平成１９年度調査報告書

欧州におけるイノベーションと知的資産活用等に関する調査報告書
（欧州のフューチャー・センターに関する実態調査）

2008年3月

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Future Centers of Europe
ENVIRONMENTS WHERE INNOVATIONS EMERGE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Future Centers are facilitated working and meeting environments which help organizations to prepare for the future in a proactive, collaborative and systematic way. They are used to create and apply knowledge, develop practical innovations, bring government in closer contact with citizens and connect end-users with industry. Government organizations use them to develop and test citizen-centered, future-proof policy options with broad acceptance by stakeholders. In the business world, they help increase the customer-driven, user-centered quality of new products and services. Their core business is developing innovative solutions to challenging business, organizational or societal problems, in particular solutions involving the active, intelligent cooperation of diverse stakeholders. People are central to their solution-seeking process, and centers allow people in co-located and distributed environments the possibility of working together on the same issues in facilitated high tech/high touch environments. As such, Future Centers are breeding-grounds for innovation, societal renewal and for enhancing and applying the intellectual capital of organizations, sectors, regions and nations.

Since the mid-1990's organizations in Europe have been working with varieties of Future Centers. There are centers operating in public administration and in multinational industries, corporate centers and centers open to the general public, centers serving geographical areas and specific sectors. They operate in various domains, for a variety of purposes, dealing with content-specific questions relating to issues in the sectors where they operate, such as transportation, taxation, insurance, banking, energy, education, water and coastal management, pensions, employment, and stimulating an entrepreneurial economy. In more process-oriented terms, Future Centers typically deal with issues of organizational innovation and the development of new visions, strategic goals, policies, products and services through identifying and proactively using emerging technological, cultural, economic, and social trends; by stimulating cooperation *within* large organizations and *between* various organizations; by enhancing open innovation and participative policy-making through collaboration with citizens, end-users, clients and stakeholders; by developing the creative and innovative capacities of personnel, and creating and cultivating leadership cadres with an innovative mind-set.

Future Centers have demonstrated they are able to achieve results that other, less people-oriented workspaces cannot achieve, through the use of diverse methods and techniques for enhancing creativity, considering multiple perspectives, recognizing patterns and blind spots, improving team cooperation and the effectiveness of decision-making. Especially important in this approach is the future orientation that focuses on linking past, present and future in an integral learning environment. In particular, Future Centers are seen to add value through their emphasis on achieving concrete results, and by helping users escape their tunnel vision to see systems and find combinations, cross-fertilize and make use of the knowledge and learning available in organizations and society.

Looking at 12 case studies of Future Centers in four countries (The Netherlands, Denmark, the UK and Sweden), various aspects of how centers work are brought into focus: their goals and mission, their history, the physical environment and "look and feel" of the centers, their products and services, and the methods and techniques they use.

Diverse lessons can be learned from looking at European Future Centers. These include the effective use of space in the broadest possible sense (the integration of physical, virtual, cognitive and affective spaces to provide a total environment where innovation can emerge), the importance of working with facilitators, the capacity to help users to cross borders and extend themselves beyond their perceived limits, the combination of playfulness and hard work on serious issues, and the continual focus on concrete results.

As Future Centers concepts continue to evolve, the future of Future Centers can be plotted in terms of the enhanced interest shown by different countries, cities, sectors and regions in establishing new centers, and in the many newly emerging forms of

Future Centers relating to living labs, science and technology parks, corporate universities, and national innovation platforms. The European Commission's *OpenFutures* project has brought many of these into focus.

In Japan as well as in Europe, the need to change society in a meaningful way, in order to deal effectively with new challenges of international cooperation and competitiveness, is clear. People have begun to realize that today we have to change constantly just to remain the same; and when staying the same is not the goal, but simply the starting point for transformation to a more attractive future with sustainable welfare and quality of life, new mindsets and working concepts such as those provided by Future Centers are necessary.

The development of Future Centers in Japan is discussed in terms of challenges, opportunities, and the way forward. Opportunities include building on existing resources of knowledge and experience in relevant fields such as Intellectual Assets management, approaches to open innovation, the use of Intellectual Cafés to stimulate knowledge creation and sharing, and the work of Professor Nonaka and his colleagues on developing and documenting the concept of *ba* and its relation to knowledge creation. These provide a fertile base for applying Future Center thinking more broadly in designing workspaces. The further integration of Future Centers concepts and *ba* can lead to the creation of uniquely Japanese innovation spaces for effective value creation. A number of aspects of Japanese work culture may also prove to be valuable resources for developing future centers in Japan: the corporate culture of innovation in diverse sectors, the linking of long-term thinking with the rapid development of successful products for the marketplace, and the value Japan traditionally places on craftsmanship and on making the efforts required and taking the time to do things right, resonate well with Future Center thinking.

Lessons from European Future Centers indicate that an effective way to initiate new centers is to work closely with senior managers, opinion-leaders and others capable of providing high-level sponsorship and institutional support. In order to mobilize interest and support, it is important to bring decision-makers in contact with the concept. Reports and presentations can help focus attention, but personal experience is the best teacher, and allows people to form clear ideas about what a Future Center can mean for them. Visits by decision-makers to one or more centers in Europe, and/or inviting Future Center developers from Europe to conduct workshops in Japan, can bring the Future Center experience to a wider group of stakeholders, and stimulate translating European experience to specific Japanese contexts which can contribute to open innovation and enhancing the creative power of society.

Chapter 1   Introduction

Since the mid-1990's organizations in Europe have been working with the concept of Future Centers. These centers are essentially instruments for facilitating practical thinking about the future. Envisioning, exploring, and prototyping the future is part of this work. The core business of Future Centers is developing innovative solutions to challenging business, societal or organizational problems – and especially solutions involving the active, intelligent cooperation of diverse stakeholders. People are central to this innovative, solution-seeking process. Future Centers allow people in co-located and distributed environments the possibility of working together on the same issues in facilitated high tech/high touch environments.

The idea of a "future center", which had one of its first practical realizations at the Skandia Assurance Group (Sweden) in the mid-1990's, has since spread to a number of different countries. There are many initiatives that have been inspired by future center concepts, both in the public and private sector, operating under names such as future centers, mindlabs, creativity labs, innovation labs and accelerated solution environments. These include physical centers as well as networks, policy laboratories, and centers for innovation, learning technologies, client-centered thinking, knowledge creation and public sector renewal.

This report describes what these centers are, why they have been established, and how they operate (Chapters 1 and 2). A brief history of the development of European Future Centers is given in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, the different varieties of Future Centers are described in terms of the themes they deal with and the outcomes achieved. Chapter 5 discusses a number of special considerations Future Centers use to design their work processes. Examples of interesting centers in the Netherlands, Denmark and the United Kingdom are described in greater detail (Chapter 6). Chapter 7 looks at lessons learned about successful practice, and Chapter 8 gives a short overview of future directions for development. The report concludes with a number of suggestions for developing Future Centers in Japan (Chapter 9).

1.1 What is a Future Center?
Facilitated working and meeting environments
According to OpenFutures[1], the European Commission project set up in 2006 to describe how these centers work, Future Centers are facilitated working and meeting environments which help organizations to prepare for the future in a proactive, collaborative and systematic way. They are used to create and apply knowledge, develop practical innovations, bring citizens in closer contact with government and connect end-users with industry.
The work of OpenFutures is described further in Chapter 8.

Powerful instruments for the knowledge economy
Future centers are used by government organizations for developing and testing citizen-centered, future-proof policy options with broad acceptance by stakeholders. They are used by business to increase the customer-driven, user-centered quality of new products and services. The centers also support employees within these organizations to develop and test new ways of working and new technical tools. They are also breeding-grounds for innovation, societal renewal and for enhancing and applying intellectual capital of organizations, sectors, regions and nations. They can be powerful instruments in supporting Europe's goal of becoming a leading knowledge economy.

Creative and innovative mindset in work processes
While working on questions of industrial, organizational and societal innovation, the centers bring a creative and innovative mind-set to bear on the issues at hand. People –

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[1] OpenFutures (2006). Description of Work

both session participants and process end-users – are the starting point for designing work processes in these centers.

Real people working on real issues
They are centers for facilitated problem solving, where people looking for real-time answers, new ideas and new directions, can bring their issues, problems, and questions. They feed and facilitate dialogue, development and decision-making processes in organizations. There is a conscious emphasis on exploiting the innovative power of interface: high tech and high touch, public and private, citizens and government, business and customers, people and technology. In these centers, an explicit future orientation is brought to bear on today's questions. Playfulness is combined with hard work on serious issues, and people are encouraged to make use of both cognitive and non-cognitive inputs and perspectives. Throughout the Future Center process, the focus is always on *achieving concrete results.* The output of working in Future Centers – depending on session objectives – can be as diverse as:

- Decisions about strategic choices and 'the way forward', *and/or*
- Physical prototypes of promising policy options, new products and services, *and/or*
- An enhanced sense of mutual respect, understanding and trust amongst collaborating partners or session participants

Diversity in approach
Projects in Future Centers are as diverse as the organizations and organizational units that use them. On the whole, they often deal with broadening perspectives on strategic issues, developing new policy options, creating prototypes for new products and services, enhancing internal cooperation and/or furthering collaboration with external stakeholders and partners. Sessions in Future Centers can take a variety of forms, depending on the issue at hand and the specific objectives. Future Centers have demonstrated they are able to achieve results that other, less people-oriented workspaces cannot achieve, through the use of diverse methods and techniques for enhancing creativity, considering multiple perspectives, recognizing patterns and blind spots, improving team cooperation and the effectiveness of decision-making.

