Trends in Organization Development

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Contents

Preface

Organization Development (OD) is an extraordinarily complex phenomenon of human society in which in the last few years there have been some interesting developments.
Without making any claim to completeness the following topics would seem to have been a focus of interest in recent research on the subject:
- integration of several approaches to OD;
- greater emphasis on the use of theories;
- the complexity of the change process;
- automation of work and administrative processes.

Some papers on these subjects, written by scientists working in the field have been collected in this reader. It has also been noted that there is a major blank area on the OD map for surprisingly few studies have been published on OD in government organizations. Two of these have been included here; the first done in a local authority service organization, the second done in a central government organization.
A brief introduction to the papers indicates some of the key topics.

Allegro and Bruining outline two main approaches to OD: the process and the task structural approach. Their view is that these approaches should be integrated to a certain extent. They present a model which distinguishes between the content towards which an OD approach is oriented and the consultation roles of a change agent (i.e. the change agent can be a 'facilitator' or an 'expert').
Finally, proceeding from the view that there is no single approach applicable in all situations, the authors put forward that a 'contingency theory' for OD should be realized.

Steensma, Allegro and Knip discuss two OD principles: (i) clarifying norms and values in so far as they play a role in planning the change process; (ii) making use of explicitly stated theories, adapted to the problems to be dealt with.
These principles are illustrated by means of a project in which an

'utility' theory of job satisfaction was tested. A change process to increase the quality of working life in a municipal sanitary service organization was planned based on the results of the test and on norms and values. Some first results of the planned changes are promising.

In recent OD literature one finds scarcely any reference to projects in central government organizations. However, in the paper by Den Hartog and Van Amstel, such a project is discussed. They suggest that, for lasting results, OD must involve self-development by members of the organization. They discuss an instrument for achieving self--development: elected committees. The account of the obstacles in the first phases of their project make interesting reading. Some of these obstacles would seem to be related to the bureaucratic structure of the organization in which they worked.

In the last paper, Van der Vlist shows how Leavitt's model of organizations can be used to understand why organizations are generally slow when it comes to change. The model also refers to current possibilities of accelerating OD. Decisions with respect to technology have major consequences for the structure of organizations and for the position of workers. Van der Vlist, like others in this reader, suggests that the workers directly involved should have a say in what must be done at a given project site. The approach suggested is demonstrated by a project entitled 'Work and Health', supported by the CCOZ (The Centre for Coordination and Communication of research data on Sickness Absence).

The papers by Allegro and Bruining, Steensma et al., Den Hartog en Van Amstel were presented at the workshop on 'Organization development and action research' at the North-West European Conference on the Psychology of Work and Organization, held in Nijmegen, 1983. The paper by Van der Vlist was written at our request.
Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to Ria Verschuren for typing the manuscripts.

Jacques Allegro,
Herman Steensma

Organization Development: A Contingency Model for Two Approaches

Jacques T. Allegro and Georg R.P. Bruining *

Summary

First this article gives an outline of two main approaches to Organization Development (OD) to be conceived of as deliberately planned, purposeful activities directed at organization wide or sub-system change.

Next we have tried to connect the two different approaches, each with its own history.

Finally some ideas are given into which direction the desired integration can be achieved.

1 Organization Development: a brief history

During the 1950s two comparatively autonomous approaches were developed, both intended to improve the functioning of organizations. These two approaches, the process- and the task-structural approach, each have their own specific characteristics.

The process approach is concerned on the one hand with changes in or effects of influence upon the worker (opinions, attitudes, behavior) and, on the other hand, with organizational processes (communication, policy formulation and decision making processes, problem and conflict resolving). This approach is based on the assumption that development or growth of the members of an organization and improvement of interrelational processes will lead to an organization which functions more adequately. Ideas with respect to how this can be promoted are

*) This is a summary of the article by the same authors in the handbook which has been published by Wiley (Drenth et al: Handbook of Work Psychology). We wish to express our gratitude to Wiley for their permission to publish the summary.

primarily derived from the insights and experiences drawn from group dynamics.
The process techniques and interventions thus developed aim to influence interpersonal relations with a view to effecting an open communication that enables the development of alternative structures and processes within the organization. The underlying idea is, that it is necessary to create an organizational climate in which the members of the organization establish their own conditions towards an effective functioning of both themselves and the organization.
A fundamental factor in the process approach is the nature of the relation between consultant and members of the organization. In this respect the members involved can, for instance, be given a chance to participate in the analysis of problems and the development of solutions.
So the shape of the relationship (e.g. giving the client the power to exercise influence) may help to mobilize human potential and engender processes that will lead to more opportunities for self-realization of the workers within the (structure of the) organization. This means that the emphasis is on how to bring about changes in an organization. In fact, this can be labelled an indirect approach.
The client is taught how to find a solution himself and how to give effect to it. The consultant's professional knowledge and skills are employed to engender a learning process towards the development of solutions.
The methods applied in this approach are often used as synonyms for Organization Development. In our opinion, this view is too limited.

The first reports on and evaluations of these attempts at organization development date from the early 1960s.
The consultative activities of McGregor at Union Carbide and the events in the space-travel industry (TRW Systems) are considered milestones in the development of the above method (Davis, 1967; Marrow et al., 1967).
In the following years a number of consultants gained recognition through their publications, e.g. Argyris, Blake, Miles, Mouton, Schein, and, in The Netherlands, though from a different background, Hutte and Lievegoed. Some well known methods are: Laboratory method of training, survey feedback, team development and intergroup interventions.
Characteristic of the laboratory method of training is the feature that

the participants in an initially non-structured group (there are neither agenda, rules, procedures, nor is there a chairman) turn their own interactions and the group dynamics into the object of their studies.

An essential feature of the survey feedback method is the use of survey and feedback sessions. With the help of a questionnaire, data on the organization are collected systematically. The information thus obtained is reported back to the related (or all) levels of the organization. Team interventions may be focused on group processes (e.g. interrelations, communication, decision processes) or on the tasks of a work unit (e.g. its reallocation). In most cases both aspects will be taken into account.

Intergroup intervention is appropriate when the diagnosis is that between workgroups that have to cooperate, there exist e.g. insufficient or inadequate communication, a misunderstanding, rivalry, negative stereotypes and hostility.

Noteworthy in the last decade is the increased interest in this approach and its subsequent expansion. Its course can be traced in the successive volumes of the Journal of Applied Behavioral Science and of the Harvard Business Review. Even to-day these publications play an important role in articles on approaches to OD and their related theories and research. A good deal of representative material from those volumes was included in readers (Dalton et al., 1970; Burke and Hornstein, 1972; Burke, 1975, 1977, Adams, 1975).

All these publications give a good impression of the methodical variations and refinements that resulted in the presently available ample supply of intervention techniques, modifications of strategy, research reports on more or less successful attempts at OD, as well as discussions about the values which form the basis of this approach.

In spite of the fact that in these volumes the subjects are categorized, no consistent and comprehensive picture of this approach to OD does emerge. Obviously it was hardly a matter of a carefully considered, well-planned development supported by research-based theoretical evaluation. The approach seems to consist merely of an amorphous mass of techniques and models, which in a few cases only are backed up by a dash of theory.

It will be clear that the authors, as regards the aspects of this approach, chiefly engaged in theories on how influence is exercised and

on the phases of change processes, interventions, the consultant's role, and other planned-change related issues. Moreover, most of these authors have one main aspect in common: their attention is focused on attitudes, behavior, and interpersonal and intergroup processes.
This is at variance with the viewpoints of those representing the task-structural approach. Publications in this field are more of an organization-theoretical nature and mainly concern diagnostic aspects and descriptions of solutions to organizational problems, i.e. the end state takes precedence over the process of development, strategies, or questions of implementation. This task-structural approach focuses on changes in task- and organizational structures, and on structural aspects such as role relations. In their opinion, changes in task--design and procedures will influence the attitudes, the behavior of the workers in the organization and their work relations.
This approach partly derives from the so-called 'classic' consultancy (scientific management and industrial engineering), whose procedure for dealing with organizational problems is as follows. Experts analyze the functioning of the organization and recommend changes to ensure improvement. The consultant's role is centered on designing a solution. Schein (1969) illustrates this by means of the so-called doctor-patient model: the consultant examines the client as if he were a doctor. A diagnosis is made, after which the consultant gives directions for treatment in the form of a report, which contains recommendations for changes, like in a prescription.
Apart from its deriving from classic consultancy, the task-structural approach can also be viewed as a reaction against it, considering the fact that it incorporates the lessons of the Human Relations Movement. This movement drew attention to the aspect of man, with his personal needs (satisfaction in his work) and social relations, as functioning within a network of techniques and structures. In analyzing and solving organizational problems not only the relation between social and structural aspects is considered, but, at a larger stage, there is also a gradual increase in the attention given to, for instance, the importance of participation of those involved in the processes of change.
The first projects and resulting reports appeared at the beginning of the 1950s. In this respect a pioneering role was played by the researchers from the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations, who conceptualized the open socio-technological system approach (Trist and

Bamforth, 1951; Trist et al., 1963; Emery, 1959, 1963; Rice, 1958; Herbst, 1962, 1974). Emery and Thorsrud (1976) published their findings on the so-called Industrial Democracy project in Norway. In The Netherlands there appeared publications by Hutte (1966), Van Beinum et al. (1967), Allegro and De Vries (1979).
At the beginning of the 1950s, descriptions of projects intended to achieve changes in the technological system and task-structure of organizations appeared elsewhere too. See Alderfer (1969) on job enlargement, and Davis and Canter (1956) on job design.
Towards the end of the 1950s concepts of job enrichment began to take shape (Herzberg et al., 1959; Ford, 1969; Paul et al., 1969). Journals that played an important part in furthering the knowledge of these approaches are Human Relations, Harvard Business Review and later on, though to a lesser extent, the Journal of Applied Behavioral Science. In The Netherlands there were contributions from Mens en Onderneming. In recent years collections of articles have appeared, containing a selection of older and more recent publications on processes of change. See Davis and Taylor (1972); Davis and Cherns (1975). Moreover, a number of so-called Trend Studies appeared, describing the development of this approach in various countries, such as: Work in America (1973); Van Beinum and Van der Vlist (1977); Van Gils and Van der Moolen (1980); Allegro (1980).

