

SI Drive Case Study
MGL, Media Groep Limburg
WP Employment, Workplace Innovation

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Media Groep Limburg

The Media Groep Limburg (MGL) was formed in the beginning of this century (with ca. 800 employees) by the Telegraafconcern – a Dutch media publisher owning several newspapers. Previously there were two newspaper companies in the Province: De Limburger and Het Limburgs dagblad. The last newspaper was already in the Telegraafconcern when in 2000 De Limburger was taken over. The new media group MGL continued to publish the two newspapers in Limburg.

Now (January 2017) MGL with ca. 250 employees, is part of Concentra Media Nederland (together with A&C Media) and publishes: one newspaper under two titles: De Limburger and Het Limburgs dagblad (also online: DeLimburger.nl), a news website and app: 1Limburg, a news platform for entrepreneurs in Limburg: WijLimburg and recently also a job board: Limburgvac.nl. Intentionally in 2017 Concentra Media Nederland will be part of the Mediahuis, together with NRCHandelsblad, nrc.next and a series of Belgian newspapers.

1. The initiative in brief

Context

A downward trend in subscriptions and advertisement revenues for both the newspapers had already begun in the nineties and de Telegraaf had started a cost cutting strategy. In 2006 MGL was bought by an British investment fund Mecom. On behalf of Mecom the senior management performed a reduction of the costs by diminishing the workforce to save the profit. Mecom was interested in short-term profit only and the staff was reduced to ca. 300 in 2013.

Against this background and alarmed by the dismissals, local management, the Works Council and a group of engaged employees started to think how to react to this negative trend in revenues and how to anticipate on the technological (digitalization) and market developments in the media landscape. The Works Council focused on the debate with the sitting CEO (performing the strategy of Mecom). Mecom propagated a cost/short term profit-strategy and planned to concentrate the Dutch newspapers they owned. After Mecom had bought Wegener as well, they tried to manage MGL via the Wegener management. Actually Mecom tried to bring MGL in the Wegener group several times, which failed because of resistance of stakeholders.

The Works Council on the other hand, advocated a qualitative/long term- strategy that need investments. They advocated for a strong, independent journal with in-depth articles and new coalitions to provide local news, using internet and social media.

Local management (i.e. the heads of the commercial departments, head of the editors and the head of the HR department) started to implement workplace innovations at job and team level. This is the **first period (2006 – 2013)** in the narrative about WPI at MGL

Medio 2013 a new CEO (Loek Radix) took office. He had the assignment to sell MGL. He was very much innovation minded. This is the beginning of the **second period** in WPI. He supported the strategy of the local management and he stimulated the collecting and developing of ideas of the employees for new business models. This CEO left the company September 2015. In the perspective of the WPI narrative this may be considered the end of the second period.

At the end of 2014 MGL was taken over by Concentra a Belgian Publisher who planned an investment strategy for MGL, much appreciated by the Works Council. Concentra's strategy also was to concentrate publishing capacity in the Netherlands. They successfully prepared a joint venture with

Corelio: the Mediahuis and there is an intention to bring Concentra Media Nederland in the Mediahuis in 2017.

Concentra's strategy is directed at the long term, publishing a qualitative newspaper and also using digitalized media to provide news in the region. This is a top-down strategy and ideas of employees are accepted as far as they fit in this strategy but not stimulated. In the perspective of the WPI narrative therefor this can be seen as the **third period**, starting with the departure of the CEO who was promoting Employee Driven Innovation, September 2015 and it still persists at the moment.

Table 1: The time line of the workplace innovation

Time line	Context	WPI
2001 – 2006	De Limburger and Het Limburgs dagblad are published by MGL within the Telegraafconcern. Start reduction of staff with hundreds of employees.	
2006	MGL is taken over by Mecom, a British investment company.	
First period WPI: 2006 – mid-2013	Debates between Mecom and the Works Council; cost strategy versus qualitative/innovation strategy.	Local management creating new organizational structures and empowered jobs for staff in marketing and sales and for journalists
2009 - 2012	Several attempt to merge MGL with Wegener (also owned by Mecom) ends up in a failure. Employees become alarmed and activated. Stakeholders force Mecom to sell MGL.	
End 2012 - 2014	Period of negotiations with several optional buyers. Period of growing agitation, awareness and action readiness among the staff of MGL.	
Second period WPI: June 2013 – Sept. 2015	Enter new CEO Loek Radix. He had the assignment to sell MGL. He was innovation oriented; he stayed till Sept. 2015.	This new CEO stimulated Employee Driven Innovation (EDI). Out of 80 initial ideas, five were chosen: Media Valley, Sponsored content, 1Limburg, More sales to subscribers, Hyperlocal.
November 2014	Concentra took over MGL from Mecom. This was under the pressure of the MGL staff and with a financial guarantee of the Province of Limburg.	

