

learning behind the frontline of public service

Leren achter de frontlinie
van de publieke dienstverlening
(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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*To the men and women working in public service
To the memory of Jim Bruining*

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This project has been a long quest. I see it as one of the important stages in a process of life long learning. Finally this stage has come to an end. But the journey goes on!

Eindhoven, November 2005

Preface: Not a novel

The stories told in the following pages don't make a novel. They are a report - a novel-report. This novel-report is the result of a case study concerning learning, knowledge production and innovation within a Dutch regional police force. The stories in Part I represent my recordings of this case study in nine narratives. Preceded by a prologue and closed with an epilogue.

I have kept the case anonymous because I presume, based on my experience in public service companies, that, although my observations are unique, they are also commonplace. I do not want to burden my representation of the case with the identification of the regional police force I studied and vice versa.

In part II, after an Interlude, I will clarify my reasons for this study in chapter 2. It is a study that I - as a former frontline worker and Human Resource Development professional - carried out because I want to gain a better understanding of learning, knowledge production and innovation by frontline workers. In this chapter I work out my initial research question: "What can be done to develop learning practices of frontline workers?" And I will describe my critique regarding the dominant case study approach in the Dutch Human Resource Development community.

In chapter 3, I will provide an account for my methodological approach. I will also elaborate on my ethnographic and auto-ethnographic approach. Furthermore, I will discuss the meaning of the narrative method I used and the multi perspective turn I took. I'm also going to clarify the way the case stories in my novel-report were written.

In chapter 4, I will return reflexively to the novel-report.

In chapter 5, I will close this text. I will turn back on my initial research question and I will address the reader for the last time, reflecting on the meaning of this study for myself, for the reader and for the understanding of learning, knowledge production and innovation by frontline workers.

Part I

1. Prologue

It is long before dawn. The wind rumbles against the windows of our house. I am at ease. All is sleeping. The deep unbroken sleep that comes before daybreak. Nevertheless, I get up and go to my desk. I can't sleep. My lamp throws a soft light on the keyboard. The storm must have silenced my neighbour's rooster, that crows every morning before sunrise. As the gale dies down, I hear the screeching tyres and the howling motor of the paper-boy's scooter. It shatters the tranquility. What a terrible cry to attack. Once I listened to it unmoved. My daughter is sleeping. Let her sleep. The morning will come when she too, unable to sleep, will get up. A pitch-black morning, when this project about learning, innovation and change shall be forgotten¹. Softly the fan of the computer hums. I sit down, looking at the shining whiteness of my screen. Grappling with my thoughts how to write my report about a police project.

From the start, I want to tell the readers how it all began. That's the first thought that urges itself upon me. I let them know why I was tempted to set out on a quest to write a dissertation. I spin out the story about the persons, the ideas and the experiences that lured me into this research project. I can't tell the case stories without revealing myself. I became part of the story. Although I still feel comfortable with my decision to write myself into the story, I am wondering if second thoughts might cross my mind. Do I have the guts to reveal part of my own personal history? I question myself. Am I prepared to portray myself, with many of my uncertainties, my experiences and my ambitions? I ask for my part. Minutes go by, but no second thoughts seem to bother me. Because I'm part of the story, I'm thinking, I have to have this autobiographical bit first before I present the conclusions I made as an HRD professionalⁱ. In the second chapter, *The Watchman I*, I want to tell my own story as a researcher, wanting to research a work-related learning project in the frontline of public service.

In the months before I had decided to write my novel-report analogous to the inspiring short story *Yabu no naka*². This jewel was written by the famous Japanese novelist Ryunosuke Akutagawa. *Yabu no naka*, in English translated to *In a Grove*³, reveals the shifting views of the same event through different witnesses. It is written from the perspectives of seven different people about a crime allegedly committed by a robber, Tajomaru. The story's only concrete facts are that a man was found dead in a grove of trees with a single sword

ⁱ HRD is an acronym for *Human Resource Development*. In general HRD professionals are concerned with the learning and development of individual employees, teams and other communities, and organisations as a whole. HRD is usually intended to create a certain added value for organisations, teams and individuals.

wound to his chest. Akutagawa explores the different angles of the story from the perspectives of the woodcutter who discovered the body, a Buddhist priest who encountered the slain man just before his death, a policeman who arrested Tajomaru, the mother of the dead man's wife, Tajomaru himself, the dead man's wife, and finally, the dead man himself, through a psychic medium. Each character adds different facts to the story, sometimes conflicting each others' statements, and sometimes corroborating other witnesses' accounts. The protagonists undermine our confidence in distinguishing between subjective and objective, truth and fiction. Akutagawa doesn't reveal a true story. Through his story, he points out that there is no ultimate truth of reality, or a single conclusive correct answer. Perception is reality, and to each of the characters in the story, their perceptions of the events that took place, and their accounts thereof, are their own inherent realities. It also becomes clear that the different accounts come not only from differences in perceptions, but also in differences in how each person would like the story to be remembered, both for their own honour, and the honour of their loved ones. Using an intricate web of deceit and misinformation Akutagawa causes his readers to step back from the individual narratives and examine the story as a whole and draw their own conclusion as to what the actual chain of events was⁴.

I want the readers to know how it began for the Moorland Regional Police Force, for the coppers and for their facilitators. I want to describe the development and the decline of the FIT Police projectⁱⁱ, an innovation project within a regional police force. I think about all the conversations I had with Deirdre, one of the project leaders. In the third chapter, 'Deirdre', the project leader tells about the background, important events and the evaluation of the project.

Earlier I decided that I was going to write different stories about the project and I thought to wrap these stories around key persons. I want to portray one of the major characters first. A dramatic figure. A chap who left his mark, on the policemen involved and on me. The fourth chapter is 'Alex'. In this chapter, the project manager tells his story about the rise and fall of the project.

In the fifth chapter, The Wachtman II, I will describe some more of the observations I made of activities in the FIT Police project, to give an impression of the different activities that were undertaken.

I set out this research project wanting to study learning in the workplace in public service. So the next thing I want to do is focus on the frontline workers

ⁱⁱ FIT is an acronym for *Forward Innovation Team*

and report how the police employees materialised the innovation project in the Moorland Regional Police Force. Their stories form the core. They are the frontliners learning to work on breakthroughs. The sixth chapter is entitled 'Bert, George, Felix and the others'. In this chapter some of the participants in the project tell about their experiences.

The project leaders, the assistants to the project manager and those in charge of the facilitation of the learning project, played an important role. I think about the support unit that the FIT Police project had at its disposal. A very feminine crew. Apart from two project leaders, several secretaries, communication advisors and students on workplace - with one exception - they were all female. Their group became known as *Alex's Harem*. I want to dedicate the next chapter to their leading lady. The seventh chapter is Claire, in which the front woman of the 'Harem', tells her story about the FIT Police project.

I can't do without highlighting a central member of the innovation project. There has to be a chapter about another principal character. Bob was one of those key figures and one of my main informants. Many involved in the project think of Bob Gabriel as Mister FIT Police. They nicknamed him 'Bob, the builder'. The eighth chapter is 'Bob'. One of the pioneers of the Think tank tells his story.

Of course I mustn't forget the image the members wanted to create of themselves. Without a doubt, until this point, about the order of the foregoing chapters, I think about the next one I have in mind. In the ninth chapter I want to show the images that were created of the project and how this was done, through the communication advisor Iris. The seventh chapter is entitled 'Iris, and the other imagemakers'. In this story Iris tells about her experiences as a member of the support group, her task as a communication advisor and the images that were created by her. Next to Iris' story about imagemaking, I will offer a tour round the gallery of other images.

I want to finish with my conclusions as an HRD professional without putting myself on a pedestal. That means that I don't want to make my observations, reflections and conclusions more important, more valuable or more believable than those of the others. In the tenth chapter of the report, *The Watchman III*, I choose to discuss my own reflections as a HRD professional on the FIT Police project.

My report will be long. Perhaps I shall not finish it ⁵ ⁶.

Cast of characters

Name	Function / Role
Ahmed Abdelloui	Employee Automation department
Helen Beets	Student (external)
Peter Broks	Team member Think tank, project 'Eye catcher'
Cleo Brown	Student (external)
Ton Bruining	Consultant / PhD researcher (external)
Germaine Buscemi	Team member Think tank
Fred Bunker	Team member Think tank
Alfred Cabot	Team member Think tank
Philip Constantine	Cartoonist (external)
Robert Cox	District chief/commander
Marie Cruz	Student (external)
Harry Damen	Team member Think tank, leader of subproject
John Deer	Professional day chairman (external)
Paula Dimmick	Team member Think tank
Bart Dunning	District commander
Hans Ehrhardt	University Lecturer (external)
Bob Gabriel	Police officer, first group member, later project leader
Jef van Gulik	HRM Manager
Deirdre Ibsen	Project leader FIT Police
Daphne Jensen	Team member Think tank, project 'Communication'
Kelly Keitel	Team member Think tank
Bert Kemp	Team member Think tank, leader of project 'Boor line'
Carlo King	Unit chief support department
Liz Koch	Communication advisor
George Lakeman	Team member Think tank, leader of subproject
Ben Madsen	Team member Think tank
Eric Meyer	Retiring Chief Constable
Felix Nevel	Team member Think tank, leader of subproject
Victor Orange	Team member Think tank
Azra Penn	Team member Think tank
Kevin Polak	Team member Think tank, project communication
Albert Porter	Communication consultant (external)
Joseph Prince	Other consultant (external)
Iris Samson	Student (external) / Communication advisor
Ernie Springel	Team member Think tank
Harold Stout	Guest (external)
Christian Tarantino	Team member Think tank
Jacky Tee	Student (external)
Claire Thomas	Project leader
Alex Vaharam project.	Chief commissioner and project manager of the FIT Police
Dirk Vega	Team member Think tank
Frank Wever	Present Chief Constable
Paul Winters	Team member Think tank (Press officer)

FIT Police projects

Project	Goal	Other remarks
Macho project	Cooperation between the police, the tax authorities and the social service to seize youngsters and take away their illegally obtained possessions. A derived goal was to humiliate these offenders and through this diminish the contagiousness of their behaviour.	Attention of National TV and National Newspapers
Eye-catcher project	To locate fugitive suspects, missing persons and disturbed people with the help of bus drivers.	Nominated for an internal innovation trophy
LB-site	Knowledge base for local bobbies on the intranet	Being developed into a information side for basic policing
Guided Tours	PR task, to brush up the image of the police force. Another goal of this project is to interest people to do volunteer work for the police force, beginning with Guided tours	
Boor line	The goal of the Boor line is to enhance the operational effectiveness of the Moorland force and to enhance traffic safety through a tit-for-tat strategy. The project-idea is to stimulate all authorised police employees to fine rude drivers by a simple mobile telephone call. On duty and on leave.	Exported to other regional police forces.
SARA project	The SARA project aimed at employing disabled people within the Moorland force. It started with one colleague.	The aim is to extend it to include all districts and divisions.
GRUTHOKKER approach	Controlling the registers of traders in second hand goods, the so-called GRUTHOKKER approach is a forgotten police task. The main idea is to deploy personnel from the Arrest Team on call and in extra hours that resulted from the lengthening of the working week from 36 to 38 hours.	Gruthok is an acronym for: Goudsmid (Goldsmith); Rijwielhandelaar (Bicycle dealer); Uitdrager (Junk shop keeper); Tagrijn (Trader in old shipping tools, scrap metal, ropes); Horlogemaker (Watchmaker), Opkoper (Wholesale buyer), Kashouder (Sells gold and silver in the market).
Photo team	The main goal of this project is to develop quality criteria for the secretarial departments within the units, through internally benchmarking.	A derived goal was increasing the awareness of the secretaries of the importance of their own role by peeking at other secretaries through they eyes of the citizen.
PR-Campaign Departitioning	A PR-campaign was started after the project team became aware that there was a communication problem.	With appealing, waggish and provoking posters, gadgets and cartoons the Forward Innovation Team passed on its message

2. The Watchman I

My first encounter with Deirdre Ibsen of the Moorland police force was at the former Palace Cinema in Moordam. The meeting with project leader Ibsen was arranged after months of chasing the chief HRM officer of the Moorland Regional Police Force. I pursued the ambition to do a PhD research. My concern was professional learning, in the frontline of public service. Earlier attempts to work with teachers and nurses miscarried. For my research, I needed an opportunity to work with frontline workers, like police officers, on learning projects in their workplace. Although the chief HRM, Jef van Gulik, said he was interested, my request had stayed on his desk. It proved hard to arrange a meeting with him. I dogged him with phone calls. Finally he referred me to the FIT Police project. FIT is an acronym for Forward Innovation Team. I called the number he gave me immediately.

“The project was set up to boost the continuous improvement of police work”, Deirdre had told me on the phone. “It is intended to increase operational effectiveness and to develop a learning organisation”.

“Hm, that is a test of first-rate intelligenceⁱⁱⁱ” I thought. However, the good feeling I had about the catch predominated.

“The main idea behind the FIT Police project is that it triggers new thoughts about police work. It should allow room for thinking, said the woman on the other end of the line.

“We have to think out-of-the box!” she continued.

“We have to be really innovative. We have to be bent on breaking through ineffective work routines in order to establish more productive police work”. I heard enthusiasm, passion, and ambition in her voice.

As an introduction, I faxed an article of mine to the management of the FIT Police project. It felt as if I had no time to lose. I had sent them a piece I wrote a year earlier. I had entitled it *Knowledge production in the frontline*.

I anticipated that the article would show my concerns with the subject.

I trusted that it would demonstrate my knowledge about it. And I hoped that it would contribute to my status as an HRD specialist and researcher.

Deirdre was one of the two project leaders of the project. She had let me know that she was interested in speaking with me. The conversation that followed marked the beginning of a 30 month explorative expedition.

It was a hot summer afternoon, in 2001. I was standing in front of an old movie theatre, The Palace. It looked as if there had been a rock concert there

ⁱⁱⁱ According to what F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote in his In his short story *The Crack-up* “(...) the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas at the same time, and still retain the ability to function”. (Fitzgerald, [1936] 1945, p. 69)

the night before. The place looked messy. Deirdre, who turned out to be a northern beauty, picked me up at the entrance. She had an athletic, but very feminine figure and was smartly dressed. She wore light white trousers and a silk blouse. I felt overdressed, and overheated, in my grey suit. We went up the wooden stairs. They cracked heavily.

I found it strange and exciting to have an appointment with the police in a building that looked like a big squat. The Palace's second youth, that of a pop temple, was over. To me, the dumpy old cinema looked like a perfect place to start thinking differently about police work, and to work on breakthroughs. But what would the coppers in the force think of this third generation of The Palace?

On the first floor was an office. The door was open. I saw another young woman behind her desk. She was a brunette in her late twenties. Deirdre introduced me to her colleague project leader, Claire Thomas. Claire stayed behind her PC as we shook hands. I made some remarks about their daring housing. We laughed.

I followed Deirdre's jaunty steps to another room that probably used to be the foyer of the cinema. Now it was decorated with policeman's caps, coats of arms of other police forces, motorcycle models and a picture of a Hindustan guy with a Harley Davidson. Deirdre explained that the regional police force didn't have enough office space to house the FIT Police project organisation.

"So we rented this place, but to be honest, I'm allergic to dust and the place kills me".

We sat down in armchairs that looked more than fifty years old. I imagined I was sitting in the foyer. Deirdre served coffee and filled me in on the FIT Police project. "It started in the summer of 2000. The European football championships held in the Netherlands were hardly over. Our Dutch team just missed the final. The police was euphoric because of their performance. There were no incidents. The press, the citizens and the crowds were full of praise. The Moorland force had delivered a top performance. Just like other forces in the country. There was a feeling of togetherness. Our leaders wanted to hold on to that. With a small group they started brainstorming and came up with an idea that later turned into our Continuous Improvement Policy. The goal was to be fine-tuned in operations and to be effective via professional support. They also saw it as a chance to bring in innovation in full swing. 'There had to be breakthroughs'. They would no longer allow good initiatives to sink into the mire of bureaucracy! After evaluation, using a quality model, to come up with clear ideas for improvements, they decided that a single revitalisation programme would not be enough. The basic principle had to be continuous development. The organisation had to develop from a bureaucratic organisation into a learning organisation".

This sounded a very interesting, ambitious, and complex operation. I drank my coffee and listened captivated as Deirdre continued. "The so called FIT Police project organisation was seen as an efficacious agent to facilitate transformation. The underlying concept was simple. The idea was to gather talented people from our regional force, on a regular basis, to undertake initiative. These people would be from all levels, with a diversity of backgrounds and we would have them think about our work. It would have to be as practical as possible. They would be challenged to think out-of-the-box. Let them bring up ideas. We'd teach them to think these ideas through in all their consequences and make them aware that the only good idea is an implemented and a secured one".

Could this vision make a difference? I thought. It would be very interesting to participate in a project like this or at least get the opportunity to shadow it. I made some notes while Deirdre talked nineteen to the dozen about the project. "Our leadership follows the thinking that sometimes the need for change is so urgent that a bureaucracy has to develop a project organisation detached from the standing organisation".

It crossed my mind, that they might have borrowed that from a Swieringa and Wiersdema⁷, two well known writers on management. I looked it up at home and found it there.

"The task of the manager of this unit is to protect it against the logic of the bureaucracy", Deirdre added.

It was clearly visible: we were in the office of the head man. The lobby was now turned into the project manager's room. In spite of the provoking accommodation, the collection of gadgets looked very familiar. It seemed a typical police commissioner's office to me.

Deirdre filled me in. "Alex Vaharam, is the commissioner who is assigned as project leader. Frankly, I heard that Alex found it both a great idea and thought nothing of it. He was enthusiastic about creating 'a movement'. But he didn't desire the job. He thought the suggestion to release him from his district leadership was not at all good for him`. The idea that he would have to give up his district made him as stubborn as a mule. He had to let that cup pass from him. He tried to convince them with persuasion, with verbal assault, with cunning moves, and with unattainable conditions. But it turned out to be of no avail. In May 2001 everything was settled. The FIT Police project was born. And Alex really went for it".

Deirdre spoke passionately about the ambitions to work with inspired, motivated and inquisitive policemen, to innovate police work and to end bureaucracy. And as she went on, I noticed that she infected me, making me excited too. It sounded like something special was going on. I talked about my views about the workplace as a learning place, and my quest to help frontline workers to develop a less defensive and more productive attitude towards their work.

"I've read your article", Deirdre said. "Very interesting. In our pursuit to become a learning organisation we got our inspiration from Swieringa's book *Instead of Reorganising* - It is like a travelling guide for us". The learning organisation on a shoestring, I thought. And she lectured: "In his book Swieringa makes the difference between 'bureaucratic organisations' and 'client-cratc organisations'. The bureaucratic organisation is hierarchic, structured, formalised, specialised, standardised and knowing and doing are separated. The client-cratc organisation is not steered by the central powers of the organisation, but by the market".

I knew that Wierdsma named the client-centred organisation a client-cratc organisation.

"That remains a strange term for client centred", I said to my self.

"According to Swieringa the ways of change in a bureaucratic organisation and client-cratc organisation are different". I heard Deirdre say, but my thoughts began to drown her reasoning. Thoughts about a possible research project emerged. And I smelled a business opportunity. . . . Could I combine them, or shouldn't I be thinking this way?

"For change - I heard Deirdre in the background - in a bureaucratic organisation he uses the metaphor of a planned journey and for change in a client-cratc organisation he uses the metaphor of a journey by trekking. The planned journey metaphor for change stands for a rational, step-by-step approach, with a separation between diagnoses and implementation, the separation of decision makers, thinkers and do-ers" I hummed, hoping to find a chance to come up with some research ideas. I focused on Deirdre's talk again.

"According to Swieringa this way of changing almost always encounters resistance. The trekking-journey metaphor stands for working together on improvements, adapting to the environment and having an influence on the environment. The journey is not planned; the environment influences the speed and direction. Higher management leads, through the facilitation of the problem solving process. Not the end of the road, but the road itself is the goal". Of course I was already familiar with Swieringa's work. I started as an HRD professional in 1990, didn't I! But I bit back a remark.

"This project seems to match perfectly with my research interests", I said to Deirdre. And I laid out some of my ideas for her.

After our meeting I wrote a project proposal to monitor the FIT Police project. The plan was to facilitate two subprojects within the FIT Police project. Deirdre let me know that the project managers of the FIT Police project were interested to cooperate with me, but - although I offered my services for a reduced fee - that they would only go along with my project if it got subsidised elsewhere. Therefore we had to wait until 2002. I felt disappointed. I wanted to start at once. So I asked permission to observe the project. After she had talked this

over with Alex, it was allowed.

In January 2002, we received a letter from the Dutch Police Institute that a subsidy had been granted.

This happened almost six years after a meeting with Cornelius Hendrix, a professor in adult education. I remember the occasion clearly. It was a sweaty afternoon, when I talked with him about becoming a researcher in the area of Human Resources Development.

In the summer of 1996 I had made an appointment with Hendrix. We met in his office at the university. An almost two hours drive from my own office. I wanted to discuss the possibilities of developing a research and development function in my department with him. At that time I was HRD manager in an international firm in the recreation business. My company employed 10,000 people in five countries in Europe. I wanted to provide state of the art services to the corporation and evaluate the added value of my department. After we had drinks and discussed my views concerning the development of my department, Hendrix asked: "Why don't you combine it with a PhD?" I was stunned. My feelings swayed back and forth. Me writing a dissertation? But I also felt acknowledged as a professional. In the end I found the idea enticing. Although the professor warned me, "It is not going to be easy. You have to have an urge to contribute to the field and support from your home front, to survive such a project".

Perhaps it was my school career that impelled me to engage in a PhD project. The headmaster of my primary school didn't think much of me. He proposed a vocational school. Despite that, I managed secondary school by the skin of my teeth. Clearly, that was an omen. I dropped out of the first school for higher vocational education I went to. After that, I worked in several jobs over the space of two years. Then I decided to better my life and try again. Perhaps my studies since then were a big quest to change the image of me as a poor student. It took a few months more than the nominal four years of professional training, to become a dietician. Next I coupled continuation courses in adult education together, until I finally got a masters degree. Perhaps it was the friends in my network holding their doctorates. Perhaps it was my vanity. Or perhaps I just want to make an appreciated contribution to my field, the HRD community. The truth is surely a mixture of these motives. But in 1996 I was tempted to take up a PhD project. I agreed with Hendrix that I would think it over and we made a new appointment. I discussed the idea with my wife, Jolande. She was supportive. Although she hadn't the faintest idea of what was going to happen when a partner takes up a PhD project. And what did I know?

We had no children at that time. Jolande had just started a shop and was working long hours. I was often alone at home. Enough time for me to engage in a PhD project, we thought. When the professor and I met again, I said that “I want to go for it. And I also have an idea about a subject. I want to research the working of feedback in organisations”. Hendrix proposed to team me up with a scholar, Hans Ehrhardt, working on feedback instruments such as multirater feedback and portfolio’s. In the next year I studied literature, I talked with Hans about research designs, and we came up with the idea to administer different kinds of feedback to a group of managers. I discussed the idea in my company, with my HRM manager, and our MD manager. Both were willing to cooperate. I read a lot about learning in organisations, learning in the workplace, the knowledge society and, more specifically, I read articles and books about assessment, feedback and multirater feedback to support the learning of employees.

After a first year of orientation, I found that my job became more demanding and there was less time to study beside my work, than I had thought. To keep my research project going, I organised the help of a student who wanted to write a thesis for her masters on multirater feedback. In the next year we developed a multirater feedback instrument, a portfolio instrument and the third instrument would be the regular performance interview. As the project went along, I found it very difficult to spend enough time to study and to manage my research project. After a long conversation with a known Dutch management consultant about my personal development, I decided to look for a job in a consulting firm. The core idea was that such a firm would have more interest in my research and facilitate me. Soon after that consultation, I saw an appealing vacancy. I applied for the job with success. The switch to the consulting firm meant a shift in my orientation. From knowledge network to a client network. That took me a year. After that I orientated myself on a subject. Would I go on studying feedback, or look for a new subject? Having studied Michael Lipsky’s book *Street-level bureaucrats*⁸, I became passionate to study working and learning in the frontline of public service.

I spend the summer holiday writing an article about it⁹.

Learning, knowledge production and innovation: An imperative for frontline professions

Ton Bruining

Introduction

Most people in the Netherlands give a high priority to public safety, health care and education. There are often discussions about the quantity and quality of the service offered by the police force, the health care and the educational sector. These three sectors of public service are challenged.

Quality and quantity are under pressure because of under investment and the continual rise in demands for services. The police departments have to find an answer to the increased insecurity in society. Because of the development of medical techniques and skills, the health care sector provoke an enormous increase in demand and the pressure on the health care sector increases because of the proportional rise in the aging population. The educational sector has to develop strategies and learning environments to prepare society for the knowledge economy.

The workers at the frontline of public service say policemen, nurses and teachers, must continually develop their professional knowledge base and competencies and make their personal development plans (Eraut, 1994). They have to cope with tight budgets, make the appropriate priorities in the allocation of budgets, align with governmental strategies, meet targets and maintain relations with clients: civilians, patients and students, anticipate on politics, meet the demands of society and respond to the increased influence of clients (Lipsky, 1980; RMO, 2000; Savornin Lohman & Raaff, 2001). They have to learn how to handle the developments in society such as the transition from the industrial age and production to the information age and innovation, the transition of power from capital and position to knowledge, the transition of hierarchal organisations and control to network organisations and empowerment, the development from linear thinking towards non-linear thinking, the development of the digital environment, new relations between young people and adults and the increased division between haves and have nots.

In order to meet the expectation of society and to improve performance, major plans were made to reform the police force, the health care sector and the educational sector. The problem is that formal policies to reorganise and improve public service often fail. Twenty years ago Michael Lipsky (1980) showed, in his highly acclaimed study Street-level bureaucracy, dilemmas of the individual in public service why formal policies fail. He emphasised the role of the individual frontline workers. He showed why and how frontline workers become defensive; he stressed the necessary support of frontline workers, the importance of working conditions to improve street-level practice and the significance of the integration of working and learning. Lipsky's views still seem very relevant (RMO, 2000 Savornin Lohman & Raaff, 2001). In public discussions, it is argued that the performance of the police force, the educational sector and the health care sector will improve by increasing the professional level of the practitioners in these three sectors. Furthermore there is the imperative of the learning organisation. Learning can be viewed as an active process of competence development, knowledge production and

innovation. Today both the individual competencies and their development and the development of the organisations as a powerful learning environment are seen as important conditions for professional learning, knowledge production and innovative force of the organisation (e.g. Senge, 1993; Eraut, 1994; Kessels, 1996). Argyris argued that the learning of individuals and therefore the learning of an organisation could be problematic in many ways. In his book *On organisational learning* (Argyris, 1999) he showed how professionals tend to avoid learning, develop defensive routines and become professionally incompetent. He argued that different types of learning lead to respectively the defensive 'model I theory-in-use' or the alternative 'productive model II theory-in-use'.

The question is how to develop the competencies of frontline workers and their learning conditions in order to improve organisational learning, knowledge production and innovation without falling in the pitfall of trying to control the daily practice of frontline workers with unrealistic policies, plans and procedures. I presume that the professionals themselves play an important role. In order to make them capable of regulating their self-development, they need learning competencies and a powerful learning environment. Which in their turn they will maintain.

Following this, I will explore the role of formal policies and the role of frontline workers in innovation, the factors that influence the performance of frontline workers are discussed, the knowledge productivity that is needed to innovate frontline work and the necessity of lifelong learning.

Innovation and policy making in the frontline

The real policy makers seem to be the frontline workers, for instance individual teachers, police officers and nurses. I will first illustrate the failure of formal policies. Then I will discuss the role of frontline workers as the real policy makers. This gives an explanation for the failure of formal policies.

Failure of policies

The concept of community policing, which was developed in 1977, survived several reorganisations but it still isn't realised (Anderson, 2000). According to Braun (1999) the problems are: The political strategies within the police force; the structure and culture of the police force that is not in alignment with the policy of community policing and therefore counterproductive; the overkill of different new strategies that have to be implemented at the same time. The health care sector has seen various master plans: Dekker in 1987, Simons in 1990, Dunning in 1991 and

Welschen in 1994. These plans were not very successful. Problems - caused by the growth, the supply driven character of the health care sector, consumerism, the focus on procedures instead of patients and the juridification of relations - remain (Westerlaken, 2000). The educational sector experienced some turbulent years. Policy was focused on efficiency. This led to large institutions but at the same time caused the loss of suitable learning environments (Adriaansen, 2000). Prick (2000) sees four main problems in the educational sector. Inappropriate policies in the educational sector that resulted in so-called innovations were far behind the social reality. Out of fear of taking politically incorrect measures, no measures were taken at all. The sector experienced large cutbacks in expenditure and reorganisations (mergers). Although education is people's business, the Dutch educational sector is far behind other sectors with its HRM practices.

Frontline workers as the real policy makers

I have chosen the term frontline workers because it is also used by the "Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling", the Dutch Council for Social Development (RMO 2000). Frontline workers are employees in the operational process of public service. Lipsky (1980) uses the term 'street-level bureaucrats'. Both terms are synonymous. Lipsky points out the frequent occurrence of street-level bureaucrats in public services he calls 'street-level bureaucracies'. "These are the schools, police and welfare departments, lower courts, legal services offices, and other agencies whose workers interact with and have wide discretion over the dispensation of benefits or the allocation of public sanctions" (Lipsky, 1980, p. xi). "Typical street-level bureaucrats are teachers, police officers (...), social workers, judges, public lawyers (...) health workers and many other public employees who grant access to government programmes and provide the service within them" (Lipsky, 1980, p. 3). Lipsky (1980, p. 3) defines street-level workers as "Public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have a substantial discretion in the execution of their work (...)". Discretion is defined in Webster's New World Dictionary (1988) as "the freedom or authority to make decisions and choices; power to judge or act". Discretion is a form of power available to every individual, albeit true that some have or assume more than others and it is both used and abused. Lipsky stresses the importance of the frontline workers and their development by pointing at the enormous numbers of public workers that share the job characteristics of frontline workers. We can illustrate this with the numbers of frontline workers in the Netherlands that are working in the professions this study focuses on. About 9 % of the working population occupies a frontline profession.

Lipsky's key issue is that frontline workers play a critical role in street-level bureaucracies and therefore in society because they are more than executioners of policies. They are policy makers. It is Lipsky's position that "public policy is actually made in the crowded offices and daily encounters of street-level workers rather than wholly in headquarters offices and legislatures" (Lipsky, 1980, p. xii). The degree to which workers decide to use the discretion available to them determines the depth and breadth of the policy decisions they make on a daily basis. "Street-level workers", says Lipsky, "make policy in two related aspects: one, they exercise wide discretion in decisions about citizens with whom they interact and, two, when taken in concert, their individual actions add up to agency behaviour. The policy making roles of street-level bureaucrats are built upon two interrelated facets of their positions: relatively high degrees of discretion and relative autonomy from organizational authority". (Lipsky, 1980, p. 13).

The implementation and enforcement of policy is mostly determined by the operating environment and not by official goals. "Public service goals (...) tend to have an idealized dimension that make them difficult to achieve and confusing and complicated to approach" (Lipsky, 1980, p. 40). The frontline worker characteristically works in jobs with conflicting and ambiguous goals. Goals can be ambiguous because: different framers of legislation may have had different ideas about the objectives; they have accumulated by accretion and have never been rationalised, and it remains functional for the agency not to confront its goal conflict and there are uncertainties about social service technologies. Goals can be conflicting because client centred goals conflict with social engineering goals, client centred goals conflict with organisation centred goals and because goals conflict because street-level bureaucrats' role expectations are communicated generally through multiple conflicting reference groups. Furthermore, the job performance of frontline workers is extremely difficult to measure. Not only because of the goal ambiguity but also because there are too many variables to take into account (Lipsky, 1980).

Recently Sandberg (2000) showed why it is important to focus on the frontline workers themselves. He found that employees and managers often give meaning in a totally different ways. Because of this, the actions of managers - for instance when they define the competencies that are needed for a job - can become counterproductive. Sandberg's alternative is to ask the employees what they think about their work and what must be done to improve it.

Performance of frontline workers and its improvement

Frontline workers often have to perform under difficult working conditions. They develop strategies in order to survive. Despite these

strategies, frontline workers often alienate themselves from their work (Lipsky, 1980). Because frontline workers, in most cases, cannot live up to their ideals, they feel embarrassed and ashamed. They develop 'espoused theories' to account for their actions and theories-in-use to cope with the problems in their daily work (Argyris 1999). The individuals in organisations reinforce each other's behaviour and the collectively developed defensive theories in use give a sense of control. In the long-term, this makes the frontline workers professionally incompetent.

Difficult working conditions

The frontline workers have to cope with difficult working conditions. They have to make decisions under conditions of limited time and limited information and they have to deal with resource inadequacy, high caseloads and role ambiguity. In addition to a high caseload, there is extra pressure because of administrative work; the frontline workers often lack proper experience or training. There is a lot of stress involved in their work and sometimes even physical threat. Under these conditions, it is impossible for frontline workers to fulfil their mandated responsibilities (Lipsky, 1980).

Strategies to survive

The frontline workers learn to develop accommodation strategies to survive. In order to balance supply and demand, they often choose additional service rather than performance improvement, because quality improvement leads to higher demands (Lipsky, 1980). The frontline workers try to control the demand and ration their services by developing strategies to complicate access to their service. Furthermore, the frontline workers try to categorise and thus simplify the reality they face, the cases they encounter and the services they render. They develop work routines to regulate the behaviour of their clients and to establish an efficient deployment of means. For every constructed category, they develop standardised behavioural patterns. If it is needed, situations are manipulated so that they fit into a certain category (Lipsky, 1980). Other practices to husband the limited resources are 'screening', 'rubber-stamping' and 'referrals'. Frontline workers permit lower-level functionaries to exercise discretion in their place (screening), they accept the judgement of others so that independent assessments need not be made (rubber stamping) and they see referring a client from their agency to another as a proper method to save their agencies budget or as a symbolic service when actual services are not available.

Alienation in the frontline

Frontline workers often become alienated from their work. This has several causes: They tend to work only on segments of the work; they do not

control the outcome of their work; they do not control the raw materials of their work; they do not control the pace of their work. Alienations are problematic because it causes absenteeism, low moral, poor performance and other manifestations of workers' dissatisfaction (Lipsky, 1980).

Performance improvement

The categorisation of service, other coping strategies and the alienation of frontline workers raise the question what can be done to improve the performance of frontline workers, how the work can be restructured and how the learning processes can be organised in another way. Possibly the solution to avoid defensive routines and skilled incompetence lies in the discretion they have in relationship with clients, the working and learning conditions, and the support to build new productive routines.

The discretion frontline workers have, provides them with the possibilities to organise their work process in their own way and it causes the mechanisms that lead to mediocre service. On the other hand, the discretion is indispensable. Firstly, frontline workers often work in situations too complicated to reduce to programmatic formats. Secondly, they work in situations that often require responses to human dimensions of the situations. Thirdly, discretion promotes the frontline workers self regard and the client's belief in the public services of the welfare state. In the development of the public sector, a lot is expected from the establishment of network relations with clients. That means no investments anymore in strategic business plans and the egos of large organisations but working together with clients on the development of the public service. In this situation, the citizens are not only clients but also producers. (Lipsky, 1980; Van Aalst 1999; RMO, 2000).

In order to become and to stay a professional that knows how to behave in new and complex situations, to learn from mistakes and to work together with clients to develop new professional practices, it seems important that the practitioners possess learning competencies (e.g. Bolhuis and Simons, 1999) and that these competencies are supported by a powerful learning environment (e.g. Kessels, 1996). But can the desired learning processes and the knowledge productivity be controlled? I think not.

Knowledge productivity and its improvement

In order to be constantly innovative, the organisations in public service must be knowledge productive. Knowledge productivity is defined by Kessels (1996) as: "the ability to acquire, create, disseminate, and apply knowledge to improve and innovate processes, products, and services".

In organisations learning is emphasised as a means of improving knowledge productivity "Given the vital importance of the learning processes involved, leaving the necessary learning to random opportunity

would be imprudent. A systematic approach with a clear purpose therefore appears obvious. Nevertheless, the feasibility of managing such learning processes is questionable and is hardly possible in the manner in which we are accustomed to running other industrial processes. Ascertaining the knowledge required for developing competencies is far from simple. Even if you succeed, the necessary learning processes will not appear on command' (Kessels, Van Lakerveld & Van den Berg, 1998). I'm interested in the exploration of the factors that influence learning, knowledge productivity and innovation.

Learning in the frontline

Learning plays a vital role in our lives, in our private lives and in our working life. Many argue that there is an increased dependency on learning in society because our society is believed to be more complex. For individuals, organisations and for society, the future is connected with continuous learning. Early investments are needed to be able to anticipate forthcoming changes. It is learning to survive (Thijssen, 1997). Several decennia ago, in the seventies, there was an interest in lifelong learning. The interest in lifelong learning is revived.

Learning, a necessity for individuals, organisations and society

Lifelong learning of frontline workers is necessary for the individual frontline worker, for the organisations in which they are employed and for society as a whole. For individuals, it is important to develop competencies in order to manage their own course of life in many aspects including their career. Lifelong learning concerns emancipation, personal development, citizenship and employability in different roles (Onstenk & Kessels, 1999).

In order to make profits and to safeguard competitiveness, to serve the public, and to secure continuity, it is important for organisations that their employees participate in learning processes wherein organisational and/or professional culture is transferred, the quality is improved, competences are developed and innovations and personal and organisational development occurs (Eraut, 1994; Onstenk & Kessels, 1999; Torraco, 1999; Walton, 1999). For the development of a prosperous and stable society, it is important that people develop and maintain the competencies to participate in society, perform their duties and use their rights (Onstenk & Kessels, 1999).

Learning to survive or to perform in new ways

For the professional development, initial learning and professional activities in the job are needed to perform adequately (Eraut, 1994; Torraco, 1999; Kwakman, 1999). In the frontline, learning can develop itself in two main directions. The frontline workers will learn to survive.

According to Thijssen (1997), the struggle for life is characteristic for the metaphors that are used to illustrate that learning is necessary. But this obvious image leaves room for widely divergent interpretations. (Thijssen, 1997). Lipsky (1980) states that at the front, the learning to survive can develop itself in two main directions. There will be professionals who want to improve their individual performance and the performance of their organisation. But there also will be professionals who are concerned with tempering the collective and individual performance. Argyris (1999) distinguishes two different learning routines that seem to be closely linked to the different directions for the job behaviour of frontline workers. "When individuals programmed with 'model I theory-in-use' deal with difficult and threatening problems, they create primary inhibiting loops. That is, they create conditions of indiscussability, self fulfilling prophecies, self sealing processes, and escalating error and they remain unaware of their responsibility for these conditions. (...) It is defensive reasoning that leads to ideas or feelings that are counterproductive to learning and effective action" (Argyris, 1999, p. 244-245).

Defensive	Productive
Characteristics	
Soft data Tacit, private inferences Conclusions not publicly testable	Hard data Explicit inferences Premises explicit, conclusions publicly testable
Supported by	
Tacit theory of dealing with threat Set of tacitly interrelated concepts Set of tacit rules for using concepts to make permissible inferences, reach private conclusions, and private criteria to judge the validity of the test	(Explicit or tacit) theory of strategy formulation Set of directly interrelated concepts Set of rules for using concepts to make permissible inferences, reach testable conclusions, and judge the validity of the test

Defensive and productive reasoning (Argyris, 1999, p. 135).

The challenge is to induce a 'model II theory-in-use' that enhances validity, free and informed choice, internal commitment and learning by productive reasoning. For society, for the client of public service administrations, for organisations in public service and for the workers in the frontline who want to present themselves as responsible and pragmatic professionals, it is important that learning processes lead to professional behaviour in the discrete environment and to performance improvement, modifications and innovations.

Learning police officers

Torre (1999) found various coping strategies of police officers. These are: playing down the goals, blaming, cynicism, selective enforcement, implicit support and mythising. Torre distinguishes four different styles in the behaviour of policemen: the pragmatic style, the pessimistic style, the law and order style and the social worker style. He found that practical professionalism is the dominant style in the police force he studied. According to Torre, the strong point of practical professionalism are the empathy, role-play, the use of social control, and the delay in the use of violence, the professional bases, and comradeship. The weak points according to Torre are peer pressure, the culture of dissatisfaction, time management, grey areas in law enforcement, police violence and the limited investment in self development and professional development. Braun (1999) studied the management of police officers by their superiors and found perils in the structural and cultural aspects of police organisations. In the police force she studied, Braun found that the activities of police officers are routinised, goals are ambiguous, effects of police work are difficult to measure and that there are unintended side effects of interventions in the work processes. Braun found that the police force she studied is very politicised. She suggests a growth-scenario as one of the possibilities for improvement. This implicates the strengthening of professional bureaucratic structures. Decentralisation of power to the level of police officers in the streets, thoroughgoing professionalisation, standardisation of knowledge and skills and minimising the bureaucratic elements.

Improving frontline learning

Learning was always associated with formal learning. But now the effectiveness of formal programmes is questioned. The transfer of training is very low (Broad & Newstrom, 1992). Currently the self regulation and autonomy of individuals in their development is stressed, the integration of working and learning is advocated, team learning is recommended and the learning organisation is portrayed as an ideal situation (Bolhuis & Simons, 1999). These insights are not new. Twenty years ago Lipsky (1980) already believed that there was more to be expected from investments in the working environment than from formal training programmes. "Worker training is less important for practice than the nature of the working conditions themselves". Lipsky also pointed out the problems of transfer and the conditions for transfer "without a supportive network of working peer relationships, training (...) is likely to wash out under the pressure of the work context". Lipsky expected more from clients acting in a reference group which supports the search for and the evaluation of services, on-the-job training, small autonomous units that create the opportunity for self-determination of small units provide a context for considerable learning and the potential for achieving a more

client oriented practice and the development of problem solving skills. He was also in favour of professionalisation in peer groups and practitioner research. Eraut (1994) would agree. According to him successful learning and innovation only takes place in the context of use. Research shows that there are relationships between innovation and training on the job (e.g. Glaudé, 1997). Furthermore, it is recommended to design the job and the organisation as powerful learning environments (Kessels, 1996, Torraco, 1999). In order to intertwine working and learning in a fruitful manner, it is suggested that different kinds of organisations need different kinds of learning arrangements (e.g. Poell, 1998). Human Resources Development (HRD) professionals are acknowledging that the interaction between working and learning is very important. Just as managers and participants, they are experiencing that formal training programmes have an unsatisfactory output. On the other hand, there are promising experiences with learning-on-the-job strategies. HRD researchers are developing new approaches to enhance and support the integration of working and learning. Bolhuis and Simons (1999) introduce the concept of work related learning. They stress that there is a limited knowledge base concerning job learning and that more research is needed into how learning and working can be integrated, how learning on the job can be facilitated. Recent research by Van der Sluis (2000) shows how individual learning factors and organisational learning conditions influence each other and how it influences the learning process and its outcomes. HRD professionals are developing a new practice in which working and learning are integrated. ♦

I got my article published in a Dutch HRD magazine. The outcome was that in 2001, I took up a PhD project for the second time. This time I decided that the subject was going to be learning and working in the frontline of public service. My initial research questions were:

What is the influence of:

- personal learning competencies of frontline workers,
- the learning conditions in the frontline, and
- the satisfaction with the discretion on the job
on the knowledge production of frontline workers?

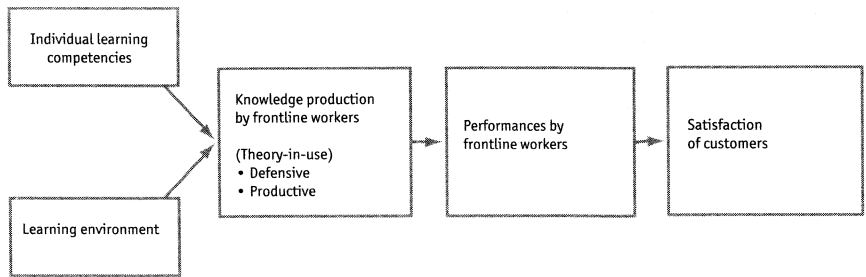
I spend the Christmas season thinking about a research design. I thumbed through Denzin's bulky Handbook of qualitative research¹⁰, studied Yin's books on case study research¹¹ and looked into Miles and Huberman's sourcebook on qualitative data analysis¹² and I came across research books for HRD research¹³.

The educational sector is the home market for my firm. When we talked about a design for my PhD study, it was obvious to me and my R&D manager that the

study would be strongly linked to the world of education. But I made it clear that a focus on education alone would not be satisfactory for me. By that time, I found the educational sector a self-centred and navel-gazing sector. There is little mobility between the educational sector and other sectors in the economy, people work for the same employer fairly long, and consulting firms such as the one I work for, focus mainly on the educational market¹⁴. I was determined to develop a multi-case study design to study working and learning in three kinds of frontline organisations: schools, health care organisations and police forces. I read more about learning, knowledge production and innovation in public service.

After I decided to study frontline workers, I had several counselling chats with my supervising professor. I prepared for these meetings by writing papers to discuss different topics such as theoretical approaches, conceptual models, and research designs. Although my professor seemed to give me a lot of freedom, I started to feel uncomfortable. He assumed a counselling position, while I felt in need of ideas. I felt that I was mucking around. I felt rotten. A few months after I had started my project I had a chat with my supervising professor and the R&D manager I had in those days. During that conversation I got a very bad feeling. I felt like a little boy. Were they patronising me? Or was it my difficulty in becoming a novice again? Was it my inability to keep my HRD identity in this new situation? I talked this over with my supervising professor and he acknowledged my feelings. He asked what he could do to make the next talk work better. But later, when I stated that I wanted to write a PhD that could be read by frontline workers he urged me not to indulge myself with an experiment that would clash with the mores of the academic community. "I want to protect you," he said. "I know all about it, I have been there".

In the summer of 2001, I agreed with professor Hendrix on a conceptual model and a research design. The main idea behind the conceptual model was that both individual competencies and the learning environment influence the knowledge production by frontline workers. That knowledge production might be more or less defensive or more or less productive. Subsequently this might influence the performance of frontline workers and the satisfaction of clients. I had decided to focus on the influence of learning competencies and the learning environment on knowledge production using Kessels' definition: Knowledge productivity is the ability to acquire, create, disseminate, and apply knowledge to improve and innovate processes, products, and services. (Kessels, 1996) The idea was to look at the learning environment with the help of Kessels' corporate curriculum concept in which seven learning functions of the learning environment are distinguished.



Conceptual model, designed in the summer of 2001

For Kessels, each company should consciously take time to develop a corporate curriculum that turns the day-to-day work environment into a powerful learning environment. The corporate curriculum should contain a set of measures to facilitate and develop: Subject matter expertise; Problem solving; Reflective skills and meta-cognitions; Communication skills; Self-regulation of motivation and affection; Peace and stability; and Creative turmoil. At that time, research instruments were developed to look at the learning environment in terms of the corporate curriculum concept¹⁵. Subsequently I started to develop a multirater feedback instrument to look at individual learning competencies, also based on the corporate curriculum concept.

The idea was to start and to study different projects in three sectors and follow these projects up in a multiple case study. Therefore I had to put together a monitor instrument to follow up the development of frontline organisations as a learning environment, to follow up the learning competencies and to look at knowledge productivity. To assess the development of the learning environment, I decided to use '*Dynamics of learning*'¹⁶ based on the corporate curriculum. To measure the individual learning skills of frontliners, I developed a 360-degree questionnaire. I did this because I had no budget to purchase one. To determine either the defensiveness or the productiveness of the frontliners, I wanted to use Argyris' 'two columned instrument' or 'left hand/right hand method'¹⁷. I decided to use that instrument while being aware that I still had to develop a procedure to assess the results.

While working on the conceptual model and the instruments, I managed to interest three primary schools in participating in my research project. These schools belonged to an influential and one of the largest school associations in secondary education. I also got in touch with two significant regional police forces, Urbanville and Moorland. Significant because Urbanville is one of the major cities in the Netherlands. Moorland because it had the image of an innovative police force. In addition I warmed up contacts with former colleagues in primary health care. Ten years earlier, I worked in a ground-breaking primary health care organisation in the Netherlands. It was obvious

for me to turn back to this organisation. The manager of their most innovative health care centre showed an interest in my project. Besides that, I spoke with a project manager of the biggest primary health care organisation in the Netherlands, where a former manager of mine is at the helm.

I felt rushed because concrete projects appeared on the horizon. And I had chosen to monitor the development of individual group members but I hadn't the affinity with statistics. I was fussing about. There was also a problem with 'Dynamics of Learning'. It was designed for a standing organisation. Not for project organisations, or learning networks, like FIT Police. I decided to look at the project organisation as a normal organisation, because there were shared goals, there was a structure and a strategy, they had their own budget, they were developing 'breakthrough skills' in a planned manner, there was a HRM policy, there were different leadership levels and all kinds of systems were developed, like a project management approach, a suggestion box, and a system to filter real innovations from problems and improvements that were thought to be handled by the existing supporting departments or by operation itself. I also decided to use the left hand/right hand method although I still had to work out a procedure to judge the results that I would get from it.

My idea was to work with and for frontline workers, but the contact with the organisations went primarily through management. In the first school I met a lot of resistance with the teachers I was assigned to. They formed a group of teachers that was supposed to work on educational innovations. The majority of the members were not interested in a researcher monitoring their innovation project. In the second school, the headmaster didn't succeed in finding a learning network for me to study. So the projects in the educational sector stranded before they even got started. In a third school, the leadership press-ganged a group of teachers, to engage in a collegiate consultation project. Because I still was planning a multi-case study, and knew that I couldn't facilitate the entire project myself, I asked a colleague to do the counselling of the teachers. He discussed the motivation of the project and the motivation of the teachers to participate. Emphasising our interest in frontline learning, stressing that, in our view, learning cannot be enforced and underlining that we wanted to be supportive. The project started in 2001. At the same time I started to work with the Moorland Regional Police Force. In the summer of 2001 I managed to get past the gate keeping HRM director of the Moorland police force. I explored possibilities with project leaders of the FIT police project. Together we requested a subsidy. Before the subsidy was granted I started observing the FIT Police project. One of the conditions of the subsidy was that the project should run in two regional police forces, Moorland and Urbanville. The project in Urbanville didn't come off the ground as planned because there were changes of management and there were continuously problems in planning monitor sessions, so that project got stuck too. Together

with the project leader, other plans were made in the spirit to use the subsidy to support learning networks.

Privately we went through big changes. My wife Jolande, age 43, got pregnant with twins in January 2002. Although there was some stress because of the risks of a pregnancy, that come with more mature age, we were perfectly happy. Most certainly after amniocentesis showed that everything was all right with the babies. The awareness that we were becoming parents and the wish that I wanted to be there for my family, put a lot of stress on me. I wanted to finish the my research project as soon as possible, against better judgement of course. At the start of 2002 I felt burned out. That was bound to happen. The target pressure in a consulting job, the pregnancy of my wife and working on a research project on the side became too much. I talked this over with my supervising professor. He urged me to let it rest for a while. I didn't want to accept it, symptomatic of course. I kept trying, and stayed involved with the Moorland police force. However privately mischief struck in September, when our son Jim died just before he was born. We were, however, blessed with Lola, our healthy girl. Our life was like the splits.

Whilst I was going through some turbulent times privately, and tried to meet my 175-day target, I decided to focus only on the Moorland case. I was tired of wasting my valuable time and energy. After I had settled with Deirdre, agreed on a plan and qualified for a grant, I got full cooperation from the project leaders, secretaries of the FIT police project team and the members of the FIT police Think tank. I went to Moorland approximately two days a month, for 30 months. I observed meetings, interviewed involved police employees and gathered documents. During that time the secretaries were invaluable. They kept me posted of events, they sent me documents, they were always ready to have a chat with me and in my conversations with them something interesting would always come up.

In Moorland, everybody I approached reacted in a friendly way. Jef van Gulik, the HRM manager, Deirdre Ibsen and Claire Thomas, the project leaders, emphasised that learning about learning in the frontline is important. When I first met the frontline workers of the FIT Police project I presented myself as an outsider in the police world. In that meeting I introduced myself and I told them that my consulting firm mainly worked in the field of education. In a short speech I talked about my motivations to study the workplace learning of frontline workers. I motivated my presence with referral to my ambition to do a study about learning in the frontline, and that I wanted to look at other frontline professions. I told them that I was an outsider in police work, but an insider in frontline work. I portrayed myself as a consultant from a firm specialised in learning. But I also came out as an experienced dietician, assuring them I was dyed-in-the-wool after eight years working in primary health care. Every time I went to Moorland, I left my business suit at home and

dressed myself in the same manner as police officers when they're not wearing uniforms. That meant wearing jeans and casual shirts most of the time. Sometimes I had to change clothes at a service station on my way to Moorland.

At the start of my own research project I tried to organise support. I made a plan to attract at least six students from police science, nursing science and educational science. Finally I could only find two students, one master student sociology and a master student educational science. That was no success for me. One of them ran into personal troubles. In fact she never started a research project. For the other one, the Moordam Police Force was too far away. As an answer to that, I tried to team up with interns, from Moorland. Deirdre coupled me to Cleo Brown and Helen Beets, two interns. I met them twice. I found out that that also wouldn't work. They were very much controlled by Deirdre. We discussed the possibility that they would help me with recording interviews, but that turned out to be difficult to plan. Nevertheless I was interested in their progress, not least for my own interest in the Moordam force. I bumped into the interns regularly. So I spoke to most of the interns of the breakthrough team on a regular basis. Actually I envied them. They could immerse in the police force, while I had my consulting job. When we met there were the usual corridor chats, but informally we exchanged experiences, literature ideas, and when they finished I tried to get hold of their theses. We talked about their research approach, and I took a special interest in Cleo's project because she used a narrative approach.

I never met anyone saying that the interns' research and, more particular, my own research, was bollocks. The frontliners were always interested when we met. They did, however find it difficult to meet their commitments. The interns and I reported to the FIT Police project team or the involved coppers. It disappointed me, though, that after I had gained access through HRM manager Van Gulik, *top management hardly showed any interest in my research*. Except for Alex, I hardly spoke to any high rank manager apart from their occasional contribution to FIT Police meetings. On the other hand, I reasoned that didn't matter to me because I wanted to focus on frontliners.

After that first meeting, I got the chance to observe several breakthrough meetings but I had to wait five months before I got the opportunity from the project leaders to 'administer' my monitor instrument. It was certainly no 'zero measurement'.

For the first monitor-moment, I had written a protocol. The protocol asked for a serious time-slot. Explaining all the instruments. Giving instructions. Offering the time to fill in questionnaires and formats. While preparing the meeting, project leaders of the Forward Innovation Team couldn't and wouldn't guarantee me the time I needed. Instructing the Team members in handling

the 360 degree, directing the *left hand/right hand method* and having them filling in the formats and prime them in filling in the *Dynamics of learning* instrument. I didn't like that part of the show. Perhaps I felt too dependent on the goodwill of the project team allowing me an entry. Perhaps I didn't want to take the risk of setting them against myself, begging for time. Perhaps I thought the time of the Forward Innovation Team too valuable to keep whining about the protocol. So I gave in. I allowed people to fill in formats and questionnaires at home.

In the course of the project, I decided to focus on the development of the learning environment. So I tried to hold on to the *Dynamics of learning* instrument. I stopped with the 360 degree. In addition to that I also stopped with the left hand / right hand format. The only idea I had was that this instrument would provide me with an insight into alternatively the defensiveness or the productiveness of the strategies of the group members. But I had not designed an approach to process the results. After a while, new problems arose. The second time the response on the Dynamics of learning was too low. There were also lots of changes in the Forward Innovation Team. So I finally decided to leave it at observation, modest participation, interviews, documents, and the material I gathered with the first 'monitor'. In 2002, I got in touch again with a former teacher, Hugo Letiche. He had become Professor at the University of Humanistics. We talked about my project. He listened, but also brought in ideas, perspectives and other alternative research approaches. My first supervising professor encouraged my transfer to Letiche. He saw that I got energy from it. In the conversations with Letiche I kept playing with the idea to extend my research to the field of education and health care. Mainly because I felt indebted to my organisation. Letiche urged me to focus on a police organisation, and left it open whether I would include other cases from the police, and from the educational world, and the health care sector.

In those days I began to read ethnographic studies like Julian Orr's *Talking to machines*¹⁸ and Latour's more philosophic *Aramis, or the love of technology*¹⁹. I came across Orr through the community of practice hype that was emerging. Orr worked in the same academic community as Wenger, the community of practice guru.

I joined the 'Doctor of Business Administration' (DBA) programme in 2003. The DBA is a part-time programme designed for working professionals with an interest in the fields of the humanisation of work, complexity theory, organisational anthropology, training and innovation and 'meaning in organisation'; and with an active interest in innovative techniques for pursuing these themes. In the organisational change programme, social theory and qualitative research methodology are the foci. It incorporates taught modules, structured supervision and peer support. Participating in the DBA put an end to my feelings of loneliness. It allowed me to retain an identity as a practi-

tioner while sharing in the discussion and debate of an interdisciplinary university department and I felt that I became a recognised partner in a community of inquirers. At a DBA conference in February 2004, I met Steve Brown. After discussing a narrative approach I felt that I was on track again. The central question of the thesis was reformulated: "What can be done to develop learning practices of frontline workers?"

The DBA brought a more philosophical and reflexive flavour to my study. I started to read other ethnographic studies like Annemarie Mol's *The body multiple*²⁰ and I revisited narrative theory. In the eighties I was introduced to the work of Mieke Bal. Now I came across Czarniawska, Boje and Gabriel.

In the meantime, I had been following the FIT Police project. Over the years, I became familiar with the frontline workers in the breakthrough team. Especially with the first participants and even more with active members such as Bert Kemp, Felix Nevel and Bob Gabriel. All experienced coppers. We would meet in a secretarial office, in the vicinity of the coffee machine or in the passageway of a police station. We would have a corridor chat in the cafeteria, in the frayed moments of a meeting or when we bumped into each other in the streets. We would talk about the breakthrough team, the projects, their functioning and their own ambitions and achievements.

As I gained access and the project went along, I was surprised by the openness of the police force. They didn't ask me to sign a document in which the use of information is restricted. Nor did they ever try to curtail my freedom in observing the project. And I was never asked to leave a room because the subject in discussion was classified. But there were employees becoming uneasy when I came too close to them. I offered guidance to project leaders of subprojects. The intention was twofold. I both wanted to facilitate but also get a closer look at subprojects. The project leader, Harry Damen, a member of the FIT Police Think tank, had taken upon him was the so called 'Guided tours project'. The goal was to have volunteers from outside the police to guide tours in the police station of the metropolitan police. But the important parallel goal was to get more experience with volunteers. The workgroup consisted of police officers, a communication officer and a staff member of the human resources department. I observed two meetings, both of more than an hour, wherein five people talked about the organisation of a guided tour and scarcely addressed the wider perspective. Halfway through the meetings, I thought to myself: what a waste of time. I had a chat afterwards with Bob Gabriel, another member of the Think tank, He had also observed the meeting in the role of, what he called, stalker. He said that he had the same feeling. The other members must have had that feeling. But worse things happened. One of the members of the project team was an HRD specialist. When Harry brought up the training of volunteers, the HRD specialist suggested the possibility of getting training funded. Instead of offering to Harry to sort it out for the project, he gave Harry the address of the funding organisation and Harry wrote

it in his 'to do' list. Both Bob and I were dumbfounded. The man tricked Harry to cover his own work. What about breakthroughs?, I thought. After I had given Harry my feedback, I offered Harry some coaching. I had observed that he was the only active participant in the meeting. In my opinion, it was because he precooked the session too much and, by doing so, he created the opportunity for the others to minimise their work for the project. They let him have it all. But Harry kindly turned my offer down. There were also some employees who thwarted an interview with me. But I wasn't out to make judgments. I only wanted my observations to be a means of getting to know their learning practice, rather than imposing my own ideas. In October 2002, I organised an introduction to peer consultation. Five breakthrough members participated in the guided peer consultation session that followed.

I guess I developed the closest relation with Bob, I interviewed him four times. On one occasion in his home. He talked about the police force, the patterns he observed, the plans he had to improve things, he let me in on his career plans and he talked about his kids and even asked my advice. I could always approach him to look at the things I wrote.

Another thing that troubled me during the project was the projects of the masters students. It seemed that they had all the time in the world to observe, to study documents, to do interviews and to present their presentations to the project team. I found that difficult. I was jealous of course. Some of the pieces were really interesting. I asked for copies and they gave them to me. The moment that I write this I'm still working on my research report and the FIT Police project organisation is eighteen months behind us.

Early 2003, there was a so-called 'Ink stain' meeting. It was held in the evening, at a very dull and rather unsuitable conference centre. An Indonesian rice table, in a typical Dutch style, framed the meeting.

The idea was to get colleagues, management and supporting departments inspired by the progress of the Forward Innovation Team and get new impulses by brainstorming with the participants.

We gathered in a basement of the conference centre. There the sub-group charged with a knowledge management project asked people to fill a chart to explicit their knowledge and skills. After that we were asked into a theatre of the conference centre. I found that very awkward. The theatre hall wasn't suited to discussing ideas with other people. Patrick Dixon, a famous tennis player, coach and radio host chaired the programme. This man turned out to be freelance consultant. He was asked to chair several Forward Innovation Team meetings. I was sceptical about his contribution and still am. Not because he did a bad job. I don't think I could have done it better, but I also don't think that I would have done it worse. I'm sure I felt annoyed because at the start of the project they wouldn't hire me as a consultant.

Firstly, Alex made one of his speeches. I noticed that he couldn't inspire me anymore. I didn't hear anything new. After we sat this through, leaders of subprojects were asked to present the progress of their projects. It must have been difficult for some of them. Standing on the stage of a rather large theatre hall. There were questions and discussions. Although there were special problems, for instance I sat in one of the front rows and the presenters were 2 meters above me, there were some lively discussions. After the presentations we could brainstorm and raise ideas for the projects before us. I don't remember spectacular ideas that came out of the brainstorms, and I rarely noticed that members of the Forward Innovation Team referred to the ink stain meeting. In October 2003, I mailed a third questionnaire 'Dynamics of learning' to the members of the Forward Innovation Team. I wanted to deploy that instrument because I had agreed with the subsidiser to monitor the project. The response was low, so I wrote a letter to remind them.

December the 4th 2003, there was an evaluation meeting. The project had come to an end. The chief constable who commissioned the project had retired earlier that year. Alex had left Moordam to take a project for the Urbanville Police Corps a few months before. Deirdre's contract came to an end. Claire had become commissioner and was now in charge of the policy department of the chief constable.

It wasn't sure how the lessons of the project and the ongoing project would be locked in the organisation. We were invited to the Urbanville police training centre. Here two coppers of the Urbanville innovation network, held a workshop on creative thinking. I thought this could be worthwhile if it would be transferred to the working environment of the coppers, but who was taking responsibility for that? No one. The second part of the programme was an excursion. We were guests of the police station in the centre of Urbanville; there we got a presentation by the pickpocket team. They showed their ropes to the members of the Forward Innovation Team. After they illustrated pickpocket techniques using videos and talked about their strategies to turn in these thieves, we ventured out into the streets of Urbanville, guided by the Urbanville colleagues.

It was already after dark when we returned to the headquarters of the metropolitan Police force. We had a meal in the canteen. Then Alex led us to his new workplace, also one of the workplaces of the innovation network of the Urbanville force. That office is quite different from your normal police station. It was a modern office, with workstations, nice seating, cubes and a big couch. A place to lounge.

Alex, already full of his new assignment, held a short farewell speech, thanked the members, bucked them up for the future, and talked about his new project. I reminded the members of the Forward Innovation Team to send me the 'Dynamics of learning' questionnaires and thanked them for their cooperation. Deirdre wrapped the meeting up by laying out the possibilities of the following up of the project. Did it interest the Team members? I don't know.

I think they hit the bars after the meeting. I went home, because I had an early start the next morning.

I interviewed Alex again in February 2004. The FIT Police project was ended. He had made a changeover to a new project leadership with the Urbanville Police force. It was a different conversation to the first time. It seemed that I had gained his trust. This time it wasn't necessary to ask questions to get him talking. He started before I pushed the button of my tape recorder.

My relation with the FIT Police project had developed over 30 months. In the beginning they accepted me as an observer, no more. After a while I was asked to contribute with professional ideas for instance to facilitate a meeting.

Finally some of the coppers, key figures like Bob, and the project leaders took me into their confidence. The relationship with Alex became closer also. In the beginning he hardly spoke with me, kept me at a distance. In the first interview I had with him I had the impression that he was irritated, that I wasted his time. Later he started to ask me for feedback. In the last interview I got the impression that he opened up. Or was he using me to get back at his former fellow managers of the Moorland force?

With all research, there comes a time when field research needs to be terminated. For me the termination of the FIT Police project was a moment to think about ending the field research. In the final session I said goodbye to the members of the Think tank. With some key figures such as Alex, Deirdre, Claire and Bob I organised a final interview to wrap it up.

In February 2004, I talked with Steve Brown about the case I was studying. His response was that, from my account, at least five different stories emerged. I hadn't looked at it that way yet. But I found it an interesting way to look at the case. Indeed I became excited, because it made me think of *Rashomon*, one of my favourite movies and Akutanawa's story *In a grove*, on which the movie is based. Between February 2004 and June 2005, I wrote several different stories to capture my experiences. I saw it as my task in the first place as a naturalistic one, to describe learning practices. Furthermore I wanted to take a critical position. Critical towards mainstream HRD research, critical towards the actors in the case I studied and critical towards myself. Although I don't have the illusion that I produced a work of literary quality, I was inspired by the naturalistic, autobiographical and multiperspectival novels I read before and after engaging in this study. Fine literature, research literature and supervisors played an important role in developing a way to reconstruct the case.

3. Deirdre

I met Deirdre and Claire again in the late summer of 2001 to discuss the proposal I had written. This time The Palace had been exchanged for a Moorland police force office building. We sat down in a conference room. There was no daylight. It was a dark, colourless, and lifeless room. I heard no sounds. It was deathly quiet. It looked as if the FIT Police project was the only inhabitant of the building. Just as they were the only inhabitants of The Palace. ... but the magic touch of the old cinema has gone, I said to myself..

Deirdre and Claire started talking about the project enthusiastically. It had taken off. Throughout the corps, policemen were asked to participate in the FIT Police project. There had been a meeting in The Palace. A group of about twenty people had applied. I was sorry that I had missed the meeting in The Palace, that I hadn't had the opportunity to invite myself.

"We are in the middle of the assessment procedure, these days," Deirdre explained.

"And we are trying to match people, teams and projects. Therefore we use two assessment instruments"

She asked if I was acquainted with the 'Papi test' and the 'Belbin approach'? I nodded yes.

Actually, I knew nothing more of the Papi test then that it was a questionnaire leading to a personality profile. Later I learned from the Internet that a man named Dr. Max Kostick had developed the test in the sixties and that it helps to provide an idea of strengths and areas of development in workplace.

But I couldn't find proper references. I was familiar with the Belbin team approach from literature²¹, I had used it in my own work and I had recently read a reflective article about the Belbin teamrole approach, in which the author concluded that it is a useful model provided that a person is not strait-jacketed in a certain role and is allowed to be authentic²².

"Now we are also seeking MD trainees to lead these innovative teams for the first innovation projects that are already coming up," Claire added.

She handed me some copies of PowerPoint slides.

It seemed to me that they had very clear ideas about organising the project, and it looked as if there were no possibilities to introduce alternative ideas. And I was kidding myself with the idea that they were interested enough in my ideas and in my approach to search for a win-win situation. Their win would be a follow up of their project in a research on human resources development. My win would be entry into their organisation, and the possibility to work with frontline workers, but under their direction. I was struggling with my ambition to combine business with this research. And I was struggling with the fact that I had agreed to a certain approach with the professor that was supervising me at the time. That idea was to follow one project group responsible for a

subproject within FIT Police without facilitation and to follow two other project groups with facilitation. One project group would be facilitated by coaching them to improve their personal learning capabilities and another group would be facilitated by improving their learning environment. Both Deirdre and Claire didn't seem happy with this experimental approach. But they were prepared to look with me for possibilities to make it work.

"But don't expect us to let you decide which project group is getting what kind of treatment" Deirdre warned. I thought I saw a triumphant look in her eyes. Furthermore it was clear that they were not willing to spend their budget on consulting fees. "We don't have the budget," the project leaders said with one voice.

I read more about the FIT Police project in a full colour brochure. The FIT Police project clientele was meant to come forward from within the organisation, or assignments would be sought. Members of the Forward Innovation Team were expected to take on the project leadership of subprojects. The FIT Police project organisation was set up to facilitate and coach the members of the Forward Innovation Team, to organise Think tank meetings and to direct the process of the FIT Police project. Twenty people from within the organisation were recommended to work for the Forward Innovation Team. Management agreed to second them to work for a year on the realisation of breakthroughs, alongside their job. The participants were expected to exchange their knowledge and experience and to participate in FIT Police projects.

After the project leaders selected the participants of the Forward Innovation Team, using an assessment procedure, they set up the Think tank, as a monthly meeting with the members of the Project Organisation. "The idea is to exchange experiences, to list ideas for dealing with police work differently, and to discuss the progress of ongoing projects", Deirdre explained when she invited me to my first Think tank. "The FIT Police Project Teams are formed with members of the FIT Police Think tank and colleagues with specific knowledge concerning the project, and trainees from the management development project".

The members of the FIT Police Think tank came together almost every month, as was planned. They discussed possibilities and ideas to improve police work, to start up projects and to follow up the progress of the FIT Police Project and its subprojects. Most of the time Alex and his team invited someone from outside the FIT Police Project to chair these Think tank meetings. I recall a phlegmatic, standoffish deputy chief constable. There was a detective chief inspector that rejected several innovative ideas as old wine in new bottles. 'Seen it, done it, and didn't work' was his mantra. But I also witnessed an involved deputy district commander who was actively asking questions. I observed a guest facilitator from another regional police force.

John DeLange, a district commander from near the region where I live. He chattered away about servant leadership. We exchanged business cards. Some meetings were lead by an outsider. They hired Patrick Dixon, former famous tennis player and team coach and now active as a radio host and consultant, several times.

“The project leaders of subprojects are being coached by us”, Deirdre told me when we talked about the competencies of the participants in the FIT Police project, “And the members of the Forward Innovation Team have all been offered a course in creative problem solving” she added. “That is a standard course, developed by some people from our regional force, with the help of a teacher from the Dutch Police Academy”. She turned round and reached for a glossy booklet on the desk behind her. She handed me the *Manual for problem-oriented working*. “The idea is that the members of the Forward Innovation Team learn how to approach a problem, learn how to develop a thorough solution, and that they improve the effectiveness of their thinking and acting. We see this programme as a step towards a learning organisation”.

The corps leadership approved of big FIT Police projects. The Project Organisation could take on small projects. The breakthrough box was established as a suggestion box to collect the many good and unnoticed ideas about the improvement of police work. Nine criteria were defined, which a project should meet to be a FIT Police project. Projects should: 1) enhance operational effectiveness on a structural basis, 2) be congruent with the priorities in the corps revitalisation programme, 3) be of regional importance, 4) meet a need, 5) contribute to behavioural change, 6) results in the development of (existing) ideas, 7) enhance regional cooperation, 8) fit into the integrated public safety policy and 9) is workable. A project always had to be commissioned by a line manager. Claire developed a flow-chart to specify the nature and the importance of every idea that might pop up.

As back office for the FIT Police project organisation there was a secretarial unit staffed with two secretaries and a unit of interns was formed for additional support. The interns were assigned with research projects, but they also lent a helping hand to the project and subprojects. Some of the trainees stayed on board after their traineeship was ended, for example as communication employee for the project. These trainees were always happy to chat with me about their projects. However an attempt to establish a more intense network fell through.

In the first year the Forward Innovation Team developed a way of working, discussed ideas, and started up projects. There was little communication about any successes. Yet the individual members of the FIT Police Think tank talked enthusiastically about the project in their networks. They praised the great

atmosphere in the Think tank meetings, the usefulness of the training courses, and teambuilding activities.

Several members of the Forward Innovation Team didn't get support for their activities from their own managers or their colleagues. Projects that came in the news were projects that weren't initially ideas from frontline workers but from the management. It turned out, that lots of ideas for breakthroughs were not new, and that somebody in the organisation, a department, or a project group, was already working on a similar project. Often with little progress.

Gradually, the meaning of the mission of the FIT Police project organisation became blurred. They set out to extend the operational effectiveness of the police force, break through bureaucracy and work in teams on big and small breakthroughs, which ease police work and provide civilians with a greater sense of safety. The project, all the subproject and the team members were aiming to transform the organisation. "But it was necessary to revise our mission statement", Deirdre said to me in the summer of 2003 because, "Especially in the first year, it was not clear what the members of the Forward Innovation Team did and what the project strived for. This led to aversion or even resistance against the FIT Police project. During the course of the project, the mission was restated as follows: 'Extend with the public the feeling of security by turning good innovative ideas into region wide breakthroughs. Not by reinventing the wheel in your own unit, but together, and alongside the day-to-day job, to increase the effectiveness of police work. For this, advantage is taken from the personal competences of police employees, in the streets, at the desks, but also behind the police station doors'." "This new mission statement led to more clarity in the rest of the organisation". Deirdre said with a rather self assured look on her face. "I think that the activities of the FIT Police project are better understood now", she declared.

In January 2004 I looked back with Deirdre at the projects. "I can say that there were several successful projects or projects that made a successful start", she underlined.

"The FIT Police project has come to an end, but some of the projects are still under construction. A good example is 'the Eye-catcher project'. Everybody is enthusiastic about this project", Deirdre began her run-down. The goal of the Eye-catcher project is to locate fugitive suspects, missing persons, and disturbed people, with the help of bus drivers. "It turns out that these people can be located and taken in much faster with the help of our regional bus drivers. The good experiences with bus drivers, for instance with the surveillance in and around night busses, using their radio-net, make the regional bus company a reliable partner. In the night hours, there are 350 busses operational in the Moorland region and they have an excellent radio network. I expect the project to be operational early 2004. I think it serves as a perfect model for of the FIT Police spirit, and for breakthrough thinking.

We nominated it for our internal Innovation Trophy 'The Eric Meyer Trophy'. They named it after their former chief constable.

"Another successful project was of course 'the Boor line'". The goal of the Boor line is to enhance the operational effectiveness of the Moorland force, and to enhance traffic safety through a tit-for-tat strategy. The project-idea is to stimulate all authorised police employees to fine rude drivers through using their mobile phone. On duty, and on leave. For the project to be successful, procedures had to be simplified. "The project is now being exported to other regional police forces," Deirdre proudly proclaimed. Meanwhile I pushed my tape recorder in here direction.

"Some of the subprojects like the Macho project, raised eye brows and discussions, even in the national press and on television. The main goal of the project was to establish cooperation between the police; the tax authorities and the social services, to seize youngsters and take away illegally obtained possessions. A derived goal was to humiliate these offenders and, through this, dam the infectious nature of their behaviour. In addition, to strive for cooperation. The thought was to reduce crime rates by other means than normal police work. Young and successful criminals have money, cars, motorcycles, and electronic gadgets. For young kids, it is tempting to copy the behaviour of these macho show offs, and follow a criminal path themselves. The problem is that it is often difficult to make a case against the criminals. But when the criminals cannot account for their possessions it is possible that the tax authorities confiscate their possessions, so that the machos suddenly are shown off as fools. The idea is to create a kind of modern pillory. We got off easily with the first case we selected for the project. Social detectives quietly dealt with the first macho on our list. The second case was a fizzle. But that one got a lot of attention in the press. Everything was prepared. With a tax assessment in his pocket, his Porsche would be towed away, but at the very last moment the tax authorities got cold feet and pulled out in the middle of the action". She sighed, but braced herself up.

