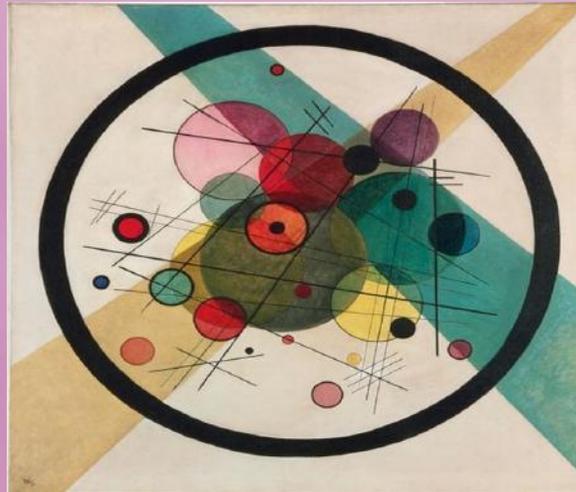




# The Multiple Middle: Managing in Healthcare

Lieke Oldenhof



# Public debate about middle managers

- Do we still need them?
- The rise of post-bureaucratic organizational forms: e.g. self-steering teams
- The intermediate position of the middle manager is 'singled out as the root of many of the problems associated with the hierarchical organizational form' (Thomas and Linstead 2002, p. 72)

# Public image about managers.....



# Method: shadowing managers



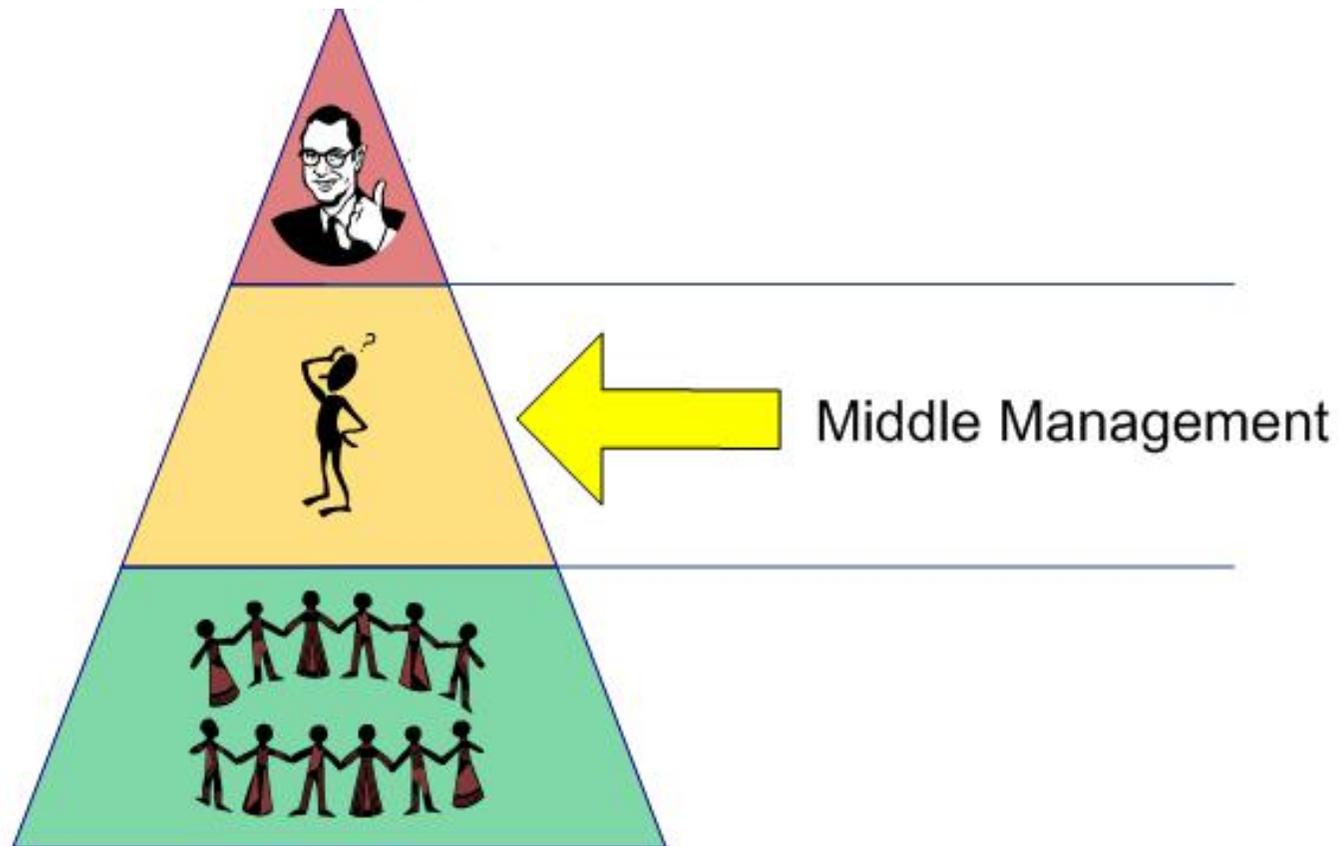
# Lifeworld of the middle manager



## Stuck in the middle

“At the top you have a budget and a regional manager who just wants you to stay within budget (...). At the bottom...they want...there is a high health-related absenteeism at your unit. They don't want to work with less people on the work floor and work twice as hard. They want you to get temporary workers. There is a tension there, because they cost a lot of money, which means I can't keep to the budget” (MM)

