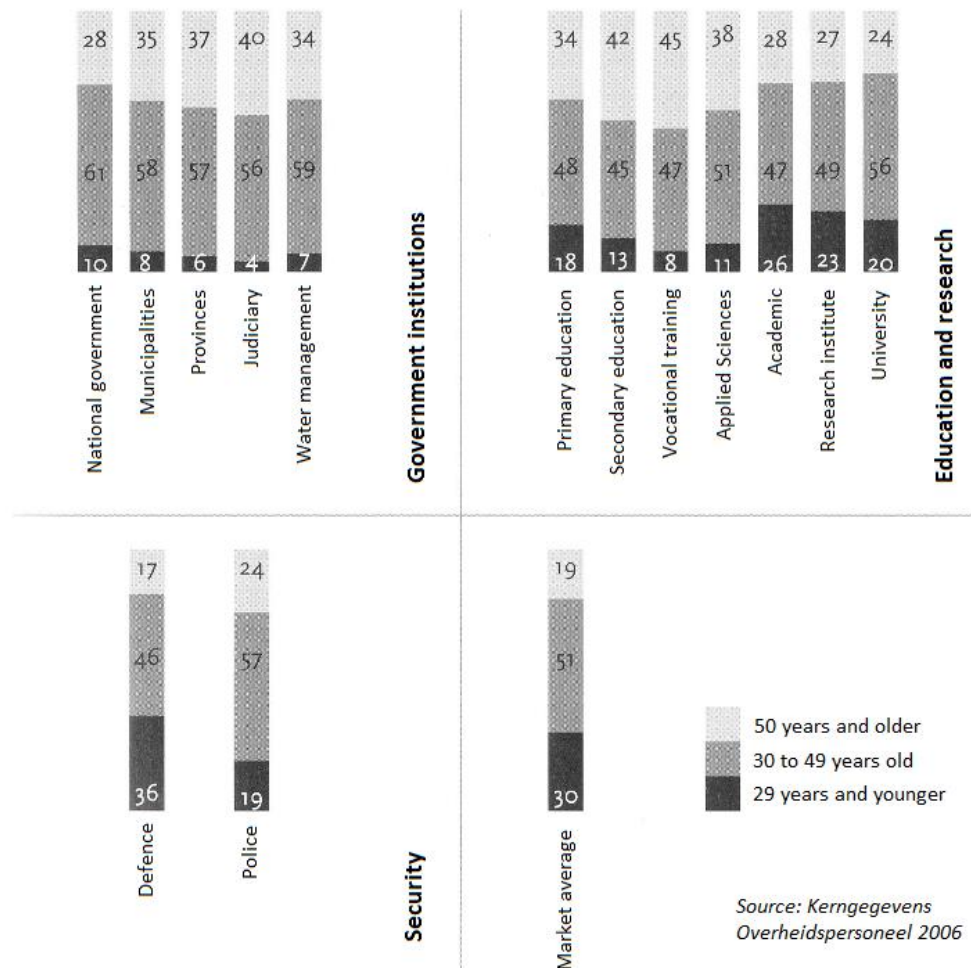


Figure 2.1. People employed per age group (in percentages)

De Vries believes that supervisors do not consider *the content* of their employees' work sufficiently. The managers do not wonder whether their employees like their job and if they get sufficient room to show their true qualities. Mariëlle van den Berg conducted research about engagement and motivation of generation Y at the government, where she posed the question how it may be avoided that civil servants from generation Y become so-called 'window seaters' (Van den Berg, 2009). Young civil servants are result-oriented and do not like formal, hierarchical procedures. They want to be recognized for their qualities (Pomp, 2008). The previous generations civil servants massively adapted to the hierarchical model with bureaucratic management. On the basis of the theory from the research, it is expected that the younger generation Y (now twenty to thirty years old) will be motivated and engaged by the use of specific HRM-instruments, such as variable financial rewards, flexibility, networking, working on a project-basis, optimal usage of ICT tools and setting clear goals. Generation Y also shows a

higher appreciation on task variety, career support, autonomy, networking, and participative management compared to older generations. The (national) government thus knows what it should do to enthusiasm and bind young, motivated, and engaged civil servants.