"I'm convinced that these two cases proved that this approach has potential". She said. And even more passionately she added, "The project will be continued under the supervision of an experienced superintendent. Luckily the consultations with the tax authorities started again".

Pointing at the list of the main projects, Deirdre stressed that there were other projects into which members of the Forward Innovation Team put a lot of effort. "Good examples that struck the eye were the 'Local bobby site', the 'GRUTHOKKER approach', the 'Guided tours', the 'Photo team' and the 'SARA project'.

The Local bobby site or LB-site started as a knowledge base for local bobbies on the intranet. The site developed into an information site for basic policing at the same time. So they changed the name.

I think the GRUTHOKKER project was a good example of reviving forgotten

police tasks to achieve current goals. GRUTHOK is an acronym for: Goudsmid (Goldsmith); Rijwielhandelaar (Bicycle dealer); Uitdrager (Junk shop keeper); Tagrijn (Trader in old shipping tools, scrap metal, ropes); Horlogemaker (Watchmaker), Opkoper (Wholesale buyer), Kashouder (Sells gold and silver in the market). Controlling the registers of traders in second hand goods, the so-called GRUTHOKKERS, to trace fences and their clientele, is a forgotten police task. The main idea is to deploy personnel from the Arrest Team on call, and in extra hours that resulted from the lengthening of the working week from 36 to 38 hours”.

Main FIT Police projects

Project	Goal	Other remarks
Macho project	Cooperation between the police, the tax authorities and the social service to seize youngsters and take away their illegally obtained possessions. A derived goal was to humiliate these offenders and through this diminish the contagiousness of their behaviour.	Attention of National TV and National Newspapers
Eye-catcher project	To locate fugitive suspects, missing persons and disturbed people with the help of bus drivers.	Nominated for an internal innovation trophy
LB-site	Knowledge base for local bobbies on the intranet	Being developed into a information side for basic policing
Guided Tours	PR task, to brush up the image of the police force. Another goal of this project is to interest people to do volunteer work for the police force, beginning with Guided tours	
Boor line	The goal of the Boor line is to enhance the operational effectiveness of the Moorland force and to enhance traffic safety through a tit-for-tat strategy. The project-idea is to stimulate all authorised police employees to fine rude drivers by a simple mobile telephone call. On duty and on leave.	Exported to other regional police forces.
SARA project	The SARA project aimed at employing disabled people within the Moorland force. It started with one colleague.	The aim is to extend it to include all districts and divisions.
GRUTHOKKER approach	Controlling the registers of traders in second hand goods, the so-called GRUTHOKKER approach is a forgotten police task. The main idea is to deploy personnel from the Arrest Team on call and in extra hours that resulted from the lengthening of the working week from 36 to 38 hours.	Gruthok is an acronym for: Goudsmid (Goldsmith); Rijwielhandelaar (Bicycle dealer); Uitdrager (Junk shop keeper); Tagrijn (Trader in old shipping tools, scrap metal, ropes); Horlogemaker (Watchmaker), Opkoper (Wholesale buyer), Kashouder (Sells gold and silver in the market).
Photo team	The main goal of this project is to develop quality criteria for the secretarial departments within the units, through internally benchmarking.	A derived goal was increasing the awareness of the secretaries of the importance of their own role by peeking at other secretaries through they eyes of the citizen.
PR-Campaign Departitioning	A PR-campaign was started after the project team became aware that there was a communication problem.	With appealing, waggish and provoking posters, gadgets and cartoons the Forward Innovation Team passed on its message

Document with an overview of FIT Police projects

Deirdre seemed unstoppable and she continued her list. "Although there is little capacity to organise Guided tours for the community, it is thought an important PR task, to brush up the image of the police force. Another goal of this project is to interest people to do voluntary work for the police force. The main goal of the Photo team project was to develop quality criteria for the secretarial departments within the units. They form an important front office for the citizens. The idea was to benchmark internally. A derived goal was increasing the awareness of the secretaries of the importance of their own role by peeking at other secretaries through the eyes of the citizen. The SARA project aimed at employing disabled people within the Moorland force. It started with one colleague. The aim was to extend it to include all districts and divisions. And then there was of course our communication process, to make the force aware of the need to 'de-partition' the organisation, and to carry out the breakthrough thinking. We started a communication campaign when we became aware that there was a communication problem. Our progress and achievements were not passed on to the corps properly. With appealing, waggish and provoking posters, gadgets, and cartoons, we tried to get across our message. There were other successful projects that didn't attract attention. For example, the neighbourhood networks for local bobbies, the readiness and ability training, and smaller projects to improve frontline work. The idea behind the neighbourhood networks was to facilitate local bobbies to ease the communication with their contact persons, by means of their e-mail software. The thought behind the extra facilities for the readiness and ability training sessions was that there are colleagues who don't deploy violence appropriately, because they use too little or too much violence. The central idea is that a proper appearance and mentality can prevent the need for violence. The smaller projects to improve frontline work were aimed at simplifying frequently used forms, acquiring information about the possibilities and implementations of new mobile data terminal systems, and the use of UV lights to detect counterfeit money". After a pause, as if she has to gasp for air, Deirdre continued. "Other projects are still running, projects that didn't get much attention. There is a pilot project using the information system of a neighbouring region. After a project to make reports possible via the Internet was superseded, at least two units looked into other possibilities to make the police more accessible to the citizens using reports on appointment. The possibilities of digital cameras were being investigated, for instance to share photographic material and to use them in briefings. The idea to network the shattered capacity of municipal officials and police employee with an investigative authority to establish a municipal surveillance system came from another regional force. In Moorland this could concern about 100 people. It turned out that there were already plans to transfer this idea to Moorland. Ideas have been developed to counteract the unsafe feelings, especially among the elderly. One of the ideas is to install cash dispensers in police stations.

This project also looks into the possibility of a partnership with a national banking organisation, that has already developed plans to improve the safety of their clients. Furthermore, the possibility to use the Boor line system to report other information has also been looked into”.

After a sip of her water, Deirdre is on again.

“The status of other projects like the Pollen project, the Solo surveillance project and the Violence protocol are unclear. And whatever happened to the idea to develop a protocol concerning violence against colleagues?”

The goal of the Pollen project is to frustrate the business of Marijuana growers. The idea is to pollinate cannabis plants by fanning pollen in areas where plantations are suspected. The Solo-surveillance project looked into the conditions and contra-indications of solo-surveillance. Furthermore there was desire for the implementation of a regional violence protocol.

“At least one project deserves revitalisation”. Deirdre emphasised, “That is the idea to develop an electronic suggestion box for improvements and innovations”

“And, some projects were abandoned”. Deirdre admitted, “Like a project to make tele-working possible. The Automation department let us know that it wasn’t possible to make backups during the night. It wasn’t possible to make photos from technical investigations immediately available. The technical solution was too expensive. And a very important project for frontline workers was the development of a start procedure that facilitated the simultaneous renewal of passwords, was ceased. The synchronic renewal of passwords is a great nuisance, but the technical solution was too heavy on the computer system. Other projects were dismissed because there was already a solution for a problem, there were too little resources, or because of bigger future plans”. Finally, she sighed, “There were all kinds of small initiatives we’ve never heard of again”

The Forward Innovation Team gave about a dozen students a traineeship and a chance to study the project. Some of the student projects were very practical and lead to a communication plan for the FIT Police project and the development of a newsletter. Others did research projects in which they evaluated the FIT Police project organisation. It was Deirdre’s task to coach these students.

At the start of my own research project I tried to team up with two of the interns, Cleo Brown and Helen Beets. Next to our regular corridor chats I made an appointment with them to explore the possibility to work together. Once, after a hard day’s work, I met them in a café at the station square in Duketown. We were all stopping over. They were travelling from Moordam to Shiretown. I was in a rush between a client in Marquisate and Moordam station. I asked them about their study, Business Administration at the University of Deltacity, talked with them about their focus on organisational learning, and showed

interest in their theoretical orientations. I talked about my experience as a frontline worker, as a HRD consultant, and the management writers that had inspired me. After their introduction to the Moorland police force we discussed the possibility of them helping me with recording interviews. That turned out to be too difficult to plan. Nevertheless I was interested in their progress. We made an appointment on one other occasion. I had spent a weekend at the coast, and was still camping near Shiretown. We met on Monday morning in the outdoor café, of a chic seaside hotel. The girls told me that they had interviewed more than fifty coppers and their managers. We talked about their research approach. Cleo looked at the FIT Police project from a narrative perspective. Helen was evaluating the project using theories of the learning organisation.

In addition to Helen and Cleo's projects, I came across the work of two other students. Jacky Tee evaluated the FIT Police project using the Dutch version of the EFQM model. And Francesca Cruz, who looked for possibilities to improve the Moorland police force as a learning organisation. She used Swieringa's metaphors of a travelling and a trekking organisation; Senge's concept of five disciplines for a learning organisation; and Beer's Viable System Model. The project team of the FIT Police project used the work of Cleo Brown, Jacky Tee and Francesca Cruz in its evaluation of the project and in the development of ideas for the future of innovation.

I had never met Jacky, but one of the secretaries was kind enough to send me her report. I had asked her, as soon as I heard, what kind of study she had carried out. The INK model is the Dutch EFQM model that she used to evaluate the FIT Police project. In this model nine important aspects are distinguished: Leadership, employees, strategy & policy, means, processes, appraisal by employees, appraisal by clients, appraisal by society and end results. Jacky argues in her report that the problem with the FIT Police project is that there weren't any SMART formulated goals. She sees, in connection with the FIT Police project organisation, four aspects that are important: Strategy and policy, leadership, processes, and employees. From the literature she develops SMART formulated goals for strategy and policy, leadership, processes, and employees. Jacky concludes that, concerning strategy and policy the FIT Police project organisation hadn't made a difference because the goals were already met, and that, concerning leadership, the FIT Police project invoked a discussion about leadership. Jacky sees positive effects in the thinking about leadership, although there were no changes in leadership style. She also sees a positive influence on communication and negotiation skills, via the cross-functional teams, peer-review and training. Concerning processes, Tee sees positive changes in the field of evaluation and appraisal, coordination, communication, teamwork and vertical information. But the most dramatic changes, were found in connection with the competence development of employees, especially of those involved with the FIT Police project. Whilst

working in the FIT Police project, police employees could experience the possibilities of another style of working and learning. They were able to develop their skills. On the five aspects of the INK model, according to Jacky, changes were limited to the FIT Police project itself. In the end, she concludes that there was almost no transfer from the FIT Police project to the standing organisation. The reason, according to her, could be the difference between the dominant travel metaphor of the organisation, and the dominant trekking metaphor of the FIT Police project organisation, and the unchanged organisational structure.

Next to the two appointments together with Helen and Cleo, I talked to Cleo several times. I was especially interested in her narrative approach. Cleo paints the culture within the Moorland Regional Police Force by telling three stories: One story told by an outsider in interaction with different employees of the police force, and two other stories each told by an employee with a particular attitude towards working problems and projects like FIT Police. In her analysis, Cleo describes three worlds. These are every day police work, the FIT Police project organisation, and management. She analyses these worlds and concludes that there are different configurations at play. These configurations are directed to either varying configurations, changing configurations, or fixating configurations. On the basis of her analysis, she concludes that the three different worlds don't allow different contexts to enter. Because employees don't get into contact with other worlds, there is little understanding for each other's points of view. The FIT Police project organisation, finds itself in-between the changing and fixating configurations. By creating its own breakthrough world, the FIT Police project only reinforced the "island culture". In addition to homogenising processes, like non-committal attitudes, risk avoiding behaviour, and parochialism, there are also heterogenising processes such as coaching leadership, a hands-on mentality and open communication to one another. Cleo provides three scenarios for the FIT Police project organisation to handle the differences and similarities. One is a conventional scenario where the FIT Police project organisation evolves into a conventional policy making body, in an organisation where people continue to solve problems from their own world. In the second scenario the Forward Innovation Team evolves into a Change lab where employees, in a safe environment, learn whilst playing with difficult, knotty problems and new perspectives. In a third scenario the organisation forms project teams wherein variety is secured and people from different worlds work together to solve problems in the real world.

Using the theories of Swieringa, Senge, and Beer, Francesca Cruz concludes that, in order to become more of a learning organisation, the Moorland Regional Police Force should combine travelling and trekking. With a clear goal in mind, the Moorland force should start an integrated de-bureaucratisation

process; reducing complexity in order to create space for change, and adapt organisation goals to developments in the environment, in society, to enhance the vitality of the organisation.

Francesca thinks that this will lead to a better fit between innovation and the process oriented approach of everyday police work, and will lead to the creation of ideas to adapt the organisation to developments in the environment.

At the end of the project's term, the project team wrote an evaluation report. It stemmed from 30 months experience with the breakthrough projects, actual developments such as result oriented contracts and cost saving programmes, visitation reports and the studies by Tee, Brown and Cruz.

I got the document from Bob Gabriel, one of the first participants in the project. When the FIT Police project was in its final phase, Bob took over Claire's tasks as project leader. By that time Claire had made a career-move and was promoted to commissioner and appointed as manager of the chief constable's policy department. The FIT Police project remain her responsibility, Bob carried out all the run-down work. In the evaluation report, a four page document without a nice wrapper, it was concluded that the FIT Police project organisation invested in the quality of innovation and that this process was fruitful, but that there was no acceptance in the organisation. Regarding the management formula Effectiveness = Quality X Acceptation ($E=QA$), the effectiveness of the project was too low.

The evaluation report suggests a slim but muscled scenario for the road to innovation pioneered by the FIT Police project organisation. The authors gave eight recommendations. I have saved a copy of the conclusions.

Keeping a FIT Police

- 1 Form an expert innovation group consisting of the corps leadership, the head of the communication department and one or more process managers. This expert group must be expected to be able to direct regional innovation top-down.
- 2 Establish a quality-circle innovation that supports all process managers.
- 3 Ensure that in innovative projects, there is a qualified project leader, coaching, enough time, and a structured approach.
- 4 Develop innovations on a small scale basis, in a limited geographic region.
- 5 Communicate ideas for innovation and improvement through the process manager and make use of steering groups and policy employees.
- 6 Assure that the project bureau of the control department supports innovation, improvement projects, and project leaders.
- 7 Report from the quality circle innovation to the top manager responsible for innovation, about the acceptance or non-acceptance of innovation ideas by process managers.
- 8 Ensure room for innovative ideas formed in the 'free space' of the organisation.

Document with eight recommendations to consolidate the FIT Police project

I don't know what happened to the recommendations of the FIT Police project team in the Moorland police force, because I ended my research. I do know that the project team fell apart. In September 2003 the project manager announced that he was going to pursue his career as a project manager for the Police force in Urbanville. At the end of 2003 Deirdre Ibsen didn't get the assurance that her contract was going to be prolonged. So she left the police force. I heard she had made a splendid career. In December 2003 the corps leaders decided not to prolong the project organisation, and transferred the responsibility of innovation to process managers. These are line managers, who have – besides their operational responsibility, a specific area for special attention. Bob Gabriel - one of the champions of the FIT Police project and temporary project leader - handed over the ongoing projects and returned to the drugs squad in March 2004.

4. Alex

Late summer was summery. But you couldn't tell in the dark, draughty alley. I found the address I was looking for halfway down the shaded street. Burning to get an opportunity to do research in the frontline, my heart beat fast as I rang the doorbell. Claire came to open the door for me. I planned to meet with Deirdre and her colleague Claire for the second time. They had let me know that the project team moved to another address. Now I was in an almost empty office building in Moordam. The lift didn't work. So we took the stairs. On the second floor I met project manager Alex for the first time. He came climbing out of the lift shaft. Obviously there was a technical problem. He'd tried to fix it. I looked for an opportunity to have a brief chat with him, but he was in a hurry.

Alex Vaharam, was project manager of the FIT Police project organisation. He is of small stature, but a real strapper, a he-man, an action man. He plays ice hockey and is a Harley Davidson freak. He looks well trained. The coppers in the force told me that Alex is one of the few high rank officers who always carries his duty weapon. Vaharam is of Hindustan origin and proudly presents himself as a 'foreigner', although he hates the concept of what he calls 'Foreignasia'. Because it doesn't exist, he says. He talks fast, as if he has no time to lose. Vaharam has worked his whole life for the Dutch police. "I'm in love with the police," he says. "Reality TV about the police is so popular. I'm happy to be in it for real". But he also criticises the effectiveness of the police, is critical about policies concerning public safety, and often provokes conflicts with colleagues, or even a government minister. After I met commissioner Alex a couple of times, I read an article about him in the Moordam Courier, the regional newspaper. I saved a cutting.

Commissioner action man and the shared sandwich

Starting as a police constable, Vaharam made a lightning career in the Moordam Regional Police Force. As a little platoon commander, just out of the cradle but vigorous, he made himself unpopular with the police officers in Veendyk. Because of squatter's riots in the early eighties the atmosphere in this city was explosive. So-called 'autonomics' liberated goods from shops in the city centre. They made a sport of pinching the caps from the heads of policemen. The instruction was that officers shouldn't worry about that. There were extra police caps at headquarters, so nobody was to leave for home without a cap. In his first briefing Vaharam called that the first one to nick a cap from an officer's head would pursue his way without two front teeth. This bravura was taken ill of him. Vaharam became in command of the criminal intelligence office and scored a success as a chief inspector, with the round up of a Turkish

Kurdish drug gang of more than 800 men. For that he installed an investigation unit in Turkey and for eighteen months he travelled between Moordam and Ankara. Moordam became an important transit port for heroine in Western Europe and the drug barons lived in the 'Flower Neighbourhood', a problem area in Moordam.

In 1995 he had become commander of a district with both elite and disadvantaged areas. He was confronted with riots in several neighbourhoods, where the population came in action because people were sick and tired of drug crime. With force he had to recover a problem area where police officers didn't dare to be on patrol on their own.

Vaharam got nation-wide publicity several times. In 1999 twenty mayors were in favour of legalising soft drugs. He opposed to this. 'Children of ten and eleven years old are blowing their heads of,' he said, 'and because of the rising concentrations of THC a joint can now be seen as a hard drug'. Public opinion fell all over him. People from drug care brushed away his arguments. Vaharam, portfolio holder drug crime, and member of a crime advisory board to the heads of police council, was 'talking bollocks'. But the drug expert of a metropolitan police force supported him. In 2002 the minister responsible for integration policy, called him on the carpet after Vaharam had said that the minister wasn't well informed about the background of the problems with problem youth from minority groups. Earlier he had a brawl with this minister when he rejected a plan of Vaharam to pull foreign youngsters out of drug crime. He also criticised the changing public opinion about Islam. 'Suddenly we are allowed to cry out loud that Islam is dangerous or retarded. 'Rubbish!' he says. 'Bashing Islam isn't going to get us anywhere. We have to polish our society. We became free and wealthy by imposing certain rules on the game. And I want to share my sandwich with others. We are rich enough! But I won't give up civil rights and liberties'.

In 2001 Vaharam saw the FIT Police project organisation as a revolutionary way to innovate police work. In this project talented officers were supposed to tackle problems with public safety. To keep in contact with frontline police work, Vaharam applied for a job as an ordinary police officer. For two years now, he is, once a week, a whole day on patrol, in one of the most problematic neighbourhoods in Urbanville. 'Managing the FIT Police project is a fun thing to do, but it was steering from behind a desk. I missed the streets. As a district commander I loved being among the street coppers, joining in on a bust, or some other action. So I applied for a job in a big city, as a regular police officer. During almost two years I was on duty for surveillance in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, full of criminality. Most policemen stay in the heat for a couple of years, but

then they look for a quieter job. So my new colleagues saw my coming with utter amazement. Which higher-up was such a fool as to do an odd job as a street copper'. But Vaharam enjoys street work. Hectic days, robbery, pickpockets, car theft, burglary or just surveillance. 'Coppers work themselves into a sweat, hardly any time for a break. But it can be done more effectively. When the thief is caught, a mountain of paper work awaits them, it takes surely ninety minutes before a police officer and his partner can be back on the street'. With the Urbanville coppers, the suspicion disappeared. It turned out that there was no snag. ♦

In the months after I met Alex for the first time, I ran into him on several occasions. Mostly at meetings of the Forward Innovation Team. There was hardly any more time than to exchange some courtesies. I regretted that. I looked for an opportunity to talk with him in depth. Eventually, after a few months, I had my first interview with him. We met when the project organisation had moved, once again. This time they got billeted in headquarters. Of course Alex's office looked different from the one in The Palace. However, the place was decorated with the same police chief's paraphernalia. That made it look perfectly ordinary now. At first he was obviously waiting to see which way the wind would blow. After I told him some more about myself, my interests and my project, he took off in his manner. Passionately lecturing and talking straight from the shoulder, forgetting to give the other some time to react. "The chief constable has commissioned me with the FIT Police project. My assignment was the pursuit of operational effectiveness. As I started out, I tried to get round bureaucratic obstacles as much as possible. I wanted to demonstrate that the innovations we strived for, really work and change the bureaucratic system. I didn't want to overthrow bureaucracy. I only wanted to remove the morbid growth of it". He sounded ardent and engaged talking about the project and his goals. He flashed me an investigative glance, as if to check whether I understood the nuance. "We have to intervene, otherwise the public won't understand what we're doing anymore. I had two important principles. The first being the most important. That was to take care that people at the bottom of the organisation understand the need for the operation. Culture will change when people get that. The second one was to make myself credible, reliable, and convincing, through small successes".

"Can you tell me more about the social reasons for the project?" I inquired. His face wrinkled as if he was uncomfortable, with the disturbance of my question. To explain the obvious, it was as if he felt bored with the question. But he caught on fast. "It is high time that we start changing. The public, has lost its faith in the

police. Citizens, who rightly or not, don't feel safe anymore, don't turn to the police any longer. We have to take criticism away by showing that we can organise ourselves efficiently and act effectively. When public safety is at stake, people always look –often with unjust reproaches by the way – at the police. It's our job to make it clear to the public what we are responsible for, what we can do, and what others can do. The police are out to regain authority, with the public and with our partners. That can be done, that has to be done. And we achieved progress. The readiness to report crimes to the police has increased, we have managed to improve safety in certain neighbourhoods".

"And are there internal reasons for the project?" I asked him.

"We have to stop passing responsibilities back and forth to parties in public safety," he answered.

"We have to put our heads together and ask ourselves what we want to achieve, and how we could do that together, what are the different roles to play, does that bring synergy and do we strengthen each other or are we counteracting each other? We have to do things more effectively or differently. We can no longer throw our problems over our partner's fence. We have to be careful not to degenerate in wish-wash. We have to change or else the public will lynch us".

Next, I probed "Is there enough innovative power to change the police organisation?"

He looked at me, and apparently assured, he nodded 'yes'.

"Because we want to change the police work and the police organisation from the inside," – he replied – "I'm happy that the level of police officers is raised. Earlier a basic education and some experience of life was enough. It was an exception when someone with a higher secondary education became a cop. Now we see coppers with a masters degree. We recruit differently, less people with a dependent attitude. We have started to change just because of that. We have reached the point where we can discuss the development of police work. Not how to catch more scoundrels but to fight criminality differently. Though the public isn't ready for that yet. I get headlines in the newspaper for solving a murder case. Not for the prevention of ten. With burglary it's the same thing".

He took a deep breath and looked at me to see if I was following, then he went on.

"I believe that changing the culture of the police force is a top down and bottom up process, but that the frontline workers are the key. Therefore we have to invest in the motivated, professional and innovative frontline workers. I call them the pullers. We never did that. We always invested in the obstructionists. In almost every civil service organisation I know, the leadership is trained in the motivation of employees. That costs a lot of energy. How do I avoid or take away resistance to change. Courses, skills training, personal talks meetings, appraisal systems. We have always rewarded the obstructionists. We forgot those who already came to your desk smiling. Resistance paid".

“How do you value the regional force as a learning environment?”, I continued
“There is enough motivation in our organisation to learn. I see that every day. Especially when there

is a calamity. But we can’t depend on the learning of a single employee, or on calamities. The thing is that we haven’t organised the learning in our organisation. And if you don’t know what to learn, then there you are, nothing happens. We have to secure the learning power and our creative strength. If we want to transform our organisation into a learning organisation we have to become transparent. The problem is we’re not used to that. That has to do with the fact that police work is done fairly autonomously: on street-level, on a regional level, and on every level in between. Although I see positive examples of people working together, we aren’t used to tying things together. On the other hand, this independence makes people creative. But if your colleague has no idea of the fantastic things you realised then that’s an opportunity lost for the organisation. Then there is the learning style of the policeman. That we can characterise as ‘seeing is believing’. If you can show in practice how new ideas can lead to success, then coppers will learn fast. We are doing-oriented and trouble shooters by nature. I’m certain that we have the competency to handle police work differently, if we could only stop to think differently before sweating ourselves. The organisation has to make clear that learning is imperative. We have to organise in a way that we invoke learning processes. We need thought and consideration in police work. We have to organise and facilitate critical reflection. I believe in the force from within. We spend barrels of money on outdoor organisations while we have the most advanced outdoor team under our own roof, the special squad”.

He rubbed his forehead while he built up his argument. With his body language he seemed to portray his utter amazement.

“Another example is the problem that, on the one hand, we aim to employ policeman and women from minority groups, and, on the other hand, they leave the force in large numbers. We bring in expensive consultants to ask simple questions, why they left. At the same time we don’t ask the hundreds of colleagues from different cultures to shed their light on the situation. They are inside, they don’t harp, and therefore we don’t talk to them”.

He paused, as if to emphasis his words. Then he concluded his exposition.

“Mind you, my assignment was more than the FIT Police project organisation alone. I had to realise a change in culture. The errand was not to come up with ten smart and effective tricks. For that you don’t need the rest of the organisation. The real trick is to have the organisation to come up with clever ideas itself. We employ loads of sharp people that have that thinking power. I’m not interested in models of organisations, in rakes. I’m interested in them and in the support they need”.

During the course of the project my relationship with Alex evolved. Next to exchanging customary civilities, after that first interview, he started to ask me

for feedback during the Think tank meetings. Halfway through the project, he participated in a meeting where I reported the preliminary results of my project.

Two years after we first met, I heard that Alex found a new job. I was driving home one day, as the newsreader of the national radio news announced Alex's transfer to Urbanville. Extraordinary, but it was no surprise. Alex knows how to play the press.

A few months later, on a December afternoon, I drove to the training centre of the Urbanville Police. I was invited to the last meeting of the Think tank. It was freezing cold. Outside the city there was a blanket of mist above the meadows. The trees were covered in white frost. Alex gave a warm welcome to the Moorland team innovators. He organised a meeting with some people of the Urbanville Innovation Network and arranged a field trip. The Think tankers talked with some colleagues from a pickpocket project and went on surveillance with them. Of course there was an enjoyable meal together and drinks afterwards. They invited me too. I joined the group for dinner in the personnel restaurant of the Urbanville police headquarters. Between the soup and the main course, I persuaded Alex to make an appointment for a closing interview.

I arranged my final interview with Alex about the same time as in Moordam the curtain seemed to have fallen on the FIT Police project. Monday February 16 showed the block-calendar in my toilet room. I had torn off the elapsed days from my 'page-a-day' above the washbasin before I left for Urbanville.

In February 2004 we met in the modern office space of the Urbanville police. The atmosphere between us felt different. A lot had happened since we talked for the first time. We'd been observing each other for 30 months. During that time I got the impression that gradually a mutual respect had grown.

Before I formally started the interview Alex began, as always, to talk.

"Yesterday I was at a regional meeting where I spoke for district commanders. For the forth time I have been invited by other regional forces to talk about the FIT Police project for district commanders. So far I have been getting lots of positive response. There's more enthusiasm for the FIT Police concept outside the Moordam force than inside. If the district commanders in my own force had talked about the project the way they did, it would have made a difference. I would have walked around with a happy face. The funny thing is that other regions adopt a lot of ideas and projects that were brushed aside in Moordam, and people tell me they get energy from working on these ideas and projects. The Boor line is a success in the Netherlands. When colleagues from other regions tell me that they use the concept with success then that does something to me. It gives me a feeling of pride. 30 months ago there was just an idea. If I hadn't been there, then there would have been no Boor line. I was part of the realisation process. I could have turned away from the FIT Police

project. I could have blocked the Boor line project, but I didn't. And you know what! In Moordam one of the corps managers has never fined someone on the spot using the Boor line. Out of principle. And just he is in charge of the Boor line, would you believe! When the FIT Police project started he assigned Bert Kemp to the Forward Innovation Team, because he had to deliver somebody, but announced at the same time that he didn't felt obliged to buy the results. We shut down the Macho line but Deltacity picked it up, Urbanville runs its own project, because they were infected by the idea from Moorland. They know of the project because we were collecting information about machos and explained about the project at the same time. The Pollen project was dismissed in Moordam. Deltacity freed a budget for it. The GRUTHOKKER project starts in other regions, whereas we thought it up. Now I look back on my native corps, where these ideas were born and where we took initiatives to make them work, and I see that they do the utmost to smother the subprojects and their outcomes. They did everything to cover up the tracks that led back to the FIT Police project. It's not that they say 'We've had it for a moment. We are weary of innovation for a while'. In fact they strangled it completely. Even the plans for a transfer organisation, that would have demanded 1.5 fte, were throttled. While the only purpose of it was to bring the running projects to a favourable end. That's strange when you consider that when I left, they were flooded with enthusiastic responses from the frontline. Bob told me that he didn't know what was coming at him. I said to him, 'I told you so, as soon as I take to my heels the project will lift off. Because then it isn't tied to a big shot anymore. There will be no longer the fear that it's for someone's personal fame and glory. They will give you the credits rather than a chief. For the district commanders you are no threat. That's how it works. So you have to cash in the results. But you know what. While the plans for a transfer organisation were approved nine months earlier, the top management suddenly pulled the plug. Out of the blue. Suddenly it was over. They said that the principles were locked in the organisation sufficiently, that they wanted to evaluate after a year and if necessary that they would consider a rerun of the project. I think that's the dumbest thing you can say! In the first place: you lose your credibility. In the second place: what would have been the costs? One and a half ft working on the implementation of all the good ideas, in a project approach. In my speech yesterday I explained that Moorland murdered the project, premeditated. If you ask me if I met my objectives, then I will say that that depends on what you consider that the objectives were. We said that we wanted a learning organisation. I think that we kindled enthusiasm in people, at the same time we screwed things up. Could I've done something, to do the first and to prevent the second? I don't know. I discussed that with district commanders yesterday. I don't know, I'm thinking that over. Could I have succeeded? When I started out, I knew it would be waging war. And why? I ran all kinds of innovative projects in my district. Spectacular projects, odd projects, cocky projects. When the police want to recruit new personnel, they come up with a

story that the police are a pedestal of our democratic society. Yackety-yak. That's interesting when you're fourteen! I started a project with the local council and the airborne brigade, and said that the police are firing guns, chasing, hanging out choppers. To the kids I said 'you can write a hundred letters but we won't recruit you, we will spot you, we only want toppers, wallies are not allowed'. We got lots of publicity, lots of spontaneity, it went like a bomb. But we were also very clear about our idea that once they were inside, after all that excitement and suspense, we would hold on to them and shape them. We wanted mounted police. Colleagues asked if we'd lost our minds. They told us that it would be best left alone. They claimed that my coppers would be shovelling and wheeling manure for six hours a day and would be on surveillance for only two. We thought of lease horses, not of mucking out stables. We rented them from a riding-school. Then everybody shouted that those horses weren't certified. So I had them certified by the KLPD^{iv}, and then I had a pool of certified horses at my disposal. To the riders, I said, 'If you like you may ride, but only in your own time'. People volunteered. My people weren't on the muck-heap. They were in their cars most of the week, and a few hours per week on horseback. A sick horse was replaced by the riding-school. Local authorities were enthusiastic and subsidised the project. That creativity bred bad blood in other districts. We got extra cars, while they had to turn them in. We bought bullet-proof vests, while their budgets ran dry. We rode horses while they hadn't got the money to fuel their patrol cars. I can imagine their grapes were sour. But my principle was that we would never profit at their expense. My colleagues in the corps management team often responded to my ideas as 'rubbish, hot air, we don't see the use of it, that won't work, it doesn't fit into our culture'. But hot air or not, fighting against cutbacks, that hot air delivered one hundred and fifty grand of subsidy for an anti-drug campaign. If other district commanders complained that they had redundant people, then I would shout 'send me eight of them, because I'm short of personnel'. The frontline workers in other districts grumbled of course. Then you can do one of two things. See to it that you manage it all the same, or react against it. The latter happened often. Another example is a training course for female management talents, which I initiated. A very good project I'd like to say. If you want women in leadership positions then you have to invest. But I didn't want to give up quality. It was a preparatory course for a leadership course at the Police Academy. I said to the police women: 'There's no guarantee that you are allowed into the Police Academy, but if you follow this course, there is a big chance that you will be admitted'. There was a lot of opposition. Other district commanders were afraid that their people would fall behind. The solution was to make it a regional project. That happened and I had to part with it. Of course they muddled it up. For example, I wanted line management as teachers, and to have the head of internal affairs discuss integrity. Now they

^{iv} National Police Agency.

have all kinds of other people handling those subjects. Eric – the former chief constable – said shortly before his retirement that he wanted me to do something for him. He said ‘I want just you to organise a FIT Police project, not in my own interest, but for the sake of the region’. I knew that would be problematic. As a district commander I could stand on my own two feet. So I said to Eric that he would have to give me authority. But it was going to be war all the same. But sometimes you need somebody to stir up a war to get things moving. My assignment was to improve effectiveness of operation, that means improve law enforcement and investigation, and limit bureaucracy. The first thing the corps management team and works council wanted me to do, was to draw up a detailed plan for 30 months to tell them precisely what I was planning to do, with whom, and why, how I was going to recruit people, what my criteria would be to select people, and how failed candidates could appeal. That meant building a bureaucracy to fight bureaucracy. That was my first war. I refused to write those plans. The funny thing is, that these plans weren’t requested for a massive structural reorganisation. Others could go ahead, while I had to go back and forth with drafts of project plans. And there was a number of colleagues, district commanders in the corps management team, who found that the whole plan was a sheer folly from the start. They infected their line management with their thoughts. They grumbled in public. I often spoke with Eric about that. I told him ‘You have to speak out’. I find that you have to do something when somebody from the management openly undermines the regional policy. Then you adapt or you break his ankles. Eric let it stew. I also claimed a position of power. As a district commander I had that position. For me a power base was an imperative condition. I suggested assigning the management trainees to me. My idea was that everybody who wanted to get on, and make career in this force, had to go through the FIT Police project. ‘So you think you have leadership qualities? We have a great project for you. At the end we will assess you. If you succeed? Well then there’s another useful item in your rucksack’. That way you compel management talent to think along with the principle ideas of the whole project, to squeeze the best out of themselves for the sake of innovation. I wanted to secure the FIT Police project in the organisation with the management talents, to let management trainees work together with the cream of our frontline workers and engage them in critical reflection. We wanted to create a learning network. That was our vision. It’s been an enormous war. The district commanders didn’t want me to have the management talents. Especially the human resources director and chairman of the board of management development showed himself very much against it. He made clear to people that he was the one to determine the MD policy. But I was going for that power. Not only would it be an enormous contribution to cultural change, but I would also have an extra pair of hands to lighten the workload. It came to a compromise. The MD policy would stand, but the MD board would deliver candidates for project management positions in FIT Police

projects. And they red-taped it, so that in 30 months exactly nobody was transferred to me. Oh there was one, but because of a mistake in the paperwork he was called back. So my only power was the corps leadership and that was a trap. In his last year, I had to put the cherry on the cake for him, but the chief constable never put his foot down. When that district commander publicly undermined the project he didn't bring that one into line, but said to me 'You know him, after all. Let it be'. Impossible. That guy had to be carpeted. But if he had displayed his power, that would have been bad too. Then we would have gotten 'dirigism'. A situation where district commander wouldn't commit himself and only do what was necessary to avoid getting caught. Nonetheless there were district commanders who saw the purpose of the project, and were well disposed towards it. But there was one who wouldn't talk with me about a subproject. His excuse was 'I haven't got the time, talk with my right-hand man'. So I let my deputy talk to his deputy. Thereupon he ran the whole thing and the entire FIT Police project into the ground, because he was never officially informed about things. Another one blocked our 'Pack of cards project'. We had an idea to make a pack of cards with the descriptions of multi-offenders. They raised lots of objections, but now they've developed it themselves. They just wouldn't let us have the project. A district commander asked whether the four hours a week we asked people to participate in the Forward Innovation Team was with or without travelling? What sort of nonsense is that? I want them four hours net. When I told him that, he responded by pulling his people out. I had to put up with lots of opposition like that. I'm aware of the role that my own personality played. I let it come to a confrontation every time. Once we organised a big meeting. It was a voluntary thing. People were expected to come in their own time, but a district commander made it clear that his people were not allowed to participate, because he wasn't informed. He sent out a banning order. These were strange moves! Eventually we revised our mission. We set out to de-partition the organisation, to build bridges, to change the culture, and to raise the versatility. We wanted to create more coherence, connections, and cohesion. That asked for a different kind of leadership. It was meant to end the cloning of management. I gave that ambition up when we didn't get the management talents I asked for. I gave up when I sensed that there was no sense of urgency to create a new organisational culture. I gave up when I realised I couldn't provoke a big flow of change.

My analysis is that some people feared that I would claim all the glory. So there remained only one goal. To prove that it worked. So we had to concentrate on the subprojects. I carefully chose two female project leaders to facilitate those. Without them I would have accomplished nothing. They were very important. They had to persuade line management to engage in certain projects, to act differently in certain situations. That was because I knew that would be difficult for me. I'm not good at selling things. I'm always looking for confrontation and debate. Always provoking competition. I would be deceitful

if I acted otherwise. I anticipated that male project leaders anyhow would have provoked more competition. Therefore, I deliberately selected two women. One of them would facilitate projects and the other one was in charge of human resources. Then we had to recruit personnel for our back office, on short term. We looked for available people. People with smaller contracts. They were almost all female. We didn't want people who were already pushing themselves to the limit. We wanted thinking power. So we recruited young and ambitious people. People who would participate for a while and then move on. When we had staffed our project team we asked ourselves how to monitor the project and its subprojects. We contracted students on work placement, doing research for their undergraduate thesis. They were almost all women. At a certain point, there were three guys and 21 women. It isn't strange that they nicked named our back office as Alex's Harem. In my opinion, the icons of the project were those frontline workers with whom the penny had dropped. These were people who were really with it and had the character, the personality, and the acceptance in the organisation, to get things done. Others, who perhaps thought 'I will participate for a while and maybe I'll then become an inspector sometime', dropped out. When we started we gave our clients a very important role, for example district commanders. I had to deal with responsible district commanders, the portfolio holders. Some of them didn't want to be seen as stakeholders of certain projects, didn't want to take responsibility, and didn't want to come up with meaningful projects. Those that didn't withdraw, came up with vague suggestions that sounded like the official viewpoints, like 'Do something about violent crimes, do something about car theft, and do something about domestic violence'. Sometimes I even thought that they deliberately sent us certain people to bummer things up. One of the district commanders was portfolio holder of multi offenders. He lumbered up to us, saying 'Hey, you're to see to it that something is done about multi-offenders'. I said 'No! You are in charge. You come up with an outline for a project. Then we can help you boost the project by coming up with groundbreaking ideas and stirring things up!'. The next thing was that he didn't do anything about multi-offenders, whining that the Forward Innovation Team didn't have time for him. Others showed resistance and responded to the project by saying: 'we've done it, we've seen it, it doesn't work'. So the ideas we started with came from the corps leadership, or from ourselves, giving voice to the signals we got from the frontline. Although many people criticised us for being the chief constable's puppet, we listened to the frustrations and irritations and thought about them. The ideas concerning the involvement of bus drivers tracing wanted persons and the pollination of cannabis came from the colleagues in the streets. The project team was very careful not to get in the picture when a project was rolled out or when a project became a success and success was communicated. But we couldn't take away the feeling that it was 'my' project. But the frontline workers became the owners, after I left. Bob calls me to tell me that he is showered with ideas. And now they have finished him off.

Very strange”.

Talkative Alex threw ironic looks my way, and as if to wrap up his story, he finished, saying:

“Would I, with this knowledge, embark on such a project again? I think so! I would put more effort into building commitment among the complete management and set things straight beforehand. Now I’ve learned that I created more ill feelings than I was aware of with my opportunistic projects. That became clear to me after the project already had taken off. I hadn’t sensed that bad an atmosphere beforehand. I would secure my conditions, my basic necessities. Get the management talents”.

A few moments later, we shook hands. Alex had walked me to the door. He wished me success with my project. And I was out in the streets again. Fresh air. Christ Almighty! I thought. He lashed out at the Moorland force. I had mixed feelings. Had he been open with me, or was he using me as his mouthpiece? I’d let him go ahead. Should I have intervened more? And how am I’m going to use this, I asked myself. It seemed impossible to anonymise this material.

5. The Watchman II

'Where's the blaze?' That was the title of the meeting that kicked off the FIT Police project. It was organised in The Palace. About 30 people were present. I missed it. I wasn't invited. Obliging though, the secretaries sent me the programme and a report. The report showed, that the gathering started at nine. Most of the participants agreed that The Palace was a fantastic and provocative place to start the project. The programme indicated several presentations. An introduction by Eric Meyer, the chief constable. A talk by Alex, the project manager. A presentation by Deirdre and others from the support group. Do you fight a fire with a PowerPoint show? I wondered. Really, it didn't surprise me that in the months I observed the FIT Police project, nobody spontaneously referred to the start-up meeting.

Two months after the start of the project, I was invited to my first Think tank meeting. The November storms sweeping through the streets couldn't spoil my great excitement. I left home in time, I thought, for the drive to Moordam. As I turned onto the motorway, it showered heavily. The windscreen wipers of my car were barely managing to combat the rain. Because of the stormy weather, there were lots of traffic jams. I arrived late. The Think tank meeting was held at the headquarters of the regional police force. I was brought to a long narrow room. It was dark outside. Inside the lights were on. It already felt like the depths of winter. The members of the Forward Innovation Team sat around a long table.

In the absence of Alex Vaharam, the hired facilitator John Deer, chaired the meeting. Deirdre was introducing some new Think tank members and a management assistant, when I entered. After she finished, she welcomed me and asked me to introduce myself. I unfolded my intentions to study the FIT Police project. I talked about my research and my engagement with frontline workers like them. I explained my interest in frontline learning, action learning and communities of practice. I told them about my plan to make observations of them working on the project. It is more than likely that it all sounded like a confession of my faith in the importance of working and learning in the frontline. Not exactly the detached, objective, unbiased scholar. I thought later.

Following my introduction, Claire, one of the project leaders delivered a PowerPoint presentation about working in projects. It was about discussing ideas and, if they were worthwhile, working them out in a project plan. It entered into questions such as: What is a project? How do you manage a project? What do you have to be aware of? And: What if the criteria are not met and the cooperation has to be discussed or the project has to be stopped. This part of the meeting was called a training session. At least that is what the minutes showed. But it actually was a monologue. The participants weren't prepared with an assignment in advance, nor was the PowerPoint monologue followed by exercises, dialogue, or discussions. There were no questions.

It was one-way traffic. Coming out of the Think tank I asked one of the secretaries for a copy of the PowerPoint presentation. The fifty sheets were in the mail the next day. Nevertheless the next activity was connected with the working in projects. The group split up into smaller groups at coffee-break. They parted into projectgroups of projects that were already defined. Project leaders were selected and some projects had already started. There was an open space for project leaders to deliberate with their project team. I observed the so-called 'Photo team'. This project was set up to develop quality criteria for the secretarial departments within the units, through internally benchmarking. Although some of the subgroup members dominated the discussion, and the project leader went against the requirements of a proper brainstorm session, the consultation was animated and productive. Several plans and appointments were made and it looked as if the participants were satisfied.

The meeting ended with a plenary session. The dates for next team meetings had already been set.

As conclusion to the meeting the hired 'chairman for a day' John Deer proposed to summarise the added value of the meeting in a press release with the possible headlines: 'Police are going to operate more efficiently'; 'Region on the move, 26 breakthrough ideas already'; 'Boor line nears completion'; 'Think tank filled (and acts from now on!)'. Subsequently he asked the participants if they had the feeling they're on the right track. One of the Think tank members put forward that to his opinion "listening to each other and to the citizens would make the FIT Police project superfluous". Somebody else reflected: "I have the impression that we used to muck-up a lot. We had endless discussions without results. Now we have an outfit that can achieve something. But we really have to bring about successes". Deer closed by advising to hold on to each other, to be an ambassador. "Don't wait for the boss," he said. "But act together!"

As an afterburner, Deirdre informed the Think tank that the project team had talked with a company that might make a promotion film about the ins and the outs of breakthrough teams, like the FIT Police project. On top of that she announced an excursion to the University of Wexel, in Eastgroove, and gave some details, adding that the participants could bring a guest, if they were willing to go in their own time, and that everybody was going to get four questions via email and asked them to get those answered in their own environment.

In December almost 50 coppers got on a touring car to Eastgroove, to attend a lecture of 'police-professor' Kees van der Vijver²³. A newsletter shows a picture of the coach party, that consisted of members of the FIT Police project organisation, participants in the FIT Police Think tank and their guest from the force. I regretted from the bottom of my heart that I didn't join the trip. It would have been a chance to talk with members of the Think tank, and the project

team informally.

Fortunately and as usual, the secretaries of the FIT Police project organisation made detailed minutes of the academic lesson by van der Vijver. From the minutes it is clear that Alex gave a short introduction preceding the lecture of the professor. He stressed that there are two hot issues in Moorland, better investigation and better enforcement. In the minutes it says that the lecture was about safety, and that Kees van der Vijver - who started his career as a police inspector, became police commissioner and director of The Dutch Society, Security and Police Foundation – has a heart for the police, and often let his tongue run away saying ‘we, the police ...’ In the report of the meeting it says that the professor talked about: public security and feelings of insecurity; the background of security problems; and the theory of Melvin Lerner²⁴ - that says that people have a strong desire or need to believe that the world is an orderly, predictable, and just place, where people get what they deserve. He also addressed the trust in institutions in Europe; trust in the police; police strength and the appraisal of the police.

The participants received texts to read in advance. Of course, I got hold of them via the support team, including the police professor’s inaugural lecture *The tears of Foucault* ²⁵.

One reads in the minutes, that it emerged from the lecture, for instance, that the notion that the sense of safety amongst citizens has not so much to do with facts and figures about the performance of the police, but more with the contact of the police with civilians. The written evaluation shows that most of the excursion-goers appreciated the event, although they considered the advanced questions too vague. They found the preceding texts tough but accessible, and thought the lecture and discussions very worthwhile. Many participants had the feeling that they got good food for thought. On their evaluation sheets they reported that the professor made it clear that the police is too much oriented towards offenders and doesn’t care enough about the victims, that the police should be aware of it’s image in society and that the front office should become more community-minded and customer-friendly. Some of the participants anticipated that the corps management would not be in favour of the police professor’s approach. Nevertheless, two months later, a district commander sent a letter to the Think tank referring to the lecture of Van der Vijver, expressing that he regretted missing the lecture, and saying that he initiated a project to enhance the feelings of safety in the streets, and that he wanted to work together with the professor and the FIT Police Think tank. Despite this letter of intention I never heard of this project in the Think tank.

This was the first time that the safety issue was discussed. The minutes show no record of the discussions nor conclusions. Gradually the themes Van der Vijver had addressed disappeared. As far as I witnessed, the FIT Police project didn’t discuss the issue until one of the last Think tank meetings.

After my first meeting in November, I observed several plenary meetings of the FIT Police Think tank. During those meetings I kept a low profile. I was usually in the group, but kept in the background. I did that physically by moving my chair a bit backwards. Eventually I became almost unseen. Part of the furniture. During coffee breaks, I often talked about what had happened in the meeting, about the current culture in the force, and about their own work as employees of a police force. On many occasions, I also asked the members of the Think tank what kind of projects they were working on, what problems they were facing, and how they discussed these with relevant colleagues. And I would always seize the opportunity to ask for documents or to make an appointment for an interview.

In January 2002 I observed Alex in the Think tank for the first time. He held a pep talk. "We're in need of change! We have to put an end to red tape!" He spoke about forerunners, followers and obstructionist. As I looked around the table I saw that most of the police officers looked entangled, inspired or perhaps flustered. Others looked as though they were waiting to see which way the wind would blow. Alex's conviction certainly gripped me.

During the course of the project, Alex would repeatedly carry out monologues like: "There is no other company that invests so much in cultural change as we do. It didn't work. But we have to think critically about the role of police in society. We have to approach police work differently from before. Everybody understands that you have the busiest hours if you open the station doors during lunchtime. There are enough coppers inside the force aware of the fact that we have to do things differently. But are people prepared to sacrifice their lunch break? I think we have to. We have to change! We have to do it differently and more vigorously. We have to invest in the forerunners of the organisation. We have never done that. We used to invest all our energy in the obstructionists. In almost all the civil service organisations I know the managers are trained in how to motivate the 'not to be motivated employees'. 'How to initiate change and avoid resistance'. 'How to remove resistance'. We had training courses, talks, meetings, and appraisal systems. We rewarded the troublemakers. We forgot those who are standing smiling at your desk. The common opinion is that you don't have to reward these people".

The Think tank meetings were once a month. They were meant to facilitate. They were always prepared in detail by the project team. The project team provided the agenda, documents and facilitation.

Agenda for a Think tank meeting.

Dear FIT-police member, The Think tank meetings are held to facilitate you. To enable you to discuss your project and the approach you've chosen, to share knowledge and to learn from each other. Two items for the agenda emerged from the last meeting. Feedback information about breakthrough ideas in progress, and insight into ongoing projects and improvement actions in the region.

We listed the following items on the agenda of the next Think tank meeting:

Feedback information and brainstorming concerning ideas that have been taken up

The last meeting led to the adoption of several ideas from the 'breakthrough box' and the formation of workgroups. From a telephone inquiry by Claire we learned that most ideas have been taken up, but that there are no concrete results. Some of the workgroups are at a feasibility study phase; others are developing a project plan. We want to utilise the first part of the Think tank meeting to take a new step forward. After your feedback, we want to brainstorm in work groups about the projects. We have asked a number of line managers to coach the groups. Action item: Evaluate the project plan and consider the next steps e.g. feasibility study or project plan. This means that the work group formulates action items, decision points for the next level management and names partners from inside and outside the regional police force.

Better blue

As an interlude Harold Stout will elucidate the project 'Better Blue'. It started in a part of the region. The aim of the project is to stimulate the mobility of employees between different districts and divisions and to offer trainee posts outside the police. The members of the Think tank are asked to give their opinion on the plan to organise wider implementation.

View on ongoing projects

We have completed an overview of all the innovation projects and improvement projects that were listed in 2000 by Claire. The database has been passed on to the FIT Police project. We want to update the list with the help of interns because it is incomplete and outdated. Action item: Review the list, indicate which projects you know about, and read the information about the projects.

Feedback on the Boor line and the Photo team

Action item: Project teams Boor line and Photo team prepare a feedback session.

Most of the Think tank meetings had a similar structure. There was almost always a guest to chair the meeting. Frequently that would be a manager from their own force. Sometimes there was a guest from outside the organisation. For instance a police manager from the network of the project team. Most chairmen gave a short speech about their thoughts concerning the FIT Police project. Then Alex often provided one of his sermons, followed by the project leaders with a presentation about a topic like 'work in projects'. Then leaders of the subprojects would examine the progress of the subgroup's undertakings. Sometimes there were small discussions, some ideas would be exchanged, but often the items on the agenda were one-way communication. I talked about that with group members, project leaders, and with the project manager. They always confirmed my feedback.

The January 2002 meeting was led by John DeLange. Delange is district commander in Castlehouse, a fairly big industrial and commercial centre in the south. It was mentioned that he studied management & organisation at a business school, besides his job as police chief. It was probably no coincidence that he was leading a regional leadership project at that time. He told the Think tank "I'm on a exploratory trip. Together with the leaders of the force, I'm trying to give meaning to value concepts like pride, inspiration, and respect, as far as they are connected to the purpose of the police".

After several meetings, I was asked by Alex Vaharam to give some plenary reflections on what I had seen. I responded positively to that request. Later Alex asked me again on other occasions. And I kept responding positively to these requests, although I felt insecure because I was struggling with the set-up of my own research. Would it be wise to interfere? But I always concluded that it would be all right. I decided not to interfere with the project manager, the project leaders and the members of the group, but cooperate if they wanted me to. I saw myself as a researcher 'on the side-line'.

In the last week of March 2002, Alex had drummed up all the line managers. "We need a moment of reflection", he had said to them. "We have to brainstorm whether we remain a group of islands or start building bridges. Whether we focus on harmony or nurture our chasms of ideas". His project leaders Deirdre and Claire had accompanied Alex. There were no Think tank members present. However, the HRM director was present all right. Jef van Gulik had invited himself. Probably, he saw the gathering of managers as an opportunity to bring out new system of vocational education and discuss the consequences with the line organisation. The meeting was held in a government building, a few blocks from headquarters. The building had comfortable – but old fashioned – conference rooms. It was a dark building. The rooms were furnished with quality carpets and curtains. After a stand-up reception, with coffee, in the corridor, Alex invited his guests to come into the

somewhat dismal room. The line chiefs gathered around the heavy conference table that absorbed all the space. Only a third of the invited chiefs had responded to the invitation and many of those who had responded had sent their apologies. So, there were enough seats for the frontline executives. They sat down for a two hour meeting, some with gloomy faces. I grabbed a chair in the back of the room.

The room was darkened after Alex had welcomed everybody, and it was illuminated again by van Gulik's PowerPoint presentation about the new educational system. Because of a more in-service character of the new professional training van Gulik stressed the importance of the learning climate in the corps. Some of the line chiefs nodded. "We need to seize our chances to make a quality difference," somebody uttered. "Your concerns are our concerns," Alex added.

After van Gulik had left, Alex took over again. "We're in need of change! We have to put an end to red tape!" He spoke about forerunners, followers and obstructionist again. "I'm a happy man," he said. "I asked for ten Think tank members, and twenty people lined up. They are the real forerunners. They rolled up their sleeves and asked what are we going to do, instead of the usual 'What are the provisions'". Next, Alex pointed out the goals he had with regard to the meeting. "I want to achieve that we create interaction with line chiefs and that we think about ways to get results".

Some of the chiefs moved their chairs, backwards, somebody stretched himself, but nobody raised a question or uttered a remark.

"This is not about a new kind of democracy", Alex stressed, and he emphasised every third or fourth word he spoke. "This is not because the corps leadership has lost track, it's about a professional culture. The idea is that people invest in new ways of working, share good practices and only ask for extra budget after they have been able to show results. We have good faith in our approach. We started with some enthusiasts and we strive for general spread of a professional attitude. You provided the manpower, but you get something in return". "You'd better!" said a fierce lady in blue. Her colleagues nodded. Somebody said something to her neighbour in an undertone, then a silence fell. Alex and Claire changed positions in the narrow space between the conference table and the wall. Before he said down, Alex introduced Claire.

Claire told the frontline managers that she wanted to make clear how the Think tank defines its projects and how these projects are run. She showed a flowchart that indicated how the FIT Police project thought to filter ideas from the ranks. "We ask ourselves is it innovative, does it bring about changes, will it boost efficiency, is it local or regional. We distinguish small and big breakthroughs. A small breakthrough can be handled by a member of Think tank and carried out for instance with a colleague outside the FIT Police project. This must lead to the sharing of knowledge. We don't want to become

a new island in the archipelago. We want to prevent and it is a first step to reduce our island culture

A big breakthrough asks for a project team. For a big breakthrough, like the Boor line or the Photo team, we have to have a client that commissions an assignment; together we formulate criteria for success and line out the organisation. Then she proceeded to tell what the brainstorm with the Think tank had yielded. The outsourcing of collisions without injuries, the revitalisation of the GRUTHOKKERS approach, the deployment of volunteers. Smaller breakthroughs are for instance the development of a website for local bobbies, tackling a nuisance with passwords or the development of a new protocol. In those cases the colleague that brought up the idea is asked to participate”.

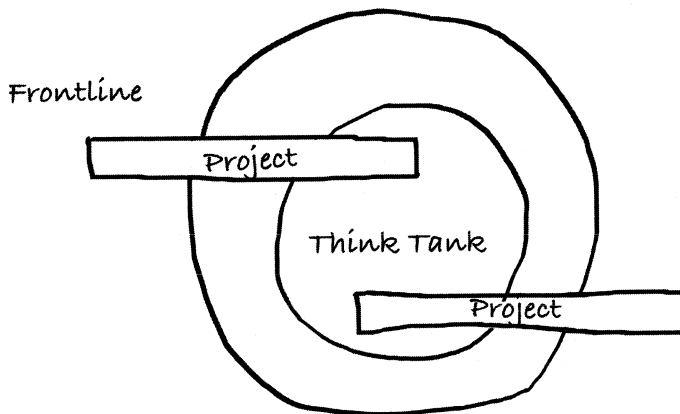
Claire stressed how difficult it is for frontline workers to be really innovative, and not to fall back solely on a solution oriented approach, without unpacking the nature of problems and the principles behind ideas. “For that we offer guidance, mentoring and training and education” she said encouraging and then she underlined other results of the FIT Police project. “People start to connect to each other, look at new roles and develop their competencies, workgroups that already existed are revitalised.

Some of these results are more intangible perhaps, but as important. We have to begin small and end big”, Claire contended as a closure of her presentation. One of the participants put forward that in her opinion the coherence of the different FIT Police project seemed an important issue and Claire completely agreed with that.

There were no further questions, nor discussions and so Claire left the floor to Deirdre.

Deirdre stressed the importance of development plans, coaching and training and the sharing of knowledge and experiences in the Think tank once a month. “This is not only important because we want to help the individual Think tanker”, she said, “but also because we want to anchor learning in the organisation and she pointed at the initiatives to train coaches, the establishment of the Think tank, the cooperation with the university of Twente and research by interns”. Then she drew a model on a flip-chart.

While she was drawing she stressed the importance of what she called the oil stain effect of the FIT Police approach.



Model drawn by Claire on a flip-chart

"For the dissemination of the FIT Police ideas and results we have to engage the local units, we have to be focused on efficiency, we have to develop our image, we have to provide subsidized trainee posts for MD candidates and develop a knowledge management approach. To secure the FIT Police project in the local units, we have to emphasize your role, the role of the line chiefs, we have to integrate with personal development plans and we have to embed all our learning experiences".

In sum, the four presentations had used up almost all the available time. Some of the chiefs started their conversation in the coffee corner. There was 10 minutes left for discussion. Somebody noticed that the FIT Police project, to him, seemed to self centered. "I wonder whether you can build a reputation. What's more, we can do more in our unit" he said. "I want to applaud that," retorted Alex, "but I see nothing, I hear nothing, I experience nothing. I want to make a difference", he rejoined the remarks of the manager. "I'm not in it for appearances". His words sounded like a barrage. "If it's had its desired effects, the FIT Police project can be phased out. We want to implement the breakthrough concept in the standing organisation. We need accessories to our plans". His eyes seemed to blaze in their sockets. "We don't need spectators to watch us founder". As his words still rumbled down on the line managers, Claire asked the gathering for some final advice. One manager remarked that he didn't have any advice. "You have designed what I thought was necessary. Now I'm looking forward to results". Another suggested that the art is in the limitations. "Try to come up with no more than three projects a year, involve the whole region, mobilize quality from the ranks and link with other development processes, improvement processes and quality programs".

A last one uttered the importance of control, the line up of the project plans, and timeframes and “you have to follow up on that”.

In October 2002 Alex, dashing and defiant, delivered a presentation of his evaluation with the corps leaders. “ ... so the Fit Police project is expected to operate more specifically, ... more concrete and ought to trigger and channel all possible competence and enthusiasm in the corps. The chief constable believes in the project. He is enthusiastic, but he’s also keeping after us. The deputy chief constables are well informed and they have the possibility to allocate means. We have to go about it on a large scale. For instance if the GRUTHOKKER case succeeds, we mustn’t deal with the case locally but send it to the crown prosecutor. The district commanders are willing to keep investing in the project. And there is national interest in the Boor line. I think that’s OK. The more regions are involved the more ideas we can pinch from each other. That will save development costs. We are looking for cooperation with our neighbours, although sometimes it seems as if they have grown tired of innovation. But I don’t want to hear anybody saying that the enthusiasm is evaporated. That’s a rubbishy excuse. And mind you, it is the FIT Police Think tank that’s deciding in which projects investments are necessary. Management is not there to slate but to facilitate. You don’t come here to tell me about your problems, but about your solutions”.

Looking around the table to gauge the impact of his words, Alex continued. “And of course management drops ideas. We have to keep the balls in the air...”

Another issue was the communication with the frontline. “We have to be careful that we don’t throw away the prestige we have gained among the coppers in the street” Alex warned. Our image fades out. “We put together a communication workgroup with a press officer, an external expert and our Liz, and we are going to communicate the projects we are proud of”.

As usual, the subproject leaders presented their progress next. After that, the usual lunch was served in the meeting room. When a serving-trolley was pushed into the meeting room from the adjoining cafeteria, the Think tankers gathered around the little wagon and dug into the croquette rolls.

While we were eating our rolls with hot and crisp croquettes, Bert told me that the bosses didn’t realise how much extra effort and extra hours they would get from their men if they would give them a small treat once in a while. “In addition to these Think tank lunches, Alex sponsors ‘croquette-sessions’ now and then”.

After lunch, the Think tank discussed the procedure from the original idea – via the improvement

During another ritual lunch with croquette rolls, Victor, one of the younger Think tankers talked to me about a teleworking project he wanted to establish.

I had asked him what his innovative ideas were while we attacked the white rolls with the dainty, crispy rissoles. "You know", he said, "we can work more efficiently if we make teleworking from home possible. I brought it in as a possible Think tank project". Dexterous, with one hand he spread mustard on his croquette. "First we have to orient, inform and discuss". Victor repeated the arguments he put forward in the Think tank earlier. "I discussed this with my boss", he said, while I searched my pockets for pen and paper to write down an address of a specialist I knew.

"I pointed it out to my boss" he emphasised, while I was copying a phone number from my business organizer. "Lots of organisations deploy teleworking. And I think it is good for us to look into the phenomena", I handed him the telephone number. "My boss asked me what I was thinking about", Victor continued. "I think my boss thinks it's going to cost time. And that he will lose that capacity. So I said to him, 'We work a lot with computers. We can do the same work at home'".

When I wanted to put my diary away, I saw that I messed with my roll and greased the leather skin. I lay aside my greasy book, to concentrate on Victor. He had been watching me bungling.

"My boss countered that teleworking asks for a lot of responsibility" Victor had proceeded with his story. "I thought, 'What threats does he foresee'. I anticipated resistance to a possible project from his side. I wondered if I could I turn around a defensive attitude or at least keep it at bay. So I said to him 'On the one hand we can build that sense of responsibility just by beginning and on the other hand you can start developing an instrument to evaluate productivity'. But I don't know if I succeeded. He just raised his eyebrows and grumbled. So I said to my chief sergeant 'I think I would like to discuss this with high rank management. I think that's an important requirement for success'. And you know what my boss reaction was? He asked me whether I kept an eye on my own work! I told him that I did and added that I thought that our force could gain a lot if we pursued a teleworking project. And I said to him that I was thinking about bringing in external expertise".

As I gave Victor the telephone number I had written down, I was thinking that Think tankers like him could do with some interest from their managers. After lunch the Think tank discussed the procedure from the original idea – through the improvement bank, to the breakthrough box and then to the Think tank and eventually an improvement project.

One morning, plunged deep in thought, I made my way to Moordam police headquarters to meet with the Think tank. As I reached the entrance of the office building, I caught up with Alfred and Bart. Alfred is a member of the Think tank. I had met Bart in the cafeteria. I greeted them, before they entered the building. They swung through the revolving door ahead of me. Bart's voice resounded as I stepped into the entrance hall. I picked up scraps of the conversation he and Alfred had. Obviously they were talking about the

Think tank. As I followed them to the coffee-machine, I heard Bert placing his order with Alfred, as they reached the shiny black coffee dispenser: "Black, no sugar, no milk!"

Waiting for my turn, I overheard more of their lively talk.

Alfred counted loud while he was pushing the code: 'one, one, one' and then he said: 'I think that they can make themselves useful.

Who can; I wondered. Obviously they had been talking about 'them' when they made their way to headquarters.

"Who can?", asked Bart.

"Those injured, on sick leave", replied Alfred while he checked the plastic cup in the machine falling in place.

"You're mad!" Bart cried out. He sounded flabbergasted.

"No, seriously. It's an idea we had in the Think tank", explained Alfred.

"Did you talk this over with management?" Bart wanted to know, while he looked as if he was disbelieving in advance.

"I discussed it with DC Cox", confirmed Albert, and he gave Bart a fierce nod. Surely he saw the disbelief in Bart's face.

"And?", Bart asked, listening with rapt attention, while he reached out for the cup Alfred took out of the machine and handed to him.

"I said to him," said Albert, "that I wanted to discuss all the time we spend on chitchat, you know, suburban bliss".

"Marital bliss!" Bart agreed, while Albert pushed the buttons again.

"Less distraction means that we can yield a return. I said to Cox. And I explained to him" said Albert while he checked the placement of his cup " . . . that I even saw possibilities to employ people on sick leave".

"Hm, this coffee sucks", grumbled Bart as he and Albert looked at the machine that produced an odd smelling brew, followed by hissing sounds and spatters of hot milk.

"The only snag is that you can't socialise, and that the reachability is less", Albert put forward.

"What did he say...?", asked Bart while he watched Albert take his beaker out of the machine.

"He was speechless ...", Albert replied. "Then I pointed out that the new health law offers opportunities to get people with lasting ailments partially back to work".

"And ...?", asked Bart looking up from his brew.

"He didn't comment. Though I think that he is interested in the ideas, the advantages and the risks. He did ask me to do an extra shift on special duty". said Albert, and he slurped the cappuccino he took out of the machine.

"Now what ...?", Bart asked interested.

"I think we work this out in a FIT Police project", Albert replied while he poured his coffee in the sink.

"Then what ...?", Bart seemed to ask rhetorically and he sounded hard-boiled. Then his coffee followed Albert's.

Alex has already left the project, left the corps and gone to Urbanville. Deirdre and Robert Cox, a district commander, organised one of the last meetings of the Think tank. The theme of the meeting was identity and imago. Patrick Dixon, the radio host, was contracted again to moderate the meeting, two cartoonists were hired to capture the impressions. There were guests like a consultant from the employers' organisation, one of the mayors from the region, a manager from primary health care, a journalist from the local newspaper, and a unit chief.

The coppers discussed the social relevance of their work and the contrarities, the call for safety and the cutbacks. They also discussed the limited influence police have on safety but that the finger is always pointed when something goes wrong. They discussed the need for prevention while the opinion leaders ask for more investigation work when they talk about safety. The government has no right to interfere, but when something goes wrong, you have to be there at once.

The mayor and the unit chief talked about projects in their community in which the local police unit and the press worked together. They made clear to the public what could be expected from the police and what not.

"You have to involve citizens, create local platforms and give a central role to the local bobby".

The healthcare manager wondered why all the attention is focused on the bad things. "So many good things happen. Why don't you accentuate those?"

Step out of your victim role. Be good and tell it".

"And another thing", she added: "Ask money for those services that don't belong to your core tasks. In health care we had to learn that".

Bert Kemp added that he gives his unqualified assent to that. "We'll catch the villains and we're going to take pride in that".

The journalist stressed the importance of the promptness of action. "That is what you have to communicate. If you perform well you draw attention automatically. But, mind you, this is not about big stories. It is about the small stories".

Nick, the unit chief, stressed the danger of overlooking the little things.

"There is no petty crime" he underlined.

Someone mentioned that it is difficult to build an image. There are 1600 identities in the force.

Bob was silent the whole meeting. So I asked him, "What are your thoughts?"

"I think about the people, we don't have contact with, and I think we have to be careful not to become glamour cops, who only take an interest in the ratings. I want to add another thing. I think that we put too much effort into protocols. In 80% of the cases we are dependent on our individual behaviour. When things don't go as they should, we should have the guts to address each other. But that is difficult in our organisation. We are a loyalty organisation."

I think that real loyalty, is being a critical friend to one another". Robert Cox closed the meeting saying that it is now important to operationalise all the ideas and intentions.

On December the 4th 2003 the Forward Innovation Team gathered for the last time, invited by Alex for this last meeting in Urbanville. Alex organised a session about creative thinking by regional project coordinators, a meeting with the pickpocket team combined with a field trip in the streets of Urbanville and dinner in the cafeteria of the Urbanville headquarters. Rounding off the visit, the Think tank assembled in the accelerating room, an office space to enhance creative thinking in the centre of HQ. Alex held his last speech. "I think we have achieved a lot. And it's now snowballing into a national movement. Innovation is imperative. Urbanville is up to its neck in difficulties. But we don't need expensive training sessions to boost the quality of police work. We can find the power within. We have to use the creativity in the ranks. Forces are brimming with ideas. Urbanville wants to share but doesn't know what is happening outside its own region. We have to organise the innovation process. Giving each other a call now and then is not enough. It's not a failure when the GRUTHOKKER-project backfires. It's only a failure when the process stops".

Next Claire unfolded the plans the project leaders had made to secure the breakthrough process. They had worked out a 'new start plan', based on the studies by the interns. The idea was to do a feasibility study first, organise a pilot next, and then decide to transfer the project to the rest of the force or to stop. "If projects have proven to be worthwhile, they have to be adopted by portfolio holders". She added that the force should invest more in improvement teams, in theme sessions - like the identity and image meeting - and try to develop more alignment within the corps". We have to avoid bureaucratic carry-on like the four-hour covenant in the future. That contract was a bad way to sign people on to the Police project". Bob grumbles that, during the past year, the teams were manned with colleagues who couldn't or wouldn't get off their daily affairs. "Hey, I know enough guys who have the guts to do that", Felix added. "People were pushed into participating", Bob groused on. "You have to get the line managers behind you", Felix replied. But Bob kept grizzling. "We have to deal with the impervious layer of district commanders, with the control freaks and the disappointing role of the HRM department". Felix's inspiration and enthusiasm remained rampant all the same. "We have to cash in on more than two years of learning time". "But you have to choose another name for the project, because the label FIT police has been blackened", somebody suggests, followed by a murmur of assent.

Months after the project was terminated I was having a fast meal in the cafeteria of Moordam Headquarters. I was in between two peer consultation

sessions. I was commissioned to facilitate eight peer consultation groups, as a side effect of my research. I met Bert Kemp in the cloakroom, getting out of his leather motorcycle suit. Bert became an animated advocate of peer consultation as a learning technique after he had joined the sessions I organised for the Think tank. He was going to join the next group, that afternoon. While finishing a desert, I ask him about his career plans. He made a cynical face. "I'm on the waiting list to become a group chief. The management development manager wants to enrol me in a formal management course, despite my experience with the FIT Police project and my role in the Boor line project".

6. Bert, George, Felix, and the others

Azra, Christian, Paula, Fred and Bert

He seems to be one of the officers still involved with breakthrough thinking, even after the project has already come to an end. He's an experienced policeman. He'd worked in the radio room for a long time. Now he is the team leader of an administrative unit that processes the tickets coppers write. Bert knows the force through and through. Not least because he was chairman of the works council.

We have a chat after a peer consultation group I organised for some members of the Think tank. He participated. I counselled.

"FIT Police was an idea of the old chief constable, but he's not exactly a front-liner, is he", he said. "But I believed in the idea. I was responsible for the Boor line project. It turned out to be a success. I enjoyed that success. In spite of the fact that the project was born in higher spheres, I made it my project. I absorbed it, incorporated it, and hawked it around".

Although he is past fifty, he still is ambitious. Always reflecting aloud on police work and his contribution to it. Never satisfied with an easy answer.

Never running with the pack.

"But I would also like to move on. I expect the management development committee to appreciate my work". He said to me on one occasion, as if he was confessing.

I nodded.

"How FIT Police start?" I asked him

"The project began very ambitiously. A commissioner led it, and there were two academic project leaders. For the coppers in the force, it started with a Kick Off in the late summer of 2001. In addition to the project management, there were interns recruited to support and do research. PR material was produced, such as brochures about the Think tank. After the kick off, there were assessments. Then a team was formed. Think tank meetings were planned once a month. And there was a teambuilding session. The participants had about four hours a week to work on the project. By the way, there was a lot of bureaucratic fuss about that. Coaching was provided, and the members of the Think tank got a chance to follow different training sessions and have peer consultation. A second Think tank group was recruited a year later. They never really got the spirit, if you ask me".

I talked to Azra during a Think tank meeting. She works as a secretary for a unit in Moordam.

I've spoken with many Think tankers about the working problems they experienced, especially connected to FIT Police initiatives. Azra was one of the first.

"For almost two years now," she said. "Before that, I was an operator/receptionist. Why do I

participate in the FIT Police project? For me, it's a challenge to think with colleagues from different districts and departments within our region about a better functioning organisation. I'm participating in the Photo team, perhaps I will work with other teams, and I want to contribute my bit to the Think tank" While catering brought in sandwiches, croquette rolls, fruit, milk and coffee, she told me that she experienced difficulties in planning her work for the FIT Police project, and to attend the team meetings.

"What do you do about it?" I asked her.

"I discussed it with my chief three weeks ago. It crossed my mind that that I needn't try that one on him. But I thought that I had to make my problem knowable to him to do my job for the Forward Innovation Team properly. So I said: 'Tony, formally I am planned six hours per week to work for the FIT Police project. In practice, this isn't working out. Because we have to rotate in a tight schedule in our department. Can we adapt this, to make my work for the Forward Innovation Team possible?' He replied that '... In principle, the daily work has priority before the FIT Police project' but he said: 'I will discuss this with the planner and I will come back to you'. If I don't come back to it myself, I will never hear about it again. I thought. Last week, it was a fortnight later, and –as I thought – I hadn't heard anything from him about my planning problem. So I asked Tony when I ran in to him: 'Thought about my planning problem?' His answer was: 'Oh.... I haven't had time to think it over and discuss it with the planner. I see what I can do for you this afternoon. I will tell you as soon as possible'. So I asked: 'When's that then?' 'This week', he said. At the end of the week, I ask him again, I said to myself.

At the end of the week I saw Tony again: 'Thought about it?' 'I have discussed it with the planner', he said. 'I'm sorry to say that I can't make any promises because of the absenteeism in our department. But I assure you, that you get those six hours per week for the Forward Innovation Team'.

I expected that. It did me no good. I think I have to reorganise myself and perhaps give up tasks".

While I made some notes in my memo book, Azra asked me if she could bring me something from the trolley.

More members of the Forward Innovation Team told me about their problems freeing themselves to join the meetings and to work on projects. One of them is Christian. Christian works as a personnel advisor in Moordam.