1.2 Characteristics of a Future Center

What characterizes Future Centers? According to OpenFutures, all Future Centers are different, unique workspaces designed to achieve particular objectives in their specific organizations and domains. Future Centers assume different forms in different organizations: some are corporate houses, some open to a broader public; some are driven by modern technologies; others eschew technology to emphasize their high touch atmosphere. Despite the variety of forms, on a generic level they share a number of common characteristics[2]:
- Clear vision - a clear understanding of the essential purpose of the centre. A clear focus on proactively addressing present and future challenges.
- Objectives – a specific set of objectives to enable users to deal effectively with their issues.
- Purposely designed spaces (in the broadest sense of 'space').
- Clear processes to engage its customers.
- Purposeful innovation process - a systematic process that guides the users through the journey of enacting the future.
- Methods & tools – a set of facilitation methods and tools for collaborative exploration, envisioning, futurizing, creativity, problem solving and prototyping.
- A dedicated team of professionals: both Staff – the people who operate the centre and support the users in their innovation journey (facilitators, hosts, innovation process experts, coaches) – and Collaborators, those people and organizations that collaborate with the centre to enhance its portfolio and effectiveness.

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[2] OpenFutures (2007). Organizational Perspective

- Technologies for enhancing the collective intelligence of participants and enabling the distributed intelligence of diverse stakeholders to feed work processes.
- Recognition of the importance of people talking together.

More specifically, centers have a number of key characteristics in common. These include the use of space, the importance of facilitators, and a future orientation that focuses on linking past, present and future in an integral learning environment.

1.2.1 Space.
The use of space is one of the defining characteristics of Future Centers. Space in Future Centers is broadly defined: The combination of physical, virtual space, mental and emotional space creates an environment that stimulates collaboration, creativity, and a results-orientation.

OpenFutures[3] reports that a Future Center space should be:
- A safe, pleasant & comfortable place for dialogue, creative thinking & the exchange of ideas with different people both inside and outside the organization.
- An encounter space for meeting new ideas and provocative propositions.
- A safe havens or sanctuary for working in new ways, without the certainty of fixed procedures or guaranteed results – a place where one can fail one's way forward and learn from what goes right – and what goes wrong.
- A comfort zone – an emotional space – required to depart from standard practice, stressful work routines, personal and professional pressures. It can be the comfort zone required to develop trust with people previously perceived to be competitors or contrarians.
- An uncomfortable, provocative place needed to let go of certainties and 'what you always do' – the 'discomfort zone' needed for innovation. Playful spaces and joy zones – where one feels stimulated to experiment and be oneself – even "in the boss's time".

Figure 1 Meeting space in Mobilion

- Virtual space – which enable the centre to extend its activity span and involve people who are not present physically at the centre. Advanced technologies are also used to enhance the experience and effectiveness of people who are physically present.
- A place to prototype new products & new ideas: The creation of future images, new knowledge, new products & innovative ideas.
- A place where it is 'only natural' to combine dreaming with thinking and doing
- A place to learn future skills, multi-perspective thinking and develop internal and external cooperation skills.
- A place where things get done – where the emphasis is on moving fast toward action.
- A place for maximizing the organization's capabilities and prototyping the organization of the future: it's spaces, services, products, and policies.

1.2.2 Facilitation

Future Centers are facilitated working environments, and the role of the facilitator in guiding people and processes is the second defining characteristic of these centers. It is not realistic to expect that, simply by convening a meeting, groups will arrive at the

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[3] OpenFutures (2007). Organizational Perspective

desired outcomes; the experience of a thousand meetings and hundreds of workshops demonstrates that this is not so.

Professional facilitators who work with insight in how context creates the right conditions for a particular situation or objective, with knowledge and experience of the social dynamics of groups, and with a battery of methods and tools at their disposal, can make or break an activity or work process. All centers recognize that the role of the facilitator is a critical success factor for their effectiveness.

1.2.3. Time and the 'future' in future centers
Back from the future. The emphasis on achieving practical results in the here-and-now is characteristic of Future Center work. People are facilitated to step into the future and explore possibilities, envision what may emerge and understand why, relate this to their perceived objectives, and discover what actions may be relevant to move matters in the desired direction. Then they return to the present in order to enact what they have learned in the facilitated workspace centers provide – building physical prototypes of their plans and intentions to test with their clients and stakeholders.

Although 'future' is the focus, in practice it is the proactive link between past, present and future that makes Future Centers successful. Asking the right questions about "where we have come from" and "where we are now" give context and direction to working in a practical way with the future. *Future* as label can be misleading; science has shown that our perception of the present is very short lived, and for most people the future begins in approximately 12-14 seconds. As Leif Edvinsson, developer of the Skandia Future Center says, "whether we like it or not, we are very soon *in the future*".[4] Although not always explicitly labeled as such, most human actions – as strategic as scenario projects for economic planning and as tactical as brushing our teeth – are aimed at accruing benefit in the future.

Future Centers deliberately combine working on innovation and futurizing with developing a clear understanding of the past and the present. In normal organizational activities, it is often difficult for people to look back longer than the few years their own personal experience encompasses. In order to understand developmental patterns in a wider context, Future Centers often encourage extensive contextual mapping of issues going back decades, and sometimes even hundreds of years. As Leif Edvinsson writes in Corporate Longitude[5]: "Knowledge economies demand that we develop perspectives on the past, present and the future…the past can be a potent competitive advantage. In their approach to the new economy people are sometimes too quick to dismiss what has gone before. Worse, they are unaware of the perspective that history affords. The past should not be ignored."

Our perspective on the present needs a sharp sensitivity to things happening all around us, without letting the present blind us to change. Many societies have traditionally been very poor at seeing how the present is evolving with any degree of accuracy, or applying the lessons of what they do see in a pro-active way. Not only trend-watching but *trend-catching* – capturing the lessons to be learned from context mapping, pattern recognition and trend studies – are processes Future Centers facilitate.

The perspective on the future needs to be open, anticipatory, and informed by multiple perspectives. "Perspective is worth 50 IQ points," according to Gary Hamel. The *far* future may be difficult to anticipate, but alternative *middle* futures can be adequately mapped through foresighting techniques, scenarios, and other futurizing methodologies. The *near* future is already present today, in R&D laboratories, on

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[4] Work in Progress (2006)
[5] Edvinsson (2002)

designer drawing boards, in the hearts and minds of young people all over the world. It is closer still, in what we – and our neighbors, our organizations, our governments – intend to do tomorrow and the day after. The future does begin 14 seconds, as Edvinsson notes: "People expect the future to be futuristic but learning is about perspective".

1.3 Functions Future Centers fulfill in organizations
Future Centers can fulfill a number of functions and usually a particular center actively organizes its activities to fulfill three or four of them. Six main functions can be distinguished:[6]

- The **meeting function**: The physical meeting space can be seen as one of the most important features of a future center. People from different parts of the organization, different work fields, and different locations are brought into contact with one another and with people from outside the organization. In this way people can break through organizational and technical silos, and profit from a broad range of insights and ideas.
- The **future orientation and innovation function**: Future Centers aim at developing and strengthening the future orientation of people and organizations. This involves paying attention to the patterns of the past, the developments, weak signals and lessons to be learned in the present, and the possible futures to which decisions should be attuned. The linking of yesterday, today and tomorrow in developing innovative concepts is seen as indispensable.
- **Knowledge function**: Future Centers are organized for the optimal creation, exchange and utilization of knowledge. The link between knowledge creation and putting knowledge to practical use is particularly important.
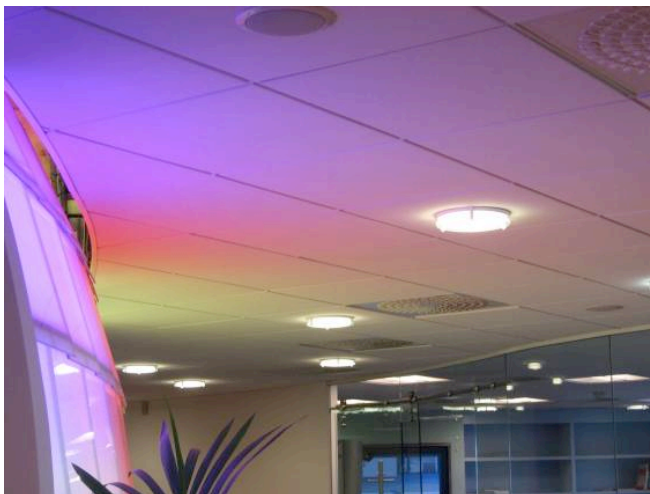- **Project incubation** and **facilitation**: Future Centers offer a safe haven where ideas can be developed into prototypes and experiments, and where projects just starting up can benefit from a dedicated work environment.
- **Breeding pond for talent**: A Future Center can function as a breeding pond for talent by actively involving managers and young personnel in innovative activities. In this way organizations work on creating of a cadre of young leaders with an innovative mind-set. Skills are developed and competences honed for leading organizations in a complex and turbulent world.

Figure 2 Custom-designed environmental lighting

- **Anchoring inspiration**: The results and above all the skills and attitude of innovative thinking and acting which are practiced in Future Centers must be anchored in various ways in the normal workplace, whether organization, sector or more broadly in society. The work of the center does not stop at the front door.

