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# Recognition and Development of Communication Science in the Netherlands<sup>1</sup>

## *Reconhecimento e avanço da ciência da comunicação nos Países Baixos*

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## ABSTRACT

Whilst highlighting the leading role of Amsterdam and Nijmegen Universities, this article summarizes the main phases - and points out the major protagonists - of the academic institutionalization of communication studies in The Netherlands since the 1970s. Firstly, it concentrates on early researchers (Stappers, Brouwer and van der Ban) and their contribution to the growing academic interest in the specialization of the field. Secondly, it highlights the role played by British researcher Denis McQuail in the international projection of the new field of studies during the 1980s. Finally, the article presents a brief overview of the current institutional situation and the main lines of research

**Keywords:** History of communication thought. The Netherlands. Denis McQuail.

## RESUMO

Salientando o protagonismo das Universidades de Amsterdam e Nijmegen, o artigo resume as principais etapas e aponta os protagonistas maiores do processo de institucionalização acadêmica dos estudos de comunicação nos Países Baixos a partir dos anos 1970. De início foca nas contribuições de pesquisadores mais antigos, como Stappers, Brouwer e van der Ban, para examinar sua participação na transição que, naquela época, representou academicamente o surgimento do interesse em especializar a área. Depois, coloca-se no centro o papel desempenhado no país pelo pesquisador britânico Denis McQuail, responsável pela projeção internacional do novo campo de estudos, ocorrida durante os anos 1980. Concluindo, o artigo apresenta rápido panorama da situação institucional mais recente e suas principais linhas de pesquisa

**Palavras-chave:** Pesquisa em comunicação: Países-Baixos; Teorias da Comunicação; Denis McQuail.

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Whichever way you look at it, the formation process of communication science as an academic discipline took extraordinarily long in the Netherlands. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, so called free study disciplines<sup>2</sup> were designed at the University of Nijmegen and at the two universities in Amsterdam ("*Universiteit van Amsterdam*" and "*Vrije Universiteit*"). Additionally, elective courses and minor studies of this kind were developed at other universities under different names (Hemels, 1972, pp. 136–151).

The established social sciences sociology, psychology and political science denied the emerging interest of the young generation of scientists in the phenomenon of public communication and its appropriateness in journalism (newspapers, magazines and broadcasting). Also neglected fields such as advertising, public relations, corporate communication and public communication in governments, ministries, provinces and municipalities could be added.

The three mentioned traditional disciplines had more or less the potential of "mother disciplines" for free study programs, but these developing, sometimes experimental programs were still embedded in and subordinate to them. For the development of a self-concept according to Clarks' stage model, this starting position for an integrated objective of the developing field of communication science was inhibiting, sometimes paralyzing. The fact that lecturers educated in communication science were missing and the resources for the new discipline were limited, gave the pioneers until the end of the 20th century a hard time.

In the beginning of the 1970s, however, inter-university considerations arose in Dutch society – caused by media developments – to recognize communication science as an independent discipline. Those who addressed societal and therefore public communication in their teaching at universities and – to a lesser extent – in their research, were challenged to establish an integrated discipline characterized by interdisciplinarity. The initiative for a coordinated action plan to recognize communication science in the Netherlands was set on the agenda of different relevant committees within and outside of university.

This originated substantially from the engagement of the former journalist and extraordinary lecturer press science Evert Diemer (1911-1997). On 1 January 1971, he was appointed as a full lecturer in communication science at his university: the "*Vrije Universiteit*" in Amsterdam, which was Christian-protestant

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2 A free study discipline ("*vrije studierichting*") with a certain final exam and later a free study discipline leading to a final exam ("*vrij doctoraal*"), can be seen as an independent study program within a certain discipline. The study program had to be authorized by the relevant faculty or by the recognized and independent discipline, which was accountable for the final exam. After establishing the Bachelor/Master system in the Netherlands in 2002, this option was no longer possible

at that time (Hemels, 2011). With this development, the term communication science has been introduced for the first time at a university in the Netherlands and became so little by little more common.

