



A state of sharing - Relevant trends for government communication

- > 37 trends identified in 2013
- > Impact of a changing society
- > Implications for government communication



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- > *Impact of a changing society*
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Foreword

Destinations

Sometimes, when I think of Society, I envisage a huge railway station without a timetable – just rows and rows of platforms and trains departing for unknown destinations. Where are they heading? Which one will we board?

The same metaphor could be applied to government communication. Countless trends, changes happening at breakneck speed – but which ones will actually influence the work we do? Hopefully, this overview of trends will help to create a kind of roadmap for the annual programme of the Voorlichtingsraad (Information Council, comprising all the information directors of the Dutch ministries) and for all communication workers and policymakers. We want to share our findings with you in this report.

Do we really want a timetable or should we be learning to let go? That is a key question in need of an answer, sooner rather than later. Any monopoly that the government might have had on public services and the dissemination of information was lost some time ago. People are organizing their own affairs in the age of the network society and the Internet revolution. The greatest challenge facing us is to let go, even though force of habit tells us to stay at the helm and continue to control and regulate. Make no mistake, we don't want to be a government that turns away and shirks its public duty. But our primary task is to help people make their own free choices within the parameters of the public good.

So, if we decide to go to Rome, let's stop off first at Maastricht and take stock. I hope that this report will inspire and fuel the public debate. If so, we will have arrived at our destination.

Erik den Hoedt

Director Public Information and Communications Service
Ministry of General Affairs

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Introduction

Relevant trends for government communication

Trend analysts, market researchers, communication experts, planning agencies... all of them constantly plotting and charting trends and developments. Not just in society, but in communication too. We have summarized these trends and developments in this report under the auspices of the Information Council (Voorlichtingsraad, henceforth VoRa).

Background: VoRa Plan for 2014

Every year the **VoRa** publishes a plan for government-wide communication activities on the basis of trends that are unfolding in society and in the field of communication, such as the network society and demands for transparency and accountability. Such trends are not without implications for government communication. Accordingly, the Directorate for Public Affairs and Communication was asked to bundle and summarize them for the VoRa Plan for 2014.

Purpose: a source-based overview of trends

This report presents an overview of 37 trends in society and the field of communication. Needless to say, it is not just about new developments in the past year. Some trends have a long history; others are more predictive for the coming decade. We singled out the period from 2010 to 2020 and traced the trends with the aid of desk research and expert interviews. We have identified them and underpinned them with sources from research agencies, planning agencies and universities.

> *See also: the notes in the appendix (page 44)*

Trend maps similar to those published by the Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management have also been compiled for these trends. They are obtainable from the Academie voor Overheidscommunicatie (institute of government communication) and can be found on Rijksporaal, the Dutch government intranet. Each map shows a trend and features a brief description. You may find these maps useful as working formats when selecting relevant trends for your own discipline, when discussing how organizations can respond to them, or when drawing up plans with your communication team. This report can also be read as a more detailed description and explanation of the trend maps.

Reading guide: seven clusters

The trends have been bundled into seven clusters: some clusters relate to trends in society, some to trends in communication, and some to both. You will also find recommendations by advisory boards, amongst others, for government communication. These recommendations are included alongside the trend to which they pertain. Often they highlight the relevance of existing trends for government communication, but sometimes they start new trends. So the distinction between a recommendation and a trend is not always clear-cut. The references to sources are brief to enhance readability. For example, 'CBS1' is used instead of a full title and footnotes. The full reference is in the appendix.

Seven clusters of trends: a summary

Less government, more personal responsibility - who should and can do it?

National and local government is taking more of a back seat as a result of changing tasks and public spending cuts. People are assuming more personal responsibility for sorting out their problems. This is a new scenario, which requires expectation management: in other words, the government must make perfectly clear what it does and does not represent. At the same time, it has to facilitate self-reliance and solidarity, while continuing its traditional role as a safety-net provider. People in low-skilled groups must also be afforded opportunities to contribute. Such people are less capable of participating in society and the bar for personal responsibility is very high for them.

From authority to network player – where do you fit in?

Traditional institutes are no longer the voice of authority, largely because people are so much better informed. A network society with more horizontal and temporary connections has emerged. Power relations are shifting inside and outside Europe and necessitating new styles of government, with the emphasis on unifying rather than hierarchical leadership. As just one of the players in the network, the government will have to find other ways of framing and communicating policy. The 'mediacracy' is set to play a pivotal role in this process as more and more debates take place in the media and on the public stage.

More public disclosure – what do you share?

Society wants open government. People expect transparency about policy and accountability for motives, choices and outcomes. The government must pro-actively publish relevant information – not just in response to requests under the Freedom of Information Act (Wet openbaarheid van bestuur) – and make other data available. These 'open' data will not only provide a clearer idea of the workings of government but create openings for better services and new undertakings in the process.

An authentic story, also told elsewhere – how do you come across?

People need true leaders, individuals and organizations with a vision and a logical and coherent story. That story is being told more and more through other channels: communication partners, platforms and branded journalism. Sometimes other channels come across as more credible because they are closer to the public or to interested parties or simply because they are more logical. Communication is emerging more and more as the binding factor.

New engagement – when do people engage?

The number of initiatives that people are undertaking outside the government, especially on their own patch, is growing all the time. A sort of hands-on democracy is materializing in which people tackle issues together. People also engage via protests, solidarity and crowdsourcing. If the government wants to get something done, it would be best advised to latch on to public initiatives and facilitate input. In plain terms, government participation instead of citizen participation. If you want to influence behaviour, you should provide opportunities to this effect. New technology can assist.

Mind shift – how do we view the world?

Assets are no longer the be-all and end-all. People no longer sit back and watch the world go by when they retire. Nine-to-five is a thing of the past and we don't even have to show up at the office to get the work done. The old, long-standing institutions and lifestyles are fading and being replaced by sharing, anti-consumerism, flexible jobs and energetic senior citizens. The sharing of services and goods is a particularly strong trend. New ways of looking at the world are opening up opportunities for new styles of government.

Changing connections – how can we still reach each other?

Mobile internet is burgeoning. The tablet, amongst other things, has enhanced the importance of images and infotainment. TV is still the most popular channel of communication; second screen (viewable simultaneously on the Internet) is catching on. Established channels, such as TV and newspapers, and also word-of-mouth are still relevant. Fragmentation in the use of media is, however, necessitating a cross-medial approach in government communication in which the potential of every medium is exploited to the full. Conversation will be the central style of communication: listening, monitoring and interacting online and offline, with meaning emerging through contact and storytelling.

Less government, more personal responsibility

Who should or can do it?

National and local government is taking more of a back seat as a result of changing tasks and public spending cuts. People are assuming more personal responsibility for sorting out their problems. This is a new scenario, which requires expectation management: in other words, the government must make perfectly clear what it does and does not represent. At the same time, it has to facilitate self-reliance and solidarity, while continuing its traditional role as a safety-net provider. People in low-skilled groups must also be afforded opportunities to contribute. Such people are less capable of participating in society and the bar for personal responsibility is very high for them.

Less government, more personal responsibility – who should or can do it?

1. Backseat government
2. A key role for expectation management
3. More self-reliance
4. Public spending cuts affect everyone
5. Solidarity under pressure
6. The bar is high, especially for the low-skilled



1. Backseat government

Decentralization, deregulation and Europe have **reduced the role of national government**. The execution of tasks is outsourced to other authorities or market players or left to individuals. This scenario not only ties in with the government's vision of its remit, but with the public spending cuts as well. With the government budget under pressure, services need to be more compact (Desk research). The public is happy for the government to take more of a backseat as long as basic provisions such as care and education are left intact (Netherlands Institute for Social Research, see boxed text on page 10).

At the same time, this less interventionist style of government is causing tension. People are sceptical about market forces, especially in the care sector. And they would prefer less rather than more European empowerment (Startklaar). The majority believe that the Netherlands has already conceded too much power to Brussels (COB2). Furthermore, the government is held responsible for abuses. Extra regulations

are demanded almost as soon as an incident comes to light. The Dutch Council of State has already highlighted the contradictions on this front: programmes are set up to deregulate and ease burdens on the one hand while the Council is being presented with unnecessarily detailed regulations on the other. The question facing the government is whether to let go and trust other players. (Desk research)

Example: covenants

Less interventionism is clearly visible in the inspectorates. Many government inspectorates have entered covenants with organizations who then take over some of the supervisory tasks. For example, three agencies (the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, the Rijnland District Water Control Board and the Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate) have signed partnership agreements with Amsterdam Airport Schiphol. They now perform fewer inspections and merely oversee the system: in other words, they supervise the supervisors. The conditions are set out in the Schiphol Airport Authority covenant (Inspectieloket).

2. A key role for expectation management

A different remit calls for expectation management: the public expects – sometimes mistakenly – that the government is able to eliminate risks, guarantee safety and clean up the fall-out when things go awry. Flooding, cybercrime and chemical accidents are typical examples of areas which the public expects the government to have under control. A government that promotes self-reliance will have to be clear about what it is accountable for (EMMA communication consultancy) – all the more so in a **complex society** and a global community where risks are likely to increase rather than decrease. Worldwide systems (IT, food production) are globally intertwined and the risks of **societal dislocation** from the threat and impact of, say, SARS or bird flu, have intensified (Strategieberaad).

On the one hand, the government must prevent risks; on the other hand, people resent the government meddling in their **personal affairs** (Strategieberaad, EMMA). This paradox is all too evident in the youth care: parenting is a job for individuals, but when tragedy strikes, everybody blames the system. In a study on social unease, the Council for Social Development (*Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling/RMO*) concludes that new policies are rarely the answer. The government can also respond by making known that there is very little it can do. Professor Reint Jan Renes argues that the government could tell people more often what to expect of it at this moment in time and not in the future. He cites as an example the youth unemployment ambassador who explains what he will do for young job seekers in the years ahead: “What a job seeker needs to know is: what are you doing for me *right now*?”

The government is transferring more and more responsibility to the individual but, says Evelien Tonkens, Professor of Citizenship, they are not telling people that explicitly: “You might get the impression that not a lot is happening when you hear about individual measures such as tighter admission criteria for care homes, but all these individual measures add up: **the onus is on the citizen**. Is this not being conveyed because of fears of social disquiet? I think it has the opposite effect and creates insecurity: people worry about what is still to come”.

Political scientist Menno Hurenkamp says that people still believe that the Parliament in The Hague is the centre – the beating heart – of government, but feel that it is being eroded, too. They want a government they can recognize but see the encroaching influence of Europe. And they are irked by the fact that, since decentralization, they are being fobbed off with statements such as “**that no longer has anything to do with us**”. The majority of citizens are unclear about how the revised system of public administration works, but they also are becoming increasingly capable of running their own affairs and have less need of the government. They try to sort things out for themselves. And that is the effect of the implicit message (noted by Tonkens) – self-reliance – that the government has been sending out for the past twenty years and which Hurenkamp calls the ‘tacit policy on daily life’.

3. More self-reliance

To recap, more responsibility is being assigned to the citizen. The pressure of an ageing population has made certain provisions (social benefits, pensions) unaffordable. Job-seekers will have to train longer or apply for jobs for longer periods of time and employees will have to make their own arrangements for their old age. The welfare state is turning more and more into a **self-care state** (Desk research).

According to the Social and Cultural Report of 2012, there is a large measure of public support for the principle of personal responsibility. Fifty-seven per cent of the Dutch public say that people should assume more responsibility and depend less on the state. They turn to the government less often for support. In this model of 'the responsible citizen under the stewardship of the government' the government would concern itself less with details and concentrate on preconditions and frameworks. It is possible to mobilize citizens by making them directly aware of their own interests and affording them certain means, such as an anonymous hotline for whistle-blowers or public safety initiatives like **Burgernet**. These kinds of facilities make it easier for people to contribute (Netherlands Institute for Social Research). Bread Funds are an excellent demonstration of self-reliance.

