

Kenniswerkplaats as a method for
learning regions and lifelong learning



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme



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EUROPEA Spain organises from 25 – 29 September a COPCHAVET seminar (COPing with CHALLENGes in Vocational Education and Training) in Zaragoza. The theme of this meeting is cooperation between school, enterprise and community. The program consists of conferences and presentations of “green” VET renewal in Agriculture and “employment and skills needed in the Food Industry of Aragon”.

AOC Terra wants to contribute to the COPCHAVET seminar with a report of its experiment Kenniswerkplaats. AOC Terra is interested in international cooperation in order to develop the concept of the Dutch tool for regional learning



AOC TERRA

AOC Terra is an Agricultural Education Centre (AOC) of almost 6000 students and offers land based (agricultural/ green) education. Land based education is divided into prevocational (vmbo), senior secondary vocational (mbo) and higher vocational studies (hbo). AOC Terra offers vmbo and mbo. The vmbo course provides general training, primarily using plants and animals to provide students with a fertile, motivational learning environment. The mbo course includes areas of study such as food technology, landscape management, horse management, flowers and design, (paraveterinary) animal care, sport and recreation, care and the environment and (agricultural) technology. AOC Terra is situated in the north of the Netherlands and consists of twelve schools: seven schools for prevocational education, four schools for senior secondary vocational education (16 years and up) and one school for senior secondary vocational education (18 years and up) and part-time courses. The (senior) secondary vocational education prepares fulltime students.

GREEN CHAIN

An AOC is not an isle – there is a growing awareness for the need of collaboration. Not only with other senior secondary vocational education but also with prevocational education, with higher vocational education (Van Hall Larenstein, CAH, Stoas Hogeschool/ Vilentum, HAS den Bosch) and University (Wageningen University & Research centre). AOC Terra is part of a green knowledge chain, learning from and collaborating with each other.

INTERNATIONALISATION - the world without borders.

Internationalisation in education means establishing and maintaining contacts with foreign schools and institutions in order to promote knowledge exchange and the exchange of students and teachers. That is why AOC Terra is member of several international networks; EUROPEA INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION, an international network for agricultural schools (<http://www.europea.org/>) of which almost 1000 schools are member; the national EUROPEA (<http://www.europea-nederland.nl/>); Carrefour Europeën. To strengthen the ties and the knowledge exchange with partners and friends in the EU AOC Terra produced the brochure *Knowledge arrangement for the learning region*.

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SUMMARY

Against the background of the experiences of a learning process in the Netherlands, this brochure will discuss the concept of the regional Kenniswerkplaatsen. Literally, the Dutch word Kenniswerkplaatsen (plural Kenniswerkplaatsen) means 'knowledge factory', a building or place outside the school designed as a field lab where knowledge is produced. This is what Kenniswerkplaatsen does. It is a learning, research and work community of regional stakeholders who in a durable setting meet students, teachers and researchers from vocational education institutes and universities. AOC Terra is amongst others the initiator of the experiment of the Kenniswerkplaatsen. Through this she wants to establish an external concept and structure for her students and teachers in order to enable them to work, learn and teach in the real world.

Why do we need the Kenniswerkplaatsen?

AOC Terra is in her field one of the best vocational education institutes in the Netherlands. However, we feel that we moved education further and further away from the real world. The actors outside, such as farmers, entrepreneurs, governors and civilians, speak their own languages and have their own habits and cultures. It became increasingly difficult for them to connect to the green education institutions. That is why AOC Terra and her green educational partners started the experiment of the Kenniswerkplaatsen. In this brochure, the details about Kenniswerkplaatsen will be reviewed, in particular with a focus on the concept itself, its origins and its implementation. We will conclude with a critical reflection.

The concept

The concept of Kenniswerkplaatsen assumes a permanent, practice-oriented learning and knowledge connection in the region outside the school between civil society actors and educational and research institutions (knowledge infrastructure). A structured, multiyear partnership built on a regional learning and knowledge agenda is underway. This structure is composed from the best traditions and experiences with tools developed in the Netherlands such as the famous so called 'OVO' triad (Education, Research and Extension), the Science Shop, problem-based learning, Inquiry-learning and the Knowledge Desk. The Dutch model of Regional Kenniswerkplaatsen is intended to grow into a regionally embedded permanent knowledge system that can continue to develop into a solid foundation for Lifelong Learning.

Regional contracts for multiyear cooperation

Kenniswerkplaatsen was originally developed and described in the context of rural development (Foorthuis 2005, Elerie and Koopman 2008, Roep 2009, Meyles and Van Hoven 2010, Foorthuis and Koopman 2011). Its focus is achieving multi-year, programme-based learning and knowledge arrangements at the regional level, in which both green and non-green knowledge institutions participate, and then formalising these partnerships in regional contracts. It is intended to cover the full spectrum of preparatory and secondary vocational education, higher education (universities of applied sciences and traditional universities) and the regional parties, which all cooperated in a jointly formulated programme on the envisaged sustainable innovation of the living/working environment of the region.

The innovation and educational agendas adopted at the regional level are the starting point for the development of the multi-year knowledge arrangements. They are implemented through projects established in a regional learning and knowledge agenda. The organisation and implementation takes place within Kenniswerkplaatsen following the 'Regional Learning' methodology.



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WHAT IS KENNISWERKPLAATS - A CLASSIFICATION

SYSTEM INNOVATION

The Dutch experiment Kenniswerkplaats is a learning, research and work community with a focus on revitalising the regional living and working environment. In *Kenniswerkplaats*, projects such as area development projects are constructed, implemented and set in a learning environment. Students, teachers, researchers, lecturers and professors of higher education and research institutions partner with entrepreneurs, governmental authorities, experts, users and private individuals to come up with innovative solutions for rural, urban and suburban issues. At the same time, the knowledge system undergoes an innovation process (Foorthuis and Rippen 2011, p. 7).

Kenniswerkplaats is the centre of a knowledge infrastructure consisting of a range of knowledge institutions, knowledge institutes and regional partners, and as such is a component of a multi-year regional knowledge agenda. The projects that result from it are knowledge- and skills-intensive:

Kenniswerkplaats is different from other models by virtue of its system approach, its multi-year horizon and continuity, its set-up for shared financing, and above all, its inherent foundation on the regional mandate. The region is owner, and the region has the initiative. As a result, the research and education sector cannot co-opt the reality on the ground, which is in effect what has happened in all experiments in this area so far. This, by its nature, creates system innovation within research and educational institutions (Hekman 2012, p. 31).

KNOWLEDGE INNOVATION

Kenniswerkplaats is a place of innovation. On the one hand, a highly streamlined and controlled knowledge infrastructure, and on the other, an open research centre for the SME segment. And yet, at the same time, a workshop and meeting place for students, teachers, researchers, public officials, entrepreneurs and the public. Anyone in the region with a knowledge question (or better still, a learning question) can come here for answers. The questions may come from a wide variety of areas: sustainability, social-economic development, spatial issues or innovation. Anything goes, so long as the region determines and establishes the focus. The region, rather than the knowledge institution, has the initiative (Lutz 2012, part 3, beginning on p. 8).

The regional *Kenniswerkplaats* realisations in the Netherlands (now numbering eight) have a permanent staff. In the triple helix approach, the costs are financed by the region, the business sector and the stakeholder educational institutions. Each *Kenniswerkplaats* is given the task of demonstrably stimulating the region in its innovation potential, through goals such as, for each workspace, mobilising 100,000 students annually with an additional 20,000 teaching and research hours, as well as 500 entrepreneurs in assignments and knowledge transfer.

The eight realisations of *Kenniswerkplaats* are affiliated in the National (so called GKC) Regional Transition Programme, which serves as a back office for *Kenniswerkplaats*, and can facilitate both individual partners and the process as a whole, at the national and international levels.

In 2008, this programme developed as a AOC Terra experiment an initial knowledge arrangement in cooperation with the Veenkoloniën (Peat District Region), which was then set out in a Regional Contract by thirteen cooperating regional government parties, five (green and non-green) knowledge institutions and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (then Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality). Along with the learning/knowledge arrangement currently in implementation in the Peat District Region is a great success in the Netherlands. The concept is copied in several other Dutch regions, the following regions are also currently developing or implementing multi-year arrangements:

- Region Green Knowledge Port Twente (lead: AOC Oost)
- Region Southwestern Delta (lead: Edudelta Onderwijsgroep) Edudelta Education Group
- Region Gelderse Vallei and Eemland (lead: Aeres Group)
- Region Green Heart (lead: Inholland)
- Region Almere (lead: Aeres Group)
- Region Northeast Fryslân (leads: AOC Friesland/**AOC Terra**)
- Region Westerkwartier – in partnership with Veenkoloniën (leads: AOC Friesland/**AOC Terra**)
- Region Noord-Holland North (lead: Clusius College)

In each *Kenniswerkplaats*, three traditional universities, eleven universities of applied sciences and nine intermediate vocational education institutions invested a total of 126,580 student hours in the 2010-2012 period. An additional 26,000 teaching hours and 321 researcher hours went into projects, which also included the involvement of 612 enterprises and just under 600 individual citizens. Thanks to these efforts, for the 2012-2013 period each *Kenniswerkplaats* is striving for a commitment of 100,000 student hours per *Kenniswerkplaats*. This demands a dynamic and reliable infrastructure connecting knowledge institutions and the 'real world.'

This is the way to create a national infrastructure. From within regional innovative knowledge agendas, work is being done on projects and processes for competency development, and in these the educational and research segments are working together in close partnership. This creates not only a regional but a national knowledge agenda that

facilitates coordination. Through this, *Kenniswerkplaats* offers new inroads, from the intermediate vocational education level through to university, for regional and area-oriented research, from large to small and from concrete to abstract. At this point we have also seen that the activities in *Kenniswerkplaats* generate a need for further academic research. We have also seen opportunities to better combine academic research with higher education. And the cooperation between students and researchers on projects often offers cost advantages, and can enhance the market position of the participating research institutions (Kwakernaak 2012, p. 9).

METHODOLOGICAL INNOVATION

Of course, the knowledge institutions cannot simply answer every question, let alone do so at any moment at the region's convenience. *Kenniswerkplaats* and its permanent staff must be the interface between the players on the society side (the business sector, government bodies, educational and research institutions and the environment, which we refer to as the 'big 5'). It is a control centre, a 'switchboard,' if you will, for bringing together questions and connecting them with running projects and processes. It is also where the architect shapes the required process to fit the need/assignment in such a way as to create a multi-stakeholder learning environment in and around the project. Here, we find the experts for the answers, help articulate the questions, connect the process to regional stakeholders, give the project a time frame and mediate on any resources required. *Kenniswerkplaats* anchors the approach in education by interfacing with the knowledge institutions to connect their projects with existing or planned modules, minors, research projects, final project assignments, or work placements, project weeks or summer schools - ideally in smart combinations of students and teachers from higher education or vocational education, to create an operational knowledge chain. Results depend on doing this in a broad-spectrum partnership with all parties, and always with the object of creating an optimal learning environment. This is the way to forge the seemingly incompatible into a functioning unit. As the process connects agendas, it connects budgets, time and efforts of teachers, students, officials, individuals and entrepreneurs. The necessity of building multi-stakeholder learning environments has, at this point, been impressed upon the European Parliament. In his capacity as chairman of the Advisory Council of the European Regions for Innovation, Lambert van Nistelrooij (CDA) argued fervently for further development of the Dutch model of regional *Kenniswerkplaats* in his publication 'Het platteland in verandering, bouwstenen vernieuwde aanpak regionaal plattelandsbeleid' ('Countryside in flux: building blocks of an innovative approach to regional rural area policy,' Nistelrooij 2008, p. 8).