Diemer himself was a friendly but also pragmatic personality used to cope with difficult organizational tasks in the newspaper business. Thinking strategically, he noticed the possibility to unite university colleagues with different interests under the umbrella term communication science - in order to reach a common goal. Through Diemer's engagement, the initiative of an inter-university deliberation committee on the acknowledgement of communication science ("*Interacademiaal Overleg Communicatiewetenschap*", IOC) was established in 1971. Aims were to write papers about for instance the state of the art of communication science in foreign countries, to make a plea for the necessity of the discipline in the Netherlands in front of media institutions and media representatives and to organize lobbying activities in science policy-making circles<sup>3</sup>.

Further, the IOC-members used the argumentation for the recognition of communication science at their own universities and faculties. This was a difficult and often frustrating exertion. After the establishment of the IOC-circle, it still took eleven or fourteen years until students could register for communication science, first at the University of Nijmegen (since 1982) and then at the University of Amsterdam in 1985.

## 1. The long journey of the initiators through the institutions

By Royal Decree (administrative act of the government) of 24 May 1982, communication science was included in the academic statute ("*Academisch Statuut*") upon the recommendation of the academic council ("*Academische Raad*") and was therefore *de facto* officially recognized as a new academic discipline. The mentioned advisory council of the government had a key position in this process, on the one hand in advising the universities and on the other hand in communicating between the academic world and the Ministry of Education and Science responsible for higher education. By including

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3 A lecturer ("lector") was a subordinate position as a university teacher, who was not allowed to have the title "hoogleraar" (professor), but was responsible for education and research in a certain field or a subfield of a discipline. Those who were lecturers with a PhD degree per January 1, 1980, could be named university professor of the (new introduced) category A without rise in salary, but with the title and all rights of a professor as bonus, if they wanted to opt this opportunity. Since the late 1990s, universities of applied sciences ("hogescholen") have used the title "lector" for teachers responsible for the support of applied research. Dutch applied universities do not use the term professor. Currently, the title "lecturer" is sometimes used in English-language job advertisements of Dutch universities, especially for practice oriented lecturers for instance in the field of public relations.

communication science in the abovementioned statute, a long-standing desire became reality after more than ten years of writings reports, making pleas and intensive lobbying activities. Key-positions in this process had James Stappers from the University of Nijmegen, and Frans Bergsma and Frans Kempers from the University of Amsterdam.

At same time, a new generation of young communication scientists and their students encouraged the merging of different approaches and several aspects of public and interpersonal communication, including the (mass) media used, slowly but surely in the new field of communication science. A feeling of being the new pioneers was in the air. However, sociological and psychological views of individual actors were still apparent and the development of a structure for the desired cooperation needed some time. The lectorship of Stappers, who had been responsible for education and research in the field of publicistics since 1970, changed to the chair of communication science in 1986. The arrangement of the curriculum and the official name "*Communicatiewetenschap*" were integrated in the academic statute in 1982. Until 1992, it was a so called "*bovenbouwstudie*", a study program built on a one-year propaedeutic course. Mostly students with a completed first year in political science, sociology or psychology registered.

Political parties, interest groups in the media field and journalists were mobilized by several actors within and around the University of Amsterdam to ensure that communication science was not exclusively taught at a catholic university in the Netherlands, although this institution had been influenced by secularization and the process of so-called "depillarization" ("*ontzuiling*"). At the end, minister Deetman agreed under high pressure of Parliament to the demand of the almost entire academic community to treat Amsterdam and Nijmegen "equally". The commission-De Moor agreed completely with Henk Prakke's point of view from 1971 regarding the independence of education and research in the field of mass communication and communication (Prakke, 1971).

The decisive parts of the report "Social Sciences" of De Moor and the members of the commission can be read as a testimonial for how communication science was carried out in Belgium, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France and the United States. The commission pointed out in their report that the field had been recognized as independent in those countries for a longer time. Education in (practical) journalism was not considered in the report, because it was not an option to introduce such a program at a university - under the umbrella of communication science. Journalism could be studied at applied universities - at first since 1966 in Utrecht. At the same time, the commission expressed confidence that the foreign examples of communication science programs

could be copied in the Netherlands. For the “development of a systematic study program of the phenomena of mass communication”, an independent position within academic teaching was needed as the commission pointed out.

