

## 7 Public Managers and Professionals in Collaborative Innovation

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### 7.1 Introduction

Innovation is a recurring ‘magic concept’ in the public sector (Bekkers, Edelenbos and Steijn 2011). A magic concept inspires not only policy makers and politicians but also the general public. Such a concept creates a perspective on change – a perspective which is rather open so that it allows to encompass a variety of manifestations that all embrace the promise that ‘transformation’ or ‘radical change’ will happen (Pollitt and Hupe 2011). Very often, the innovations that organizations pursue are perceived as a possible ‘game changer’, fundamentally altering the role and position of and relation between relevant stakeholders.

During the last five years, innovation in the public sector has been linked to several developments. First, innovation is considered to be vital in order to strengthen the responsiveness and effectiveness of public sector organizations. This can be achieved by really addressing the needs of end-users, given all kinds of societal challenges like the ageing of the population, rising youth unemployment or climate change. End-users might be citizens, but they might also be street-level bureaucrats and public professionals who are confronted with all kinds of pressing and dynamic needs. Second, innovation is considered as a reform strategy that is necessary to legitimize the retreat of government, especially in relation to the emergence of new welfare state arrangements and public health provisions and services that try to fill the gaps that are the result of this retreat. A retreat that opens the door to the development of new governance arrangements that make use of self-organizing capacities of citizens and all kinds of ‘grass-roots organizations’. Third, we see that new social practices emerge, also acting as potential ‘game changers’, in the

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slipstream of the development of new technologies, such as social media and mobile internet technologies. Fourth, these innovations touch upon the positions, views, interests and domains of many actors as stakeholders of innovation processes.

As a result, innovation – in both public and private sectors – can be seen as the outcome of a process of a exploration and exploitation that is based on collaboration in which ideas, views, experience, knowledge and other resources are shared in order to meet specific challenges. In collaborative innovation, each of these stakeholders is affected, *and* their relations change. The promises of innovation can only be met when multiple actors are connected in new ways, when they collaborate more than they used to do and when their (inter)actions are related to external pressures, needs and demands.

In this chapter, we pay attention to the ways in which two distinctive stakeholders are affected by the rise of innovation: public *managers* and public *professionals*; we analyse their roles and the interplay between them in innovation processes. Public professionals and public managers play a vital role in the innovation of the content, course and outcome of public services. Their interplay very often influences the specific outcomes of public service innovation, also in relation to efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy (e.g. Noordegraaf 2015a).

We first sketch two models of innovation that can be witnessed in the public sector. These models are ‘ideal types’, although rooted in empirical findings. In the first model, public innovation is seen as a matter of intended innovation that occurs by initiating top-down actions, backed by strategic agendas. We call this *enforced* innovation. In the second model, public innovation is an emergent activity that occurs by starting from bottom-up actions and organically embedding innovation in work routines, procedures and process, backed by service and client interests. We call this *free* innovation. Next, we analyse the implications of these modes of innovation for both managers and professionals, and their relations. We show how both managers and professionals have become part of collaborative networks in which management and professional logics interact. We argue that the two ideal-types fall short in capturing these dynamics. Instead of emphasizing either ‘enforced’ or ‘free’ innovation, we focus on two alternative forms of public innovation, in which managerial and professional logics are interwoven: *guided* and *focused* innovation. Instead of assuming that managerial and professional logics are either ‘tightly’ or ‘loosely’ coupled (e.g. Weick 1976; Orton and Weick 1990), as is the case in enforced versus free innovation, we sketch the possibility of ‘selective’ and ‘strong couplings’ in which both managers and professionals are important for the success of ‘magic’ innovation

ambitions. Finally, we draw conclusions and we sketch ways forward. We especially discuss how guided and focused innovation can be strengthened *and* how both managers and professionals can be equipped to stimulate viable collaborative innovation.

## 7.2 Two Models of Innovation

If we explore the ways in which the public sector organizes and manages innovation, two well-known models can be distinguished. In the first model, innovation is viewed as an intended management activity that is backed by strategic agendas. In the second model, innovation is an emergent activity that is rooted in daily work processes, tied to service and client interests. Before we describe these models in the following subsections, one remark on the nature of public services and professionals should be made. Beneath, we treat this in a rather generic way: we speak about services and professionals in rather general ways. When the models are applied to more specific situations, we have to be careful, as services and professionals differ in terms of strength and nature. First and foremost, services depend in terms of their ‘publicness’ (e.g. Bozeman 1987; Noordegraaf 2015a). They might be part of the state, such as police services, or organized outside the state, such as hospitals or schools. This has strong effects on innovation processes as institutional conditions affect how steering, financing and accounting for innovation might take place. Furthermore, there might be various types of professionals working in and around these services. There are classic or ‘pure’ professionals (cf. Noordegraaf 2007) like medical doctors, who have lots of institutional autonomy. They are part of strong professions that regulate entrance, education and occupational practices. There are also semi-level, street-level and welfare state professionals (cf. Noordegraaf 2015a; also see e.g. Lipsky 1980) who have less autonomy and are more bound to organizational and welfare state contexts, such as nurses, policemen, teachers and social workers. When they work in state-based organizations, such as welfare organizations, they are more street-level or welfare bureaucrats than ‘professionals’. Although we do not really pay attention to these differences, we return to it later, as it affects the applicability of the models we identify. When professionals are ‘pure’ it will be more difficult to tie them into innovation networks and link them to innovation agendas. When they are less pure, it will be easier to either ‘control’ them *or* to seek more subtle ways to combine organizational and ‘professional’ actions. To turn it into a more generic point again, because professionalism throughout public

