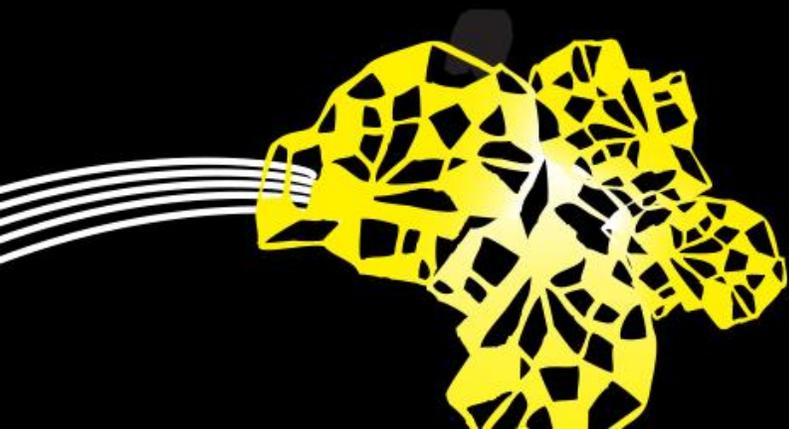
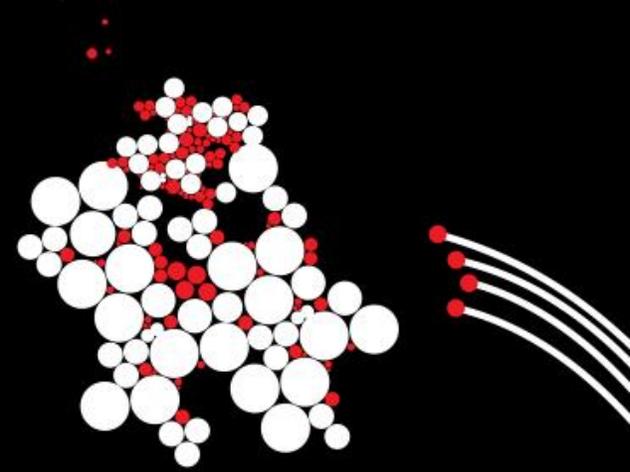


UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Inspection of cooperatives for
inclusive education in the Netherlands

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- Special needs education in the Netherlands
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Special needs education

Two basic approaches:

- education in special schools (separated)
- support in regular schools (inclusive)

