

TIJDSCHRIFT VOOR
COMMUNICATIE
wetenschap

**Communication Science
in the Low Countries**

Special Issue

*An overview of communication science research
in the Netherlands and Flanders*

Edited by

Jan Kleinnijenhuis, Frieda Saeyns & Coen van der Linden

JAARGANG 27 NUMMER 3/4 1999



BOHN STAFLEU VAN LOGHUM

Tijdschrift voor Communicatiewetenschap richt zich op het signaleren en registreren van ontwikkelingen binnen de Communicatiewetenschap en haar verwante wetenschapsgebieden in Nederland en Vlaanderen. Als zodanig biedt het tijdschrift een platform voor degenen die in onderzoek of beschouwing belangwekkende informatie willen publiceren over het wetenschapsgebied om een bijdrage te leveren aan discussie binnen en ontwikkeling van de Communicatiewetenschap.

Verschijnt vier keer per jaar, in maart, juni, september en december.

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Abonnementenadministratie

Samsom/afdeling klantenservice/Postbus 4/2400 MA Alphen aan den Rijn/tel. (0172) 46 68 47.

Voor België: Kluwer Editorial/Kouterveld 2/1831 Diegem/tel. (02) 719 16 03/fax (02) 719 15 19.

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Abonnementsprijs: Voor particulieren f 169,-/Bfr. 3995; voor instellingen f 269,-; voor studenten f 89,-; los nummer f 42,50/Bfr. 995.

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Op iedere inzending van een bijdrage of informatie zijn van toepassing de Standaard-publicatievoorwaarden van Wolters Kluwer Nederland BV, gedeponeerd ter griffie van de arrondissementsrechtbank te Amsterdam onder nr. 126/1998; een kopie kan kosteloos bij de uitgever worden opgevraagd.

Lay-out

Green Light/Ineke de Groen

ISSN 1384-6930

Nederlands
uitgeversverbond
Groep vaktijdschriften

Jan Kleinnijenhuis & Frieda Saeys

Overview of communication science research in the Netherlands and Flanders

The fastest growing subject in the social sciences over the last fifteen years, in both the Netherlands, Belgium and beyond, has been communication science. In terms of the number of students, it has become the largest social science subject at many universities.

Communication scientists study salient characteristics of the society which rose from the ashes of the economic crisis at the beginning of the 1980's, usually referred to as the information, communication and network society. The fax, the mobile telephone, the PC and the Internet have vastly increased the density of the world-wide information and communications network. These new opportunities have brought about a revolution. Hierarchical organisations are changing into network organisations, within which co-ordination is achieved using transparent intranet databases and anarchic ad hoc contact by e-mail, telephone and mobile phone. Personal contact within our own physical environment is frequently interrupted by or interspersed with external contacts via the mobile phone, radio, television, e-mail, and reading material of all kinds. Government bodies, pressure groups and political actors, which traditionally derived their power from exclusive mutual access, are being turned into points in a network within the information and communication society. However, alongside such developments, classical and traditional media continue to fulfil important societal functions.

This overview edition provides an inventory of the academic progress in this fascinating field of study. We asked one representative of communication science departments from each university to write a summary of the recent academic progress made at their own institution. The articles in this overview edition cover scientific results from the *Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam* (EUR), *Katholieke Universiteit Brussel* (KUB), *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* (KUL), *Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen* (KUN), *Landbouwniversiteit Wageningen* (LUW), *Universiteit Gent* (RUG), *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam* (VUA), *Vrije Universiteit Brussel* (VUB), *Universiteit van Amsterdam* (UvA) and *Universiteit Twente* (UT). Unfortunately not all the universities are represented. Research at the *Universiteit van Utrecht*, *Universiteit van Leiden* (main subject Child and Media) and *Universitaire Instellingen Antwerpen* (focus on teaching professional

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communication) could not be included in this volume. It should be pointed out that this inventory only deals with research, and does not necessarily imply that the same emphases, priorities or gaps are present in the subjects taught to students. To an even greater extent than their Dutch counterparts, the academic staff in Flanders are heavily burdened with teaching tasks and are therefore forced to make choices in the field of research.

The contributions in this edition demonstrate that significant progress has been made at the various universities in a range of areas, thereby entirely justifying the publication of this special edition to gain a new general perspective on the current state of affairs. Although there are all kinds of connections between research activities at the various universities, it is easy to lose sight of these if one focuses on the way in which each institution describes its main subjects. Each university combines research themes in its own way, which means that it is not easy to arrive at a comparative overview of the wide-ranging field of research in communication science in the Netherlands and Flanders. The reader of this special edition is strongly advised to put the labels of the research themes of the individual universities into an overarching perspective. In order to facilitate comparisons between research activities at various universities, this introduction makes an inventory of current research at a less abstract level than in the individual contributions to this edition. This introduction only deals with *areas* of research, however. Readers are referred to the separate contributions for the academic *progress* made within each area.

Paradigmatic developments

The opposition between neo-positivist, neo-Marxist and interpretivist research from the 1970s no longer exists, even though traces of a neo-Marxist legacy can be found, amongst others, in the contribution from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. During the eighties new paradigms based on the work of Foucault (structuralism) and Stuart Hall (cultural studies) enjoyed popularity. In the nineties these old oppositions reduced to a distinction between mainstream research, which is not based on an explicit paradigm, and the interpretivist-culturalist approach (most notably the University of Nijmegen, Wageningen Agricultural University, the University of Groningen and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel) in which the paradigmatic principles are explicitly expressed. At least three interpretations of the interpretivist-culturalist approach can be distinguished:

- a change from an instrumentalist top-down vision of communication to a bottom-up, receiver-oriented interactive vision of communication;
- a change from pure quantitative to more qualitative research;
- a genuine interest in popular culture.

From 'the study of the press' to 'communication science'

As radio and television came of age, the term 'study of the press' ('perswetenschap') came to be replaced by the term 'communication science'. In the Netherlands and Flanders the label "media studies" is not a label of an academic discipline, but a label of the interpretivist-culturalist approach to media reception. More recently, the scope of this discipline has been extended still further to incorporate the study of new media. Table 1 presents an overview of the specialists at each university who focus on specific media. A disclaimer is in place here. The function of the tables is merely to enable comparisons between communication research at different universities. We do not pretend that researchers included (often) in the tables are the most productive authors. Especially junior researchers are underrepresented.

TABLE 1 **Media related research**

	<i>KUL</i>	<i>KUN</i>	<i>VUA</i>	<i>VUB</i>	<i>UvA</i>	<i>RUG</i>	<i>UT</i>	<i>Others</i>
Newspapers			Klein-nijenhuis	Witte Verstraeten	Hemels Van Neerven Van Cuilenburg	De Bens	Gutteling	
Radio/TV	V.d. Bulck	Renckstorf Van Snippenburg Van der Haak	Oegema	Burgelman	Wieten Vochteloo Emons	De Bens Saeys Coppens	Heuvelman	
Film, music	De Meyer					Biltereyst		
Regional media		Hollander Jankowski Hageman			Bakker	Raeymaeckers		
New Media	Hesling De Grooff	Jankowski		Verhoest	Van den Hooff Postman Frissen	De Smaele De Bens	Van der Geest De Jong	Universiteit Utrecht Van Dijk, Bouwman

It is clear from Table 1 that only research departments with large numbers of students can still permit themselves the luxury of employing specialists in the field of specific media. Keeping abreast of the rapid developments in the new media represents a formidable challenge, even to the larger departments.

Production, distribution, and reception of symbolic messages at macro-level

The most important development within communication science is probably the shift in focus away from the study of separate media. Modern communication science focuses on the underlying communication *processes*, which take place through the media. The current, greatly expanded description of the subject of communication science as the production, distribution and reception of symbolic

messages at the macro-level (society), the meso-level (organisations) and the interpersonal level is very much in keeping with this shift. Table 2 presents an overview of the aspects of the social communication processes at the macro-level in which researchers at each university are engaged.

TABLE 2 **Communication processes at the macro-level (societal level)**

	KUB	KUL	KUN	VUA	VUB	UvA	RUG	UT
<i>Production and distribution</i>								
National Communication (technology) Policy	Servaes	Van Poecke			Witte Burgelman Pauwels Verhoest	V. Cuilenburg Slaa Verhoest	Voorhoof De Bens	
International Comparison	Servaes Lie				Burgelman Thevissen	Hamelink Brants	De Bens Biltereyst Saeys Voorhoof	Gutteling
<i>Symbolic messages</i>								
radio and tv-programming			Van der Haak		Verstraeten	Bardoel	De Bens	
Informational content; News selection		Roe	d'Haenens Beentjes Van der Rijt	Kleinnijenhuis Oegema	Goyvaerts	Schönbach Semetko Neijens De Ridder Valkenburg Brants Van Praag Van Zoonen	Saeys Coppens	
<i>Reception and effects/consequences</i>								
media- and information consumption	Servaes	V.d. Bulck Roe	Renckstorf Van Snippenburg Hendriks Vettehen			Schönbach Neijens Van Zoonen	Biltereyst Voorhoof	Heuvelman
Effects, consequences, Impact		V.d. Bulck Roe Minnebo Eggermont	Beentjes	Kleinnijenhuis Oegema Caljé		Schönbach Semetko De Ridder Valkenburg	Biltereyst De Bens	Gutteling Kutt-schreuter

Table 2 reveals that only the larger universities study all aspects of communication processes. At the *University of Nijmegen* and the *Vrije Universiteit* in Amsterdam, little emphasis is placed on the social production of communication, while at the *Vrije Universiteit Brussel*, the independent emphasis on the reception of communication is limited.

Production, distribution and reception of symbolic messages at the meso-level and the micro-level (organisational and interpersonal communication)

Recent developments in information and communication technology have led to the insight that complex organisations (e.g. companies, government bodies) are the most important agents within the area of communication processes. The interactive databases,

TABLE 3 **Communication processes at organisational level**

	EUR	KUL	KUN	LUW	VUA	UvA	VUB	RUG	UT
<i>Production and distribution</i>									
Communication management corporate communication	Van Riel Voorschuur	Fauconnier Vloeberghs		Engel	Van Ruler	Scholten	Thevissen	Vyncke	Seydel Elving Woudstra van Gemert
Communication between organisations (with stakeholders)	Van Riel Van den Bosch	Fauconnier		Van Woerkum Te Molder	Kenis Den Hond				
Internal communication	Van Reekom	Vloeberghs			Van Ruler	De Ridder Van den Hooff Postmes			Seydel Elving, Woudstra van Gemert
<i>Symbolic messages</i>									
paid publicity						Franzen Neijens Smit	Thevissen	Vyncke	Schellens, De Jong, v.d. Geest
free publicity	Van Raay e.a. Stroeker			Bouwman	Klein- nijenhuis Oegema				Steehouder, Gutteling, Heuvelman
"interactive" Interpersonal communication negotiations				Te Molder Van Woerkum	Pröpper				
<i>Reception and effects/consequences</i>									
Effects marketing communication	Van Raay e.a.		Marsman			Franzen Neijens Smit	Thevissen Cierkowski	Vyncke Verleye	Boer
Effects external "corporate" communication	Van Riel Stroeker Maalman	Roe		Aarts	Klein- nijenhuis Oegema		Thevissen		De Jong v.d. Geest Schellens Steehouder Gutteling Heuvelman
Effects internal communication						De Ridder Postmes			Seydel Elving Woudstra van Gemert

intranet facilities, the fax and the telephone now available to businesses with many international branches, have given rise to new forms of both co-operation and competition between organisations as well as to new forms of both co-ordination and internal competition between units of every single organisation. To an increasing extent, economic progress has come to depend on effective marketing communication, effective internal communication and effective communication within the stakeholders' policy network. Table 3 presents the research subjects being undertaken in the field of organisational communication at each university.

A comparison of Tables 2 and 3 reveals that organisational communication is pushed forward by the Erasmus University in Rotterdam (EUR), the Wageningen Agricultural University (LUW) and the University of Twente (UT) as their primary research area. Among the universities with large numbers of students – and large numbers of researchers – the *University of Nijmegen* and the *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* devote relatively few resources to this new field of study. Nevertheless the *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* is known as a pioneer in the field of organisational communication due to professor Fauconnier.

Nowhere does communication at the micro-level form a central focus of research.

Communication with special target groups

The growth of communication science has led to a situation where the integration of the production, distribution and reception effects often take place separately for each specialist subject. The main areas of focus in this respect are research into communication with women, minorities, youth and health care patients (see Table 4).

TABLE 4 Communication with target groups

	<i>KUL</i>	<i>KUN</i>	<i>VUA</i>	<i>VUB</i>	<i>UvA</i>	<i>RUG</i>	<i>UT</i>	<i>Others</i>
Sexes			Van Ruler		Van Zoonen Hermes	Saeyns		
Children and youth	Roe Muys	Beentjes			Valkenburg Vyncke	De Bens Voorhoof Raeymaeckers		RU Leiden: Van der Voort e.a.
Ethnic minorities		d'Haenens		Schelfhout Verstraeten	Pinto	Saeyns Voorhoof		UvA: T.A. van Dijk
Health care						Saeyns Vyncke	Seydel Boer Elving Taal Drossaert	EUR: Buunk e.a. RU Limburg Kok Damoiseaux

Table 4 shows that the integration of insights at the level of specific target groups is especially prominent at the University of Nijmegen, the University of Amsterdam and Ghent University. Health care communication is a core subject at the University of Twente.

Methodological progress

If the social sciences are to offer more than simply professional knowledge, then conclusions must be based on research methods and techniques which are not (or not yet) widely known in the professions. In recent decades little research time has been devoted to the development of new methods and techniques in the field of communication science. However, there are exceptions to this rule. These include the development, often qualitative in nature, of methods for content analysis and audience surveys at the University of Nijmegen (e.g. Wester, Hendriks Vettehen), the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Roe, Van den Bulck), the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam (Kleinnijenhuis, Oegema) and the University of Amsterdam (De Ridder, Neijens, Schönbach). In the field of organisational communication, examples are its integration with social-scientific network analysis (Kenis, Vrije Universiteit; Van Rekom, Erasmus University Rotterdam), an efficient method to chart internal communication (De Ridder and Seisveld, University of Amsterdam) and a new method to identify the identity of organisations (Van Rekom, Erasmus University Rotterdam).

Conclusion

As this introduction exemplifies, communication science has become a scientific discipline with many wide-ranging branches, although only a few strong lines in various fields of communication science have come to the fore here. The aim of this overview edition is to provide a summary of the *progress* made up to this point for each field of study. The scope of this introduction is such that only the *fields of study* could be set out. In our capacity as compilers, we wish our readers a great deal of pleasure in reading this volume of articles on the scientific *progress* within these fields of communication science at universities in the Netherlands and Flanders.

Overzicht van communicatiewetenschappelijk onderzoek in Nederland en Vlaanderen¹

Inleiding

De snelst groeiende sociaal-wetenschappelijke studierichting van de afgelopen vijftien jaar is de communicatiewetenschap, niet alleen hier te lande, maar ook internationaal. In termen van aantallen studenten is het aan veel universiteiten de grootste sociale wetenschap geworden. Het is de wetenschap van de maatschappij die verrees uit de economische crisis van het begin van de jaren tachtig, doorgaans aangeduid als de informatie-, communicatie- of netwerkmaatschappij. De fax, de draagbare telefoon, de PC en het Internet hebben de dichtheid van het mondiale informatie- en communicatienetwerk enorm verhoogd. De nieuwe mogelijkheden hebben een revolutie teweeggebracht. Intermenselijke contacten binnen onze eigen fysieke omgeving worden frequent onderbroken door, of vermengd met externe contacten, via portofoon, radio, televisie, e-mail en lectuur van allerhande soort. Hiërarchische organisaties veranderen in netwerkorganisaties, waarbinnen coördinatie bereikt wordt met behulp van transparante intranet-databases en anarchistische ad hoc contacten via e-mail en (draagbare) telefoon. Overheidsinstanties, politieke bewegingen en politieke besluitvormingsorganen, die traditioneel hun macht ontleenden aan exclusieve toegang tot elkaar, worden in de informatie- en communicatiemaatschappij punten in het netwerk. Daarnaast echter blijven ook de klassieke, traditionele media een belangrijke maatschappelijke rol vervullen.

In dit overzichtsnummer wordt de wetenschappelijke voortgang op dit boeiende wetenschapsgebied geïnventariseerd. Daartoe is per instelling voor communicatiewetenschappelijk onderzoek aan één vertegenwoordiger gevraagd een overzicht van de recente wetenschappelijke vooruitgang aan de eigen universiteit te schrijven. Dit verzoek resulteerde in onderzoeksoverzichten van de navolgende instellingen: de Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam (EUR), de Katholieke Universiteit Brussel (KUB), de Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KUL), de Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen (KUN), de Landbouwuniversiteit Wageningen (LUW), de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VUA), de Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), de Universiteit Gent (RUG), de Universiteit van Amsterdam (UvA) en de Universiteit Twente (UT). Helaas ontbreken in deze bundel door uiteenlopende

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oorzaken niettemin de bijdragen van de Universiteit Utrecht (vacante hoogleraarpost), de Universiteit Leiden (afstudeerrichting Kind en Media) en de universitaire instellingen Antwerpen (vooral onderwijsgericht).

De bijdragen aan dit nummer laten zien dat aan verschillende universiteiten op verschillende terreinen inderdaad grote voortgang geboekt is, zodat dit themanummer alleszins gerechtvaardigd is om het overzicht te herwinnen. Hoewel tussen het onderzoek dat aan verschillende universiteiten geschiedt allerlei dwarsverbanden bestaan, kan men deze gemakkelijk uit het oog verliezen als men afgaat op de formulering van overkoepelende thema's per universiteit. Elke universiteit kiest een eigen indeling van onderzoek, waardoor niet altijd meteen duidelijk wordt welk deel van het brede communicatiewetenschappelijke terrein door elk van de centra wordt gedekt. Bovendien moet er op gewezen worden dat deze inventaris enkel betrekking heeft op het onderzoek, wat niet noodzakelijk betekent dat ook in het onderwijs dezelfde accenten, prioriteiten of leemtes terug te vinden zijn. Meer nog dan in Nederland is in Vlaanderen de academische staf zeer zwaar belast met onderwijstaken, zodat er noodgedwongen keuzes moeten worden gemaakt op het gebied van het onderzoek.

De lezer van dit themanummer moet de indelingen van onderzoek van de afzonderlijke universiteiten uitdrukkelijk relativiseren. Om een vergelijking mogelijk te maken tussen onderzoek aan verschillende universiteiten, wordt in deze inleiding op een iets lager abstractieniveau dan in de afzonderlijke bijdragen aan dit nummer het huidige universitaire onderzoek in Nederland en Vlaanderen geïnventariseerd. *Slechts aandachtsvelden van onderzoek passeren de revue, voor de wetenschappelijke vooruitgang per aandachtsveld moet worden verwezen naar de bijdragen zelf.*

Paradigmatische ontwikkelingen

De tegenstelling tussen neopositivistisch, neomarxistisch en interpretatief onderzoek uit de jaren zeventig bestaat niet meer, ook al treft men in de bijdrage van de VU Brussel nog wel een enkele formulering aan die duidt op een neomarxistisch verleden. Via onder meer Foucault (structuralisme) en Stuart Hall (Cultural Studies) is de oude tegenstelling verbleekt tot een tegenstelling tussen mainstreamonderzoek, dat zich niet op een paradigma beroept en een interpretatieve-culturalistische benadering (vooral KU Nijmegen, LU Wageningen, RU Gent, VU Brussel) waarin paradigmatische uitgangspunten wel expliciet worden genoemd. De uitwerking van de interpretatieve-culturalistische benadering wordt in drie richtingen gezocht:

- omslag van een instrumentalistische top-down visie op communicatie naar een bottom-up, ontvangersgecentreerde interactieve visie op communicatie;

- omslag van meer kwantitatief getint onderzoek naar meer kwalitatief onderzoek;
- inhoudelijke belangstelling voor populaire cultuur.

Van perswetenschap naar mediastudies

De term 'perswetenschap' is met de volwassenwording van radio en TV allengs allerwegen vervangen door de term 'communicatiewetenschap'. Intussen is het studieterrein verder verbreed met de bestudering van nieuwere media. In tabel 1 wordt een overzicht per universiteit gegeven van 'specialisten' per universiteit die zich op bepaalde media concentreren. Opgemerkt zij dat dit soort overzicht slechts dient om zwaartepunten van onderzoek aan verschillende universiteiten te kunnen vergelijken. Het is niet zo dat onderzoekers die (vaak) genoemd worden per definitie de meest productieve wetenschappers zijn. Vooral junioronderzoekers zijn in de tabellen ondervertegenwoordigd.

TABEL 1 **Onderzoek naar specifieke media**

	<i>KUL</i>	<i>KUN</i>	<i>VUA</i>	<i>VUB</i>	<i>UvA</i>	<i>RUG</i>	<i>UT</i>	<i>Overige</i>
Drukpers			Klein-nijenhuis	Witte Verstraeten	Hemels Van Neerven Van Cuilenburg	De Bens	Gutteling	
Radio/TV	V.d. Bulck	Renckstorf Van Snippenburg Van der Haak	Oegema	Burgelman	Wieten Vochteloo Emons	De Bens Saeyls Coppens	Heuvelman	
Film/muziek	De Meyer					Biltreyest		
Regionale media		Hollander Jankowski Hageman			Bakker	Raeymaeckers		
Nieuwe media	Hesling De Grooff	Jankowski		Verhoest	Van den Hooff Postman Frissen	De Smaele De Bens	Van der Geest Van Dijk	Universiteit Utrecht Van Dijk, Bouwman

Uit tabel 1 komt duidelijk naar voren dat alleen onderzoeksafdelingen die gekoppeld zijn aan studierichtingen met veel studenten het zich nog kunnen veroorloven om specialisten op het gebied van specifieke media in huis te hebben. Zelfs deze universiteiten lijken de ontwikkelingen op het terrein van nieuwe media niet allemaal te kunnen bijhouden.

Productie, distributie en receptie van symbolische boodschappen op macroniveau

De belangrijkste ontwikkeling binnen de communicatiewetenschap is wellicht dat de aandacht van de studie van afzonderlijke media verschoven is naar aandacht voor de achterliggende communi-

catieprocessen via de media. De intussen wijd verbreide omschrijving van het object van de communicatiewetenschap als de productie, distributie en receptie van symbolische boodschappen op macroniveau (maatschappij), mesoniveau (organisaties) en interpersoonlijk niveau sluit daarbij aan.

TABEL 2 **Communicatieprocessen op macroniveau**

	KUB	KUL	KUN	VUA	VUB	UvA	RUG	UT
<i>Productie en distributie</i>								
Nationaal communicatie (technologie) beleid	Servaes	Van Poecke			Witte Burgelman Pauwels Verhoest	V. Cuilenburg Slaa Verhoest	Voorhoof De Bens	
Internationale vergelijking	Servaes Lie				Burgelman Thevissen	Hamelink Brants	De Bens Biltereyst Saey's Voorhoof	Gutteling
<i>Symbolische boodschappen</i>								
keuze info-soorten programma-aanbod			Van der Haak		Verstraeten	Bardoel	De Bens	
Informatie-inhoud en nieuwsselectie		Roe	d'Haenens Beentjes Van der Rijt	Kleinnijenhuis Oegema	Goyvaerts	Schönbach Semetko Neijens De Ridder Valkenburg Brants Van Praag Van Zoonen	Saey's Coppens	
<i>Receptie en effecten/gevolgen</i>								
media- en info-consumptie	Servaes	V.d. Bulck Roe	Renckstorf Van Snippenburg Hendriks Vettehen			Schönbach Neijens Van Zoonen	Biltereyst Voorhoof	Heuvelman
effecten, gevolgen		V.d. Bulck Roe Minnebo Eggermont	Beentjes	Kleinnijenhuis Oegema Caljé		Schönbach Semetko De Ridder Valkenburg	Biltereyst De Bens	Gutteling Kutt-schreuter

In tabel 2 wordt voor het macroniveau per universiteit weergegeven welke onderzoekers zich met name met welke onderdelen van maatschappelijke communicatieprocessen bezighouden. Uit tabel 2 komt wederom naar voren dat alleen de grotere universiteiten alle fasen van maatschappelijke communicatieprocessen bestuderen. Bij de KU Nijmegen en de VU Amsterdam is er weinig aandacht voor de maatschappelijke productie van communicatie, terwijl aan de VU Brussel de zelfstandige aandacht voor de receptie-zijde van communicatie gering is.

Productie, distributie en receptie van symbolische boodschappen op het meso- en microniveau (organisationele en interpersoonlijke communicatie)

Recente ontwikkelingen op het terrein van de informatie – en communicatietechnologie hebben geleid tot het inzicht dat complexe organisaties (b.v. bedrijven, overheidsinstanties) de belangrijkste

TABEL 3 **Communicatieprocessen op het niveau van organisaties**

	EUR	KUL	KUN	LUW	VUA	UvA	VUB	RUG	UT
<i>Productie- en distributie</i>									
Communicatie management corporate communication	Van Riel Voorschuur	Fauconnier Vloeberghs		Engel	Van Ruler	Scholten	Thevissen	Vyncke	Seydel Elving Woudstra van Gemert
communicatie tussen organisaties (met stakeholders)	Van Riel Van den Bosch	Fauconnier		Van Woerkum Te Molder	Kenis Den Hond				
interne communicatie	Van Reekom	Vloeberghs			Van Ruler	De Ridder Van den Hooff Postmes			Seydel Elving, Woudstra van Gemert
<i>Symbolische boodschappen</i>									
paid publicity						Franzen Neijens Smit	Thevissen	Vyncke	Schellens, De Jong, v.d. Geest
free publicity	Van Raay e.a. Stroeker			Bouwman	Klein-nijenhuis Oegema				Steehouder, Gutteling, Heuvelman
inter-persoonlijke communicatie onderhandelingen				Te Molder Van Woerkum	Pröpper				
<i>Receptie en effecten/gevolgen</i>									
effecten marketing-communicatie	Van Raay e.a.		Marsman			Franzen Neijens Smit	Thevissen Cierkowski	Vyncke Verleye	Boer
effecten overige externe communicatie	Van Riel Stroeker Maalman	Roe		Aarts	Klein-nijenhuis Oegema		Thevissen		De Jong v.d. Geest Schellens Steehouder Gutteling Heuvelman
effecten interne communicatie						De Ridder Postmes			Seydel Elving Woudstra van Gemert

spelers zijn binnen communicatieprocessen. Zo zorgen binnen internationaal vertakte bedrijven interactieve databases, intranet-faciliteiten, de fax en de telefoon voor nieuwe vormen van samenwerking of concurrentie tussen organisaties en voor nieuwe vormen van coördinatie of stammenstrijd binnen organisaties. In toenemende mate is economische vooruitgang afhankelijk geworden van effectieve marketingcommunicatie, effectieve interne communicatie en effectieve communicatie binnen het beleidsnetwerk van 'stakeholders'. In tabel 3 wordt per universiteit weergegeven wat op het punt van de organisationele communicatie aan onderzoek verricht wordt.

Bij de universiteiten met grotere studentenaantallen – en veel onderzoekers – blijken de Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen en de Katholieke Universiteit Leuven verhoudingsgewijs weinig aandacht aan dit nieuwe studierein te besteden – hoewel de KU Leuven met prof. Fauconnier als pionier op het pad van de organisationele communicatie kan gelden. Uit een vergelijking tussen de tabellen 2 en 3 blijkt dat organisationele communicatie aan de Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, aan de Landbouwniversiteit Wageningen en aan de Universiteit Twente zelfs meer gewicht krijgt toebedeeld dan communicatie op macroniveau. Communicatie op microniveau vormt nergens een speerpunt voor onderzoek.

Communicatie met speciale doelgroepen

De groei van de communicatiewetenschap heeft ertoe geleid dat de integratie van productie-, distributie, en receptie-effecten thans veelal plaats vindt per inhoudelijk specialisme. Met name het onderzoek naar communicatie met vrouwen, minderheden, de jeugd en patiënten loopt daarbij voorop (zie tabel 4).

TABEL 4 **Communicatie met doelgroepen**

	KUL	KUN	VUA	VUB	UvA	RUG	UT	Overige
Sexen			Van Ruler		Van Zoonen Hermes	Saeyns		
Kinderen en jeugd	Roe Muys	Beentjes			Valkenburg Vyncke	De Bens Raeymaekers Voorhoof		RU Leiden: Van der Voort e.a.
Minderheden		d'Haenens		Schelfhout Verstraeten	Pinto	Saeyns Voorhoof		UvA: T.A. van Dijk
Doelgroepen Gezondheidszorg						Saeyns Vyncke	Seydel Boer Elving Taal Drossaert	EUR: Buunk e.a. RU Limburg Kok Damoiseaux

In tabel 4 blijkt dat integratie van inzichten per doelgroep vooral prominent is aan de KU Nijmegen, de UvA en de RU Gent. Gezondheidsvoorlichting is een kernthema aan de Universiteit Twente.