Our survey of research published elsewhere (Bruining and Allegro, 1981) shows, that in terms of improving attitudes, it hardly makes any difference, what intervention method is applied, whereas in terms of productivity the choice of the intervention method seems to be essential in the sense that the task-structural approach shows most effects. However, this conclusion needs some modification, because the two methods have often been applied exclusively to different levels and measurement of production is often very difficult on the higher levels.

2 Integration for the two approaches

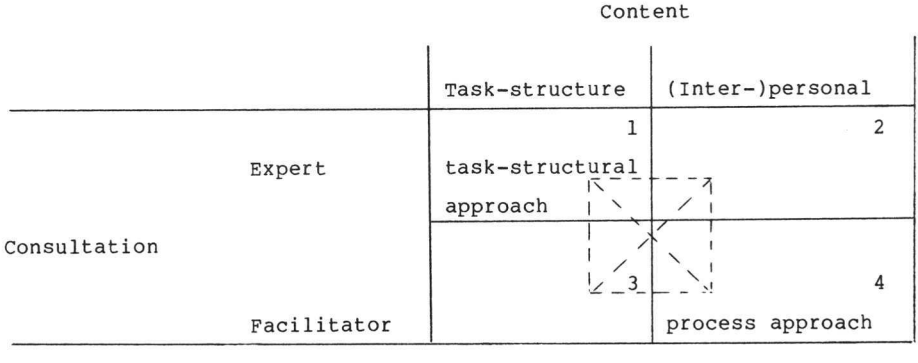
More and more often, it is argued that the two approaches should be integrated to a certain extent (see e.g. Burke, 1977).
Process-consultants are becoming even more convinced that they should not merely facilitate (inter-)group processes, but that in some

situations a more directive approach is required and their expert knowledge regarding social, structural, and technological aspects should be brought in.
At the same time, those engaged in the task-structural approach are becoming more responsive to the idea that, under certain conditions, it is necessary to assist the members of the organization in solving their own problems or to have them participate (for instance, in the open socio-technical system approach).
In our survey of research some data support our view that integration of the two approaches is relevant. Moreover, that view is supported by the fact that an individual change by itself is not sufficient, no more so than an exclusive change of structure of jobs.
The following model serves to illustrate the choices available in an integrated Organization Development.

A model for Organization Development

In view of the above-mentioned desirability of joining the two approaches, it is necessary to take a closer look at the dimensions contained in the approaches outlined so far. To suppose that integration merely consists in shuttling between the two approaches in the course of the change project will not do.
Agreeing with Van de Bunt (1978), we think it necessary to distinguish analytically between the content towards which an approach is directed, i.e. task-structures or (inter-)group processes, and the consultation roles, i.e. those of expert and/or facilitator. This analysis is represented in the matrix of figure 1.

Figure 1



Up till now, we have mainly found certain specific combinations of roles and content in the OD-literature. The combinations given in our matrix occur most frequently: the so-called task-structural (1) and process (4) approaches. The dotted lines indicate what other combinations are possible, for instance that of focusing on task-structure (1) with a facilitator role (3). This implies the creation of conditions on behalf of those involved so that they can themselves design tasks and organizational structures. Examples may be found in the projects of Allegro and De Vries (1979), Seeborg (1978), and others.
The last possibility (2) concerns focusing on (inter-)group processes from the viewpoint of an expert-role. An example is the teacher in a management-course, who demonstrates the theory presented by him by means of exercises.
A more dynamic elaboration of an integration-directed approach is given below.
Often, in the course of a change process, varying situations may occur, which require corresponding approaches. Thus, at a certain stage, a lack of knowledge may occur with regard to social, technical, economical or structural aspects, which makes it necessary to bring in the relevant professional knowledge. Such an input may subsequently lead to a more group-directed consultation (group facilitation), so that its consequences can be examined in an open atmosphere and those involved can be stimulated to implement the corresponding, 'taught' organization principles in their own work situation.
Conversely, knowing that change often gives rise to resistance if it is brought about by external advice (e.g. purchase of expert information of service), a consultant may decide to let those involved participate first in the analysis of the organizational problem. On the basis of this analysis the consultant can then make a proposal for improvement and finally try to find ways to put these into practice in cooperation with the client. Such an intermediate form is described by Albrecht and Schierz (1971) in a cooperation model. In this model, knowledge regarding solutions is linked with a procedure in which the client participates in collecting the data, in the analysis and diagnosis, and finally in introducing the change (solution).
Thus, Organization Development is characterized by attempts to employ these roles alternatively (contingently), depending on situations or needs. The emphasis is mainly on stimulating the learning process of

the members of the organization. Attention is alternately turned to task-structural and/or process factors.
For a theoretical support of this integration, we feel that a link can be established with so-called contingency thinking as it has been developed in various areas of organizational psychology.

Towards a contingency approach in consulting

Following the above approaches, a contingency theory for organization development could be realized, proceeding from the view that there is 'not one best approach' to be applied in all situations. A conceptual model should be developed enabling the consultant to establish a rational matching between his consulting behavior (or interventions) and the nature of the problems diagnosed, the objectives defined and the conditions (e.g. characteristics of the organization), which all influence change possibilities.
The first steps towards the development of such a frame of reference have already been taken. These concern formulations, chiefly based on the study of the literature and consulting experiences.
The above-mentioned models are provisional, preliminary profiles. More research data than are present available regarding the differential effects of approaches are required to support them empirically.

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Organization Development in a Municipal Sanitary Service Organization

Herman O. Steensma, Jacques T. Allegro, and Judy Knip

Summary

Two principles of organization development are discussed: (i) clarifying norms and values in so far as they play a role in planning the change process; (ii) making use of explicitly stated theories adapted to the problems to be dealt with. These principles are illustrated by means of the project 'job satisfaction in a municipal sanitary service organization'. A 'net-utility' theory of job satisfaction was tested. Based on the results of this test and on norms and values, a change process was planned to increase the quality of working life The first results of the planned changes are promising.

1 Introduction

Many change agents have a favourite kit of change techniques (for a review of these techniques, see Allegro & Bruining, 1983). One-sidedness is sometimes apparent. Instead of paying attention to the organizations' problem (or problems) and selecting the appropriate technique, they apply their pet technique without asking if this is the best way to solve the problem(s). We have little sympathy with change agents of this kind because their intervention is often harmful to the organization.

In our opinion this situation partly derives from the weak theoretical foundations of present-day organization development. What, then, is the right procedure? Our view is set forth below: An organization has one or more problems. A change agent is consulted. Sometimes diffuse requests for help are merely the result of irresolution. Sometimes, however, clear and concrete requests turn out to be based on very diffuse problems. First of all a careful diagnosis of the problem is necessary, otherwise the change process will probably fail. This diagnosis should preferably result in some 'explanatory questions' being

asked.

The guiding principle in answering the questions should be that as many (social) phenomena and as many (social) processes as possible should be explained with the smallest possible number of statements (Lindenberg et al, 1979). It is our opinion that the actions of the change agents should be based on explicitly stated theory. In this way one supports the growth of knowledge in the social sciences. Furthermore, sound theories have proved to be very useful and practical in guiding planning. People remain people though and this applies to change agents as well. They are not only guided by their (theoretical) insights, but also by their personal norms and values. In so far as the planning of organizational change is not based on theoretical foundations but on personal norms and values, these norms and values should be made explicit, because they determine the choice of change strategy. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case in practice. Many activities of change agents seem whimsical when in fact they ae based on a personal value system which has not been explicitly stated.

2 The questions

In this paper we shall illustrate our principles of organization development using our project: 'job satisfaction in a municipal sanitary service organization'.

The town council of a large Dutch town asked for our help in improving the job satisfaction of workers in the sanitary service. In collaboration with staff members of the municipality's personnel department and the director of the organization our brief was more precisely formulated.

The following questions were to be answered.

1. How do the workers experience their work (e.g. are they satisfied or dissatisfied?)
2. What causal factors influence perception of the job; with special reference to the factors affecting job satisfaction?
3. Being aware of these causal factors what can be done to influence them, and how must this be done?

