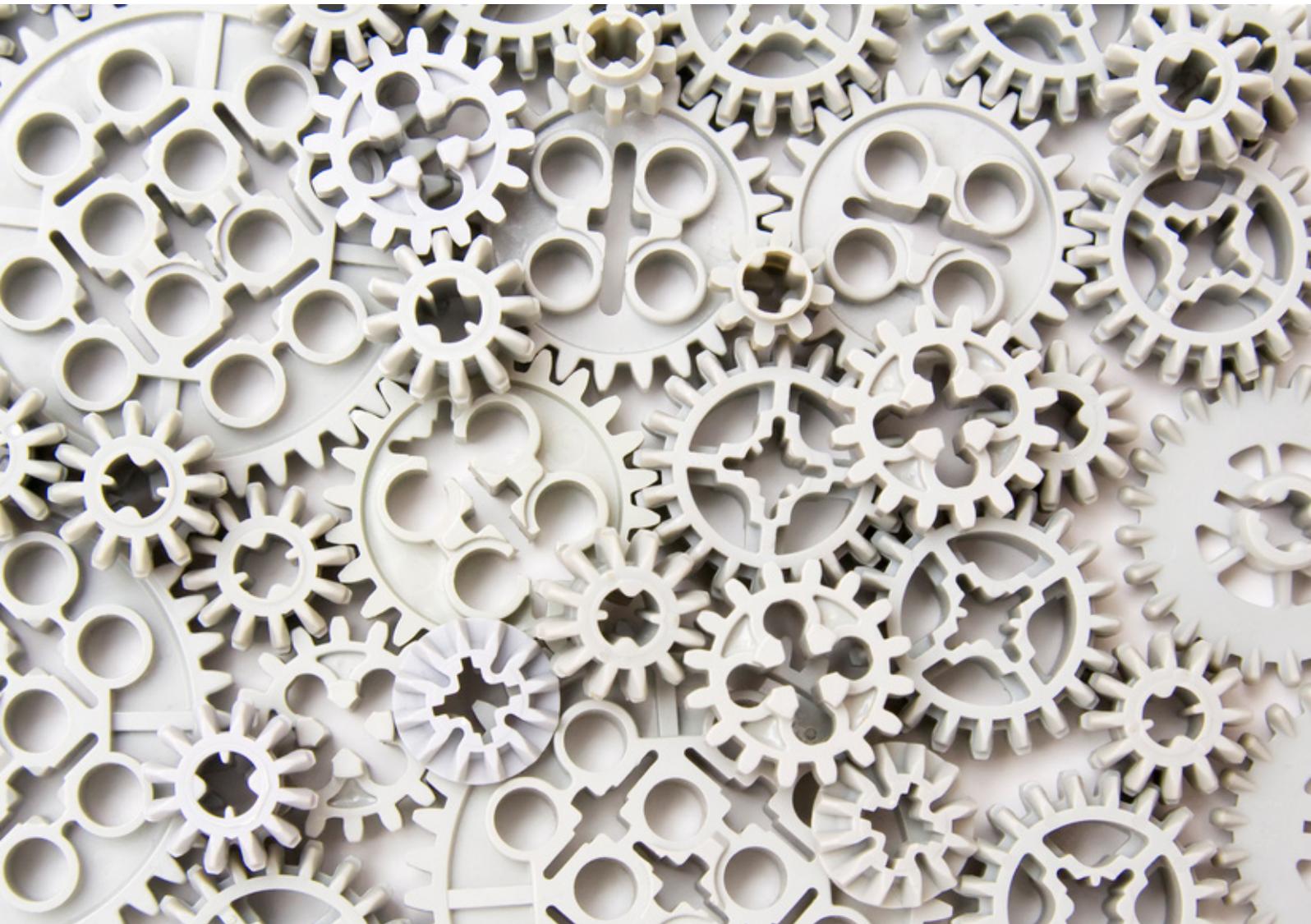




## REPORT

# Symposium Meta-management in the Delta

Thursday, 9 April 2015 | Museum of Communication | The Hague



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## Meta-management in the Delta

On 1 February 2010, the Delta Programme was launched under the leadership of Wim Kuijken as the “Delta Programme Commissioner”. It is a special programme with an updated approach to public administration that should ensure a focus on the long term and cooperation in the areas of flood risks and freshwater supplies. A challenge that, though not acute, is extremely urgent, according to the former Minister and Chairman of the second Delta Committee, Cees Veerman in 2008. The recommendations of the Delta Committee at the time led to the “Delta Act”, in which an annual Delta Programme and a Delta Fund were set up. The “Delta Programme Commissioner” was appointed to head the national management team.

