creatively. Here they meet people from other ministries and ideas from other sectors. Informality and 'serious play' are linked to hard work and concrete results.

Sessions have very diverse aims: new visions on policy issues, facilitated project start-ups, and performance-oriented action plans may result from sessions. Where possible, participants produce physical prototypes to take away and test with their constituencies. Affective objectives such as enhanced understanding between participating organizations, and better inter-ministerial cooperation, are often achieved in Country House projects. The sustainable development process and cradle-to-cradle concepts form part of the center's focus, as one way of realizing its identity as a *future* center.

Figure 35 Group Decision Room, The Country House

Methods/techniques

The Country House makes use of a range of techniques to enhance creativity, visual thinking, logical analysis, decision-making and collective intelligence. These include: brainstorming and brain stilling, mind mapping, scenario thinking, SWOT analysis, stakeholder analysis, group decision room technology, and videoconferencing.

The Country House has also developed a number of its own methods and techniques.

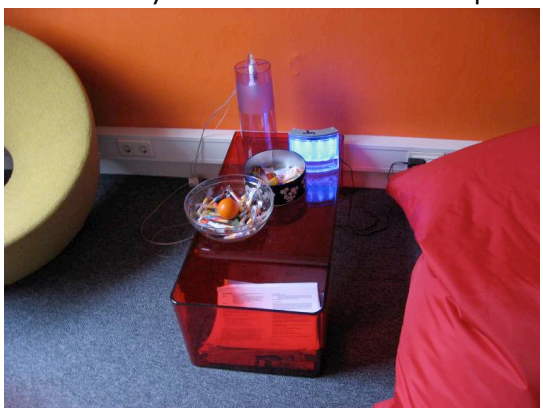

Figure 36 Colored pens and markers are available everywhere

- The *Project House* is a work form for facilitating project startups. It supports teams in simulating their own work processes from the start of their projects until the end. During the sessions, team members physically build a house. The various steps focus on problems, stakeholders, risks and other issues relevant to their project. Throughout the process the focus is also on the team: its responsibilities, the motivation of team members, and how they work together.

- The *Workplace* is a technique to help civil servants make prototypes of their ideas, plans, and proposed products. The results range from tangible things to policy prototype and action plans. During sessions, intended end-users are invited to comment on and critique the prototypes.

- The *Electronic Meeting Space* is an integral part of the Country House approach. Group Support System technology is used to heighten the effectiveness of creative techniques, ensure anonymity where needed, and provides a digital record of ideas and opinions. It is regularly used for prioritizing ideas and options, and for decision-making processes.

Figure 37 Multipurpose furniture, The Country House

The center has a small, dedicated team of facilitator-advisers. In addition, the Country House can make use of a network of facilitators working in the 13 ministries of national government to take on a broad range of assignments and projects.

6.3 **DIALOGUES HOUSE (Amsterdam, the Netherlands):** Future Center of the ABN-AMRO Bank
"Making more possible together"

Introduction: goals, mission
The Netherlands' largest bank has the country's newest future center facility: Dialogues House. Dialogues House is a space for innovation, entrepreneurship, sustainability and collaboration, located in the bank's headquarters in Amsterdam. The center, situated in the bank's former 'dealing room', is approximately 2000 square meters.

The Dialogues House opened in November 2007 to provide a meeting place and workspace for enterprising people working on innovation and sustainable futures. It is aimed both at people from inside the bank and the broader Dutch public. It's an inspiring location where *inside* and *outside*, *today* and *tomorrow* come together in a surprising mix of spaces and activities to stimulate entrepreneurship and responsible thinking about the direction society is taking.

Making more possible together is the Dialogues House motto. There is a regular program of workshops, events and speakers to stimulate people to consider new perspectives on current issues, and encourage them to confront the challenges of present and future with an innovative, enterprising mind-set. Unexpected encounters between people from the bank and the broader society are encouraged, leading to dialogue on shared interests and relevant issues.

Figure 38 The Forum at Dialogues House

Dialogues House is also host to a number of relevant and related initiatives, including the Institute of Brilliant Failures, which highlights the importance of experimentation and failure in innovation; Dialogues Academy, with programs inspired by the themes of dialogue, entrepreneurship, and societal innovation; and the Incubator, where bank personnel can develop new products and services. When space is available, enterprising projects created in Dialogues House can also continue their work there.

History
People at the ABN-AMRO Bank saw clearly how many late 20th century and 21st century organizations suffer from corporate anorexia: downsizing by decree in their striving to

become lean and mean, outsourcing R&D and innovation units as cost centers, requiring results-driven performance with zero tolerance for mistakes in the name of increasing competitiveness. These autistic organizations, looking inside for inspiration and ideas while ignoring everything outside themselves, were ignoring the basic tenets of entrepreneurship and innovation at their peril, and becoming less competitive instead of more.

To protect itself against this autism and anorexia, the bank created a Dialogues programme in 2004 in order to create a climate that was friendly for open innovation and entrepreneurs. Making use of the intellectual capital of the bank, its clients and external relations, this programme resulted in a stream of innovative and entrepreneurial projects impacting the bank, its employees and the larger society. One idea born in the Dialogues programme led to a proposal for creating an in-house space for stimulating innovation and enterprise. After three years of the Dialogue programme, people were ready for the next step.

Figure 39 The Children's Room, Dialogues House

At the end of August 2007 the proposal was taken to the bank's Board of Directors. Despite delicate negotiations about competing takeover bids, the time was right to create such a center. It took the Board only 30 seconds to approve the plan, with the only stipulation that the project had to be realized before the end of the year. Using the incubator approach – working with a concurrent design and construction process, rewriting procurement procedures and internal regulations to facilitate fast and efficient building, with no micro-managing, no unnecessary meetings and no overhead – the process of creating the center was itself innovative and entrepreneurial. It became clear that a lot of the rules organizations make for themselves are unnecessary and limiting. The key was in discovering which were habits, and which were meaningful.

As the takeover of the bank became reality, the process of creating Dialogues House progressed according to plan. Setting a seemingly impossible challenge and then realizing it gave all the people involved a sense of purpose and an injection of energy. Dialogues House officially opened in mid-November 2007, less than three months after the Board's 30-second decision-making.

Figure 40 Rainbow curtain at Dialogues House

Environment

In the Forum, the large, central open public space, there are diverse group and individual workspaces, innovative furnishings, a large open arena for lectures and workshops, lots of colors and a full complement support facilities. In the middle of the public space is a commercial café-style bakery where fresh bread and cakes are baked several times a day, suffusing the atmosphere with enticing aromas. There is capacity for several hundred people, yet the space also has an intimate feel with seating clusters where small groups and couples feel at home. There are also non-public working areas integrated in the Dialogues House design: these *innovation islands*, located behind a rainbow curtain of semi-translucent plastic, offer spaces where bank departments and projects aimed at (radical) innovation and sustainability can work, part of the whole but undisturbed by Forum activities.

Dialogues House is an integrated concept and the entire space functions as a whole. There is a direct relationship between the component spaces and what happens there. A number of these spaces can be reserved for use, or simply appropriated if they are free:

- There are five open skyboxes overlooking the Forum, with standard seating for six and a capacity of 16, suitable for diverse activities;
- One wall is lined with six meeting booths, equipped with soundproofing material, where up to four people can sit together for quiet conversation;
- A meditation room for quiet reflection allows individuals and small groups the chance to withdraw from the busy sights and sounds of the Forum;
- The Children's Room, full of soft furniture, low seats, and bright colors, is a space without tables where even bankers are encouraged to sit on the floor;
- The Pressure Cooker, which seats 16, is a large raised oval chamber in one part of the Forum. This multimedia workspace is unusually spacious, warm and welcoming despite its presentation technology, six wall screens, dark colors and artificial light. The space can be used for working with linked computers, but is equally powerful as an intimate space for face-to-face discussion.

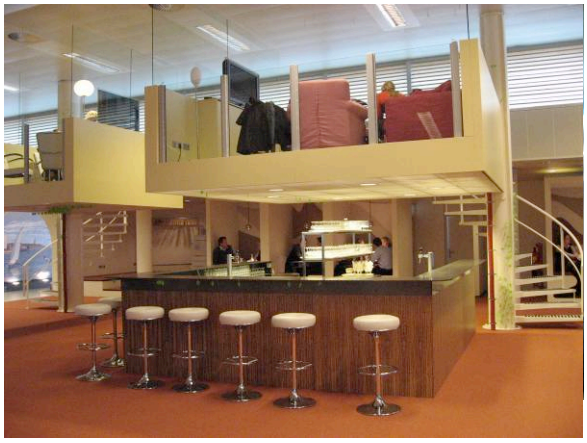

Figure 41 Skybox and bar, Dialogues House

Figure 42 Unique furnishing: sliding seats at Dialogue House

Unique furnishing is found throughout Dialogues House. Furniture designers and ICT entrepreneurs can place new products and prototypes here to discover how people react to them. Chairs and tables with embedded technology, electronic design tables, striking sofas and unusual lounge furniture can be used for a time, then replaced by new designs. Things which people like are promoted on the Dialogues House website, and a steady flow of new designs assures that even frequent visitors find something new to try.

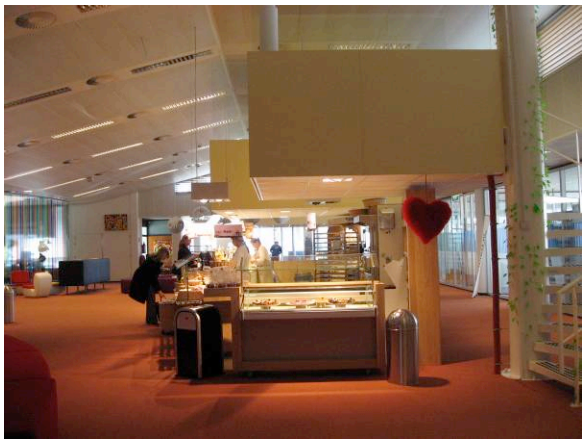

Figure 43 Fresh bread and cakes baked daily at the bakery in Dialogues House

Behind this test concept lie more basic questions: what kind of environment should you offer knowledge workers for optimum performance? What conditions are necessary for technical innovation to have positive impact on knowledge productivity? In the Dialogues House philosophy, knowledge is important, but organizations and entrepreneurs compete because they are able to *do* something with their knowledge; how do working, thinking and social environments contribute to creating value in knowledge-intensive enterprises? Exploring this issue is part of the core business carried out here.

Products/services
Regular offerings in a variety of programs ensure that the center is always full of surprising people and powerful ideas.

- *Dutch Excellence* spotlights organizations and entrepreneurs who play an important role in putting (and keeping) the Netherlands in the forefront of global innovation. This series of events explores how Dutch excellence contributes to a shared societal awareness of how to make the impossible possible?
- *Inspiration* is podium for people and business organizations that can inspire others in setting up sustainable enterprises: they stand out, see chances where others see threats, and turn these possibilities into business opportunities with their mix of courage, conviction, and inventiveness.
- The *Dialogues Academy* puts experts from universities and the world of practice 'in front of the class' on subjects ranging from risk management to the effects of short-term profit versus long-term sustainable value. These biweekly *Master Classes* offer inspiring sessions where innovating in 'the world we live and work in' is the focus.

Figure 44 The Pressure Cooker at Dialogues House

- The *Institute for Brilliant Failures* offers presentations on practical examples of how early failure can lead to later success. Famous and lesser-known products, people and initiatives are featured, and through the interactive website users can propose their own candidates. Through stories, films, interactive workshops, seminars and road shows, the Institute strives to achieve its own kind of climate change: a positive attitude in society and business to perseverance, learning from mistakes, and accepting the importance of failure in the innovation process.