Third period WPI: September 2015 - now	CEO who promoted EDI left September 2015 and a new CEO related to Concentra took over.	Employees are not actively stimulated to provide and develop ideas. Of the five initiatives the Media Valley, Sponsored content and sales to subscribers seem to be 'safe' since there is financing resp. it pays.
Oktober 2016	Mediahuis announced that in 2017 Concentra Media Nederland will be integrated in this joint venture of Corelio and Concentra.	??

Workplace innovation practices

First period: 2006 - 2013

In the first years two commercial departments and one editorial were created: Editors, Marketing and Sales. And there were several supporting departments, such as Finance and HR. This was a strategy of focusing on the kernel activities and other activities, like printing and distribution were outsourced. The commercial jobs were enlarged and empowered; for instance an advertisement seller was trained and coached to work as an account manager who - together with clients - actively discuss, creates, realizes and evaluates an advertisement plan. Many of the original commercial staff with a relatively low formal education, were trained to do the new jobs with much more professional competences and autonomy. New commercial staff is acquired among a higher educated population.

The existing local frontline editor teams were reduced. These teams use to collect local news in the (small) cities. The majority of the journalists moved to the research department or started to work in a theme-group (health care, education, social cohesion etc.) working on in depth articles that need research. After all, the market for short and quick messages (news items) has largely been taken over by social media. The journalists got a much more interesting job, more autonomy to organize their own work and were empowered in their job.

Second period: 2013 - 2015

Medio 2013 a new CEO (mr. Radix) took office. He came over from DSM a big chemical company in the region that is famous for its innovative strategy. Radix is very much innovation minded; he propagated the use of the talents and ideas of the employees to find new earning opportunities: Employee Driven Innovation (EDI).

Out of the eighty ideas that he collected in his first months, five were selected to be developed by a team each. These multifunctional and multidisciplinary teams were supported, trained and coached to do their new jobs for which they were exempted temporarily. This is a form of 'employee driven innovation of the business model'.

The five selected ideas are:

1. An online news providing service, the website and app. '1Limburg' together with the local broadcasting company as partner.
2. The creating of a 'Media Valley' where new media initiatives and startups can develop. This is done in collaboration with the regional University College and students of the department Communication

and MultiMedia design and with the Council of the city Sittard-Geleen and sponsored by the Province of Limburg..

3. Sponsored content, that is publishing articles about health, sports or local infrastructure projects (e.g. A2) where third parties pay for (being hospitals, sport clubs or their sponsors, or in case of the A2 tunnel building the road building companies).

4. Using the commercial potential of communities of subscribers (e.g. a collective insurance).

5. Hyperlocal, a website for small news messages and small advertisers.

Third period: 2015 ---

Medio 2015 Louk Radix left the company and Concentra appointed a new CEO: Marc Vangeel. The strategy of Concentra is very much directed at finding ways to use the possibilities of digitalization. Concentra is willing to invest in new opportunities for the MGL, and ideas of employees will be favorable viewed. However Concentra does not encourage employees to come up with ideas such as was done by the former CEO.

The local news provider 1Limburg was very successful in terms of people using this website and app. and it plays a role in the regional communication networks. However 1Limburg still costs the founding fathers money and up to now nobody has found a sound business case. Therefore the continuation after the first contract period, is in discussion and uncertain.

The Media Valley as a field for experimentation is a success and can be continued thanks to the financial support of the the province of Limburg, the University College, the city Council of Sittard-Geleen and MGL.

For Sponsored content a new action plan has been approved by the Management Team in 2014 and it is running. Sales to subscribers is ongoing.

The last idea Hyperlocal is stopped because elsewhere in Concentra this idea already has been elaborated and MGL can learn from that experience.

To summarize, MGL staff grew to the idea of employee driven innovation of the business model in the period (2006-2013). In that period a considerable amount of the employees of MGL were empowered in their jobs. They became aware and got engaged in the struggle of the local management and the Works Council to keep publishing a quality newspaper and to maintain employment of a high standard in this company and in the province.