Now, five years later, the Delta Programme is celebrating its fifth anniversary. A good time in the Delta Programme to pause and reflect on the experiences with this new approach in public administration. At the Museum of Communication in The Hague, those involved in the programme and interested parties came together for the “Meta-management in the Delta” symposium in order to discuss the “meta-management” approach and its applicability within other fields falling under public administration.

It was an exceptionally interesting symposium. Martijn van der Steen provided the Delta Programme with a reflection on public administration and explored the possibilities of it moving from being an “administrative anomaly” to being a “new administrative norm”. In five short pitches and the subsequent in-depth sessions, discussions were held on the applicability of a similar approach in the field of energy, in the digitalisation of the government, in urban and regional developments and in the field of security and anti-terrorist measures. The approach of the Delta Programme is characterised by flexibility and possibilities for adaptation, and tries to move many stakeholders through the use of “soft power” towards a chosen point on the horizon. This approach is very promising and full of potential in many other domains as well. Nevertheless, during the symposium it became apparent that it would not be an easy challenge. Urgency, interests, political considerations, the power to overrule and ideological considerations differ widely between domains and influence the freedom there is for a meta-management approach. Consequently, the focus here is not on copying the approach, says the Delta Programme Commissioner, Wim Kuijken, but much more on searching for diversity. At the same time, the question arises as to what is going on, why are the existing institutions unable to solve the problems they face and why do they need to set up special “bypass organisations”? Or is this only a temporary development that will influence existing organisations as well, a development that will create the drive, the courage and the possibilities within them to launch initiatives outside their current organisation and to connect with other parties? It is a good ambition for the ten-year anniversary: meta-management as a new administrative norm.



Opening by Wim Kuijken

## Opening

**Felix Rottenberg**, Day Chair

**Wim Kuijken**, Delta Programme Commissioner

**Paul 't Hart**, Professor of Public Administration at the University of Utrecht

The Delta Programme Commissioner, Wim Kuijken, kicked off the gathering with a clear message: 'The Delta Programme is not mine, it belongs to other people.' He realised that proposed adaptations to the structures of our public administration, to the house that Thorbecke built, have seldom been successful. Large tasks we face are never solved by one party on its own, but through all of us working together. Collaboration, therefore, became the focus point of the Delta Programme, collaboration between all layers of government and involved stakeholders. To prepare the Netherlands for an uncertain future whose amplitude is unknown, the parties involved jointly formulated promising solutions and paths of adaptation that are flexible: solutions that are robust for the different Delta Scenarios, in which space has been left for possible links to other investment agendas. It is a complex task, said Kuijken, that requires striking a continual balance between vertical and horizontal ties. It was necessary to have an accurate story, a good narrative. The a-political character of the challenge ahead, a strategy of remaining small and, especially, coordinating the assets, as well as readjusting them, has characterised the approach in the Delta Programme. Flexibility, adaptivity and especially collaboration thus became the keywords of the Delta approach or: meta-management.

Under the direction of Day Chair Felix Rottenberg, Wim Kuijken and Paul 't Hart, Professor of Public Administration at the University of Utrecht, discussed meta-management further. In 2014, 't Hart published the book "*Ambtelijk Vakmanschap 3.0*", which, according to Kuijken, is a publication that contains valuable golden tips on how civil servants and organisations should develop themselves in order to be successful. One of these tips is to "be porous". Paul 't Hart emphasised the importance of remaining porous for an organisation that has been placed outside the bureaucratic structure: 'You should not erect a fence around the boundaries of your organisation. Rather, you should position yourself in the field.' But then the risk continues of "becoming silted up" by compulsory, vertical accountability structures; even for small organisations. Kuijken points out that it is therefore important to trust and provide space, on the one hand, and to accept that sometimes things go wrong, on the other. The particular concern here is to refrain from giving in to the knee-jerk reaction of coming to a quick decision, and instead to give civil servants the freedom to work with the long term in view. Might this approach be applicable in other fields and, if so, in what ways? This symposium is focused on this question.

<sup>1</sup> Hart, P. 't (2014). *Ambtelijk vakmanschap 3.0. Zoektocht naar het handwerk van de overheidsmanager* [Official expertise 3.0. Quest for the handiwork of the government manager]. The Hague: NSOB.

## From an Institutional Anomaly to the New Administrative Norm?

Keynote speech by **Martijn van der Steen**, Co-Dean and Deputy Director of the *Nederlandse School voor Openbaar Bestuur* (NSOB – Netherlands School of Public Administration).