The business of Dialogues House is inspiring people to change. The philosophy from which it was created serves its many users with an exceptional example. To make the impossible possible, one does not first change the system; one creates a 'special case' to demonstrate that what is possible and inspire others to do the same. And where change is concerned, the work of preparation – including the mental preparation – is just as important as the change itself. When the moment is right, people are ready to take leaps that they would never have made earlier. The decision to create Dialogues House took 30 seconds, but the preparation for the meeting took three years.

Dialogues House stimulates people to engage in innovation and change, and is itself an example of the process required. It is a process of connecting vision to context, creating platforms to build on, taking all the necessary steps (but *not* the unnecessary ones), making leaps of thought and leaps of faith (while realizing that not everyone is ready to leap at the same time), and thinking big - but always acting in the real world.

6.4 LEF: Rijkswaterstaat Future Center (Utrecht, the Netherlands): *Future center of the Department of Public Works & Water Management*

"Experience is believing"

Introduction: goals, mission
LEF Rijkswaterstaat Future Center is a central point and safe haven for innovation within the Rijkswaterstaat (RWS) organization. It is a corporate house, providing an inspiring environment for the Dutch Department of Public Works & Water Management to develop

Figure 45 Billboard at LEF: "The best way to predict the future is to create it" (Peter Drucker)

ideas, experiment with prototypes and explore new and effective ways to work together with its external relations, marketplace partners, and stakeholders in society. The goal is to discover and explore effective solutions for road and water infrastructure issues in a creative hotspot that stimulates new ways of thinking and working.

LEF's mission is to challenge the organization to come up with new and effective ways of looking at problems, asking relevant questions, and dealing with its important issues – and translate this into practical projects. *Doing* is seen as the natural extension of *dreaming*, and in order to do things in a different way, people must first adapt a different mindset. Putting them in a different working environment where they can explore and experience new possibilities can facilitate this, and the LEF workspaces are designed with this in mind. It is most definitely *not* a 'dream factory' and sees facilitating the realization of innovative initiatives as an essential part of its core business.

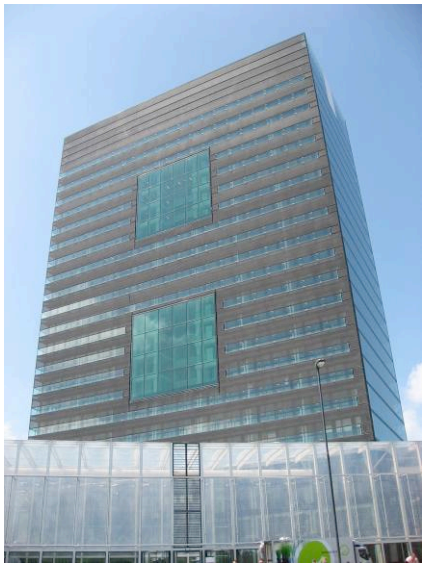

Figure 46 LEF entrance at Rijkswaterstaat headquarters

History

The *RWS Future Center* grew out of an organization-wide innovation impulse begun in the late 1990's, when working visits to two Sweden future centres (in 2000) sparked the ambition of senior managers to create something similar at Rijkswaterstaat.

Before the visits, future centers were someone else's innovative idea. Experience is believing, and the fortuitous combination of the *right message* (what future centers can accomplish in large knowledge-intensive organizations), heard and experienced by the *right people* (including a senior director who eventually became Director-General of the organization), at the *right moment* (when innovation was set to become a key factor for organization renewal) helped focus energy and resources on bringing this innovative concept to the Netherlands. The importance of senior managers who are willing to say "*I* want this for my organization" should not be underestimated. People and their passion is always the driving force of organizational innovation.

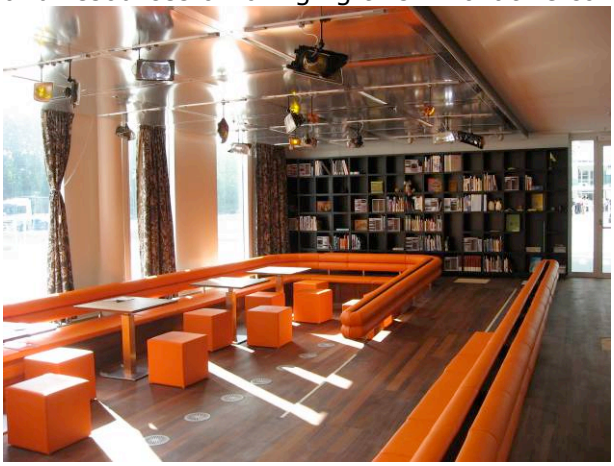

Figure 47 Reception area and meeting space

In 2002 a prototype future centre for set up to discover and test what would work at RWS. At the same time, space was reserved for a purpose built future centre in the new centrally located RWS offices that were then being planned. The prototype future centre (Mobilion) operated for five years, supported by innovation programs within the

Department as well as by senior management. In 2006 a program began to develop definite working methods and activity plans for the actual center. As construction began on the new building, activities to bring the future centre to fruition began to move more quickly, and in 2007 the decision was taken to merge prototype and program to create LEF: the Rijkswaterstaat Future Center. The center will officially open its doors in the middle of 2008. LEF is the Dutch word for "courage", an attribute essential for innovation to succeed in organizations[23].

Figure 48 LEF: workshop space with movable floor

Environment

The 3000 m^2 are located on the ground floor and first floor of the new corporate headquarters. There are workshop spaces and gardens, a multimedia mindset theater, and a large auditorium (seating 250 people) for national and international symposia. Informal spaces allow colleagues and invited guests to meet each other for informal discussions, exchanging ideas in relaxed surroundings. Environment is also a good cup of coffee and good quality food. Catering is often part of the design of sessions and events.

One of the special things about LEF is the interior design. There are different large and small spaces that can be furnished flexibly. Each of the workspaces can be given a special atmosphere, as desired. In the multimedia theatre, using 360° projection techniques, session participants can be rapidly brought into a different mind-set. It is also possible to provide a total immersion in the subject for which people have come, in order to give focus and direction to the sessions that follow. In this way participants can leave their daily routines behind them and begin sessions more open to new ideas and other ways of working.

Figure 49 LEF: Interactive exposition space

A large interactive exposition space allows visitors and session participants to experience historical, state-of-the-art and futuristic developments relevant to their work. There are semi-permanent and short-term displays, installations, objects, and mini-environments aimed at stimulating thinking about the past, present and future of water and road infrastructure, changing organizational work processes, and how to work together with citizens, stakeholders and end-users of the infrastructure.

Products/services

LEF is both a comfortable place to meet colleagues and a challenging workplace for innovative people to develop new perspectives on their work, translate new ideas into practice, and make courageous decisions about the road and water infrastructure of the future. It is a surprising place where personnel – from the work floor to senior management – and their external

Figure 50 Interactive map of the Netherlands

[23] Kune, Kuil, Van der Wiel (2008)

relations are encouraged to work together in an unconventional manner. Here they can take part in sessions and activities with professional facilitation, designed to deal with the issues they work on. In addition, LEF makes it possible for people to set up and participate in longer-term activities, using its facilities to bring new life to projects that need an innovative impulse to overcome obstacles or more-of-the-same thinking.

Figure 51 LEF: Interactive installation in the exposition space

LEF is directed at the entire personnel of the Department of Public Works and Water Management, from senior management to workers in the front line. It also serves the Department's most important public stakeholders: other ministries, regional and local government, business and industry, transport and water organizations, and citizen groups. LEF Future Center will also involve the external public, including secondary schools and higher education students, in Rijkswaterstaat work on the basis of concrete issues and relevant themes.

LEF provides a variety of spaces and facilities to support innovation, knowledge creation and application within the Department. These include LEF theaters, future scans and ateliers.

- LEF theaters: these are large-scale thematic sessions about road and water infrastructure, mobility or internal operations. They are exploratory, looking for promising directions, and aim at setting the agenda for further decisions on the issues at hand. They are intended for exchanging ideas and opinions amongst people from the various target groups relevant to the issue.
- Future scans: these sessions specifically aimed at recognizing trends and societal developments. They can take the form of lectures, debates, exhibitions, film and multimedia presentations, and even cabaret.
- LEF ateliers: ateliers are sessions for small groups, with a good mix of internal and external participants. Especially appropriate for project start-ups, problem solving, examining questions shared by participating organizations, and working out subjects which arise in LEF theatres and future scans.

Other facilities include a Speakers Academy with internal and external innovation experts from diverse fields relevant to the core business of RWS, a Group Decision Room with videoconferencing facilities, and a Summer School program where students from Dutch and international universities can actively work on RWS issues and problems in an interactive working/learning environment.

Figure 52 LEF: special seats for special purposes

Learning from innovation is a cornerstone of the LEF philosophy. LEF' s clients must agree to actively share their results and lessons learned with the rest of the RWS organization, and with other parties participating in relevant projects. In this way the knowledge gained in LEF projects becomes accessible for wider use.

As a central point for innovation, the goal is to disseminate innovations and knowledge about innovation processes. LEF can initiate projects on themes relevant to the future of the

Figure 53 Work space in the exposition, Mobilion

organization and the sectors in which it operates; part of this work is to anchor the themes to relevant projects and people in Rijkswaterstaat. The LEF working method is based on helping people generate and develop new ideas, and then testing them as prototypes and pilots. After several iterations, when a new idea is robust enough, LEF hands off ownership to the appropriate people in the Department. *Letting go* once something is mature enough to stand on its own is a key part of the process.

Mobilion

From 2002 until the end of 2007, Mobilion operated as an 'experimental park' for the development of the Rijkswaterstaat Future Center. Mobilion's mission was to prototype the most promising possibilities for prototyping future center functions, using space, and developing the working methods best suited to this ambitious project.

In Mobilion the natural metaphor was movement. The complex energies of traffic and water management were perfectly captured in this small building situated on a green strip of land between a busy highway and a major canal. People entered this unassuming barracks-like building and right away knew they had entered the dynamic world of Rijkswaterstaat, the Department of Public Works & Water Management.

Figure 54 Exposition space and glass floor, Mobilion

Mobilion was created to prototype possibilities. It served as a meeting place, workshop space and atelier for developing and testing promising working methods, facilitation techniques, exhibition ideas, functions, and for spatial designs, discovering which were best suited for use in the proposed future center. Located at the intersection of main transport routes in the middle of the country, it offered the Department a central location where her personnel, together with their relations and stakeholders in society, could meet, learn from each other, work together, and develop ideas to tackle the challenges of traffic and water infrastructure in an innovative way.

One of the most striking features was the exposition floor. In the *expo* people could walk on the largest glass floor in Europe. Under the glass was a map of the province of Utrecht plus the surrounding region, large enough that individual houses could be seen: people often saw their own! The highway, water and rail infrastructure was all there. The feeling of walking 30 centimeters above the countryside was disconcerting for some people at first, but the experience of taking part in workshops about the physical infrastructure of the region while sitting just above the map of the location was quite powerful, and enhanced the practical bent of the discussion.

Mobilion prototyped the following facilities and services:

- Innovation ateliers and creative work sessions

- A meeting place for people and ideas – where people from inside and outside the organization can meet each other is a relaxed atmosphere
- Flexible exposition space, where important policy themes were made accessible for professionals, students, and the general public
- Group decision room facilities
- Innovative symposium and conference facilities
- Educational programs to involve secondary schools in actively thinking about transportation and water management issues
- Pro-active involvement of retired Rijkswaterstaat engineers in coaching and mentoring roles, in order to keep their knowledge and expertise available to the organization
- Special catering designed to complement events

Methods and techniques developed in Mobilion which have become part of the LEF arsenal include:
- Project Learning, to facilitate knowledge transfer and learning about innovation.
- Rapid prototyping, to develop more effective products, services and strategies in shorter time.
- Building on Trust, to facilitate better cooperation between internal and external project partners by exploring assumptions about integrity, needs, goals and trust.
- Trend Catching, to actively capture trends and the results trend studies for practical application in organizational planning.