Methodologische vooruitgang

Wil sociale wetenschap meer bieden dan praktijkkennis, dan moeten uitspraken gebaseerd zijn op methoden en technieken van onderzoek die in de praktijk (nog) niet gangbaar zijn. In de afgelopen decennia is er bijzonder weinig onderzoekstijd overgebleven om nieuwe communicatiewetenschappelijke methoden en technieken te ontwikkelen, maar er zijn uitzonderingen. Onder andere valt te denken aan de ontwikkeling van (veelal kwalitatieve) methoden van inhoudsanalyse en publieksonderzoek aan de KU Nijmegen (Wester, Hendriks Vettehen), aan de VU Amsterdam (Kleinnijenhuis en Oegema), aan de UvA (De Ridder, Neijens, Schönbach, en aan de KU Leuven (Roe, Van den Bulck). Op het terrein van de organisationele communicatie kan gedacht worden aan de integratie met sociaal-wetenschappelijke netwerkanalyse (Kenis, VU; Van Rekom, EUR) en aan onderzoekmethoden om de interne communicatie (De Ridder, Seisveld, UvA) en de identiteit van organisaties (Van Rekom, EUR) in kaart te brengen.

Tot slot

De communicatiewetenschap is een wijdvertakte wetenschap geworden, zo moge blijken uit deze inleiding, waarvan slechts enkele en dan nog onvolmaakte krachtlijnen naar voren werden gebracht. Dit overzichtsnummer moge dienen om de wetenschappelijke vooruitgang per aandachtsveld te overzien. In deze inleiding konden slechts de aandachtsvelden genoemd worden. Als samenstellers wensen wij de lezers leesgenoegen toe bij het verkrijgen van een beeld van de wetenschappelijke vooruitgang binnen de communicatiewetenschap aan Nederlandse en Vlaamse universiteiten.

1. De bijdragen in dit themanummer zijn in het Engels, opdat buitenlandse geïnteresseerden kennis kunnen nemen van de 'State of the Art' van het communicatieonderzoek in Nederland en Vlaanderen. Vanwege de omvang is dit themanummer tevens een dubbelnummer.

Jan van Cuilenburg

From broadening the scope towards focusing attention again

Current research in communications at the University of Amsterdam

Introduction

The *Department of Communication* at the *University of Amsterdam (UvA)* is located within the *Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences*. The study of media has been part of the curriculum of the University since the mid 1930s and the first Chair was established in 1948. The Department has (1998) a combined faculty and staff of 45 f.t.e., including five Professors and five Senior Associate Professors. The Department counts chairs for general communication science, audience and public opinion research, communications policy, history of communication, international communication, communication and organisation and communication campaigns. In addition to these 'regular' chairs the Department has special, sponsored chairs ('bijzondere leerstoelen') for commercial communication, economics of the newspaper press, pop music, intercultural communication, child and media research, and strategic communication (public relations).¹

There are around 1,500 students (1998) majoring in the *Communication Science* program, which extends over a period of four years and leads to the Degree of *Doctorandus* (approximately MA equivalent). The yearly influx of freshmen amounts to 400 students. The number of students in the Department has risen dramatically over the last ten years. In 1985, only 155 students were majoring in communication. Sixty percent of the students at present are female.

Broadening the scope

Basic Philosophy of the UvA Department of Communication

As in the United States and elsewhere in Europe, in the Netherlands communication science as a discipline of its own has its origin in political science, sociology and social psychology on the other hand. From social psychology communication science inherited its great interest in persuasive communication and the effects of mass media. Consequently, 'communication' is often defined as transmission and reception of messages. The transmission model of communication is based on the well-known Lasswell formula (1948) '*Who Says What In Which Channel To Whom With What Effect?*' Also political science strongly influenced the communication science agenda. It made e.g. the political functions of journalism and media in democracies a core issue of the discipline.

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In the early 90s, the UvA Department of Communication has defined its object of teaching and research along the following demarcation line: Communication Science studies the social production, distribution and reception of symbolic messages. This particularly broad definition is inspired by what may be called a 'broadening of scope of the discipline'. When communication scientists in the past looked at national communications systems, their main interest were mass media and their functions for society; a quick view in one of the many handbooks on communication will corroborate this proposition. Ever more, however, at the University of Amsterdam the traditional restriction in attention to mass media was regarded as obsolete: mass media are *demassifying* and many forms of new media and high-tech information technology appear and get their rightful place in the communication market. That's why the Department of Communication has taken as its basic philosophy a *double broadening of scope*. On the one hand a broadening as to communication channels and information carriers, like audiotex, E-mail, web-communication and other new (telematic) media. On the other hand, the Department opted for a broadening of scope as to audiences. Not only does the Amsterdam Department focus on mass audiences in the consumer market, but also attention is paid to business communication and information provision for the professional market. It is the Amsterdam position that communication science as a discipline should *not* confine itself to *public* communication to *general* audiences. The scope of the discipline should be broadened to include information for the business market next to the consumer market and also to incorporate non-public, organisational communication alongside public mass communication. So the object of communication science would be as broad as the production, distribution and reception of symbolic messages, regardless of their form, carrier, communication channel and target group.

Teaching program

This basic philosophy is reflected in the teaching program where next to more traditional topics like the social, cultural and political functions of mass media, much time and energy are spent on telecommunications, telematics, communications economy and informatics. It is the program's intention to train students for all kinds of jobs in communications, both in the consumer market and the business market. Notably the teaching program aims at three different types of academic professional branches, i.e. (1) *communication research* (media, audience, public opinion and marketing research), (2) *communication consultancy* (media policy consultancy, telecommunications consultancy, PR and commercial communication, consultancy for intra-organisational communication) and (3) *communication management* (publishing, audio-visual program production, communications logistics). The Department does not lecture in journalism and publicity. That does, however, not alter the fact that a significant number of students after graduation find jobs in these branches of communication.

The 1993 new research program

In the late 80s, communication research at the University of Amsterdam was mostly oriented on the newspaper press and television and on themes from mass psychology. Research was rather fragmented, that is, projects were designed rather coincidentally and taken together didn't show much coherence. Systematic planning, steering and quality monitoring and feedback of research were lacking. As the department grew in staff numbers, however, the need for planning and structuring research also grew. In 1993 the Department adopted a new four-year research program, in which most of the research was concentrated. This program reflected the broad definition of communication science the Department opted for several years before. The new research program addressed the political and social functions of public communication to general audiences. However, it also paid much effort and attention to communications supply for the business market and to economic questions on public and non-public information provision. Within the program, two main lines of research were defined: *Communication, Organisation and Policy (COP)* and *Media, Culture, Politics and Public (MCP)*. The COP program covered a range of projects, classified under the headings: the professional information market; the public information market; communications policy. The MCP program covered projects under the headings: media and identity; media and politics; media use in daily life; persuasive communication; media history.

The 1993 research program has been the Department's research guideline until autumn 1997. In 1997, the *Amsterdam School of Communications Research ASCoR* was established and new research profiles for the Department were defined. To get a clear picture of *ASCoR*'s current research policy and agenda, it makes sense to first describe (Sections 3 and 4) the design and results of the two research lines of the 1993 program, that laid the basis for *ASCoR*'s current research.

The Communication, Organisation and Policy (COP) program (until 1997)

COP research question

This program was concerned with studying the structure of information provision in the national society, particularly for business and business-like applications, and the communications policies as pursued by national and international actors. The main research questions in the COP program were as follows:

- A. What consequences result from developments in society's information and communication infrastructure and services, for public and organisational knowledge and decision-making, and for the economic production of goods and services?

B. What is the influence, on each of these, of communications policy and of the underlying policy theories as deployed by national and international actors (private organisational as well as governmental)?

Two themes were distinguished in this program, respectively: (A) communications infrastructure and services, and (B) communications policy, relating to media, telecommunications and information provision. In respect of both themes, a distinction was made according to whether research was directed towards the private consumer market or the business market. Although there was some overlap, the former mainly related to newspapers, broadcasting and magazines, the latter to videotext, databanks, audiotex, EDI, etc. Attention to the consumer market raised questions concerning the public sphere and the role of citizens as well as consumers. In general, this meant that information and communication were viewed as end-products, while in the business market they were more likely to be considered as materials and means for economic production.

The objectives of the COP research program were similar to goals, which are being pursued in many other countries, since the same kinds of forces are at work and are operating across national frontiers. For this reason, a number of the projects were comparative or involved co-operation and exchange of results with colleagues abroad (e.g., *Euromedia Research Group* (1992)). The methods used were varied, but they principally involved organisational and national case studies, interviews with key persons (mainly of organisational actors and users of communications technology) and document analyses.

There are too many changing factors and contingent circumstances in the field to develop long-range, fundamental theory concerning communications policy. Nevertheless, a significant part of the research effort in the program has been directed towards developing a broad framework of analysis for communications policy and system changes, nationally and internationally. The paradigm deployed had both normative and empirical dimensions (McQuail, 1992; Van Cuilenburg & Slaa, 1993).

Consumer market

Under the heading '*Consumer market*', three main projects were conducted. First, a study into the news and information provision by regional and local newspapers (daily, weekly and free sheets). The research has developed and applied criteria for describing and evaluating the quantity and quality of news content about local political and economic events. Interviews, content analysis and observation have been employed as methods (results reported in Bakker, 1998, Ph.D. thesis). Second, a study into the broadcasting structure and programming quality in West Europe. The project has developed a theoretical framework within which organisational changes

in television since 1986 are related to developments in programming, currently with specific reference to the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (Vochteloo & Emons, 1995). Third, a study into the industrial dynamics of newspaper markets. This research project focused on strategic economic and social trends that are currently influencing the economic performance of the newspaper industry in the Netherlands and the United States (Hendriks, 1995; results also reported in Hendriks, 1998, Ph.D. thesis). The project demonstrated that the newspaper market is a saturated market. In the circulation market, newspapers have to compete with many other media for scarce time and attention of media consumers. In the advertising market newspapers have lost their lead to electronic media. Several options for strategic newspaper management to counter these negative trends are studied. A plea is made for process innovation in newspaper production and publishing, that is a plea for experimenting with new forms of journalism, new formats and new division of tasks between journalists, marketing people and publishers within the newspaper organisation.

Though not a formal part of the COP research program, worth mentioning here are also three books by Van Neerven on the economic and marketing foundations of newspaper publishing. These studies were written within the framework of the special chair of the economics of the newspaper press (Van Neerven, 1991, 1992, 1994). In these studies, Van Neerven develops a strategic framework for the marketing of newspapers, both on the circulation market and the advertising market. From many different angles, in his books Van Neerven stresses again and again that newspapers are not only a journalistic, cultural product, but also and economic good to be sold in a commercial environment.

Business market

In respect of the '*Business market*', several related inquiries were pursued:

A. How did telecommunications networks and services develop over the last decades, and what factors play a part in this?

Key concept in these studies is 'convergence', that is, the technological convergence between different information and communication technologies (computer and telecommunications) and blurring the boundaries between different telecommunication infrastructures and services (telephony, the *Internet*, broadcasting) (Slaa & Burgelman, 1994). Bouwman and Latzer (1994) demonstrated that the development of telecommunications services does not only depend on technological innovations and regulatory and political changes (liberalisation and harmonisation of infrastructures), but also on social factors, that is, on innovation in the field of user demand.

B. How should informational provision within organisations be structured in order to achieve maximum effectiveness?

Initially this project focused on possibilities to improve information systems and on developing tools to structure information. Research showed how computer supported content analysis methods may be used to acquire expert information from texts (newspaper articles, policy documents) in order to facilitate well-considered decision making (Ph.D. thesis De Ridder, 1994). Subsequently attention shifted to the quality of communication processes in organisations to pass on professional information. Quality of communication processes may be considered from different point of views (De Ridder & Seisveld 1996).

C. What factors influence the adoption and use of electronic information services in organisations and what are the consequences?

Based on several empirical case studies, Van den Hooff (Ph.D. thesis, 1997) demonstrated that the adoption, use and effects of electronic mail within organisations heavily depend on an organisational learning process. Van den Hooff predicts that together, technological development and organisational learning in the use of these technologies, will lead to an increase in the use of computer-mediated communication systems. Further results in this projects are to be reported in a Ph.D. thesis by Nouwens (fortcoming)?

D. What factors influence adoption by the general public of new information services, such as Videotex?

To answer this question, Bouwman and Christoffersen (eds., 1992) organised an international study on the failure of the Videotex information systems in several European countries and in the United States. The research team found that the Videotex failure has to be blamed to not understanding Videotex as an interlocked innovation, comprising not only innovation in the infrastructure (networks, hard- and software), but also innovation in the supply of services and the user demand. If one of these elements is insufficiently provided, then it becomes likely that the entire innovation chain brakes down and the introduction process will stop. This showed to be the case with Videotex.

Communications policy

In respect of communications policy, work has been continuing to develop a new framework for policy analysis and research that encompasses both traditional mass media on the one hand and new electronic services and telecommunications on the other hand, also spanning the public-private divide. Van Cuilenburg and Slaa (1993) argued that technology urges policy makers to abolish the traditional regulatory and policy separation between media and telecommu-

ications. Government media policies can currently no longer be exclusively guided by cultural values, as was the case with media policy, and telecommunications policy should also pursue objectives outside the technological and economic field. An integration of media and telecommunications policy is called for, leading to one national communications policy. In Van Cuilenburg and Verhoest (1998) this line of thought was elaborated into the direction of a general communications policy for access. Access communications policy aims at the greatest freedom of communication, for the greatest number of suppliers and users, and for that purpose is monitoring and correcting any situation in which control of access is subject to market failure. Empirical research applying this new framework was reported in Van Cuilenburg and Slaa, 1994 and 1995.

An ongoing project within the COP program has been concerned with analysing changes in West European media systems and national and European policy for electronic media, as part of a 17-nations study. The Amsterdam Department participated and is still participating in research conducted by an international network of scholars, working together for more than fifteen years now in the *Euromedia Research Group*. The activities of this group have resulted in several publications on Western European media and media policy (McQuail, 1991; Euromedia Research Group, 1992; Siune & Truetzschler, 1992; Brants *et al*, 1992a,b). The research group has been focusing its attention on the dynamics of European media structures in the 80s and 90s. The groups indicates as the main relevant change the breakdown of the monopolistic public service model in broadcasting that for decades had been prevalent in many European countries.

A separate aspect of research into media policy has been pursued under the heading of '*Media Performance*', where the aim was to study the theory of public intervention and public interest in media and develop empirical indicators for evaluating 'media quality' (McQuail, 1992). This study represents a fundamental inquiry into the main theoretical concepts, which are applied in evaluating the public performance of mass media. Freedom, equality and social cohesion are identified as the main public communication values in terms of which media performance might be assessed. Inferred from this norm are principles like media independence from pressures and constraints (freedom of expression), free access to channels of communication, diversity of media supply, and objectivity of media content. These media principles may be operationalised to measure media performance in the public interest. An empirical study into broadcasting performance in the Netherlands has been conducted by Manschot (Ph.D. thesis, 1993). Manschot showed that program output of Dutch public service broadcasting 1972-1992 had strong commercial characteristics and hardly met program criteria as required in official regulation on public service broadcasting in the Netherlands Media Law.

Research into international communications policy has primarily been represented by studies of media globalisation and power relations, with particular reference to human rights and ethical issues (Hamelink, 1994a,b). These publications form a critical inquiry into consequences of global media change for the social and economic world order. The studies examine the political processes and decisions that determine the global communication environment. Mass communication, telecommunication, data traffic, intellectual property and communication technology have all been regulated by agreements within the international community. The political practices in the different fields of communication are assessed against standards of human rights. A plea is made for the right to communicate 'for all people' as the cornerstone of human-rights-based world communication politics.

The Media, Culture, Politics and the Public (MCP) program (until 1997)

MCP research question

The general goal of the MCP program was to study the social-cultural, political and social-psychological aspects of media and communication processes. The research was conducted with particular reference to the fields of *popular culture* and of *opinion formation and persuasive communication*. More specifically, in this program the following questions were addressed:

- A. What is the role of the media in the construction of individual and collective identities?
- B. What is the role of media in the formation of (public) opinion?

Research within this program can be viewed, first of all, in the light of international developments in applying cultural studies approaches to questions of media effects (constructing meanings and identities) and to media audiences (reception, interpretation and social uses). New theory gives greater weight to social-cultural factors and to the perspective of the recipient and user. In relation to persuasive communication, theory concerning media effects are applied and developed. The MCP program reflected the importance attributed to media as an influential factor in modern society, especially in relation to politics and commercial communication. Attention has also been paid to the historical roots of the study of collective behaviour (Van Ginneken, 1992).

Given its rather broad research questions, a diversity of methods was used in the MCP program. Research into matters of identity and citizenship employed predominantly qualitative, ethnographic and interpretative approaches, while in respect of persuasion and reception, methods were more quantitative and research designs were more structured.

A publication which covers the MCPP domain and its researchers quite well is the *liber amicorum* for Denis McQuail which focused on the necessity of a renewed normative debate on various media genres, ranging from public broadcasting (Van Cuilenburg) to reality television (Wieten), the gossip press (Van Zoonen) and feminist literature (Hermes). Several authors in the *liber* argue that in media policy debates on the public functions of media the notion of general interest is stressed too exclusively, whereas current audience fragmentation asks for 'publics', that is, the need to think of the public as a plurality, making general assessments of the public interest nearly impossible and obsolete (e.g. Van Zoonen & Hermes). The collection of essays was published in Brants, Hermes and Van Zoonen (1998).

Media and identity

The construction of individual and collective identities through media practices was studied in a variety of projects in which three core themes can be distinguished: the role of news media and journalism, the construction of gender identities, and the upcoming role of the *Internet*.

The role of *news media and journalism* was studied in several projects on news content, for instance with respect to political matters and political language (De Landtsheer, 1991, 1993, 1994) and the long-term development of reporting of opinion polls as news in the Dutch press (De Boer, 1995). A Ph.D. study on the framing of ethnic minorities in talk shows by Leurdijk, and on sub-cultural music genres by Wermuth are to be reported in forthcoming Ph.D. theses. Examination of news treatment of early phases of the women's movement showed a strong tendency in journalism to frame feminism as a simple struggle for equal opportunities; this process was concluded to be the result of organisational routines in journalism (Van Zoonen, 1991a, 1992a). From a somewhat different perspective news framing was also studied by Van Ginneken (1998). Though formally not being part of the MCPP research program, reference also has to be made to Bardeel's study on the impact of new information technologies on both the journalism profession and the position of journalism in society (1996, 1997).

The analysis of the *construction of gender identities* in the media has also been a strong component of the MCPP program, and runs through the studies of journalism (above) and the *Internet* (below) as well. It is expressed in a variety of international publications on theory (e.g. Ang and Hermes, 1991; Van Zoonen, 1994) and numerous research projects. Theoretically, the position developed is that individual and collective identities are discursively constructed through various interactions with the social and symbolic environment, media obviously providing a major context. They are seen as constructing a myriad of contradicting discourses on gender which are articulated

with individual gender identities in diachronically and synchronically varying ways (Van Zoonen, 1991b, 1994; Van Zoonen & Meijer, 1997). A particular instance of this process takes place in news media constructing a public identity for the women's movement that is constituted by the movement's own collective identity and the organisational and generical logic of news production (Van Zoonen, 1991a, 1992a). Another research project has concentrated on the meaning of women's magazines for the gender identities of their readers. In-depth, qualitative research into reading of women's magazines, showed these to be interpreted according to a variety of different repertoires reflecting an interaction between the content of magazines and the social location of (mainly female) readers (Hermes, 1995). Research on the *Internet* showed this new technology to be articulated with masculinity in particular, leading to a popular qualification of them being 'toys for the boys' (Frissen, 1992). The exclusion of women from these new media practices has been explained from various perspectives ranging from stereotypical views on women's inability to deal with technology in general to feminist analyses of male dominance in design, production and use of the new information and communication technologies (Van Zoonen, 1992b).

The rise of the *Internet* and the coming onto the market of many new information and communication technologies were reflected in an increasing attention the MCPP program paid to ICT and new media in daily life. Worth mentioning here are Van Zoonen (ed., 1992) and Frissen (1992). The adoption and integration of new communication technologies in domestic environments have been object of study by Frissen and Bergman (1997), Bergman (1997) and Frissen (1997). The aim of this research is to take full account of dimensions of physical and social space and of social relationships in the home in practices of ICT adoption and usage.

Though not specifically related to one of the three aforementioned themes, questions of media and identity were also studied by Van der Bolt and Tellegen. In their research on children's reading of books, a medium often neglected by communication science, Van der Bolt and Tellegen (1993, 1994) brought to light the importance of emotion in the interplay between children and fiction.

Persuasive communication

An important part of the MCPP program has been focusing on the fundamentals of influence processes in campaign situations, both relating to advertising and public opinion. Franzen (1994) sketched the state of the art of empirical research into the effects of advertising and other forms of commercial communication on consumer behaviour. Growing attention for advertising expressed itself in the founding of SWOCC in 1995 (on SWOCC's role see also Section 6), but also in publications like Den Boon and Neijens (1996), and Smit

(Ph.D. thesis, 1999). These studies show the (in)validity of measurement instruments for media consumption and the beliefs, evaluation and behaviour of consumers with respect to mass media advertising (television, radio, newspapers and magazines).

The effects of media communication have also been studied by experiment in non-campaign situations, notably by Velthuisen (1996) who did put the impersonal media impact hypothesis to a test; also Stapel and Velthuisen (1996). The impersonal impact hypothesis states that the mass media can influence the risk judgments that people make with regard to others and to society in general (judgments on a societal level) but that personal risk judgments, such as the chance of being oneself the victim of danger or any potential concern on the subject, is not affected. The aim of the research project was to see whether the impersonal impact hypothesis holds. Data analysis showed that personal media impact is unlikely because individuals (want to) see themselves as relatively invulnerable and secure. However, when media messages are characterised by factors which cause the feeling of invulnerability to disappear, when they are vivid and self-relevant, personal impact is possible.

The 1994 Dutch parliamentary elections offered an excellent opportunity to study the role of media in political campaigning and the effects of media on political opinions and voting behaviour (Brants, 1995; Brants and Van Praag (eds.), 1995; Scholten, 1995). Analysis of media content during seven months before the elections made it possible to test some theories about the effects of media on political opinions and voting behaviour. The research showed that contrary to popular views, issue news still has effects on shifts in short term political preferences of media consumers (Kleinnijenhuis, Oegema, De Ridder & Bos, 1995;). Political opinion formation was also studied on the occasion of different referendums in Amsterdam on several local issues (Neijens *et al*, 1992; Neijens *et al*, 1996). All these publications indicate a growing concern of the University of Amsterdam for political communication and its effects on citizens (see also Section 6). Worth mentioning in this respect also is a special issue on political communication of the *Politics, Groups and the Individual* edited by De Landtsheer (1995). In the transitional phase from the MCPP research program to the founding in 1997 of ASCoR with its new research programs (see Section 5) election studies (notably on Britain and Germany) have been conducted and published by Semetko (1995a,b) as well.

A new instrument to measure and evaluate public opinion has been developed by Neijens *et al* (1992). International interest in this research resulted in close collaboration with the University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research (Price and Neijens, 1997, 1998). In this collaboration improved measures of 'informed' public opinion were evaluated.

Some historical projects

Though the MCPP program's focus was on current uses, effects and reception of media with audiences, citizens, voters and consumers, several research projects were concerned with the historical dimensions of communication and media. A great number of publications into the history of newspapers and magazines were written by Hemels. Characteristic publications are Hemels (1992 and 1997) and a large study by Hemels and Vegt (1993 and 1997), which gives a rather extensive historical overview of Dutch illustrated weeklies and magazines in the period after 1840. Other important historical work on media within the MCPP program has been produced by Wieten (1994) on the introduction in the Netherlands of television broadcasting, and by Wieten *et al* (1996) on 50 years of religious broadcasting in the Netherlands.

The founding of ASCoR in 1997

Through the years, it became more and more clear that the ever-growing number of faculties and researchers in the department urged to a more effective and efficient organisational structure for research and research management than the Department itself could offer. With the introduction by law of a new administrative structure for Dutch universities (Wet Moderniseren Universitaire Bestuursstructuur MUB [University Administration Modernising Act], 1997) the University of Amsterdam decided to establish the *Amsterdam School of Communications Research ASCoR*. ASCoR was founded 1997 soon after the new Act became operational. The School operates as an independent institute next to the Department of Communication.

ASCoR's Mission

ASCoR is designed to be an institute for academic research and Ph.D. teaching and training in the field of communications. It aims at contributing to knowledge on the role of media and telecommunications in national and international information and communications provision seen in a perspective of democracy and democratic opinion formation. The School tries to realize its mission by doing fundamental academic research into the political, social, cultural and economic aspects of societal information and communications provision. Next to doing research the School is teaching a Ph.D. program for young researchers, from the Netherlands and abroad, in the field of communications.

ASCoR conducts research into the political, social, psychological, cultural and economic dimensions of communications infrastructure, contents, and effects. Like its two preceding departmental research programs, the School takes a broad view of social communications systems, including not only traditional mass media as newspapers, radio and television, but also non-mass communication media as

telephone, post and the *Internet*. However, as one can easily see in the Sections 3 and 4, broadening the scope of the communication discipline, which the University of Amsterdam opted for, in addition to the rather great number of researchers in the Department of Communication, unintentionally resulted in a great heterogeneity of research projects and research questions. This heterogeneity inevitably brings along the risk of incoherence and inconsistency in research programs.

To counter this risk, *ASCoR* tries to focus its research projects on the role of media and (tele)communications, nationally and internationally, in the perspective of democracy and processes of opinion and identity formation. Thus, the School has chosen as its main theme for research: *Communication Toward Open Societies*. That is, *ASCoR* focuses on *openness* in communications and opinion and identity formation. *Openness in communications* refers to the situation in which senders and receivers in communication processes may freely exchange messages. *Openness in opinion formation* is indicated by the processing of diverse information, opinions and views, which may contribute to tolerance of different cultures, views and groups of people in society.

Three key issues of research

Research at *ASCoR* addresses issues about access, citizenship and abundance. These issues are important for contemporary societies.

Access/accessibility

Information and communication systems differ in terms of access to infrastructure and to political, economic, social and cultural content in society. The distribution of communication access opportunities usually strongly correlates with inequality in political and economic power in society. *ASCoR* considers the scientific analysis of access to communications infrastructure and of the accessibility of political, social, cultural and economic content of great social relevance.

Citizenship

Citizenship and civic participation are prerequisites for contemporary societies. The proliferation of mass media, migration patterns, and the claims of various groups in society have added cultural and social concerns to the conventional political meaning of citizenship. An essential issue in present-day societies is, how media can sustain and strengthen diverse forms of citizenship in political, cultural, social and psychological realms. The contribution of the media to civic participation is an important issue for both modern democracies and societies in transition, like the former communist countries of Eastern Europe.

Abundance

The explosive informatisation of many societies is partly due to new

technologies and to the telematic convergence of telecommunications and computers. This runs parallel to an exponential diversification in communications: an increasing variety of content is supplied via an increasing number of information technologies, distribution channels and outlets. This diversification in supply is coupled with an ever-increasing segmentation in audiences on the demand side. The consequences of this are an important issue for modern societies.

The ASCoR research programs

In focusing on key issues of access, citizenship and abundance, ASCoR tries to execute a coherent, inclusive and extensive research program under the heading of *Communication Toward Open Societies*. ASCoR defined five different research programs to investigate access, citizenship and abundance in society: Audiences, Campaigns and Persuasion (ACP); Communications Policies for Access (CPA); Communication, Politics and the Electorate (CPE); Media, Citizenship and the Public Sphere (MCPS); Open and Informed Organisations (OIO).

Audiences, Campaigns and Persuasion (ACP)

The role and influence of communication in information campaigns and commercial advertising (mass media) campaigns are studied to develop and test theories of audience reach and effects. Research emphasises the development of design and methods, with attention to cognitive and affective aspects of communication processes. Research often focuses on brands, because they play an important role in commercial communication, and on the role of media as vehicles for commercial advertising.

The ACP program addresses the following key question: *Which factors explain reach and effects of communication campaigns in information affluent societies?* The research program is conducted in close collaboration with SWOCC, the *Foundation for Scientific Research into Commercial Communication*. Ph.D. students in the field of commercial communication who are sponsored by SWOCC get their Ph.D. training from ASCoR and write their Ph.D. thesis under supervision of the ASCoR faculty. Some results so far in this new program are Price and Neijens (1997, 1998), Van den Putte and Hoogstraten (1997), Smit and Neijens (1997) and Franzen (1998).

Communications Policies for Access (CPA)

The policies of national, supranational and international governmental authorities and the policies and strategies of communication organisation are the focus of research in this program, to develop fundamental, empirical, as well as normative concepts, principles and theories concerning policy making behaviour and policy outcomes. Special attention is given to human rights, freedom

of communication, diversity of content, universal service and public access, as well as economic phenomena such as competition and concentration, and supply and demand.

The CPA program addresses the following key question: *How do governmental policies and communication business strategies enhance or diminish access of organisations, groups and individuals to the communications infrastructure, and diversity in information provision?* After nearly one year this program running, as successor to the COP program (see Section 3), some results so far are: Hamelink (1997a,b), McQuail (1997), and Van Cuilenburg and Verhoest (1998).