## **2.8 Government endeavours for reformation**

Certainly, it is not only doom and gloom at the government. On the contrary, on all levels of government there have been initiatives to innovate and renew the government sector. For example, a special government commissioner is appointed to implement new business models and new working methods. A Public Services Renewal Program is implemented by the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations. Leading professors have taught 'inspiration classes' for large groups of HR-managers and employees of the government services. Similar projects have started within other levels of the ministry, the municipality, the provincial governments, the health sector, the education sector, and the police (Roobeek & Van der Helm, 2009).

The government attempts to present itself more and more as a 'normal' company, with a modern way of working. For companies it may be evident to operate in a networking manner and to be client-oriented, but for government institutions this way of working has only recently gained attention. This is being demonstrated by vacancy texts from the year 2010: for example, for a ICT researcher the requirements are formulated as 'being able to look beyond your own field of expertise' and 'being able to work in multidisciplinary teams'. The position gives the opportunity to work in flexible hours with a healthy work-life balance. Furthermore the suitable candidate should be 'sensitive to its environment, a good networker and team worker'.

In another vacancy, for service employees in the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, one of the requirements is that the potential employee should be able to deliver good and timely services to customers. Next to having technical knowledge, it is expected that they are decisive, with strong communication and managerial skills, and result-oriented. The same organization asks its business consultants to take initiative and to motivate their employees. Options to take parental leave are explicitly mentioned in the vacancy, as is the availability of study facilities.

## **2.9 Transitions at the government take more time**

The public sector is organized differently compared to the private sector and therefore knows a different structure and organizational culture. The public sector is generally organized strongly compartmentalized. This makes it difficult to serve a greater (national) societal interest, or to address important issues, such as security, the environment, or health care, effectively. To achieve this, several departments need to cooperate and sometimes even leave the control to another party. Working inter-departmental or inter-organizational has always been difficult, and

until now has been foremost an activity on paper and in meetings, with little concrete output. It has been difficult for politics to 'score' when topics are beyond the area of *one* minister (representative from municipality or province, etcetera). Last years, this started to change, because it is not anymore accepted to limit subjects to only one arbitrary department or political area.

In the public sector there is a strong culture of 'unknown, unloved': the *not invented here*-syndrome (Grotenhuis, 2006). You may actually find this in many private companies as well. It comes down to people not being open for cooperation or alternative ideas. Accepting that good ideas come from elsewhere is natural in working in a networking atmosphere. With this working attitude, you explicitly approach others to ask for cooperation. An average civil servant may feel like a '*knowledge worker*', but he or she is usually certainly not a '*knowledge networker*'. For this, different skills are needed, which only recently has been made explicit in HR policies. The practice of change is recalcitrant. Being clear about the difficulties, challenges and the time consumption of the process towards change is essential. A different way of working is such a radical change as it touches upon the content of the work, structure, culture and working climate. This new manner of working starts with the level of the (top)management, with exemplary behavior. Subsequently, room is given to experiment, to the courage of working differently. This involves both the way of working inside the government institutions as well as the acting of government outwards. It is becoming increasingly important for the government to interact with the private sector, and with social and knowledge institutions. If there is a common, societal goal, for example electric transport, sustainable energy, e-learning environments or intelligent route-information, then the government may act as a *launching customer* by working in a networking way with different parties.

In companies *change agents* are often being deployed to give impulses to change. While at the government executives are attracted from outside for HR-policies to head to new directions. However, also restructuring the reward structure can stimulate different behaviors. More differentiation and breaking through the system of seniority will give more incentives to change. We are certainly not pleading for a bonus culture, but we do find it important to make a difference between those who are ready to stick their necks out to stimulate change and those who are just 'counting their time' until they may return home, instead of 'making their time count'. The change agents offer, together with or supported by management, examples of these different ways of working.