## 2. The protagonists at the Universities of Nijmegen and Amsterdam

The postwar generation of sociologists and psychologists in the Netherlands focused more on the Anglo-Saxon than on the German academic world. Furthermore, for the pre-communication science oriented scholars another consideration was important: They observed the establishment of empirical research with applied results in the United States, but they perceived the interest in Germany as more oriented towards theory building with an ideal-typical objective. To integrate those two science cultures in teaching was a major concern for Stappers in the 1960s already, as I could experience myself as one of at that point only a few students in his university seminars and also before as a participant of his courses on Saturday at the above already mentioned journalism institute. Marten Brouwer, his colleague in the role of critical opponent at the University of Amsterdam, was focused on the American way of furthering the study of human and public communication.

### 2.1 James Stappers between German and Anglo-Saxon traditions

The future publicistics and communication scientist James Stappers (1930-2014) studied psychology at the University of Nijmegen. In his dissertation in 1966 he focused on Prakke's theory of “functional publicistics”, but also took communication models of prestigious American social scientists into account. This comparative approach can already be derived from the title of his dissertation *Publicistiek en communicatiemodellen* (“Publicistics and models of communication”). Through intensive contact with Lerg in Münster, Stappers knew that this colleague – supported by Prakke – focused on theory building and the research results of American academics. According to Petra Klein (2007, p. 197), communication was seen “at an exposed position as a two-sided interdependent process” at Prakke's institute for publicistics at the Domplatz in Münster.

In regards to his background in psychology, Stappers stressed the process character of communication and mass communication as public communication. He questioned whether the sociological and system-theoretical based concepts of the colleagues in Münster were flexible enough to meet the emphasized dynamics and characteristics of a “communication event” (“*communicatiegebeuren*”). Stappers divided this “*communicatiegebeuren*” in a communication process on the one hand, seen from the perspective of the

intentions of the sender, and an information process on the other hand, seen from the perspective of the receiver and his expectations.

This bipartite division of the term "*communicatiegebeuren*" led to a dual use of the term "communication", namely as a component of the "communication event / *communicatiegebeuren*" on a higher level and as a component of the "communication process" on a lower level. As a speck on its elegancy, this ambiguity in defining communication and information and the (inter)relationship between both key notions caused some criticism and even the reproach of confusion of thought. In connection with this debate one has to consider that designing, criticizing and rejecting definitions and models - not only of communication - in the 1960s was a favourite occupation of scientists of all establishing social sciences. However, Stappers' trick enabled the use of two perspectives without destroying the relationship between the constituting elements. The paradigm shift from "What are people doing with the media?" to "What are the media doing with people?" could take place. The door for the uses-and-gratifications approach had been opened in Nijmegen, before the term was common under communication scientists.

Although Stappers – as a publicistics and communication scientist at the University of Nijmegen –with his adaption of functional publicistics focused on models developed in Münster, he also took a systematic look at the models of communication published in the United States. His role model was undoubtedly George Gerbner (1919-2005). Although Stappers criticized the field model of mass communication of the German psychologist Gerhard Maletzke (1922-2010) published in 1963, they agreed on an important approach: Maletzke saw publicistics as a science of targeted public communication. According to his point of view, communication is *targeted*, because it aims to reach a certain goal. And as he pointed out in his *Psychology of mass communication*, communication is *public*, because it does not address – in contrast to private communication – a limited number of recipients, but addresses an "audience", that means everyone who is able to receive the message (Maletzke, 1963).

Stappers phrased his definition of mass communication as public communication in exactly the same way in his dissertation three years later. Without neglecting the intentional character of communication – as it was phrased later in the sense of Jürgen Habermas – according to Stappers the receiver is "emancipated" more and more in his actions from the by him perceived power of the sender or sender organization (Klein, 2007, pp. 268-270).

## 2.2 Marten Brouwer searching for renewal in theory building

At the University of Amsterdam there was basically only demand for the German tradition, as it was advanced by the pioneer Kurt Baschwitz mainly in regards to mass psychology in the post-war era. According to Marten Brouwer (1929-2001), who followed the footsteps of Baschwitz regarding parts of his professorship in 1971 (Hemels, 1993, pp. 98-99), the critical merits of his teacher were neither in empirical research in social sciences nor in his longstanding historical research, but in the theory building involved. In the 1920s already, the German scientist published papers about mass psychological mechanisms, especially in regards to public opinion. According to Brouwer (1998, p. 32), Baschwitz put the recipient in the center of interest in connection with studies of the press and other mass media. Baschwitz' statement "The most important part of a newspaper is its readership" is well known. It is the first sentence of his book *De krant door alle tijden* ("The newspaper through all ages"), published in 1938 (reprinted 1949).