The general public was always welcome; groups of schoolchildren, meetings of regional and national special interest groups, and other visitors coming to view the exhibitions were often present at the same time as Department personnel, professionals and experts taking part in innovation workshops and ateliers. In this open atmosphere it was easy to understand that public sector organizations work to serve society, that they have both an 'inside' and an 'outside', and that both inside and outside have a role to play in making the Department an effective, innovative, public-oriented service provider.

6.5 THE ACADEMY SZW (The Hague, the Netherlands): *Future Center of the Ministry of Social Affairs & Employment*

"How to escape making policy in an ivory tower"

Figure 55 The Universe, Academy SZW

Introduction: goals, mission

The Ministry of Social Affairs & Employment (SZW) initiated its Academy SZW in May 2003. "Learning while you work, working while you learn" is the motto of the Academy SZW. A Future Center is part of what makes the Academy an effective tool for innovation and learning. Here the lessons of the past speak powerfully as a departure point for working in the present and future. In its multimedia theatre The Universe, the sky is *not* the limit, but rather the starting point for thinking about public responsibility, the role of the civil servant in societal transition, and the future of work and social affairs.

The interface of working and learning has become extremely important in modern society. Working environments are changing drastically. There is a lot of information and one must create policy more often in dialogue with the surroundings. Organizations face challenges which require an open, renewed and results-driven working method. The modern civil servant needs new tools, insights and skills. How can we decide which information is

important? How can civil servants best fulfill their tasks and determine who their partners are? How can they work effectively in an international work field?

To answer these and similar questions, the Academy have developed a multi-faceted approach, using two component facilities: Universe and Laboratory. These are facilities for helping people to think outside the organization, and for involving people outside the organization in thinking with ministry personnel in co-developing new policy instruments – two ways to escape making policy in an ivory tower.

Figure 56 Civil servants using the Timeline, Academy SZW

History

In 2001 a reorganization of the ministry based on principles of working "from outside to inside" and "results-oriented work" led to the realization that a physical environment would help personnel experience what is means to work in this way, and thus internalize learning about the new norms and values of the organization. The Academy was established in 2003. Inspired by a visit of senior officials to MindLab in Denmark, the development of the Universe and Laboratory facilities followed the same year.

Environment

The Universe is a small theatre, where under a starry sky, ministry personnel and session participants from other ministries can view an introductory film about the history of social policy and employment issues in the Netherlands and in Europe. How was care for the poverty-stricken organized in Leiden in 1650, and how will it be done 20 years from now? Why is the emancipation of women different in The Netherlands than in other countries? What were the driving forces that led to the first The Child Act? What forces are driving the future?
After the introductory film, an interactive timeline helps session participants anchor knowledge about the issues, and gain insight into both the concerns of the past and in developments relevant to the future.

The Timeline is a game of question and answers, which develops insight in the various themes. Thematic contact can be changed to meet the circumstances. Every form of corporate story can be told, whether the subject is 'what does the European Union mean to my work?', the future of social security, the multicultural society, or how major business corporations are created. It is possible to form a picture of the past, present and future of these issues in an innovative way by means of this multi-media mix of image and sound. The gaming aspect appeals to the competitive spirit of session participants, encourages active participation, and enhances learning.

The Laboratory facilities support these objectives as well. The Laboratory is actually a collection of different rooms where project teams, management teams, interdepartmental working groups and trainees can work in a fast and results-oriented manner. In the Acceleration

Figure 57 Starry sky of the Universe, Academy SZW

Figure 58 Group Decision Room, Academy SZW

Rooms, an electronic meeting system facilitates sharing opinions and decision-making processes. Video-conferencing facilities are also available. The electronic meeting system (using GroupSystems software) has proven so effective that in 2007 a second electronic meeting room was installed to enable sessions with a large number of participants – or else different clients – to access to this facility at the same time.

There are also an Office Garden with a number of informal meeting spaces, private workstations, and a small pantry for self-catering.

Products/services

The Academy has a double focus: it is both a place for creating new knowledge and applying knowledge to problems at hand, and for prototyping and practicing new ways of working with knowledge: results-oriented, from outside in, incorporating creative thinking processes – and fun. For this reason, work processes in the future center pursue a double objective: the explicit work process focuses on getting results for a specific issue or project, the implicit process is about experiencing (and thus learning) a new way of working. Outcomes reflect objectives achieved in both domains.

In 2003, fifty sessions were held, with 600-700 people taking part. By 2007 the number of sessions rose to 150 a year, and more than 3000 people were involved. More than a quarter of the projects working in the future center involve interdepartmental and multidisciplinary projects. Typical issues focus on policy development for aging populations, gender mainstreaming, and the future of employment in a multicultural society.

Aside from its future center functions, the Academy SZW also serves the organization's *Corporate Learning Centre*. In this role, it facilitates a wide range of departmental learning activities.

Methods/techniques

Scenario-thinking, creative problem-solving techniques, knowledge-based gaming and the use of film complement the timeline facility of the Universe. Whiteboards, smart boards, and other low threshold technologies are available: facilities that are easy to use and do not require a moderator. More than anything else, the two electronic meeting rooms with linked computers are in constant demand.

In the end, it is people and their daily concerns that is the central focus. Work in the Academy is both results-oriented and fun. Designing a process to help people achieve what they want starts with a good conversation about desired outcomes. And because these outcomes are achieved, people come back.

6.6 MINDLAB (Copenhagen, Denmark)

Future Center for three Ministries: Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs, the Ministry of Taxation, and the Ministry of Employment

"The consistent focus on what's possible"

Introduction: goals, mission

MindLab is a future center facility working for three ministries: Economic and Business Affairs, Taxation, and Employment. It functions as a hub for strategic, user-centered innovation, creating value by contributing to:

- More accurate policy development. Innovation of the policy-making process will lead to using the real needs of citizens and business as the starting point for developing higher quality and more effective policies and services.
- Transformation of the ministries' working culture, to include greater focus on end-user needs, and on working more actively across different policy areas.
- Knowledge development and sharing. The aim is to develop user-drive methods for policy and service design, to document experiences with user-centered tools, and to disseminate these in the public and private sectors.
- Communication of MindLab's achievements. This means signaling to the public at large that the ministries' ability to innovate, to test new forms of collaboration, and to include end-users in policy development is important and effective.

MindLab does not work within three silos, but is expected to work on developing projects across organizational borders, involving relevant parties throughout government and society. Citizen centric policymaking is basic to the MindLab approach; opportunities for innovation arise through seeing the world through the user perspective.

History

MindLab was originally set up by the Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs to work as a strategic innovation unit for the public sector. It began in February 2002 as a people-centered workspace where ministry personnel and their public stakeholders could develop innovative approaches to their projects.

Within the sometimes restraining confines of the public administration, MindLab fostered a unique emphasis is on what is *possible* to achieve, not what - at first instance - seems to be impossible. This instilled a can-do confidence in civil servants to work more effectively within the constraints of existing regulations and procedures. MindLab is a physical workspace but also a special mental and emotional environment, which pushes people to be more creative in how they think and work, encouraging them to cross borders they would not ordinarily cross, while keeping their focus on achieving concrete goals.

Figure 59 The Egg, iconic space at MindLab

Since opening in February 2002, MindLab has worked on a broad range of projects for both internal and external clients. More than 80 policy project start-ups, covering all areas of the Ministry's field of responsibility, took place in MindLab during the first three years. Important projects during the initial period included defining the concept for the ministry's project-based working method, and an iconic project – preparing a multidisciplinary team for the Danish EU presidency in 2002 – which established MindLab's credentials as an effective instrument for getting results. In 2005 MindLab was instrumental in facilitating the development of new cooperative agreements between Denmark and Greenland.

This approach to public sector innovation proved successful, although evaluation indicated that what MindLab was especially effective in facilitating creative solutions to customer problems, which was not one of its original goals. The decision to was made to redesign the concept and broaden its scope. After an extensive evaluation in 2006, MindLab was renewed as a trans-organizational unit for user-centered innovation working for three ministries: by the Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs, the Ministry of Taxation, and the Ministry of Employment. It began work under this new mandate on January 1st 2007.

Environment

The original MindLab workspace was designed by artists to create a spatial metaphor of people as central to the innovation process. The large semi-open space was divided in four areas representing the human body and four ways people contribute to innovation processes:

- the *head* - an open resource center, for researching the background and broader context of issues;
- the *stomach* - the small kitchen with its long wooden table and bar stools, where people could feed their colleagues and project partners with ideas and information while enjoying coffee, a snack or a light lunch;
- the *hands* - work areas where people could build prototypes;
- the *heart* was a closed oval brainstorming and reflection space called the egg, where people could come to the essence of the issue at hand and discover which direction they wanted their solutions to move. The egg became a visual icon of the MindLab work process.

Figure 60 Kitchen table at MindLab

For most of its users, the contrast between their normal working environment and MindLab was striking. The open space and flexible furniture invited a completely different focus on the subject at hand. Initials briefings were carried out at the high table with bar stools in the kitchen. Conversations took place on piles of orange cushions, and decisions were made at the pinewood tables in the meeting space. MindLab is physically situated in the Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs, close to the main entrance. Personnel and visitors can see that innovation is important here.

As part of its expanded mission to serve three ministries, MindLab has been undergoing extensive physical renovations in 2007-08, aimed at creating a new and effective environment in which to pursue its goals.

Products/services

MindLab continues to provide a facilitated neutral zone where people from different ministries and sectors, with different professional competences and interests, can work together to achieve mutual gains. MindLab helps clients with:

- Defining the policy goals of a project;
- Clarifying the goal, purpose, organization and success criteria of projects
- Scenario thinking, and adopting multiple perspectives on possible futures;
- Context analyses to form a broad view of the past and present context of issues projects deal with;
- Research to uncover the real needs of

Figure 61 Central work and meeting space, MindLab

citizens and business;
- Brainstorming and the prioritizing of ideas;
- Developing solutions for problems in policy projects;
- Analyzing, qualifying and testing new ideas in practice, through qualitative research methods and service design strategies;
- Evaluating and measuring the impact of these efforts on end users.

In order to achieve these results, MindLab carries out activities such as:
- Designing research projects run by cross-ministerial project teams that bring end-users more actively into the central administration's policy and service development process;
- Carrying out qualitative research activities, based on anthropological and sociological approaches;
- Conducting workshops and seminars with both experts and end-users;
- Applying e-government solutions which help generate new ideas based on the contributions of citizens and business;
- Developing and sharing new methods for policy and service design.

The new MindLab is conceived of as a "triple helix" organization that brings government, private enterprises, and the research community together under one roof. Its core staff consists of 6 people, including a sociologist, IT specialist, anthropologist, designer, and political scientist. Three additional staff members will be provided (on job rotation basis) from government, and three more on job rotation from private enterprise. Rotation periods last 6-12 months. Three PhD students will be associated full-time with MindLab for a period of three years. The Governing Board consists of the Permanent Secretaries of the three participating ministries, and four external representatives.