It got an impetus, support and concrete form in the period that a new CEO who was innovation minded held sway (medio 2013 – medio 2015). And it is tolerated since then as far as it is in accordance with the strategy of the new owner now. The Works Council trusts on the good intentions and the investment strategy of Concentra. However the Works Council members regret to see that most colleagues have stopped to participate in the debate about the strategy and the future of the company. And they have worries because still (end 2016) there is no profitable solution for the declining revenues from subscriptions and advertisements.

2. Actors, networks and alliances

Actors in the first period: 2006-2013

In the first period, actors from the side of Mecom were:

- CEO's who had to execute Mecom's strategy.
- In the company there was the local management: heads of the editorial and commercial departments and head of the department HR, who tried to anticipate on the new digitalized media landscape, within the borders of Mecom's strategy,
- The Works Council got more and more active propagating a long term, quality oriented strategy and objecting against a merger with Wegener (another Dutch company owned by Mecom) and promoting the takeover by Concentra.
- And more and more employees got aware of the threat of losing their job and the loss of the opportunity to produce high quality journalism.
- In this period also local authorities got involved. The Province of Limburg is represented in the Supervisory Board of MGL.

Actors in the second period: 2013 - 2015

The second period starts in June 2013 with the entrance of the new CEO, Loek Radix coming from DSM and ends when this man left MGL in September 2015. Apart from this CEO, the actors were the Works Council and supporting employees still aiming at a takeover by Concentra. This Belgian publisher is really interested in publishing and promises to follow an investment strategy for MGL. In this period the Works Council and supporting employees have protested, when a takeover by Concentra seemed to fail while Mecom insisted on a price that was considered too high by Concentra. "Stop de moord op het Limburgse woord" (Stop the murder of the word of Limburg). At last in November 2014, the takeover by Concentra succeeded, also because the Province of Limburg facilitated it by putting a financial guarantee on the acquisition deal.

In the company itself there were several other actors operating:

- the local management and several employees encouraged to provide their ideas for new business opportunities;
- employees working in the multi-disciplinary teams that were responsible for the elaboration of the selected ideas;
- several external partners involved in those projects, such as:
 - In Limburg: the broadcasting company Limburg1,
 - In the Media Valley: a University College and its students, representatives of a city council, young entrepreneurs co-creating new initiatives,
 - In the Sponsored content initiative, third parties that want to pay for certain articles about their activities.

Actors in the Third period: 2015 >>

Loek Radix was succeeded as CEO by Marc Vangeel from Concentra. Concentra has another style of involving employees than introduced by Loek Radix. Therefore many journalists and commercial staff are not so much interested in the debate about the strategy and new business models anymore. They concentrate now on their own daily work as journalist or account manager, which is still challenging in itself. Now few staff members actively support the Works Council in his attempts to convince Concentra to invest in initiatives to develop new business opportunities together with the employees.

There are new actors who discussed and arranged the coming move to the Mediahuis.

Professional, peer and trust networks

The Commercial Director interviewed in 2016, benchmarks his company with other (regional) newspaper publishing companies and concludes that MGL is one of the best. MGL is an efficient (lean) organisation but it can improve in innovation of the business. This Commercial Director is expecting much benefit of the joint venture Mediahuis of Corelio and Concentra, that was planned at the time of the interview. MGL can learn about digitalization from NRCHandelsblad, also in the Mediahuis. One problem is: for digitalized news providing volumes have to be huge to earn money.

Most newspapers in the country have sought ways to anticipate the digitization in the periods described and many conclude more or less the same: more active account management and content fuller journalism. They were inspired by and learned from each other.

The local network of the broadcasting company, the University college, the libraries, the Province and the municipalities is important to find cross overs and political support when needed.

The interviewed Works Council members are active members of their trade union and professional union (NVJ). In the union they share their experiences in using your voice for innovation and how to reach an influential position as Works Council. However for the initiative of Employee Driven Innovation or how to survive as local newspaper in the new media landscape there is not much to learn of other members of the NVJ. Up to now nobody has found the holy grail.

3. The innovative solution

Insights and learning leading up to the solution

Actually 'the' solution for the business case for (printed) news-providing in a digitalized media landscape has not yet been found. Not in this company nor in any other. The actors, especially the Works Council members who are also active in the national trade union for Journalists, and the local management think that at MGL they don't perform very badly compared to colleagues in Western Europe. Everybody knows that they must digitalize, but nobody knows yet how to earn money in the long run with digitalized news-providing.