Example: Bread Funds

Bread Funds are safety nets that self-employed workers create for one another so that support will be on hand in the event of long-term illness. It is an alternative to an expensive disability insurance. When someone takes ill, he receives monthly payments from the other members of the fund. The money you contribute is kept in a separate account. "Powerful institutions? Power to the people," a participant says on the website. Others say: "Affordability and solidarity", "I know where my money goes" and "You build a different society from the bottom up."

So, people do want to 'solve things themselves' – especially if they can do it together. Sixty-two per cent of Dutch citizens believe that people should participate more in collective initiatives such as **neighbourhood communities**. People can become more self-sufficient in bringing up children, in combating obesity and in keeping the neighbourhood clean. They can also undertake to live a healthy lifestyle, settle debts on time and prevent teenage alcoholism (Motivaction). Things are different in certain other domains, where personal responsibility is subject to preconditions (see boxed text).

> *See also: Hands-on democracy (page 28)*

When do citizens accept more personal responsibility?

Despite the public support for more personal responsibility, the Netherlands Institute for Social Research identifies certain limitations in its Beroep op de burger report (Appeal to the Citizen):

- Personal responsibility must not be imposed by the government. The government lacks credibility since it does not always discharge its own responsibilities; for example inspectorates have been known to fail dismally. This observation is borne out by another study (COB3): the government itself **makes blunders** and people suspect it of shirking responsibility.
- It depends on the policy domain. The government should still be responsible for education, care and safety. Personal responsibility is more appropriate when it comes to raising and caring for children, and to art and culture. Government intervention in these areas is quickly equated with mollycoddling. The government should guarantee basic provisions and retain responsibility for supervision and sanctions. Vulnerable people must not end up as the **dupe**.
- Concrete appeals to citizens are likely to provoke **resistance**. The principle is all very well but there is less willingness to come into action. They wonder: Can I do this? What good will it do me?

- Freedom is misleading as an argument for personal responsibility. Supervision will always be needed. It is generally felt that fellow citizens should not be allowed to abuse the system. It is therefore better to **frame** personal responsibility as a financial desire for economization and a moral desire for citizenship. The public is receptive to both arguments.
- The assumption that citizens can bear more personal responsibility because they are financially better off and **more competent** is false. First of all, households have no more disposable income than before and secondly, though educational levels are higher, some people are still illiterate, many have no basic qualifications, and there is also a group that cannot assume extra responsibilities because of disabilities and limitations.

> *See also: The bar is high, especially for the low-skilled (page 13)*

4. Spending cuts affect everyone

Economic growth has flattened out and the government budget is nowhere near in order (CBS1). The need for spending cuts was therefore acknowledged by 65% of the public when the new Cabinet took office, though the perception that spending on education and care had already been dramatically reduced in the preceding years had narrowed down the support base. By the autumn of 2012 there were far fewer **taboos**, such as raising the state pension age and cutting mortgage interest relief (Startklaar). The support for spending cuts has not changed in 2013. The public understands that the books have to balance, but wants the burden to be spread fairly. Where and how heavily the axe will fall is a delicate topic. It would not be prudent for the government to intervene too fast or too rigorously. It would be best to realize **efficiency improvements** so that services can remain as intact as possible (COB2).

The motives behind the spending cuts also need to be **visible**: what choices did the government make and why? The government is being forced to economize (because of the crisis) and will have to make clear to the public what it can and cannot expect (Council of State).

> *See also: A key role for expectation management (page 10), and Transparency and accountability (page 19)*

People take a grim view of the economy and their own financial future (COB1). One third expects their financial situation to deteriorate in the coming year; the highest percentage since the Citizens' Outlook Barometer began in 2008. The crisis is edging ever closer and is making inroads into people's lives. The decline in income and spending power, the increase in low-income households, the need for **debt counselling**, the fall in employment, the tight housing market, and the all-time low in consumer confidence indicate that the recession is hitting the **pocket** of more and more people (CBS1). Consumers think twice nowadays before spending money and the unemployment figures have risen to over half a million for the first time since 1996.

People are also concerned about the **debt crisis** in Europe; in particular, the implications for the Eurozone if one of the countries goes bankrupt, and for the economy, pensions and employment in the Netherlands. People find it difficult to separate spending cuts at home from loans to weak Eurozone countries. It is a difficult subject to fathom. The debt crisis is too complicated for many Dutch people (Debt Crisis Monitor).

5. Solidarity under pressure

Lindblom PR agency reports that solidarity is disappearing between social groups because spending cuts in the housing market and the care sector are affecting 'ordinary people'. Individuals are less prepared to pick up the tab for someone else's unhealthy lifestyle. According to 85% of the population, it is more a case of **every man for himself** in the Netherlands (Startklaar). Conversely, there is more willingness to help members of one's own circle – so solidarity is actually growing in the private sphere.

> *See also: Hands-on Democracy (page 28) and Social relations: problem and pride (page 31)*

Professor Tonkens agrees that broad-based solidarity is under pressure: "As people realize that large institutions (pension funds, banks) can't provide security, they opt to organize things on a small scale and closer to home. The Bread Funds for the self-employed are a classic example (see page 9). **Reciprocity** has long been regarded as a sort of 'kitty' that you contributed to and could dip into if necessary. It has now developed into a direct give-and-take service nearby between acquaintances and peers: I look after you and you look after me. In the context of the welfare state, however, reciprocity is more anonymous and overarching, with 'healthy' and 'sick', and 'rich' and 'poor' standing shoulder to shoulder." Political scientist Hurenkamp confirms this development: there is no shortage of solidarity among the same kinds of people: homogeneous groups in terms of education, interests et cetera.

6. The bar is high, especially for the low-skilled

There is a whole group of people for whom personal responsibility is far from simple. You need to know your way around officialdom and other systems in order to participate in this increasingly complex society. Some people feel pressured by market forces and freedom of choice (e.g., of energy providers). It is not easy to get hold of the right information, compare providers and make a choice for the right reasons. The Netherlands is already an **achievement society**: fears of failure are intensified by the high social norms around family, work, education, hobbies, et cetera (Strategieeraad).

The government should make it easier to participate in society. This applies particularly to the low-skilled, who tend to participate much less. According to Statistics Netherlands (CBS1): they work less;

- they are more likely to suffer depression and are less healthy physically and mentally;
- they live more isolated lives;
- they have less faith in politics and other institutions;
- their participation in politics (voting etc.) is lower than for any other group.

The gap between the high-skilled and low-skilled in the Netherlands, referred to as **diploma democracy** in the book of the same name by Bovens and Willeljk, is now recognized by citizens and in the public debate (COB1). Low-skilled groups participate less and are less represented in official bodies. In the past, civil society organizations (e.g., trades unions) were led by low-skilled workers but that is no longer the case (Desk research). It is not always easy for some people to find their way around; it takes skills that are not possessed by everyone. The problem is largely knowledge-related. According to Hurenkamp, this reflects the true division in society. Lack of participation is not just a question of less education; highly educated groups do not exert themselves enough to get themes onto the agenda (in the media) that also matter to less educated groups.

There are other **divisions** in society, which overlap to some extent with the division in level of education; take, for example, rich and poor, IT literate and non-literate, haves and have-nots, ethnic and non-ethnic, and people with a larger or smaller world. Els Dragt, trend researcher at MARE Research, has listed them. People believe that it is only the gap between high- and low-skilled which has widened (COB1).

The abundance of information is making demands on all consumers and members of the public. Information processing is getting more perfunctory in this **information society**. The younger generation in particular tends to trust information from search engines without batting an eyelid. That is the downside of readily available knowledge. So, it is all the more important for information to be relevant, reliable and customized (Desk research). Low-skilled individuals have less faith in information from the government and scientific institutions than highly skilled individuals (COB2). They use the Internet, but largely for entertainment. The digital divide between low-skilled and highly skilled groups is no longer about Internet access (now almost 100%) but about Internet use.

> See also: *Other media behaviour (page 39)*

DE SCHULDENCRISIS SAMENGEVAT

Het is in het belang van Nederland om mee te werken aan de oplossing van de schulden crisis. We zijn namelijk financieel en economisch met andere Europese landen verbonden. Zo gaat de crisis van een land over naar Europa en hebben we een gemeenschappelijke financiële toekomst te maken. Als het dus slecht gaat in een Europees land dan heeft dit direct gevolgen voor onze economische groei en het aantal banen.

Met 26 andere landen vormt Nederland de Europese Unie. Deze landen werken samen om de economie, handel en werkgelegenheid in Europa te verbeteren en te versterken.

DE 2008 STERKE EN DE 2009
Landen waarmee het financieel en economisch al slecht ging, komen door deze crisis nog verder in de problemen.

DE NEDERLANDSE ROLES
Onderhandelt met de andere landen om de crisis te beperken. Het is belangrijk dat de andere landen ook hun rol spelen. Het is belangrijk dat de andere landen ook hun rol spelen.

ANDERE LANDEN DIE HET IN PROBLEEM EN
België en Portugal. Deze landen hebben ook problemen met hun huishoudingen en economie op deze manier.

STRENGERE EUROPESE REGELINGEN IN 2012
Europa heeft nu een nieuwe manier om de economie te verbeteren. Dit is een manier om de economie te verbeteren en de economie op deze manier.

Example: writing for the low-skilled – language level B1 and visual material

Research has shown that people with low skills need simple language, short pages and task-based information (Blauw).

The editorial teams at Rijksoverheid.nl therefore write preferably at language level B1 and design the pages to be easily comprehensible. What this boils down to in practice is:

- Short sentences with active verbs (no passive verbs, definitely no complex syntax);
- No difficult words or jargon;
- Concrete information (and concrete examples to explain abstract information);
- No implicit meanings (metaphors etc.);
- Task-based information: the reader must see immediately what kind of information the page is offering and what you need it for;
- An easily understandable structure with clear headings, sub-headings and lists.

The question-and-answer format lends itself perfectly for this purpose. For example: How do I apply for child benefit? The government website also uses visual material such as infographics, photos and videos to explain things

> See also: *More images and infotainment (page 38)*

From authority to network player

Where do you fit in?

Traditional institutes are no longer the voice of authority, largely because people are so much better informed. A network society with more horizontal and temporary connections has emerged. Power relations are shifting inside and outside Europe and necessitating new styles of government, with the emphasis on unifying rather than hierarchical leadership. As just one of the players in the network, the government will have to find other ways of framing and communicating policy. The 'mediacracy' is set to play a pivotal role in this process as more and more debates take place in the media and on the public stage.

From authority to network player – where do you fit in?

7. Diminishing authority
8. Network society
9. New international power relations
10. Other styles of government
11. Mediacracy



7. Diminishing authority

Institutions are no longer regarded as the voice of authority. A government minister, a bank manager, a teacher, a scientist – they no longer wield authority by virtue of their position. Nowadays they have to claim authority and earn trust (Desk research, EMMA).

That is because people are much better informed – **knowledgeability** is high (RWS Next). The Internet gives people fast and easy access to all sorts of sources. In addition, every failure and shortcoming is exposed to ruthless scrutiny by the media. The Internet is heaving – says online communication consultant Renata Verloop at Frankwatching – with **self-appointed and bona fide experts** which institutions have to contend with. A classic example is the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (see example below). It is therefore important to engage in dialogue with citizens in a **tone of voice** that conveys authority without sounding authoritarian. Verloop: “The possession of knowledge is no longer a unique selling point. How you share your knowledge with online savvy – that’s the new authority” (Frankwatching2).