Note that the second question is a purely explanatory question, as distinct from the first, which merely requires a description. Answers to the second question, together with personal norms and values,

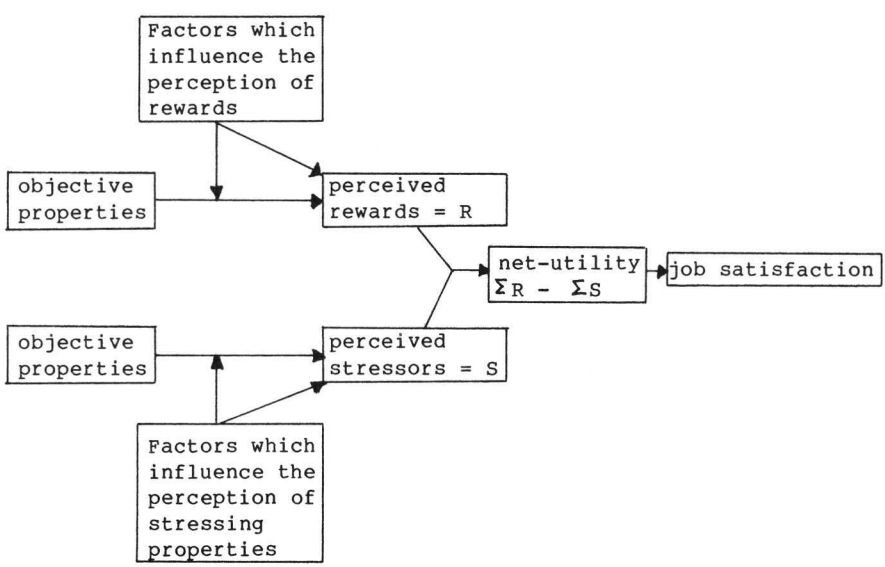
provide guidance in trying to answer the third question, the 'policy' question.

3 Principles of Organization Development

To answer the descriptive and explanatory questions we reasoned as follows. Behaviour is a function of the person and of the environment. The same is true for experience and perception. The environment in our case - the job and the circumstances - involved has more or less rewarding properties. Environmental properties may also be a burden on persons, but they are more stressful to some than to others. The 'net--utility' of a job can be defined as the difference between the sum of perceived rewards, and the sum of perceived burdens (perceived stressors) a job offers according to a worker. Of course the same job can have a higher 'net-utility' for one worker than for another worker. We then went on to make an important assumption: the more positive the net-utility of a job, the higher the job satisfaction will be.

Our theoretical position is summarized in the following figure.

Figure 1 The model of job satisfaction [1)]



This model can serve as a guide in trying to find causes of job satisfaction. To complete boxes (properties, factors which influence perception, perceived rewards, perceived stressors) literature about job satisfaction and about the quality of working life was studied, and several persons were interviewed. We then constructed a questionnaire with about 200 questions. Among the topics covered were: general job satisfaction; safety; health; general well-being; several other aspects of the quality of working life (e.g. job content; context variables; role ambiguity; quality of human relations at work; equitable payment; participation in decision making, etc.); demographic data; work ethic; etc.

Questionnaires were answered by 104 workers. Our model stood its test very well. Several hypotheses about intrinsic and extrinsic job factors, and the effects of personal factors were confirmed. Results were used in formulating answers to the third question we had to deal with: what can be done to influence factors affecting job satisfaction, and how can this be done? The point was already made that personal values also play a role in answering this question. Our personal norms and values played an important role not only in formulating the answer to the third question, but in the whole planning of the project. From the start of the project we had made it quite clear to all those involved - workers, management, staff - that in our view people should be held as responsible as possible for themselves and their fate. However to be able to bear responsibility one must have an opportunity of influencing the course of events. This was why increasing organizational democracy is an important strategy in all of our projects. (So far, we have used this strategy in five projects: Allegro, 1973; Allegro & De Vries, 1978, Steensma & Knip, 1981, 1982; Ris, 1983; Den Hartog & Van Amstel, 1983 - Allegro and Steensma are involved in de latter projects). Our personal norms and values led us to adopt a normative reeducative change strategy (Chin & Benne, 1969). However, in the initial stage particularly, we often had to adopt the expert role because members of the organization lacked some of the necessary skills (e.g. knowledge of research techniques).

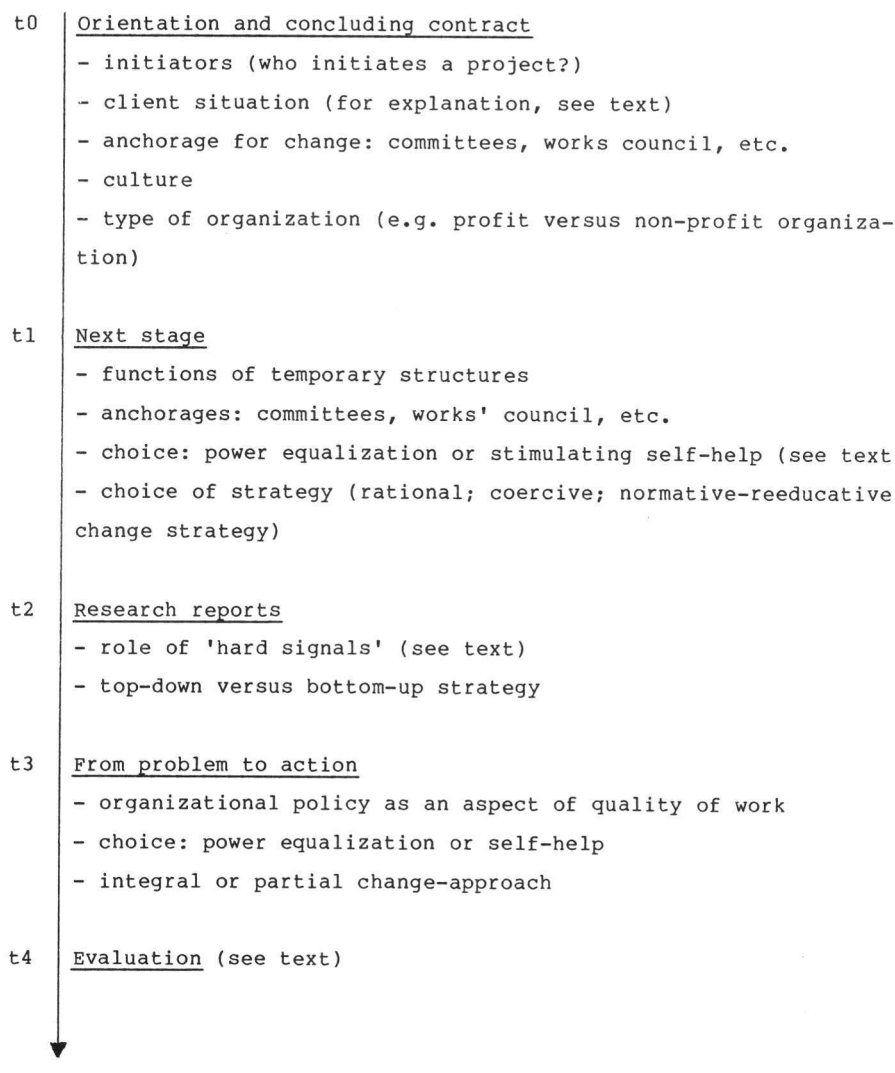
In the present project, workers and management were involved in planning the activities from the start. First of all, we asked the top management and the works' council for permission to start the project. We also asked them to cooperate with us in all phases. The idea was

that the project should not be seen by them as something imposed by the town council: it had to be their own project. A steering committee was formed beforehand to think about all stages of the project and to formulate policy immediately after the first research results had been collected. Representatives of the works' council, representatives of middle management, and the director of the organization, were all members of this steering committee together with staff members of the municipality's personnel department and the researchers. Thus workers' representatives were involved in strategic decisions.
Also, a 'working party' was formed to work out the steering committee's brief and to pave the way for changes in the organization. Elected representatives of middle management, and elected workers' representatives from all departments in the organization sat in this 'working party', together with researchers and members of staff departments. In other words all the members of the organization were made responsible for the course of the events to follow to a greater or lesser degree.
Summarizing our position so far, we have argued that in organization development one should make one's values clear - in so far as they play a role in planning the change process - and one should make use of theories, adapted to the problems one has to deal with. A conflict may arise in that the theoretical answers may run counter to one's values. At this point a choice has to be made. Fortunately, this situation has not occurred in our projects.

4 The time-table

Once the theory has been tested, and norms and values have been made clear, it is a fairly straightforward step to realizing what has to be changed, and how the changes will be executed. However, there is a temporal aspect to a change process. In each process, there is a 'when' question, i.e. 'When must something happen?' It is very difficult to answer this question, partly because of the lack of theories, partly because of disturbing, unplanned events which make ad-hoc adaptations inevitable. However, in discussing the problem with several colleagues of ours, we agreed that the following time-table is a fairly good description of how a certain kind of organization development - improving the quality of work - should preferably be planned.

Figure 2 The time-table of organization development.



Comments on this table are given below sometimes with references to our 'sanitary service project' by way of illustration.

Unfortunately, want of space forces us to confine ourselves to only a few topics:

(i) client situation; (ii) choice: power equalization or stimulating self-help; (iii) role of hard signals; (iv) evaluation.