Martijn van der Steen reflected on the Delta Programme from the perspective of public administration. The fact that the Delta Programme has existed for five years is exceptional, yet it feels very normal and familiar, as if there had always been a Delta Programme Commissioner. Still, according to Van der Steen, it is an “institutional anomaly”. Yet it is this exceptional nature itself that makes it comparable to other domains and dossiers.



Martijn van der Steen

### Puzzling, powering and perpetuating

In his reflection, Van der Steen utilised three perspectives from the field of public administration. The first one is the “puzzling & powering thesis” of Hugh Hecló.<sup>2</sup> *Puzzling* concerns substantive ideas, it is about searching for promising solutions and a strong narrative in the midst of uncertainty: “What is this about? What direction is it headed in? Who is involved?” Next, *Powering* concerns the development of a coalition of political and social support around this strong narrative. This is often difficult to accomplish because everyone has his own interests, wishes and ideas about what is necessary. It is these

factors, in particular, that make the theme of adaptation to climate change such an “administrative nightmare”: due to the extremely long time span, the large number of players involved and enormous competition from other policy goals. Hecló says that movement in this area will not be possible until a strategy for puzzling and powering is on hand. They go hand in hand: a strong narrative makes it possible and easy for the necessary parties involved to come in. It is inclusive, challenging, as well as promising and feasible. Without a powerful narrative on why and in what direction we are moving, there will be no powerful coalition. This is reflected in the Delta Programme, says Van der Steen. The frame shifted from coastal reinforcement to “living with water”: adapting to climate change concerns all of us. From “adaptation as an add-on that you have to integrate”, to “adaptation by design”. “It is a complex task, but we have accomplished similar ones in the past” was the message. It is not a radical break with the past, but rather the continued development of the Delta. And besides, an important addition to Hecló’s thesis is the fact that it is a long-term challenge. As Veerman said at the time: ‘It is urgent, but not acute.’ The long-term challenges can be brought up for discussion every day. Sometimes that creates the space to take a decision, but if that decision must stay in place for 100 years, the chance of failure is large. That is why Van der Steen points to a third “p” that, in addition to *puzzling* and *powering*, is crucial for the Delta Programme: *perpetuating*. The art is to keep people’s attention without the pressing urgency of staying current by building a structure in which the decision is safe for the dynamics of the everyday political agenda. I.e., outside the budget, in its own law, with its own administrator. Just as Odysseus had himself tied to the mast so that he did not succumb to the singing of the Sirens.

### The Delta Programme as “Adaptive Management”

The second theoretical perspective that Van der Steen used for his reflection was the “wicked problem” of Rittel and Webber.<sup>3</sup> Climate change is a typical “wicked problem”: few people still doubt that it is real, but what it is exactly no one seems to know. There are different theories on the physical changes involved and there is considerable uncertainty about the social consequences they will have. It gets even more complex due to the lack of a common consensus: adaptation to climate change requires choices and involves conflicting interests. At the meta level, a good climate policy is important to everyone. At a more worldly and everyday level, other interests take priority. Against the backdrop of all these uncertainties about a lack of information and the unpredictability of future interactions, the Delta Programme introduces the idea of adaptive management: we do not know fully how things are going and base our actions on that. On time and properly, without being entirely clear about what “on time and properly” mean.

<sup>2</sup> Hecló, H. (1974). *Modern social policy in Britain and Sweden: from relief to income maintenance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

<sup>3</sup> Rittel, H. W. J., & Webber, M. M. (1972). *Dilemmas in a general theory of planning*. Berkeley: Institute of Urban & Regional Development, University of California.

Adaptive management means anticipating things as much as possible based on the best possible knowledge and skills. As well as structuring the programme so that unexpected turns can be incorporated. This requires the combination of a big goal with a strong structure, but one that then leaves plenty of room for the real occurrences in the world – how technology or knowledge overtakes us, or how people behave differently from what we expected, thereby forcing us to look for other solutions. The Delta Programme is a typical example of a “wicked problem”, yet it is also the prime example of how administrators can deal with it: via an adaptive strategy that optimally combines anticipation with maximum manoeuvrability and flexibility.