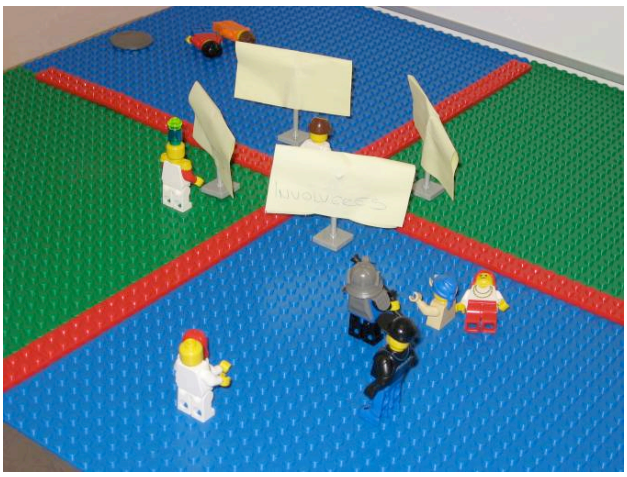

Figure 62 Lego Serious Play at MindLab

Methods/techniques

MindLab uses tools and facilities not usually found in Danish central government offices. There are extensive whiteboards on the walls, electronic brainstorming tools, and multimedia. Context mapping, creativity techniques, visual and tactile stimulation are basic elements in the MindLab arsenal. Toys of various types provide metaphors drawn from daily life, and Lego Serious Play allows session participants to build models of their proposed solutions. It all helps people achieve the results they come for. Remaining serious while using playful, using creative techniques to broaden horizons, staying focused on session objectives, and producing tangible, usable results all contribute to ensuring the high quality outcomes users demand. But according to MindLab, the most important instrument it has is the effort that customers, their colleagues, and the MindLab staff themselves put into the projects. It is always people who make the difference.

6.7 MOMENTUM (Hørsholm, Denmark): Future center for the North Zealand region

"Creativity is a natural process"

Momentum is "a house for collaboration" created to stimulate idea-driven regional development. It is a reflection oasis where creativity is encouraged, where people from different organizations and sectors can work together, reflect on issues, think for themselves, and develop new possibilities for innovation in the region.

History

Momentum was established in 2004 as a centre to serve the business community in the region of North Zealand, north of Copenhagen. Both public and private parties in the region were concerned with the influence the Oresund Bridge would have on North Zealand. This bridge, opened in 2000, physically linked Denmark (Copenhagen) and Sweden (Malmo) together for the first time since the Ice Age, and created a strong economic base in Oresund. They formed an association dedicated to the development of welfare in society through enhanced cooperation between public and private actors, and created Momentum as a facilitated physical workspace to further their goals. It has been involved in a range of projects on a number of areas, including health, education and regional development. In these projects, Momentum acts as a neutral partner to the public/private companies involved, providing a framework for development and cooperation, and facilitating creative and dialogue processes.

Figure 63 Wooden hill at Momentum

Figure 64 Screaming Room at Momentum

Environment

The same artists who created MindLab designed the workspace. Momentum believes that the physical setting is essential for the success of dialogue and creative processes, and the innovative design of the building provides several unique workspaces where people can work together. The main workspace is situated next to an indoor fishpond with trees and bushes. A little way from this space there is a wooden hillock in the middle of the floor. These design elements are built into the building because of convictions about how the creative process works: creativity is seen as a natural process, which happens everywhere in nature. Creative insights most often occur outdoors, at the side of a lake, while walking in a forest, or climbing a hill.

Figure 65 Conversations at the indoor pond

The message which users of the facility experience is clear: creativity does not need a building, and Momentum is *not* in the building; it is in the region. For this reason the building was designed so that users could experience the integration of inside and outside, and the flow of creative processes in the indoor workshop spaces and in the natural environment outdoors.

Aside from its plenary workspace with fishpond and trees, there are additional spaces with whiteboards for walls, a wooden workspace which simulates a hot tub, and a "screaming room" where

people can retreat from group sessions to confront personal frustrations in a soundproof mirrored closet, after which they can return refreshed to take part again in collaborative activities.

Products/services
There are eight employees: a political scientist, a biologist/chemist, an MSc in Economics & Business Administration, an MA in English and French, an administrator, an engineer, a business anthropologist, and a butler.

Momentum also runs the Momentum's Idea House, a unique creative space, which is used as a conference and meeting facility by a wide range of companies and institutions.

Figure 66 Hot tub workspace, Momentum

6.8 INNOVATION LAB (AARHUS AND COPENHAGEN, DENMARK)

Introduction: goals, mission
Innovation Lab is an international knowledge centre for new technology trend spotting. It runs on a non-profit charter. Innovation Lab provides clients with precise previews of technological developments in the next 3-5 years in particular areas, working in collaboration with a global network of 2500 contacts within the worlds of science, product development and entrepreneurship. Innovation Lab uses this knowledge to pinpoint the coming challenges for companies and organizations, disseminating these insights through projects, seminars, workshops and publications.

Figure 67 Innovation Lab interior

Through a wide and varied range of activities and media, Lab Agents work to translate the latest technological developments into hands-on experiences and meaningful scenarios. Innovation Lab interprets the meaning of technology, and makes the impact of technology meaningful for its clients, network partners, and participants in its events and programs.

Figure 68 Workspace at Innovation Lab

Environment
Innovation Lab's primary base is in Århus, Denmark. It is located in IT City Katrinebjerg, an important IT research and innovation campus. Innovation Lab Copenhagen is located on the fifth floor of Copenhagen IT University's IT Greenhouse.

The Århus office exemplifies the difference between award-winning design concepts and rewarding workspace. It is an environment held together by enthusiasm. Lab agents design their own workstations, and set priorities according to personal interests in their own fields of expertise. The working environment is full of unusual artifacts, from dentist chairs to beach

umbrellas and giant puppets. There is a small museum of recent technology, a demonstration area for ICT-driven prototypes not yet on the market, and a techno junkyard from which people can construct physical models of new concepts. According to Innovation Lab, Future Centers are not about long-term forecasts – they are about present day archaeology.

Figure 69 Interactive exhibition, Innovation Lab

Products/services

The power of Innovation Lab comes from its collaboration with its knowledge and business partners. Together they form a global early warning system for technological development. Industrial research and development divisions, universities and think tanks, individuals and multinationals contribute to creating new perspectives on what's new. The Lab works with innovation within a triangulated constellation of broad knowledge, communication skills and innovation power. What has gone before is always relevant. In this vision, history has always been a collection of futures, future-focused pioneering carried out by groundbreaking individuals. Today the future lies all around us, in the patterns of the past, the artifacts of today, the passions of people to improve their lives, and especially in the mindset of young people who believe anything is possible.

Figure 70 Museum of recent technology, Innovation Lab

Seeing what is already there, all around us is the core competence Innovation Lab uses to help people understand the future. With its focus on the next 3-5 years, it confronts people and organizations with the impact which already existing technologies, products and design concepts can have on their world – before these technologies and products are brought to the market in accessible, affordable versions. In this way, people can anticipate what their world may be like in the coming years while there is still time to influence this development.

Innovation Lab uses eight lenses for viewing the world, and organizes its trend watching according these perspectives: the disappearing factory, future living, technology experience, society, media species, care ware, hub jobs, and green technology. These perspectives reflect the Lab's view of where technological change will impact society in the near future. Together they form a coherent map of the places our lives will be different on the day after tomorrow.

Services Innovation Lab provides include[24]:

- *Snapshots* - tales from the future. Lab Agents can bring clients up to speed on what emerging technologies have in store for them in Snapshot presentation, which take less than an hour.
- *Demo-lab* – the future on display. Experiencing Demo-lab makes emerging technology issues and solutions feel real. Each year Demo-lab gives several thousand visitors a hands-on and down-to-earth encounter with emerging technologies and cutting-edge solutions.

[24] Innovation Lab : website

- *Conference with exhibition*. Four times a year, Innovation Lab arranges a major event encompassing a conference as well as an exhibition module. The pivoting point of every arrangement is always a future-oriented topic rich on perspectives.
- *Prototyping.* Developing innovative prototypes requires a degree of technical and market-related insight very few businesses have ready access to. In a world that has left the traditional R&D division behind, the principles and practices of Open Innovation enable effective and powerful product development. The Innovation Lab approach to project coordination means reaching across company, industry, and mental boundaries to pool energy and intelligence.
- *Consulting services*. Innovation Labs consulting and project management services draw on Lab Agent expertise and contacts to major technological innovators the world over. Future technological developments hold new promise for traditional industries; Innovation Lab helps businesses skip a few evolutionary stages.

50 employees with very varied educational backgrounds work in the various Innovation Lab offices: "All our employees come from different backgrounds – that's very important. Lately we hired a blacksmith; he is an incredible source of new angles and ideas. Our CEO is a bookkeeper who used to sell calculators. The next person we are going to hire will be a marine biologist."

Methods/techniques
Innovation Lab makes use of various network-centered methods for gathering data. As indicated in the following citations, people play a central role in the I-Lab philosophy:
- "Every week each employee brings five new ideas to the table"
- "We have a network of 2500 people all over the world"
- "Our business model is to constantly have 10 clients as members of the Innovation Playground"

6.9 TRYGVESTA BUSINESS LAB (Copenhagen, Denmark)
TrygVesta BusinessLab is the name of this Innovation Center, in which customers, partners, leaders and employees have the opportunity to work in different innovative and stimulating processes. In addition, BusinessLab is the name of a separate organizational unit working exclusively on facilitation innovation processes, including concrete innovation projects, organizational skills, and knowledge fusion.

They work from the principle that "our biggest threat in the future probably doesn't come from our biggest competitor, but from a totally unexpected and obscure angle". That is why they constantly scan the periphery for first indications and weak signals. "We don't look for the right answer – we look for the right question."

TrygVesta's Corporate Values and Vision – being perceived as the leading provider of peace-of-mind in the Nordic Region – inspires an approach with a special human and social angle.
For this reason, the development of the Future Center as well as its innovation processes has a strong focus on competences that traditionally challenge rationality. These include emotional perspectives and disciplines such as philosophy, design, and dramaturgy.

Personnel
Six employees with different educational backgrounds: these include a former leader of the IT department at Tryg Vestas, a PhD student, a business designer, and a dramatist. They believe that the diversity of the employee's background is essential for thinking new thoughts instead of just doing things in the same way.

LinKS and a number of partners designed BusinessLab.

6.10 FUTUREFOCUS (London, United Kingdom)

Introduction: goals, mission

FutureFocus is a purpose built resource in the middle of London, open to everyone in the Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform (BERR), the Department for Universities, Innovation & Skills (DIUS), the Department for Children, Schools & Families (DCSF), and to relevant stakeholders across government and business. Use of Futurefocus is free to everyone in BERR, DIUS and DCSF, though events requiring additional resources are sometimes charged. Other organizations can use the facility for a fee.

Figure 71 Workshop at Futurefocus

The facility supports teams working to achieve the Departments' objectives and create the conditions for business success. It supports continuous improvement; joins teams in the Departments with stakeholders in business and across government; improves strategic and resource planning; enables teams to work better together; delivers efficiency and financial savings; and reduces risk and leads change within the Departments.

Figure 72 Futurefocus: *Interactive Society* workspace

History

In the late 1990's, the British Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) wished to speed up and future-proof government policy-making. They felt the need because the democratic process is relatively slow, and there is constant uncertainty about whether a policy or initiative would actually still be appropriate by the time it was rolled out. DTI decided to create a facilitated environment for working on a broad range of policy issues that need a new perspective, or an innovative approach.

DTI's inspiration for creating the center was the perception that in the business world, new technologies help cut lead times in the production, distribution and promotion of products, thus enabling companies to respond faster to new customer demands, and to reduce the risk of being overtaken by trends and events. The Department felt that this could be applied to the world of policy-making.

FutureFocus@DTI was originally developed by the Department of Trade and Industry in partnership with three commercial parties. The Secretary of State opened it as a purpose built futures facility in October 2000. In 2007 a reorganization of the government split up the responsibilities of DTI between several new ministries. FutureFocus, with its record of success, received a new mandate to expand its services for three ministries.

Environment

There are three creative spaces - the Immersive Theatre, the Creativity Lab, and the Interactive Society - and three Breakout Rooms. The use of visual imagery and Group Systems technology are characteristic of the FutureFocus working process.