Baschwitz did not have a good knowledge of English and his key-publications were not translated into English. His contribution to theory building was therefore not perceived and recognized by the Anglo-Saxon academic world. Furthermore, he had to go underground in the period of German occupation and had to pause his academic work (see Anschlag, 1990). In 1968 Brouwer defended his doctoral thesis *Stereotypen als folklore* (Stereotypes as folklore) at the University of Amsterdam. His central theme was the importance of informal communication for mass communication, from rumor to two-sided conversations as interpersonal communication. He contributed to communication theory with the "myceliummodel" in pointing out the influence of interpersonal networks on opinion formation. In contrast to public mass media messages, the informal communication patterns are as invisible as the mushroom threads in their entirety, which can merge to a tight network at the bottom side of a mushroom (mycelium or fungus) (Brouwer, 1968). In this regard Brouwer came close to Stappers' view, however he would not admit this. Stappers saw "publicistics" as a multidisciplinary and integrated science, which is an independent part of communication science. He differentiated between the research objective of publicistics and mass communication, defined as public communication and its "modalities" journalism, advertising, propaganda and so on.

Brouwer studied in the best traditions of Baschwitz and H.C.J. (Bert) Duijker (1912-1983) (mass)psychology at the University of Amsterdam. Quite early he became familiar with the state of the art of *communication science* in

the United States because he got a fellowship for the United States. There he got the opportunity to work with Lee Thayer, born in 1927, who was already becoming a distinguished expert in the field of communication studies, especially organizational communication. In the sixth edition of the handbook *People, society and mass communications*, edited by the political scientist Lewis Anthony Dexter (1915-1995) and David Manning White (1917-1993) of the gatekeeper theory (1964) – used at the University of Nijmegen in the early 1960s – an article by Brouwer about the low interest in mass communication as a research field within social sciences was published. Although Brouwer was a nephew of Prakke, he did not feel connected to his theory building of functional publicistics and his cultural-historical approach (see also Hemels, 1990; 1999/2000). Quite the contrary: He had an excellent knowledge of the methods and techniques of research in social sciences and was an expert in statistical data handling.

Brouwer held on to his point of view that the theory of mass communication is not limited to the mass media, but has to be extended to communication phenomena within the invisible mass. For theory building one of Brouwer's main ideas is of remaining importance. It is the realization that the effects of mass communication through mass media can be better understood if researchers take a closer look at informal communication processes and structures. In 1971, Brouwer became full professor of psychology of collective behavior at his own university. From 1991 until he received the emeritus status, his professorship was focused on political psychology. This new task led to a second inaugural lecture in 1992 about among others xenophobia and descent with the provocative title *Het eigen volk* (One's own people) (Brouwer, 1992). Two years later Brouwer got the emeritus status.

### **2.3 Anne Willem van den Ban in the footsteps of Everett Rogers**

Brouwer followed an approach with his mycelium model in which the sociologist and communication scientist Elihu Katz (born in 1926) together with the sociologist Paul F. Lazarsfeld (1901-1976) connected *personal influence* with the role that individuals play *in the flow of mass communication* (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Furthermore, he was ambitious in developing an alternative for the *two-step-flow model*, that Anne Willem van den Ban (1928-2016) had introduced from the United States in the Netherlands in the 1950s to explain the role of *opinion leaders* for the effectiveness of agricultural education of farmers at today's Wageningen University and Research Centre [official name, shortened: Wageningen University or WUR].

In 1964, Van den Ban became the first professor of information studies (*"Voorlichtingskunde"*) in the Netherlands and founded a working group of the same name, which received the more formal status of a department in 1971. He is known as the founder of this specialization in the Netherlands and is still associated with Wageningen as a founding father of communication studies at this university with a history of agricultural sciences. He got a fellowship in the United States and became acquainted with Everett M. Rogers (1931-2004), the author of the classical handbook *The diffusion of innovations*, first edition published in 1962. Therefore it was not surprising that the term *"Voorlichtingskunde"* for information studies in 1998 was replaced by *"Communication and innovation studies"* (*"Communicatie en innovatiestudies"*) by Van den Ban's successor, at first Niels Röling (\*1937) and later on Cees M. J. van Woerkum (\*1947).