### Framing, Scripting and Casting

Yet the Delta Programme is about more than simply structures and preconditions. It also pertains to what happens from the point of departure, to how, in such a complicated field among many different parties, your intended movement comes to pass without you being able to make the movement yourself. To indicate this, Van der Steen used a more recent perspective developed by NSOB colleague Mark van Twist, who talks about *framing*, *scripting* and *casting* in order to point out how strategies in the wings guide the movement on the stage.<sup>4</sup>

In this context, *framing* is about taking small steps in order to realise a huge leap. The Delta Programme has found a framework to reduce a future question to a level of a significant beginning: the framework of taking “small steps for a huge leap.” A strategy of “strategic incrementalism”, according to Van der Steen. This framework of small steps is next given form in the script, the work method: it is a *script* for acting, a work method that moves between the central responsibility of the Delta Programme Commissioner and the decentralised realisation of the actual climate agenda. The Delta Programme was originally quite a central programme, created by central government between the ministries, addressing the needs of a national task. Yet, at the same time, it is a locally and regionally oriented programme that has maximum space for local choices and diversity. Centrally organised, yet realised decentrally. Van der Steen refers to the term “delta dictator”, which was used occasionally around the Veerman Committee. It is an interesting term that expresses the wish to have someone above the parties that can bring them together when necessary. But the art of this dictator is to get the local movement off the ground, to keep it moving and to take it further. It is a top-down-bottom-up programme. And finally, the *casting*: “People make the institute.” The Delta Programme Commissioner is an institutional novelty in our administrative system. Not really a manager, but an official that does have special authority. From this administrative structure, the focus is on how the person occupying the position presents himself: whether he can win people’s trust, as well as maintain his independent position. Apart from institutions, the focus here is also primarily on people: “the Delta Programme Commissioner is a person that gives shape and a face to the institute. That is why the casting of the face is crucial.” We come across this face in a number of different images, wearing Wellington boots on the dyke or during negotiations in The Hague. It is this handiwork that finally belongs at the institute. Personal, but not less systematic. That is why Van der Steen states that casting the commissioners deserves systematic attention and conscious consideration: ‘In order to understand the institute, we have to look at the people.’

### From Institutional Anomaly to a New Norm

The lessons learned from the Delta Programme can also apply to other challenges that are brought up for discussion at the symposium. They are all “wicked problems” that require an adaptive work method. All of them have a long-term dimension and require a strategy of *puzzling*, *powering* and *perpetuating*: a strong narrative about what is going on, the ability to bring parties together around this ambition and to find a structure to provide this temporary consensus the necessary protection for a long time. Furthermore, they are issues for which a central figure must guide the numerous other parties – without the possibility of doing this by decree – and that requires a strategy of *framing*, *scripting* and *casting*. Van der Steen concluded with an ambitious objective for a ten-year anniversary on meta-management: ‘The Delta Programme Commissioner is perhaps an **institutional anomaly** in history, a special entity outside the norm. But if we stand here in five years’ time, then I think this will have completely turned around: a **new administrative norm** in the approach taken towards complex administrative issues.’

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<sup>4</sup> Van Twist, M.J.W. (2010). Over (on)macht en (on)behagen in de beleidsadviesing [On power and impotence, pleasure and discomfort in policy consulting]. The Hague: Boom/Lemma.

## Meta-management in four other domains

In the follow-up to the programme, we reflect on the application of a meta-management approach and the position of a (national) coordinator or commissioner in four other domains. To what extent can this approach be used or is it already being used in the energy transition, in urban and regional developments, in the digitalisation of the government and in the domain of security and anti-terrorist measures? In five short pitches, the “nieces and nephews” of the Delta Programme Commissioner briefly discussed these issues. Then the themes were discussed in greater detail within smaller groups in four in-depth sessions.

### I Energy Transition

**Pitch** **Mark Dierikx**, Director-General for Energy, Telecom and Competition at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and a member of the monitoring committee of the SER Energy Agreement for Sustainable Growth (BEA).

**In-depth session** led by **Albert Vermuë**, General Manager of the *Unie van Waterschappen* (Union of District Water Boards), **Geert Teisman**, Professor of Public Administration at Erasmus University Rotterdam, and **Mark Dierikx**, Director-General of Energy, Telecom and Competition at the Ministry of Economic Affairs.



Mark Dierikx

In his pitch, Mark Dierikx pointed to the fact that the Energy Transition, like the Delta Programme, is a long-term project. We all agree that the release of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere has to be reduced in order to achieve the objectives set for 2050, but we cannot suddenly change things radically tomorrow. It involves an ideological and emotional transition, in which the social discussion often becomes bogged down by staunchly held personal values and views.

Here, too, a common course and implementation are necessary in order to move forward. Yet, whereas the narrative and goal on the horizon were so very important in the Delta Programme, these things are still missing from the current Energy Agreement, which is focused on the short and medium term, according to Dierikx. The Energy Transition is focused on the long term, on a future that is uncertain. Herein also lies the shared challenge: searching for the acceptance of uncertainties and a jointly established destination on the horizon.

