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Ben Kokkeler
Em.professor of applied sciences
Bestuurslid Stad en Wijk, en PRIO
Coördinator HBO Thematafel
Veiligheid



Dutch resilience governance structures challenged by the Whole of Society approach

Crisis Governance Meeting, Antwerp

My lens



Em.Prof. applied sciences, Smart Public Safety, Avans Hogeschool

Academic researcher on Science & Technology Studies, STS, PhD. Universiteit Twente, distributed leadership in emergent (research) organisations, socio-technological impact-analysis

Chair joint ethical committee Eindhoven, Helmond/Brainport Smart District, 's-Hertogenbosch, Tilburg, Breda, Roosendaal

Coordinator Dutch 'HBO Thematafel Veiligheid'

Co-chair Dutch Human Capital forum on Cybersecurity

Evaluator/auditor of innovation programmes national and European, Technopolis Group

Former CEO Centrum voor Veiligheid en Digitalisering (CVD)

Former programme manager nation wide data programme's LNV and NVWA (foodsafety & crisisgovernance)



Dutch resilience governance structures challenged by the Whole of Society

At present, Dutch society is gearing up to be prepared for hybrid crises that have not occurred before in terms of scale, duration and socio-technological challenges.

Under the banner of 'the whole of society' creating resilient governance structures at regional level is the talk of the town.

This WoS-concept combines the earlier appeal from the United Nations to cope with climate change and the approach of NATO to mobilize a broad range of physical and human resources in response to the new geopolitical context.

In my presentation I resume the main governance challenges and dilemma's in the Dutch context that require research, while suggesting that lessons learned from interorganisational network steering and information management during Covid-19 could inform future research.



Current challenges and dilemma's for municipalities and public safety organisations

Geopolitical, climate and socio-economic turmoil boil down in polarisation on regional and local level

Digitalisation and AI occur as disruptive dynamics that not only could serve the public course, but are also quickly adopted by criminal (state) organisations

Emergent challenges: balancing the openness of society at large, an open – internationally intertwined - economy, open information platform – internationally dependant, an open (local) democracy, a regionally oriented system of 25 safety regions, scarcity of human capital. And on top of all that: becoming the mainport for large scale military operations

Municipalities and public safety organisations are heavily challenged, but can engage in socio-technological learning networks



Whole of Society - converging threats

United Nations:

Cities must innovate for the whole of society approach. <https://oecdcoito.blog/2023/11/15/cities-must-innovate-for-whole-of-society-climate-action/>

Cities generate 80% of global GDP as well as more than 70% of global CO₂ emissions. They are home to more than half the world's population and [key to solving the climate crisis](#) and protecting people from its impacts. They can show that moving faster is not just possible, but aspirational and popular. Key to this is building the political foundations for delivery by mobilising all of society in support of key structural and lifestyle changes needed.

NATO:

The 'Whole of Society' (WoS) approach, inspired by Finland's longstanding experience, which emphasizes the co-operation between government, the private sector and citizens to the national security.





Societal Resilience in the Netherlands: Whole of society approach



September 2025

General societal disaster&crisis-requirements for the Netherlands



Health care

(Medical and psycological attention for infectious diseases, severe burns, victims of war or CBRNE, etc.)



Safety

(Acute search and rescue, evacuation and refuge)



Basic and fundamental needs

(e.g. shelter, food and water, internet connection for displaced people)



Recovery and recognition

(Well-being i.e financial, social, pshycological, medical welness)