What unites all centers is a common focus on dealing with people and the issues that matter to them: the real issues of importance in organizations and society. People seek centers out because there is often no other place within their organization (or sector) where they can work together in a neutral space, unencumbered by daily routine, suffocating regulations and procedures, in a creative and open atmosphere. Organizations create and use centers because they understand the importance of

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[6] Kune (2002)

facilitating people and the way they work as the key ingredient in the innovation process.

1.4 How are Future Centers different from other creative and collaborative working environments?
At first glance Future Centers may seem to encompass all kinds of activities that also take place in other innovation environments. How are Future Centers different from think tanks, R&D units, creativity centres and Living Labs? Why are they different from conference facilities with facilitated workshops and the client-specific offerings of consultancy firms?

According to Leif Edvinsson[7], what is essential in Future Centers is the integration of factors:
 - the creative context
 - the networking space
- the quality of life and mind satisfaction.

The key is the Future Center working process. This process is an integral approach to thinking and doing, based on applying specific operating principles in a holistic approach to work. Centers provide dedicated physical, virtual, cognitive and affective workspaces for people to work in – each one custom-designed to deal with the particular problem and people at hand. Their integrated vision in which space, the diversity of participants, the facilitators, the importance of learning from the past and present as well as from the future, and the methods and tools all contribute to achieving results. This is what gives centres the ability to leverage and multiply intellectual and relational capital in order to create value.

In this way Future Centers are different from other kinds of innovation and collaborative workspaces.

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[7] Edvinsson (2005)

Chapter 2. Reasons for Establishing Future Centers

Organizations report a variety of reasons to establish Future centers. The basic motivation is to enable people to meet the present and future challenges of their work more effectively.

2.1 Innovation as success factor

Many people see innovation as the key organizational success factor for the 21st century. It is essential for the effectiveness, competitiveness, and sometimes even the survival of organizations. This is as true for government organizations as for business. In order to survive in a turbulent environment, organizations need to constantly renew themselves. Unfortunately, the constantly growing pressures of addressing the challenges of *right now* make it very difficult to devote time and space for innovative future oriented thinking. Organizational and societal leaders recognize the need for innovation, future thinking, and increased and effective cooperation across borders of all kinds. This includes borders of work domain, sector, professional specialization, as well as organizational, generational, geographic, and national borders. The question is: how can this be achieved in modern knowledge economies? How can organizations escape their tunnel vision to see systems and find combinations, cross-fertilize and make use of the knowledge and learning available in organizations and society?

Futures Centers are *one* of the recent answers. They are used to create and apply knowledge, develop practical innovations, bring citizens in closer contact with government and connect end-users with industry. They are used by government organizations for developing and testing citizen-centered, future-proof policy options with broad acceptance by stakeholders. They are used by business to increase the customer-driven, user-centered quality of new products and services. The centers also support employees within these organizations to develop and test new ways of working and new technical tools. They are also breeding-grounds for innovation, societal renewal and for enhancing and applying the intellectual capital of organizations, sectors, regions and nations.

2.2. The challenge to innovation in knowledge economies and organizations

There are various reasons why European organizations establish future centers. Effective measures are needed to overcome the challenges faced by the modern knowledge economies and knowledge organizations. These 21st century challenges include:[8]

- Complex and turbulent socio-economic environment, rapid pace of change
- Changing nature of work and workspaces
- Inability of some industries to recognize the importance of knowledge, knowledge-workers, knowledge-networks and intellectual capital as their prime resource for growth and development
- Increased need for collaboration across borders, cultures, disciplines, generations
- Ineffective future-orientation in government and business organizations: short-term orientation of thinking and research, poor sustainability of solutions
- Stressful working environments, which deaden the spirit and negatively influence productivity
- Ad-hoc instead of systemic innovation practice
- Increased competition from knowledge professionals from Asian countries
- Digital divide: between old and young, modern and old-fashioned, haves and have-not's
- Inadequate intergenerational communication and co-mentoring
- Non-inclusion of citizens in e-government, e-services, participative planning & policy making

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[8] OpenFutures (2006). Description of Work

- Territorialism and compartmentalized work in government and business: work and responsibilities arranged in silo's, work structures organized to discourage or limit easy communication and collaboration
- Inadequate communication and knowledge exchange amongst professional networks, whereby people working with in different organizations (and sometimes even the same organization) often don't know of each other's existence, can't find each other, and are therefore unable to share knowledge and experience.

2.3 Specific organizations have specific reasons to create Future Centers

Organizations establish Future Centers in order to achieve a variety of internal goals and objectives. Each organization has its own particular reasons for establishing Future centers. For example:

- *Skandia (Sweden).* Perceived changes in the insurance business that the company would face in the coming years, and the need for more innovative capacities in its managers.
- *Department of Public Works & Water Management (Netherlands)*. To provide a meeting and working space for people within the organization (and important external stakeholders) to support innovation processes, and to work together on the issues which impact the organization's effectiveness.
- *Dutch Tax and Customs Administration (Netherlands)*. Make its personnel more creative and open to new ways of working, in order to meet the changing challenges of society.
- *Country House (four ministries in the Netherlands national government)*. Increase the creative and innovative capacities of civil servant, and encourage an integral approach to policy making by breaking down silos in government.
- *MindLab (Denmark).* To stimulate user-centered innovation in the three sponsoring ministries.
- *Innovation Lab* (*Denmark*). To help people experience to impact of technology on their lives while they still have an opportunity to influence it.
- *Department of Trade and Industry (UK)*. To help the organization think about the future and respond to it, to make policies fit for the future and to increase the speed of their execution, by providing a facilitated environment for working on a broad range of policy issues which need a new perspective, or an innovative approach.
- *Royal Mail (UK).* To provide the people, tools and space their own personnel – and their customers – need to unlock business-changing ideas; to enable users to release potential and ultimately to make a real and positive difference to their businesses.

Chapter 3   Development of Future Centers in Europe

One of the direct inspirations for this concept was the Skandia Future Center, established at the Skandia Insurance Company in 1996. This Swedish financial services multinational company organized a laboratory for testing prototypes of future working life, optimizing opportunities for creative dialogue and knowledge sharing, and developing intellectual capital. This seminal 'future center' has been the inspiration for like-minded initiatives across the world.

Parallel developments in the United Kingdom led to prototype Future Centers in the late 1990's and eventually gave birth to the Royal Mail Innovation Lab (2000). This Lab likewise influenced a large number of similar initiatives throughout the United Kingdom.

A number of milestones in the development of European Future Centers are highlighted below.

1996 Skandia Future Center (Sweden)
In the mid-1990's senior management at Sweden's Skandia Insurance Company realized that the insurance business would face big changes in the next years. In 1995 a project team developed a workable prototype. In 1996 the Skandia Future Center opened its doors to serve the Skandia community.

2000 Royal Mail Innovation Lab (UK)
In the mid-1990s, the United Kingdom's Post Office (now the Royal Mail) began developing concepts for a place where ideas could be developed, captured and channeled into results in a creative way. A pilot Innovation Lab was tested in 1997-98, and a fully functional Innovation Lab opened in 2000.

Figure 3 Future centers of Europe

2000 FutureFocus@DTI (UK)
Inspired by the Royal Mail, the Department of Trade and Industry developed FutureFocus@DTI to speed up and help future proof government policy-making. It opened as a purpose-built facility in October 2000.

2000 Working visits to Scandinavia bring Future Center thinking to the Netherlands
Visits by senior managers and innovators in the Dutch Ministry of Transport, Public Works & Water Management to two Swedish Future **Figure 3 Future Centers of Europe**

Centers in 2000 leads to establishing Mobilion as a prototype Future Center (2002).

2001 MindLab

Inspired by the Skandia Future Center and ideas introduced in the LinKS executive education program, Denmark's Ministry of Economic & Business Affairs created MindLab to support the ministry in developing innovative policy and strategies.

2002 XPIN promotes Future Centers in the Netherlands

The Expertise Bureau for Innovative Policymaking (XPIN) – a knowledge center for the public sector in the Netherlands – initiated the broader discussion about establishing future centers for government with its publication of a pamphlet describing Future Centers for government[9] in February 2002. An XPIN study tour of Future Centers in Denmark and Sweden (November 2002) brought a number of senior civil servants into direct contact with Skandia, MindLab and other centers. A second XPIN pamphlet[10] followed in 2005.

2005 Five public sector Future Center initiatives in NL

The XPIN pamphlet and field trip lead to a steady increase of interest in this concept, and to the creation of the Country House (joint venture of four ministers, 2004). Independent visits to MindLab and Skandia by other senior government managers led to establishing Future Centers at the Ministry of Social Affairs & Employment (2003) and the Tax & Customs Administration (2004). By early 2005 there were five Future Centers in the public sector in the Netherlands.

2005 1st International Future Center Summit (NL)

In autumn 2004 a number of societal innovators met at a knowledge cities conference in Barcelona, and decided to organize an international gathering of people working with and interested in Future Center methodologies, innovation workspaces and labs for social innovation. This became the First International Future Center Summit & Exploration Tour, held in the Netherlands in May 2005. Visits to five Dutch public sector Future Centers provided a unique setting for bringing people and ideas together, and for active reflection on both the practical application of methodologies and on the future of future centers. 54 people from 13 countries attended the Summit.[11]

The Summit agenda included activities aimed at exploring new ideas for thinking about Future Centers, and how these centers could contribute to societal innovation. Networking activities aimed at personal and organizational cooperation, and consortium forming and community building to increase the leveraging potential for helping to launch new centers. On the final day, plans were made to submit a proposal for a European Commission project (OpenFutures). A number of international initiatives resulted from contacts made at the Summit.