domains becomes less pure and more ‘hybrid’ (cf. Noordegraaf 2007, 2015b), the latter possibility is more relevant than ever.

### 7.2.1 *Enforced Innovation (Intended, Top-Down)*

Innovation is a topic that has systematically been given attention in many policy sectors. Let us begin with three (Dutch) examples. In the Netherlands, the attention of innovation has been organized through special programmes and special projects. In the educational sector, a special law has been implemented which tries to facilitate experiments with new educational practices, thereby bypassing specific educational norms that normally have to be fulfilled.<sup>1</sup> These experiments are focused to assess if specific innovations really work. Questions that have to be answered relate to the following issues: Do they really matter? Do they really make a difference? What are positive and negative effects and side effects? Furthermore, if schools want to implement specific innovations they can hire specific support and advice. Moreover, innovation processes are also supported by a number of portals that are set up. These portals help to access relevant knowledge about what is going on and what are the relevant effects of specific innovations and experiments, as well as to help connect people to other relevant people and organizations.

Another example is the Health Care Innovation Forum (in Dutch: ‘Zorg Innovatie Forum’<sup>2</sup>). This forum is a network organization which wants to improve innovation and reform in the health-care sector through the development of a shared vision. It also wants to set up collaboration arrangements in order to tackle the fragmentation of all kinds of innovation efforts in the health sector. The forum wants to set up innovative projects which are worked out in business cases. It tries to scan possible chances, invites experts and market parties to participate and tries to coordinate and monitor the activities that are taking place.

Last but not least the Dutch police have paid attention to the role of innovation in their newly established national police organization. With the creation of a national police force in 2013, a process of centralization and standardization ended, in which fairly autonomous regional police forces were integrated in one national organization.<sup>3</sup> When looking at the role of innovation into the organization plan of the national police, we see that innovation is primarily perceived as change that comes from outside

<sup>1</sup> For an overview, see [www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/innovatie-in-het-onderwijs/stimuleren-innovatie](http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/innovatie-in-het-onderwijs/stimuleren-innovatie).

<sup>2</sup> For an overview, see [www.zorginnovatieforum.nl](http://www.zorginnovatieforum.nl).

<sup>3</sup> See draft Design plan [‘Concept Inrichtingsplan Nationale politie’], 25 June 2012, pp. 64–65.

the organization and that is based on the adoption of new technologies and new knowledge. These new technologies are seen as possible sources of uncertainty and risk that have to be managed. Not every innovation leads to an improvement in the quality of the working processes. Innovation is seen as the outcome of specific strategic, policy and technologically funded considerations that are formulated to establish the ambitions of the national police. The police argue that innovation management is a challenge for the police that can only be managed in a 'top-down manner', while quality improvements in working processes are seen as the outcome of bottom-up process. Furthermore, the Dutch national police also see innovation as the result of a vision of specific societal developments as well as of how the police should develop itself. The board of the national police tries to manage (technological) innovation in such a way that it really leads to innovation in the working processes of the police as well as to an improvement in the goal efficacy of police activities. This is being achieved through planning, prioritizing and budgeting of the innovation efforts. Such a systematic approach helps to reduce all kinds of potential risks. It also helps to improve the goal efficacy of the national police. In order to be aware of what relevant innovations might be available, it is important that the technological environment of the police is scanned systematically so that the possible added value of innovative concepts and technological applications can be explored.

These three examples show that innovation is something that can be 'created'. It is something that systematically can be organized into an organization or into a policy sector. As such innovation is an organized activity, as an intended activity that is consciously formed and implemented. In doing so, resources can be spent to develop and diffuse innovations. More specifically, three forms of enforced innovation can be distinguished:

- a. Innovation in terms of facilitating local initiatives and experiments and sharing the knowledge that is gained in these experiments. The innovation programme in the educational sector illustrates this.
- b. Innovation in terms of creating collaborative innovation networks in which a shared vision is developed in order to develop projects that are in the common interests of relevant partners. The Health Care Innovation Forum illustrates this. Innovation management is primarily seen as connecting people, organizations, ideas and practices but also funds. The forum is not only a meeting place, it is also a broker.
- c. Innovation as a top-down management activity. Innovation is something that can be planned and can be steered from a central position in the organization. Innovation is a question of selection and choice. In order to do so it is necessary that the top of the organization has a vision

on the organization, knows what is happening outside the organization in terms of possible new knowledge and technologies that can be adopted and knows what the possible risks of the innovation are. These two considerations in combination with the willingness to allocate budgets for innovation, help to systematically manage the introduction of innovation. This view comes forward in the Dutch police example.