Communication, Politics and the Electorate (CPE)

The role and influence of information, communication and media in political processes are addressed in this program using a range of methodological approaches (public opinion surveys, experiments, content and discourse analysis, focus groups, elite and semi-structured interviews, participant observation), in local, national and international contexts. CPE research concerns public opinion, elections, political communication and socialisation, governmental communication and information campaigns.

Research projects in the CPE program address the following key question: *How do the media and other channels of communication contribute to processes of political opinion formation?* Participants in this research program come from communication science as well as from political science. The 1998 Dutch municipal (March 1998) and parliamentary elections offered many opportunities for interdisciplinary research projects and joint efforts with colleagues from other faculties and other universities. Some early results in the CPE program are Semetko (1997), Semetko *et al* (1997), Semetko and Valkenburg (1998), Feldman and De Landtsheer (1998), and Brants and Neijens (1998).

In 1997, a major event in the CPE program was the acquisition of a substantial grant from the KNAW, the Royal Academy of Sciences: Patti Valkenburg was appointed to KNAW research fellow to conduct a study of the impact of news media on political attitudes. Her project is a multi-methodological study of agenda-setting, priming and framing effects of political news in Dutch television and major newspapers. Valkenburg uses content analysis, experiments and cross-sectional and panel survey to answer her central research question of what role the news media play in the formation of political attitudes of citizens. Professor Valkenburg, who in 1998 was appointed to special professor of Child and Media Research, will within the CPE domain devote part of her research effort to this topic as well (Valkenburg, *et al*, 1997, 1998).

Media, Citizenship and the Public Sphere (MCPS)

Changing relations between media, citizenship and the public sphere cover a broad social program, including informative and journalistic genres as well as fiction and popular genres. The meaning of these genres and of media in general is related to 'politics', defined broadly as the means people have to (gain) control (over) their own immediate and distant surroundings, in both private and public life. Against this background the MCPS program addresses the following key question: *Given the changing relationship between media, citizenship and the 'public sphere', how do and may media texts and media technologies contribute to the potential of all citizens to participate fully and equally on their own terms in society?* Evidently this program embroiders on its predecessor, the MCPP research program (see Section 4). Four recent MCPS publications are: Frissen and Te Molder, eds. (1998), Hermes (1997), Meijer (1998), and Van Zoonen and Meijer (1997)

Open and Informed Organisations (OIO)

Information within organisations is studied in ASCoR with emphasis on the kind of information organisations want, the ways in which information is distributed and exchanged and the distribution methods used. An important issue in the field of organisational communication is the balance between access to internal and external information resources and the corresponding abundance of these. The OIO program will address these issues guided by the following key question: *What organisational and technological factors contribute to optimal access for organisations to external and internal information resources and to the prevention of information overload?* Some of the results booked in 1997 in this research program are Sakhel *et al* (1997) and Scholten *et al* (1997).

In 1998, Tom Postmes, participating in the OIO research program was appointed to KNAW research fellow to conduct the study *Norm Formation and Computer-Mediated Communication*. The study uses experimental methods to investigate how social norms emerge and regulate communication processes in groups whose interaction is mediated by computer technology. This research builds on earlier work in the program investigating how normative influence is exerted in computer-mediated groups (Postmes & Spears, 1998). The study has a three-year duration.

New chairs, new plans, new programs?

In 1998, quite some new regular and special chairs started operating within the Department and within ASCoR. These concern general communication science, child and media research, pop music and intercultural communication. How these chairs will plan their research activities is, of course, still a matter to be decided. It is possible that some plan of some new chairs might be incorporated in one of the five already existing ASCoR programs. However, it might also be expedient in some cases to develop new, separate research programs

within the ASCoR mission of *Communication Toward Open Societies*. A decision has yet to be taken.

Some Concluding Remarks

To finish this treatise on communication research at the University of Amsterdam, we want to make three short remarks. First of all, it will be of utmost importance for ASCoR to spend much attention and effort on applying for NWO [National Science Foundation] second stream financial funds. In the 1996 VSNU [Association of Co-operating Dutch Universities] Quality Assessment of Research the following remark was made on one of the two pre-ASCoR programs: 'It is remarkable that in this very good programme there is no academic staff at all on the basis of the second financial stream and very little on the basis of the third.' (VSNU, 1996, p.65). Indeed, this is very remarkable. The more so, because this assessment probably doesn't only apply to this particular Amsterdam program, but to Dutch communication science as a whole. Within the framework of NWO, communication science as a young discipline has still an unclear position and communication scientists do hardly participate in well-established networks of traditional social disciplines represented in NWO. However that may be, it will be a major task for ASCoR to apply and apply again with good grant proposals for NWO and KNAW [Royal Academy of Sciences] financial support.

Second, ASCoR being a research institute as well as a Ph.D. training institute, will apply for formal KNAW recognition as a 'onderzoekschool' [research school] in the next years. ASCoR prefers to do so from a national platform, together with other universities. Third, and related to the latter remark, ASCoR's research theme being *Communication Toward Open Societies*, the School attaches great value to open relations with colleagues, departments and institutes from other universities. In 1998 discussion on intensive co-operation started with the Nijmegen and Twente sister departments. ASCoR welcomes collaboration and joint efforts and ventures with applause. So, the hopes on future corporation are running high.

Notes

- 1 Giep Franzen, Jules van Neerven (until September 1997), René Boomkens, David Pinto, Patti Valkenburg, and 'vacancy'.

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Jan Kleinnijenhuis

Towards the study of policy, communication and organisation

Communication research at the Free University of Amsterdam

The early years of communication science at the Vrije Universiteit

In 1937 a dissertation entitled 'Vrijheid van Drukkers' (Freedom of the Press) was defended in the Faculty of Law at the *Vrije Universiteit* in Amsterdam by a young scholar named Evert Diemer. Freedom of the Press was a hot item because of totalitarian developments in Europe. After World War II Diemer – who was honoured with a Yad Vashem distinction – became editor-in-chief of *De Rotterdammer*, a regional Protestant newspaper that was swallowed up in the early 1970s by *Trouw*, a national Protestant newspaper with a far more leftist orientation.

Diemer resumed his academic career in 1958 when he was appointed lector and later Professor of Press Studies at the department of Political Science at the *Vrije Universiteit* (Diemer, 1958). Press Studies was re-labelled as Communication Science in the early 1970s.

Diemer continued to write on the ethics of Christian journalism (e.g. Diemer, 1960) and the social responsibility of journalists (Diemer, 1981). He understood social reality as a conflict between incompatible ethical principles. In his view, communication science at a Christian university was an intellectual endeavour to sharpen the ethical values of journalists in general and of Christian journalists in particular.

The 1970s were also the years of the emergence of social science methodology and large scale computing in the social sciences. Diemer's staff members Jan van Cuilenburg and Wim Noomen developed an 'integrated approach' to communication science. On the one hand they developed content analysis methods to measure aspects of the news, such as its well-foundedness (Noomen, 1977) and its progressiveness (Van Cuilenburg, 1977). On the other hand they used survey research to extract the beliefs and opinions of media consumers on correspondence. In a rigorous study of the coverage of the 1978 debates in Parliament concerning one of the first government plans for cutbacks in government expenditures (the *Bestek 81-debat*), Scholten (1982) combined many of these early measurements of media content and public opinion. This early line of empirical research rendered a rather optimistic view of the Dutch press. By and large the press in the Netherlands was politically diverse ('pluriform'). Societal opinions were represented in the press to a fairly high degree ('pluriformity'), both externally (do different media offer different viewpoints?) and internally (does one medium offer a

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variety of viewpoints?). Most newspapers gave good arguments in favour of their viewpoints. Even the most comprehensive newspaper only presented 20% of the statements in a Parliamentary debate, but the press as a whole presented more than 40% of a major Parliamentary debate. Of course, these rather optimistic results depended heavily on the assumption that the yardstick with which to evaluate the diversity of the press should be societal diversity. Starting from critical mass communication theory, Van den Berg and Van der Veer (1986) of the department of Social Science Research Methodology at the *Vrije Universiteit* related the diversity of the Dutch press in a labour dispute to the criteria deduced from critical theory. Their conclusion was less optimistic. Every newspaper passed on the dominant bourgeois viewpoint that business reorganisations with wholesale staff dismissals were inevitable, although presumably somewhat painful for those dismissed.

Communication science in the 1980s and early 1990s: the macro-micro link

Press concentration was one of the underlying themes in the early years of empirical mass communication research. In fact, empirical research started with the question of whether the Catholic newspaper *De Tijd*, which was on the brink of insolvency, could create new bonds with old and new readers (Van Cuilenburg, De Jonge & Noomen, 1973). Despite the scientific insights gained into the links between a newspaper and its readers, *De Tijd* nevertheless surrendered. In 1984 a study by Jan de Ridder marked the beginning of a new line of research. De Ridder gathered independent data on the processes of public concentration (readers shifting from small to large newspapers), supplier concentration (mergers of newspaper concerns), and boards-of-editors concentration (less independent boards of newspaper editors). De Ridder showed that post-war processes of public concentration, supplier concentration and boards-of-editors concentration could be modelled as logistic curves. His conclusion was that the process of concentration had slowed down in the 1980s. Van Cuilenburg, Kleinnijenhuis and De Ridder (1988c) showed that economically strong suppliers, and even supplier concentration, were necessary to prevent boards-of-editors concentration. Although they showed that 13 of the 41 independent Dutch newspapers had a less than 50% probability of surviving, they failed to draw the obvious conclusion that a new wave of supplier concentration and boards-of-editors concentration was imminent in the late 1980s. Bardoel (1989) studied the chances of newspaper survival in a newly emerging on-line market of electronic services and electronic news. Bardoel foresaw, correctly, that documentation specialists and the general public would become strong competitors of ordinary newspaper journalists in the age of electronic news.

A methodological issue which had to be tackled time and again in

'integrated communication research' was the measurement of reasoning in the press. Noomen (1977, p. 25-32, 256) argued that the familiar Toulmin approach to the user of arguments (Toulmin, 1957) was problematical. Various investigations, mainly in the department of Social Science Research Methodology, resulted in the conclusion that automatic content analysis was a promising but nevertheless poor alternative with which to perform this relatively complex content analytic task (*cf.* Saris-Gallhofer & Saris, 1977; Namenwirth *et al.*, 1978; Van Cuilenburg, Kleinnijenhuis & de Ridder, 1988). The J-score method was generally used to unravel political argumentation (Van Cuilenburg, 1977, p. 60-61). The J-score method boils down to determining the ratio of the number of positive and negative sentences concerning an attitude object. In a pilot study of argumentation in schoolbooks (Scholten, Van Cuilenburg & Kleinnijenhuis, 1983) it was found that indirect reasoning chains played a major role and that this could be modelled using a network approach following Charles Osgood's 'evaluation assertion analysis' (Osgood, Saporta & Nunnally, 1956) (if, according to a text, A has something to do with B and B has something to do with C, then A has something to do with C). The NETwork approach to content analysis has since been elaborated upon in many publications (e.g. Van Cuilenburg, Kleinnijenhuis & De Ridder, 1986, 1988ab; De Ridder, 1994ab; Kleinnijenhuis, de Ridder & Rietberg, 1997). The NETwork approach was also at the heart of the dissertations of Kleinnijenhuis (1990) and Hageman (1995). Kleinnijenhuis (1990) showed that the news of today can be predicted, to a certain degree, from indirect chains present in yesterday's news. Hageman (1995) showed that mergers between newspapers do not consistently shrink the diversity of cognitive networks of municipal politics.

In a wider sense, the network approach has also been useful in the study of reciprocal patterns of societal agenda-setting. To what extent do political actors, media and publics influence each other? Kleinnijenhuis and Rietberg (1995) found that in a top-down process, political actors influenced the media, while the media in turn influenced the general public. In a bottom-up process, political actors adjusted their agenda to the public agenda, but the correspondence between the political agenda and the public agenda was shown to be mainly due to their co-orientation to the same real economic developments (employment, inflation, taxes). Both the agendas of political actors and of publics are sensitive to real world developments. The media may report real economic developments correctly, although they can also make bad mistakes (e.g. Kleinnijenhuis, 1990:232, Kleinnijenhuis *et al.*, 1998:20), but the media agenda – which issue is to be given more attention? – is relatively insensitive to real world developments.

Meanwhile, the department of Social Science Research Methodology at the *Vrije Universiteit* continued to develop survey research methods suitable for communication research. Saris, Neijens and De

Ridder (1983) developed questionnaires to trace the societal debate on nuclear energy, and societal debates in general. Neijens (1987) developed a questionnaire to tap an audience's informed opinions. His conclusion was that simple information which could easily be given to respondents was enough to arrive at informed opinions. At the department of Social Psychology, Klandermans and colleagues studied information and communication in social networks as a means for social movements (e.g. Klandermans & Oegema, 1987). Oegema's dissertation (1993), for example, studied the erosion of support for the peace movement in the years after the peak of the anti-missile movement in the early and mid-1980s. His conclusion was that the social pressure resulting from close-knit networks were at the heart of the success of the peace movement (Oegema, 1993). Support for the peace movement eroded when these networks were no longer used as intensely (Oegema & Klandermans, 1994). Semin and colleagues, also from the department of Social Psychology, study communication processes at a linguistic level (e.g. Semin & Fiedler, 1988; Wigboldus, 1988). One of their findings is that participants describe stereotype-consistent behaviours at a higher level of linguistic abstraction (e.g. using state-verbs, as in "Peter is a nice guy") than they do stereotype-inconsistent behaviours (e.g. using action-verbs, as in 'Peter insulted Mary'), thus giving rise to the expectation that the stereotype-inconsistent behaviours are exceptions to the rule which can be explained by circumstantial peculiarities. In the department of Linguistics, Professor Tan's studies include visual language (e.g. Tan, 1991).

Metamorphosis

Communication science at the *Vrije Universiteit* underwent a metamorphosis between 1988 and 1995. The first cause of this metamorphosis was that the scholars who had shaped communication science moved to other universities or even other jobs. Van Cuilenburg, who became professor of communication science after Diemer's resignation in 1981, moved to the University of Amsterdam in 1988. Bardoel, Gallhofer, Hageman, Neijens, De Ridder, Saris, and Scholten, who can be considered as the co-founders of empirical communication science at the *Vrije Universiteit*, went on to the University of Amsterdam, other universities, or even other jobs. Noomen, who succeeded Van Cuilenburg, became Dean of the *Vrije Universiteit* in 1995.

The second cause of the metamorphosis was the establishment in 1993 of a new discipline at the *Vrije Universiteit* entitled Policy, Communication and Organisation, as a co-operative project of administration science and communication science. The new discipline was a response to societal changes. Due to the information technology revolution of the 1980s and early 1990s, a 'network society' came into being in which (agents within) private enterprises, non-profit organisations, social movements, civil services, media,

special interest groups and the general public could interact with each other through an astonishing variety of newly developed channels of verbal and visual information exchange (e.g. on-line databases, new television channels, direct mail, fax, Internet, intranet). In the new information society, 'policy' meant networking (e.g. Van Dijk, 1997), communicative steering (e.g. Pröpper, 1992) and dialogue as a method (e.g. Van Ruler, 1998), where 'policy' had traditionally been perceived as the promulgation of laws, verdicts or plans which would be executed almost automatically either by an hierarchical government bureaucracy or by the 'invisible hand' of the price mechanism which would perfectly rule utility-maximizing individuals. It was precisely this overwhelming variety of newly developed communication channels and the resulting information overload from it (e.g. Van Cuilenburg, 1982) which made communication a policy problem for organisations, since more communicative choices were required than ever before. A new type of student enrolled in the new discipline of 'Policy, Communication and Organisation', which now attracts more than 200 students per year (post-HBO included). These students are interested in the interface of communication with policy and organisation. They are intrigued more by private enterprises than by the traditional media or governmental agencies.

The third cause of the metamorphosis is related to the first and second. Communication scientists from various backgrounds but with a common interest in organisational and communication processes entered the *Vrije Universiteit*. In January 1999 the 'communication' staff consisted of Dr J.F. Caljé, Dr D. Oegema, M. Meijer, Dr A.A. van Ruler, C. Vaneker and P. Zweekhorst. In the research group on Policy, Communication and Organisation, Prof. F. Fleurke, Dr F. den Hond, Dr F.D. Huizenga and Dr P. Kenis are also prominent. The next paragraphs give a short description of the University's current research. The three themes combine the six themes in section C of the joint research programme entitled 'Institutions and actors: public administration, communication and policy' of administration science, political science and communication science.

Interorganisational communication and co-operation: the macro-meso link

In the network society, organisations are neither ruled completely by government laws or government procedures, nor by the invisible hand of the price mechanism. Instead, innovations, strategic alliances with competing organisations and communications with stakeholders are of much greater importance. Co-ordination, or at least co-orientation to common information sources, is helpful for organisations to further each others' interests in a positive sum game. Co-ordination and co-orientation mechanisms can usually be classified under five broad substantive headings (Kenis & Knoke, 1998; Kenis, 1993; Knoke, 1990; 1999): communicative exchanges

(e.g. technical data, work advice, office rumours, conferences, clearinghouse operations), resource exchanges (e.g. trade, physical exchanges), power relations (either rewards or punishments depending on compliance with norms or commands), boundary penetrations (e.g. interlocking directorates) and sentimental attachments (e.g. trust). Interorganisational theory privileges interorganisational communication as the primary co-orientation mechanism. Communicating preferences, intentions, values, normative expectations and empirical facts are a necessary prelude to establishing resource exchanges, power, penetrative, and sentimental ties.

The basic hypothesis of a network theory of interorganisational relations is that the relations between organisations are a more powerful tool with which to explain organisations than are organisational attributes. The structural properties of interorganisational networks affect the interorganisational behaviours of individual organisations (Kenis & Schneider, 1996; Kenis & Knoke, 1998).

Interorganisational behaviours can be operationalised as features of direct dyadic relationships between pairs of organisations at a given point in time as the units of analysis. The structural properties of interorganisational networks to explain the precise features of dyadic relationships can be operationalised as features of the network of direct and indirect relationships at a previous point in time. Thus, tests of network theories of interorganisational communication and co-operation require longitudinal data with respect to the dynamic development of dyadic relationships (communicative, resource, etc.) between organisations (e.g. Kleinnijenhuis & De Vries, 1994). The application of these principles in studying the provision of HIV-preventive measures may serve as an example (e.g. Kenis, 1996). Such measures (needle exchange, methadone, etc.) have been studied in nine German municipalities, the basic hypothesis of the study being that these often controversial measures can only be provided by organisations embedded in specific inter-organisational relations and/or networks. First results show that it is indeed less the 'problem load' or the 'normative orientations' in such a policy field which explain whether preventive measures are provided or not, but rather the communication structure. For example, in networks where informal communication, especially between repressive and supportive organisations, exists and where at the same time a central organisation is present with respect to the exchange of resources and expertise, the development of effective preventive measures is much more likely.

Fleurke and Huizenga (1996) explain why a complex pattern of co-ordination and incentives for co-ordination between governmental, societal and corporate agencies is imperative to optimise waste disposal policy. Den Hond (1997) studied patterns of communication and co-operation in the automobile industry. The automobile industry found itself able to agree on joint environmental action in the late 1980s when threats of strict regulation by national governments and the EC had prompted the automobile industry to create a joint

communication platform and scientific reports had indicated the possibility of a win-win game between environmental measures and profitability. Kleinnijenhuis (1999) contends that the development of a discourse coalition in which players routinely reinforce a discourse which suggests that the future outcomes of interorganisational games are consistent with a game-theoretic 'co-operative game' is vital for interorganisational cooperation. The joint discourse that suggests cooperative solutions is usually furnished by exogenous parties which are deemed neutral, sacred or all-powerful by the organisational players. It is essential for such a routinely reinforced discourse that the players realise that the discourse is essential to obtaining each others' co-operation, even if they are sceptical with respect to its truth themselves.

To understand interorganisational co-ordination in complex networks, the visualisation of these networks is essential. Brandes, Kenis, Raab *et al.* (1999) discuss various visualisations of policy networks.

Communication management: the meso level

An integrated approach to management communication, marketing communication, internal communication and public relations requires communication management. The research question of the research project on communication management is an exploratory one. Do communication specialists in organisations possess the knowledge on communication processes, the skills and the power bases to implement an integrated approach?

On the basis of a survey among communication specialists in profit- and non-profit organisations, Van Ruler and De Lange (1995) show that most communication specialists do not have a higher education in communication. Most communication specialists typically attend some communication courses, and many have a background in journalism. Since 1995, however, the degree of professionalism has increased somewhat (Van Ruler & De Lange, 1995, forthcoming).

In her dissertation, Van Ruler (1996) examines the theoretical orientations of communication specialists on the basis of a small survey analysis and additional in-depth discussions with many of the respondents. Van Ruler argues that respondents should ideally adopt an interactive perspective (striving for mutual understanding and common solutions with target groups) on the essence of communication, rather than a transmission perspective (striving for persuasion of target groups), partly because the interactive perspective makes communication specialists more sensitive to the actions, reactions, beliefs and orientations of target groups. The majority of the communication specialists viewed communication as a type of transmission or even as straightforward emission, rather than as interaction (Van Ruler, 1996, p. 182,334).

In a recent essay, Van Ruler (1998) contends that four different fields of communication management should be distinguished. In

line with her dissertation Van Ruler distinguishes a transmission perspective from an interaction perspective. A distinction is also drawn between communication aimed at information dissemination and communication aimed at influencing attitudes and behaviour. Van Ruler suggests that each of the four fields of communication management requires its own approach and its own body of scientific knowledge. Transmission aimed at information dissemination requires knowledge of the methods and channels that can be used to *inform* target groups. Transmission aimed at influencing attitudes and behaviour requires social-psychologically-oriented knowledge about *persuasion*. Interaction between parties whose aim is only information exchange requires knowledge on *dialogue* as a method (Van Ruler 1998). Interaction between parties who seek to influence each other's attitudes, behaviours or policies requires knowledge about negotiations and interactive policy-making (labelled 'formation'). Policy-making is 'interactive' when decision-makers and stakeholders (e.g. commercial organisations, governmental agencies, interest groups, concerned citizens) consult each other on the basis of an informal, but agreed-upon procedure at an early stage of the policy-making process and with an open mind. An impetus for interactive policy-making is the desire of organisations to commit stakeholders to their policy. Interactive policy-making also rests on the expectation that extensive consultations may diminish the inclination of stakeholders and citizens to oppose the organisation and its policy, for example when the media portray the organisation or its policy negatively. Interactive policy-making is also used to evade parliamentary control or media influence. Pröpper and Kessens (1998:260) maintain that in the Netherlands, interactive policy-making at the local level is a reaction of local bureaucracies to lower levels of political participation, especially to a lower turnout at municipal elections.

Media effects and Media Monitor: the meso-micro link

Public images of organisations may rest partly on reports in the media (e.g. *The Economist*, *De Telegraaf*, or the *Financial Times*). The specialised information published by organisations (e.g. corporate communication campaigns, extensive internet sites) is usually passed on by the media to peripheral news consumers. Very little is known, however, about the precise effects of various news types on news consumers' attitudes and behaviours towards organisations. Until the 1980s, effects were deduced from content analysis with no scrupulous analysis of changes in public opinion, or from an analysis of changes in public opinion with no scrupulous analysis of prior media content. Effects research at the *Vrije Universiteit* starts from an 'integrated' longitudinal approach. The basis question is whether, and if so to what degree, favourable or unfavourable attitudes towards an organisation (a party, a firm, a department) depend on the news, and if so, on which features of the news. To answer this research question, stat-

istical techniques are used to compare features of the weekly news with subsequent changes in the attitudes of respondents towards organisations in weekly panel surveys (e.g. Kleinnijenhuis *et al.*, 1995, 1997, 1998ab). The pattern of news effects that show up is summarised below.

News on organisations consists mainly of three types. News on support and criticism, also labelled 'conflict-oriented news', refers to the support for or criticism of an organisation. The precise effect on the news audience of news criticism of a target organisation depends on the triangular relationship between the audience, the supporting or criticising subject actor, and the target organisation. It is to be expected that criticism from within the organisation itself will diminish the audience's support for an organisation, since whatever side the reader chooses, support for part of the organisation will by definition decrease. Criticism from traditional adversaries will often increase the latent support of the audience for an organisation. These criticisms can function as the proof of the rationale of an organisation's existence. Criticism from neutral sources, or from usually neutral sources, will have fairly weak effects (e.g. Heider, 1946). Recent research shows that evaluative editorial comments have only small and incidental effects as compared to the effects of other types of conflict-oriented news. Traditionally, media effects have been narrowed down to the effects of explicit journalistic comment.

The second type of news about organisations consists of statements on organisational successes or failures. This type of news corresponds roughly with news labelled as 'horserace news'. Success often breeds success. Peripheral news consumers readily side with successful organisations. However, latent sympathisers with an organisation who reflect carefully on the news may draw an unexpected conclusion from repeated news on that organisation's failures. They may infer that the organisation is more in need of societal support than ever, or that an absolute low is imminent or may even have passed. In the way that thoughtful share dealers may infer that the tide will soon turn when the media pay attention to an organisation's failures and losses, thoughtful voters may infer that an unsuccessful party does not deserve to lose so heavily after all.

Issue news is a third type of news on organisations (e.g. news on profits, investments, employment, the environment). Caljé (1997, p. 126-138, 186-187) showed that readers of different newspapers who share identical socio-demographic characteristics may have rather different perceptions of environmental issues and issue risks, even although the differences between the environmental news in their respective newspapers were rather subtle. Directional theory (Rabinowitz & McDonald, 1989) can help to explain the role of issues in organisational image-building. In general, an organisation which unequivocally promises to deliver what the public indistinctly seems to want has the edge over an organisation which tries to adjust its promises to the precise demands of the public, provided that the

promises are within the limits of acceptability. Issue ownership theory (e.g. Petrocik, 1996) maintains that most organisations have a long-standing reputation of solving problems in specific issue areas. Mercedes Benz, for example, has the reputation of being Teutonic with regard to the issue of thoroughness (at least, until Baby Benz turned over). Leftist parties, for example, have a good reputation when the issue at stake is social security. Rightist parties have a good reputation when taxes are at stake; they just maintain that taxes are excessive, almost regardless of their actual level. Rightist parties have a reputation for reducing taxes. A news wave on tax issues will encourage voters to adopt political standpoints which give rightist parties the edge over leftist parties.

The public image of Shell as an oil concern with a poor environmental reputation can serve as another example. Although after the Brent Spar fuss Shell tried to create a public image as a concern with an exemplary conduct on environmental issues, the public continued to perceive that Shell was a company with a particularly poor environmental policy (Kleinnijenhuis, 1999). Apparently Shell made the mistake to beat the drum with an issue that was owned by its old adversaries. [Shell seems not to have realised that no amount of publicity about its environmental programme would allow it to wrest the issue back from its old adversaries.]

Current research aims at the development of a *media monitor* which indicates, on a daily or weekly basis, how an organisation performs with regard to conflict-oriented news, horserace news and issue news.

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Hans Verstraeten

Research activities at the department for Communication Sciences of the Free University Brussels

Introduction

The request of the editors of this journal to give an overall picture of the media research of each university department came at the right moment for us.

The department Communication Sciences of vub celebrated its 25 years of existence in the year 1997-98. We took advantage of the opportunity, not only to look back at the past, but especially to look forwards to the future. This *exercise in thinking* forms the base of this overall picture. I limited myself to the evolutions that occurred in the field of research, as I was asked to do (see Witte, et al., 1998).

Essential characterisation of the research that was conducted by the department over the last years, is undoubtedly the fact that different aspects of the media and communication issues are always checked in relation to the wider social context. However differentiated the media appear, it's always considered to be part of the more extensive social context (Verstraeten & Perceval, 1991, 1994).

Although this basic idea forms the essential connecting link between all the researches, it remains far too general as a starting-point of a research programme. Therefore from there on developed five *main points* in the content of the research, namely:

1. Politics and Communication
2. Culture and Communication
3. Applied Persuasive Communication
4. Media Sociology
5. Media- and Multimedia policy

Next comes a short historical reconstruction of this development, merely to make it clear how these five *main points* are connected to the three research centres, that work within the department. This gives us the possibility to deepen the research concerning content.

How it grew

The five already mentioned main research points each have an history of origin, that can be situated mainly in the research. A brief survey can clarify this.

- The central point 'Politics and Communication' was present prominently from the beginning, by the numerous licentiate's

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theses and mainly by the doctorals realised under the promoting of Prof. Dr. Els Witte. The handbook published by Els Witte (1991) still remains the backbone as regards content of this main point.