THE PRINCIPLE: CONNECTION BETWEEN SECTORS

Processes such as shrinkage, changing age demographics, new economic pillars (or the lack thereof), climate change, urbanisation and leisure have an enormous impact on our daily lives. This transition is so intensive and far-reaching that we have no ability to deal with it in today's administrative and economic context.

The conventional tools that we generally reach for are not up to these tasks. These tools, as well as our approaches and our working methods, are rooted in sector-based thinking.

But this thinking in terms of water, agriculture, economics, nature, recreation, traffic or culture as discrete sectors, with all their structures and organisations, no longer appears to be effective. Generally speaking, the sectors are organised very effectively from the inside out, but also differ strongly from each other. Their quality and value are high; make no mistake. Within themselves, the sectors have generated an enormous amount of professional knowledge, and above all we must protect and use this knowledge.

But where the sectors intersect, the very places where the major knowledge questions facing us arise, the cooperation is difficult to get off the ground. All experts speak their own language, have their own tools and rely on their own financing channels. Room for one function often comes at the cost of another, not only physically and financially but in the minds of the public as well. At some point, there is no more to give. In times of crisis or societal transitions such as shrinking or changing age demographics, rather than fighting for space a better approach is to look at how to complement your own sector and share the space in meaningful ways.

There is generally a perfectly good solution for a problem within a single sector. But the point is that the major questions of today arise where the sectors overlap. How do we make sure that global warming does not make our very existence impossible? How do we keep cities and towns vital as their people get older? And how do we pay for all this in times of financial-economic crisis? These are the major knowledge questions that no single sector has the answers for.

**This is a
knowledge
arrangement**

So we have to ask the knowledge questions together. All parties have to work from their individual problem definitions to arrive at new, shared questions. They have to become aware of the transition assignment, want to arrive at new knowledge together and jointly learn how to get there.

THE GOAL: STRENGTHENING THE REGION'S COMPETITIVENESS THROUGH INNOVATION

From all corners, we hear the laments being sung of the vanishing countryside and its way of life; the dwindling of its tight social networks and the disappearance of services and farms. But is this really happening? This is a question of perspective. While it is true that many of the old structures and facilities are vanishing, at the same time new networks and economies are developing in the countryside and around the cities. Every day there are new farmers, although they are a new type of farmer in a new context. A 'true' farmer, but one seizing the opportunities of the new economic pillars that our countryside offers: living, recreational use and care, new chains or partnerships, new connections with surrounding

cities or other sectors, combining a global orientation with a local one - all movements that we can- see if we look closely.

THE ORIGINS OF KENNISWERKPLAATS

Kenniswerkplaats and its methodology were developed in 2004 from an experiment of the AOC Terra/VHL professor (uas) Willem Foorthuis in the Peat Districts in the northern Netherlands, where there was already an interesting regional partnership strategy in the form of the Agenda for the Peat Districts (nine municipalities, two provinces, two water boards). Working with six knowledge institutions, they developed a knowledge arrangement enabling the regional dialogue platform to feed the questions from the region directly into the educational and research institutions.

The arrangement became known by the name of '*Kenniswerkplaats*' (Foorthuis and Rippen, 2011). In the nearly eight years since, *Kenniswerkplaats* has also changed. What has also emerged since then, through the joint efforts of the lectorate in Regional Transition at the university of applied science and intermediate vocational education institution AOC Terra in Leeuwarden and with professor (uas) Willem Foorthuis (founder of *Kenniswerkplaats* and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation's Green Knowledge Cooperative (GKC), is the national Programme in Regional Transition. The most important task the ministry has placed with this programme is the formation of regional knowledge alliances for which the workspace methodology is the most important pillar.

After the Peat Districts region, a further eight regions followed in setting up a *Kenniswerkplaats*. The focus has increasingly shifted towards knowledge and innovation: not only working together, but learning together. The original name of 'Workspace' was changed to '*Kenniswerkplaats*' to reflect this shift.

HISTORICAL ANCHORING

It should come as no surprise that the process surrounding *Kenniswerkplaats* can be so effectively structured at the local, regional and national levels. The Netherlands has a rich tradition of bringing together communities, enterprise, research and education, and because of this we are able to draw upon broad and long-term experience in the formation of the new *Kenniswerkplaats* network.

OVO TRIAD (EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND EXTENSION)

For example, we can draw on the well-known 'OVO triad' that arose as a response to the fundamental and deep agricultural crisis in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The solution for the crisis was seen to lie in the promotion of knowledge and research to jump-start the enterprise sector, and with it the economy.

The parallels with today's current agenda are inescapable. Professional education for agriculture was better organised and professionalised. Consultants and PR professionals were appointed as connectors between knowledge and company.

Science was actively linked to the regional issues. In actuality, this created the foundation for the well-known education and research system pursued by Wageningen University and its green knowledge chain through the secondary vocational education system as we know it today.

A network around information and research rapidly sprung up in the period from 1890 to 1915 (Foorthuis 1991, p. 38 et seq., and Foorthuis 1994, p. 64 et seq.). In it, the terms education and information were closely connected. After all, what would be the point of agricultural information if recommendations could not be understood due to lack of knowledge? Driving forces in the process were the agricultural public relations officers agricultural consultants who were quickly appointed across the country. These moves created a broad pallet of educational programmes, trainings, practical research and courses all the way to the individual business level and even as far as the local café, which in turn led to the establishment of associations and partnerships or study groups.

The form the 'triple helix' took at the time rapidly increased the level of organisation in agriculture, creating hundreds of cooperatives and associations, such as partnerships for dairy processing, meat sales, potato flour processing, livestock feed and plant fertiliser sales, agricultural credit, insurance and livestock improvement through genetics. In addition, the winter evening readings and research groups of young farmers were created; today we would refer to these as 'communities of learners.' It was this degree of organisation that enabled the application of academic and commercial principles on a massive scale in the day-to-day practice in the companies. Based on this new knowledge network and the active connection of the knowledge institutions (on a permanent basis), after the agricultural crisis of 1878-1895 the Dutch agricultural sector saw rampant and sweeping changes across the sector and its acreage (Foorthuis 1991 and Foorthuis 1994). The economic effect was impressive, and the Dutch agriculture sector developed into a world leader (Zuurbier, 1984). The 'OVO triad' had proven itself, and over the course of the twentieth century the system was further refined and continued to prove itself time and again.

With the transition from the rural economy, with the agricultural sector as employer and economic pillar of the countryside began to vanish rapidly starting after the nineteen sixties, the OVO triad began to crumble. The partners in it grew further and further apart due to the transition to professionalism within each sector. This moved education further and further away from the situation on the ground in the rural region, and even from the very people it should have been educating. The emphasis shifted to schools. The players in the OVO triad developed their own languages and cultures, and it became increasingly difficult for them to find common ground. Through the 1970s and 1980s, the role of research and education was gradually taken over by commercial parties. It is hardly surprising that it was towards the end of this period that the intermediate vocational education institutions as AOC Terra en the universities became more and more aware of this situation. Experiments were done but the internal infrastructure based on education was not able to change. They were shut out

from what was then the still closed bastion of agricultural organisations, ministry and research institutes. The OVO triad had lost its impact, and the partners had become estranged. As the definition of the concept of knowledge economy emerged, the more government bodies became aware of the value of knowledge as a driver of innovation the stronger the argument became for closer cooperation between government, knowledge institutions and the business sector. In the Netherlands, a variety of initiatives emerged, such as the Knowledge Desk Brabant, Regional Innovation Centre Eemland, Rural Academy and *Kenniswerkplaats*. All these were initiatives for arriving at new knowledge arrangements (Roep 2009). But as the grant funding dwindled, so too did much of the impetus.

CURRENT SOCIETAL CONTEXT

As a logical continuation of a historical structure, *Kenniswerkplaats* functions both as a contemporary answer to current societal issues, the most significant of which we identify below.

INVOLVED CITIZENRY

In the coming years, the Dutch cabinet aims to enhance and expand involved citizenship.

This policy is defined by the former Dutch Minister of the Interior in the integration memorandum 2011 (Beleidsnota Integratie, binding, burgerschap [Integration Policy Memorandum, binding, citizenship], 2011, p. 14). He cites three policy-based drivers for this:

1. The cabinet strives for compact government.
2. Part of reaching this goal lies in mobilising the commitment and responsibility of the public in the structure and liveability of their environment.
3. Small-scale involvement must be retained as a counterbalance for current trends towards upscaling

The minister observes that in recent decades, the welfare state has taken more and more responsibilities away from citizens, professionals and civil society organisations, in favour of having them carried and looked after by government services. This, says the cabinet, is not only too expensive, but places the public more and more in the position of consumer and client of public services. The cabinet wants to break this trend with new forms of involvement and responsibility of citizens and civil society organisations in their environment. These new forms have to go 'fundamentally further than the traditional forms of participation, listening and societal debate.' (ibid.)

How these new forms of responsible citizenship should look is not yet clear. A plan has, however, been announced for a 'collective agenda for contemporary citizenship.' This agenda is to be composed in collaboration with municipalities, social organisations and the public. The minister had hoped to present this agenda at the end of 2011, but as yet this has not happened.

CRISIS AND SHRINKAGE

The motives of the now caretaker Rutte cabinet for promoting responsible citizenship are largely instrumental in nature. The financial-economic crisis is forcing the government to enact budget cuts, and these mean letting go of tasks that must be picked up by the citizenry. One relevant topic here is the 'shrinkage problem.' In the current discussions surrounding the 'shrinkage' issue, there are three processes potentially converging:

- Demographic trends (e.g. death rate surpassing birth rate)
- Spatial trends, for example, some regions or cities attracting more business and residents than others
- Economic trends, such as the industrial transformation of an area, when a given industry leaves and a part of the area's population follows

One of the first consequences of a 'shrinkage' is the disappearance of facilities. Not only does the 'demand' for facilities decrease as the number of inhabitants of a region falls, but we also see a one-sided shift, because it is generally the less prosperous (and often, the older) residents who stay. In its recommendations 'Identifying and utilising population shrinkage,' the Social and Economic Council refers to a number of factors, including the importance of cooperation between local authorities, the business sector, civil society institutions and the public. The responsible ministry (Interior and Kingdom Relations) sees an important task for the citizenry here. Shrinkage regions have to be stimulated, on the one hand by giving municipalities more policy leeway, and on the other by promoting a stronger position for the public.

DECOMPARTMENTALISATION

The criticism of the welfare state is nothing new, nor is it purely dictated by the need for budget cuts. Conceptions of the relationship between government, citizen and professional have been defined by change since early 2000, when the word 'partnership' began to be used as the fundamental concept in this area. The strict policy channels, both at the various levels of governmental authorities as well as in social organisations had to be swept aside. The magic word became 'decompartmentalisation': better interconnection, more coordination and more cohesion.