Out of all the institutions (including media, unions and banks) the **Dutch House of Representatives and local government** are least trusted by the people (COB2). The elderly and low-skilled, in particular, have very little faith in politics. The turnout for the elections to the House of Representatives in 2012 was the lowest in fourteen years, with only 73.8% of the electorate bothering to vote (CBSi). Confidence in the government is low but stable.

Example: To vaccinate or not to vaccinate

The National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) learned some valuable lessons from the vaccination campaign against cervical cancer in 2007, which triggered a vigorous debate on whether to vaccinate young girls. Was it necessary? And didn't it entail too many unknown risks? The standpoint of concerned mothers as expressed in the (social) media was given just as much weight in public opinion as the standpoint of the 'authority', the RIVM. Now, says the institute, it is looking for a new balance between showing authority and listening to society.



Whereas, in the past, the RIVM concentrated on issuing facts to professionals, it is now gearing its communication to an audience that seeks its opinion. There is a similar institute in France which works more closely with individuals, professionals and scientists in key communities (Frankwatching2).

8. Network Society

Long-standing connections in society have been crumbling in recent decades with the advent of individualization and the disintegration of politico-religious barriers. People feel less represented by politics, civil society, interest groups or formal input (Desk research). This **detachment** is appearing on other fronts as well: family ties are looser and people are leaving the church (see example below).

Example: Ontdopen.nl

In 2012 Pope Benedict made an announcement that rankled in some quarters: it was said that he was preaching inequality between people with different sexual orientations. Some felt so strongly that they decided to leave the Roman Catholic church. To help them on their way someone launched a website called ontdopen.nl (de-baptism). A standard letter was posted on the website along with instructions on where to send it. A year later, the bishops revised the policy on church leavers and the church itself has now made it easier for people to go.

Horizontal relationships are typical of our network society (ROB1). The connections are also more temporary, more informal and organized more around single issues. **Loose is the new tight**. The electorate is also shifting with each election, making it harder to pursue a stable policy (RWS Next, Council of State). A government that wants to involve the public in its plans will have to find new ways and times for doing so. Not just via input meetings but also in the implementation of policy. The government will also have to fit in more with initiatives of the people themselves (WRR, EMMA).

> *See also: Hands-on democracy (page28)*

The government and its agencies are still to adjust to **horizontalization**. For example, departments have named fixed policy domains even though they should work more often with flexible programmes (Desk research). “The network society forms loose connections around a central issue or a sustainable coalition around a long-term project. As a result, governments are definitely not always the ‘boss’ in policy processes. (...) Policy communication is no longer exclusively the domain of the government. Classic communication strategies presuppose primacy of the government, a linear policy cycle and the dominance of large media. But that image does not chime with the network society” (EMMA).

9. New international power relations

There is also a network society worldwide: our country has to cooperate with Europe and Europe has to cooperate with the rest of the world. Agreements are harder to reach nowadays because of stronger contradictions in Europe, the diminishing power of the West, and the rise of new economies in Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS countries). All of this calls for **rebalancing** (term from the government-wide knowledge agenda of the Strategieeraad). The sensitivity to conflicts is greater partly as a result of the global scarcity of natural resources. One response is protectionism. But, says trend researcher Dragt, the scarcity is opening up opportunities for the West to market knowledge and innovation on sustainable energy amongst other things.

10. Other styles of government

The network society needs a different type of leader. Changes in citizenship styles (towards more self-reliance and more initiatives from society) should be accompanied by changes in leadership styles. Otherwise there will be a **mismatch** (Motivaction2). Economist Herman Wijffels and researcher Martijn Lampert from Motivaction are therefore calling for a broader **leadership repertoire** (Wijffels). The cooperative forms of organization that are currently emerging would benefit from leaders who give people space and stimulate initiatives. Leaders with the social intelligence that is needed to win back trust and chart their own course with fine-tuned antennae. “It is absolutely crucial for leaders to embrace a network and unifying style besides the more directive and customary styles of hierarchical and procedural leadership.” Logeion3 calls this ‘serving’ leadership.

The government will have to let go of its internal orientation and interact more with the outside world (Siepel, *Congruente overheidscommunicatie*). It should also profile itself less because that’s not what society wants. More **co-creation** and symbolization are needed.

11. Mediocracy

The network society compiles its own problem agenda. The social media have unleashed a powerful force for controlling and influencing the government, a.k.a. **peer governance**, according to RWS Next, or the ‘power of the people’ in more prosaic terms. What is more, with civil society organizations on the decline, political debates are taking place more and more in the media. The interaction between media, citizens, interested parties, politicians and opinion pollers is growing. The Council for Social Development (RMO) calls this the ‘Opinion Forum’. Stakeholders are getting involved in the political debate via letters to the media or reactions on Twitter (where it is picked up by the traditional media) or lobbying groups and thus get a chance to influence the democratic decision-making.

It is thought that more than two thirds of **parliamentary questions** are prompted by reports in the media. At the same time, the media are being used more and more to call politicians to account (instead of Parliament alone). This underlines the circular relationship with the Opinion Forum. Whether it likes it or not, the government will have to account for its actions in the public arena (EMMA).

> *See also: Transparency and accountability (page 19)*

The Council for Social Development (RMO) has coined the term **media logic** to describe the increase in the influence of the media. The logic of the media is playing a stronger role in determining the form of the public debate and is creating a 'prisoners' dilemma' in the process: everybody joins in, so nobody can opt out. In the meantime, politicians have adjusted to the rules of the media: "The more the journalist or presenter is on screen, the more time he gets to speak, the more he interrupts the politician, gets the last word, or uses any other technique to gain the upper hand, the more we see of media logic". Cardinal features are personalized news, conflict news and negativity. Government departments differ in their sensitivity to media logic (Nieuwsmonitor).

The **circulation speed** of the news is also faster, says Pieter Klein, editor-in-chief of RTL Nieuws: "As members of the press we roll from one event to another. How can you interpret the things you see happening?" He quotes a recent case in which State Secretary Fred Teeven (VVD; Party for Freedom and Democracy) was hauled over the coals after Russian asylum seeker Aleksandr Dolmatov took his own life. Teeven was allowed to remain in his post. "Does that suggest a government minister who feels regret? And was the Labour Party sincere or was some sort of political horse-trading going on?" RTL wants to keep providing the context with the facts, not least to sustain its own credibility and trustworthiness, but that is not always easy.

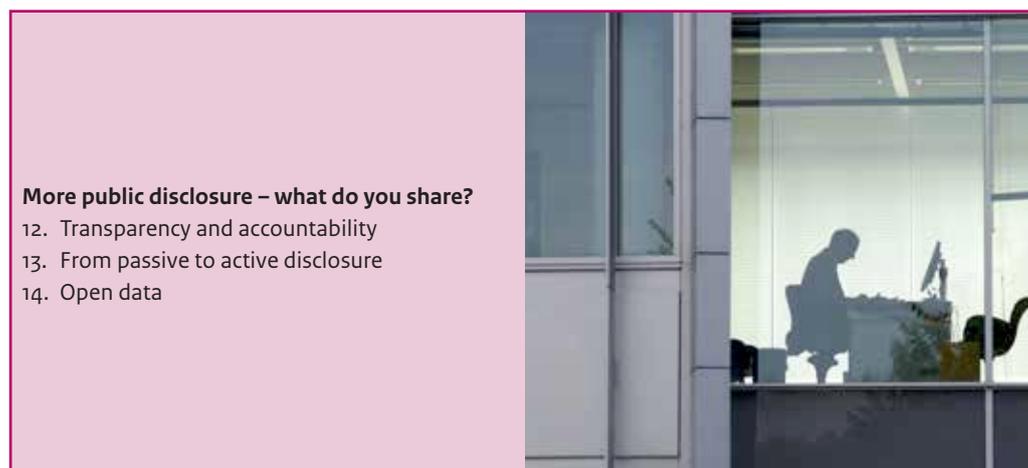
> *See also: Populism and fact checking (page 23)*

The circulation of news is being accelerated by **agenda journalism** and citizen journalism. The 'agenda' is followed by many media: they turn up with similar offerings to other media, and there is a strong overlap, especially in the case of newsworthy events or scandals or abuses. Journalists do not want to miss what other journalists have uncovered. Since the editorial teams were downsized (especially in the regions) newsdesks have been relying heavily on press reports and agencies. And news travels fast via **citizen journalism**. Journalists are hard pressed to compete, because ordinary people are far less concerned about journalistic codes of 'both sides of the story' etc. In any case, traditional media often apply much looser norms for the Internet than for newspapers (Nieuwsmonitor). All in all, the media have gained more influence over the government's information services.

More public disclosure

What do you share?

Society wants open government. People expect transparency about policy and accountability for motives, choices and outcomes. The government must pro-actively publish relevant information – not just in response to requests under the Freedom of Information Act (*Wet openbaarheid van bestuur*) – and make other data available. These ‘open’ data will not only provide a clearer idea of the workings of government but create openings for better services and new undertakings in the process.



More public disclosure – what do you share?

12. Transparency and accountability
13. From passive to active disclosure
14. Open data

12. Transparency and accountability

More than ever before, citizens and stakeholders are demanding clarity from the government. They are asking it to account not only for the effects of policy and communication but also the decision-making process. What factors did it take into consideration? (RWS Next, EMMA) Take, for example, the debt crisis: people need information they can understand, more disclosure and an honest account of the strategy and the loans (Debt Crisis Monitor). “Don’t conceal things. Tell it as it is,” is the advice of trend researcher Dragt. Communication is doubly important in times of crisis: the government will have to **account for its actions** internally and externally (Frankwatching¹). Openness helps to win and retain trust. The government has to assure people that their interests are being represented, show them how decisions are made and publish the results (Desk research).

In *Handbook of Public Relations* communication consultants Neyzen et al. say that openness used to be an ethical or communicative choice. Now the risk of leaks by people working in and around organizations is so great that openness is no longer a choice but a ‘must’. Logeion uses the metaphor of a **glass house** to explain that, as a result of sophisticated digitization, everything that an organization does is visible pretty quickly. So, those who fail to deliver on promises can expect an immediate backlash (Logeion³).

Accountability is being demanded not only from institutions but from communication departments too. As a communication professional you need to convince your client that his money is being put to good use. Professor of Communication Science Betteke van Ruler identifies **four types of accountability**:

- What do you have to offer? (professional accountability)
- What works? Can you justify your choices? (decisional accountability)
- What is feasible? What does society experience as legitimate? (social accountability)
- What does it deliver? (performative accountability)

Take, for instance, an appeal to the public to spend more money. That, according to Van Ruler, is a poor example of social accountability: “You can’t ask that of people at a time when thousands are losing their jobs every day.” Is what you say ethically and morally responsible? Research by Logeion (Logeion1) has shown that the majority of communication professionals do think seriously about accountability. They find it important to render accountability for communication policy beforehand and after.

13. From passive to active disclosure

Active disclosure is key, but a lot of information is still made available only upon request under the **Freedom of Information Act**. What should the government do? RTL news editor-in-chief Pieter Klein: “A proactive government provides timely insight into facts and opinions, is much more open and transparent and – most importantly – it explains the decision-making process and the reasons. It answers our questions – in clear terms. At the moment we get the facts at politically opportune moments. And if we don’t, we all too often have to submit a request under the Freedom of Information Act. As in the case of the **debate on spending power** around the coalition agreement. That information is there all the time. Everybody knows that. So why do they play things so close to their chest? One practical point is that not enough capacity has been freed up within the government to allow something to be actually done about disclosure and freedom of information.”

Thou shalt disclose

The Council for Public Administration (ROB) is urging the government to be more proactive in making information public and accessible. “Developments in society are leading in this direction and technological developments are making it possible,” says the Council in *Gij zult openbaar maken* (Thou shalt disclose). Systematic publication of all unclassified information that the government has at its disposal will enhance the **legitimacy** of and faith in the government. The Council also says that the current Freedom of Information Act needs to be thoroughly reviewed. Disclosure is too passive at present and the number of FoI requests is increasing all the time. Ministers, elected representatives and public officials should be more open and learn to be less constrictive in the way they deal with government information (ROB2).