2006 Future Center DVD

Enthused by the energy of the Summit community, a team from the Country House Future Center in the Netherlands decided to make a film/DVD about Future Centers in Europe. Visits to 14 centers in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands in 2005 provided footage for this film, *Work in Progress*, which was released in 2006. It has been distributed widely since, and has inspired and influenced people working on Future Centers and similar initiatives all over the world.

2006 *OpenFutures*: European Commission project

The OpenFutures project was proposed to the European Commission, and accepted in 2006. 12 partners from eight countries formed a consortium to describe good practice in Future Centers and similar initiatives around the world. The project mission is "to accelerate the innovation, dissemination and use of Future Centers as collaborative working environments,

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[9] Kune (2002)
[10] Kune (2005)
[11] Dvir and Kune (2005)

by creating an easily accessible open source 'operating system' describing how to set up, run and continuously improve such centers[12]. The project is described further in Chapter 8.

2nd Future Center Summit (Italy)

The Second International Future Center Summit & Exploration Tour took place in Tuscany, Italy, in June 2006. Using Leonardo Da Vinci as an icon of innovative practice, this "Da Vinci Summit" focused on three themes: (1) *Future Spaces: anytime, anywhere* (how to create temporary, dynamic, mobile, inexpensive future center workspaces using existing spaces as

Figure 4 Guidebooks, 1st and 2nd Future Center Summits

a given); (2) *Learning from the past to create the future* (inspiration through learning how innovators worked in both Renaissance and 20th century Italy); and (3) *Art & Future Centers* (how art can be used to open new horizons, what Future Center practitioners can learn from artists and their methods). 58 people from 12 countries attended the Summit.[13]

2007 MindLab and FutureFocus get broader focus

Extensive evaluations of their effectiveness, coupled with a reorganization of the public sector (in the UK), led to renewal and expansion for two early Future Centers: MindLab (Denmark) and FutureFocus (UK). Originally both Future Centers worked for one parent organization – in both cases their respective ministries for economic affairs. The two centers were reborn in 2007 with a new mandate and a broader focus. Both now serve three ministries (see Chapter 6).

2008 New initiatives

There is increasing interest in Future Centers and their concepts. New initiatives in a number of countries have resulted in feasibility studies, prototypes and new centers throughout Europe and around the world. A third Summit is being planned for early 2009.

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[12] OpenFutures (2006) Description of Work
[13] Dvir, Kune, Martinez, and Dvir (2007)

Chapter 4   Varieties of Future Centers

This Chapter discusses the different varieties of Future Centers in terms of the sectors they work in, their relationship to their parent organizations, the issues they deal with, the outcomes of working in the centers, and how they add value.

4.1   Sectors and domains

Future Centers assume different forms in different places. There are centers operating in public administration and in multinational industries, there are corporate centers and centers open to the general public, centers serving geographical areas and specific domains; there are also purely commercial centers offering services to a variety of customers. They operate in various domains, for a variety of purposes.

Figure 5 OpenFutures webpage met overview of Future Centers

National government.

Looking at public administration, there are future centers operating at ministerial level in national government, and in semi-governmental agencies dealing with economic affairs, taxation, transportation, public works and water management, nature and the environment, spatial planning and urban revitalization, social affairs and employment, pensions, the welfare system, and education. In the Netherlands there is a Future Center bridging the work of four ministries, in Denmark and the United Kingdom there are centers working for three ministries.

Local and regional government.
Future Centers can play a role as 'urban innovation engines' to trigger, generate, foster and catalyze innovation in cities, metropolitan areas or regions.
Denmark has a regional Future Center serving government and business interests a large region north of Copenhagen (Momentum). In the Netherlands there is a municipal Future Center (Studio Bliq) operating since 2007. Feasibility studies are looking into establishing regional or municipal Future Centers elsewhere in the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Italy.

Sectoral centers.
In Israel and the Netherlands there are centers working to improve the quality of education in school systems. Plans for energy and sustainability Future Centers are being worked on for Denmark and the Netherlands.

Private sector.
A variety of sectors have created company-specific versions of Future Centers: post, telecommunications, energy, consumer electronics, assurance, and banking. A number of consultancy organizations – both large and small – operate their own future centre-like facilities on a commercial basis.

4.2   Areas of activity
What do people do in Future Centers? Looking at the activities and ambitions of various centers, the following list emerges[14]:
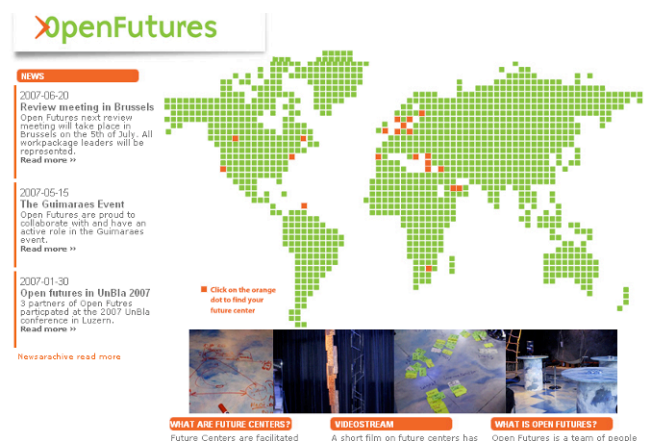
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[14] Kune (2005)

- Explore long term policy options through examining signals, trends, and emerging patterns;
- Translate signals and trends to policy positions;
- Translate policy positions into research questions;
- Develop new concepts and experiments to tackle social problems;
- Couple innovation and strategy;
- Broaden the focus of participants to stimulate thinking in time, space, and contexts;
- Enhance the creative and anticipatory capacity of people and organizations
- Create and cultivate leadership cadres with an innovative mind-set
- Encourage and contribute to capacity building in society
- Set up innovation agenda and help organizations work towards their realization
- Stimulate communities of practice and other forms of learning networks
- Practice participative policy development and planning, involving stakeholders in social change, and enhancing the innovative potential of government, organizations, and society.

4.3   Issues and Themes

Content-specific questions relating to issues particular to the sectors where Future Centers operate – sectors like transportation, taxation, insurance, energy, education, water management, pensions, employment – form the focus of a sizable percentage of the activities organized at the centers.

In more generic, process-oriented terms, Future Centers typically deal with issues of:
- Organizational renewal
- Developing new visions
- Developing new products/services
- Enhancing the creative and innovative capacities of personnel
- Project start-ups
- Identifying and proactively using emerging technological, cultural, political, and social trends.

- Cooperation *within* large organizations
- Collaboration *between* various organizations
- Collaboration with end-users and stakeholders
- Developing trust and mutual understanding between people working at different organizations.
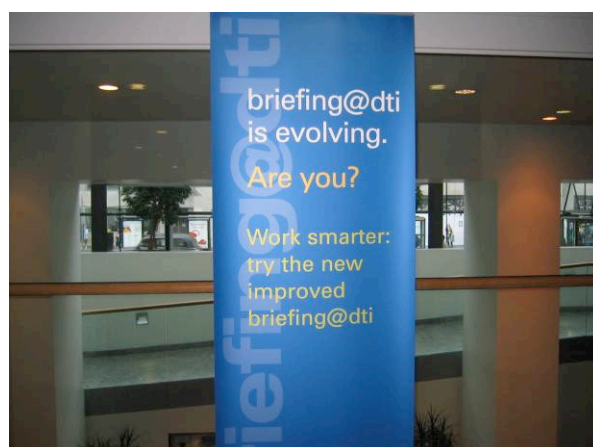
Figure 6 Futurefocus banner at ministry headquarters

Future Centers in the public sector have dealt with a variety of issues in the past years. Examples are given below[15].

4.3.1 Inter-ministerial cooperation
- *Purchasing function of the national government*. Inter-ministerial project to strengthen the shared purchasing function of the national government. It looked at ways to better collaborate on shared purchasing, and at overcoming obstacles to implementing new measures. (The Country House, NL)

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[15] OpenFutures (2007). Organizational Perspective

- *Taskforce Youth*. Sessions designed to create and explore opportunities for a multi-disciplinary task force charged with creating thousands of new employment opportunities in the next three years. (Academy SZW, NL)

- *National Action Plan for Fighting Poverty*. This project looked at what measures should be taken to reduce poverty. It involved stakeholders from diverse participating agencies. (Academy SZW, NL)

- *Nuclear non-proliferation*. This project aimed at examining issues regarding nuclear proliferation from different perspectives, before international negotiations for treaty ratification. It involved various Ministries, government agencies and departments working with this issue. (FutureFocus@DTI, UK)

4.3.2 Developing visions and goals
- *Professionalizing the Job Market Development Department*. This project aimed at professionalizing the work of this department by developing a shared vision, mission, and key operational objectives together with personnel and management. (Academy SZW, NL)

4.3.3 Organizational and sectoral renewal
- *From Taking Care Of to Making Sure That*. This project for senior and middle managers at the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature & Food Quality, focused on defining the Ministry's new point of departure for policy-making, and translating this focus to work planning on various management levels. (Castle Groeneveld, NL)

- *Between the Village Green and Brussels*. This project designed was to create new ideas and impulses for rethinking the National Forestry Service. Senior officials of the Forestry Service, experts from relevant knowledge fields, as well as stakeholders from civil society took part in workshops, dialogue sessions and a series of events resulting in recommendations to the government. (Castle Groeneveld, NL)