But decompartmentalisation will not remove the problematic organisational structures, nor will it make a substantial contribution to the approach to societal problems, said the Council for Social Development in its advisory report 'De ontkokering voorbij' (Beyond decompartmentalisation). In practice, 'more coordination' would generally lead, more than anything else, to the institution of new coordination bodies (that would therefore be an extra addition- to the existing dialogue and work structures). On balance, this would not be an improvement or make anything easier; rather, this would be a further complication.

The researchers arrive at the conclusion that compartmentalisation is not necessarily something bad as such, because it is what makes clear that different perspectives are possible and, in fact, necessary. This does not say, however, that everything has to stay the way it is - not at all. What is called for is an approach that acknowledges the complexity and diversity of the reality. This demands contact between the individual parties and obtaining wide-scope knowledge. This means the goal should not be decompartmentalisation for its own sake, but increasing the learning capacity of all parties.

According to the Council for Social Development, you have to accept that problems can be complex, and not try to solve them from the top down. Turn the perspective around, and ensure that

- private citizens and professionals make choices and share responsibility
- there is room to learn without dictating everything from the top down

This means that both within and between the various different sectors and players and their positions, goals and opportunities have to be made clear to all and common solutions have to be found. And that also means that within an organisation (for example, the local or regional authorities), a shared knowledge agenda and shared budget for a shared process or project must be structured so as to span the various different sectors (such as welfare, housing, labour participation, health, public space, etc.). The same goes for other administrative bodies and organisations.

SUSTAINABILITY

One issue that runs through all the subjects mentioned so far is sustainability. Sustainability relates to the generation and use of energy, the way we deal with materials, transportation and transport, housing construction, the food chain, counteracting or mitigating the consequences of climate change, reducing pollution - in short, it affects every aspect of our lives. It is a cross-sector subject, and so is a necessity for all societal sectors.



Virtually no one disputes the fact of the urgency of a 'green transition' in itself. A recent survey for the provincial environmental federations, for example, shows that 74% of Dutch consumers have a preference for climate-neutral products, and are even willing to pay 5% more for them. Still, saying is one thing but doing is something else; and at the same time- 'the consumer' is less and less willing to make concessions on price and quality. More and more people are seizing the responsibility for sustainability in their own actions, but in the eyes of consumers the biggest responsibilities are still borne by industry and the government. Thus, sustainability is not only a question of technological research and innovation, but even more so, one of awareness and attitude change in regard to the impact of individual actions on sustainability and applying this to one's own behaviour.

Two conflicting dynamics make this difficult:

- the individual as a member of society, with a high sense of standards for sustainable development, versus the egotistical consumer, whose primary focus is looking out for his own self-interest
- local action by enthusiastic citizens, versus global processes that cannot be changed

René Munnik, the Thomas More Foundation Professor at the University of Twente, argues for a change of perspective: Until now, we saw sustainability primarily as a necessary correction for what is going wrong. Let's look at sustainability as something that can and should be permanent, simply because being cautious makes sense. In terms of responsibility, sustainability is as a principle everyone's concern, but the parties that should be primarily held to account for sustainable development are those who determine the political and economic course: people in key positions, policy-makers, administrators, politicians. Does this discharge the ordinary citizen from his or her responsibilities? No, quite the contrary; but at the same time, Evelien Tonkens' remarks on the constructive relationship between societal players and the role of government are valid here: 'The inviting and connecting government does not withdraw, but is active without being overbearing and calculating and inciting passive behaviour.

This means that which goes for all other societal questions applies equally to sustainability: active citizenship can only come about when the government, the business sector and the civil society players, like the individual, take an active attitude, invite and connect, as well as ask for something from the public in return. As this shows, this too is a process of knowledge development, in which the different perspectives are explicitly raised, a common vision and shared goals are defined and 'sustainable' work coalitions are formed.

Golden Triangle

In the national policy, the top sectors and the 'Golden Triangle' are the most important points of attention. This means that the focus is on economy, knowledge & innovation, education & labour with a central, directing role for the business sector, in part in regard to the engagement of education and research. In their policies, provinces and municipalities are more and more frequently opting for the same perspective, beginning from the motivation of enhancing the regional and local economy.

The regional challenges demand new strategic partnerships. Governmental bodies, the business sector and knowledge institutions must draft regional learning and knowledge agendas to resolve the complex issues in the region together. New arrangements are needed on knowledge and innovation, lifelong learning and green and non-green education.

SPOTLIGHT KENNISWERKPLAATS VEENKOLONIËN (PEAT DISTRICT)

REGIONAL CONTRACT

The first shared attempt to build a regional knowledge arrangement in which authorities, knowledge institutions and entrepreneurs come together was the foundation and set-up of the *Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën*. After a period of learning by doing in which various projects were taken on following the working method of the Science Shops, but with the involvement of the educational sector (from secondary vocational education through academic education and research), the Steering Group adopted the Agenda for the Veenkoloniën, consisting of administrators of the partners, in order to arrive at a declaration of intent focusing on a multi-year partnership. This declaration of intent was signed on 19 June 2008. Next, the knowledge agenda was developed along with a business model. This led to a regional contract, which was signed on 11 December 2008 by the partners in the Agenda for the Veenkoloniën, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, Wageningen UR, Hogeschool Van Hall Larenstein, **MBO AOC Terra**, the University of Groningen, Hanzehogeschool, Stenden and Alfa-college (secondary vocational education).

The knowledge agenda of the time focused on a number of sub-programmes: Agribusiness, Landscape, Infrastructure, Tourism, Living, Socio-economic innovation and connecting regions. *Kenniswerkplaats Regional Contract* for the Veenkoloniën was implemented with the contribution of 48,248 student hours, 1,873 teaching hours and 3,508 hours of researchers that were connected and invested in projects such as *Space for Water*, *Doing business in the Moors*, *Appreciation and image of the Peat District*, etc. Student hours were budgeted at 5 euros as a contribution by the institution; in addition the institutions included project grants in the regional contract. The regional partners contributed their projects and the resources for them, while in addition supplemental funding was applied for in the group context, with the contributed budget to serve as co-financing (Rippen and Vos 2008).

This created an operating budget of 661,671 euros for the 2009-2010 period, half of which was furnished in cash. The budget was worked out in the same way for the following period, 2011-2012. All in all, in the 2006-2010 period, the collective partners invested a total of 1.6 million euros in the development and operationalisation of *Kenniswerkplaats* Veenkoloniën. The partners also jointly submitted applications for monitoring and analysis of the methodology used. These requests were honoured by the ministry and supplemented with budgets from the region, allowing a support team of scientists to be affiliated with

Knowledge Agenda Veenkoloniën								
	Total hours knowledge institutes					Value in €	Contr. in €	Add. budget
	Studenten	Docenten	Promovendi	Onderzoek	Overig			
Agribusiness	8960	299	0	1200	0	€ 182.075	€ 100.435	€ 81.640
Landschap	16516	862	0	1280	50	€ 266.000	€ 236.970	€ 29.030
Infrastructuur	0	0	0	0	0	€ -	€ -	€ -
Toerisme	10.092	367	-	1.008	8	€ 118.221	€ 71.855	€ 46.366
Wonen	11000	299	200	0	36	€ 80.945	€ 76.215	€ 4.730
Soc. Econ Vernieuwing	1680	46	0	0	0	€ 10.930	€ 10.930	€ -
Regio's Verbinden	0	0	0	20	0	€ 3.500	€ 2.000	€ 1.500
Projectkosten								€ 60.000
	48248	1873	200	3508	94	€ 661.671	€ 498.405	€ 223.266

Kenniswerkplaats with the assignment of documenting the working method, increasing its professionalism and making it transferable by producing a Toolbox.

Since then, *Kenniswerkplaats* has produced ten publications, one in German. At present *Kenniswerkplaats* is investigating options for making the results available internationally, by translating the most important publications and results. With this material, the methodology of *Kenniswerkplaats* will be further elaborated and its employees professionalised in national trainings, thus creating a transferable methodology (Rippen and Vos 2008).

WHAT MAKES IT DIFFERENT FROM CONVENTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

What makes people so interested in *Kenniswerkplaats* is not so much the fact that it gets education and research involved in regional issues. So much more happens. The unique thing about this partnership is its broad spectrum, its multi-year nature and continuity, the collectivity (the 'big 5' of business, government, education, research and the environment, i.e. the public and other stakeholders) and the emphasis on the change process, the transition. This arrangement can be seen as a system, given the fact that the direction is in the hands of the region. The region is the owner. It wants to get all knowledge institutions, from preparatory and secondary vocational education to university, involved in its agenda

and its implementation projects, whether operating regionally in the area or relevant in any way to the region.

In *Kenniswerkplaats*, the accent is no longer placed on running projects in the field, with only isolated project results. Likewise, *Kenniswerkplaats* is not an 'information desk' like so many others, where you ask a question and get an answer that you may or may not be able to work with.

In *Kenniswerkplaats*, it is all about the question and how to articulate it, not the available answers. In many cases the real value comes from the question behind the question, and together finding out what knowledge you really actually need.

Kenniswerkplaats is intended to achieve fundamentally different results than those that would be achieved in a traditional project placed by external clients or learning in a traditional institutional environment. The participants in *Kenniswerkplaats* focus not only on the assignment, but the nature and degree of personal and professional development (competencies and HRM) and the embedding and permanent effects of the results in the region and in knowledge structures. Specifically, this means:

1. **Structured partnership** between many different types of shareholders (multi-actors) from a shared perspective on the region and an ambition to initiate a process of transition;
2. A **commitment on learning and working together** in order to boost the innovation capacity of the region;
3. The achievement of **solutions with real-world application potential** (in their interconnection and with long-term effect);
4. **Multidisciplinary approach**; in consideration of the complexity of the problem (preferably multilevel and in a combination of knowledge and experience in agricultural, technical, economic and social spheres, including with the intention to expand current practice);
5. Focus on **embedding in the region**; no stand-alone projects, but an on-going learning process in the region; at irregular intervals, stopping to reflect: what have we learned and how did we learn it? This allows all new insights to flow back to the local and regional policy.

SUSTAINABLE ARRANGEMENTS

It is important to understand that *Kenniswerkplaats* is not a temporary partnership. And in it, it is not just the students who are expected to do the learning. In *Kenniswerkplaats*, the goal is different. Firstly, all parties involved sign a reciprocal learning contract, and secondly they enter into a sustainable partnership, an alliance, with each other. In order to arrive at this type of multi-year, sustainable process between government bodies, education, research and the corporate sector, the partnership needs to be organised and structured. All

parties have to learn from each other, and physical and mental conditions have to be achieved for this process. Students and teachers have to take their knowledge and questions to meet the field, and vice versa. And this not for just an individual project, but in an on-going learning process.

Students play an important role within *Kenniswerkplaats*. They have a fresh eye and often explore projects from a unique perspective. Connecting education and research makes it possible to further improve the depth and quality of complex innovation processes.

The region connects and utilises the existing knowledge from the field and from institutions, thus providing for its need for innovation and knowledge. The institutions can work sustainably on creating attractive learning environments, innovation in education programmes, knowledge domain development and the training of professional and competent students. Also important is the observation that the presence of students puts the other parties in 'learning mode.' The students' often unexpected questions can set even the most seasoned professional in the field thinking in new ways. Looking at it this way, their presence is more or less a requirement for arriving at a structure of Lifelong Learning.