- Also the origin of the central point 'Culture and Communication' goes back rather far in the past. The numerous licentiate's theses under the promoting of the colleague's H. Dethier (about film and music), M. Namenwirth (about music policy and music sociology), the late D. Van Berlaer (about literature and media), together with their own research activities, are an obvious illustration. The recent doctorals of C. Pauwels (1995) and K. Segers (1997) are an important contribution for the further profiling regarding content of this main point.
- The doctorals of the colleague's H. Verstraeten (1984) and J.C. Burgelman (1986), that were taken in the midst of the eighties, formed the base for the founding of the Centre for Study of the New Media and the Information technology (CSNMIT, founded in 1987). Because of a further research diversification, which was done by mutual arrangement (J.C. Burgelman in the direction of information technology and media policy, H. Verstraeten in the direction of media sociology) two different research centres derived from it: CMIT (Centre for Study about Media, Information and Telecommunication, director: Prof. Dr. J.C. Burgelman, this centre forms the 'home base' for the main point Media- and Multimedia policy') and CEMESO (Centre for Media Sociology, director: Prof. Dr. H. Verstraeten, this centre is the *support* of the main point 'Media Sociology'). The doctoral of D. Biltreyst (1993) – at present professor at Ghent University – formed an important support of the main point Media Sociology, while the doctoral of P. Verhoest (1996) ment a further profiling of the main point Media- and Multimedia. In both research centres, next to a numerous amount of licentiate's theses, different research- and doctoral projects are current. (for more information, cf. SCOM-website – URL: <http://www.vub.ac.be/SCOM/>).
- The main point 'Applied Persuasive Communication' was formed mainly by the doctoral of F. Thevissen. This caused the founding of the centre for Study of the Marketing Communication (MACO, director: Prof. Dr. F. Thevissen (1993); this centre consequently is the base of that main point). A few research projects and a very large amount of licentiates' theses form the main activity of this centre.

These five main points form a fertile cross-pollination between research and education. At the level of seminars this is merely achieved by the assistants/ researchers, while the research of the professors in the first place means a constant up-dating of the courses regarding content. But to set things clear: the five main points are points of

reference for the scientific research. They don't necessarily correspond with main subjects on the level of education. Summarising, one can schematise the relation between the five main points of research and the three operational research centres as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1 **Communication research at the Free University Brussels**

<i>Main points of research</i>	<i>Research centres</i>
1. Politics and Communication	SMIT/ CEMESO/ MACO
2. Culture and Communication	SMIT/ CEMESO
3. Applied Persuasive Communication	MACO
4. Media Sociology	CEMESO
5. Media- and Multimedia policy	SMIT

It is understood that the three centres can't function as isolated 'islands of research'. Mutual co-operation and co-ordination is necessary and inevitable because input is delivered from 2 or even 3 centres to a number of main points. Moreover a considerable contribution is made by research that isn't formally done in one of the three centres. Since years, especially the licentiates' theses and doctorals concerning film, under promoting of Professor Dethier and important support of S.Keuleers, are forming an essential support of the main point 'Culture and Communication'. Also the music sociological oriented licentiates' theses, under promoting of Professor M. Namenwirth have delivered an important contribution.

Mostly to clarify the connection between the research activities of the different centres and the five main points we choose to organise the discussion about the research per research centre.

Research within the Centre for the Studies about Media, Information and Telecommunication (SMIT)¹

The research centre for Studies on Media, Information and Telecommunication (SMIT), set up in 1990, has two main approaches. First of all, research topics are grouped around policy questions; secondly and supplementary to this, the centre carries out its own user research. During the years transversal approaches have emerged. These touch upon both our policy and users research. In this respect traditional mass media, new media and information technologies as well as convergence between telecommunication and broadcasting is being considered. At the same time research topics are also developed on a geographic basis. This means that research can be regional (Flanders), national (Belgium), European (European Union), and world-wide (third world problems) (see Figure 1).

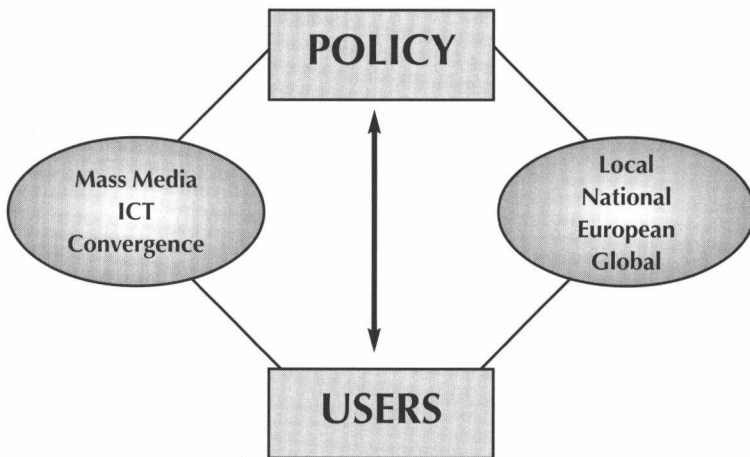


FIGURE 1 The Brussels research programme

In all, 38 research projects have been completed within this framework and a further 8 are in hand. Most research projects are fundamental in nature, but consultancy research is also sporadically carried out.

With this research programme, SMIT is seeking to fill a number of empirical and theoretical gaps in communication science research.

First of all it wants to differentiate itself from a vision of policy and user research that is purely economically inspired, technologically determinist and instrumentalist. According to this vision, what will happen socially is derived from what is technically possible, whereas from the social science perspective, it is precisely the reverse questions that are relevant. This obviously implies that the focus of the work lies on fundamental rather than applied research questions, for example: what is precisely the nature of the transfer from a post-industrial to an information society, what consequences does this have for organising the future of the Western welfare state, for maintaining a culturally inspired media policy, for fundamental policy principles such as 'the general interest', 'universal service provision', for the cultural way in which we experience time and space, etc.

Secondly, SMIT's research differentiates itself from a simplistic or naive use of the categories of 'market' and 'state' in policy debate and research, regardless of whether this involves broadcasting, telecommunications or new information technologies. In most debates and research, 'market' and 'state' are seen as a dichotomous pair: there is a regulation by the market, and there is regulation by non-market forces, which must then be the state. Depending on the author's

orientation, this is then deemed to be good or bad. However, historical research and detailed analysis have shown that it has never been the one or the other, and that regulation by the market or the state has never been a goal as such, but rather a way of solving clashes of interests in society.

Thirdly, SMIT differentiates itself from the type of market-inspired user research which is directed at product optimisation and market introduction and is inspired by the motto 'what is possible technically must also succeed'. This requires us to ask two questions: first of all about demand and acceptance/reception, and secondly about what information technology has to offer: once the information technology is there, we examine how it is accepted by the public, but equally fundamentally, we ask how this offering came into being (influence of economic, political, social cultural and technological factors from a structural-dialectic causally-inspired policy model).

Fourthly, but again deriving from the foregoing, SMIT, from a normative-humanistic option, focuses its research on the public interest, by asking very precise questions on how and under which conditions the public benefits from what occurs and, if not, what must be done for this to be so. This of course requires us to use a refined user categorisation system, and one must take care not to extrapolate residential use from research on professional and large-scale users, a shortcoming which until recently distorted user research. The same distortion appears whenever one extrapolates from conclusions arrived at in user research in Europe to a third world context. Here too one can gainfully extend the area of examination to encompass the economic, political, cultural, social and technological factors environment.

Translated into concrete research, the above represents a very broad range of research possibilities in which a cross-pollination of findings between the various research directions and projects is sought after. For example, in its research and theory formation SMIT assumes that a possible convergence may exist between audio-visual policy and telecommunications policy in Europe. In so doing, it is objective about the fact that the two sectors are separate empirical realities, each with its own internal dynamism, and as such studied separately by SMIT, but at the same time offer analogies, which need to be examined, in terms of policy problems and underlying assumptions. One obvious point of attention is, for example, the way in which the general interest is best regulated in both areas. More in particular the question of whether 'public service' is still a meaningful regulatory concept for the broadcasting sector, and 'universal service' a meaningful concept for the telecommunication sector, and if so, how they must be implemented. Mutual cross-pollination, we insist, not extrapolations, exist also when we examine telecommunication policy in a European and third world context, and again when we look

at how the new information technologies are introduced in both parts of the world.

As mentioned before, each research centre strives to synergisms with the other main points. What concerns the centre SMIT, this means mainly delivery of content to the main points 'Politics and Communication' (inquiry into political power strategies that cause policy decisions) and 'Culture and Communication' (inquiry into media policy and film policy, integrated within a global culture policy). There's co-operation with the main point 'Media Sociology' (ICT-users research).

Research within the Centre for Mediasociology (CEMESO)

The main focus for the research that's conducted within this centre, which is founded in 1994, revolves merely around the complex and ambivalent issue concerning the relationship between media, public sphere, democracy and social identity. And this from a sociological perspective. This research is a continuation of the political-economical media research, that was conducted in the past (Verstraeten, 1980, 1988). In the meantime, it is more elaborated in the direction of a critical political economy of the relationship between media and public sphere. That includes that the research of the centre focuses at three levels of research.

1. Indeed, the research in economical structures and relations of property remains of capital importance. Phenomena as media concentration, commercialising and transnationalising must be lagged after. In this way the changes in 'the institutional configuration' concerning the public sphere can be charted.
2. A political economy that limits only to that first level of research, threatens to get a repetitive character. Not only the economical structures of the 'institutional configuration', but also the concrete process of production within the media should be analysed. Hereby we merely pay attention to the field of tension between the commodity character of the media structures on the one hand and the practical process of production of the media messages on the other hand. That's why one can lay points of departure on this level to a number of ethno-methodological communicator studies. Only then can be clarified that a linear and monolithic determination of the content of media by the economical is absolutely out of question. The essence of a critical political economy does not lie in the one-sided emphasising of an immediate dependence between the content of media and the economical determinants, but on the opposite it lies exactly in the concrete research of the tensed relationship between structural determination and practical autonomy.

3. Furthermore, if one wants to see clear into the dynamics of the public sphere, the research should concentrate on a systematical analysis of the signification and 'sense-making' processes of the media-users. Especially this level was neglected to much shortly by the political-economical media research. And consequently one has found too fast the mechanistic connection between the ideological content of media and its repercussions on the public. To avoid this, its necessary that the political-economical research expands its radius of action, of the production of media messages to a political economy of the reception and signification of them. At this level one can search connection to the qualitative reception-research, that is expanding strongly the last few years.

At the theoretical level the research of the centre agrees with the different re-conceptualisations that were formulated the last decade in connection with the 'public sphere' and the transforming part that the media plays in it (Verstraeten, 1996). The centre wishes to contribute with its research not only to the further theorising at this level. It mainly aims to found the theorising empirically from different subsections and to deepen or correct it where needed. At the moment eight doctoral projects are current, in each of them the empirical verifying of the theoretical insights is the first matter of importance.

On methodological level the quantitative and qualitative methods of research are combined in most projects. although the different projects each have their own empirical domain, there also exists a coherence in the way of research. The projects are structured regarding content as follows.

Field of research 1: Media, information and public sphere

Mainly the production aspects as well as the reception-aspects are emphasised with respect to the informative part of the media offer. On the one hand there is a research project on the media representation about politics by doing a comparative analysis of the reporting about two important political scandals in recent Belgian history (Goyvaert, 1998).

Two other doctoral projects concentrate on the question to what extent and how media users can get relevant information from the media (one project with respect to the press, another with respect to television), using both the quantitative as the qualitative research methods (Bauwens 7 Vandenbrande, 1998). Those two projects are integrated within a large-scale research project, financed by the Flemish Community, about media use and changing forms of citizenship. In co-operation with SMIT there has been connected a post-doctoral field of research about young people and Internet. It is mainly from this field of research that input is delivered to the main point 'Politics and Communication'.

Field of research 2: Intercultural and subcultural dimensions with respect to the public sphere

Due to the fact that a dynamic vision on the public sphere does not depart from one homogeneous sphere, but on the contrary from a plurality of public spheres, the centre conducts also research on this level. The intercultural dimension merely is worked out in a doctoral project about the audio-visual representation of ethnic minorities for children (Schelfhout, 1996). This project is connected on a few levels to the multicultural education and media pedagogy. Another project wants to examine through ethnographic research methods how and to what extent the Western young people in the Third World try to construct new meanings. This research for 'spatial practices' is situated at the cross-roads between intercultural communication and cultural geography. A third project more aims at the subcultural dimension via an empirical-sociological research on the communicative value of illegal graffiti in Brussels (Bosmans, 1994). It is out of this research interest that the Centre for Mediasociology organised the fifth Flemish Congress for Communication Sciences in 1996 (Schelfhout, 1998). It is also from this field of research that a contribution is delivered for the development of the main point 'Culture and Communication'.

Field of research 3: Fiction, ideological representation and the public sphere

On this level two doctoral projects are current. The one project wants to analyse on a longitudinal base the visual, narrative and ideological codes in the Hollywood movies, in order to reconstruct the image of the social reality that is represented by this 'Dream factory'. The other doctoral project researches how changing gender-identities are represented in the popular media. Through a combination of discourse analysis and qualitative reception-analysis will be analysed how men and women build up their gender-identities reflexively while reading popular media texts.

The research policy of the centre is aimed mainly at the realising of doctorals on the level of fundamental media sociological research. Apparently more applied contract research is called upon, for as far it can mean a support to the current doctoral projects. By that way studies were conducted under the authority of the Centre for Equal Chances Policy, Policy of Major Areas for Education (OVGB, Hasselt) and the VRT (public broadcasting).

Centre for the Study of Marketing Communication (MACO)²

Since the eighties there is an exponential increase of the applied research and (often deposited) applied research methods within the sector of communication, that has (by 'outsourcing') got mainly in the hands of the private sector (market research- and consultancy offices). The reasons for this are an increased consciousness of the im-

portance of communication and information in an organisational context and parallel to this the significant growth of the communication functions within firms and governmental organisations (Rifkin, 1995), as well as an upgrading of 'the communication profession' which has evolved expressly from an executive to a political-strategical function on the level of management. On its turn the increased importance of the communication research in the policy cycle of the enterprises has connections with the insight that to communicate cost-efficiently and effectively within the context of organisation should not be taken for granted (Fill, 1999). Also because of the increased information production (possibilities), the diversification of (technological) communication tools and the involved issue of the so-called 'information overload'. This declares the so-called 'revival' of the effect-and-impact research within the applied communication. In the eighties and nineties the existing offices for communication-, marketing- and market research have realised an important part of their growth on the waves of this development. Hereby they concentrated mainly on offering the firms 'production capacity' (large-scaled 'quantitative research' on representative scale for targets of extrapolation), technology (research about electronic data traffic) and speed of 'production' (fast delivery of research results). On the other hand they remain behind on the level of scientific quality in terms of validity and reliability of the research. For instance in the United States this was the reason why the sector of the market- and opinion poll research got the bad reputation of 'quick and dirty business'.

Gradually the clients of the communication research (firms, governments, non-profit organisations) began to reflect on the function and especially the filling-out and the execution of the applied communication research and this mainly out of an elementary concern about the quality and practical utility of results coming from the applied communication sector (Franzen, 1998). In the (actual) popular domains of the advertising effect research and the corporate image research this tendency is clearly perceptible.

The MACO (Centre for applied Marketing & Communication Research) has, from its foundation on, consciously wanted to anticipate the higher mentioned needs for 'scientifically well-founded' applied communication research. More specifically in the fields of the political and institutional communication, marketing communication and corporate communication. By that the two most important fields within the applied communication are 'covered'. The last two years there has been a considerable amount of external request for advice, quality control, research designs and execution concerning applied communication research. It often concerns complementary support or supervising of communication research that is conducted by offices or authorities with a higher and faster production capacity and for whom the MACO maps out a route of strategical communica-

tion policy and corresponding research. The part of the MACO in such collaboration must be seen synergetic and complementary rather than competitive. The MACO demands always to enter into the research as an autonomous partner to guarantee the independence of the research and the results of the research. The last years the MACO was involved in that part in research orders for the European Commission. Mainly in the field of the political and institutional communication: e.g. TACIS-project EDKYR-9501 'Strengthening of the Ongoing Civil Service Reform in Kyrgyzstan, Central Asia-where a collaboration started between the MACO and the RIPOR ('Regional Institute for Public Opinion Research in Central Asia').

Furthermore there were propositions made to the European Commission for the project 'Strengthening the Capacity of External Relations Departments Ministries in the Kyrgyz Republic' (TACIS-project EDKYU 9601) in collaboration with Fontys (Eindhoven, Netherlands and Gruppo Soges, Turin, Italy), the PHARE-project 'Public Education and Information Elaboration and Implementation of the Basic Elements of the Czech Government's Communication Strategy on European Union Related Matters' (PHARE Project CZ9703/0102/0401/01) and a request for the project 'Institutional building and management development of the Regional Institute for Public Opinion Research on Democratic Reforms and Socio-political Transformation', also at the European Commission.

Other projects in the sphere of the institutional communication that the MACO has lead successfully were amongst others 'A Communications Strategy and Radon Perception Study for the DBIS/SPRI Radon Programme', financed by the Ministry for Social Issues, Public Health and Environment).

In the field of the marketing communication research the MACO is involved in various screening researches of the efficacy and impact of Commercial Communication Strategies (e.g. for LRC-Netherlands) and a screening of the Brand-, Corporate Communication and Intern Communication Policy of the Belgian holding NV.

All those experiences and exchanging of scientific research expertise, by being involved in orders of on the one hand commercial and on the other hand institutional partners, delivers important impulses for the development of fundamental research about the efficacy of communication methods- and techniques. In this way a number of research methods and models were developed in the lap of the MACO (e.g. PECS-model for applied persuasive communication, Product and Brand Identification Tests for the testing and optimising of advertising strategies, brand repertoire research for the testing of the relation between the (mental) 'power' and (economical) performance of a brand. These techniques are adjusted after having been extensively tested, on an experimental base, upon their reliability. Afterwards they are being integrated in practical communication research orders.

These acquired experiences are being exchanged regularly at (international) congresses (e.g. for the American Marketing Association) during lectures for specialised departments where people of the professional and the academic field are united (Marketing Foundation, Department Advertisement and Research) at the invitation or request of enterprises (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRB - Communication training for Belgian diplomats -, Ministry of Civil Service, NV. INVE-group). The MACO has been more and more involved in that quality to start up (international) seminars, workshops of Training Seminars (in collaboration with e.g. STEM, Centre for Empirical research, Prague, GP-group, France, ACC in the Netherlands, RIPOR in Kyrgyzstan, Emerson College Boston). The MACO wishes to profile in the future in all before mentioned branches of the applied communication research and, based on fundamental research, to develop research instruments, techniques and models for the passing within the organisational context of communication research. With these it gives priority to the issues concerning the optimising of (costs) efficacy, impact and efficiency of (integrated)-communication in commercial and institutional contexts, because in this field lie the most important challenges and most needs (Ciezkowski, 1998).

Conclusion

With the five main points that were mentioned before, supported by the research from the three research centres and related research outside of the centres, the department hopes to have developed a large research programme that did not only organically grow from the past of the research but that bears research potential mainly in the future. We hope to have clarified that the media research of the department doesn't wish to lock up in a few artificially constructed dualisms, where the scientific research often suffers from (namely: fundamental against applied research, theoretical against empirical research, quantitative against qualitative methodology, the own research discipline against interdisciplinary research). The department's opinion is that, mainly in the future, the quality of the scientific media research would increase if it does everything to escape from such narrowing dualisms and if it searches for the mutual complementarity of these apparent 'oppositions'.

Finally, the department attaches great interest to the developing of a dynamic research culture. In the past, the conducting of scientific research (especially in the shape of doctorals) was mainly a rather isolated, lonely and strictly individual activity. Also here the department tries to change something by organising workshops (in collaboration with the researchers of the different centres), where the researchers can bring their research design or their first partial results up for discussion with their colleagues. Also the participation of the researchers in the Flemish inter-university doctoral network and

especially in the 'European Network of Doctoral Studies in Communication and Media' with summerschools every year in Madrid, Lund or London - plays an important role on this level. It's here that the researchers get the opportunity to present their research to colleagues from outside their own university walls or land-frontiers. Our experience shows that this work is extremely inspiring as well as motivating. And inspiration and motivation: is it not that we need exactly (maybe even more than financial funds) to do solid scientific research?

Notes

1. In co-operation with C. Pauwels, J.-C. Burgelman and F. Neukens.
2. In co-operation with F. Thevissen.

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Jan Servaes & Rico Lie

Communication for social change

The study of communication, culture and policy at the
Catholic University Brussels

Introduction

The Faculty of Political and Social Sciences is the youngest faculty of the Katholieke Universiteit Brussel. In 1989 the Faculty of Economic, Social and Political Sciences started with a Communication Studies section, and in 1991 with the Political Science and Sociology sections. It was only in 1993 that the autonomous Faculty of Political and Social Sciences was founded and that the Department of Communication Studies could slowly but surely develop and grow. Firstly, we will explain the most important theoretical principles on which the department's work is based. Secondly we will describe how its philosophy is put into practice.

Theoretical starting points

The primary research field of the Communication Studies department at the Katholieke Universiteit Brussel is the interaction between communication and social change. A very important underlying area is the relation between culture and communication. This relation can be approached in different ways. Research primarily starts from the idea that all forms of communication are culturally based. It is the intention to investigate the role of communication in the processes of social change. A second, closely connected field is concerned with the policy and planning components of the interaction between communication and social change.

Communication in social change

Terms like 'communication', 'information', 'social change', 'development', 'participation', 'democracy', 'freedom', etc. belong to everyday speech. They are so frequently used that the need to define their exact meaning is no longer felt. However, if one would take the trouble to do so, it would soon become quite clear that they are differently interpreted by different people and institutions. This does not only apply to the definitions of said ideas as used by the man or woman in the street, but also for the working definitions as used by professionals and policy makers, and even for the so-called social-scientific definitions in general.

Therefore we need clear definitions, which is of course easier said than done. Indeed, these terms not only cover a complex and multi-dimensional reality, they are also charged with certain norms. By this we mean that each definition is dependent on the normative theoretical point of view from which the issue is studied.

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Many authors link the concept of social change with the concept of development. 'Social change' and 'development' are therefore two terms that cover more or less the same content. Social change refers to changes in the organisation of a community; in structure and/or in function. A general definition of social change is given by Jef Verhoeven (1986, p. 19). He defines social change as 'a significant change of structured social action and/or of the culture of role carriers, groups or collectives'. Such a general definition can be further specified on the basis of criteria such as the scale of social change (micro, meso, macro), the time span in which it is taking place (short versus long term), the rate of the changing processes (evolution versus revolution), the direction (progress or decline), its content (socio-cultural, psychological, organisational, a.o.), and the question whether the social change is either peaceful or aggressive. In this context development can be called a specific form of social change. At first the word development had a positive connotation whereas 'underdevelopment' was labelled negatively. However, development not only refers to a process of social change, but it also indicates the aim or end point of the said process. 'Development' is often implicitly identified with the hierarchic completion of clearly defined stages leading to a general and final form of community that would be satisfactory to all. Such a model is *de facto* fashioned after Western standards. That way the concept implies a value judgement; it refers to a specific target group (who needs to be developed?) and objective (what is development?). That is why the term development and the so-called Third World are often bracketed together, which is very unjust as development is taking place in the entire world. The issue of and discussion on communication in developing or social changing processes are therefore not limited to the Third World. Social change does not refer as emphatically to a certain direction and is therefore better suited to cover the processes of social-cultural change which are taking place in Western as well as in other countries. Such processes are for instance: globalisation and localisation, women's liberation, everyday racism, awareness and politico-economical emancipation and economical liberalisation. Social change often happens unintentionally, but we are especially concerned with planned and intended social change with specific objectives that are linked with certain situations and cannot be universally generalised. In these processes of determined socio-cultural change communication seems to have become a key word.

'Communication in social change' is a very broad field and is connected with many forms of media. Many divisions of the mass media are of a technological nature, which is, however, only one of the many possibilities of division and not always directly relevant. Other classic divisions such as the distinctions between public media (mass media), instrumental media (information and education) and local, small-scale media, are also somewhat outdated. The arrival of the multimedia and the convergence of the media has made the above distinctions less adequate. What is more, such a division already leads

on a macro level to a fragmented policy, whereas the decentralisation should be implemented on the meso and micro levels. The distinction made on the macro level is not necessarily the same as the distinction on the meso or micro levels.

The role of culture

All human action is based on an exchange of ideas, knowledge and experience. People communicate by means of language. Linguistic misunderstandings are mostly not the result of linguistic incompetence, but are usually due to a different way of thinking and cultural pattern between the communicating individuals. We can 'hear', but do not 'understand' one another. These misunderstandings can be either verbal or non-verbal. As a result objectives are not reached. Effective communication is characterised by information that is tailored to the people for whom the message is intended. The role of culture in this context is very important. Communication is effective when the messages fit in with the receivers' culture. An important condition to that end is that their culture is known and understood. Such an understanding only comes about if the contacts are of a guaranteed quality.

International communication is concerned with all cross-border traffic of data, information and knowledge. In the case of intercultural communication, the social use and the social and cultural context in which and between which is communicated become important. Meanings of words and symbols, as well as language itself, are in fact culturally linked. To define culture in this context is no sinecure. The term culture includes material and immaterial aspects of a certain way of life, passed on and confirmed by means of socialisation processes and ideological devices (school, media, church...) to members of a community. Culture is not only about values or judgments about good and evil, beautiful or ugly, but also about the way we eat, live or dress. In that sense cultures can be described as social contexts in which a certain frame of reference has found its expression or has become 'institutionalised', and which directs and structures the interaction and communication of the people within that context. Such frames of reference can be distinguished by three empirical dimensions: a world view, a values system and a symbolic representation. In this respect institutions fulfil a key role. They are forms of action that have crystallised – on the basis of social acceptance – into more or less standardised and self-evident routines, and that can have either a negative-limiting or positive-liberating effect. Culture can be described as a cluster of institutions that interact and influence one another, and that can stand out by an own 'identity'. Such a vision on culture implies a dynamic nature. Culture is never 'completed', but always in 'development'. Moreover, while shaping their social existence people are constantly (mostly unconsciously) making certain choices that are controlled by the values and options of their culture. Social reality can then be seen as a reality, the establishment and cultivation of which have originated from certain values, a

reality in which the values system and the social system are entirely interwoven and are affected by one another. Seeing that the needs and values that are developed by different cultural communities in divergent situations and surroundings are not the same, these cultures also present a different identity. Cultures derive their 'identities' from the fact that they are based on a network of institutions with a common world view and ethos. That 'identity' differs from culture to culture. In other words, each culture has to be analysed on the basis of its own logical structure. Indeed, each culture operates from its own logic. Cross-cultural or intercultural communication is only successful if all parties concerned understand this logical foundation and accept it as equal. As in all social processes, this is not a purely rational process nor is it planned beforehand. Therefore culture should be seen as the unintended result of the interwoven actions of a group of people who are interrelated and interactive.

The paradigm of multiplicity, a culturalist perspective and an interpretative approach

In the last four decades the views on social change and the role of communication and culture in social change have strongly altered. In the course of this period we have seen the evolution of three paradigms or viewpoints: the paradigm of modernisation, the paradigm of dependency and the paradigm of multiplicity. These paradigms are complementary rather than alternative. They form the basis for reflecting on alternative communication in development and social change. An important reversal in the manner of thinking was the fact that the unilateral vision on the relation between sender and receiver had lost its validity. Many people came to realize that the receiver was active. The theoreticians also grew aware of the fact that science is not value-free or neutral.

These general views can be complemented with opinions that emphasise the need to change the existing social structures, such as the so-called critical theory and its Latin-American variant. This current in Communication Studies critically examines society and links this analysis with the effects of the media within that society. We should also mention the Brazilian Paolo Freire who developed the consciousness-raising method, which is more concerned with participation and dialogue.

The criticism of the paradigms of modernisation and dependency has led to the formulation of new visions on social change and communication. The reversal in the vision on social change is characterised by two general trends. Firstly one discovers and recognises that theories, research and social structures are never value-free. Secondly, the vision on the receiver is changing. People are no longer seen as passive, easily suggestible creatures, but as active individuals in a dynamic process. Development cannot be imposed, it should come from within. The former president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere (1973, p. 60), stated it pithily: 'People cannot be developed, they can only develop themselves. An outsider can build a house for

someone else, but he cannot give the other pride and self-confidence as a human being. Man must create those himself by his own activities, decisions and by full participation – as an equal – in the community in which he lives’.

The paradigm of multiplicity supposes that the context in which the active receiver finds himself is important. This implies that a universal development model is not possible. Development is a unique process for a specific community and should be based on, among other things, the following principles: the satisfaction of basic needs; the examination of a culture from within (endogeneity); the use of one’s own potentials (self-reliance); ecologically sound development; and the pursuit of participatory democracy and structural changes (or enduring development).

This approach particularly reassesses the role of interpersonal communication. In contrast with the earlier paradigms this approach also attaches more importance to participatory communication and to small-scale media that pay more attention to the local culture and are interactive and participatory. The receivers should be able to participate in the communication process in order to shape their development while starting from their own culture.