During the in-depth session, Dierikx further explained the course of events surrounding the realisation of the Energy Transition. In many respects, it resembles the approach of the Veerman Committee. The Council for the Living Environment and Infrastructure was asked to delineate the different transition routes up to 2050 and, in so doing, to consider both conventional and traditional routes. The goal is to ensure via scenarios that we can be prepared. However, the Energy Transition is extremely difficult because an enormous number of parties are involved that have dug in their heels ideologically. Moreover, in political terms, it is quite a sensitive subject. Whereas it was possible for the Delta Programme Commissioner to depoliticise the subject, in the energy domain this is much more complicated, as Geert Teisman also states.

An important difference vis-à-vis the Delta Programme is the short period of time in which the current Energy Agreement was realised. Whereas in the Delta Programme, we had several years to develop the Delta Decisions, the Energy Agreement – an agreement in principle in general terms – was concluded in less than a year in cooperation with more than forty different parties. Although most people see the energy problem as urgent, it is nonetheless difficult to get everyone to reach a consensus on the matter. Even after the large power failure in North Holland, no one started to panic about energy. In a response to this, those attending the symposium discussed the possibilities for letting go of the long-term focus of the Energy Transition somewhat and concentrating more on an adaptive approach. However, Dierikx does not think this will be accepted just like that. If wind turbines are set up, he must be able to explain why.

One of the attendees stated that, actually, a “grand narrative” should be given in which the details are omitted and only later filled in. Where do we want to go and in what direction do we want to head? The room to manoeuvre should be kept at a maximum. You should tell the stakeholders the direction we are heading in and the actual details can follow later on. To do this, you must work in an adaptive manner. At the same time, you must show that the steps you are taking now are very necessary. The question remaining is who should tell this grand narrative. Should a type of energy commissioner be appointed? People will see this is illogical if it concerns a grand narrative. You have to make choices and defend them. Mark has been advised to name the myths and to tell the narrative together as a group. And if that collective narrative corresponds to some degree, then we can count ourselves lucky.

## II Urban and Regional Developments

**Pitches** **Ton Jonker**, Director of the Amsterdam Economic Board, and **Marco Pastors**, Director of the National Programme Rotterdam South.

**In-depth session** led by **Ellen van Doorne**, Senior Advisor for KIEM at the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, **Katrien Termeer**, Professor of Public Administration at Wageningen University and Research Centre, **Ton Jonker**, Director of the Amsterdam Economic Board, and **Marco Pastors**, Director of the National Programme Rotterdam South.



Ton Jonker



Felix Rottenberg and Marco Pastors

In urban and regional development, meta-management occupies an important position. In two short pitches given by Ton Jonker and Marco Pastors on the Amsterdam and Rotterdam programmes, the importance of collaboration between knowledge institutions, the business community and government, referred to as the ‘triple Helix’, is considered as essential. For example, the Amsterdam Economic Board, led by Ton Jonker, encourages innovation and collaboration between the many different parties with the goal of creating sustainable economic growth in the Amsterdam metropolitan region. The National Programme Rotterdam South is also trying to link organisations together, including the national government, the Municipality of Rotterdam, educational and health care institutions, housing corporations, and the business community, in order to work on creating better prospects for Rotterdam South. According to Jonker, continuity and collaboration are crucial to continue to move forward. In his pitch, Pastors added that he does not allow himself to be swept along with political changes too much in order to protect the continuity of the programme. Through a serious programme of improvement for Rotterdam South, with concrete annual goals, work is conducted in cooperation with many parties in the region with a focus on realisation.

In the in-depth session, Katrien Termeer highlighted a number of points from the pitches given by Jonker and Pastors. She has her doubts about the founding of “bypass organisations”. Apparently there is an urgent problem that cannot be solved by existing organisations. But what makes the bypass organisations so different that they will be able to solve this problem? It is important to formulate ambitions; clear objectives are necessary to monitor the progress of the long-term project. She describes the role of the commissioner or director as one filled with “impassioned modesty”. It involves commitment and establishing links, as well as creating friction, seeking out confrontation and striking a balance in this. At the same time, the relationship to politics is complicated. On the one hand, depoliticisation is necessary. On the other, political support is necessary to make the programmes possible.

The term “depoliticisation” led to some discussion. From this discussion it seems that the term “depoliticisation” has a range of different meanings for those attending the symposium. Termeer considers the term to mean decoupling problems from political interests by making them technical issues. In response to this, others stated that depoliticisation is primarily about removing things from the issues of the day, which enables people to focus better on the long term. At the same time, political support remains important. The term “depoliticisation” is therefore somewhat misleading: you must always remain aware of the political elements at play so that you are able to work with them. You must see where the possibilities lie and be able to tie together the different political realities. The issue of democratic legitimacy also plays a role here, says Jonker: where can it be found after depoliticisation? The dilemma between depoliticisation, on the one hand, and retaining political support, on the other, also requires careful balancing and meta-management.