The cooperation between all shareholders and the performance of 'learning by doing' innovation projects in *Kenniswerkplaats* contributes to the development of a vibrant living and working environment while retaining identity, social cohesion and an enterprising and competitive economy. The intensive cooperation also creates new participatory, flexible and sustainable networks, work alliances and communities of practice. This develops the foundation for a methodology and infrastructure for bringing Lifelong Learning to maturity in keeping with the needs and desires of the various shareholders.

THE WORKING STRUCTURE OF KENNISWERKPLAATS

WHO IS IN CONTROL?

Kenniswerkplaats can only be a success with shared responsibility on the part of the region and the knowledge institutions. But someone has to be in the driver's seat, and that is the region. The area programme and the knowledge questions from the region are the starting point. The process of creating *Kenniswerkplaats* and the regional knowledge agenda will be different in each of the eight regions. In the Veenkoloniën region, the process followed in area agenda, driven by the corresponding agency. In the Noord Holland (North) region, it is the province that continues to pull the process forward, and in Zeeland the impulse comes from an educational institution (Edudelta, in Goes), while in other regions like Twente and Northeast Fryslân it is smaller municipalities in the driver's seat.

EXAMPLE: NORTHEAST FRYSLÂN

Kenniswerkplaats Northeast Fryslân offers a good example to illustrate the process. Here, the approach was stepped. The first step was a pilot study for a *Kenniswerkplaats* in the municipality of Dantumadiel. The municipality, AOC Friesland and the ministry created a

number of initial basic structures, such as a steering committee, the first connections with the educational institutions (including contacts with 'grey' educational institutions) and a number of learning by doing projects. These three parties also worked out the minimum conditions for *Kenniswerkplaats* Northeast Fryslân, i.e., financing, co-financing (which includes provincial involvement), accommodations, etc. In the meantime, the SEMP (socio-economic- master plan) in the region was developed and translated into the Agenda Network Northeast. The ambition projects are a component of the Agenda Network Northeast. These included knowledge questions for making the connection in *Kenniswerkplaats* between the region, the schools and the other 'big 5' players. This made the involvement in *Kenniswerkplaats* broader than Dantumadiel, and laid a regional foundation for the knowledge agenda through the Agenda Network Northeast. Formulating the knowledge questions also created the momentum for making the step from municipality to region.

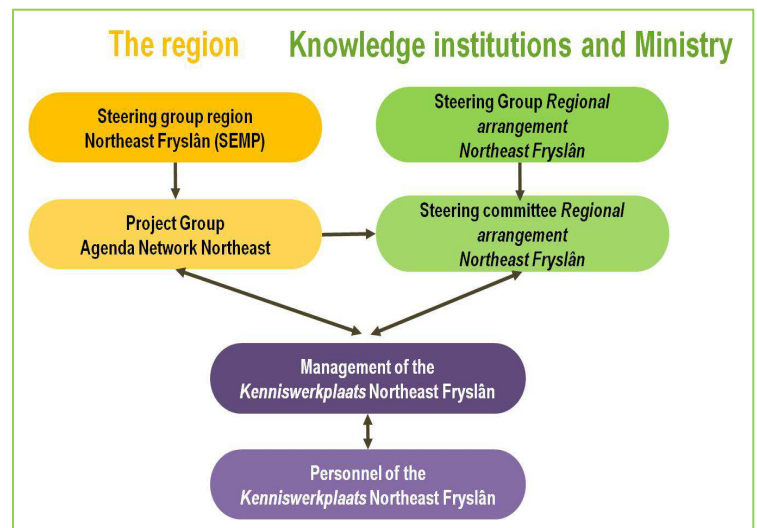
These are important steps that establish a basis for a regional knowledge arrangement, because an administrative foundation is indispensable. It establishes the basis for a multi-year partnership programme between a region and the knowledge institutions, and then not as ad hoc partnership but as a permanent knowledge cooperative. The on-going policy practice is the backdrop, but this too can always be supplemented with innovative concepts.

This means that the region is the owner of *Kenniswerkplaats*. For Northeast Fryslân, this means control in the hands of the region:

- The guiding principle is the vision set out in the SEMP. The responsibility for this vision is placed with the political steering committee for the region of Northeast Fryslân.
- The steering committee proposes projects, ideally through an official project group with responsibility for the Agenda Network Northeast. The leadership of *Kenniswerkplaats* works together with the chairman and the employees of the project group on a daily basis.

But in addition, *Kenniswerkplaats* has a clear arm of control from the knowledge institutions and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation:

- Once per year, the administrators meet in the Regional Arrangement Northeast Fryslân Steering Committee. This group monitors the 'regional contract' and sets out the line for the coming year.
- Performance goes via the Steering Committee, which meets once every six weeks, and consists of the directors of the schools and the regional executive members. The



entrepreneurs also attend. This regional group defines the content-related and organisational embedding within the knowledge institutions.

The structure as described here is a basic model that can be adapted for use in any region.

AND WHO ARE THE ACTORS?

FROM STAKEHOLDER TO SHAREHOLDER

The parties invested in *Kenniswerkplaats* are not seen as stakeholders, but as shareholders.

What exactly is the difference?

Stakeholders have an interest and want to see that interest borne out. Shareholders do too, but they also take personal responsibility for making good not only on their own stake, but those of their fellow shareholders. Give something to get something is their motto. Co-responsibility is the keyword.

This also means covering the financing together. Take the example of educational grants for innovation in education. These resources can be engaged on a multi-year basis with the regional innovation funding from various ministries, the European government and the regional and local authorities. This is the only way to make performance happen and get the less flexible parties (like the educational sector) on board.

A major advantage of a multi-year partnership between these parties is that it allows complex area development processes to be deconstructed and appropriate measures to be sought in dialogue with the public and the corporate sector.

ENTERPRISE

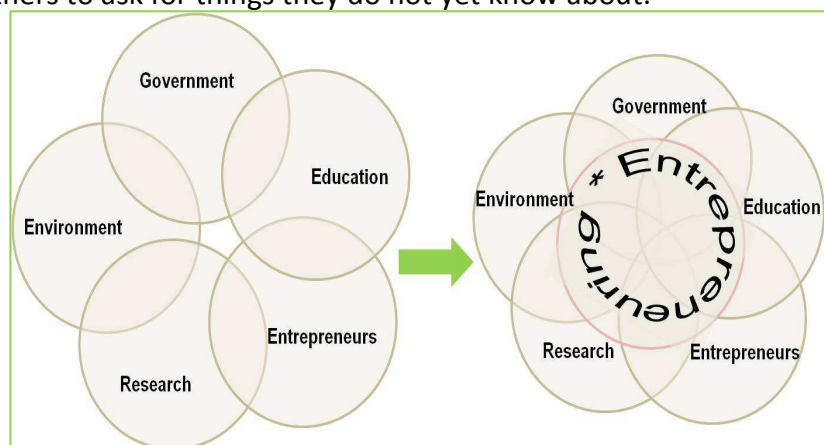
Success depends on more than the big 5 meeting in *Kenniswerkplaats* environment. The goals are Learning *with each other* and *from each other*, going through a development process together, changing together. And the result that you want to achieve together is the transition of the region, from a loose cooperative relationship to a *structured learning region*.

Recent policy developments place a strong emphasis on entrepreneurship. But entrepreneurship is more than having your own business and the knowledge and skill needed to make it a success. Entrepreneurship is also an attitude that lets you see opportunities and seize them to make things better. That enterprising attitude is also sometimes referred to as 'enterprise'. *Kenniswerkplaats* wants to develop the enterprise of all of the big 5. This is a learning process for each of the big 5. They are more than qualitatively measurable target groups. If, however, they want to be truly shareholders, then they have to learn to see and capitalise on their shared interest. That is the new knowledge that has to move all of the big 5. The will and the expertise to move - this is, in essence, the enterprise that has to be set into motion in *Kenniswerkplaats*. The learning process of one becomes a prerequisite for that of the others. And *Kenniswerkplaats* offers the environment

in which that can happen, and which makes sure that every player does not have to wait until another moves.

But let's look at what enterprise really means:

- For the government - Learn to see things from a different perspective. How can you, as a political and official organisation, become a cooperative partner? How do you discover the freedom that legislation and regulations offer you to act as a facilitator rather than an enforcer? And how can you delegate responsibilities to your social partners (the other four of the big 5)? (note: this is not the same thing as handing off tasks to others)
- For the environment (the public and social organisations) - Learn to understand your own role. Don't call for more responsibility, and then look to the government as soon as something needs to be done. In a representative democracy, the government is all the citizens together. So, learn to be a part of the government. Be responsible for the quality of your living environment, and do this together with others.
- For the entrepreneurs - Think further than your own shop-front. The fact that you're an *entrepreneur* doesn't in itself make you *enterprising*. Shops and companies play an important role when it comes to a vibrant living environment. What image does your business have in the public space? And can you improve it? Can you also get profit for your business out of it in the process?
- For the educational sector - remember, learning is not just for students, but for teachers as well. Training colleges, schools of applied sciences and universities are taking on an increasingly important role for all professionals in the government, industry and social organisations (Lifelong Learning being just one example). And the same holds true within *Kenniswerkplaats*. In *Kenniswerkplaats*, teachers not only pass on knowledge but get new knowledge themselves. Here, an entrepreneurial attitude means recognising opportunities for new knowledge. This is an important HRM tool. Research - Understand what the real questions in society are. Often, these are different questions than the ones initially asked. Remember that the public, government bodies and entrepreneurs cannot ask for things that they have no inkling of. Asking the right questions is more important than answering the wrong ones. For researchers, an enterprising attitude means teaching others to ask for things they do not yet know about.



THE BIG 5: THE TRADITIONAL INTERRELATIONSHIP TRANSFORMED INTO

GIVING AND GETTING

With this in mind, the 'classical' figure of the big therefore changes into a constellation orbiting around a shared, enterprising *attitude*. All in all, 'enterprising' essentially means that all parties give something and want to get something. The 'getting' is usually not much of a problem. In most cases, every one of the big 5 will have no trouble putting into words what they are asking from the others. Entrepreneurs and researchers tend to think in terms of an assignment, the educational sector seeks work placements for students, the government wants to delegate some of its duties and the public often respond with a knee-jerk account of what they *don't* want (NIMBY: 'not in my backyard').

But what are they giving in return? You can't get something for nothing. Organising this so that in the bottom line, every one of the big 5 offers an advantage is one of the crucial learning steps in *Kenniswerkplaats*.

THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

A very important player in the rural and suburban space is the individual: the people who live there. They seek the right balance between working and living landscape, between production and consumption landscape. People want to live where they feel comfortable living. And the more peripheral in the area lies, the more important its unique cultural and spatial qualities are in getting people to come there and stay; the people who can then make the area economically, culturally, and socially lively and vibrant. That offers the opportunity to 'cash in' on the new position of the countryside through new employment, new products and new partnerships.