There might have been some learning from other newspaper publishers in how to adapt the organisation and the jobs to the new challenges, but that was not a conscious form of learning. In the second period the actors who had promoted the appointment of the CEO who came from DSM, apparently had hoped to learn and profit from his experience with innovation management at DSM. That is experience with forms of open innovation together with partners in the region and in the supply and distribution chain (Chemelot) and with Employee Driven Innovation.

Interrelation between different forms, dimensions or levels of innovation

The case shows a company that is both reacting to several forms of innovation and tries to find out how to practice and use new forms or dimensions of innovation.

The first dimension is a **technical innovation**: the digitalization of the media landscape that erodes the old business model.

However this innovation at the same time provides new opportunities for new services. Therefore the second form of innovation is a **service innovation**. The question for MGL is: how to use internet and social media to provide consumers with actual, qualitative high, local news. This also means **business**

model innovation because it is not easy to find out how to get income out of these new services, since others provide news for free via social media. Literally: 'MGL news is stolen' and put on websites. What other interactions with clients can deliver profit? To be able to innovate the service a fourth and a fifth form are needed: **organizational and workplace innovation**. That means: 1) improving job design (research time and facilities for Journalist and the development of advertisement sellers to account managers) and 2) a simple and flat organizational structure (three departments with a head and a deputy) 3) starting multidisciplinary projects for innovation across all departments 4) collaboration with external partners.

4. Gaining momentum

There was not so much competition with other newspaper publishers. But there is a growing competition in news providing by other media. This is the economic context that was decisive for this initiative.

The initiative, the Employee Driven Innovation (EDI) did gain momentum when a new CEO entered who had experience with open and employee driven innovation.

In the last period the EDI lost momentum and especially support from the majority of employees because Concentra does not encourage employees to come up with ideas for business innovation and if any new idea comes up, it is tested on its compatibility with the strategy of the company. However Concentra invests a lot in marketing and product innovation: they introduced a new look for de Limburger and developed L-Magazine for young readers especially women and young families.

Drivers

The driver for the EDI was the eroding business model of this newspaper publishing company. The earnings from advertisements and subscriptions are steadily coming down since the nineties of the last century. First the Telegraaf and then Mecom reacted with a short term cost cutting strategy, that resulted in mass layoffs between 2000 and 2013. On the contrary the Works Council and the local management advocated a long term quality- and innovation strategy as response to the trends. The local management succeeded in an organizational and job redesign, empowering the employees. And – by using their local political network – they succeeded in the recruiting of an innovation minded CEO, who was given the assignment to sell the company to a new owner. End 2014 this succeeded also thanks to the pressure of the Works Council together with a protesting group of employees and a financial guarantee of the Province of Limburg.

The new CEO gave a boost to the EDI of the business model. For the employees, having experienced the layoffs and the pressure to merge with Wegener, which was considered to be a deterioration in the quality of the newspaper, there was the fear to lose their jobs and the quality of their product where they were proud.

And at the background there was policy influence: the provincial authorities were concerned about the distribution of independent local news and information that might contribute to regional social cohesion. Therefore they supported the long term quality and innovation strategy of the local management and the Works Council where they could and promised a provincial financial guarantee when Concentra took over MGL from Mecom. And there is realized a public-private cooperation by the public financed broadcasting company and MGL in 1Limburg, a website and mobile phone app. And finally the municipality of Sittard-Geleen and the University College Zuyd Hogeschool cooperate

with MGL in the Media Valley project, which is financially supported by the Province of Limburg as well.

Barriers

The barrier for the initiative: EDI in the first and partly in the second period was the unwillingness of the owner Mecom to invest in MGL.

And in the third period where there is a new owner that is willing to invest, it is the inhibitory effect of his critical evaluation, assessing whether the employee initiatives are consistent with the long term strategy of the company in the Mediahuis.

Success factors and critical events

A success factor certainly was that the local management and the Works Council supported by a growing group of engaged employees persisted in enforcing a quality and innovation strategy and succeeded in implementing such a strategy within the boundaries put by senior management and the means available, until a new owner took over.

A second success factor was the presence of a charismatic leader in the person of the CEO Loek Radix appointed June 2013 who stayed until September 2015. And in some of the projects there was a successful collaboration with external partners.