## **2.10 Examples of the new content of work at the government**

The New Content of Work is firstly based on working differently in the own organization, secondly on working differently between people and departments within the own organization, and thirdly on cooperating differently with third parties to come to a better content of the work and a smoother execution of the job. In action research-projects that we have set up in several layers of the governmental institutions, it appears again and again that top officials who want to give rise to the challenge of innovating the (national) government are certainly present. We will give a few examples below.

### *Province of Groningen*

The province of Groningen (situated in the North of the Netherlands) started a few years ago with a networking trajectory to enhance knowledge flows, stimulate diversity, and promote a higher mobility of current civil servants. Several networking-teams were set up around strategic themes. The participants of the networking teams came from diverse departments of the province. The participants were explicitly selected on diversity, age and knowledge backgrounds, in order to achieve an interesting mix of people. Around the theme 'labor market' teams have been actively working with external agents, such as the Rabobank, the Chamber of Commerce, consultancies, local professional schools, and the University of Groningen. Moreover, a trajectory has been developed for active pupils, students, starters, re-starters and established entrepreneurs, enabling and stimulating them to come up with ideas and initiatives for stimulating the economy and the labor market in the Northern Netherlands, and also to keep the young professionals for the North to prevent brain-drain to the attractive bigger cities in the West. Rather than the provincial government just granting subsidies, the Rabobank has been asked to provide micro-credits for business plans. By doing this, the province started both to work differently internally and received new energy from external parties that was needed for the issue of the labor market.

In this way the trajectory moved from granting subsidies to actual networking entrepreneurship. The efforts made by a small group of inspiring, leading civil servants played a decisive factor for the success of this experiment. This group was convinced that, in order to be an excellent employer for young people in the coming years, not only a different business model was needed in the province, but also another profile. Members of this group were not in an easy position, as they were a minority that endeavors renewal in the form of internal and external networking, in an organization that strongly hangs on its traditional way of working. We also really witnessed the opposition of other top civil servants. It takes courage and a strong personality of leaders with a vision to counter these hindering forces. But it also gives energy. This energy for a great part ended up outside the province of Groningen, as some of the group

members continued their work elsewhere. It was however remarkable that all stayed active working for the public cause and kept applying the ideas of the New Content of Work.