"The activities for the Forward Innovation Team", Christian confided me, "bear on my regular tasks. I wanted to discuss this with my colleague, but I did it with some regret, because the atmosphere was bad at the time. I said to her that I noticed that she obviously found it pretty annoying when I was working a couple of hours a week on the FIT Police project the previous month. 'My goodness, yes', my colleague replied. 'Now and then I find it unpleasant. And because you work part-time you're hardly ever here for us'. Here we go again, I thought. It seems as if part timers are not allowed to take on other tasks.

Ridiculous! 'What's *us*?', I asked her. 'Are there other colleagues complaining about my contribution to the Forward Innovation Team. Then I want to know about it'. She said: 'With us, I mean our entire department, and no there are no straightforward complaints'. See, I thought so. I said to myself. There's only one who has problems with it. I've never heard complaints from my other colleagues. I always try to be there for them. But then what? So I say to her: 'I haven't heard from other colleagues but if they have any complaints then I think that we must get around the table'. I wonder if she agrees, I thought. And she did. 'Let's do that,' she said. 'Incredible!' I thought. 'OK, I'll set a time and date with the others to discuss this, and I think that it's important to involve our manager in this meeting'. I hope that we get this matter out of the air this way and that it's over and done with".

"I'm involved in two projects". Paula is an experienced cop and works as a local bobby.

"The first project concerns building a website for local bobbies. As a first step I want to discuss this idea with my colleagues. I want to avoid the feeling that I'm in this to score personally. It has to be a collective product. In my vision the website has to give extra support to avoid you doing extra work. You don't have to reinvent the wheel. I think you have to take care that they don't get the feeling that they are burdened with extra tasks. I must convince them that, in this way, we can use individual achievements for the benefit of all colleagues. Can't imagine yet how the first meeting with my colleagues may develop".

"And the other project?", I asked her.

"Oh ... the other project that has my concerns is the so-called GRUTHOKKER-approach. We have to align with other units to make it a success. For that we have to chart all the units that can be involved and we have to outline out what their tasks might be. I'm afraid though that investigation will not take up the cases".

On a dreary Monday, I was early for a meeting with Deirdre. As always I found a few members of the Forward Innovation Team up hanging around the office of Alex and his project leaders. I ran into Fred at the coffee machine. Fred is chief of the arrest unit. I was curious about the training habits of such a taskforce. So I asked him about it. His face darkened.

"Only yesterday I had a big problem with that". And he explained his problem to me. "I find it important that the unit members are facilitated to follow skills training. I expect from my own chief that he makes sure that the planner schedules two people. I carefully picked a moment to bring this up. I found my chief Jan in a good mood four weeks ago. So I asked him: 'Jan, got a minute?' And he said: 'Sure, what's up?' I felt it essential to specify why it's so important to me. 'As group commander of the arrest unit I feel responsible for'. And he reacted: 'I feel it comin''. Of course I thought, he knows that

the planner fails. So I presented the problem as clearly as possible and declared what my concerns were. 'More and more I see the members of the unit bunk off the training sessions and it is so important that we drill the procedures, ... together. People report off because they are not planned for training and assigned to do surveillance'. But he didn't agree with me. 'I think it's better than you make the suggestion'. He said. 'I had to take measures a couple of times. To secure manpower for surveillance, you know'. But it isn't a rosy picture at all. Otherwise I wouldn't make a fuss about it. So I replied 'But the chief constable ascertained that training has priority'. Then he finished our little discussion and said that he would ask the planner to pay attention. That was a month ago. However, the unit members still aren't scheduled for training. So I called upon him yesterday. I was determined to put matters straight. So I went to him and said: 'Jan, I would like to speak with you about scheduling my unit members for skills training'. "I expected that!", he said. I could tell by his reaction that I was right. He hadn't done anything about it. I was by no means satisfied. 'Nothing has changed since our last chat, people still aren't scheduled', he sighed. 'I thought we were coming along', he said, 'but I can't always keep them free. There are other things to be done'. It was clear that he made the wrong choices. However I thought I should bring that up carefully. 'The priorities are clear. Surely I understand your problems. But I feel responsible for the safety of my people. I can only take that responsibility, with a well-trained crew. When it comes to the crunch, I prefer other choices'. I thought that made my intentions perfectly clear. You know what he said? 'Sorry, times up. I have to go'. And that is not the only problem I had yesterday!

"Oh,", I muttered. I wanted to get to know more, but I was also gasping for another shot of caffeine. "Let me buy you another coffee", I mumbled. "Cappuccino?" He nodded yes. And I pushed the buttons while Fred went on. "After this conversation I went to the head office. I participated in the Forward Innovation Team. This FIT Police project is a beautiful idea, but we don't see any results. I decided to discuss this with Alex, our project manager. I thought that perhaps he could shed some light on the reasons why. If we could make that visible, then we could do something about it. I find Alex talking to his ladies. Together we went to his room, after going for coffee first. 'Fire away', Alex said to me with his big smile. So I pushed off: 'It worries me that, except for the Boor line, nothing concrete has come out of the Forward Innovation Team'. He replied: 'I think that the Forward Innovation Team needed a running-in period before it started to really function well. Besides that, they packed us with a lot of ideas. We needed time to pick out the promising and suitable projects, for a breakthrough approach. By now a lot of projects are steaming up and I'm looking forward to results'. I thought, 'You're a smooth operator! Why don't we hear anything about it? Can't we reduce the number of projects, so that there is more time to focus on selected plans and to come speed up results?' His reply was, 'we want to come forward with good projects

and not cheap tricks, with kick and rush'. That didn't satisfy me and I said, 'the Forward Innovation Team has been functioning for a year now. In my opinion there should have been more results'. Then he said "I think we could have communicated better with the organisation, to make it more visible what we are working on' OK, I thought, that is a concrete idea. You should have thought about that earlier. Then I thought: 'If you ask me, do you actually know what is going on in the rest of the organisation?' But to be honest, I didn't put that question to him".

Then Deirdre came round the corner and that silenced our conversation. "Glad you are early", said Deirdre and I followed her to her room.

Kelly, Harry, Dirk and George

I agreed to meet George in hall of the courthouse. The building obviously dates from the late fifties or early sixties. I wondered what it would be like to work in this noisy, outdated building? It looked like my old school. Before my thoughts could wander away, I saw my interviewee coming out one of the offices. George is 33 years old, but has a boyish look on his face. He is a court officer and guard. He told me he had little time that afternoon, because one of his colleagues had fallen ill. So we didn't get to discuss architecture and the functionality of the building. We pushed off immediately.

"Why was I part of the Forward Innovation Team? I very much like contributing to the upgrading of the level of our regional police force. I hoped that the ideas that are in the minds of our colleagues could be realised, as much as possible, and that our colleagues could be motivated to come up with new ideas under the motto 'Together we are strong'. I joined the project from the start. My chief sergeant asked me to participate. The project leaders approached our management. At the start I hadn't the foggiest idea what the project was about. But the information I got appealed to me tremendously. I indicated that I had little experience. After several jobs and a few years in military service, I joined the police recently. They didn't mind that. They emphasised that a fresh view of police matters. After one year's experience on the project, I adopted a subproject: 'the Knowledge bank'. That project was embraced by the FIT Police project. When I joined, the project team was already working on the project, so I didn't claim project leadership". I hummed and nodded my head, wondering what Alex would think about this modesty.

"In principle I had positive feelings about the FIT Police project. We were all very positive about it. We all had high expectations. But it turned out to be difficult to realise real breakthroughs. I had expected that it would be easier. But a police force is an unwieldy organisation. Opinions and methods of working don't change easily. As Alex Vaharam says, there are early adopters, followers and obstructionists. The number of early adopters disappointed me". "How do you feel about the project now?" I asked him.

"I must say, Vaharam inspired me. I remember a meeting where it became clear

that all the participants were going through a bad patch. He organised what he called a 'bus stop' and said that our trekking party had to mark time, asking ourselves: where are we, and where are we heading for. That really cleared things up. There turned out to be many different views, concepts, and ideas in the group. These ideas concerned different subprojects as well as creating support for the whole project. Finally we agreed that it was important for us to create support from the frontline workers. We expected to find the majority of followers among them. We determined that we should initiate a project that would appeal to them".

Before I could ask him in which projects he was in, he continued: "Prior to my appointment in the Knowledge bank, I participated in smaller projects, such as the implementation of the use of mediation techniques. Our mediator had questions about that and I

helped her with that. So, after a while, she knew which steps she could make to take it further. Eventually questions came about mediation from inside the organisation, from local bobbies for example. And even LSOP^v was interested. I've also worked on a project aimed at interregional consultation databases. It's unbelievable but it's not possible to consult the database of another regional force. Isn't it too crazy that if somebody steals a car in Moordam, we cannot follow him in the Veendyk systems, if he continues over there? It takes lots of paperwork and bureaucratic fuss, to make that possible. I participated in a project team and it was our intention to change that in cooperation with neighbouring forces. Let me tell you about what happened to me".

I looked at him expectantly.

"Once I went to see somebody from our own Automation department. After introducing myself I planned to ask him some questions, 'I'd like to ask you some questions about consulting the data systems of other forces'. While I asked that question, I feared that I would be driven from pillar to post. Obviously the Automation guy thought: 'There we go again, another one that's going to try that, but I'm not your man, Ahmed is'. The guy from Automation responded 'Can't tell you anything about this. I think you have to talk to my colleague. So I asked him: 'Can you put me through to Ahmed then, please?' But Ahmed couldn't be reached that day. I phoned him the next day. In the hope that we could finally get down to business, I explained to him what the Forward Innovation Team wanted and that I was part of a project team. Ahmed told me 'I've tried this before. But it won't work. But let me give you the names of the contact persons in the other forces'. I put down the phone and I hoped that we could make it work this time. It turned out, after a while, that another regional force made this operational problem into a project. I think that it is still running. We have to have our keep a finger on the pulse. But to be honest, I don't know what's going on right now".

^v The national police education centre.

“Why not?”, I wanted to know.

“After smaller projects I became fully absorbed in the Knowledge bank project. I enjoyed having a ‘breakthrough’ responsibility for that. The Knowledge bank project group was working on it for quite some time, until the FIT Police project embraced it. So it’s not right to call me the project leader. I pulled up a chair at the table of this community. We were a small group, we met once a week, tried to work playfully, and we had a step-by-step plan, and an actionist attitude. I was responsible for the pilot phase. I’d done a road show in the region to present the project and during region-wide FIT Police meetings I presented our project. I was satisfied with the progress we made. Of course with our thinking we were ten steps ahead of the frontline. That’s always the case”.

Beaming with pride he went on.

“For our project, we benchmarked in other regions. In Urbanville they had a team of sixteen people working full time on a project like ours. In Midtown you had one guy responsible for the whole thing: the knowledge broker. If you had a pressing question you just called him, because he knew it all. As a copper he was involved with the development of lots of procedures. I think that makes an organisation vulnerable though. Everything in the hands of one person”. I nodded understandingly.

“In Moorland we needed people to set their shoulder into the project. I made myself strong for a knowledge centre. I think knowledge management is important for police work. At the ‘oil stain meeting’ we distributed knowledge sheets.

An ‘oilstain meeting’ was FIT Police speak for a gathering to inform colleagues, staff departments and managers and to brainstorm about new ideas.

“People could describe their know-how and capabilities on these sheets. I tell you, it is no picnic. It’s not an easy task to build an instrument to share knowledge with 1600 people”.

“Our most important partner in the project was the Information and Automation Department. A department, people complain about all the time. I think these complaints stemmed from ignorance. In a project like ours, you get to know each other. Then you start looking at things differently. That creates mutual understanding. I pleaded for a model like in Midtown. Whizzkids apart from the information and Automation department”.

When George checked his watch I tried to wrap up our conversation and asked him for the results of the FIT Police project.

“I suppose that when you draw up the balance sheet of the FIT Police project there are two ways to look at the outcome. We can look at what we have learned and at the acceptance of the breakthrough ideas in the organisation. I’m satisfied about what we’ve learned, although I acknowledge that we didn’t translate enough into concrete results. I think that, after a slow start, we made some major steps forward in the second year. Secondly, I think we had to put more effort into building our image. The Forward Innovation Team had too

much the image of a bunch of do-gooders, starry-eyed idealists”.

“hm,” I grumbled and as I nodded, George kept talking enthusiastically about his subproject.

“I would have liked to work full time on a project like the Knowledge bank. But to be honest, I think that the four hours in the covenant, the contract we made, were enough. One week you would spend sixteen hours of work on the project, the other weeks less than the four that were designated. I experienced sufficient support from my management to participate in the project. When I needed more time or other facilities and made a motivated request, then extra facilities would be granted to me. Furthermore, I appreciated the support and the coaching by the Forward Innovation Team, for example by project leader Deirdre Ibsen. I learned a lot from that”.

“The press complains that they often are informed too late about certain incidents” Kelly, the communication advisor told me.

“I wanted to look into this with a colleague and think about how we can improve the situation. One of the options is to use the technical possibilities of the radio room. I talked this over with the chief sergeant of the radio room. I said to him: ‘We would like your cooperation with this problem. We think that the systems of the radio room can make a difference’. I think that the chief radio room wasn’t happy with that, because he replied that he would be pleased to look into it, but that he was afraid that it was a new task and that it would mean extra work for his staff. ‘And what’s more’, he said, ‘we don’t work for the press’. Yeah, Yeah, Yeah, I could have seen that coming. Always the argument of shortage of staff. And why do we always want to keep the press out of the way? So I said to him: ‘I think its almost no extra load for the staff. Technically it can be done easily. Furthermore, I think that, if we have good contacts with the press, we can steer the communication in the interest of public safety”’.

Harry Damen is a senior policeman. A nice guy, shy, but ambitious too. He’s 47. As a senior, he takes on special tasks in his unit. As a mentor coordinator he is responsible for the practical training of aspirant policemen. And he was member of the Forward Innovation Team and led the Guided tours subproject.

“I found that the most important aspect of the FIT Police project was that everybody in our organisation could benefit from it. But let me tell you about some things that happened to me! I wanted to discuss the facilitation of my work for a subproject that was a result of the FIT Police project with my boss, Carl. From discussions with fellow team members in the FIT Police project, I got the idea that there should be more consultation and agreement amongst managers about freeing time for work for the Forward Innovation Team. So I brought it up one day. ‘Hi Carl, got a minute?’ He – Carl that is - looked somewhat disturbed up from his paperwork ‘Yes?’ he said. ‘Have you heard something about the possibilities I get for my project?’ I asked. ‘Nope, haven’t

heard a thing! What's it about?' he asked. 'It's a FIT Police project' I replied. 'Oh? I've heard little about that' That's strange, I thought. That he knows nothing about it. I think that he will have difficulties to fit my project in. I think he is not happy with my participation in the project. So I said 'It should have been discussed in the management meeting last Tuesday. The project is initiated under the authority of Felix'.

"We did such a project in our town". Carl said and then he returned to his paperwork. I thought that he found the project not interesting enough and went back to the desk I was sitting at before".

"Let me tell you another story" Harry said, when he was finished.

"One day I was sitting in the canteen. I heard a colleague talking about the 'Boor line'. We had discussed problems about the acceptance of the 'Boor line' project in the Think tank. We had agreed that we would promote the project when it came up. Thinking I was hearing a fan, I addressed him with enthusiasm. 'Hey, I heard you talking about the Boor line' I said to him. 'Yeah, What's the use?' he replied. I had it wrong, I thought. He thinks nothing of it. Another one! Why are some colleagues so negative? I wondered. 'I think it's a first class idea,' I persisted. 'Nothing doing! It won't work,' he said with his mouth full. 'You don't have to use it!' I almost yelled at him. 'I will write those tickets myself,' he said, shrugging his shoulders. 'Have it your way!' I thought and ended the conversation.

During a short break in a Think tank meeting, I had a brief chat with Dirk Vega. Dirk is an experienced senior police officer. His unit is based in a regional centre. Dirk told that one of his main concerns is alcohol abuse among youngsters

"The youth is drinking too much in different pubs and other catering establishments.", he said.

"This invokes vandalism, especially after hours. I think that a project based on cooperation by the police, the Food Inspection Department, and the local council, will bring forward actions to tackle this problem. I would like to write a plan for such a project".

"What steps have you taken?", I asked him.

"I had a meeting with my unit chief", he said. "And I raised this issue. My chief had only a short reaction: 'Aren't your priorities on quite a different level?'"

Germaine, Zach, Ben and Felix

I looked forward to having lunch with Germaine. However, the atmosphere in the cafeteria of district headquarters was rather grim. As we were queuing alongside the stainless steel counter, a group of five coppers wearing blue battle dress entered. They filled the room with their presence. I felt the anger when they passed us by, to a table near the cash point at the end of the buffet. They looked tense. Their macho behaviour – the way they walked, their loud voices and the way they hurled their belts on the table. It was almost

caricatural. But not entirely, and that was ominous. They scowled their dissatisfaction. If management and those other stinkers talk about integrity, it's always about ours and not about theirs

Germaine filled me in and told me that several talked-about cases were up for the disciplinary tribunal. They all involved esteemed colleagues from the ranks. At the same time, she told me, there were rumours about dubious declaration behaviour by high rank managers.

As we sat down with our lunch, the noise from the table with the coppers, from what looked like a Special Patrol Group, gradually faded away.

While I supped my soup, Germaine talked about a conversation she had had with her unit chief, Dunning.

"You remember I discussed a possible project, regarding the processing of reports with you?", I nodded.

"I believe that Dunning would want me to work out the problems we have with the processing of reports in a tangible proposal. So I walked to his desk yesterday, after the briefing". I looked at her and saw a determined look on her face.

"I said that I wanted to talk with him about the problems we have with processing reports. So I put it to him straight, 'You know how much work we have with processing all those reports. We should do something about that!' I told him of course I had been thinking about a way to deal with this problem, but anticipated that the special unit, I think to propose, will cause him extra work. And I wondered whether he would go along with that. 'Good point', his response was and he asked if I had any ideas. I put forward my idea to organise a special unit. 'And you should coordinate that', I said to him. But he said that it might be a good idea if I worked out my thoughts. He asked me to show him how I think we could organise things more sensibly and what I might need to make it work".

"And . . .?" I asked Germaine expectantly

"I accepted the challenge", Germaine said. And I immediately said that there was another thing I wanted to discuss with him. 'What that then?', he asked, and I saw the reserved look on his face. I told him that we had looked at crime figures in the Think tank. Thefts and burglaries are snowballing. There are lots of reports but few solved cases'. 'Another problem ...!', he muttered and I saw him pulling a long face. But I protested and told him that we thought of a different approach in the Think tank: 'We have to approach criminality in another way. Get to the fences, and through them to the thieves'. 'That's a good point', Dunning said to me. But how?"

Germaine sighed theatrically. "What is it with managers?", she asked me.

"Have they forgotten that they are coppers too? Or is Dunning just happy that I come up with ideas?"

"I told Dunning that we talked about restarting the GRUTHOKKER- screening", Germaine proceeded.

"Of course Dunning wanted to know what it would cost him in manpower and

time. And he asked me if I thought it was a priority”.

Then, and she sighed even more theatrically, she said: “Of course it is important to think about manpower and priorities. But it’s important that they don’t frustrate a start of a GRUTHOKKER project. I have to keep on nagging. I told Dunning to look at it in a different way: ‘keeping in touch with the work area fits in with the modern ideas about public safety. With the GRUTHOKKER approach, we show a feeling for the public’s problems. And the local bobby can take it on’. And you know what - Dunning gave me his blessing. That means I have to start with feasibility studies. But I think he’s sold”, Germaine said while we clean up our table. “Now his worry is selling the GRUTHOKKER-idea to the bobbies”.

Zach is concerned with the violence protocol concerning aggression against colleagues and the aftercare. In one of the meeting of the Think tank meetings he told me that his boss is also concerned about this issue, but that he probably thinks that the police in Moorland are already doing the right thing. Zach questioned this. He told me that he discussed this with his unit chief and that he wanted to participate in a FIT Police project regarding this issue. Zach said what his chief replied: ‘That’s OK with me, but is it our concern, or should someone else be responsible? Who should take the lead? And don’t we have such a thing already?’ “Thought so”, said Zach, “So I answered that there are some informal arrangements, but ...”, continues Zach, “I know from experience that they often are not complied to”. Zach stirs his coffee slowly, pauses and then says with a very serious look on his face “I told him that we I think that we need something on paper”, Zach pauses. You know what he said? “I will discuss this in the district meeting. I will come back to you”. Zach looks me in the eye, drinks his coffee and says, “This means that I have to follow his heels like a dog. I said to him: ‘OK, but I hope I get a decisive answer on some short term, because I’d like to get to work on it’”.

I spoke with Ben about the working problems he’d experienced as a Think tanker.

“One of the concerns I had when I joined the FIT Police project”, he said, “was the routing of information within the police. I asked myself why that is so poor. So I discussed this with my unit leader. ‘I get the feeling that necessary information doesn’t get to its destination in time’, I said to him.

‘What could be the problem?’, he asked me in return. ‘I think we didn’t make the right arrangements and procedures’. I told him. ‘How can we make the right arrangements and procedures?’, he continued to ask me. At that point I thought that he could do something himself. So I said to him: ‘You could confer with one of your fellow managers of the other units’. His reply was that he thought it would be wise if FIT Police installed a workgroup to tackle the basic problems”.

“That’s how they drive each other back and forth”, I thought. And judging by

Ben's pregnant pause, I gathered he felt the same way.

"I was in a fix with another problem, but I think I handled that", Ben continued after that meaningful pause. "It's buzzing in our unit. The repeating question is 'How can we get results in our job, while Ben spends a lot of time on the FIT Police project?' I talked about this with a close colleague. You know what he said?" Ben asked, looking at me" "Is that hassle with that FIT Police not finished yet, then....?" I thought that it would be best if I laid it on thick and said: 'No, Leonard, that is only going to make things worse and It will even take more time for the project in the future'. He grumbled about that: 'I work my butt off'. I know that he does, all the same I said to him: 'That's what you're paid for'. He looked at me for a while and finally he said: "I understand that the FIT Police project is important for your development". I nodded. 'That's right! I suggest that we spread our tasks and that we have to plan well'. So that will throw some light on things, I thought. Leonard agreed with my suggestion to look at the assignment and planning of tasks".

Felix Nevel is an experienced policeman, 38 years old and a plain-clothes man. He's been out of the uniform for more than ten years. I got to know him as a good-humoured guy, always full of stories. In his function he undergoes the most exciting adventures. He is a coordinator and team leader in the tracing team. Recently, he was taken on in the Management Development project. He was also an aficionado of the FIT Police project.

"For me, the most important motive is the sharing of knowledge and capabilities". He said to me.

"When I was asked to participate in the Forward Innovation Team, I didn't know what to expect. What immediately appealed to me was that people would participate from all kinds of departments and local units. That struck me as a great idea. For me, it was not important what their rank or formal position would be. I thought it was important what they had on their minds, what kind of message they had, and what they did about it. I mean nobody needs cosmic noise. I had a good feeling about the initial group. Unfortunately some people dropped out. I heard that some of them didn't get the support from their chief sergeant. That was a pity. When ideas became more explicit and the goals became more concrete I felt in place in the project. But I think that there were too many changes in personnel. For instance in the support group. It happened more than once that people in the support group took an assignment on energetically, but then suddenly disappeared. I think the Forward Innovation Team needed more peace and stability".

'Hm,' I thought, 'he's picked up some educational jargon from the questionnaire I'd asked them to fill in'. Peace and stability is one of the seven learning functions that, according to Joseph Kessels, distinguishes his corporate curriculum concept. Why does a cop from the tracing squad want peace and stability, I wondered. I could imagine that you might need some in a hectic job, but, on the other hand, the policemen that I know in similar jobs

are always looking for the contrary of peace and stability.

“Of course things went wrong when the first projects started and took shape. But a lot went well. I found it really something when halfway through the project, it was decided to continue the project. I thought that it was obviously worthwhile for the organisation to have a project like the Forward Innovation Team. We hadn’t had such a broad cooperation throughout the region before. It didn’t matter which project you talked about, and whether it was a success. It was the cooperation across the region that counted. I worked with departments I didn’t know existed before. And people to whom I introduced myself asked questions about the Forward Innovation Team, what my intentions were and what I was doing. You need a project like this to get to know each other, to share knowledge and experience and to broaden our network. It’s a good thing when cross-fertilisation occurs. I think that that really happened”.

“At first there was the idea to link the FIT Police project with the MD project. Then there were people saying: ‘No, Alex Vaharam isn’t going to decide who’s a potential’. I found it a big threat when they banged the drum and announced that the members of the Forward Innovation Team were high potentials. We immediately met scepticism. And I think that was justified. Of course most of us had something to offer. But you have to be careful, and certainly not make much of it yourself. You need successful projects; you need to score, to create support for the project. We passed over that too quickly. Alex, of whom I think tremendously and whom I really like, won people over for our cause, throughout the region and through all ranks. I found it positive, and I think that 80% - 90 % of the corps found it positive. But there were 10 % who saw it as a negative thing. Some people get disgusted when they hear his name. Perhaps they felt the ground cut from under their feet. I think that happened in the corps management team”.

“Although the programs of the meetings were loaded and there were lots of tall stories from the project manager, project leaders and from guests, there was enough space to breathe. Definitely when you looked for it. Sure, during meetings a lot of information was exchanged, but people would talk about that afterwards. Of course in the beginning you waited to see which way the wind would blow. We had to break in. I found the teambuilding events that were organised for the Forward Innovation Team important. Roll up your sleeves together and have a beer together. That gets people to open up. Finally people took the initiative and looked for space to act. They got that from Alex. Alex was always supportive when you wanted to undertake something, and asked him to work on some manager, or to make time, or a budget. Perhaps more than you needed. But he saw very quickly what people were up to. For instance, if managers sent an alibi cop or a mole. He would be fed up with that

instantly. You could tell that, by what he would say, from the look on his face. I had no trouble with that. In the frontline we always ask for bosses who act that way. You shouldn't cry when they live up to those expectations. In my unit, slackers are not finished off immediately, we put them in their place, but when they sustain, we've finished with them, and ask them to leave. Alex was a manager who could do that".

"The key figures of the project were Alex of course, you need guy likes Alex to get change, and, Claire and Bob. Claire proved a really practical support. Everybody head a good feeling about Claire. She thinks realistically, has the knowledge and the power, she is flexible and easily linked ideas. She is an academic, but she's also very practical and just like Alex she can communicate on all levels. She opens people up. Bob was also important. He was the strong one. Not only because he's on the ball. He knows our corps of course. He can talk the hind legs off a donkey, and he really has a way with people. Everywhere I drop his name, people talk positively about him. Especially on the work floor. But there are more guys of course. Harry, Bert and others. Peter, for instance. If there's a project on a neighbourhood level, he has to be involved. He is a loud mouth but he's also got good ideas. He was my partner in the 'Eye-catcher' project. He was the most fanatic member of the project group. I also valued the influence of you Ton, the researcher and outsider. You gave feedback that triggered me, made me think, that resulted in things we hadn't thought of yet. The police should make more use of the influence from outside. There were some important people outside the Forward Innovation Team. Carlo King for instance. I tell you. He was my chief. He sent me to the FIT Police project and several others. Though he was very standoffish at first. He's an odd character, a crude lout, but brings you to your senses. He always asked me how we were doing with the FIT Police project, how we were doing in the subprojects. He was a boss who really proved to be concerned from start to finish. He would call on Alex and point out things".

"I had a bad feeling about Alex leaving the project. But I was really positive about the contribution that Robert Cox, a district commander, made to the project. He could continue the project and be a good successor. Of course the corps leadership was supportive. The chief constable always tried to get closer to the frontline and showed interest. But I heard nothing of other district commanders, of high rank managers, from the top of the organisation, people who frustrated the project. They played politics. That dismayed me. But let me tell you 'I will address these people'. I will ask them why they were you so negative, and why they objected. Of course they will be smart enough to wriggle their way out of it. But they will get the message".

"So not everything went easily. I wanted to start up a project about car crime. Somebody called me to outline my ideas on one A4. So I did. Then afterwards, I

was told that I shouldn't think that I could start up a project with one A4. Then there was a fight between district commanders about my project, and I lost sight of what happened to my ideas. I did find out that my project was frustrated, of course. But I wanted to keep out of politics. I think that I would have got a green light from the chief constable. But I'm certain that they kept it from him".

"The 'Eye-catcher project', is seen as an example of a good FIT Police project. I think that's because of the way we worked together. Except for the technical equipment and the technical implementation in the radio room, the Eye-catcher project is ready-made. Of course it gets me upset that we can't start because of technical delay. And mind you, even when the technical problems are solved, it isn't finished. The idea has to prove itself. But why it's a good example of a FIT Police project? People were enthusiastic. I learned before, from other projects that project leaders make a mistake when they assign all the nice tasks to themselves and pass out annoying tasks to the team. I wanted to do it differently. So I asked people what they wanted to do, what they would go for. I gave the nice jobs to others, for example making inquiries to other regional corpses. People hate writing, and so do I. But I took that on myself. I asked for support of course. That's how it starts. As a leader you have to give people a good feeling and be supportive. The style of the leader is important. I hope that the new chief constable, has the same leadership style. We don't need those dry sticks that you also meet at headquarters. I don't connect or open up to people with a haughty attitude. But a guy like Alex made a difference. He would address me, for better or for worse".

"But the biggest success of the FIT Police project is that it proved there are people that can make a difference. But you have to see the project as a start. As a process, it has scarcely hatched. I am disappointed that the attendance dwindled in the end. Though we had Bob doing uphill work, and Deirdre - a husky woman she is - bringing people in, addressing people. And I think the project leaders did enough to get people involved. But we needed more people with guts. Naturally the fact that Alex left played a role. Perhaps members of the Forward Innovation Team should have recruited people, and we should have tempted more managers to work together with the FIT Police project, and made them feel important".

"Now there are people asking me, 'Hey are you up for a management job?' Then I say that's because I've shown what I'm capable of in the Eye-catcher project. Perhaps people get inspired if we, Bob, myself and others, get a good position after working on breakthroughs".

7. Claire

Apart from a masculine project manager, the FIT Police project team was mainly staffed with women. They were young, energetic and attractive. They did their masters in the science of public and social administration, law, business administration, bachelors in communication or were still studying. One of them even had a double degree. They chose the police out of curiosity or to make a dream come true. Most of them hadn't had any experience with the police. Together they formed the staff of the FIT Police project organisation.

A few of them were tried and tested as police officers. Like Claire Thomas. But she followed an academic career instead. She became involved in research projects in the aftermath of disasters like the massive fireworks warehouse explosion that engulfed a neighbourhood, riots after a hooligan was shot dead by a policeman and the catastrophe in which fourteen youngsters were killed and 130 were injured after a short but heavy blaze swept through a cafe packed with teenagers celebrating New Year.

Outside the meetings of the Think tank, I usually met the supporters of the FIT Police project team in their offices. After a third temporary housing at the central police station of the Moordam metropolitan police, the team found its final accommodation in the headquarters of the regional police force. Their offices were only two doors away from the rooms of the chief constable. A typical phenomena, I thought. They moved from the frayed end of the organisation to the vicinity of the power centre.

It is autumn of 2003. The FIT Police project is drawing near to its agreed end date. I had asked Claire for an interview to look back at the FIT Police project. As I walked from the parking lot to the headquarters, I thought about the differences between the support team and the Think tank. Apart from the fact they were mostly female, the members of the support team were young. They were academics, or were still pursuing a master's degree. Most of them had no frontline experience. I saw them as careerists. In the FIT Police project, they were in the lead. They were directing the learning of frontline workers. By contrast, the members of the Think tank were mostly male. They were not exactly young, but middle aged or even close to retirement. They were non-academics, but had an enormous amount of frontline experience. Career-wise they were settled or slow-movers. And in the project they were the followers. Their learning was directed by the project team.

After I checked in with the receptionist, she picked me up. A few minutes later, we found ourselves in Claire's new office. She still had her office in the headquarters of the Moorland police force. But she had moved physically closer to the chief constable's chambers. There used to be a corridor with

about five rooms, a closed door with an identity-card-lock and a spacious landing between Alex's office and the chief constable's chambers. Now there was only the landing that was used as a lobby. Claire's office wasn't spruced with the usual commissioner's paraphernalia. Doesn't she need to expose her trophies, I wondered as my eyes wandered through the room which was decorated very businesslike. Nevertheless, it felt agreeable, because of the blue curtains and the wooden wainscoting. There was a full dress commissioner's uniform on a coat-hanger in the corner. 'I only wear it on official occasions', she once said.

"I heard that they nicknamed us Alex's Harem". Claire spoke while I followed her to her office. "Looked like it, I guess. Deirdre, the communication advisors, the secretarial staff and I and all the female students we provided with a work placement. But then they forgot Bob", said Claire while we sat down at her conference table. "He became part of our team. He and his colleague Bert". Bob Gabriel and Bert Kemp were both experienced policemen. They were asked to follow up projects, detect problems with projects and to support members of the Forward Innovation Team if necessary. Especially in their role as project leader. They called themselves 'stalkers'. After a while, Bob got so closely involved with the project that he was released from operational service and was detached to the Forward Innovation Team as a full time member.

"A few months ago, I got promoted and became head of the department Policy and Administration Affairs and responsible for policy development, policy conditions and policy support. Process management is becoming important in Police organisations. Those processes have to be prepared, thought through and developed. My department is concerned with this. Bob took over my tasks as project leader".

As Claire served me my usual coffee, I asked her to go back to the beginning. "Our assignment was to initiate organisational and cultural change. We were to set out and bring in innovations and improvements, and to stimulate people to develop their own ideas. Not only did we want them to bring forward their own ideas, we wanted them to get going with these ideas themselves. Inspiring them to build something beautiful, in the daily chaos. The problem is that in a police organisation, we are swayed by the issues of the day. That's inevitable. What we tried was to work on innovations in an achievable, feasible and practical way. Take little steps, together and have success together instead of being full of good ideas which remain private ideas. That would be a breakthrough because a police organisation is goaded from the frontline, from the streets. We are always abreast of things. Our experience is that people work that way. They think that way. Policemen haven't learned to think ahead. We believed that that could be

changed. You can't change the environment, but you can deal with it differently. In an organisation with an ad-hoc assignment, you can work differently. More goal-oriented and open for change, instead of concentrating on how to get the planning fixed. We wanted to get more purposeful behaviour in the streets. Many people were put off by that idea. Their professional discretion was at stake. We touched the culture. Suddenly people were expected to take directions. There's nothing wrong with professional autonomy and discretionary space. It only needs more focus. Not only on what is important now, but also on what is going to be important in the future. We know that our organisation is capable of working more efficiently and effectively. We prove that when there are calamities. Then we put our backs into it. Top level management, the corps leaders believe that we have the strength to be efficient and effective beyond calamities, but we don't use it. The problem is that middle managers, district commanders, have created their own kingdoms and have their own priorities. Only when there are conflicts the corps leadership issues an ultimatum. There's a layer of clay between top management and the frontline.

The average copper in the street hasn't got the notion that things can be different. We saw in the FIT Police project an important gateway to change. The members of the Forward Innovation Team saw the possibilities for change. Not always though. Sometimes they believed that things could not be changed. Not out of pessimism, mind you!

And now we also see some district commanders standing up for some changes. In the beginning, they asked in God's name what we were up to. Many acknowledge the island cultures, without seeing possibilities for change".

I wanted to know how she looked back on her role in the project.

"We had two project leaders," said Claire. "First Deirdre and I did it together. Deirdre provided

coaching and helped the participants in the FIT Police projects with their personal development plans. I had the task of supporting subproject leaders with the development of project plans, and to act as an ambassador for the FIT Police project organisation in the organisation". We got involved at the start of the project, in April 2001. There wasn't room for an office, there were no computers, nothing. So in her first week I was busy arranging these things. I hired an office in an old movie theatre. The place was still littered with beer bottles, filled glasses, fag ends and worse. After we cleaned it up, we produced a vision document. No more than one A4. I worked that out, for Alex. Not much later, Deirdre joined the team. Next, the project team interviewed people from the different parts of the organisation. The project was kicked off in the late summer of 2001. About twenty people formed the first Forward Innovation Team. We held our first meeting in The Palace, the old cinema. You could hear people saying 'What's this for Pete's sake? What are we doing here? What's the meaning of this?' Guys were sent out by their bosses to size up the situation

and had to report back. Those first meetings were very energetic. Most members of the Forward Innovation Team were motivated from the start and had lots of trust in what they were up to, in the FIT Police project. They thought it was absolutely fantastic. 'Yeah, let's improve police work!' Some of them became real breakthrough die-hards and they still are. Bob Gabriel, of course, Felix Nevel and Bert Kemp, who became project leader of the Boor line. Those guys formed the heart of our network. They were like family". She smiled.

"Bert had just had a very rough time and couldn't pick himself up again. He was looking for something new. He was interested in the Boor line idea, but he was very insecure. Alex said 'Bert is going to fall on his face, keep him on his feet!' So that was our mission. We coached him and guided him through the conversations with his boss, who was also the client-manager of the Boor line project. Bert really pulled himself through and got somewhere with the project".

I was curious how she perceived the results of the FIT Police project. "Our project had a slow start. However we saw the gain in the instigation of a process. But after one year, the only real success was the Boor line. And many coppers felt that the Boor line was an idea of the chief constable or said that it didn't work. That inspiring, boosting and driving function of the project organisation was hard to measure. Furthermore, we feared that the coppers in the force felt inhibited by the project. We saw that as a real hazard. In the end the real successes are the little individual successes. The development of Bert Kemp and of Bob Gabriel, for example. And the development of networks was a success. Learning networks, analysing front line problems, becoming aware of new possibilities and connecting with the frontline again were also successes. A third success was the smaller projects. Listening to what people's daily problems were, how they experienced these, and what their ideas for improvement were. Fixing certain problems with computers, such as problems with printing pictures. Getting around the problems with the constantly changing passwords. These are examples of lingering nuisances and not always easy to get rid of. We didn't solve all these problems, but they were acknowledged, and put on the agenda. And people became aware of how they relate to their colleagues and management concerning these problems. Or more realistic: did not relate. They learned to handle these problems more effectively, themselves. I think that the corps leaders aren't really satisfied. 30 months ago, the chief constable told me that he thought the biggest problems were the higher management and the island cultures they induced in the organisation. The corps came from a situation where the chief constable was asked to rule, to change so that they would have to manage their own affairs and this deteriorated into a situation with many realms. So his idea was to bridge these realms. By feeding the frontline, management would be made more dependent. Of course, he also wanted exciting new projects so that he

would have exposure on nation-wide TV. As far as that is concerned, he had some small successes: the Boor line and the Macho project”.

I suggested that the hits of the FIT police project weren’t really born in the frontline. Claire agreed. “Lots of ideas came from the corps leaders and from Alex. The Forward Innovation Team sometimes felt deceived, thinking that they were working out the ideas of top management, that they were a vehicle for the corps leaders, or another news flash. That brought us into a difficult position. Perhaps there was the potential for good ideas in the frontline, but it took time to develop the frontline. People need time to think. We acknowledged that. Where top management on the other hand yearned for results. And Alex could be very impatient too. That grew upon us. Although we wanted it to be frontline driven, we started to develop projects ourselves, because it took the frontliners too much time. We sensed developments though, when we talked with them, and with their direct chiefs, and discovered that they had learned a lot, that the project is important to them and that is important to get time to think and to listen to each other. That’s what they learned. In discussions and analyses concerning the feasibility of a tele-work project we saw that they materialised, concretised, explicated and thought through all aspects of operational effectiveness. The important thing is not the continuation and realisation of the project. Those images of operational effectiveness were the main learning results. You heard them say: ‘I learned a lot from this’. I think they made a step forward, from being unaware of strategy, for example, to being aware of the power of strategic moves”. While I checked my tape recorder, Claire continued: “Perhaps we wanted to go too fast. The project was particularly an eye-opener for the group. But for top management that’s not enough. They want concrete results. It’s the same for Alex. When all is said and done, he wants to score”.

I wondered whether top management had done enough for the project, so I asked her.

“In our view the chief constable hasn’t done enough to support the project. He should have taken a stance more often instead of leaving it to the powers at play. And he should have steered Alex. We often joked with him and said ‘put on your pink shirt’. Obviously we meant: instead of going to war. The corps leaders weren’t visible during the course of the project. We only saw them in the beginning. Alex was very engaged in the project. He could inspire people, trigger a bottom up movement, and his strength was that he was always thinking of ways you hadn’t thought of yet. But we also heard that his needle got stuck. We started to see through his rhetoric. Alex generated lots of resistance because of his style. He came out of meetings thinking that he’d fixed things, but as we went to work it often turned out that there was no real commitment. That was hard work. Of course we had our fights with him. Once we said to him that we wanted to throw in the towel. That we couldn’t detect a

straight course, that we had troubles with the drawn-out processes. Then he started talking and flooded us with all kinds of suggestions. But we didn't want another pep talk. We just wanted to think first. Of course he had his difficult moments too. He hardly ever shared those with us, but we could see it. Then he would call one of his buddies.

It is clear that I wasn't the only one who got bored with Alex's mantras, I thought.

"Now that Alex has parted", Clair added, "we see that doors are opening. Somebody picked up the Macho line idea and is really going for it. Also for his own glory of course. But that's not so bad. Alex invoked a lot of resistance because of his style".

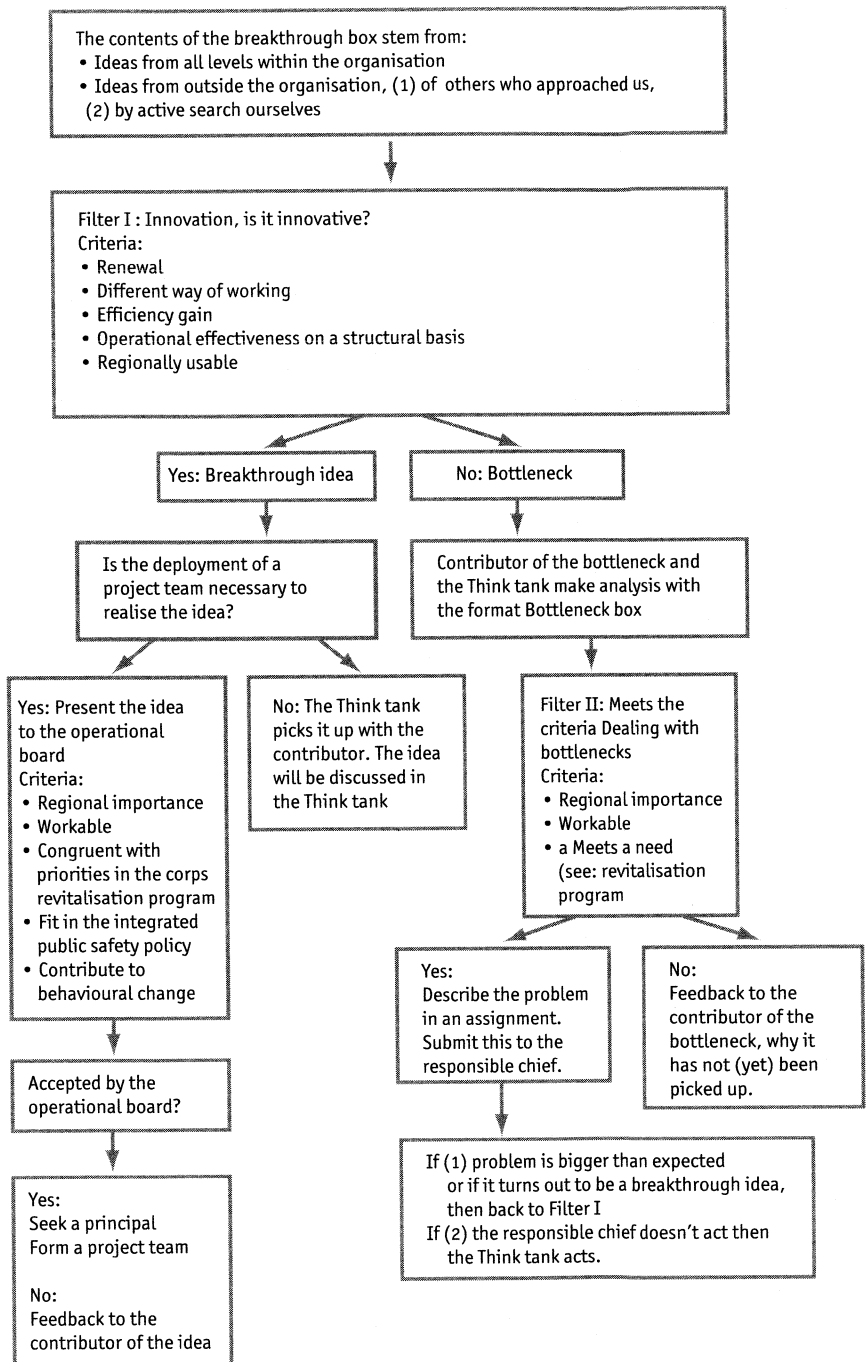
Then she wrapped up.

"Looking back, we started with ambitious thoughts and plans. We made heavy weather of it from day one. We wanted to bring about cultural change, to fight bureaucracy, to implement a learning organisation and to develop innovations and execute a MD policy along the way. We ended up modestly. It's a pity that we couldn't get everybody to think with us. Perhaps we thought too simply in the beginning. We took pot-shots at it. Give it a bang and Bob's your uncle!

Then we became aware that it was difficult to meet those high expectations.

From the start, we asked ourselves what our job was. I think that we were supposed to be mediators; bridge builders; linking pins; liaison officers; knowledge brokers. We were supposed to be initiating; dropping ideas; bringing people together, closer to the organisation; picking up signals; giving suggestions. The beauty is that we weren't tied up in a discipline. We did everything. Innovation was our agenda of course, but we tried to serve people. We saw to duties that weren't ours. Of course we gave them up to the appropriate departments. Obviously we were looking for new thoughts, but they were really scarce. We didn't find any evidence for the idea of the corps leaders that frontline cops have real innovative thoughts in their heads.

We could measure that with our breakthrough box. A flowchart, that contained criteria to distinguish old, tried and tested ideas from respectively improvements and genuine innovations".



The breakthrough box

8. Bob

Bob is an experienced detective. He worked for the drugs squad when he joined the FIT Police project. In Think tank Meetings at the beginning of the project, Bob presented himself as a very critical, sometimes almost cynical member of the group. But he's an amiable man. He's outgoing, and open about himself. Always thinking and dreaming aloud.

Bob brought up very small and practical problems that annoy every policeman for instance the problems of logging in computer programs with a constantly changing set of passwords. And the problems with equipment that frustrate the printing of pictures. Most of the problems he raised looked as if they could be easily solved. But despite his ideas and those of other members of the FIT Police project and the pressure to solve these problems, Bob often failed to get ahead. In spite of this, he didn't get discouraged.

He always kept looking for possibilities to override bureaucracy and to enhance creativity. Bob made use of the other possibilities the FIT Police project offered. The Forward Innovation Team offered him an opportunity to develop himself. He followed courses in creative problem solving, in personal leadership and he engaged in peer coaching. At the end of the first year, he turned out to be one of the core team members. When several colleagues decided to leave the group, Bob chose to stay on board. At that time, he was at a turning point in his career. Would he consolidate or would he go on developing the talents that others attributed to him? In the second year of the project, Bob wanted to play a more active role. He started to stalk the projects in progress and supported his fellow team members, he visited units and talked with colleagues and superiors about the aims of the Forward Innovation Teams and looked for new projects, cooperation and support. At the end of the project Bob was detached from the drug squad to the project organisation in order to consolidate FIT Police projects and their outcomes. When in February 2004, the top management definitely decided to end the FIT Police project, to pull the plug, Bob returned to the drugs squad.

As he left the department he got a *Bob the builder* notebook as a parting gift. To write down all the ideas he gets and he was asked to keep working on them. Bob and I had many small chats during the 30 months the FIT Police project lasted and I followed it. On several occasions I interviewed him.

"I experience frequently that we, as the police, don't operate optimally. Among other things, there are problems with cooperation, automation, authorisation and equipment. Usually this concerns matters that, to my opinion, can be solved quickly and easily. But that often fails because of bureaucracy. I expected the Forward Innovation Team to break through the bureaucracy and that improvements which improve the investigations and or

the working conditions could promptly be implemented. I thought the FIT Police project organisation was an initiative worthwhile trying. It's a pity that the first year wasn't very productive.

The problem was that too many things were left to the subgroups. They were flooded with ideas and approaches, but after the Think tank meetings they were left on their own. In the first place I think the project team members were sitting on the fence. Secondly they were involved with two things. I think that the combination of personal growth and group development on the one hand and innovation and organisational development on the other hand turned out to be difficult. Who has to take that to heart? Difficult to say. Perhaps it was the line-up of the subproject teams and the attention they got. I think it was a big problem that the teams couldn't spend enough time together and that team members were scattered over the region and never saw each other, and I think that some of the team members were only members because they were put in. I think the teams lacked intensity in working together.

"The story about a simple cable that remained the missing link to print out photos of defendants became a connecting thread throughout the entire project. Let me exemplify that: For us, detectives, it is a big nuisance that our system doesn't allow us to print pictures of defendants immediately so that we can use them in interrogation. I decided to go over this problem with the technical investigation service. I turned to a colleague on the shop floor. 'Is it possible to print the pictures of defendants directly?' His reply was something like: 'Uh.... No.....Technically? Uh.... No'

I wasn't satisfied. Regarding the shilly-shallying I thought there was more to it. Technically not possible? Bollocks! So I decided to turn to my own chief. Being aware that he would not see the importance and probably had a lot in his head with other matters, I said 'Technical investigation service cannot or will not make it possible to print out pictures directly'.

'What's so important? Thought the case in which you wanted to have pictures immediately was done with'.

Although I thought that my chief didn't see the benefits for the future. I insisted. At the same time I feared that he would forget to take it up with the technical investigation service. He had a busy schedule and is a messy organiser. 'I'll have the same problem next time, and my colleagues too'. My boss went to the chief of Technical investigation service. He assured him that it was technically not possible. I'm afraid that my chief didn't give a full and proper explanation of the problem and probably let himself be fobbed off".

"We dreamed of fundamental innovations while such simple things frustrated police work. That hurt. Recently I heard that the cable has been arranged. It will be available soon after somebody has put his signature on it. In other projects we discovered that somebody was already on it. The GRUTHOKKER

project for example. I adopted it, together with another member of the Forward Innovation Team. We found yet another colleague on a similar project. We went to the guy, we talked with him, and it seemed that they had to confer with the local and judicial authorities. But then there is always a holiday standing in the way. Before the holiday we do nothing, after the holiday we have to start up and then there's always another holiday. Projects with a longer term often get grounded by holidays. We proposed to our colleague that we send Alex to the local and judicial authorities, but our colleague was about to go on a holiday. But I think we goaded someone. Made a breakthrough".

"A very sad project was the 'Guided tours project'. Our police force gets lots of requests for conducted tours behind the scenes. We thought that volunteers could guide these tours. So we tried to organise that. Actually it was a test to see whether we could work with volunteers and so see which kind of things enter into this.

Harry, the project leader, made inquiries about volunteer projects in other forces, in Urbanville for example, where they deploy more than 1000 volunteers. In Urbanville they said to him: you have such a project yourselves in Moorland. Harry found out that somebody from our own HRM department had a volunteer project on his hands. So he called upon our HRM colleague. This guy pulled open a filing cabinet and said, while he blew the dust of the dossier: 'we have it on the shelf. We are working on it. We have an assignment from the Home Office, you know'. He was supposed to establish volunteer work with two neighbouring regions before his retirement at the end of the year. Harry pushed on the project, and even tried to take the HRM colleague on board in the project team. But the HRM guy delayed, counter acted and sabotaged. It gave lots of trouble. Deirdre went to straighten it out and learned that Harry, in our project, had trampled on his feelings. It was decided to wait with our project until the HRM colleague retired. Last week we got an invitation for the kick off. In the meantime Alex impressed on our minds that the project was a success. After all, our goal was to get volunteers at work and we put pressure on it to make it work. For our own appearances, we also realised the Guided tours".

"We are very happy with a local bobby called Nico. He always cut right through things. He has always been a critical chap, also about the FIT Police project. Deirdre heard from his chief that Nico had to leave the Forward Innovation Team because he neglected his work. From the moment he got the message, he wasn't allowed anymore. I saw him all the time in meetings. He kept coming although his chiefs forbade participating. Of course we invited him. I really like him. He's a man after my own heart. He did it the way it was intended. Organised his own space to participate. Naturally I also find that he shouldn't neglect his work"

"It's not easy to realise breakthroughs. Why? Because actually everything within the police organisation is organised, everything is seen to, everything has its place. So every time when we started a project, we would roll over somebody's territory. There were colleagues who could accept that, whilst others were affronted. Deirdre was the ideal person to make it up again. Apart from the fact that police culture slows things down, frustrates or blows up a project.

Good cops sometimes frustrate projects. I'm thinking of a unit chief, always standing up for something, but one who has always a plan, a timetable. You got to hide, when you try to override that".

"I myself got involved in all kinds of small projects and initiatives. Getting things done, Electronic reporting for example. The civilians in Moorland can report electronically via Internet. But if you drop in the Moordam police station you have to queue. There are eight people before you. My first thought was to place a terminal there and I talked about it with a unit chief, who wanted to participate in a small project. We have lots of useful written off computers. Then Automation said to me 'we're designing a terminal, which we've been working on for three years', but they couldn't deliver. So the unit chief of the police said OK, give me two terminals and... some space to place them. But I couldn't go along with this smooth customer. We came up with ideas; we pulled some strings, and then thought that this unit chief should fend for himself.

Another example is digital cameras in the hospital. When people report an assault, we can make a picture after medical treatment. But the official report of grievous bodily harm can be more unequivocal with before and after treatment pictures. For example all kinds of questions concerning integrity are attached to this idea. I think it's worthwhile to tackle those problems. So people can have their Polaroid taken, before they report. What's wrong with that?"

"To make a project a success, you need an animated project leader. A person with the capability to motivate people and to act promptly. The client who commissions the project is just as important. Your dream client will think along with you and offers appropriate facilitation. And as a project leader, you have to be able to build your own project team. Felix had that in the Eye-catcher project. In the first place, Felix was enthusiastic about the project and he is the kind of guy who can kindly ask whether an assignment given on Friday can be ready on Monday. In the second place, he had the luck of an enlightened client, one who thought with him. And third, Felix put his own project team together. I think the project will be an overwhelming success, but first people have their holidays".

"In my opinion, the golden rules to achieve breakthroughs are: free people from operational service for an appropriate amount of time, improve the organisation of project groups, and improve the selection of participants in the project. I think the projects can gain from focus, attention and concentration. The FIT Police project organisation as a community for innovation. In order to get things done, you have to find the right people in a network. I heard this story about the Dutch railway company: People from the south of the Netherlands, working for the government asked for facilities to work on board the train to The Hague. After finding the right people: an engine driver, a conductor, a caterer, a technician and a first line manager, they organised a special carriage from operations.

At the end of the project period Bob complained that the members of the Forward Innovation Team became very quiet.

I hear nothing spontaneous from group members. There are a few active project leaders.

Sometimes we call a meeting, think about a programme, like a couple of weeks ago. That programme depended on the participation of certain people. It collapsed. I was so mad that I phoned all the absentees. Of course they assured me they had a good reason for not showing up. Maybe not a sham, maybe according they had the feeling they could legitimate their absence because of the work pressure. But Alex always emphasised that the membership of the Forward Innovation Team was voluntary but not without obligations. We expected the members of the Forward Innovation Team to be part of the 20 percent innovators, that they would organise their own work in such a way that they could make time for learning events and realise breakthroughs. But they disappointed me. Nevertheless there are enthusiastic members, are subproject leaders who want to make a difference and we have had some meetings to enlarge the network. It's not dead. I remain optimistic. I have my recoils, and then I think 'What a misery'. But I always pick myself up. There are breakthroughs that really work and from those I get a good feeling. And of course I keep thinking how to improve police work and how to make projects work.

I sat on the bicycle yesterday. It was getting foggy, so couldn't see far around me. Then you have to start thinking. I want to create networks, to get networks working on a theme.

My problem is that I often cycle alone in the mist".

Two months after the FIT Police project stopped, I talked with Bob once more. "Although the corps leaders pulled the plug out of the FIT Police project, it's worth reflecting on the approach. I think it's important to have a Think tank group that continues thinking about learning and innovation. However the corps leaders don't seem to agree. We have to create a brain for the organisation that thinks freely, thinks innovatively, and thinks creatively".

"The first problem with the Forward Innovation Team was that we worked too long in isolation. And we had a problem with communication. The Macho line provides a good example for it. However many people were charmed by the project. Finally we pick on the guys that really bother us. Then somebody started a rumour that the first attempt was an utter fiasco and that therefore the project was stopped, although the project wasn't abandoned at all. The Macho project also proved that we depend on our partners and that we have to learn to deal with that. The tax authorities were deterred by all the publicity that the project raised".

"Secondly, you need frontline workers for some projects, but for other projects you need more heavy weight. We lacked some of these management types. It sometimes happened that guys from the Forward Innovation Team spruced themselves for a meeting. Appearing in their Sunday's best. Alex even joked about a project leader turning up in his wedding suit. He blew things up that way. I always stay myself.....I think you have to be yourself, don't behave different. I think we have to choose the best man for the job. Sometimes you need more authority. Somebody with the experience to steer and to negotiate. I would have liked to have more personal influence on choosing people for projects. I think it's important that we have more variation and wider knowledge of the organisation. It would be a good idea to have people from other regions and people from outside the police. I got that idea when we talked with some innovators from other regions with a project manager from an innovative hospital. And we would have to get rid of the FIT Police label, because that's associated with Alex too much".

"Thirdly, the covenants that were made with the members of the Forward Innovation Teams were a horror. They only encouraged the procedure freaks to go for their calculator. I talked with the chief constable about this and told him those contracts were counterproductive. He could see that. On the other hand, we should have been more secure about preconditions for projects. I think those are an outspoken and committed stakeholder, a clear commission, and enough space to act. I think that a Think tank would do a good job if they were think an innovation project through before it is started up. I guess that the FIT Police project accumulated a lot of knowledge to facilitate innovation projects for future innovation projects".

"Fourthly, the line-up of the Forward Innovation Team and subproject teams must be done differently. I think you don't need difficult assessment procedures. You walk around in the organisation, use your gut feeling, and you approach other people".

"Fifthly, I think that it's a good idea to work with themes more then we did. Recently we organised two theme-meetings. The subproject Knowledge management organised a conference and the project leaders organised an imago-meeting together with Robert Cox, one of the District commanders".
"For the Knowledge management meeting we made a selection of people we needed or were enthusiastic. And others invited people. Eventually we had a

group of 25 people. We made sure that we saw to it that we planned a follow up meeting. And we made sure that something was going to happen between these meetings. We asked people to connect with other people to provoke an 'ink stain effect'. During the Knowledge management meeting it became clear that the intranet is not working satisfactorily. The coordinator told us that he had 5000 pages of information, but only ten are used. He is baffled because people always cry out loud that they know nothing, while it's all there. We invited all kinds of stakeholders to discuss Knowledge management. In the end, I have mixed feeling about that the Knowledge management meeting. It was a pity that, thinking about Knowledge management, we got stuck in the intranet discussion. On the other hand, we wanted it to be concrete. Talking about knowledge, before you know it, you end up in a woolly conversation. We didn't want that to happen. By the way, I have my own problems with Knowledge management you know. The pile of 'books to read' on my desk is growing every day.

At the end of the meeting, I was thinking how we could involve more people thinking about Knowledge management. I got the idea that if we, all the 25 participants, discuss the Knowledge management problems with somebody from the corps and ask them to make a contribution to the intranet by adding a useful link from the website of another regional force, then we could incite 125 other people in the organisation to think about Knowledge management. "The imago meeting was also a good experience. But you have to find someone who wants to put his back into it. You don't want one of those who want an imago in seven procedures. Robert Cox, the DC whom we organised the imago-meeting with, isn't like that. He is a good guardian of an imago project. For the imago meeting, we invited people from the Forward Innovation Team. I think it would have been better if we'd specifically invited people, as we did for the Knowledge management meeting. Colleagues who have a feeling for the subject and are involved with that theme. Colleagues who want give their best to realise improvements or innovations. Now I got the impression there were some awkward customers present at that in the imago meeting. People who weren't thinking along but were only looking for trouble".

"And sixthly. I think that the ideas for breakthroughs, or the need for them, can come not only from the frontline but also from management. Lately a manager who got a meagre result in the management review approached me. He wondered if we could come up with an idea to boost his figures. Of course he wanted a fast result. I think that this manager has his own responsibility, but I also think it's important that all sections and echelons are involved in thinking about innovation. The frontline, staff departments and line management.

“How will we look back on the FIT Police project in five years time? In the end I think that we recall the project particularly as Alex’s thing. He played an addressing and appealing role. He sold the project. Alex is a good salesman. The proof for that is that the project ran for 30 months. In our police culture we look at results in the first place. Projects have to throw up concrete results otherwise they’re no good. Alex knew how to compare two worlds together. Striving for results and cultural change. Convincing people that there is more between heaven and earth. I was happy with the space that the corps leaders gave us to experiment. But without Alex, somebody that could hold on to and defend that approach, that space wouldn’t have got there in the first place or would have disappeared very quickly. The assaults of the district commanders on the position, the budget and the people budget were surely very fierce. The chief constable and Alex defended the project. The district commanders are very focused on results. Of course that’s a good thing, but cultural changes work out slowly. I also think that in five years time we also remember the project as a success.

I see things changing. I see people opening up. Not only frontline workers. I’m certain that one of the district commanders, some key figures in the organisational support and several heads of departments liked the breakthrough approach. And transferred that approach to their own team. They seek cultural change”.

“But there is one thing bothering me, and perhaps that shows that there was something missing, that it was a troublesome project. Last week they came to me, they wanted to make a book about the project, and they wanted me to tell an anecdote. But when did I really have to laugh? I can’t recall anything. There are enough stories to cry about, but nothing to laugh about. That heavily disappointed me. Looking back on my frontline history, I have heaps of funny stories”.

9. Iris, and the other image makers

I met Iris Samson for the first time in the cafeteria. I was at a table with the other interns. Around us, coppers of a special unit occupied a few tables. They wore battle dress. Officers of the motored police exchanged their experiences of the morning at the back of the room and a group from a support unit was at the counter. The groups didn't mix, but all ate the same greasy snacks.

Iris was one of the communication advisors recruited to image the Fit Police Project. From the start the image of the FIT Police Project was a major concern. After the kick off in "The Palace", an information leaflet and a picture gallery with all the members of the Think tank, it was much too quiet, said the project team. Furthermore, there were continuous communication problems between corps and the FIT Police project. The participants wanted to have a free space to work on their work related learning projects, their improvement projects and their innovative ideas, on the other hand they knew they were being critically watched. Therefore several communication advisors were involved in the project and a communication project group was established. Iris started as a student on an assignment. When she finished her assignment, she was hired by the project leaders to support the project, together with Liz Muller. She was another communication advisor and started also as an intern.

With project manager Alex, Bert Kemp, secretary Daphne Jensen and Kevin Polak, they formed the FIT Police communication project group. For a while, Kevin Polak participated in the Think tank and in the communication project group. Kevin is one of the press officers for the Moorland force. The communication project group was completed by two external members. They were Philip Constantine, the cartoonist and Albert Porter, an external communication consultant.

Iris was still a student when we met for the first time. After I had introduced myself over lunch, she gave me her story. "They were recruiting students who could contribute to the project with their final assignment. I was in the fourth year of a college for creative communication. I wanted the assignment especially because it concerned the police. Because you know the police form the streets. But you know nothing of the organisation behind it. I thought it exciting to have a peep behind the scenes. And they selected me. When I joined in 2001, the project had already started. Together with Deirdre, I worked out the details of my assignment. I was especially interested in the frontline".

After that first chat, many followed, in the corridors, during Think tank meetings and in workgroups.

For instance on a stormy day in February 2003. It was lunchtime and I wanted to go home. I had just finished the facilitation of a peer-consultation group that morning. As I walked out of headquarters, a strong gust of cold wind blew

across the square in front of the building. As I searched the lee of the buildings, I bumped into long tall Iris. "Cod paring", she said as she held a bag with warm fish snacks under my nose. "A treat for the project team, because I handed in my thesis". "Well done", I said. "What were your main conclusions?" I asked while we sheltered in a doorway for a minute. "That the frontline was hardly involved. Ideas and plans were developed in an ivory tower. The project team hatched ideas, whilst the frontline had to carry out the plans. I think it's more important to draw the frontline into the process. To create a basis. Because, you know, coppers, they won't have projects imposed on them. They want to have a say. Of course people have heard about the Forward Innovation Team, but what was really going on remained unclear. That was the result of my survey. Everybody had heard of the Forward Innovation Team and knew who was participating in it, but was unacquainted with what was going on. While just that was significant".

I suspected that the pieces of fried fish she was holding were getting cold, and I didn't want to keep her any longer. To wind up our chat, and to inform myself about the details, I asked her for a copy of her thesis.

The postman delivered Iris' project paper the next day. It was titled *Unknown, unloved*. In the summary, I read her definition of the problem: 'In what way can the FIT Police project organisation best communicate the organisation and its successes to the frontline in order to create acknowledgement and recognition'. On the basis of a survey, she found that the target group was indeed familiar with the project but hadn't got a favourable response. The colleagues found that they were not kept well informed about the project. They felt out of touch with what FIT Police did while they were not acquainted with the purposes and vision of the project. A minority added that they barely noticed anything of the project in their daily job. Iris pointed out that the project organisation had taken her findings to heart and outlined a communication plan to take away the negative image of the FIT Police project and create a new image. She pointed at the importance of the transfer of information and, as part of this, she stressed the significance for the FIT Police project to develop a trademark.

"After I finished my final assignment and graduated, I stayed on, as you know" she called out from her kitchen. After Iris had left the Forward Innovation Team and the project was closed, we met again. We had made an appointment at her place, in Deltacity. She lived in small apartment, but quite comfortable for a student. Her living room was dominated by a suite of sixties furniture. White and made of plastic. Iris explained that they are hand moulded and made by a relative. Obviously, creativity ran in the family.

"At first it was a part-time job, later on there were so many tasks that it became a full time assignment. I liked working for the police, but it was a macho culture. More than in other firms I'd worked for. At the start I often

experienced that the coppers played a waiting game. 'There's another young girl who is going to tell us how we have to do our job'. I think the nickname Alex's Harem says enough! But when people see what you do, you are accepted. When I started, the project organisation had already been working for one year before they decided to professionalise the communication with the frontline. And they wanted to catch up that year of lost ground. The reality was that there already was a lot of resistance. 'Projects are already fixed beforehand without us having a say in it. Why would we suddenly listen to them! Or to help the project organisation!' It was a thorough job and we didn't manage a 100% acquaintance with the project, but I think I contributed. The project itself was stopped dead in its tracks. I think it should have lasted for at least one more year to have a chance of survival".

While Iris served coffee and a biscuit, I admired her huge and, at the same time, slender synthetic chairs.

"Towards the end of the project you could notice that things that were built up were slowly pulled down again. For instance the volunteers' project. I participated in it and I've seen management types being obstructive. Doing nothing more than seeking problems and saying that the project didn't stand a chance. Personally I found that a pity, because I thought it to be a good idea to throw a bridge between society and the police. If you want to create a better image what can you do better than to involve people".

I ate my biscuit, heard a rubbish lorry pass and looked at her while she proceeded.

"I think the image of the police in the news is very bad at the moment. Of course the Boor line and the Macho line were in the news. You only come in the news when things are exciting or go wrong".

There was a pregnant silence.

"My job was the internal communication. An internal communication officer was responsible for the external PR and Alex of course. He courted the press and the press him, of course", Iris smiled.

"Alex was a dogged type who could achieve his goals with the greatest of ease. I have to say: I admire that quality, that passion, that drive. I think he needed it, because we noticed that he had many friends but also many enemies".

And with a snigger she said,

"I think he did well".

And she continued,

"You always create enemies when you stand for something. There are always people who think that you mustn't. I think that has to do with insecurity about their position, with fear.

I think that Alex's snag was that he had a few blind spots. That he pushed through even when not everything was thought out".

We exchanged meaningful looks, she paused and I turned the cassette in my tape-recorder.

"Looking back, I think that the installation of the communication project

group was a good thing because there were lot of different voices communicating about the project.

The positive thinkers were enthusiastic about the teambuilding, the Think tank, and were influenced by Alex's pep talks. At home in their unit, they told inspiring stories. They emphasised that the project would make a difference, that if people had a problem or an idea, they could bring it in, that the team would pick it up, that there was not the risk that ideas would get stuck in the management layers. They were told that real innovation was possible and that it was great fun to work on that. The negativists said that it was all a waste of time. Drivelling over a cup of coffee, no good ideas. They were a minority though. I think there were 80% positive thinkers and 20% negativists, but the latter would easily affect the group they functioned in. Some of them were pushed by their unit chiefs, although they knew that they were accepted by the project manager.

I think it is Police culture to rely on routines. Everybody has his own tasks. You don't poke your nose into other people's business. The Forward Innovation Team meant a change. I was very positive about the FIT Police concept; it is a pity that it failed. It failed because it didn't get enough time to mature. Of course it was a gigantic turn around. The idea that coppers could bring in ideas, could participate.

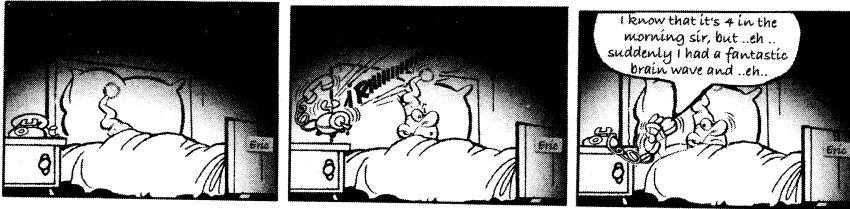
Setting up a project organisation is easy, but to change the minds of the people, that costs a lot of time!

The real toppers were the Boor line and the Macho line. They got a lot of media attention. They scored. However, the initial ideas for these came from outside. They were thought of by high ranks. They didn't come from the frontline and they weren't oriented in the internal organisation. For me the real successes were the SARA project and the Volunteer project. These projects gave police officers more time for their core business. Of course they were less glossy". "In what way could the picture of the Forward Innovation Team be influenced and, how did you work on a better image?"

"We used and developed several tools to communicate the Forward Innovation Team idea and its progress.

We acquired some space in the *Our update*, the corps magazine, to give greater publicity to the Forward Innovation Team-story. We wanted to call for attention to the Forward Innovation Team in a light-hearted manner, in a humorous way. To get the activities of Forward Innovation Team more widely known and to gain more sympathy for the project. For that purpose Philip Constantine, our cartoonist created a small comic strip. Recently I glanced through the work again and I thought it was splendid. The communication group came up with the themes. Philip transformed those into a triptych cartoon, a three-picture story. It came out every two weeks in the *Our update*, it turned into considerable series. As the series made headway, the triptychs became more daring, let's put it that way. At first we were restrained and asked ourselves: will it do or not? But as the series continued we permitted

ourselves a bolder approach. For instance, when our theme was that ideas could pop up 24 hours a day, I realised that I have my ideas at night. So we used that. A copper rings the chief constable out of bed. We thought it was great, that that was acceptable.



Cartoon: Copper rings Chief constable

Through our risqué approach, we got response. Yes, that was rather positive. Although we gained the day getting into the *Our update*, the cartoon used up all the regular space we got. Because we wanted to spend more, get more profound stories off our chest, we couldn't always use the *Our update*; we created an intranet site and we developed an electronic newsletter. Within six months time we reached 600 members. We sent the first two issues to all personnel. Then we asked whether they wanted a subscription or not. From then we sent it specifically to a group interested in information about the Forward Innovation Team. We could communicate what we wanted and it turned out to be favourably received".

While Iris kept talking, I leafed through some copies of the *Our update*.



Cartoon: A Police officer has an idea!

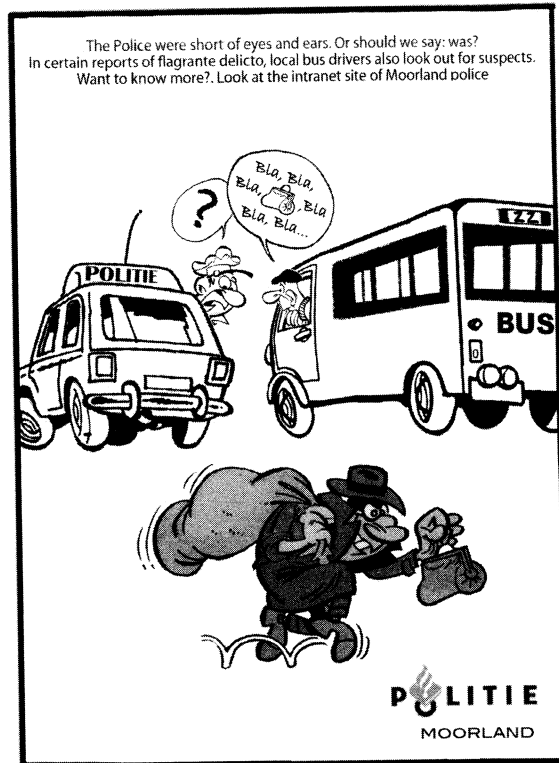
"And People let us know they had ideas, offered their help or informed us that they made plans about similar projects we developed. They undertook actions to contribute. You don't do that just like that. Coppers have a demanding job as it is. The initiative to do something extra means something. The response consisted mainly of email. We got a lot of emails. Sometimes I had a response of 50 emails on one newsletter. I find that substantial. At first I thought

people just skimmed through the headlines and would read only bits and pieces. But I found that the readers seriously read our texts. I know that because they responded substantively. You can't do that when you've only glanced at the headlines.

"What sort of persons showed a response?" I asked.

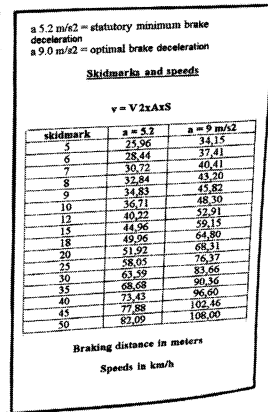
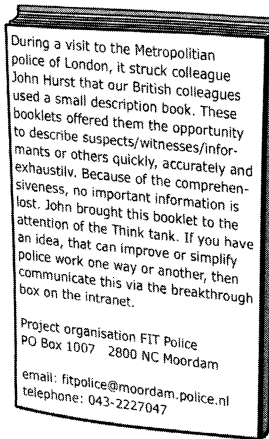
"That was rather variable. Of course you had the twaddlers from the units. But in general serious responses from the whole system, from all the layers within the police organisation, frontline and management".

"We developed a poster campaign with cartoons that explained the Forward Innovation Team and different projects".



Poster of the Eye-catcher project

"Furthermore we developed some gimmickry. Tools like a UV-light with our logo and a description book, to make quick notes. That was a gigantic success. People asked for those gimmicks. The neat description book offered guidelines, a checklist with the important features and it was designed in a small, handy size. You could stick it in a breast pocket. Potential users had a look at it. We asked them for improvements. I think it's still going like a bomb. People still order them".



Picture of a FIT Police gadget: Discription book

"I think the Forward Innovation Team idea eventually came to life and it is up to the organisation to carry it on".

"How have you experienced the end of the Forward Innovation Team?" I asked. The Forward Innovation Team community experienced a strange end. The project organisation fell apart very quickly. People got new jobs. Alex went to Urbanville. His tasks were taken over by Claire, and Bob took over Claire's tasks.