The individual gives the countryside (and by this we also refer to smaller cities) an unprecedented strength through all his manifestations. With its wide diversity of inhabitants today, the countryside is in fact a microcosm of urban society. Anyone who cares to look can see a broad palette of competencies, education, professions and interests. This colourful picture must be looked at with the idea of utilising this strength for development.

In this present situation, we often unintentionally frustrate more than we utilise and promote. Because as soon as we present these individuals with rules and regulations pared down to the square inch, we turn potential allies into adversaries.

The new rural citizen will then devote all his competencies to frustrating developments that do not suit him instead of together looking for a win-win situation. The citizen wants a cooperative government, the political sector wants responsible citizens - these terms are frequently bandied about, but still without a clear operational framework.

ACTION LEARNING AS METHOD

The approach is based on 'learning in, with and from practice'. As part of the process new knowledge is created and circulated. We know this method from action learning and action research. The important thing is developing and learning from and with each other. All

stakeholders contribute their specific needs, qualities, knowledge and creativity. Schools and universities leave their buildings and go out into the 'real world' of the region to work on concrete, total projects together with the clients, stakeholders and sectors on location. These are students, teachers and researchers at all levels, from lower secondary vocational education through university, and from a range of professional disciplines. For example, rural innovators meet landscape architects, land and water managers, forestry officials and conservationists, environmental experts, traffic experts, ICT specialists and in some cases even graphic artists and performers. These interactive processes do not become a 'struggle for space'; on the contrary, they engender cooperation for arriving at widely supported, creative solutions.

SO WHO'S DOING WHAT?

- Together with regional parties, **educational and research institutions** pursue strategic, innovative and interdisciplinary area projects, and in the process promote and complete education and research from which the knowledge questions are formulated.
- **The public, government bodies and market parties** take responsibility for the development and implementation of innovative ideas and projects for their living environment.
- **Entrepreneurs and the public** achieve self-administration for their area: residents, businesses and organisations themselves determine the future of the region, within the limiting conditions and quality criteria set out by governmental bodies. In the future, these parties may also function in the client role.
- **Research** supports the client and the hands-on parties in coming together to achieve knowledge creation and knowledge sharing between the big 5 in the green, grey and blue sectors.
- **Teachers, professionals and interested parties** are systematically and intensively involved in projects so as to generate the knowledge acquisition, knowledge application and knowledge distribution.
- **Students** are taught from a practical perspective with interactive projects, but also bring their own knowledge, perspectives and, most importantly, critical questions that the experts are no longer willing or able to ask each other. This enables them to identify and help traverse the gaps between the other shareholders.

RAISING PROFESSIONALISATION

KNOWLEDGE DOCUMENTATION

At this point the Kenniswerkplaats programme has produced a number of knowledge documents..

1. One is the *Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën Toolbox*, a set of four publications addressing primarily the working method, role and task breakdown in the workspaces. A team under the leadership of education experts E. Hekman and G. Bomhof provided a detailed working description of the workspace, focused entirely on the creation of the learning environment. This toolbox also includes an overview of the process followed in *Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën*, with a great deal of practical experiences and statements of users. A further two publications address the value of the workspace, one with a focus on the academic field, by researcher C. Kwakernaak, and one with a focus on the business sector, by entrepreneur H. Drijfhout.
2. A second team under the leadership of educational specialists at the higher vocational and secondary vocational education levels worked out a set of tools that the institutions can use to structure the education outside the classroom and in the region while respecting the educational system. This tool kit consists of 20 manuals, guidelines, adapted academic schedules and evaluation systems.
3. The third set is a content-oriented series of publications produced under the leadership of S. Lutz. This material can be downloaded on the web site kenniswerkplaats.eu.



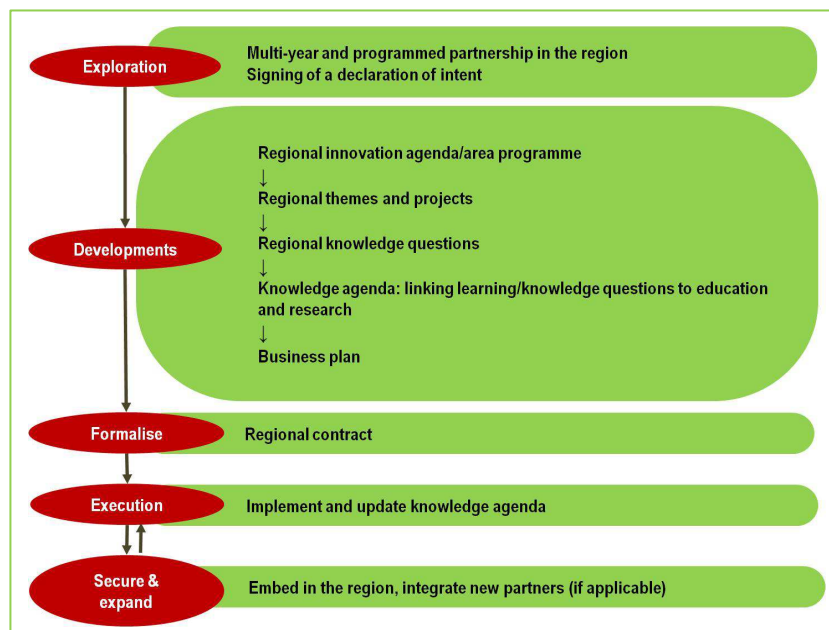
PROGRAMME-BASED APPROACH

With this knowledge documentation and the expansion into many other regions, *Kenniswerkplaats* has left the experimental stage. The further professionalisation required will depend on continuing ministry support. In 2010, then-minister Gerda Verburg said: 'The regional connection offers many opportunities for the development of the region. Take *Kenniswerkplaats Veenkoloniën*, where students work with area stakeholders to produce a broad range of ideas. This partnership is working amazingly well. It is giving an important impulse to the revitalisation of the region.'



5-STEP PLAN

In order to develop regional arrangements, the kenniswerkplaats Programme created a 5-step plan for arriving at its 'Regional Knowledge Framework' (Rippen 2009). By following the five steps, each region can structure and operationalise ongoing partnership between education, research, regional administration and the Ministry. A national Programme supports this process.



INSIGHTS

The experiment phase gives us a number of significant insights for a partnership on a professional basis: All of these relate to the following question: how do we ensure that *Kenniswerkplaats* functions? In other words, how do we make it so that the partnerships can actually happen, and that in those partnerships, 'working together' also leads to 'learning together'?

This depends on a number of things. In the first place, the partners have to be willing and able to invest in the forms of structural cooperation on a regional scale. This, in turn, requires first and foremost that the region and the knowledge institutions collaborate on a shared knowledge agenda. How to do this is described below, in section *The regional knowledge agenda*.

Secondly, a major realisation is that the learning itself is important. How can we get insight into the learning process? How do you select appropriate projects in practice, and how do you evaluate them? The 'transition model' described starting on page 30 has been developed for this purpose..

Finally, the actors themselves also have to develop in the *way in which* they pursue the partnership. Insights into this area have been acquired in the process of pursuing this approach. These are described in sections *Learning in partnerships* and *Regional Learning in Kenniswerkplaats*.

THE REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE AGENDA

Working in *Kenniswerkplaats* is something new to all parties involved. It's about learning with each other and working towards the development of innovative solutions for area issues. In *Kenniswerkplaats* concept, the region is the owner of *Kenniswerkplaats*. The

bottom line is that *Kenniswerkplaats* is about increasing the innovative capacity of the region. But to do this, the regional actors must first figure out what the relevant questions are, what tasks they have before them and what developments and innovations they want to achieve in the region within what time frame. The next step is to determine how the regional questions need to be answered and how the regional programme must be achieved. This is where the knowledge institutions come into play. What answers can they offer, and how can those answers be moulded into a shared programme?

This is the regional knowledge agenda. But how do you arrive at such an agenda? In the following, we will describe the five phases involved in getting there.

PHASE 1: WHAT ARE THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS?

The desired regional developments and innovations are set down in an area development plan or regional agenda, which identifies at the policy level the priority themes and ambitions for the direction in which the various policy themes should be moving in the coming years. In Northeast Fryslân, that is the socio-economic master plan. These ambitions can be interpreted in policy projects expressing the desired achievements within a subject area and the desired time frame for achieving them. To take the example of the Northeast Fryslân region, this is set out in the Agenda Network Northeast. Policy consensus on this type of regional development plan/agenda is important. It is also important to have this document ratified at the administrative level. Working in *Kenniswerkplaats* also requires the determination at the administrative level that in the implementation, the region must opt for partnership with teaching and research institutions in a regional *Kenniswerkplaats*.

As soon as there is an administrative consensus on this, there is no further discussion of what issues need to be addressed in the region, and the work in *Kenniswerkplaats* can focus on how the proposed developments and innovations can be achieved, as well as what knowledge and knowledge products are needed to make the right choices in them. In this phase, we must also establish the preconditions a properly functioning *Kenniswerkplaats* needs, such as financing commitments and appointment of a *Kenniswerkplaats* manager.

PHASE 2: WHAT KNOWLEDGE DOES THE REGION NEED?

The area development plan or regional agenda contains a list of policy tasks, broken down by theme. In every case, before they can be practically implemented in the form of implementation projects, there will still be a number of administrative hurdles to get through. These may, for example, have to do with the exact location, nature and scope of spatial developments, the financing method or the way in which the public and the corporate sector can be brought on board with the intended developments. Making these decisions responsibly often requires a concrete substantiation at the content level. In other words, we need knowledge products that help administrators make the most informed possible decisions on the implementation of the area development plan or regional agenda.

Before this, in phase 2 the regional actors catalogue the knowledge and knowledge products they need to best implement the various different policy themes in the area development

plan or regional agenda. Within each theme, the policy-based lead for the theme is responsible for this inventory of the knowledge requirements.

An initial, albeit incomplete, inventory for *Kenniswerkplaats* Northeast Fryslân has already been conducted. It is scheduled to be further developed starting February 2012. For this, as part of the Agenda Network a number of ambition projects have been identified, for which region-wide knowledge questions have been formulated to establish the connection between the region, the schools and the other members of the big 5 in *Kenniswerkplaats*. This establishes a regional foundation for the knowledge agenda through the Agenda Network Northeast.

PHASE 3: WHAT KNOWLEDGE CAN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH OFFER?

A number of different educational institutions participate at various educational levels in *Kenniswerkplaats*. In ideal cases, these will range from lower or intermediate vocational education and universities of applied sciences to traditional universities. Research institutions are also partners in *Kenniswerkplaats*. To organise it such that the required knowledge products (as a result of phase 2) are vested as well as possible in the knowledge institutions involved, *Kenniswerkplaats* manager organises a 'knowledge market.' The schools and research institutions then indicate which knowledge products they could provide.

This type of knowledge market is not a one-time event; generally, multiple meetings are required to work out the best matches. Important criteria are whether the knowledge institution has the required subject expertise and the required educational level to produce the knowledge products requested. The knowledge institutions also catalogue who the expertise holders within their organisation are. It is important for each knowledge institution to indicate for each theme which expertise holder will be the first contact point for the regional theme lead to make further arrangements on the substantive content of the research to be conducted. This is because it will always turn out to be necessary for the theme leads with the knowledge institutions to consult with the theme lead for the region in order to get a better picture of the specific knowledge product needs. This demands a very good view to the big picture and good direction by the manager of *Kenniswerkplaats*. He or she will maintain order and make sure that the left hand always knows what the right hand is doing. Ultimately, of course, arrangements will have to be made on the prioritisation and phasing knowledge questions, to allow a cohesive package of research projects to be formulated.