Openness should serve the decision-making and opinion formation – the government should not just publish information for the sake of it. Information should offer something extra to citizens and communities. This active **‘disclosure machine’** should be started up and kept operational inside and outside departments. A responsive government will not be achieved without a change in culture at all levels. Communication professionals are pushing for this change and various parties will be involved in it.

Open government

The Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) is drawing up an action plan for open government upon the initiative of **Barak Obama and David Cameron** amongst others (Open Government Partnership). It is expected that the 'Vision of Open Government' will be presented to the House of Representatives in mid-2013. The document will address not only the Freedom of Information Act and open data but also openness in a broader sense. The aim is to create a government which:

- develops, implements and evaluates policy in partnership with society;
- is open to initiatives in society;
- is transparent in its dealings;
- encourages the use and reuse of data for new products and services;
- digitizes its services where possible. (BZK)

14. Open data

The government can also enhance transparency by releasing data. People in the UK can find out more about what the government does with the taxpayer's money and get more insight into government dealings by visiting the **wheredoesmymoneygo** website. This kind of transparency also boosts efficiency: for example, the disclosure of the expense claims of British public servants has led to savings of 40% (Court of Audits). This fits in with the 'Vision of Open Government'.

The government is making more and more open data available for reuse (RWS Next). The EU is calling on member states to do the same. "**Your data are worth more if you share them,**" says European Commissioner Kroes. These data can be used by market players to develop new services and products and can lead to new applications, such as *Omgevingsalert* (see example), an app that updates you on changes in your own neighbourhood. Transparency is thus not the only argument for open data: there are many more. For instance, open data improve services to the public and stimulate economic activity.

There are now 251 datasets in the register of data.overheid.nl, the government's open data portal. Amongst the many sources of information it offers are water level data from the Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management, the location of **all charging stations** for electric cars in the Municipality of Utrecht and a complete database of basic legislation. Open datasets are sources of publicly accessible unedited information which are not subject to copyright or other third party rights. They contain data (from processes or files) which were collected for public projects and were therefore financed with public money.

Example: *Omgevingsalert* (neighbourhood alert) – always up to speed with changes in your neighbourhood

Omgevingsalert was the winner of the national app prize in 2013. Here's what the site says: "Would you like to keep up to speed with what's happening in your neighbourhood in a fast and easy way? Would you like to know if a large renovation project is being planned in your street? Or that your neighbour is planning an extension that will block the sunlight in your backyard? Find out the locations of high fences and new industries? Where trees are to be felled? The *Omgevingsalert* app shows you at a glance where planning applications are pending in your neighbourhood. Simply enter your interest to receive alerts about new applications for planning permission." So far, the maker, Andersteboven, has used data from fifteen municipalities (April 2013).

Paul Suijkerbuijk, project leader of the government portal, says: “Open data? Sounds technical, but it’s actually instrumental. I see it as an intervention for solving questions.” It can lead to **better public services** or highlight areas of possible efficiency savings. It can also lead to more compact government as a lot of the implementation and execution is outsourced to market players (Academie2). This reflects the **less is more** trend which various people have drawn attention to (Van der Jagt2): the government wants to achieve more with fewer resources.

Competitions are organized regularly to challenge people to develop applications with open data. (See appsvoornederland.nl for some of the entries). It is not always possible to predict exactly what the data will be used for. The Rijksmuseum tried to target makers of small apps when it opened up part of its collection, but it was the big players such as Google Art and Kennisnet who responded (Court of Audits).

More and more data – **big data** – are being generated, which the government itself can also put to better use by **datamining**. Smart linking of big data enables organizations to “respond directly to individuals, situations, locations, times and moods” (Logeion3). Government agencies can offer tailor-made services, compile personalized campaigns and maintain law and order more efficiently; when databases are linked up, the chance of hits is far greater. In 2013, Van Mayer-Schönberger and Cukien published a book entitled Big Data Revolutie to explain how the data explosion will answer all our questions.

People also expect more tailor-made information (Desk research) and to be targeted more directly in services and communication. For example, the Omgevingsalert app saves them the hassle of scanning the municipal pages in the local newspapers every week to find planning permission applications that might affect them personally. But big data need to be treated with caution. This is why Marketing Online warns marketers that “Badly executed big data projects (i.e. **personalized campaigns**) will merely chase the consumers away”.

More personalized information can conflict with legislation on the protection of personal and other sensitive data. The **protection of privacy**, however, no longer focuses on keeping information secret but on drawing up rules on how information should be treated. There are excellent opportunities within the legal parameters (Desk research).

An authentic story, also told elsewhere

How do you come across?

People need true leaders, individuals and organizations with a vision and a logical and coherent story. That story is being told more and more through other channels: communication partners, platforms and branded journalism. Sometimes other channels come across as more credible because they are closer to the public or to interested parties or simply because they are more logical. Communication is emerging more and more as the binding factor.

An authentic story, also told elsewhere – How do you come across?

15. Populism and fact checking
16. Need for leadership
17. Identity and authenticity
18. The government as a communication partner
19. Branded journalism
20. User-generated content
21. Communication as the binding factor



15. Populism and fact checking

With the rise of the mediocracy (see above) **de-ideologization** and populism were pretty much on the cards. Political parties nowadays are being guided more by public opinion (RWS Next) and less by their own vision and theories. There is no such thing as *the* public opinion, says the Council for Social Development (RMO) – at least not as one voice. You need to unravel people's qualms and expose the underlying concerns and thoughts. Politicians should see public opinion as the starting point of debate instead of the outcome.

Facts are less important in the mediocracy. Pieter Klein from RTL Nieuws agrees that journalists are also focusing more on opinions than on fact and more on sentiment than content. He warns for **experiential journalism** and calls on journalists to strike a more even balance by reporting facts as well. But a counter-trend does appear to be emerging: in the past year fact checking has been laying down the gauntlet to **fact-free politics** (RWS Next). Indeed, in the run-up to the 2012 election, nrc.next ran a column which tested whether statements were true or false.

16. Need for leadership

There is an unmistakable need for **leadership**: people like to line up behind individuals with a clear aim and vision, individuals with their own story (Desk research). Wijffels concludes from Motivaction research findings that there is a minority who believe that political leaders have an adequate vision of society. But what do they stand for? In national politics this is to some extent reflected in the number of 'accords' in recent times: the Kunduz Accord, the Autumn Accord, the Orange Accord, the Social Accord and so on and so forth. It is getting difficult to see the wood for the trees (Lindblom).

The Coalition Agreement of autumn 2012 seemed to break this trend: the coalition parties (Party for Freedom and Democracy and Labour Party) were less intent on horse-trading and compromises and made more of an effort to keep the standpoints recognizable. Wijffels approves of this development, arguing that compromises stand in the way of solutions. This development fits in with the **demise of consensus politics**, which has been predicted in some quarters (RWS Next).

> *See also: Other styles of government (page 17)*

17. Identity and authenticity

According to Betteke van Ruler, Professor of Communication Science, identity and authenticity have become more important than image and reputation. If you want to win trust, you should pay more attention to **legitimacy** and less to reputation. Reputation is about distinguishing yourself from the rest of the field; legitimacy is about whether your organization is perceived as just and fair. Van Ruler is critical: "The government is not taking the trouble to tell the story, nor is it communicating to unite. Communication is fragmented and poorly underpinned. The government communicates for each policy domain and not from the perspective of the citizen. The average person simply cannot piece together the story. There is plenty of **ego-communication** but that will hardly inspire trust. Nobody explains what is happening, what the problem is, where the risks lie, and which factors are taken into consideration – a perilous situation in a time when we are being heavily hit in our pocket and our hearts."

> *See also: Transparency and accountability (page 19) and Storytelling (page 43)*

Professor of Corporate Communication Cees van Riel (a.k.a. the 'king of reputation management') has also said that an appealing story is not enough; it also has to make sense. He explores this idea in detail in his book *The Alignment Factor* (2012), where he puts aside all thoughts and theories about reputation. The organizational or corporate policy must be reliable, credible and just. Only then does the organization or company earn a **licence to operate**. This trend is also being acknowledged in the world of commerce: marketeers are naming authenticity as one of their spearheads (Marketing Tribune). Tom Dorrestijn from Studio Dumbar, designer of the new house style of the Dutch Government: "The crucial factor is personality. That is what binds the outside with the inside (image) and the inside with the outside (identity). Behave as you are. If that doesn't ring entirely true, you are unreliable."

In the words of Pieter Klein from RTL Nieuws: "When I see government ministers on TV, I want to believe them, but I can't." Klein has discerned a strong tendency to present things in an over-optimistic light and regards this as a trend towards **propagandist** government. "This may be appropriate at a time when the government is confronted with massive communication attacks as we saw in *De Telegraaf*. I believe in a government that fights back but now it has gone to the other extreme and is too self-aware."

One government

In recent years the government has been acting more in concert and improving inter-departmental coordination to avoid contradictory regulations and to **do more with less**. Inspectorates now work together more often to save costs and to cut down on the number of business inspections. Communication is also more consolidated, with one government logo and one website (Rijksoverheid.nl). There seems to be plenty of public support for the current efforts to improve cohesion and recognizability (DPC). The logo is well-known to the public, and the website has potential. The site is not all that well-known at present but it has been welcomed so far. The public perception of the government is largely dictated by the political news (e.g., about unkept election promises) and is therefore more negative than the perception of Postbus 51 (the predecessor to Rijksoverheid.nl). There could still be some **competition between information senders** in government. Not only do different tiers of government communicate on the same topics, government agencies – policymakers, executive officers and inspectors – can also get in each other’s way by communicating from their own perspective about one and the same issue (Frankwatching2). The Directorate of Public Affairs and Communication (DPC) has reservations about this: most questions about government issues are asked via search engines, whereupon Rijksoverheid.nl frequently surfaces. The themes on the website do come from departmental policy dossiers but there is still no coherence between them.

18. The government as a communication partner

The story need not be told through one specific channel. In fact, sometimes a **different storyteller**, such as an organization or agency that is closer to the public, can be more credible or more relevant than the government. When this happens, it is better if the government is the communication partner rather than the communicator (Desk research, EMMA). For example, it entered a **public-private partnership** to disseminate information on organ donation. In such contexts it is important to ensure that content can be easily reused by other public bodies or private players (Frankwatching2).

Example: organ donation campaign

How do you mobilize people into doing something that reminds them of their own mortality? That’s the last thing they want to think about. Government campaigns about organ donation tend to come over as patronizing. People are more likely to register as organ donors if someone they know or respect draws their attention to it, such as a relative, a colleague or a celebrity. This should preferably happen in a social media environment where they are already active. This is why the use of role models and media partners was so crucial in the ‘Yes or No’ campaign. The public itself spread the message (Academies5). And the targeted 5% rise in the number of registrations was achieved (in 2009 – 2012). There was also a 5% rise in the Yes response in the same period (Dutch Society for Organ Transplantation).

According to Reint Jan Renes, we are seeing more and more partnerships for, amongst others, **lifestyle interventions**, which are involving industry and consumer organizations besides the government. Which parties are involved in the desired behavioural change? Coordinators in old people’s homes, for example, who can get your message across to the residents. Keep in touch with these players, he advises. Can you join existing networks? What about people on Facebook who share their indignation at violence against people in public office? They could serve as **ambassadors** for government messages. At the same time, the government has to let go: issues are becoming less manageable and more people are joining in the public debate.