The field of Applied Communication Science developed since 1993 at the University of Twente as well. It was continued since 2008 as Communication Science (Bachelor) and Communication Studies (Master) in the department of communication science in the faculty of social sciences of this university for technical sciences. Nowadays, the one-year Master offers three specializations: Corporate and organizational communication, Technical Communication, and Marketing communication. Special attention is paid to science communication. Since 2000, the sociologist Jan van Dijk (\*1952), appointed for sociological aspects of the information society, is one of the outstanding professors of the mentioned department and founding father of the Centre for E-Government Studies (Van Dijk, 2012).

### 3. Dennis McQuail and the constitution of communication science in Amsterdam

Between the end of the era-Baschwitz in 1956 and the beginning of the era-McQuail in 1977, the descriptive-analytical work of Maarten Rooij (1906-1986), as well as the theorist and empiricist Brouwer at the University of Amsterdam, built a bridge between two epochs in the development of pre-communication science education and research towards an independent and recognized communication science.

But Rooij received the emeritus status in 1972 and to find a successor was very difficult. Denis McQuail (1935-2017) was finally appointed after five years of vacancy. He was British with a background in social history and sociology and had already worked as a professor at the University of Southampton. By his own account, he came to Amsterdam in 1977, because with the position as a professor of mass communication there, he was able to focus on (mass) media research. McQuail's appointment was a great enrichment for the program of the

free study programs in mass communication (since 1976) and history of press, propaganda and public opinion (since 1977) in Amsterdam.

In accordance with the academic tradition at Dutch universities, McQuail gave his inaugural lecture only one year after his appointment. Especially because communication science was still not established as fully independent of traditional social sciences in the Netherlands, the topic of his speech – *The historic roots of a science of mass media* – was chosen very well (McQuail, 1978). McQuail's science-theoretical argumentation supported those who had already fought for an independent study program since years. According to him, communication science is highly influenced by other sciences such as social psychology, sociology and political science, but is not dependent on them.

In his first years at the University of Amsterdam, McQuail taught as the only full professor in harmonious cooperation with a relatively small team. The optional subjects of film studies were part of the faculty section mass communication (the "*Vakgroep Massacommunicatie*"). Until 1982, Jan Marie Lambert Peters (1920-2008) was part-time professor for film studies at the University of Amsterdam. From 1959 to 1965, film studies also was an elective course at the University of Nijmegen, lectured by the former journalist and critic Adrianus van Domburg (1895-1983) who had the academic position of a 'lector'. Peters was founder and first director (1958-1967) of the "*Nederlandse Filmacademie*" in Amsterdam and since 1963 guest professor at the KU Leuven (Belgium). From 1968 until he received the emeritus status in 1985, he was professor for literature and audiovisual communication at this university (Hesling & Van Poecke, 1985). Afterwards film and television studies as well as theater studies developed towards a "*bovenbouwstudie*" in "*Media studies*" at the faculty of humanities, which is comparable to the study program in "*Medienwissenschaften*" in Germany.

McQuail took the scientific leadership of the still rather small group of mass communication scholars at the University of Amsterdam after his appointment as a full professor. The label "communication science" was chosen for the unity of education, research and administration. He stayed true to the University of Amsterdam for twenty years until he reached emeritus status in 1997. His importance for communication science was recognized far beyond the Dutch borders: His reputation reached a European, even a worldwide dimension.

His introduction to communication science, *Mass communication theories. An introduction* (McQuail, 1983), published in its first edition in 1983, became a brand as *McQuail's mass communication theory* in 2000. When the core textbook was published in its sixth edition in 2010 (McQuail, 2010), the publishing house *Sage* announced to have sold 80.000 copies worldwide. The *European*

*Journal of Communication*, in 1986 founded on initiative of McQuail and Els De Bens of the University of Ghent, noticeably contributed to the strengthening of communication science in Western Europe.

McQuail, the professor emeritus, returned to Great Britain but visited Amsterdam still several times for academic events, until reaching the age of 70 in the position of supervisor and supporter of graduate students. He was invited all over the world to give lectures, attended international conferences and was publishing as before. He characterized his self-chosen position as one of an observer in the center of the discipline with a broad overview of communication science. The way he dealt with the diversity of theories and approaches relevant for science in his *Introduction* shows his ability to look at the development of the discipline from a birds' eye view and also to examine it critically.