Looking at the three examples of public innovation management, we see that in all the three forms of innovation management a rather rational perspective on innovation prevails, although the emphasis differs. In the first one, the idea is to steer innovation by making use of a number of incentives which help to seduce possible innovators or adopters of an innovation to start, e.g. by helping them to acquire specific funds or to overcome specific legal barriers, or by making knowledge accessible. These incentives are focused on changing the cost–benefit ratio. In the second one, we see that innovation is organized on the basis of a market-model of collaboration in which demand and supply are linked to each other. The forum in the health sector is a place that brings together innovation producers or owners of solutions on the one hand and possible users and problem-owners on the other hand. If these parties find each other, innovations can occur. In the third model, innovation is seen from a rational command and control perspective in which boards, executives and managers are able to steer innovation.

It is also interesting to focus on the sources of innovation. In each of the cases, innovation is closely linked to new knowledge-based concepts and technologies. As a result innovation management is primarily seen as being able to link to the needs of schools, hospitals or the police to these resources in order to exploit them. This is visible not only in the police example but also in the education example. These needs seem to be formulated at the organizational level: what does a school, a hospital or the police need?

Besides, it can be argued – clearly expressed in the police example – that the needs of the organization are closely linked to the goals of the organization. Innovation is very often seen as a way of achieving these goals in a more effective, efficient or more coherent way. As such it can be argued, following March and Olsen (1989), that the logic and values behind the enforced innovation model represent a ‘logic of consequence’.

Last but not least, we see that systematic attention is important for achieving intended public innovation. Special programmes, special laws, special organizations are set up in relation to specific goals that have to be accomplished. Innovation is defined as a specific task that can be linked to specific competences and responsibilities, as well

as to financial and human resources (money and staff). In that way, innovation is formalized.

In sum, innovation management as far as enforced innovation is concerned can be characterized by

- a. a process in which innovation is seen as a systematic organizational activity;
- b. rather rational features, although emphases may differ;
- c. a focus on making use of new knowledge concepts and new technologies coming from the outside;
- d. achieving systematic attention, by institutionalizing innovation in formal positions, programme and units; and
- e. links with central goals of organizations and the desire to improve goal efficiency and goal effectiveness in a consequentialist way.

### 7.2.2 *Free Innovation (Emergent, Bottom-Up)*

Innovation management can also take place in a different way. It can be seen as an emergent activity that occurs at the shop-floor levels of public service delivery, initiated and carried out by workers including street-level workers and professionals. Individual professionals or groups of professionals with 'entrepreneurial' spirit – perhaps backed by clear interests – try to change ways of working, routines and procedures in order to book better results. This can be caused by contested ambitions, such as financial interests or the strengthening of positions or reputations in professional arenas, but it can (also) come from more 'sincere' ambitions like quality and safety improvements, improving client satisfaction or enhancing learning and improving knowledge. Again, we give several (Dutch) examples.

One example is the so-called Parkinson-net,<sup>4</sup> a Dutch health-care initiative that was started by a few medical professionals, most specifically neurologists, from Radboud academic medical centre, in order to improve treatment of Parkinson's disease. It started as a small-scale project, aimed at establishing collaborative relations between medical specialists (neurologists) and nurses inside the hospital and therapists and nurses outside the hospital, in order to create more integrated care for patients with Parkinson's disease. It specialized the work of nurses, by introducing so-called Parkinson's nurses, and at the same it established more generalist orientations by strengthening links between specialized treatment and therapeutic care. Within a rather short period of time, this initiative grew bigger. At the moment it covers the whole country, which is divided into multiple Parkinson-net regions.

<sup>4</sup> See [www.parkinsonnet.nl](http://www.parkinsonnet.nl).

Another example is the Dutch organization ‘Buurtzorg’ (‘Neighbourhood care’)<sup>5</sup> which was established a couple of years ago in order to renew home care. Instead of working inside ‘bureaucratic systems’, which negatively affected the quality of care, the innovators coming from the professional rank-and-file tried to break out of the system by a rather radical innovation. They created ‘cells’ of self-organizing teams of home nurses who would render care on the basis of autonomous professional judgement. Instead of sticking to rigid planning and financing schemes, often linked to time-based performance systems, and instead of making excessive work divisions, these self-organizing teams would provide more integrated care by autonomously making plans, by dividing tasks on the basis of local needs, by forming professional judgement and by creating time for ‘high-quality’ care. The nationwide organization, Buurtzorg, is a holding company that offers facilities, including ICT facilities, forms strategy and stimulates learning and innovation.