- *Rail safety*. This project allowed stakeholders of the various rail networks in Britain to discuss rail safety, how agencies can effectively work together to minimize risks, and the possibility of setting standards. (FutureFocus@DTI, UK)

- *Education renewal*. This project aimed at renewing chemistry education in the city of Beer Sheva and (indirectly) enhancing the power of the chemistry industry as one of the city's areas of competitive advantage. (Educational Future Center, Israel)

4.3.4 National policy in international context
- *The Price of Paradise*. Project focusing on the new member nations of the European Union, the challenges they face in policy areas of agriculture and nature preservation, and what this means to policy-making in the Netherlands. (Castle Groeneveld, NL)

- *Preparation for EU chairmanship: Cabinet policy (Denmark)*. This initiative defined a strategy for how the Danish cabinet could realize its top priority during the European Union chairmanship in 2002: effectively dealing with all issues around the expansion of the European Union. In a three-month period preceding the chairmanship, MindLab helped more than 150 officials and civil servants prepare to work 'as one team' during the chairmanship by facilitating processes of issue awareness and anticipation, teambuilding, priority-setting, and crisis management. (MindLab, DK)

- *Preparation for EU chairmanship: Ministry of Justice (Netherlands)*. To prepare for the 2004 Dutch EU chairmanship, the Ministry of Justice defined important themes, anticipated policy positions of key European players, and set priorities for its chairmanship. People from the ministry headquarters, its regional offices, several other ministries, and their representatives in Brussels took part. (Country House, NL)

4.3.5 International collaboration
- *Safecoast*. Project Safecoast enables coastal managers to share knowledge and experience, and broaden their scope for flood risk management, in order to find new ways to 'keep our feet dry' in the future. Sessions investigated possibilities for developing joint policy for the participating countries: Netherlands, Denmark, Germany,

France, UK, and Belgium. Special attention was paid to working with personal and cultural differences. (The Country House. NL)

- *Camp Greenland*. Large-scale sessions took place as part of a project from the Prime Minister's office to develop a new mutual policy for cooperation and joint action between Denmark and Greenland. The sessions were seen by many participants as a turning point in the project, and led to a strong sense of shared ownership for decisions by parties in both countries. (MindLab, DK)

4.3.6 Cooperation within large organizations
- *Strategic thinking workshops* for different management groups. These workshops focused on issues relevant to various departments within the ministry, as well as generic issues facing the entire ministry, such as how to balance public sector goals and business goals. Departments taking part included the Agency for Patent Administration and the Agency for Intellectual Property Rights. (MindLab, DK)

- *Bottom-up movement*. Six-day training for people who want to take advantage of opportunities they see for action – both individually and together with their teams – within the organization. (The Shipyard, NL)

4.3.7 Cooperation and trust between government and business community
- *Building on Trust*. Two series of informal sessions between government agencies and the construction industry, aimed at restoring (damaged) trust between the various parties. The double focus was on making explicit both (i) the needs and requirements of all parties, as well as (ii) the assumptions people hold about the needs and positions of the other parties. (Mobilion, NL)

- *High Level Brainstorm*. Presentation of the key issues from the draft White Paper on Mobility to important stakeholders in business, civil society and government. Creative presentation and discussion techniques led to drawing sharper conclusions and shared ownership of recommendations. (Mobilion, NL)

- *Policy for new entrepreneurs*. Sessions dealing with what policy is required to enable small and medium-sized enterprises to operate effectively in sectors where Denmark has a strong international presence, what incentives are advisable to ensure that entrepreneurs continue to create new businesses in these areas, and how to stimulate women to become entrepreneurs in these and other sectors. (MindLab, DK)

- *Micro-economic workshops*. These workshops aim at strategic thinking for business development in various sectors, for example building materials, media, pharmacy, meat and produce, etc. They deal with issues such as identifying areas for business development, modeling dilemmas, analyzing problems regarding the market, rethinking problems in terms of opportunities, and prototyping different ideas to create new scope for development. (MindLab, DK)

- *Government Internet site*. A government Internet site has been designed for communicating more directly with citizens. This series of projects aimed at overcoming the emerging problems. The sessions focused on problem anticipation and repositioning, followed by solution finding and prototyping concrete initiatives. (MindLab, DK)

4.3.8 Organization/sectorial learning
- *Project learning*. Extensive project to increase the learning capacity of the Department of Public Works and Water management, with a triple focus on: (i) ability of project managers and their teams to learn during projects; (ii) capacity of projects to learn from one another; (iii) enhance the capacity of the organization to make the lessons from projects accessible to the entire organization. (Mobilion, NL)
- *Surfacing hidden rules* which rule the Tax and Customs Administration (The Shipyard, NL)
- *Thematic workshops on relevant themes*: Self-management; Diversity; Corporate Identity; Learning from mistakes. (The Shipyard, NL)

4.3.9 Water Management

- *Water in the design of low-lying Netherlands*. Sessions developed to explore how to apply modern insights and technology – in the light of the accumulated lessons of several hundred years – to the planning and design of low-lying areas. The sessions focused on anticipating spatial planning needs for the next 60 years, looking at optimal use for economic purposes, recreation, housing, and nature preservation. (*Mobilion, NL*)
- *Water management in the polders*. A series of master classes – in the form of interactive design studios – designed for elected officials in city government, provincial government, and water boards. Participants looked at past, present and future issues in the design of low-lying polder lands, and how to rethink priorities for making decisions that exceed their present term of office. (Castle Groeneveld, NL)

4.3.10 Broad discussion of issues with society

- *Dream of a Green Heart*. The 'green heart' is a rural area in the heart of the highly populated western Netherlands, between the large cities Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. The area is threatened by uncoordinated development based on local interest; in total there are more than ten municipalities in the region – as well as several Ministries and the Dutch Railways – each with their own plans. In this project diverse constituencies, including many people from civil society, were brought together to think together about what this "green heart" should look like and how it should develop in the next 40 years. (Castle Groeneveld, NL)
- *Space for Speeding Up, Space for Slowing Down*. This project focused on creating awareness in government and society for the role that physical space plays in going faster and slowing down. By examining development principles for and policy-decisions on 'fast' and 'slow' places – for example, highways, city-centers, entertainment theme parks, forests, nature preserves - and their influence on the quality of life in society, it provided the basis for broad societal discussion on these issues as they relate to future policy options. (Castle Groeneveld, NL)

4.3.11 Work process innovation (new ways of working).

- *Work process innovation*. This project, carried out for a London department store, aimed at involving staff, designers, and the external supply chain in the product development process, in order to enhance their ability to create new products to appeal to the future buying public. In addition to diverse ideas for new products, the project resulted in creating a new frame of mind for working from individual product teams to the whole organization. (FutureFocus@DTI, UK)
- *Future of front-line policing*. This project dealt with issues and national objectives around the future of front-line policing, focusing on defining which issues are faced on the street, and what technologies can best be used to deal with them. The goal is to prevent the purchase of technologies that promise much but don't address the actual needs of front-line police. (FutureFocus@DTI, UK)

4.3.12 *Trends, scenario's and futuring*

- *Scenario sessions for the Modernizing Government Programme*, a national programme for transforming public administration in the Netherlands. (The Shipyard, NL)

- *Future visions*. Vision 2010: The Tax and Customs Administration and Innovation in the near future. (The Shipyard, NL)

- *Trend-catcher Transportation*. Project designed to translate trend-studies into options for reorganizing the project-portfolio and research-agenda of a government agency. Looking at future transportation developments in the light of trend-studies and stakeholder interviews led to a set of options for decision-making, and to an enhanced future awareness amongst and managers and decision-makers at the agency. (Mobilion, NL)

- *Education and training infrastructure*. This project was designed to develop future scenarios to help shape education and training infrastructure for next 20 years. The

question "more jobs or better jobs?" was looked at from diverse perspectives. (FutureFocus@DTI, UK)

- *Educational future images*. Creating a vision for the future for selected educational domains, using a 10-15 year time horizon. The future images are used to inspire concrete development projects (Educational Future Center, Israel)

4.4   How do Future Centers add value?[16]

Throughout the Future Center process, the emphasis is always on *achieving concrete results.* This practical results-oriented focus creates value for all participants. Future Centers also add value by bringing an explicit future orientation is brought to bear on the questions and challenges facing users and their organizations. Users are encouraged to learn from past (patterns), present (broad context) and future, in order to create results that can be applied tomorrow.

Evaluation reports by users indicate that centers create value because they help users to:
- *Break down barriers* to change, creativity, and trust.
- Facilitate collaboration *across borders* of all kinds.
- *Work from the positive*: solution-seeking, not problem-finding.
- Break through tunnel vision to see *systems*, find *combinations*, explore *new ideas*
- Create workable, testable prototypes.

Figure 7 Provocative statement about the future at Royal Mail Innovation Lab

Value also derives from activities in which people are brought into contact with:
- New ideas that are relevant to their work.
- Interesting people they did not know before.
- Real people, who are encountered *person-to-person* and not *functionary-to-functionary*. In working life, people tend to see their professional relations and acquaintances from other organizations – and sometimes even their own colleagues – as functionaries and representatives of an organization or department. In Future Centers, people meet each other as individuals.