Building on the paradigm of multiplicity and Freire’s basic ideas, the role of participation and dialogue has become very important in the processes of communication in social change. Directly connected with participation and dialogue are the ‘bottom-up’ approach and the active view on human beings. It is emphasised that within ‘communication in social change’ people are not seen as passive factors or billiard balls on whom behaviour can be imposed directly from above (‘top-down’). People actively give meaning to their daily lives, their social surroundings and therefore also to their media-surroundings. That is why the stress lies strongly on a ‘bottom-up’ approach. This perspective builds on a scientific-philosophical interpretative approach. This is the underlying philosophical source of inspiration in most of our department’s research projects.

We can generally find obvious connections between ‘communication in social change’ and anthropology. These links with anthropology do not only exist qua theoretical approach and thematic relevance, but also on the level of the used qualitative methods and the so-called triangulation. Triangulation means that different methods are applied at once. Participation, ‘bottom-up’ approaches and an active view on human beings are very familiar concepts in anthropology. Also the notion of culture, the major field of study in anthropology, occupies an important place. In our view participation and culture are two inextricably linked ideas within a culturalist approach.

Without the recognition of cultural differences and the consequent mutual understanding and respect of one another’s culture, there can be no form of participation. Therefore we can speak of an interpretative perspective as well as of a culturalist perspective on communication in social change.

Communication, culture and policy

In contrast with the more economically and politically oriented policy options on which the paradigms of modernisation and dependency are based, the paradigm of multiplicity – which forms the theoretical basis of the department’s policy research – focuses on the idea that there is no universal and generally valid development strategy, that development should be seen as an integral, multidimensional and dialectical process that can differ from community to community. The same can be said of the ‘role’ of policy and planning for social change. Policy makers and planners are faced with a number of important choices, not only concerning the issue of communication and the possible solutions, but also about the method in which policy and planning should be organized and put into practice. Different problems or situations call for different solutions. Again there is no universal method to be used always and anywhere. That is why today, as in the formulation of theory, policy and planning are also looking for a kind of hybrid approach that builds on different theories, and integrates and combines different methods of planning: ‘There is no ‘role’ for communication in development, but rather many roles’ (Middleton & Wedemeyer, 1985:33).

In spite of these fundamental and qualifying considerations policy makers and planners still need a more universal conceptual and operational frame. We are in fact not only dealing with a theoretical, but also with a practically-oriented discipline, or a ‘process of conducting research on, or analysis of, a fundamental social problem in order to provide policy makers with pragmatic, action-oriented recommendations for alleviating the problem’ (Majchrzak, 1984:12). In this definition we recognise two aspects that are closely linked with the theoretical propositions of the paradigm of multiplicity: i.e. the attention for essential, fundamental social problems, and for the practicability, applicability and action-orientedness of the research recommendations.

In the field of policy-oriented research Majchrzak (1984) distinguishes four disciplines on the basis of practicality and manner of approach (see fig. 1).

	FOCUS	
	<i>technical</i>	<i>fundamental</i>
<i>low</i>	policy analysis of policy	analysis of fundamental policy-research
	APPLICABILITY	
<i>high</i>	technical research	policy and planning-research

FIGURE 1
A typology of policy research

Within this typology the department focuses especially on the third and fourth type of fundamental research which has either a more theoretical or a more practical relevance.

A conceptual and operational model for communication policy and planning

The department has developed a model based on a few elements that are essential to the formulation and analysis of a communication policy, i.e. (a) intrinsic variables which can be of an external or internal nature (objectives, policy functions and such); (b) factors defining one another (sectors) and actors (institutions, public); (c) a distinction by level of analysis (international, national, local and suchlike); (d) a process-minded, planned approach (policy, planning, realisation, evaluation). This model tries to express the structural-dynamic complexity of the policy-making issue. A realistic and coherent policy model will only become possible insofar as the interrelations of above-mentioned elements can be adequately assessed. To do so in the practice of policy and planning is even harder than in theory. Theoretically it is indeed possible to isolate certain aspects by deduction or induction and to study them separately. The most important elements of this model are summarised as follows:

The issue of the level of analysis

Policy makers and planners are faced with problems on diverse levels of analysis. There are not only internal or external contradictions on the international level (for instance between the centre and the periphery), but policy and planning can also be affected by tensions on the national and local levels, tensions between the state and the media or between the authorities and the population. We could say in general that a necessary combination and integration of local, national, regional, international and intermediary levels should be pursued. A culturalist analysis starts, furthermore, from following premises: (a) the integration and combination of different policy and planning methods, (b) the multidimensionality and baseorientatedness are the centre from which the different levels are analysed. In other words, one starts from a new perspective in which ideas such as decentralisation and participation are fundamental. Centralisation does not have to clash with the principle of decentralisation. Central organisms can offer a synthesis of regional and local services. It is important, though, to keep an eye on the scale of centralisation in order to guarantee that local entities and individuals can participate and have their say. In other words, the coherence between centralisation and decentralisation is very complex, and each so-called decentralised situation should therefore be carefully analysed.

An integrated-dialectic policy model

So long as the vision on development or social change has not been clearly defined, there may be obscurity and confusion on the sec-

ondary and peripheral levels with regard to the development and communication policies, both on the macro and on the micro level. The value system on which the economical, political, social and cultural activities of a community are based is therefore inherent to the philosophy of development: 'The point here is not to emphasise which values ought to be adopted at the expense of others, but rather, to recognise that stability and equilibrium of any living system is directly connected to the process of value orientation and value maintenance as factors of hemostasis warding off decay, disorganisation, and disintegration' (Mowlana, 1997, p. 9).

A structural policy model

Within the structural-static approach it is important to make a clear distinction between policy- and planning-defining factors and actors. Actors may be public or pressure groups that are active, either directly or indirectly, and on the basis of an explicit or implicit programme. However, policy is not only defined by these actors with their distinctive logic, but also by more structurally immanent factors. These factors especially determine the framework in which the actors can take actions and become policy-defining. Factors are linked with place and time and can therefore be different from community to community. Some have a cyclical, others a more structural nature. This distinction is partly inspired on Mowlana's 'multidimensional and integrative approach to communication utility' (Mowlana, 1997) in which he makes a division between a 'communication infrastructural axis' and an 'individual-system level axis' on the one hand and McQuail and Siune's (1986, p. 23) typology of policy actors on the other. This model is the basis of and has been further developed in the research projects in which the department is involved (see below). The drafting of a policy should meet the needs and expectations of the present pressure groups, and also consider the available means and existing infrastructure.

A dynamic policy process

From a dynamic perspective the policy process can be divided in five stages that often overlap and affect one another: the policy formulation, the strategic or long-term planning, the operational or short-term planning, the realisation or execution of policy and planning, and the evaluation. The different analysis levels and stages of the policy process are determined by the dialectical interaction of different structural and dynamic components. Policy formulations should be interconnected on the different levels. The central objectives must offer a synthesis of the sectorial aims. These can be, for instance, principles such as the alleviation of basic needs, the stimulation of national identity, participatory democracy and suchlike. A valuable and effective communication policy is only possible if contextual determinants of a political, social, economical, ecological or other nature are correctly assessed on the one hand, and if an active participation of the different interest

groups is guaranteed on the other. General principles such as participation or decentralisation should not be neglected. Besides the establishment of structures that can facilitate an active social participation, it is also necessary to create – in view of the following stages – evaluation and research possibilities in order to facilitate corrections or adjustments of policy and planning if necessary. Alan Hancock's policy and planning matrix (1981) clearly shows that this process is cyclical and open.

Implications for the practice of policy and research

This policy model also has consequences for the practice of policy and research. In particular the used method, the choice of the research field, and the place of the policy maker and researcher are fundamentally different from conventional models. This model implicitly contains more dialectical strategies of mobilisation and awareness-raising. Research of public-oriented and participatory forms of communication has become especially focused on decentralised and isolated initiatives. Such projects are certainly valuable, for instance to experiment with new social communication processes and patterns. But next to these small-scale projects there should also be room for large-scale analyses and situations. This kind of research should be oriented towards two issues. Firstly one should investigate which actors or interest groups exert their influence from the top. These influences can transform, strengthen or weaken one another. We are dealing with a much more accurate analysis of the patterns of manipulation that affect the bottom by means of power, money or cultural influence. This also places the state more into the centre. The second issue is the way in which the bottom reacts to influencing. Research should be aimed at the rationality of the target groups. The difference with traditional anthropological research is that the choice of the symbolic order to which the research is oriented, is defined by key concepts such as reproduction, labour or culture. More or less accidental differences in rationality are not interesting, but we are mainly concerned with systematic tendencies and differences. This implies that the choice of the place and context of the research cannot be accidental but should be based on practical instead of theoretical considerations. Only with these considerations in mind is it possible to break through the artificial fences of the different media and levels, in pursuit of the integrative, disintegrative and reintegrative elements that maintain or undermine the ideological order and mechanisms of power and dominance versus contra-power and liberation.

The basic premises of 'Communication in social change'

The coherence of 'communication in social change' is expressed in the different common underlying premises. In conclusion we can say that the department's research in all its diversity, i.e. in theory, method, medium and region, is characterised by a number of underlying common values and starting-points. These premises, values and starting-points are:

The use of a culturalist viewpoint

By means of such a viewpoint specific attention is given to communication and culture in social changes. By putting culture centrally in the used perspective, anthropology can significantly contribute to the field of 'communication in social change'.

The use of a 'bottom-up' approach and an interpretative perspective

Participation, dialogue and an active vision on human beings are of the utmost importance. A highly considered value is the showing of respect and appreciation for the uniqueness of specific situations and identities.

The use of integrated methods and theories

In the field of 'communication in social change' it is considered important that the chosen methods should be connected with the used theoretical perspective. This implies that also openness, diversity and flexibility in methods and techniques are valued. In practice it generally means triangulation and a preference for qualitative methods. This does not mean, however, that quantitative methods are excluded.

To show mutual understanding and attach importance to formal and informal intercultural training

Tolerance, consciousness-raising, acceptance and respect can only be arrived at when members of different (sub)cultures not only hear, but also understand each other. This mutual understanding is a condition for social change. In order to prevent all forms of miscommunication, formal and informal intercultural training should be deemed important.

Targeted groups should be actively involved in the project's preparation and realisation in order to make a success of intentional social-cultural change processes. In that case effective participatory communication between all parties concerned is indispensable. The information flow between project managers and targeted groups needs a solid base on which the process of social change is shaped. That is why the communication between the different interested groups is a primary item of the agenda, both in the stages of planning and implementation. The integration of the communication strategies in a project should be connected with the existing communication infrastructure and the local culture. This also implies that the information and information channels should be tailored to the targeted groups.

If all these criteria are dealt with it will be possible to realise an effective communication in social change, not only in our multicultural society but also elsewhere.

In practice

Research centre 'Communication for Social Change' (CSC)

The research and documentation centre 'Communication for Social Change' (CSC) was founded in 1995 and is active in research, teaching and information in the interdisciplinary field of communication

in social change. As a consequence of earlier theoretical initiatives and empirical studies the multiplicity perspective is further pursued. In contrast with earlier perspectives on communication for development (the approach of modernisation and diffusion, and those of dependency and cultural imperialism) the multiplicity perspective focuses on culturalist, multidimensional and intrinsic-normative aspects. The Centre's lines of research are:

'Participatory Communication Research'

This line of research wants to make an inventory of the different methods listed as 'participatory communication research' and to analyse them both theoretically and empirically.

'Development Communication in UN Governmental and Non-Governmental Organisations'

The purpose is to analyse the different approaches with regard to development communication in theory as well as in practice. It also wants to translate the current international package for the Belgian and Flemish situation.

'The Interrelationships between Culture and Communication Policy-making in Thailand'

This line of investigation tries to examine the relationships between culture and communication policy-making in Thailand.

'Comparative Research on (Tele)communication Policies in Western Europe, South-East Asia, Southern Africa and Latin America'

This line of investigation compares the (tele)communication policies in Western Europe, South-East Asia, Southern Africa and Latin America.

'Communication for Social Change'

In addition to a further theoretical formulation, the multiplicity perspective is specified in several subjects (e.g. 'technology transfer' and the cohesion between globalisation and localisation) and tested by empirical data.

Scientific events

In the last four years the Communication Studies department and its research centre 'Communication for Social Change' has organised autonomously and in co-operation with its co-ordinating Faculty and external organisations several scientific events. These events are a concrete frame for the lines of research and the presented research philosophy. A survey is listed below:

'The Little Journalist on the Barricades', March 1995

'The Little Journalist on the Barricades' was a panel discussion on war journalism. The problems of war journalism were introduced by the documentary 'Press at War' by Pascal Decroos.

'Human Rights and Conflict Management', October 1995

'Human Rights and Conflict Management' was a conference on the present-day role of the United Nations in human rights situations and conflict management. The conference sought an answer to the fundamental question: 'After 50 years, is there still a future for the United Nations?' The conference was accompanied by the exhibition 'Building or Extinguishing?', a visual representation of the role of the United Nations.

'Communication, Culture and Development', December 1995

'Communication, Culture and Development' was a second conference organised for the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. In contrast with the first conference on human rights and conflict management this conference was more oriented towards culture and communication and the role of UNESCO, FAO and other specialised UN and NGO agencies.

'Will the BRTN Make it to 2001?', March 1996

'Will the BRTN Make it to 2001?' wanted to find out how the BRTN should develop further as a public broadcasting corporation. The Minister of Economics and Media, Eric Van Rompuy gave a comment on the so-called Mini and Maxi decree, which was followed by a dispute with and between the Minister, people working for the media, policy makers and academics.

'(Tele)communications Policies in Western Europe and Southeast Asia: Cultural and Historical Perspectives', August 1996

The international congress '(Tele)communications Policies in Western Europe and Southeast Asia: Cultural and Historical Perspectives' was organized in cooperation with the research centre SMIT of the VU Brussel and the research centre AMIC from Singapore. Its purpose was to investigate the convergence of telecommunication and 'broadcasting' from a culturalist perspective. The congress was put in an Asian-Western comparative perspective.

'Media & Politics', February 1997

'Media & Politics' was one of the largest congresses ever hosted by the KU Brussels. A few sections of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) participated in the selection procedure for the acceptance or rejection of the submitted abstracts and papers. All kinds of subjects were dealt with: media and human rights, internet and democracy, globalisation and cultural identity, public opinion, stereotypes in the media etc.

'Student Congress', February 1997

The student congress 'Media, Politics and Manipulation' was organised alongside the large international congress 'Media & Politics'. The students succeeded in motivating 700 secondary school students for a discussion with Flemish and Dutch personalities from the worlds of social science, press and politics.

'Human Rights, Democracy & Communication', December 1997

'Human Rights, Democracy & Communication' was a study and reflection moment on human rights. It was intended as a reflection on the 50th anniversary of UNESCO and wanted to sketch the broad outlines of a 'Human Rights Agenda' for the 21st century.

'Political Corruption in Europe and Belgium: Proportions, Characteristics, Causes and Remedies', December 1997

'Transparency International' listed Belgium – after Italy – as the most corrupt country of the European Union. The conference wanted to find out whether this was really the case. In the morning several cases from the E.U. were presented, in the afternoon Belgium itself was studied.

'Student Congress', February 1998

This second student congress was called 'Our Democracy on the Road to (No)Where?'. Among the subjects treated in several sessions: the right to vote for migrants, youth and politics, the news media, political corruption and new political movements.

'Migrants, Refugees and the Right to Communicate: The European Union, Exclusion and Citizenship', April 1998.

This international congress on the issues of migrants and refugees in European perspective was organised in co-operation with the World Association of Christian Communication (WACC) from London.

'The Production and Consumption of National and Local Cultural Products in the Age of Global Communication', June 1998

This large international congress was organised in co-operation with the Asian Media and Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC) in Singapore, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Télécommunications (ENST) in France, and the National Chung Cheng University of Taiwan.

'Thailand's Communication and Culture under the Current Economic Crisis', January 1999

This large international congress was organised in co-operation with the Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand.

'Human Rights and Development Cooperation in Africa', December 1998

'Human Rights and Development Cooperation in Africa' was the yearly moment of study and reflection on human rights.

'Student Congress', February 1999

This third student congress was titled 'Changing Borders: European Supremacy in Belgium'. A range of sessions treated themes such as: language problems in Europe, a look behind the scenes of the June 1999 elections and the decay of our media in European and global perspective.

PhD research

The department of Communication Studies wants to attract doctoral students who can identify with the above formulated theoretical principles and their applications, and to supervise their PhD research. The department's yearly intensive PhD seminar is also open to doctoral students from other universities. Among the lecturers were: in 1997 Mina Ramirez, professor and director of the Asian Social Institute in Manila; in 1998 Robert White, professor and director of the Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Communication of the Gregorian University in Rome. Subjects for discussion were: 'the cultural negotiation model of development', 'the role of democratisation of communication in development' and 'theories of globalisation and theories of development'.

Co-operations

The department of Communication Studies and the research centre CSC participate in national, European and international research units. It has, for instance, joined the Participatory Communication Research Network (PCRN) and the Participatory Communication Research Section of the International Association of Media and Communication Research (IAMCR). The CSC is also involved with the co-ordination of the UNESCO-IAMCR Roundtables on Development Communication and the UN-Interagency Roundtables on Communication for Development. The president of the department of Communication Studies is president-co-ordinator of the Steering Committee of the European Association for Communication Research (EACR) and the European Consortium for Communication Research (ECCR).

In the recent past the department has engaged in international co-operation agreements with, among others, the Asian Social Institute (ASI), Manila, the Philippines; the Asian Mass Communication and Information Centre (AMIC), Singapore; the Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand; La Crujia – Centro de Comunicacion Educativa, Buenos Aires, Argentina; the Florida State University, Tallahassee, USA; the State University of New York at Buffalo, USA; the University of Buea, Cameroon; and the Universidad Nacional de la Plata, Argentina.

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Jan Gutteling, Peter Jan Schellens and Erwin Seydel
Designing effective communication
Communication research at the University of Twente, Enschede

Introduction

The core business of the Communication Research programme at the University of Twente is communication within and by organisations¹. The general research question focuses on design processes for internal and external communication of organisations and their communication products. Communication contributes to organisational effectiveness when it helps to reconcile the organisation's goals with the expectancies of its strategic constituencies. In general, we expect organisations to set up strategies, structured systems and processes, and make means available for their internal and external communication activities. Communication goals of organisations may be of an informative, instructive or persuasive nature; target groups may be commercial institutions, employees, other organisations, customers or clients, the general public, government or supervisory institutions, journalists, the media, and so on. Organisational communication research is aimed at understanding how and when intended effects can be reached and unintended or unwanted effects can be avoided. The determinants of the success or failure of organisational communication are therefore studied in the sender, the receiver, the media or channels, the messages, the context of the communication and in the interaction of these factors. The primary goal is to produce an understanding of the process of designing organisational communication. Designing communication is defined as the systematic approach to communicative problem solving, characterised by the analysis of the problem, the generation and elaboration of potential solutions, the testing and revising of concepts and the implementation and evaluation of final solutions. With this in mind, studies are conducted into the design practice and the management of organisational communication (Seydel, 1996).

Theories from the behavioural sciences regarding knowledge transfer and information processing, information seeking behaviour, task performance and changes in attitude and behaviour are the guiding principles for this research programme. Disciplinary input comes from applied linguistics and cognitive social psychology. This implies that the effects of communication are studied on the level of the individual and on intermediate level. The question is how in a particular context the individual reacts to communication: is attention paid to the message, is this attention selective or biased, how can the processing of the information be described, and what effects occur in terms of changes in knowledge, attitudes or behaviour? At interme-

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diate level, the effects are studied, for instance, by looking at the levels of safety or efficiency of the organisation or at its image as perceived by internal or external target groups. Cognitive social psychology focuses on issues of information processing and attitude and behavioural change; applied linguistics focuses on issues regarding the impact of message variables. The research is also aimed at the characteristics and effects of the various communication *products* which result from the design process, both on the level of the modes of delivery ('traditional' and new electronic media) and on the level of the structure and content of concrete messages in diverse genres (e.g., public education or instruction).

The programme consists of three sub-programmes:

- text in use and document design: a linguistic perspective on communication design;
- communication and persuasion: a social-psychological perspective on communication design;
- design of health communication.

The research topics of these sub-programmes are described in more detail below. Furthermore, the most salient findings and publications of the last five years of each sub-programme are highlighted.

Text in use and document design: a linguistic perspective on communication design

The goal of the applied linguistic programme is to develop methods for evaluating and optimising the quality of textual communication produced by organisations. This requires insight into how texts are produced and processed.

In considering text production, the programme does not focus on individual writing processes (an object of cognitively oriented research), but rather on *document design processes*, i.e. institutional, planned and collaborative modes of text production. Writing processes of this type are characterised by the analysis of targets and target groups, the use of reviewing and the application of pre-testing. Text processing is not only taken to cover the comprehension and retention of texts, but also the selection, acceptance and application of information. The programme therefore supplements research into the *comprehension* of texts of a psycholinguistic and cognitive psychological nature by conducting research into the *use* of texts: for purposes of knowledge transfer (through informative texts), for changing attitudes and behaviour (through persuasive texts) or for performing tasks (through instructive texts).

The central research object of the programme is the quality of functional documents, i.e. of types of text that play an important part in societal and organisational communication. The target audience of public information materials, governmental forms, instructive texts

such as user manuals and software documentation, and on-screen texts in the context of the new media consists of various segments of the general public, either citizens or consumers.

Research into document design is aimed at gaining insight into the characteristics of the process of document design and the consequences of these characteristics for the quality of written communication. Research into the use of documents is aimed at gaining insight into the effects of specific characteristics of a document and the consequences of these characteristics for document design. These characteristics include rhetorical aspects (such as selection of content, perspective and order of information) and linguistic aspects (such as style and structure-signalling devices).

Depending on the specific research question being investigated in a given project, the programme uses various research methods.

For research into *document design processes*, we use surveys and case study methods (interviews, questionnaires and document analysis). Special attention is given to methods of pre-testing and usability testing which may be applied in the process of document design as a means of improving the quality of texts.

For research into the *use of texts*, we employ qualitative methods (e.g. the thinking-aloud method) as well as quantitative observational methods (e.g., registration of keystrokes, reading times, etc.). In experimental research into how the use of texts is affected by various textual variables, the dependent variables are sought in the degree to which the text is successful in achieving its goals (the transfer of information, the influencing of behaviour or the performance of a task).

The programme is geared to developing general principles that can be used in communication design processes. It focuses on knowledge that can be applied to document design in general or the design of certain genres. This general knowledge may concern the *product* of the document design process (such as the knowledge that incorporating feature *x* or feature *y* into a text will increase the efficiency of the communication). This knowledge may also pertain to the *process* itself (e.g., the knowledge that using method *p* or method *q* is likely to increase the efficiency or effectiveness of the design process and the quality of the product). In particular, the development and validation of methods for applied research is viewed as an object of research.

The results of such application-oriented research give rise to theoretical questions (e.g. 'Why do text features *x* or *y* have the effect they do?' or 'Why is method *p* or method *q* effective?'). Although some of these questions might be answered on the basis of existing theories of text processing or text production, others may lead to new theoretical insights.

Overview of results

The development of document design as an object of academic re-

search has been clearly presented in several special issues of *Tijdschrift voor Taalbeheersing* (Dutch Journal of Speech Communication) on document design (Schellens & Steehouder, 1994), text evaluation (Renkema & Schellens, 1996) and instructive documents (Maes & Schellens, 1998). Results of research carried out in the Netherlands have been internationally distributed in two special issues of American journals (Steehouder & Jansen, 1996; Van der Geest & Schellens, 1997).

The core of the programme consists of a number of long-term projects. An initial project involves exploratory and descriptive research into the professional practice of document design and communication design in an organisational context. This project provides the basis for a number of projects that concentrate on the use of specific types of documents, i.e., public information brochures, instructive documents (such as forms and manuals) and on-screen documents.

Processes of document design and communication design

The professional document design process differs from the non-professional writing process in the interaction that is involved between parties, in its use of reviewers and reader research as evaluative tools and in separate production and distribution processes (Schellens & Steehouder, 1994). This picture has been further clarified by empirical research. The influence of social conditions on writing processes has been studied in a case study approach developed by Van der Geest (1996), resulting in a detailed description of planning and re-viewing in the collaborative writing processes of engineers (Van der Geest & Van Gemert, 1997).

Document design processes are often embedded in or linked to communication design processes at a more general level. The design of public information brochures, for instance, is frequently part of a campaign development process, which in turn is dependent on a policy design process. To get a more sophisticated picture of communication design, those multilevel design processes have been studied in a number of multiple case studies in different fields: public information campaigns (Klaassen & Schellens, 1999), communication about working conditions and safety rules (Van Gemert, 1999) and the design of Web sites, where technical and communicational design are inextricably linked.

Communication design in organisational contexts has been the focus of several studies into the analysis and diagnosis of communication problems in organisations (Van Gemert & Woudstra, 1998).

Instructive texts (forms, user guides, software manuals)

Instructive documents have a how-to-do character, i.e., they are intended to support readers in the performance of specific tasks. In this project, central questions are: 'How are instructive documents read and used?', 'What kind of requirements do these documents have to meet?' and 'What kind of document characteristics are func-

tional or dysfunctional in supporting users in task performance and problem solving?'.

The use of *forms* (and instructions on how to complete these forms) has been investigated by making a desk analysis of ten forms and then asking test subjects from the target group to fill them in and think aloud whilst doing so. This project produced three types of results. First, a method for analysing and testing this type of documents could be developed and validated. Second, the people who completed the forms provided insight into the use of texts. It turned out, for instance, that many problems can be explained by highly selective reading behaviour and an inadequate reflection of efficient sequences of processing (as shown by task analysis) in formulating and ordering questions. Lastly, the project yielded insight into the critical text variables that affect the use of forms, including the fragmentation of information, structure-signalling devices and the sequence and formulation of questions (see Jansen & Steehouder, 1992).

The main topics of research into *manuals* and *user guides* have been: the function of declarative information in manuals, the effects of different kinds of schemes in instructions and the search behaviour of users of instructive documents.

In a series of experiments, it has been investigated whether and how declarative information in software manuals is used by both experienced and inexperienced test subjects and how this use affects immediate and delayed task performance (Ummelen, 1997). Using a newly-developed method to track the use of a manual (the 'click-and-read' method) and using log files to record task performance, it was found that declarative information, in spite of having no effect on immediate task performance, has a positive effect on delayed task performance. The explanation offered is that people use declarative information to construct a mental model of the software program. This mental model allows them to predict or reconstruct steps in a given procedure. If only procedural information is given, as advocated in the 'minimalist approach' to software documentation, constructing a mental model of the program is more difficult.

The effect of using various types of schematic representations (tables, flowcharts, etc.) on the effectiveness of instructive texts has been examined in comparative experiments (Boekelder, 1996).

The search behaviour of users of instructive texts has been investigated in observational research (Steehouder, 1994). Analytic research has been conducted into sequencing phenomena in stepwise instructions (Jansen & Steehouder, 1996).

In 1997, a comprehensive professional publication on software manuals, aimed at technical writers, was published (Steehouder & Jansen, 1997). Maes et al. (1996) presented a textbook for higher education on the design of instructive texts.

Public information brochures

A variety of methods are currently available for pre-testing drafts as a

step in document design. De Jong & Schellens (1997) presented a critical inventory of methods.

In this project, a method was developed and validated for pre-testing six draft government information brochures, i.e., the plus-and-minus method, combined with a semi-structured interview. Research indicated that readers showed a significant preference for the revised versions of all brochures. In three cases, a significant improvement in the comprehensibility of the information was found. In two of the three persuasive brochures, improvements were found in the persuasiveness of the information (De Jong, 1998).

The project has yielded insight into the problems encountered by readers of informative and persuasive brochures, including comprehension problems and problems relating to the selection, acceptability and relevance of information. Many of these problems cannot be explained by assuming that the texts do not take sufficient account of readers' language skills or prior knowledge. Rather, the explanation lies in the fact that the texts do not adequately reflect the readers' informational needs and perspectives.

Comparative research using individual versus focus group approaches has revealed how the mode of data collection may affect the type of reader feedback obtained. The group pre-test reveals more general problems relating to the document as a whole and tends to focus more on the acceptability of the information, whereas the individual pre-test reveals more detailed problems and focuses more on comprehension issues (De Jong & Schellens, 1998).

By generalising beyond the specific problems encountered by test subjects, the project has yielded a large number of insights into how to produce efficient leaflets. Revision strategies have been formulated for various types of problems. A first study into the revision strategies of professional writers has revealed a high variety in preferences for different revision strategies (Schellens & De Jong, 1997). In addition to the research into reader-focused evaluation methods, text-focused functional analysis has been studied as a means of text evaluation (Schellens et al., 1997).

On-line documents

We have recently started a research project into the use of on-screen text. The aim of this project is twofold: first, it seeks to obtain insight into the factors that specifically enhance the effective and efficient use of on-screen texts; second, the project should result in the development of evaluation or pre-test methods that are useful in the process of designing on-screen information (De Jong & Heuvelman, 1999).

Communication and persuasion: a social-psychological perspective on communication design

The central goal of this sub-programme is to study the social-psychological processes of internal and external communication in an organisational context from a social-cognitive theoretical perspective.