Whether the “Delta Programme Commissioner” can be copied in other domains is a complex issue. In many places it would work, particularly if there are many stakeholders. At the same time, an approach shouldn’t be repeated too often. And perhaps not all themes are urgent enough. Or perhaps an overly intense power struggle is underway. A possible, even more important question that emerges is why a Delta Programme Commissioner is necessary, why are the existing organisations unsuccessful? It has been said that public services apparently are wary of showing too much ambition. There is fear and hesitance when it comes to exploring the future and that is why bypasses are sought. Job Cohen qualifies this picture somewhat: what the Delta Programme Commissioner does is primarily make links and, as a result, you find yourself returning to the existing organisations. By linking them together, they are able to achieve more. Bypass organisations work because they work between existing organisations, enabling them to establish links between these organisations. Does this mean that we have here a new way of solving problems through dialogue? Perhaps, says Kuijken. We have a wide range of organisations that have to deal with the same things, but no one is taking the lead. An organisation like the Delta Programme Commissioner brings them together.

### III Digitalising the Government

**Pitch Bas Eenhoorn**, Digital Commissioner.

**In-depth session** led by **Bart Parmet**, Staff Director for Delta Programme Commissioner, **Mark van Twist**, Dean and Administrator of the NSOB and Professor of Public Administration at Erasmus University Rotterdam, and **Bas Eenhoorn**, Digital Commissioner.



Bas Eenhoorn

‘Thorbecke is no longer here’, stated Digital Commissioner, Bas Eenhoorn, in his short pitch. When Thorbecke created our social order 150 years ago (constitutional reform of 1848), we lived in a period when manpower was being replaced by machines. Now, 150 years later, our brainpower is being replaced by a smarter brainpower: a “Second Machine Age”, according to Eenhoorn. As the Digital Commissioner, it is Eenhoorn’s task to set up a programme, together with all governments, that is focused on laying a government-wide, infrastructural foundation for a digital government for now and in the future. To accomplish this, new agreements must be reached because, as Eenhoorn puts it, ‘this concerns all of us, this pertains to everyone.’

In the in-depth session, Mark van Twist ponders whether the idea of the House that Thorbecke built (constitutional reform of 1848) is still suitable for the digitalisation of the government. From the perspective of this question, the House that Thorbecke built is more of a metaphor in which the original structure of “the House” possibly no longer suits the spirit of the current age. The structure of the house, with a number of floors (different levels of governmental authority), that seemed logical at the time can now actually be an obstacle. Is a different structure necessary? This could be achieved by thinking about other institutional structures – such as the

possibility of making the provincial government a grand municipal government because of the advantages of scale this would provide – as well as by thinking about new types of government positions, such as the Digital Commissioner. In the area of digitalisation, much is already taking place in the Netherlands. Dutch society is already very active digitalising. In the halls of government, too, digitalisation offers the attractive prospect of savings and urgency (the Municipality of Molenwaard is given as an example, where the city hall exists in digital form only, saving 1 million euros a year in operating costs). But the crux of meta-management lies here: we want to digitalise and at the same time keep everything the same. Digitalisation is urgent, but many other matters are urgent as well. Where things really start to pinch, returning to the House that Thorbecke built, is the legislation that is behind the times. In practice, there are numerous examples, such as the Public Prosecutor that is tied to obtaining a “wet” signature; hard work is being done to implement digitalisation, but the reality on the ground is often intractable.

The digitalisation of all interaction in government also raises questions about protection, security and resistance. The availability of all log-in data at a single movement of the hand or fingerprint is handy, but it also increases vulnerability to (identity) fraud. Crime is digitalising as well and cybercrimes continues to develop. This means that you must reach new agreements as the government. One of the biggest issues we are facing is what can we do and what do we want to do with all the available data? Extra layers with personal “strongboxes” full of valuable identity data should be set up, but if you peel back all the layers it is still difficult to protect everything. This is related to the dilemma involving freedom, security, (economic) progress and, as an overarching theme, trust.

The biggest challenge for the Digital Commissioner, according to those attending the symposium, lies in the speed of developments and the timeline. The current state of affairs in the area of digitalisation is continually out of date, which can raise questions about trust. Whereas the Delta Programme Commissioner spent five years making a plan and building a network, the Digital Commissioner does not have that amount of time. The position of a special government official and the shape you wish to give it therefore matters. A particular timeline results in a particular work method. For the long term, there are a number of difficult problems to tackle, but you can set them to one side in the short term because many gains can be made now, in the present. Initially, you use the carrot to try and go along with the digitalisation efforts, but if this proves unsuccessful, you must use the stick. Yet you can only use the stick if there is authority to do so. In Denmark for example, there is a Minister of Information that oversees the different levels of administration. So careful thought should be given to the position in terms of authority and institutionalisation. It matters very much, after all, whether you are a minister, a taskforce, a government commissioner or a national commissioner. And it matters whether the position is then politicised or depoliticised, and whether the position has a follow-up or not. Each form has advantages and disadvantages.