Trends in the Netherlands until 2014

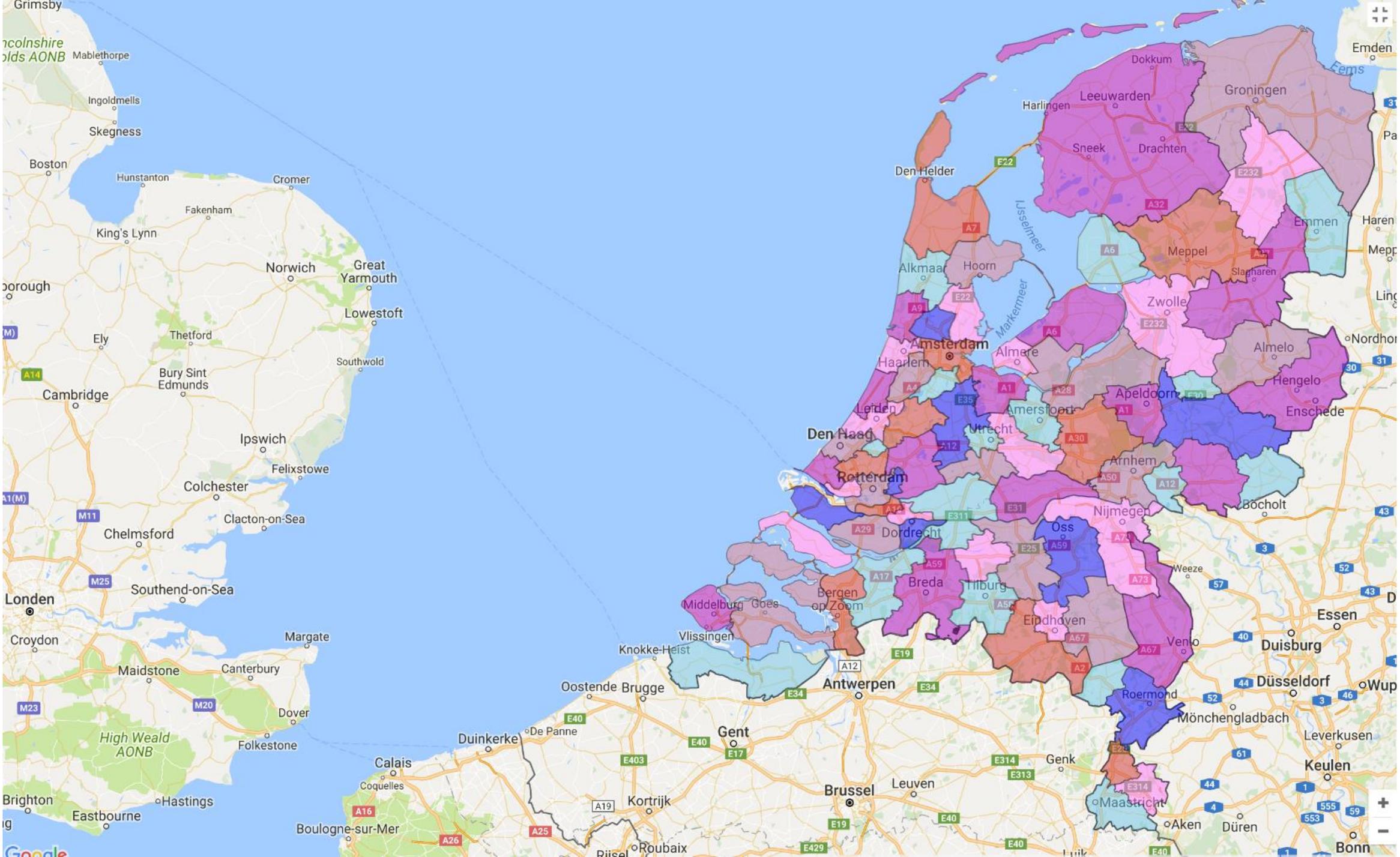
- Since 1950's, increased separation in special institutions
- Since 2000, increased popularity of vouchers for support in regular schools
- Labeling, stigmatization, medicalization (e.g. ADHD, 20 per cent dyslexia)
- Rising costs

Probable causes:

- societal changes affecting pupil population
- improved diagnostics
- reduced acceptance of children who pose problems
- existing policies created perverse incentives 

The Inclusive Education Act of 2014 (IEA)

- Inclusive education when possible
- Mandatory regional “cooperatives” (N=152), in which schools:
 - improve special needs support within regular schools
 - establish regional support structures for inclusive education
 - improve information and placement services to parents
- Fixed budgets per region (school boards share financial responsibility)
- Additional inspections at the level of the cooperatives



Our study

How are cooperatives inspected, and what are the impacts of these inspections?

Methods:

- Single case study of an inspection of a cooperative (2016)
- Analysis of inspection reports (2017)
- Survey among managing directors of cooperatives (2017)

Findings within the cooperatives (I)

General acceptance of:

- desirability of inclusive education
- shared responsibility of schools
- desirability of network-level inspections

Findings within the cooperatives (II)

Tensions between:

- existing (confession-based) networks of schools
- the new cooperatives and existing local networks

Worries of:

- increasing bureaucracy
- loss of local autonomy, local knowledge, local achievements

Actual cooperation can be very limited (sub-regions and school model)

The inspectorate's approach

- Inspection 2020: supportive, facilitate learning
- List of inspection criteria exists, but is not yet applied
- Soft approach:
 - looking for signs of good cooperation, positive intentions, ambitions
 - stimulating improvements in data gathering and reporting
 - respect for newness and local difficulties
 - supportive tone of reporting

Two hands on one belly (a Dutch proverb)

The inspectorate and the cooperatives:

- share responsibility for making inclusive education a success
- share a similar system-level rationality
- share the stage in a governmentality play

Inspectorate regarded as:

“a critical friend”, “a means to exert pressure on the school boards”

Conclusion

- Fixed budgets are having impact
- Limited direct impact of inspections: walking on egg shells
- Long term impact via governmentality?
- Critical issues:
 - limited cooperation and risk sharing (school model)
 - work load in schools (changing student population, bureaucracy)
 - schools and teachers are distanced from the debate
- The inspectorate is losing its bite and its tongue?