(i) Client situation

Expectations of client and change agents should be compared. Note the difficulty in changing organizations: there are several parties in an organization, their wishes and expectations may conflict. In our project this turned out to be the case with middle management versus the workers. At one point middle management displayed a very strong resistance to change. We succeeded in weakening the resistance of these managers by making it clear to them that their 'rewards' could be influenced by the results of the project. Support of the top management was indispensable at this point. The support was given and the resistance was reduced.

(ii) Choice: power equalization or stimulating self-help

In terms of our values, both should be done. Meanwhile we have developed a theory of self-help which is described elsewhere (Steensma, 1983). The theory implies that a reduction in power differences is necessary to stimulate self-help.

(iii) Role of 'hard signals'

Our reports, based on the results of our survey, functioned as hard signals that something was wrong - and more so than several people had thought. Some members of middle management denied the existence of the problems. However, a survey-feedback of our results to all members of the organization made it clear that the results were acknowledged to be correct. The steering committee took the results seriously and an 'action plan' was developed. Several steps could be taken by the organization itself on which no further comment will be made here. There were also activities for which our help was indispensable. We provided this help but took care to enounce that gradually the organization would be able to do without our assistance. To speed us this process, we 'enlisted' staff members of the municipality in a task force.

Tasks to be done:

- improve human relations between workers;
- improve middle management's concern for people;
- improve 'werkoverleg' (a system of regular and formalized consultation between a superior and his subordinates as a group);

- job enrichment;
- improve communication (information and communication channels were blocked or did not exist);
- start a project to decrease sickness absenteeism.

(iv) Evaluation

Some of the results of the evaluation of the change process are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Some of the results of the evaluation

Opinions of a sample of workers (n = 94) about job aspects. In each case, the former situation is explicitly compared with the situation after one year of action research.

aspect	now better	same	now worse	
content of job	21%	73%	6%	100%
relations with colleagues	35%	64%	1%	100%
relation with supervisor	41%	53%	6%	100%
participative decision style of supervisor	41%	51%	8%	100%
job satisfaction	39%	60%	1%	100%
'werkoverleg'	39%	53%	8%	100%

At first glance, these results - obtained after only one year of action research - are promising. However, there is a snag. When we used some questions from the previous questionnaire there was hardly any difference between the answers to these questions before and after the implementation of the planned changes. Perhaps this is attributable to the fact that when the situation improves people raise their standards.
Other methods of evaluation - observations, expert judgements, changes in objective measures of quality of working life - indicate that most things are slightly better now than before our arrival.

Meanwhile, the project to reduce 'sickness absenteeism' has been started with the implementation of the 'CCOZ system of sickness absenteeism registration', which is an advanced system of registration in The Netherlands. The organization itself is developing a model of communication channels. Gradually, we have transferred the satisfac-

tion project to the organization and to the municipality. Dissemination would thus seem to be possible in this way. Perhaps the best way of putting it is to say that our activities have paved the way for a real change process. A start has been made but much still remains to be done.

Notes

1) The core of the model has been developed by Steensma in collaboration with the sociologists Gerats, Tazelaar & Wippler. The model can be considered as an integration of the 'Michigan-stressmodel' (Winnubst, 1980), the Vroom-model (Vroom, 1964) and the Hackman and Oldham model (1980). In the sociological version we used in other research we did not refer to net-utility. Also, the main effects of factors which influence perception were missing: these factors were only considered as moderator variables.

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Improving the Quality of Work in a Public Enterprise

Hugo H.W. den Hartog and Renée J. van Amstel

1 Introduction: The project Work Well-being and Health

The Project Work Well-being and Health is an action-research project which tries to achieve three objectives:

a. improving the Quality of Working Life (QWL);

b. developing and testing structures and procedures for a permanent organizational policy in the field of QWL;

c. formulating recommendations for the gradual introduction of the new Law on QWL (Arbo-wet) in government organizations.

The Quality of Working Life

By improvements in QWL we mean improvements in employment conditions, working conditions, job content, and in organizational and personnel policies in the field of health, safety and well-being at work in general.

QWL has both 'objective' properties - i.e. attributes which can be observed and/or measured by 'experts' outside or inside the organization - and 'subjective' properties, i.e. opinions, attitudes, norms and values of workers towards their work. Both aspects are important, but in this project emphasis has been laid on the subjective properties of QWL.

Not only because what can be a burden or a point of stress for one person may sometimes be regarded as a positive challenge by another, but mainly because of the strategy for organization development used in the project. This strategy is based on the viewpoint that organization development should largely be the result of the ideas and activities of the members of the organization themselves and should derive from 'self-activity'. Of course, this is again a matter of emphasis because worthwhile contributions from outsiders and experts should not be excluded from the project. Finally, the importance of the subjective attributes of QWL is underlined by recent research of

Steensma, a.o. which clearly indicated that job-satisfaction was a function of the 'net-utility' of a job; that is of the difference between the sum of perceived rewards and the sum of perceived burdens (of perceived stressors) offered by a job according to a worker (Steensma, 1983).

New organizational policies for QWL

We believe that for successful and lasting results, organization development must largely be self-development, by (the members of) the organization. On paper, and in theory, it is fairly easy to create model organizations and a considerable part of the work of scientists and consultants in fact consists of telling other people 'how to behave': how to organize according to the latest fads and fashions. Nevertheless, we all know that in the real world organizations are often very resistant to change and that improvements can only be introduced slowly; this is even more true of public enterprises which often have very centralized administrations and traditionally prescribed rules and procedures. Apart from this there are many QWL-projects which were fairly successful or seemed to be as long as the consultants were present but whose results had evaporated completely after a few years (Goodman, 1979).

Bad expertise? In some cases perhaps, but often we believe, low involvement of the organization members so that the more traditionally minded managers had the chance to organize again as they had done in the good old days.

As we are operating in a government agency with this project, we certainly do not presume that we will fare much better. But at least we should try and one of the means is to use the ideas, expertise and creativity which can be mobilised by the organization itself. Another is not to jump too far or drive too fast. People should be given enough time, especially when change processes are introduced in existing organizations, to adapt to new situations and to learn from them. At all stages of the process the criterion should not be the terrific innovations that have been introduced, but the less spectacular, though more pragmatic, criterion of progress towards desirable goal? Thus using the well-known terminology introduced by Chin and Benne (Chin and Benne, 1979; Allegro, 1980; Van der Vlist, 1981), the strategy we are using is mainly 'normative-reeducative', starting from

the here-and-now experiences of the members of the organization and of their definitions of the problems which have to be solved. Creating learning experiences in this way, however, will not be enough so use is also made of 'empirical-rational' strategies - convincing people that new ways of organizing are desirable because these are in their own interests and rational - and if necessary, also strategies based on 'power and coercion'. Though the latter may have undesirable side--effects, demotivation and opposition, for instance, it is also true that innovations often have to be backed with some initial force from senior management. The need to cut the Gordion knot is sometimes the only way to make any progress.
Organization development using no methods based on power, is very difficult indeed, if not impossible (Beer, 1976; Veen, 1982).

The new Law on QWL

A third goal is to formulate recommendations for the introduction of the 'Arbo-wet' in government organizations, based on the experiences in the project. Literally translated 'Arbo-wet' means the 'Work Environment Act'. However the scope of the law is much wider than this term suggests because the law aims at improving QWL in a broad sense. Another important difference with the former laws on safety and health at work is that the new law is not restricted to narrowly defined regulations and prohibitions, but is also meant as a guideline and invitation to management and workers to collaborate in improving QWL. In this respect the new law is closely connected with the equally new Works' Council Act, the version of the latter that is now going to be introduced in government agencies even goes so far as to prescribe negotiations leading to agreement between management and representatives of workers in the field of QWL and the technical and financial methods of organizing. If agreement cannot be reached the question has to be referred to arbitration.

To reach (at least partly) the above-mentioned goals, the basic planning for the Project Work Well-being and Health consists of doing research - mainly by interviews and group interviews - on QWL as perceived by the different members of the organization and eliciting proposals for improving their working situations. Armed with these inventories of problems, representatives of the various work-units and

organization levels assembled in a QWL-committee will develop plans for improvements in consultation with the management and the workers they represent. Apart from improvements in QWL positive effects are hoped for on motivation and involvement, health problems caused by jobs, the quality of the services rendered by a government organization and organizational efficiency.

Since at the time a similar line was being followed at the Personnel Directorate of the Ministry of Transport and Public Works the plans for the project were developed further in co-operation with a Committee set up for this purpose by the latter Ministry. A comparably project was developed for industry and this resulted in a project in a large conglomerate of paint factories (Masselink, Zandvliet and Van der Leeuw, 1982, 1983; Ris, 1983).

2 Preliminary phases of the project

The first phases of the project were time-consuming and laborious. It took a long time to find an organization where the management wanted to participate. The typical reactions were positive with regard to the 'philosophy' and the goals of the project, but, nearly all organizations found it difficult to participate themselves, though it was often said that 'the project could be very beneficial for other parts of the ministry'. The main obstacles were:

- The starting point was that the results as well as the problem inventories would be published. Most managers, however, were somewhat afraid of publicity both inside and outside the organization. They were often afraid that other organizational parts or higher levels would use the project results against them. Consequently the desire for confidentiality was great; as a rule this is ensured by internal or external consultants but it could not be guaranteed in this case because of the intended learning effects for others.
- Many civil servants also expected that higher levels in the ministry would refuse to co-operate if proposals for improving QWL proved to be rather costly, especially in these times of economic recession.
- Though most respondents saw a correlation in their own organization as well between QWL and motivation, health problems, productivity etc., many expected that it would be very difficult if not impossible

to improve situations, because, as was often said, there were too many decision-levels and, at the same time, decision-making was too centralized, especially with respect to finance.