Figure 73 Work-in-progress at Futurefocus

In the *Immersive Theatre* a facilitator may present some images or future scenarios to stimulate the group's thinking, and begin the debate among participants on what the future might look like and what challenges they could face. There are a variety of films presenting alternative views of issues affecting Society, Technology, Environment, Economics and Politics. These films are particularly useful when working with a group of people who may not have worked together before. The facilitator can also help the group build their own scenarios from scratch, or can introduce examples from other areas. The key messages from the images are around the way society influences change, the speed with which things are changing and the need to widen consideration in order to provide the best types of solution. The Theatre prompts discussions and moves the participants into a higher level of strategic thought.

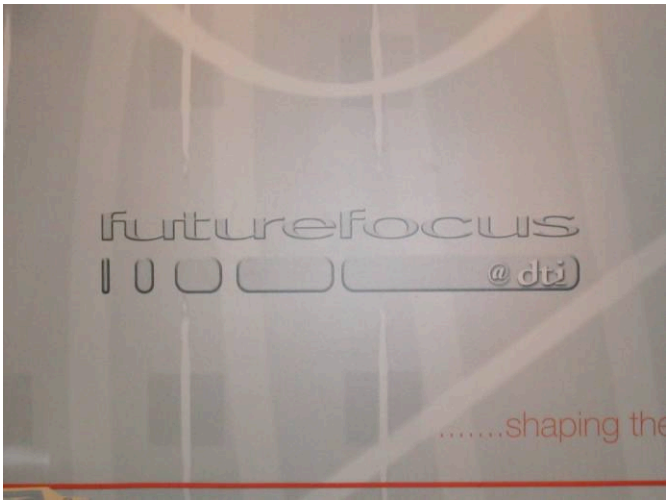

Figure 74 The entrance, Futurefocus

The *Creativity Lab* encourages all participants to express their views freely using group decision technology, which preserves the anonymity of contributions.

Futurefocus is also equipped with a variety of tools and techniques to help groups work together. *The Interactive Society* is an open flexible space that can be set up in conference style or cleared for team building activities. It also serves as an additional space for events requiring Group Systems. It is equipped with Smart Boards and wireless capability to explore the Internet. There are facilities for showing PowerPoint presentations, running DVDs or showing any other material that may be relevant, as well as traditional whiteboards.

Products/services

Futurefocus uses a unique, totally neutral and confidential facilitation and mentoring process that extends individual and group thinking about how the future may be changing, and generates creative ideas and collective agreement about what actions should be planned and implemented. FutureFocus works with a team of professional business consultants and facilitators. There are 13 facilitators on call.

6.11 ROYAL MAIL INNOVATION LAB (Rugby, United Kingdom)

Introduction: goals, mission

The Innovation Lab was set up to provide the people, tools and space that Royal Mail customers and staff need to unlock business-changing ideas. Its state-of-the-art physical environment supports the psychological climate that is essential for enabling people to feel free and safe to experiment with novel ideas and seemingly strange solutions. It provides the tools and environment to unlock potential business-changing ideas. It enables people to get away from the office and focus wholly on the task in hand. Creative play and discovery are basic tenets of Innovation Lab operating principles. Royal Mail personnel, from senior management to work floor employees, as well as external business relations, use the Lab. The Lab is also used by a number of Royal Mail's client companies to release potential and, ultimately, to make a real and positive difference to their businesses.

Figure 75 Prototyping space, Royal Mail Innovation Lab

Figure 76 Chill Area, Royal Mail innovation Lab

In the face of accelerating change – technology, policy or working culture – every business is under pressure to create new ideas. The Innovation Lab helps people see their business challenges from an entirely different and fresh perspective and lets them experiment safely with ideas before putting solutions into place.

History

In the mid-1990s, the United Kingdom's Post Office (now the Royal Mail) wanted to put its own stamp on meeting space. They realized that the basis for change had to start with developing new processes for decision-making. Out of this general concept came the idea of an Innovation Lab, a place where ideas could be developed, captured and channeled into results in a creative way. The Post Office realized that society was changing, and that in the coming years business would be transformed in a significant way. In order to start building on the future, the plan was to educate constituents (employees, business colleagues and customers) on the importance of using technology in business. The concept was to create some sort of immersive environment where people could learn about cutting edge technology and how it could be applied to everyday decision-making and business processes. Thus was borne the Innovation Lab, designed to showcase new tools of communication and technology for the 21st century. A pilot Innovation Lab was created, and groups from the organization began to test it in use. The concept rapidly evolved from a place where groups would think through the implications of a technology-

Figure 77 Between workspaces, Royal Mail Innovation Lab

enabled future into "intensive work spaces for teams tackling a huge range of challenges, both tactical and strategic. Quite simply, the focus became creating a place for sustained creative thinking and planning. People would have fun working in the Lab, but they would also deliver serious, sustainable solutions.

Figure 78 Technology in workspace at Royal Mail Innovation Lab

A fully functioning Innovation Lab opened in 2000. Efforts were focused very specifically on designing a new environment for thinking. Three elements were vital: people, tools and space. Like the prototype, the new Innovation Lab was built to inspire creative thinking. Brainstorming rooms were themed around game playing and puzzles, a strategic planning forum was built with floor-to-ceiling white write-on walls, and furnishing and lighting fixtures were carefully selected. In sum, the entire area was designed to get people thinking creatively and without restriction.
One of the most important changes from the pilot was the addition of new web-based meeting software that enhanced the process of creative brainstorming. Leadership facilitation was considered the other key to unlocking creativity. Leaders would be needed to engage people to think differently, to get them to resolve complex problems, and to get groups to move through the process quickly and seamlessly[25].

Figure 79 Relaxation space at Royal Mail Innovation Lab

Environment

The Lab is designed as a series of interconnected zones for different types and phases of the creative working process. These include a Research Space, a Playroom, a Puzzle Room, a Project Room, a prototyping space (Make it Real) and a relaxation space (Chill Area). These spaces have strong design features, using bright primary colors. Virtually all spaces – walls, tabletops, cabinets, can be written on. There are coffee, tea and soft drinks available throughout the working spaces. Recently a second, under designed multi-purpose workspace has been added (*This is Lab 2*), which enables groups to get away from the predetermined design elements in order to create their own atmosphere in a large, otherwise empty space. The interior spaces are built to inspire. Brainstorming rooms themed around game playing and puzzles, a strategic planning forum and a rest and presentation area are all designed to get people thinking creatively and without restriction.

The Lab is set in the grounds of the Royal Mail's Coton House Learning & Development Center, an 18th Century Manor House, surrounded by more than 120 acres of parkland. There are extensive recreational facilities (including a gym, pitch & put golf, tennis courts and two bars). Overnight accommodation is also available, and the Lab can be accessed until late in the evening, in case a 'big idea' comes after a good game of pool[26].

A combination of the right environment, the Lab team and the best technologies help clients to develop and communicate their ideas and get the best results from their workshops, and ultimately, the best results for their business. The Lab's physical location is not a limiting factor. The team regularly run events online and off site too, choosing the most suitable physical or virtual environment for each event.

[25] IAdapted from Powell (pdf)
[26] Adapted from Royal Mail Innovation Lab website

Products / services
Whether brainstorming a new concept or developing an existing business idea, getting out of the office and into the Lab enables people to work their ideas out and test them from different angles. The Lab is an excellent place for creativity. Creativity requires playfulness as well as focus on concrete results. Sometimes the creative process can be a bit chaotic, especially when traditional ways of thinking and working need to be challenged and shaken up. By providing a structure and a process to work through the concepts under consideration, raw ideas can become business-changing initiatives.

Figure 80 Playing pinball between sessions, Royal Mail Innovation Lab

According to the Innovation Lab website, the kinds of activities the Royal Mail supports best are:

- Thinking 'outside the box' in more divergent and creative ways
- Non hierarchical idea generation
- Systematic brainstorming in a way
- Transparent decision making processes

An expert and dedicated Facilitation and technical support team support all of this. A dedicated and full time team of facilitators and technicians staffs the Innovation Lab facility. It is the diversity of the individual styles, experiences and expertise of this team that not only makes the Lab's energy so infectious and exciting but also what gives events such range and flexibility. Creating the right mix of people within the group is a key factor in creative thinking, and the Lab encourages clients to bring a diverse group to the Lab. Facilitators also come from a variety of backgrounds, and it is their experience and professionalism that makes Lab activities effective. By providing a structure for creative thinking, with enough openness and flexibility for groups to tease their ideas forward and sufficient limits to test concepts against strict criteria, a process is created through which raw ideas can become innovative, practical, initiatives ready for implementation.

Methods/techniques
The award winning Innovation Lab is a fantastic place for creativity. It comes with everything needed to help people think and share thoughts; from the simple things like plenty of pens and sticky tape, to the more specialized things like online brainstorming, digital capture devices and materials for prototype mock-ups.

Building on the Mel Rhodes (1961) model of creativity; Product, Process, People and Press, The Innovation Lab strives to ensure the "unity of the four strands".

Much of the foundation of an Innovation Lab workshop comes (though not exclusively) from the CPS (Creative Problem Solving) process and utilizes a wealth of tools and techniques homegrown and shared from around the World.
Managing the diversity of the people within any given workshop is of prime importance – ensuring that there is as much diversity in the experiences and styles of the people "as the group can afford" (Kirton, M.J, 2003) and accredited in a number of psychometric instruments, the Innovation Lab facilitation team can assist groups in understanding their thinking preferences and how to develop them

Using creative play, exploration and discovery, people are carefully guided through a process from challenge identification to solution implementation planning. And all in a relaxed and engaging way. You might find yourself creating your new business plan in Lego,

or spraying your marketing strategy on the wall as graffiti. And don't be surprised if you find yourself struck by a Eureka moment while playing pinball or playing the drums!

6.12 Skandia Future Center (Vaxholm, Sweden)[27]

Introduction: goals, mission

Skandia Future Center (SFC) was designed to experiment with the future of organizations, working methods, and working environments. It would be a meeting space for cross-border collaboration and value-creating partnerships, where people from different countries, age groups and professions could meet in a knowledge dialogue about the future of the enterprise and how the organization can meet the needs of the future. To facilitate this, they created an environment where trust, openness and intellectual challenge were supported by subtle and explicit appeals to the senses – through smell, music, specially designed furniture, water, the entire physical location – could enhance physical harmony and an innovative, entrepreneurial spirit.

Figure 81 Exterior view, Skandia Future center

Although Skandia Future Center no longer exists, it was the prototype for modern European Future Centers. From 1996-2004 it defined the cutting edge of future center work is essential for understanding European Future Centers.

History

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 few years – less protection, more competitors, the need for new type of products, and new ways of selling and marketing services. They saw that one way to prepare for the future was to help employees and managers become open minded and ready to work in new ways. A Future Center was one way to achieve this, and in 1995 a project team was set up to create this center: a workspace and meeting space with focus on renewal and development. Leif Edvinsson, later Corporate Director of Intellectual Capital at Skandia, played a leading role in conceptualizing, setting up and developing the center from 1995-1999. Professor Edvinsson is now Professor of Intellectual Capital at Lund University, Sweden.

During the years of 1996-2004, Skandia Future Center served Skandia as a unique prototyping laboratory for new organizational designs, and inspired people across the world to think differently about innovation and the future. Originally services were free. In 2002 SFC began charging visitors for using the center, but the number of visitors continued to grow. By December 2002, 25,000 people had visited SFC. However, by early 2003 most of the original SFC team had left Skandia to create businesses of their own.

[27] OpenFutures website

Later in 2003, many top managers were forced to leave Skandia due to a financial scandal, and the entire Board of Directors was replaced. New management, recruited externally, focus on cost cutting and rebuilding the firm's damaged reputation. Innovation was no longer a focus, many projects were stopped, and at the end of 2004 SFC was phased out.