What we can learn from these examples is that innovation ‘management’ – although ‘management’ is a misleading term – tries to make use of the experiences of the professionals that play a vital role in all kinds of public service delivery projects, especially when they have to apply specific programmes, standards, formats, routines and procedures as well as when they encounter citizens. The source of innovation is the experiences of these professionals vis-à-vis the needs of the citizens, which are seen as an incentive to look for new routines, formats and procedures. As such, innovations emerge from these experiences and confrontations that take place at the boundaries of the organization. As such, it seems that these innovations primarily focus on changing the relationship and interactions between professionals and citizens and not so much on applying new knowledge concepts and new technologies.

Furthermore, it is important that these professionals are able to re-design the routines, procedures and formats with which they work. This implies a number of things. First, they have to be aware that they are themselves an important source of innovation and that these procedures, routines, working processes and formats can be changed. They should not see themselves as the cogwheels in an implementation machine. They are able to re-design ‘the machine’. This implies that innovation and service improvement should be a part of their mindsets, which also have to be addressed in the training and socialization of these professionals. Moreover, it also presupposes that the management in the organization is willing to discuss these innovations and improvements, willing to explore

<sup>5</sup> See [www.buurtzorgnederland.com/](http://www.buurtzorgnederland.com/).



the effects of these innovations, for instance by setting up experiments as well as to support the adoption of these innovations.

Another consequence of this approach is that innovation is embedded in the daily routines of workers and professionals. As such no specific formal arrangements have to be set up to make innovation possible. The most important arrangement is that there is a culture supportive of innovation – a culture in which workers and professionals are willing to explore new ways of working which are applauded by the managers’.

The embeddedness in daily routines and daily contacts may also imply that the legitimacy of the innovation is also rooted in these routines and other daily practices. In doing so, innovations try to improve the fit between the work processes that take place and the specific needs of citizens. The link with the overall goals of the organization, in terms of goal efficiency and effectiveness, is rather *loose*. Relations between professionals and managers are loosely coupled (cf. Weick 1969) and professionals have much leeway to deviate from organizational agendas. In terms of March and Olson’s (1989) distinction between the logic of consequence and the logic of appropriateness, it may be argued that this type of innovation predominantly refers to the logic of appropriateness. Innovations should be able to deal with the contingent and thus specific circumstances of public service delivery processes, as they can be derived from the day-to-day interactions between professionals and citizens. Innovations should have added value in terms of feasibility and support, not primarily in terms of the achievement of the overall goals of a specific organization.

Another interesting aspect of this type of innovation management is the rather incremental character of it. Innovation can be considered as a process of continuous improvement which consists of rather small changes. However, given a specific period of time and adding up all these small change, a fundamental change may have occurred. As such an innovation can be seen as the outcome of a process of *layering*, in which different layers of improvement build on each other.

In sum, innovation management as far as free innovation is concerned is characterized by

- a. an emergence from daily contacts of professionals and street-level bureaucrats with citizens as clients, as well as from the application of specific routines, procedures, working processes and formats;
- b. a more organic interweaving of work and innovation, with a strong social bias, rooted in social relationships and interactions;
- c. the layering of continuous improvements, thereby focusing on the introduction of new routines and re-design of existing routines;
- d. an emphasis on specific situations in which these professionals have to operate.

### 7.3 Alternative Innovation Models

Both models can be juxtaposed: the enforced model can be set against the free model; top-down innovations can be set against bottom-up innovations. This can be linked to common approaches in public administration and organizational sciences, in which organizational and professional logics are seen as distinct and treated in oppositional ways (e.g. Exworthy and Halford 1999; Farrell and Morris 2003; for oversight, Noordegraaf 2011). In fact, organizational and professional logics are generally seen as opposite paradigms, which generate contested images of organizational processes – including innovation processes – and conflict-ridden images of daily actions and interactions. In the enforced model, as indicated, executives and managers try to establish *tight couplings* between strategies, goals and implementation between plans and practices. The free model prefers *loose couplings* between managerial and professional spheres (e.g., Weick 1969; Orton and Weick 1990), so that their individual values, rationales and methods remain rather separate.