Research questions are aimed at understanding attitudes, judgments, decisions and behaviour from an information processing perspective, i.e. the selection, interpretation and integration of information. The guiding notion is that human behaviour, attitudes and decisions are not only influenced by 'objective' characteristics of stimuli, but also by the 'subjective' interpretation and integration of those stimuli into pre-existing cognitive structures, such as knowledge and expectancies, by processes of attention, perception and memory (Seydel et al., 1985).

Concrete research projects, which often form an integral part of the design process of communication, deal with research questions such as: What motivates people to communicate or behave in a particular manner? This question aims at *analysing* and *describing* the determinants of the communication process between individuals or between groups within a particular social system or between social systems, particularly with respect to social change. Another research question is: How can individuals be persuaded? In other words, which methods of social influence can be designed and implemented in particular social contexts to prevent or solve communication problems? A third research question is aimed at the social forces enabling effective communication processes. This question addresses the evaluation of potential solutions for communication problems. The know-why and the know-how of preventing and solving communication problems in organisations are the spin-offs of this research, which is evaluated in organisational contexts. Several research methods are used in this sub-programme. Many projects make use of designs in which survey research (questionnaires or face-to-face interviews) is applied. Survey research enables us to analyse the determinants of success and failure of organisational communication with their internal and external target groups. Furthermore, simulations or experimental designs are used to determine the effects of communication or newly developed communicative interventions in a particular context. Finally, content analysis is used to study communicative products, for instance, both in the process of designing communication and in the analysis of existing forms of communication (public information brochures, news media, etc.).

Overview of results

The research of this sub-programme centres around three main research themes, which will also guide research efforts in the near future, i.e.: (1) organisations in transition, (2) risk perception and risk communication and (3) the media.

Organisations in transition

This research focuses on the processes and context of organisational communication. The focus of organisational communication has changed during the past years from being product-oriented to being process- and context-oriented (Elving et al., 1998). An example can

be found in the study by Van der Weerd et al. (1998). The research project described in Van der Weerd et al. focused on the emotional component in dealing with turnarounds, the process in which a new company strategy determines the survival of the organisation (e.g. reduction of the number of employees, or business process re-design). Understanding the impact of the turnaround on the co-workers and the role and the quality of communication were the research goals of this project. Soon, on this issue a PhD project will start.

Risk perception and risk communication

As a consequence of increasing scientific knowledge about hazardous situations, events and activities that effect human health, safety and well-being, people are confronted with information making them aware of potential threats. This information may be sent by all types of actors (the private sector, experts, governmental organisations, news media, etc.) with various goals in mind (Gutteling & Wiegman, 1996). However, the information provided and the public perception of the hazard are usually not very well attuned. This problem is amplified by doubts expressed by the public about the intentions of the senders of the information, which decreases their credibility (see Gutteling, 1999). Public unrest or fear, protest or alienation may be the direct consequence of this complex communication process (Cadet et al., 1994). Several projects have been aimed at understanding the social-cognitive determinants of risk perception of various target group. Wiegman et al. (1995) focused on experts' views of the risks of nuclear energy or coal in France and the Netherlands. Spijker et al. (1996) reported on the public perception of new technologies to manage polymer waste. Other studies have focused on the impact of mass media risk reporting on public risk perception in a between-media design (newspapers: Caljé, 1997; Gutteling et al., 1994; Gutteling & Wiegman, 1998) or in a between-countries design (acid rain and newspapers: Gutteling et al., 1995; modern biotechnology and newspapers: Gutteling et al., in press). Two PhD theses have been completed in recent years (Caljé, 1997; Galetzka, 1998), as well as an international review article (Wiegman & Gutteling, 1995) and an international monograph (Gutteling & Wiegman, 1996). A new development in this research theme is currently being studied in a PhD project focusing on organisational aspects of risk communication.

The media

Media psychology focuses primarily on the interaction between cognitive and affective media information processing and on media behaviour, i.e. the way people use the media. In this research theme, the media consists of the 'traditional' mass media, characterised by a linear transmission of information (e.g. radio or television) and of the 'new' media, characterised by convergence and interactivity (e.g. the multimedia PC and interactive television). Media psychology

is a crucial discipline for the understanding, analysis and design of communication in which the media fulfils a particular role. Some projects have concentrated on the impact of the visual design characteristics of informative television programmes (Heuvelman, 1996). The significance of particular audience characteristics has also been studied (Heuvelman, 1997). The results of these studies are translated into recommendations regarding programme concepts and scheduling (see Heuvelman, 1994 and 1997). Several publications have addressed media research methodology (e.g. d'Haenens & Heuvelman, 1996). Recently, research efforts have been extended to the Internet and interactive television, again with a particular interest in methodological issues (De Jong & Heuvelman, 1999) and audience characteristics (Heuvelman & Peeters, 1999).

Other research

One part of this sub-programme has now been finalised, i.e. the project that focused on the effects of crime prevention communication. This project involved an evaluation of the effects of a multimedia tell-the-truth campaign concerning burglary of homes and violence on the streets. The objective was threefold: to increase knowledge of burglary and violence in order to (1) bring the fear of crime more in line with the risks involved, (2) encourage adequate preventive behaviour and (3) improve the attitude towards the criminal justice system. Results showed that the campaign led to a more positive attitude towards the criminal justice system among the general public. Information meetings led to increased knowledge about burglary, the outcome expectation and self-efficacy expectation regarding burglary prevention and the intention to implement preventive behaviour. In the course of this project, a PhD thesis was completed (Kuttschreuter, 1994) and several articles were published, both nationally and internationally (Kuttschreuter & Wiegman, 1997 and 1998). A new development in this sub-programme is a PhD project on marketing communication, which started in 1998.

Designing health communication

The goal of this sub-programme is to understand the contribution of communication processes to the improvement of human health, to the prevention of a deterioration in health, to the improvement of the quality of healthcare services and to the quality of life and the recovery of patients. The research activities focus on primary and secondary prevention and on permanent care. They take a social-psychological perspective and analyse determinants of health-related behaviour in a social, organisational or societal context. Understanding these determinants facilitates the design of communicative interventions (e.g. products or protocols) that aim to improve audience knowledge, or to change beliefs or behaviour that contribute to the prevention, reduction or solution of health problems and the improvement of the quality of care and the quality of

life of patients. To achieve these aims, we need to understand the relation between beliefs, health behaviour and the health situation or quality of life of groups of individuals. In addition, we need insight into the relative impact of communicative interventions on knowledge, beliefs and behaviour, as well as the context in which these interventions may be helpful in preventing ailments or improving the quality and fine-tuning of care. Furthermore, we need to understand the interrelations between the quality of care, the need for care and patients' quality of life, the organisation of the health services and care, and the co-ordination of care between the various health service professionals. Finally, we aim to understand how communicative interventions may affect active participation in the early detection of disorders such as breast cancer. The research methods that are applied in this sub-programme are similar to those described in sub-programme 2.

Overview of results

In this sub-programme, we distinguish 3 research themes, namely prevention, early detection and care.

Prevention

Research on prevention focuses on the relative impact of communication on the behavioural changes needed to prevent illness. Unhealthy habits, such as smoking or prolonged direct exposure to sunlight, are risk factors in the development of cancer. In order to encourage people to stop smoking, a communicative intervention has been developed that can be applied by GPs in their practices (Pieterse et al., 1994). The main focus of the project has been to determine which characteristics of GP practices predict the adoption of the intervention, enabling the implementation of this intervention on a national scale. A PhD thesis on this topic has recently been completed (Pieterse, 1999). With respect to exposure to direct sunlight, research has focused on the determinants for this type of behaviour (Pieterse et al., 1998). Public information material for 11- and 12-year-old schoolchildren has also been designed and evaluated.

Early detection

Research on early detection focuses primarily on the communicative and psychosocial aspects of the implementation of mass screening for breast cancer for women between 50 and 70 years of age. National breast cancer screening has been gradually introduced in the Netherlands since 1989. Projects deal with questions about the understanding of participation, and repeated participation, of women in this mass-screening programme (Drossaert et al., 1996a) and the psycho-social factors that determine women's perception of the breast examination (Drossaert et al., 1996b). The data gathered in these projects are also relevant for the cost-benefit discussion of mass-screening programmes (Drossaert et al., 1998). A PhD thesis will be completed on this issue.

Permanent care

In this research line, projects focus on patients with cancer or rheumatic diseases. The oncology projects aim at understanding the constraints in the care for cancer patients. Professionals from different backgrounds (medical, nursing) provide care for cancer patients in the Netherlands, within different organisational contexts.

Constraints are defined as provision of care that is insufficient or inappropriate. Constraints may be found in the treatment of patients, in the organisation of the care for cancer patients, the way in which patients are informed and the way in which professionals communicate with patients. To meet the demands of care for cancer patients, we need to understand the impact of the disease on everyday life.

This implies an important assumption: care for a cancer patient aims to improve the health status of that patient. In other words, the quality of care is related to the health status of the patient in the sense that qualitative good care will lead to an improvement in the health status of the patient. Factors that influence the health status were studied in a PhD project (Elving, 1999). Research among medical professionals is characterised by low response rates. Because of this, an innovative research method had to be used: work conferences and regional priority meetings in which all relevant organisations in two experimental regions participated (hospitals, general practitioners and district nursing and home care organisations). In the project a 'communication passport' for cancer patients was designed. A field experiment was conducted to evaluate the communication passport with patients and professionals (Elving et al., forthcoming).

Research related to rheumatic diseases concentrates on two areas: (1) patient education and counselling and informing the lay public about rheumatic diseases and (2) psycho-social and communicative aspects of healthcare, including both professional and informal care, healthcare needs and the supply and continuity of care. Systematic reviews have been published about group education for patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) (Taal et al., 1997) and about compliance in RA and the role of formal patient education (Brus et al., 1997a). In addition, reviews have been published about the psychosocial aspects of RA (Taal et al., 1995). In his PhD research, Taal (1995) developed and evaluated a *group* self-management education programme for people with RA. This programme was based on a self-efficacy approach to patient education (Taal et al., 1996a). In a retrospective analysis of data from this study, the question of whether RA patients with high disease activity benefit more from patient education than patients with low disease activity was addressed (Brus et al., 1997b). Based on the group self-management education programme, a programme of *individual* education for people with RA was developed and evaluated (Riemsma et al., 1997a). In another PhD project, a group education programme was developed and evaluated for patients with recently developed and active RA, and aimed at compliance with a basic treatment regime (Brus, 1997). This study also focused on the determinants of compliance with medication

among RA patients (Brus et al., 1999). Recently, a study has been conducted into the long-term effects of the participation of spouses and the inclusion of booster sessions in group education for RA patients. In these projects, several self-report measures to assess health status have been constructed and evaluated (Dutch AIMS-2: Riemsma et al., 1996; Dutch AIMS-2 compared to IRLG: Evers et al., 1998; Thompson index: Taal et al., 1998). Other PhD projects on the care of patients with arthritis dealt with heat and cold treatment (Oosterveld, 1994) and a biopsychosocial analysis of Dutch and Egyptian RA patients (Abdel-Nasser, 1996). For patients with rheumatic diseases to be accepted by society and not stigmatised, it is important that rheumatic diseases receive adequate attention in the mass media and that the general public has an appropriate image of these diseases. In her PhD project, Van der Wardt (1997) conducted a content analysis of the mass media reporting of rheumatic and other chronic diseases, as well as a survey among the general public, rheumatic patients and their spouses to study their knowledge and perceptions of rheumatic diseases (see also Van der Wardt et al., 1999). The quality and effectiveness of leaflets and films by the Dutch League against Rheumatism were also evaluated.

Riemsma completed a PhD thesis on the role of self-management, formal and informal care in RA and the burden of caring for RA patients (Riemsma, 1998). This project also resulted in several international publications (e.g. Riemsma et al., 1998; and in press). The relationships between the problematic and positive aspects of social relationships and the psychological well-being of people with RA were studied (Riemsma et al., in press). A meta-analysis is currently being performed on the effects of patient education on RA and osteoarthritis patients. Another current project is studying the regulation of the supply of health care for RA patients. Finally, studies are being conducted to evaluate the effects of modern multidisciplinary Spa treatment for patients with fibromyalgia in Tunisia and for patients with rheumatoid arthritis in the Netherlands. Patient education is an important and integrated part of these treatments.

New projects

A new development in the sub-programme of designing health communication is the research on the communicative and psychosocial issues of psychiatry. The first results have been reported on a content analysis of Dutch mass media (Van Schie et al., 1997) and on public perceptions of psychiatry and psychiatric patients (Modde et al., 1998).

Future

This programme distinguishes itself from other communication research programmes because of its emphasis on the systematic design of organisational communication. In the next few years this emphasis will lead to an identifiable contribution to the 'body of know-

ledge' of these processes. Co-operation on a local, a national and an international level will increase, with the start of a Communication Research institute at the University of Twente, participation in a national communication research school, and participation in international research programmes.

Note

This article describes the research programme of the Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences, Department of Communication Studies. Several researchers from other Faculties of the University of Twente may also publish on communication research issues.

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Tradition, challenges and innovation

Media and communication research at the Gent University

Introduction

The University of Gent is one of the pioneers of media and communication research in Belgium. Going back to the late 1950s when the first courses on press history were installed in Gent, communication and media research always had strong interdisciplinary roots. In addition to the traditional social sciences inspiration, communication research in Gent became initially influenced by historical-descriptive and juridical currents. This was mainly due to the work of Theo Luykx and Frans Van Isacker, two founding fathers of what would become in 1964 the Department of Communication Sciences (first as 'Pers – en Communicatiewetenschap', later as 'Communicatiewetenschappen'). Luykx' historical-descriptive work covered a wide range of media with a main emphasis on the development and the changing societal role of the press (e.g. Luykx, 1978). This tradition inspired other research in the department (e.g. De Bens, 1973; Ros, 1993) and it continues to work through research on the structure and development of different media sectors. The second tradition, initially associated with Van Isacker's studies (e.g. 1973) on copyright and related juridical issues, still works through research on media law and deontology (Saeys, 1978; Voorhoof, 1995a).

From the beginning, the department kept pace with national and international academic currents in the field. Research and education programmes constantly have been adapted to recent needs and evolutions. Since the 1970s sociological, political sciences and social-psychological influences led to more research on media audiences and persuasion, while content analyses became an important tool in analysing media messages.

In spite of a relatively small academic staff, important research activities were developed. In the 1990s, university authorities finally gave way to more means including new staff members for communication research. This was partly a result of the fevered rise in the number of students in communication sciences in Gent (1). The recent changes in the teaching and research staff composition and in the educational programme did not only provide the opportunity to widen the range of research objects (e.g. from traditional to new media, from national to global communication) and to introduce new traditions (e.g. cultural studies and more qualitative approaches), altogether with an improvement of the methodological assistance. They also opened new research perspectives to understand and respond to the severe challenges of the changing role of the media and to the growing diversity of communication means in a post-modern society.

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One of the key challenges in communication science in this respect may be the further dispersion of the different research objects and domains, while, at the same time, the field saw a growing convergence of methods and paradigms. This complex process of change needs imaginative responses from the research community, not only in concrete research projects but also in a continuing dialogue and consultation on the societal importance of different forms of public communication. In this perspective the Department of Communication Science of Gent decided in 1997 to co-ordinate all research activities within one center (OMC, "Onderzoekscentrum Media en Communicatie" or Research Center on Media and Communication). Besides the external function of visualising the various research projects, the OMC now also operates within the department as a fruitful internal forum for dialogue and exchange of ideas through regular meetings – dealing with research experiences and problems, and wider discussions on mediated communication. Reflecting upon these challenges and transformations, this article tries to describe recent and ongoing research in Gent. We will group research under different headings which mainly refer to the traditional communication levels, going from media law, policy and sector analyses; media messages and textual analyses; to audience studies. It must be clear however that this quite mechanical way of presenting research along communication levels does not do justice to the ethics and questions that lay behind most media and communication studies in Gent. Under the overarching idea of the important role of mediated communication in the public sphere, most researchers start from specific socially relevant questions (e.g. media and racism; media and citizenship; media and the transformation of cultural identity; new information technologies and education), leading to the use of specific methods and the investigation of one or more communicative levels.

Media law, policy and sector analyses

One of the strongest research lines at the department in Gent deals with the belief that the role and effects of mediated communication can not be understood without a thorough investigation of the basic political-economic structures in which media and communication actors operate. This refers to the idea that public communication is mediated – however not completely determined – by the industrial-commercial goals of the dominant media actors. This raw political-economic strain which utters itself in sector analysis, is often combined with studies on public media policies and media law. Also communicator studies fit into this approach to contextualise sender-oriented research.

Media sector and policy studies

A crucial problem in relation to media sector and policy studies deals with their rapidly changing nature, as much on a local, na-

tional, European or a global level – throwing up the question of regular and reliable information. Besides the traditional heuristic devices (books, journals, internet,...), the department has installed for many years now an archive, containing a continuously updated section where different media sectors are screened through newspaper and other editorial material. Besides this valuable archive different researchers proceed on a regular basis their research investigation of various media industries within specific geographical dimensions (e.g. the overviews of the Flemish media sectors in Saeys, 1993; Saeys & Van Baelen, 1998; De Bens & Tanghe, 1994).

Following Luyckx' historical-descriptive tradition much attention has been devoted to the press, which became in Belgium and in many other European countries the key actor in the development of multimedia activities, concentration and commercialisation. This can best be exemplified by De Bens' (1997a) recent studies on the Belgian press with a systematic analysis of the structure and activities of the different national newspaper groups. Besides an historical account this work also contains an analysis of the economics of the actual Belgian daily press, including the role of the advertising versus consumer market. A European frame for the role of the press in multimedia activities was exemplified in De Bens' work for the *European Media Group* (De Bens, Kelly & Bakke, 1992, De Bens & Ostbye, 1998). On the other side of the spectrum, regional and local media were scrutinised in a collaborative OMC-book on the local media in Flanders, containing articles of De Bens, Raeymaeckers, Castille, Coppens, Janssens en Van Landuyt (see De Bens & Raeymaeckers, 1998).

Broadcasting is another key sector which is closely followed by different researchers at the department, often in relation to content and programming changes. Besides the Flemish and Belgian broadcasting system (e.g. De Bens et al., 1997; Biltreyst, 1997b; Voorhoof, 1998c), there is a keen interest in the European broadcasting sector and policies (e.g. Castille, 1997). A recent effort in dealing with both industrial and policy dynamics, as well as with the programming strategies, resulted into an international reader co-edited by Saeys (d'Haenens & Saeys, 1997). The scope of this book is opened up to the wider Europe and beyond, including an article by De Smaele on the former Soviet Russian broadcasting system in transition (based on her doctoral project; De Smaele & Romaschko, 1997) as well as some non-European cases.

Some other communication industries and their related policy levels, recently treated by researchers at the department, are: advertising and marketing communication (Vyncke, 1992, 1996, 1997), the cinema industries (Biltreyst & Vriamont, 1995), and new digital media (De Bens & Mazzoleni, 1998).

Media law, freedom of communication and deontology in the democratic society

Studies on media policy heavily draw upon media and information law in general, which refers to the second, juridical tradition men-

tioned above. It has been mainly Voorhoof who developed this important current in Ghent, offering several focus points such as the difficulties related to the tension between different levels of broadcasting law in Europe (e.g. EU and Flemish media legislation). Voorhoof's main point of attention however deals with how basic principles of freedom of speech, expression and information, relate to possible restrictions from general legislation, court decisions, and media policies and laws. At the center of this problem lies the continuing recognition of the crucial importance of free critical journalism and of media independence for a fully-fledged democracy. Drawing upon different case studies in (Belgian and European) jurisprudence, Voorhoof has been indicating the difficulties in continuously guaranteeing freedom of expression – such as those in most European constitutions or in the European Convention on Human Rights (art. 10) (Voorhoof, 1995a; 1998b). Some of the case studies have been widely relevant, not only for communication sciences as such, but also for recent Belgian political and socio-cultural history. Besides the question of legal protection of children in relation to mass media and new forms of communication (cf. the Dutroux case) (1994), Voorhoof also worked on the case of the tension between absolute freedom of expression and racism/revisionism (cf. the electoral and propaganda success of the extreme right-wing party Vlaams Blok) (Voorhoof & Schuijt, 1995; Voorhoof, 1996a). Another case in point has been the tension between free media, politics and justice. Since the mid-1990s the relation between the traditional institutional powers and the fourth estate has been going through a severe crisis in Belgium, often as a result of critical press investigations on political and financial scandals (e.g. the affair Cools, Agusta and Dassault, Nato Secretary-General Claes). At several occasions, political and juridical elites turned their attention to the media's role in this all and voices were raised to regulate the boundaries of press freedom and deontology. At several occasions policy recommendations were formulated on these crucial points (Voorhoof, 1995b; 1998a), while different members of the department published on the role and boundaries of new critical, investigative journalism within an eager commercial setting (e.g. Voorhoof, 1998b,d). Other publications concern the relation between freedom of information and copyright and focus on new developments in copyright law in order to guarantee the use, access and distribution of cultural products, information goods and multimedia. The issue on freedom of information and access to administrative documents is another field of special interest.

Communicator studies

These issues on deontology and the new roles of journalism drove the attention again to the journalist and other media workers (Voorhoof, 1995c). In the department there has been a consistent interest in communicator studies, especially for newspaper journalists (De Bens, 1997a). In recent years similar sociologically-inspired com-

municator studies were conducted in other fields too. Here we can refer to Saeys' studies (1997) on the issue of gender as a variable in media production processes.

Media messages and texts

Research under this title deals with different interests and methods for analysing media messages, both in content and form. As indicated under the previous heading, several researchers draw a clear connection between the political-economic and the symbolic dimensions of mediated communication.

Portrayal and representation

This interest in the symbolic dimension of media discourses and representations is strongly present in Saeys' work in relation to specific social issues. One illustrative example relates to her research on the role of media in a multicultural society, where a content analysis of the portrayal of ethnic minorities in the Flemish press and television (Saeys et al, 1993; d'Haenens & Saeys, 1996; Saeys & d'Haenens, 1996) resulted in specific policy recommendations for journalists and other editorial responsables. Another interest deals with gender issues and the representation of women in news reporting (Saeys, 1997). Further research is going on dealing with issues as the portrayal of disabled people and the representation of social diversity in television news on regional broadcasting.

News has been a recent point of attention in the work of Biltreyst too, who conducted the Belgian contribution to the *Global News Flow Study*. This world-wide enquiry with over forty participants concentrated on a content analysis of foreign and international news items in the press and television in 1995. Publications on this research projects are under way, while a recent grant by the Flemish national fund for scientific research will enable the researcher to conduct a follow-up study and to open up this interest in foreign news to the audience reception side of it.

Television programming, public broadcasting and debate

Another strongly developed field of attention where political-economic insights and the symbolic dimension are closely related, deals with television programming analyses. At the center of this interest for television's output stands the role of this (still highly) powerful mass medium for informing and fuelling public debate. A clear example here is the longitudinal programming analysis of the overall television output in Belgium (De Bens & Tanghe, 1994; De Bens et al., 1997) and in Europe (De Bens et al., 1992), which has been installed at the department for several years now.

The television programming studies by Biltreyst were more thematically-oriented with an interest for specific categories. Besides studies on the question of television and cultural identity through fiction programming (1992), Biltreyst also turned to questioning the vi-

ability of the public service broadcasting philosophy in such areas as cultural and children's programming (e.g. 1997a; Blumler & Biltereyst, 1998). The latter research, funded by the EBU and the British Broadcasting Standards Council, looked at how public broadcasters in the wider Europe still lived up to their traditional cultural-educational logic through their programming strategies towards children and youngsters.

Another recent research drove on the imports, programming and significance of Latin American telenovels for European television stations. This research together with Meers (1999) illustrates the interest in the role of new 'Third World' cultural industries in international communication.

Semiotics, values, advertising and consumer behaviour

Besides programming and content analysis, some researchers take semiotics as their point of departure. Notably Vyncke has worked on this perspective. His main concern is to transform semiotics from a humanistic into a social science as such, besides psychology, sociology and anthropology. According to his research (Vyncke, 1995a), the value concept (as defined by Milton Rokeach) should be the central concept in making this transformation possible. Based on extensive research, Vyncke has now developed his own value inventory, which differs largely from the well-known inventory of Rokeach. This new research instrument has been mainly tested in the field of advertising and consumer behaviour. From a semiotic point of view, both can be studied as texts. What Vyncke tries to do is to reveal the hidden value-dimension in both. This in turn has led Vyncke to new approaches of communication management (Vyncke 1996).

Recently Verleye joined the staff. Within the field of communication he has been working on issues of market segmentation and economic psychology (Pepermans & Verleye, 1999). His methodological, economical and psychological expertise will complete the spectrum of research activities within the department. The methodological sophistication related to these mixed approaches to audiences, has been a consistent field of attention of Verleye too (Verleye, in press; Verleye, Pepermans & Despontin, in press). His main interest here is in the measurement and impact of brand personality. In an attempt to bridge the gap between quantitative and qualitative consumer research, a new research procedure – called Pegasus – was developed and tested (Verleye & Broeckeaert, in press).

Audiences

The previous sections already indicated how superfluous the distinction between message and audience studies might become. In many case studies, the analysis of the portrayal and meaning of media messages is accompanied by audience studies. The analysis of media audiences, users or receivers (dependent on the research tradition) has become central for communication studies, not only for (so-

called) administrative interests in the uses and effects of media (messages), but also for more critically inspired research on media meaning.

Uses and effects

A wide range of studies in Ghent investigated the use of mass media and different kinds of other communicative means, often for specific audience groups. All these studies focused on questions in relation to the media as social agents. Saeys' work on media use for instance relates to its overall interests in social issues such as gender, racism, and the multicultural society (e.g. Saeys et al., 1993). Different questions were elaborated in collaboration with the Flemish public broadcaster, such as the preferences of Radio 2 listeners and the use of teletext subtitling by deaf people. Other research has been directed to students' media use (Laenen, Riebbels & Saeys, 1997), while a new policy-oriented audience study was recently funded by the Flemish Government for the investigation of the use of news by mentally handicapped persons.

In 1988-1990 a cross-country cultivation study took place under the supervision of George Gerbner, analysing the role of television as a mediator of culture. A programme analysis of television drama on Flemish television as well as a survey among Flemish adolescent viewers was carried out by the department (De Bens, 1992). De Bens also supervised other audience oriented studies, such as one on children and their perception of television advertising (De Bens et al., 1993), or Raeymaeckers' ongoing doctoral research on adolescents' use of print media. Recently De Bens' work showed a consistent interest in the importance of new information and communication technologies for residential and professional users. Besides a study on the use of video-on-demand funded by the Belgian Telecom operator Belgacom (De Bens & Van Landuyt, 1996), De Bens also reported on an audience-oriented study dealing with the importance of ICT's for new educational purposes (De Bens & De Smaele, 1998).

Reception and meaning

Following the strain of more qualitative approaches to the audience, different studies were conducted on how receivers pay attention to media messages, or how meaning is constructed between media messages and users. The latter is often indicated as qualitative reception analysis. Here Biltereyst's approach has been both theoretically (1995a, 1997c) as well empirically informed (1991, 1995c). In his original work on audio-visual fiction and cultural identity formations in a globalised context, the researcher tried to connect a critical political-economic approach with cultural studies insights, which opened up broad perspectives for qualitative approaches to texts, audiences and the meaning formation between them. This work will be continued on the meaning of international and foreign news. Research on the comprehension of news in general has been conducted by Saeys and collaborators (Riebbels, 1992; Coppens et al.,

1997), concentrating as well on newspapers as on radio news. In the enquiry into radio news comprehension a mixed approach was used, drawing upon qualitative and quantitative methods. Media reception was also one of the starting points of d'Haenens' investigation (1994) on the relation between media production and research.

From structure to process

Previous sections already indicated at several occasions that, similar to what happens in the international research community, ever more researchers tend to integrate several communicative levels into their research. While traditionally a structure-oriented approach dominated communication research, now a more *circular, process-inspired model* is often applied. This means that in many research projects in Ghent an integrated approach has been applied with an interest for the production and distribution context, altogether with an investigation of media offer and/or their use and meaning. This integrative approach has been clearly marked in such research as Saeys' gender investigations, Vynckes work on marketing and corporate communication, Biltereyst's foreign news project, or De Bens' new ICT's research.

Besides the process-oriented approach many research projects also have a clear *longitudinal* dimension. For the analysis of the impact of commercial forces on television, a programme coding system was developed which has been applied at several occasion over the period 1988-99 (e.g. De Bens et al., 1992). Another longitudinal research project deals with changes in audiences and programming in Flemish regional television (1988-89) (Coppens e.g., 1998). An analysis of the socio-demographic profile of Flemish journalists was carried out in 1973, 1983 and 1993 and will be repeated in 2003. A final longitudinal study deals with the portrayal of women and cultural minorities in Flemish media (Saeys, 1997; Saeys & d'Haenens, 1998). As the overview also clearly shows, many ongoing research projects relate to themes with a high level of *social engagement*. It has been clear that different social (media) issues have been treated by various researchers – such as racism, gender, the audience as citizen/consumer, or the role of public service broadcasting in public debate. One of the basic research themes however is: how do media still guarantee their “public interest” role? Media users are not only consumers, but also citizens. The question how people shape their new complex cultural and political identity through media, has become a central question in Biltereyst's work. Especially in his foreign news study he will try to address the notion of the new complex citizenship through questions such as: How do public (media) institutions create political and cultural identities through news on local and foreign issues? How important are they in the people's construction of their complex citizenship? Another example is the “media and multiculturalism” project. This led to recommendations for journalists, which are implemented in collaboration with several professional associations.