Figure 82 Informal meeting area, Skandia Future Center

Environment
Appeal to the senses

SFC was located on an archipelago about 45 minutes drive from Corporate Headquarters in Stockholm. A visit to the center was also a 'step back' from the hectic concerns, short-term focus and firefighting of daily work. The center was located in a large villa on the water. Creative use of spaces inside the building and outside, in the gardens and at the water's edge, was an integral part of the design concept.

So was an appeal to the senses. When entering the Skandia Future Center you smell the tar from the wooden floors and you hear waltz music playing. Straightaway your senses are being stimulated. Your heartbeat slows down, your stress levels lower. Take a deep breath and feel welcome to the future! Walking up the stairs you start to smell the freshly baked cinnamon buns that are baked in the kitchen every day.[28] The metaphor of navigation was present throughout the center and in many of its tools: the smell of tar, the presence of heavy ship ropes, the authentic captain's steering wheel looking out from the top floor over the expanse of islands and water, the Dolphin Navigator System (for strategic management).

Products/services
Many projects were initiated with SFC as a platform. Different meeting and facilitation tools are developed and introduced: Knowledge Café, Knowledge Safari, IC Salon, and the Dolphin Navigator System. To help prepare for the future, Skandia established a number of "Future Teams" with people from different generations worked together on future oriented activities, using SFC as a base. The focus for the Future Teams was not only to come up with future scenarios relevant to the insurance market, but also to come up with the right questions to ask about the future. Answers to many of these 'questions' resulted in a number of activities leading to major organizational renewal.

Skandia Future Center provided a variety of services:
- Dialogues about Intellectual Capital, and the Future
- Tailor-made workshops on issues important to visitors
- Facilitation services for workshops
- Strategic planning sessions
- Teambuilding sessions
- Presentations by prominent people from diverse areas of interest
- Breakfast, lunch and dinner
- Overnight stays

Methods/techniques

[28] Tidhult (1998)

- *IC Salon.* A tool to start for a longer sessions about organizational change and/or or strategy. IC Salon was used to help groups create new ideas, construct and/or manage a creative environment, and choose the right tools and methods for their work.
- *Knowledge Café.* A meeting tool for anchoring important and topical issues in an organization or company. The Café is a very democratic working method based on conversation. It helps to increase creativity and the creation of new ideas, using a web-based IT-tool specially developed for the purpose. This facilitates the compilation of ideas and opinions, and the subsequent reporting.
- *Knowledge Safari.* This is a team building activity, in which people solve different tasks in various new constellations, taking advantage of group members' different experience and knowledge. This results in new forms of cooperation.
- *Knowledge Kick-Start*. Bt describing the theories behind the concept of Intellectual Capital, Knowledge Kick-start served as an introduction on working with IC and the various tools that SFC made available for this.
- *Strategic Facilitation*. Strategic facilitation increases group efficiency by visualizing activities graphically, helping participants to prioritize and align their activities.
- *Storytelling.* SFC used workshops in story telling to communicate thoughts, ideas and complicated message in a manner that was easy to understand and remember.
- *Knowledge Path*. This method helped new employees get to know the company they were part of: its vision, strategy, culture, products, organization, and people.
- *Dolphin Navigator System.* Dolphin Navigator System is an IT system for holistic management, showing the relationship between vision, strategy and the different activities in a company. It was used extensively as an aid to rational and effective planning, and to follow the organization's goals and strategy.
- *Futurizing.* Futurizing is a process of proactively exploring the unknown. Based on the idea that the future is unknown, this prototyping technique stimulated people to work out their ideas now ("within 14 seconds"), rather than wait for tomorrow or next year.
- *Visualizing.* As a precondition for futurizing, Skandia wanted knowledge to be visualized. The visualization of knowledge is crucial, because once people see it they better able to talk about it, and to take appropriate action to apply it.

Figure 83 Interior at Skandia Future Center

Chapter 7 Lessons learned in European Centers

Since the middle 1990's Future Centers have been operating in various societal and corporate environments. They serve a diverse public by providing facilitated thinking, working and meeting environments for creating custom-made solutions to issues that are important to users. In addition, the centers have also worked actively to renew their own products and services, methods and techniques. In this renewal process they make use of research, collegial consultation, and most importantly the lessons learned from daily practice.

Looking at the lessons learned in more than a decade of Future Center work, the following points stand out[29]:

The bottom-line

- **Use of space**. Centers combine cognitive and affective space with physical and virtual space. The effective integration of these various 'spaces' provides a total environment conducive to achieving the objectives at hand.
- **Facilitators**. The key to working with people is people. Professional facilitators play an essential role in helping users achieve desired results. They create impact far beyond what people working on their own can produce.
- Helping users to **cross borders and extend themselves beyond their perceived limits**. This is the core business of centers, releasing session participants from restraining patterns of behavior and habits of thought, and bringing people in contact with new ideas and sources of inspiration they normally would not have access to.
- **Playfulness combined with hard work** on serious issues. *Homo ludens*, man at play, can tap sources of inspiration and creativity that complement and complete rationality. It can act as an antidote to the heavy emphasis on the logic of analysis and bottom-line accounting that tend to dominate organizational thinking processes. People work hard in Future Centers, often harder than they do in other work situations, because the relaxed atmosphere releases energy and the collective drive to achieve worthwhile results.
- The **focus on concrete results**. This is why people come back to work in centers again and again; sessions result in tangible output which can be tested, improved and put to use in the work situation.

The balance

- **Balance stimulating intellectual discussion and concrete action.** Talking about future challenges and directions is most meaningful in the context of translating insights into concrete actions. The best Future Centers seamlessly link thinking, talking and doing.
- **Balance internal and external focus.** Where centers aim at renewing their parent organizations, focus on core business and primary process is essential. Make sure the centre is not overly oriented to issues and people outside the organization, but at the same time insist on having a continuous flow of ideas from the outside world.
- **Balance long-range initiatives and quick wins.** Smaller, short-term actions that lead to immediate tangible results help create the support needed for bigger, bolder, more ambitious initiatives and more future-oriented projects.
- **Balance uniqueness and learning from others.** The need to create a unique centre that addresses the specific requirements of an organization and fits its unique culture should be balanced with learning from other centers and adopting their good practices. Do not re-invent all the wheels.
- **Balance the physical and virtual spaces**. While the 'magic' of meaningful conversations often happens naturally in face-to-face meetings, in many cases

[29] OpenFutures (2007). Organizational Perspective

there are geographic, time and other constraints. The virtual extension of the centre makes sense; it enables some activities to be carried on at a distance, bridging geography and busy schedules that don't allow for travel. Virtual spaces can enable meaningful participation/contribution with technology-enhanced facilitation techniques, allowing projects to benefit from the distributive intelligence of the organization, the sector and beyond.

- **Balance high tech with high touch**. Use technology that helps the center's activities (for example, electronic meeting software and hardware) but at the same time retain the comfortable, casual, personal environment where people can feel at home, work with their hands, pick up a pen and write/draw something, or simply talk with one another.
- **Focus on the essence as well as the shell.** Centers need to make their mission and their integrated working model clear. The importance of the inspiring physical environment is only one factor that makes Future Centers effective. Do not focus on the building or the physical space, but on the integrative mix of concepts that drives the center's operating principles.

The basis

- **It's about people.**
    - **Leadership is critical**. Leadership at all levels is essential for guiding work processes in projects and for directing the course of centers within their parent organizations. However, it is essential that the centre is not dependent on one person; when he/she leaves the organization, the centre may be seen as his hobby and suffers accordingly. Invest efforts in developing good relationships throughout senior management.
    - **Partnerships are critical.** External partnerships can add needed knowledge and new perspectives to processes. Partnerships with respected persons and organizations can also provide legitimacy when working with complex and sensitive issues. Pay special attention to partnering with other units within the organization. Without genuine partnerships, there will not be 'buy in' from other parts of the organization, and the centre will be regarded as an ivory tower.
- **Clear vision is critical**. The personnel, the parent organization, and the important stakeholders must understand why the centre is needed and how it can provides value. The center's mission, as well as the issues it addresses, should be related to the major challenges of the organization.
- **Asking the right questions.** Future Centers ask questions and encourage people to ask questions – this allows people and organizations to better understand both the context within which they work, and the mindsets in which they think about people, problems, and possible solutions. Asking good questions also helps people not accept easy answers. In many organizations, people are too quick to accept the obvious answer ("what everyone knows"), the superficial answer, and the easy answer that seems to fit, even though this often brings things back to business as usual. Asking questions: many questions, provocative and inconvenient questions, can help us focus on what we *don't* know, and works against accepting too easy an answer.
- **Find the right set of performance measures.** Performance measures and economic justification factors can make or break a centre. A simple return-on-investment spreadsheet is not the appropriate tool to justify the investment – centers must measure the real potential impact and added value of the centre, not only the tangible short term results.
- **Remember the importance of continuous renewal**. Renewal of the center's mission, methods and working practices should be a high priority. Over time, the needs of the parent organization as well as other contextual conditions (e.g. corporate objectives or internal politics) change. The center's vision and operating principles should be continuously updated and upgraded.

Chapter 8 Future Directions for Future Center in Europe.

There is increasing interest in Future Centers throughout Europe. Developments in recent years have broadened the scope of some existing Future Centers (for example, both MindLab and Futurefocus now work for three ministries instead of one), while others have developed new and more extensive physical working environments (LEF Future Center's new dedicated work space, and The Country House's historical city villa with gardens). While several original centers have closed (Skandia Future Center and Sydkraft), new centers have emerged in Sweden, Denmark, the UK, the Netherlands, Finland and Israel. In other European countries (Portugal, Italy, Croatia) organizations are investigating possibilities for establishing future centers, while interest outside Europe is evident in China and Japan. There is clearly a need for this kind of facilitated innovation environment.

Cities (in the Netherlands and the UK) and regions (Tuscany in Italy, Oresund in Sweden-Denmark, Limburg Province in the Netherlands) are working on feasibility studies to see how future center-type workspaces can stimulate entrepreneurship and innovation in their public and private sector communities.

Figure 84 LEF: Netherland's largest Future Center

More and more industrial working environments are being redesigned in ways that reflect future center concepts (for example: Google, Pixar, Nuon, Red Bull, Volkswagen), while commercial providers of future center-like services have plans to create new facilities to expand their service provision (Twijnstra-Gudde).

This chapters looks at several directions that point to promising lines of development for the European Future Centers in the coming year.

8.1 OpenFutures European Commission project[30]

In 2006 a European Commission project was initiated to survey best practice in existing future Centers and describe the state of the art in an open operating system accessible to all internet users. The Mission of *OpenFutures* is to *accelerate the innovation, dissemination, and use of Future Centers and other collaborative working environments*, *by creating an easily accessible, open source "operating system" describing how to set up, run and continuously improve these places*. *OpenFutures* aims to increase the effectiveness and the efficiency of Future Centers and other collaborative working environments in diverse fields of public administration and industry.

OpenFutures brought together many of the people who have pioneered Future Center concepts since the mid-1990's, and whose work incorporates recent research and hands-on practical insights in diverse disciplines relevant to Future Center work: innovation management, work organization, workplace design, the behavioral and cognitive sciences, knowledge creation and intellectual capital, interactive technologies and tools, participative methodologies for change, innovation and group dynamics, usability and human factors, learning environments, and the organization of professional communities. These experts work in both public administration and business, and their collective, integrated experience has been mobilized to describe how best to establish and operate Future Centers.

[30] OpenFutures website

The project explores the *ORGANISATIONAL, PHYSICAL, TECHNOLOGICAL & METHODOLOGICAL* perspectives of these collaborative working environments. The project describes best practice, critical success factors, and opportunities for practical collaboration for these dimensions, and provide insights into how Future Centers and other kinds of collaborative working environments can mutually benefit from each other's expertise and technologies. Special attention is paid to how human factors and the organization of work processes enhance user-centricity and the ability of people to collaborate across distance, content areas, and national cultures.