"You follow!" Iris said, with a tongue in cheek.

"Projects were passed on to different departments or were closed down. Firstly there was uncertainty about the future of the project for too long. When there is uncertainty, you can't communicate well. So the rumours started. All the trouble for nothing. Not that the members of the Forward Innovation Team-group thought that. They felt they still were on a mission. But in the frontline..."

"You sound cynical", I threw in.

"I am. I think that the break up went too fast in the end. The project was dying out. The idea was that the FIT Police idea should live on. I think they weren't that far. They needed another year".

And, putting on a sorry face, she said, "In the end there was no farewell for me".

"What went wrong?"

"I think the team should have communicated what they were doing from the very outset and involve people from the organisation as soon as possible. Because there were ghost stories circling round from the beginning. Alex wanted to score! It's an elite group. It's a new soft-soap approach to lumber us

up with yet more work. We may bring forward ideas that will not be executed after all. It's only about management ideas and it will cost us hours to realise them.

"I only want a rough estimate," I muttered.

Iris seemed a bit annoyed about my question. But laughed furtively.

"I want to know how forceful those voices were", I insisted, "You are the communication expert".

Then, giving in, she said, "I think at first it was perhaps 50% from the audience. The frontline workers that reacted like that or had those thoughts. But they didn't know what they were criticizing. By God they didn't know what the Forward Innovation Team was all about. And then 20% was thinking that they wanted to stay away from the project. So there was already a lot of resistance when I started".

"Did that change?"

"Certainly. Because we informed the corps about the project, about the project organisation and about the goals. In the end, I think that 20% still holds on to the 'ghost stories' or simply 'don't want to know'".

"What was the role of management, besides the communiqués, the posters and the gimmicks?"

"I think the middle managers, the unit chiefs, were concerned about what happened with the work schedules and that they would lose manpower. I think that an information tour Deirdre and Bob made along the units made a difference. When they told our story, clarified the goals of the project, communicated the expectations towards the frontline and asked what the frontline expected from the Forward Innovation Team, the attitude of the unit chiefs changed, because of this direct communication. A good sales strategy. What's in it for you and what's in it for us all!

Make clear that you need people and their cooperation. You always have to do that, to get things done. Give people the idea that you need them. That sounds a bit harsh, but it's just the way it is. Make people feel important for the organisation. That gives them a drive, then they will go for it".

"What was the role of the chief constable?"

"I thought that Meyer kept himself away from the project too much. I can't say I had the idea that he was in charge of the project".

"What did you expect from him, from Meyer?"

"I expected him to be more present. I haven't seen him in the meetings I participated in. For us, Alex was the great communicator".

That Alex and his FIT Police project team knew how to get attention, proved the coverage they got in the regional newspaper. The Macho project was an item in a television programme, and it drew the attention of the national press. There was interest in the main objective of the project that was to tarnish the image of young criminals and negate the model function they have on youngsters, showing that crime doesn't pay, by making sure that they cannot derive status

from their criminal income. In the television documentary and in the press, it was pictured that the project lacked the full cooperation of the tax authorities, and that it got bogged down by sticky bureaucracy.

Next to Alex and the communication advisors of the project organisation, there were other 'imagemakers'. Other students for instance. They created images off the FIT Police project in their thesis. For a short while the Moorland Police Press officer participated in the Think tank. Then there was me. I created an image with an instrument connected to my preliminary research project. Finally the Moorland Regional Police created an image of the FIT Police project.

A week after my making my first acquaintance with Iris, I ran into Cleo Brown, another intern of the FIT Police project. A month before we had talked about the progress of her project over lunch and I knew she had to turn in her paper a week earlier. Cleo searched for the cultural impediments in the Moorland police region. She told me that, in her final thesis, she supposed that people constructed their own interpretations of reality and that there were cultures that allowed variety and cultural fixation occurred when others were kept outside. As we spoke, the officers at our table gave us a disturbed look. They were all members of a peer – consultation group I had been asked to facilitate. The group meeting was about to start. I made an appointment with Cleo. Meanwhile she gave me her thesis. She created a nineteen-page story based on dozens of interviews. In this story an outsider got in touch with different people in the Moorland police force. Moreover, the stories of two different police officers were told. They were both representatives of different worlds within the Moorland police. In the story, it is narrated how different people, within the region, deal with problems and projects like FIT Police. In her analysis, Cleo argued that there are three worlds within the Moorland police. The world of daily police work, the world of the FIT Police project organisation, and the world of management. She concluded that, among them, there's little understanding for each other's views. According to Cleo, the FIT Police project finds itself on the interface of police practice and management world, but has only reinforced the sense of island cultures. She developed three scenarios on the basis of learning strategies to cope with differences in the future. She described the first one, a conventional scenario, as a caricature. The second one prudently laid open a learning route and showed how current barriers can be overcome. The third scenario looked like a long way off, but can perhaps function as an ideal image of the future, an enticing picture. It shows the Fit Police project situated on the interface between everyday police work and the world of governance, partners and management.

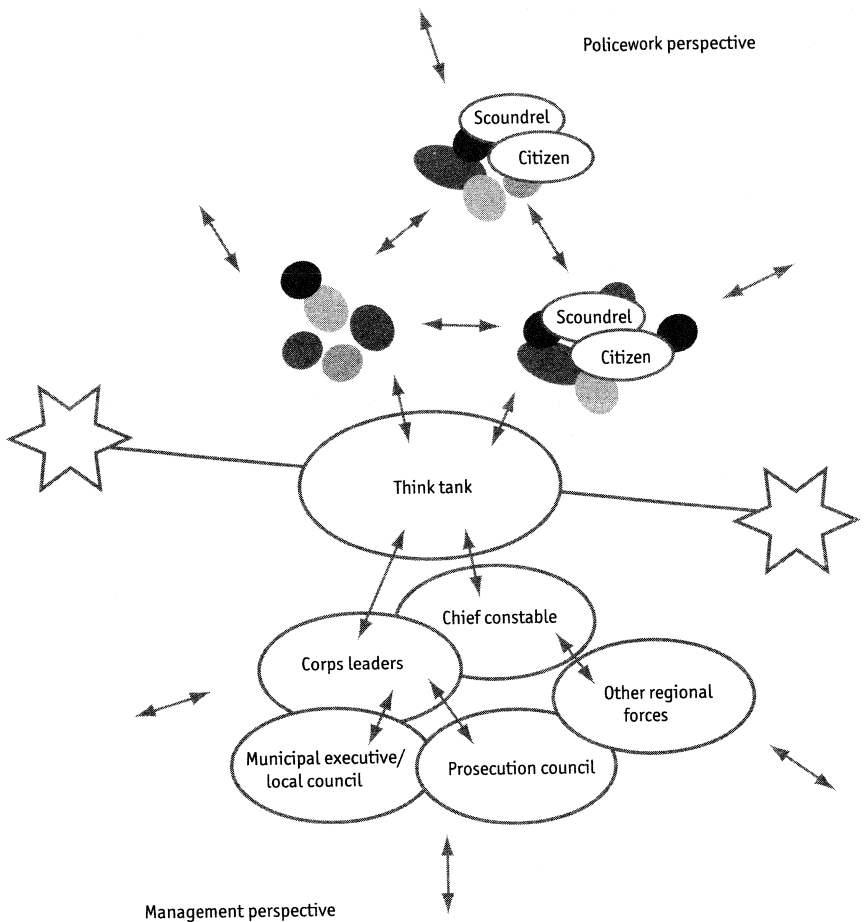


Figure from Cleo Brown's masters thesis: The FIT Police project in an ideal situation

At the beginning of September 2003, we meet in Marsh Heights, an old medieval mansion in the outskirts of Moorland. There you can rent rooms for functions and conferences. Based on the experiences with the peer-consultation group, I was asked by Deirdre to facilitate a workshop about peer consultation for first line managers. Cleo was there to talk about her research with the FIT Police project team five months after I had talked with Cleo about her project. It annoyed me that I didn't know of that. I would have been interested to observe the conversation about Cleo's work.

Cleo wasn't the only student who came up with a picture of the project. Two weeks later, I had an appointment at the headquarters with two enthusiastic inspectors. They were both frontline managers and wanted to take action to realise a peer consultation project. They were inspired by a peer consultation project I had done for the FIT Police project. After I had drawn up a plan together with the two, we broke up in good spirits. I was starving for a cup of coffee and had a bit of a natter with the girls of the back office. Entering the office, I saw Francesca Cruz, another young woman on work placement, was present. She studied Business administration. Francesca told me that she was finishing her study. Deirdre had asked her to make recommendations for the realisation of the learning organisation concept within the current Moorland Police organisation on the basis of theory and experience. Francesca was inspired by systems theory. She had concluded that the FIT Police project hadn't succeeded in bridging the gap between the bureaucracy in the police organisation and the ideals of a learning organisation as proposed by Swieringa.

"I think that the FIT Police project is evolving into a learning organisation. But in an environment that is predominantly characterised by bureaucratic conditions". She said.

Francesca had chosen Beers' Viable Systems Model to offer ideas to bridge the gap. According to Beer there are five crucial functions for the design of an effective, viable organisation: Action, coordination, control, intelligence and policy. Francesca proposed this design method, to equip the organisation for an effective operation and innovation. Francesca's thesis shows Beer's models regarding managing complex systems.

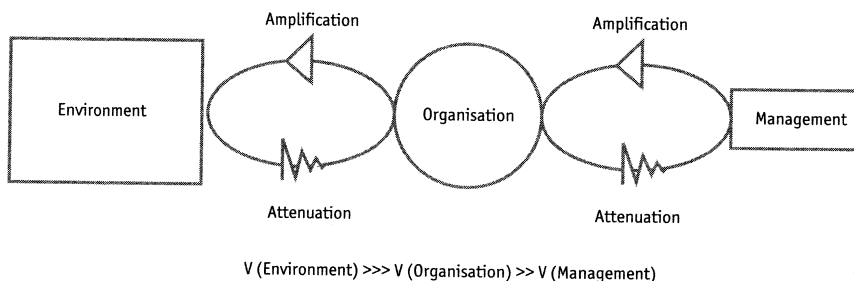


Figure from Fransesca Cruz's masters thesis: Managing complex systems

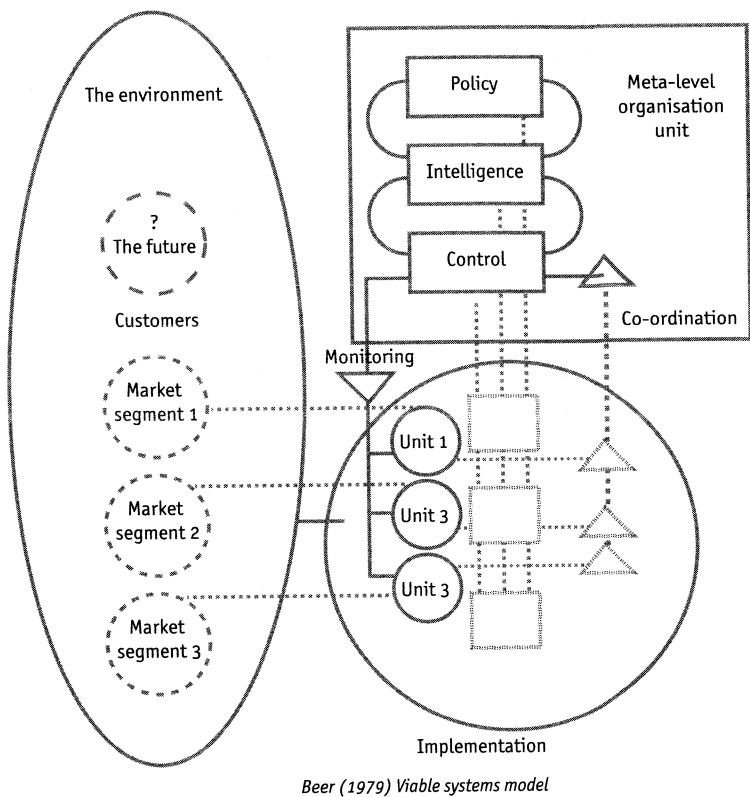


Figure from Francesca Cruz's masters thesis: *Designing a viable organisation.*

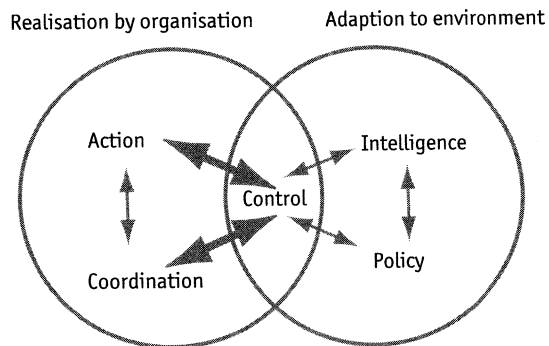


Figure from Francesca Cruz's masters thesis:
The current situation of the Moorland Regional Police Force

I have never met Jacky Tee, the third student, but a secretary was kind enough to send me her final paper. Jacky use the INK model, the Dutch version of the EFQM quality model to evaluate the FIT Police project.

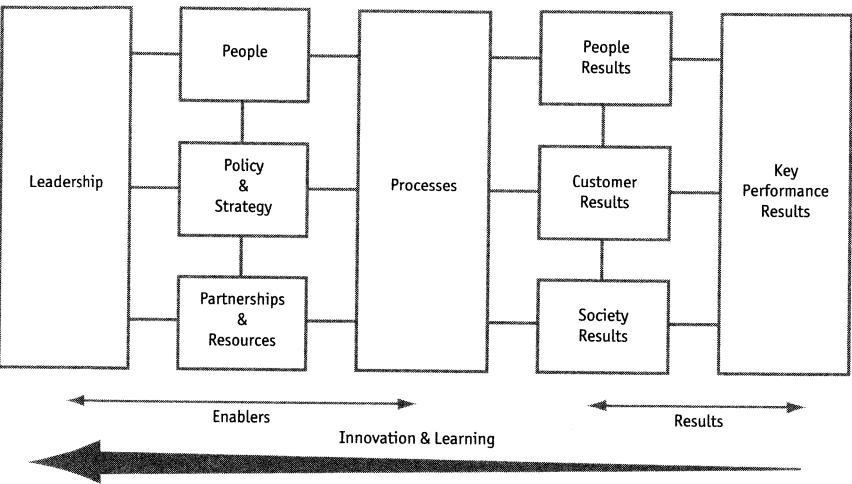


Figure from Jacky Tee’s masters thesis: The EFQM quality model

EFQM Domain Employees			Approach of the Project organisation FIT Police						
			Cross functional project teams	Suggestion box	Coaching	Training	Education	Peer-counseling	Supervision
EFQM Domain Employees			●	●	●	●	●	●	●
INK – Doelen Medewerkers	1	Shared vision	■					■	■
	2	Involvement		■					
	3	Open communication and sharing information	■	■				■	■
	4	Cooperating in teams	■						
	5	Team interest before personal interest	■	■					
	6	Social behaviour necessary for the adjustment of activities.	■					■	■
	7	Individual discretion, opportunities to acquire and develop discretion..			■	■	■	■	■
	8	Skill to work client-oriented	■		■		■		
	9	Skills to function within a team.	■		■		■		
	10	Easy access to necessary knowledge	■		■			■	■
	11	Use of lateral communication and coordination						■	■
	12	Continuous learning process.	■		■			■	■
	13	Opportunities to develop personal competencies	■		■	■	■		

Figure from Jacky Tee's masters thesis: An EFQM – personnel analysis

Another imagemaker was Kevin Polak, one of the press officers of the Moorland regional police.

Deirdre had asked me to interview members of the Forward Innovation Team and to ask them how they experienced the project as a learning experience. One of my interviewees was Kevin. He had been with the police for almost 25 years. In those years, he has worked in surveillance, as a detective, in the radio room, and as a local bobby. Just before our interview he applied for a post as press officer and got the job.

I met Kevin in hall of Moordam HQ. At that time, he was the leader of the FIT Police communication workgroup. After he had welcomed me, we went to the headquarters' self-service restaurant.

"I couldn't find a decent room for our meeting", he excused himself.

When we entered the cafeteria, it was still lunchtime and busy. We treated ourselves to a cup of coffee from the machine and sat down at one of the tables. Meanwhile Kevin explained how his department operated.

"We have chosen a one-counter policy. Behind that counter, we have one press officer and he is the spokesman, in case of incidents. There is a journalist. And, moreover, there are four communication advisors, each with a specific portfolio. In addition there are communication advisors on the district level and supporting units like justice affairs have their own spokesman. I'm one of the few with blue blood in the veins. The majority of the communication specialists have another background. For instance communication studies. I think the mix works well".

Lunchtime was over and the coppers and other staff were leaving the cafeteria when Kevin explains how he'd got in touch with the FIT Police project.

"It was by coincidence. I handed them an idea. Implementing Reporting by appointment, makes a more efficient planning possible because you know you are notified about the kind of report beforehand. By the way, I don't how the matter stands..."

After giving me a meaningful look, he carried on.

I had no idea of what was going on, inside the Forward Innovation Team.

My ideas about it were biased by public opinion. The image of the Forward Innovation Team was, and is, not good.

In spite of that, I felt flattered by the question to do something about that.

My first experiences with the Forward Innovation Team confirmed the opinion I had. An outfit that that evokes the impression of being elitist. Calling out that they create breakthroughs, without having much success.

In the meantime my opinion has become more favourable towards the Forward Innovation Team. What is good about them, is that improvement of police work is really being thought about, that ordinary coppers are involved, that you learn from that and that police officers as part of the Forward Innovation Team can develop themselves.

The communication from the Forward Innovation Team to the corps became a project for me. I'm the project leader. Members of the project group are Bert Kemp, a policeman, Daphne Jensen, a secretary and some others, but that's still a bit vague.

The first assignment we had to carry out was an article about the Macho project in the next *Our update*. The requirement was that the project was portrayed as an idea from the shop floor. I asked Alex, whose idea it was. His reply was that you could be confident that it came from the shop floor. Then that's what I took for granted . . ."

Was it unbelief I saw on his face? Before I could put that as a question to him, he continued.

“In my perception, a lot of the Forward Innovation Team projects got bogged down in bureaucracy. Project groups consulted a lot of people and meanwhile the clock was ticking on. Making appointments was difficult, because people had irregular shifts and were dependant on colleagues who also had irregular shifts. I think you should be excused from duty to devote yourself 100% to the working out of an idea.

A lot of colleagues in the Forward Innovation Team must be praised for what they have been doing, but they still are common coppers taking on a heavy Macho project. Naturally they have been doing that not only to realise breakthroughs. They have also been participating in the Forward Innovation Team group for the benefit of their careers”.

The project organisation played a facilitating role towards the members of the Forward Innovation Team. But it was hard to assess the yield of their efforts. Surely Alex or the others can be called in to put their foot down. That’s how we solved the automation problems. The whole corps had problems with the Automation department. I suppose they have come round now. But in general coppers don’t easily change their work routine. Many colleagues carry the scars of earlier reorganisations. For a lot of people, the benefit of all these changes isn’t visible, on the contrary. At first, there were six patrol cars in the city at night, then four and now only two. Why is that?

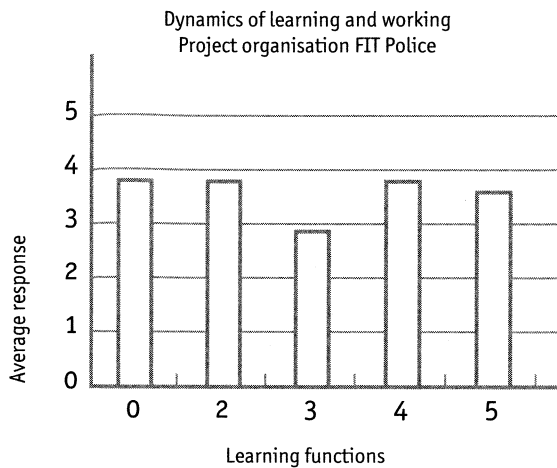
And now we ask the common coppers to think of dodgy ideas to do the job more effectively. They will think that’s just banging their head against a brick wall. Take, for instance, the procedure to increase the pace of proceedings. Therefore you have to fill in yet another form. And you already have so much paperwork to do.

And you have to relativate the convenience of automation. It’s only produced more work. For the policeman or -woman in the street, renewals are only pleasant if there are also advantages for themselves.

I often wonder whether we, as the Forward Innovation Team, gave ourselves an attainable assignment. The proposed innovations don’t match the culture of the force and other factors like the politics within the corps.

In April 2003, I reported my findings regarding the question “How members of the Forward Innovation Team experience the project as a learning project”. I sent them a written report and I clarified my findings in a meeting with Alex, Deirdre, Claire, Bob and Bert. For this report, I used interviews I’d held and the results of a questionnaire made to evaluate the quality of a working environment as a learning environment.

In the spring of 2002, I reported my own findings. Therefore I used the ‘Dynamics of the learning’ instrument and interviews I had had with the Think tank participants.



Picture of figure from my Dynamics of learning report.

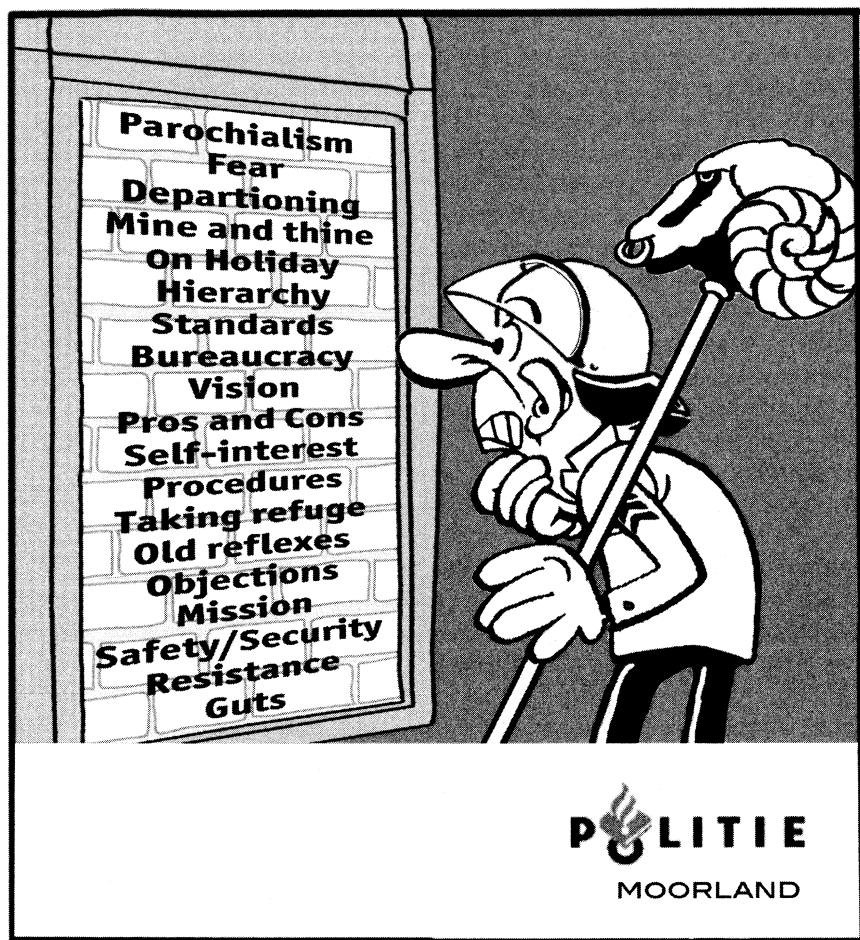
Last but not least in this compilation of images is a provisional end shot of the FIT Police project. But who made it? About eight months after the FIT Police project was put to a stop. The summer of 2004 was coming to an end. I had an appointment with someone from the Dutch Police Institute. Jill, former secretary of the Forward Innovation Team was kind enough to reserve a small conference room for me. I waited for my guest in the lobby. In the middle was a small sitting area. On the coffee-table, I found a basket with magazines. Professional journals for the police, magazines of the police union, and the two-weekly magazine of the force *Our update*. There was also a copy of a small book titled *Result First* in a de luxe binding. Hard cover, high quality paper, modern layout and lots of photographs. I leaved through the booklet. It was a report of the 2003 results and in the context of its ambitions for the future. In the introduction, I read that the text is based on the annual report of 2003 and the 2003-2006 policy plan. The authors explained that they used the INK model, a Dutch version of the EFQM excellence model. A model for quality management. I thumbed through the book back and forth again, looking for the Forward Innovation Team. But there was next to nothing. It was only mentioned that the corps started with peer consultation, an initiative started by the Forward Innovation Team and a project I was still involved in. But there was no mention of the results of the Forward Innovation Team, no reference to the project, not even an allusion to the Forward Innovation Team idea. I found it stunning, but I was not surprised. Stunning because the Forward Innovation Team project was meant to innovate police work and a lot of effort was put into it. Not surprised because it was a controversial project. To be sure, I searched the booklet again, from front to back and from back to front. But alas ...

After my guest had left, I paid a visit to the girls of the former Forward Innovation Team back office. While Gill was getting me a cup of coffee, I saw another booklet, composed of coloured copies. On the cover it said 'Closed'. I guessed directly that it was the final report of the Forward Innovation Team. The assistants confirmed my conjecture. Of course, I begged for one. Naturally there's one for you, they called out. Liz, a former communication-assistant, dug a copy for me out of a cardboard box and handed it over to me. I skimmed through it. It was a very colourful piece of work, but the prints were very bad. It was obvious that there was hardly any budget left. Looking at it more closely, I saw there is a contribution by the Mayor of Moordam. He was the administrator of the regional police force. He underlined the importance of experience with projects such as FIT Police. "Organisations are required to be flexible, to renew and to move along with the changing demands of society. The FIT Police project played an important role to initiate this in our region". There was a piece by the retired chief constable, Eric Meyer, who commissioned the Forward Innovation Team. He emphasised the imperturbable emphasis on organising innovation and the mobilisations of talents in the organisation. If necessary straight across the field of rules and regulations, "You don't achieve breakthroughs without cracking". And there was a contribution by Alex. He stressed the importance of the individual behaviour of police officers and the building of a culture that enhances the innovative capacity of the police force. "Not the many, sometimes sensational projects, but the process, the breakthrough thought will stick in my mind forever. In our organisational culture lurks the potency of excellence".

Of course there was the poster with the symbol of the Forward Innovation Team. A pondering copper in an anti-riot squad outfit, equipped with a mediaeval battering ram, standing before a bricked up gate, obviously symbolising the organisation.

The main projects of the Forward Innovation Team were described in the booklet and there was an overview of all the other initiatives, and what happened to them. It was one of the many PR utterances of the Forward Innovation Team.

A year later - in the summer of 2005 - Liz told me that I am one of the few that has the booklet 'Closed'. The Corps leaders have never found a suitable occasion to spread it.



Battering through bureacracy

10. The Watchman III

It was in the early spring of 2001 when I had my first meeting with people from the Moorland police force. We asked one of the members of our board of supervisors to arrange a meeting with the chief of police. Together with my then manager, I went to Moordam. We had a meeting with Eric Meyer, chief constable of the Moorland police, and Jef van Gulik, the HRM manager. Meyer was interested in my views about frontline workers and in the concept of corporate universities. We talked about it. Didn't make any concrete deals. We agreed that I would have a chat with van Gulik to talk things over more thoroughly. The managers left it to the HR specialists.

Human Resources Development is 'my cup of tea'. Since 1990 I consider myself an HRD professional. That year I became an HRD consultant and company trainer in a big general hospital. A few months earlier, I completed a higher education in adult educational theory. I did this after seven years studying in addition to a full time job as a dietician in primary health care. For almost four years I worked on HRD policy, training-on-the-job and the innovation of the in-service vocational education for nurses. Early as in 1990 I tried to contribute to the HRD profession by writing articles in professional journals. I also studied adult educational theory at the University of Amsterdam. I got my masters degree in 1992.

One year later, in 1993, I managed a switch from the health care sector to a commercial service firm. I started as a trainer/consultant in an international company in the recreation business and, in 1996, I became the Training & Development manager in that company.

Professionally, they were happy days. They still have a warm place in my heart. I felt place in my new firm. I became involved in Cultural change programmes, Strategic Repositioning Programmes and Reengineering programmes. Many times I was asked to facilitate large group interventions. I was in charge of the development programmes for high potentials, which I began to design as action learning sets. After a few years I became International Manager Training & Development. I operated as a cooperative leader. Working closely together with the board of directors, with local management teams, with the frontline managers and with the HRM department. The company was ambitious, trend setting and market leader. Top management made great demands upon the competence of the training centre. However we were sometimes becalmed by cost-saving operations. As Senior consultant and Training Manager, I had opportunities to innovate within the realm of training policy, the design of learning programmes and the instrumentation of HRD. It was my world. For me, there was no doubt: I belonged!

I discussed the possibilities of putting more effort into R&D activities and innovation. The professor I consulted suggested combining these efforts with

a PhD For two years I worked on a project concerning feedback in the workplace. After a while I had to conclude that working in the recreation business and working on a PhD were impossible to combine for me. Therefore I chose to transfer to a consulting firm because I expected a better fit between the core business of my new employer and my own ambitions. In 1998 I left the recreation firm to work as a senior consultant for a consulting firm in education. I chose the consulting firm to be able to focus more on the basics of the HRD profession. I started a new project in 2001. Now, five years later, it has been completed under the supervision of Hugo Letiche, professor at the University for Humanistics. His teaching concerns the practice of meaning, but he is also a known specialist in the field of organisational development and organisational learning. In addition to my job, I'm also active as an editor and a publicist. I joined the editorial board of the journal of the Dutch Association for Training and Development and stayed on until 1998 when I switched to the editorial board of a leading HRD magazine, *Training & Development*²⁶. During more than ten years on these boards, I produced several special issues and published numerous articles.

I find my body of knowledge in different networks and current networks of like-minded professionals, – both formal and informal. More formal networks are the *Dutch Association for Training and Development*, the *Association for Educational Research* and the *Dutch Action Learning Association*. More informal is the *Vanwoodman society for knowledge productivity*. In my own organisation I find a home base in expertise groups, horizontal networks, on learning and development. Furthermore there is a body of literature. International Journals about Human Resources Development for example *Training & Development* of the ASTD, the American Society for Training & Development, the *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, the *International Journal of Training and Development* and *Lifelong Learning in Europe*. Then there are the Dutch HRD magazines and journals that provide an actual overview of the latest developments and trends in the HRD field. They are *Training & Development*²⁷, *Learning in Development*²⁸, and, until recently, *HRD magazine*. Also important are journals from other fields like sociology, psychology, philosophy, studies of management and organisation, Performance Improvement, and Human resources Management. Examples are *Human Relations*, *The American Psychologist*, *Dutch Journal for Psychology*²⁹, *Behaviour and Organisation*³⁰; *Philosophy and Practice*³¹; *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Organization studies*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Management & Organisation/journal for social policy*³², *Performance Improvement*, *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, *Guide to Personnel Management*³³, *Personnel Policy*³⁴ and *Human Resources Management*. For almost four years I refereed articles from these journals for the Dutch HRD magazine *Training & Development*³⁵.

A proficient overview of Human Resources Development is provided by

numerous handbooks, periodic specials, special issues and professional loose-leaf systems. Around 2000, in 2001 in the Netherlands three handbooks were published. *Learning and Working*³⁶, *The Handbook Human Resources Development, profile of a field*³⁷, *Human resources development: organizing the learning*³⁸

Besides that, I use John Walton's *Strategic Human resource Development*³⁹, the periodic *Capita Selecta Trainers in Organisations*⁴⁰ that followed up the *Handbook Trainers in organisations*⁴¹, *HRD Thema* that published four specials a year between 2000-2004, and the loose-leaf systems *Guide for the training practice*⁴², published from 1988 until 1997 and *Handbook Effective Training*⁴³, published since 1994 until this present day. Recently Rosemary Harrison and Joseph Kessels published together a handbook concerning HRD in a knowledge economy titled *Human Resources Development in a knowledge economy, an organisational view*⁴⁴. Last but not least in *Learning to Change*⁴⁵ Leon De Caluwé and Hans Vermaak provided a very useful overview of theoretical approaches towards learning and change.

During the era in which I became an HRD professional, the professional orientation was changing from a focus on formal training and development and on the use of existing knowledge toward the orchestration of a wide variety of instruments to bring about formal and informal learning and the production of new knowledge. In the period I'm talking about, beginning in the early eighties, the notion of Human Resources Development was about ten years old. It was first coined in the early 1970s by Nadler⁴⁶. In a revised edition of this book, Nadler and Nadler defined HRD as an organised learning experience within a given period of time with the possibility of performance change⁴⁷. HRD includes training, education, and development. Training is planned learning that is focused on improving current job performance while education is planned learning focused on preparing an individual for a future job. Development is broader than education, not specifically job-related, learning pertaining to personal growth. A broader view on HRD and more directed towards interventions is embodied by McLagan's definition of HRD: "HRD is the integrated use of training and development, organisation development and career development to improve individual, group, and organisational effectiveness. Training and development focuses on identifying, assuring and helping develop, through planned learning, the key competencies that enable individuals to perform current or future jobs".⁴⁸ The academy of Human Resources Development, an international association of scholarly Human Resources Development professionals claims the following territory: Human Resources Development or HRD as a profession is an interdisciplinary field. It is focused on systematic training and development, career development, and organisational development to improve processes and to enhance the learning and performance of individuals, organisations, communities and society⁴⁹. In their acknowledged overview of learning in

organisation, Bolhuis and Simons don't use the notion of Human Resources Development. They speak of a Learning policy for organisations and define that as follows: "Learning policy is the policy aimed at optimising job learning, for the benefit of the learning organisation, by facilitating all kinds of learning that contribute to the development, the goals and the strategy of the organisation".⁵⁰ For the development of a learning policy Bolhuis and Simons⁵¹ offer the following criteria

- 1 Learning policy concerns the entire organisation;
- 2 Connects individual learning and collective learning;
- 3 Improves present and develops new competencies, including the capability to learn;
- 4 Is oriented towards all relevant learning processes and results;
- 5 Is concerns content aligned with the goals of the organisation;
- 6 Is an ongoing process.

According to Walton⁵², Human Resources Development, in its broadest sense, is about development and change through learning; about how, what and where individuals learn and what Lyon describes as 'encouraging people to develop and grow from dependency to independency, to interdependency'⁵³. But Walton isn't concerned with learning from the cradle to the grave, he confines himself to the world of work and focuses on skills, knowledge and abilities that people need to operate and co-operate effectively in a vocational arena. Although he evaluates many approaches towards HRD, an own definition is nowhere to be found in his handbook. He mentions that HRD is concerned with learning and how it might be managed, but for the book he offers a series of propositions and assumptions:

- 1 The object of HRD strategy is individual and collective learning and the desired outcome is development of thinking and practice;
- 2 How individual and team learning are embedded in an organisation can become a distinctive and valued competence for that organisation and a source of differentiation from what takes place in other organisations;
- 3 Learning in organisations is not automatically, or even primarily, restricted to training interventions. Learning and development occur in a range of intentional situations and accidental circumstances, which collectively add to the skills and knowledge base that people draw upon in the exercise of their organisational roles;
- 4 Human Resources Development gains meaning and significance when its contribution enhancing the strategic capability and intellectual capital of organisation is clearly spelled out and understood across the spectrum of the membership;
- 5 For learning and development to take place effectively, have strategic focus and become a distinctive organisational competence, supporting processes are required, steered and guided by appropriately positioned specialists;
- 6 This will not happen if the tendency is to accord low status to those

- specialists responsible for the accomplishment of HRD in an organisational context persists;
- 7 In turn, individual practitioners will need to acquire a strategic vocabulary and awareness, and demonstrate their fitness for purpose;
 - 8 The likelihood of learning becoming a distinctive organisational competence will be greater when the HRD effort moves beyond an introspective performance-in-task orientation and takes into account the learning needs of individuals seeking to secure future employability. This necessitates a supportive learning climate that will foster development as an end in itself".⁵⁴

In their recent book, *Human Recourses Development in a knowledge economy*, the authors, Harrison and Kessels, propose the following definition⁵⁵: "HRD as an organisational process comprises the skilful planning and facilitation of a variety of formal and informal learning and knowledge processes and experiences, primarily but not exclusively in the workplace, in order that organisational progress and individual potential can be enhanced through the competence, adaptability, collaboration and knowledge creating activity of all who work for the organisation".

When friends, relatives, acquaintances or possible customers ask what we do at KPC, and the expression HRD slips from me, I usually get frowned at. Despite knowing that most times they will frown at me again, my reaction is to explain that HRD is an acronym for *Human Resources Development*. A few years ago, I would have said: I'm in the training business, and people would nod. These days I go into it amplifying that we as HRD professionals are concerned with the learning and development of individual employees, teams and other communities, and organisations as a whole. And, as if I were Jochem de Bruin⁵⁶, I often add that we intend to create a certain added value for organisations, teams and individuals. A friend asked me once why consultancy is always cooking up newfangled fabrications like HRD. He is a butcher. But I know he hardly ever slaughters.

Working and learning in the frontline

In 2000, at a conference concerning knowledge productivity, organised by the Vanwoodman Society for Knowledge Productivity, I discussed the meaning of working and learning, knowledge production and innovation for frontline professions such as nurses, teachers and police officers with network partners. After that conference, I edited a special issue for *HRD Thema*, as an outcome of that conference. It was titled *Stimulating knowledge productivity*⁵⁷. I also wrote an article for that special. *Knowledge productivity in the frontline of public service* (see page 22)⁵⁸. That article was the start of this research project. When the project was completed, I reflected on what had been going on in the FIT Police project. Therefore I used several different approaches towards

learning and change that were brought forward by organisation theory and the HRD community. In the past, advocates of these approaches often put up vigorous fights against one another. A few years ago I lodged my objections to these, often scandalous, brawls in article for a well-known Dutch HRD magazine. I urged to increase the thinking power in the field and plead for a meta-paradigmatic approach⁵⁹. In reflecting on the case of the FIT Police project I will deploy this meta-paradigmatic approach.

To sort the development of HRD theories into different categories, I borrowed the robust and versatile overview of change paradigms by the De Caluwé and Vermaak⁶⁰. The latter distinguished five main paradigms in thinking about change and learning, each representing a family of theories with a world of difference: in underlying assumptions, in the type of interventions, typical actors, pitfalls and in the competencies of the change agent. Probably inspired by Edward the Bono's thinking hats concept⁶¹, they adorned each paradigm with a colour to facilitate the communication about the different approaches. De Caluwé and Vermaak discriminate successively the yellow theory based on socio-political views on organisations; the blue theory concerning project-based designing and implementing of change; the red theory approach was based on the Hawthorne experiments and committing HRM instruments; the green theory rooted in action-learning and ideas about learning organisations; the white theory with the practice of meaning as keynote. Recently Simons and Ruijters⁶² presented five metaphors of learning they deduced from the HRD literature and combined their approach with De Caluwé and Vermaak's approach.

Yellow theory: Socio-politics and copying the art

The yellow theory assumes that people and organisations change through coalitions and political force. The yellow way is using power and influence. An organisation changes by forcing people to do things, by organising consortia, by influencing people who will do it. Various authors impress on the HRD professional's mind that they aren't in dream world and that they have to reckon with the inner world of the organisations and powers involved. Walton⁶³ wrote a robust handbook for HRD professionals who are out to make sure that learning and development provide a constructive contribution to the strategy of the organisation. In his book he pays a lot of attention to establishing synergy between different parties. Authors from the Performance Improvement school, like Robinson and Robinson⁶⁴ offer many ideas for political and strategic approaches and to create a basis for change. Knijff⁶⁵ puts forward that leaders in organisations differ in their views and have miscellaneous views on organisational systems and their technology which implies particular approach of HRD and he criticises HRD professionals who maintain a neutral position, a supply-oriented approach. He thinks that they don't go deeply into the organisation. Schrijvers⁶⁶ impresses on people,

including HRD professionals, to bear in mind the evil forces that are at work in organisations. Meggison shows that predominant learning of managers is emergent, not planned in advance. This was also described by Van der Sluis⁶⁷ and Van den Berg and Poelje⁶⁸. I would argue that the same emergent learning applies to the learning of frontline workers and I agree with Simons and Ruijters⁶⁹ that this premise is part of the yellow theory.

According to Bolhuis and Simons⁷⁰ emergent learning occurs mainly through modelling and imitation. This learning is the outcome of learning in rather implicit ways from other people through observation and imitation and in practice where one encounters problems and disappointment. Thus the metaphor that Simons and Ruijters propose to use for this kind of learning is the copying-the-art-metaphor.

Simons and Ruijter think that yellow learners are not exactly keen on situations involving role-play and exercises. "They will soon come to regard this as 'childish'. They prefer to learn in the real world (instead of a learning world) where they are challenged to perform and achieve in a complex environment. Part of the challenge here is to avoid mistakes or to turn a disadvantage into an advantage"⁷¹.

If he wants to deal with yellow approaches, the HRD profession must be able to think strategically, handle policy plans, put politico-strategic intervention to work and have an independent, flexible and diplomatic attitude⁷²

Blue theory: Blueprints, projects and acquisition

The blue theory contains the idea that organisations or persons change when there are clear goals and clear structures so that everybody really knows where to go to and how to act. Seeking a blueprint approach, the HRD professional wields a model oriented and project based approach to make system analysis on different levels and assesses training needs that stem from that.

You find the blueprint approach with Romiszowski⁷³ and the Performance Improvement school with authors like Rummler & Brache and Swanson. Sfard⁷⁴ distinguishes two sorts of learning: learning by acquisition and learning by participation. Learning as the acquisition of something is probably the most common view on learning. According to Bruner⁷⁵ the basic assumptions of the acquisition metaphor are that:

- 1 knowledge of the world is treated as the objective truth that can be transmitted from one person to another;
- 2 a medium, such as a teacher or a book is needed to transport the knowledge of the one person who "knows" to another person who does not; learning has to be institutionalised.

The acquisition metaphor can be regarded as a blue metaphor. Simons and Ruijters think that "Blue learners know what they want to learn and target their learning to achieving a concrete result. Regular testing is part of this learning process. After all, knowledge can be measured. Examination results give a clear indication to what extent the result has been achieved"⁷⁶.

A HRD professional who wants to comply with the blue theory has to have access to, and be capable of handling content, thinking in systems, be able to manage projects and be result-oriented and independent⁷⁷.

Red theory: Human Resources Management and participation

The keynote of the red theory of change is the assumption that people and organisations change when there is a supporting and rewarding climate. It is in terms of rewards, in terms of atmosphere. An organisation will change if people feel good, if the climate is good and they get something more out of it and if they get more money or more recognition. The red theory focuses on social cohesion and collaboration. In the red theory people are seen as the most important assets of an organisation. HRD professionals focused on activities meant to enhance the qualities and the competencies of employees and the capitalisation of these by connecting people to the organisation. In this approach it's about the brainpower and other capabilities of the members of an organisation. Personal development plans, teambuilding programmes and building a corporate culture play an important role. Examples are approaches to stimulate the knowledge productivity of people⁷⁸. Orr and Sandberg⁷⁹ show that it can be counterproductive to direct knowledge production and competence development top down. Red theory managers, or actually, better put, leaders, stimulate the thinking of their employees and organise the space for it and employees get a voice in the design of programmes. Personal development plans are an example. When dialogue and reflection are the upbeat for employees to generate their own ideas about the competencies they have to develop, then that will have far-reaching consequences for the compositions of learning arrangements such as on the job and off the job learning and career plans and other learning activities. After employees had got the opportunity to design their own learning trajectories, management should facilitate the following up.

Sfard's participation metaphor⁸⁰ examines learning as a process of participation in various cultural practices and shared learning activities. "The focus is on activities and not so much on outcomes or products of learning. Knowledge does not exist either in a world of its own or in individual minds but is an aspect of participation in cultural practices (...) Cognition and knowing are distributed over individuals and their environments, and learning is 'situated' in relations and networks of distributed activities of participation. Knowledge and knowing cannot be separated from situations where they are used or where they take place. Learning is a matter of participation in practices, enculturation or legitimate peripheral participation. The latter is beautifully shown in Julian Orr's study talking about machines⁸¹ (Orr, 1996)

Simons and Ruijters⁸² think that "Learning is easiest for red learners within a group where the members are interested in and trust each other. There is strength in numbers and you can avoid mistakes. Support in the form of a team

coach can be useful, someone who can guide the group process. But members dividing tasks within the group themselves and rotating chairmanship are a good alternative“.

In order to work with red theory, the HRD professional has to be able to use models of organisation, systems thinking, motivational theories, educational design, communication and especially dialogue skills, and he has to be accurate, reliable and inspiring confidence⁸³

Green theory: Action learning and experimenting

Pre-eminently the green theory is the learning perspective. In line with the green theory, people and organisations change when learning (ability) is supported and facilitated. It is the idea that an organisation changes when a long-term perspective is taken and there is a focus on learning abilities of people, as well as learning abilities of the organisation. Stimulate the people to be life-long learners. Thinking about the learning organisation led to a yearning to escape pedantic and stubborn approaches, which Argyris thinks will lead to skilled incompetence. Argyris⁸⁴ shows that in organisations there are lots of opportunities to learn but that this often leads to conservative or defensive strategies. In the green theory it's all about the development of a productive learning system that can be evoked by striving for growth and maturation, for searching and experimenting, for dialogue and co-creation as an alternative for controlled learning activities. The employees themselves get an important responsibility for meeting the goals of their development plans. HRD professionals in a green metaphor are dedicated to creating a learning environment, a positive learning climate. The learning activities of the employees are often intertwined with their work. They learn in the workplace. Managers or leaders may determine the goals or what problem should be solved, but there are no ready-made solutions. Learning requires a peaceful, safe, not too complex, but realistic environment where learners have the freedom to experiment, ask questions and have the opportunity to reflect. Learning can be supervised by someone from the work environment or by an experienced trainer. The important thing is to have someone who can simplify situations, point things out or can pass things on that will bring you a step closer to your goal. With him, you can also discuss mistakes, because mistakes contain a wealth of information that helps you learn⁸⁵. Problem oriented learning, action-learning and the leittext-method are different scenarios for the HRD professional⁸⁶. An HRD professional who wants to use the green theory has to be creative, flexible and must inspire confidence. He has to be acquainted with organisational theory and educational theory. Finally, he has to be able to create learning situations and to facilitate learning processes⁸⁷.

White theory: Meaning & discovery

The white theory focuses on inspiration and flow: people and organisations change in dynamic open situations. The white way is often called the chaos theory. It's a bottom up approach. If you want to change an organisation you have to leave room for people to bring in their own ideas, and give them rights to influence their situation and to develop the ideas from bottom up. If you want to change an organisation don't come with ideas and don't bring anything but leave people room to change in their own way. The organisation of coincidence is a basic principle of the white theory. The HRD professional who chooses this approach chooses willingly a state of uncertainty. Directing, commanding and controlling managers are unwanted in this approach. Wanted are leaders who provide challenges⁸⁸ or Big Hairy Audacious Goals as Collins and Porras⁸⁹ call them. The HRD professional has to be attending a learning environment, to disorganise existing patterns, consciousness-raising of employees, generating energy and stimulating creative thoughts. For this, the HRD professional has to be able improvise and to draw from a rich toolbox on the spot to incite the employees thoughts. Tools that stem from philosophy, psychotherapy, sociology, linguistics, literature and other art forms, and organisational theory⁹⁰. These techniques enable the HRD professional to tempt the employees to leave a stabile and secure environment and seek uncertain, unstable and sometimes horrible environments. A place like that can be called a place of exertion⁹¹. All the involved have to be engaged in a process of exchange and negotiation in order to create new understandings, new realities.

Paavola, Lipponen, and Hakkarainen plead to supplement the two metaphors that Sfard distinguishes, acquisition and participation, with a third metaphor: the knowledge creation metaphor. This premise is founded on an analysis of three recent theories of knowledge creation, Engeström, Bereiter and Nonaka and Takeuchi. According to Paavola et al. these three theories share six common characteristics that are different from the acquisition and the participation metaphor⁹².

- 1 Learning is understood broadly to involve knowledge advancement in general. In all these models, dynamics of knowledge creation and the pursuit of newness is a focal starting point;
- 2 They focus on bringing mediating elements to the process of knowledge creation, such as questions and questioning. In trying to capture the dynamic processes of innovative learning and knowledge advancement mediating elements, questions and various disturbances instigate cycles of innovation;
- 3 Learning is fundamentally social: new ideas grow between individuals and not within individuals. Communities play important roles in knowledge creation;
- 4 Individuals, however, play important roles as instigators of innovation. Analysis of individual tacit knowledge is, for instance, an important start

- for innovation;
- 5 Tacit knowledge is an essential resource of creative experts;
- 6 There is a focus on conceptual and theoretical modelling, using symbols and externalisation of tacit knowledge and theory. This theorising and conceptualising goes, for instance, with risk-taking, uncertainty and looking for new and promising ways.

The focus in the knowledge creation metaphor is on deep understanding and meaning construction.

Because, in work environments, the focus will not so much be on explicit planned and pre-organised learning, but on the processes of innovation and the construction of meaning. Simons and Ruijters⁹³ call this the 'Construction of meaning Metaphor'. They think that "the white learner doesn't really require their learning process to be supervised, but an inspirational 'teacher' or 'supervisor' will be taken seriously. White learners are often recognised by their creative drive and their urge to discover things for themselves. Initially, they can appear to be chaotic. But mistakes are all part of the game and keep you alert. If something takes too much time and effort you know you have to try another tack. To act.

The HRD professional who wants to apply the white theory has to have a wide knowledge, and knowing organisational theory, chaos theory and psychology. He has to be able to recognise patterns and breakthrough patterns, to deal with uncertainty and be independent, challenging and flexible⁹⁴.

Multicoloured approach

In an earlier publication⁹⁵ I put forward that all five theories are a source for inspiration and that HRD professionals can escape a monoparadigmatic approach⁹⁶. After he has escaped monoparadigmism the HRD professional may become a polyparadigmatic professional, helping clients within different paradigms. The excellent professional will be able to help a client change his paradigm. This is what Feltmann calls the metaparadigmatic competence. To attain this level, the professional has to disengage himself from preferent paradigms. From people like Latour, Morgan, Feltmann en De Caluwé you can learn how to think meta-paradigmatically, to use a multicoloured approach⁹⁷.

Thus far, my professional background. In Moorland, my 'fingers were itching to act', as I looked at the FIT Police project from the perspective of a HRD professional. Alex was randomly present during Think tank meetings. His contribution would be a pep talk, an inquisitive questioning of the Think tank or some information he had to give as project manager. He left the facilitation of the Think tank participants and the Think tank meetings mainly to the project managers, Deirdre and Claire.

I looked at the Think tank as an action learning set, as a community of practice, as a learning network. During the eleven years I considered myself an HRD professional, I had facilitated many action learning projects and the like. In my working life, I participated actively in many so-called communities of practice and learning networks. And even more, in December 2001, I published an article about these learning concepts in the Dutch HRD magazine, *Training and Development*⁹⁸. In this article, that was titled *Action learning revival*, I emphasised the meaning of learning concepts such as action learning in relation to learning by working on actual work problems, learning from confrontations, learning to get a grip on the environment and learning to design own work related learning projects. The idea of learning implied bringing about change in work. That was, in my opinion, also the idea behind the FIT Police project.

In my article, I followed action learning Guru Revans as I distinguished action learning from project groups, change programmes, research and development programmes and more. I distinguished action learning from project groups because action learning is about the confrontation with practice and the creation and implementation of change. In project groups, participants usually only talk about changing practice. Wasn't FIT Police meant to put an end to loose talk? I distinguished action learning from change programmes because action learning stems from a personal need for and commitment to change, in change programmes, managers, policy makers or consultants taking the initiative to invoke change. Just as I thought, that the purpose of FIT Police was meant to find the power within. I distinguished action learning from research and development because, in contrast, R&D action learning is usually very personal, subjective and unacademic. I got the impression that practical judgment was cherished within the FIT Police project.

I considered the facilitation of an ambitious project like FIT Police no sinecure. In my article I discussed the necessary competencies of facilitators of action learning emphasising that facilitators should have an active learning attitude, wide experience and the capability for system-thinking and the capability to facilitate processes in organisations and learning processes in groups. To be honest, as I observed the Think tank meetings, I found that the project leaders were not those skilled facilitators, nor were they experienced and they hardly proved to be creative as facilitators. Every meeting had a similar routine and felt as a general meeting and not as a sparkling learning experience. In my opinion, and this sounds harsh because the project leaders made good-hearted efforts, they were playing ducks and drakes with the golden opportunities they got to create an action learning set. I couldn't catch the project managers with particular ideas about facilitating the group over time. I scarcely ever heard them talk about facilitating the overall learning process of the group. Though they did talk about coaching individual Think tank members. They provided the Think tank with additional training, like a training in creative problem solving.

Alex organised a highly praised teambuilding session, to which I - by the way - was not invited.

Judging the Think tank meetings as a learning professional, I found hardly any demonstration of educational design. Neither within specific meetings nor between meetings. I didn't observe a single meeting where they used the result of their assessments to facilitate the Think tank. And I scarcely heard the project managers reflect on themselves as facilitators. In my opinion they muddled along from meeting to meeting.

In the beginning I tried to intervene but was roughly put into place by Deirdre. Sometimes they asked me for advice with the design of part of a meeting. Then I provided them with ideas to generate creativity or to stimulate reflection, although I felt uncomfortable with that. On those occasions I saw myself as an accessory to ad-hoc activities. Incidentally the project manager asked me to give my feedback on Think tank meetings. I recall feeding back that I felt the meetings got stuck with exchanging information, that I thought the energy of the group was wasted in chaotic discussions and that I missed reflection and peer consultation. The result of this feedback was poor. Only Bob and Bert asked frequently for advice concerning the design of a meeting they wanted to organise, for instance as leaders of their own subprojects or when they were asked to replace the project leaders.

There was one point at which I had some success with an intervention. As part of my original research design I was planning to develop a monitor procedure to assess the development of the FIT Police project as a knowledge productive community over time. One of the components of this monitor instrument was thought to be the *Dynamics of learning* instrument⁹⁹. This instrument assessed five of the seven learning functions of the so-called corporate curriculum.

The corporate curriculum is a concept to improve the quality of an organisation as a learning and knowledge productive organisation. The idea behind the corporate curriculum is to facilitate the improvement and innovation in work processes, products and services through the development of new knowledge in a rich learning environment. The seven learning functions are thought to be the key elements of such a rich learning environment. The corporate curriculum's learning functions are subject matter expertise, problem solving, reflective skills, interaction, self-regulation, calm and stability and creative turmoil. The *Dynamics of learning* instrument only covered the first five learning functions. Calm and stability and creative turmoil weren't assessed because research instruments to assess these learning functions weren't yet developed.

I ceased my efforts to pursue my original research design at the end of 2002. Nevertheless I administered the *Dynamics of learning* instrument in the spring of 2002 to assess the quality of the FIT Police project as a learning environment once successfully. The results showed that four of the five learning functions scored satisfactory, but that reflection could be improved. After I got the results back from the university that processed the questionnaires that were filled in by the Think tankers, I reported the results of the instrument to the project manager, the project leaders and a delegation of Think tank members. I advised them to discuss the results of the report in the Think tank meeting, but they didn't follow up on that. It was decided, however, that the Think tankers should receive an introductory to peer consultation and offered an opportunity to participate in a peer consultation group. I was asked to provide the introduction and to facilitate a possible peer consultation project. And I agreed to that. Following an introduction of peer consultation, in which about ten Think tankers participated, five of them chose to go along with peer consultation, including Bob Gabriel and Bert Kemp. In September 2003, when the FIT Police project was coming to an end, I was asked by the Police force to facilitate more peer consultation groups, especially for first-line management. The idea was that, in order to empower frontline workers, it is necessary that their direct managers know about the importance of reflection as a way of learning in the workplace and as a way to build a learning community. Now, in 2005, about 50 first-line managers participate in these sessions.

Despite all the problems I saw concerning the development of the FIT Police project, the Think tank and their individual members, I was convinced that a lot had been achieved.

A learning network was established; Think tankers of the very beginning - like Bob and Bert but also Felix Nevel - acted with empowerment; Frontliners and managers started to ask the network for advice. Together with Deirdre, I worked out a discussion paper to convince the corps management to invest within the context of the training budget in the development and the facilitation of communities of practice. I learned that the yearly disposable training budget was considerably underspent.

In the end there was a particular thing that bothered me regarding the FIT Police project and especially the Think tank meetings. On many occasions I thought of the Think tank meetings as peep shows. Besides the project manager, the two project leaders, secretaries and myself, there were so many occasional chairmen, guests and students who took the chair that I felt sorry for the Think tankers. But I'm a baker with a head of butter, of course, because I, too, was one of the busybodies.

Sometimes there were up to one non-Think tanker out of every two participants. It was as if they were being gaped at like monkeys in a zoo. It looked as

if they were followed and patronised as puerile professionals. Considering all the research that was being done, they were scrutinised as guinea pigs. However faithful participants didn't complain about that. Diehards like Bob Gabriel and Bert Kemp only sounded their praises about all the attention and input they got.

I took the De Caluwé and Vermaak's coloured approach to evaluate the learning approach of the FIT Police project.

Using yellow theory - The Moorland Regional Police Force, and this can hardly come as a surprise, seemed to be a very politicised and bureaucratised organisation. Alex was well aware of that. The next question, of course, is whether the project should bother about power relations or not. Alex chose to go his own way. On the one hand, he created an experiment that gradually became more detached from the standing organisation. On the other hand, he expected the organisation to buy-in to the project. If the latter didn't happen, he was likely to make war. The chief constable, the founding father as well as his successor, or other top management hardly showed their faces. Many involved complained about that. Many high rank officers didn't buy-in to the project. Project managers, project leaders and Think tank members thought that the project was overtly or more covertly frustrated. The FIT Police project as a learning experience wasn't linked, not even loosely coupled with the existing training policy. It was an open secret that it didn't come off between FIT Police and the HRM department. In the frontline, the Think tankers were confronted with resistance and, on many occasions, they let that pass. The creation of a shared view within the project organisation was important. But this was a process whereon the, for many Think tankers, charismatic Alex left his mark. The creation of coherence with the rest of the organisation was certainly an issue, but it was also problematic on all levels. There were obvious conflicts within the ranks of high management, there were problems between the project and supporting units like the HRM department and frontliners had problems with first line managers and colleagues. Within the project, many Think tankers showed themselves emergent learners. They copied Alex's speech and his style of reasoning. Perhaps, in doing so, they bought in resistance beforehand.

Using blue theory - On the one hand, without surcease, the trekking metaphor was proclaimed. That could be associated with white theory. On the other, hand the FIT Police project showed many signs of a blueprinted organisation wherein the traveling metaphor dominated. In the beginning, it was decided that the project should work two ways. It should change the bureaucratic culture and it should bring about innovations in police work so that the efficiency and effectivity of police work would improve. A project structure was designed, with a clear division of labour. The Think tankers were appointed

after an assessment procedure and all kinds of project management instruments were promoted to control the innovation projects. Agendas were followed with dedication. Flowcharts and sets of criteria were developed to decide whether a project idea was a real innovation, a real breakthrough or not. Students and scholars who wanted to research were welcomed. In absence of the initiator the project manager and project leaders played a directing role. Lots of documents were produced to record the progress and the status of projects.

Using red theory - The FIT Police project strongly counted on the thinking power and the motivation of the participants. The trekking metaphor implicated that uncertainty was accepted. There was also much attention to the climate within the project. The project management tried to build a positive atmosphere. They organised teambuilding sessions, barbecues, and collective tours. The meetings were always provided with a nice lunch, croquette rolls included. HRM instruments like coaching and training played an important role in the FIT Police project. Looking at the development of guys like Bob and Bert, talent management definitely played a role. The project leaned heavily on the personal input of the participants. The possibilities the FIT Police project offered for personal development were played as important lures for the participating coppers.

Using green theory - The trekking metaphor was the mantra of the FIT Police project. As I said earlier, this could indicate a white theory. On the other hand there were the Alex's pep talks, the directions of the project leaders and the forceful images created about what should happen. A lot of emphasis was put on the idea of becoming a learning organisation collectively and individually and in the beginning also on changing the bureaucratic culture. Achieving quick results, in cooperation with other participants in the project as well as with other departments and colleagues, was promoted. Within the project the subprojects were highly valued as learning groups, by the project manager and the project leaders as well as the Think tankers. The project leaders wanted to create learning. They emphasised the acquisition of techniques such as problem solving techniques and peer consultation, but I never heard them talk about the quality the learning should have and, in the Think tank meetings, I never saw that they put an effort into dialoguing techniques and other techniques to enhance second order learning. Clients of the Think tank were given an important role in the learning. But although I heard that clients played a role in project group meetings I never witnessed that.

Using White theory - Going by the motto of the project "trekking instead of traveling" you might associate this with white theory. But, to be honest, such a way of thinking would be a bridge too far for a strongly bureaucratised and, at the same time, highly politicised organisation like a police force. However, in their views and behaviour, Alex and especially Bob showed affinity with

white thinking. The blueprinted behaviour of the project leaders didn't match with white thinking at all. The way they planned, flow-charted and tried to control events strongly conflicts with white theory. The project organisation had students studying the development of the project, but in Think tank meetings I witnessed, I rarely got the impression that they studied the machinations that facilitated and frustrated the project. I heard that they revised the mission of the project during a teambuilding sessions, but I was told that Alex did the pioneering work.

Looking back on the project with the five different paradigms, with the five coloured paradigms of change in the back of my head, I think that the project organisation should have invested more in achieving coherence with the environment. They should have negotiated more. The key players would have gained a few and lost a few but in the end the project could have profited. There is an old wisdom that in order to be successful you should invest in the cause and the relation. Investment only in the cause or only in the relation leads nowhere.

Although it can be very useful to have some blueprints, some plans and procedures when you have to start up and handle a project like FIT Police, the directing role project managers and project leaders played and the instruments they used strongly conflicted with the trekking metaphor they proclaimed. Bob proved, in the end phase of the project, that a more low-key attitude, more differentiation in approach could work.

The project managers made use of all kinds of motivation techniques and several frontliners will tell that they benefited from the project. The HRM techniques played an important role in the project. It is a pity that the FIT Police project didn't connect to the HRM systems of the force. Now, everybody that is for an important part independent of such systems profited from the project career-wise, while the frontliners are back to square one. The initiating chief constable got his media attention in the twilight of his career, Alex got transferred to a bigger regional police force and acquired a more influential position, one of the project leaders got promoted within the regional police force and the other one found a new and suitable job elsewhere, the students on work placements all graduated on a project and many of them found a job. I was able to write a dissertation about the project. But Bob the builder was sent back to the drugs squad and Bert's achievements within the project didn't add up positively on his personal record. He has to start all over again to become a chief sergeant.

And what will it do to the Think tankers when they find out that their achievements were denied in official reports?

One can argue that, at the end of the project, several Think tankers developed a new way of thinking and learning in the workplace. They acquired new capabilities. It is sad to see that, once the project got off the ground, it was blocked.

I am convinced that several potential white thinkers in the ranks of the Think tankers could have eventually fulfilled the trekking dream. In fact it probably doesn't make a difference whether there is a FIT Police project or not. If they feel the need, they will organise themselves.

So, concerning the question whether the project was killed or that is still alive, I could unfold several theories, using De Caluwé's approach, and I summarised them in a little scheme.

Yellow	The project was killed. Prevailing powers, at all levels, saw no need for it any more. Perhaps it even endangered the stability of the power structures. In the power game, Alex was irrelevant. He was already done away with. Probably before he even became the project manager. He certainly felt that he lost his powerbase. Surely, some of his ideas must have been worthwhile but this revolutionary, this idealist, this narcissist dug his grave when he ran like a bull through the china shop.
Blue	The lifecycle of the project came to an end. The project died a natural death. The prevailing conditions gave no hope for future development, so it was decided not to revive the project.
Red	The project was killed. And not only the project. Within the ranks, it extinguished the rays of hope in those frontline workers who believed the message of a learning organisation, empowerment of the ranks and cooperation across the organisation. It killed a lot of motivation under those Think tankers who believed that their investment would add up to their personal record, which flourished in the FIT Police community. Furthermore, it alienated those coppers who didn't believe in management policy in the first place.
Green	The project died, because the quality of its learning processes was too poor. The project couldn't survive because it couldn't adapt itself nor could it change its environment.
White	The project was killed. But that doesn't matter. Probably its seeds were sown. And from those new initiatives and perhaps better ones can grow in the wild.

Scheme in my notebook: Coloured investigation into the death of the FIT Police project

In my notebook, I worked out some steps that could have been taken to prolong the life, to prevent the death or the assassination of the project.

Yellow	Understand and accept the forcefield, and wait for, or create an opportunity to reinvent, together with all the stakeholders a project to establish a learning network for the development of policework. Probably a benchmark with an acknowledged innovative corps might work.
Blue	Work with the appropriate authorities. Establish a project group. Define a project to orientate on the possibilities for human performance improvement. Analyse Strategic and HR indicators and design a suitable, state of the art HRD approach to meet the goals set in the strategic plans of the police force. Make it SMART
Red	Work with the people managers. Look for existing communities of leaders engaged with culture, motivation and development. Look in the HR indicators for the employee-satisfaction, analyse the engagement of employees with policy plans. Involve employees and their concerns with respect to themselves, their tasks and others.
Green	Look for established learning communities or initiate such. Ask them to confront the strategic plans with the results of the FIT Police project and other trajectories aimed at knowledge production, innovation and learning and derive learning questions. Facilitate professional inquiry and integrate this with other learning programmes such as management development.
White	Assert that the project was killed, organise other provocative impulses, and wait for what happens next. Play along with initiatives to boost learning, knowledge creation and innovation.

Scheme from my notebook: Coloured recommendation with regard to learning in the workplace of the Moorland Regional Police Force.

What would I do, if I were responsible for Human Resources Development in the Moorland Regional Police Force? I think that, in comparison with six-seven years ago, when Danielle Braun¹⁰⁰ did her anthropological study and found out that the police organisation she investigated, was highly politicised,

things are fairly the same. So, to be successful with a learning-initiative you should play politics and look out for 'policy windows'. I wouldn't be too afraid of politics. My next action, would be to encourage the development of an approach with enough support in one of my favourite 'colours'. I admit, I don't have much affinity with a blue print. I can draw up educational designs and make development plans, but I lack the passion to comply with such schemes. Nevertheless, I would try to speak the language of those who favour such plans. 'Connect and make use of diversity' would be my motto. Knowing that police organisations are hierarchies and understanding police culture well enough, I guess that white theory is not a feasible pathway. That leaves me with socio-politics, personal/cultural development and action learning. I would be happy to invest in those pathways. I would listen to stakeholders, invest in small learning projects and organise support. Not only to organise success, but also to learn more about learning in the workplace. This time I would be sure that civilians were involved, that connections were made with all hierarchical levels and that different learning trajectories would be aligned. Although I would try to bring people together, I would be careful with big events, after the failure of the FIT police project. Small is beautiful. I would be careful with too high ambitions. You don't want to give people the the experience of failure that the Think tankers often must have had. I would like to ask leadership to be visible, as it was often invisible whilst the FIT Police project ran. I would be reserved with policies plans and procedures. The FIT Police project sometimes wallowed in flow charts, project plans, overviews. I would praise people who put effort in small projects. Not only if it turns out to be a big success for the boss. Last but not least I would not communicate important things different then they really are. No matter how difficult that is: speak up!

Let me put it in other words. If I was in charge, I would like to pass the functionalistic approach of the nine criteria that were formulated. I would like to try to change these criteria, because I think that the real value of the FIT Police project and my support as an HRD professional wouldn't be the perfect performance in the frontline of public service, but the development of a knowledge base between frontline and management. A knowledge base which would help frontline workers in the hectic of their daily job and a knowledge base that puts management in a position to make wiser decisions. If this would be possible, then frontline work would be so much more valuable and managing a frontline firm so much more gratifying.

Epilogue: Detective of perspective

Despite the arguments of members of the Forward Innovation Team, the management team of the Moorland police stopped the FIT Police project. Or rather didn't extend it. Formally because the term of the project expired. It was said that the basics of the project should be secured in the business processes. Was that a correct representation of things? Were the participants of the breakthrough project baptised with the fire of the breakthrough spirit? Did they receive the power that will keep them moving? Is there a chance that the breakthrough thought will live on in the minds, the hearts and the actions of the members of the Forward Innovation Team and will it affect others? Or did somebody kill the project, as Alex put it bluntly? Was the breakthrough spirit choked?

A few months after the project was ended, it already wasn't mentioned at all in a quality report. On the other hand, Bob is still working on his ideas and more than a year after the project is closed. In the summer of 2005, I still saw the posters of the copper with the battering ram in the hallways of the Central Police station in Moorland.

If it's still alive, what could have assured the viability of the breakthrough spirit? And if it was killed, what could be the motive? Why would they want to silence it? And for me, of course, the big question remains my initial research question. What can one do to develop learning practices of frontline workers?" What could have been done in this case to initiate, facilitate, secure and improve learning practices?

In detective stories there is always a moment when all the suspects and their buddies gather in a big circle, quaking, to hear Inspector Columbo or Hercule Poirot name the perpetrator¹⁰¹. The guilty party is often the one who is the most ill at ease, who says foolish things and gives himself away¹⁰². But I'm not the omniscient detective, the one to tumble to the solution, to unlock the truth and to expose the culprit¹⁰³. Perhaps it is not so important to know if the spirit of the project was killed or not and if it was killed who killed it. Perhaps the most important question is what the involved have learned from it.

What have the different actors learned? The FIT Police project team wrote an evaluation report. They elaborated their ideas to initiate a start-again. They thought they had found an answer to facilitate, secure and improve learning in the frontline in a lean, operable, feasible and practicable way. In the end it turned out not to be realisable. Perhaps they can apply their lessons learned elsewhere. Alex looked back on the project and after he voiced his displeasure or, even stronger, vented his spleen, he concluded from his angle that he should play the power game differently next time. I wonder how he played after his transfer to his new organisation. The participants made a portfolio, together with project management. They summarised their ideas, their projects and their results and actions and conclude in their little portfolio

booklet, that all things must come to an end. They left the FIT Police spirit to others in the organisation to take it further. I am curious whether the organisation does. What will happen after management shut down the project, rejected an improved and a lean follow-up plan and silenced the project, by not mentioning it in their reports. The communication advisors and the company journalist live on current events. They jumped on new happenings probably leaving the project to history. The interns who supported the project came up with their final bachelor or master thesis. They worked out theories, designed models, evaluated the project and made recommendations. Will they elaborate on their ideas when they take off in their career? Bob wrote his ideas, experiences and reflections in his *Bob the builder* notebook and tried to act upon it and there might be a chance he still does. I felt involved as an HRD professional and I'm sure I have learned from it, personally, professionally and academically. Here, academic knowledge is at stake. I was a scholar and this dissertation is an academic account of what I have learned. I worked out some theoretical notions that led to my research question. I elaborated my personal dissatisfaction with contemporary HRD research and I developed an approach that suited me better. I present that to you in the second part of this thesis. Actually, you can consider the second part of this study as more material to this case.

In fact I was merely *a detective of perspectives* ¹⁰⁴. Although I have written this novel-report to understand more of learning, knowledge production and innovation in a public service organisation, I don't have the pretention that I can now tell you how things are. I'm not going to unravel any mysteries for you, nor disclose thought maschinations. *We get the truth only in novels, and this isn't a novel*¹⁰⁵. I anticipate that you already have formed some thoughts of your own, after you have been going through the novel-report. I will promise you, that eventually, I will reveal my thoughts, in a well considered way.

The End

Part II

1. Introduction

In part I, I have confronted you with nine narratives about a learning project. These narratives form the heart of this study about learning behind the frontline of public service. This entr'acte is meant to provide you with an outline of the rest of this dissertation.

In the next chapter II.2, *Understanding workplace learning in public service organisations*, I will clarify how I broke the ground for my research approach and I will discuss at length why I began this study. A study that I - as a former frontline worker and HRD professional - carried out because I wanted to gain a better understanding of learning by frontline workers. In this chapter I will work through my initial research question: "What can be done to develop learning practices of frontline workers?"

In Chapter II.3, *Creating an understanding*, I will justify my reasons for making you read a case which is more than 100 pages long. This chapter provides an account of my methodological approach. I will work out my critique of the dominant case study approach in the Dutch HRD community, and I will elaborate on my ethnographic and auto-ethnographic approach. Furthermore, I will discuss the meaning of the narrative method I used and the multi perspective turn which I have taken, and I will also elucidate the way in which the case stories were written.

Chapter II.4, *Corresponding about learning behind the frontline*, is an epilogue in which I will close this study with my own reflections. I will return reflexively to the novel-report and reflect on the meaning of this study for the understanding of learning, knowledge production and innovation by frontline workers. For that matter, I use a series of letters that I have prepared for some key figures within the frame of this study.

In chapter II.5, *Reflexion*, I will close this text. I will turn back on my initial research question and I will address the reader for the last time, reflecting on the meaning of this study for myself, for the reader and for the understanding of learning, knowledge production and innovation by frontline workers.

2. Understanding workplace learning in public service organisations

2.1 Introduction

If organisations in public service, such as schools, hospitals and police forces, want to improve their service to society and want to have a greater impact in dealing with the challenges, goals and problems of our contemporary and future society, they have to appreciate their employees in the frontline as knowledge workers and must invest in the development of workplace learning. This was a strong premise I subscribed to, before I started this study. At the same time, I realised that it is far from clear how learning in the workplace in public service 'goes'. The problem for administrators, managers, frontline workers and HRD professionals, is that learning is a complex and multifaceted process. I aspired to do this research project because, as an HRD professional, I wanted to develop a more substantial understanding of workplace learning in public service organisations. How do frontline workers learn in the workplace? How do they produce knowledge? How do they transfer their learning and knowledge into practice in order to improve their performance or to develop new ways of working? Based on the assumption that certain learning practices might support performance improvement and/or necessary innovations, my central question has been 'What can be done to develop the learning practices of frontline workers?'

Around the turn of the century, I had started this PhD research, and took the challenge of developing a better understanding of learning in the workplace in public service. With this investigation, I have aimed to contribute to the body of knowledge of my HRD profession. As a consultant practitioner, I seek a better understanding of learning in the workplace to improve daily practice, wherein I try to help organisations in the public service, to enhance their learning ability. The next question has been: how to go about it? Let me assure you, this has been an iterative process of looking at possible research strategies. I looked at strategies to build and test a concept of professional learning in the frontline of public service. I considered deducting a theory from practice. Studying the literature, I gradually became critical of the focus found there, which emphasises academic modelling and limited attention to the complexities in the workplace. Eventually I chose to develop an alternative approach, based around the idea that learning is imperative for humanity, for organisations, and for individuals; and that learning goes far beyond a model for facilitation, analysis and interpretation of learning practices. In the next chapter, *Creating an understanding* (part II, chapter 3), I will explain the critical, narrative and auto-ethnographical strategy that

evolved from my preliminary work. With this research approach, I have striven to provide an in-depth inquiry into learning practices of a public service organisation.

In advance of (and simultaneous to) the development of my own research approach, I studied literature dealing with peculiarities of frontline work, learning organisations, systems thinking and learning, and workplace learning. Subsequently I developed a critical position with regard to mainstream HRD research. Inspired by fine literature, narrative theory and ethnographic research, I developed my research approach. This required the presentations of narratives in part I, instead of the usual theoretical exploration, progressively refined research questions, hypothesis and methodology. In this chapter, I will report how I broke ground for my approach to studying learning practices.