> *See also: Facilitating behaviour (page 32)*

Partnerships can give rise to tensions. Who takes charge of the communication? Is the quality still monitored? Or does monitoring matter less than it used to? Should we take Renes' advice and **lighten up**? Is the government still recognizable as a player? And if not, does it matter? Is recognizability still important when we've got transparency (What is the government doing?) and accountability (also in financial terms: What is the taxpayer's money being spent on?) or even legitimacy (Why do we need a government anyway?)?

The motto is: find out where the target group is and be there! For the government (and other organizations) that also means establishing a presence via existing **platforms**: explaining your standpoint on discussion forums, responding to tweets, etc. Sending out messages works only to some extent as the audience and the effects are limited. It is, for example, well-known that teenagers are not convinced by what they find on the Facebook accounts of organizations. They prefer to ask their friends or they consult **user reviews** (InSites). Organizations must give peers a say instead of filling pages with their own content. They should also allow feedback and dialogue. They are still sender-oriented at present (Frankwatching2). Trust in **peers** is growing of its own accord through the increase in the flow of information and suspicion of institutions (Neyzen).

The government would still much prefer to engage in dialogue on its own platform and not to intervene at other locations. However, this one-sided approach makes it vulnerable when other arguments are mooted on these other platforms and standpoints are adopted which are different from those on the official site (EMMA). This appears to confirm the notion that the government is still in the 'second wave' of communication, as noted by communication advisor Guido Rijnja in the Galjaard Lecture of 2012. The government's **own media** and not the free media are still dominant (Frankwatching2).

> *See also: Conversation (page 41) and User-generated content (page 27)*

19. Branded journalism

Journalists are being commissioned more frequently to create content for businesses. The practice – dubbed 'branded journalism' – still commands only a niche market in the Netherlands: 10% of organizations will consider branded journalism in 2013 (Logeion1) and may employ journalists to create content. "It's only logical in the current **attention crisis**," says Ebele Wybenga. "You can buy advertising space, but you can't buy good old-fashioned attention."

Can't communication advisors provide this kind of journalism? No, says Henk Vlaming, former journalist and current director of the Nederlands Redactie Instituut. They lack the right **journalistic instincts**. They can handle current affairs and underpinning, but social relevance and urgency are more complicated. It seems almost impossible to be critical and independent. Wybenga names ACNE Paper and MrPorter.com as trendsetters. According to Vlaming, a good Dutch example is **Hevo**, a building consultancy that writes journalistic articles in healthcare publications. Another is NBA, an organization of accountants that reports financial news on its own platform and offers space to journalists. Vulnerable brands such as Schiphol and ProRail would benefit from branded journalism. Journalists could offer them intrinsic added value and they would also be more readily believed because they do not need to promote a product.

20. User-generated content

The provision of information, discussions and the formation of opinions take place in the public arena, where the government has less control (see the case of the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) on page 13). Everyone has access to the news media and everyone can publish and make news. People upload videos to YouTube, edit wikis, post their opinions on forums, set up blogs... More and more people are leaving comments on **hybrid** sites such as GeenStijl.nl and Fok.nl (combination of news website and blog) (Nieuwsmonitor).

Everyone on Twitter has become a spokesperson. That prerogative no longer rests with the press liaison officer (Rijnja). According to Van Ruler, employees worry about what they may and may not communicate. Van Ruler confesses to being amazed by the **twitter guidelines** of the government (guidelines for government communication online), which state that the farther removed you are from the subject matter the more freedom you have to tweet opinions. How are the recipients to know how far removed someone is from the subject matter? What is more, if government project managers do not write about their project, the stakeholders will. And if they can blog and tweet, why can't they talk to the press? Central web-editing, says Frankwatching3, is being overtaken by **open content management**.

Once you share information, you are no longer in control of it. Thinking in terms of information copyright is out of date, says trend researcher Dragt, who has coined the expression '**copyleft**-thinking'.

21. Communication as the binding factor

All these senders and platforms have assigned the communication professional a **new role** as a binding factor in the network society. Various academics and professional have noted this trend. Van Ruler observes that the job is less about self-communication and more about helping others (inside and outside the organization) to communicate better: "Steering, facilitating, slowing down, chasing up, editing and guiding all the communication in and around the organization."

The professionals will also have to make organizations more **communication-minded**, says communication advisor Neyzen, so they will need coaching skills. Logeion chairperson Ron van der Jagt expatiates on this new role (Van der Jagt2): "The notion that all communication is the exclusive domain of the Communication Department now belongs in the past. Communication as a skill is for everyone; communication as a discipline is for professionals. The professionals are being challenged to develop their role more specifically in a strategic and advisory direction." He cites a list of core tasks, such as protecting perceptions, building trust and social legitimacy, uniting stakeholders, facilitating internal and external dialogue, acting as a **change agent**, and making the policy and the organization more communicative.

What used to be the ideal achievement – a consistent message with a wide audience in the dominant media – is more likely to fall flat in the network society. EMMA illustrates this point with the communication on **climate change**: "The government should bring parties with opposing views together so that they can exchange arguments. It should resist the knee-jerk reaction to come up with solutions itself. This would not be a one-off event but an ongoing dialogue: online to exchange ideas and offline to build mutual understanding."

> *See also: Conversation as the central style of communication (page 41)*

New engagement

When do people engage?

The number of initiatives that people are undertaking outside the government, especially on their own patch, is growing all the time. A sort of hands-on democracy is materializing in which people tackle issues together. People also engage via protests, solidarity and crowdsourcing. If the government wants to get something done, it would be best advised to latch on to public initiatives and facilitate input. In plain terms, government participation instead of citizen participation. If you want to influence behaviour, you should provide opportunities to this effect. New technology can assist.



22. Hands-on democracy

Is the citizen hands-off or hands-on? This question was asked by Fraanje (ROB). Membership of trades unions and political parties may be on the wane and walk-in surgeries might be dominated by select groups of ‘lobbyists’, but a new kind of engagement is emerging in the meantime. More and more initiatives for the public good are being launched outside the realm of politics and policy; projects that do not need political decision-making. People are using social media to organize themselves around common causes in their own neighbourhood or city. “Personal initiative is flourishing as never before” (Fraanje).

These trends have been accorded a whole array of names: direct democracy, new realism, the energetic society and **new engagement**. Here we bring it all together under the common denominator of ‘hands-on democracy’ as proposed by Van de Wijdeven (Tilburg School of Politics and Public Administration). Basically, what this new movement boils down to is that people are doing more by themselves in certain areas such as care in the community or the generation of energy. They do this off their own bat with no transfer of responsibility by the government. The Internet has helped to pave the way for collective efforts like these; it is easy for like-minded people to find each other online (e.g., WeHelpen and De Windcentrale).

> **See also: More self-reliance (page 11)**

Example: WeHelpen

'Because helping one another goes without saying.' That is the English version of the slogan of WeHelpen, an online marketplace for informal care. Volunteers offer services: local residents can get help with transport to and from hospital, walking the dog, form-filling, paperwork, etc. Formal healthcare facilities are coming under mounting pressure from a combination of spending cuts and an ageing population. And the Internet makes it easy for people to come into contact. These circumstances have prompted organizations such as Achmea healthcare insurers and Rabobank to set up cooperatives to facilitate support and assistance. Supply and demand are matched on the basis of postcodes. Assistance is rewarded with 'credits' (six per hour), which you can cash in or donate.

Example: 'There's a new wind blowing through the Netherlands and it's bringing us energy'

You can be co-owner of a wind turbine via deWindcentrale.nl and drastically reduce your energy bill. The website says that 5,200 people had bought windshares by April 2013 and that their lights run on power from their own turbine. "Energy 2.0: smarter than the rest." Zoncollectief.nl is also an energy initiative: it helps you start up a solar energy collective with people in your street, neighbourhood or town. When you buy what you need together you get 15-30% discount on solar panels and assembly kits.

The motives for 'doing things yourself' can be anything from idealistic to pragmatic in nature (Wijffels). The new generation, known as **generation Z** (page 31), is also prepared to do its bit to support society. The members are also very solution-minded (RWS Next).

Some independent initiatives still need external funding; sometimes the money is raised through crowdfunding, a new and increasingly popular phenomenon. A typical example is an author who mobilizes sponsors before starting on a book. De Correspondent (journalistic platform of Rob Wijnberg) is another example. Political representation is still needed, says Republic.nl. The political system also allows minorities a voice (who do not organize themselves via direct democratic representation) and can weigh up different interests.

Trust in the citizens

Hands-on democracy is a **deregulatory** perspective for policymakers, says the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR). In its recommendatory report *Vertrouwen in burgers* (Trust in the Citizens) the Council argues for the continuation of citizen engagement because there are still many untapped opportunities. At the moment, only a small group feels drawn by the way policymakers are trying to get people to engage. In addition, policymakers are not receptive enough to expressions of citizen engagement, so people circumvent the official routes. The Council has identified three paths to improvement:

- Learn to welcome public initiatives, even if they do not fit neatly into your own perspective as a policymaker. Encourage people to take initiatives. Professor Renes believes that this can be realized by appealing to their basic motivation, the things they do anyway.
- Policymakers should join forces with vulnerable groups, create sufficient and adequate opposition, as recommended by EMMA.
- Do not involve people just in the policy planning. Widen the landscape by involving them in agenda-building, policy implementation and crisis management.

Many people turn the perspective around and say that it isn't about citizen engagement in 2013 but about **government engagement**. Where can the government engage in what is happening in society? Which communities are relevant? Where are people talking to each other already? There are doubts as to whether citizens really want to engage. Dorresteijn from Studio Dumber: "If you ask me, people are not exactly waiting for this. They want clarity and leadership. Look at how successful Wilders and Dijsselbloem have been." The buzzword at the *Open en Bloot* (Cards on the Table)

conference was **co-creation**. That does not mean that you listen and then go your own way – it implies actual cooperation: the national government is *one* of the partners in the policymaking process. So, we can expect to hear more about government engagement (Government Seeks Partner) in the future.

> *See also: Communication as the binding factor (page 27)*

The government is trying to persuade people into citizenship, but with strong undertones of obligation. “Assuming responsibility for yourself,” says Evelien Tonkens. “People agree with this in an abstract sense, when others are concerned. But support soon crumbles if they themselves are affected. At local level, people are more likely to relate the appeal to take initiative to their own lives. They are discovering **glocalization**, ‘small-scale’ and ‘nearby’ combined with a worldwide vision and reach. In the past people were far more willing to support global objectives such as education in Latin America. Now they are turning to local initiatives in their own city or neighbourhood – where there are many instances of hands-on democracy. (...) Hands-on democracy is the logical next step in the evolution from input to interactive policy development and then to participation. But citizens are almost certain to want more power and resources. When people start sharing in the development and implementation of policy, it’s only a matter of time until they want a share in government as well – as in the UK, where, with the advent of the Big Society, more co-responsibility and **empowerment** is envisaged.”

> *See also: More self-reliance (page 10)*

The Citizenship Programme of the Ministry of the Interior is developing knowledge about engaging groups of citizens within its **Kracht in Nederland** (power in the Netherlands) community. There is a strong emphasis on the trend towards the shift in control, usually from local authorities to citizens, in relation to, for example, input in decision-making (e.g., about the municipal budget), the assumption of municipal tasks (parks and greenery) or joint approaches to projects (e.g., neighbourhood upgrades) (Government Seeks Partner). This slots in with Tonkens’ vision. Renes advises government bodies that want to engage citizens to strengthen “what is already there” in the **positive deviance approach**: “That’s where the energy is.”

Example: Internet consultation

Internetconsultatie.nl (part of overheid.nl) is a site for consulting citizens about legislation being drafted by the Cabinet and Parliament. Anyone can visit the site and respond to the latest proposals for, amongst others, the Library Bill, the Mediation Bill or the policy document on expense allowances for employees. According to Sargasso.nl, it is one of the government’s most successful **citizen-participation** projects, though ministries can still put forward more proposals for consultation. In January 2013 the site was hosting an average of 1,100 visits a day (Sargasso).