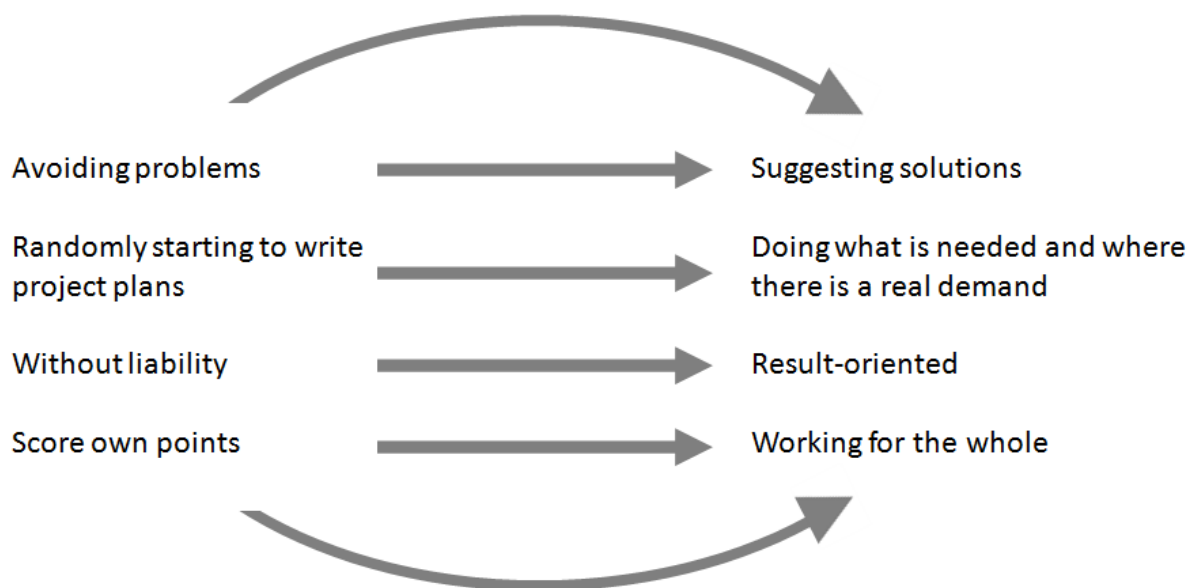


Figure 2.2 In transition to the New Content of Work

### *National government*

Another example concerns the national government, in which we set up a networking trajectory for a great section of the ministry for Infrastructure and Environment (Roobeek, 2009a). Interesting about this trajectory is that in this case an older top civil servant was the inspirer. He stayed, also after his farewell as civil servant, a sound board for young, ambitious, entrepreneurial civil servants. An excellent example of intergenerational cooperation. The assignment was to screen some big infrastructural projects on internal and external cooperation with the executing private partners. How good were the relations between these partners? And if the projects were delayed in execution, why was this the case? By observing several teams of civil servants of diverse projects we could quickly see differences and similarities.

In one of the teams it appeared that people worked in a routinely way, procedural and according to fixed prescriptions. No fixed working space was available, people came from diverse services from several places in the country and the team hardly saw each other, except on agreed meetings. There was a lot of procrastination and delay, especially caused by internal, often futile matters, such as the absence of a secretary that kept an agenda and could serve as a contact person for the team. However, the project *did* entail an infrastructural project on one of the busiest roads of the Netherlands. The team seemed not aware of the urgency to do something about the continuing daily traffic jams, the costs this brings to citizens and companies, and the negative ecological effects. We intervened when we saw that the energy of

the team was almost gone and the team became smaller and smaller as a result of civil servants that decided to quite halfway the project. The internal supervisor became increasingly critical and the team did not even get opportunity to discuss the problems with colleagues.

With the team-members that were left, we had an discussion about the importance and the uniqueness of the infrastructural project. From this discussion it appeared that the project was extremely complex, because to heighten a bridge with 1,5 meters while half the Netherlands remains to daily pass the bridge is a challenge, to say the least. The bridge itself was an example of Dutch architecture and innovation. Even though the cooperation with the surrounding municipalities was not without problems, a unique bridge for cyclists was realized. Thus, taken everything together there was a wonderful success story that through internal fiddling in the departments had disappeared to the background.