In II.2.2, I discuss the increasing importance of learning for organisations and learning in the workplace with respect to the importance of knowledge workers in the burgeoning knowledge economy. I will give an overview of some of the key thinkers on learning in organisations, I will point out theories concerning workplace learning and I will give a categorisation of paradigms with regard to organisational learning and point out critiques with regard to organisational learning theories. Furthermore, I will provide a tentative understanding of learning and learning practices in organisations. Grounded in a critique of purely academic modelling and of limited attention for the complexities in the workplace, I will look especially at the descriptions of organisational and workplace learning in the literature under review. In II.2.3, I will discuss the literature I found on working and learning in the frontline of public service, with Michael Lipsky's revelatory work on street-level bureaucracies as a centrepiece. In this section, I will define the concept '*frontline worker*'. In II.2.4, I will relate Lipsky's work to that of five other system thinkers: Argyris and Schön, Senge, Engeström and Midgely. In II.2.5, I will continue by examining the work of four other leading thinkers regarding learning in organisations, respectively Eraut and Wenger, and the Dutchmen Kessels and Simons. In II.2.6, I will return to theories and research regarding workplace learning and review the dominant strategies in Dutch HRD research and the Dutch learning-in-the-workplace research tradition. In II.2.7, I direct my attention to fine literature as an alternative source of knowledge about learning at work and I prelude my alternative outlook on HRD research. In the next chapter, I will work out my critical, narrative and auto-ethnographical approach. In II.2.8, I will vouch for the relevance of my divergent research mode.

2.2 The increasing importance of learning for organisations

It is a widespread belief in our society that organisations have to be agile and have to embrace continuous improvement and innovation because of changes in society, social structures and the economy. Organisations are expected to learn to act upon opportunities, challenges, problems and tensions that go along with these changes. To achieve that, it is commonly accepted that learning is important at all levels of organisations. I certainly subscribe to that belief. It is of course a truism that learning is necessary and inevitable for individual human beings, communities and thus for organisations.

2.2.1 Knowledge workers in the knowledge economy

During the past decades, the idea that lifelong learning is indispensable has been strongly emphasised as can be seen in notions like the knowledge economy (Drucker, 1968), the information age (Toffler, 1980), learning economy (Archibugi & Lundvall, (1994), the network society (Castells, 1996) the new information economy (Hallal & Taylor, 1998). Almost sixty years ago, in his 1946 book *Concept of the corporation*, Peter Drucker interpreted organisations as concrete solutions to problems, management as knowledge work and knowledge as the fourth factor of production. In *The age of discontinuity* (Drucker, 1968), he states that knowledge is the foundation and measurement of economic potential and economic power. In *Post-capitalist society*, Drucker describes how every few hundred years a sharp transformation has taken place and greatly affected society - its worldview, its basic values, its business and economics, and its social and political structure. According to Drucker, we are smack in the middle of another time of radical change, from the Age of capitalism and the Nation-state to a knowledge society and a Society of organizations. Over 50 years, Drucker constructed a model of the knowledge society and economy that included new organisational models, a redefinition of technology and management from the perspective of a knowledge economy, and development of an ethics of responsibility to guide the commitment of knowledge workers to organisational goals. Knowledge organisations were urged to pay attention to their knowledge productivity as a function of the transformation of the industrial economy into a knowledge economy until the nineties of the 20th century. In my work as an HRD manager, a consultant and a scholar, I have followed up the idea that we evolved from an agrarian society into an industrial society and from an industrial society into a knowledge society. On the other hand, I have also criticised the idea that knowledge is a new production factor. I have tended instead to emphasise that the passage to a knowledge society is connected to the changing nature of labour: from an emphasis on muscle power in the agrarian society, to driving power in the industrial society, to eventually thinking power in the knowledge society. As a

consequence, I have pledged in my work to acknowledge workers as knowledge workers, to give them the space to think and to develop the workplace as a learning environment wherein they can develop their thinking power (Bruining, 2000a/2000b; Van Aken, Bruining, Jurgens & Sanders, 2003).

2.2.2 Organisational learning

For more than a quarter of a century, an enormous interest in 'organisational learning' and the development of the 'learning organisation' has been building up. Thinking about organisational learning started as a function of organisational development and the growth of a more competitive organisation and more sustainable organisation. Gradually it became more important, or even imperative, to become a learning organisation in the context of the burgeoning knowledge economy.

Chris Argyris (1977) defined organisational learning as the process of detection and correction of errors. In his view organisations learn through individuals acting as agents on their behalf: "The individuals' learning activities, in turn, are facilitated or inhibited by an ecological system of factors that may be called an organizational learning system" (Argyris, 1977, p. 117). His key publication is *On organizational learning*. Another early advocate of organisational learning was Reg Revans. His ideas about action learning originate from 1945. He further developed his ideas in the 60's and 70's (Revans, 1982). He has argued that people learn most effectively from sharing real problems with others and not from books or lectures. Consequently, his 'action learning' concept requires solutions to be implemented, not just recommended. *Action Learning: New Techniques for Management* (Revans, 1980) is considered to be his most important work. The concept of the learning organisation gained massive popularity after Peter Senge published his book *The fifth discipline: The art & practice of the learning organization*. Senge believes that "the organizations that will truly excel will be the ones that discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization" (Senge, 1990, p. 4). He thinks that learning organisations are fundamentally different from traditional organisations, which tend to be authoritarian and controlling. When, in the nineties, organisations began to recognise knowledge as a key source of competitive advantage, knowledge management approaches attempted to capture existing knowledge within formal systems, such as databases. Gradually they discovered the limitations of this approach. According to Senge an organisation moves to the 'desired state' of the learning organisation when employees continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, when new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, when collective aspiration is set free, and when people are continually learning to see the whole together. Senge struck a chord. *The fifth discipline* was one of the most cited books in the past decennium. It had an enormous

impact when it came out and still remains influential to this day. Around the turn of the century, Etienne Wenger pointed to the kind of dynamic 'knowing' that makes a difference in practice. This knowing requires the participation of people who are fully engaged in the process of creating, refining, communicating, and using knowledge. In his seminal book *Communities of practice, learning, meaning and identity*, Wenger advocated that learning is social and comes largely from our experience of participating in daily life. Wenger's thoughts are derived from his work with Jean Lave (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Their model of situated learning proposed that learning involved a process of engagement in a 'community of practice'. According to Lave and Wenger, these communities of practice are everywhere. We are generally involved in a number of them. We participate in communities at work, in school, at home, or in our civic and leisure interests. In some groups we are core members, in others we are more at the margins. The characteristics of such communities of practice vary. Some have names, many do not. Some communities of practice are quite formal in their organisation, others are very fluid and informal. However, members are brought together by joining in common activities and by what they have learned through their mutual engagement in these activities (Wenger 1998). In this respect, a community of practice is different from a community of interest or a geographical community in that it involves a shared practice.

2.2.3 Workplace learning

The concept of learning in the organisation is rooted in organisational sciences, organisational sociology, organisational psychology, business administration, personnel science, educational science and critical management studies. Although much older, but not yet so popular as the learning organisation, concepts of workplace learning come from these same branches of study. Learning is inherent in work, so since time immemorial people have learned in the workplace.

Before the establishment of a system of vocational education in the beginning of the 19th century, workplace learning was common practice. From the middle ages, when skilled craftsman formed the first guilds to today's information age, working people have persistently sought to improve their lives through learning. However, after the guilds were abolished in the early 19th century, because they gained too much power, gradually, and far away from the workplace, an extensive educational system developed. In the middle of the 1980's, the workplace was rediscovered and revalued as a learning place, as a consequence of growing costs of training and development of personnel, and reports about the disappointing effects of cursory learning. Nowadays the workplace is regarded as an authentic, motivating and effective learning environment. It is seen as an important environment for initial vocational learning and further employee development (OECD, 1999). The nineties saw a growing flow of professional

and academic publications pointing at the advantages of workplace learning. Workplace learning has since then been believed to provide an answer to the growing need for flexibility, the imperative need for lifelong learning and the drive towards increased productivity, competitiveness and innovation. Traditional learning strategies like cursory approaches or other forms of formal and often individual learning now meet with increasing criticism. The output is often disappointing because these strategies entail all kinds of transfer problems. There is a rising interest in returning to workplace learning, varying from planned employee development to self-steered learning. Gradually the focus has moved from non-recurrent interventions like workplace education and training towards the integration of working and learning. A wide variety of stakeholders and other parties are interested in workplace learning. For instance employers, governmental bodies, unions, managers, human resources professionals, ergonomists and scholars. Ideas like the knowledge economy contributed to a growing interest in workplace learning (eg. Marsick and Watkins, 1990) and its relation to competence development (eg. Eraut, 1994), learning orientations (Doornbos et al. 2004), learning preferences and learning styles (Simons and Ruijters, 2003; Berings, Poell & Simons, 2005), learning architecture (Ruijters, Noorman, Rockwell & Simons, 2004), knowledge productivity, knowledge management and innovation (eg. Kessels, 1996; Brown & Duguid, 2000; Von Krogh, Ichijo & Nonaka, 2000). The problems, limitations and frustrations with knowledge management systems has led to an acknowledgement of the personal knowledge of the knowledge worker and the importance of the interaction of knowledge workers in communities of practice (eg. Orr, 1996; Wenger, 1998).

In the educational and HRD literature, various definitions of workplace learning can be found. Some associate workplace learning with all forms of education and training which are closely related to the daily job and work processes of employees and trainees. Others prefer a broad definition and define it as learning for work, at work and through work, ranging from formal, via semi-structured to informal learning. As an alternative, there are some who prefer to use a concept of workplace learning mainly in connection to informal, incidental learning processes during work, leading to competent workplace learners. Formal and informal learning are distinguished from each other with respect to the level of intention: implicit, non-intentional, incidental, deliberative, intentional, structured. Van Woerkom (2002) records that many authors define work-related learning processes in negative formulations and from that she infers that it is apparently easier to define what work-related learning is not, rather than what it actually is. Differences also stem from the heterogeneous 'theoretical backgrounds' of the authors. There are, for instance, educationalists, organisational theorists and a wide variety of others interested in learning in the workplace. The educationalists

are mainly interested in the question of how (lifelong or adult) learning comes about (eg. Knowles, 1998; Claxton, 1999). The organisational theorists are predominantly interested in the search for factors affecting learning (eg. Boonstra et al., 2004).

2.2.4 Different paradigms concerning organisational learning

Based on a 'five-colour' categorisation, De Caluwé and Vermaak ([1999]2003) propose to distinguish five different paradigms concerning organisational learning and change. Based on their categories, I myself have distinguished five different HRD approaches (Bruining, 2001). Some emphasise the alignment of the interest of stakeholders on all levels (Robinson & Robinson, 1995; Walton 1999). Others promote the design of a human performance system (Romiszowski, 1988; Swanson, 1994; Rumler & Brache, 1995), investments in a motivational and adaptive culture and strategic alignment (Kotter & Heskett, 1992; Harrison, 1997), the reflective practices, learning projects and the workplace as a rich learning environment (Swieringa & Wierdsma, 1993; Argyris, 1999), or self-organisation (Bateson, 1972) and the encouragement of 'flux and disruption' and re-storying (Schrijvers, [2000] 2002). Similarly, Garrick (1999) also distinguishes and examines four dominant discourses regarding learning at work: 1. human capital theory, 2. experience-based learning, 3. cognition and expertise at work, 4. generic skills, capabilities and competence.

From a variety of different angles, the development of theories and reachability regarding learning in organisations, workplace learning and learning practices have been criticised. Operating in the realm of innovation research, Gieskes (2001) argues that because of the abstract nature of the conceptual discussions about learning in organisations and the kaleidoscopic and anecdotal nature of the development of theories, we know relatively little about learning processes in organisations. Following up on this critique, Gieskes contributed to the development of a seemingly valid and reliable scale for measuring learning behaviour and claims, in addition, that managerial activities and decisions that are predictive for improving learning behaviour have been identified (Gieskes & Van der Heijde, 2004). Others have a more humanistic view. Fenwick (2004) challenges the subjugation of human knowledge, skills, and relationships to organisational or shareholder gain and focuses on transforming workplaces and HRD practice toward justice, fairness, and equity. The work of Lipsky (1980) and of De Savornin Lohmann and Raaff (2001) can also be considered humanistic. They study the dilemmas of employees stuck between public and policy. Others again argue that the fashionable management fads, for instance about learning, may lead to mass hypnosis (Huczynski 1993) and put thinking to rest (Ackoff, 2001). Conversely Ten Bos, coming from critical management studies, welcomes a fashionable approach to management thinking. Ten Bos studied five

fashionable themes that dominated management theory in the nineties, including the learning organisation¹⁰⁶. Ten Bos pleads for a more philosophical rather than scientific understanding of these management fashions. He questions the positivist and utopian orthodoxies that have pervaded management thinking and contends that management fashion is a cultural phenomenon that deserves serious reflection. Building on postmodern theory, Ten Bos argues that management fashion might encourage the practitioner to engage in philosophical self-experimentation and to adopt alternative forms of understanding. According to Ten Bos, the catch is that management fashion often fails to keep up to this promise because it remains paradoxically incapable of laying down its rationalist cloak (Ten Bos, 2000). Finally, I want to point at a growing group of scholars looking at the ambiguous and complex view of the workers regarding working (and learning). Most of them work in a critical, ethnographic and/or narrative tradition.

Based on an ethnographic study, Julian Orr showed how service repairmen maintain their distance from the formal organisation and create identity and meaning through their “war stories”. Czarniawska (1999) and Rhodes (2001) promoted the idea of using ‘genres’ rather than paradigms as the medium of explanation and understanding. This is beautifully illustrated by Rhodes. To study the implicit power of writing and authorship that is at play when people and organisations are (re)presented in research, Rhodes analysed a research project in the area of organisational storytelling that investigates how people in one organisation used stories to (re)present their own learning experiences from the implementation of a quality management programme. His research is written in three principal genres: autobiography, ethnography and a fictional short story. These (re)presentational strategies are analysed to examine how different genres affect authority in different ways.

2.2.5 Provisional understanding of learning and learning practices in organisations

Although one of the most important forms of learning in working life is through learning in the workplace, most of the research on learning in employment has been concentrated around formal learning initiatives. Consequently we only know a little about actual learning in the workplace (Nordhaug et al., 2000). In my personal quest to find suitable approaches for learning in organisations and more specifically the workplace, I have been influenced by different paradigms over the years (Bruining, 2001). In the end, I have had to recognise that this led to a growing sense of confusion. From the start of this research project, I gradually tried to set aside the approaches I was committed to in certain phases of my professional life, in certain jobs and in certain projects. Nevertheless, in order to provide some hold, I will tentatively define learning and learning practices in organisations and I will give an overview of different approaches regarding learning in organisations and workplace learning.

As I commenced my research project, I extracted a definition of work related learning from the educationalists Bolhuis and Simons (1999) "Learning is the development or the realisation of relative sustainable changes in knowledge, skills or attitudes, or the ability to learn, in the sphere of work, of individuals, groups and/or the organisations where these individuals and groups are employed. These can under certain conditions also lead to changes in work processes or work outcomes of individuals, groups or organisations" ¹⁰⁷. This extract appealed to me because it provides a broad definition of learning. It refers to workplace learning in a general sense and it refers to the importance of the social and cultural context of learning, the multidimensionality of individual and collective learning, the emotional aspects of learning, the relation between learning and performance and the characteristics of good learning.

I also tried to define learning practices for myself and loosely circumscribed them as 'practices which are good for learning'. In organisations, learning practices are work projects that offer the opportunity to learn. Activities take place on-the-job, near-the-job or off-the-job. With these practices, the participants either achieve their objectives and/or there is a beneficial impact on the organisation, or it provides useful learning experiences which are likely to stimulate creativity, ingenuity and self reflection on the part of the participants or their environment. Thus, good practice may include cases which made mistakes, and do not score high on conventional benchmarks, as long as the case has learnt useful lessons which are resolutely transferred so that others can learn from their experiences. It is generally believed that valuable learning depends upon a clear understanding of the context and assumptions surrounding a particular case, as well as a clear description of what happened and the results obtained. In canonical texts from the field of organisational learning (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Orr, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) learning practices comprise a broader sequence of structured learning activities undertaken by individuals or a network or community of individuals or organisations who wish to cooperate to mutually develop their capabilities (Daft & Weick, 1984).

2.3 Working and learning in the frontline of public service

I have chosen to use the shorthand 'frontline of public service' to refer to the practices of employees directly involved in delivery of public services in organisations and I use the sobriquet 'frontline workers' for these employees. Frontline workers are employees in the operational process - or frontline - of public service. Michael Lipsky (1980) uses the terms 'street-level bureaucracies' and 'street-level bureaucrats'. Both these terms are considered

synonymous to respectively public service organisations and frontline workers. As a former frontline worker, I feel that the term 'frontline' and the honorary nickname 'frontline workers' – also adopted by the Dutch Council for Social Development^{vi} (RMO, 2000) – are appropriate. Not only do the concepts frontline and frontline organisation have quite a long history in organisation theory. They are used to typify organisations, or parts of organisations that are in direct contact with the public in circumstances that are not routine and usually entails a certain tension (Smith, 1979; Hartman & Tops, 2005). These terms refer to the difficult problems, frantic situations and nerve-racking circumstances the public service workers such as nurses, teachers and police officers can find themselves in. The designation 'frontline workers' can also be associated with being at, coming to, or making a forefront. In this respect the connotation of the complexity and clutter is in place. Quite a lot of the workers in the frontline of public service experience their functioning as surviving or conquering the urban jungle (Hartman & Tops, 2005).

According to Lipsky (1980), typical street-level bureaucracies are schools, hospitals, police and welfare departments, lower courts, legal services offices, and other agencies whose workers interact with and have wide discretion over the dispensation of benefits or the allocation of public sanctions. Typical street-level bureaucrats are teachers, police officers, social workers, judges, public lawyers, health workers and many other public employees who grant access to government programmes and provide the service within them. He defines street-level workers as "Public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have a substantial discretion in the execution of their work" (Lipsky, 1980, p. 3). Discretion is defined in Webster's New World Dictionary (1988, p. 392) as "the freedom or authority to make decisions and choices". Discretion is a form of power available to every individual, albeit that some have or assume more than others and it may be both used and abused. Lipsky points out the frequent occurrence of 'street-level bureaucracies' and 'street-level bureaucrats' or frontline workers. He stresses the importance of the frontline workers and their development by pointing at the enormous numbers of public workers that share the job characteristics of frontline workers. I can illustrate this with the numbers of frontline workers in the Netherlands that are working in the professions this study focuses on. In 2004 about 9 % of the working population occupies a position as nurse or nursing aide, teacher or operational police officer¹⁰⁸.

^{vi} Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling.

Before I began this research project, before I set out on this exploration, I developed four assumptions from my personal experience and from the literature:

- 1 Frontline workers might well be the most important policy makers in public service.
- 2 Frontline workers, as every other employee, probably learn continuously in the workplace.
- 3 In order to survive the complex and hectic daily reality, frontline workers have to face, they develop what might be called defensive learning strategies. These strategies focus on themselves and lead to mediocre service and alienation from the public.
- 4 In order to realise innovations in public service, it is important that frontline workers develop productive learning strategies in which the focus is on the public and improving, changing and innovating their service.

The frontline of public service has its own reality, its own dynamics and is not always as successful as the policy makers want us to believe (Hartman & Tops, 2005). Strategic frameworks and policy cycles often miscarry because the execution of policy can never consist of the kind of mechanical, linear process of policy preparation, problem formulation, decision making, execution and evaluation that many phase models for policy making suggest. That is what Hartman and Tops (2005) conclude, with reference to classical studies by Presman and Wildavsky (1973), Scharpf (1978), Lipsky (1980) Sabatier (1986) and Martland (1995). Tjeenk Willink (2004), Vice-President of the Council of State of the Netherlands, points out the dire necessity to deliver the professional frontline workers from a 'fanning out bureaucracy'. The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy finds that the quality of public services is hindered by a government that is always urging for control and also based on an improper relation between policy making and the execution of policy (WRR, 2004). Under the domination of governmental policy makers, managers and their support staff frontline workers create their own space and become the real policy makers (Lipsky, 1980; Barret & Fudge, 1981). Until now there has been little attention on frontline processes and frontline steering (Hartman & Tops, 2005).

Based on the notion that frontline workers are policy makers, a strong premise behind this study is that it is in the interest of our society that our police officers, health care workers and teachers continuously and other frontline workers in public service constantly learn. The frontliners must certainly be among the first to come upon the changing needs and changing demands concerning the nature of public service. In the front office of our public service, for example, the frontliners are expected to deal with increased aggression and violence; to handle ethnic, religious and racial tensions in the streets; to care for an aging population and answer to growing

demands for care; to respond to the educational needs in a knowledge society and to look after a growing number of disadvantaged people.

Another premise behind this study is the idea that workplace learning is not only a way to improve work performance or to innovate, but also to enhance the quality of working life. Despite the ideal of a learning practice and the value for both employer and employee, it often turns out a pipe dream. It is difficult for employees in general and thus also for frontline workers to get into a learning mode. It is certainly difficult to get into a learning mode that leads to continuous performance improvement and innovation. This is pictured in the literature on organisational learning (Boonstra, 2004), professionalisation (Eraut, 1994), street-level bureaucracies (Lipsky, 1980; RMO, 2000; Savornin Lohman & Raaff, 2001), learning in the workplace (Streumer & van der Klink, 2004) and innovation (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Gieskes 2001).

I have experienced profoundly the difficulties that accompany continuous learning in the workplace. For more than seven years I worked as a frontline worker in primary health care, and since 1990 I have been working as a trainer/consultant facilitating learning arrangements for frontline workers such as teachers, police officers, firemen, nurses and general practitioners. In my first occupation I worked as a dietician in primary health care. I had curative tasks and preventive tasks, I held office hours several times a week, I acted as a health educator and facilitated group work, and I provided consulting for other healthcare workers. In this job, I experienced both the great enticement of critical reflecting and innovating practice with colleagues and other disciplines as general practitioners, district nurses in local health centres and with specialists and clinical colleagues from hospitals as well as the temptation to wallow in routine behaviour because of work pressure, out of uncertainty, or due to sheer laziness. As a frontliner, I experienced the availability of discretionary space. It could be used to improve and to develop new ways of working with patients. It could also be used to hone routines, to brush up performances or simply to make yourself comfortable.

As an HRD professional, I was successively an in-company trainer, training & development manager, senior consultant and researcher. Working with nurses, general practitioners, medical receptionists, teachers, police officers and firemen in different roles, I encountered enthusiastic frontliners wanting to innovate their practice by making projects and creating learning practices and I also came across self concerned, defensive and sometimes even hostile employees holding on to their routines. In the hope to develop a better understanding of this behaviour and to find appropriate strategies to intervene, I studied the work of systems thinkers, champions of organisational learning and researchers studying learning in the workplace.

2.4 System thinking and learning practices

As I set out to study learning in the workplace in public service, I familiarised myself with the work of Lipsky. I considered this to be worthwhile not only because he analysed the specific characteristics of street-level bureaucracies and street-level bureaucrats but also because he pointed to the importance of learning in the workplace, long before this became vogue. Lipsky can be considered as a systems thinker. He disclosed how many street-level-bureaucracies have evolved into unsatisfactory functioning and alienating systems. Robert Flood, who wrote comprehensive books on systemic thinking and learning, defines systemic thinking as “the discipline which makes visible that our actions are interrelated to other people’s actions in patterns of behaviour and are not merely isolated events (Flood, 1999, p. 2)¹⁰⁹.

In addition to Lipsky, I studied the work of five other systems thinkers: Argyris and Schön, Senge, Engeström and Midgely. They all come from different backgrounds. Lipsky is a sociologist. Argyris is a psychologist. Senge is an engineer. Engeström is an educational scientist, and Schön and Midgely are philosophers. I was interested in their analysis of the productive and counterproductive forces regarding learning in organisation, and their views concerning the improvement of learning. Grounded in a critique of the dominant trend for academic modelling and limited attention for the complexities in the workplace, I looked especially at the descriptions of organisational learning and workplace learning in the literature about systems thinking, organisational learning and learning practice.

2.4.1 Lipsky

Though his primary interest was the well being of the clients of public service, Lipsky realised that he had to focus on the public service organisations. Lipsky studied the working of street-level bureaucracies and the effects it has on the street-level bureaucrats or frontline workers. In his famous book *Street-level bureaucracy* (Lipsky, 1980), he showed how street-level bureaucrats have to provide their services while most times burdened by a high case-load, often buried under undue paperwork, and not always fully trained and sometimes dealing with stress or even physical threats.

The street-level bureaucrats have to cope with a demanding public on the one hand and prevalent management practices of bossing frontline workers through control and direction on the other hand. Lipsky revealed how frontline workers and their clients get trapped in a ‘cycle of mediocrity’. The better the service they offer and the more it fits client needs, the greater the demand for service will be. This compels street-level bureaucracies to develop defensive routines, to put up barriers and to diminish their services until an equilibrium is established.

Lipsky’s study is still highly valued today. A few years ago a report of an advisory board of the Dutch government drew heavily on Lipsky’s study

(RMO, 2000) and De Savornin Lohman and Raaff (2001) elaborate further on Lipsky's work to improve the praxis of social workers. As a remedy for the cycle of mediocrity, Lipsky prescribes the creation of a learning environment and a habitus of learning in the workplace. He doesn't believe in investments in formal training. With reference to Freidson (1974), he argues that, "Worker training is less important for practice than the nature of working conditions themselves". Lipsky (Lipsky, 1980, p. 200) is aware of the problems with transfer of training. He thinks that "without a supportive network of working peer relationships training (...) is likely to wash out under the pressure of work context" (Lipsky, 1980, p. 200). Lipsky instead emphasises the value of: Clients as reference groups, On-the-job-training, creating the opportunity for self-determination of small units, professionalisation through action research, leadership that offers sufficient discretionary space. According to Lipsky this will provide a context for considerable learning and the potential for achieving a more client oriented practice.

For me, an important limitation of Lipsky's study is that it is grounded in observations of the 'collective behaviour' of public service organisations. Lipsky did not engage in a close study of street-level bureaucrats in action, so his work can not offer rich descriptions of street-level practices. Furthermore, Lipsky's ideas concerning the development of street-level bureaucracies from within, through learning in the workplace, are interesting, especially because he anticipates the contemporary attention to learning in the workplace. But his ideas about learning and creating a new professionalism remain highly speculative.

2.4.2 Argyris and Schön

The development of often deeply entrenched defensive routines at individual, group and organisational level is also a central issue in the work of Argyris. Moreover Argyris extensively studied learning processes in organisations. Argyris developed many of his concepts together with Donald Schön. In 1970 their collaboration around 'Action Science', the study of how espoused values clash with the values that underlie real actions, began. They became known around 1974, when they published their book *Theory in practice* (Argyris & Schön, 1974). But their work is still influential.

Mental models play an important role in the thinking of Argyris and Schön. They assume that people have mental maps regarding how to act in situations. These cover the way they plan, implement and review their actions. Furthermore, they assert that it is these maps that guide people's actions rather than the theories they explicitly espouse. What is more, few people are aware of the maps or theories they do use (Argyris & Schön, 1974; 1996). Mental models invisibly define our relationship with each other and with the world in which we find ourselves. Consequently mental models can undermine 'systemic thinking' by limiting the vision of what can be seen and done. In other words, we see what we believe, not believe what we see.

Argyris and Schön's approach is to bring about a shift from single loop learning to double loop learning. Single loop learning involves the detection and correction of error. If something goes wrong, solutions are sought within the governing variables. An alternative response is to question governing variables themselves, to subject them to critical scrutiny. This is double loop learning. Such learning may then lead to an alteration in the governing variables and, thus, a shift in the way in which strategies and consequences are framed. According to Argyris there is a large variability in 'espoused theories' and 'action strategies', but almost no variability in 'Theories-in-use'. He suggests people may espouse a large number and variety of theories or values which they suggest guide their action. However Argyris (1999) believes that the theories which can be deduced from peoples' action (theories-in-use) seem to fall into two categories. Implicit theories-in-use which inhibit double loop learning (Model I) and explicit theories-in-use which enhance it (Model II).

The primary purpose of Schön's research is to offer an epistemology of practice based on a close examination of what practitioners actually do. Although he criticises professional practice "because professionals do not live up the values and norms that they espouse, and secondly because they are ineffective" he also notes that practitioners often reveal a capacity for reflection on their intuitive knowing in the midst of action and sometimes use this capacity to cope with the unique, uncertain, and conflicting situations of practice (Schön, 1983). The focus of much of Argyris' intervention research has been to explore how organisations may increase their capacity for learning. This asks for double loop learning, which means that assumptions underlying current views are questioned and hypotheses about behaviour tested publicly. The end result of which should be increased effectiveness in decision-making and better acceptance of failures and mistakes. Argyris argues that double loop learning is necessary if practitioners and organisations are to make informed decisions in rapidly changing and often uncertain contexts (Argyris, 1990).

Their concepts of espoused theories, theories-in-use, mode I and mode II, skilled incompetence, reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action and the concept of single loop and double loop learning are derived from one of the pioneers of systemic thinking, Gregory Bateson. The anthropologist Bateson applied systemic thinking to biology, evolution and psychology and concluded that there are hierarchies to the way we classify experience via our mental maps. Argyris and Schön used Bateson's concepts of first and second order learning (Bateson, 1972).

Argyris and Schön and Senge made systemic thinking popular, linked people with the more mechanical aspects of systems inquiry and promoted reflective processes, dialogue and experiential learning. The weaknesses of their approach is that it is powerfully driven by notions of consensus, which some feel reduces the potential for critical reflection. Furthermore the approach

does not address power, knowledge distribution and ethical issues in any formal sense. In itself, it does not really constitute a system thinking approach, but makes use of notions of system dynamics. This can be constraining. The account of the whole is not particularly rigorous, even if the description of parts is. There is no formal means of boundary setting. And finally, although one can find numerous fragments in their work drawn from praxis, they do not give you a feel of the organisation studied, in its complexity and embeddedness. The material Argyris presents is usually only one page long or shorter. The examples drawn from praxis stand merely as exemplifications of theory. In *On organizational learning*, Argyris discusses the defences that individuals and organisations put up to resist double loop learning. Donald Schön presents more extensive case descriptions in two of his best-known books, *The Reflective practitioner* (Schön, 1983) and *Educating the reflective practitioner* (Schön, 1987). In the first book he discusses the practice of a design-class by the architect Quist, and a supervisory session that a third year resident in psychiatry has with his supervising psychoanalyst, he also gives examples of reflective practices in science based professions, in town planning and in management. In the second book Schön presents the Quist-case again, followed by more examples from architecture, music, psychotherapy, and education. He also offers a case in which Argyris is at work. Nevertheless, Schön has been stiffly criticised with regard to his case descriptions (Richardson, 1990; Eraut, 1994; Usher, 1997). Without wanting to criticise Schön's concepts of reflection, I agree with his critics that Schön, like Argyris, seems to be obsessed with the generation of formal theory of reflection, but he doesn't clarify his own action, he doesn't interrogate his own method and he seems to neglect the situatedness of the practitioner experience. Usher (1997) even sneers that this failure to analyse his models and ideas might have contributed to the rather unreflective use of those by trainers.

2.4.3 Senge

In his influential book, *The fifth discipline*, Senge (1990) states that adaptive learning or single loop learning is necessary to survive, but it focuses on solving problems in the present without examining the appropriateness of current learning behaviours. Senge argues that we humans are the creators of our own reality and that we have the power to control our destinies. People are able to act upon the structures and systems of which they are a part. For this, adaptive learning must be supplemented by generative learning, learning that enhances our capacity to create to make this generative learning happen in an organisation. Senge describes, or better prescribes, five *core disciplines* or component technologies that are vital for a learning organisation. They are systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision and teamlearning. Senge sees systemic thinking as the conceptual cornerstone, the '*Fifth Discipline*', of his approach. It is the

discipline that integrates the others, fusing them into a coherent body of theory and practice.

Senge's prescription is based on his diagnosis that organisations often suffer several of the seven learning disabilities that, in his opinion, are responsible for organisational failure. Senge argues that the learning disabilities can be overcome through mastering of the core disciplines and that this transforms an organisation into the state of a learning organisation. The five disciplines are all concerned with a cognitive shift from seeing parts to seeing wholes, from seeing people as helpless reactors to seeing them as active participants in shaping their reality, from reacting to the present to creating the future. Senge sees it as the role of the leader to build a learning organisation. The leader is the designer, teacher, and steward who can build shared vision and challenge prevailing mental models. He is responsible for the development of an organisation where people are continually expanding their capabilities to shape their future.

My critique is that Senge doesn't explicitly describe a learning organisation in practice. In '*Fifth Discipline*', the learning organisation remains a buzzword covering roughly the ideal of an organisation built on vision, teamwork, openness, flexibility, ability to act under changing conditions, and so forth. It is an organisation where people don't just cultivate their limited territory and privileges, but where they stick their neck out and together take responsibility for their shared future, working on creating maximum synergy and maximum ability to deal with the whole situation.

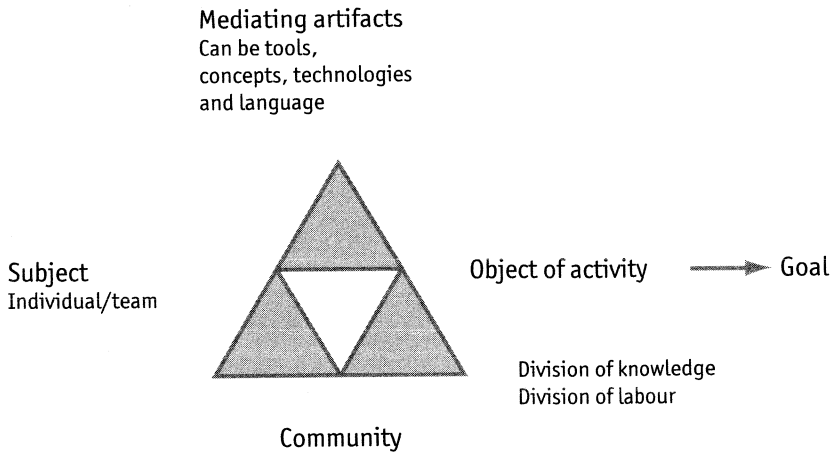
Furthermore Senge writes eleven *laws of the fifth discipline*. All of which become clear once we let go of our linear, unidirectional causation way of thinking, and adopt the systemic perspective. Senge ends his expatiation picturing ten *systems archetypes*, generic structures which embody the key to learning to see structures in our personal and organisational lives. Senge only gives small examples to enrich his arguments. He illustrates his systems theory and the limits to growth archetype using the business case of 'People's express', a low-fare airline that operated from 1981 to 1987. It takes Senge only seven pages for the description and the analysis of the case. But with all those numbers (5-7-11-10) the book looks like a version of the Bible.

2.4.4 Engeström

From a totally different background, Yrjö Engeström built concepts similar to those of Argyris and Schön (Engeström, 1994, 1999). The latter stand firmly in the American capitalist tradition while Engeström's concepts stem from the soviet developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky. They find their common ground in the work of Bateson (1972), who had a profound influence on many management thinkers. Engeström (1999) views a human activity system as a collective activity system with complex interrelations between the individual subject and his or her community. The ideas behind Engeström's cultural-historical Activity theory are that each of the systems components

might be quite well known but that the importance lies in the relationships between the components and that an individual never reacts directly to the environment, but always through cultural meaning, instruments and signals. In addition, rules, relations and the division of tasks play an important role. Thus, in Engeström's (1999) approach to collective learning, the concept of a working system is central and his basic assumption is that learning and working should not be considered at the individual level, but at a systems level. Engeström's systems model consists of six components: the subject who is working within the system, the tools he is using to change (mental) objects, the changed object / outcomes (to be) reached, the (unwritten) rules and norms that prevail in the system, the community of practice (the culture of the working system), and the division of tasks in the system. According to Engeström, the human activity systems should be studied from an historical perspective, questioning which of the six components has changed, creating what kinds of tensions with other components. He claims that there are always basic tensions between components of a working system, because of historical changes. When a subject is asked to reach new outcomes, for instance more collaboration with co-workers, there will be a tension between these new outcomes and the current division of tasks. When new tools (computer programs, for instance) are introduced, there can be a tension between the subject (who cannot use them yet or is afraid of using them) and the tools. All connection lines between the six components can be in a state of tension. Engeström developed action-learning techniques based on Activity theory. In studying a working system, one should study the dominant tensions, make people aware of them, and let them find solutions on their own. In his research, he showed how professionals, like medical specialists, develop inward-looking and defensive communication systems and he showed how these systems can be turned into outgoing, receptive and productive communication systems.

The value of Engeström's Activity theory is that it describes the factors that affect or mediate between individual behaviour, the subject, and the results of that behaviour, the object, in order to achieve the goal in the context of wider social systems. These wider factors are not merely external context, since they are part of the system - changing as a result of the system's activities. Furthermore, unlike many systems' models, which emphasise "learning" as critical component, the Activity theory is actually driven by a particular learning theory. For Engeström the process of expansive learning should be understood as construction and resolution of successively evolving contradictions in the activity system (Engeström, [1987]1999).



According to Engeström there are three key relationships, and three mediating factors. The clear triangle shows the key relationship between the individual, the community of which they are part and the activity they are all engaged in. The three shaded triangles represent the relationships that mediate the relationship between individuals, activities and communities.

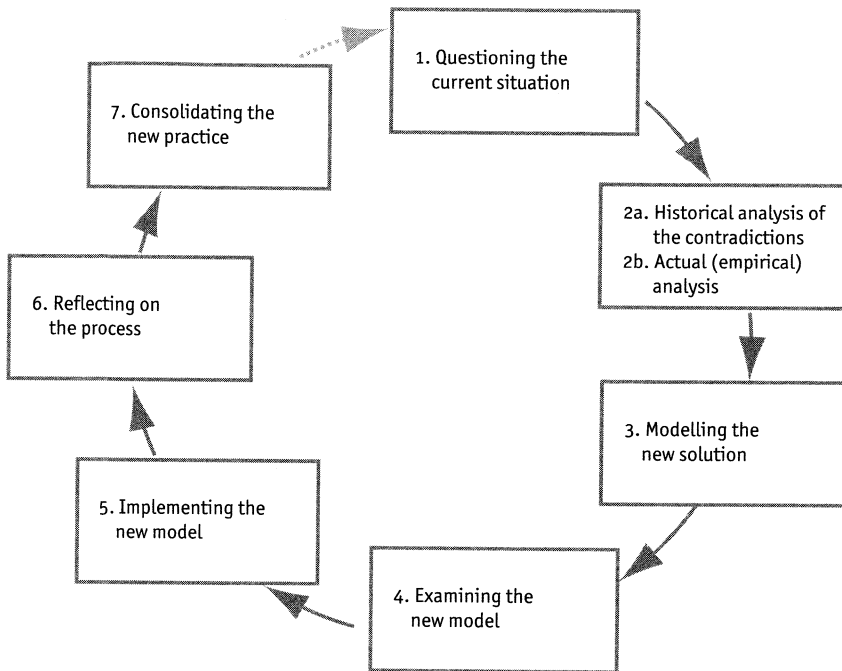
So:

- concepts and technologies have an active influence upon the relationships between the individual and the object of his or her action, and vice versa;
- social rules and regulations mediate the relationships between the individual and the community, and vice versa;
- and a division of knowledge and labour mediate the relationships between community members and the shared object of the activity system, and vice versa.

Engeström's Activity theory proposes that these features can be aggregated. The individual can be a single person, a group of people, an organisation or a community. So, for instance, an activity system that is a branch office of a government agency, influences and is influenced by a wider activity system such as a national society.

The theory of learning that is associated with Activity theory is meant to explain how an individual, or groups of individuals, interact with these factors so that they learn from that experience. This theory of learning is based on Vygotskyian concepts of identifying and explaining patterns and puzzles or contradictions. It also draws on Latour's actor network theory in that both regard innovations as stepwise construction of new forms of collaborative practice, or techno-economic networks (Engeström & Esclante 1996; Engeström, 1999; Latour 1987; 1988). The diagram below has some similarities with Kolb's learning cycle (Kolb, 1984). Like Kolb, Engeström

looks at learning as the transformation of experience, through reflection, conceptualisation and action (Engeström, 1994).



According to Engeström, initiatives to increase the learning potential of teams and to benefit the yield, will stall when due attention is not paid to the fact that teams are also an instrument for managers to exercise power and control. Both power and learning results are an outcome of the way teams handle the tension between the exercise of power on the one side and the initiatives to learn for from the other (Engeström, 1999).

In his introduction to the German edition of *Learning by Expanding*¹¹⁰, Engeström wrote that his approach entails an agenda for utopian research into concrete human activities undergoing historical transformations, which, for him, implies an ambitious research programme both theoretically and practically. My problem with Engeström's approach concerns both theory and practice. The theory looks superficial. In parts it seems to state the obvious. But despite the action learning techniques, it is not obvious how to translate the model into practice. My concern with practice is more serious. Although Engeström's work is based on analysis of conversations and dialogues, for instance amongst hospital personnel, his publications hardly contain

descriptions of the practices he claims to have analysed. In a rich collection of articles and publications, the development of a utopian model rather than an interest in the riches of learning practices seems to prevail.

2.4.6 Midgley

Midgley developed a model of learning based on the inquiry into practice on all levels in the organisation, starting from wherever one is situated and deploying a variety of instruments, in order to build a new and shared paradigm of work. In Gerald Midgley's thinking, a professional bureaucracy can be seen as a discipline, which he defines as a heterogeneous body of knowledge used by an identifiable professional community. The key agent is inevitably the practitioner (Midgley, 2000). According to Midgley, there are a variety of meanings available, depending on the community's theory or theories to understand the identity of the practitioner, but in the end this variety must be constrained. Midgley stresses that it is important to recognise the constraints imposed by professional identities so that conscious decisions can be taken about whether and when to challenge them. In *Systemic Intervention* (Midgley, 2000), he aims to rethink systemic intervention to enhance its relevance for supporting social change in the 21st-century. It is his ambitious (and far from finished) quest to develop a useful systemic language to deal with real life situations and a methodology for systemic intervention. He attempts to bring together science and ethics in one practice, to conceptualise complex situations characterised by interacting issues and multiple, conflicting points of view, to reflect about values and boundaries of inclusion, exclusion and marginalisation of stakeholders and issues, to sweep into intervention the viewpoints of a wide variety of stakeholders. Midgley seeks to provide means to engage with others in a flexible and constructive manner, thereby facilitating the development of new social agendas and plans for changes that can command support from those affected by them. He provides arguments for why philosophy, methodology and practice all have a role to play in our thinking about systemic intervention. Midgley identifies three waves of systems thinking over the last 50 years or so. In the first wave, early systems theorists like Bertalanffy describe systems in physical terms, resorting to metaphors from electronic computation or biology. Later it evolved in socio-technical systems thinking, systemic family therapy and systemicoperational research. Socio-technical systems brought together human relations, psychodynamics, action research and open systems theory. Emery and Trist are known socio-technicians. Family therapy departed from psychoanalysis. They saw the experience and behaviour of the individual is influenced and maintained by the way other individuals and systems interact with them. Campbell and associates were known for their systemic work with organisations based on family therapy. Systemic operational research emphasised the scientific dimension of systems thinking. Beer, with his viable systems

modelling, was a famous exponent of systemic operational research and his approach was extensively applied worldwide. Although the limits of the physical metaphor - and for Midgley, the non-systemic traces of reductionism and mechanism - were rapidly reached, this first wave of systems thinking still has its advocates and practitioners in the 'hard systems' tradition. Following, the second wave of systems thinking developed. Authors like Churchman, Ackoff and Checkland were involved in the paradigm shift. It was a move towards a more phenomenological, interpretative understanding of human systems. 'Soft systems thinking' employs social metaphors to develop appropriate systems approaches for human systems. The emphasis is on dialogue, mutual appreciation and the intersubjective construction of realities. Midgley sees himself as representative of the third wave of systems thinking. This third wave grounds itself in the critique that despite participative methodologies, the second wave lacked the attention to power relationships. The third wave, or critical systems thinking, draws on the critical theory of Habermas, particularly in relation to theories of knowledge and of communicative rationality, and on the work of Foucault and followers on the nature of power. Critical systems thinkers are concerned with emancipation or liberation and address naivety about power imbalances. Another emphasis is the development of a set of tools to bridge various methods that bring diverging, differing or even incompatible philosophical assumptions about, for instance, the nature of social reality, knowledge, and action. Midgley's concerns are: the interconnectedness of things; the socially negotiated, or constructed nature of reality, or our premises for action and those of the people we would work with, for, or against; the problem of those affected, both by existing social systems, and by attempts to make social improvements (social exclusion); and the problematisation of questions of values in relation to social, scientific knowledge. He sets himself a very ambitious task, namely the formulation of a new approach to some persistent, seemingly intractable philosophical questions (like the subject/object dualism, the nature of knowledge, and the realism versus idealism debate), and thereby to establish a methodology for intervention. Midgley subscribes to process philosophy, to identify the real with change and dynamism. He criticises the preoccupation of systems thinkers with undertaking 'holistic' or 'comprehensive' analyses. For Midgley there is no such thing as a genuinely comprehensive analysis. 'Boundary critique' is his key idea. Though it is not a new idea - Boundary critique was first used by Churchman and subsequently elaborated by Ulrich - Midgley takes it into new territory. He is concerned with two kinds of boundary: the boundary around the system in focus, delimitating the system from its environment and between those who are involved, or who benefit, and those who are affected, but who might not benefit, or who are likely to suffer. His key notion then is that such boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are contestable and should be contested. Midgley believes that through an explicit and transparent

consideration of this question - what he calls 'process philosophy' - many of the classical philosophical problems can be dissolved. He contends that the fight between realism, idealism, and social constructionism depends on the boundaries being chosen. Making boundary critique central to his methodological pluralist recommendations, Midgley advocates the 'creative design of methods', drawing on the various systems methods developed by workers within the second and third waves of systems theory. First he introduces his concept of intervention. He defines this as purposeful action by an agent to create change. It is contrasted with observation. Next, the systems philosophy is related to the methodology of intervention, and it is suggested that 'systemic intervention' is purposeful action by an agent to create change in relation to reflection on boundaries. Then the case is made for theoretical pluralism. This follows on logically from the theory of boundary critique because every theory is based on either implicit or explicit assumptions about the appropriate boundaries for analysis. Midgley advocates pluralism. Drawing on Habermas' theory of three worlds (1981), Midgley acknowledges the value of three discourses: quantitative applied science, human relations and psychoanalysis. Subsequently he encourages the use of "a plethora of methods and methodologies which represents substantial resource for the systems intervener wishing to practice methodological pluralism" (Midgley, 2000, p. 216).

Rather than giving an exhaustive overview of methods, Midgley discusses three challenges related to his plea for a plural approach. Midgley doesn't believe in a metaparadigmatic approach, but he encourages learning about ideas from other paradigms and reinterprets them in his own terms. To diminish the psychological problem of resistance to methodological pluralism, Midgley suggests the step by step approach beginning with one or two ideas from another paradigm. Midgley supposes that the acceptance of methodological pluralism implies a cultural change. He is optimistic about that change because, amongst many interveners, the need for pluralism is no longer controversial. Nevertheless he seems to have concerns about the quality of pluralism as he pleads for a critical pluralism that is theoretically informed and gives boundary critique a central role in intervention practice.

Midgley builds his theory of boundary critique and his systemic intervention method on a vast selection of authors. Preceding his case histories, he develops his philosophical and pluralistic method by connecting an overawing gathering of philosophical insights, approaches from systems thinking schools and an abundance of perspectives from sociology, psychology and organisational theory. From this abundance of theoretical approaches, Midgley carefully built his theory of boundary critique and his method for systemic intervention. After meticulously formulating his intervention approach, he offers four case histories from his intervention

practice in Community Operational Research (dealing with problematic issues in community contexts). The four examples are respectively used to illustrate a different aspect of his methodology. My problems with this are twofold. First, the descriptive evaluations lack a vivid picture of what really went on in practice. Second, it seems that practice is brought in as a function of theory.

2.5 More theorising about professional learning

Continuing my search for rich descriptions of learning practices in organisations in relation to, my question ‘What can be done to develop learning practices of frontline workers?’, I turned to the work of four distinguished scholars in the field of professional learning, whom I knew as HRD professionals. They are Michael Eraut and Etienne Wenger, and the Dutch Joseph Kessels and Robert Jan Simons.

2.5.1 Eraut

With his *Developing Professional knowledge and competence* Eraut (1994) delivered a highly praised and frequently cited book on professional learning. In this widely regarded study, Eraut analyses different types of knowledge and know-how used by practising professionals in their work and how these different kinds of knowledge are acquired by a combination of learning from books, learning from people and learning from personal experience. Drawing on various examples, problems addressed include the way theory changes and is personalised in practice, and how individuals form generalisations out of their practice. Eraut makes the very pertinent point that practising professionals are engaged in the constant process of using theories and that this in itself creates a theory (about how to use theory). We can therefore say that there may be as many different types of theories as there are the processes to create them. Eraut considers the meaning of client-centeredness and its implications, and to what extent professional knowledge is based on intuition, understanding and learning. He considers the issue of competence versus knowledge and the effect of lifelong learning on the quality of practice. In this respect, Eraut questions the naiveté of many theories regarding the development of professional theories. According to Eraut, too many theories of professional expertise tend to treat experts as infallible, in spite of much evidence to the contrary. Eraut cautions that “as they are confronted with waiting clients, overloaded in-trays, and calls for efficiency gains, plans get ‘cobbled together’ in a hurry, decisions are made ‘on the hoof’ and symptoms are treated instead of attending to the problems they disclose” (Eraut, 1994, p. 149). Eraut specifically criticises Schön. Although he acknowledges Schön’s reflection-in-action concept, he questions his idea of reflection-in-action. There is no time for it, he argues. Furthermore, reflection on action isn’t an understood learning-game. The problem is how

to make it work. Simply being open with ourselves may be problematic enough, and Eraut emphasises the guilt-ridden burn-out which may arise when we fail to measure up to our ideal types and he points at the counter-reaction in dealing with errors. For instance, how medical students “acquire a ‘vocabulary of realism’ which virtually annihilates the concept of ‘making a mistake’” (Eraut 1994, p. 227). While calling for honest self-examination, he asks whether “professionals, their employers and the public can find a proper balance between the guilt-ridden and the callous” (Eraut 1994, p. 227). Although the examples Eraut provides are certainly appealing, they lack rich descriptions of what is really going on in the workplace situations and projects Eraut examined and used to build his theoretical arguments.

2.5.2 Kessels

Joseph Kessels is one of the leading figures in the Dutch HRD community. He became famous with his adaptation of Romiszowski’s work regarding the design and the production of educational systems (Romiszowski, 1981, 1984). Kessels made that substantial and tough work accessible for HRD practitioners (Kessels & Smit, 1989). Kessels moved from a performance improvement approach, wherein the focus lies on the assessment of learning needs and the efficient and effective design of a learning trajectory, towards an approach where the key idea is the development of a rich learning environment. He worked his new views out in two inaugural lectures titled *Het Corporate Curriculum* [translated: The Corporate Curriculum] (Kessels, 1996) and *Verleiden tot kennisproductiviteit* [translated: Tempting for knowledge productivity] (Kessels, 2001). Recently he published a book together with Rosemary Harrison: *Human Resource Development in a knowledge economy* (Harrison & Kessels, 2004). Kessels and Harrison seek to link the domain of organisationally based Human Resource Development to that of learning and knowledge in an emergent knowledge economy. In their book, the authors’ emphasis is on processes of strategy, organising, knowledge development and new information and communication technology and proportionally less on operational tasks and techniques to do with design, development, facilitation and review of learning activities, the production of instructional material and the assessment of learning outcomes. The first part of the book is devoted to the emerging knowledge economy, the second part deals with the question of how to build knowledge productive organisations and the third part focuses on the challenges of HRD professionals in the knowledge economy. In their book the authors present 42 cases. Many of them are no longer than half a page. Most of them are no longer than one page. Some of them are longer than one page, but none of these case descriptions is longer than three pages. So they don’t provide insights into what is really going on. But, if we are being honest, that clearly wasn’t the intention of the authors in the first place. On the other hand, they do emphasise the importance of practical knowledge. Yet besides theoretical

arguments stating the importance of practical knowledge, there are no real examples of how this practical knowledge emerges, nor examples of how it influences the knowledge productivity of the organisation and the knowledge economy.

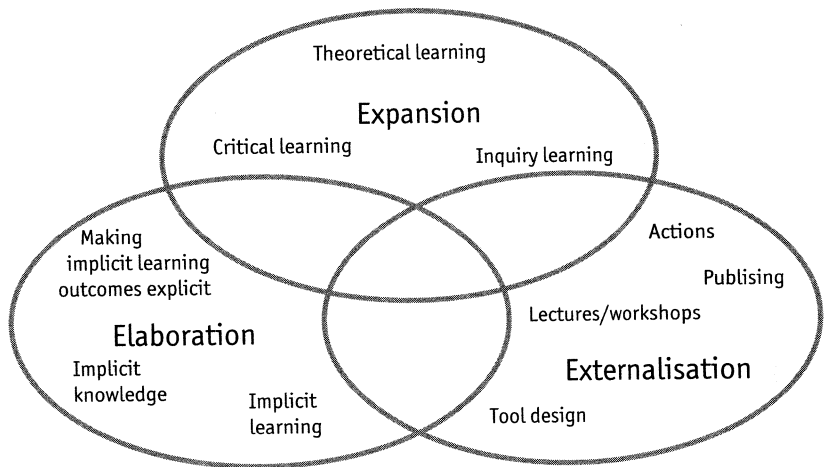
2.5.3 Simons

Another leading scholar in the Dutch HRD community is Robert Jan Simons. In 1999, Simons delivered, together with Bolhuis, a handbook dealing with learning at work. In this book, the authors enumerate the current, at that time, prevailing insights regarding life-long learning and workplace learning (Bolhuis & Simons, 1999). They concern the desirable shift from education to learning, the concept of the learning organisation, the development of a learning theory for organisations, the difference between organisational learning and individual learning, issues regarding transfer of learning in organisations, perspectives and methods to develop workplace learning. Bolhuis also introduces a perspective on the development of learning policies in organisations in coherence with other organisational policies and he makes an elegant plea for an identity shift of the HRD professional from educator to learning specialist. The key question that Bolhuis and Simons raise is how and by which means are learning processes in organisations to be influenced. In the years after publishing the handbook, Simons was involved with many PhD researches in the domain of working and learning in the workplace.

Since 1999 Simons has been researching the learning orientations in the workplace with Doornbos. Doornbos, Bolhuis and Simons (2004) have found that most researchers and practitioners mainly take an educational perspective and try to import educational thinking to the workplace, instead of looking at the essence of workplace learning in itself. Doornbos et al. argue that workplace learning is largely implicit and aimed at work- or person-related goals. Learning is part of belonging to and participating in a 'real life' context involving emotions and the development of a professional identity. In that learning all kinds of interaction partners play a role, and not necessarily a guiding one. While the educator represents authority in educational environments, access to learning and knowledge is largely equal at the workplace. However hierarchical relations characterise the social work context. Learning results in individual, as well as shared, understanding. Learning content consists of not only 'truths' but also messy problems and changing views. Whether prior or new learning actually constitutes improvement is often questionable.

Since 1999, he has been working with Ruijters on a new model of professional learning which defines professionalism in a dynamic way, as continuously working on vision, methodology, tools and techniques, and the alignment between these three components by elaborating on his or her work-competences, expanding his or her theoretical knowledge and insights and

externalising his or her practical and theoretical insights, which means contributing to the development of the profession and / or to team and organisational learning. They regard their model as a normative model of professionalism. It specifies that professionals should be continuously involved in different kinds of learning, and offers details of how this may be organised. Simons and Ruijters (2004) argue that every kind of learning, be it by elaboration, expansion, or externalisation, has its own value for lifelong learning of a professional. They also call for renewed attention to emotions like confidence and curiosity to bridge different stages of learning. And they indicate that, at present, a model of professional learning cannot be one of just individual learning. Collective learning needs to be a part of it – as defined by their model.



The complete model of elaboration, expansion and externalisation: all forms of learning together in one view (Simons & Ruijters, 2004)

Furthermore, adapted from De Caluwé's (1999) categorisation of paradigm for learning and change, Simons and Ruijters developed their own model to distinguish five different learning preferences of individuals.

Learning by ..	Key words
Copying the art	Role models, imitation from best-practice, real-life, pressure
Participation	Dialogue, with others, collaboration, discourse, trust
Acquisition	Objective facts, transmission, knowledge, from experts
Experimentation	Critical reflection, safe, experimentation, explicit learning
Discovery	Meaning, deep understanding, inspiration, self regulation

Five learning preferences and contexts of learning (Ruijters, Noorman, Rockwell & Simons, 2004)

The work of Simons and most of his associates is typical of the academic educationalist community. They build on literature, construct models and formulate hypothesis, gather qualitative and quantitative data¹¹¹. So the conclusion he formulated together with Doornbos, that most researchers and practitioners look mainly from an educational perspective and try to import educational thinking to the workplace, must give food for thought.

2.5.4 Wenger

Grounded on his work with Lave - wherein they developed their notions of 'situated learning' and 'legitimate peripheral participation' in their book, *Situated learning* (Lave & Wenger, 1991), his concerns with praxis and the influence of other scholars such as Engeström (1987) and his developmental perspective on historically constituted activities, Latour (Latour and Woolgar, 1979) and their focus on science as practice, Orr (1996) and his work on informal networks and practice as communal memory through sharing stories, and built on the assumption that engagement in social practice is the fundamental process by which people learn and become who they are, Wenger developed his theory of learning and presented that in his frequently cited book *Communities of practice* (Wenger, 1998).

Wenger set out to develop a new theory of learning, based on his work with Lave. Rather than looking at learning as the individual acquisition of certain forms of knowledge, Lave and Wenger (1991) situated learning in social

relationships. They were mainly interested in what kinds of social engagements provide the proper context for learning to take place. They proposed that it is not so much that learners acquire structures or models to understand the world, but that they participate in frameworks that have structure. Learning involves a process of *social* participation. The nature of the *situation* impacts significantly on the process. Lave and Wenger developed the idea of 'legitimate peripheral participation' to characterise learning. Legitimate peripheral participation is not itself an educational form, never mind a pedagogical strategy or a teaching technique. It is an analytic viewpoint on learning, a way of understanding learning. They made clear that learning through legitimate peripheral participation takes place no matter which educational form provides a context for learning, or whether there is any intentional educational form at all. The notion of legitimate peripheral participation provided them with a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artefacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. "A person's intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a socio-cultural practice. This social process includes, indeed it subsumes, the learning of knowledgeable skills" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29).

In *Communities of practice*, Wenger presents two vignettes derived from 'some ethnographic fieldwork' in a large insurance firm. From these vignettes emerges the insight that, in this particular firm, the company remains an abstraction for its claims processors, despite their pay-cheque. The group the claims processors actually work for is a relatively small community of people who share working conditions. Within this group people learn the intricacies of their job, explore the meaning of their work, construct an image of the company, and develop a sense of themselves as employees. With the vignettes, Wenger wants to illustrate (give some life to) his theoretical concept of communities of practice.

According to Wenger, a community of practices denotes a coherent social practice. They don't necessarily align with established communities or established ideas about what communities are (for instance that a community is a warm persuasive term for an existing set of relations). Communities can be, and often are, diffuse, fragmented, and contentious. Nevertheless, Wenger considers them as an organisation's most versatile and dynamic knowledge resource, they form the basis of an organisation's ability to know and learn. According to Wenger, communities of practice are the prime context in which we can work out common sense through mutual engagement. They are a joint enterprise as understood and continually renegotiated by its members. They function through mutual engagement that bind members together into a social entity and their outcome is the capability of a shared repertoire of communal resources (routines, sensibilities, artefacts, vocabulary, styles) that members have developed over time.

Wenger followed up his work on communities of practice book with *Cultivating communities of practice* (Wenger, McDermot & Snyder, 2002). It is a typical, easy to read Harvard book. This book sums up the value of communities of practice for the organisation; distinguishes communities of practice from other structures such as formal departments, operational teams, project teams, communities of interest and informal networks; distils three elements – domain, community and practice – for a model to develop communities of practice; derives seven principles to give life to communities of practice (design for evolution, opening a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives, inviting different levels of participation, developing public and private community spaces, focusing on value, combining familiarity and excitement and creating a rhythm for the community), introduces five stages of community development (giving attention to the development and the maturation of communities of practice, paying attention to the development of distributed communities, wherein people cannot meet face to face, paying attention to the downside of communities, proposing techniques to measure and manage value creation and suggesting a five phase model for knowledge creation) and contemplates about communities of practice changing the way businesses are organised.

2.6 Dutch HRD research and learning in the workplace

I have been looking at organisational learning from different angles. Here I will return to learning in the workplace. I have chosen to delineate my orientation to the Dutch HRD research community and the emerging Dutch HRD learning-in-the-workplace research tradition. The next question is whether the Dutch tradition in HRD theory and HRD research offers the rich descriptions I am looking for. My starting point was *Leren op de werkplek* [translated: Learning in the workplace], edited by Jan Streumer and Marcel van der Klink (Van der Klink & Streumer, 2004). As the title suggests, it is a book about learning in the workplace. The book offers twelve contributions from some of the best-known Dutch HRD researchers dedicated to this field. But the book unfortunately doesn't contain the rich descriptions I am seeking. Four of the chapters in the book have a theoretical character. Four different authors provide an overview of the field in a historical perspective, the integration of working and learning is conceptualised, recommendations for the design of workplace learning are given, a theoretical framework for the implementation of structured on-the-job training is offered and the assumptions concerning learning in the workplace are discussed and fundamental questions are raised e.g. whether the workplace is a good learning place. In eight other chapters, important issues concerning workplace learning are raised and different researchers present

cases or case studies. There is one chapter concerning the use of workplace experience in vocational education, with nine cases from other authors, summarised in a few lines per case. The first case illustrates the difficulties with workplace learning. In the eight following cases as many didactical principles are illustrated. The conclusion is that the most important method is the assignment of tasks that matches the development needs of the employee, though it remains unclear how this works in practice. A second chapter concerns the learning in the workplace in the sector small to medium-sized enterprises. Relevant characteristics of companies in this sector, related to learning in the workplace are described. There are more than 500,000 companies in this sector. So obviously this chapter only discusses broad outlines. In a third chapter, the attention is focused on critical reflection at work. Van Woerkom presents a case study that she also used in her dissertation, which I also will discuss hereafter. She provides an analysis of her case study based on a conceptual model she has constructed, illustrated with quotes from interviews. Three cases are described in a fourth chapter concerning e-learning and its possibilities in the workplace. The author uses less than three pages to illustrate the cases. One is from another author. The author concludes his contribution with the optimistic remark that lots of opportunities for e-learning have emerged but that there are also lots of shortcomings in this young field. For the reader, it remains unclear what these could be because it is only too obvious that the cases are chosen to serve as a promotion for the possibilities of e-learning. In a fifth chapter concerning learning through organising learning projects, the author presents a methodology for the organisation of learning projects. Employees, managers or HRD professionals can use this method. Thereafter a descriptive evaluation of four cases is presented. The author concludes that learners have to play an important role in the organisation of learning projects; that learning projects provide an opportunity to systemise spontaneous learning without formalising it; that there is a diversity of possibilities to organise learning projects and that the presented method is useful to make a description and a diagnoses of earlier work projects and new ones. A seventh chapter concerns the transfer of workplace learning. Three problems from practice are identified in five-twenty lines, followed by a theoretical reflection on the problem and the approach to solving the problem. An eighth chapter concerning the evaluation of structured on-the-job-training presents a descriptive evaluation of a case study. The case itself is described in 20 lines. In the concluding paragraph, the author's remark that lots of factors influence the outcome of a structured on-the-job-training and that the evaluation can do no more than make a reasonable case for the training. Within the last ten years, seven of the authors who contributed to Streumer and Van der Klink's book on workplace learning obtained their doctorate with a thesis about learning in the workplace. They are Esther Gielen¹¹² (1995), Marjan Glaude¹¹³ (1997), Jeroen Onstenk¹¹⁴ (1997), Rob Poell¹¹⁵ (1998),

Marcel van der Klink¹¹⁶ (1999) himself, Kitty Kwakman¹¹⁷ (1999) and Marianne van Woerkom¹¹⁸ (2003). In addition to these six PhD's, there were other recent dissertations about learning in organisations and learning in the workplace, e.g. by Cees Sprenger¹¹⁹ (2000), Jos van der Waals¹²⁰ (2001), Mirjam Baars van Moorsel¹²¹ (2003) and Saskia Tjebkema¹²² (2003). And at this moment there is other PhD research carried out. I came across the work of Sanne Akkerman¹²³, Marjolein Berings¹²⁴ (2004), Anja Doornbos¹²⁵ (2004), Aimee Hoeve¹²⁶, Manon Ruijters (Simons & Ruijters, 2003; 2004), Andre Krak¹²⁷, and Maarten de Laat¹²⁸.

The research-strategy followed by almost all these HRD researchers is that they first engage in a theoretical study, then build a conceptual model, which they subsequently evaluate using interviews, questionnaires, or a descriptive case study, in most cases followed by a revision of the model.

After I had studied eleven recent dissertations on workplace learning, I had to conclude that in none of these dissertations was there a rich description of the practices studied. All eleven researchers started from theory instead of from practice, built a model, and almost all did qualitative research in the tradition of Miles and Huberman (1994) and Yin (1994) to refine the model. All this is very close to a positivistic research approach. Although Denzin and Lincoln's handbook on qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) offers an abundant repertoire of research methods it seems that in the Dutch HRD community only one approach is accepted.

2.6.1 Dominant Research Strategy in HRD research

Many HRD researchers claim that they did qualitative research, albeit sometimes only partly. Although qualitative research can mean different things, Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 3) provide the following general definition: "Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" and they continue, "These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self". This definition implies that Denzin and Lincoln recognise that knowledge of the world has many faces. But Torraco, in a HRD Research Handbook, states that "(...) HRD researchers continue to develop and improve theories that are vitally needed to guide the work of all HRD professionals" (Swanson & Holton, 1997, p. 134). He and his fellow researchers are striving to fill the gap between practical knowledge and sound research – the trusted source of verifiable know how (Swanson & Holton, 1997, p. xiv). They seem to believe in the universal truth. Others such as McGoldrick, Stewart & Watson (2002, p. 395) have more of an eye for the diversity of HRD theory and stress that they "(...) do not, completely at least, discount the possibility of a definitive analysis of the nature and meaning of HRD" and they

acknowledge that HRD clearly proves constitutive of power and control.

While Denzin and Lincoln have edited a handbook of more than 1100 pages, offering a vast variety of paradigms and perspectives, strategies of inquiry, methods of collecting and analysing empirical materials and arts and practices of interpretation, evaluation and representation, it seems that the Dutch HRD community submitted itself to an almost universal approach that you first built a theoretical concept or model from literature, then you refine this model using qualitative research according to the guidelines of Miles and Huberman and Yin, who attempt to ensure validity through structured formalisation. Although I appreciate the value of this approach I would like to point out that theory has the tendency to simplify practice. I presume that this applies to HRD theory. Latour formulates the principle of irreducibility. "Nothing is, by itself, either reducible or irreducible to anything else" (Latour, [1984]1988, p. 158). This means that entities, whether natural or artificial, human or nonhuman, contend for a position in the same universe. Moreover, subjects and objects define and re-define each other. In building HRD theory there are powers at work. Several stakeholders might influence conceptualisation or research strategies. HRD clearly is a political activity. Theorists and researchers have the habit of representing their ideas in words and schemes, with an abundance of references and statistics, but the question is whether these instruments are suitable and addressing people in organisations. This gives the impression that the researcher always knows more than the researched. A power game indeed. In order to deliver more to practice, to serve and address all stakeholders, other methods of inquiry and representation might prove indispensable.

2.7 Prelude to an alternative research approach regarding workplace learning.

Some HRD theorists might boast that they have the trusted source of verifiable know-how and the guiding principles for all HRD practitioners. I question this. Their models are undoubtedly valuable, but I think that learning processes have to be considered in the broader context in which they are embedded. A context wherein language and symbolic representation, knowledge and information, power and social processes play a role. In the studies I have reviewed I have hardly found any rich descriptions of workplace situations or learning practices in organisations. The exceptions I have encountered lie in the work of Orr, Wenger and Rhodes. Orr (1996) describes service-repairmen at work. Wenger (1998), in his book on communities of practice, describes an employee processing assurance claims. Rhodes (2001) offers in three different ways – through autobiographies, an ethnography and a short story – the re-narration of an official story about a

quality programme and planned learning. On the other hand, I have read very compelling literature about learning, like Thomas Mann's monumental novel *The magic mountain* (Mann, [1924] 1975) and Robert Musil's gigantic but unfinished trilogy *Man without qualities* (Musil, [1978] 1988). But even more significant for my research are the novels about learning and working in organisations. Some of these are famous works in the world literature, like Kafka's novels and short stories (Kafka, 1977).

Here I want to direct the attention to fine literature as an alternative source of knowledge and as a prelude to my alternative outlook on HRD research. Pierre Guillet de Montoux and Barbara Czarniawska argue that "Novels, like research, are usually inspired by a quest for insight and knowledge" (Guillet de Monthoux & Czarniawska, 1994, p. 8). They cite Dwight Waldo: "literature helps to restore what the professional scientific literature necessarily omits or slights: the concrete, the sensual, the emotional, the subjective, the valuational" (Waldo, 1968, p.5). They also argue that functional models of organisations with their rationalistic management are nothing more than stories, dreams and adventures full of heroism and horror, but usually ending happily and in harmony.

In world literature, there are many examples of books wherein organisational life is portrayed more lively and cruelly, but perhaps more realistically, than in organisational literature. Examples are *J.R.* by William Gaddis, which is about the homo economicus. *Nice Work* by David Lodge, which is about bridging organisational cultures. *Bartleby the scrivener: a story of wall street* by Herman Melville which is about deviant personalities and strategies in organisations. *Rabbit is rich* by John Updike is about an individual breaking away from a group. Keeping one's individuality in a group or organisations is a storyline in *The man in the grey flannel suit* by Sloan Wilson, *Death of a salesman* by Arthur Miller and *Point of no return* by John P. Marquand. Both *Something happened* by Joseph Heller and *Major Barbara* by George Bernard Shaw tell about the will to believe in the corporate gospel. Chaos, stress and politics in organisations are pictured in *Office politics* by Wilfred Sheed, *The catbird seat* by James Thurber and *Typhoon* by Joseph Conrad. *Glengary Glen Ross* by David Mamet is about the cruel and theatrical world of sales.

There is another reason to value certain literary sources. Many authors had inside knowledge of their fields of fiction or they were journalists. Kafka worked as a clerk, and so did August Strindberg and Joseph Conrad (Guillet de Montoux & Czarniawska, 1994). In addition to these examples from world literature there are great examples from Dutch literature, which I am more closely familiar with. I mean the work of authors like Multatuli, Bordewijk, Alberts and Voskuil. Multatuli was civil servant. Multatuli is the pseudonym of Eduard Douwes Dekker, who worked for the Dutch government in the

Dutch East Indies – the present Indonesia - until he felt forced to resign. Soon after he returned to the Netherlands he wrote *Max Havelaar* (Multatuli, 1860). It is mainly an autobiographical account of his experiences as a colonial administrator. It also is considered the Masterpiece of Dutch nineteenth century literature. Albert Alberts worked for fifteen years as a bureaucrat, for the most part for an institute that controlled quinine products. He used his experience in his novel *De vergaderzaal* [translated: The conference room] (Alberts, 1974). The conference room is the story of Mr. Dalem for whom the meeting that has just begun is one meeting too many. Alberts was honoured with two of the most important Dutch literary prizes. He received the “Constantijn Huygensprijs” in 1975, and the “PC Hoofdprijs” in 1996. Ferdinand Bordewijk, worked as a barrister, but he was also one of the most important authors of the classic Dutch modern literature of the so called “new objectivism”. Bordewijk used to say, ‘I’m a lawyer first and a writer second’. His most famous work, the novel *Character* (1938), was the basis of the Academy Award-winning film, named the best foreign film in 1998. Between 1959 and his early retirement in 1987, Voskuil worked as an academic staff member at the Bureau for Dialectology, Folklore and Onomastics. Following his retirement he wrote the novel cycle *Het Bureau* [Translated: The office]. A mammoth book, that consists of seven volumes and a total of 5,500 pages, published between 1996 and 2000 (Voskuil, 1996-2000). It is a detailed, soap opera like view on the world of the main character Maarten Koning who works, just like Voskuil, as a scholar for the office. From the book emerges the hopelessness of Maarten Koning’s life and work. Even though he does not believe in the value of scholarly research, he sees it as his duty to stay, finish his work and maintain the illusion of solidarity with his colleagues. All is futile. *Het bureau* is a profoundly comical, detailed and moving depiction of that world of bosses and wage slaves which ultimately imprisons everyone.

From novels we can learn that it is possible to combine the subjective, the fate of individuals with that of institutions, the micro events with macro systems (Guillet de Montoux & Czarniawska 1994). Novels transmit tacit knowledge, they are rich in narrative knowledge and they depict the world in terms of human actions and motives. Through literature dealing with organisations we can extend the range of our knowledge, the vicarious experience that novels can offer us can even substitute for personal experience, novels can locate experience in different cultures. In novels knowledge and experience are not de-contextualised, displaying a unique capacity to grasp the complex without simplifying it, to articulate a paradox without resolving it in some didactic manner.

As I discussed earlier, the literature on organisational learning, knowledge management and knowledge production and human resources development

has a tendency to focus on the relationship between management and employees, rather than the activities that result in a product or service. Mainstream HRD research has a tendency to look at the world through concepts, models and frameworks. If this causes a hazy view, the impetus is on the researchers to reconstruct the original concepts, models and frameworks. In this study, I have tried a different approach.

Relatively little research examines the specific interactions and dynamics by which the professional community constitutes a resource for learning in or near the workplace. In particular, few studies go inside communities to focus closely on learning practices, the development of learning opportunities and possibilities that exist within work situations. This study draws on the examination of learning practice within a regional police force. It is inspired by the ethnographic approach Julian Orr chose in his study of technical representatives, *Talking about machines* (Orr, 1996). Orr showed that an ethnographic approach can lead to a rich description and a new understanding of the practice. Orr provides a keenly observed description of the work life of technical representatives of a copier machine company. The study focuses on the interactions of these technicians who go around as mobile technicians to problem solve problem with photocopier machines at companies in Silicon Valley. Orr looks closely at the triangle of the technician, the customer, and machines. How do the technicians interact with the machines they maintain, with the customers who depend on the machines, and with each other in their rather closed world? It becomes clear that in the small subculture of service workers described in this ethnographical study, the 'tech reps' rigorously maintain their distance from the formal organisation. By enhancing their status as heroes among their fellow repairmen, they fulfil needs not addressed by the corporation; they create identity and meaning through their 'war stories' about working on the machines entrusted to their care. Orr shows unrelentingly that prevailing management practice, such as the use of procedures and manuals and managing the relationship with employees is not the same as managing the work. Although it is inevitable that there's always representation by the author, I think it's a pity that we don't 'hear' the voices of the technicians directly in *Talking about machines*. Orr narrates for them rather than presenting dialogue; therefore we miss the sense of personalities. Of course ethnographic studies for their part have the problem that the researcher self is not free of values, mental models and experiences and a yet bigger problem in ethnographic research is that these are often not made explicit. But all the same, ethnographic research can shed a different light on learning and working.