23. More protests

The **tendency to participate in public protests** has grown in recent decades. In 1975, 35% of the population were willing to take action against political issues; by 2010 this figure had risen to 56%. The increase may be a reflection of self-confidence or self-aware citizenship – or it could just as easily be an expression of deep-seated discontent (COB2). The Council for Social Development (RMO) reports that 70% of the population thinks that the Netherlands is not developing in the right direction. Sentiments of unease are being expressed more often. There has also been an increase in the public sympathy for protests: people either approve of them or are indifferent (COB2).

It's also easier to protest than ever before: all it takes is a tick on an Internet survey form or a name on an online petition. IT has made it easier to mobilize people. Thirty-eight per cent of the Dutch population have signed an Internet petition at some time or other (UT). This online activism – or **slacktivism** – is on the increase. It typifies the shift in citizenship styles identified by Motivaction: the percentage of acquiescent citizens has shrunk and levels of self-reliance have risen. Others are also noticing that people are more emancipated (Neyzen). A classic example of an online campaign is Behind the Brands.

Example: Behind the Brands

Oxfam Novib is mobilizing consumers to call the 'Coca Colas of this world' to account: multinationals must do business fairly and honestly. It is facilitating this mission with a website called behindthebrands.org. "Your favourite brand is receptive to your opinion. Sign the Behind the Brands petition and join the worldwide movement for a fairer food system."

> *See also: New international power relations (page 17) and Transparency and accountability (page 19)*

In the annual report of 2012 the National Ombudsman notes an increase in the number of **complaints** about the government. Last year (2012) 15,040 complaints were received compared with 13,740 the year before. More than three quarters were justified. Most of them concerned the tax authorities, municipal councils or the police. The Ombudsman predicts that the dissatisfaction with the government will only get worse. He cites three causes: public spending cuts which have undermined the quality of the services; more people turning to the state in times of crisis; and a surfeit of new legislation (Ombudsman). The willingness to protest and more emancipation may play a role in this. The Ombudsman further concludes that much of the government communication is over-complicated.

> *See also: The bar is high, especially for the low-skilled (page 13)*

24. Social relations: problem and pride

Society, it seems, is getting harder. People show very little respect for holders of public office (Strategieeraad). The **way we relate** to one another is accorded top priority in many surveys – tolerance, social conduct, norms and values constitute a major societal problem. Paradoxically, the way people relate to one another in their own circle is regarded as a strength. Willingness to assist and social involvement are regarded as a source of pride. Most people feel that they can rely on friends and acquaintances for help and support (COB1). Social relations therefore are characterized by problems on one hand and pride on the other. There is no need to place this issue on the political agenda, as people do not feel that it is something that the government should do something about (COB2).

> *See also: Hands-on democracy (page 28)*

Economist Herman Wijffels observes that the mindset of the age is perceived as hard and egoistic, while there is also a deep desire for community and quality of life. The more socially marginalized people feel, the less satisfied they will be (CBS1). As mentioned already, political scientist Menno Hurenkamp states that there is a lot of solidarity within individual groups. As a result, it is unlikely that people will seek contact with 'strangers'. **How do you build bridges?** The government forgets that there is relatively little dialogue between the different 'identities'. It should be teaching citizens to deal more effectively with other ideas and to accept differences. Solidarity is based too much on homogeneity at present.

> *See also: Solidarity under pressure (page 13)*

25. Crowdsourcing

The capacity of the ‘crowd’ is being utilized more and more – for crowdfunding (see above), for collecting information, and for assistance (crowdtexting was even used to write the lyrics for the coronation song). The crowd played a key role in catching the Boston marathon bombers. One outstanding example of crowd mobilization in the Netherlands is the **Amber Alert**, which warns people to be on the lookout for a missing child. All these initiatives testify to a new kind of engagement.

Example: #durftevragen

‘Durftevragen’ (dare to ask) is a more modest example of crowdsourcing. You use the hashtag #dtv to tweet a question and get replies from people you know and people you don’t know. This is a fast and easy way to tap into knowledge. Sharing knowledge can also help to carve a place for yourself in your network.

26. Facilitating behaviour

The government has always tried to make people behave in certain ways. As society’s problems become more and more behaviour-related, the government is more eager than ever to facilitate changes. But how? Scientific insights – from social psychologists and behavioural economists – are making ever-deeper inroads in government actions. Traditional efforts to **influence behaviour** are being replaced by efforts to facilitate behaviour. We must not, for instance, expect too much of communication because, when all is said and done, Man is anything but a rational being. Our choices (e.g., for a healthy lifestyle) are based far more on emotion and habit than on rational decisions (Renes, Neyzen).

According to Renes, besides communication, legislation and financial incentives, facilities to bring about behavioural change are becoming an increasingly important instrument: “People have known for ages that vegetables are good for your health, so more knowledge is not the issue. But a supermarket trolley with a separate section for fruit and vegetables ... that sends a message to the subconscious. Research findings have shown that shoppers will then buy healthier food.” This technique is known as **nudging**.

The tax authorities have been advised to adopt a similar approach: focus on the material environment, the factors and circumstances that promote the desired behaviour. Only then look at motivation – because that is a lot harder to influence. This will hopefully prevent policymakers and communication professionals from slipping back into the age-old carrot, stick and sermon mode (Van Rooij). Digital forms can, for example, be designed in such a way that they cannot be sent until everything is filled in. Or you can design street corners so that nobody would dream of parking there anyway. That way, a ‘no parking’ sign would be unnecessary.

Renes says that we are far too quick to resort to communication. Confronting erroneous behaviour can have an adverse effect: it often tends to reinforce it. Renes quotes the example of the **Sire campaign** to combat aggression against emergency service workers: “Advertisers have drawn attention to this abuse with fancy commercials in the belief that people will then behave more respectfully. However, if you show people assaulting paramedics on-screen, you merely confirm a social norm: apparently, it is not that bad to behave like that because other people do it too.” The anti-smoking strategy is a good example. At long last, we have seen a sea-change in the social norm. Name and show the right behaviour (‘park your bike in the rack’) instead of deprecating or prohibiting the wrong behaviour (‘no parked bikes allowed’). The point is that we can get our heads around the positive aspects more easily than the **negative** aspects. In short: change ‘do not’ into ‘do’ (van Rooij, Mies).

Renes: “When policy is being framed, we look far too much at how people *should* behave instead of how they *do* behave.” Once you have ascertained the desired behaviour and the actual behaviour, you should go to work down four routes:

- What are the **touchpoints**? These can offer interesting moments for communication?
- Who is the significant ‘other’ for the target group? Who exerts a subconscious influence on the target group?
- How can you help the target group to switch to the desired behaviour?
- How can you provide the best possible tailor-made information?

The possibilities for registering behaviour have increased thanks to social media, amongst others. There are more mobile research tools, sensor systems and **tracking systems** to trace how people actually behave. Renes discerns an increase in the demand for such possibilities.

Example: CASI

CASI is Campaign Strategy Instrument of the Campaign Management Department of the Ministry of General Affairs. The aim of CASI is to translate academic insights into practical applications for engendering behavioural change. How do you move from a policy assignment to a promising communication strategy? CASI asks questions in order to analyse the policy problem, the environment and the current and desired behaviour, and then links the findings to the way people process information (Academiel).

So the government has to focus on subconscious behaviour. However, we need to stop at this point to ask not only how the government should achieve this, but whether it should **interfere** in the first place, given the ethical and moral implications. No-one would argue with a road-building strategy that stops drivers from exceeding the speed limit (Sustainably Safe concept), but what about obligatory alcohol locks on cars to stop you from driving if you are above the limit?

27. New technology

New technological applications can also help to change behaviour or enable citizens to engage. **Apps**, like *BuitenBeter* (see example), have been doing this for a while. And there are a lot more applications around. Take, for instance, **serious gaming**, which doctors apply to exercise certain motor skills; patients are challenged to exercise more with their home trainer, etc. The underlying idea is that *homo ludens* (man at play) learns better when he is having fun (NRC2).

Example: BuitenBeter

Citizens can use BuitenBeter to report problems in the locality. A cyclist may, for instance, take a photograph of a pothole in a road or a broken streetlight and upload it via the app so that it automatically reaches the official in charge of the municipal infrastructure. This is another way in which citizens are involved in the implementation of policy.

And what about **augmented reality** (RWS Next) in which virtual information is added to reality? Let’s take a simplified example in the form of the notional line that is projected on a football pitch on TV to see if a player is offside. This can, of course, extend much farther. Think of projection systems in the car or spectacles that scan the surroundings – an app with image recognition that tells you in real time which buildings you see around you.

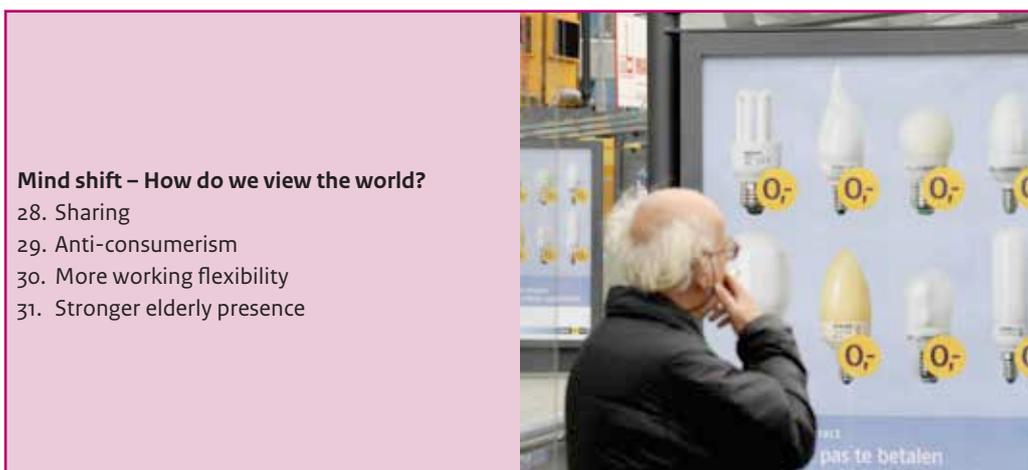
The sense of touch is also being stimulated virtually. When the telephone was introduced we could hear each other at a distance for the first time. The webcam enabled us to see each other at a distance. But now, with touch technology we can even touch things at a distance. **Hug pyjamas** are

being marketed so that parents can hug their children when they are geographically somewhere else. Movements at one location are converted into pressure in the pyjamas which is experienced as a hug (NRC3). Trend researcher Dragt refers to the **internet of things**: your fridge might, for example, warn you that you are consuming too much salt after it has scanned the product barcodes. The government can also make use of such (communication) applications.

Mind shift

How do we view the world?

Assets are no longer the be-all and end-all. People no longer sit back and watch the world go by when they retire. Nine-to-five is a thing of the past and we don't even have to show up at the office to get the work done. The old, long-standing institutions and lifestyles are fading and being replaced by sharing, anti-consumerism, flexible jobs and energetic senior citizens. The sharing of services and goods is a particularly strong trend. New ways of looking at the world are opening up opportunities for new styles of government.



28. Sharing

Sharing is a strong and relatively new trend. **Property is 'out'** among the younger generation (Youngworks, RWS Next). The new vision of consumption is about sharing, renting, lending and accessing. Nowadays it's possible to stream music through services like Spotify and Deezer instead of buying CDs. Lindblom says that this sudden shift from 'paying for ownership' to 'paying for access' may be "the biggest trend in 2102". Indeed, it appears to be spreading to other products and services: e-books, bank statements, cars, office space... At wego.nu you can borrow a car from one of your neighbours. And machines called **swap-o-matics** are appearing on street corners where you can hand in or swap goods (Youngworks). Swapping will increase alongside monetary transactions (Wijffels). And the popularity of marketplaces is still on the increase (91% of all internetters, UT).