Because of these obstacles which seemed to be insurmountable, we finally decided to stop the activities in government agencies and to continue with these projects in industry only. When the Committee set up for the purpose was informed, one of the members, a personnel manager, said that he thought the Project Work Well-being and Health might find an opening in his organization. This led to further negotiations with the board of directors and the works' council of 'Rijkswaterstaat Directie Limburg' (RDL), a part of the organization of the Ministry of Transport and Public Works whose sphere of operations roughly coincided with the province of Limburg. This time the results were: agreement on the starting-points, goals and methods of the project, a contract in April 1982 and an effective start in September 1982 after orientating discussions and the inauguration of a preparatory committee in Limburg. The committee included representatives of management, works' council, RDL organization departments, public assistance, public health department and consultants of the foundation CCOZ.

3 Rijkswaterstaat Directie Limburg

Rijkswaterstaat Directie Limburg (RDL) has as its main tasks the construction, administration and maintenance of roads, canals and rivers in the province of Limburg, together with the supervision of the implementation of legislation. RDL has a head office in the town of Maastricht (about 150 civil servants) and an Outer Service (about 530 civil servants). The Outer Service is divided in 6 regional Service Districts. Each district has its own management and district office. The geographical spread of the functional units is typical of the organization of a service district; locks, flood-control dams, small work groups of 'cantonneers' (workers on the road, canal- and riverbanks, gardeners). The Mechanical and Electrotechnical Department (MED) is a service department working for all the districts. The Project Work Well-being and Health was started in the Maastricht Maas (DMM) service district followed by the MED.

Diagram 1 Rijkswaterstaat Directie Limburg

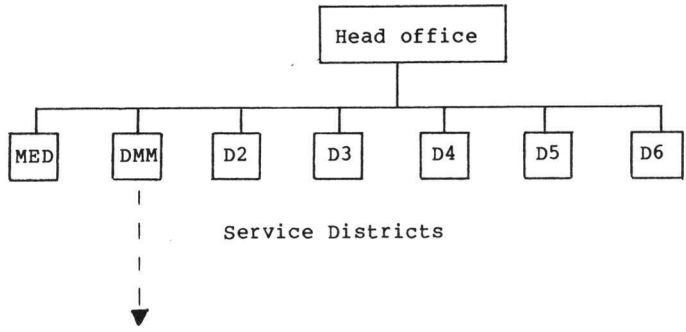
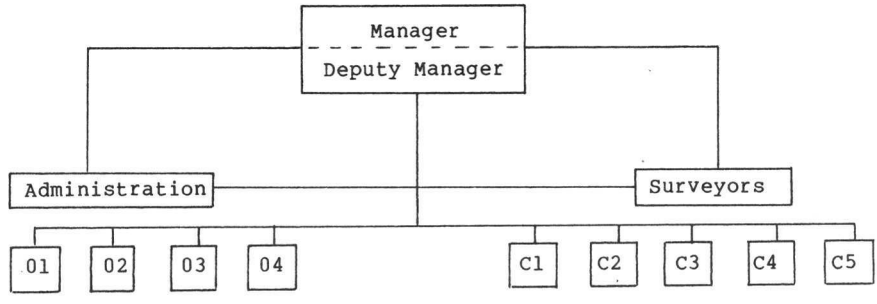


Diagram 2 District Maastricht Maas



Objects: locks, flood control work groups 'cantonneers'

4 Introduction of the project

The board of directors and the works' council decided to introduce the project in the Outer Service for, compared with head office, few organization development activities had been conducted there. Two important points of departure were: fostering self-activities and voluntary participation. The preparatory committee consequently started an extensive information campaign in which the project was discussed at all levels of the organization. The positive result was, that apart from one service district, all districts and the MED were willing to participate in the project, though it seemed that the workers were more enthousiastic than management. After a first inventory of the problems in the service districts, the committee decided to start with

the project in the Maastricht Maas district, followed by the MED. In the committee's report a procedure in phases (see diagram 3) and a project-structure (see diagram 4) was also proposed. This project structure we intended and designed as a new and permanent consultation structure between management and representatives of the various levels and functional units in the districts.

Diagram 3 Working procedures

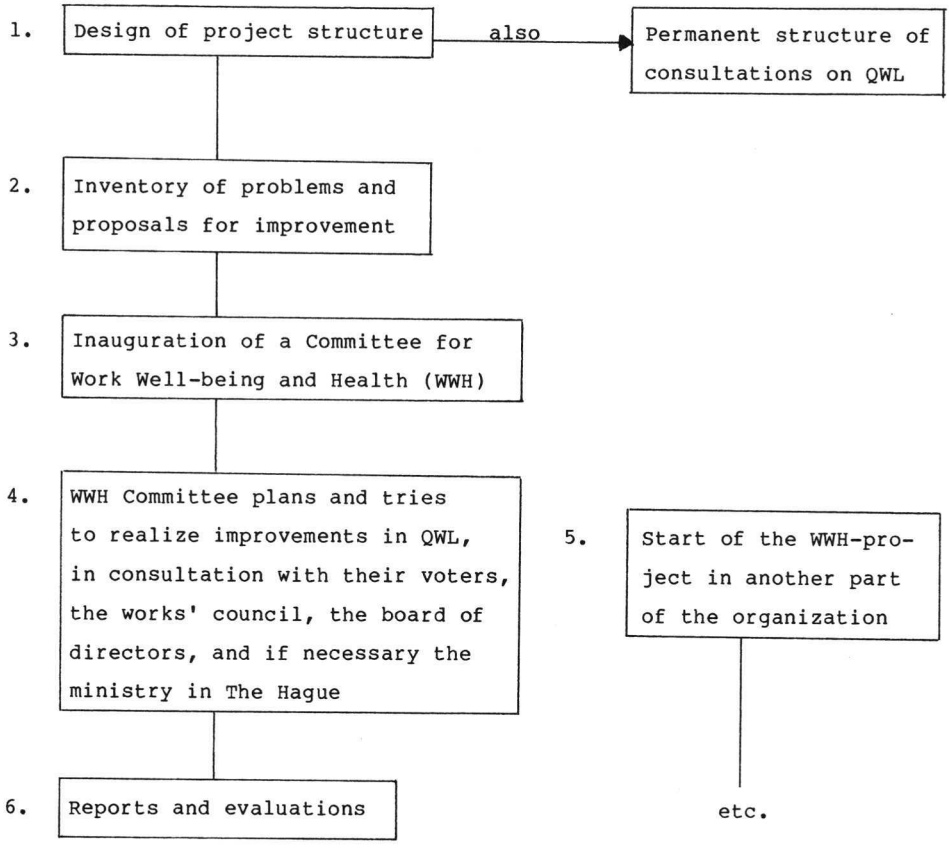
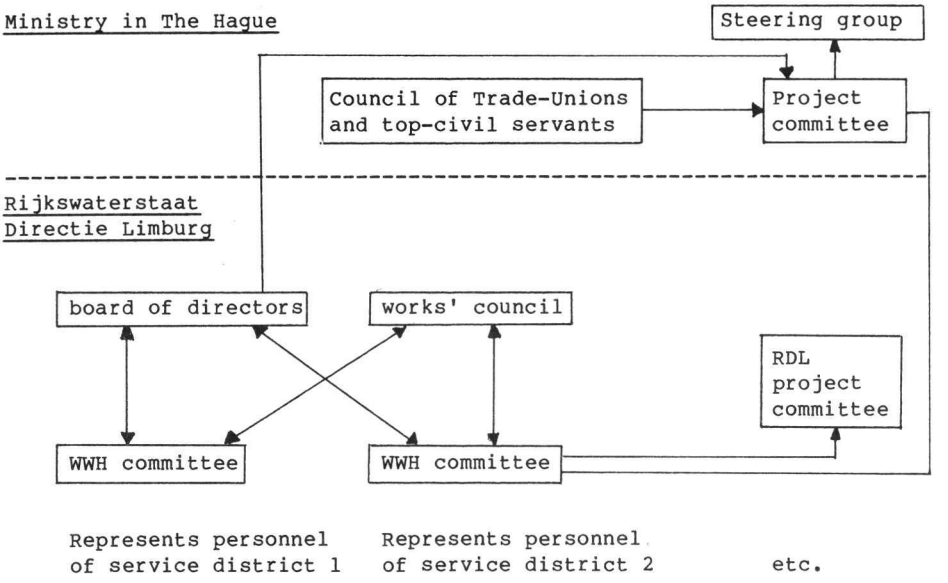


Diagram 4 Project Structure



The crux of the new structure is formed by the elected WWH committees in the service districts as a form of permanent consultation on QWL. According to us and the other members of the preparatory committee these were necessary because of:

- The need for a more direct form of consultation between the management of the MED and Service Districts and the workers at the base of the organization, as the only forms of consultation were between management and middle management and, in informal ways, between middle management and workers.
- The great distance between the workers and their representatives, appointed by the trade unions, in the works' council in Maastricht, a distance also caused by the wide geographical spread of the work-units over the whole province of Limburg.