Content analysis is going on on a longitudinal base, which will give information about the effect of this implementation. Media policy studies have become more important than ever and most of the research at the department of communication at the University of Ghent involves a *policy dimension* too. The OMC takes part in a longitudinal media research project of the European Science Foundation: Changing Media – Changing Europe (1999-2004).

Conclusions

One of the main ideas of this overview is that, along with the growing staff and a clear tendency towards specialisation (e.g. in the direction of specific media or communication means; in stressing specific research traditions or disciplines), there is also an on-the-field experience of the necessity to integrate different levels of communication and to come to interdisciplinary research.

This has been most urgent in finding appropriate answers to different complex questions on the societal role of mediated communication. In this context dialogue and mutual consultation prove to be fruitful. One way of organising the internal debate in Ghent has been the launching of an OMC-book series. A first reader (d'Haenens & Saeys, 1996) brought together different views on the Flemish media and the multicultural society, while a second one (De Bens & Raeymaeckers, 1998) offered juridical, policy, programming and political-economic analyses on local media in Flanders. A third book (Biltereyst & De Smaele, in press) will shed light on different angles of the question of the European audio-visual culture. As an attempt to open up an external dialogue on specific media questions, the latter book also invited scholars from other research centres to bring in their expertise. We hope that this and other initiatives might inspire more consultation between researchers in the Dutch-language area. In order to understand the research dynamics in Ghent, however, it is important to acknowledge not only the different researchers' interests, social engagements or methodological expertise. It is equally important to connect it solidly to the university's social role and mission. It is clear that past and ongoing media studies in Ghent can not be detached from crucial educational tasks (e.g. sector analyses) or external questions from policy or other institutions (e.g. policy and communicator studies). One of the core problems in this all relates to finding enough intellectual freedom, time and space to co-ordinate those tasks.

Note

- 1 The number of MA's delivered by the department of Communication Sciences in Gent went from 28 in 1989 to 118 in 1998.

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Jan Van den Bulck, Steven Eggermont & Jurgen Minnebo
Unity in diversity

Current research on communication and media in Leuven

Basic question

Ever since its inception the Department of Communication of the K.U. Leuven has had several separate areas of research. To a large extent the history of this young department – and its equally young science – is a history of people. Most ‘evolutions’ and ‘developments’ are therefore usually clearly linked to the personal interests of the researchers in the department. Leuven has always stressed the freedom of the individual academic, with the result that many different fields have been studied in many different ways. This makes distinguishing trends and evolutions a rather difficult exercise.

Nevertheless, it is clear that three questions appear to have guided theory and research from the beginning. First, early researchers were concerned with the question of the societal impact of the media. This led to a large number of studies of persuasive communication, most notably on the techniques and effects of communist propaganda (cf. De Volder, 1957). In the long run this focus led, on the one hand, to studies of the sociology of the press and, on the other hand, of advertising. Second, ‘new media’ early on caught the attention of the department. Even though film was not exactly a new medium in the sixties, studies analysing such ‘entertainment’ in a way usually reserved for books and other forms of ‘high’ culture were not at all evident (cf. Peters, 1961; Peters & Van Driel, 1954; Peters, 1981). In the long run this focus evolved into, on the one hand, an interest in media culture, film and popular culture and, on the other hand, into permanent attention being given to the newest technological developments. While this may seem self-evident in an age of Internet and interactive electronic media, the department was amongst the first to study developments in cable television (Kabeltelevisie, 1974).

The department became an independent part of the university in 1947. More than fifty years later its structure still reflects these first fields of interest, albeit that they have been split into five research groups and, thus, five basic questions. Each group has its own perspective and often contrasting methodologies.

Communication codes

This group attempts to study the way in which messages or ‘texts’ function, how they evolved historically, what their effects on society are, and how they have been used and interpreted by receivers or ‘readers’. A lot of attention has been given to codes, textual struc-

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tures and genre (cf. Van den Vonder, 1997 on movie history, Van den Bulck, H.¹, 1998 on soaps; Minnebo, 1999, on crime shows). Leuven has a strong theoretical tradition in this field, which draws on the three historic points of view referred to above. Film, television and popular (music) culture have received most attention, but roller-skating, surfing, and the use of dialect have been treated as equally important study objects.

Usually using popular music as a case study researchers from Leuven have added to the culture debate by tying more classical approaches to the philosophy of culture to insights from media studies. The multitude of potential interpretations or 'readings' and subversive use or empowerment has made what is sometimes still referred to as products of 'low culture' acceptable and legitimate objects of academic inquiry (cf. De Meyer, 1997a, 1997b).

Not surprisingly, perhaps, given the general position of the Dutch language in the world and in the Belgian historical and political context in particular, the department has paid (and continues to pay) a lot of attention to theory and research concerning cultural identity. The special position of smaller languages and cultures in the context of Europeanisation and globalisation, and the role of media systems (e.g. as a policy tool) in the development of national cultural identities, in particular, have been the subjects of a number of publications (cf. Van den Bulck, H. & Van Poecke, 1996a, 1996b; Sampedro-Blanco & Van den Bulck, J., 1995). Research into the specific situation of Dutch as a small language in the increasing transnationalisation of media culture has been based on theoretical work on the evolution from a modern to a post-modern or post-materialist society. Aiming to provide valuable insights for a (European) media policy which offers some kind of support for cultural diversity, the potential double role of language is studied: language is seen as both a means to distinguish 'us' from 'them' and as a means to unite members of a community (cf. Van Poecke & Van den Bulck, H., 1994). These research activities are a good example of international co-operation between the department and other universities. Some of these studies have been conducted in other countries as well.

The sociology of communication and media

The starting point for the researchers of sociology of communication in Leuven has always been to study *why people use the media the way they do*. This basic question, which refers to *uses and gratification's theory*, stresses the role of the receiver in the communication model and distances itself somewhat from linear effects theories which over-emphasise the 'power' of the media.

Studies of the media use of youngsters and the relationship between that media use and academic achievement have been an important part of the international publications of the department in the past few years. Originally this research built on the Swedish 'Media Panel' research (Rosengren & Windhal, 1989, see e.g. Roe, 1992), but since

then material has been used from a longitudinal study conducted in Flanders. In this study about one thousand 9 to 10 year olds were interviewed three years in succession (cf. Roe, 1998; Roe & Muijs, 1998). The research is based on sociological theories of in-groups and out-groups and the importance of, amongst other things, music and (increasingly) computer games for the self image and identity of youngsters and even young children (Muijs, 1997). This approach is directed against the traditional 'moral panic' which assumed that spending a lot of time consuming 'marginal' music styles was negative for academic performance. The sociological model which opposes this view states that bad school results cause children and adolescents to find other domains of lifestyle in which they *can* achieve something. It then becomes obvious that such youngsters will turn to music styles, VCR, or computer game use which the school or society appears to disapprove of.

The same interest in media use and a similar critical approach to effects theories has stimulated sociologists of communication to chart various aspects of television viewing (Roe & Vandebosch, 1996; Van den Bulck, 1995) and forms the background of an ongoing study of the position and influence of 'new' media in families. This study postulates a continuum of families with regard to possession of media. It is hypothesised that these families will differ significantly in structure, patterns of socialisation and lifestyle. Extensive charting of families media use is expected to shed new light on the potential influences of new media on family life in general, and family interaction in particular. More research on children, families and media suggests that cause and effect in yet another popular cliché should also be reversed. Van den Bergh & Van den Bulck, J. (1998) studied the relationship between media-use, parental guidance and family communication patterns. The study suggests that media use does not impede communication in the family. In fact, in many families a large part of what is communicated about deals with the content of the media or the regulation of media use. Media use does not influence family communication, it reflects the patterns which exist in other forms of communication. Apart from such extensions of *uses and gratification's* approaches to the uses and effects of the media some attention has been given to effects theories. Van den Bulck, J. (1997) attempted to integrate insights from tradition cultivation research with insights from theories which ascribe a more active role to the viewer; Eggermont (1998) critically assessed pornography research and showed how theory and research in that domain is heavily tainted by the ideological position of the researchers; while Vandebosch (1998) studied the effects of the media on the names parents give their children.

Internal and external communication

In their own words this research group is mainly oriented toward the study of 'the strategic dimension in management that is called communication management'. A distinction is made in theory and re-

search between 'internal' and 'external' public. The former refers to internal communication in organisations (cf. Vloeberghs, 1997), while the latter refers to public relations and advertising. The 'external' studies devote increasing attention to recent developments which target specific groups (as does direct marketing) and to the latest developments (such as 'cybermarketing').

While much research and theory in both advertising and public relations has been strongly influenced by economics and marketing, Leuven has always (and from very early on, cf. Fauconnier, 1967) tried to develop a particular approach from a communication studies' point of view (Van der Meiden & Fauconnier, 1990, Fauconnier, 1990). Theory on both 'internal' and 'external' communication is continuously fed by research. Communication in organisations is routinely examined in several studies of company newsletters or internal magazines. Public relations issues have been looked at in studies of the relationship between journalists and the spokespersons of companies (Borremans, 1997).

Much of the research on internal and external communication can be traced to questions about the media's role in, and their effects on, society. A recent example is the research on *direct marketing*. The starting point of the study dealt with questions concerning the ethical acceptability of intrusive marketing methods, with special attention given to issues of privacy. In quantitative audience studies, factor analyses showed, for instance, that people make a clear distinction between different types of privacy (coined 'informational' and 'relational' privacy, see: Walrave, 1996, 1997).

The development and structure of the media and media policy

Leuven has always been very interested for the 'traditional' media such as newspapers, magazines, radio and television. In a strongly media-structured country such as Belgium (cf. Van den Bulck, J., 1992), research topics such as news selection processes or the – much less visible – influence of ownership structures have always offered interesting research material.

This group closely follows developments and evolutions in the traditional media. The societal context of broadcasting in general and the press in particular are studied from an economic, cultural, as well as political point of view. Studies have been conducted to draw a picture of the history and development of the daily press since the Second World War (cf. Biltereyst & Van Gompel, 1997; Van Gompel, 1997). The interest of the researchers is focused on drawing a picture of the extent of political influence on the editorial policies of Flemish newspapers and on charting structural developments in the daily press. Both quantitative content analysis and qualitative discourse analysis are used to analyse micro and macro content.

Apart from the interest in what was referred to as 'the traditional media' (broadcasting and written press), substantial research has been conducted into the music industry. Here, participants and the (eco-

conomic and cultural) relationships between them have received a lot of attention (cf. De Meyer, 1996a, 1996b, 1997c). Recent research has specifically analysed government policies regarding this sector (De Meyer & Vandeput, 1998).

New communication technologies

While some interest exists with regard to technological developments in the media, Leuven mainly looks at the functional aspects of what some refer to as 'new' media (cf. Hesling, 1994, Geerts, 1997 on the internet). On a descriptive level new media are evaluated by looking at their possibilities and characteristics concerning search strategies, data storage, dissemination capacities etc. On an analytical level research is conducted into new applications of the media and on the effects on and consequences for users and society. Despite the relatively new character of these developments, this research group has a respectably long tradition. With teletext and viewdata as cases, the first studies of telematics were conducted almost twenty years ago (cf. De Grooff, 1980, De Grooff & Fauconnier, 1982). More recently, most research has taken place in the larger framework of the 'Medialab programme' of the Flemish Government which has sponsored two large scale studies. The first study analyses and evaluates the use of interactive media in the communication between (local) government and citizens. Research into the actors involved in these processes should identify the factors that increase the success of digital government communication. In the wake of this study a lot of work is being done on developing quantitative measurement tools for dealing with the consumption and analysis of new media. Some of the research specifically aims at testing different methods through the use of, for instance, a split ballot questionnaire design (Steyaert, 1997, 1998).

The same functional and methodological approach is used in the second study which looks at electronic publishing in the Flemish newspaper industry. This study analyses the attitudes and characteristics of the users and looks at the way in which new developments in this sector affect the industry (Porteman, 1998). This twofold approach is typical of the specific dynamics of the department of communication of the University of Leuven: while most research is the result of the specific interests of individual researchers, it is clear that eventually most researchers end up dealing with the original basic questions around which the department was founded. While the department grants a lot of freedom to each researcher, there does appear to be some kind of 'unity in diversity'.

Methodology

When one reads some of the oldest books accompanying the early courses at the department, one sees that even fifty years on some of

the advice given to students on how to conduct content analysis still draws on what was taught by the department's 'founding father' prof. De Volder (cf. Hendriks, 1970). Work on methodologies adapted to or specific for the study of the media, in other words, has been a point of interest from the start.

In recent years methodological developments have received extensive attention in various publications (e.g. Roe, 1998; Roe & Muijs, 1998; Muijs, 1997; Van den Bulck J., 1996b; Van den Bulck J., 1999). While the use of statistics is mainly limited to specific applications as a part of research projects, there is some interest in methodology as such. Research has been done on the validity and quality of quantitative concepts such as 'viewing volume' (Van den Bulck, J., 1996a, 1996c) and on the extent to which respondents over- or underestimate their media use when a relative or other third person is present during the interview (Van den Bulck, J., 1999). Another study critically assessed the rigour and validity of the methodology of *uses and gratification's* research (Roe, 1996).

Most of the quantitative research is based on surveys, with a special emphasis on longitudinal research (Roe, 1998; Roe & Muijs, 1998), but there is also some interest in experiments (Van Poecke & Van den Bulck, J., 1998). Statistical fields of interest of members of the department mainly encompass linear modelling (applications of the general linear model and ANOVA) and a continuous interest in developments in structural equation modelling.

Historically, however, the interest in the extensive use of statistics and quantitative research is a fairly recent development. With the exception of a long tradition of quantitative content analysis the department has much stronger roots in qualitative research. A lot has been published on semiotics. Prof. J. M. Peters, for instance, developed his own approach to the semiotics of film (Peters 1961, 1972), though even in the field of popular culture semiotic theory was applied (cf. Van Poecke, 1978 on the language of fashion). In recent years in depth interviewing techniques used in cultural studies have gained in importance (cf. D'Hoest, 1997).

The growing interest in telematics creates new methodological questions. How should one study users of the internet? Which methodologies are appropriate? How does one assess the validity and reliability of research on computer use, where some may use the computer extensively, but only for a minute or so at a time, while others use the computer hardly and badly for hours at a time.

Research into these matters is blossoming. In the wake of the large scale 'medialab programme' of the Flemish government, researchers from the department are working on projects which aim at developing methods which allow research to be done which is both internally and externally valid. Other researchers, in other fields, are starting to learn to cope with the presence of 'new' media and the challenges they create for empirical research.

Discussion

This article has mainly discussed research activities. A lot of work, however, has been done on theoretical issues, too. The role of the media in processes of identity formation in post-modern societies, for example, has received a lot of attention (cf. Van Poecke, 1996). Similarly, problems dealing with the sociology of organisations and marketing have been looked at from a communication scientific perspective (Fauconnier, 1990, 1997a, 1997b).

Because they are often perceived as a societal threat, the media and the supposedly 'low' culture they produce have always received a lot of attention. As a result, research done at the department often receives media attention and may occasionally lead to (or become part of) societal or even political debates. Researchers from the department have never shied away from such debates. The university even considers this as part of its 'mission statement'. To some extent the department has even formalised its presence in the public arena in which media are analysed, discussed and debated. Training in dealing with new information technologies aimed at a wider audience is part of the task of the Media Centre of the department (cf. De Grooff, 1996). Similarly, The Centre for Audience Research conducts contract research for organisations and companies (cf. Roe & Van Rompaey, 1997; Vandebosch & Roe, 1998; Van den Bulck J. & Eggermont, 1998; Roe & Minnebo, 1998). Others have conducted research to help prepare policy solutions at the request of the government (cf. De Meyer & Vandeput, 1998).

As far as the impact of theory and research at the Department of Communication at the University of Leuven is concerned, two types of outcome can be distinguished. If the field of study does not fit into a larger and more 'classic' field of study, or if research specifically looks at local situations or local problems, it is more difficult to publish about these issues internationally. Such studies aim at charting local or national developments, situations and problems, and attempt to play a role in the public debate about such issues. The second type of study deals with subjects which are closer to what the international community of communication scholars is interested in, which makes it more obvious to attempt to publicise theory and results on a wider, international scale.

Both types of research continue to deal with the basic questions which the department was concerned with at the time of its inception. The main policy of the department has always been, and still is, to stimulate researchers by offering them the freedom and security to deal with their own theoretical and research interests. While the range of subjects, methodologies, and even ways of publicising the results may therefore differ considerably; at the centre of it all there seems to be a typical way of dealing with communication and the media which all share. Be they by training sociologists, linguists, political scientists or whatever, ultimately Leuven does not produce sociological, psychological or other studies of the media. There appears

to be a clear 'communication science' of the media and communication at the core of this wide spectrum of theory and research.

Note

- 1 Since both Hilde Van den Bulck and Jan Van den Bulck work at the department a distinction between them will be made by adding their initial.

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Leo van Snippenburg & Karsten Renckstorf

Mass communication as a social interactive, reality-defining process

Current research at the department of Communication,
University of Nijmegen

Introduction and objectives

The research of the Department of Communication at the University of Nijmegen addresses mediated communication processes in the public sphere. It is organised in the Nijmegen Institute of Communication Research (NICOR). The program is subdivided into four lines of research. Each line clusters projects which address similar objects of study. The four lines are: 1) media use in everyday life, 2) media campaigns, 3) media texts and culture, 4) community, media and technology.

The program uses especially, but not exclusively, a social science frame of reference. It thereby emphasises the development of advanced theory and methodology as a solid base for its empirical research. Inasmuch as mass communication cannot be considered distinct from other modes of communication, the program is not entirely restricted to mass communication. Related phenomena are studied as well, when relevant, such as conversational and organisational communication. Although the research of the program addresses often, as a point of departure, the situation in the Netherlands, it is aimed at generating widely applicable knowledge, and at contributing to the international 'state of the art' in communication studies. With these goals in mind, relations with research groups in other countries are maintained and international comparative research is stimulated.

Basic research problem

Basic to the NICOR program is the notion of mass communication as being first and foremost a social interactive, reality-defining process. Research therefore is directed at the social meaning-giving practices of communicators (journalists) as well as audiences (readers) vis-à-vis media and its contents. The participants in the communication processes are, furthermore, considered to be agents acting on the basis of their specific motivations (needs, desires, opinions, etc.) which are closely related to their socio-cultural positions, psychological conditions, life experiences and actual circumstances. In that way, the research concentrates on social beings engaged in mediated communication of which, in principle, no one is excluded. The media in a restricted sense, i.e. as merely technical devices, are only seen as necessary, but not sufficient prerequisites for the communication process. Media are thus defined in a broad sense. They are consid-

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ered relevant objects of study only to the extent that they are socio-cultural systems for the production, public distribution, and reading of the media contents. Taking these basic notions as starting points, the global research problem overarching the four lines of the program concerns the structures and functions of the mass communication processes as such, their impact on the structures and cultures of society and social groups, as well as on beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and behaviour of individuals. The specific problems of the four research lines are briefly described below.

The first line, *media use in everyday life*, focuses on the social action aspects of the mass communication process, i.e. on the relevance of media use for communicators and audiences in their interpreting activities, especially to the extent that this relevance is connected to social and socio-psychological characteristics, and to situational and contextual factors.

The second line, *media campaigns*, studies communication processes to the extent that they are explicitly or implicitly intended to achieve specific goals, as is the case in, for instance, public information campaigns, marketing communication, and persuasive communication. In such cases, the campaigners ideally have to anticipate the specific socio-cultural positions, actual circumstances, and related characteristics of the target groups in mind. The research efforts are, among other things, directed at investigating to what extent the goals are realised in actual media campaigns.

The third line, *media texts and culture*, studies the involvement of mass communication in the (re)creation of culture. Research addresses the processes of production and reading of media contents as conditioned by existing (sub)cultural codes and conventions. It thereby acknowledges the potentials of communication in reinforcing as well as undermining and transforming existing collective beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and behavioural patterns.

The fourth line, *community, media and technology*, studies the structures and functions, as well as the transformations of (new) information and communication technologies within specific communities (e.g. geographical, institutional and virtual communities). The projects especially address the opportunities media technologies offer for community change and development. Furthermore, issues to be investigated in the other three research lines as well are studied here, particularly in respect to the relation between community and (new) information and communication technologies.

Theory and research

Empirical research projects within those four lines derive their conceptual models from one or more of the theories formulated in the

tradition of communication studies. Because of the research program's specific perspective on the communication process (see above), two broad philosophical-theoretical approaches have general relevance for all the projects in the program: the so-called 'social action' and the 'cultural' approach.

The *social action approach* emphasises the essentially interactive character of media-use. Involved participants are viewed as social beings engaged in communication as well as in other community processes; as agents acting intentionally on the basis of their specific objectives and interests. Their active involvement constitutes the basis for attending to the media, i.e. media exposure and especially the interpretations of the media content (see McQuail & Windahl, 1993; Renckstorf, 1989, 1995; Hendriks Vettehen, Renckstorf & Wester, 1996). This approach has roots in the writings of Max Weber, Alfred Schütz, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann. In communication research, the approach was initially introduced by Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, Michael Gurevitch and Jay Blumler (cf. Renckstorf & McQuail, 1996).

The *cultural approach* conceives of communication as a symbolic process whereby culture is created, maintained and changed (Carey, 1989:23; cf. Edelman, 1988; Hall, 1997). Communication is not considered just a mediating process in which representations of reality are exchanged between communicators and audiences; nor is reality viewed as just an objective world 'out there' or in humans internally. The approach was originally inspired by work from such different traditions as sociology (Emile Durkheim and Karl Mannheim), anthropology (Claude Levi-Strauss), semiology (Roland Barthes) and social philosophy (Michel Foucault). It has become integrated into communication studies in the last two decades. Early contributors to this development were English cultural studies scholars who elaborated on notions of structuralism, critical theory, and contemporary French philosophy (see Ferguson and Golding 1997).

Within the NICOR program, the social action approach and the cultural approach are considered complementary rather than contrary, and even to overlap to some extent. They give global guidance to the formulation of research problems. Because of the character of the research topics in lines one and two, the social action approach is especially, but not exclusively, relevant here, while the cultural approach is more, but not exclusively, relevant for projects in line three and, to a lesser extent, in line four.

Methods

Aside from the production of the usual descriptive studies of mass media modalities, research in the NICOR program is largely directed at explaining, respectively understanding ('verstehen') mass

communication processes. Different methodologies may play a part in the research, depending on the object and problem at hand.

Testing as well as explorative strategies, field as well as experimental designs, and standardised quantitative as well as qualitative-interpretative methods are applied. As described above, the research projects take social theoretical notions as starting points for the research as much as possible.

Concerning the empirical part of the research, all the methods and techniques of datagathering and data production available for communication science research are applied, when relevant. For instance, a data-gathering project of a somewhat longer time span is a repeated nation-wide questionnaire on media equipment, media exposure and media use in the Netherlands. This survey is conducted every five years. The first wave was conducted in 1989 (see Arts, et al. 1990); a second wave in 1994 (Hendriks Vettehen et al. 1995), and a third wave will be executed in 1999. Other longer term data gathering projects concern television content. One project addresses the content of drama and soap on Dutch television. It analyses cultural stereotypes of characters, and values underlying story lines.

Another content analysis project addresses talk shows on television. Here, qualitative analyses are applied on behalf of research on media content in relation to identity construction and ways of giving meaning to one's life by audiences as well as actors in concerning media programs. It is self-evident that, in addition to these larger scale data gathering projects, smaller scale data gathering projects are executed. Some of these projects are being carried out in preparation for or directly related to the larger scale projects.

Overview of the four research lines

Line 1: Media use in everyday life

Research within this line takes the social action model of mass communication as elaborated within the NICOR program by Renckstorf (1989, 1995), Renckstorf and Wester (1997), and Hendriks Vettehen et al. (1996) as an explicit point of departure. This 'Media Use As Social Action (MASA)' model conceives the audience as the central element in the mass communication process. However, communicators are also acknowledged as relevant factors to be studied. They, like the audiences, are actively engaged in mass communication processes on the basis of their specific objectives, intentions and interests. Furthermore, the model postulates that all participants in the communication process are capable of reflecting on their own behaviour and are continuously doing so in interaction with others within their social networks, e.g. within families and communities. This active involvement forms the basis for the actors' interpretations of reality and, thus, for their interpretations of media content. According to this model, the mediated messages are not considered 'stimuli' which provoke reactions from the recipients, but as parts of

the 'symbolic environment' of human beings which have to be interpreted by 'meaning making' human actors (cf. Renckstorf et al., 1996).

A large part of the research of this line addresses the use of media and mediated messages (exposure, interpretation, retention) by different audiences. It focuses on the ways people within specific situations (socio-cultural position, family setting, actual situation, etc.) attend, experience, and render meaning to media and media content. Specific problems studied include 'heavy viewing' (Frissen, 1992, 1996), 'non-viewing' and 'watching foreign tv-channels' (Renckstorf & Hendriks Vettehen, 1994; 1996), 'tv-viewing and family context' (Mutsaers, 1996) and 'ethnic minorities as media users' (d'Haenens & Saeys, 1996). Results demonstrate, among other things, that the categories of users which are generally conceptualised as homogeneous, e.g. heavy viewers and non-viewers, are in fact much less homogeneous than usually assumed. An ongoing Ph.D. project is devoted to time budgeting in media use (Huysmans, 1996). Against these backgrounds of media use patterns, contexts for and consequences of developments in media and (tele)communications policy in Europe are assessed (d'Haenens & Saeys, 1998).

Another part of the research within this line addresses the use of specific media and media content by their respective audiences, e.g. research on the use of sports programmes by sports fans (d'Haenens, 1996b), on the reception of arts information programmes (d'Haenens, 1996a), as well as research on the use of tv news and general information-oriented media programs. The problems studied include 'information needs and news consumption' (Bosman & Renckstorf, 1996), 'personal relevance of tv news items' (Hietbrink, 1996), 'patterns of tv news use' (Konig, Renckstorf & Wester, forthcoming), 'women's use of tv news' (Hermans & Van Snippenburg, 1993), 'differential recall of tv news' (Hendriks Vettehen, Hietbrink & Renckstorf, 1996), and 'the use of political information in newspapers, on radio and tv' (Van Snippenburg, 1996). Results indicate that mediated information normally does not reach those groups which, from a normative point of view, should benefit most from it (e.g. less educated, politically inactive). This as a consequence of the fact that people use media according to subjectively felt information needs rather than to objectively ascribed needs. Results show also that, next to usually investigated objective factors, interest in information and perceived problems are also important determinants of media use. Against the background of a rather extensive overview of tv news research, 1970-1998, a specific 'action theoretical frame of reference for the study of tv news use' i.e. a scheme that elaborates on general factors contributing to the explanation of tv news use, has been developed in order to guide research on this topic in a systematic manner (Renckstorf & Wester, forthcoming).

A third part of the research within this line addresses the use communicators make of the media, i.e. the ways professional communicators use the media as specific sources and as general means of surveillance in fulfilling their daily occupational roles. For instance, newsroom routines and journalistic values such as 'common sense' and 'newsworthiness' (d'Haenens, 1996), as well as the role information sources play in the course of daily 'news-making' routines of Dutch newspaper journalists have been investigated (Pleijter & Renckstorf, 1998). A further project here addresses the extent to which communicators try to and succeed in anticipating audiences' information needs and interests. The 'state of the art' of communicator research has been reviewed (Hermans et al., 1994), and a specified action theoretical frame of reference has been formulated (Renckstorf, 1991). Ongoing Ph.D. projects are 'communicators and their audiences' and 'communicators' information sources'.

Line 2: Media campaigns

The second line of NICOR research investigates mass communication processes that are more or less explicitly designed to achieve changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of the general population or of specific target groups. The intentions underlying the communication are clearly explicit in the case of, for instance, advertising, propaganda and public information campaigns; they are less explicit in, for instance, image building and stereotyping by processes of mediated mass communication. As in the former line, it is acknowledged that audiences are not to be conceptualised as passive receivers of media content, but as agents actively approaching the mediated messages from their own motives and perspectives, thus creating the meanings relevant to them. Research within this line has developed in close connection with the continually occurring debates on issues of media campaigning, such as on the effectiveness of aids campaigns, the ubiquity of commercials, and advertising directed at children as target groups.

The research particularly addresses the topics of 'health education' (Renckstorf & Van der Rijt, 1993; Van der Rijt, 1996) and 'governmental information campaigns' (Bosman et al., 1989; Nelissen, 1991).