To some extent, sharing is a response to spending cuts, the former excesses of the welfare state, and the need for sustainability (no longer a hype; RWS Next). Sharing is also relatively new: when you share, you build trust in your **community** (Youngworks, RWS Next). *The Deelstoel* (shared workplaces) is one example of sharing within the government.

Example: Peerby.com – why buy when you can borrow?

We believe in ‘we’ and not ‘me’. Peerby claims to be “a small business with big ideas. We believe in ‘we’ and not just ‘me’. With Peerby you can swap goods with other people in your neighbourhood. We bring people in contact with one another to offer an alternative to the **throw-away culture**.” You send out an appeal, say what you need and why you need it, and Peerby passes it on to your neighbours. Or, you simply fill in your postcode and see what your neighbours have to offer: a coffee machine, an extendable ladder, paint rollers, badminton racquets... ‘Share and get rich’ is the motto: sharing is good for the neighbourhood, your budget and the environment. Peerby is supported by *Stichting Doen* amongst others (a foundation dedicated to the promotion of a green, social and creative community).

29. Anti-consumerism

There is nothing new about anti-consumerism. But it seems to have gathered momentum in these times of economic hardship, when **less is more**. Years of prosperity are exacting their toll through ‘lifestyle ailments’ such as obesity, compulsive gaming and decision stress. People are smoking less, but the obesity problem is getting worse (CBS1).

Acquisition at all costs is no longer relevant in 2013, says Youngworks. Wijffels agrees and says that “**Big, bigger, biggest** has had its day”. Consumption is no longer the driver of economic recovery, contrary to what many people think. In 2013 the Dutch Cabinet appealed to people to spend money to help beat the crisis. Wijffels says that spending more is an ‘old reflex’. In the past, more prosperity was equated with more happiness. Now we are at a crossroads where it’s quality and not quantity that matters. According to Wijffels, new growth must come from non-material, social and ecological renewal. The **circular economy** (with the emphasis on efficient use of resources) can also create new jobs. People expect less in terms of welfare and are organizing their own affairs. They are prepared to live more austere, to consume less and to make more conscious choices, according to the Motivaction survey from which Wijffels draws his conclusions.

There are two other trends in this scenario, says Dragt: **slow** (everything is moving too fast, we want to take a step back to consider the important things in life) and **feminization** – the rise of female values. But what are they? According to Karmijn Kapitaal, a private equity fund run for and by women with a mission to introduce female values in the investment world, the focus is on cooperation, involvement, caring and building businesses (NRC1). Tonkens has also identified feminization as a trend.

30. More working flexibility

People have been working flexible hours for some time, so the ‘New World of Work’ is no longer new; however, it is still developing rapidly, and it involves a lot more than issuing employees with smartphones and setting up docking stations. People are working independent of place or time. The possibilities are being further expanded by **cloud computing** (increasingly important as a data repository) and **BYOD** (bring your own device) (Bugter). These new trends can, however, undermine government measures for **cyber security**.

Government departments are becoming more flexible by being less compartmentalized and by working more on a project basis (Desk research). People are more of their **own boss** – not just the self-employed but employees too. Civil servants are working more independently in a flexible government organization (RWS Next), totally in keeping with horizontalization. There are, for example, more self-steering teams. In this new scenario additional competencies such as cooperation will be needed.

The dividing line between work and home is also fading. This applies particularly to Generation Z (see next chapter) but also to the current workforce. More and more people are working at home, especially the highly qualified: 21% works at home at least once a week. The work-at-home figure for the low-skilled is only 6% (UT). Civil servants can also work via *Deelstoel* (shared workplaces, see example below). Trend researcher Dragt refers to this trend as **urban nomadity**.

Example: 1,218 shared workplaces

Civil servants can use *deelstoel.nl* to book a workplace at another government organization. The nationwide network is making public buildings accessible again. It promotes “cooperation, knowledge-sharing among colleagues, more efficient use of public buildings, the reduction of CO₂ emissions and commuting, and the New World of Work,” says the website. There are currently 1,218 shared workplaces in 118 buildings (May 2013).

Flexible working practices are also supported by Intranet, which is developing from a communication tool to an instrument for business operations with company-wide applications and officially approved content. It also offers team environments with user-generated content, communities, and services for mobile devices. ‘Mobile’ is getting more important with the day (Bugter). This observation is confirmed by René Jansen from Winkwaves: soon we’ll be able to log on to the intranet everywhere, not just at the office. It will be the gateway to the **workplace lab**. ‘Mobile’ is more and more about people and communities and is forming a platform for (almost) real-time communication. Twitter and Yammer are already being used in 26% of organizations (Academie4).

Social media are also blurring the boundaries between public and private, work and home. Many civil servants profile themselves via an **online identity** (Neyzen). The job can no longer be clearly separated from the person. One salient trend that fits in with this development is **life hacking**, a mix of knowledge management, time management, personal development and web 2.0. Life hacking is about doing more in less time with less stress so that you can deftly navigate the information and network community (Aslander).

31. Stronger elderly presence

People are living longer and leading more active lives (CBS2). They are working longer (some have no choice since the state pension age was raised to 67) and after they retire they are more active than previous generations. Today’s senior citizens join committees, do voluntary work or set up businesses. They live as long as possible in their own homes and enjoy life, not least because they have more disposable income. Trend researcher Dragt discerns an **age quake**: we will have to rethink our ideas of the elderly. The ageing population has also increased the number of smaller households – a trend that is being further strengthened by the rise in one-parent families (‘family dilution’, CBS1). The older generation is wielding more influence, so it is all the more important to engage them rather than putting them out to pasture as before. The rise of the **50Plus** party is evidence of this trend. The results of a poll by TNS NIPO in April 2013 indicate that 50Plus would win fourteen seats in the House of Representatives (50Plus).

Changing connections

How can we still reach each other?

Mobile internet is burgeoning. The tablet, amongst other things, has enhanced the importance of images and infotainment. TV is still the most popular channel of communication; second screen (viewable simultaneously on the Internet) is catching on. Established channels, such as TV and newspapers, but also word-of-mouth are still relevant. Fragmentation in the use of media is, however, necessitating a cross-medial approach in government communication in which the potential of every medium is exploited to the full. Conversation will be the central style of communication: listening, monitoring and interaction online and offline, with meaning emerging through contact and storytelling.

Changing connections – How can we still reach each other?

32. More images and infotainment
33. Other media behaviour: mobile Internet
34. Masses of media, but traditional channels still relevant
35. Conversation as the central style of communication
36. Monitoring and webcare
37. storytelling



32. More images and infotainment

More and more information is being conveyed visually: more infographics in the newspapers, more videos on the Internet (also on Rijksoverheid.nl) and more news apps such as RTLNIEUWS365. Text is of secondary importance. The news is condensed into slide shows that you can **swipe**. These features are typical of tablets, which most people use in the evening, at home on the sofa (Intomart), primarily to relax. Infotainment is well-suited to tablets. Images are a simple way of conveying information.

> *See also: The bar is high, especially for the low-skilled (page 13)*

The younger generation is more visually oriented, says Dragt. Youngworks agrees: “The Internet is their school and YouTube is their classroom”. Around 50% of data traffic now consists of video material. Teenagers use photos rather than text for status updates. In 2012 Instagram made its debut: in 2013 the younger generation is expected to embrace **Pinterest** (Youngworks). Communication consultant Neyzen sees society becoming more visually oriented: the importance of images is self-evident, even though many of his fellow-professionals are still tuned in more to the printed word.

Generation Z constantly online

Generation Z was born between 1992 and 2010. Members of Generation Z decide for themselves what they want and are always online. Privacy is less important to them and work should be fun. Their working lives and social lives are intermingled (RWS Next).

Infotainment also means less emphasis on content. Editor-in-chief Pieter Klein at RTL Nieuws describes this as 'impoverishment'. "You have to hold the attention of the audience. That's why there is such a strong tendency to 'dress up' the news." The **entertainment function** of the media wins at the expense of the information and watchdog function, says the Nieuwsmonitor. News is packaged into entertainment by applying a different angle and style and visual adaptations. A journalist looks for scandal and conflicts and pays more attention to political tactics than standpoints and arguments (Nieuwsmonitor). Klein says that they try to balance this at RTL: "We want to appeal to our audience, be popular if you like, but our core task is still to report relevant information so that the viewers can form an opinion."

> *See also: Mediocracy (page 17)*

33. Other media behaviour: mobile internet

PR agency Lindblom sees mobile Internet as the greatest **game changer** of the decade. We are online all the time, wherever we are. There are more smartphones and more tablets. Watching TV online has trebled within a year (between the end of 2011 and the end of 2012). The number of people who own a tablet has also trebled during this period (Intomart).

The New World of Viewing (online, postponed viewing on iPlayer, etc.) was still relatively small in 2012 according to SPOT, but prominent in certain subgroups. For example, people aged 20-29 watch far more videos online. **Multitasking** has also increased: every day we consume on average 7 hours of media in 5.5 hours. That means that part of our media consumption overlaps; we do other things at the same time, especially when the radio is on (SPOT). The average Netherlander spends two hours a day on online media (De Kok).

TV, still the most popular channel (36% of media time), is watched with a relatively large degree of attention. The percentage of time spent on the Internet is rising as a result of social media; this is happening at the expense of the radio (SPOT). Three-quarters of Dutch households have digital TV. **Connected TV** (the TV makes contact with the Internet) is also growing in popularity (11% of households) (TNS NIPO).

Second screen (using tablets and smartphones while watching TV) is on the increase and is creating new challenges for marketers, who will have to combine TV content with social media, search and e-commerce. Another relevant phenomenon is **showrooming**: comparing prices and products on a smartphone while visiting stores. Hence, marketers will have to adapt in-store shopping to the mobile revolution. In short, technology is impacting on purchasing behaviour (Marketing online).

YouTube and nu.nl, Uitzending Gemist and RTL XL are the most popular **apps** (Intomart). Other research (I-Prospect) says that the top four apps are Whatsapp, Facebook, Wordfeud and Twitter. Sixty-six per cent of Internet users have a Facebook account; Hyves is in decline (Intomart). Facebook is less popular among the youth: teenagers want websites that are not visited by parents or the older generation (Youngworks). Facebook seems to have passed its peak. People are turning more to photo applications with chat opportunities such as Pinterest and **Tumblr**.

Mobile is 'exploding'. Mobile applications are more important than website building, says Dorresteyn from Studio Dumbar. The requirements are a **responsive design**, interactivity, layered information, a small scale and accessibility. Short, clear communication is a more or less technical requirement. Rijksoverheid.nl is also being made responsive: the content will be the same as for the desktop version but it will be arranged differently. Another trend is that Google, Facebook and LinkedIn will keep developing. Google can follow its users closely and analyse data so that it can place personalized advertisements (big data). **Search-engine marketing** is also increasing and returns and conversion are getting more important. More attention will be paid to cyber security as the vulnerability of online media becomes more visible. Attacks have already been launched on banks and government websites such as Digi-D and Rijksoverheid.nl (DPC).

Example: Medium is the message

According to Jansen from Winkwaves, the medium will interact with the message. Google not only adapts search results to earlier search and surfing patterns, it supplements search terms differently for each user. Another example is Katango, a platform which links your digital contacts from Facebook amongst others, and suggests possible links for you on LinkedIn (Academie4).

34. Masses of media, but traditional channels still relevant

The traditional channels (television and conversation) are still relevant. The role of social media in the formation of opinions on politics and government policy is still fairly limited in terms of penetration and appreciation. Important disseminators of information are NOS Journaal, nu.nl (especially among the youth) and RTL Nieuws as well as newspapers, teletext and door-to-door magazines. Relevant opinion shapers are Kassa, Radar, DWDD and Pauw&Witteman. The television programmes are therefore still well represented. The importance of conversations should also not be underestimated (MOM).