In order to analyse organizational and especially innovation processes amidst contemporary circumstances, this black-and-white juxtaposition is problematic. Although both models put a different emphasis either on leading roles of managers or on professionals, it is important to analyse the *interplay* between these domains and to re-conceptualize organizational/professional connections. In the literature, this is known under the heading of *hybridization* (e.g. Kurunmäki 2004; Noordegraaf 2007, 2011, 2015b, 2015c; Kurunmäki and Miller 2006; Dent, Kirkpatrick and Neogy 2012; Kirkpatrick and Noordegraaf 2015). Professional and organizational logics are reconfigured (cf. Noordegraaf 2015b, 2015c) and professional/organizational principles and values are interwoven (Kirkpatrick and Noordegraaf 2014). This happens because professional and managerial action occurs in changing contexts – various forces change the landscape for managerial/professional action. First, the cases that are treated and the problems that are tackled get increasingly wicked. This means that boundaries between managerial and professional fields are weakened and that these fields are linked to stakeholders. This might happen regionally or locally, but also transnationally. Hospitals or home care organizations might feel the need to organize collaborations with other professional services in order to tackle so-called ‘multi-problems’, but they might also become part of transnational professional service firms (e.g. Brock, Powell, and Hinings 1999) that render well-organized professional services. Second, there is an increasing need for ‘public value’ (e.g. Moore 1995), both because end-users become more prominent, as indicated before, and because of growing self-organizing capacities in society. Professional fields

can no longer hide behind the proverbial ‘walls’ of their professions, as many stakeholders demand accountable and trustworthy services. Third, new expert networks and communities arise, facilitated by new technologies that make it easy to communicate, to experiment and to use (big) data and (big) databases. The classic image of the professional as solo-practitioner who treats individual patients on the basis of professional judgement is radically reconfigured. This also affects the professional-driven innovations that were discussed above. Examples like Buurtzorg are interesting for highlighting contemporary innovations, but they also re-install a classic and perhaps nostalgic image of the well-rounded and well-equipped individual professional who solves problems. In case of home care this might be appropriate, but in many other fields this faces obstacles.

In these shifting contexts, innovation requires less instrumental action, less division between fields and more openness and interaction. Conceptually, it calls for more *distributed* images of organizational/professional action. Professionalism is no longer realized by individual professionals but by concerted action of various professionals, support staff, managers and stakeholders. Instead of juxtaposing managerial and professional innovation – or what we call *enforced* and *free* innovation – these two traditional models can be juxtaposed against two other forms of innovation that represent managerial/professional connections. Instead of seeing innovation either as intended and top-down or as emergent and bottom-up, we open up these models and distinguish between their constitutive elements. Instead of lumping top-down and intended as well as bottom-up and emergent together, we differentiate between top-down and bottom-up on the one hand, and between intended or planned and emergent on the other. These other very different dimensions can be combined in multiple ways. Professionals can, for instance, be involved in intended innovation, linked to organizational agendas, and management-driven innovation (top-down) can leave space for open and emergent innovation processes. The matrix that is depicted in Figure 7.1 visualizes these different types of public innovation and the multiple roles managers and professionals can perform. The two alternative models we identify on the grounds of this typology are called *focused* and *guided* innovation.

The two models of top-down, enforced versus bottom-up, free and emergent innovation, which were described before, represent tight and loose couplings between management and professional domains respectively. In the *enforced* model, the work of the professionals is tightly linked with the innovation goals that the management of the organization have formulated. In the *free* model, there is a loose coupling, because the

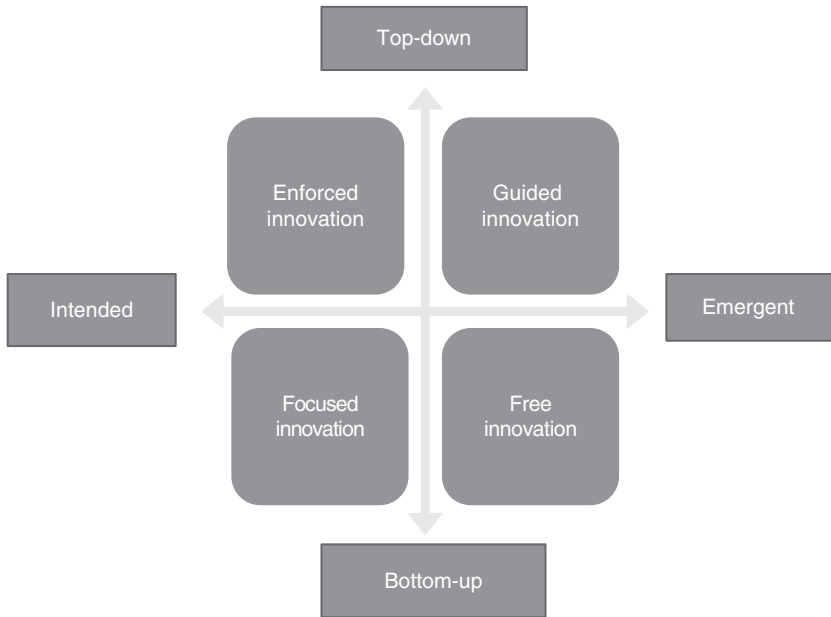


Figure 7.1 Four types of innovation

innovation efforts that take place in the professional world lead to some extent a life of their own. One could even argue that these efforts are linked with the goals of the management when a specific ‘policy window’, a rather opportunistic opportunity, emerges and which can be used. Chance plays an important role in the adoption of possible innovations by the management. What we call *focused* and *guided* innovation offer two alternative models, encompassing different – ‘selective’ and ‘strong’ – couplings between organizational and professional principles. We will briefly describe these two alternative models beneath.