The new WWH committee at the intermediate levels of the organization of RDL should fill the gap and improve communications. Improvement in this respect was considered important because of the new works' councils in the court service, which will be introduced in the coming years, will be granted important powers as approved. Some members of the council will be directly elected by the workers.

5 Some preliminary results of the Work Well-being and Health project

At the time of writing (March, 1983) the project has not yet been concluded. An interim evaluation has just started however and it seems that the first results are promising, a fact confirmed by the decision of the board of directors and the works' council to introduce these forms of consultation on QWL in the whole RDL, including head office; deliberations are still underway on the actual structures, procedures and competences. The main problems have been:

- The sceptical and sometimes downright negative opinions and attitudes of management and middle management in the Outer Service towards job consultation, the participation of the workers, and the new WWH committees. This situation has been improved in the Maastricht Maas district and the MED, but is still a problem in the other districts and at head offices, which have no practical experience with the project.
- The fear of some members of the works' council that their powers of competence and decision will be impaired by the WWH committees (though the committees have only advisory powers).
- Lack of support for the project from some senior civil servants in The Hague, mainly because they fear that these forms of participation and consultation on QWL will be too costly in view of the government's financial problems but also because of traditional views on organizing bureaucracies.
- The necessity of conducting very many lengthy and recurring discussions about the goals, structures and procedures of the Work Well-being and Health project with a lot of persons and groups in RDL. Though on paper the organization is hierarchically organized it has surprisingly anarchial characteristics with the result that discussions and deliberations keep starting over and over again.
- It is difficult for the WWH committees and the managers, not only in the Outer Service but also at Head Office to solve simple organizational problems in an efficient way within a reasonable amount of time because of the multitude of decision-makers and at the same time, the centralized way of decision-making at the Ministry in The Hague, especially with respect to financial procedures.

Though progress has been made these problems have not all been solved, and will certainly not all be solved during the Work Well-being and

Health project in Limburg. Nonetheless the project is still on its feet and positive results have been achieved:

- The consultations between the managers of the MED and the Maastricht Maas district and the respective representatives of the workers and middle management, are proceeding in a satisfactorily way, after a difficult start in Maastricht Maas.

The way now adopted for consultations with 'informal' meetings of the members of the committee followed by formal meetings with the manager, is functioning better than the way initially chosen in which the manager was present at all the meetings. With the present system the manager is confronted with the well-reasoned views of the representatives and therefore dominates the discussions much less. This experience is very much in line with Mulder's theory and research on power relations and on the processes of reducing power distances (Mulder, 1971, 1972).

- The communication and the supply of information within the Maastricht Maas district and the MED has been improved. As a consequence many problems mentioned in the inventories turned out to be real ones because these were based on insufficient information and knowledge. The same is true for the communication with the Personnel Department at the Head Office. Here, too, relations have been improved.
- Though real serious problems in QWL were not found in the project there were a lot of relatively minor problems which were investigated and partly solved more rapidly owing to the activities of the committees. Some serious problems were also investigated and approached more energetically. Examples are: the introducing of job-consultation on the two largest locks, improvements in the system of personnel assessment and career planning, and a solution for a dangerous and unsafe situation for shipping-traffic near the main bridge of the town of Maastricht.
- The two main problems we met in RDL - a multitude of decison-making levels combined with centralized decision-making at the ministry in The Hague, and the great distance between the works' council and the workers at the base of the organization - seem to be typical at many other bureaucratic organizations.

If we can make some headway towards solving these problems in Limburg the results will be applicable to a wide array of government organizations, in accordance with the third goal of the project.

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On the Inertness of Organizations When it Comes to Improving the Quality of Work

René van der Vlist

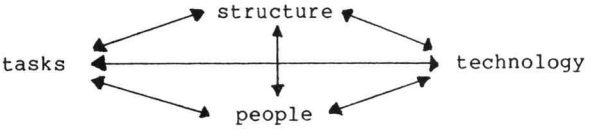
1 Introduction

Organizations are generally slow when it comes to changes. The organizational model of Leavitt (in: Cooper et all, 1964, Leavitt, 1965) is a good starting-point for understanding why this slowness exists. Changes of a fundamental kind aimed at improving the quality of work, are achieved with great difficulty as Leavitt's model may help us to understand. The model, however, also refers to some present possibilities that may be used to accelerate the process. To exploit them, social scientists - especially organizational psychologists and social psychologists - have to adopt an active role.

2 Leavitt's model of organizations

There are many definitions and descriptions of the concept of 'organization'. They all have some validity but always from a restricted perspective, as a cognitive model serving to clarify some aspect of the phenomenon under study.

Given the empirical fact that most organizations are slow when it comes to changes we can use Leavitt's model of organizations to understand why. According to Leavitt organizations can be seen as multivariate systems with at least four (types) of mutually dependent variables: these variables interact and tend to integrate in some kind of dynamic equilibrium:



Leavitt, 1965

Some explanations may be needed:
Tasks are defined as the 'raison d'être' of the organization. Tasks are deduced from of fall together with organizational goals.
Technology must be seen as the totality of machinery, tools and instruments such as institutions, work procedures and work methods. The lay-out of the production process (the setting of machinery) is also part of the technology as are staff assessment, ordering and selling procedures, etc. The static aspect is dominant in the concept of technology. Technology can be envisaged in the form of a blue print and procedure manuals.
The concept of structure is even more complex than the concept of technology. Structure refers to the way in which a complicated system is built or integrated. Without structure there are only independent, loose parts. The structure creates interdependence. In this sense the concept refers explicitly to connections between parts. Connections exists as soon as the functioning of one part is influenced by or dependent on the functioning of some other part. Connections can be of a material as well as of an immaterial kind. Two wheels that interlock, gear into one another, show a material connection. Two communicating workers (in the process of their work) show an immaterial connection. Quite rightly Leavitt considers the communication and information system as part of the structure as well as the power structure and the stream of goods. To many a reader the concept of stucture has a static connotation. Nevertheless structure can only be recognized if a dynamic process is going on.
Lastly, people are the persons, the workers, carrying out activities. These activities combine into jobs. Workers perform their jobs by using technology according to procedures and in accordance with the structure as defined.

3 Existing organizations and their conception of people

Leavitt's four variables interact and tend to a kind of dynamic equilibrium. This implies that given three out of four (for instance tasks, technology and structure), the fourth (people) is more or less determined.
Of the four variables the concept of tasks, as used by Leavitt, is dominant. Given the task (= the organizational goal) only a limited

technology is appropriate. The relationship is never so compelling that the task determines the technology, but there is certainly something like an 'indicative dependency'. Given tasks and technology the same holds for structure. In this case, too, there exists an 'indicative dependency'. And given tasks, technology and structure the same holds for people, the implication being that, given tasks, technology and structure, the demands to be made of people are very much restricted though the relationship is not a 100% compelling. The order I chose was not a random order. In most of the organizations organizational goals come first. Technology follows and is largely chosen on the basis of rational technical and economical grounds. It is implicitly assumed at this stage that the 'structure' and 'people' can be adapted.

When the structure has to be chosen the choice is usually based on presumed efficiency, dependence on the technology itself and the controllability of the process (with respect to technology as well as to people). Conceptions of people fit in with these, i.e. within technology and structure, preconceptions about people are built in. It almost never works the other way around.

An organization is a total system. Task, technology, structure and people function according to decisions made in the past. As a rule organizations have a certain historical continuity. It follows that organizations do not change overnight. Given the organization, the advent of new members with different cognitions and ideas has merely a very relative influence; it is rather the newcomers who are socialized. Nor does the environment of organizations change overnight (the importance of the environment will be discussed).

Consequently most organizations are characterized by a certain stability and the functioning of the organization is taken for granted by most of its members. Conceptions of structure, technology and people gradually adapt to the way organizations function: the culture of an organization will come to harmonize with it as it was meant when it was first formed. (By 'culture' we mean the norms, values and attitudes that apply to each individual member of the organization as well as the matched cognitive constructions of reality (Van der Vlist, 1981, p. 94).

The predominant western organizing principles are still based on the principles of technical rationality, economic preconceptions and the

controllability of the production process. As Van Beinum states: "There was - and still is - the traditional way (of thinking about work-organizations) which is characterized by the 'rational machine' type conception of organization ..." (Van Beinum, 1966) a direct extrapolation of which is the 'rational machine type conception of man': "... the division of labour, maximal task breakdown, homogeneous tasks, the minimizing of skill at the operative level, rigid controls and close supervision" (Van Beinum, 1966).

Scientific Management is the keystone of this type of rational organization. In fact Scientific Management in itself cannot be seen as an organizational theory; it is simply the keystone of such a theory. Taylor hardly bothered about the organization as a whole but concentrated all the more on work methods at the shopfloor-level. In fact he took the technology for granted, accepted the structure more or less as given but changed the demands made of the people. Botter (1970, 3r print) consequently refers to shopfloor-technicians when he refers to the group known as representatives of 'Scientific Management' (Taylor, Gilbreth, Gantt, Barnes).

It is likely that the Scientific Management movement had so much influence precisely because its representatives focused on the shopfloor-level, the most elusive, least reliable part of the rational technical design that organizations were aiming at and, ... generally speaking, still are today.