This creates the multi-year research programme in the form of a regional knowledge agenda. For the individual research projects, the knowledge institutions draft project plans in which they detail the way they will address the region's knowledge questions. The regional team lead will respond to these project plans, and will then adopt them, modified where necessary in response to the commentary from the region. This process of project-based work is often something new for educational institutions.

Representatives from research institutions in which project-based work is standard practice can help in this process in the drafting of project plans, and can also indicate whether and in

what form the research can make a substantive contribution to the performance of these *Kenniswerkplaats* projects. This does, however, mean that all parties must be on board as equals. Here again, the workspace manager has a very important coordinating task, of course always in close consultation with the knowledge institutions. The process must be monitored very closely, and all parties must be encouraged to actively participate and keep their commitments.

PHASE 4: BUDGETING OF THE REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE AGENDA

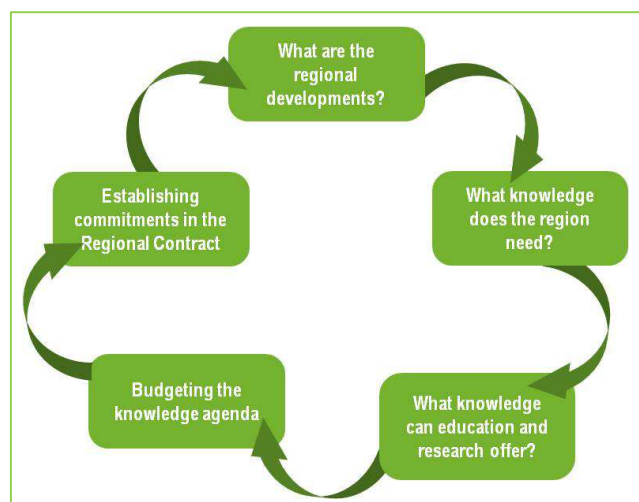
Following on from the substantive programming of the research by the educational and research institutions in *Kenniswerkplaats*, these institutions also produce a budget for the annual volume of efforts and costs per theme over the total implementation period of *Kenniswerkplaats* projects. This budget is an estimate of the number of hours students and their supervisors will spend as well as the number of hours of the experts of the research institutions. An hourly rate (cost price) will be agreed for each. Of course, student hours will have a much lower rate than the hours of supervisors and researchers.

The budget of hours and costs may of course be determined in much more precise terms than the budget for later years. This means that concrete arrangements can be made on the work commitment and financing of research in the subsequent year, and that arrangement on later years may be more global and less definitive. They can be specified in more detail later in the drafting of the annual work plan as it is updated.

Based on the cost budget drafted, the definitive financing arrangements will be agreed with the region. This creates an annual budget overview with accompanying financial coverage summary for the research programme.

PHASE 5: ESTABLISHING COMMITMENTS IN THE REGIONAL CONTRACT

The details of the content and budget of the regional knowledge agenda for *Kenniswerkplaats* are worked out in proper consultation between education and research institutions in the regional actors in *Kenniswerkplaats*. This knowledge agenda must then be adopted at the administrative level to ratify the commitments on performance and financing. The knowledge agenda is adopted in the form of a regional contract to be signed by administrators of the stakeholder institutions. The regional contract can be supported by the underlying documents, such as the detailed knowledge agenda and the business plan setting out the professional commitments on the management of *Kenniswerkplaats*.



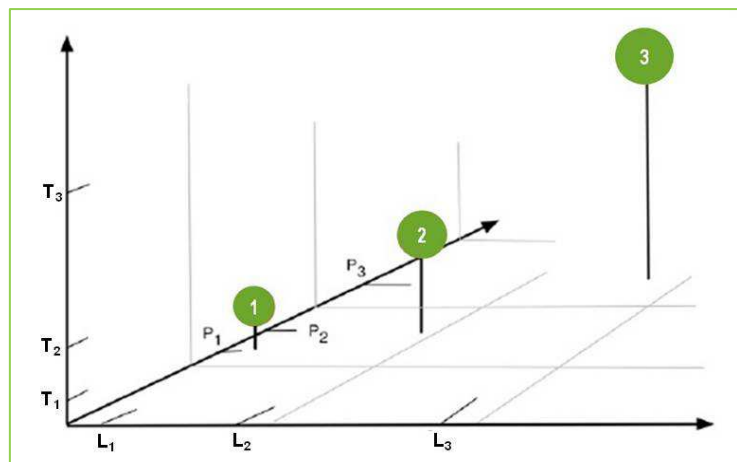
WORKING AND LEARNING IN KENNISWERKPLAATS

The characteristics of learning and working in *Kenniswerkplaats* are very different from those in a conventional programme, course or work placement as learning environment: *Kenniswerkplaats* is interdisciplinary, inter-sectoral and involves multiple organisations or systems. Because there is still no off-the-shelf concept for structuring this type of learning-work process, we create the 'support group' function in *Kenniswerkplaats*. This group has the task of developing concepts, tools and working methods for supporting, facilitating, organising and evaluating the learning and working processes, and improving them on an on-going basis. The initial insights pertain to the way in which projects are worked on (the transition model) and the system of working in cooperative partnerships (the learning communities). Both concepts have the goal of promoting the transition of the region. We describe them below.

THE TRANSITION MODEL

Partnerships in projects are about more than achieving a pre-set goal in the best possible way. They are also about understanding each other, seeing things from each other's perspective linking diverse goals and interests, and achieving synergy by utilising the available diversity.

When working on a project, the attentive participant will ascertain three dimensions.



1. The first dimension (**P**) is the project itself. Every project has a goal, and its performance should be about achieving that goal in an effective way. This requires focus on the task, both for the purpose of the product and the project (the activities). Indicators for project results include meeting the clients expectations, originality, documentation and archiving, and 'looking beyond the project.'
2. The second dimension (**L**) is the learning process. How do the participants in the project develop, what do the other shareholders learn from it, and how does the working method and organisation develop in the process? This is about the developments at the individual, group and organisational level as a result of the partnership and joint learning. Indicators for the development include the way feedback is used (individually, as a team and as an organisation) and the level at which learning takes place. You can also look at how the internal diversity in the group or organisation is being utilised. Is work solitary or in isolation, or are people seeking each other out and learning from each other by seeing the differences in personal characteristics and background as opportunities for personal and professional growth?

3. The third dimension **(T)** is the actual regional transition: How can the project and learning results be sustainably embedded in the region, i.e., how can they help the project achieve a permanent effect? This refers to the effects of the partnership on a project or a series of projects (a time-limited activity) in the long term. Is there a high-potential and lasting effect on the development of the environment? An indicator for the permanent embedding may be for example the way in which the problem formulation and project approach intentionally takes into account a promising permanent contribution to regional development in the planning stage. A second perspective consists of the evaluation of behavioural change among the stakeholders. Do the experiences in the partnership lead to the stakeholders internalising the working method, and do they gain an interest in drafting a development agenda?

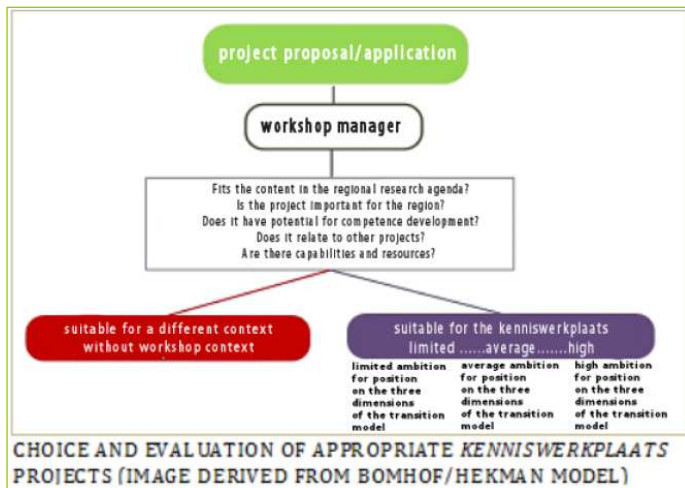
Every project that can be implemented in the region can be positioned in the transition model. The ambition for every dimension can be specified.

This way, the expectations of all shareholders (the big 5) can be properly coordinated. Further, for every dimension working methods and instruments are developed and engaged.

- In the project dimension, methods for project-based work, creativity techniques, techniques for presentation of the results, guidelines for communication with the client, etc., are defined.
- In the learning dimension, didactic working forms are used to facilitate learning by the shareholders. These can include workshops, methods of feedback and reflection, discussion techniques for multi-stakeholder processes, etc.
- In the transition dimension, there should be procedures and strategies for finding and involving all processes and parties relevant to the project, so that a project result 'lands' in the region optimally.

Example: an explanation of the three dimensions using a fictitious project on the revitalisation of old smuggling routes.

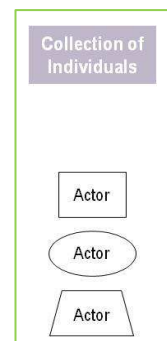
- In a simple version (P), the result of this type of project could be that the roots are designed and perhaps even completed, and that the students get their academic credits.
- At a higher level (L), the process would include focused attention on the personal and professional development of the participating partners at the individual and team level. Taking the example of the same smugglers' paths project further, the learning process of the students and supervisors can be added as an extra focus. The participants have reflected on the approach, group composition, working in teams, etc. Knowledge and insights have been enriched.
- At a third level (T), we look at the quality of the transition: the benefits contribute to sustainable development in the region; the shareholders have learned with and from each other and further developed at the individual, team and organisational levels. In this case, during the course of the process there has been attention to growth on all three dimensions. The smuggling paths project is handled on a much broader level. Individuals and a site management organisation have joined forces to maintain the paths and presented a nature education programme; businesses have become involved in the form of organising tourist theme weeks; the government has allowed for the necessary permits and integration with other themes. Additionally, the entire process has been described and can be used as an example case in a number of different programmes.



Another function of the model is the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the processes and results. Ambition levels and corresponding quality criteria can be formulated for every dimension. And finally, there is a third function of the transition model: it serves as a foundation for the choice of projects. If a project cannot contribute to some form of development or embedding, whether on the personal level, in the institution or in the region, and if cannot be adapted to do so, then it is not suitable for performance in *Kenniswerkplaats*.

LEARNING IN PARTNERSHIPS

Many conventional partnership projects only rate on the predefined results, and even on those, some rate better than others. Many do not rate at all on aspects like area development or sustainable embedding. To allow for development (both individually and in the team, the institution and the region) and to make embedding in the region possible, the nature, intention and extent of the partnership must be adjusted in fundamental ways. Based on this observation, in *Kenniswerkplaats* we have created a model for the development of a learning and partnership community on four levels.