4.5   Outcomes & results of work in Future Centers

Typically, projects in Future Centers[17]:
- Develop new concepts and experiments to tackle social problems
- Couple innovation and strategy
- Explore both short and long term policy options through examining signals, trends, and emerging patterns
- Enhance the creative and anticipatory capacity of people and organizations
- Practice participative policy development and planning, involving stakeholders in social change, and enhancing the innovative potential of government, organizations, and society
- Create and cultivate leadership cadres with an innovative mind-set
- Encourage and contribute to capacity building in society
- Set up innovation agenda's and help organizations work towards their realization
- Stimulate communities of practice, innovation circles and other forms of learning networks;

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[16] OpenFutures (2007). Organizational Perspective
[17] Kune (2005)

- ▪ Translate signals and trends into policy positions
- ▪ Translate policy positions into research questions.

The results of work done in Future Centers:
- Can be used for decision making, action planning and evaluation;
- Can lead to concrete innovations and agreements on the course for realization;
- Can draw decision-makers' attention to opportunities and threats in the present and future, and can help organizations to focus on taking – or not taking – initiatives;
- Can sharpen the focus on possible consequences of policy options and place these in the right context for informed decision making;
- Broaden and deepen the basis for action by extending the reach of policy options, broadening the understanding of context and feeling for time, and stimulating creativity;
- Strengthen the cooperation between departments/ministries and between agencies and decentralized government agencies;
- Anchor policy renewal in society, for example by bringing many voices and perspectives together in the discussion about policy alternatives and their realization. In addition, the energy and creativity of diverse parties in society is mobilized and made use of for design and implementation processes.

Chapter 5   Design elements, Facilities and Tools used at Future Centers

This chapter describes the facilities and services, design elements and tools used at Future Centers to facilitate work processes.

5.1   Design and use of space

The environmental context in which people work – their meeting spaces and working spaces – can be an *enabling context* (one that makes things possible) or a barrier to effective action. Space has an important influence on how people think, feel, interact and participate, on their creativity and their productivity, on how they commit to tasks or remain aloof, cooperate or block joint activities. The idea that space can be designed and used to influence thinking is not new. It is the explicit combination of dedicated space with other conceptual principles that make Future Centers effective. Space is to be understood in its broadest possible sense. Center spaces are people-centered and personal, serious and playful at the same time. This space can be conceived of as physical, social, mental, and emotional space. In workshops and projects it is both *process space* and *collaborative space*, where relevant it is the *neutral space* between different organizations where participants can work for the good of all. Most important of all, it is *permission space*: one is given permission to be oneself, to express oneself, to enter into playful and passionate – and effective – working

Figure 8 Colorful zoning at Royal Mail Innovation Lab

relationships with people and ideas. As a design element in events and activities, Future centers integrate the different kinds of space to create the atmosphere appropriate to the goals of the session.

People centered workspace. People with their knowledge, experience and capacities (intellectual capital) and their capacity to work together (social capital) are the most valuable basic resource of knowledge-intensive organizations and knowledge

intensive societies. People are central to the future center concept: Future Centers see people as the most important source of social and organizational renewal.

Figure 9 Indoor pond at Momemtum

Knowledge creation and innovation happen in places. Knowledge creation depends on shared context: situated perception, thinking, and action. This shared context is also referred to as *ba*, as Nonaka & Konno[18] describe it, using a Japanese concept for "place". The quality of *ba*, according to Nonaka and Konno, determines the quality of knowledge creation. Without temporal, spatial, and relational context there is just information, not knowledge; and no innovation is possible.

Qualities of a good innovation space. A good innovation space is characterized by five elements, each with physical, social, and mental components[19].

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[18] Nonaka & Konno (1998)
[19] Kune (2002), based on Brian Arthur

- *Self-organization*. Participants are participants, not onlookers. A good *ba* needs intention and direction, but creative chaos and care as well.
- *Open boundaries*. People can work on their own issues as well as on the questions of others.
- *Letting go of habits*. The space helps participants transcend the limitations of their own perspectives or thought patterns.
- *Multi-disciplinary dialogue*. A good place helps participants to see themselves through other perspectives, opening themselves to new ideas and insights. The quality of the conversation is an important measure of the quality of the workspace and the health of the organization.
- *Moving focus*. The focus changes as the activity moves forward, allowing different participants with different perspectives to take the lead.

These physical, social, and intellectual-spiritual qualities of workplaces are fundamental in helping people to transform organizations.

5.2   Location of the center

Some Future Centers are located at the corporate headquarters, often in a prominent location. FutureFocus is on the ground floor of the building where one of its parent ministries is situated, next to the main entrance. MindLab, in the period it worked exclusively for the Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs, was also located near the main entrance of the ministry. LEF Future Center has a prominent location at the new corporate headquarters of its ministry. In this way, both personnel and visitors to the ministry got a clear message: "Innovation is important here". And: "Innovation is possible in *this* building where we work".

Figure 10 Main lobby of the Department of Trade & Industry: how to find Futurefocus

Figure 11 Entrance to Futurefocus

Other centers deliberately choose a location far from corporate headquarters. This reinforces the mental (and emotional) distancing from the restrictions and routines of normal work, freeing up the mind and spirit for new perspectives, new ideas, and alternative ways of working. People using the center experience this physical distancing from their daily concerns, deadline stress, and inhibiting regulations as an advantage in creatively constructing effective solutions to the problems they are working on. Skandia Future Center, the Country House, and the Shipyard use this "getting away" concept to good advantage.

5.3   Facilitators

Facilitators play a key role in the success of activities that the centers engage in. These facilitators support users in achieving their goals, and at the same time assure the center works according to its operating principles.

Centers either make use of their own facilitators, or facilitators brought in from outside organizations, or a combination of both. The particular mix is different in different centers, and there are centers that report excellent results with each approach. Common to most centers is that they use facilitators who:

- Challenge existing mind-sets and accepted wisdom: this challenge can be directed at centre users, project participants, and parent organizations of the participants.
- Bring fresh ideas to traditional and/or stuck situations.
- Represent a cohesive mix of people and styles: people with a shared sense of direction, who set the tone of events.
- Are able to "take an opportunity forward".

These are people with a sense of responsibility and ownership, who are enthusiastic about the vision of the center they work for, and believe fully in what they do. In general, centers seek professionals with expertise in their craft and who are able to use a variety of methods and tools required by the work of the centre.

Some centers pay special attention to the personality of the aspirant facilitator, following the adage: "Hire for attitude, train for skills". There are also some centers (for example Royal Mail Innovation Lab, Denmark's Innovation Lab) that carry this to an extreme. They make it a point to hire people with very diverse backgrounds, often with an affinity for innovation but little facilitation experience.

Diversity in the facilitation team is important. Equally important is renewing the team. Most Future Centers renew personnel after several years: fresh people bring fresh ideas and new perspectives, break down possible groupthink, keep the center alert to emerging trends and developments, and prevent it from repeating itself and falling into rigid routines.

What makes a good facilitator?
Various qualities and competences characterize a good facilitator:
- Competent, professional approach; open-minded; understands the organization and the business; courage to challenge fixed ideas and ready do things differently; a large network (both internal and external) within his/her area of expertise.
- Ability to deal with uncertainty, a large comfort zone (not easily disconcerted by what happens), willing to take risks, desire to help individuals and groups learn and grow, curiosity and personal commitment to learning.
- Flexibility, creativity, and diverse professional experience.
- Talent as a performer, empathy, solid knowledge about the process facilitation
- People skills: respect for people and their strengths and weaknesses, good listening skills.
- Ability to quickly immerse him/herself in the content of a dossier, and the social dynamic of a group.

5.4 Design elements for events and activities
A large variety of design elements and working methods are used to enable participants to reach their desired goals. Depending on the specific objectives of the sessions to be held, work processes may be designed to include a mix of elements such as:
- The meeting space: low threshold, welcoming, relaxing, inspiring, and often divided into different zones for different kinds of work.
- The atmosphere: open, comfortable, positive, playful - or perhaps provocative and designed to challenge established wisdom of participant organizations.
- Specific tailor-made workspace: may be designed to reflect a particular theme or period (for example: how an organization was 50 years ago, how society may be in 30 years).
- Mindset-theatres, to enable participants to leave their daily concerns behind and focus on the issues at hand
- Dialogue: this may take the form of creative conversations, or strategic conversations
- Storytelling workshops
- Seminars on content issues
- Design studios, ateliers or special workspaces for creating physical prototypes of good ideas, promising plans, proposed products or other session results
- Focus groups and test environments for improving prototypes

- Large-scale interventions, using diverse methods like Open Space, Future Search and Knowledge Cafes
- Scenarios for thinking about possible futures: sometimes existing scenarios, sometimes scenarios developed by the participants themselves for use with particular issues
- Trend spotting and trend catching methodologies
- Creative problem solving techniques, and methods for thinking out-of-the-box
- Group decision tools
- Initiating internal networks and communities of practice
- Creating external networks and communities of practice
- Publications giving an overview of project results

Figure 12   High tech group methodology: virtual reality installation at ThinkLab

Figure 13 High touch group methods at Future Center Summit

5.5 Group decision tools[20]

These tools aim at and are excellent for facilitating work processes where raising problems, getting ideas on how to solve them, developing these ideas further, and discussing what the whole group thinks of the ideas, are important. Meeting effectiveness can also be enhanced, since the process of tapping into the group's collective intelligence is divided into a series of steps ensuring a constant focus, and a there is a continuous forward moving process. Input from the various participants is anonymous. This ensures swift generation of ideas and, more importantly, increases the possibility of a truly open process, i.e. a process whose outcome is not determined by the identity of the person who initiates the various ideas. Anonymity of the participants is an advantage of the system: all participants are nameless, and thus equal. Hierarchy and power, which often play a role in face-to-face sessions, are not relevant when using group decision tools. People are able to express wild ideas, honest opinions, and sharp criticism of ideas without fear of 'what other people will think'. An added advantage is that the output of group decision sessions is the result of a joint effort, not an individual one. Group decision software gives participants the feeling that they belong to a highly productive, efficient and creative group.