In the first period and the first half of the second period there were several critical events that polarized the internal relations. Important were the several rounds of redundancies. There was the forced and at last failed merger of the MGL with Wegener and several attempts to sell the company. And there were the difficult negotiations with the Belgian publisher Concentra who was promising to invest in the company, that succeeded at the end of 2014.

The second period is marked by the entrance of new CEO coming from the network of the Provincial representative in the board and from the Wegener network and has worked at DSM. He showed a charismatic leader and encouraged employees to provide ideas for new business and supported the development of a selection of those ideas.

5. Complementary innovation

The initiative EDI is legitimated by a demand for independent local news that is assumed by the Works Council, the local management and by the Provincial authorities involved.

The public-private experiments that have been done here show successful. For instance the popular website and app. 1Limburg might show sustainable and provide employment in the region. These however do not seem to be compatible with a private owner. They demand innovative financial constructions.

Absorptive capacity

The knowledge of new information and communication technologies is an issue. Journalists have to know how to do research using these media and how to write an article and/or use image material to get their message across via new media. Marketing and Sales people should know how to use these new opportunities. With this knowledge these employees would be capable of developing good ideas for new business models.

Role of technology

Practically all roles were altered by Internet and social media. Journalists have to write in depth articles and do much more research. To a great extent short news messages are taken over by social media. The marketing and sales people have to communicate intensively with their clients to find a multimedia way for them to reach their clients, instead of simply taking an advertisement at the telephone. There is a certain competition between the traditional newspaper and social media. But there is no level playing field.

That is why the CEO of the newly formed Mediahuis in the NRCHandelsblad article of October 19, 2016 said: 'We moeten digitaal sneller vooruit' which means: 'we have to digitalize faster'.

6. Impact of the social innovation

The general aims of the promoters of the initiative EDI were: guarantee the independent news providing by a quality newspaper in the region and finding a business model for that, keeping high quality employment in the region.

Economic sustainability of MGL

At the moment there are published one regional newspaper of high quality under two titles: De Limburger and Het Limburgsdagblad (also an on line version: DeLimburger.nl), a website and app: 1Limburg and a website for entrepreneurs: WijLimburg. The revenues are acceptable for the owner, who does not seek to maximize profit and good compared to other regional newspapers. There also is seen a future for the newspaper in the newly formed Mediahuis.

The initiative, the actions of the Works Council, the local management and employees and the employee driven innovation of the business model directly or indirectly have resulted in an economic survival of the MGL. The company survived in the struggle against a destructive strategy of a former owner. However the Works Council is not assured in the long term business model.

Employment in the region

In the first period 2006 -2013 approximately 500 jobs were lost. Since then there is no considerable loss of jobs in the commercial or editorial departments. In March 2015 one printing house was closed, which meant a loss of 60 jobs. The printing of the journals is now done at two places, a Belgian printing house and one in Gennepe, N. Limburg. The relative stabilization of the employment for the journalists and commercial staff since 2013 cannot be ascribed to the workplace innovation only, it is the whole situation that has led to a long term innovation strategy.

Institutionalization

In the first period of the WPI the employees were grouped along the kernel activities: Editors, Sales and Marketing and supporting staff (Finance, HR). The new jobs for the commercial staff and for the journalists were formalized. Other activities such as: printing and distribution were outsourced. In the second period there was an active collecting of ideas under the employees. And after the selection of five ideas, multifunctional project teams were installed to develop those ideas. The employees working in those teams were trained and coached. There were also organized innovation meetings for all employees to hear how these project teams progressed with their work.

Diffusion

In the world of newspaper publishing all companies and groups are experimenting and seeking around the same concepts and ideas with a lot of imitation. Only the local forms are exclusive and there the employees can contribute very well.

The job redesign as it was done at MGL in the first period seems to have become quite common in the sector. MGL was certainly not the last one in implementing this workplace innovation that empowers employees. But you cannot say that others followed MGL or that the concept was distributed.

In the second period there was an active diffusion at company level of the practice of idea collecting. There were organized lunches with the CEO where ideas could be launched and clarified. Thus 80 ideas were collected of which 5 were elaborated and implemented up to the present. These five activities are meant to stay exclusive for MGL, since it was hoped that they would bring profit to the company in the near future. Their outputs are meant for diffusion or distribution as services. However none of these can be called a success yet. That is, the 1Limburg news website is a success in the sense of the amount of users and the role it plays in the community, but not in business sense. And therefore it is not sure that it will sustain. The Media Valley gets a chance since it is co-financed by external (public) partners. The Sponsored Content will be continued, but it is not sure that it will provide a financial base for independent news and information producing alongside.