### 7.3.1 *Focused Innovation (Organizational Ambitions, Professionals in the Lead)*

In focused innovation, professionals are in the lead, i.e. their work practices are the source of innovation. But they have a clear intention to contribute to innovating working processes in which they participate, and this is accompanied by a clear managerial focus on result. This is not only a matter of individual intentions, as professional groups and segments (cf. Bucher and Strauss 1961) might intend to strengthen

public services by aiming for innovative methods, techniques, routines and work systems. Academically, this is discussed under the heading of *organizing professionalism* (cf. Noordegraaf 2011, 2014). Consciously organizing innovation processes increasingly becomes a part of professional acts and repertoires. What we see here is that both professionals and managers share the same goal; they share the idea that working in a resilient organization implies that professionals are permanently engaged in a reflective process, in which they are critical regarding the assumptions that lay behind their work in order to experiment with new ideas, working methods and techniques. The role of the management is, on the one hand, to create an environment in which innovation, as an embedded activity in the work that professionals do, is embraced. In doing so it is important that the management of the organization underline the importance that one of the central values of the organization is innovation. On the other hand, it is important that an innovation *infrastructure* is established which facilitates these embedded innovation processes. This infrastructure refers not only to the creation and maintenance of an innovation culture in which especially ‘double loop learning’ (Argyris and Schön 1978) is embraced but also to the creation of an organizational climate in which it is possible to experiment and thus to take risks, although there is a clear focus on results as well.

The development of all kinds of supporting services, resources and means that are necessary to help professionals to innovate their work is also an aspect of this infrastructure that should be mentioned. For instance, to have a small budget that helps professionals to spend extra time, or to hire external advice and support. Furthermore, in order to ensure that professionals embrace innovation as an inherent part of their professional work, it is important that they internalize the value of (professional) innovation. Moreover, it is also important that they have acquired or are able to acquire the competences, knowledge and skills that are necessary to be reflective and innovative. This is where training and education come in. Reasoning from this model, it is important that in the professional education curriculum innovation as a subject is being taught. One example can be derived from the Dutch educational field. In the curriculum of their teacher-training colleges, some Dutch universities of higher education pay explicit attention to the question: How can teachers ask themselves the right question to improve their teaching formats, routines and working methods? If innovation is embraced as an embedded activity in the work of professionals, we see that public services are subjected to a rather ongoing process of focused innovation. To some extent, it could be argued that the innovation that takes place has a rather incremental nature, thereby looking for continuous service improvements – step by step – however, looking from a long-term

perspective and on a higher, aggregated level, the sum of the small improvements may add up to major improvements and innovations.

We will give a few examples, beginning with innovations in training and education; in one of the Dutch academic medical centres the so-called 'Wonder and Improve' project has been established, aimed at teaching young doctors how to incorporate organizational responsibilities in their professional repertoires. Instead of teaching about management and leadership through courses, lectures and books, the educational leaders link organizational responsibilities to the everyday work of young doctors. They organize special Wonder and Improve sessions which focus on signalling and detecting organizational problems, analysing where they come from and finding solutions. Teams of young doctors are made responsible for implementing these solutions. These sessions and actions are clearly related to a broader organizational agenda, namely a quality and safety agenda, but tackling organizational issues and developing organizational responsibilities occurs quite invisibly. Young doctors are socialized into an organizational world that used to be alien and anonymous, but that become 'manageable' after improving organizational awareness.

Furthermore, the same academic centre also links other innovation mechanisms to the same quality and safety agenda, such as tracing techniques for optimizing patient safety and health-care quality. Tracers are used to analyse how actual care processes occur and whether medical professionals stick to the various guidelines and protocols they are expected to comply with. There are people who can formally act as certified tracers, and the organization consciously stimulates medical professionals, including medical doctors and nurses, to become certified tracers. This means they monitor the delivery of care in other departments and throughout the hospital, which means they are enabled to tell colleagues elsewhere about how they treat patients. Moreover, they are enabled to 'see' problems and vulnerabilities in their own medical practices.

In sum, focused innovation is characterized by

- a. an awareness in professional service organizations, also on the side of professionals and professional groups, that innovation is part of professional work;
- b. cooperation between professionals/professional groups, as well as between professionals and other internal and external stakeholders;
- c. conscious and focused methods for improving and diffusing innovations;
- d. management roles aimed at creating an innovation infrastructure in which embedded forms of innovation can flourish; and
- e. subtle mechanisms in professional education to embed innovative competencies in training, education and socialization.