GroupSystems is the most commonly used group decision software used in Future Centers. This software enable users of linked computers to produce, share and prioritize ideas rapidly and anonymously. In various centers it is referred to as a Group Decision Room (Country House, Academy SZW), an Acceleration Room (Innovation Lab), or a Creativity Lab (FutureFocus). Since the first DOS-based GroupSystems software was launched in 1989, the

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[20] OpenFutures (2007) Technological Perspective

Figure 14 Central monitor for GroupSystems work (Academy SZW)

software has undergone several changes, migrating first to the Windows platform in the mid-1990s and then to an internet-based platform in 2000. With the launch of its latest product ThinkTank™ in July 2006, GroupSystems utilizes the latest developments within the field; ThinkTank™ employs a web 2.0 architecture and is based on open source technology components.

GroupSystems can also be used to build up organizational memory by capturing all aspects of the decision-making processes involved at various stages of the work being done. Compared to other tools aimed at getting ideas from large groups, the output from the collective effort is also significantly easier to process. Because this type of software enables face-to-face, virtual and mixed sessions, brainstorming sessions can be held with people regardless of their physical location. This imposes very few limits on the kind of group that can be summoned to give their views on a specific topic, and it offers even the remotest part of a network a potential voice in the process. Furthermore, work can be done asynchronously. Participants can log onto their meeting when and where it suits them.

The *Zing* system is more simple to use than GroupSystems, more mobile, but less ambitious. It offers tools and methods for rapid knowledge creation, guided discovery learning, accelerated teamwork and large-scale organization transformation. It is used to help people working in teams to create new knowledge faster, and to invent new products and services. As a teambuilding tool, Zing helps groups to become teams rather than individuals within a group. Team can build a shared common, where people can contribute to evolving ideas, and ensure ideas from everyone are "listened to" equally. Team

Figure 15 Group Decision Room at The Country House

members see ideas as they are being created so they are more prepared to borrow and build on them more easily.

Zing system support collaboration in different forms: face-to-face, team-to-team, or across the Internet. It offers tools to vote, sort, weight, rank, combine, summarize, provoke, and decide. Zing is useful when people come together to decide on future strategies, new product ideas, business re-engineering etc. It helps the teams to discuss issues in a democratic manner and develop common visions and consensus.

From the facilitator's point of view, using Zing makes it easier to run through an agenda sticking to a strict time schedule. Every point of the discussion is shown on the screen to all participants, which ensures keeping them focused on that particular issue. Additionally, there are numerous scenarios of diverse kinds of meetings (e.g. strategy development, project planning, process improvement) prepared by former Zing users, that may be used as a framework to plan new sessions.

5.6 Services offered at Future Centers

Among the many services offered by Future centers are:

- Project hotel / incubator space facilities, which project start-ups can use as their home base for a period of time (typically 2-3 months).
- Access to external national and international networks of specialists in relevant sectors and academic domains.
- Facilitation and coaching of groups, project teams, departments, and sometimes individuals.
- Business intelligence and information about trends, demographics, relevant facts and figures, and so forth.
- Flexible state of the art exhibitions of corporate projects, recent trends, and new inventions

Figure 16 Creativity workshop

- Internal staff development programs for leadership, future orientation, the innovation process and other relevant themes
- Educational activities (including instructional visits and/or production of educational materials) for primary and secondary school students
- Programs to involve university students in relevant projects
- Participative problem-solving programs for secondary and tertiary education.

5.7 Facilities and Support

Future Centers provide various facilities and support to ensure that users are able to meet their objectives. These include:

- A back office, in which facility managers, technicians, video-jockeys and so forth can help the work process to move smoothly.
- Availability of coffee, tea, soft drinks, water and sweets in places throughout the center, where participants can take them at their own convenience.
- In-house catering, including good food and excellent coffee, for lunch, dinner and/or snacks (often in the form of a buffet).
- A small kitchen, where coffee, sandwiches, snacks can be prepared during the sessions; in some centers fresh bread and cakes are baked throughout the day, which suffuses the entire workspace with welcoming aroma's.

Figure 17 Interactive whiteboard

- Library and/or Media Café: facilities with digital and print resources.
- Videoconferencing facilities.
- On-line computers for access to Internet and – within corporate Future Centers at companies – access to intranet and to users' own workstations in the organization.
- Spaces with comfortable chairs for informal discussions before sessions and during the informal moments, coffee breaks etc.
- Garden, or inner courtyard where plants and flowers grow (for relaxation between sessions).
- Meditation, silent spaces for reflection.

Chapter 6 Future Centers: Looking at Some Examples

In this Chapter, examples of 12 Future Centers in four countries (The Netherlands, Denmark, the UK, and Sweden) are presented. The short cases are structured, where possible, to include thumbnail descriptions of their goals and mission, their history, the physical environment (the "look and feel" of the centers), their products and services, and the methods and techniques they use.

6.1 THE SHIPYARD (Breda, the Netherlands): Future Center of the Dutch Tax & Customs Administration
 "The thinking power of people"

Figure 18 Iconic figures in the window of The Shipyard

Introduction: goals, mission
The mission of the Shipyard is to develop the innovative power of the employees of the Dutch Tax and Customs Administration, and to help them use this innovation capacity to meet the challenges of fulfilling the Administration's responsibilities in a changing society.

The Shipyard actively supports this stretching of brainpower, offering an inspiring environment, challenging methods and professional process facilitation. To do this, The Shipyard has created an atmosphere that employees enjoy: warm, personal and encouraging – not only in this building, but also on their Intranet site, and in locations they use throughout the organization. As stated in their vision document: "The Dutch Tax and Customs Administration will create a Future Center as a beloved place, a place you really want to visit. It should be a center for inspiration, to get away from daily concerns, a place to find and share knowledge, a meeting place for the entire organization… The facility will become the physical anchor of the organization and its identity. The six anchors [of the Tax & Customs Administration] will come to life in the Future Center. The facility and its environment will radiate respect and awareness, peace and safety. It is a place where opinions are sharpened, where ideas are born and can grow to maturity."

Figure 19 Interior space, The Shipyard

History
Since the late 1990s, the Tax and Customs Administration has encouraged its employees to deliberately use their brainpower to achieve continual renewal, and actively seek to realize concrete improvements and/or innovations in their work. In 2001 an innovative programme for internal ideas management was initiated, and this eventually led to a proposal to create a physical place where the generation and development of creative ideas could be facilitated. The recently published XPIN pamphlet about Future Centers for government[21] helped legitimize the proposal with senior management, and a visit to Skandia Future Center provided inspiration, ideas and practical examples of how to design such a center. In July 2003 the decision was made to initiate a pilot Future Center, and permission was given to develop the building and facilities. The initial period of the pilot was four months. This period

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[21] Kune (2002)

Figure 20   Interior, The Shipyard

has since been extended several times. A more extensive evaluation took place in the middle of 2006.

In March of 2005 The Shipyard merged with the Tax Academy, another innovative initiative of the Tax & Customs Administration. Under the name *Impulse*, these two initiatives pursue joint objectives of continuous renewal, innovation, and co-creating the 'organization as community'.

Since opening its doors in 2003, 2500 to 3000 employees a year have worked in the Shipyard.
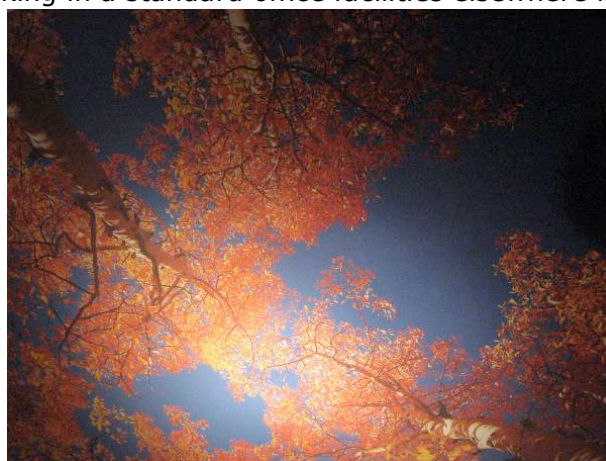
Environment

The Tax and Customs Administration has renovated an entire building for its Future Center. It uses the metaphors of 'the organization as ship' and the center as shipyard. This shipyard is a place where personnel can return to shore, refurbish their workspace and facilities, and renew their energy before setting out again to pursue their tasks and responsibilities in society. This "time-out" from the pressures of deadlines and daily routines has proven valuable in creating a climate of creativity in which people can work differently. The

Figure 21   Iconic figure, The Shipyard

building itself has a long history within the organization, and is perceived by Tax Administration personnel as *their* house. Inside, the new and the old are combined. The historic building makes it easier to think 'out of the box': the environment is surprising and stimulating for people who are used to working in a standard office facilities elsewhere in the organization.