1. **Collection of Individuals** – Many partnership projects take the form of a collection of individual players grouped into a temporary partnership or alliance (the project group). Each partner in it has its own goal. In such cases, the partnership happens based on pragmatic considerations, and it is focused on achieving the predefined project goal. There is no individual or joint learning need on the part of the participants. Many of these projects are performance-based projects driven by time and money. This type of project group is not suitable for a learning environment such as *Kenniswerkplaats*.
2. **Community of Interest (COI)** – Sharing knowledge is only possible if project members and external experts can unite around a connecting theme. The shared interest becomes the motivator to share information with each other and create new knowledge. The members of the project group bring the new knowledge and insight gained back into the project. They can share and expand their knowledge. The exchange of diverse positions and perceptions creates a greater opportunity for new insights and solutions to arise, and new networks may emerge that can continue after the conclusion of the specific project. This Community of Interest is theoretically suitable for



Kenniswerkplaats, but on the ambition scale must be classified as 'limited.' During the project, only limited investments will be made in building social capital (i.e., creating a climate of trust and mutual involvement).

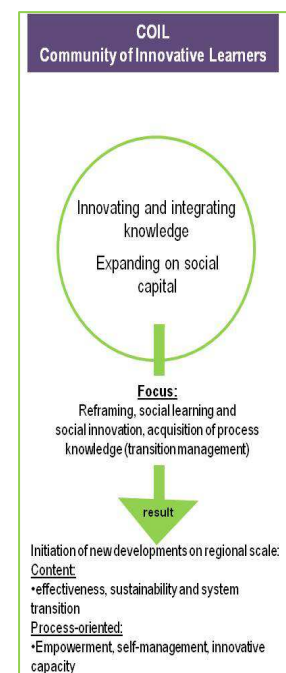
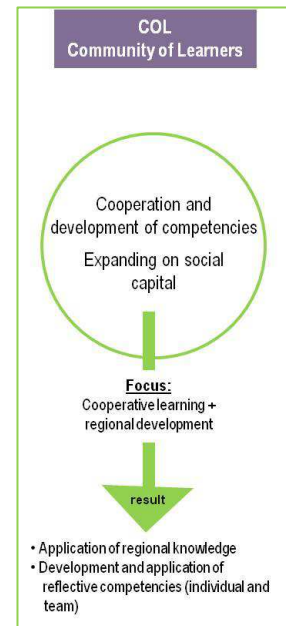
3. The focus will be primarily on exploring the theme in depth by exchanging knowledge and positions. The contacts and the exchange of information and perceptions during the meetings of the COI will generate a contribution (albeit a limited one) to the development of the participants.
4. Community of Learners (COL) – In this partnership form, group learning is the central focus, and the processes of 'working together' and 'learning together' are deeply interconnected. Further, all members of the community are consciously working on developing competencies and/or sub-competencies. A requirement for the formation of a COL is that the group be a genuine and tight-knit community, with active involvement of all participants as a common denominator. From the beginning, all will have expressed the intention of learning from each other. In concrete terms, this means two things:

- Firstly, that there be deliberate investments in relationships, mutual trust and reciprocity;
- Secondly, that there be regular meetings (real life and virtual) with all participants from the various ranks in order to learn from each other, reflect with each other on the process and contribute to the learning culture of the community.

More than with a COI, this form of working together and learning together includes personal and professional growth at the individual and group levels. The group commitment to learn from and with each other also increases the chances of embedding of the results, learning and experiences. A COL is suitable for *Kenniswerkplaats*, and will generally be evaluated as 'average'.

4. Community of Innovative Learners (COIL) – If a partnership expresses the ambition to contribute to sustainable innovation in the region and also derives shared learning objectives as a community on that basis, we refer to this as a Community of Innovative Learners. In terms of content, the focus here will be on the broadening and application of regionally integrated knowledge. But this is not all. The transition from COL to COIL is dictated primarily by three factors:

- The structural involvement in the learning and working community of as many of the big 5 as possible and very deliberate attention to the relationships and creating an open learning and working culture.



- Application of process knowledge on transition management, primarily in the choice of high-potential projects, success in generating a broad support base, the ambition for continuation and consolidation;
- An expansion to development at the system level, because it is principally here where change processes take on a sustainable character.

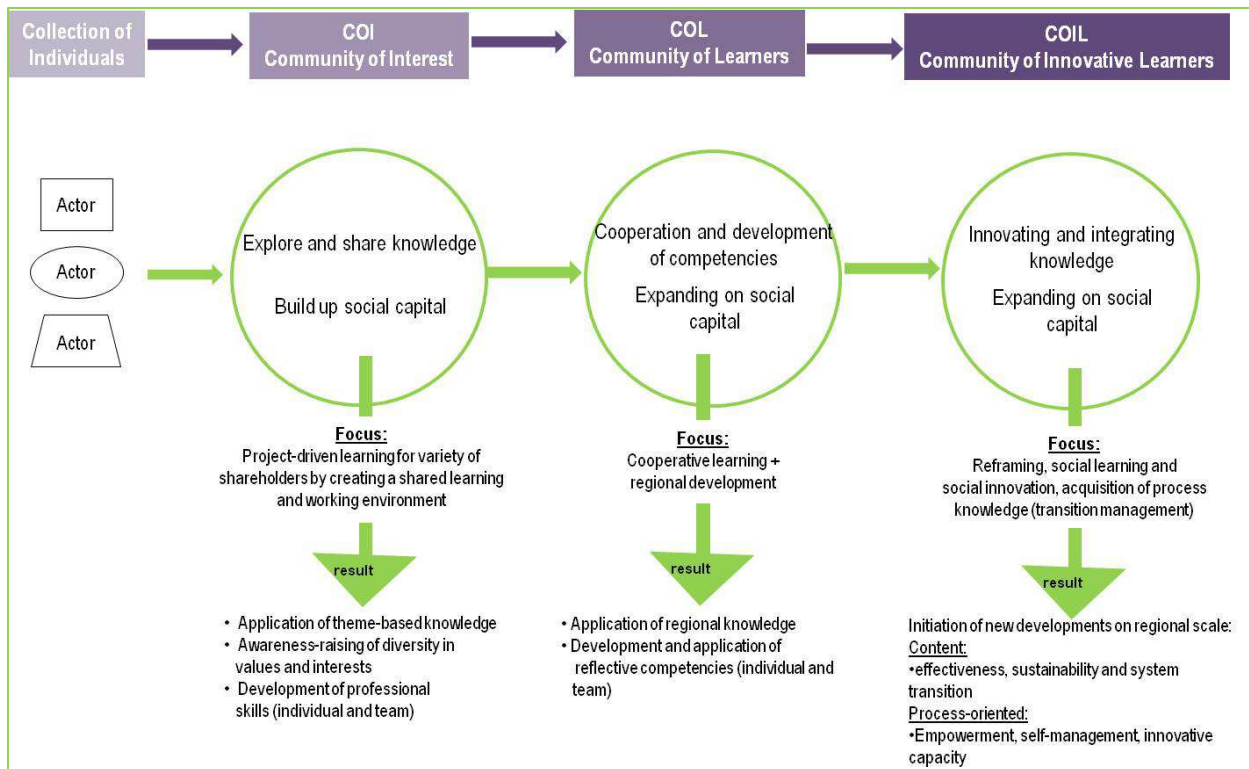
With a more heterogeneous participant group (in their backgrounds, experience, interests, priorities, etc.), growth into a COIL will explicitly demand time and attention to building social capital and jointly developing conditions that promote social learning. A COIL must include specific process knowledge and

skills need to initiate and facilitate transitions. More than in the COL as partnership form, the structure of the COIL will be beneficial to transition processes. In the terms of the transition model, this represents potential at all three dimensions (P, L and T). In a coil, the working together and learning together are in themselves the goal ultimately sought in *Kenniswerkplaats*.

As this shows, partnerships can go from the level of a group of individual players into a community of innovative learners. The latter level is the target level of *Kenniswerkplaats*. An important part of this is to promote maximum diversity among the members of this learning community. This refers not only to their personal and professional competencies (junior and senior, this not necessarily being linked to age), also that participants must represent the broadest possible spectrum of the big 5.

The junior participants may be students, who ideally will come from a wide variety of backgrounds: different programmes (multidisciplinary), as well as different levels: vocational education, universities of applied sciences, traditional universities (multi-level). Or, they may also be employees of companies developing new competencies/sub-competencies as part of on-going professional development (Life-Long Learning) in such a learning and work arrangement. In this situation, the COIL functions as a rich learning environment in which feedback can become a given, not only in terms of professional content but in relation to the learning process.

Ideally, the senior participants will also come from the broadest possible spectrum of the big 5: education and research, business, governmental, semi-governmental, and social organisations, including citizens special interest organisations. In their expert role, they can provide input based on their knowledge and practical experience, or also act as coach for structuring the learning process in a COIL. At the same time, they are also learning partners, because questions from the other participants keep them on their toes.

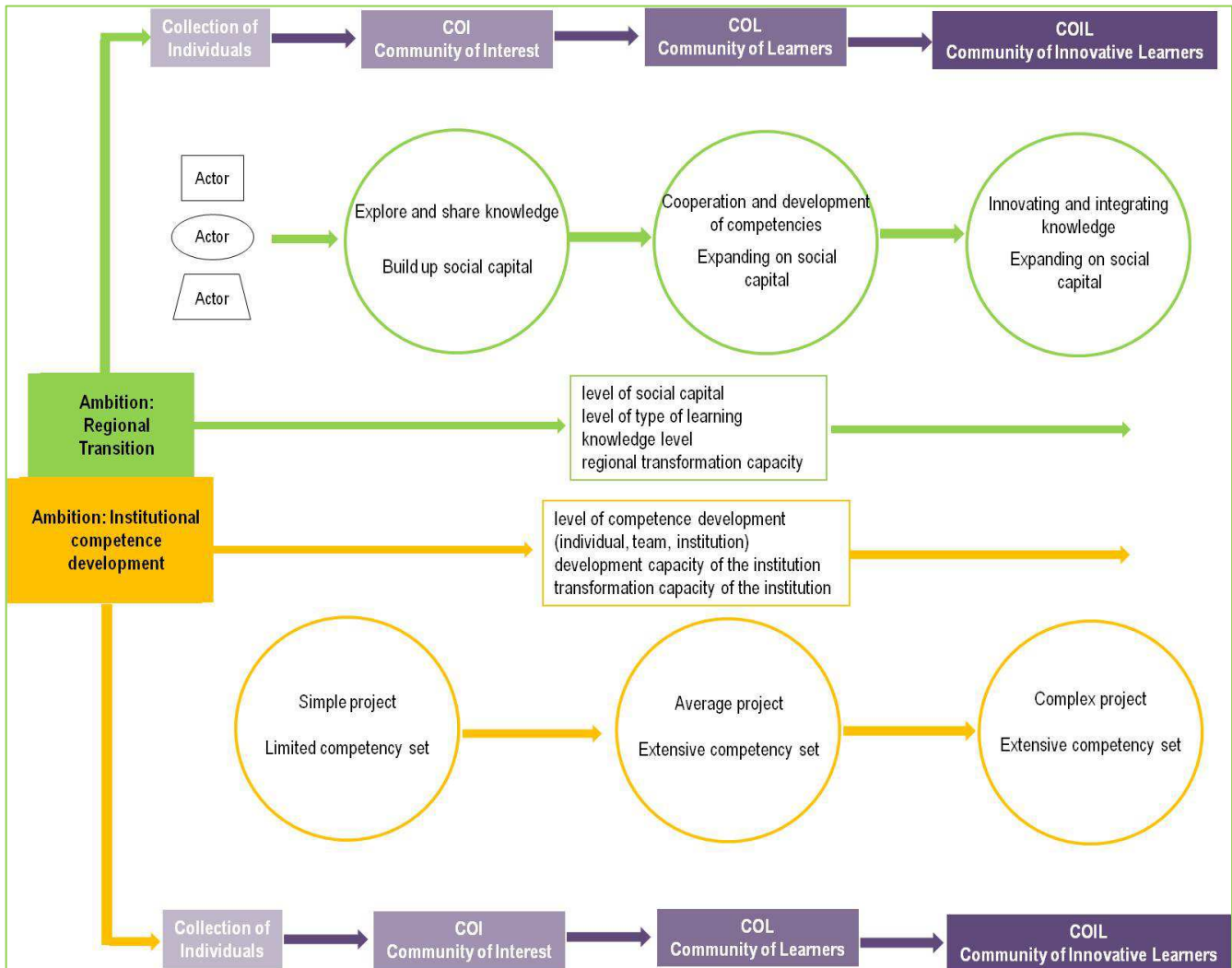


REGIONAL LEARNING IN KENNISWERKPLAATS

A COIL makes the optimum contribution to Regional Learning, and at the same time to the learning capacity and knowledge institutions, governmental authorities and companies. When both aspects are in play, the actors are truly engaged in the regional transition process. There is always some parallel between the learning ambitions of a region and those of an institution (an educational institution or knowledge institution, a governmental authority or company).