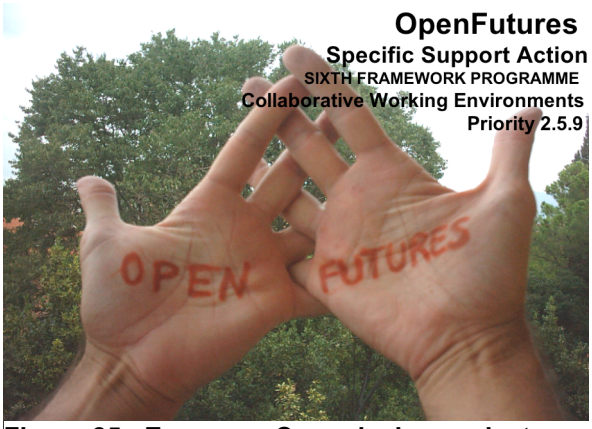

Figure 85 European Commission project OpenFutures

The project supports both the Future Center community and a broader community of researchers and practitioners working on the development of collaborative working environments in Europe (e.g. Living Labs, see section 8.3 below). The intention is to integrate existing experience and on-going research in order to provide new opportunities for breakthroughs, systemic innovation and societal renewal. After the project finishes in mid-2008, results will be available both on Internet and in print-on-demand versions.

8.2 Emerging issues for future research

The survey of good practice done by OpenFutures has surfaced a number unanswered questions and emerging issues – issues on which there is no general agreement, and issues where centers indicate that they do too little or would like to know more. These are the directions in which centers indicate they would like to evolve.
Together they indicate the contours for a research agenda of the future.

OpenFutures has indicated the following issues as arenas for innovative practice and additional research:

- How to enhance the effectiveness of high-touch centers with affordable emerging technologies?
- How to /sector? use technology to harness distributed intelligence throughout an organization
- How to position Future Centers as accessible to everyone, avoiding the image of being elite?
- How to play a stronger role in implementing the results achieved in Future center sessions: how to provide support and stimulation in actively realizing the results of sessions in the client's working environment?
- How to anchor the outcomes of Future Center projects in the organization?
- New working models of Future Centers for organizations without financial resources.

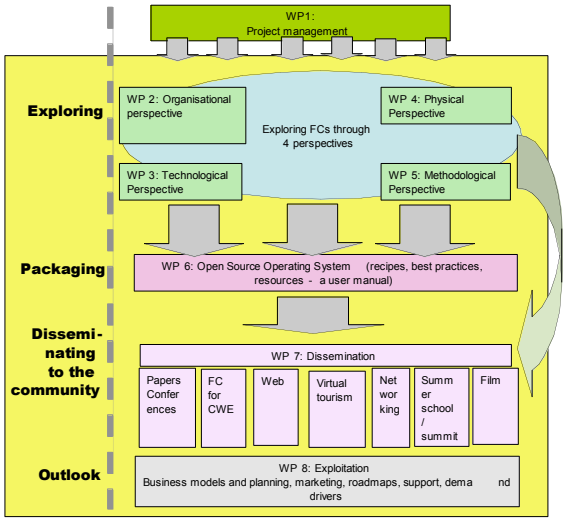

Figure 86 OpenFutures work plan

- The potential and power of temporary, dynamic *future spaces*: how to create and take full advantage of Future Centers "on location", in order to address issues where people work and problems actually occur.
- How can linked future spaces and centers work together on collaborative projects.
- More "future" in Future Centers: more effective use of professional futurists and futurizing tools.
- How to measuring the value of short-term results in the context of mid-term organizational outcomes and long-term impact.
- Closer links between Future Centers, Living Labs, and Corporate Universities.
- Learning spaces large and small: how to apply the learning done in Future Centers to organizational contexts beyond the centre?
- Emergent forms: mobile Future Centers, Future Centers in a suitcase, the network as Future Center.
- Special varieties suited to countries without financial resources: southern Europe, Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America.

The OpenFutures consortium is in consultation with the European Commission about developing new projects that address a number of these issues. Individual centers, innovative practitioners and academic researchers are looking independently at answers to some of the open questions. The Future Center Alliance (see section 8.6 below) is working with clients to create prototypes that demonstrate practical solutions to some of the issues raised.

8.3 Future Centers and Living Labs: hybrid forms

Living Labs are co-creative innovation environments driven by new and emerging ICT technology. The Living Lab is a new concept for R&D and innovation that supports the Lisbon strategy for jobs and growth in Europe. Labs are open innovation environments in real-life settings – for example, a city or urban neighborhood, a geographic region, the various buildings of an organization – in which user-driven innovation is the focus for the process of testing and improving new ICT-based products and services. A Living Lab makes technology applications available to users in their own working and living environments, and encourages users to take active part in research and innovation. They integrate societal and technological dimensions simultaneously in business-citizen-government-academia partnerships.

Living Labs exist in diverse domains including e-Health, e-Transport, e-Government, e-Agriculture and e-Tourism. The European Commission recognizes the potential of Living Labs to contribute towards building a future economy in which real-time user-centric research will be a normal co-creation technique for developing new products, services and societal infrastructure.

In the period 2005-2008 The European Commission has supported the establishment of a Europe-wide network of Living Labs. The European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL) was launched during the Finnish presidency (2006) and active support has continued during the presidencies of Portugal and Slovenia (2007). It sees this network as one of the first steps towards creating a new European Innovation System. In the same period the Commission has run a number of projects supporting research into Living Labs. In 2007 these projects were brought together as the Living Lab Portfolio of Projects, under the coordination of a leadership group. *OpenFutures* forms part of this portfolio.

Future Centers and Living Labs.
Future Centers share the Living Lab passion for open, user-driven co-creation, but focus on a far wider range of issues. In Future Centers the issues and objectives *belong to the users*, not to lab operators or technology providers. Where the current generation of Living Labs focus on how existing and emerging technologies can

Figure 87 High tech/high touch balance

improve the quality of life of people who come into contact with them, Future Centers enable people to deal with actual issues and problems regardless of what technology is available, where people live and work or where the lab itself is located. Future Centers aim at a balanced high tech/high touch approach, and actively emphasize the social dynamic aspects of collaboration rather than the technological means.

As such, Future Centers and Living Labs are natural partners. As a result of cooperation in the Living Lab Portfolio of Projects and diverse contacts with existing Living Labs, researchers have begun to explore possibilities for new forms of Livings Labs in which Future Center concepts are embedded, and new forms of Future Centers in which Living Lab technologies play a larger role. These new, hybrid forms promise greater effectively in tackling societal problems and issues that impact the quality of life throughout Europe.

8.4 The future of future centers

The first generation of Future Centers was typified by the Skandia Future Center and the early centers (Sydkraft, ABB) that it directly inspired in the second half of the 1990's. The current generation of Future Centers, as described in this report, have incorporated the lessons learned by the early Swedish centers and adapted the concepts to a variety of cultures and contexts. We can see this generation as Future Centers 2.0.

In looking at future directions for development, it is useful to think in terms of Future Centers 3.0. Here, emerging insights and new user contexts will influence the creation of different types of centers better enabled to deal with the full range of issues facing organizations and society as the 21st century unfolds.

Emerging forms

The Future Center/Living Lab hybrid is certainly one direction this development will take. Other emerging forms include the city as Future Center, the neighborhood as Future Center, the sector as future center (for example: the energy sector, the construction sector, food and agriculture), the thematic future center (for example: sustainability, integration of minorities in a multicultural society, curriculum development in education, aging populations and health care).

Future Centers for Science and Technology Parks

By definition, Science and Technology Parks (STP) deal with the future on a daily basis. They explore, create and develop new theories, technologies and products, addressing future needs, challenges and opportunities. Future Centers can add an additional element to the fabric of a STP – a dedicated organizational space to leverage the human and structural capital of the STP. It would act as a place for facilitated conversations between internal and external stakeholders, triggering multi-perspective analysis of current and emerging research, potential collaborations, and possibly joint strategies between different organizations working in the STP. [31] In this way it could be a potent instrument for furthering open innovation.

Another development is the integration of Future Center concepts in corporate universities. The Dutch Foundation for Corporate Universities (NSCU) has been investigating ways to

[31] Dvir, Garcia, Ozores, Shwartzberg (2007)

integrate a Future Center function in the activities of its members since 2006. The relationship between future center thinking and creating learning organizations was the subject of the Foundation's annual conference in 2006, and a research project about innovative and inspiring learning environments in 2007. The NSCU published a pamphlet describing its findings in 2007.[32] A European corporate university initiative is under consideration.

Yet another direction the future may take is indicated by the interest that several national innovation platforms are taking in Future Centers. These platforms tend to be high-level think tanks, excellent at describing the direction of desired societal change in terms of "what" and sometimes also "how". The link to realizing their recommendations in practice, however, is often weak. Can Future centers play an active role in the realization of these recommendations? The national innovation platform in the Netherlands makes use of he *Country House Future Center*, and is looking into creating a larger, national center to deal with a great variety of societal issues. The innovation authority of Flanders (Belgium) is interested in similar developments.

Is it possible for a country to be a experimental park for societal transition and innovation? In its White Paper "Innovation Nation" the United Kingdom has set out a broad plan for unlocking the talents of its people to recreate itself as "the best country in the world to run an innovative business or public service"[33]. The need for a broader application of Future Center concepts throughout the government (and throughout the country) is clear, and *Futurefocus* – working for the responsible ministry – will play a role here.

The idea of a national future center – and a "country as future center" – still needs further development, but the first initiatives along this line are ready to be taken. In a parallel development, countries like Finland and Slovenia have declared themselves to be national Living Labs.

Once Future Centers operate on a national scale, their ability to break through silos and compartmentalized thinking of all kinds will be greatly enhanced. Integral visions and effective action plans can be created through processes of thinking together. They can apply new kinds of collective intelligence to seeking synergy and consensus through creative dialogue, instead of simply stapling together the ideas of each participating party. Countries will be facilitated in dealing with national and international issues of societal innovation at the appropriate level – which, in terms of Future Center philosophy, is never report-based, always person-to-person.

8.5 Using "*ba*" to optimize intellectual capital

Future Centers can provide a practical modern translation of the concept of *ba.* Ba is a context that harbors meaning, a shared space for emerging relationships that serves as an arena for knowledge creation. This Japanese concept, which roughly translates in the English word for "place", was originally proposed by the Japanese philosopher Nishida, and gained wider attention through the seminal article by Nonaka & Konno in 1998.[34]

According to Nonaka & Konno, knowledge is embedded in shared spaces, where it can be acquired and used. *Ba* is the world where the individual realizes himself as part of the environment. It can be thought of as a shared space for emerging relationships. In organizations, knowledge-creating teams and projects play key roles in value creation; value emerges from interactions within the shared *ba*, but is not restricted to physical *ba*. This space can be *physical* (eg. office, dispersed business space), *virtual* (e.g., email, teleconference), *mental* (eg. shared experiences, ideas, ideals) or any combination of them. The concept of *ba* provides a platform for advancing both individual and/or collective

[32] NSCU (2007)
[33] Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills (2008)
[34] Nonaka & Konno (1998)

knowledge. It describes and informs places where people, projects, and organizations can optimize their intellectual capital and apply it to working on innovation.

There are four types of *ba* and these correspond to the four stages of the Nonaka & Konno's SECI model, which describes the interactions between tacit and explicit knowledge that lead to the creation of new knowledge. In this model, knowledge can undergo four processes of transformation, each one adding value to the organizational context in which it occurs:

- *Socialization*, where tacit knowledge is shared through face-to-face interaction. It involves capturing knowledge through physical proximity and direct interaction; it is exchanged through joint activities.
- *Externalization*, where tacit knowledge becomes explicit – for example, through dialogue – and converted into "knowledge recipes" which embed the combined tacit knowledge and enable its communication and use.
- *Combination*, where various elements of explicit knowledge are combined into larger and more complex assets suitable for general use. For example: presentations, prototypes, guidelines and textbooks.
- *Internalization*, where explicit knowledge becomes part of an individual's knowledge base (e.g. mental models), and an implicit asset for the organization. It is embodied in actions and practice, and closely linked to learning by doing.