Besides Orr, there are other famous ethnographic studies about innovations, organisations and professional practice. For example Bruno Latour's *Aramis, or the love of technology*, Robin Leidner's *Fast food, fast talk* and recently

Annemarie Mol's *The body multiple*. Latour ([1993] 1996) delivered a provocative book about a large scale innovation project in public transportation. Aramis was a small car version of the driverless subway which is now commonly known because of applications in France and the USA. Latour disguises himself as a student of engineering sciences and writes a kind of whodunit on the final question: 'who killed Aramis?' Because he lends his voice to the engineer, to himself as a professor of Sociology, to the Aramis system itself and to himself as an author, the book shows different views on the same reality. Leidner (1993) uses participant observation to explore aspects of service-industry efforts to insure sameness of effort and routinisation of work. The author chooses for examples the omnipresent McDonald's and the Combined Insurance Company. Both companies achieve service provider-service recipient relationships that are routinised yet acceptable both to the customer and employee. Mol (2002) did a profound ethnographic study of an ordinary disease. She looks at the day-to-day diagnosis and treatment of arteriosclerosis. A patient information leaflet might describe arteriosclerosis as the gradual obstruction of the arteries, but in hospital practice this one medical condition appears to be many other things as well. From one moment, place, apparatus, specialty, or treatment to the next, a slightly different 'arteriosclerosis' is being discussed, measured, observed, or stripped away. Mol demonstrates that this multiplicity of reality-in-practice does not imply fragmentation. Instead, the disease is made to cohere through a range of tactics including forms and files, making images, holding case conferences, and conducting doctor-patient conversations. Inspired by researchers like Orr, Latour, Leidner and Mol, I iteratively developed a research approach in which I seek to be auto-ethnographic, narrative and critical.

2.8 Relevance of my divergent research mode

Ideas concerning the knowledge economy, knowledge workers and knowledge production in the workplace have many missionaries, but there is only a small body of knowledge concerning the production of knowledge by knowledge workers, and the influence of individuals or environments. With this research I want to bring problems concerning learning, knowledge production and innovation in public service to light and create a basis for dialogue with managers, policy makers and last but not least practitioners in this field. I want to make this research *socially relevant* by provoking critical reflection by the actors in the field. My assumption is that such a critical reflection leads to more productive and less defensive practices, that the performance of frontline workers will increase this way and that the clients will profit as a direct consequence.

The practice asks for clues and ideas, concepts and programmes, and above

all, concrete tools to improve learning, knowledge production and innovation. Look at the success of management books. There is a need for better insights into important factors for personal and professional development, team development and organisational development and the connection or interplay between these factors.

The problem is that it often looks like a labour of Hercules and sometimes even like a labour of Sisyphus to implement these models and tools in the thorny details of actual practice. With this study I'm not looking for a universal model or a quick fix solution. I want to make this research relevant to practice by offering practitioners some theoretical reflections they might not think of by themselves. Insights managers, policy makers, practitioners and HRD consultants can use to reframe their theory of practice and the creation of a powerful learning environment to stimulate the professionalisation of frontline workers (Czarniawska, 1999).

There seems to be narrow basis concerning the production of theories and theoretical reflection regarding knowledge production of frontline workers. And within the Dutch HRD community there is hardly any study containing rich descriptions of practice. I am seeking to make a difference in this respect. I want this study to be relevant for the scientific community by providing impetus for the enrichment and expansion of the scientific body of knowledge of HRD, management theory and the science of public administration with a narrative approach.

3. Creating an understanding, A narrative auto-ethnographical and critical approach.

3.1 Introduction

Big reports, small tales, cock and bull stories, strange yarns. People tell each other stories. Stories help us to give sense to the world around us and to deal with it. In stories we tell who we are. As Robert Musil ([1978], 1995 p. 709) wrote "Lucky the man who can say 'when', 'before' and 'after' (...). Most people relate to themselves as storytellers". Whether we are practitioners talking about our experiences or researchers representing these experiences, we have to be aware of the nature of representation and the 'misrecognition' of the real in the virtual. This thought was offered to us by Plato, through his allegory of the cave (Mcquillan, 2000). Having knowledge of the allegory of the cave and its multiple layers of meaning, is knowledge of the 'real' world for Plato. However, earthly truths for Plato are but weak representations or metaphors for the real truth that resides in a realm above the material world.

This study was set out to show, to reveal, and to represent, learning behind the frontline. I have taken up the task of narrating stories about a learning and innovation project in the workplace of a regional police force. I saw it as my task to transfer knowledge about this case.

Thinking about the meaning of stories, about the functions of narratives, about sensemaking in organisations in relation to learning, and learning about learning behind the frontlines, I was, amongst others, influenced by the Dutch philosopher and adult educational theorist Nijk (1978), the humanists Abma (1999) and Letiche (2001), the organisational theorists Weick (1995) and Argyris (1999) and the narrative theorists Boje (2001), Czarniawska (1997) and Rhodes (2001).

My mission was to narrate the stories in such a way that practice and theory can be related, that HRD practitioners and HRD scholars can learn something from that case and that police leadership, police policy makers and the frontline workers can learn from it. I consider my mission accomplished if my stories influence the readers with regard to their concepts of workplace learning behind the frontline of public service, their attitude towards initiating, nurturing, supporting, stewarding, and terminating learning practices, and/or the development of specific skills.

Above, I deliberately used the verb 'to narrate'. In an etymological sense, this verb is derived from the Latin word *gnarus* and the Indo-European root *Gnu* -

meaning 'to know'. Hereafter I will define 'narrative' with respect to its use in the genre of organisation writing.

The inquiry focuses on how the behaviour of actors involved in an innovation project contribute to learning, innovation, and knowledge production of frontline workers. With this research, I try to develop a deep understanding of different aspects involved in a learning project for street-level bureaucrats, such as police officers. What did happen? And what can we learn from it? What are the answers to the central question of this thesis - namely how can learning practices of frontline workers in the workplace best be facilitated? Simultaneously, this study is about a HRD consultant, who decides to get out of his comfortable role as a consultative professional, and starts to do research.

In the end, I consider the narratives in the novel-report important for myself as researcher-practitioner and for the reader because they provide a rich and thick description of a particular learning project. The stories are meant to invoke new understandings regarding learning in the workplace in public service. I tried to create stories derived from a real life social situation, a learning project in the workplace in public service, behind the frontlines of police work. The goal of this ethnographic approach was to combine the view of an insider with that of an outsider. "The resulting description is expected to be deeper and fuller than that of the ordinary outsider, and broader and less culture bound than that of the ordinary insider" (Wilcox, 1982, p. 462).

During the 30 months I studied the so-called FIT Police project, I put myself in a complex role. I got deeply involved with the project and at times, I even became a participant. I studied a particular culture, using multiple forms of data-collecting. In this respect, the most important device to collect, to process and to present the data, was myself. On top of that, I was also a source of data. Rather than relying on a preconceived framework for gathering and analysing data, deploying computers to give meaning to detailed transcripts, or negotiate with the researched about their speech-acts, I became grounded in partial enculturation and I resolved to do the analytical work through narration of nine stories. My novel-report contains descriptions of local places, snapshots of people's lives and relationships, their inner thoughts and feelings, their outward appearances, anecdotes of personal triumphs and disasters, rules, contradictions and meanings. And at the end of all of this, through a judicious blend of empirical experience and systematic narrative activity and aesthetic aspiration, I constructed an aggregate of nine related stories, meant to take the reader into the deeper and fuller appreciation of the people, the communities and the complexity of the phenomena that have been studied. Therefore I used poetic impulses to restore some of the more aesthetic and dramatic dimensions of the field experience that is usually missing in traditional qualitative research.

However, the stories aren't plotted in an Aristotelian fashion. My novel-report is by no means meant as fine literature. There are no poetics for poetics. I didn't iron out contradictories or complexities, I didn't fill in the blanks. The novel-report serves my goal to expand the understanding about the intricacies of learning practices in the workplace. I ask the readers to turn the case over in their own minds, asking themselves: What did happen? What can I learn from it? And how can learning practices of frontline workers in the workplace best be facilitated? But beware! There is no single direction or straightforward path for the reader to follow. There is no glorious declaration of deliverance. There is no catharsis. This study isn't aimed at a generalisation of findings beyond the case itself. The beauty is in the specificity of the text and in the open invitation to the readers to relate to it. I urge the readers not to lose themselves in the stories, nor to depart from theory, but to dwell between their own body of knowledge and the different stories, and to create through their own participation and reflexivity their own perspective.

In this chapter I want to justify my approach, throw light on the methodology I developed and vouch for the relevance of it. First, in 3.2, I want to make clear that I have situated myself as a researcher, and the research-text I have written, in a genre of academic writing about organisations. Then, in 3.3, I want to explain why I first offered up the stories in Part I to you. Next, in 3.4, I draw up my position as a critical, narrative and auto-ethnographical researcher. Following up on that, I will expound on the autobiographical and narrative angles of this work and I will clarify my critical approach. In 3.5, I will write about writing the case. In 3.6, I will close reflexively.

3.2 Genre of academic writing about organisations

This study must be situated within the relatively recent emerging tradition of narrative organisational research. Because this is a fairly new academic field, with new sets of techniques, I feel compelled to explain why this study, by its nature and location, aspires to be an academic piece of work (Rhodes, 2001). A justification like this might have been omitted, if this were a regular inquiry in a dominant academic tradition. Notwithstanding, I don't see this account as an enforced act of justification. On the contrary, I am quite anxious to expound why I think narrative research has its own merit and is of significance, complementary to more established research traditions. I feel challenged to describe why my work contributes to the realm of organisation theory and research. Here I want to argue why this research-text, including my novel-report, my theoretical and methodological orientation and my reflexive closing, constitutes a work of social studies. I want to clarify why it cannot be considered as literature, why it is more than an idiosyncratic

depiction of a case and how it relates to traditional research in the realm of organisational research and partly overlapping domains like HRD studies.

Although two major constituents of this research text, the novel-report and the reflexive closing, are inspired by fine literature and make use of literary techniques, thereby attempting to raise emotion and engagement and welcome interpretative diversity, this piece of work essentially has an academic character. In the first place, the novel-report is based on empirical work, it is a representation of developments in an organisation, and it is not imaginative. Questions were raised and discussed in context, a methodology was developed and analysis was done, in the construction of the novel-report, and in the reflexive work. But perhaps the most important hallmark is that the text is addressed to the academic community. This notion of addressivity (Fuller & Lee, 1997) reifies the nature of the text, its writer and its reader. "For me to write this book, and for it to be accepted (by you) as worthy of being called research, I must collude (at least to some degree) with the requirements of academic writing", says Rhodes (2001, p. xii) in *Writing organization*. In that same text, Rhodes shows how different scholarly (re)presentations based on different generic convention serve to stage authority. He makes clear that writing practices create images of researcher, subject and reader, in ways that are not necessarily explicit in the text, and also lead to different interpretations. Based on Bakhtin's work, Rhodes coins the concept of the heteroglossic organisation, "a theorization of organization which posits that knowledge is diverse and multilingual and that different (re)presentations can always be achieved from different perspectives and different genres" (Rhodes, 2001, p. 31). The heteroglossic organisation is multi-vocal and multi-generic. With his concept of organisation, Rhodes rejects centralisation and replaces it with diversity and heterogeneity. He argues that conventional academic genres suppress heteroglossia. Rhodes doesn't opt to be flung away by the centrifugal forces of heteroglossia, but choose to lay out a genre of experimental writing and too show how to maintain a relationship with neighbouring genres. "To write in different genres (...) does not suggest that there could not be others" (Rhodes, 2001, p. 109).

Following Rhodes, this means that I must proceed by adopting the subject position of: researcher, writer, knower and advancer of learning in the frontline of public service organisations. I'm certainly in a situation where I have to do this, because I can anticipate that it is likely that my work might be perceived as a divergent text. At the same time, it might well be that in the otherness of my text lies its merit. Rhodes (2001) with reference to Hodge (1995) suggests that the original researcher must show his paces, balancing between the reproduction of the discipline, and the genre of the academic research text on the one hand, and productive new perspectives on

the other. Original research should draw on a range of disciplinary sources but also question boundaries. It should work with old prohibitions and new knowledge, and make the juxtaposition of the disciplines visible. Original research should take these problems seriously, beliefs and experiences that are annulled by dominant discipline. It should be open to the monstrous. Original research should look for new centres of gravity emerging from a density of layered disciplinarity. It should be transdisciplinary.

I am inclined to agree with Rhodes. With this book, I side with a genre of academic writing about organisations that evolved from cross-overs of organisational theory with narrative theory, literary theory and anthropology. This suggests a way of working outside of positivist science and involves, for instance, multiperspectivity, partiality, tacit knowing, and asymmetry. It responds to the *cri de coeur* of Letiche, Van Boeschoten and de Jong (2005) that it is practice rather than theory which requires epistemic prioritisation. It tries to develop what has been coined as mode 3 knowledge – the meaningful relationship between working, learning and innovation (Taylor & Ray, 2002; Letiche et al. 2005) as complementary to mode 1 knowledge (which assumes that scientifically proven generalized principles are the only possible objective base for action) and mode 2 knowledge (practitioner knowledge). It draws on the organisational researchers Czarniawska (1997), Boje (2001), Rhodes (2001) and Letiche et al. (2005).

I feel a bond with scholars who lay bare the power researchers have over the researched (Richardson, 1992), and how people are represented as socially constituted categories of analysis (Clegg & Handy, 1996). I relate to those scholars who suggest that there is a choice between colonising or liberating the text of the research participant (Hodge & McHoul, 1992), and that researchers should open up text for multiple readings (Putnam, 1996). I resonate with those academic writers who promote new forms of reflexive and experimental writing and give up the pretence of being the unimpeachable proprietor of truth.

3.3 A novel-report first

Now I want to account for why I first presented my novel-report with nine stories in part I. I want to clarify why I wanted you to read them first, why I wanted you to relate to these stories, and why there is no option to study this text concerning learning in the workplace in public service without reading them. I want to justify why I placed such a high demand on you, the reader. And why I didn't provide you with a key. Furthermore, I will articulate what the meaning of the stories is for my research. And finally, I will underpin my argument that they contribute to the understanding of learning processes in the workplace, innovation in organisations, and knowledge production of

frontline workers. To succeed in this, and to tie my stories to theory, I have to lay out three important threads that I want to twist.

The first thread I want to lay out is my reasoning why a narrative approach is an appropriate method to shed light on my research question. My starting point is the assumption that learning in the workplace can not be explained with a single model. Employees, or frontline workers, can't be helped with a simple recipe to start learning. It is too simple to think that you have the core of things, that all stuff makes sense when you have a model that organises it all. I think it is not realistic to think that a set of commandments will make learning happen. I think that there is more to facilitating learning than finding a single lever for learning. I believe that there is no learning spell, or expert incantation, to create learning. Nevertheless, the objective of this study is to find indications for the facilitation of learning projects in the frontline of public service. So far, I have offered you narratives of a complex practice and the course of an innovation project for police officers.

As a second thread, I will work out the narrative technique I have used. I have sought to narrate a form of reflexivity to meet the concerns of representation and responsibility. Studying constructionism, reflexivity, (auto-) ethnography and narrativity, I have developed a way to deal with narratives. The results were presented in Part I. Nine narratives were presented. These were all different representations of a project that I had the opportunity to observe for more than 30 months. I decided to bring my experiences to you in these narratives because I didn't want to simplify my experiences in a one-dimensional theoretical model or limit myself to an ethnographical report.

The third thread consists of my arguments why the narrative turn I took is a good alternative to the prevailing research tradition in HRD in the Netherlands. After a review of Dutch HRD research concerning learning and working in the workplace, I found that most of the research was done in the same fashion: engage in a theoretical study, build a conceptual model, evaluate this using interviews, questionnaires or a descriptive case study, all of which is followed by a revision of the model. Personally I'm not excited about model building and questionnaires. As Goodall (1989, p. 142) wrote "I don't know how to count the way a person feels looking out an office window, or how to deconstruct the simmering hatred between co-workers that manifests itself in small acts of semiotic terrorism". I'm not bent on disqualifying conventional research. I have been involved in similar research myself (e.g. Van Aken, Bruining, Jurgens & Sanders, 2003). Conventional HRD research is one way of looking at working and learning. As a consequence of my critique I have been looking for a new, alternative route. Research that - although not undoubtedly better - can serve a complementary role.

3.4 Seeking to be a critical, narrative and auto-ethnographical researcher

My methodology wasn't designed as a fixed set of methods, but rather developed during my research. Before the start of this research project, I had designed a research approach in the tradition of mainstream Dutch HRD research. I reviewed the literature, developed a conceptual model, tried to refine my research questions, formulated hypotheses and designed a multiple case study. As my project went along, I became increasingly unhappy with this approach. For me, the models, schemes and diagrams I found in the mainstream HRD literature didn't do justice to practice. My criticism of mainstream Dutch HRD research is that there is little actual research being done that examines the specific interactions and dynamics by which the professional community constitutes a resource for learning in or near the workplace. Most studies seem instead to be simply plotted, with the case descriptions often lifeless or pulled out of their joints. Therefore I have tried to develop an alternative approach. The first decision, drawing on Geertz (1973) and Orr (1996) was to choose an ethnographical approach. Influenced by Bochner and Ellis (Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Ellis, 2004; Coffey (1999) and Czarniawska (1999) I applied autobiographical techniques. Boje (2001) Czarniawska (1999) and Gabriel (2000) enthused me to develop a narrative approach. Ten Bos (2000), Letiche (2000), and Linstead et al. (2004) showed me the added value of a critical approach. Through Thomas (1993), who offered an introduction, and the studies of Latour ([1993] 1996), Kunda (1992), Leidner (1993) and Mol (2002), I became acquainted with critical ethnography. In *Casing a promised land* by Goodall (1989), I recognised a similar approach to the one I have been striving for. Goodall studied the peculiarities of five different organisations. He entered them as a cultural ethnographer. He used the metaphor of the organisational detective to characterise his own role as a professional snoop, who chooses not to live a conventional life but who wants to make a living by solving other people's problems and who has a duty to report. Finally Rhodes (2001) offered me the necessary footing to depart from prevalent research and at the same time maintain a desire to cohabitate with traditional scholars in the academic field.

In this paragraph, I will expound my choice for ethnography in a Geertzian tradition. In the following paragraphs, I will work out the auto-ethnographical twist I gave to my ethnographical work, elaborate on the narrative strategy I developed, and substantiate my critical position.

3.4.1 Ethnography

In quantitative research, cause and effect are the main objects searched for and context is treated as a set of interfering variables that need controlling. In qualitative research, context is treated as socially constructed reality while

observation and analysis are meant to lay open webs of meaning.

Ethnography is a form of qualitative research. It is both the study and description of human activities and culture.

Many, often European, anthropologists see Malinowski as the first ethnographer. That was because he was the first to use extensive fieldwork, and because he documented a detailed method of participant observation as a dominant form of research. Malinowski acknowledged 'the native's point of view' (Young, 2004). Others, most American, give the credits to Boas.

Although he wasn't the first to do extensive field work, he is praised for his efforts to lure scholars out of their lecture-rooms. "He did effectively establish the fieldwork paradigm for American academic anthropology" (Wallace, 1972, cited in Sanday, 1979). Ethnography usually has a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena in everyday life. Ethnographers have a tendency to work primarily with unstructured data, that is data that has not been coded at the point of data collection, in order to provide a closed set of analytical categories. This implies an investigation of a small number of cases, or one case in a very detailed manner.

Rather than looking at a small set of variables, and a large number of subjects (the big picture), the ethnographer attempts to get a detailed understanding of the circumstances of a few subjects studied. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, p. 1), offer this brief and 'loose' definition of ethnography: "We see the term [ethnography] as referring primarily to a particular method or set of methods. In its most characteristic form it involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily life for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions — in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are in focus of the research".

Ethnographic studies aim to produce a systematic narrative of the behaviors of and systems of

actors in their local cultures, which can be broken down to organisations, professions, or communities of some sort, providing conceptions of and discursive practices about them, and interrelations between them (MacAloon, 1992). Ethnographic accounts are both descriptive and interpretive.

Descriptive, because detail is so crucial. Interpretive, because the ethnographer must determine the significance of what he observes without gathering broad, statistical information. "Ethnography is an interpretive endeavour undertaken by human beings with multiple and varied commitments which can and do affect how the research is done and reported" (Hall, 1999). An analysis of data in an ethnographic record involves explicit subjective interpretations of the meanings of actions and processes, with a higher level of conceptualisation. The outcomes of such subjective interpretation take the form of verbal descriptions and explanations (Vidich and Lyman, 2000).

Taking these issues into consideration, ethnography seems to be an adequate and fruitful approach for studying learning as a process, interaction, and practice. As an analyst, I'm continuously involved in what is going on. And, like in a detective novel, I don't come up with an instant solution, but I offer up texts to you so you may check my conclusions. I will go further into ethnographic interpretation in the paragraph on narrative, and in a paragraph concerning ethnographic writing.

I have developed my own ethnographic approach based on the work of Geertz, Ellis, Hammersley and Atkinson and Rhodes. Today there are many views on ethnographic interpretation. See for an overview Sanday (1979), Van Maanen (1988), Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) and Denzin and Lincoln (2000).

3.4.2 Collecting data

From the moment I secured entry to the Moorland Regional Police Force, I started to gather all kinds of data about the Force and the FIT Police project. I observed meetings of the FIT Police Think tank and made personal notes. I collected minutes of FIT Police project meetings. I interviewed key figures several times during the course of the project. I chatted with the members of the FIT Police Think tank, support staff, interns, project leaders, the project manager and all the guests they invited. As a beachcomber, I picked up every related document, artefact and report that got under my feet. If I got wind of a relevant document, newspaper clipping or artefact, I tried to get hold of it. I asked the information service of the regional newspaper, I enticed the secretaries to send me relevant documents and I begged interns for their reports. Furthermore, I started to develop an instrument to monitor the FIT Police project. I planned to use the 'Dynamics of learning' instrument to evaluate the nature of the workplace as a learning environment, together with an instrument I had developed to assess individual learning competencies of the participants in the project and the left-hand/right-hand method of Argyris to get an idea of the non-spoken thoughts of the participants. Although I abandoned my original research design I added the data to my archives.

During the project I wasn't the proverbial 'fly on the wall'. Nor was I the 'Socratic gadfly' (Kalleberg, 1995). I didn't try to make myself invisible. I revealed myself both as a researcher and as an HRD specialist to everybody I met in the regional police corps. I didn't act as an external facilitator or as a hired specialist. I didn't run around, asking people focused questions and probing for detailed information in order to direct the course of the FIT Police project. I participated just enough to become a natural part of the environment. On several occasions, I was asked for advice concerning the design of an activity within a Think tank meeting, or to give feedback on the process. I always met those demands.

3.4.3 Following the footsteps of Clifford Geertz

Sanday distinguishes three different paradigms of ethnography – holistic, semiotic and behaviouristic – and she further divides the semiotic school into thick description and ethnoscience. The holistic style is the oldest and is represented by configurationalists such as Benedict and Mead, and functionalists like Malinowski and Radcliff-Brown. Although these four scholars were different in their integrative models, they maintained a dialogue between ethnographic fact and theory, and were alike in their commitment to the study of culture as an integrated whole. By contrast, behaviouristic ethnography doesn't study the whole. Rather its purpose is to provide observational data on preselected functionally relevant categories (Sanday, 1979). The anthropologist Geertz is the prominent exponent of the thick description school. In this study I follow in Geertz's footsteps. His study of the evolution of humanity's cognitive capabilities, presented in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Geertz, 1973) is one of the strongest arguments for the proposition that knowledge is ultimately grounded in conversations among members of knowledge communities. In *The interpretations of cultures*, a compilation of essays, Geertz expounds his interpretive anthropology. He believes that an analysis of culture should not be "an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (Geertz, 1973, p. 5). For Geertz, "doing ethnography is like trying to read, in the sense of constructing the reading of a manuscript – foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious recommendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventional graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behaviour" (Geertz, 1973, p. 10). After I had been observing the FIT Police project, interviewing participants, collecting artifacts, studying documents and reports, I ended up with a pile of data. I then started to read my archives, trying to make sense of it all. And I experienced the foreignness of the police culture, the fading memories of certain events, the ellipses in my files, the incoherencies in reports, suspicious recommendations and tendentious commentaries. I decided not to formulate a peremptory reconstruction of key events or a single disclosure of emergent patterns, nor did I visualise the case in maps, flowcharts or matrices, to help to crystallise and display consolidated conclusions as Fetterman (1989) suggests. Cultural analysis, writes Geertz, "is (or should be) guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the *Continent of Meaning* and mapping out its bodiless landscape" (Geertz, 1973, p. 20).

Van Maanen (1988) finds that ethnographic writing often depicts culture in a contested, emergent, ambiguous fashion. He explains that this is not because the methods at the ethnographers' disposal are imprecise or weak, but because such ambiguity is an accurate characterisation of the way things are in reality. Van Maanen argues that representations should presumably be commensurate with the obscurity and shifting nature of the cultural

materials themselves. Czarniawska (1999) argues that the researcher also plays an important role in how the case is represented. The researcher informs the representation with his or her perspective. That's not a problem for her, for she advises the researcher not to remain anonymous and invites him or her to step into the picture. The auto-ethnographic field offers a rich accumulation of methods to do so (Ellis, 2004). Rhodes points at the heteroglossic nature of organisations. He argues that there is no reason for a crisis of representation as long as one acknowledges the plurality of different perspectives and representational possibilities. With reference to Walter-Bush (1995), he states and that theory sensitises people to those multiple realities and with reference to Fox (1995), that theory and knowledge fabricate the social science that they one claimed to describe. Rhodes states that this shouldn't lead to the acceptance of relativism but rather to modesty¹²⁹.

I wrote the nine narratives for the novel-report adhering to Geertz, and with words of Van Maanen and Czarniawska in the back of my mind.

According to Geertz, the ethnographer is faced with "a multiple of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render" (Geertz, 1973, p. 10). The stories I have presented to you are anthropological – they are part of a developing system of analysis. They are cast in terms of the interpretations to which certain persons subjected their experience to me, they are anthropological because it is the researcher as an anthropologist who is professing them. "We begin with our own interpretations of what are informants are up to, or think they are up to and systemize those" (Geertz, 1973, p. 15).

As I have explained, I was involved with the project, and the people participating in the project. So the data I brought to you are not neutral. They are both my interpretation and the interpretation of the participants. In order to be open about myself as a researcher and interpreter, I included autoethnographic material, interviews were submitted back to interviewees for feedback, and I tried to weave my considerations as a researcher, as much as possible, into the text. At this point I want to make clear that the goal of this study is not merely description or explanation, but tracing critical moments, persons and incidents across events, and trying to learn from them. With this study, I want to bring the reader in a position to give his or her own interpretation of events and decisions. To make that possible this study seeks to provide an extensive description of the case. Therefore the case is presented without the simplification of a model and with the different perspectives of the actors involved. I sought to write a novel-report, composed of a web of multi-interpretable texts. For this, I used the 'thick description' method recommended by Geertz. This is very different from a 'thin description',

which merely records observable phenomena. A thick description includes social conventions, subjective impressions, and background information necessary to reveal in Weber's words, "the causes of [individual events] being *so* and not *otherwise*" (Weber, [1904]1949, p. 72). The problem with his approach, as Geertz recognises, is that "I have [never] gotten anywhere near the bottom of anything I have ever written about, either in the essays below or elsewhere. Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes, the less complete it is" (Geertz 1973, p. 29). Weber concurs, writing "the number and type of causes which have influenced any given event are always infinite and there is nothing in the things themselves to set some of them apart as alone meriting attention" (Weber, [1904] 1949, p.78). In other words, I have to be realistic. It is theoretically impossible to write a history of the learning project that takes into account the complete context of the situation. Therefore, I was forced to limit myself to the context that, in Weber's terms, is interesting and *significant* to me. And for no objective reason, though for reasons that I hope will appeal to others who wish to understand learning behind the frontline of public service.

With the interpretation of the FIT Police case, I strive to meet Geertz's (1973, p. 18) injunction that, "a good interpretation of anything - a poem, a person, a history, a ritual, an institution, a society - takes us into the heart of that of which it is the interpretation of. When it does not do that, but leads us somewhere else - into an admiration of his own elegance, of its author's cleverness, or of the beauties of Euclidean order - it may have its intrinsic charms; but it is something else than what the task at hand (...) calls for". The task of the ethnographer, and, in this case, my task, is not to create an elegant text, but to come close to the actualities of the event. In this research project, the goal is figuring out how to deal with learning processes, knowledge production, and innovation in a regional police force.

As I emphasised earlier, and I repeat it here, this study is a piece of work in a specific genre of academic writing about organisations. It is not a usual report of findings and there is no charter to skip the stories, because the analytical work is in the organisation of the stories themselves. The strategy therefore was to provide the reader with such a rich and multi-perspective description that the reader is provoked to develop his or her own interpretation.

In any case, as a narrator, I have to be seen as the best friend present. In this situation it's important to realise that Derrida used his famous remark 'il n'y a pas d'hors-texte' - which has been translated as "there is nothing outside of the text" (Derrida, [1967] 1997, p. 158) - to argue, contradictorily, that the text is composed of lots of things outside the text itself. So it should be

translated into the maxim that 'there is no outside-text', meaning that relevant interpretational contexts are boundless. For Derrida, the text itself is a bearer of a statement, whose truth is problematic. This is both about denotation (what the word means) and connotation (what the word evokes). With a denotive sign, the reader focuses his energy on the internal, toward specific facts and renderings in the text. The issue here is that facts, taken as arising independently before they were conceived by the scholar, are textual through and through. Connotation emerges from words in their relationship to other words, for example in a written or spoken discourse and even from their implied relationship to other words that do not appear in that discourse¹³⁰. The truth of a text is problematic, as its 'elements' have a fluid rather than fixed meaning" (Carr, 2002, p. 5). The connotative challenges the reader to look outwards, to search for something else, for other possible relations and systems. For that search, the narratives I provided are the inevitable intermediates.

3.4.4 Ethnographic description

According to Geertz, there are three characteristics of ethnographic description: it is interpretive; what it is interpretive of is the flow of social discourse; and the interpreting involved consists of trying to rescue the 'said' of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms. For himself, he adds a fourth characteristic of such description: it is microscopic (Geertz, 1973).

Earlier I explained that this study is under interpretation, that I, as an ethnographic researcher and writer, am an interpreter, but also that you are invited to be one, and more than that, indeed already are. With the narratives I tried to interpret learning processes. For the purpose of this research, they are not about the regional police force, but about learning behind the frontline of public service. Geertz (1973) notes that, for anthropologists, the locus of their ethnographies are not the object of study. They don't study villages (tribes, towns, neighbourhoods ...), they study in villages. For Geertz this does not correspond to the 'the natural laboratory' concept. For him the important feature of anthropologists' findings is their complex specificness, their circumstantiality. Through the sort of material produced by long-term, mainly qualitative, highly participative, scrupulous fine-comb field study in confined contexts that the mega-concepts with which contemporary social science is imbued - legitimacy, modernisation, integration, conflict, charisma, structure, meaning - can be given the sort of "sensible actuality that makes it possible to think not only realistically and concretely about them, but, what is more important, creatively and imaginatively with them" (Geertz, 1973, p. 23). The writing and rewriting of the narratives, focusing on learning, confronting the case with theories of learning in organisations and, more specifically, in the workplace, made it

possible to learn more about learning. Finally, the multi-perspective turn I took, looking at the case from different positions, telling different stories, was my method of being microscopic. Semiotic analysis, as practiced here, involves the discovery and capture of generalisations about the way events influence each other and facilitate an environment to enhance learning. In Geertz's understanding, ethnography is, by definition, thick description. Geertz (1973) borrowed this concept from Ryle (1971), who distinguishes between 'thin' and 'thick' description. In Ryle's view a thin description is one that accurately accounts for observable phenomena. In contrast, a thick description is one that layers meaning on the 'phenomenalistic' observation. For Geertz ethnography is a kind of intellectual effort, "(...) it is: an elaborate venture in (...) 'thick description'" (Geertz, 1973, p. 6). Both Ryle and Geertz use the action of winking to clarify the distinction between thin description and thick description. Ryle illustrates his point with the following anecdote:

"Two boys fairly swiftly contract the eyelids of their eyes. In the first boy this is only an involuntary twitch; but the other is winking conspiratorially to an accomplice. At the lowest or the thinnest level of description the two contractions of the eyelids may be exactly alike. Yet there remains the immense but unphotographable difference between a twitch and a wink" (Ryle, 1971, p. 480).

Elaborating his concept, Ryle writes that "(...) thick description is a many-layered sandwich, of which only the bottom slice is catered for by that thinnest description" (Ryle, 1971, p. 482).

Geertz examines how – in order to distinguish the winking as a social gesture, from a twitch or a mimicked wink, we must move beyond the literal behaviour to both the particular social understanding of the winking as a gesture, the state of mind of the winker, his/her audience, and how they construe the meaning of the winking action itself. 'Thin description' is the winking. 'Thick' is the meaning behind it and its symbolic import in society, or between communicators. For Geertz, the whole point of a semiotic approach to culture is to help us obtain access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live, so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with them. In this respect one has to realise that cultural theory is not its own master and its pretensions, thick description's freedom to shape itself in terms of its internal logic, is rather limited (Geertz, 1973). "What generality it contrives to achieve, grows out of the delicacy of its distinctions, not the sweep of its abstractions" (Geertz, 1973, p. 25).

3.4.5 Reflexivity

This study was set up to research learning practices, knowledge production processes, and innovations behind the frontline of public service. Following up on my critique on mainstream HRD research, it has also become an effort

to develop a suitable alternative research strategy and a style to report research findings. The heart of my critique on mainstream HRD research is twofold. My first point is that it is model dominated. My second point is that the creator of the model is mostly implicit and depersonalised. My response was the development of a critical, narrative and autoethnographical strategy. In doing this, I became aware that my writings about learning practices, knowledge production processes, and innovations behind the frontline of public service, were bound to become informed by my autobiography, as for instance a learner, a frontline worker, an HRD professional, and a researcher. To cope with this, like most ethnographers, I recognised my subjectivity as a researcher. I didn't try to rule my biography out. On the contrary, I acknowledged it. I followed Geertz, who railed against notions of ethnographic research that assume that researchers must be objective, detached, or scientifically uninvolved in the community under investigation. I gravitated towards ethnography, as an interpretative research mode to develop more insight into the workings of human activities, like learning at work. I continued to follow in the footsteps of Geertz and embraced the role of "positioned observer" and recognised that I am somebody, from a certain class and a certain place. My own personal experiences and viewpoints influence my knowing and being. They influence the topics I choose to explore, the places I go, the people I meet, the questions I ask, and the interpretations I draw from my data. Subsequently I have tried to avoid representing ethnography as though it were a laboratory study of some sort, which is, according to Geertz, almost in a kind of positivist sense false (Olsen, 1991). Rather than seeing subjectivity as a weakness of the method, I made my subjectivity known up-front, so that the effects and possible biases can be better interpreted by my readers. I didn't remove myself from the report of my findings. On the contrary, I chose for an autoethnographical research approach and situated myself within the narratives of my novel-report. Regarding matters of authority and claims on truth, I emphasise the importance of the knowledge of the reader in whom I see an interpreter of equal substance. This concerns both the interpretation of the case material and the interpretation of my autobiography. This present stance serves as a prelude to chapter 3.7, wherein I elaborate on my position as a critical, narrative and autoethnographical researcher and clarify the principles I used to write the case in a novel-report.

With my choice for a critical, narrative and autoethnographical research approach, I entered a fray with issues concerning (self-) reflexivity. The definition of reflexivity is "a bending back on itself or oneself" (Webster's Dictionary, Revised Edition, 1996). Reflexivity has been described as a turning-back of one's experience upon oneself, wherein the self to which this bending back refers is predicated and must also be understood as socially constructed. Steier (1991, p. 2) states: "This folding back may unfold as a spiraling, if we allow for multiple perspectives, and acknowledge that the

same self may be different as a result of its own self-pointing". Through this continuous process of turning back on myself, I learned several lessons in my struggle with a critical, narrative and autoethnographical research strategy. Couched in five categories, these lessons are, concerned about issues regarding my position and ethics as a researcher, the choice of voice, self disclosure, handling of the data (transcribing interviews, narrating stories) and organising the text. Studying the FIT Police case, I gradually became uncomfortable with the academic mores I felt, to keep a distance. I considered it inappropriate to hold back professional expertise, experience and reflections in situations wherein I judged that learners could use my contribution. You don't let a patient die for the sake of your research. So, during my research project, I completely changed my research strategy. Instead of the traditional, detached and quasi positivistic case study research I originally wanted to use for the sake of theorising, I opted for an ethnographic approach to develop a deep understanding of the messy, thorny and seemingly both painful and sanguine learning practices. I chose to give voice to the actors I frequently met and interacted with. Although I anticipated that processes on other hierarchical levels influenced the learning practices I was researching, I chose not to attenuate my ethnographic inquiries chasing (what I judged to be illusory) completeness, although I was tempted to. Because I got the impression that the actors involved occasionally tried to use me as a spokesman to voice their needs, views, worries, and hopes, because I sensed that they sometimes told me in confidence what they didn't tell their superiors and because I experienced myself that my inquiries were influenced by the theories I was acquainted with, the ideas I developed and by my own analysis of the situation, I decided to represent different voices in my novel-report. Drawing on Czarniawska (1999) I wanted to be explicit about my role in voicing the different actors. Consequently, I am present as a researcher-detective in all the narratives. I valued the utterances of all the actors but I didn't take them for granted. Drawing on Searle's speech act theory (Searle, 1969), I subscribed to the idea that everything time a person speaks or hears, he or she gives it a meaning and that thinking that literal meaning or sentence meaning somehow exists independently along side of the speaker or hearer meaning is a complete misunderstanding of the nature of meaning. This is why I did not dare to be the omniscient voice-over. I further deemed it to be important to reveal my own background. I strongly belief, that, as a scholar, I'm part of the intertextuality, meaning that each text exists in relation to others and that each text is mediated by others and is even constructed more by their intertextuality than by their authors. With this position I draw on Barthes ([1971] 1977).

3.4.6 Meaning

At the end of this paragraph, I want to conclude that I subscribe to the

ethnographical tradition established by Geertz, which is principally concerned with meaning, as opposed to origins or causes. The intention of my novel-report is to bring together narratives from practice and create a situation where they can be confronted with organisational and educational thought, narrative from which meaning can be constructed. Geertz (1973) worries about the uneasy coexistence of ethnography with generalisation and argues that the data must speak to larger issues. I do agree with this emphasis on the pertinence of data. In the case of this study, that is the learning of frontline workers in public service. However, I tend not to share his worries about generalisation, because I am more interested in the creation of meaning than in its generalisation. I do agree with Geertz that we never get to the bottom of things. I don't want to consort with radical reflexivity and find myself on a purely deconstructionist route. I don't want to end in a situation where it is 'Turtles all the way down'⁸, to nothing. At the end of the day, I consider myself a realist. There has been a FIT Police project, that was a meaningful event and I wanted to describe it. To conclude this paragraph concerning ethnography, I once again would like to use the words of Geertz (1988, p. 143) who wrote "Whatever else ethnography may be . . . it is above all a rendering of the actual, a vitality phrased".

3.4.7 Autoethnography

Ellis (2004) and Hertz (1997) strongly argue that researchers are situated actors and that they bring their own perspectives and their own vignettes to the scene. Thus their autobiographies echo in their representations. Ellis and Herz suggest autoethnography as a way to overcome this reflexive complexity. For Ellis, autoethnography is "research, writing, story and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social and political" (Ellis, 2004, p xix).

In literature there are more than sixty terms with meanings similar to autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). But autoethnography has become the term of choice, even by the critics (Ellis, p. 40)

The term autoethnography was first coined by Karl Heider who used it to refer it to people's own account of what they do. Usually, David Hayano is

⁸ 'Turtles all the way down' refers to an infinite regression myth about the nature of the universe. A well-known scientist once gave a public lecture on astronomy. He described how the earth orbits around the sun and how the sun, in turn, orbits around the centre of a vast collection of stars called our galaxy. At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said: "What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise". The scientist gave a superior smile before replying, "What is the tortoise standing on?" "You're very clever, young man, very clever," said the old lady. "But it's turtles all the way down". A version of the story also appears in Geertz's *Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture*, (Geertz, 1973).

credited as the originator of the term. He limited the meaning to cultural level studies by anthropologists of their own people. Social scientists often use the term now to refer to stories that feature the self or that include the researcher as a character (Ellis, 2004, p. 38).

Ellis defines it as follows: "Autoethnography refers to writing about the personal and its relationship to culture. It is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness" (Ellis, 2004, p.37). "Autoethnographic forms are portrayed in dialogue, scenes, characterisation, and plot. Thus autoethnography claims the conventions of literary writing (Ellis, 2004). Combining literary and ethnographic techniques allows the researcher to create a story to engage readers in the subject in the same way as a novel engages readers in a plot (Richardson, 2000; Czarniawska, 1999). Although I have a leaning towards an inviting writing style and I have acknowledged that I'm more attracted to literary texts regarding working (and learning) than to academic texts, I'm constrained with regard to the construction of plots. In this respect, I'm more inclined towards Boje's emphasis on the importance of 'improper' storytelling. Boje (2001) like Latour ([1993]1996) objects to the plotting of non-linear, living storytelling that is, in essence, fragmented, polyphonic (many voiced) and collectively produced. Boje emphasises the importance of this incoherent, unplotted storytelling, which he refers to as antenarrative. Hereafter, I will explain my standpoint with regard to writing (ante) narratively.

Ellis distinguishes seven different approaches to autoethnography (Ellis, 2004): 'Personal narratives', 'Indigenous or native ethnography', 'Reflexive or narrative ethnography', 'Complete member researchers', 'Confessional tales', 'Contingent autoethnography' and 'Literary autoethnographies'. My research evolved into a contingent ethnography. According to Ellis, "where an author writes about others, most likely not planning to study anything about the self. Then in the process of research, the researcher discovers his or her connection to the material and to the world studied" (Ellis, 2004, p. 51).

Because of that discovery to some degree my research became a 'Personal narrative study', "where social scientists view themselves as the phenomenon and write evocative stories specifically focused on their academic as well as their personal lives" (Ellis, 2004, p. 45).

Others using the autoethnographic methodology are e.g. Ronai (1992), Richardson (1992, 2000), Charmaz and Mitchell (1997), DeVault (1997), Rheinharz (1997) and Freeman (2001, 2003).

3.4.8 Narrative

Since the late eighties, when Polkinghorne (1988) provided a narrative approach for organisational case studies, there has been growing interest in

the use of the narrative to understand people in organisations. This study rides the waves of that swelling stream of narrative research. Boje (2001) provided an overview in Westwood and Linstead's book, *The language of organization* (Westwood & Linstead, 2001). My novel-report can be seen as an 'Ergonographic study'. This term was first coined by Czarniawska and means something like ethnographies of organisations¹³¹ (Czarniawska, 1997). The narrative is both important material and a crucial device to understand learning in the workplace.

In the eighties, I first got acquainted with narrative theory through the work of Bal¹³² (1980, 1997) and Letiche (1988). In my professional career, I used different narrative methodologies. When I was a dietician, I used diary techniques to help people break bad eating habits and re-story the relationship between body and food. I used the explicitation of professional knowledge and action research techniques to initiate professional growth (Bruining & Knibbe, 1988). Later, I became a trainer and used the Indian 'talking stick' - technique as a tool to render explicit the diversity of views and talents present in groups of employees, to create better decisions and strengthen community, by reaching synergy. To train individual communication skills and group skills, and to develop and change organisational culture, I collaborated with actors and directors and from this work evolved drama techniques such as simulation and improvisation. In my present work as a consultant and educational specialist, I explore the differences in narrative construction in communities of learners (Bruining, 2005). Over the years I have seen that in organisations the 'narratives' of, for instance, the frontline workers are often dominated by policy makers, management, consultants or lobby groups (Bruining, 2000b). This even brought me to write a series of articles in an HRD magazine titled *The forgotten chapter of organisational change theory - How to counteract bad change policies* (Bruining & Schrijvers, 2003a) and *The art of being obstructive - Five ways, and practical leads, to cross bad changes* (Bruining & Schrijvers, 2003b). As I went along I have developed an eclectic view on the importance of (ante) narratives. First I will go into the definition of narrative, then I will outline my eclectic narrative approach.

The folklorist John Burrison believes that the narrative impulse or the need to tell of or listen to experience and imagination as it is structured into plot is one of the traits that make us human. Czarniawska (1997) underpins the idea of social and individual life as a narrative and doing so she points at Barthes' proclamation of the social centrality of narrative. The narratives of the world are numberless, wrote Roland Barthes. He discovered them in many forms, such as myth, comedy, mime, painting, stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news items and conversation. "(...) narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of

mankind, and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative” (Barthes, [1966] 1977, p 79).

There is a growing body of organisational research which is taking a narrative approach. In this emerging genre, there is a great and confusing diversity in the definition of the narrative and related concepts like story, antenarrative and narrative knowing. I will touch on the differences briefly, select some of the views on the narrative in the genre of organisation studies and I will motivate my preference with regard to definitions. Other worthwhile and broader introductions into the narrative are delivered by Bal (1997), Abbott (2002) and Booker (2004). Mcquillan (2000) provides a comprehensive survey of theories of narrative from Plato to Post-Structuralism and offers a broad selection of texts.

Organisations can be seen as socially constructed verbal systems (Hazen, 1993) or storytelling networks (Boje, 2001). To understand Boje’s view on the narrative in organisations it is worthwhile looking at his definition of story space, “the co-mingling, morphing, and collision of narrative, antenarrative, story, and terse story” (Boje, Rosile & Gardner, 2004). Earlier Boje wrote regarding the antenarrative: “I give ‘antenarrative’ a double meaning: as being before and as a bet. First story is ‘ante’ to narrative; it is antenarrative’. A ‘narrative is something that is narrated, i.e. ‘story’. Story is an account of incidents or events, but narrative comes after and adds ‘plot’ and ‘coherence’ to the story line” (Boje, 2001, p. 1). For Boje, a terse story is “an abbreviated and succinct simplification of the story in which parts of the plot, some of the characters, and segments of the sequence of events are left to the hearer’s imagination” (Boje, 1991).

Boje (2005) regards narratives of practice as partial, unfinalised and often inconsistent. He describes them as ‘clunky’ and ‘leaving blanks’. For Boje, the (ante-)narrative exists in a dialogic relationship between consistency and inconsistency, order and disorder, coherence and incoherence.

“Antenarratives are bets that a pre-story can be told and theatrically performed that will enroll stakeholders in ‘intertextual’ ways transforming the world of action into theatrics” (Boje, Rosile, Durant & Luhman, 2004, p. 756).

For Gabriel, not all narratives are stories. He argues that factual or descriptive accounts of events that aspire at objectivity rather than emotional effect should not be treated as stories. According to Gabriel, stories need to be an integrated piece of narrative with plots and characters “generating emotion in narrator and audience, through a poetic elaboration of symbolic material” Gabriel (2000, p. 239).

For Czarniawska “A story consists of a plot comprising causally related episodes that culminate in a solution to a problem” (Czarniawska, 1997, p. 78). Seemingly a narrative is something more for her. They are characterised

by plots. The narrative mode of knowing, according to Czarniawska consists in organising one's experience around the intentionality of human action and the plot is the basic means by which specific events are put into a meaningful whole (1999, p.14).

Czarniawska doesn't follow Barthes extensive outlook on narrative, wherein he includes any form of communication in his notion of narrative.

Czarniawska prefers Greimas and Courtes narrow definition of a narrative, that "in its most basic form, requires at least three elements: an original state of affairs, an action or an event, and the consequent state of affairs (Czarniawska, 1998, p. 2).

With respect to narrative knowing, Orr (1990) stresses the importance of the situatedness of narratives in the context of their origin. According to Tsoukas and Hatch (2001) this means that narrative knowledge is only and implicitly valid in the context where it originates from. It is also emphasised that narratives stick to the context of their telling (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1990; Orr, 1990; Brown & Duguid, 2001) because of their jargon, their reference to implicit norms or to historical events of the community in question, as part of the community's history, and reflect the characteristics of the tellers (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1990). Therefore it is argued that narrative knowing is only understandable for the members of a specific community. Outside this community it is simply not understandable (Brown & Duguid, 2002).

I tend to agree with those who argue that narrative knowing is situated and only understandable for the members of a specific community. It is precisely because of this, that I earlier stressed the importance of an ethnographic approach with regard to workplace learning. In such an approach, the view of an insider is combined with the view of an outsider. If it is true that, as Doornbos, Bolhuis and Simons (2004). conclude, HRD researchers until now have looked at organisations and workplace learning too much with the eyes of educationalists. They now have to engage in ethnographic research and in the development of new workprocesses.

Here, I don't want to go into the complexities of debates about definitions, I just want to assert that I have a strong preference for Boje's approach to the antenarratives. Boje's antenarratives correspond with what Barthes ([1970] 1974) calls the writerly text. Barthes makes a distinction between readerly and writerly texts. A readerly text limits the number of oppositions that it incorporates by professing an unproblematic transcription of reality. The focus is not on itself, but rather on what it purports to represent. A readerly text seeks closure, conceives its textuality, forces the reader to produce a meaning and positions readers as passive consumers. It renders its artifice through rhetorical techniques that produce the illusion of realism. A writerly text, by contrast, moves the reader to produce a meaning or set of meanings. It is perpetually unfinished rather than final, authorised, universal or

absolute. A writerly text paradoxically offers up a transparent window into reality-making processes, despite of its heterogeneity, contradictory and its denial of closure. To produce a writerly text is to produce a text that opens the way to the construction of a plausible reality (Barthes, [1970] 1974).

Readerly texts, with their dependence on an omniscient narrator and adherence to the unities of time and place, create an illusion of order and significance that is at odds with the chaotic, often directionless, and haphazard nature of modern life. Writerly texts ask for a narrator as in the ancient Greek theatre (Sinclair, 2005). Barthes wrote that the Greek theatre "is always a triple spectacle: of a present (we are watching the transformation of a past into a future), of a freedom (what is to be done?), and of a meaning (the answer of gods and men) (...). The Greek theatre seizes upon the mythological answer and makes use of it as a reservoir of new questions: for to interrogate mythology is to interrogate what had been in its time a fulfilled answer (Barthes, ([1982] 1985, p. 68).

Originally, in the pre-Sophoclean Greek theatre, the narrator was the leader of the chorus. The chorus, which could have up to fifteen members, all of whom offered background and summary information in order to help the audience follow the performance. It commented on main themes, asked questions, gave opinions and warnings, clarified experiences and feelings of the characters in everyday terms and showed how an ideal audience might react to the drama as it was presented. They also represent the general populace of any particular story. The chorus sympathised with victims, reinforced facts, separated episodes, and often served as spokespeople who reaffirm the status quo. The narrator played the important role of bridging the gap between the audience and the players, to intensify the emotions, and to unite the various episodes - the narrator reads the text in a writerly way. The leader of the chorus interacted with the characters in the play, and spoke for the general population. This changed when Sophocles favoured the interaction between actors and thus brought ancient Greek tragedy closer to the modern notion of dramatic plot.

In the field of organisation studies, the theatre metaphor has been used on many occasions. Oswick, Keenoy and Grant (2001) provide an historical overview and a collection of texts applying theatre to organisations. Boje, Luhman and Cunliffe (2002) distinguish two particular perspectives in the use of the theatre metaphor. According to them, the first perspective, organising-is-like-theatre, stemmed from sociology and is prominent in the work of Erving Goffmann. "Dramaturgical concepts such as the frame of theatre, scripting, and keying are theatrical concepts imported from Goffman to study the dramaturgical aspects of organizing and organizations" (Boje et al., 2002). The second more literal perspective, organising-is-theatre, stems from philosophy and literary criticism and Kenneth Burke is a represen-

tative. Burke believed that all of life was drama, and that theatre imitates life. We may discover the motives of people by looking for their particular type of motivation in action and discourse. Boje et al. (2002) offer a more dialectical view. They argue that theatre can be used to empower spectators, to become spect-actors. They see in Boal's theatrical forms, image theatre, invisible theatre and forum theatre, three ways to raise critical consciousness. Images theatre follows very tight coordinated scripts and is supposed to raise reflective discussion. Invisible theatre emerges from real life. The spectators become spect-actors and are offered the possibility to re-script their lives. Forum theatre is like theatre sport. The spectators can determine and modify the rules, they can cross boundaries between audience and actors, they can become directors, actors or stagehands. With respect to organising, Voogt distinguishes three ways of interacting: playing, gaming, and game/play. Playing means that the rules are made and modified whilst playing. Gaming refers to acting within a given and accepted context. According to Voogt does organising need the changeable mode of organising play and organised game. Voogt distinguishes also two modes of directing, positive and negative. Positive directing infers ongoing participation and construction. Negative directing means controlling the conditions for positive directing and should prevent the organising process and the organisation from getting jammed. Van Dongen thinks that "game (...) refers to the consensually validated definitions of reality (...), whereas play refers to the ongoing metaphorization of possible other 'reality' games, as fundamental for change and development" (cit. in: Van Dongen, De Laat & Maas, 1996, p. 100).

Like Barthes and Boje, Voogt emphasises the emancipation and empowerment of the spect-actors. From Barthes, I gather that a readerly text colonises its audience and that a writerly text emancipates its audience. I, for my part, want to acknowledge frontline workers as well as my readers as knowledge workers. I don't want to colonise them with my text. It seems to me that Czarniawska and Gabriel are closer to a readerly text and that Boje is closer to a writerly text. So it's obvious that I prefer Boje's notions of the (ante)narrative. I would like to concur with Boje et al. (2002) when they stress that we are not just passive spectators, we have the capacity to be actors and script editors. In this respect I think it is important that, as Boal – influenced by Brecht – states people need "a poetic in which the spectator delegates power to the character who thus acts in his place, but the spectator has the right to think for himself" Boal ([1974] 1979, cit. by Boje et al., 2002) not – or no longer – "scripted and authorised by others who are merely better storyteller and theatric performers" (Boje et. al, 2002).

3.4.9 Being Critical

It is a general feeling that our society is becoming increasingly complex. However, the Romans must have thought so too. The transformation of the world into a global economy, the aging of societies like ours, the changing of community structures, to name a few developments. Increasing complexity weighs on organisations, on profit organisations as well as on public service firms. Meanwhile, organisations are usually asked to continuously increase their performance. At the same time, organisations are flattened and brought under the flag of empowerment. The present-day frontline managers and their empowered employees, are more and more regarded as knowledge workers and increasingly asked to take more managerial responsibility for their work (Linstead et al., 2004). To cope with these responsibilities, they can turn to the piles of popular management books that are offered to them, on the internet, in railway station bookstalls, in magazines and through direct mail. It is disconcerting how amenable decision makers in organisations are for the temptations of the latest management fads. Ten Bos (2000) argues that the problem of management fads is that they aren't faddish enough. He has a problem with the non-faddish aspects of management fads. He has problems with endeavours to provide them with scientific grounds. Following Linstead et al. (2004) I don't accept "the 'faddish' approach that offers a new salvation in the latest tools or techniques" (Linstead et al. 2004, p. 1). Nor do I accept the reduction of learning, knowledge production and innovation, in one-dimensional models. Like Linstead et al. (2004, p. 1), I think that "those who practice management can do it better by taking a critical approach", and that the same goes for scholars. Like critical ethnographers, I am unsatisfied with the description of surface appearances and motivated to find something more (Pfohl and Gordon, 1986). Willis (1977) redefined the nature of ethnographic research in a critical manner. So culture "is no longer out there to be discovered, described and explained, but rather something to which the ethnographer as an interpreter enters (Daniel, 1996, p. 198). If fads offer an opportunity to be critical, to emancipate from control and to create meaning, then I would tend to agree with Ten Bos.

Through my narrative report I tried to be critical. I didn't want to straitjacket the complexities and problems associated with working and learning in the workplace in public service in a neat model.

I did want to excavate underneath the rhetorics I met. Certainly not to undermine the organisation in study, nor its leadership or its employees. By means of the narratives I provided, - which I intended to be antenarratives, rather than readerly plotted texts - I tried to reveal, communicate, stage a situation to which the audience - frontline workers, their managers, researchers - can relate to and can reflect upon themselves, without me colonising them.

3.5 Writing the case

After I had decided that I wanted to pursue a critical, narrative and (auto)ethnographical research approach, a crucial step in this study was the design of a fictional framework to represent the case. As I have explained before, I didn't want to impose a model on the case. I didn't want to dictate the order of things. I didn't want to be the invisible, impersonal, mediator. Nor did I want to have the final word of what is happening in the case. I wanted to give different actors involved authentic and different voices. I wanted to capture some of their experiences. Furthermore, I saw writing the case both as a method of inquiry for myself and an opportunity to bring readers into a situation wherein they can make inquiries themselves.

On the basis of the conviction that data collection and writing are not separable, I went to my desk to write the case. I used the material I had gathered through observing, interviewing and collecting artefacts, but I was well aware of the dialectic interplay between my beliefs and my material (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). In this section, I will clarify how I undertook the challenge of writing this case. I will begin by explaining the five principles that I developed and bore in mind while writing the case. The crux of this section is the fifth principle which is meant to be aimed at the development of (ante)narratives of professionalisation (Letiche et al, 2005). Next I will explain why I used the detective format writing the case and finally I will amplify on my style of writing and back this up with my sources of inspiration.

3.5.1 Principles

(1) Create multiperspectivity is the first principle I formulated and held on to while writing the case. Departing from my criticism on model dominated research, I searched for an alternative approach as a response to the usual search for a single perspective. The acknowledgement of multiperspectivity was a reaction to the experience that scholars, managers, HRD professionals, frontline workers and other people are often out to find the 'correct' framing of a situation or a problem. I wove a multiperspectival texture for the case study. I wanted to use multiperspectivity in an effort to capture the pluralistic character of knowing and valuing.

The first time I came across the idea of multiperspectivity was in the writings of organisational theorists Gibson Burrell and Gareth Morgan and to the work of Karl Weick. Burrell and Morgan (1979) studied sociological paradigms of organisational analysis. They laid bare the complexity of organisational life and argued that organisation studies demanded a more sophisticated, more subtle form of theorising through which different stories could be told and different perspectives acknowledged. That doesn't mean, argued Weick, that because we have multiple identities and deal with multiple realities, we

should become ontological purists. "To do so limits [the] capability for sensemaking" (Weick, 1995, p. 35). In *Images of Organizations*, Morgan (1986) proposed the use of metaphors to advocate a less formal more playful way to make sense of organising. In *Sensemaking in Organizations*, Weick describes seven properties of sensemaking that set it apart from processes such as understanding, interpretation, and attribution. It is grounded in identity construction (1). It is retrospective (2). It enacts sensible environments (3). It is social (4). It is ongoing (5). It is based on extracted cues (6). It is based in plausibility rather than accuracy (7). Weick favours the construction of the meanings of things based on reasonable explanations of what might be happening rather than through scientific discovery of the real story. Where the paradigms or metaphors suggested by Burrell and Morgan are analogous to plotted writing and thus more comparable with Czarniawska's narratives, Weick's position comes closer to Boje. Both agree that the (ante)narratives of people in organisations are fragmented. The difference is that Weick (1995) suggests that people give meaning and create coherence in hindsight, while Boje (2001) contends that the (ante)narratives contain a variety of possibilities.

I found the justification for my principle of multiperspectivity in the philosophical writings of Bakhtin, Polanyi, Latour and Mol. Bakhtin proposed the concept of heteroglossia to capture the multiperspectivity of discourses. From Polanyi's work emerged five concepts - tacit knowing, indwelling, perspectivity, participation and polycentric order - connected with the multiperspectivity of knowing. Latour formulated a critique of rationalist science. He developed the strategy of irreduction, to acknowledge different readings of reality. Mol articulated an ontology which posits the multiplicity of reality.

For Bakhtin (1981), no individual perspective is adequate to the whole, only the concrete totality of perspectives can present the whole. Bakhtin conveys this with his concept of heteroglossia. This concept builds on the assumption that there is a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships. Heteroglossia refers to the presence of more than one language or means of representation, within one given text or situation, and it may operate on several levels. Bakhtin sees heteroglossia as a basic state of the novel and as a fundamental textual operation. In the basic state of the novel, heteroglossia is the essential product of the difference between the voice of the author, the voice of the narrator, and the voices of the characters within the story (Bakhtin, 1981). Heteroglossia also operates in the basic sense of the interaction of languages and culture both inside and outside the novel. "Languages of heteroglossia, like mirrors that face each other, each reflecting in its own way a piece, a tiny corner of the world, force us to guess at and grasp for a world behind their mutually reflecting aspects that is

broader, more multi-levelled, containing more and varied horizons than would be available to a single language or a single mirror" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 415). Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia leads to fragmentation. Rhodes (2002) conceptualises the heteroglossic organisation as a multitude of stories and storytelling practices. A similar conception of the storytelling organisation can be found in Boje's suggestion of the organisation as 'Tamara-land'. In the Tamara play, a wandering audience follows a dozen actors moving through a theatre with a dozen stages. This makes about a half-billion (12 to the power 12) different narrative threads possible. Of course, the audience is never able to see all actions at once. Tamara helps to explain the dynamics of performers caught in a network of stages, as they make choices of whose drama to participate in next. Boje sees 'Tamara' as a metaphor for organisational life. In organisations the employees, like wandering actors in Tamara, move from stage to stage and try to fit in the web of carefully scripted storylines. While off-stage, there are characters that never seem to make it into the play (Boje, 1995; 2001). Boje places emphasis on the antenarratives. These are the unstructured, uncensored, incoherent meaningless accounts people have. The Tamara metaphor also leads to fragmentation. Polanyi's thinking is more connected with the emergence of coherence. Polanyi indicates that each person has principles that structure interpretations, actions and communications. You might call this a personal perspective. According to Polanyi, we are not aware of all of this knowing. He couched this argument in the often-cited proposition "We know more than we can tell" (Polanyi, 1966, p.4). Polanyi observes a difference between two types of knowledge. There is 'explicit knowledge' of which we are focally aware, and there is 'tacit knowledge' that is implied in this, and of which we are subsidiary aware. Another principle idea in Polanyi's philosophy is the concept of 'indwelling'. This refers to the interplay between explicit knowledge and tacit knowing. Indwelling is an individual process, as well as a process that links knowledge to social interactions. Polanyi discerns a shared process of mutually and tacitly adjusting each other's perspectives. This participation can be seen as the interplay between the self and the social. Shared perspectives and collective practices constitute 'polycentric order'. Polycentric order is a social order without a dominant centre. The idea of polycentric order implicates an ethical principle that consists of the commitment of people to the emergence of meaning and order through a process of mutual adjustments (Brohm, 2005). In his study on the medical breakthroughs of Louis Pasteur – the biologist who became an icon of science in France – Bruno Latour showed that the celebrated scientist was a gifted 'adjuster'. In his time, Pasteur won almost everyone in France on his side. He made hygienists, doctors, army, state and the public accept his germ theory. He did this in a series of clever moves. Doctors, afraid of losing control concerning the treatment of patients to laboratory scientists, were given sera and vaccines to administer. Hygienists got new solid scientific

grounds for their theories. The state got the cause of anthrax. For the public, Pasteur had spectacular, but staged, experiments to admire. In *The Pasteurization of France*, Latour ([1984]1988) made clear that Pasteur, through a series of translations, was able to link very heterogeneous interests. The complexity of forces at play behind inventions, is also the central theme in *Aramis, or the love of technology* (Latour, [1993]1996). With this book, Latour created a text that compels the reader to shift perspective constantly, so that he gains an appreciation for the complexities in our world. In Latour's philosophy, all forces are on an equal philosophical footing, whether they are scientific facts, physical blows, governmental edicts, occult superstitions, or newspaper editorials. Although each of these entities may have stronger or weaker claims to truth, these claims can only be sorted out through trials of strength in which objective evidence plays a prominent but not exclusive role, along with rhetoric, custom, and sometimes even brute force. In the second part of *The Pasteurization of France*, Latour developed his strategy of irreduction. For Latour it is not a question of reducing the whole to its parts. No particular zone of reality has inherent privilege over the others. On the contrary, Latour wants to show that the whole - the network of contingent circumstances - is superior to its parts (Teil & Latour, 1995). In the tradition of science and technology studies, established by Latour and others, like John Law, Annemarie Mol (2002) presented an ethnography of medical practice, *The body multiple*. In a combination of ethnographic research, theoretical argumentation, and accounts of personal experience, Mol articulates an ontology which posits the multiplicity of reality. In her ethnography of medical practices dealing with the disease atherosclerosis, Mol zooms in on socio-material practices performed in a specific institutional setting. Drawing on Foucault, she approaches these practices as sites where subjects and objects acquire their shape and definition. Her fieldwork offers a whole gamut of various ways in which the disease atherosclerosis emerges in different situations in the hospital. Mol describes how, for instance in the clinic, the pathology-lab, the operating theatre, and the epidemiological research centre atherosclerosis takes on a somewhat different appearance: in the clinic, the disease is performed as 'walking pain,' whereas in the pathology department, atherosclerosis gets defined as a 'thickening of the blood vessel wall'. Mol demonstrates that the various medical practices relating to atherosclerosis each enact a different version of this object. Based on her ethnographic account of the differing articulations of atherosclerosis, Mol argues for the ontological multiplicity of the disease. According to Mol, objects should rather be understood as having a fragile identity, one which, moreover, may differ between sites. This difference, Mol points out, must not be understood in terms of a fragmentation or pluralist character of objects. They "are more than one but less than many" (Mol, 2002, p. 55). Multiple objects, Mol posits, hang together in specific ways. Mol's ethnography shows how the actors in the hospitals engage in coordination work, which leads her

to the claim that the multiplicity of objects should not be understood as irreducible. This notion of 'coordination work' bears many similarities with the concept of 'modes of ordering' put forward by John Law. In *Organizing Modernity* (Law, 1994), presented this concept as a way to understand 'social order' as something which is performed, rather than given. In this light, Mol's point of the coordination of different versions of an object in practice, can be taken as an 'ontologisation' of the question of social order. Earlier I mentioned that, in addition to the philosophical justification, an important inspiration to apply the principle of multiplicity, came from multiperspectival novels and short stories. It is argued for instance by Boje (2001), Czarniawska (1999), Linstead (2000) and Rhodes and Brown (2005) that social sciences in general and organisation theory in particular can profit from parallels and analogies with fiction literature.

To summarise, from Bakhtin's writings, I derive both the concept of heteroglossia and the notion that heteroglossia is an operation. Seeing the congruence between Bakhtin's heteroglossia, and the idea of the heteroglossic organisation (Rhodes, 2001), I'm not inclined to fully accept the consequences of the concept. With reference to Boje's Tamara metaphor, I really don't think that we have 12 to the power of 12 variations, meaning 479,001,600 possible story lines. There is an important role in store for the narrator. Interesting in this respect, is the fact that Bakhtin in his work, in which he studied the work of Dostoevski, claimed that narration in Dostoevsky is always without perspective, as is the case in the novel *The possessed*. Some critics regard the narrator in this novel as a peripheral figure. Others have pointed at the importance of rumour in the novel, and that the narrator's pathos lies in his attempts to orientate himself as objectively as he can amidst the morass of gossip, which he attempts to sift and organise into a causal chain of events. Yet others have ignored the narrator altogether, or else regarded his role as so transparently conventional as to allow his views to stand for those of the omniscient author. Gene Moore (1985) notes that if such discrepancies suggest an unresolved problem, they may also be taken as a tribute to the subtle discretion of a narrator so unobtrusive as to be easily overlooked. In Moore's reading, the voice of common rumour is like a chorus on the periphery. The narrator frequently presents himself as a chronicler of local public opinion, as a questioner of characters, as an informant and as a pedagogue or armchair philosopher explaining events in socio political terms. From this I gather that, with regard to heteroglossia or antenarrativity, the pre-Sophoclean Greek theatre would be a better metaphor than Boje's Tamaraland. From Polanyi I take his ideas about the emergence of coherence, shared practices and personal perspectives and as the core to all this, the concept of indwelling. From Latour I borrowed both the ethnographic research strategy and I was inspired by his ideas about multiplicity. Latours's text are a joy to read, and therein

lies the problem. Aramis, for instance, is a well plotted multiperspective novel-report. In other words, a large part of the labour of assembling the text is not left to the reader. I follow Barthes' critique, in this, that it is still a readerly rather than a writerly text (Barthes, [1982] 1985)¹³³. From Law, and more in particular from Mol, I extracted the idea of 'coordination' work that should be done between actors and audiences. This also concurs with the role that I see for the narrator.

Through a multiperspectival approach, I have tried to mediate and illuminate the multidimensionality of, for instance persons, concepts, symbols and narratives. Instead of focusing on an analysis of the different narratives in advance, my intention was to create an opportunity to read different situations and the richness they have to offer.

(2) No hidden mediation is my second principle. Working with my material, trying to construct stories to give voice to the participants in the project, I realised that the perversity of the attempt to give the actors voices meant, at the same time, filtering them. Actually this is what researchers do all the time. And so did I. In writing the narratives of the novel-report, I created something new using my resources and my creative powers (Czarniawska, 1999; Ellis, 2004; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Richardson, 2000). Because of this, I feel morally joined to the text, and bound to reconcile what is observed with what is said, acknowledging my own role as researcher in the construction of the interpretation (see Woolgar, 1988). Earlier in this chapter, I explained the autoethnographic nature of this study. Drawing on the work of Czarniawska (1999), Ellis (2004), Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) and others, I acknowledged my participation, subjectivity, partiality and contingency, as well as the pluralistic nature of my interpretive observations. Therefore I wanted to be visible in the novel-report. Based on this principle, I searched for a fictional framework that allowed me to write reflexive narratives. The prologue and epilogue, the autobiographical narratives, the narratives wherein I am slightly visible as an observer and the reflexive letters that close this thesis in part II, served that goal.

(3) Acknowledge that the author is 'dead' is the third principle. With my compliance to this principle, I draw on Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault. They both declared the death of the author (Barthes, [1968] 1977; Foucault, 1977). Barthes and Foucault rejected the idea that the author is the origin of something original. The author is the product or function of the writing of the text. The author only exists because of the writing of the text. Barthes considered the external consequences of authorship. In his landmark essay *Death of the author*, Barthes' argued that it is not the author but the reader who does the work and it is the reader that makes the text a great work (Barthes, [1968] 1977). Barthes not only determines the death of the author,

but also celebrates the birth of the reader. In the reader, all interpretive energies are focused. Like Barthes, Foucault examined the idea of the author in his seminal essay *What is an Author?*, Foucault described the process of writing and the question of authorship from the inside. He is concerned with identifying the ideological apparatuses that insist on the author.

Foucault argues that the author is not a source of infinite meaning, but rather part of a larger system of beliefs that serve to limit and restrict meaning. According to him, "the function of an author is to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society". (Foucault, 1977, p. 124). Another function of the author is appropriation. The presence of an author's name gives a certain meaning to a text (Foucault, 1977). For Foucault, the 'author-function' has four main characteristics: "The 'author-function' is tied to legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourses; it does not operate in a uniform manner in all discourses, at all times, and in any given culture; it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a text to its creator, but through a series of precise and complex procedures; it does refer, purely and simply, to an individual insofar as it simultaneously gives rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy" (Foucault, 130-131).

Foucault's work illuminates the ways in which the reader or responder - whether student, teacher, critic, or citizen - is as much a construct as the 'author'. Although Foucault didn't formulate a set of 'reader functions', they may be derived from his work (Lunsford, Rickly, Salvo & West, 1995).

For Barthes, writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. "Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body of writing" (Barthes, [1968] 1977, p. 142). According to Barthes, the writer can only imitate what is anterior, never original. The writer's power is only to mix the writings altogether, not an origin. Barthes emphasises the listener or reader. He indicates that it is the listener or the reader who understands each written word. For Barthes, there is only one place for the multiplicity of writing; that is the reader, not the author. Barthes places emphasis on the destination, not the origin. He says that "a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination" (Barthes, [1968] 1977, 148). Therefore, it is the reader who gives a future for a text, because it is the reader who consumes the text. It is the reader who can make the most of it.

With the acknowledgement of the death of the author, I strive to open the text to the reader and his set of reading strategies, with no regard to any authority of the author. The death of the author empowers the reader because there is no proper way of reading, established by the author-

researcher. Corresponding to his proclamation of *The Death of the Author*, Barthes insists, “the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text” ([1970] 1974, p. 4). The aspiration of this dissertation is that it is the reader who situates the narratives in the novel-report, the theoretical chapters and the reflexive letters, it is the reader who connects the case to his own knowledge and above all it is the reader who completes the analytical work.

(4) Put a great effort into touching the reader was the fourth principle. In writing the case, I found myself truly dedicated to the creation of a text with which the reader could connect with. I tried to find a personal approach to combine research and literary techniques (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). I attempted to create a novel-report that would engage readers in the same way a novel engages readers in a plot. I wanted my readers to think about the thorny, knotty, tricky problems at stake (Czarniawska, 1999; Ellis, 2004). To achieve this, I decided to write scenes. I didn’t fragment the text into vignettes based on theoretical topics, but I did try to write (ante)narratives from different but recognisable perspectives. The ambition was to provide space for different voices, but further trigger those voices to emancipate themselves. If readers can connect to the text, it might throw a different light on their own situation. Through the stylistic handling of the data, the uncovering, unraveling detective work is done. I tried to dramatise the scenes to connect readers to the text, but I tried not to plot the scenes. I might have got it wrong. But I take that risk. I take it because I think it’s necessary and it’s worthwhile. It was necessary because I think as an HRD researcher, I find myself in a position to tell better stories than the actors themselves. This sounds more arrogant than I want to, so I will explain. I think, in my position, I could come up with better ways to represent the stories. I was able to tell better stories because I was able to provide a context for the stories. A context that consists of other stories or a narrative about the things the actors take for granted. I could create an atmosphere. With the resources at my disposal I could construct a kind of frame story from which the different actors can make better sense. It might sound bizarre. But I think that I have taken the actors involved, the frontline workers, more seriously by not reporting straightforwardly, but by creating the narratives the way I did. This was utterly necessary. The way I did it, does justice to their voice and to the quality of their professional lives.

(5) Acknowledgement that the author is not the monopolistic proprietor of knowledge is the fifth principle. Barthes celebration of the reader interpreter connects with this principle. Drawing on Polanyi (1962), I consider that all readers possess relevant and different sources of personal knowledge. In his quest to understand the qualities of concepts from Polanyi’s philosophy, in relation to organising a knowledge intensive firm,

Brohm developed a theatre metaphor¹³⁴ from his reading of Polanyi.

“On the stage, there is a certain setting with actors and theatre requisites. The spotlight indicates the current focus of the play. It shows what is relevant; it creates a foreground, so that the rest of the stage becomes background. The attributes and actors in the background are not important. However, they contribute only in terms of the current focus. This focus, being a particular piece of the entire setting, is established through the use of spotlight, the positioning of the actors, the use of requisites and the story. The director governs the production of a story that is developed through a moving focus, so that parts of the background become foreground and vice versa.