### 7.3.2 *Guided Innovation (Situating, Managerial Grip)*

In guided innovation, managers play an important role, but instead of intentionally steering and controlling innovation, they 'let things happen'. In doing so a culture is systematically created in which 'a thousand flowers flourish'. To some extent, it can be argued that professionals and experiences on the shop floor, or at the front line of public service delivery processes, are seen as an endless stream of innovative problem definitions as well as new approaches, which only have to be orchestrated in a specific direction. To some extent, the organization is seen as a '*garbage can*', which can be used as a source of innovation, given the emerging challenges with which the organization is confronted (Cohen, March and Olsen 1972).

Given the variety of possible alternative problem definitions as well as possible emerging innovative solutions, the main task of the management is, on the one hand, to stimulate the development and maintenance of an organizational context in which variety is embraced as being a condition for innovation. On the other hand, management tries to facilitate and support the process of selection and retention of the innovation to be adopted (Weick 1969). For instance, by looking at new problem definitions and innovative solutions being discussed or even being used in daily practice, specific patterns can be discerned in what they have in common. This view of innovation also resembles Mintzberg's focus on strategy as *pattern*, as opposed to plans (Mintzberg 1978). According to Mintzberg, strategy is a pattern in a stream of decisions (p. 934). Likewise, innovation can be seen as new and changing patterns in streams of actions. This also resembles 'strategy as practice' approaches (e.g. Johnson et al. 2007), which show how strategies are formed in daily practice. As a result, managers try to systematically seek opportunities, respond to events and make use of incidents in order to strengthen innovative potential. To some extent, chance plays an important role in the selection of possible innovations, but the main difference with the bottom-up approach to innovation is that the chance to be able to develop new innovative approaches is systematically organized into the organization.

An interesting example can be found in the use of an 'early warning' system used by the Dutch Rijkswaterstaat, which is the federal agency responsible for the development and maintenance of different traffic infrastructures (Van der Steen et al. 2013). The early warning system retrieves signals from a great number of internal and external respondents. Signals are often retrieved by conducting interviews, which are carried out by an early warning team. This leads to a long list of weak

signals, which is then narrowed down by a selection committee to a short list. Before the list of weak signals is presented to the board, further research is done to understand the nature and possible impacts of the selected weak signals. As such these weak signals are embedded in the strategic cycle of the board and are a recurring topic on its agenda. The board then decides which signals should be explored further and deeper (Van der Steen et al. 2013: 23). An example a weak signal that has led to an innovation was focused on the question: How do we deal with phosphate and transform it from a waste product into a valuable good? Phosphate is waste product that one the hand leads to eutrophication problems, like water pollution (water quality for which Rijkswaterstaat is being responsible), while other hand it also an indispensable food substance. The early warning system noted that the global phosphate supply was running out, while the supply production was in hands of rather politically unstable counties. As such this waste product would represent great value for the future. It was also shown that private companies were developing methods for reclaiming it. As a result of this early warning signal, the Rijkswaterstaat was given the opportunity to take on a facilitating role, as a policy entrepreneur, by bringing relevant parties together to develop reclaiming technologies out of the water system managed by the Rijkswaterstaat (Van der Steen et al. 2013: 25).

There are two interesting developments that foster this type of innovation, and both are technology-driven. First, it can be argued that social media can provide an interesting internal and external communication environment that can bring internal and external professionals as well as other relevant actors together to make an inventory of possible weak signals, by discussing them, exploring them and also linking them to other developments. As such it is possible to create virtual policy communities that act as communities of practice (Wenger 1998) which can emerge and can be stimulated and facilitated by managers (Bekkers 2004). However, it is important that the content and results of these discussions are linked to the managerial realm and that communication and feedback channels are created. The second development is that increasingly the large amount of data produced in the daily performance of all kinds of tasks (especially if these tasks are data-driven and ICT-supported) can be made technically available, so that it can not only retrieved but also used, by linking it to other data or data sets. In doing so, weak signals can be retrieved which can be a stimulus for product and service innovation. This development is called 'big data', and it is considered an important source of policy and service innovation (Bekkers and Moody 2014).



In sum, guided innovation is characterized by

- a. an awareness that innovation cannot really be controlled by (top-down) plans and techniques;
- b. an emphasis on weak signals and strategic details that can be used to discover new patterns and set new innovation streams in motion;
- c. an emphasis on organizational practices, to be used as a source of innovation;
- d. efforts to mobilize innovative potential by strengthening (inter)organizational interactions, also by making use of new technologies;
- e. innovation as a systematically organized process of letting 'a thousand flowers bloom'; and
- f. a facilitating and supportive role of management to organize the exploration of weak signals and the linking of signals to the organization's policies.