Certainly, there have been reactions to the concept of man predominant in the time - and - motion studies and the correlated concept of control and supervision deriving from the scientific management movement.

These reactions, however, with the exception of the socio-technical approach of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (1950-1975), have never been fundamental enough. They focused on the scientific management movement's implicit concept of man. The fact remains that a more fundamental criticism is needed which should not just focus on the implicit image of man, but also on the concepts on which decisions with respect to the technology and the structure of organizations are based. Images of man are just a keystone in this whole process. When decisions on technology and structure are based on what we have come to call 'rational, technical, economic' considerations, then the concept of man as discussed, is a natural corrollary.

Of course scientific management had its advantage. Its technical, rational approach to production processes made it possible to design specialized machinery. It is doubtful whether that mechanization, and as a direct descendant, automation would have been possible without the breaking down of production processes into smaller units as achieved by scientific management. The disadvantages however, are also striking. Workers became trapped in repetitive, boring, alienating operative functions. Task break-down 'mechanized' the workers as well because of it main features:

- create the maximum specialization by limiting the number of tasks in a role
- reduce the variety of tasks in a role
- maximize repetitiveness and eliminate challenge
- minimize training time
- treat the employee as an isolated individual without ties to colleagues
- assume that the sole motivation of people to perform well is financial (Clark, 1972, p. 27).

4 Kelly's personal construct theory (1955)

Even today decisions about technology and structure are predominantly based on technical rational economic grounds while concepts of man (workers) are nothing more than the keystone. And even today this creates an organizational culture which correlates with this approach. There are techniques that could be used to test this thesis.
Relatively unknown in organizational psychology is Kelly's 'personel construct theory', developed in clinical psychology, but also used in social psychology (research on stereotyping, see for instance Funk et al, 1976). Kelly developed the repertory grid technique wich can be used in this context as well.
The basis model underlying personal construct psychology is the idea of 'every man his own scientist'. Kelly argued that every man, like a scientist formulates hypotheses, models or theories about the world around him. And, that it is useful to see these personal, often implicit theories, in terms of networks of 'personal constructs'. A construct may be seen as a reference axis, a basic dimension which is used to appraise the reality, the personal and material world. In the

presentations of this theory Kelly included a procedure that came to be known as Repertory Grid or Rep. Grid.
As far as Kelly's theory is concerned Van der Vlist formulated the same idea as follows: "(...) People construct an image or a model of reality according to its usefulness in the course of personal goal--oriented behaviour. To make goal-oriented behaviour possible such a workable model of the world is essential. There is no need for such a model to correspond with reality. What is needed is that it works in a pragmatic way and that it is in line with other models that are held." (Van der Vlist, 1981, p. 65).
Van der Vlist distinguishes between more and less central constructs and argues: "Central constructs are in important ways tied to other constructs and integrated with other factors that influence behaviour (needs, values, norms). To change central constructs is relatively difficult because it would imply that other constructs, as well as needs, values and norms will have to change as well. One can say that in central constructs people invest more than in periferal constructs." (p.76). As may be clear I think that one such a central construct in organizations has to do with the way people are envisaged. In most organizations constructs about workers correlate with the fact that on rational, technical, economic grounds decisions about 'technology' and 'structure' come first. Such a personal theory has proved useful, after all organizations used to function reasonably well. When theories like these are shared throughout society they create common ground and the theory tends to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Trist (1981) expresses this as follows: "The structure and culture of organizations have evolved as an adaptation to the prevailing societal environment. People have learned to make this adaptation with considerable effort. Many of their ego defenses are projected into the existing structure and culture (...) They have formed their occupational identities in relation to them (...) Whatever its shortcomings, the status quo is familiar and has been internalized (...)" (p. 47). Whole organizations are influenced in this way, from top to bottom, though some difference in perception between these tow levels remains. (Lammers, 1983) and others have distinguished two models in organizational sociology: the system-model and the party-model. The system--model emphasises the wholeness of the organization. In the party--model the organization is seen as a combination of parties or sub-

groups each of which has its own goals and interests. I think that organizations can only be understood when both perspectives are combined. Along with Van Dijck I would distinguish two fundamental dimensions in each organization: the system-dimension and the 'social--action-dimension' (Van Dijck, 1972).

The system-dimension focuses on the control of variability in the environment from the perspective of the specific goal or task of the organization as a whole. The tasks, originating from this dimension are management tasks. The 'social-action-dimension' is expressed by the fact that role performers in the organization give specific meaning to their actions and strive for own personal and group goals. This implies that the management of an organization (taken broadly to include middle and lower management) is most bound by the organization as one system, constructs about workers included. Others in the organization are influenced by the prevailing organizational culture (see Trist) but, precisely because of individual and party interests, are able to withstand its all-pervasiveness. As a consequence comment on the functioning of the organization vocalized by management will be in system-corroborating terms. Vocalized by workers the functioning of organizations is commented upon in symptom-critical terms.

Management thinking is system-affirmative; the thinking of workers is predominantly symptom-critical and not fundamental. For example: When it comes to sickness-absenteeism, management is inclined to think in terms of more rigid controls, while workers are inclined to argue that inferior work should be better paid.

Apart from this example, it is my hypothesis that constructs about workers held by management are most in line with the fact that organizations tend to be built as rational machines. These constructs did and still do correlate with scientific management reasoning. These constructs have powerful behaviouristic features and certainly are not of a humanistic nature.

The Rep. Grid techniques as developed by Kelly may be used to test this hypothesis. Each Rep. Grid consists of a set of subjects, a set of elements and a set of 'constructs'. The set of subjects consists of the persons or category whose personal constructs one wished to explore. (In our case: management at several levels). The set of elements is formed by the persons or categories with respect to which personal constructs are available (here: rank and file workers). The

set of constructs consists of descriptions of the elements that are more or less applicable.
Kelly mainly used 'elicited constructs' (see Rathod, 1982). However, constructs can also be 'provided'. Provided constructs can be derived from conception of man as implied by scientific management and behaviourism, as well as from humanism and the set of basic needs of workers as formulated by the socio-technical system approach (Emery, 1978; Trist, 1981). Rep. Grid data can be analysed elegantly with multidimensional scaling techniques (see for instance Rathod, 1982). My prediction is that the 'top' of an organization especially, the part most bound by the system-concept of the organization, is inclined to use personal constructs about workers emanating from behaviouristic - and scientific - management-models of man.

5 Creating change in organizations; no sinecure

Images of man are not right or wrong. When it comes to 'reality' images are more or less useful. Images of man, however, can be good or bad from a moral point of view. There are some indications that we are entering a period in which morally 'good' or 'better' images are also more useful.
To understand why we need to focus on a variable which we did not include in Leavitt's model: the environment. Organizations are open systems. They have to operate in an environment which is important in more than one way.
People, goods and services are extracted from the environment and transformed within the organization. Products and services are exported to this same environment. This fairly simple input-through-put-output model makes it clear that each organization is dependent on its environment in two fundamental ways. Thus the environment may have influence on the organization in two different ways. Though we may presume that each organization aimes at profitable, closed relationships with the environment by trying to control it, no organization in the long run will succeed completely. As a consequence no organization can, without endangering itself, deny developments in the environment. Changes in the environment have been studied by Emery and Trist (1963). They focused on the output side of the organization. The same can be observed in De Sitter's work in his publication 'Op weg naar

nieuwe fabrieken en kantoren' (1981). De Sitter stresses the fact that large scale production systems with centralized decision (and command) structures fail to be flexible and innovative in a rapidly changing market.

As we noticed, Emery and Trist (1963) also focus on the output side of the organization when they analyse changes in the environment. In a recent publication (Trist, 1981) Trist summarizes the views of the original Tavistock group. Four types of environments were distinguished. The first two (called 'random placid' and 'placid clustered' environment) need not to be discussed here.

"The third environmental type, however, called the 'disturbed reactive', reflects an accelerating change rate and became increasingly salient as the industrial revolution progressed. It zenithed some time after World War II when the science-based industries rose to prominence in the wake of the knowledge and information explosions. The best chances of survival in this world went to large-scale organizations with the capacity to make formidable competitive challenge through expertise and to maximize their independent power. The organizational form they perfected was the competitive and singular technocratic bureaucracy in which the ideas of Max Weber and Frederick Taylor are matched and operationalized to fit the requirements of the disturbed-reactive environment." (Trist, 1981, p. 39).

The very success of these technocratic bureaucracies helped to create a fourth type of environment which is called the 'turbulent field'. In such an environment large scale organizations, operating in different directions compete each other and produce unanticipated and dissonant consequences. "The result is a kind of contextual commotion which makes it seem as if 'the ground' were moving as well as the organizational actors. This is what is meant by turbulence." (Trist, 1981, p. 39).

To illustrate what is meant Emery points a.o. to seafishing: "(...) Fairly simple examples of this may be fishing and lumbering, where competitive strategies, based on an assumption that the environment is static, may, by overfishing and over-cutting, set off disastrous dynamic processes (...) with the consequent destruction of all competing social systems." (Emery, 1974, p. 28). One could add that in sea--fishing these processes will be accelerated when the number of large fishing units like factory ships and cooperating fleets increases.