In the last period there were some **barriers** for diffusion. The new owner did not desire to continue or diffuse the idea of Employee Driven Innovation; it is not encouraged any more. Innovation is now managed top down, with employee participation.

Another concrete barrier was that there was no feedback on the 75 ideas that were not chosen to be developed in the first instance (being also the last). As a consequence many of the MGL staff focus on the nice sides of their current job and hope that it will last their time.

Finally the diffusion process is hampered in this company and elsewhere in the sector by the fact that up to the present nobody, nowhere has found yet a promising business model for publishing a local newspaper or exploiting multimedia for the providing of qualitative and independent local news on a commercial basis.

7. The role of policy

The role of policy and policy makers have been described in several previous paragraphs. To sum up provincial politicians have played a role supporting the long term quality strategy of the local management and Works Council that was the stimulating context for the WPI initiative. The provincial authorities are represented in the Supervisory Board. The Province had offered a financial guarantee when the negotiations between Mecom and Concentra about the takeover of MGL were likely to fail. Concentra is willing to invest in new opportunities for MGL.

More directly, there is public – private cooperation in the news website 1Limburg as well as in the Media Valley where the city Sittard-Geleen and the Province of Limburg are participating.

8. The practice field level

The initiatives at Media Groep Limburg can be seen as a Workplace Innovation project.

Workplace innovation

The 'working definition' of Workplace Innovation is: An integral set of mechanisms (for scientific explanation) or interventions (for implementation in practice) relating structural (like organisational design) and cultural aspects (like leadership and organisational behaviour) of the organisation and its people with the objective to simultaneously improve the performance (i.e. productivity, innovation, quality) and quality of work/working life (wellbeing at work and, competence development, engaged employees). In this approach the engagement of employees in decision-making processes is a precondition (Totterdill & Exton, 2014 and see for the theory on Workplace Innovation: Oeij et al. 2017).

There is a long history (seven decades, estimates Peter Totterdill,) of (partial) WPI practices around Europe that are described under several names: 'Work restructuring/redesign', 'Humanisierung der Arbeit', 'Sociale innovatie', 'Social dialogue', 'Innovatieve Arbeidsorganisatie' and the like. The overall term Workplace innovation was used in Finland since the beginning of the new millennium and is more or less used EU wide since the establishment of a EU wide network of organisations practicing and/or studying WPI: EUWIN (European Workplace Innovation network).

Media Groep Limburg as a workplace innovation project

In the 2013 sample of the European Company Survey (ECS), the Media Groep Limburg (MGL) was one of the cases. This company appeared to score high (was among the highest 5%) on the WPI-index. Therefore it was invited to participate in the Eurofound study where case studies were made of 51 best scoring companies (Oeij et al, 2015 a and b). From this last study it was concluded that MGL had implemented 'substantial WPI practices'.

The interviewed people in the company however were themselves not aware of practicing WPI. Local management and employee(representatives) just fight for latitude to be able to adapt their work to the developments of a digitalized media landscape and advocated a long term quality oriented innovation strategy. They wanted to save jobs, meaningful and high quality work and to save a permanent, high quality, independent newspaper for the region. They did not talk about Workplace innovation and did not participate in any network of organisations discussing WPI.

There was a presumed **social demand** for saving high quality jobs in the region and for an independent, high quality newspaper.

Mechanisms of social change

Sharing new insights and **learning** is of course essential for WPI to disseminate and scale up. In some European countries there are learning networks or research supported national programs (Finland, Germany) that facilitate collective learning. EUWIN (2013 – 2016) was the first learning network on WPI at European level.

For the purpose to learn from good practices there are two knowledge banks where many WPI-cases can be found: www.workplaceinnovation.org and EUWIN's knowledge bank:

<http://portal.ukwon.eu/euwin-knowledge-bank-menu-new>.

At MGL the local management and the employee(representatives) were not aware that they were implementing WPI practices. Therefore they did not actively seek for information and knowledge or good practices about WPI. Except probably that the head of the HR department had learned from the professional circuits in which he participated.