# The middle between top and bottom



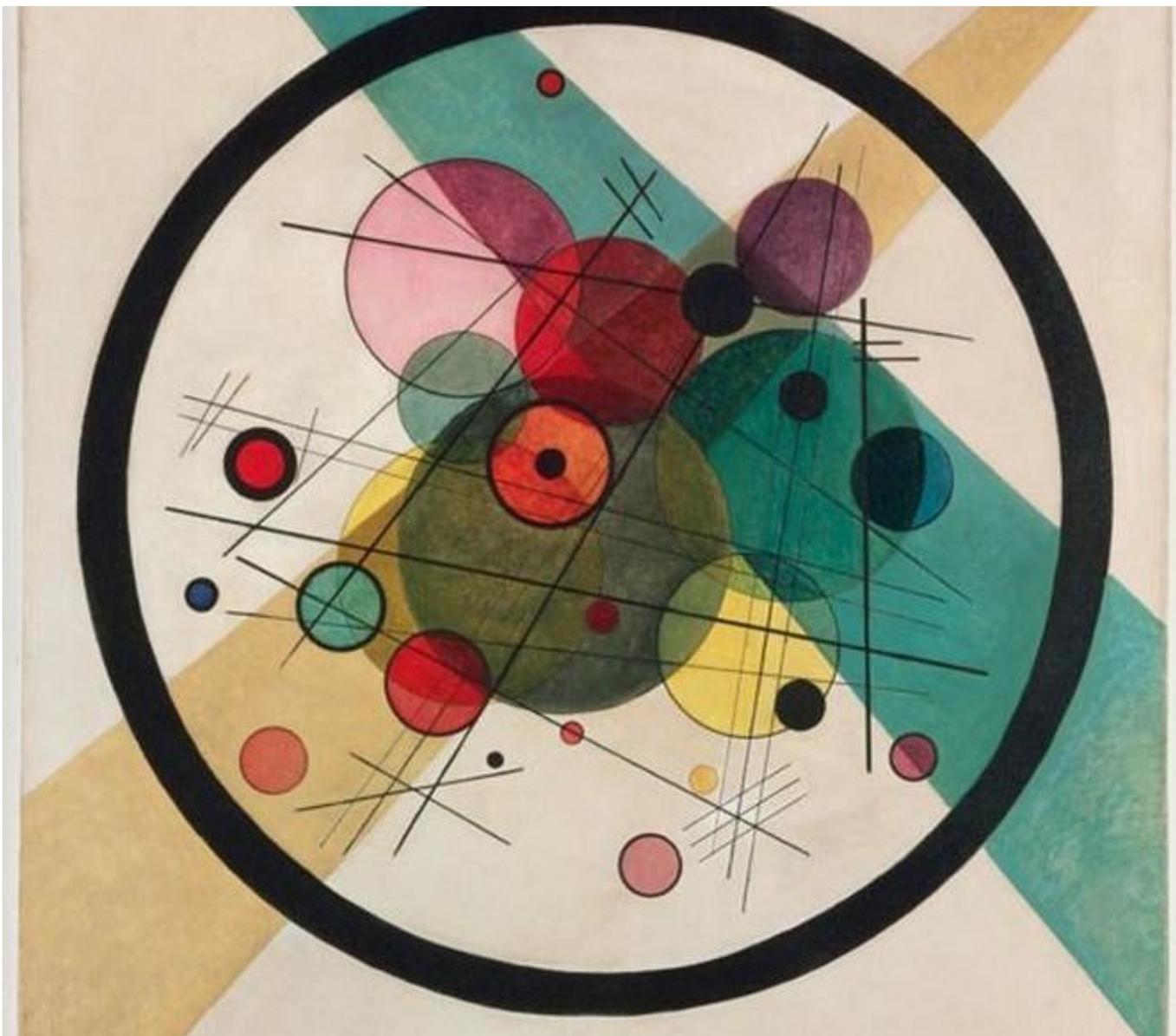
# Consequences of hierarchical conceptualization of the middle

A partial view of middle management activities: just managing 'up' and 'down'



# Opening up the middle: forwarding alternative middles

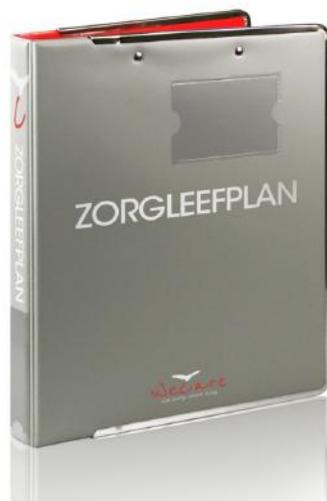
- The middle between conflicting values: e.g. affordability and quality of care
- The middle between different justifications: e.g. market and civic justifications
- The middle between professional and managerial identities: hybrid roles
- The middle between multiple organizations: e.g. service providers in health, social care and housing.



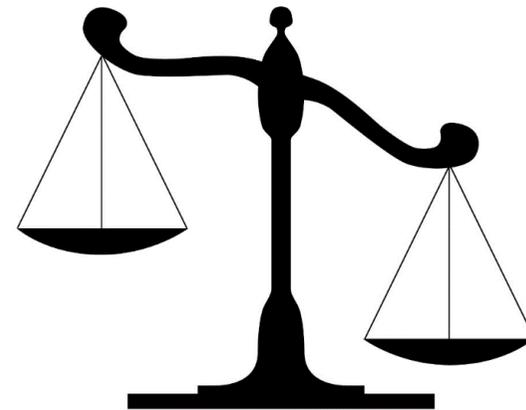
# Work performed in alternative middles

- Valuation work
- Justification work
- Professionalization work
- Boundary work

# Professionalization work



# Valuation work



# Conclusions

- The multiple middle = a fluid state of being rather than a fixed hierarchical position in the organization
- Middle management= increasingly a collective activity
- ‘In the middle’ valuable normative work is being done to shape good healthcare.
- ‘Cutting out the middle’ is not the solution to all problems
- The shape and form of management = a matter of choice!