When McQuail passed away on 25 June 2017, he was 82 years old. Immediately, many obituaries were published, beginning with digital tributes to 'this' British social scientist and foundational theorist in mass communication' (Michael Todd, 2017). Peter Golding stressed his many kindnesses as follows: '(...) many in the field will remember Denis best for his personal qualities. He was the most charming and amusing of companions, and endlessly generous in support, advice and help to younger colleagues and peers alike' (Golding, 2017)

But other scholars also made successful efforts to develop their focus areas in education and research – media policies, information issues, methods of research and political communication – complementary to the *body of knowledge* of the professional group in communication science at the University of Amsterdam. An introduction to communication science, first published in 1984, was edited several times (Van Cuilenburg et al., 1996). Compared with McQuail's worldwide used *Introduction*, this alternative textbook was less theoretically structured and more focused on the media in the Netherlands – with all its implications. In 2000, a reader with a broad overview of the field of study in the Netherlands was published (Van Cuilenburg et al., 2000).

#### **4. Toward the establishment of a mature discipline in the Netherlands**

The journey towards the recognition of communication science in the Netherlands had a brilliant start, but through the related public attention, there was great pressure on the representatives of the new academic discipline. Furthermore, the minister did not provide additional financial means for research and education in communication science. The cooperation of scientists with diverse backgrounds in a joint effort was therefore necessary in Nijmegen as well as in Amsterdam. One of the first challenges was in compiling a well-balanced study program for the three-year studies following a propaedeutic

course in another discipline. This gradually led to a definite empirical-analytical change in the social sciences – with the psychologists as pioneers in the 1960s. The sociologists followed soon.

The “empirical turn in social sciences” (Löblich, 2010) was also changing the discipline of publicistics in the three decades after the end of the Second World War. Within the established discipline of communication science of the 1970s in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria the historical-descriptive approach of the humanities tradition was more present than in the Netherlands but at the University of Amsterdam this approach was still represented until the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The “certainly viable relics of the humanities” (Schmolke, 2010, p. 321) were in danger of disappearing when communication science was understood and classified only as a social science.

On the one hand, the communication scientists were challenged to work on the same empirical, quantitative basis as the main stream of social sciences. On the other hand, they had to find a balance between the aspiration of being generalists in teaching and the necessity to be specialists as researchers. Ideally, a specialization process emerges when a science reaches the stage of establishment, after the stage of an emerging discipline. Regarding communication science, it can be concluded that the circumstances led to the empirical turn and to a specialization process in research of its own.

In implementing the new discipline in the second half of the 1980s, the pioneers remained still connected with the specializations and interests of their original study discipline. However, already in the 1990s, they took the communication science context into account. This attitude led sooner or later to a full engagement in communication science - sometimes with new, adapted specializations. A good example is the internationally known Cees J. Hamelink (\*1940). From a Lutheran theologian with international experience in broadcasting and media policy he developed since 1983 within communication science of the University of Amsterdam towards a critical engaged specialist in the field of international communication.

#### **4.1 Communication Research at the University of Amsterdam**

In September 1997 it was founded the Amsterdam School of Communication Research (ASCor). Considering the adjusted understanding of the most efficient way of academic research, so that the Netherlands can compete with foreign universities, it was decided on the highest level of political decision making to introduce an institutional separation of educational and research tasks. Those two fields of work of an academic at university had always been connected, so that the decision was accompanied by far-reaching

consequences. No discipline could withstand the trigger: The allocation of research funds was made dependent of achievements. In the beginning, there was a debate if this policy should be seen as a means of pressure to intensify the acquisition of (external) projects. However, after some years of try-outs the outcome of the system was striking.

Since the foundation of ASCoR, researchers were very eager to compete with social scientists of other branches for contract research. This mostly meant that they had to work on a strong empirical basis. Because most of the ASCoR-researchers from the beginning were interacting with the institutions responsible for teaching tasks within the curriculum in communication science, they enriched the courses with their special knowledge, based on research. When the Bachelor-Master structure was introduced in 2003, the Bachelor curriculum got a more general character, whereas the Master and Research Master curricula gave room to specialization.