Different kinds of *ba* are suited to each of these knowledge conversion processes, and can support and facilitate the conversion of knowledge. The dynamics of ba are a function of spatial design. Creating spaces (physical, virtual and mental) with appropriate *ba* can enhance the processes of knowledge creation, sharing and use.

The concept of *ba* and the SECI-model have enjoyed a wide influence in the development of organizational knowledge-creation processes and innovation environments in Europe. Planners and practitioners have used them in their design of innovation spaces. Several Future Centers initiatives have made initial attempts to create workspaces corresponding to the various *ba*'s, in order to facilitate the different knowledge conversion processes. Early experiments and prototypes have led to new insights in the use of space for the application of emergent knowledge, for enhancing innovation and for supporting the creative capacities of people.

Thinking about intellectual capital and knowledge-creation – and thus value creation – in terms of *ba* and the SECI-model provides new avenues for organizations to create conditions and environments conducive for innovation to emerge. Intellectual and Knowledge Cafés are places for socialization and internalization, Intellectual Assets centers and creativity centers are excellent environments for externalization. Future Centers, with their different workspaces and facilitated environments, can provide *ba* suitable for all four processes of the SECI model.

Particular areas within Future centers can be designed to enhance knowledge creation. For example, at Skandia Future Center, the kitchen functioned as a trust-enriching environment, exercising all senses to embrace and cultivate the knowledge sharing. A special knowledge environment can be seen in the K-room, prototyped at Bottom Line AB in Sweden. K stands for knowledge, *kulture* (culture), *kreativity* (creativity) and *kommunikation* (communication) in Swedish. Every detail in the K room is full of historical perspectives, influencing a knowledge story to be shared as collective intelligence. Such dialoguing environments are used to nurture leadership and sustainable organizational perspectives.[35]

[35] OpenFutures (2008)

Konno sees the importance of shaping *ba's f*or knowledge-workers, for example translated in terms of systematized office design which takes into consideration a variety of factors beyond the purely physical and architectural aspects. He views the workplace as a knowledge ecosystem, where creativity, collaboration, and effectiveness can be enhanced through attention to *ba*.

Nonaka recognizes that *ba* is not limited to the frame of a single organization, but can move beyond the boundaries of cooperating companies and networks, or between companies and their customers. *Ba* can be built as an interactive relationship with customers, a joint venture with a supplier, or an alliance with a competitor.[36]

In this sense *ba* becomes a vehicle for supporting open innovation. Spatial design, the collaboration of people beyond boundaries, and the creation of *ba* impact the core business of Future Centers, and promise to provide insights into the development of yet more effective centers.

8.6 Future Center Alliance

A working alliance of specialists in the field of establishing and running Future centers has emerged from the OpenFutures consortium. This group of visionary thinkers and pragmatic practitioners is committed to helping clients in business and government create effective Future Centers that are custom-made to deal with the issues and challenges of their work context. As societal innovators, they have an interest in helping organizations and sectors to optimize intellectual capital and apply it towards achieving broader societal objectives.

This group includes people from Sweden, the Netherlands, Israel, Italy and Poland, experts specializing in intellectual capital, creative environments and innovation ecology. They were instrumental in creating the Skandia Future Center; they organized the first two Future Center Summits, and are coordinators of the OpenFutures project. Their attention is focused on finding practical and effective answers to a number of the emerging issues related to Future Centers 3.0, and prototyping new forms of centers to meet the challenges of modern organizations and societies: How to create temporary, nomadic centers which work where people live and problems actually occur? How to create centers in environments with limited financial resources? How can what is learned in Future Centers be integrated into organizational and societal learning? How can an (inter)national network of linked Future Centers – systematically sharing knowledge, facilities and other resources – be used to tackle boundary-spanning problems?

The Future Center Alliance is working on plans for a 3rd international Summit in the second half of 2008, which will address a number of these issues.

Figure 88 "The perspective is worth 50 IQ points", Skandia Future Center

[36] Nonaka, Toyama, Scharmer (2001)

Chapter 9 Suggestions for Future Centers in Japan

9.1 Challenges

There are various reasons why a country may be interested in developing Future Centers. Societies are challenged by problems of increasing complexity as they make the transition from traditional economies to knowledge economies. Intellectual assets alone do not necessarily enable organizations to meet the complex and interrelated challenges of globalization, sustainability, changing climate, diminishing resources, aging populations, and the increasing need for international cooperation and competition across borders of all kinds. Innovation and entrepreneurial spirit are required, but even this is no guarantee of success. New perspectives and paradigms are required, because doing *more* of what we have always done – even doing it better, smarter, faster, and cheaper – will not deliver new outcomes, but only improve our efficiency to achieve more of the same.

Many modern knowledge economies experience problems embedding innovation, entrepreneurial spirit and citizen-centricity in organizations and society. The catalogue of problems is extensive and characterizes even the most progressive societies. For example:

- It is often difficult to introduce new ideas into traditional institutions; this can be true of both government and large corporations.
- The same is true for introducing new ways of thinking and working: traditionally oriented organizational culture discourages thinking out-of-the-box and challenging the system.
- Where there are many creative ideas, organizations often lack the ability to put them into practice.
- Hierarchical structures and top-down approaches to change can stifle creativity and individual initiative.
- Many small and medium sized enterprises lack the time and resources to share ideas and experience with others.
- Citizen and user centric innovation processes need special environments to thrive, and these mental and physical environments are often hard to find.
- Both industry and government experience difficulty in the effective application of scientific knowledge.
- More investment in R&D leads to less value from the results (often referred to as the 'innovation paradox').
- Engineers and planners talk about user-centric design, but often produce answers to engineering problems instead of what users and citizens really want.
- In both the public and private sector, new policies (in government) and new products (in business) are often subject to over-engineering.
- Over-engineered solutions tend to resist change, despite the changing demands of society and the changing preferences of people.

Silos of science and engineering hinder the development of integral solutions for societal problems. Even within organizations, knowledge is developed – and protected – in compartments, and it is difficult to break out of them. Open systems serve innovation, but organizations tend to be closed, protecting what they know and their right to exploit it.

Future Centers in Europe have provided useful approaches to deal with a number of these issues. Breaking down borders of all kinds is an area in which they are especially effective. Future Centers encourage people to have a healthy disregard for 'received truth' and accepting 'the way things are' as the way things have to be. Understanding a paradigm is very different from acting as if it is the only approach to reality. Multiple mind-sets enrich opportunities, and this is one route centers use to stimulate innovative thinking.

In both business and government, many people equate innovation with technology. Policy and strategies are often formulated in terms of 'magic bullets': "Where's the magic technology or killer app that will solve everything?" Future Centers help organizations understand that innovation is about more than technology, and help put people and their intellectual capacities in the equation. They are places where the consistent attention to

examining existing patterns and testing new perspectives provides a fertile context for exploring opportunities for meaningful change. As such, they have been able to contribute a questioning, entrepreneurial mind-set to dealing with change, and create conditions where innovations in thinking and doing can emerge.

If a number of these issues also apply to Japan, there may be sufficient reasons to explore what Future Centers can contribute to meeting economic and societal challenges with people-centered, citizen-centered open innovation processes.

9.2 Opportunities

Japan can build on existing resources of knowledge and experience in relevant fields to explore possibilities for developing future centers. There is extensive experience with Intellectual Assets management, including national agenda's and regional programs for making better use of these assets. New approaches to open innovation and issues of intellectual property rights are being investigated in order to develop effective strategies for collaboration in national and international arenas.

Organizations have experience using innovation spaces like Intellectual Cafés to stimulate knowledge creation and sharing. Cafés of this kind can be one service in the package of services future centers offer. The work of Professor Nonaka and his colleagues on developing and documenting the concept of *ba* and its relation to knowledge creation is a fertile base for applying future center thinking more broadly in designing the *ba* of workspaces. The further integration of future centers concepts and *ba* can lead to the creation of uniquely Japanese innovation spaces for effective value creation.

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 (such as electronics, automotive, and digital appliances), and the coupling of long-term thinking with the rapid development of successful products for the marketplace that is characteristic of various industries, are building blocks for exploiting future center concepts more broadly in society. The importance of tradition, and the value Japan traditionally places on craftsmanship and on making the efforts required – and taking the necessary time – to do things right, resonate well with future center thinking.

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 are necessary.

In the Keizai Doyukai 2006 proposal for Japan's Innovation Strategy, the core function of innovation is seen as the ability "to overcome the past, tackle current challenges, and to create value for the future, and it requires diversity, an open and global mindset, a willingness to collaborate and the ability to communicate".[37] In many ways, this reads like a recipe for working with Future Centers. The proposal argues that citizens must become more independent and change their mind-set regarding innovation. In order for this to happen, Japan's society must change; the proposal suggests three strategies to do so:

- *Build an open society*, tearing down walls that exist within society, welcoming and rewarding new challenges, and providing opportunities to people who wish to do so.
- *Build a diverse society*, enabling diverse types of people to play an active role in shaping society, creating a more tolerant social structure and mind-set, and redesigning the education system so that it develops people who can think for themselves and communicate smoothly with other.

[37] Keizai Doyukai (2006)

- *Build an attractive society*, where people discuss and share common goals/visions to create a clear and engaging goal for innovation, and an attractive picture of the future which people are proud of.

Many aspects in these strategies involve core elements of future center practice, which can be addressed effectively in centers dedicated to societal transformation and organizational change. Introducing future centers in Japan offers an opportunity to realize these – or other relevant strategies – in a productive way.

Good contacts exist with European Future Centers, and with networks of thought-leaders and practitioners in this field, and this suggests a fruitful way forward.

9.3 Suggestions about how to proceed

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. The first requirement is always the *will* to act. This includes the will to take concrete steps, and applies to both individual and organizational will. A strong champion can mobilize interest, energy and other resources required to take these steps. The impulse for setting up a future center can come from any level of the organization, but support at senior levels is an essential success factor.

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, which may include working sessions to explore expectations and needs, and facilitated discussions about how the centers work and why they are effective, are an excellent means to bring the concepts to life. Several European centers were initiated after visits of this kind.

It is also possible to invite future center developers and personnel from Europe to conduct workshops in Japan, creating dynamic *future spaces* that demonstrate how the concepts work in practice and bring a future center experience to a wider group of stakeholders. This can be combined with workshops focused on translating European experience to specific Japanese contexts.

The intention would be to create Japanese models relevant to the culture of particular work contexts: public, private, sectoral, regional. One can consider setting up centers for central or regional government, in SME sectors, or in major multinationals. Government and industry could learn together from centers serving different sectors. Ideally, several centers could be set up in different contexts, allowing cross-pollination and testing different approaches to complex issues. Contact and collaboration with existing centers and with networks like OpenFutures, the Future Center Alliance and the Summit community can provide input for realizing these models.

Initially, ambitious objectives coupled with small steps focusing on achievable objectives may work best. Large capital investments in ambitious projects may follow after discrete initiatives demonstrate their capacity for producing results. Considering societal themes like energy, environmental protection, education, stimulating entrepreneurship, integration and equal opportunity, healthcare, aging population, sustainable knowledge creation – either at the level of policy, policy implementation, or industrial product and service development – there seem to be sufficient areas where future centers can contribute new perspectives, innovative ideas, and energetic translation into concrete results.

In this way, future centers can contribute to open innovation and open government, and to enhancing the creative power of society. Standing still is equivalent to slipping backwards. The future is a moving target, and it is important to move with it.

Chapter 10 References and Resources

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