The theatre, in its entirety, represents us as human in our social contexts with our personal histories. The stage corresponds to consciousness. The requisites and actors on the stage represent the impressions on our consciousness. Some of these impressions become part of the play that develops on the stage. They bear on the focus of the play. This focus stands for the focal awareness. Just as in a theatre play the focus is a Gestalt, a coherent whole. At the same time, it is also suggestive of development in the play, just as the content of focal awareness suggests meanings to come and bodily actions to perform.

Then there is the audience. Their laughter, cries, or rumours, even their silence, make them present on stage. Knowing often – if not always – takes place in a social context, whether other people are present, or merely imagined or presumed. (...) The director is the principle that creates meaning on the basis of tacit clues, and that integrates bodily movements into action. A director has particular tendencies in scripting plots, and thus also stands for tendencies in understanding, developing, meaning and performing. He summons memories, clues and movements to fit a focus that he demands. The director stands for a (...) perspective. The director has no complete control over the story” (Brohm, 2005, p. 14-15).

Although Brohm’s theatre metaphor helps me to understand Polanyi’s ideas concerning the dynamics of interplay between tacit and explicit knowledge and my own capacity as director of my own meaning, it doesn’t help me to position myself as the author of a writerly text. Using Brohm’s theatre metaphor, I perceive myself merely as the theatre director. Writing the different stories, the theoretical accounts for my research question, methodology and reflexive closure, I tried to give space for different perspectives. I created a theatre stage, brought in the props and actors, wrote a script and switched on several spotlights. This seems all very readerly. Because I didn’t want to covertly impose my thinking on the case and on the reader, I revealed my motivations and frustrations, my influences and my own ideas and analyses through one of the characters in the novel-report. I sincerely tried to avoid playing God. Therefore, I tried to synchronise my

personal narratives with those of the other actors involved and brought them on to the same level. I was no longer the director. I stepped into the play. I tried to restrain myself with regard to the development of plots, I commented on the original theoretical groundings that I have as an organisational theorist and educationalist and that, together with practice, led to my research question, in my closure I addressed all the different parties, in the form of a letter, which directly implies an invitation to respond. In fact, in my endeavour to write a writerly text, I used the metaphor of the pre-Sophoclean theatre, for which I would like to coin the concept of the 'Organisational learning chorus'. The Organisational learning chorus is a place for the development of professional knowledge in mode 3, it is an event, a face to face encounter or a relation between writer and readers, and it renders speech, meaning "a searching-itself voice which is facing a question, expressing itself from a lived experience, expression of a world rather than a world view" (Moriceau, 2004) in contrast to impersonal language or discourse, "a set of words, where each one has got its own place and its role to play, locked on itself: closed system (...). In a discourse, there is no creation, only iterations of the same system, nearly incantation" (Moriceau, 2004). I think of the organisational learning chorus as an event that contributes to learning, knowledge, production and innovation and to the creation of meaning. It is this that Letiche et al. (2005) describe as the antenarrative of professionalisation.

3.5.2 The researcher as a detective

Through Czarniawska (1999), I came across the format of the detective novel that might offer a convenient framework for the critical, narrative, autoethnographic and multiperspective approach I strived for in my research and a suitable set-up for the case studied. Czarniawska shows that the detective narrative provides a powerful script for organisational inquiry. She draws an analogy between a detective story and an organisation study. "There is a preference for a realistic style dedicated by an interest in social life. They are both built around problem solving in a social context. The narratives are constructed in a similar way: there is something amiss, it is neither clear or obvious what it is (there are many false clues), this 'something' must be explained (the problem must be diagnosed) and - although this is optional in both detective story and organizational studies - the way of solving the problem ought to be prescribed" (Czarniawska, 1999, p. 79). Czarniawska considers the detective novel suitable for organisational research because it offers the possibility of both describing a complex case and the research process. She points out that a detective novel usually consists of two stories. One is the story of the crime which is hidden and mysterious. The other concerns the process of investigation. "It is the story of how knowledge is mobilised in order to reaffirm order over chaos" (Patriotta, 2003, p. 169). The stories are nested in each other and related by

a mechanism of reciprocal disclosure whereby tacit knowledge is first brought to the surface and then concealed again. According to Czarniawska the trope of a detective novel seems not only an appropriate way to represent the events, to reveal the quest to understand learning, but also a way to engage readers. It is a method to draw the readers in the story and, at the same time, offer them an opportunity to keep a distance and to build their own story. To achieve this, it has to be an alluring story. A good example for Czarniawska is Gouldner's Patterns of industrial bureaucracy (Gouldner, 1954), "because it reads like a detective story, it engages and fascinates the reader" (Czarniawska, 1999, p. 85), because it offers language games, the pleasure of an iterative scheme and there is mystery.

2.5.3 Literary inspiration

In the prologue to my novel-report, I showed appreciation for Ryunosuke Akutagawa's famous short story *Yabu no naka* (In a grove) as great inspiration for writing the case (Akutagawa, [1922] 1952). It served as a marvellous example of narrating stories about the shifting views of the same event through different witnesses. It inspired me to develop a similar format for my novel-report. Besides the story of Akutagawa and the cognate motion picture *Rashomon* by Kurasawa, there are many other examples of a multiple perspective approach in literature and the art of motion pictures. Ethnographers like Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), Czarniawska (1999), Ellis (2004) and Richardson (2000) emphasise the importance of literary sources of inspiration. Grounded by theory, but also inspired by works of art, I became convinced that I should pursue a multi perspective approach.

In Part II, chapter 2, I argued that literary work can be more probing than a traditional case study approach. In the creation of the novel-report and its style, I was inspired by the masterpieces of so called hard-boiled fiction¹³⁵ e.g. *The Maltese Falcon* by Dashiell Hammett (1929), *Double Indemnity* by James M. Caine (1936) and *The Big Sleep* by Raymond Chandler (1939). Using elements from the hard boiled style, I could call up the atmosphere of the police world. Czarniawska also likes to borrow from the post modern options in detective fiction, but also from Eco's *Name of the rose* and more contemporary works like Paul Auster's *City of glass*, Patrick Suskind's *Perfume*, Haruki Murakami's *Hard Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* and Jeanette Winterson's *The passion*. For Czarniawska, these novels all "retain the iterative scheme as a reflexive allusion or a pastiche and remake the simple mystery to be straightened out by a clever detective, into the mystery of individual life and social order. At the end, the mystery deepens, if anything, and yet the readers feel richer and wiser, or perhaps just comforted by company" (Czarniawska, 1999, p. 93).

Czarniawska refers to two famous arguments why the form of the detective novel should be taken seriously and not be regarded as useless trash.

The famous author of detective fiction, Raymond Chandler argues that from the point of view of the writer: There are no criteria of absolute loftiness: 'it is always the matter who writes the stuff, and what is in him to write it with (...) there are no dull subjects, only dull minds' (Chandler, 1950, p. 191, cit. by Czarniawska, 1999, p. 80). Umberto Eco, both a famous novelist and a famous social scientist, argues from the point of view of the reader that they earn their appeal thanks to their interactive scheme and relaxing redundancy (Eco, 1979, ref. by Czarniawska, 1999, p. 81). It's somewhat ambiguous when detective stories, aimed at satisfying the need for surprise and the unexpected, are actually valued for their comforting repetitiveness. Czarniawska thinks that redundancy, the iterative scheme and familiar characters can serve as a stabilising frame through which to reach novel insights into the complexity of social life.

Novels by writers with a regular job convinced me that case studies could be done differently and more compellingly. The hard boiled detectives were a source of inspiration in my efforts to create an atmosphere. Other more contemporary and post modern detective novels suggested by Czarniawska helped me to play with fictional tropes and getting disengaged from traditional manners of writing case studies. In addition to the literature suggested by Czarniawska, I searched for other novels and stories about detection. In Samuel Becket's *Molloy*, I found another example of a detection story (Beckett, [1950] 1955). *Molloy* consists of two monologues – that of a bedridden Molloy and that of Moran, a private detective who is sent to find him. In the first half of the novel, the dying Molloy describes how he lost everything, including the use of his legs, on his journey in search of his mother. In the second half, the bureaucrat, Moran, assumes the narrative voice, describing his hunt for Molloy, which leaves him crippled and just as destroyed as his quarry. *Molloy* is a self reflexive story about searching for the self, for truth and for a modern idiom. Yet, another example of a detection story that influenced me and my writing was Mark Haddon's *The curious incident of the dog in the night-time* (Haddon, 2003). This bitterly funny novel is a murder mystery of sorts, told by the autistic fifteen-year-old, Christopher Boone. When his neighbour's poodle is killed and Christopher is falsely accused of the crime, he decides that he will track down the killer. As the mystery leads him to the secrets of his parents' broken marriage, and then into an odyssey to find his place in the world, he must fall back on deductive logic to navigate the emotional complexities of a social world that remains a closed book to him. Christopher takes everything that he sees or is told at face value. He is unable to sort out the strange behaviour of his elders and peers. A last source of inspiration, I want to mention here, was *My name is Red* by the Turkish writer, Öhran Pamuk. Pamuk's novel, in which a brutal murder is investigated, is about art and about daily life. It is an ode to the Ottoman narrative art and a thriller at the same time. 'My Name is Red' speaks

in many voices, some more predominant than others. A dog, a tree, and a horse as well as Death, Satan, and a corpse all make eloquent contributions to the narrative. The setting is Istanbul in the late 1500s- period.

3.6 Closing

Now the research project is finished and I have iteratively developed the narratives and, at the same time, have given the grounds for my approach in theory, I have come to the conclusion that this interpretive ethnography, this scholarly storytelling, the development of an Organisational learning chorus, was, for my purpose, better than alternative methodologies, like the criticised mainstream research, like testing, like alternatives in the proposal for a quasi experimental approach I made in the beginning of the project. Why should I prefer this situation specific, author specific, fallible method, you might ask. A method that asks more questions than it pretends to answer? A method which chief product is a perspectival understanding of the truth created by and constituted in a transient rhetoric (see also Goodall, 1989)? I think ultimately it's better because, in the ethnographic research tradition I find to a far greater extent than in other methods of social science the willingness to admit its own limitations. It proved better for me, because I learned not only about the subject, but was also challenged to develop an alternative approach following my line of critique. It was also remunerative for me because I learned about myself, as a learning person, a (former) frontline worker, an HRD consultant and as a researcher. Because it was so rewarding I don't bother so much about the other side of the coin. This is not to say that the method was better in terms of time management. Ethnographic research and ethnographical writing is extremely time consuming. However, the important issue here is whether I have developed a better method to answer my research question. I think it turned out to be a better method because it is less precise, more open for scrutiny and less likely to be judged by its adherence to a method than for its statements about learning. I think it is better because it deals with the rhetoric of the contingent¹³⁶. I think it is better because it invited me as a writer to deal with, to associate with the various and changing meanings given to (workplace) situations. And I think it is better for the reader because the chosen method leaves space for the reader to develop his or her own thinking about learning, knowledge production and innovation behind the frontline of public service.

4. Corresponding about learning behind the frontline

Ton Bruining, senior adviseur/onderzoeker
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22 November 2005

Prof. Dr. H.K. Letiche
University for Humanistics
PO Box 797
3500 AT Utrecht
The Netherlands

Dear Professor Letiche,

You advised me to play God more. That would be in the spirit of Geertz, you said. We were out on the terrace of your house in the South of France, lingering at the table and I was relishing the memory of the delicious dinner you cooked. It was the last occasion I had, to work a full day with you on my dissertation and that day was coming to an end.

Your pronouncement shocked me. I had difficulties with it. Were you helping me along Geertz's path? Were you advising me to create stronger plots in my novel-report. Or were you just teasing me? I couldn't figure it out at that moment, under the black star-spangled Mediterranean sky.

I was having some difficulty with your verdict. I remember responding to you, that I would find it presumptuous to beat the big drum, as a scholar, from an ivory tower. There is enough divine providence in other modes of HRD research. Forgive me, my tone is bantering. Let me assure you that I appreciate traditional logico-positivistic strategies, interpretive ethnography, action research and so on. Call me a 'Latourian' in this respect, endorsing his irreduction-principle¹³⁷.

Now I'm bound to finish this study and I am writing you this letter to let you know how I want to come to a close in a way that is consistent with my novel-report and my methodological views. But first, let me look back, with you, at the approach I've developed.

Before I started writing my novel-report, we discussed several possibilities of approaching the FIT Police project. Let me recollect the two most elaborated ones. Two years ago, we considered the design of a conceptual model based on the work of Lipsky, Argyris and Schön, Midgley and Jackall. I was already familiar with the theories of Lipsky, Argyris and Midgley. You suggested looking at Jackall's work in addition. Lipsky¹³⁸ studied street-level bureaucracies, such as police forces. He found that street-level bureaucrats have the discretion to be the real policy makers in public

service. Stuck between the public demands and the managerial control, they develop, often very defensive, coping strategies to survive their frantic practice.¹³⁹ Argyris¹⁴⁰ and Schön¹⁴¹, also laid bare the implicitness and defensiveness in organisation. I wanted to adopt their methods because, at the time, I thought their pursuit of explicitness might improve learning practices behind the frontline. Nevertheless, I recall that we both were somewhat reticent, because we both had seen Argyris at work. Steady as a rock with regard to his model and his analyses. You introduced Midgley¹⁴² to me, and recommended him, because of his approach of systemic intervention, using a model of learning based on the inquiry into practice on all levels in the organisation. I think you met him at a conference of critical management studies. Last but not least you pointed at Jackall¹⁴³, because he showed that modern bureaucracies are moral mazes, always trying to get rid of tedious details and to protect the privilege of authority. You also recommended him because of his fieldwork and his adventures in getting entrée.

I felt reluctant to go into model building and decided not to follow that route. That would have led to the conclusions that the FIT Police project was bound to fail because the public wasn't brought into play, new leadership wasn't involved, thinking about police work wasn't made explicit and scrutinised in networks involving all levels and that the project was bound to fail because the project, and especially its project manager, lacked the overt support of the announced leadership, didn't manage to deliver results and the project manager wasn't perceived as a self-controlled, team playing, stylish and protected manager and his macho-look might have dismayed the rising powers.

Next, you stressed the value of the value of the theories of narrating the self. I looked into the work of Polkinghorne¹⁴⁴, McAdams¹⁴⁵ and Holstein and Gubrium¹⁴⁶. Using that line of approach might have brought me to focus more on developing instruments that would have helped frontline workers and managers to develop, interpret and develop stories about themselves, about their professionalism and their contribution to the police organisation and society. But I felt reluctant to use that approach too. I anticipated I would be more beefed up with the instruments than I would be engaged with practice. Moreover, the foreseen method looked far too therapeutic for me.

I am happy that you teamed me up with Steve Brown about 18 months ago. He has been a fantastic listener. He pointed at the value of the different frontline stories and of my own story struggling with the frontline project. He made me aware of the beauty of messy practice and encouraged me to concentrate on writing the stories first. He has been a fantastic and wide read guide. After I had finished the stories, he set me of on a voyage of discovery, with a few hint references to literature. The key was his advice to read Barthes' seven page long essay 'Death of the author'¹⁴⁷.

For the rest, you were rather reticent about your recent work and I tried to resist the temptation to play up to your current work. You carefully withheld the proofs of your latest books, for instance, about leadership. But we can't ignore the fact that you have been my teacher since 1982.

With reference to the work of Bakhtin¹⁴⁸, Polanyi¹⁴⁹, Latour¹⁵⁰ and Mol¹⁵¹, I developed a web of multi-interpretations. Doing this, I didn't chose to negate myself as a right-minded person, as an HRD specialist, or as an ethnographic researcher, but, at the same time, I tried to break away from researcher-bound interpretation. I didn't want to bootstrap limited knowledge to complete knowledge¹⁵². On the contrary, with pleasure I wanted to confess to the inescapable partiality implied by narrative construction of reality. To overcome this inevitability, I follow Barthes¹⁵³ and Czarniawska¹⁵⁴ and celebrate my readers.

I hope that you and all the other readers have enjoyed my novel-report. I created it from all the material I gathered and with all the creative powers I have. I tried to develop a fictional trope. I sought inspiration in novels (especially novels of detection), but that doesn't make me a virtuosic writer. Furthermore, all the characters that I staged are based on real persons. It was also my choice to limit the *mise-en-scène* to the Think tank of the FIT Police project. That is why other characters, that one might have expected, are hardly present in my novel-report, simply because I hardly saw them.

I imagine that all those who gave audience to my novel-report - my critics and my supervisors, my fellow-scholars and the HRD community, everybody involved with the Moorland Regional Police Force and the rest of my readership - have done their own 'bracketing' based on the material I have come out with. I suppose that you and all the readers have built their own ideas about what has happened in the case and can draw their own conclusions about what should be appropriate conduct of all those involved in learning projects like FIT Police. That's the way I wanted it.

To conclude, I decided not to come up with another framework to be added to the gallery of HRD models. I decided to stay congruent with my critique on the model dominated character of mainstream HRD research. Nor did I develop a new panacea for learning behind the frontlines of public service. I put aside the suggestion to focus on the development of a narrative instrument as an efficacious agent to facilitate the learning of frontline workers. Let alone trying to follow in your footsteps. Regarding the latter, it is not surprising though, that my work resonates with your recent studies concerning workplace learning, narrative and professionalisation¹⁵⁵ in which you draw on the narrative theories of the same authors I came across, mainly because of your teachings of course. For my part, I wanted to make a difference within the Dutch HRD community, with a critical, narrative and ethnographic approach.

In the end I did come up with the metaphor of the *Acient*, pre-Sophoclean Greek theatre to think about narrative professionalisation. This form of theatre stages actors, public and narrator as participants. I called it the Organisational learning chorus. I think it resembles Wengers's communities of practice approach¹⁵⁶, but other then Wenger I'm not inclined towards further theorising about the concept. Moreover I think it's less chunky and discontinuous than Boje's *Tamara-land*, I hope that frontline organisations might persuaded to engage in this kind of narrative professionalisation. I like to muse about what would happen if managers, HRD professionals, frontline workers and

academics for their part, would subscribe. A nasty dream would be that somebody asked me to focus on the method and explore and unravel the technicalities of the Organisational learning chorus and to give lectures about it.

Because I'm well aware that this is an academic dissertation, I offered both a theoretical and methodological account for my approach, in addition to my novel-report. I chose to complete this academic quest with a series of reflexive letters. This being the first one.

Next to this letter, I will write letters to all the actors who performed in my novel-report. Furthermore, I will also write to the chief constable of the Moorland police force, to generate some ideas to improve the conditions for learning, knowledge production and innovation within the corps and to emancipate and empower the frontline workers. In addition to addressing key figures in my novel-report, I want to address my manager. She is interested in the development of knowledge about learning, and supported this study. Finally, I want to write to Michael Lipsky whose street-level bureaucracies formed the anacrusis to my research.

At the end of the day, I am fortunate that it was possible for me to undertake this quest. The value was that I developed an inquisitive eye, lost some of my naiveté, without becoming a cynical nihilist. I think it has been a worthwhile effort to contribute to the development of a critical approach to HRD studies. Last but not least, I hope it will contribute to HRD practices in frontline organisations and that the frontline workers and, at the end of the line, the public will profit.

Thank you for being a wonderful narrator in the writerly theatre of DBA.

Yours sincerely,
Ton Bruining

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22 November 2005

Department of the Interior
Mrs. D. Ibsen
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Dear Mrs. Ibsen,

I hear that you work for the home office now and that you've thrown yourself into local politics for the social democratic party. I think that I have some reflections concerning the FIT Police project that might be of interest to you as a policy making official and local politician. I gather from your unremitting passion for the FIT Police project, that you are still striving to improve police work and public safety. Therefore I boldly write you this letter to give you my reflections on what happened, what - to my opinion - your role in the process was and what can be done next time to develop learning practices of frontline workers.

A few years have passed since we worked together on the FIT Police project. I'm very happy that you, at that time, facilitated my research project. A lot has happened, since we managed to get a subsidy to study the FIT Police project (of course you want to correct me now, because officially you applied for the subsidy and Moorland got the grant). We have experienced the start up of the FIT Police project, we enjoyed its heyday and we saw that the project was coming to close. You changed jobs just before the FIT Police project was stopped. Although it wasn't endorsed, it gave me great satisfaction to work with you on a proposal for the prolongation of the FIT Police Project, just before you left.

Now I have finished my novel-report and started reflecting upon the case of the FIT Police, many personal and professional understandings emerge. Of course not all my insights are new. Before I go on, I would like to declare that while I was observing the project, I kept many reflections and insights to myself. I did that because my offer to become actively involved was declined and subsequently I tried to restrict myself to the role of researcher. In retrospect, this brought some ethical disquiet upon me. I observed things, that in my view, could have been done better. Although I often thought that the facilitation of the FIT Police project could have been done more professionally, I chose not to interfere. I saw that things went wrong, but I didn't intervene. I talked about my reflections in the corridors, but otherwise, I restrained myself. In hindsight, I doubt

whether the position I took, was right. It was like watching a patient suffer, drawing attention to it, but without actually offering professional aid.

In many ways I appreciated the FIT Police project, but, as I said, there is also criticism from my part. I don't want to be blunt, but I don't intend to beat about the bush.

My criticism is not meant to offend you, but to improve learning practices.

As is probably still your ambition as well.

Let's go back to 2001. Because of you and other 'project haulers', the FIT Police project took off dynamically. Some of the subprojects were realised. Mostly those initiated by management. It seemed to me that you were always very concerned with the prosperity of the project. I remember the worries you and Claire had regarding the village politics of the district commanders. We spoke about the imperviousness of this management layer and how Alex failed to play politics successfully.

I remember you as well organised and as a thorough planner. I imagine you contributed much to the project organisation, the staffing of the support group and the smooth organisation of meetings, excursions, and conferences. You were also very engaged with the development of the Think tank as a team, using all kinds of HRM instruments. And you were praised by the Think tankers for your role as coach.

On the whole, frontline workers felt that they were involved with innovative work. However, they regretted that they hardly got a chance to bring about success with their own ideas. Nevertheless, from the beginning, you stressed the imperative of the learning organisation and the potency of frontline workers. I wished we could have done more work on creating learning situations for these frontliners. Meetings and conferences got bogged down in gratifying guests, giving space to glamorous facilitators, pep talks by managers, exchanging information and planning the communication of success. Many learning events were isolated from the project. Besides individual coaching, training courses were provided and delivered by different suppliers, and peer consultation was organised (by me) for motivated members of the Think tank.

These learning events were organised by the FIT Police project and were not attuned to the HRD policy of the Regional Police Force. It often surprised me how you and Claire had analyses of everything. The structure, politics and culture of the organisation, the behaviour of management, staff and executive police on all levels, the progress of projects. And it was striking how the students on work placement all recited the mantra of changing the organisation on a journey-by-trekking. By observing the project on many occasions, I felt on a planned journey, reading a book about trekking. Eventually, the FIT Police project had to give up her double agenda. The ambitious quest to change the culture was abandoned and the project focussed on the creative improvement of work processes. After 30 months, the project came to an end. You tried to save the project. A bureaucratic solution was proposed but it failed. Meanwhile we made a desperate attempt to reshape the project into a community of practice, facilitated as an HRD project. But, as it turned out, that wasn't a realistic proposition, either. Our proposition was rejected by the corps management.

At the outset of the project your enthusiasm triggered me. But soon I felt that there wasn't much space in the FIT Police project plans to fit in my expertise. And more seriously, I felt that the police-officers didn't get enough opportunities, stimulation and facilitation to bring forward their thoughts about policing in general and to analyse the response they got with Think tank projects in their operational practice. It seemed to me that this was caused by the fascination for instruments, renowned guests and a polished programming. It looked as if the frontline workers had to be showered with overhead sheets, egos of guests and an overload of project ideas. It felt as though there were a bundle of tour guides – a project manager, two project leaders, a communication advisor - and assistants – secretaries, students, a consultant/researcher, ready to lead the trekking.

In hindsight, I think that more effort should have been put into playing politics, connecting with the worlds of other players such as the district commanders, the HRM departments and last but not least the frontliners and their street-level networks. Now many of the involved had the idea they were in a war. With Alex as the warlord, the support team providing plans of attack and the Think tank worrying about propaganda. In addition, I perceived a lot of modelling, planning, engineering and researching. The support group was backed-up by a battery of students in business management. Nevertheless, many models and research reports remained unused or – with the trekking metaphor as most important example – were (forgive me) amateurishly used. I imagine that the project could have done with less blueprinting. I observed a strategic HRM concept concerning the building of a Think tank team, and the training and development of individual members. More effort to integrate this approach with the existing organisation could have been worthwhile. As an HRD specialist, I missed clear, though reserved, facilitation strategies of the learning events. Finally, I think the project would have benefited if more space was given to the ideas of the Think tankers and other frontline workers and if the resistance that the FIT Police project and its project manager aroused would have been discussed on different levels.

If both the possibilities and the multiplicity of different learning and change practices would have been acknowledged, and thin practices would have been tended, then the organisation and the individual learners might have benefited. To continue with the war-metaphor, I seemed to have developed just now, the organisation was more in need of liaison officers, instructors and medics, than it was in need of advance commanders or engineers.

If I may give you an advice for your future involvements with promoting learning, innovation and change, then I suggest that you keep your plans in mind but that you go easy on trying to blueprint your environment. Furthermore I think that your environment can benefit from your interest in human development as long as you don't try to 'colonise' them with your plans. In addition, you might want to put more effort into integrating learning events, creating rich learning environments and providing open

space for learning from within. Finally, as you are in local politics these days, you might also want to engage yourself in organisational politics.

Although it is well considered, I'm aware that my plain criticism may sound harsh. Nevertheless it was given in good concern and I hope you find some use in my feedback to improve your managerial qualities.

On balance, I want to repeat that I can also criticise my own performance. I chose to be only slightly more than a fly on the wall, and truly I regret that. I think we could have all benefited if I had behaved as a Socratic gadfly.

Yours sincerely,
Ton Bruining

Ton Bruining, senior adviseur/onderzoeker
Postbus 482
5201 AL 's Hertogenbosch

22 november 2005

Urbanville Regional Police Force
Commissioner A. Vaharam
PO Box 2916
4545 ST Urbanville
The Netherlands

Dear Mr. Vaharam,

Are you interested in some reflections that might help you to become a more effective manager in inspiring frontline learning? I have some for you, based on my research of the FIT Police project. 'That comes too late in the day', I hear you think. Years have past, others presented there evaluation reports and you have moved on. But I also got to know you as a manager who wants to reflect, and who really wants to improve police work. I'm convinced that you take advantage of my critical reflection, based on a profound case study.

Let me take it from the beginning. It is four years since you offered me the opportunity to study the FIT Police project. I remember the first time we met. You came climbing out of the lift shaft. You made an indelible impression, whether or not I caricatured my first encounter with you. Following that first meeting, I got to know you as a visionary, driven and ambitious policeman. You had yourself nicknamed Chief commissioner action man. But what has become of all that action? Sadly, only a few projects were realised, many ran aground and most of the projects never took off. I heard that a colourful booklet meant to hand over the results of the FIT Police project to the coppers of the force was never distributed. I have seen an official quality report wherein the project seemed to be hushed up. The Think tankers are back in there unit. Apparently the MD committee denies that the project yielded significant learning experiences. Potentials like Bert, Felix and Bob have to go through the MD programme from the start. That must have stung you. And didn't it bother you that many of the personnel involved in the FIT Police project seemed to have profited career-wise, except the frontline coppers?

A sharp contrast with the collapse of the FIT Police project, is the glamorous image you have built of yourself. I have read articles about chief commissioner action man in the newspaper. Recently I heard a newsreader on the radio mention your transfer to another police force. And you managed to get on television. The leader of the government party was all ears when you revealed your vision on police work in a talk show.

Now, what can you do to become a more effective manager stimulating frontline learning? To improve your actions, you can evaluate projects like the FIT Police project and your role in them, in a 1001 ways. You could use the EFQM model for quality evaluation. The Moorland corps leadership used that method (Perhaps not surprisingly, they kept the FIT Police project under wraps). You can look at the project with Swierenga's planned journey and trekking metaphor you liked to use (I did that, and saw the paradox of planned journey to get trekking). You can use systems thinking, like many champions of the learning organisation do, to analyse the fit between a learning project like FIT Police and the existing organisation (But if you misread the results, like the FIT Police project team did, you come up with perpetuating bureaucratic proposals). Or you can convene a leadership conference, mobilise all the managers and create an open space to discuss an issue at hand, like learning (Recently Moorland had his traditional conference. First line managers wanted to have an opportunity to raise their issues. Unfortunately different policy makers saw it as an opportunity to discuss their new plans and dominated the agenda). But will these undertakings and analyses help you to become a better manager, builder of a learning organisation, facilitator of professionalisation, teaching coppers. Perhaps they might.

An alternative way of finding clues to become a better manager is to look back at the poetics of your situation in Moorland. On the scene, we had both your glamorous appearance as police chief and ambitiously started, but soon faltering and collapsing, FIT Police project. Based on your ideas about changing the nature of police work, you pumped an alternative rhetoric into the organisation. Like many others, in the beginning, I was rapped with your speeches, your pep-talks and your one-liners. While you pursued your fated way, others began to feel that the anecdotes, metaphors and incantations were completely inappropriate. Perhaps you were right in your vision. But it seemed that you failed to respond to many warnings you have received. Right from the start, there was overt resistance of the district commanders. Your project leaders urged you to play it smoothly. The Think tankers, for their part, told many anecdotes about the stubborn, unruly practice. Was it your pride or overwhelming self-confidence, that led you to disregard these warnings? That inescapable made you a tragic hero? With the potential for greatness, but doomed to fail, Aristotle proclaims!

When the project was stopped, you said that you were left out in the cold by the corps leadership and that you were deliberately sabotaged by your fellow commanders. You even concluded that the closure of the project was premeditated murder. Undoubtedly you were in a situation that you couldn't win. Tragic for a manager of your calibre. Lucky for you that you could go off. That you could avoid becoming a tragic figure. Not because the FIT Police project they planted on you, was assassinated. But because you accidentally killed it yourself. Probably your transfer came in time and though you became a fallen hero, you might win a moral victory, and your (breakthrough) spirit might live on.

Now, what can you do to prevent the scenario of the tragic hero next time? Moreover, what can you, as a leader, do to make sure that the frontliners in public service will rise to the problems in our society.

Management gurus like Collins and Porras¹⁵⁷ and Rushkoff¹⁵⁸ preach modesty. Organisations don't need timetellers, charismatic leaders with great visions or heroic narratives. Organisations do need clockmakers, unpretentious leaders, who will help their employees to reconnect with their own core competencies and passions. Perhaps they have a point. But knowing your extravert character you might gain more from a few 'guiding principles for glamorous managers'.

- 1 Become a peacemaker instead of a warlord. Instead of losing time, money and energy with propaganda, the organisation can benefit from dialogue.
Learn from Socrates.
- 2 Seek mutual adjustment with other parties in the organisation. Acknowledge the multiplicity of things and organise communications between stakeholders.
Learn from Pasteur.
- 3 Don't dominate management meetings, conferences, learning projects and safe havens like the Think tank with your own thinking. Allow a myriad of perspectives, strive for participation. Learn from Polanyi.
- 4 Make sure that privileged, delicate, fragile learning networks engage in learning instead of getting stuck in rhetoric. Learn from HRD practitioners.
- 5 Be true to your message. Let the frontline workers think for themselves.
Learn from the frontline workers.
- 6 Don't underestimate the power structure. Learn from Jackall.

Alex, I'd like to wind up by saying that, above all, I see you as a very passionate copper, and I would be happy to discuss this letter with you anytime. To explore the teachings of Socrates, the success of Pasteur, the use of Polanyi's philosophy in knowledge intensive organisations, the state of the art of HRD theory, and reflect on powerplay in organisations. In the meantime I wish you all the best innovating police work.

Yours sincerely,

Ton Bruining

PS. I hereby enclose a summary I made of Robert Jackall's work. It is more than twenty years old. Nevertheless, I think it's still very topical.

Moral Mazes

Robert Jackall

Moral Mazes by Robert Jackall is an in-depth study and sociological analysis of managerial ethics. Jackall's work is based on extensive field work among managers at every level of three organisations, a chemical company, a textile firm and of a public relations agency. Jackall met a lot of problems starting his research, because 36 corporations turned down his request to study ethics on their premises. He had to play it cleverly. He devised, for instance, a project description that would sound acceptable to a CEO. He found his way into a chemical company that encouraged him to study the effect of chlorofluorocarbon regulation on corporate practices. Jackall got a crash course in chemistry and he was soon inside the corporate doors, asking questions about ethics. Jackall reported his findings in an article for the Harvard Business Review and later in a book, both titled Moral Mazes (Jackall, 1983; 1988).

In his book, Jackall takes the reader inside the intricate world of the corporation. He reveals a world where hard work does not necessarily lead to success, but where sharp talk, self-promotion, powerful patrons, and sheer luck might. A world where people are played off against each other, written documents don't resemble the tangled, ambiguous, and verbally negotiated transactions that they purportedly represent, feudal conditions prevail and relations between superiors and inferiors, between persons and groups are extremely important. A world in which an optimistic belief reigns that you can come away unscathed from reprehensible behaviour.

Jackall's case study shows that the corporate managers he studied, primarily focus on the moral 'rules-in-use', developed in their social setting to facilitate their own survival and success. These rules nurture the rampant growth of pragmatism, flexibility and cynicism that takes its toll on group loyalty. By conforming them to their social settings actual moral rules-in-use, managers seemed to bracket other moral considerations, removing such considerations as a potential obstacle to illegal or immoral behaviour. According to Jackall, a central problem of contemporary, large corporations is the separation of the individual from the consequence of her actions. In a large corporation, an individual often cannot see the difference it makes to short change quality or even to cheat, because he will not get caught.

Jackall didn't want to offer programmes for reform, nor did he offer tips on how to find one's way on the fast track to managerial success. He rather wanted to write an account of how managers think the world works.

Nevertheless in his 1983 article there is a paragraph on success and failure. In this paragraph Jackall claims that from the research he had done in different concerns, he could derive five criteria that seem to control a person's ability to rise in middle and upper middle management.

In ascending order they are:

- 1 Appearance and dress;
- 2 Self control;
- 3 Perception as a team player;
- 4 Style;
- 5 Patron power.

Nevertheless it's important that people now and again 'hit the numbers' and meet performance criteria.

Jackall argues that the bureaucratic 'ethic' governing managerial practice is self-interest: protecting one's derriere and furthering one's career. With a straightface, managers mask intense competition in a world where people hide their intentions, and accountability often depends on the ability to outrun mistakes. Jackall found that organisational life is a maze, a thicket of never-ending jockeying for status and position. A festering growth of euphemisms, cheap excuses and opportunism. Jackall provides a glossary of job-performance-evaluation speak, in which "quick thinking" means "offers plausible excuses," and "requires work-value attitudinal readjustment" means "lazy and hardheaded".

Jackall concludes by arguing that bureaucratic ethic breaks apart substance from appearances, action from responsibility, and language for meaning. Most important, it breaks apart the older connection between the meaning of work and salvation. In the bureaucratic world, one's own success, one's own sign of election, no longer depends on one's own effort and on an inscrutable God but on the capriciousness of one's superiors and the market; and one achieve economic salvation to the extent that one pleases and submits to one's employer and meets the exigencies of an impersonal market.

Jackall, R. (1983) Moral mazes: Bureaucracy and managerial work.
Harvard Business Review, 61 (5), pp. 118-130.

Jackall, R. (1988) Moral mazes: The world of corporate managers.
New York: Oxford University Press.



Ton Bruining, senior adviseur/onderzoeker
Postbus 482
5201 AL 's Hertogenbosch

22 November

Moorland Regional Police Force
Bert Kemp
PO Box 1007
2800 NC Moordam
The Netherlands

Dear Bert, George, Felix – and the others,

How are you all? As you perhaps know, I am still speaking to my contacts within the Moorland police force. It has come to my ears that most of you have returned to your units, that some of you have been admitted to the Management Development programme and that one or two of you are charged with a special project. I write to you all freely, because I felt involved with the FIT Police project and with all you coppers involved. I hope you don't mind my doing so.

I still have a lot of questions on my mind which that I will put to you.
In return, I will always gladly oblige you with a suitable response to your questions.

First, I'm curious to learn, in hindsight, what you have left from your participation in the project, whether you use the lessons learned in the project, and which of the breakthrough insights, experiences and skills come in handy in your work nowadays.

Second, I'm also very interested in the appreciation you get in the organisation for your breakthrough experiences. I know, for instance, that Bert started to feel competent and efficacious because of what he learned as project leader of the boorline and I was told that he was proposed for promotion. But I also learned that the MD committee didn't seem to acknowledge the Boor line experience and enrolled him in the official management course. I heard that Felix is now a temporary first line manager. I wonder what he – as one of the champions of the FIT Police project – thinks about the stagnant Eye-catcher project. And George, what happened to you and all the others?

Third, I'm curious to learn if the organisation appreciates whatever values you gained for the FIT Police project. Because I'm confused about that. On the one hand, when the FIT Police project was stopped, management announced that the breakthrough ideas were incorporated and secured in the organisation's processes. On the other hand, I heard from several of you that almost all the projects that were handed over by the FIT Police project organisation were abandoned or came to a stand still.

Finally, of course, I want to know if you still foster the breakthrough spirit or that you have added it to your list of management fads. When I visited one of the police stations in Moordam recently, I saw that the posters were still up. Are they just a funny pictures of the problems in the frontline of police work, are they a silent protest against shutting down the FIT Police project, or do they indicate that the breakthrough spirit is still alive in your ranks?

Finally, after all's said and done, I have some observations I want to share with you.

Many of you resisted or were opposed to doing FIT Police work, perhaps even sabotaged it. This popped up in questionnaires you filled in, interviews I had and it sometimes was discussed in the Think tank, but that always led to a discussion about covenants, the importance of a road show by the project leaders or another communication project. It struck me that you never discussed together how to break through the resistance in your direct environment, how the FIT Police project might emancipate you.

In every respect it was surprising for me that only 15% wanted to participate in a peer consultation project. I'm inclined to think that this is a signal that the majority of you only paid lip-service to the breakthrough concept.

Behind the scenes, I often heard that the FIT Police project was worthwhile because, through the FIT Police network, you escape the grind, you could discuss police matters with people from units you otherwise don't encounter. And you could not only inform each other and swap ideas informally, but also start cooperation throughout the network. In the evaluation this hardly came across. All the attention seemed to go to (the absence of) project results. Wasn't it so that many of you, off the record, said that you perceived the Think tank as an open space to think about police work differently, and that that was the real and invaluable result of FIT Police. Why didn't the Think tank insist on a dialogue with the corps leadership to preserve the Think tank as an established learning community? Your reconciliation might be perceived as a signal that the majority of you only paid lip-service to the breakthrough concept.

I was flabbergasted that when many of you met ignorance, resistance and even sabotage - not only by your colleagues, but many of the direct chiefs indulged in this - communication was left to Bob and Claire, who went on a road show. Why didn't you fight that together, why did another brochure become the next project? That sounds like falling harder on deaf ears. Why didn't assertiveness 'at home' become a project? Was it because Alex repeatedly stressed that you shouldn't pay attention to obstructionists and troublemakers (and wasn't that the treatment he got himself)? Or must this passivity once more be perceived as a signal that the majority of you only paid lip-service to the breakthrough concept?

In the end, I found it curious that almost all of you kept repeating Alex's mantras. One of them was 'don't invest in obstructionists'. Meanwhile you had to deal with so called

obstructionists all day. Alex's one-liners were never discussed. My guess is that you were overwhelmed by his powerful rhetoric, took it for granted or took it with a pinch of salt. My next guess is that the absence of a dialogue about his one-liners obstructed learning. Why didn't anybody gag him? Or is this another signal that the majority of you only paid lip-service to the breakthrough concept?

Okay, I know this is confronting and I know that there is still a number of frontline coppers in your regional corps that want to improve learning practices, creating a knowledge base to find new ways to do police work and innovate police practice. So I think that, despite the fact that corps management locked up the FIT Police experience, the spirit is out there.

Subscribing to the view that the frontline workers play an important role in the innovation of police work, endorsing the idea that professionalising frontline workers is required to develop their own learning strategies, I want to encourage those frontliners despite the notion that the organisation might be a dangerous maze.

I wish all those frontline learners a safe trekking.

Kind regards,
Ton Bruining

Ton Bruining, senior adviseur/onderzoeker
Postbus 482
5201 AL 's Hertogenbosch

22 November 2005

Moorland Regional Police Force
Mrs. Commissioner C. Thomas
PO Box 1007
2800 NC Moordam

Dear Mrs. Thomas,

You're an intriguing woman. I would like to explain my bold assertion. Furthermore I have some questions for you.

In 2001 you joined the Moorland police force to become a project leader in the FIT Police project.

What astonished me, while I was writing about a story about the FIT Police project from different views was the unwearingly zeal the FIT Police project team displayed while, for some, it must have been a disastrous plan from the beginning. I gather that you were among those realists. You saw the impenetrable, the inscrutable and hard to circumvent management layers. You seemed to read Alex like a book. And you assessed the limited competencies of many of the frontline workers. All the same, for more than to years you were a champion of the breakthrough concept. It seemed that you kept hammering on management doors, continued talking round Alex to change his style, and were unwearingly looking after problematic projects and caring for the frontline workers involved.

The FIT Police project came to an end. It wasn't a celebrated success. Many pointed at the disappointing results in terms of successful implemented and effective innovative projects. Few pointed at the benefits in terms of the learning of frontliners. Nevertheless, you were a success. You climbed up the career ladder. Your star has been rising despite the FIT Police project. You moved from the old squad cinema, via a deserted office building and Alex's desk to where you are now. It seems as if, after Alex's transfer, you could pull out the FIT Police project just in time. Nowadays, you reside only 15 metres away from the chief constable's office. What's the secret of your success?

Another thing that amazed me was the way the FIT Police project team and management handled the results of the research done by themselves, the interns and by me. It seems to me that the findings of the interns were distorted in a bureaucratic proposal that would suit the management in control at that time. I know that there were meetings to discuss the findings of the interns and myself, but I missed an overall reflection to learn from the various insights, to create a perspective of continuously improving police work together. Imagine that the Moorland force is a hospital, and you

were charged with the Patient Service Department. What would you think of a team of medical specialists, like cardiologists, internists, surgeons, radiologists, lab assistants, nurses and pathologists that didn't interpret their findings to cure atherosclerotic patients? What if they concealed, misused or transformed their results to their own liking?

Recently I've read an article by Robert Jackall about the pyramidal politics in organisations. Jackall contends that being successful requires results, of course. It was obvious that the FIT Police project Team and the Think tankers were well aware of that. But Jackall also argues that for successful managers, it is important to be perceived as a well groomed, self controlled, team playing, stylish and protected by a patron. Why did Alex, although he seemed to have sensed the danger of the project, engage in the project passionately? And if his senses were correct, why didn't he listen to your good advice playing politics? I can't imagine that he was so naïve as to underestimate the power play, to overplay his hand, to walk into the sharp blades of his opponents. Reminiscing, I sometimes suspect that he produced his own swan song. What do you think of that?

I hope one of these days we can discuss my, perhaps confronting, observations. You are a scholar yourself and you always have come across as a police manager interested in the nature, the difficulties and the challenges in frontline work and the embeddedness of frontline work in the bureaucratic organisation.

Meanwhile I wish you all the best with your assignments as manager from the policy department to improve police work, and I hope you, in good spirit, can build on the achievements of the FIT Police project

Yours sincerely,
Ton Bruining

Ton Bruining, senior adviseur/onderzoeker
Postbus 482
Hertogenbosch

22 November 2005

Moorland Regional Police Force
Mr. Bob Gabriel
PO Box 1007
2800 NC Moordam

Dear Bob,

On top of all the informal chats we had, I have some observations and questions for you.

You must know that I regarded you as one of the champions of the FIT Police project. You were always present in the Think tank, not only physically but also with your common sense. You never got tired of expressing your astonishments, making your analyses, brainstorming about bold ideas and developing implementation strategies. On several occasions we talked about the FIT Police and evaluated the breakthrough process and its results.

When Alex and Deirdre left, Claire moved up the hierarchy, the Think tank disintegrated, the interns finished their project and the FIT Police project seem to founder, you stayed at the helm and took over the project leadership. You devoted yourself to the legacy of the FIT Police project. You supported the idea to transform the blueprinted FIT Police project into a loosely coupled network of professional frontline workers, managers and policy makers. That proposal, to which I contributed myself, didn't make it in the aftermath of the FIT Police project. Meanwhile you were zealously occupied in transferring the FIT Police projects and projects ideas to the organisation, consulting managers about the nature and background of the project and supporting networks that seemed to take an interest in the sometimes orphaned projects. Furthermore, you ardently tried to save some kind of police network. You proposed reducing the FIT Police project to a small, almost undercover unit, ready to stand by innovative ideas, stalking – as you expressed it- the whereabouts of innovative ideas, connecting people in the field and consulting managers, at their demand or to your liking. Although it often appears as though you are fighting a losing battle, you don't seem to give up. Despite that fact, you're not unaware of the politics in bureaucracy. Recently, I understood that your return to the drug squad was made undone and you were commissioned with a specific innovation project concerning multi-offenders. Now the organisation has got rid of the breakthrough concept it seems that you have developed a discretionary space to keep up your professional and innovative habitus.

So far my regard for your outlook on the innovation of police work from within and your apparently tireless undertaking efforts. I still have some questions for you.

It struck me that almost all the projects the FIT Police initiated were focused on internal problems, and even when the public was involved, for instance improving the service at reception desks, this was produced as an internal benchmark. I haven't witnessed or heard about forums with the public.

After the FIT Police project were closed you frankly criticised police management for its disregard of frontline initiatives. Have you have ever had a reaction from management on your comments?

I know that you are considering your future career. You told me you are looking at possibilities within the regional police force, in other areas of the Dutch police, or even outside the police. What do you need from the police organisation so that it in return can profit from your drive, your analyses, your provocative plans, your relations and your creativity?

It puzzles me why you keep going against the current. Sometimes I have the idea that you, like a salmon, have to go against the current to be fruitful.

I hope that you carry on your construction work in – or behind the frontline of police work. I hope we can carry on our conversation about improving police work and professionalising frontline workers, I hope that the police organisation will make better use of your thinking power in the future.

I wish you all the best,

Ton Bruining

Ton Bruining, senior adviseur/onderzoeker
Postbus 482
5201 AL 's Hertogenbosch

22 November 2005

Iris Samson
325 Sparrowroad
4589 VK Deltacity

Dear Iris,

Your work was an important cue for the improvement of my own work. That's why I write you this letter.

Time has gone by since we had our frequent chats about the FIT Police project, since we talked about the thesis you concluded your internship with, since I interviewed you, and we looked back on the FIT Police project and the campaign you designed. Writing about the images that were made of the FIT Police project, it has turned out to be an important pursuit in my study into the FIT Police project.

You were not the only one that created, often caricatural images, of the bureaucratic archipelago, jungle or barrier the Moorland coppers were faced with and the challenging horizons that were glimmering. Others, like the project management, the interns, myself, the coppers in the force and the management of the Moorland police force, created images as well. Alex created the image of the Chief commissioner action man.

Cleo Brown used interviews and narrative techniques to picture the isolation of the FIT Police project and then derived organisational schematics from that. Fransesca Cruz produced, on the basis of structured interviews with a questionnaire, an image of the actual and desired situation regarding the vital systems functions. Jacky Tee used a box-model to capture the achievements of the FIT Police project. I, for my part, evaluated the quality of the learning infrastructure with a tested instrument, represented my findings in a histogram, compared it with a series of interviews and diagnosed an undeveloped learning function. For many of the coppers in the force, the project was a blind spot, intended or not, just as it was for the corps leadership.

Now what did I make out of the array of images I had gathered? Images about the FIT Police project that were embedded in stories I have written from different perspectives and pictured in the PR-campaign, the regional and national press, undergraduate and graduate thesis and formal bureaucratic proposals and reports.

My first impression was that there seemed to be hardly any strategy in the development of those images, nor was there any effort to discuss the different images and to create some coherence and alignment, for instance with respect to interventions.

If learning in the workplace, knowledge production in the frontline of public service and successful innovation means creating a network of involved stakeholders, building a sense of community in which, implicitly, ideas are revealed, explained and asserted, then the management of the Moorland force and the FIT Police project has failed to do its job.

Confronting the image-making within the Moorland force with the image-making by, for instance, medical personal, it shows how faddish, amateurish, unwieldy or other-worldly the management approach to learning, knowledge production or innovation can be. The issue is whether efforts to improve the managerial images can lead to transcendental insights. Or do we have to acknowledge that, in organisations, we are chained in Plato's cave? What do you think?

Finally, I thank you for your images about the FIT Police project, they led to a search for other images, and finally to reflections about the FIT Police project and management practices in general.

I hope that you can use my reflections in the future. Who knows, perhaps you will later become in charge of a communication department in a public service firm.

Kind regards,
Ton Bruining

Ton Bruining, senior adviseur/onderzoeker
Postbus 482
5201 AL 's Hertogenbosch

22 November 2005

Moorland Regional Police Force
Mr. F. Wever, Chief Constable
PO Box 1007
2800 NC Moordam
The Netherlands

Dear Mr. Wever,

As you know, I studied the breakthrough project from 2001 until 2004. Now my dissertation is finished. I am very anxious to learn what your reaction is after studying my novel-report and this and other letters. I tried to write frankly and freely about the FIT Police project, I tried to make space for multiple voices within the project and I tried not to simplify the events or to have a verdict about the whole project. I have kept the options open, you might say.

I'm curious if and how it will influence the facilitation of learning practices behind the frontline of public service. Oddly enough, you never asked about my findings on your own accord. I sent you a draft of my stories nine months ago. I remember that your main concern was the appearance of the corps to the outside world. That was a bit disappointing because my consulting company allowed me to study the frontline project for about 80 days. Measured against the current fees of my consulting, this represents a value of about 100,000 euros. And that doesn't take account of my private investments in the research project. I have to admit that I, for my part, was somewhat aloof, because I wanted to offer you a well-considered final draft. When I look back on my project, I think I would have acted otherwise, especially with regard to the outlook I developed upon learning behind the frontline of public service. I might have happily turned it into an interactive event after I had become familiar with police work through ethnographic research. I still would like to offer that service to you, what do you think of that? But before you answer that question, let me take you back to the beginning and offer you some reflections.

I started studying the FIT Police project because I considered it an interesting initiative to improve a frontline organisation, like a Regional Police Force. You gave me a unique opportunity to observe a project meant to develop and innovate police work through the learning of frontline workers, like police constables, receptionists and press officers.

In popular management books and in the literature from organisational science, public administration science and educational science projects like the FIT Police project are

advocated as an important strategy to ameliorate the organisation and its work processes, to establish a professional learning culture, to develop a knowledge base and to provide alternatives for traditional, and often failing training courses. Michel Lipsky¹⁵⁹'s research in the seventies, Argyris¹⁶⁰' research in the eighties and Julian Orr¹⁶¹'s in the nineties have shown that, despite all the work processes designed by management and policy departments, defensive routines flourish and frontline workers are the real policy makers. How do you experience this?

Of course I know that the FIT Police project raised a lot of dust in your organisation. Many saw the project manager as a controversial man. His conduct must have worried you because of the tensions he must have caused in management circles, between departments and in the frontline. Furthermore, the FIT Police project team, its support staff, the exemption of the Think tankers and the additional costs for training and development must have used up a considerable budget. Conversely, the yield of the project portfolio, in terms of successful projects must have disappointed the corps leadership. It surprised me that I didn't find the FIT Police in the annual report of the final FIT Police project year, nor in the quality report that was published about that year, and that the booklet that the Project organisation made wasn't circulated. Why do I get the impression that the project was silenced?

In retrospect, I find that the FIT Police was constantly very worried about the requirements for short term success, ventilated by many corps members. Subsequently a lot of discussions in the FIT Police project weren't about improving police work, but about communicating success. The project team did not only have a communication workgroup, but also employed professional communication advisors. Strangely enough, there was hardly any dialogue between the high rank managers, policy makers, street-level personnel (especially those opposing the FIT Police project and citizens) in the Think tank meetings. Some of the participants in the FIT Police project spoke about impervious layers in the organisation. Do you recognise those?

Although the FIT Police project was meant to generate new ideas, projects and results through learning processes, the HRM department was hardly involved in the FIT Police project. After the project came to a stop, the champions of the FIT Police project felt that their portfolio was not appreciated in their management assessment, and they had to start from the beginning. It seemed to me that the FIT Police project was only judged by measurable results, whereas the conception of new ideas about police work, the learning experiences and the development of a learning cultural were considered too 'soft' to measure. How would you like to respond on this issue?

Of course the FIT Police project can also be criticised. It was propagated in the FIT Police project many times that the innovators of police work shouldn't invest in the 'thwarters' or 'obstructionists'. The risk of this kind of thinking is that relevant concerns remained unheard, not explained and not discussed. The Think tank consisted entirely of personnel from the lower ranks, there were no middle managers involved on a

continuous basis, there was no integration with other systems in your organisation, like the HRM systems (eg. Corporate plans for learning & development, team development, MD programme, personal development plans) or audit & control. From a management point of view, the Think tank could have been a risk. Because it resulted in disturbance, some projects were like unguided projectiles and the costs must have been high and the ideas weren't all that original. Nevertheless the Think tank would have been a perfect platform to discuss the pros and cons of projects intended to improve police work. The FIT Police project offered a perfect opportunity to articulate different views in the organisation. What would it be worth to you, to recreate such a stage?

Surely, my list of reflections is not exhaustive and you certainly have reflections yourself. I hope we can create an opportunity to discuss my dissertation and its consequences for you.

Until then, I salute you.

Yours sincerely,

Ton Bruining

Ton Bruining, senior adviseur/onderzoeker
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5201 AL 's Hertogenbosch

Dear Antonette,

I want to report to you what I learned about learning, from my research behind the frontlines of public service. For four years now, you have been investing in this research project, since knowledge about learning is the main cornerstone of our consulting firm. Before I try to answer your question from my perspective, I want to thank you for the continuation of your support when the schools I selected for my research project dropped out. Although the educational sector is our home market, you stood by my decision to focus on the most promising case, a regional police force.

My answer will be quadruple. I will explicit what I think I have learned about learning in the workplace in public service organisations, or frontline organisations as you know I like to call them. I will elaborate on what the added value of my research for our home market might be. I will look for a derivation for our consulting firm and finally I will say more about what I learned about myself.

First let me explain what I think I have learned about learning in the workplace of frontline organisations.

A central theme of this thesis became the partiality of reality. People, for instance being police officers, first-line managers, senior managers, project managers, project leaders, staff scholars, consultants have an inclination to favour one group or view or opinion above alternatives. So, one of the most important things I think to have showed is the multiformity and situatedness of learning processes in the frontline.

Furthermore, I have seen frontline workers, trying to learn, trying to develop new knowledge and trying to innovate, struggle with colleagues who turn their backs on them. I have experienced that frontline workers as well as managers find it hard to address their colleagues and superiors. Sometimes because they lack the motivation to do so, otherwise because they lack the skills. Moreover, I have seen that, on many occasions, learning processes in the frontline are dominated by management concepts, managers and their assistants. The dominators often seem to have their own motives to do so. Because they try to do well, because they want to create a different approach or simply because they want to have it their way in terms of their career. I have witnessed groups trying to establish a communal approach. Triggered by the problems they face on a day to day basis, find a response from colleagues, companions in adversity perhaps or inspired by a manager. I have seen frontline workers trying to find various approaches, without disqualifying one or another approach. Finally I sensed that learning processes might provoke variance. From my specialist point of view, I conclude that the lack of HRD expertise leads to well meant, but sometimes disastrous learning

approaches. I also realised that the many management tools that are available to explicit the condition of the organisation as a learning system, a learning culture, learning plan, hitch in to one another badly. In addition different approaches to conceptualise learning and change can be distinguished and they are as difficult to cohere.

Dealing with the question "What can be done to develop learning practices of frontline workers?", I want to put forward that I can only try to give an answer after I have learned whether the facilitator of the implied learning processes accepts the partiality of reality and what he/she wants to happen with that partiality. I, for my part, accept that partiality of reality.

In the case I narrated, in Lipsky's studies, as well as in my daily practice as a consultant and a scholar and in the discussions, I follow in the newspapers - for instance about safety policy or educational reforms - this partiality brings forward many problems in many situations because actors turn their back on each other. Actors built and use their own discretionary space, to narrate their own story without worrying about trying to understand, trying to communicate, let alone trying to work together with others such as colleagues, support staff members, managers or even their clients. They perform in dissonance. Probably the ability to learn, to produce knowledge and to innovate diminishes in this mode of performative dissonance because the actors alienate themselves from their environment.

In other situations, individual or groups of actors, like networks of employees, managers, supporting staff, consultants or scholars dominate the production of meaning and the performance repertoire. Employees resisting change can excel in this mode. As can managers who try to organise in a traditional way. They usually blow the horn of mission, vision, goals and strategy and recite that everybody should align [noses in the same direction!]. They prefer to establish order and try to accomplish that by reducing diversity. They habitually emphasise standards and procedures, handbooks and control mechanisms like monitoring and evaluating. In relation to learning this mode of performative dominance might get dysfunctional when a configuration, like an organisation, can only function by suppressing or destroying other configurations.

If people try to work together with others and, at the same time, acknowledge the others' story, the others' concepts, the others' knowledge producing systems then we are in a performative consonant mode. Then the emphasis is on understanding the other, linking with the other. This implies a broader concept of organising characterised by the ordering of different activities, acknowledging the added value of diverse contributions and facilitating the handling of this variety.

In a situation where variety is accepted, learning, knowledge production and innovation might increase because the actors try to establish a functional constructive situation. The question is whether functional construction leads to the performative dominance or goes in another direction. That would be the direction of performative variance. In this mode, the actors accept the variance or even deploy the variance to improve and to cultivate their constructs.

Perhaps there is even a fifth performative mode. In such a mode, the actors not only

accept the variance but use this variance, allow themselves to be inspired or even deploy the variance to develop new ways of thinking, new ways of learning and new ways of knowledge production.

To summarise:

- 1 Performative dissonance: one reality doesn't know, doesn't want to know; doesn't accept the other reality.
- 2 Performative dominance: one reality dominates the other.
- 3 Performative consonance: one reality communicates, works together, allies with the other reality.
- 4 Performative variance: one reality improves itself by allowing, stimulating its development through loosely coupled/genetic cooperation with the other reality.
- 5 Performative resonance: one reality is moved by the other reality; changes itself using the other reality.

Although, in the case of the FIT Police project, it seemed that the possibilities for frontline learning, the occurrence and the results appeared to be dismal, I remained a positive thinker and I still believe in the potency of the frontline approach to learning. An approach that implies the maneuvering of the frontline workers into a position where they are acknowledged as knowledge workers. In this respect, I would like to propagate an ecological view towards frontline learning. Meaning the importance of adaptability towards the drives and the needs, the challenges and problems frontline workers meet. Meaning the creation of situations wherein consonance, variance and resonance are a possibility.

Next I would like to turn to what the added value of my research project for our home market might be. From my experience in other fields like health care and education, I see no reason why the multiformity of learning processes would be different from the police.

I think it is worthwhile for us to develop an approach in which we acknowledge the teacher as a knowledge worker and develop ideas about how to emancipate these knowledge workers, without colonising them with our ideas about learning, professionalising, knowledge production, knowledge dissemination and innovation. Furthermore we can make a difference if we, as consultants, don't dismiss other management models and tools, like concepts for learning in the organisations and in the workplace, but put an effort into communicating between each other.

At the end of this project, I have to admit that I didn't invest in the academic development of an irrefutable model of the development of professionalism in organisations, while one would normally expect just that from a PhD Research. On the contrary, I did everything I could to develop an argument that such models, and consultancy instruments we like to build on top of them, colonise frontline organisations and frontline workers. Nevertheless I developed a metaphor for a staging that might lead to performative resonance. I have named it the Organisational learning chorus. The idea is to create (learning-) practices inspired by the Ancient, pre-Sophoclean, Greek theatre. In such learning practice, a narrator leads sessions wherein participants

such as frontline workers, managers, staff, clients, consultants are invited to narratively unfold their viewpoints. The narrator is not the omniscient leader, staff employee, client or consultant. Nor is he only the Socratic facilitator. I see him or her as an informed member of the community. In my view (ante) narratives are prepared for such a session, but a plotted and controlled course of the event is out of the order. I wonder whether organisations in public service, especially schools are daring enough to invest in professionalisation along this line. It would ask from frontline workers, staff, managers and of course parents and students to ease off with the need for coherence, SMART¹⁶² goals and plans, and control.

Thirdly, concerning our consulting firm, I would like to suggest that we are frontline workers ourselves. For us, the same principles apply, the same possibilities to develop learning processes. Subsequently I have the same suggestion for our management as for the managers in the frontline of public service.

Finally, what have I learned for myself? In the first place I feel proud that I have developed, with the help of my supervisors, an alternative approach to HRD research. And I'm satisfied with the result and talking to colleagues and friends in the communities I operate in, I have experienced that I can inspire them. I think that I have learned to connect the social administrative approach, the educational approach and the philosophical approach, I dwelled in the space in between, reflecting on the case and I'm looking forward to new research questions from this multidisciplinary approach.

Thank you for everything,

Ton

Ton Bruining, senior adviseur/onderzoeker
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22 November 2005

Demos: A Network for Ideas and Action
Dr. M. Lipsky, PhD
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Fifth Floor
New York, NY 10001
USA

Dear Mr. Lipsky,

I have some reflections and some results for you 25 years after your *Street-level bureaucracy* came out. A few years ago, it struck me that the mechanisms you described in your study were still relevant in the Netherlands. As a 'remedy' for the problems in street-level bureaucracies, you stressed the importance of new professionalisation. A long time before learning in the workplace became a hot topic in the Netherlands, you emphasised the importance of workplace learning. I know that in your work you are still striving to improve street-level bureaucracies and other governmental organisations. Therefore I send you my dissertation, that includes this letter.

With this letter I would like to pay a tribute to you. As it probably was and still is for many, *Street-level bureaucracies* was and still is a meaningful book to me.

After I studied your work, I brought it in relation to the work of Argyris and Schön and later that of Engeström, Midgley and other scholars dedicated to learning in organisations and learning in the workplace. I was so inspired by your book that it influenced the direction of my PhD research and I started looking at public service firms or street-level bureaucracies in your terms.

In 2001, I found a police organisation interested in the development of innovative police work and coincidentally becoming a learning organisation. They named their project FIT Police. I got the opportunity to do a critical, narrative and autoethnographical research. I followed the project for 30 months.

The FIT Police projected fitted the directions you gave to improve street-level bureaucracies. It tried to break away street-level bureaucrats or frontline workers as I call them, away from the informal accounting to their own community. The project was meant as a network to get the frontliners out of their isolation and it was designed as a work environment to develop new professional standards. It focussed on the forerunners of new professionalism and was aimed at the

development of new work processes and the support of the development of these new professionals. You warned that breaking down the routines of street-level bureaucracies would be a hard reform. You stressed the importance of feeding on demand, supporting small units instead of forcing the paradigm of workplace learning through the hierarchical policy chute and integrating with leadership development in the workplace. You emphasised the importance of professional inquiry and the development of what we nowadays tend to call communities of practice combined with the development of new standards for this inquiry to avoid the danger of defensive mechanisms. And you advised strongly to involve the public in the development of new professionals. The project leaders followed almost all your advice, but they kept a distance toward the public and they didn't manage to integrate the leadership development programme. That stayed in the hands of the bureaucrats.

I'm sorry to inform you that the project I studied came to an end after 30 months. It was said that the achievements of the project were integrated into the organisation. The amelioration of police work is now in the hands of process managers. They are high ranked police-officers, in charge of big units or districts, or leading support departments. It was peculiar that, after its termination, the experiences with the project were kept silent. The project wasn't mentioned in a quality report by the corps leadership and the distribution of a booklet with a portfolio of the project, made by the participants, has been stalled for more than a year now. Beyond that, the innovation projects inspired by the FIT Police organisation have been stopped, mothballed, or delayed.

It seemed obvious that the administrators were not happy with the project. Otherwise they would have celebrated the outcomes of the project, despite their policy to integrate it into the existing organisation.

The experiences of the FIT Police project could be an illustration in your book. The bureaucratic system manoeuvred and eliminated the 'strange body' FIT Police establishing a new level of bureaucratic mediocrity. The FIT Police failed because it was managed with bureaucratic instruments and judged only by bureaucratic standards and the involved frontline workers weren't acknowledged, let alone praised for their achievements. Leadership development wasn't involved in the programme and, and this must be an important argument for you, the public was not involved.

From your book I can derive ideas about how to establish a more professional culture. However, I find it difficult though, to derive from your work, what can be done to develop initiatives from within and how new professionalism, eg. through workplace learning, can be achieved.

Today, in the HRD community and in knowledge intensive organisations, the concept of communities of practice or learning networks is promoted. I think that those theories comply with your ideas about developing professionalism in street-level bureaucracies. Furthermore I arrived at a metaphor that, in my opinion, can be used to stage learning events that involve relevant voices such as the public, the frontline workers, adminis-

trators and leadership potential. I would like to invite you to comment on my concept of the Organisational learning chorus.

Furthermore, I think that your analyses are a premonition for the advocates of communities of practice not to become to euphoric about the possibilities of their concept.

Perhaps we have to turn to other work, like that of Jackall, to find some loopholes to establish projects like FIT Police as a sorely needed and unremitting learning system. An indispensable breeding ground from which new ideas about police work might emerge. A rich learning environment wherein new thoughts can be discussed, examined en conceptualised. A community of practitioners that initiates action research projects. A learning network that offers a rich knowledge base and a whole range of possibilities for street-level bureaucrats to develop their professionalism.

I see the organisational learning chorus as an indispensable breeding ground between bureaucrats, frontline workers and public, to influence the quality of service by public firms, to extract knowledge to develop more appropriate work processes and to have a basis for better decision making.

Yours sincerely,

Ton Bruining

5. Reflexion

Eindhoven 22 november, 2005

Dear reader,

For a long time I didn't know how to write the closing page of this text. But today I found a way. I decided to write a letter to you. Actually it's an invitation. I hope that, after reading my novel-report and perhaps even struggling through my theoretical work, you would like to respond.

The period in which I was searching for a closure of this study, felt very disquieting. How to end a research project in which you have tried to acknowledge the multiperspectivity of things and about which you seek to report in a writerly way?

I had to resist several strong temptations. I had to resist an urge to draw no conclusions at all. But eventually I decided to write about my own views. I felt invited by the writerly intended narrative-report to draw my own conclusions with regard to my initial research question "What can be done to develop learning practices of frontline workers?" Next, I had to resist an urge to boil everything down to one final conclusion. What I tried to do instead, was to write an unfinished series of conclusions, that I see as a spur to a myriad of conclusions.

There were moments that I felt that I had found just the thing. But then I decided to avoid the idea that a multiple voiced narrative, a study based on multiple paradigms or different genres can claim a more significant understanding¹⁶³, or that more perspectives means more knowledge¹⁶⁴. But I don't want to go as far as to suggest that the multiple interpretations show that social reality can't be determined. Wouldn't that be readerly¹⁶⁵?

This research project offered me the opportunity to deploy both the centrifugal force of multiperspectivity and the centripetal force of the Pre-Sophoclean theatre metaphor. The centrifugal force is deployed by offering different representations that might contribute to the emancipation of the reader, who can create his or her own narrative. By bringing the different narratives onto the same stage and let them work together I tried to deploy a centripetal force¹⁶⁶.

Throughout the text you can probably draw your own conclusion about what I have learned. I have written about what I think I have learned in chapter II.4. However, I see chapter II.4 as an unfinished chapter, which can be supplemented by you. I don't want to summarise my conclusions and transfer them to a closing paragraph. I see Chapter II.4 as the writerly theatre of this text.

What you've just read, if you've read it, is the statement. It took me two years to write it, but at last, in November 2005, I got it done¹⁶⁷. I have tried to make explicit what I have learned. And I also wanted to reveal the enduring prospect of alternative configurations¹⁶⁸. What have you learned?

Ton Bruining
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Notes

¹ Inspired by Beckett's *Molloy* and Turgenev's *A Sportsman's Sketches*.

Beckett ([1950]1955, p. 92) wrote:

"It is midnight. The rain is beating on the windows. I am calm. All is sleeping. Nevertheless I get up and go to my desk. I can't sleep. My lamp sheds a soft steady light. I have trimmed it. It will last till morning. I hear the eagle owl. What a terrible battle-cry! Once I listened to it unmoved. My son is sleeping. Let him sleep. The night will come when he too, unable to sleep, will get up and go to his desk. I shall be forgotten".

Turgenev (1852, p. 61) wrote:

"More than three hours had passed since I first came across the boys. The moon at last had risen; I did not notice it at first; it was such a tiny crescent. This moonless night was as solemn and hushed as it had been at first.... But already many stars, that not long before had been high up in the heavens, were setting over the earth's dark rim; everything around was perfectly still, as it is only still towards morning; all was sleeping the deep unbroken sleep that comes before daybreak. Already the fragrance in the air was fainter; once more a dew seemed falling.... How short are nights in summer!... The boys' talk died down when the fires did. The dogs even were dozing; the horses, so far as I could make out, in the hardly-perceptible, faintly shining light of the stars, were asleep with downcast heads.... I fell into a state of weary unconsciousness, which passed into sleep".

² Akutagawa's renowned short story became even more celebrated when acclaimed Japanese film director, Akira Kurasawa, partially based his 1951 classic film *Rashomon* on it.

³ I used the Japanese - Dutch translation *In het bos* (Akutagawa, [1922] 1988).

⁴ Abstract of and comment on *In a grove* are extracted from *A Cross Cultural Examination of Rashomon* (Anonymous, 2000).

<http://www.gradesaver.com/classicnotes/titles/rashomon/essay1.html>

⁵ Wrample from Samuel Beckett's, *Molloy* (Beckett, [1950]1955, p. 92).

⁶ A Wrample is a written sample. A text bit that is fitted in a written text. It is a variation on sampling in music. That is the act of taking a portion of one sound recording and reusing it as an instrument or element of a new recording. The idea of a wrample was first used by Kluun in his novel *Komt een vrouw bij de dokter* (Kluun, 2003).

⁷ Swieringa & Wierdsma ([1990] 1993).

⁸ Lipsky (1980).

⁹ The original article was written in Dutch and titled *Kennisproductiviteit aan de frontlinie* (Bruining, 2000).

¹⁰ Denzin and Lincoln (2000).

¹¹ Yin (1993; 1994).

¹² Miles and Huberman (1994).

¹³ McGoldrick, J, Stewart J & Watson S (2002), Swanson (1994).

¹⁴ Werken in het onderwijs,
http://www.minocw.nl/werkinonderwijs/doc/2004/nota_wio2005.pdf

¹⁵ Kessels (1996).

¹⁶ Original Dutch title: Dynamiek van leren.

¹⁷ Argyris (1999).

¹⁸ Orr (1996).

¹⁹ Latour ([1993] 1996).

²⁰ Mol (2002).

²¹ Belbin (1993).

²² Beuving (1998).

²³ Prof. Dr. Kees van de Vijver works for IPIT, a Dutch educational and research institute concerned with the safety of society and the governance issues that this raises.

²⁴ Lerner (1980).

²⁵ Van der Vijver (1998).

²⁶ Original Dutch title: Opleiding and Ontwikkeling.

- 27 Original Dutch title: Opleiding and Ontwikkeling.
- 28 Original Dutch title: Leren in ontwikkeling.
- 29 Original Dutch title: Nederlands tijdschrift voor de psychologie.
- 30 Original Dutch title: Gedrag & Organisatie.
- 31 Original Dutch title: Filosofie & praktijk.
- 32 Original Dutch title: M&O - tijdschrift voor sociaal beleid.
- 33 Original Dutch title: Gids voor personeelsmanagement.
- 34 Original Dutch title: Personeelsbeleid.
- 35 Original Dutch title: Opleiding and Ontwikkeling.
- 36 Original Dutch title: *Leren en werken* (Bolhuis & Simons, 1999).
- 37 Original Dutch title: *Handboek Human Resources Development, profiel van een vakgebied* [Handbook Human Resources Development, profile of a domain]. (Van Gent and Van der Zee, 2001).
- 38 Original Dutch title: Human Resources Development. Organisatie van het leren (Kessels and Poell, 2001).
- 39 Walton (1999).
- 40 Original Dutch title: *Capita selecta Opleiders in Organisaties* (Kessels, Smit & Papas-Talen, 1989-1999).
- 41 Original Dutch title: *Handboek Opleiders in organisaties* (Kessels & Smit, 1985).
- 42 Original Dutch title: *Gids voor de opleidingspraktijk* (Schramade, 1988-1997).
- 43 Original Dutch title: *Handboek Effectief Opleiden* (Schramade, 1994-2004).
- 44 Harrison and Kessels (2004).
- 45 Original Dutch title: *Leren Veranderen* (De Caluwé & Vermaak, [1999] 2003).

- 46 Nadler (1970).
- 47 Nadler & Nadler (1989).
- 48 McLagan (1989).
- 49 AHRD (1999, p. ii).
- 50 Bolhuis & Simons (1999, p. 211).
- 51 Simons & Bolhuis (1999, p. 212).
- 52 Walton (1999).
- 53 cit. Walton (Walton, 1999, p. 1).
- 54 Walton (1999, p. 7-8).
- 55 Harrison and Kessels (2004, p. 4-5).
- 56 Character in a series of commercials for an international corporate & investment bank.
- 57 The original special of HRD Thema was written in Dutch and titled *Stimuleren van kennisproductiviteit* (Bruining et al., 2000).
- 58 Kennisproductiviteit aan de frontlinie (Bruining, 2000b).
- 59 Bruining (2001).
- 60 Caluwé, L. de & Vermaak H. ([1999]2003).
- 61 De Bono (1985).
- 62 Simons & Ruijters (2003).
- 63 Walton (1994).
- 64 Robinson & Robinson (1995).
- 65 Knijff (2000).
- 66 Schrijvers ([2002] 2004).

- 67 Van der Sluis (2000).
- 68 Van den Berg and Poelje (2002).
- 69 Simons & Ruijters (2003).
- 70 Simons & Bolhuis (1999).
- 71 Simons & Ruijters (2003).
- 72 (Bruining, 2001, Mooijman 2003).
- 73 Romiszowski (1988), Rummeler & Brache (1995), and Swanson (1994).
- 74 Sfard (1998).
- 75 Bruner (1996).
- 76 Simons & Ruijters (2003).
- 77 Bruining (2001), Mooijman (2003).
- 78 Kotter (1990), Stewart (1997), Van Aken (1997).
- 79 Orr (1996), Sandberg (2000).
- 80 Sfard (1998).
- 81 Lave & Wenger (1991), Orr (1996), Simons & Ruijters (2003).
- 82 Simons & Ruijters (2003).
- 83 Bruining (2001), Mooijman (2003).
- 84 Argyris (1999).
- 85 Simons & Ruijters (2003).
- 86 Tjepkema (1994), Wierdsma (1999), Keursten (1999).
- 87 Bruining (2001), Mooijman (2003).
- 88 Heifetz & Laurie (1997).