It was decided to not cooperate with sociology, political science and cultural anthropology, which had already founded a joint research school at the faculty. That communication science started ASCoR of its own was a signal of being convinced to succeed, even if the study program had 400 or more new students every year. In 1992, communication science had finally obtained its desired propaedeutic course, which was also a milestone in the process of reaching an independent status and strengthening confidence as a recognized social science. But the immense growth in enrolment meant a great burden in terms of teaching, while the allocation of staff hours was not extended. At the end of the millennium, there was a ratio of one teaching staff member for 92 students. Nevertheless, this circumstance was no obstacle to push forward ASCoR-activities. The solo effort to found a research school may be explained by the fact that communication science often felt marginalized by other social sciences.

The *mission statement* was as follows: "ASCoR conducts research at an advanced level into the political, social, psychological, cultural and economic aspects of communication infrastructure, contents, and effects. Research addresses the role of media and (tele)communications, nationally and internationally, from the perspective of democracy and processes of opinion and identity formation. As an institute for academic research and training in the field of communications,

ASCoR is also a meeting place for scholars, students and policymakers" (ASCoR, Annual report 1997/1998, p. 3).

The *ASCoR Annual report 2012* reads as follows: „It [ASCoR] is the largest research institute of its kind in Europe and is among the largest worldwide. More than 55 senior researchers are permanently associated with ASCoR and its

English-language PhD program hosts more than 40 candidates" (ASCoR, 2013, p. 13). In regard to research fields it mentions: "ASCoR research concentrates on the production, uses, and consequences of information and communication in informing, persuading, and entertaining citizens. The approach is multidisciplinary: Core theories of communication science are combined with theories and methods from other social sciences, political science, sociology, psychology, economics, history, and information sciences" (ASCoR, 2013, p. 13). This citation shows the disappearance of the reserved attitude toward the neighbor sciences within and outside of social sciences. It also gives evidence of confidence and openness and therefore the willingness to cooperate with various partners. The research focus is empirical, qualitative and quantitative at the same time (ASCoR, 2013, p. 13).

Patti M. Valkenburg (\*1958) may be the first ASCoR scholar after McQuail, who reached within less than a decade an international reputation in her field of study. At the University of Amsterdam, Valkenburg got an endowed professorship for education and research in the area of youth and media in 1997. Since then, she developed an international highly valued research program and founded the "Center for Research on Children, Adolescents, and the Media" (CcaM) in 2003. No other communication scientist has been awarded that many times: In 2001 she got the -with EUR 2.5 million endowed- Spinoza prize and in 2008 she was the first Dutch member of the International Communication Association (ICA) awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award. The above mentioned Hamelink, who taught international communication at the University of Amsterdam from 1983 until 2005, became the second Dutch "ICA Fellow" in 2013. The University of Amsterdam granted Valkenburg the highly honorable position of "universiteitsprofessor" (*distinguished university professor*). The professor of Child and media research is also a distinguished research professor at the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences of her university.

#### **4.2 Communication science research at the University of Nijmegen**

Part of the tradition of the Faculty of Social Sciences in Nijmegen founded in 1964 was to connect research projects to the respective resident professors. This research strategy was followed for a couple of decades. When in 1971 in the small municipality of Melick and Herkenbosch volunteers started with the production and distribution of cable television programs and this illegal experiment two years later got a State-aided official status, Stappers' institute of mass communication was asked to follow the development in order to evaluate the effects. Until the 1980s, Stappers encouraged research in the field of public and interpersonal communication in the local communities, especially

with regard to the functioning of the local democracy. Accompanying research regarding local mass media and cable television raised questions whether local identity can be influenced by the new possibilities for communication and which consequences local broadcasting could have for print media in the area of local communication (Van der Linden et al., 1994).

In the 1980s, Stappers' name is more connected to the research area *Communication, culture and community*. In education and research, he paid attention to the importance of communication for culture, for *cultivation and message systems* in relation to communication and culture, and further to the importance of *community communication*. Educated in psychology, he was – together with a small research group – oriented towards the approach of *cultural indicators*, propagated by George Gerbner (1919-2005) (Stappers, 1984a, b).

Since 1986 and until he received his emeritus status in 2009, Karsten Renckstorf (1945-2013) developed the research area *Media use and social action*. The choice of this focus led to a great variety of publications about television and social behavior (Arts et al., 1990; Frissen, 1992; Hendriks Vettehen, 1998; Renckstorf and Wester, 2001; Huysmans, 2001; Schaap, 2009); the question how people use information, which they get through *public information campaigns* (Renckstorf et al., 1996); media use of “media-makers” such as journalists and program directors (Hermans, 2000); and the use of broadcasting news by the receiver (Huysmans, 2001; Schaap, 2009).