In a certain period (see above) they were inspired by a CEO who had worked on innovation projects at DSM where a practice of open innovation (Chemelot) and a meritocratic form of sharing of ideas was developed.

The **variation** that WPI is aimed at, is the unique offering of products or services that may be the result of combining the talents and ideas of all people present at this workplace.

In the case of the MGL there is a unique newspaper that provides independent and informative news about items that matter for the region, by journalists and commercial people who know the region, live there and are very much engaged and motivated to contribute to the regional development and social cohesion.

The process of **adoption of WPI** is often started in a period of crises, a period where a leader who proposes a different approach of management gets a chance. Especially financial and economic success (more than the quality of work) is decisive for the advancement and also for **imitation** by other organisations.

In the case of MGL of the five initiatives that were started to develop new business models, those who have funds to develop further can stay. The initiative that doesn't have a good business case was stopped after a critical evaluation by the sitting CEO who is committed to Concentra.

Workplace Innovation is seldom accompanied by **conflicts**, since the aim of WPI is to realize benefits for the company and for the employees at the same time. A collaborative culture is in fact a precondition. It just fails if one side does not feel satisfied. But there are conflicts when initiatives are stopped by some stakeholders while others want to continue it.

In the case of MGL there was a conflict with the foreign owner Mecom since he did not want to invest in any innovation and did in fact follow a destructive strategy.

Companies practicing WPI are operating in **competition** or they are public organisations. Private companies have to compete and try to keep or enlarge their market share. Public organisations feel the political pressure to work as efficiently as possible. WPI might help to win in this competition respectively search for balance between effectivity and efficiency, when the talents and competences of the employees are used to realize doing things in a smarter way thus reducing the costs (enhancing productivity) or to produce a product or service that better meets the market demands because of its quality.

The competition MGL encounters is actually not with other newspapers but with the news providing by digital and social media (i.g. Google, Twitter, Facebook). In fact Facebook users sometimes include articles of De Limburger on the site. There is no selection between equal partners anymore, no level playing field. And that appears to be a very difficult struggle.

There are several national **networks** on WPI especially in the Nordic countries and in Germany. And there is a EU wide network of organisations practicing and/or studying WPI: EUWIN (European Workplace Innovation network).

The staff of MGL does not participate in any WPI network. Some of the journalists are active members of the national trade union for journalists (NVJ), where they share knowledge and test their opinions. However it seems that they bring more knowledge than they get because MGL is one of the best performing regional newspaper in the Netherlands.

The *tension* caused by the permanent pressure to *adapt* or preferably pro-act on market developments, development of new technology and disruptive innovations presses companies to become more agile and use not only the flexibility but also the talents and ideas for innovation of the employees. They have to enhance their capacity to innovate.

For the MGL the tension was very clear: in fact the digitalization of the media landscape is a disruptive innovation. There are several strategies to cope with that. One is adaptation: just wait until it is over and try to earn as much money as long as it lasts, which was the strategy of Mecom. The other strategy is investing in the development of new opportunities combining the competences developed for the old technology (writing high quality informing articles) with new technology (supporting the dissemination of the articles by using internet facilities and social media). This seems the strategy of the Belgian owner Concentra and the coming owner Mediahuis (NRCHandelsblad, Wednesday 19 October, 2016).

The last strategy showed to be a good basis for Employee Driven Innovation, when a CEO who supported that idea was there for MGL. In more recent period however, the strategy is more determined by the top of the concern.

One of the theoretical presuppositions of WPI is that (technological) innovations will only *diffuse* and render when they are accompanied, supported, compensated by workplace innovations.

In the case of MGL technological innovation, i.e. the digitalization of the media landscape is the driver for change. If no new business models for regional news providing are found (no business model innovation), there will be no medium in the end to disseminate qualitative regional news and information in the province, no medium for journalists to use their competences, even though there might be a (small) market demand for it.

One of the intentions of WPI is to bring decisions as low in the organization as possible (Democratic dialogue, Gustavson, 2015). So in principal or in the end the planning of change (that is a series of decisions) is done by those who are involved. However in many cases this is not (yet) *institutionalized* and many decisions are taken top-down or by representatives.

In the case of MGL there has been a delegation of some decisions especially about how to do your own job (job autonomy) and this is still practiced. Decisions about the strategy and investments in new business opportunities were partly delegated for a short period. However old and new owners determine the strategy in general, while some participation of the Works Council is accepted.

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