Large technocratic bureaucracies which to a large extent helped to create turbulence do not match this same environment (Trist, 1981, p. 35-45). Consequently Trist, as well as De Sitter (1981) advocates the formation of small-scale, more temporary organizations (offices as well as production units) with decentralized decision and command structures. The question that remains is: How should this be achieved? An optimistic view is the liberal approach which presumes that precisely because a certain type of organization is more adapted to the demands made by the new environment the process will take an evolutionary course. But not everyone is optimistic. Van der Woude correctly points to developments in The Netherlands where although (neo)-Taylorism should be abandoned as soon as possible, this fact has been completely ignored in a number of recent reports and papers on the restructuring of the Dutch economy (Van der Woude, 1982).
Trist reports that socio-technical-system researchers have come up with the hypothesis that the most likely spot where one could expect the rise of alternatives to the Taylor model would be 'new plants in the science-based industries' (Trist, 1981, p. 40). And indeed the socio-technical system approach has succeeded in a number of countries especially with new plants: (a fertilizer plant in Norway, a refinery in the U.K., an aluminium manufacturing plant in Canada, a consumer products and pet food plant in the U.S.). With the development of these new plants a new organizational paradigm developed as summarized in a table (Trist, 1981, p. 42):

Old Paradigm	New Paradigm
The technological imperative	Joint optimization
Man as an extension of the machine	Man as complementary to the machine
Man as an expendable spare part	Man as a resource to be developed
Maximum task breakdown, simple narrow skills	Optimum task grouping, multiple broad skills
External controls (supervisors, specialist staffs, procedures)	Internal controls (self-regulating subsystems)
Tall organization chart, autocratic style	Flat organization chart; participative style
Competition, gamesmanship	Collaboration, collegiality
Organization's purposes only	Member's and society's purposes also
Alienation	Commitment
Low risk-taking	Innovation

The main problem is formed by existing organizations. In the preceding pages it is made clear why. Innovation in the direction in which Trists points is met with great suspicion and resistance especially in existing organizations. Trist, too, is very pessimistic and states that even where such innovations seem to be welcomed, substantial change cannot be introduced across the board. 'Yet where such change is left only in one section of a plant or only in one plant in a corporation, more often than not it fades out or is actively stopped' (Trist, 1981, p. 45). The pressure on conformity becomes paramount and a regression to the conventional takes place.

6 Possibilities of creating change

Trist is convinced of the fact that socio-technical research must give great priority to the development of methods and techniques that will prove useful in changing existing organizations in the direction of the new paradigm. In view of the increasing turbulence, transformations are vital.

Some research was done by Trist and others. According to them in each case a first step must be to convince the highest level of the corporation or agency. (... the level of governance as distinct from 'management', p. 45) of the importance of the innovations. With the 'highest level of the corporation' Trist has in mind the level that is concerned with normative planning: "... critical choices concerning organizational values and philosophy" (p. 45). A means to this end is according to Trist (compare Emery and Trist, 1978) the 'search conference': "The board, the president and the vice presidents (...) go off-site for two or three days to scan the wider environment in a futures perspective (...) then to discover how far they can create a shared image of a desirable organizational future and finally to consider action steps towards this, having regard to the constraints" (p. 45-46). The Tavistock Shell project started this way. A next step would be "... the plants or other self-standing establishments where socio-technical change is most needed and most likely to be accepted have to be identified (...) A third step consists of selecting concrete project sites within plants (...)"

At this point (or even earlier) the Union should be involved. At last "(...) What Emery (1976) has called a 'deepslice' (a task force of

workers, foremen, specialists) may be selected to carry out an investigation and make recommendations on what might best be done at a given project site in consultation with those directly involved - who would have to 'own' the project or nothing much would happen" (Trist, 1981, p. 46).

Trist's approach is positively 'top-down' because basic values are at stake. It is an approach that has proved to be successful though set-backs occur (as for instance in the Norwegian Industrial Democracy project where with Norsk Hydro, the largest Norwegian enterprise, about 500 "middle managers (...) sensing a loss and no gain so far as they were concerned, said No" (p. 48). This approach was also used in The Netherlands and with some success. One of the most recent projects is a project supported in conjunction with the Foundation CCOZ (The Centre for Coordination and Communication of research data on Sickness Absence) in Amsterdam (Allegro, Ris, Masselink and Zandvliet). It is from the same point of view that Zandvliet and Masselink have criticized De Sitter's suggestion of achieving innovations through 'operational management'. Zandvliet and Masselink point to the highest level of management meaning the level where decisions are taken, when strategic choices have to be made (Zandvliet and Masselink, 1982, p. 234). They state that this level of management fulfils the position of norm-setters in the organization. The similarity with Trist's approach is clear. It is the approach CCOZ is following in their project 'Work and Health' especially the sub-project at Sigma Coatings, a chemical (paint) industry in The Netherlands. In May and June 1980 talks were held between Sigma Coatings and the CCOZ. In May 1980 the Board of Sigma Coatings published a draft policy document which was presented to the Works' Council. The Board stated that working with Sigma Coatings ought to be an "interesting proposition to present and future personnel of Sigma Coatings". The policy document mentioned the importance of the development of workers, a good and healthy work climate and the improvement of the work environment. At this stage Sigma Coatings planned to build a new factory in the centre of Holland It was decided that the new plant would be organized in such a way that social aspects would be treated with the same importance as technical aspects. Orienting talks were held between the director of social affairs and organization, the head of the personnel department,

the head of material management (production plant), a plant manager and the secretary of the central Works' Council. Sickness absenteeism and its remedy was one of the main topics. I quote: "In order to design a policy not only an individual approach will be followed, it is also accepted that sickness absenteeism can be seen as a symptom of problems having to do with the content of work and the organization of work. Especially the fact that it is difficult to recruit personnel to fulfil the unskilled positions (a situation that is not expected to change in the future) is important. It is admitted that these recruitment problems can be the consequence of the low quality of the positions offered. Positions that can be labeled as 'qualitatively bad'. High absenteeism and turnover rates are only natural" (Progress report I, CCOZ, March 1982, P. 9).

Recruitment problems were expected especially in the case of the new plant that was to be built in the centre of Holland. An approach to the new plan from the point of view of improving the quality of work was seen as an attractive alternative. At the same time it was decided that the same approach should be tried in existing plants elsewhere in Holland. On December 16th, 1980, an agreement was reached between the management of Sigma Coatings, the Central Works' Council and CCOZ. Consultation with the management and the Works' Council led to three committees (for each of the three participating, existing, plants) composed of three members appointed by management and three members appointed by the Works' Council. The chairman of the Works' Council became chairman of all of the three committees. Two staff members of CCOZ (Zandvliet and Masselink) were asked to function as consultants to these three committees.

In the case of the new plant a 'Preparatory Committee' of 23 members was formed comprising representatives of CCOZ, the Works' Council, the management and personnel (one work's managers included). In September 1982 this preparatory committee reported for the fourth time. It is an experience to read this last report. The creativity and energy of this preparatory committee has been unbelievable. As an example of Emery's and Trist's 'deep-slice' it has been very successful.

The example of Sigma Coatings makes it clear that the Trist-approach is conductive in the case of concrete problems being experienced by organizations. The most obvious are those such as were encountered at

Sigma Coatings: problems with respect to people, as we saw normally the keystone for the organization, and one of Leavitt's main variables. However, it is not the only way the 'people' variable manifests itself. In the wider environment at least two other possibilities are:
- Labour unions, as organizations created to defend workers interests;
- Legislation.

The attitudes and vision of the unions with respect to the quality of work are very important as they influence the intention and the disposition of management. The position of the unions in The Netherlands is, howeve, unclear. Certainly, to fight alienation has regularly been called a primary goal (see e.g. 'Vakbeweging en maatschappij, NVV, 1977, and 'Visie', NKV, 1978). Nevertheless I have the impression that the labour movement in general is suspicious when it comes to experiments in this respect. In 'De proef op de som' (Looise, 1976), a publication of the Unions' reserach institute (Stichting Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek Vakcentrales) it is concluded that: "Experiments with work structuring and worker participation are, in general, inadequate to create a situation of joint decision making.." The distrust of the labour movement may be based on negative experiences, but it is, however, also possible that even the unions have developed a behavioristic model of man. Whatever the case may be, the unions could play an essential role when it comes to putting pressure on management to create new and healthy work organizations. Legislation, the second factor in the wider environment of work organizations, has manifested itself recently by means of the working environment Act ('Arbeidsomstandighedenwet') of 8 November, 1980. The first phase of this act will go into operation in 1983. The act itself breathes a spirit of 'humanization' (undoubtedly due to the fact that it was developed by the former minister of Social Affairs, prof. W. Albeda, an organizational sociologist and one who is well aware of the problems we have discussed).

If the principles of the act are adhered to, the Dutch community has command over a powerful instrument to achieve the adaptation of work organizations, even in established plants.

There is at least one other significant factor in todays' society that can be used to increase the rate of change in the desired direction: many organizations are on the eve of important decisions with respect

to Leavitt's variable 'technology': automation and the computerization of work and administrative processes. Major decisions on technology, with major consequences for the structure of organizations and the position of workers are concerned. The quality of work in particular is at stake. Decisions as expressed do create situations that are comparable to 'new plants' (Trist). The CCOZ and other institutions focusing on the restructuring of work organizations should realize this and give full attention to these developments. It would be wise for legislation to formulate firm demands with respect to the kind of decisons management may take.

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