Renckstorf was working at the “*Hans-Bredow-Institut*” in Hamburg, before he became the second professor of communication science in Nijmegen in 1986. One of the largest projects of the *Media-Use-as-Social-Action*-group that he started was the large-scale field research project MASSAT, which was carried out in 1989, 1994 and 2000 (Arts et al., 1990; Hendriks Vettehen et al., 1995; König et al., 2005). Renckstorf worked together with the political scientist Leo B. van Snippenburg (\*1942). He was professor of communication science from 1996 to 2002, in fact as the successor of Stappers, who received the emeritus status in 1995. Van Snippenburg's working field was mainly focused on the political-economic development, sociocultural changes, and media use in regards to information acquisition and political communication.

After becoming a professor of communication science in 2002, Fred P. J. Wester (\*1947) continued working in the research area “*Broadcasting as social behavior*”. During his whole career at the University of Nijmegen, he had a reputation of being an expert in social science methodology (Wester, 1995; Wester et al., 2012). In his research as a professor, Wester was inspired by two important traditions in communication science. On the one hand theory building in the area of *agenda setting*, conceptualized by

Maxwell E. McCombs (\*1938) and Donald L. Shaw (\*1936) in 1972, and on the other hand the cultivation theory of Gerbner, already mentioned above. Publications with results of qualitative and quantitative research were the outcome. The focus of the research was on the quality of news within journalism, "*representation*" and the development of stereotypes, also in relationship with minorities.

Communication science in Nijmegen had during one decade a tradition in teaching and research in the area of media policy. From 1990 to 2000, the sociologist and broadcasting expert Kees van der Haak (1937-2015) was the first professor on this endowed chair ("*bijzondere leerstoel*"), followed by the sociologist and communication scientist with special expertise in the fields of media policy and journalism research Jo Bardoel (\*1951) from 2002 to 2010. From 2008 to the autumn of 2010, the historian and journalist Ben Knapen (\*1951) was teaching on media and quality of journalism. He decided to go into politics and was after his professorship during two years secretary of state ("*staatssecretaris*") for foreign affairs. The appointment of Bardoel in 2009 as a full professor of journalism and media at the University of Nijmegen led to the research project "*Journalism and media policies*" to follow up the research in the period of Renckstorf's professorship on media use and "*media-makers*". Through Bardoel education in journalism received new impulses. At the end of 2014 he said goodbye with a farewell lecture.

## 5. A conclusion with an open end to the future

The "*Media & Communicatie Instituut*" ("Institute for media and communication") was founded for the teaching of communication science in the academic year 2002-2003. This was followed by the introduction of the Bachelor-/Master-structure for communication science next year. The first one took over the organization of and responsibility for the program communication sciences from the Faculty of social and behavioral sciences. With these organizational changes, communication science could finally be considered as entirely independent within the faculty, in spite of only seven years after its formation, the institute for media and communication ceased to exist. The newly formed College "*Communication Science*" took over the responsibilities for the three-year Bachelor program per 1 February 2010. The master program in communication science with a duration of one year and the two-year Research Master program in communication science were offered by the "*Graduate School of Communication Science*" from then on.

As a conclusion concerning the development of communication science in the Netherlands in the last decades, one could unreservedly copy a citation and agree with the results of a bibliometric study about Denmark, Finland,

Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Instead of “Nordic”, one only has to read “Dutch”. The respective sentence is as follows: “The results of the present study indicate that communication research carried out by Nordic scholars is becoming increasingly international, and the past decade can be considered a golden one” (Fernández-Quijada, 2014, S. 147).

It cannot be denied that especially communication science at the University of Amsterdam significantly influenced the “golden decade”. Looking back on the fact that exactly this university was almost ignored in the allocation of the new study field thirty five years ago, one can be happy with the new energy after the *narrow escape*. Luckily, there is no monopoly position of Amsterdam, and communication science is developing at other Dutch universities in a great diversity. The questions “Where do we stand today? Where do we want to be” are still current and the necessary elements for the ongoing identity debate (Schulz et al., 2009). Apart from the relationship of communication science to other disciplines, factors have to be identified and discussed that helped paradigms to achieve a breakthrough, to establish schools and to promote the building of myths, or conversely hindered their establishment.

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