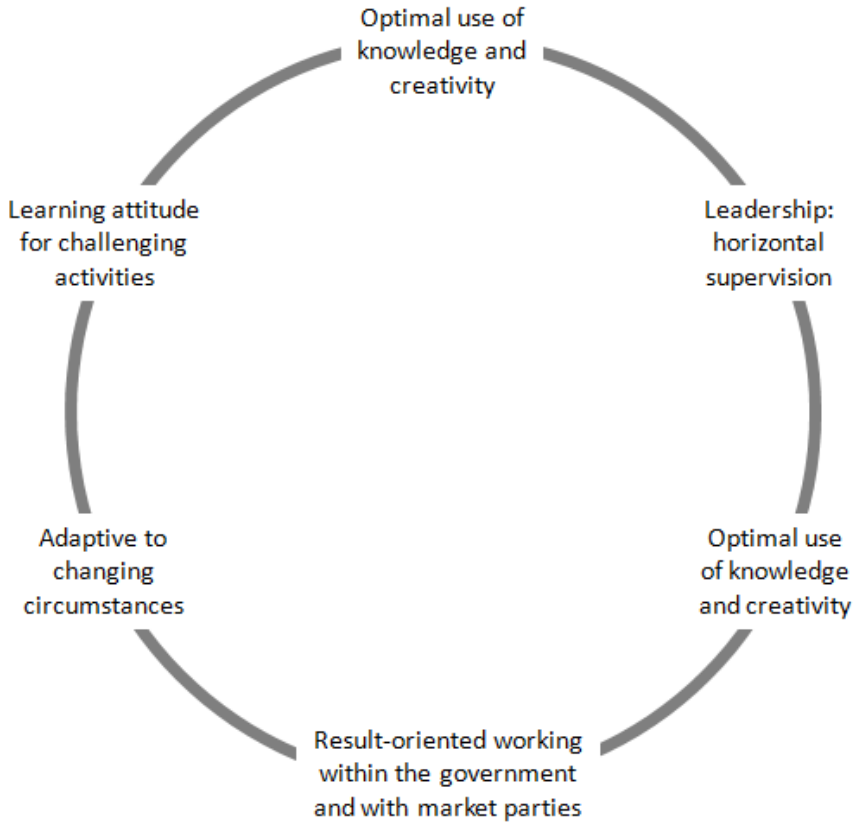


Figure 2.3 Core aspects of working in a networking manner as a base for 'The New Content of Work'.

Subsequently we made a film scenario with the team and a small film crew of two people, with substantive support of MeetingMoreMinds. The result was a seven-minute film in which an highly engaged and knowledgeable civil servant, and besides a highly involved team member, held interviews with all external parties, the builders, the architects, the municipal and provincial civil servants, the top of the ministry, the residents, the sailors, et cetera. The team

asked very humble just to speak for 10 minutes during an official meeting where they as 'troublemakers' were not welcome anymore. In cooperation with the top of the service they still managed and only showed the short film to the audience. Everyone was caught by the appealing content, the innovations, the complexity, and the fact that the crucial infrastructural project eventually, with delay, had made a restart. The negative image was gone. New civil servants wanted to participate in the project.

The learning point was that the motivation came back in the team by going to the essence of the project, and by using the energy coming in from the executors and clients. If they continued moping internally, then this project would have resulted in a failure, costing millions of euros.

### *A large sluice complex*

Another team we observed was dealing with a theme which was at least as complicated and substantial, namely the renovation of a big sluice complex. The team was diversely composed and met on a weekly basis, but they also saw each other often in-between, as their (flex) work places were often in the same building in Utrecht. The team was characterized by a very good atmosphere, high collegiality, and internal exchange. Next to the project leader, there was an informal (female) leader who made sure that all relationships got substantial input, that everyone kept to his/her agreements made with external partners, and that they stayed in a professional, but open relationship with the contractors.

Clearly, in this case the problem was not in the team functioning, but was due to the endless obligated checks on quality, technical parts, price, et cetera. While the assignment was outsourced, there was a large group of hierarchically higher-placed civil servants (who most likely would have showed the same behaviour internally), who delayed the energetic and enthusiastic team by requesting unwelcome, additional requirements. By doing this, they created an unworkable situation, which seemed to get worse when the skilled project leader left for a job in the private sector. What to do? The senior civil servants of the unit directly wanted to place an interim project leader, but we intervened and suggested the excellent functioning team would make a profile of a network-leader, under which this team could develop itself further. So it happened that after two sessions a profile of a desirable network-leader was defined and the work plan was screened. Also, it was agreed to work in couples on the different sections, so that knowledge may be exchanged more efficiently and the dependence on each other would be diminished. In case of illness, holidays or leave, the team would be able to continuously function on a high level. Moreover, they chose a new temporary project leader from inside the team. Together with the top of the service, it was agreed that a young management talent would serve as a daily contact-person, to sustain, and even strengthen, the horizontal way of working.

The beauty of this example is that it is about an excellent networking team which was working in a very self-directing and autonomous way. The team started to act more assertively to nosy colleague civil servants, in such a way that entrepreneurial acting to the executors could continue and the delay stayed limited. The top of the service kept looking for a project leader with a networking profile, but in fact this leader was not so much needed anymore. When a suitable leader was found in the end, the added value was little. This, because the networking team could direct itself, partly through the role of informal leaders, who closely monitored the knowledge, the means and the relationships, without losing sight on the substantive details of the project. Learning point is that professionals within the government certainly *are* able to get room for substantively driven, complex projects.