This is diagrammed in the image on the next page. The process in the upper half (green) shows the development of the learning ambitions for the region as a whole, as these play out in *Kenniswerkplaats*. The decisive factor here is where the participants want to go in the longer-term. The further you go to the right on this line, the more intensive the partnership and the higher the return, not only from individual projects but also in the area of development and sustaining the result. The partnership develops here, depending on the ambition level, from COI to, at its most far-reaching form of learning partnership, the COIL.

The lower half (yellow) shows the ambition of the knowledge institution, company or governmental authority. Here again, the development is more extensive and more sustainable the more you move right, from a simple project with a very limited set of competencies to a complex project with an extensive set of competencies.



The image above makes four things clear:

1. As an institution, you cannot suffice with the form of cooperation that continues to get bogged down at the level of the Collection of Individuals. In effect, this is no more than a cobbled-together group of players, each with its own interest and its own objective, and-with no form of shared ambitions. This method will not succeed in achieving growth and development.
2. All institutions together (the big 5) cannot contribute to the transition ambition of the entire region if in their partnership they continue to get stuck at the level of Collection of Individuals. The considerations of the previous point apply here.
3. But likewise, forming a COI is neither sufficient for an individual institution nor for the region as a whole. This gets you no further than the exchange and sharing of knowledge in simple projects with minor learning effects. A COI is suited as an entry-level

community for players that do not yet know each other. A COI can play a role in *Kenniswerkplaats*, but this will then be characterised as 'limited' (see the image on page 21).

4. *Kenniswerkplaats* is built around communities with the stated desire of learning with and from each other. But this alone is not enough. They also have to want to innovate: for themselves (at the level of the individual, the team and the institution) and the region. For this reason, a COIL is the goal towards which *Kenniswerkplaats* is ultimately working.

REFLECTION

Partners in the Knowledge cluster must reflect regularly on the development of *Kenniswerkplaats*. The reflection is by a regional host to the workspace manager, and is also intended to monitor/evaluate the process. Goals, learning in the region and regional learning should be considered as separate subjects in the reflection.

The most important points in this reflection are:

- Are the premises of *Kenniswerkplaats* being met, i.e. the actual participation of the desired parties under a regional contract, and working towards a set area agenda?
- Is the organisation embedded and are the working processes adequately described and documented (tasks and authorities)?
- Are the requirements for innovation capacity (continuous development) being met?
- Is the operation tied in to the national Dutch GKC programmes (what is being given, what is being gained)?
- What are the measurable results, what is the impact?

SWOT

To assess this, a SWOT analysis has been performed based on the big picture of the experiences within and with *Kenniswerkplaats*:

STRENGTHS

- Cooperation between 'big 5' parties
- Create a rich environment for students
- Working according to regional knowledge agenda and prioritisation
- Broad network potential
- Two layers: Administrative safeguarding and cooperation during performance
- Connection with relevant expertise

- Facilitative potential of the independent *Kenniswerkplaats* (in ideal situation)

WEAKNESSES

- Insufficient conversion strength to execute a sufficient number of projects and involve all of the big 5 in a relatively short time frame
- Administrative developments/impediments versus available implementation capacity
- Actual participation by parties inadequate (differs very strongly between the 8 Kenniswerkplaatsen)
- Strongly grant-driven
- Involvement in regular education curricula
- Impact as a result of forced format of education (particularly in secondary vocational education)
- Earning model is not yet adequate
- Embedding of workspace manager either as independent actor or as representative of one of the big 5
- Insufficiently wide vision (approached too much from the perspective of one actor)
- Lack of organisational capacity

THREATS

- Lack of clarity on financing in the long term
- Switching too slow, effectiveness too low (due to multi-stakeholder approach)
- Speed of operating and switching between client/contractor - and expectations in this area - vary widely
- Reduced interest on part of several actors due to new knowledge policy (top sectors, changes in regional administrative bodies, etc.).
- Being caught up by new structures (top sectors, etc.)

OPPORTUNITIES

- Choose HCA as pivot point
- Consciously choose position as example for the Centres for Innovative Professional Skills
- Handle Dutch national so called GKC programmes more effectively (plant, animal, NLP)
- More effective use of overriding themes (enterprise, bio-based, international)

- Create broader networks (education: more green AND grey, research: same)
- More effective knowledge sharing
- Organise *Kenniswerkplaats* by region (where the energy of the actors is)

CONCLUSIONS

With the SWOT analysis, we can draw several conclusions that are of essential importance for further professionalisation of *Kenniswerkplaats*:

REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The regional approach as it stands is a good choice in keeping with the changes facing society. In the region, the big 5 come into contact with each other to jointly achieve goals (that exceed the powers of any individual actor). *Kenniswerkplaats* can be a good form of cooperation for doing so. Connecting the HCA with the region is an excellent opportunity for underscoring this regional approach. Here it is important to ensure that the green domain meshes with the non-green.

SHARED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND 'SHAREHOLDERSHIP'

Regions have their own dynamics and their own culture. It would therefore only be logical to put control in the hands of the region, and for the national structure to follow the regional development and describe and facilitate inspiration between the partners through 'vision forming' and best/bad practices. The real effects are generated where the parties actually become shareholders in an implementation approach. The risk is that the organisation gets bogged down in administratively initiated and grant-driven subjects (administrative burden). Effectiveness and outcome must be transparent, objectively assessable and guaranteed in order to be sustainable.

The vision, agenda, consortium of institutions and practical organisation can be organised in the region. National connections arise through the centres of experience and centres of excellence (green and grey) in the national regions (classification of national government and educational institutions).

JOINT EARNING MODEL

The intended innovation-oriented dynamic arises when the parties have a joint earning model. The risk is that the educational system as a partner takes insufficient opportunities to orient itself towards these. Frequently, the focus will remain on the educational system and shift too little to the social developments in the region. These developments are described in the regional agendas and can often be linked to the themes and programmes of the GKC. They are distributed through the centres of experience and centres for innovative professional skills, which are regionally oriented and must move with labour market developments (business development and career prospects) in the region.

BRIDGING FUNCTION

It is strategically important for *Kenniswerkplaats* (including regional hosts) to be positioned as a bridge between labour markets, education and science. (How do we connect the traditional universities with the universities of applied sciences, what do the companies need in terms of knowledge and expertise of their personnel, how do you organise that transition among employees, and how do you organise innovative development in your companies/branches). This gives *Kenniswerkplaats* better embedding more compatible with the structuring of top sectors

STRENGTH OF LLL

The universities of applied sciences and the senior secondary vocational studies are very much in touch with what makes companies tick. But they are unable to change the learning culture in companies, because they are not oriented towards the labour market. Secondary vocational education institutions lack the strength to make this happen. That knowledge is, however, organised around the GKC programme Lifelong Learning (LLL). The failure factor is getting bogged down in administrative structures, which would make it easy to lose the momentum needed to make the necessary shifts.

PERSPECTIVE

The foregoing leads us to a perspective on *Kenniswerkplaats* In the short term. Given the new organisation via the top sectors, the clear choice is to connect *Kenniswerkplaats* closely with the HCA. The following notions are relevant here.

- The SME segment is the driver of the economy (certainly at the regional level).
- *Kenniswerkplaats* is functional for structured cooperation at the administrative level between enterprises, province/region and knowledge institutions. The effectiveness becomes visible in projects with clients. (companies, lower authorities)
- *Kenniswerkplaats* has its greatest value and impact in the SME segment. Large companies are more inclined to organise their innovations themselves.
- *Kenniswerkplaats* must professionalise as a work organisation and develop and document its efforts in a measurable and results-oriented manner.
- Within two years, *Kenniswerkplaats* must have access to revolving funds, to make it no longer dependent on grant applications.
- The 'big 5' parties have a common structure (golden triangle) to enhance innovative strength in the region for a future that is sustainable, societally relevant and self-sufficient.
- The ministry oversees and safeguards the functionality of *Kenniswerkplaats*.
- *Kenniswerkplaats* is intended as a flywheel in the region.

- *Kenniswerkplaats* is an appropriate means of moving the HCA forward: Regional labour market (companies and workforce) is involved; Ministries (of Economic Affairs, Agriculture & Innovation and, if possible, Education, Culture & Science) facilitate the professionalisation (for example: transition to person-specific learning budget for LLL, options to organise labour market-oriented learning and effective network development and knowledge-sharing between regions (national government focuses on connecting national regions)), province participates at area level in *Kenniswerkplaats*; municipalities are involved at labour market level.
- Knowledge institutions facilitate the learning questions and the organisation of the efforts to answer them.
- Efficiency of knowledge development is increased by connecting research and education faster and more often. The effect is that cooperative knowledge centres emerge in the region.
- Regional hosting is indispensable for maintaining the connection with the national networks.

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UNPUBLISHED DOCUMENTS

Together, *Kenniswerkplaats* has now published over 400 working documents, ranging from advanced research, such as Prof. D. Strijker's soon-to-be-published final report on the evaluation and image of the Veenkoloniën, to outstanding reports by preparatory vocational education students. VHL and AOC Terra are now in the process of establishing an KenniswerkplaatsKnowledge Centre in which this material will be monitored, analysed and prepared and submitted for publication. Three chair appointments and four uas professors will be linked to this knowledge centre. As of now, a PhD student in Place Keeping has been

appointed, with funding to be provided by the Northeast Fryslân and the Veenkoloniën regions.

COLOFON

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Evelien Kist, international officer AOC Terra

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AOC Terra has deliberately made the choice to work with authentic professional assignments in which a very close relationship with the environment (the five o's) is being pursued. The reason for this choice lies in the fact that this will create a very effective learning environment. AOC Terra is looking for other schools that also wish to opt for this approach.



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