## IV Security and Anti-Terrorist Measures



Dick Schoof

**Pitch** Dick Schoof, National Coordinator for Anti-Terrorist Measures and Security (NCTV) for the Ministry of Security and Justice.

**In-depth session** led by Arwin van Buuren, University Senior Lecturer in Public Administration at Erasmus University Rotterdam, Paul 't Hart, Professor of Public Administration at the University of Utrecht, and Dick Schoof, National Coordinator for Anti-Terrorist Measures and Security.

In his pitch, Dick Schoof firstly stressed that he is “only” a national coordinator, without any formal authority. And yes, his position helps at times. The core of his duty is to monitor democratic, social and economic stability. To accomplish this, he needs an unbelievable number of parties. That is why he is called a coordinator. For Schoof, coordinating means managing, directing and facilitating on a complex playing field, on which work is carried out in turn on different playing fields at the same time. And on each of these playing fields the threat has to be established and a network organised. But it is not an easy task, because it often concerns “wicked problems”. It is a world full of uncertainty. It concerns the “whole of government”, the previously mentioned triple helix parties.

But it also concerns the “whole of society”: “We do it for and particularly with society.” As in the Delta Programme, it pertains to managing with uncertainty, which requires manoeuvrability and adaptive capacity on the part of networks in order to communicate actively and to strike a balance between the power to overrule and, especially, “soft power”.

In the in-depth session, Schoof stressed that, in his view, meta-management is primarily about making sure that, in your role as the coordinator, you refrain from trying to organise everything and, instead, allow all parties to have their own role to play. In this respect, meta-management is fundamentally different from chain management. Meta-management is inextricably linked with networks. But, at the same time, all of these organisations have vertical connections. So it makes it all extremely complex. To overcome this, Schoof pointed to the importance of a meta-goal. This also provides sufficient space for the necessary manoeuvrability and flexibility. Yet it is not a permanent model of negotiation; rather, it is based on the management capacity of all the organisations, which you all, together, need to have in order to realise your meta-objectives. An important difference between the NCTV and the Delta Programme Commissioner is that the subjects for which the NCTV is responsible – crisis management, anti-terrorist measures and cyber security – are also driven strongly by current affairs in the form of incidents and attention in the media. The same applies to some parties with whom the NCTV works, such as operational services. The public image engendered is therefore an important factor in the daily work of Schoof and his organisation, for which he himself, in contrast to other Directors General, is also the public face of his subjects and organisation. The difference with the Delta Programme Commissioner can therefore be summarised as follows: the NCTV is active in current affairs and the formation of the public image and, as a result, communication plays a large role. At the same time, this personification in the media has a big pitfall. And the “soft power” of the NCTV is a type of myth that is lost if you can no longer be the binding agent. Now that the work field of the NCTV has broadened and the organisation has become its own institute, there are greater expectations as well.

Paul 't Hart emphasises that, in the role of coordinator or commissioner, you must ask yourself the question “What am I doing here?”. There are different roles imaginable: setting agendas, organising round table discussions, an executive role, being the public face of the government, the link between common efforts, the lightning rod (in role of blame avoidance). There is often discussion on this role. Other important questions, according to 't Hart, are who or what gives you the mandate (a crisis, an impasse?), how do you position yourself, and how do you gauge progress? In the Delta Programme, operationalisation has been successful, but for the NCTV measuring performance is more difficult. If something goes off the rails, the coordinator can be removed, but likewise it can also be said: more authority, resources and responsibilities must be given to the NCTV. And with it all comes a sack of money and the power to overrule, but you then lose a position of “soft power” that you really need in meta-management. One of the persons attending the session added that trust is also a dilemma here, because the NCTV cannot fully show its hand to (local) administrators. Schoof explained that there is intensive contact with administrators, especially at the moment that something is going on in that region. With municipalities in which there are no problems at a particular moment, there is much less contact as a result. He added that so much information is shared that it is no longer a one-way-street. The comment was made that we live in a world of “need to know” and, particularly, a “need to share”, which requires continuous collaboration with a great many stakeholders.