#### 7.4 Discussion (Connectivity Matters)

In this chapter, we focused on managers and professionals and identified four specific types of public innovation, which represent different combinations of emergent/intended innovation and top-down/bottom-up action. These various types of innovation enable managers and professionals to enrich their innovation repertoires and to establish *connectivity* in everyday practices. That is what the chapter stressed; innovations call for questioning traditional images and roles of managers and professionals and going beyond either professional or managerial domains. Both managerial and professional actions become more dispersed and dependent. Relations between managers and professionals in collaborative innovation force us to renew our own organizational rhetoric. This fits the hybridization of organizational/professional practices. As professionalism becomes less pure throughout the public sector (cf. Noordegraaf 2007), there will be more possibility to work towards focused and guided innovation.

In order to replace the 'magic concept' of innovation with workable innovation processes, we need to (1) contextualize innovation, (2) identify relevant stakeholders, (3) explore different innovation processes that enable us to understand the interplay between stakeholders, and (4) organize connectivity between professionals and managers organically but also systematically. The various public innovation models that we sketched can be helpful, not only to weaken unproductive analytical distinctions (such as 'managers versus professionals'), but also to seek additional innovative potential which is generated by bringing professionals and managers together, although the emphasis of each model may differ. It is important to acknowledge that professionals and managers, and other stakeholders, are

part of collaborative networks in which relations instead of individual actions determine success. These relations might be a matter of ‘pragmatic collaboration’ (cf. Reay and Hinings 2009). But they might also embody both ‘selective’ and ‘strong couplings’ of both managerial and professional logics (for insights on how multiple logics might be combined, see e.g. Skelcher and Smith 2015; Noordegraaf 2015a). Instead of seeking or highlighting conflicts and clashes, managerial and professional fields might seek common ground, either by jointly working on certain projects or activities (selective) or by interweaving work outlooks and values (strong).

In addition, perspectives on innovations count: when managers and professionals act from counterintuitive points of view and ‘work against’ their own logic, they can generate new opportunities for making innovation happen. When managers relax control ambitions and when professionals act more intentionally and systematically, they might profit from unused innovative potential. Furthermore, the two alternative models on innovation – focused and guided innovation – show that innovation can be organized in a systematic way, thereby trying to exploit the innovation potential that professionals possess. Both managers and professionals can contribute to innovations in ways that are counterintuitive in the light of traditional images of managerial and professional logics. But when these logics are seen as flexible and less oppositional, new prospects for innovation arise. Professional acts can be linked to organizational agendas, by using organizational programmes – such as quality programmes – and by seeing professional action more as distributed action than actions by individual professionals. Managerial acts can be linked to professional values and principles by weakening the emphasis on goals and objectives and by strengthening the focus on signals and surprises.

## 7.5 Conclusion

The emphasis on focused and guided innovation, in addition to more classic enforced and free innovation, is not meant to get rid of classic models and privilege contemporary models. All of these models – as ideal types – have value, depending on context. In certain organizational and work settings, enforced and free innovation can still occur, and vice versa, and focused and guided innovation does not necessarily lead to better results. It also depends upon the nature and type of professionalism involved. Although the term ‘professional’ is widely used, there are great differences between different types of professional practices, largely linked to the number and nature of regulatory mechanisms involved. ‘Pure’ professionalism is scarce, especially in public domains, and is

increasingly difficult to maintain. This means not only that the necessity to uphold free innovation is losing ground, but also that the necessity to guard enforced innovation is less strong as well. When professionalism is either reconfigured, to include innovation agendas and acts, or embedded within organizational contexts in meaningful ways, there might be all the more reason to focus on focused and/or guided innovation. In that sense, these alternative models *are* of more value than ever.

Apart from their conceptual value, the rise of alternative models for innovation has various practical implications. First of all, both managers and professionals need to enrich their *repertoires*, in order to act on the basis of these various new models. They need to be aware of the fact that there are multiple ways to establish innovative services and that their traditional roles become one aspect of collaborative action. They more specifically need more connective abilities. Second, they need to be sensitive to *contingencies*, in order to select 'the right type' of innovation. In some cases they can emphasize their traditional role, while in other cases they need to be linked to organizational agendas and programmes. When they do so, they might still feel the tensions that come with hybrid roles, but they are aware of the fact that collaborative innovations call for innovative acts. The third consequence is that innovation, based on the connecting professionals and managers, can be more *naturally* organized in more *systematic* ways. If professional commitment is consciously established in rather organic ways, something which is possible when the alternative innovation models are used, innovation can be linked to the daily processes of both managers and professionals. This paradoxically turns the much-desired and magic concept innovation into a 'natural' instead of exceptional activity in public sector organizations.

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