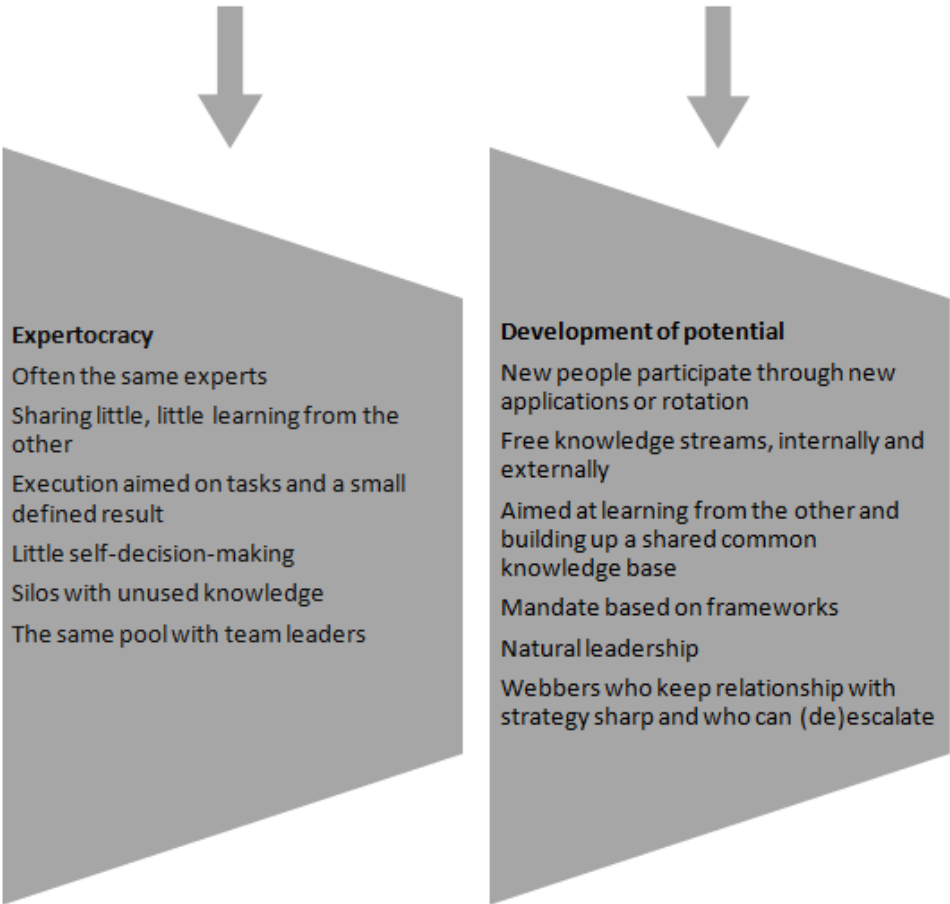


Figure 2.4 Project-teams with only experts versus networking teams with potential

**2.11 Working with new cooperation-models**

The New Content of Work partly replaces old patterns and ways of working. Slowly more room is created for a different logic which better fits the current time. We need to look for other ways of working and cooperation, and for models matching this reality. We cannot propose a uniform



solution. Dependent on the context different models may be useful. We doubt to fully speak about business models, as the functioning of (semi)government cannot be equated to that of businesses.

Osterwalder and Pigneur define a business model as 'the basic idea of how an organisation creates, delivers and maintains value', (Van den Berg, 2009, p. 3). This description leaves room for the creation of value by the government. The authors give diverse commercial examples of (patterns of) new business models, such as those of Apple or Skype as new media companies, but also from the publishing industry, or from more classic companies such as Procter & Gamble and GlaxoSmithKline. For example, Apple could create a powerful platform with iPhone, where others could deliver their services by delivering apps (applications). Since 10 July 2008 the platform is known as the 'app store', where users may buy an app for a small amount of money. To illustrate this success: early 2011 the 10 billionth app was sold.