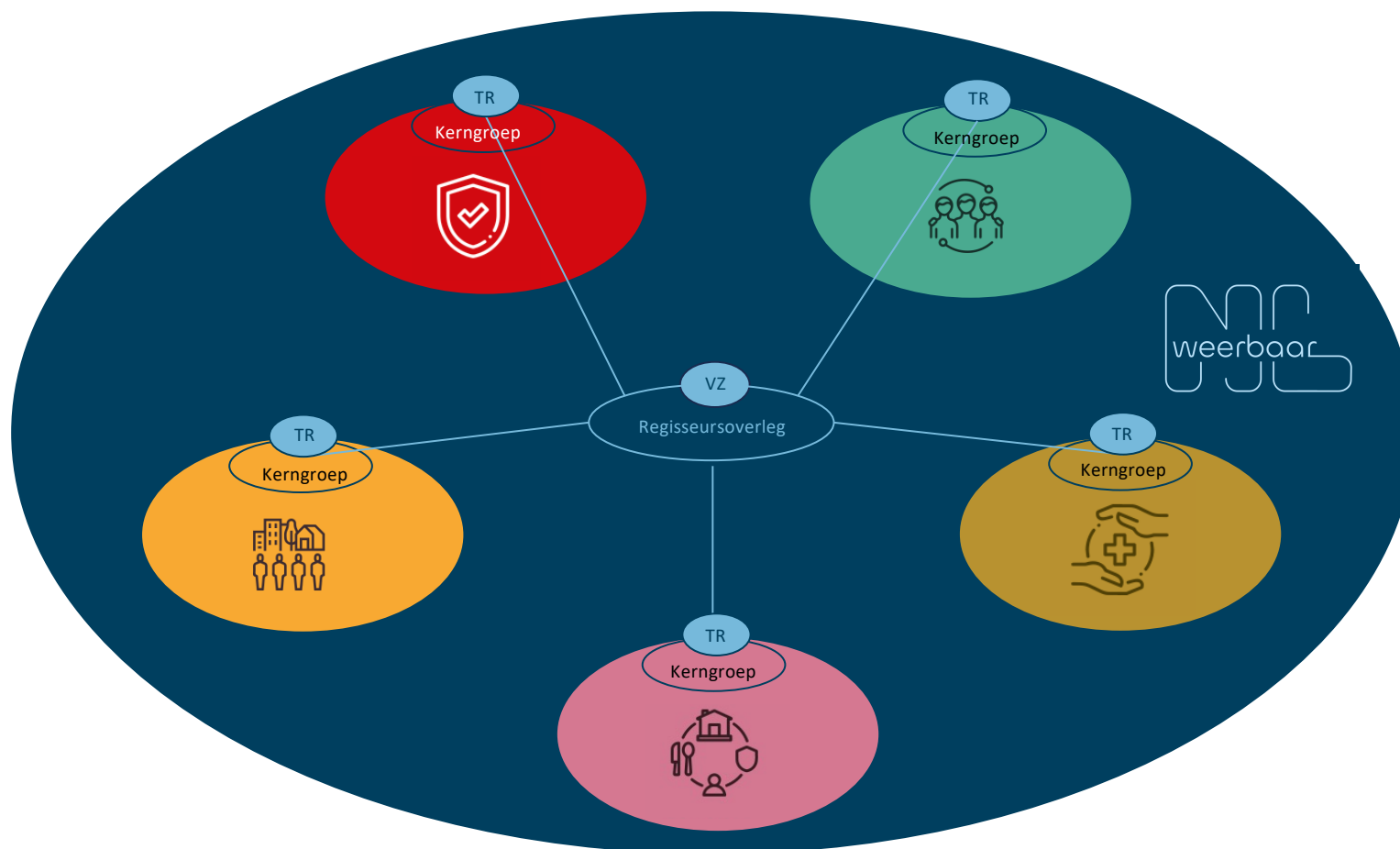
Continuity of society

(Vital infrastructure e.g food, water distribution)

Whole of society approach

- Creating overview of total of capabilities for crisis-respons in society - from emergency services to engaged local citizens
- Sharing and gaining collective knowledge and expertise
- Building (online) communities (WeerbaarNL.nl)
- Focusing on general societal requirements rather than causes of disaster and crisis
- Formulating 5 societal disaster&crisis-requirements for the Netherlands based on the 7 baseline requirements of NATO
- Strengthening societal as well as personal and organizational resilience on local, regional and national level simultaneously (N.B. WeerbaarNL focuses on societal resilience on national level)
- *Requires a network governance approach rather than hierarchical control*

Network governance through community building



The Dutch response: WeerbaarNL and Whole of Society approach

first observations

Focus on: “de basis op orde”. Priority at **physical infrastructures** and logistical hubs (“noodpunten”)

Citizens are approached as **households**: make sure that you survive the first 72 hours

Similarly, the majority of companies – **SMEs** – are not being challenged or supported to join forces

In particular **smaller municipalities** are just starting of in exploring their role, informed by the VNG

The nationwide “IGV Coalition” aims at a **learning network** of regional thematic coalitions carried forward by safety regions

Active search for **foreign learnings** from Finland (WoS), Ukraine (cities), Italy (volunteer organisations)

The overall approach is mainly ‘**institutional**’: thematic regional approaches are being explored

Social innovation that accepts partnerships with citizen or company collectives is not in focus yet

Overarching threats and challenges such as **hybrid distortions** or (state) cybercriminal attacks are not yet addressed in an orchestrated way

An overarching socio-technological vision and concept for data and AI-driven governance and management is lacking