The variety of spaces at The Shipyard – each with a different atmosphere – supports this experience. Each space room is different, and strongly related to its use. The *Workshop*, for example, is a

Figure 22   Ceiling of *The Silence*, The Shipyard

place where people can work with their hands. *The Brain* is specially designed for brainstorming. *The Silence* is for brain stilling. The Shipyard invites people to use their imagination, and in its small theater people can start the day by viewing a short film: *Reset Your Mind*, which helps them do just

Figure 23   *The Silence*, The Shipyard

28

that. There is a beautifully renovated ballroom for plenary sessions, a modern demo-center where computer programs are tested and demonstrated, and four scenario rooms for experiencing different perspectives on how Dutch society may develop, and what this could mean for tax and customs procedures in the near future.

In this 'corporate house', tax personnel feel at home, work at ease, and get to know the innovative ins-and outs of their own organization better. As the facility is not open for the general public, participants in sessions are able to leave information on the walls for

Figure 24   Outdoor activity, The Shipyard

people in other divisions and projects of the Tax & Customs Administration to see, in this way informally communicating 'what's new' to colleagues they may not otherwise encounter.

Products/services

People from all parts of the Tax and Customs Administration make use of the facilities. Typically, they come because:
- A project is seeking solutions to its own problems;
- A department or unit is looking for unconventional ideas to give a new

Figure 25   The interior patio, The Shipyard

Figure 26   *The Workshop*, at The Shipyatd

perspective on its work;
- A theme initiated by The Shipyard promises new impulses and input to improve organizational working procedures.

There are no meetings allowed, and no training takes place. Working in the Shipyard means: reset your mind, be inspired by the informal and dynamic environment, combine fun and work, use imagination to create unconventional solutions, experiment and share knowledge. Cultivating a good atmosphere where people feel at home is crucial to its success. The total environment is based on high touch rather than high tech, and talking with colleagues and experts "as if at the kitchen table" is part of The Shipyard experience. The lunches are healthy, using 100% organic products.

Figure 27   Scene from film *Reset Your Mind*

Figure 28   Scenario space at The Shipyard

A small team runs the Future Center as its own company. People play different roles, each with its own responsibilities, but all people in this team are equally responsible for the whole. If necessary, they work together with external facilitators.
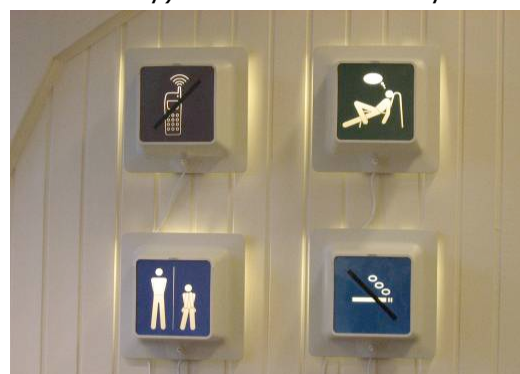
There is considerable freedom to initiate topics and get new ideas into the parent organization. When Shipyard personnel feel that particular theme's are important for the development of the Tax Administration's primary working processes in the future, they see it as their responsibility to 'stretch minds' in order to start organizational thinking to movement in those directions.

A recent example is the project on using intuition at work. Experimental pilots organized through The Shipyard demonstrated that in a number of complex situations, decisions based on intuition were effective and had the potential of saving the organization a tremendous amount of time (and thus money) in the course of a year. Senior management is enthusiastic, and least one pilot region will translate the results to standard working practice this year.

Methods/techniques
Sessions are always custom-made. The design of the sessions starts with the preliminary briefing, at which goals, expectations, desired results and possible working methods are made clear. The Shipyard process starts with people and spaces – physical, mental, emotional – created to inspire people and support processes to enable people the work outside their 'boxes'. A variety of methods

Figure 29 Scenario space at The Shipyard

and techniques are used regularly: theatre sport, mind mapping, Fish, and facilitating creative thinking sessions to discover unconventional ideas. Sometimes new methods are designed together with a client for a particular session.

The four scenario rooms help participants develop multiple perspectives on issues of policy and working procedures. Working with internal scenario's developed using the Shell scenario method, groups can develop robust strategies with the potential for success in all four anticipated futures. In the scenario rooms, the relationship between personal mindset and perception of reality becomes clear, enhanced by the physical layout and furnishing of the space; session participants develop a better of understanding of how broadly 'reality' is perceived and experienced in society. In addition, personnel and project teams are helped to develop a future orientation that goes further than 'next week' or 'next year'.

Examples of specific methods used in The Shipyard include:
Mission to Mars is a project simulation game. Working under pressure groups have to design, build and test their rocket ship for a mission to Mars. It's almost like real life at work, with all its time pressure, uncertainty and demands; the game makes very clear how teams works, who makes decisions (and who does or not). It's called a game, but people realize how close it is to their daily reality: it's confrontational, uncompromising

and very hard work. Will the rocket ships find their way to Mars, or explode? At the end of the day people know if they have done a good job.

Parrèsia is a 'home made' method, based on the work of Michel Foucault. In work situations it's not always easy to say what you really think. Using this method people are able to do so, because a safe environment is created where others listen to each other's arguments. The experience is stronger because it is also a physical method.

6.2   THE COUNTRY HOUSE (The Hague, the Netherlands): Future Center for the national government (joint venture of 4 ministries)

Introduction: goals, mission
The Country House strives to enhance the innovative capacities of civil servant and to create purposeful cooperation between committed people and organizations in government. The Country House concentrates on people – civil servants working at all government ministries – as the most important source of renewal in government. It works with clients in government to tackle multi-sector societal issues in an effective way. This center is an informal and dynamic working environment where people and organizations can meet each other, gain inspiration, play with ideas and experiment with innovative work concepts.

History

Figure 30   Civil servants at work in The Country House

The Country House is a joint venture of four Dutch ministries: Economic Affairs, The Interior, Financial Affairs, and Housing, Spatial Planning & the Environment. Inspired by the XPIN study tour of Scandinavian future centers in 2002, plans were developed to create an inter-ministerial future center in the Netherlands. The original intention of having all 13 ministries participate was scaled down to an administrative form in which four ministries co-financed the center, which would be available for work on interdisciplinary projects involving multiple ministries. A study initiated to provide inspiration for the project, completed in 2003, was eventually published as the 2nd XPIN future center pamphlet[22] in early 2005. By that time the Country House was already in operation.

The center began work in mid-2004 and opened officially in December 2004, with the intention of functioning as a future centre for national government. Since the summer of 2004 there have been concrete creative and innovative results in a variety of projects. More than 2500 people have worked in the Country House, including 1000 people in 2007. There are an average of 7-10 sessions a week. In 2007 a more effective administrative form was chosen, and since the beginning of 2008 the Country House has operated as an agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

In late 2007 the future center moved to a new location: a historic city villa with
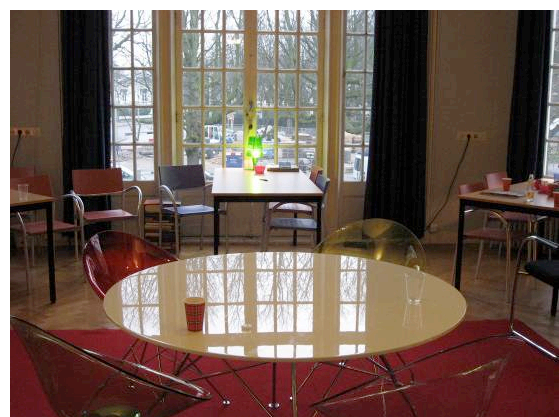
Figure 31   Workshop space in The Country House

[22] Kune (2005)

extensive gardens. With this move it realized a three-fold increase in effective workspace. The new building resonates better with the metaphor of 'country house', and provides a true getaway experience in the center of busy The Hague.

The name *country house* is grounded in Dutch tradition: easy to remember and symbolizing the hospitality that is part of the Country House formula and characteristic of its approach. In the Netherlands, country

houses are traditionally locations where people can escape from the pressures of the

Figure 32   Gardens at The Country House

daily grind, often with their guests for a weekend. They are places where people can recharge their batteries and contemplate their ideals for the future (and how to achieve them), inspired by their gardens, libraries and art collections. After the weekend getaway they return to their work full of energy and new ideas. There have always been countries houses for busy managers and diplomats in the area around The Hague, and now there is a new one with a special focus: improving the quality of the civil service.

Figure 33   Outdoor terrace at The Country House

Environment
Located in a large villa in the middle of The Hague, a variety of workspaces and supporting facilities create an atmosphere that invites openness, relaxation, taking a broad outlook, defining new perspectives, taking initiatives, and taking responsibility for action. Workspaces vary from intimate rooms where three or four people can retreat to work out ideas for their session, to larger spaces where up to 40 people can work together. The rooms all have names suggestive of the type of activity suitable there: World Café, Chat Room, Solution Room, Good Conversation,

Black & White, Chill Room, Room with a View. With the exception of the electronic boardroom, all are high touch spaces with a variety of seating

and table arrangements, whiteboards and flipcharts. Colored pens and markers are available in all workspaces. Large enclosed gardens give people the possibility of working outdoors, or relaxing in a green environment.

Many sessions end with an informal reception with drinks and snacks. Catering is important in the Country House philosophy: the quality of meals, snacks, and coffee is excellent. Special attention is paid to participants' need for extra energy during sessions and at breaks. There are bowls of fresh fruit, chocolate and candies everywhere.

Products/services
People come to the Country House because it is a place that gets results. They are facilitated in

Figure 34   Meeting space at The Country House

working in a multi-perspective, multi-disciplinary way, in an inspiring physical surrounding, with unusual methods and techniques that inspire people to think differently and work