The fragmentation of media use is calling for a **cross-medial approach** in government communication which is capable of harnessing the power of every medium. Each medium caters to a different social need: newspapers and magazines make people start discussions, radio and television are more for entertainment and passing the time, and social media offer opportunities for interaction and for keeping up-to-date passively. TV continues to be important to a broad group and to certain segments of the population such as the low-skilled. Television is good for passive use of information but always in conjunction with other channels of expression (DPC). More use will have to be made of social media, but online is not the ultimate solution: it is more difficult to reach the low-skilled groups via the Internet because they use it mainly for chatting and entertainment, not for information, education or participation (UT). The one cannot replace the other; what is needed is a mix.

Continuous monitoring and listening and responding in networks are important. Only when you are up to speed with what is going on, can you respond adequately to needs. The trick is to latch on to continuous interaction and offer personalized information. Basically, the trend is shifting from a communication **boost** to more ongoing communication (Desk research). The government is spending less on media because – amongst others – there are fewer mass media campaigns. The focus in the follow-up to an RTV campaign is on interaction: the channels and the message are adjusted to suit individuals or groups (Desk research and Academies).

The current communication plans are not dynamic enough, says Van Ruler: "The communication plan as we know it should be shelved." She advocates instead the Reflective Communication Scrum model. Communication is dynamic, so you need to intervene in short sprints and keep performing interim evaluations in order to fine-tune the campaigns. During a sprint you reflect on the progress in **scrums**: short meetings attended by all players. A validation measurement is carried out after each sprint.

Example: Dynamic communication model

The first organizations to work with the new-style communication model are the Municipality of Zaanstad and the Municipality of Groningen. Initial reports indicate that the method generates more speed and involvement. Rotterdam wants to use the model for its parking meter policy, and the Tax Department and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also have plans (www.dncp.nl).

35. Conversation as the central style of communication

It is not the new channels that have upturned the communication discipline, but the shift in who is 'in control' of the message. Organizations can no longer afford to assume that they are the initiator of a message. Stakeholders are not always in listening mode. They can talk and they want to be heard. Moreover, it is no longer clear who the **stakeholders** actually are, so organizations are going to have to do more listening and less sending and find out 'where things are at'. In any case, "The louder they shout, the angrier people get" (Van Ruler).

Conversation is therefore the central style of communication, says Van Ruler. Organizations should make people feel that they are being seriously listened to. She quotes the term **invitational communication**, used in the US: "Take your discussion partner seriously. Involve people in the process. Discuss the risks and angles. And say if there is anything you can't use." Van Ruler stresses that the communication vision of the government revolves too much around sending, receiving and influencing. She wants to see a more transactional vision. Communication derives meaning through interaction.

Tonkens also believes that dialogue is crucial to democracy: "The Internet encourages freedom of speech but not **democratic dialogue**. People are in transmitting mode most of the time. But listening to others and re-thinking your ideas because you have taken someone else's opinions on board (core values in a healthy democracy) are much less integral to the Dutch culture. The public discussion turns into a **free-for-all** – which has no place in a democracy. The government should encourage proper debate."

Word of mouth still has a very strong influence, says Steven van Belleghem (Academie7 and Van Belleghem): people who are ambassadors for your product, service or policy and advertise for you verbally offline and online (with **retweets and likes**). What can the government do with that? Look for conversation triggers and talking points. There are opportunities galore in the experiences people share about your organization. Questions put to the government also offer potential for dialogue and conversation. Imagine a tweeting road inspector or a tax department that offers webcare to people who fill in their tax returns. Listening is not just for the web-monitoring department: everyone should be on the lookout for opportunities to converse. Van Belleghem has identified four 'C's for the conversing government:

- Customer experience: people should be happy with their contact with the government;
- Conversation management: partake in conversations on social media. That will make government human and personal;
- Content strategy: be an expert in your field;
- Collaboration: work together, organize communities of customers and employees.

> **See also: Monitoring and webcare (page 42)**

Making contact is the prime challenge for the communication professional, says Guido Rijnja in the Galjaard lecture of 2012: “Something visceral happens when you make contact: you transform a ‘me’ into a ‘we’. The network society is confronting us head-on with the significance of direct communication.” Rijnja refers to a **third wave** in government communication: first the press wave, then its own media wave (pamphlets, websites) and now the network wave.

It’s no longer a question of who the policy is for but rather where it has come from. It is not the communication consultant who makes contact with the citizen but the public official and the policy framer. Government communication is nestled in policy; so help professionals to do their job. Rijnja: “The government communicator has to be an internal advocate of the external performance.” What kind of competencies do you need for that?

- You know what and who gets through to people. Show that you’re an expert: Where are communities forming in policy? How do people identify with organizations? And so on...
- You are familiar with the traditional tools of the trade: the carrot and stick, the sermon... But you are equally at home with new instruments, such as nudging (see Facilitating behaviour).
- You stimulate opposition. Help your organization to see the impact of decisions. The Municipal Executive in Rotterdam has even changed its communication paragraph into an impact paragraph: “The word ‘impact’ helps us to focus on what we do.”

> *See also: Communication as the binding factor (page 27)*

36. Monitoring and webcare

Social media monitoring has grown by leaps and bounds via **Coosto** and **Tweetdeck** amongst others. But monitoring is not the same as listening: people want to feel that they are being heard (EMMA). First, you need to listen in a different way. Van Ruler: “Now we listen with a certain goal in mind, but we should forget about goals and be more empathetic. We should not just be monitoring and finding out what people think about government ministers and policies, we should be making ‘field’ observations and asking what is actually going on.” Her advice is to follow the **undercurrents** 24/7. Van der Jagt agrees: “Behaviour in networks is unpredictable and contagious; it can change suddenly. So continuous monitoring is essential” (Van der Jagt).

Secondly, there is still very little interaction. Often, there is no long-term deployment strategy for social media. **A lot of chatter, not much to say** (Desk research). This year many communication professionals will work on the social media strategy: the integration of social media as a permanent part of the communication mix. Eighty-nine per cent uses social media to send and monitor information; 60% uses them for interaction and dialogue and participation in online communities and platforms, and 25% uses them for co-creation, crowdsourcing or crowdfunding (Logeion1).

Social media are also being used far more for interaction: webcare, online participation, apps. This is particularly evident in executive organizations such as the Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management (see example), which can use social media as a **service channel**, whereas other departments use them more as a communication channel. Many corporate Facebook pages appear to have been launched with the aim of ‘doing something with social media’, but with no meaningful strategy (DPS).

Example: Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management – Public Organization 2.0 for 2012

The *vanAanarBeter* app (from A to Better), the deployment of Yammer, and virtual reality project N18 are three examples of mobile communication that won the Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management the accolade of Public Organization 2.0 for 2012. The value of internal social media such as Yammer became abundantly clear during the evacuation of the Westraven office building after staff had reported tremors. Social media such as Twitter are also being deployed externally. There are Facebook pages for large-scale projects and there is a webcare team. *VanAanarBeter* has been updating road users since 2012, also via an app about roadworks: this is the first government app worldwide that sends real-time reports about driving routes (Ambtenaar 2.0)

Government processes, being notoriously sluggish, do not exactly lend themselves to webcare and other **real-time** communication. For example, before the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority publishes a blacklist it has to be sure of its facts. Consultant Renata Verloop explains: “The response to a damaging message online cannot take as long as the average time taken by an official press release to get through the initialization culture. At the same time, the government needs to be meticulously careful. That can deliver some tricky dilemmas at times” (Frankwatching2).

37. Storytelling

Organizations that want to reach out need to tell a story that rings true with the target group. Only then will people be receptive to the message and share it (**go viral**) in their social networks, says Neyzen. Information is conveyed and meaning created through stories, says Van Ruler.

Storytelling is still trending, also in internal change processes. The Academie voor Overheidscommunicatie organized two expert seminars on storytelling. Author Huib Koeleman calls it ‘internal sense-making’: “**Public support** can’t be organized. If people don’t want something, no amount of communication will change that. Giving them the space to invest in a change with individual meaning will positively influence their willingness to accept it.” Koeleman stresses the need to track down individual associations (Academie6).

This ties in with the vision of Erik Reijnders, communication and organizational advisor. Most of the time, the executive board comes up with a top-down blueprint for a reorganization and the personnel have to absorb the technical details within the brief timescale of a presentation. But what they really want to know is: What is going on? How will this affect me personally? And what should I do now? Everyone finds their own answer to these questions. And once they have found it, they search for confirmation and ignore anything that says different. This tendency is called **self-referentiality**. After all, you can hardly be expected to pick up and process all the signals around you. Slowly but surely, people gather around the coffee dispenser and share their thoughts about what the board has thought up. Professor Thijs Homan calls this a collective **meaning cloud**. If you want to make changes, you first need to start new dialogues and get the most respected figures in the organization involved (Academie3). As a communication manager or **community manager** you can also make use of internal communities to stimulate discussion within the organization (Academie4).

Aknowledgements

Expert interviews and literature

Expert interviews

The following persons were interviewed for this publication:

- Karin Legierse, Strategy team, Directorate for Public Works & Water Management
- Reint Jan Renes, Reader in Cross-Medial Communication in the Public Domain, HU University of Applied Sciences
- Els Dragt, trend researcher at MARE Research
- Pieter Klein, Editor-in-Chief, RTL Nieuws
- Betteke van Ruler, Professor of Communication Science, University of Amsterdam
- Evelien Tonkens, Special Chair of Citizenship, University of Amsterdam
- Tom Dorresteyn, General Director, Studio Dumbar
- Menno Hurenkamp, political scientist, University of Amsterdam

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DPC takes care of government communication with the public via Rijksoverheid.nl and Vraagbeantwoording Rijksoverheid. It oversees the mass media campaigns, organizes central media purchasing and it supports the government in the further professionalization of its communication operations by means of knowledge-sharing and research, amongst others.

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Research
Rita Timmerman (DPC)

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Buitenhof 34
P.O. Box 20006
2500 EA The Hague
www.rijksoverheid.nl/dpc
<http://portal.rijksweb.nl/irj/portal/organisatie/az/dpc>

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What trends in society and the communication sector are relevant to government communication? The Public Information and Communications Service reports thirty-seven in this document, ranging across a broad spectrum from self-reliance and a need for leadership to anti-consumerism and webcare.

The concept of 'sharing' appears in several trends; consumers borrow and lend each other things instead of buying them. Office workers share desks. Governments share tasks: to reduce public spending they transfer responsibility to market players and individuals. There is also a trend towards hands-on democracy, expressed, for example, through local neighbourhood initiatives. All of this is creating a new kind of solidarity. Policy is developing differently in the network society. The government is sharing its expertise with other players; it must co-create, operate more transparently, and disclose information pro-actively. More government data are being shared so that new applications can be developed.

Communication is also something you do together. Sometimes other organizations are better at getting the government's message across than the government itself. Why not? Communication is, after all, for everyone: we share our lives via Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube et cetera and we are always online.

These trends and developments are calling for other leadership styles and a different role for communication – one that binds and unites. There are opportunities galore to realize your ambitions. That's why this report is called 'A state of sharing'.

Is sharing the perfect solution for the government? That is for the reader to decide. 'A state of sharing' is first and foremost an invitation to everyone who works for the government to talk about how we can respond to current developments in our communication. Hopefully, it will serve as a launching pad for innovation and ambition.

Know **the market**, understand **the discipline**.

Public Information and Communications Service
(Dienst Publiek en Communicatie)

Buitenhof 34
P.O. Box 20006
2500 EA The Hague
www.rijksoverheid.nl/dpc

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