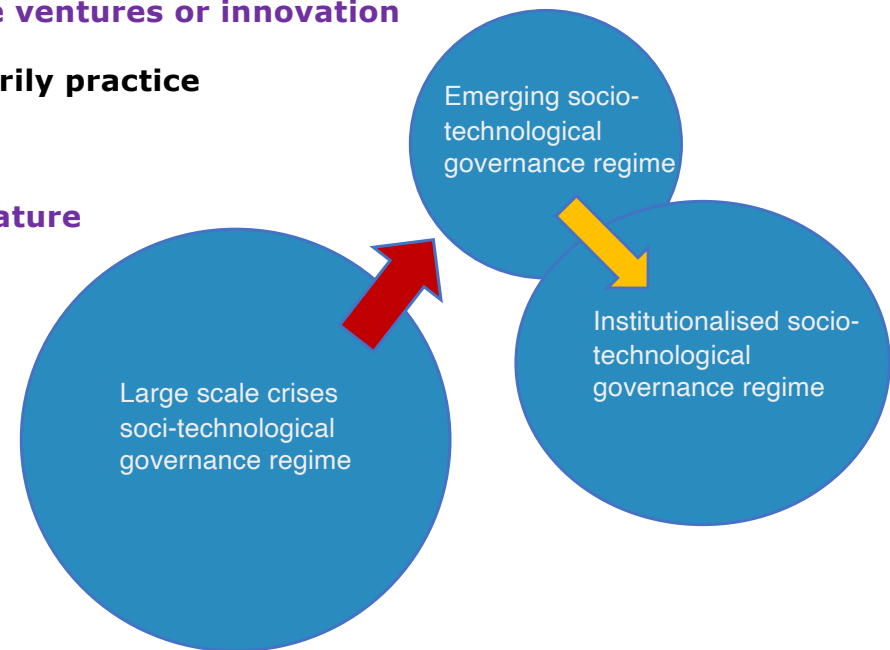
Overall observations regarding governance

The operational focus of the Dutch WoS approach results in a **wide variety of lessons learned** that are barely registered, they are amalgamated in daily working practices

The operational focus responds to the **known threats and challenges**

The predominant focus on operational resilience seems to prohibit innovation: **the resulting governance focus is on control/not on new cooperative ventures or innovation**

The evolving governance approaches seem to be primarily practice and threat oriented, only **partially and implicitly informed by academic literature**



Lessons learned from interorganisational network steering and information management during Covid-19 could inform future research

In the years 2022-2023 a network evaluation study was conducted about **the role of the Directeur Publieke Gezondheid (DPG) as networkmanager** during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. (2023; Van den Oord, S.; Janssen, H.; Kokkeler, B.; Marynissen, H.; van Zelst, M.)

The study concludes that the DPG has succeeded in bringing together organizations and individuals from various domains and sectors and enabling them to collaborate. To this end, the DPG has deployed **a range of integration mechanisms**. A second conclusion, following this positive outcome of crisis management in terms of achieved network collaboration, is that lessons can be learned for the near future, when the occurrence of large-scale and longer-lasting crises – including in related areas such as energy and water supply – cannot be ruled out.

Following these positive conclusions, several recommendations were made: sustain the GHOR office as a network administrative organization (NAO) within the organizational network; establish the **NAO** as the network organization for crisis governance and the implementation of DPG **distributed leadership**; and, last but not least, **position the DPG as a network architect** and further develop this role in the continued development of the organizational network.



The Dutch research landscape regarding WoS

At present, we see a multi-level and emerging research actors landscape.

A core position is taken up by the national institutes NIPV, Police Academy and NLDA, with rather limited research funding – currently under pressure due to the overall funding strategy changes of the national government.

TNO is leading in a range of public-private consortia, for confidential research & innovation programmes, working with substantial budgets – currently expanding due to the new funding strategy of the Ministry of Defence and the new EU commitments. The immediate impact of the funding strategy for the wider research organisations landscape is still unclear.

Universities are gearing up (new) clusters of research groups and programmes, primarily in close consultation with the Ministry of Defence, seeking financial partnerships with the Ministry and with firms.

The safety regions and municipalities are currently being serviced with a substantial investment impuls aimed at enhancing the resilience of infrastructures. As it seems, not allowing research funding.

The universities of applied sciences have a key role in the development of thematic and regional research & development networks with public partners and with SMEs that are not yet familiar with large crises and cooperation with the Ministry of Defence. The NIPV professorships hold a core network position, having excellent connections to fire brigade departments and safety regions. Professorship platforms such as PRIO (data, ICT, AI, cyber resilience), Stad en Wijk (livable and safe neighborhoods), Zorg en Veiligheid, Toekomstbehendig Bestuur, and, of course, Safety, bring together over 150 professorships and over 1,500 (part-time) researchers. (In total, UASs count over 5,000 researchers)

The association of hogescholen (VH) and the HBO Thematafel Veiligheid facilitate and stimulate the creation of networks and consortia, currently inviting professors to join forces in a consistent national research programme and supporting boards in setting their cooperation strategies with the Ministry of Defence and the wider landscape of safety organisations.





Dr. Ben Kokkeler

**Em. Professor Social resilience in digital society | Centre for public safety and criminal justice | Avans
University of Applied Sciences**

Bjm.Kokkeler@avans.nl

Dr. Steven van den Oord

Senior researcher Networks & Crisis Governance, Dept. of Organization Studies, Tilburg University

S.vdnOord@tilburguniversity.edu

