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IJzeren wegen en sociale wegen. Een beschrijving van een reorganisatieproces bij het wegonderhoud bij de Nederlandse Spoorwegen in termen van het open systeem model van organisaties.

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Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:

1972

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Tanamal, T. H. J. J. (1972). *IJzeren wegen en sociale wegen. Een beschrijving van een reorganisatieproces bij het wegonderhoud bij de Nederlandse Spoorwegen in termen van het open systeem model van organisaties*. s.n.

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Summary

Chapter I describes the aim of this study.

In recent organisation literature - i.e. in the Netherlands - very few publications are to be found in which the systematic investigation of the complete course of planned change processes have been described in detail. This study is designed to fill-up this gap, and thus to provide a contribution to organisation theory, by describing an action research of the successive actions of an extensive planned-change (process of organisation development), carried out in the period 1963-1967 on the Netherlands Railways.

The planned-change was aimed at revising and re-allocating the tasks of the staff of 52 technical subdivisions spread over the whole of the railway network, these together forming part of the 8 operating regions, into which the operating department with its 18,000 employees - the biggest department of the Netherlands Railways - was divided. These subdivisions are in fact permanent way maintenance sections having, as their primary task, the maintenance and renewal of a given geographically demarcated part of the railway network.

As feed-back information to top-management, this study is intended to contribute towards future management policy as regards organisation development. Finally, the object of this descriptive study on actions is to offer new concepts concerning the training and education of managers. For this purpose, the performance of management here was arranged according to the open system model.

Chapter II gives the theoretical background of this study.

The Netherlands Railways, considered as an open system, are open to changing values in culture. This interaction has led to the creation of a new management philosophy and, consequently, to an organisational change within the Netherlands Railways. This new management philosophy: striving towards an adaptive, flexible organisation by granting more room for autonomy in its subdivisions, first took shape in 1962/63 within the operating department. Using this philosophy, the Netherlands Railways create new "company values", in which autonomy for the staff gets a central place. These new values require both a behavioural-change and incorporation into the tasks of the existing organisation.

The question was how to do this. In reflecting on this problem, links were sought with the socio-technical system approach for the incorporating of the new values into existing tasks in order to arrive at the formation of group tasks for relatively autonomous work groups. The bringing about of the desired behavioural change pointed towards a planned change.

Chapter III illustrates the motives for and defines the problems dealt with in this study. In 1963, all managers of the 52 permanent way maintenance sections were set the task of realizing the following objective: finding by themselves a new task structure for their managerial staff in which the new values may

take shape. This assignment was moulded into the form of a planned change with the author as active agent (i.e. change agent). The problem then became how to set up a planned change which was simultaneously focussed on the bringing about of a behavioural change and on the creation of a new structure.

In Chapter IV a description is given of the field of study in an analysis of the situation at the outset of the planned change.

In Chapter V, after considering the desired ultimate situation, the strategy for the bringing about of the behavioural change is determined and the plan of action is given.

This strategy, based on knowledge and methods from the social sciences, had an educational (sociatrical) character and the following starting points: for the motivation, an appeal was made to the need for self-realisation and participation by the managers of the permanent way maintenance sections in the overall set-up; the small group (in-group) was chosen as vehicle of influence.

Chapter VI contains, together with Chapter VII, the essence of this study and shows, in a behaviourally orientated description of the continuing actions, in what way the behavioural change and the new structure have been effected.

In this process of organisation development, which shows all features of a process of "democratization of the work-place", the following is revealed:

- . the interaction between the new and the existing values
- . the social control of the process of change
- . the problems and consequences for the individual and the group concerned
- . a process of action training (training for change) for the managers of the permanent way sections and
- . the flexibility and adaptability of the organisation

A separate page shows the "strategical path" which the change agent has adopted. Thus, the result of this description forms a model for such a process of organisation development.

Chapter VII describes how, from the socio-technical system approach with the help of a process of joint-optimization, an initial structure for an open socio-technical system, which may promote the development of relatively autonomous groups, emerges. This initial structure has the character of a development structure design. Thus this description furnishes a model for setting-up such structures. Appendix i gives a survey of the various parameters from the technical-economical system and of those from the social system, which, in the process of joint-optimization, were attuned to each-other.

In considering the new structure more closely, this chapter goes on to show how the autonomy has been incorporated into the tasks and how the social system may develop in the interaction with the environment.

This chapter also shows that the incorporating of autonomy into the tasks is limited by various boundary conditions and boundary

constants. A survey of these boundary conditions is to be found in appendix h.

Lastly, a final survey and conclusions are given in Chapter VIII. The most important conclusions are:

- The recommending and incorporating of new values concerning man and organisation requires a process of organisation development.
- In such a process, the initial phase appears to present the greatest difficulties.
- The recommending and incorporating of new values sets in motion all existing values and requires the setting up of a new, adapted pattern of values.
- The recommending and incorporating of new values is only possible, and only becomes truly useful, when attended by adequate structural changes.
- Under expert guidance, the granting of autonomy is a usable tool for bringing about changes in the organisation.
- Summing up, it may be concluded that the new management philosophy on the Netherlands Railways fits into the open system model. Hence the OSM is a usable model for the training and education of managers in adaptive organisations.