The government is not comparable with Apple. But also for the government there is the task and the opportunity to experiment with new models, as well as stimulating these new models outside the government. In line with the definition of Osterwalder and Pigneur, for the government it is about the adding, delivering and maintaining value for the economy and the society. The government may do this by facilitating, directing, and especially by stimulating cooperation both internally as well as with parties outside the government. This requires flexibility and adaptability in different contexts. Sometimes it is needed to release control or to explicitly not wanting to be the one in control. Control may block the process, while it is essential to give room to renewal and experiments which are executed by external parties.

By changing towards an initiating and subsequently facilitating role, also different cooperation-models are required. For the government, we can think of working with other ways of financing, co-creation or to put the commissioning at others and to offer only (financial) support. The municipality Zaanstad (situated close to Amsterdam) booked progress with working in a networking manner on the policies around sustainability. Many activities, from the refurbishing of business terrains to the creation of more sustainable neighbourhoods, could be realized without full financial support of the municipality. It was not a simple process, but eventually stakeholders realized that co-financing also creates added value for them (Roobeek, 2009b). Concerning innovation, the current Dutch government's perspective is to grant less subsidies, but more alternative instruments, such as guarantee loans and revolving funds. The government may also act as a *launching customer* to stimulate big-scale innovation projects. On the issue of sustainable energy in both the built environment as well as in the energy-intensive sectors, the Netherlands could come again on (European) track by diminishing the regulatory burden and by facilitating finance on the long term, for example through housing corporations, pension funds, and banks.

Working in a networking manner directly connects to the underlying ideas of open innovation (Chesbrough, 2003). Together you can realise more than on your own. This is true for the government, but also for other public services. It is necessary to look and act beyond the own departmental boundaries and outside the own organisation. Networking is 'hot', fragmentation is 'not'. These type of teams usually have an interdisciplinary and inter-organizational character. They know a high degree of decisiveness and own responsibility, and therefore are attractive for people to work in. Form and content go together.

The government may stimulate these new ways of working by (helping to) setting up projects where will be experimented with new (business) models or other ways of working. In this reign, the ICT-Innovation platform Creative Industry (IIP/Create) came to being in 2007, a national ecosystem on the intersection of ICT and creative industry. It exists of the SMEs, large companies, the knowledge institutions, and cultural organizations. IIP/Create has the mission to stimulate societal and economical innovations on the issues of creativity, entrepreneurship, and technology ([www.iipcreate.com](http://www.iipcreate.com)). This platform experiments with other cooperation-formats by bringing together interests of diverse local and regional parties on a national level. In this way, also a representation abroad has been realized and fragmentation is being countered. IIP/Create looks at issues around intellectual property, new business-models and *living labs*. These living labs are test- and development environments, where is being worked on new products, or services in a real life-context. Think of a hospital, airport or shopping mall. By moving beyond the classical research laboratories, learning is made possible, and knowledge may be applied to real-life contexts where users of the new products or services know what is needed. IICP/Create is based on a cooperation of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation. These ministries created a joint subsidy to stimulate the creative industry: the Creative Challenge Call ([www.cultuureconomie.nl](http://www.cultuureconomie.nl)).

An example of an intensive cooperation between the department of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, the Ministry of Defence, and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations is on the field of brain research. In 2009, the National Initiative Brains and Cognition was founded, which is now leading in the Netherlands ([www.hersenenecognitie.nl](http://www.hersenenecognitie.nl)). Fundamental and applied research in a societal context are central to come to innovation. Moreover, they look actively to valorization extending current applied research. By cooperating on the national level and developing a common vision, more cooperation and therewith more synergy will be realized. A government which acts in an entrepreneurial fashion, and also expects and requests this entrepreneurship from others, is crucial in this process.