- ⁸⁹ Collins and Porras (1994).
- ⁹⁰ Schrijvers ([2000]2002).
- ⁹¹ Kooistra (1988); Wierdsma (1999).
- ⁹² Paavola, Lipponen, and Hakkarainen (2002) Engeström (1999), Bereiter (2002) Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995).
- ⁹³ Simons & Ruijters (2003).
- ⁹⁴ Bruining (2001), Mooijman (2003).
- ⁹⁵ Bruining (2001).
- ⁹⁶ Feltmann (1992).
- ⁹⁷ Latour, B. ([1984]1988), Morgan, G. (1986), Feltmann (1992), Caluwe, L. & Vermaak H. ([1999] 2003).
- ⁹⁸ Original Dutch title: Opleiding & Ontwikkeling.
- ⁹⁹ Original Dutch title: Dynamiek van leren. (Van den Berg & Lakerveld, 2000).
- ¹⁰⁰ Braun, D. (1999).
- ¹⁰¹ Wrample Latour (1993, p. 289).
- ¹⁰² Wrample Latour (1993, p. 289).
- ¹⁰³ Variation on Latour (1993, p. 289).
- ¹⁰⁴ Wrample Red Hot Chili Peppers, 1995, track Walkabout.

Walkabout

I think I'll go on a walkabout
And find out what it's all bout
Just me and my own two feet
In the heat I've got myself to meet
A detective of perspective
I need to try to get a bigger eye
I could tern the art of life
In a walk I could find a wife

On a walkabout
You could do it in the city
You could do it in a zone
You could do it in a desert
You could do the unknown
On a walkabout

¹⁰⁵ Wrample Latour (1993, p. 289).

¹⁰⁶ The other themes are strategy, leadership, culture and business process redesign.

¹⁰⁷ Translated from the original text in Dutch by Ton Bruining.

¹⁰⁸ *In 2004 the employed population amounted to 8.157.000 persons, of whom 397.700 nurses and Nursing aides; 303.037 teachers in primary, secondary, vocational, and higher education; 37.606 operational police officers.*

Retrieved

<http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/start.asp?lp=Search/Search>

<http://www.zorgvoorbeter.nl/fileadmin/zorgvoorbeter/Beleid/rapporten/M-EVA-2588768B.pdf>

http://www.minocw.nl/werkinonderwijs/doc/2004/nota_wio2005.pdf

http://www.politie.nl/Nieuws/Nieuws/landelijk_32_48618.asp?ComponentID=48618&SourcePageID=46893

¹⁰⁹ Systems thinking is an extensive field of study and there are a variety of systems approaches. Amongst the best known are System Dynamics, Soft Systems Methodology, Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, Complexity theory, Fifth Discipline, Critical Systems Thinking, Cybernetics, Open systems theory and Integrated planning. Basically Systems thinking has two 'parents': The engineers such as Von Bertalanffy and Ackoff and the group dynamacists and organisational developers such as Argyris, Bohm, Emery, Revans. Systemic thinking was also influenced by others, e.g. Checkland, Churchman, and Engeström. They brought constructivists ideas.

¹¹⁰ Yrjö Engeström ([1987] 1999). *Lernen durch Expansion. Entwicklung und Perspektiven der Tätigkeitstheorie*, Marburg: BdWi Verlag Marburg.

¹¹¹ An exception might evolve from the work of Sanne Akkermans. She started her research with Engeström's activity-theory but gradually became more interested in multivoicedness. Her dissertation is expected in 2006.

¹¹² Esther Gielen (1995) studied the transfer of training in a corporate setting. First she tried to identify variables which influence transfer of

training and in particular the relation of these with learning and performance. Secondly she tried to measure these effects of these variables in a corporate setting. On the basis of a literature review she build a transfer of training model. In a quasi-experimental research this model was tested within a corporate training program of large international Dutch Banking organization. The study can be perceived as an exploratory analysis aiming at developing a hypothesised structural equation model on the influencing factors of transfer of training.

¹¹³ Marjan Glaudé (1997) researched organizations undergoing change and for that reason establishing on the job training programmes. The main question of her research was: Under what conditions can on-the-job-training be implemented as an effective management tool for bringing about innovation within an organisation? After a theoretical reconnaissance she constructed a conceptual model. Next she did a multiple case study in the vein of Yin. Subsequently she adjusted her model based on the results of her case study. She concludes that introducing on-the-job-training as an innovation tool faces the following tasks: horizontal harmonisation between labour and training systems at different levels; horizontal integration by intervening from a technical, political and cultural perspective, at the different organisational levels, and in the procs; vertical harmonisation among organisation levels by going through the training cycle and by intervening from a technical, political and cultural perspective.

¹¹⁴ Jeroen Onstenk (1997) studied the interplay of learning, working and innovation, both in vocational education and career. Onstenk proposed to relate learning and professional skill "to the production process, to the organization and to the communities of practice in which work activities and learning activities on the job take place". His research questions were: 1. How are demands with regard to professional skill influenced by innovation of work and organisation? How can broad skill be defined? 2. Which contribution can learning on the job make to the acquisition and development of (components) of broad professional skill? II.1. How can the learning potential of jobs be analysed? 4. How can innovation of work and organisation contribute to the acquisition and development of broad professional skill on the job? 5. How does the acquisition and development of broad professional skill take place in the practical component of vocational training and how can this be improved? After a thorough review of the literature - Onstenk dissertation runs to almost 400 pages -, the researcher constructed a conceptual model and used earlier research of himself, including three case to complete is study and to give conclusions and recommendations on strengthening the connections between innovations of work and professional practices and learning on the job and to sketch perspectives for the development of a competence qualifying organisation.

¹¹⁵ Rob Poell's study dealt with two questions. First, how are learning and work related? Second, how is work related learning organised? In order to shed light on these questions the researcher developed a concept of work related learning projects, using a network perspective. His dissertation contains a descriptive evaluation of four cases and a multiple case study of sixteen learning projects. The first study showed that work-related learning can be organised in different (group) learning projects and that learning projects can expand the action repertoire of participants. In this first case study the learning network theory was used to produce descriptive categories for the analysis of learning projects. The second study was multiple case study research along the lines of Miles & Huberman, combining qualitative and quantitative cross-case analysis. This study showed that work related learning projects differ with regard to the strategies used by employees, managers and HRD staff. According to Poell these differences are related to the type of work in which the learning project is conducted and that the dominant strategies in the learning projects were related to the work relations between the actors.

¹¹⁶ Marcel van der Klink (1999) formulated two questions: 1. Is on the job training effective? 2. Which characteristics of the trainee, the workplace and the training explain the effectiveness of on-the-job-training? He studied the effectiveness of on-the-job training in two cases. In each case he used three different measurements of effectiveness. In both cases he measured progress in behaviour and transfer and furthermore he measured respectively sales in one case and the knowledge of new products and services ten weeks after completion of the training in the other case. In both cases the researcher applied questionnaires to collect data from trainers, trainees and the trainee's managers or mentors. Van der Klink concludes that on-the-job training courses were only partial successful. The work situation and the characteristics of the participants turned out to be the most significant factors in explaining the effectiveness of training. Van der Klink couldn't establish mechanisms that were of importance regarding the transfer of training. Furthermore, he couldn't endorse the belief that on-the-job training is an effective form of training. Neither could be deduced that it is an ineffective learning tool.

¹¹⁷ Kitty Kwakman (1999) focused on two research questions: 1. How do teachers learn? 2. Which factors enhance or inhibit teachers' learning. Her thesis consists of four different studies. Two of them are theory based whereas the others are based on empirical research. First Kwakman did a theoretical study after which she concluded that empirical research was needed to investigate the relevance of theoretical insights, she decided to restrict herself to self directed and on the job learning and choose to use

professional standards as a conceptual framework for research into teachers' way of learning. Next she did a qualitative study in which the results of semi-structured interviews with sixteen schoolteachers were analysed using a computer program to descriptively code and categorize data. Through open coding and constant comparison, in the tradition of grounded theory she concluded that learning depends upon opportunities and restraints in the working environments as well as on individual factors. The way different factors influence learning remained unclear. Consequently she focused on learning and influencing factors. She decided for an explanatory research design. Therefore she first conducted a new theoretical research after which she choose to operationalize learning as executing professional activities. On the basis of the theoretical investigation of the variables which are related to teacher learning in the literature she conceptualised two models. One in which learning is the dependent variable whereas features of the individual, the task and the working environment are independent variables. The second model is a model in which stress as well as learning are considered as dependent variables and task characteristics as independent variables. With a survey she researched the relevance of the two different models, this led to three new conceptual models for different types of professional activity. In the end Kwakman drew several conclusions regarding the problems with researching on-the-job learning, new dilemma's that stem from her results. Concerning enhancing and inhibiting factors Kwakman drew the conclusion that these are subjective and ambiguous. Grounded on her research Kwakman made a few recommendations: 1. Open the discussion about professional behaviour and professionalism; 2. Organize learning processes and create incentives and support; II.1. Give more attention to the workplace as a place to learn. All these are leadership tasks. According to Kwakman teachers themselves have to realise that changes are inherent to the job, that they have to invest time and energy, but that there might also be a return on investment in the form of energy and the prevention of routine.

¹¹⁸ Marianne van Woerkom (2003) sees her thesis as a reflection of a search process to understand work related learning. She followed an inductive, explorative approach, gradually building up a theory by observations and by using a combination of intensive and extensive research. Van Woerkom started by studying work related learning in theory. Subsequently she developed a conceptual model based on an output approach. Thereupon she carried out case studies in seven organisations to test the feasibility of her model. On the basis of here case studies she designed a new conceptual model, "which is based only upon an interaction model, and aims to understand and explain critically work behaviour". Using both literature and her case studies she elaborated further on the concept of critical reflective work behaviour, which she defined as "a set of connected activities, carried out individually or in interaction with others, aimed at optimising individual or collective practises, or critically analysing and trying to change organisational or individual values" After she defined critically reflective work

behaviour she designed a conceptual model that might explain this behaviour and operationalised it by selecting relevant variables, this model was tested statistically and thereupon revised. Next two case studies were executed in a combination of a quantitative and qualitative approach. Finally Van Woerkom concluded that critically reflective work behaviour seems to be a bridge between organizational learning and individual learning. According to her the value of the concept is that it makes one aware that job related knowledge and skills cannot be separated from the rest of the workers life with all its rational and irrational aspects, or from organizational climate and values at a certain moment in time, in which job skills are embedded.

¹¹⁹ Cees Sprenger (2000) studied how on-learning –oriented organisations successfully realize learning processes supporting their employees to deal with uncertainties and learn new ways. Sprenger's interest wasn't in formal learning programmes but in spontaneous learning processes. The researcher, based on a theoretical survey distinguished three ways of thinking about learning – a strategy & management approach, a social constructivist approach and a human resources development approach - and he distinguished three dimensions of learning in organisations –structuring of learning, socializing through learning, processes and facilitating learning processes. Subsequently Sprenger did a multiple case study, applying the approach of Yin, to find out if, and in what way the dimensions he found were important in organisations with a focus on learning. Four cases in different lines of the business world were selected and within these four organisations a total of seven learning projects were analysed. The results were compared with results of previous research. Sprenger's conclusions were: 1. Thinking about learning isn't explicitly part of the strategy of on learning organisations. 2. People working on learning projects together form a learning network and learning activities where all informal, organised as a part of the project and not primarily to learn. II.1. The job of HRD professionals is to organize and facilitate these learning processes. To illustrate his findings Sprenger constructed a narrative in which he described an ideal situation. As an overall conclusion Sprenger introduces the concept of the learning practice as space wherein employees develop learning activities to support their performance. These activities cannot be planned in advance must be shaped step by step.

¹²⁰ Van der Waals (2001) research question was how training and learning within labour organisations can be given shape in an effective manner and he looked at manager driven training and learning and searched for alternative concepts to shape training and learning within organisations. Van der Waals used case studies in the spirit of Miles & Huberman and Yin as a general research strategy. Two development studies were done to test the practability and effectiveness of educational interventions. The first intervention was a manager driven learning project. In a single case study van der Waals found that wasn't any evidence for the practicability and affectivity of manager

driven training and learning. This conclusion re-emerged from a multiple case study in five organisations. Van der Waals also derived factors that according to managers, trainers and employees determine the affectivity of training and learning. From this an employee driven concept was designed and implemented which proved to be effective in a single case. Although Van der Waals found that employee driven training and learning has its limitations with respect to embedding and continuation he pleads for an approach in which employees give direction and work together in collaboration with trainers and managers.

¹²¹ Mirjam Baars van Moorsel (2003) research question is “how can the concept of learning climate be conceptualised and which dimensions of learning climate can be distinguished. Van Moorsel starts by constructing a model and subsequently designing an instrument to assess the learning climate in organizations. Van Moorsel distinguishes three dimensions approaches regarding the learning climate, the learning network approach, the learning organization approach and the learning opportunities approach. She concludes that the learning network approach offers the best starting point for defining the learning climate, as she does as follows “the values regarding learning that manifest themselves into the content and organizational structure of the learning network, and which implicitly influence employees learning”. For the design of the climate assessment instrument she used an existing British instrument, translated that into Dutch, tested it in different Dutch organizations. Her conclusion was that the instrument was invalid. The development of a new instrument falls outside the scope of this research. Besides the different approaches regarding the learning climate the researcher also distinguishes different value dimensions. These dimensions were explored in two literature studies and the value dimensions regarding learning were explored in a case study in five departments of three production firms. Baars van Moorsel chose for a structured case study design conform Miles & Huberman (1994) and Yin (1994). The researcher presents a descriptive evaluation of the case studies. One of the conclusions is that in the researched organization the values “on the job learning” and “off the job learning” were not found and that this is remarkable because this distinction is often made in the literature on learning in organisations.

¹²² Saskia Tjebkema (2003) focuses in her dissertation on self-managing work teams, a concept that can be traced back to the 1940s, when it was developed as part of the Social Technical Systems Design Theory. In the pursuit to become a learning organization, organisations search for ways to increase both individual and organisational learning. Self-managing work teams are believed to provide a context to achieve both. Tjebkema’s problem statement is “How can learning within self-managing work teams be facilitated in a structural way” To answer this statement three research

questions were posed: Which type of learning activities can be distinguished, in what ways can these learning activities be supported and what conditions promote or inhibit learning within self-managing work teams. The researchers aim was to construct a framework for a learning infrastructure. Besides literature reviews, exploratory interviews, group interviews, the study contains three analytical or interpretive case studies with a predominantly explorative character, serving the purposes of validation, evaluation and clarification. The study was set up according to Yin and Miles and Huberman. The case study results are presented in a descriptive evaluation, illustrated with quotes from interviews. Finally Tjebkema concludes that both formal and informal learning activities play an important role in self-managing work teams, that there is no preference for one them and that both are complementary. Besides learning activities regulation activities can be distinguished, to identify learning needs, to manage the learning process and to evaluate the outcomes. Tjebkema designed a framework to describe the learning infrastructure that each self-managing team has. Top managers, team leaders, team members, and material support are important to facilitate informal learning. Off the job training and to a lesser degree also on the job training are important to support formal learning. The team leader plays an important role regarding the support of regulating learning activities. It is obvious that regarding learning social support is crucial. Furthermore the researcher concludes that general conditions influence the learning in self-managing work teams and that they are part of the learning infrastructure. The conditions can be categorised on four levels: organization, team, workplace and individual. On the organizational level top management plays an important role. On team level the team leader; the team size and the team composition play an important role. At the workplace and on job level it is adequate variation, autonomy and work pressure. And at the individual level it is motivation for learning and skills in organizing support for learning. Tjebkema recommends using her framework to map the learning infrastructure. This activity can lead to the strengthening of the learning infrastructure, linking the different elements and monitoring it.

¹²³ Sanne Akkerman started her research based on Engeström's model. She now looks into multivoicedness in collaboration.

¹²⁴ Marjolein Berings is interested in learning styles and frontline workers. He goal is to develop an instrument to improve nurses' use of on-the-job learning strategies. Her research question is: How can nurses' on-the-job learning styles be mapped in order to improve their use of on-the-job learning strategies? (Berings, 2004).

¹²⁵ Anja Doornbos is interested in learning orientations of frontline workers. She looks at the learning orientations of police officers (Doornbos, 2004).

- 126 Aimee Hoeve is interested in learning in the workplace and innovation. Her research question is in what way does the learning of groups and individuals contribute to innovation in organisations. She seeks to bridge the field of innovation and economics and workplace learning as domain of educational research.
- 127 Andre Krak is a police officer. He started his PhD research together with Anja Doornbos. He also looks at learning in the workplace by policemen.
- 128 Maarten de Laat is involved with support of communities of practice with the help of ICT-systems.
- 129 The same argument is raised by Brohm (2005) in his reading of Polanyi.
- 130 Beautiful examples can be found in the poetry of webartist Millie Niss, for example *Subway semiotics*. Go to <http://www.sporkworld.org>.
- 131 Ergonography suits Czarniawska better than ethnography, because *Etho-* is also used for animal studies (ethology). *Ergon* is Greek for work. Czarniawska created the neologism Ergonography not for its beauty, but from the need for a term different enough to be noticeable and to distinguish a genre that is typical for (her) work (Czarniawska, 1997).
- 132 Bal's seminal book *De theorie van vertellen en verhalen* (Bal, 1980), was translated into English in 1985. The book that was titled *Narratology*, introduction to the theory of the narrative, was revised in 1997 (Bal, 1997).
- 133 The very trick that *Aramis* as a text carries out: it is a writing-reading machine which interchanges technical reports with problems from social, cultural, economic and political theory.
- 134 First published as *Bringing Polanyi onto the theatre stage*, a study applied to knowledge management. (Brohm, 1999).
- 135 Hard-boiled, or Black Mask, fiction was born in America during the 1920s, a time when magazines known as pulps were flourishing. Probably the best known of these, and certainly the most influential, was *The Black Mask*. The magazine came to be associated with a style of writing that profoundly changed the face of detective fiction. Originally publishing any type of adventure story, *The Black Mask* eventually came to focus on crime and detective stories exclusively. It was during Joseph Thompson Shaw's editorship (1926-1936) that the magazine really hit its stride. It was Shaw who shortened the magazine's title to *Black Mask*, and attempted, through the

stories he published, to reflect a certain style of writing, taking detective fiction in an entirely new direction. Black Mask stories reflected the harsh realities of life in America during that time; consequently the main characters were usually tough guys, loners, men who lived not only by strict ethical codes, but also “brought justice to the weak and death to those who preyed on them”. Dashiell Hammet (1894-1961) and Raymond Chandler (1888-1959) both created stories and characters that will forever be identified with private-eye fiction, in the process creating a whole new genre. These stories, with their harsh realism, violence, and terse dialogue, remain the best examples of a style of writing that is acknowledged to be the most important contribution the United States has made to the mystery genre. In 1930 Hammet published *The Maltese Falcon*, which introduced his most famous character, Sam Spade. The 1941 version of the novel starred Humphrey Bogart as the reclusive P.I. Spade is probably the best-known private-eye of all time. With “*The Big Sleep*” (1939), Chandler introduced gumshoe Philip Marlowe, immortal

¹³⁶ In philosophy and logic, contingency is the status of facts that are not logically necessary. In colloquial English, a contingency is something that can happen, but generally is not anticipated.

¹³⁷ Latour (1988).

¹³⁸ Lipsky (1980).

¹³⁹ Lipsky (1980, p. 211).

¹⁴⁰ Argyris (1999).

¹⁴¹ Argyris & Schön (1996).

¹⁴² Midgley (2000).

¹⁴³ Jackall (1988).

¹⁴⁴ Polkinghorne (1988).

¹⁴⁵ McAdams (1993).

¹⁴⁶ Holstein & Gubrium (2000).

¹⁴⁷ Barthes ([1968] 1977).

¹⁴⁸ Bakhtin, M. (1981).

¹⁴⁹ Polanyi (1962; 1966; 1969; 1975).

¹⁵⁰ Latour ([1993] 1977).

¹⁵¹ Mol (2002).

- ¹⁵² Geertz (2000).
- ¹⁵³ Barthes ([1968] 1968).
- ¹⁵⁴ Czarniawska (1999).
- ¹⁵⁵ Letiche, H., R. van Boeschoten & F. de Jong (2005).
- ¹⁵⁶ Wenger, E. (1998).
- ¹⁵⁷ Collins and Porras (1994).
- ¹⁵⁸ According the announcements of Rushkoff's new book, *Get back in the box*, innovation inside out, modesty is going to be the message.
- ¹⁵⁹ Lipsky (1980).
- ¹⁶⁰ Argyris (1990).
- ¹⁶¹ Orr (1996).
- ¹⁶² A frequently used acronym that is used for the formulation of project plans. The acronym SMART refers to Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely goals and plans to meet them.
- ¹⁶³ Lewis & Grimes (1999).
- ¹⁶⁴ Rhodes (2005).
- ¹⁶⁵ Alvesson, 1996.
- ¹⁶⁶ Rhodes, 2005
- ¹⁶⁷ The Italics are Wramples from Double Indemnity (Cain, 1936, p. 112).
- ¹⁶⁸ Variation on Mol "bare the permanent possibility of alternative configurations" (Mol, 2002, p. 164).

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Summary

This study narrates a search process that is intended to develop a better understanding of learning in the workplace by employees in public service, based around the idea that learning is imperative for humanity, for organisations, and for individuals. It is an account of a quest that starts with a novel-report of a 30 month long study, concerning an innovation project within a regional police force. The study was set up with the following question in mind: "What can be done to develop learning practices of frontline workers?" In this dissertation frontline workers are defined as public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have a substantial discretion in the execution of their work. This means that they have a relative freedom to make choices and decisions.

Nineteen different actors, including the researcher, tell about the innovation project and their learning experiences. None of the stories takes precedence over any other.

This study is titled *Learning behind the frontline of public service*, because the researcher didn't follow employees carrying out their executive duty. He observed them just behind the frontline of public service, in cafeterias, police stations and other quarters.

Grounded on his critique regarding the dominant case study approach in the Dutch Human Resource Development (HRD) community and a sincere desire to describe practice without colonising it from theoretical prejudice.

In this study, a novel-report of the case precedes a theoretical elaboration of the research question and a theoretical foundation of the chosen narrative, autoethnographical and critical approach.

Ultimately, this study doesn't close with a customary discussion and conclusions. Based on his novel-report, the researcher has written ten reflexive letters to key figures with respect to this study. Finally, in an eleventh letter, the researcher addresses his readers. In this research, a specific role is ascribed to the reader. Drawing on the French philosopher Barthes, the researcher declares that he didn't want to produce a readerly text, that seeks closure and regards readers as passive consumers. Instead, he wanted to create a writerly text, that opens the way for the reader to the construction of a plausible reality without the author colonising them.

In his closing letter, the researcher explicitly invites readers to supplement this book with their reflections.

Part I is the core of this study is narrative research report. It contains nine narratives, preceded by a prologue and closed by an epilogue. Together they form a novel-report. The concept of the novel-report was borrowed from Latour's ethnographical study *Aramis, or the love of technology*. Latour wrote an ethnographical research report about an innovation project in France meant to develop an automatic public transportation system. In his novel-report the researcher gives space to the different voices of actor involved in an innovation project within a Dutch regional police force, that was set up to transform a bureaucratic system into a more professional system, to break through counterproductive work patterns and to deal with police work more smartly. The project was meant to stimulate learning, knowledge production and innovation.

In the novel-report, the case study is kept anonymous because the researcher presumes, based on his experience in public service companies, that, although his observations are unique, they are also commonplace. He didn't want to burden his representation of the case with the identification of the regional police force that was studied and vice versa.

In the prologue the researcher reveals his intentions concerning the case study that the reader is about to engage upon. He explains that he feels himself part of the story and therefore cannot talk about the case without revealing himself. Furthermore, he tells how a Japanese short story, *In a grove*, by Akutagawa, inspired him to narrate the case from different perspectives. This famous short story shows that protagonists all have their motives to represent a course of events in their own way. Akutagawa makes his readers step back from the different narratives, examine the story and the reports of the actors as a whole and draw their own conclusions.

The nine narratives in the novel-report describe the innovation project from different perspectives, including his own autoethnographical perspective. It contains three narratives in which the author tells about the project and six narratives in which several actors involved tell about the project from their perspective. In the first narrative, The Watchman I, the researcher recounts how it all began for him. He explains why he began his study, he clarifies his background and reports about events in the run-up to the research project. In the second narrative, one of the project leaders of the studied innovation project, Deirdre, is presented. This story also tells how it all began for the coppers of the regional police force, and for their facilitators. It describes the development and the decline of the innovation project. The third narrative portrays another major character, project manager Alex. He gives his account of the rise and fall of the project. The fourth narrative is told from the perspective of the researcher again. He reports about the different project activities he observed. The fifth

narrative stages twelve different frontline workers. They tell about their experiences with the project in their daily work. In the sixth narrative a second project leader, Claire, gives her account of what happened. The seventh narrative calls upon Bob, a frontline worker who became a key member of the project. The eighth narrative doesn't only offer an account of yet another participant in the innovation project but also tells about the images that were formed promoting and researching the innovation project. The ninth narrative is told from the perspective of the researcher again. This time the researcher tries to make his own analysis of the events that he has been observing and participating in. Therefore he uses a multi-paradigmatic approach to look at learning processes, derived from the Dutch organisational researchers De Caluwé, and Vermaak. An epilogue closes the novel-report. In this epilogue the researcher acknowledges that, in the end, his novel-report doesn't offer a final scene where everything is revealed. The researcher underpins that he was merely a detective of perspectives. Despite the risk that it might be disappointing, this summary doesn't reveal the essence of the different narratives. A main idea behind the novel-report and this thesis is that each reader develops his or her own narrative from the presented material.

Part II of this study provides a customary chapter considering the literature regarding learning in organisations and learning in the workplace. In *Understanding workplace learning in public service organisations*, the increasing importance of learning for organisations in the burgeoning knowledge economy is discussed. The researcher refers to principal thinkers regarding organisational learning, like Argyris, Revans, Senge and Wenger. Next, he points at the growing interest for learning in the workplace with referral to reports of the OECD, and acknowledged authors in the domain of workplace learning, like Marsick and Watkins and Eraut. He looks at different paradigms concerning learning in organisations. Next he focuses on the peculiarities of working and learning in the workplace of public service. Based on Lipsky's study regarding bureaucratic systems, he discusses defensive work processes that are developed in frontline organisations by frontline workers leading to and mediocre service. Following up on that he discusses the systems approaches of Argyris and Schön, Senge Engeström and Midgley, he shows how these all point at the development of defensive practices and (learning) processes to break through this defensiveness. Subsequently he focuses on professional learning and zooms in on the work of Eraut and Wenger and the Dutch researchers Kessels and Simons. Then he discusses the Dutch tradition of HRD research, especially the research focused on workplace learning. Concerning his literature study, the researcher chose a broad definition of learning in the workplace, which to begin with is defined as the development or the realisation of relatively sustainable changes in knowledge, skills or

attitudes, or the ability to learn, in the sphere of work, of individuals, groups and/or the organisations where these individuals and groups are employed. These can, under certain conditions, also lead to changes in work processes or work outcomes of individuals, groups or organisations.

Gradually, in his theoretical exploration, the researcher criticises the canon of international and Dutch research regarding learning in organisations and learning in the workplace for its, in his eyes, one dimensional, model dominated approach. He criticises distant approaches in which researchers place themselves hierarchically above the researched. He comes to the conclusion that there is limited attention to the complexities in the workplace. Following up on his critique, the researcher pleads for an alternative and complementary approach. Inspired by fine literature of authors who were employees in the first place and wrote compellingly about working. Also inspired by ethnographic research like Orr's *Talking about machines*, the researcher argues that, with his narrative approach and his novel-report, he provides an impetus for the enrichment and expansion of the scientific body of knowledge of HRD, management theory and the science of public administration.

After discussing the traditions within HRD research and pleading for an alternative approach, the next chapter, *Creating an understanding*, is dedicated to the development of just that. The researcher argues that his approach is an example of an alternative genre of academic writing, next to the genre of mainstream research. First he justifies his reasons for making the reader read a case which is more than 140 pages long. The novel-report is an invitation to the reader to join the researcher in his quest and to develop their own understandings regarding learning in the frontline of public service. The researcher suggests to his readers not to lose themselves in the stories, nor to depart from theory, but to dwell between their own body of knowledge and the different stories, and to create through their own participation and reflexivity their own perspective. Based on his critique of the dominant case study approach in the Dutch HRD community, he works out an ethnographic and autoethnographic approach, grounded on the ethnographic tradition of Geertz and the autoethnographical approach of Ellis. The researcher assumes that the researcher as a person plays an important role in the formulation of research questions, the choice of methodologies and the communication of results. Following Czarniawska, he concludes that this important aspect usually stays covert. Next he discusses the meaning of the narrative method which has been a connecting thread in his work. Rooted in a narrative tradition, the researcher contends that narrative methods provide a particular method to come to an understanding with a researched community. More specifically, he argues why he finds himself especially at home with Boje's antenarrative approach than with the more plotted methods of Gabriel and Czarniawska. For Boje,

the narratives of practice are partial, unfinalised and often inconsistent. The antenarrative exists in a dialogic relationship between consistency and inconsistency, order and disorder, coherence and incoherence. Boje's antenarratives correspond with what Barthes calls the writerly text. Barthes makes a distinction between readerly and writerly texts. A readerly text limits the number of oppositions that it incorporates by professing an unproblematic transcription of reality. A readerly text seeks closure, conceives its textuality, forces the reader to produce a meaning and positions readers as passive consumers. It renders its artifice through rhetorical techniques that produce the illusion of realism. A writerly text, by contrast, moves the reader to produce a meaning or set of meanings. It is perpetually unfinished rather than final, authorised, universal or absolute. A writerly text paradoxically offers up a transparent window into reality-making processes, despite its heterogeneity, its contradictory nature and its denial of closure. According to Barthes, producing a writerly text opens the way to the construction of a plausible reality. Subsequently the researcher explains his critical position and contends that he didn't want to straitjacket the complexities and problems associated with working and learning in the workplace in public service in a neat model. On the contrary, he wanted to excavate underneath the rhetoric he met. By means of the narratives, intended to be antenarratives, rather than readerly plotted texts, the researcher argues that he tried to reveal, to communicate and to stage a situation, to which the audience - frontline workers, their managers, researchers - can relate and can reflect upon themselves, without the researcher colonising them. Finally the researcher elucidates the way in which the case stories in the novel-report were written. Therefore he first clarifies five principles he developed and lastly he pays tribute to the literary sources that inspired him in writing this novel report. 'Create multiperspectivity' is the first principle. It is meant to support the effort to capture the pluralistic character of knowing and valuing. The justification of this principle of multiperspectivity was found in the philosophical writings of Bakhtin, Polanyi, Latour and Mol. Bakhtin proposed the concept of heteroglossia to capture the multiperspectivity of discourses. Five concepts which emerged from Polanyi's work - tacit knowing, indwelling, perspectivity, participation and polycentric order - are connected to the multiperspectivity of knowing. Latour formulated a critique of rationalist science. He developed the strategy of irreduction, to acknowledge different readings of reality. Mol articulated an ontology which posits the multiplicity of reality. 'No hidden mediation' is the second principle the researcher developed. Working with the material, trying to construct stories to give voice to the participants in the project, he realised that the perversity of the attempt to give the actors voices meant, at the same time, filtering them. But this is what researchers do all the time, he argues. 'Acknowledge that the author is dead' is the third principle the researcher

acknowledged. With his compliance to this principle, he draws on the French philosophers Barthes and Foucault. By proclaiming the death of the author, the researcher strives to open the text to the reader and his set of reading strategies, with no regard to any authority of the author. The death of the author empowers the reader because there is no proper way of reading, established by the author-researcher. The aspiration of this dissertation is that it is the reader who situates the narratives in the novel-report, the theoretical chapters and the reflexive letters. It is the reader who connects the case to his own knowledge and, above all, it is the reader who completes the analytical work.

‘Put a great effort into touching the reader’ was the fourth principle. In writing the case, the researcher found himself truly dedicated to the creation of a text to which the reader could connect. He attempted to create a novel-report that would engage readers in the same way a novel engages readers in a plot. The researcher wants the readers to think about the thorny, knotty, tricky problems at stake. To achieve this, he decided not to write scenes, he didn’t fragment the text into vignettes based on theoretical topics, but tried to write (ante)narratives from different but recognisable perspectives. The ambition was to provide space for different voices, but further trigger those voices to emancipate themselves. The researcher tried to dramatise the scenes to connect readers to the text, but tried not to plot the scenes.

‘Acknowledge that the author is not the monopolistic proprietor of knowledge’ is the fifth principle. Barthes celebration of the reader interpreter connects with this principle. Drawing on Polanyi, the researcher presumes that all readers possess relevant and different sources of personal knowledge. Because he didn’t want to covertly impose his thinking on the case and on the reader, the researcher revealed his motivations, frustrations, influences and his own ideas and analyses through one of the characters in the novel-report. He sincerely tried to avoid playing God. Therefore, he tried to synchronise his personal narratives with those of the other actors involved and brought them on to the same level and tried to restrain himself with regard to the development of plots. In his endeavour to write a writerly text, he used the metaphor of the pre-Sophoclean theatre, for which he coins the term *Organisational learning chorus*. The Organisational learning chorus is a place for the development of professional knowledge, it is an event, a face to face encounter or a relation between writer and readers, and it renders speech, meaning ‘a searching-itself voice which is facing a question, expressing itself from a lived experience’.

Through Czarniawska, the researcher came across the format of the detective novel that might offer a convenient framework for the critical, narrative, autoethnographic and multiperspective approach he strived for in his research and a suitable set-up for the case studied. The detective narrative

provides a powerful script for organisational inquiry because it offers the possibility of both describing a complex case and the research process. Czarniawska points out that a detective novel usually consists of two stories. One is the story of the crime which is hidden and mysterious. The other concerns the process of investigation. It is the story of how knowledge is mobilised in order to reaffirm order over chaos. The trope of a detective novel seems not only an appropriate way to represent the events, to reveal the quest to understand learning, but also a way to engage readers. It is a method to draw the readers into the story and, at the same time, offer them an opportunity to keep a distance and to build their own story. To achieve this, it has to be an alluring story. To write an alluring novel-report, the researcher let himself be inspired by stories of detection. The most important being the already mentioned *In a grove* by Aktutagawa; the hard-boiled detectives by Hammett, Chandler and Caine, like *The Maltese Falcon*; Beckett's *Molloy*, Haddon's *The curious incident of the dog in the night-time* and Pamuk's *My name is Red*.

After he has unfolded his methodological approach, the researcher turns to the question why he preferred this situation specific, author specific, fallible method. A method that might generate more questions than it pretends to answer? A method of which the chief product is a perspectival understanding of the truth created by and constituted in a transient rhetoric. He concludes that it is ultimately better because, in the ethnographic research tradition, he found, to a far greater extent than in other methods of social science, the willingness to admit its own limitations. It proved better for the researcher, because he learned, not only about the subject, but was also challenged to develop an alternative approach following his line of critique. It was also remunerative for him because he learned about himself, as a learning person, a (former) frontline worker, an HRD consultant and as a researcher. More important, the researcher concludes that it turned out to be a better method because it is less precise, more open for scrutiny and less likely to be judged by its adherence to a method than for its statements about learning, because it deals with the rhetoric of the contingent, because it invites the researcher to deal with and to associate with the various and changing meanings given to (workplace) situations. Moreover, the chosen approach is better for the reader because the method leaves space for the reader to develop his or her own thinking about learning, knowledge production and innovation behind the frontline of public service.

Before the author invites the reader to provide him with their interpretation of the case study and reflection of what they have learned from it themselves, he turns back to the case himself and offers the readers ten reflexive letters. These letters are addressed to: Prof. Letiche, his supervisor; to the actors that played a key role in the novel-report; to the top management of the involved

organisation and to Michael Lipsky whose street-level bureaucracies formed the anacrusis to his research. These letters are written from different viewpoints. The researcher as doctoral student, ethnographic researcher, consultant, former frontline worker, employee, is above all concerned with the development of learning practices of frontline workers.

In the letter to his supervisor the researcher explains once more how he resisted the plausible suggestions his supervisor made to plot his case study with a theoretical concept. In the letters to the project manager, the project leaders and a communication advisor of the innovation project under study, the researcher gives reflections concerning the inconsistencies he thinks to have seen in the facilitation of the project, the lack of professional support for learning processes, the influence of personal peculiarities, concerns and viewpoints and he confesses that he experienced ethical dilemma's as an HRD professional and researcher, having specific professional competencies to facilitate learning in the frontline but he kept a distance because, initially, he felt he was not allowed to interfere. In his letters to the frontline workers the researcher wonders what, in hindsight, the added value for the frontline workers has been. Did they develop special skills, has their experience been appraised and is the breakthrough spirit embedded in work processes as managers contend despite the resistance or even sabotaged projects?

The researcher points at his observation that there was limited enthusiasm to collectively discuss the resistance they individually met, the limited motivation for peer-consultation, the lack of initiatives to collectively discuss experiences, insights with top management and the unquestioned reception of the project manager's rhetoric. Although the researcher questions the urge of some of the frontline workers in the innovation project to really emancipate themselves, he acknowledges there are frontline workers striving for more professionalism despite the fact that they are ignored or even thwarted. To the top management the researcher expresses his surprise with regard to the apparent lack of interest of top management in the coherence of the innovation project with the standing organisation, the progress and outcome of the project in terms of output and process. He acknowledges the problems top management might have had with the turbulence the project might have caused and he suggests recreating a platform in the organisation to understand each other better and to learn. In the letter to his own boss, the researcher urges KPC Group to develop new ways of thinking, new ways of learning and new ways of knowledge production. To develop an ecological view on learning, that averts situations of dissonance (one reality doesn't know, doesn't want to know; doesn't accept the other reality) and dominance (one reality dominates the other) and that promotes consonance (one reality communicates, works together, allies with the other reality), variance (one reality improves itself by allowing, stimulating its development through loosely coupled/genetic cooperation with the other reality) and resonance (one reality is moved by the other reality; changes itself using the other

reality).

To his manager, the researcher contends that this is important for police organisations like the one he studied, for the home market of KPC Group and for KPC Group itself. And he congratulates himself because he has come across the metaphor of the organisational learning chorus to follow up on his research. The next-to-last letter is addressed to Michael Lipsky whose work inspired the researcher to start his research concerning the learning behind the frontline of public service. In this letter, the researcher supposes that the innovation project under study was silenced by the bureaucratic system in a way Lipsky might have predicted, furthermore he observes that Lipsky's ideas to develop new professionalism were undeveloped and he suggests that Lipsky's ideas might gain from the community of practice concept, while on the other hand, the happy advocates of the community of practice concept might gain some realism from Lipsky's own work and that of Jackall.

In the end, the researcher can't resist the inclination to put forward the idea of the *Organisational learning chorus*. Inspired by the format of ancient Greek pre-Sophoclean theatre, the researcher sees an organisational learning chorus as a learning event. For instance a narrator leads sessions wherein participants such as frontline workers, managers, staff, clients and consultants are invited to unfold their viewpoints narratively. The narrator is not the omniscient leader, staff employee, client or consultant. Nor is he only the Socratic facilitator. The researcher sees him or her as an informed member of the community. In his view (ante) narratives may be prepared for such a session, but a plotted and controlled course of the event is out of the order.

Finally the researcher declares that he only wanted to set a stage, to bring together different narratives and to offer an opportunity for the readers to contribute. In the last sentence of his thesis the researcher asks his readers what they have learnt. For an answer, he leaves his home address.

Samenvatting (Summary in Dutch)

Deze studie verhaalt over een zoekproces, dat is bedoeld om een beter begrip te krijgen van leerprocessen op de werkplek in de publieke dienstverlening, om van daaruit deze leerprocessen ook beter te kunnen ondersteunen in het belang van de mensheid in het algemeen en organisaties en individuen in het bijzonder.

Het is de verantwoording van een navorsing, die is beschreven in een 'narratief onderzoeksrapport' van een 30 maanden lange studie van een innovatieproject in een regionaal politiekorps. De studie is opgezet met de volgende vraag: 'Hoe kunnen leerpraktijken van frontliniewerkers ontwikkeld worden?'

In dit proefschrift worden frontliniewerkers gedefinieerd als beroeps-beoefenaren in de maatschappelijke dienstverlening, die direct contact hebben met cliënten en die over een substantiële discretie beschikken. Dat wil zeggen een ruime bevoegdheid om zelf beslissingen te nemen.

Negentien verschillende actoren, inclusief de onderzoeker, vertellen over het innovatieproject en over hun leerervaringen. Geen van die verhalen staat boven een van de anderen.

De studie is getiteld 'Leren achter de frontlinie van de publieke dienstverlening', omdat de onderzoeker de medewerkers niet volgde bij de uitoefening van hun executieve taken. Hij observeerde hen direct achter de frontlinie van de publieke dienstverlening. In bedrijfskantines, politiebureaus en op andere werkplekken.

De aanpak van deze studie komt voort uit een kritiek op de dominante case studie benadering die de onderzoeker bespeurt in het Nederlandse onderzoek op het terrein van Human Resources Development (HRD), en uit een diepgevoelde behoefte om de praktijk te beschrijven, zonder deze vanuit theoretische vooroordelen te 'koloniseren'.

In dit onderzoeksrapport gaat een casestudie vooraf aan de theoretische verkenning van de onderzoeksvraag en een theoretische verantwoording van de gekozen narratieve, auto-etnografische en kritische aanpak. Uiteindelijk wordt deze studie niet afgesloten met de gebruikelijke discussie en conclusies. Gebaseerd op zijn 'narratief onderzoeksrapport' schreef de onderzoeker een tiental reflexieve brieven, gericht aan de sleutelfiguren uit zijn onderzoek. Tenslotte adresseert hij in een elfde brief zijn lezers. In deze studie wordt een bijzondere rol toegekend aan de lezers. Zich baserend op het werk van de Franse filosoof Barthes, verklaart de onderzoeker dat hij geen 'readerly' tekst wil maken. Dat wil zeggen een klassieke, lineaire, gesloten tekst, waarin de lezers beschouwd worden als

passieve consumenten. De onderzoeker zegt erop uit te zijn om juist een 'writerly' tekst te creëren, dat wil zeggen een tekst die de weg opent voor de lezer om zelf tot de constructie van een plausibele werkelijkheid te komen, zonder daarbij bezet te worden door de auteur. De lezer wordt door de onderzoeker uitgenodigd om dit boek met eigen reflecties aan te vullen.

De basis van deze studie wordt gevormd door Deel I van dit 'narratief onderzoeksrapport'. Deel I bevat negen narratieven, voorafgegaan door een proloog en afgesloten met een epiloog. Samen vormen ze een 'novel-report', een concept wat de onderzoeker heeft ontleend aan Latour's etnografische studie *Aramis, or the love of technology*. Latour schreef een 'onderzoeksroman' over een innovatietraject in Frankrijk, dat was bedoeld om een onbemand openbaar vervoer systeem te ontwikkelen. Hij noemde dit een 'novel-report', een begrip dat in deze studie is overgenomen.

In zijn novel-report laat de onderzoeker de stemmen horen van verschillende betrokkenen bij het innovatieproject. Dit project was bedoeld om de ontwikkeling van een minder bureaucratische en een meer professionele cultuur te stimuleren, het was bedoeld om gebruikelijke werkpatronen te doorbreken en op een slimmere manier met politiewerk om te gaan. Het was bedoeld om daarvan te leren, om nieuwe kennis te ontwikkelen en deze te implementeren om zodoende innovatie tot stand te brengen. Om dit te realiseren werd een projecten organisatie ingericht, die in deze studie de naam FIT Police heeft gekregen (Forward Innovation Team Police)

De casestudie is geanonimiseerd, omdat de onderzoeker er, gebaseerd op zijn ervaringen in de publieke dienstverlening, vanuit gaat dat zijn observaties uniek zijn, maar tegelijkertijd ook algemeen. De onderzoeker wil zijn representatie van de case niet belasten met de identificatie van het bestudeerde regionale politiekorps en omgekeerd wil hij het politiekorps niet belasten met deze casestudie.

In de proloog onthult de onderzoeker zijn bedoelingen met de casestudie, die de lezer tot zich gaat nemen. Hij legt uit dat hij zichzelf onderdeel voelt van het verhaal en dat hij dat verhaal niet kan vertellen zonder zichzelf te onthullen. Verder vertelt hij hoe het Japanse korte verhaal *In het bos*, van Akutagawa, hem inspireerde om de casestudie vanuit verschillende perspectieven te vertellen. Dit beroemde korte verhaal laat zien dat alle actoren hun eigen motieven hebben om de loop der dingen op hun eigen manier te representeren. Akutagawa beweegt met zijn verhaal de lezers een stapje terug te maken, afstand te nemen, de verklaringen van de actoren als geheel te beschouwen en eigen conclusies te trekken.

De negen narratieven in het 'narratief onderzoeksrapport' beschrijven het innovatieproject ook vanuit verschillende posities, inclusief het auto-etnografisch perspectief van de onderzoeker. Het narratief onderzoeks-

rapport bevat drie narratieven waarin de auteur over het innovatieproject vertelt en zes narratieven waarin zeventien andere betrokken actoren hun verhaal doen vanuit hun eigen perspectief. In het eerste narratief vertelt de onderzoeker hoe het voor hem allemaal begon. Hij legt uit waarom hij de studie aanving, hij vertelt over zijn achtergrond en rapporteert over gebeurtenissen in aanloop naar het onderzoeksproject. In het tweede narratief wordt een van de projectleiders van het bestudeerde innovatieproject opgevoerd. In haar verhaal vertelt ze over hoe het allemaal begon voor de betrokken dienders van het regionaal politiekorps en voor hun ondersteuners. Haar relaas gaat over de ontwikkeling en afbouw van het innovatieproject. Met het derde narratief portretteert een andere belangrijke speler zichzelf. De projectmanager Alex geeft zijn versie van de opkomst en neergang van het innovatieproject. In het vierde narratief vertelt de onderzoeker weer. Dit keer over de verschillende projectactiviteiten die hij observeerde. Het vijfde narratief voert twaalf verschillende frontliniewerkers op. Zij vertellen over hun ervaringen met het project in hun dagelijks werk. In het zesde narratief doet de tweede projectleider Claire haar verhaal over de gebeurtenissen. In het zevende narratief wordt Bob, een frontliniewerker die een sleutelfiguur werd in het project, geroepen om zijn relaas te doen. Het achtste narratief vertelt weer een andere betrokkene over het project. Dit keer is Iris aan het woord, zij is een PR functionaris van het FIT Police project geweest. Ze vertelt hoe het innovatieproject gedurende de rit is verbeeld, bijvoorbeeld in promotiecampagnes en in onderzoek. In het negende narratief komt de onderzoeker weer aan het woord. Dit keer probeert de onderzoeker zijn eigen analyse te maken van het project waarin hij participeerde en dat hij observeerde. Daarvoor gebruikt hij een multiparadigmatische benadering om naar leerprocessen te kijken, afgeleid van de Nederlandse organisatieonderzoekers De Caluwé en Vermaak. Een epiloog sluit het 'novel-report'. In de epiloog legt de onderzoeker uit waarom zijn 'novel-report' niet sluit met een finale slotakte, waarin alles verklaard wordt. De onderzoeker benadrukt dat hij slecht een 'detective van de perspectieven' was. Ondanks het risico dat dit als teleurstellend kan worden ervaren, wordt in deze samenvatting geen synopsis gegeven van de verschillende narratieven. Kerngedachte achter het 'novel-report' is immers dat iedere lezer zijn eigen narratieven ontwikkeld op basis van het gepresenteerde materiaal.

Deel II van deze studie bevat een gebruikelijke literatuurstudie met betrekking tot de literatuur over leren in organisaties en leren op de werkplek. In *Understanding workplace learning in public service*, wordt het toenemende belang van leren in organisaties in een opkomende kenniseconomie bediscussieerd. De onderzoeker voert daarbij een aantal invloedrijke denkers op het gebied van leren in organisaties aan, zoals Argyris, Revans, Senge en Wenger. Vervolgens wijst hij op de groeiende

belangstelling voor leren op de werkplek, waarin hij ondermeer refereert aan studies van gerenommeerde auteurs op het gebied van leren en werken, zoals Marsick en Watkins en Eraut. Hij bespreekt verschillende paradigma's op het gebied van leren in organisaties. Aansluitend gaat hij in op de bijzonderheden van het leren en werken in de publieke dienstverlening. Op basis van Lipsky's boek *Streetlevel bureaucracies* gaat hij in op de defensieve werkprocessen die in frontlinieorganisaties door frontliniewerkers worden ontwikkeld en die tot middelmatige dienstverlening leiden. Vervolgens bespreekt hij verschillende systeembenaderingen die ieder op eigen wijze laten zien hoe defensieve praktijken in (frontlinie) organisaties tot stand komen en die aanknopingspunten bieden om deze te doorbreken. Daarvoor gaat de onderzoeker in op het werk van systeemdenkers als Argyris en Schön, Senge, Engeström, en Midgley. Daarna gaat de onderzoeker met zijn literatuurstudie door op professioneel leren en zoomt hij in op het werk van Eraut en Wenger en de Nederlandse onderzoekers Kessels en Simons. In het verlengde daarvan bespreekt hij de Nederlandse traditie van HRD onderzoek en meer in het bijzonder het onderzoek naar leren op de werkplek.

De onderzoeker kiest in het kader van zijn literatuurstudie, voor een brede definitie van leren op de werkplek, dat om te beginnen wordt gedefinieerd als de ontwikkeling of realisatie van relatief duurzame veranderingen in kennis, vaardigheden en attitudes, of de vaardigheid om te leren in de context van het werk, van individuen, groepen of organisaties waar deze individuen of groepen werkzaam zijn. Onder bepaalde condities kan dit leren ook leiden tot veranderingen in werkprocessen of werkresultaten van individuen, groepen of organisaties. Gaandeweg zijn theoretische verkenning, bekritiseert de onderzoeker de canon van het internationale en Nederlandse onderzoek naar leren in de organisatie en leren op de werkplek vanwege de in zijn ogen eendimensionale, model-gedomineerde benadering. Hij bekritiseert de afstandelijke aanpakken van onderzoekers en de wijze waarop deze zich hiërarchisch boven hun onderzoekssubjecten lijken op te stellen. En hij stelt vast dat er weinig aandacht is voor de complexiteit van de werkplek. In lijn met zijn kritiek pleit de onderzoeker voor een alternatieve en complementaire benadering. Geïnspireerd door de romanliteratuur en auteurs die in de eerste plaats werknemer waren en aansprekend schreven over werken en leren, en zich baserend op etnografisch onderzoek, zoals Orr's *Talking about machines*, argumenteert de onderzoeker dat zijn narratieve benadering en zijn novel-report bedoeld zijn als een aanzet tot een verrijking en een uitbouw van de wetenschappelijke kennis van HRD, management theorie en bestuurskunde.

Nadat hij de verschillende tradities binnen HRD onderzoek heeft belicht en een pleidooi heeft gevoerd voor de ontwikkeling van een alternatieve benadering werkt hij in *Creating an understanding*, een eigen benadering uit. De onderzoeker argumenteert dat zijn benadering exemplarisch is voor een

ander genre van academisch schrijven. Hij plaatst zijn benadering naast het traditioneel academisch schrijven. Allereerst verantwoordt hij zijn motieven om de lezer lastig te vallen met een case studie van meer dan 140 pagina's lang. Het novel-report is een uitnodiging aan de lezers om de onderzoeker te vergezellen bij zijn exploratie. Het is een uitnodiging om eigen denkbeelden te ontwikkelen met betrekking tot leren in de frontlinie van de publieke dienstverlening. De onderzoeker doet zijn lezers de suggestie om zichzelf niet te verliezen in de verhalen, noch vanuit de eigen theoretische kaders te vertrekken maar te pendelen tussen hun eigen kennis en de verschillende narratieven en door middel van hun eigen participatie en reflexiviteit eigen perspectieven te ontwikkelen. Gebaseerd op zijn kritiek jegens de eenzijdige casestudie-benadering van de Nederlandse HRD-gemeenschap, werkt de onderzoeker een kritische, narratieve en auto-etnografische onderzoeks-methode uit.

De onderzoeker bespreekt eerst zijn etnografische benadering die gebaseerd is op het werk van Geertz en het auto-etnografisch werk van Ellis.

De onderzoeker gaat er vanuit dat de persoon van de onderzoeker een belangrijke rol speelt bij de keuze van het onderzoeksvraagstuk, het formuleren van de probleemstelling, de keuze van de onderzoeksmethode en het communiceren van de resultaten. Tegelijkertijd stelt hij in navolging van Czarniawska vast dat dit belangrijke aspect veelal verborgen blijft.

Vervolgens bespreekt hij de betekenis van de narratieve methode, die een rode draad vormt in zijn eigen werk. Geworteld in de narratieve traditie betoogt de onderzoeker dat narratieve methodieken de gelegenheid bieden om tot een begrip van de onderzochte gemeenschap te komen.

De onderzoeker beargumenteert dat hij zich meer thuis voelt bij de narratieve benadering van Boje, dan bij de meer geplotte methoden van Gabriel en Czarniawska. Volgens Boje zijn praktijkverhalen partieel en vaak inconsistent. Boje gebruikt voor praktijkverhalen daarom het begrip 'antenarratief'. Een antenarratief beweegt zich in een dialogische relatie tussen consistentie en inconsistentie, orde en wanorde, coherentie en incoherentie. Boje's antenarratieven lijken te corresponderen met wat Barthes een 'writerly' tekst ofwel open tekst noemt. Barthes maakt het onderscheidt tussen writely en readerly teksten. Een readerly tekst limiteert tegenstrijdigheden en veronderstelt een onproblematische beschrijving van de realiteit. De readerly tekst dwingt de lezer op een bepaalde manier betekenis te geven en positioneert de lezer als passieve consumenten. Een readerly tekst wekt door het gebruik van retorische technieken een illusie van realisme op. Een writerly tekst daarentegen beweegt de lezer een of meerdere persoonlijke betekenissen te genereren. Het is eerder onafgemaakt, dan een finale, geautoriseerde, universele of absolute tekst. Volgens Barthes opent een writerly tekst paradoxaal genoeg de weg naar de constructie van een plausibele realiteit, ondanks de heterogeniteit, de contradictoire aard en de ontkenning van een conclusie.

Daarna licht de onderzoeker zijn kritische positie toe en betoogt hij, dat hij de complexiteit van de werkelijkheid van het leren op de werkplek van de publieke dienstverlening niet in het keurslijf van een model wil stoppen. Integendeel, hij wil de retoriek die hij in zijn onderzoek ontmoette, verder uitdiepen. De onderzoeker beargumenteert dat hij door middel van zijn praktijkverhalen of (ante)narratieven, een poging heeft gedaan om een praktijksituatie ten tonele te voeren waarmee zijn lezerspubliek, frontliniewerkers, hun managers, en onderzoekers, zich kunnen verbinden en waarop deze kunnen reflecteren, zonder dat de onderzoeker hen koloniseert. Tenslotte licht de onderzoeker een vijftal principes toe die zijn gehanteerd bij het schrijven van de praktijkverhalen in het novel-report. Tenslotte betoont hij zich schatplichtig aan een aantal literaire inspiratiebronnen. Het creëren van multiperspectiviteit is het eerste principe. Dit principe is bedoeld om gestalte te geven aan het pluralistische karakter van kennis en waardering. Het multiperspectivische principe is gebaseerd op het filosofische werk van Bakhtin, Polanyi, Latour en Mol. Deze auteurs laten ieder op eigen wijze de meerstemmigheid van de werkelijkheid zien. Bakhtin beoogd met zijn concept 'heteroglossia' de multiperspectiviteit van een discours te benadrukken. Uit Polanyi's werk komen vijf concepten voort die verbonden zijn met de multiperspectiviteit van het kennen: 'tacit knowing', 'indwelling', 'perspectivity', 'participation' en 'polycentric order'. Latour bekritiseert de rationele wetenschap. Hij introduceert als alternatief de irreduction-strategie die volgens hem recht doet aan de verschillende 'lezingen' van de werkelijkheid. Mol ontwikkelde een ontologie die van een meervoudige werkelijkheid uitgaat.

Geen verborgen medium zijn, is het tweede principe. De onderzoeker bekent dat hij degene is geweest die de verhalen heeft opgetekend om stem te geven aan de verschillende actoren. Hij bekent dat hij zich bewust is van de perversiteit daarvan en dat dit betekent dat hij de werkelijkheid filtreert. Dat is wat alle onderzoekers doen, stelt hij. Erken de dood van de auteur, is het derde principe dat de onderzoeker hanteert. Met de erkenning van dit principe baseert hij zich op de Franse filosofen Barthes en Foucault. Door de dood van de auteur te proclameren streeft de onderzoeker er na om de tekst te openen voor de lezers en diens strategieën. De dood van de auteur emancipeert de lezer, omdat er geen dictaat is voor van de manier waarop de tekst gelezen moet worden. Het is de intentie van deze dissertatie, dat de lezers de antenarratieven in het novel-report, de theoretische hoofdstukken en de reflexieve brieven situeren. Het is de lezer die de casestudie verbindt met zijn eigen kennis en het is bovenal de lezer die het analytische werk doet. Probeer de lezer te raken is het vierde principe. Bij het schrijven van de casestudy voelde de onderzoeker zich zeer betrokken bij het creëren van een tekst waarmee de lezer zich zou kunnen verbinden. Hij probeerde een novel-report te creëren dat de lezers op eenzelfde manier zou raken als een roman.

De onderzoeker wil de lezers graag bewegen om na te denken over de delicate, ingewikkelde en netelige problemen op de werkplek achter de frontlinie van de publieke dienstverlening. Daarvoor probeerde de onderzoeker herkenbare en gedramatiseerde scènes te creëren zonder deze dicht te timmeren met een plot. Hij probeerde ruimte te geven aan verschillende stemmen waarin deze zich verder kunnen emanciperen. Erken dat de onderzoeker niet de monopolistische eigenaar van kennis is, is het vijfde principe. Dit is verbonden met Barthes, 'viering van de lezer'. Dit principe is ook gebaseerd op het werk van Polanyi. In lijn met Polanyi veronderstelt de onderzoeker dat iedere lezer over relevante en persoonlijke kennis beschikt. Om zijn lezers niet te domineren onthult zijn motivaties, frustraties, invloeden en eigen ideeën bij monde van een van de actoren in het novel-report. De onderzoeker doet een verwoede poging om geen God te spelen daarom brengt hij zijn verhalen op gelijke hoogte met die van de andere actoren.

In zijn poging om een writerly tekst te schrijven heeft de onderzoeker gebruik ge maakt van de metafoor van het Griekse theater van voor Sophocles. Daarvoor lanceert hij het begrip 'Organisational learning chorus' of 'Organisatie leer-rei'. De onderzoeker ziet de organisatie leer-rei als een plek voor de ontwikkeling van professionele kennis, het is een gebeurtenis. Een face-to-face ontmoeting tussen leden van de organisatie of tussen auteurs en lezers. De leer-rei is bedoeld om ruimte te geven aan een zelf-onderzoekende stem, die zichzelf gestalte geeft vanuit een ervaring.

Via Czarniawska kwam de onderzoeker uit bij het format van de detective roman. Dat vormt een handzaam raamwerk voor een kritische, etnografische en multiperspectivistische benadering die in dit onderzoek wordt nagestreefd. Het narratief van de detective biedt een krachtig script voor een onderzoek, omdat het de mogelijkheid opent om de beschrijving een complexe case en het onderzoeksproces te combineren. Czarniawska wijst erop dat de detective over het algemeen bestaat uit twee verhalen. Het ene verhaal gaat over de misdaad, die verborgen en mysterieus is. Het andere verhaal gaat over een onderzoek. Dat verhaal gaat over het mobiliseren van kennis, om orde in de chaos te scheppen.

Het format van de detective lijkt niet alleen toepasselijk om gebeurtenissen te representeren, en de zoektocht naar het begrip van leerprocessen, maar ook een manier om de lezers te betrekken. Het is een manier om de lezers in het verhaal te trekken./en tegelijkertijd hen de gelegenheid te bieden om afstand te houden en eigen conclusies te trekken, een eigen verhaal te construeren. Dat vraagt om een aansprekend geschreven verhaal. Bij het schrijven van zoveel mogelijk aansprekende verhalen in het novel-report, heeft de onderzoeker zichzelf laten inspireren door 'detectie verhalen'. Belangrijke inspiratiebronnen waren, naast het al genoemde *In het bos* van Akutagawa, hard-boiled detective romans van Hammett, Chandler en Caine,

zoals *The Maltese falcon*, Beckett's *Molloy*, Haddon's *The curious incident of the dog in the night-time* en Pamuk's *Mijn naam is Karmozijn*.

Nadat hij zijn methodische benadering heeft ontvouwd, stelt de onderzoeker zich zelf de vraag waarom zijn situatie specifieke, auteur specifieke en feilbare methode de voorkeur verdient boven een andere benadering. Een methode die als hoofdproduct een perspectivisch begrip van de werkelijkheid oplevert, gebaseerd op en gecreëerd door een vluchtige retoriek. De onderzoeker komt tot de slotsom dat zijn methode uiteindelijk beter is, omdat hij in de etnografische methode meer dan waar ook, de bereidheid vond om de beperkingen van de eigen methode te erkennen. De gekozen methode is beter voor de onderzoeker omdat hij niet alleen zijn onderzoekssubject beter leerde kennen, maar ook omdat hij werd uitgedaagd om in het verlengde van zijn kritiek een eigen methode te ontwikkelen. De methodiek was ook lonend, omdat hij over zichzelf leerde: als een lerende persoon, als voormalig frontliniewerker, als HRD consultant en als onderzoeker. En nog belangrijker, de onderzoeker komt tot de conclusie dat zijn methode beter is omdat deze minder precies is, meer open staat voor kritische blik en niet zo zeer beoordeeld zal worden op de uitwerking van een bepaalde methode en maar eerder op de opmerkingen die met betrekking tot leren worden gemaakt. De methode is volgens de onderzoeker ook adequater omdat het raakt aan de concreetheid van ons toevallig bestaan en omdat het de onderzoeker uitnodigt om te gaan associëren met de verschillende betekenissen die op de werkplek aan leren worden gegeven. Verder is de gekozen aanpak beter voor de lezer omdat de methode ruimte laat voor de lezer om zijn of haar eigen denken met betrekking tot leren, kennisproductie en innovatie achter de frontlinie van de publieke dienstverlening te ontwikkelen.

Voordat de auteur de lezers uitnodigt om hem te voorzien van hun interpretaties van de casestudie en wat zij zelf geleerd hebben, keert hij zelf terug tot de case en biedt hij de lezers tien reflexieve brieven. De brieven zijn geadresseerd aan prof. Letiche, zijn promotor, aan de sleutelfiguren uit de casestudie, aan het top management van de betrokken organisatie en aan Michael Lipsky wiens *Street-level bureaucracy* de opmaat tot deze studie vormde. Al deze brieven zijn vanuit een verschillende perspectief geschreven. De onderzoeker als promovendus, als etnografisch onderzoeker, als consultant, als voormalig frontliniewerker, als employee, maar in alle gevallen betrokken op de ontwikkeling van leerpraktijken van frontliniewerkers.

In de brief aan zijn promotor zet de onderzoeker uiteen hoe hij diens aannemelijke suggesties om zijn casestudie nadrukkelijker te plotten met behulp van allerlei conceptuele modellen weerstond. In de brief aan de projectmanager, de projectleiders en de communicatie adviseur van het

bestudeerde innovatie project, geeft de onderzoeker reflecties die vooral betrekking hebben op: de inconsistenties die hij in de facilitering van het project heeft gezien, het gebrek aan professionele ondersteuning van leerprocessen, en de invloed van persoonlijke eigenaardigheden en aandachtspunten en gezichtspunten. De onderzoeker erkent dat hij zelf als HRD professional en onderzoeker voor ethische dilemma's stond, op momenten dat hij, eigenaar van specifieke vakbekwaamheden, vanwege het onderzoek afstand hield van de praktijk en omdat hij zich niet gelegitimeerd voelde om te interveniëren.

In zijn brieven aan de frontliniewerkers vraagt de onderzoeker zich af wat, in retrospectief, de toegevoegde waarde van het project voor de frontliniewerkers is geweest. Hebben zij specifieke vaardigheden kunnen ontwikkelen, zijn hun ervaringen gewaardeerd, en is de doorbraak-gedachte in het werk ingebed, zoals sommige managers beweren, ondanks de weerstand of misschien zelfs wel gesaboteerde projecten? De onderzoeker wijst op het geringe enthousiasme om collectief de weerstand die zij allen ervoeren te bespreken, de beperkte motivatie voor collegiale consultatie, het gebrek aan initiatieven om gemeenschappelijke ervaringen en inzichten te bespreken met het topmanagement en de onkritische, klakkeloze manier waarop de retoriek van de projectmanager werd omarmd. Hoewel de onderzoeker de behoefte van het merendeel van de frontliniewerkers aan echte emancipatie betwijfelt, erkent hij dat er ook een groep frontliniewerkers is die streeft naar meer professionalisme, ondanks het feit dat hij wordt tegengewerkt. Aan het topmanagement, uit de onderzoeker zijn verwondering met betrekking tot het gebrek aan belangstelling van de top voor de coherentie tussen de het innovatieproject en de staande organisatie en voor de voortgang en uitkomsten van het project in termen van product en proces. De onderzoeker erkent de problemen die het topmanagement vermoedelijk heeft gehad met de turbulentie die het project bij tijd en wijle moet hebben veroorzaakt, maar doet desalniettemin de suggestie om opnieuw een platform te creëren in de organisatie om elkaar beter te leren begrijpen en om gezamenlijk te leren. In een brief aan zijn eigen baas dringt de onderzoeker er op aan dat KPC Groep nieuwe manieren van denken, nieuwe manieren van leren en nieuwe manieren van kennisproductie gaat ontwikkelen. Om een ecologische visie op leerprocessen te ontwikkelen die een situatie van dissonantie (de ene realiteit kent de andere niet, wil de andere niet kennen en accepteert deze ook niet) en dominantie (de ene realiteit domineert de andere) afwenden en dat een situatie van consonantie (de ene realiteit communiceert, werkt samen, en vormt bondgenootschappen met de andere), variantie (de ene realiteit verbetert zichzelf door zich in de ontwikkeling te laten stimuleren door een losjes gekoppelde, 'genetische' samenwerking met de andere realiteit) en resonantie (de ene realiteit wordt bewogen door en verandert zichzelf door gebruik te maken van de andere realiteit) bevordert. De onderzoeker houdt zijn baas voor dat dit belangrijk is voor de bestudeerde

politieorganisatie, voor de eigen thuismarkt en voor KPC Groep zelf.

Op het eind kan de onderzoeker de verleiding niet weerstaan om het idee van het organisational learning chorus naar voren te schuiven. De onderzoeker feliciteert zichzelf met het concept van de 'organisatie leer-rei' als uitvloeisel van zijn onderzoek. Geïnspireerd door de vorm van het pre-Sophocles Griekse theater, ziet de onderzoeker in het de 'organisatie leer-rei' een gebeurtenis, waarbij een verteller een betekenisvol verhaal probeert te vertellen aan het publiek, met behulp van zorgvuldig geselecteerde actoren en waarbij alle belanghebbenden zijn uitgenodigd om hun gezichtspunten te naar voren te brengen. De verteller is niet de alwetende leider of adviseur, noch is hij de ongebonden socratische facilitator. De verteller is juist een betrokken en geïnformeerd lid van de gemeenschap.

De voorlaatste brief is geadresseerd aan professor Lipsky wiens werk de opmaat vormde voor dit onderzoek. In de brief aan Lipsky veronderstelt de onderzoeker dat het innovatieproject het zwijgen is opgelegd door het bureaucratisch systeem op een manier die door Lipsky voorspeld had kunnen worden, verder signaleert hij dat de ideeën die Lipsky ontwikkelde met betrekking tot nieuw professionalisme nog onontwikkeld zijn en dat ze zouden kunnen profiteren van hedendaags opvattingen over communities of practice. Terwijl aan de andere kant de pleitbezorgers van het community of practice concept wat realisme bijgebracht kan worden met behulp van ondermeer het onderzoek van Lipsky en Jackall.

Op het einde verklaart de onderzoeker dat hij niet meer wilde dan een podium bieden dat het publiek in staat stelt te participeren en een perspectief te ontwikkelen.

In de laatste zin van deze studie vraagt de onderzoeker zijn lezers heel direct wat zij hebben geleerd. Ten behoeve van een antwoord laat de onderzoeker zijn privé-adres achter.

About the author

Ton Bruining was born on the 23rd of May, 1956 in Eindhoven. Between 1977 and 1982 he studied human nutrition and dietetics. In the early 80s there was no specialisation in prevention and education, trained as a clinical dietician, he extended his study organising an extra internship in an organisation for primary health care and homecare services. After his bachelor, he started working as a dietician in primary health care in 1982. He found a job in Flevoland with an organisation that was heavily involved in innovating the organisation of primary health care. That has proven a critical decision over the years. Because he wanted to become a better health educator, he studied pedagogics and specialised in adult education between 1982 and 1992.

At an early stage, he realised that becoming more effective as a health care worker, often means you have to intervene in the organisation, so he further concentrated on management & organisation and learning in organisations. He did action research, studied the relationships between strategies for organisational change, quality improvement and learning in the workplace, and he wrote a masters thesis concerning the development of training policies. In 1990, he started working as a training & development officer in a general hospital in Eindhoven and became responsible for the training policy, but he acted also as a trainer in social and managerial skills and he got involved in curriculum development of the professional education of nurses. At the end of the year 1993, he switched from public service to the profit sector and became a senior consultant in training and development in a multi-national specialised in accommodation and recreation, based in Rotterdam. He developed numerous work-related learning projects, for frontline personnel as well as for high potentials. In 1995 he became an international training and development manager and responsible for the corporate training centre. In 1996, he started a PhD in educational science, studying the effects of feedback in organisations. In 1998, he temporarily stopped his research project as he found a job as a senior consultant for a firm specialised in learning, KPC Group in 's Hertogenbosch. At the end of 2000, after a period of reorientation, a new study was started focussing on work-related learning in public service organisations.

His original approach was bound in the rationale of mainstream Human Resource Development (HRD). After a second reorientation in 2002, he changed his perspective from educational science to humanistics and teamed up with one of his former teachers in pedagogics, now professor in practice of meaning, Prof. Dr. H.K. Letiche. He found a philosophical and critical approach more promising and cherished the intellectual and methodological diversity within the humanist community.

Since 1990, he writes for professional journals in the field of Human Resource Development. Since 1994, he is member of the editorial staff of a HRD

journal. In 1999, he became editor of the Dutch HRD magazine Opleiding & Ontwikkeling. In 1998 he was one of the founding fathers of the Vanwoodman society for knowledge productivity, a mainly Dutch and British network of scholars and consultants interested in thinking, learning, knowledge production and innovation. He is a board member and he has contributed to several publications and seminars and he has organised three conferences about knowledge and art. In 2003, he co-authored a book on knowledge production and thinking. Since 1 december 2005 he is associated professor at Avans University. Ton Bruining is married to Jolande and has two children Lola (2002) and Jim (2002†).

Propositions

belonging to the dissertation

Learning behind the frontline of public service

by Ton Bruining

- 1:** Academics are poor storytellers.
- 2:** A better insight into learning in organisations doesn't necessarily require a theoretical model.
- 3:** De colonisation of learning practices by learning paradigms is terror.
- 4:** The lack of coherence between the views of managers and employees interferes with the development of learning practices in organisations.
- 5:** Strategies for the development of learning practices of front-line workers must be adaptive to the strategies of those front-line workers.
- 6:** An organisation is seriously ill when managers are responsive to the stories in management books and not responsive to the stories of their employees.
- 7:** Organisations need intermediates.
- 8:** The PhD tradition limits knowledge productivity.
- 9:** The contribution of this dissertation is in the reading.
As a formula: reader – author > 0.
- 10:** Both working on learning in the workplace of frontline organisations, and working on a PhD, ask for feeling for drama.
- 11:** Art education is indispensable for the development of a knowledge society.
- 12:** Restrained use of PowerPoint improves the thinking power of organisations.

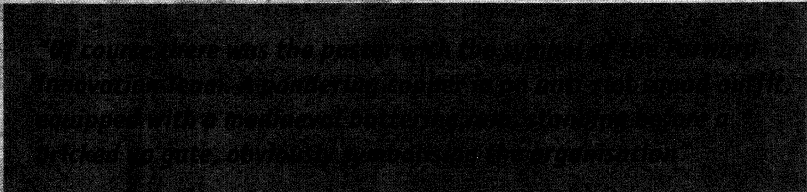
Stellingen

behorende bij het proefschrift

Learning behind the frontline of public service

van Ton Bruining

- 1:** Academici zijn slechte verhalenvertellers.
- 2:** Een beter inzicht in het leren in organisaties vraagt niet per se om een theoretisch model.
- 3:** De colonisatie van leerpraktijken door leerparadigma's is terreur.
- 4:** Het gebrek aan samenhang tussen opvattingen van managers en medewerkers over leren en organiseren belemmert de ontwikkeling van leerpraktijken in organisaties.
- 5:** Strategieën voor de ontwikkeling van leerpraktijken van frontliniewerkers moeten adaptief zijn aan de strategieën van die frontliniewerkers.
- 6:** Een organisatie is ernstig ziek wanneer managers wel ontvankelijk zijn voor de verhalen uit managementboeken en niet voor de verhalen van hun medewerkers.
- 7:** Organisaties hebben verbindingsmensen nodig.
- 8:** De promotietraditie beperkt kennisproductiviteit.
- 9:** De bijdrage van dit proefschrift zit hem in het lezen.
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- 10:** Zowel het werken aan leren op de werkplek in frontlinieorganisaties, als het werken aan een proefschrift, vraagt om gevoel voor drama.
- 11:** Kunstzinnige vorming is onmisbaar voor de ontwikkeling van een kennissamenleving.
- 12:** Terughoudendheid in het gebruik van PowerPoint vergroot het denkvermogen van organisaties.



This study narrates a search process that is intended to develop a better understanding of learning in the workplace by employees in public service. It is an account of a quest that starts with a novel-report of a 30 months long study, concerning an innovation project within a regional police force. The study was set up with the following question in mind: "What can be done to develop learning practices of frontline workers?" Nineteen different actors, including the researcher, tell about the innovation project and their learning experiences. None of the stories takes precedence over any other.

This study is grounded on a critique regarding the dominant case study approach in the Dutch Human Resource Development community and on a sincere desire to describe practice without colonising it from theoretical prejudice. A novel-report of the case study precedes a theoretical elaboration of the research question and a theoretical foundation of the chosen narrative, autoethnographical and critical approach.

Ultimately, this study doesn't close with a customary discussion and conclusions. Based on his novel-report, the researcher has written ten reflexive letters to key figures with respect to this study. Finally in an eleventh letter the researcher addresses his readers. In this research, a specific role is ascribed to the reader. Drawing on the French philosopher Barthes, the researcher declares that he didn't want to produce a readerly text, that seeks closure and regards readers as passive consumers. Instead he wanted to create a writerly text, that opens the way for the reader to the construction of a plausible reality without the author colonising them. In his closing letter, the researcher explicitly invites readers to supplement this book with their reflections.

The researcher sees his approach as an alternative genre of academic writing, next to the genre of mainstream HRD research.

Ton Bruining is senior consultant for KPC Group, 's-Hertogenbosch and associate professor at Avans University, Breda.