## Looking for Connecting Threads

**In a closing plenary session, Paul 't Hart, Mark van Twist, Geert Teisman and Katrien Termeer reflected on the results of the in-depth sessions, led by the Day Chair, Felix Rottenberg.**

The “wisdom of the crowd” seemed to be enormous in the in-depth sessions. In four wonderful sessions, high-quality discussion was held on the meta-management approach in the different domains, on the differences and similarities, and on the administrative dilemmas that are involved. Katrien Termeer stressed that the concept of “depoliticisation” engendered different associations and dilemmas. To us, depoliticisation means “separating a subject or programme from the issues of the day” in order to provide greater space for a focus on the long term. But the term is misleading because you cannot do without political support. This became clear in the session on urban and regional development. Democratic legitimacy also plays a role in this. Termeer therefore called on everyone not to view our politicians and existing organisations in an overly negative light.

Geert Teisman emphasised once more the importance of staying away from taking large decisions. It can create suspicion, particularly in the Energy Agreement. He quoted one of the people that attended the in-depth session: ‘the approach of Economic Affairs seems to be one in which you are searching for the big plan, while the grand narrative is missing.’ So the recommendation is to ensure that there is a grand narrative, but stay away from the big plan, just as the Delta Programme Commissioner stays away from taking big decisions. Besides, he proposed that we frame the threat differently: We define Groningen now as a big problem, but it is primarily also a grand narrative with a very interesting development task for Groningen. Teisman, a native of Groningen, sees it as a magnificent narrative for the Netherlands: What can we contribute so that the tap can be shut off in Groningen sooner? Whether this narrative can be told by the Ministry of Economic Affairs is doubtful. Perhaps a type of outboard motor, a private actor, would be more appropriate.

In the in-depth session, Mark van Twist learned a great deal more about digitalisation, e.g. about the “wet signature”: we digitalise a great deal, but at the back we are still faced with a large number of procedures and we are still working with horse and buggy. During the session, three things were mentioned most: progress, freedom and security. And from these three ideals arise dilemmas. In the domain of digitalisation, the creed is usually turned around the other way: it is not urgent, but it is acute. Eenhoorn sees himself as a trailblazer on the way to becoming a type of “minister of information”. This sounds good but, according to Van Twist, he is mistaken. After all, you are not there on behalf of a minister, you also represent all the other parties.

In the in-depth session on security and terrorism, Paul 't Hart examined the role of the coordinator through the lens of meta-management. Yet sometimes these roles are pushed upon you. Tomorrow, Dick Schoof could be the lightning rod that falls on his sword to save the Minister. You can also be the public face or a Tsar (with the power to overrule). Coping with these different roles is a part of your tradecraft. An important part of the session was the measurability of progress made. 't Hart said that we often talk about “shifting a problem”, but that he often misses the “object of desire” to shift towards. Meta-management pertains to processes, yet you cannot measure your success by processes alone. It also therefore pertains to meta-goals. How ambitious are you when it comes to setting goals and how strict are you with yourself in ensuring that you remain accountable for all your responsibilities?

Felix Rottenberg gave the last word to Katrien Termeer. She expects that we will have more bypass organisations in the years to come, which fits in with the network society. But more interesting is the question of how these bypass organisations will change existing organisations?



*Felix Rottenberg, Paul 't Hart and Wim Kuijken*

## Closing Words

Wim Kuijken, the Delta Programme Commissioner, concluded the gathering with a few words about the bypass organisation. The bypass organisation was an eye-opener for him. And yet he asked himself: What is wrong with the existing organisations that they are unable to do this, that they may not do it or simply don't do it? Like Katrien Termeer, he hopes the bypass organisations will be able to challenge the existing organisations to get on the move, pick the ball up and run with it. This means that Kuijken expects these bypass organisations to be temporary, until the existing organisations find the drive, the courage and possibilities again to get on with the task outside their own organisation while connecting with others. Because this simply cannot be the intention for the long term, can it?

With this critical closing question, Wim Kuijken and Honorary Chairman, Felix Rottenberg, sent all those attending the session to the closing drinks party.

### Information

You can send any questions about the report to [info@deltacommissaris.nl](mailto:info@deltacommissaris.nl)

### Delta Programme

The Delta Programme is a national programme: the national government, provincial governments, municipal authorities and district water boards work together in the programme, with contributions from civil society organisations and the business community. The goal is to protect the Netherlands, for future generations as well, against flooding and to ensure the supply of sufficient freshwater.

In the 2015 Delta Programme, Delta Decisions and preferential strategies were prepared. These will have a large impact on the future of our delta. The Delta Programme also contains a Delta Plan for Flood Risk Management and a Delta Plan for Freshwater, scheduling all the measures and provisions to limit floods, pluvial flooding and water shortage.

The Delta Programme is being implemented under the direction of the Delta Programme Commissioner, the Government Commissioner for the Delta Programme.