From our professional practices, we could give many more examples from working differently at the national government, the provinces, the municipalities, the police, health care,

and education. This proves that more than before, progressive civil servants stood up and took initiatives to start working differently during the last years. In these projects core aspects of the New Content of Work, such as getting more autonomy and working at home, have been perceived as natural. Much more important than working 'any time at any place', is the passion for the content of complex issues in a public-private setting, and how you can make a positive change. Such a step will lead to an efficient and competent government which commands respect about the open way in which people are cooperating with each other. The New Content of Work is for the government as a whole still an enormous hurdle to take, but there are more and more good examples of working differently. For a government that needs to make an effort to offer young people with a professional attitude challenges instead of bureaucratic controls, is the step to The Other Content of Work an urgent one.

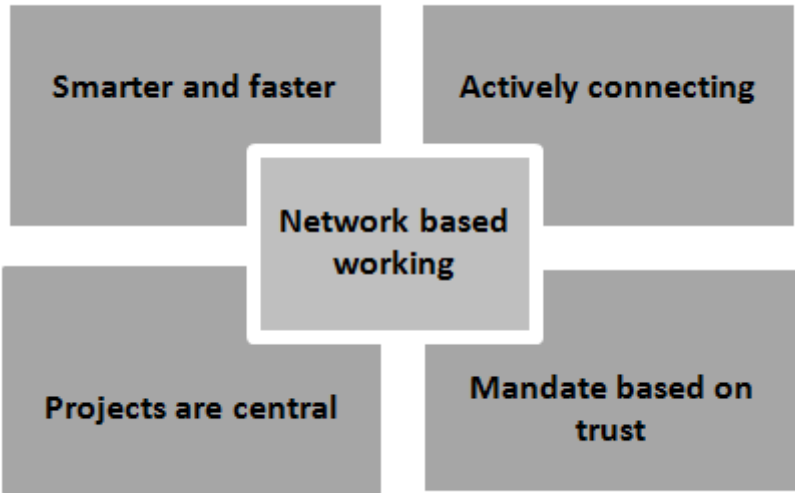


Figure 2.5 Working in a networking fashion

### 2.12 Conclusions

A speedboat is more maneuverable than a tanker. The government, and government-related institutions, are more like a tanker which slowly heads into a different direction. However, more speed is needed, as more complex issues need more courage and decisiveness in the execution. The government does not need to do everything on its own anymore. That offers room for cooperation with other parties that bring new qualities and financial means. Even when the government would become a super networking organization, it still needs to speed up the process to the New Content of Work. Working needs to become different until the smallest veins. Bureaucracy and over-regulation is already for years seen as detrimental, however still very persistent. The call for cooperation is loud for years, but working differently, in a networking manner, requires a substantial culture change and a totally different way of supervision. The

hierarchy and layers of control are delaying the process and cost a lot of money. We see the speedboats of the private sector, with young people on the wheel, overtaking the tankers of the public sector. The government cannot afford it anymore to stay on a low speed. For a young generation which grew up with internet and social media, it is unexplainable why procedures and routines far from the previous century still need to be in place. Even worse, these young people start to avoid governmental institutions as potential employers.

In this contribution we indicated that especially the more complex issues which are central at governmental institutions, make the transition to the New Content of Work necessary. In the recent years there have been different types of experiments at different places, from the national government until the municipal level and from police to health care institutions. The government in all its appearances needs to continue with these experiments. A *one size fits all*-approach is not appropriate, working decentralized with diverse approaches will generate more enthusiasm than a centralized approach. Dare to be innovative, release control and learn from organizations where you cooperate with. Make use of new models. Do not always be in the supervising role, but facilitate more and appreciate changes which make working at the government more interesting for smart people. In a bureaucracy there are few leaders, but a lot of 'stacked' followers. More room for leadership within teams, on departments and at the top is necessary to experience new role models. This will require another recruitment policy at governmental institutions. At this moment the advertisements seem promising, but as long as the working climate and the content of the work will not substantially change, the transition will still take a long time. The need to change to the New Content of Work is clear. The bright spots we indicated may grow to beacons for innovation.

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