Results thus far indicate that it is generally difficult to reach target groups and to influence them in the intended ways. A necessary prerequisite for reaching intended effects appears to be an appropriate anticipation by campaigners of concerning target groups' definition of the situation. There is some evidence that information needs of specific groups depend heavily on the problems they experience (Van der Rijt, 1996). Research on questions such as 'why' and 'how' do target groups usually deal with problem-relevant information in the media (e.g. health problems) may be helpful in answering the question how to reach them more successfully. Other findings indicate that it appears meaningful to distinguish between problem- and

interest-guided patterns of information seeking. In the first case, information-seeking activity is directed to specific information in order to solve a (perceived) problem. In the latter, information-seeking activity can be described as routinely scanning the media for information on certain topics, because of personal or professional interest in these topics (Van der Rijt & Need, 1996). It appears that exposure to health information in the mass media is mainly interest-guided, indicating that health campaigns via the mass media usually reach people already interested in the topic at hand (Van der Rijt, forthcoming). Research results indicate, furthermore, that in order to reach hard-to-reach target groups it may be useful to deploy para-professionals within the target group who have been trained to educate members of the group (Van Dommelen & van der Rijt, 1998). Interpersonal communication between target group members has been shown to be a very relevant factor. In concordance with previous findings, a study of a mass media campaign on 'working safely with carcinogenic substances' revealed that the campaign appeared to reach the target group more successfully as it evoked more (favourable) interpersonal discussion (Moonen et al., 1995).

Some other research projects within this line concern processes of 'image building' (Bosman, 1996) and 'stereotyping' by mediated communication (Renckstorf, 1993). Much of this research is focused on the somewhat problematic relations that social and cultural minorities encounter in their new socio-cultural environment (Renckstorf & Bergmans, 1996). Results of this research thus far suggest that characteristics attributed to objects in media messages are more dependent on audiences' specific interpretations than on the way they are encoded, according to the culturally dominant conventions, in the media messages. Ongoing Ph.D. projects are 'German migrants in the Netherlands: identities and interactions', and 'The image of Germans in the Netherlands'.

Line 3: Media texts and culture

A common denominator in the research projects of this line is the perspective on mass communication as a pre-eminently cultural phenomenon. Communications are considered the basic elements in the collective meaning construction processes. They comprise views on (socio-cultural) reality as well as on available positions within this 'reality'. Media texts and the involved production and reception dynamics are thus considered to be mutually strongly dependent and central elements in the continuous establishment, maintenance and transformation of culture, i.e. of the system of collective beliefs, values, norms and behaviours (see Carey, 1989; Hall, 1997). Specific research projects in this line focus particularly on the following three cultural-communicative fields: media and socialisation, media and identity construction, and the second order (connotative) meanings of media texts.

Research on media and socialisation addresses the operation and consequences of mass media use in the raising and education of children and youngsters in the family and at school. Many of these projects are executed in co-operation with scholars from the University of Leiden. Concrete research problems concern, among others, the extent to which children comprehend and remember stories on television and television news items (Beentjes & Walma Van Der Molen, 1997); the ways the topics which children learn from television relate to those they learn at school (Van der Voort & Beentjes, 1997b), and the interpretations of children of different age groups of emotions expressed in television programs (Beentjes, De Boe & Heijink, 1997). Other projects concern the extent to which violent and aggressive video and television programs serve as models for children's emotional and aggressive behaviors (Van der Voort & Beentjes, 1997a), and the use of background media during homework (Beentjes & Van der Voort, 1997). Research on the use of traditional and interactive media by pupils in primary and secondary school is executed nation-wide in the Netherlands (Beentjes, Koolstra, Marseille & Van der Voort, 1997) as a participatory project in an international comparative program. The research suggests amongst others that tv is generally better recalled than audio and print (Beentjes & Walma Van Der Molen). It suggests furthermore that young children understand emotions portrayed by human actors better than emotions portrayed by puppets, this probably because of the ability of human actors to use facial expression (Beentjes, De Boe & Heijink).

Research on identity construction links the complex concepts of culture and identity with media use and media content. Basic is the view that identity construction is essentially a cultural process. In it, the person is connected with the socio-cultural context, establishing a sense of belonging in the world by a coherent account of how he (she) sees him (her)self and, on a collective level, how they as a group see themselves. Identity is seen as a symbolic project that is actively and reflexively constructed in relation to several cultural resources, comprising the media. Media provide individuals and groups with symbolic material with which identity is forged in an ongoing dialectic between sameness and difference. The self-reflexive condition of self-formation in modern society fosters research on the so-called reflexive reproduction of cultural meaning (Hijmans, 1997), that places media in the more general context of secular society. A recently initiated research project addresses the uses and meanings of tv talk shows. The cultural meaning of the genre will be explored, notably in terms of the moral aspects to participants as well as to viewers. As a first step, explorative research is carried out in order to construct a typology of talk shows. In addition to quantitative, qualitative investigation is especially relevant to this cultural study. Therefore, qualitative methods are intensively studied and elaborated. Hijmans (1996) presents a typology of ways to conduct

qualitative content analysis in media research. The typology pays attention to five different operating procedures in the field of qualitative analysis of media content. An ongoing Ph.D. project on the content and reading of magazines for teenage girls concerns the gender aspects of identity.

A third category of projects in this line addresses the beliefs, values and norms that can be attributed to media texts. Methodologies of analysing the value themes in story lines have been developed, and applied in research on tv drama. Projects on other tv content and on photographs are to follow. Related to these are research projects on the reception of (audio)visual texts, i.e. on the meanings concerning value themes, which different categories of viewers attach to the story lines of tv serials. An ongoing Ph.D. project investigates the effects of ambiguities in photographic images of advertisements on paying attention to, being involved in, and interpreting the advertisements.

Line 4: Community, media & technology

The research line 'community, media & technology' is a continuation and expansion of the former research line 'mass communication at the local and regional level'. The inclusion of information and communication technology in the research agenda has come about due to three recent developments in the media landscape:

- the expansion of local and regional media into information and communication technology, e.g. the appearance of electronic newspapers and of interactive websites linked to regional and local radio and television stations;
- the emergence of locally-oriented digital communication networks such as digital cities and virtual meeting points sponsored by local authorities, institutions and organisations such as banks (e.g. Trefpunt.NL) and by publishing companies (e.g. City Online);
- the general emergence and increasing importance of inter- and intra-organisational digital communication networks such as intranet.

In both the old and the new line of research here, the relation between (media) communication and the community, i.e. between media, information and communication technologies on the one hand and specific communities on the other, has remained the focus for theory building and empirical research. The literature review by Van der Linden, Hollander & Vergeer (1994) for instance, has resulted in the development and testing of a tentative conceptual model for further research on the use of small scale or community media.

In addition to the geographical, socio-cultural and political communities that were investigated originally, other community types, such as institutional, organisational and virtual communities, are now included. Since research in this line conceptually addresses the relationship between community and communication, it allows the re-

search models to include both higher level (community) and lower level (individual) characteristics as factors relevant to the use of community media and community-oriented applications of digital network technologies such as intranet, electronic newspapers and digital cities. The margins of the concept of 'community' are further explored in relation to new media technology (Hollander, 1997; Hollander & Jankowski, forthcoming). Traditionally confined to the geographical community, the concept was gradually extended to include socio-cultural groups not necessarily living in the same geographical area. It was, for instance, extended to cover also ethnic groups and women's groups. With the introduction of the Internet, World Wide Web and many smaller scale computer networks, the concept of community has been further expanded to include 'virtual' communities and professional communities within organisations.

Part of the empirical research of this line is descriptive as well as policy-oriented and internationally comparative. It describes the structures and actual developments of local and regional media and information and communication technology in the Netherlands, this all in the context of the government's policies, and compares them to those in other countries. In this way, this research is policy-oriented and internationally comparative by nature (Jankowski, Prehn & Stappers, 1992; De Goede, Hollander & Van der Linden, 1996; Hollander, 1997).

The research on community, media and technology includes case studies as well as larger-scale qualitative and quantitative projects on the functions and uses of a variety of media technologies (local and regional radio, television and press, local as well as larger and smaller-scale applications of digital networks). It does so with respect to different community types (geographical communities, institutional communities, life stage related communities composed of, for instance, elderly or children, organisational communities, and virtual communities) and to a range of topics, e.g. information, news, politics, and entertainment (Hagemann, 1995; Jankowski & Hanssen, 1996). Recent and ongoing research has furthermore focused on tele-democracy in the province (Leeuwis, Jankowski, Martin, Van Rossum, & Noordhof, 1997), on the use of intranet in a hospital, and on the use of Internet by groups of the elderly. The research on tele-democracy in the province clearly indicated some of the problems encountered in experiments with new communication technologies, such as problems resulting from participation by different organisations with different intentions, and problems resulting from differences in expectations regarding the outcome of an electronic debate and the consequences for policy formulation. An ongoing Ph.D. project investigates the impact of different aspects of the life stage (family aspects, occupational aspects) on the use of local and regional media in the Netherlands.

Summary and discussion

The NICOR program addresses mediated communication in the public sphere and related phenomena. The motivated activities of social beings, and the cultural meanings recreated in the communicative interactions are the starting points for empirically-based investigations. The media as technical devices are only seen as necessary, but not sufficient prerequisites for the mass communication process. The research program is broadly based on the following two philosophical-theoretical approaches: the 'social action' and the 'cultural' approach. The former stresses mass communication as a social interactive and intentional process, the latter as an integral part of the continuous meaning production process by which (socio-cultural) reality is maintained and transformed. The active participants in the process, their communities and cultures are considered the relevant objects of study. In this way, the basic research problem concerns the structures and functions of the mass communication process as such, its consequences for the structure and culture of society and of social groups, as well as its impact on beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and behaviour of individuals.

The program emphasises the development of advanced theory and methodology as a solid base for the empirical research. In addition to the program's contributions to general knowledge on mass communication by the results of its descriptive, exploratory, and explanatory empirical research, contributions to the international state of the art in communication science may especially be seen in the development of theory (particularly specifications of the social action model, cf. Renckstorf, 1996), and of methodology and methods of communication research (Hendriks Vettehen, 1998; Bosman et al., 1998; Huysmans et al., 1997). Much of the research is science-oriented. It is not, however, restricted to this domain. Many projects are of a more applied character, especially those in the fields of media campaigning (line 2), and community, media and technology (line 4). Although the projects address as a starting point the local Dutch situation in many cases, the research questions are always conceptualised within a wider frame of reference, and results are discussed in relation to the international context. All research projects are aimed at generating generally relevant knowledge on communication eventually.

Different methodologies and methods of data production and analysis are used in the research projects, depending on the object and the problem at hand. In addition to much ad hoc data gathering for specific research projects, the program executes some longer-term data gathering projects. One is a repeated nation-wide questionnaire on media equipment, media exposure and media use in the Netherlands. Other longer term data gathering projects concern the content of drama, soap and talk shows on Dutch television.

The program's policy for the years to come is directed at maintaining and reinforcing the academic level of the science-oriented as well as the applied research projects. This is evident particularly with respect to its theoretical foundations and methodological precision. Concentration of many of the projects on especially two issues will be stimulated across all four lines of research to promote the coherence and stability of the program. The choice of the two themes is, among other things, based on the following actual developments in mass communication: first, on the increasing 'overload' of informational and other media content and, second, on the acceleration in the introduction and acceptance of new media technologies. The two issues are 'news and information', and the 'social and cultural consequences of media technologies'. Although the program remains essentially science-oriented, it is expected that research on these themes will also contribute to tools, experience and knowledge for applied purposes.

The research program of the Department of Communication of the Nijmegen University has gradually reached a solid level since inception in the mid-eighties. However, some obstacles may inhibit further expansion. These are related to the recent government's policy of allocating available 'extra' research funds. It has already become clear that the actual allocating practices for funds, which are the consequences of this policy, privileges vested research groups of traditional disciplines. They have, because of their extensive, well-established networks and advanced institutionalisation within overarching scientific associations like the Dutch Scientific Foundation (NWO) and the Dutch Academy of Sciences (KNAW), an advantage in the competition for funds. A relatively young and less developed research community in the Netherlands like that of communication science is likely to meet obstacles on its way to further development. A way to tackle these obstacles and overcome related problems, may be through closer co-operation between the research programs of the communication departments of the various Dutch universities. Talks to achieve this have been started, and some closer co-operation may already have been institutionalised by the time this description of the NICOR research program is published.

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Cees van Riel

Ten years of research at the Corporate Communication Centre, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Introduction

The Corporate Communication Centre of the Erasmus University Rotterdam, located within the Rotterdam School of Management, was founded in 1988. Aim of this research and executive education centre was the development of a new academic field, labelled as Corporate Communication. Corporate Communication concentrates on management decision making regarding the orchestrated implementation of all consciously used forms of internal and external communication, aimed at the creation of a favourable reputation with all relevant stakeholders the organisation depends upon.

The embeddedness within the business school stimulates the application of an interdisciplinary approach (integrating marketing, organisational behaviour and strategic management into communication), of problems to be solved in the business world and concentrating on the why and how of decision making by managers about (commercial) communication topics. More specifically we concentrate our research on the mutual interdependency between 'organisational performance' on the one hand and 'corporate identity', 'corporate reputation', and 'orchestration of communication' on the other hand. (Van Riel, 1997a). An overview of our research divided in three main clusters: corporate identity, corporate reputation and orchestration of communication, is to be found in Table 1. In the last decade we studied within every cluster more specialised subjects (conceptualisation, measurement, impact on organisational performance, etc.) as can be found in column 1. Linked with every cluster, Table 1 provides information about key publications (CCC and 'other'), dominant theoretical sources of inspiration and prevalent research methods applied.

State of the art

In the next sections an overview will be provided of the state of the art of corporate communication research, paying specifically attention to the contributions of the CCC to this emerging field of interest.

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TABLE 1 Corporate Communication Centre research in overview

<i>Research cluster</i>	<i>Key CCC Publications</i>	<i>Key 'other' Publications</i>	<i>Theoretical framework</i>	<i>Research methods (ccc)</i>
<i>Corporate Identity</i>				
Conceptualisation	Van Rekom, 92 Van Riel & Balmer, 96	Larcon & Reitter, 79 Albert & Whetten, 85,97	Corporate Culture, Means-ends	Literature review
Measurement	Van Rekom, 92, 98	Balmer, 96	Means ends	Laddering
Identification with the Organisation	Smidts et al, 95, 98	Aeshforth & Mael, 89 Dutton, 94	Social Indentification	Survey
<i>Corporate Reputation</i>				
Conceptualisation	Pruyn, 90 Van Raay, 86 Fombrum & van Riel, 98	Poeisz, 88 Fombrun, 96	ELM Signalling Game theory	Literature review
Measurement	Van Riel et al., 98	Fryxell et al., 94	Attitude Theory	Literature review
Impact Reputation on Organisational Performance	Maathuis, 93	Fombrun & Shanley, 89		Analyses of secondary data
Corporate branding	Van Riel, 92, 97 Maathuis et al., 97, 98	Keller & Aaker 92, 98 Brown & Lacin, 97	Brand Extension Attribution Theory	Survey
Issues Management and Crisis Communication	Van den Bosch et al., 97, 98 Heugens et al., 98	Dutton	Boundary Spanning	Case studies
<i>Orchestration of Communication</i>				
CSF of Corporate Campaigns	Adema et al., 93	Helgesen, 94 Grunig et al., 92		Survey
Effective Orchestration of Business Communication	Van Riel, 97, 97	Grunig, et al., 92		Case studies

Corporate identity

Conceptualisation of corporate identity

Corporate identity indicates the way in which a company presents itself through behaviour, as well as through communication and symbolism, to internal and external audiences. Academic authors from France (Larcon & Reitter, 1978; Ramanantsoa, 1989; Moingeon & Ramanantsoa, 1997), Germany (Birkigt & Stadler, 1986; Merkle, 1992), the USA (Albert & Whetten, 1985) and the Netherlands (Van Rekom, 1992; 1998; Van Riel & Balmer, 1997; Van Rekom, Van Riel & Wierenga, 1998) have made important contributions in defining the concept. Through their efforts, we can now define corporate identity as the self presentation of an organisation, rooted in the behaviour of individual organisational members, expressing three features: 'sameness over time' (continuity), 'distinctiveness' (features that differentiate the organisation from other organisations) and 'centrality' (features that are perceived as the essence of the organisation and that are spread over all organisational units). A vital question to be answered is what a valid and reliable approach is to find these features? Not only fitting the three above mentioned criteria, but also 'being recognised and supported by all relevant internal and external stakeholders'.

Measurement of corporate identity

During the last decade several methods have been developed to explain the actual corporate identity. The majority of the available methods comes from 'traditional' consumer behaviour research, which couple survey techniques comparable to standard external reputation research (see e.g. Poiesz, 1988), but which are used within the organisation (see e.g. De Cock, 1984), qualitative semi-structured interviews (Bernstein, 1986), ethnography (Balmer, 1996) and, heuristic analyses of historical sources to get grip on the nature of the company roots (Ramanantsoa, 1989). Further one can distinguish measurement techniques originally developed in organisational communication (communication audits, Goldhaber, 1986; Greenbaum et al. 1988) and in organisational behaviour (organisational identification scales; Ashford & Mael, 1989; Van Riel, Smidts & Pruyn, 1994) measuring the actual knowledge of and attitude towards relevant corporate issues, more specifically the degree of identification with the organisation among employees.

In our research we are especially interested in features which describe the actual situation. Popular methods to trace (see Van Riel, 1997a) the 'desired' corporate identity features like the Cobweb method of Bernstein (1986) or the IDU method of Rossiter and Percy (1997) are from a validity and reliability point of view of limited use, due to two problems. Firstly the problem of '*lack of uniqueness*'. Mission statements, corporate brochures and other platforms tend to express the central characteristics of the organisation, often claim-

ing similar characteristics as their competitors. This does not only apply to the official statements of identity and mission as well as to informal stories, which are supposed to express what the organisation is like. Berg and Gagliardi (1985) observed a striking similarity between the different corporate value systems, as expressed by 'this we believe' brochures, corporate bibles, mission statements and the like. Martin, Feldman, Hatch and Sitkin (1983) observed how the same stories that made a claim on uniqueness occurred in virtual identical form in a variety of organisations. A second problem is the problem of 'representativeness': who is most dominant in the definition of features claiming the concise representation of the organisation. How organisation members view their own organisation differ widely. What top managers think may be completely different from what the technical staff on the shop floor may think, and need not necessarily correspond to the observable behavior on the shop floor. By consequence, the link between what an organisation pretends to be and what stakeholders can observe is easily lost. A more balanced description of what an organisation 'actually' represents has to be based on input of all layers in the organisation: not by summarising their claims, but by analysing their actions. Theoretically it is necessary to interview all employees in order to be able to obtain a complete network of means-ends relations between what organisation members do. However, such complete information is hard to get empirically: it would require the complete means-end structures from all employees. In stead of interviewing all employees Van Rekom proposes a more economic approach in two steps.

Identification with the organisation

It seems to be fair to assume that the nature of the set of organisational identity characteristics will impact performance positively *if* the characteristics are appealing for both internal audiences (management and/or employees) and external audiences with different stakes in the organisation (financial, clients, social responsibility, etc.). Academic literature appears to be scarce about this subject. Some exceptions are the work of Dutton et al. (1994), Whetten (1997) and Van Riel, Smidts and Pruyn (1994) suggesting that the stronger the identification of employees with their organisation, the more likely they will show a supportive attitude towards it or to accept the organisation's premises and make decisions that are consistent with organisational objectives. The impact of these antecedents on organisational identification can be measured with the ROIT-scale. This is an instrument developed by researchers of the CCC and applied in a broad range of Dutch and Belgium organisations. The focal point of this scale is the identification of an employee with his or her organisation. Based on the concept of social identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and inspired by the OCQ (Organisational Commitment Questionnaire) scale of Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) we constructed a 21 items organisational identification scale, focusing on 'perception of belongingness', 'congruency between organisational

goals and personal aims', 'need for affiliation' and 'perceived benefit of membership'. We used five clusters of antecedents of organisational identification: 'employee communication', 'perceived organisational prestige', 'job satisfaction', 'goals and management style in implementation of goals' and 'corporate culture'. A complete ROI-survey enables management to detect weak spots in the organisation, creating or avoiding a supportive attitude towards the chosen identity features, which are used in internal and external communication. One of the interesting findings (from a communication point of view) in our research focuses on the strong impact of employee communication on organisational identification (Smidts, Van Riel & Pruyn, 1998; Boot, 1997). Employee communication is distinguished by us in information flow (downward, upward, horizontal), message characteristics (accuracy, readability, sufficiency, usefulness), communication climate (openness, trust, involvement in decision making) and communication structure (available channels to inform employees). Three components of employee communication are assumed to be communication antecedents of organisational identification: (a) the perceived quality of the contents of the organisational messages regarding own performance and organisational performance, both measured in terms of sufficiency and usefulness, (b) the perceived quality of the communication channels, in terms of perceived organisational effort, and the usefulness, accuracy and reliability of these sources of information, and (c) the quality of the communication climate, consisting of openness and trust in communication, perceived participation in decision making and the feeling that one is taken seriously. Communication climate appears to be the most important (communication) antecedent of organisational identification. The impact of quality of information received on own and company performance, and the quality of communication channels appeared to be considerable smaller (Smidts, Van Riel & Pruyn, 1998). The impact of the latter seems to go mainly via the communication climate, suggesting that how and organisation communicates is more important than what is communicated. This stresses the importance of 'soft' aspects in communication like openness, honesty and participation in decision making, resulting in the necessity for managers to pay serious attention to communication climate, specifically their own role in improving the climate.

Corporate reputation

Conceptualisation

Perceived organisational prestige (corporate reputation) also impacts organisational identification strongly. Corporate reputation is seen as an overall evaluation of organisational achievements (Fombrun, 1996), indicating a high esteem in the eyes of external stakeholders, based on the combined evaluation of separate images attributed to firm activities in areas like; 'finance', 'human resources', 'social responsibility' or 'product quality'.

A sound reputation has a positive effect on marketing by improved positions in the evoked set, financially improving the attractiveness of the company as an investment object and human resource management by attracting new employees, (Gatewood et al., 1993) and increasing involvement of employees with their company (Dutton et al., 1994). Further it appears to reduce costs of litigation (Grunig, 1992) and it gives signalling power to competitors (Heil & Waters, 1993). Like corporate identity, research in 'corporate reputation' can be found in several strands. Fombrun and Van Riel (1997) distinguish six academic disciplines paying attention to reputation: *economics* (company's have specific character traits that distinguish them from other types of firms, Weigelt and Camerer, 1988), *strategic management* (reputations are assets circumscribing firms' actions and rivals' reactions, actions of firms are hard to duplicate because they arrive from unique internal features therefore creating a distinct element illustrating the competitive advantage of a firm (Fombrun & Zajac, 1987; Freeman, 1984), *marketing* (personal characteristics of a subject results in information processing chunking cues in memory creating more or less networks of meanings of an object depending on the subject's involvement and the object's persuasive capabilities and efforts (Van Raaij, 1986; Petty & Caciopo, 1986; Poiesz, 1988; Pruyn, 1990), *organisational behaviour* (reputation is rooted in sense making of organisational members, perceived external prestige of the own company impacts organisational identification strongly (Dutton et al, 1994; Porac & Thomas, 1990), *sociology* (reputation rankings are social constructs created by the interaction between a firm and it's stakeholders in a shared institutional environment (Granoveter, 1985; Shapiro, 1987) and *accounting* (financial value of the company (Fombrun, 1996; Deng & Lev, 1997).

The six strands can be summarised into two main streams. One cluster focusing on perceptions of external stakeholders (organisational behaviour, sociology and marketing) and one cluster focusing on the vision of the dominate coalition within the organisation (economics, strategic management and accounting).

Measurement of corporate reputation/image

Familiarity with the nature of corporate reputation has become a necessity, enabling firms to anticipate (and as a consequence 'mobilise or influence public opinion') on developments resulting from shifts in public opinion as results of changes in 'grading' the company on actions impacting the environment. Companies can solely depend on public available 'opinion leader research' surveys, like *Fortune 500*, *Financial Times*, etc.', risking to miss information describing company specific trends. The latter can only be acquired by applying measurement methods satisfying the specific needs of the firm, like Q-sorting, Natural Grouping, Kelly Repertory Grid, Photosorting', etc. The variety of methods contrasts tremendously with the lack of information, providing managers with an overview of (a) the kind of methods to be

chosen from and the nature of the specific methods and especially (b) the advantages and disadvantages of these methods.

Image measurement techniques can be categorised based on the goals of the research (benchmarking against competitors or for attribute generation). Others stress that methods differ in the kinds of output they produce (statistical evidence versus qualitative descriptions based on e.g. 'pictures'), the attractiveness for the respondents, the ease of analyses, and the costs incurred in data collection. (Van Riel, Stroecker & Maathuis, 1998). Image measurement techniques can also be distinguished as either open ended or closed-ended. Open methods invite respondents to describe a company in their own words, whereas closed methods require respondents to assess companies on previously selected attributes. Finally, methods also differ in the specific task that they ask respondents to complete, whether asking them to sort cards or photos, to describe a company using metaphors, to fill out scales in a questionnaire, or to explain personal driving forces).

Strengths and weaknesses of six image measurement methods were tested by researchers of the CCC in two complementary empirical settings (one among passengers of airlines, one among students about their images of financial service organisations). We found that closed methods produce comparable, albeit relatively limited results. In contrast, open methods generate qualitative results that are informative and rich in detail. We concluded that managers can benefit from these findings if they rely on open methods for exploratory analyses of corporate images and then use closed methods to verify corporate associations quantitatively (Van Riel, Stroecker & Maathuis, 1998).

Impact of corporate reputation on organisational performance

A favourable corporate reputation is not an isolated objective, but a vital condition (thus a means) to create a sound commercial basis from which the success (in the widest sense of the word) of the company will eventually stem. On this latter point, contemporary empirical evidence can be found in studies recently carried out on the relationship between a company's achievement and its reputation (Fombrun & Shanley, 1989). Profit appears to have the greatest effect on reputation, followed by risk (negative influence) and the market value of the organisation. Other factors that influence reputation are: the visibility of the organisation in the media, the extent to which institutional investors hold shares in the organisation, the dividend pay-out ratio (a high ratio has a negative influence), social concern, size and the extent of advertising. Financial evaluation and reputation interact strongly (Sobol & Farelly, 1989; Higgens & Diffenbach, 1989; Fombrun & Shanley, 1989). Fryxell and Wang (1994) state that 'the higher the financial performance, the higher the reputation ranking will be'. Issue ownership theory however sug-

gest that this is (partly) a result of agenda-setting, meaning that the degree of attention media spend on specific items (in this case on financial performance in relation to business firms) will impact the attributes evaluating the reputation of a company (Petrocik, 1996). Research of the Corporate Communication Centre of the Erasmus University has shown that the following additional antecedents appear to be important: familiarity (condition sine qua non), branch characteristics and economic climate (Maathuis, 1993). High familiarity results in a more favourable reputation, but also in a more sophisticated one, i.e. people tend to have a complex network of meanings, evaluating both positive and negative aspects about the organisation. Companies with a below average degree of familiarity appear to be evaluated primarily by economic climate and branch characteristics.

Another, more recent example of CCC research regarding the impact of corporate reputation on organisational performance, is the impact of reputation on employer attractiveness. In co-operation with Blauw Marktonderzoek we analysed (quantitative) data describing perceptions of students and practitioners working in Information Technology about their evaluations of IT companies and their willingness to work for them. Reputation appeared to be a valid indicator for attractiveness as a potential employer (Van Riel & Slimmens, 1998).

Corporate branding

Companies can increase the value of their components through the mechanism of horizontal and vertical brand value transfer. In marketing literature this is termed as 'image spill-over' effects (Sullivan, 1990). This is especially true from one product towards another product (line and brand extensions: Aaker & Keller, 1990), products complementing each other (co-branding: Rao & Ruekert, 1994) or linking organisational associations to product associations (Belch & Belch, 1987; Keller & Aaker, 1992). An endorsement will be more successful if consumers *perceive similarity* between the core brand and its extension (Boush & Loken, 1991). This is not only valid for the branding of products, it is also true for corporate branding. Maathuis (1999) defines corporate branding as 'the process of sending signals to stakeholders, labelled by the corporate brand, in such a way that it positively contributes to the reputation of the company, and its constituting elements (business units, divisions, products)'. Basis for 'fit' (perceived similarity) in corporate branding is 'overall similarity or presence of explanatory links (brand specific attributes, user characteristics, shared parts, complementary or substitutability in usage situations, an image or prestige positioning, other abstract associations)'.

Maathuis, van Riel and Van Bruggen (1998) tested the impact of organisational associations on corporate brand evaluations and on the evaluation of a new product. Three major findings resulted from their experiment among students (in their role as consumers):

- Customers attribute higher quality and credibility to brands that evoke organisational associations. They attribute this to the fact that organisational associations in customer's memory have 'higher backing'. They are based on encounters with both products from the company, and with the company itself. By influencing brand quality and brand credibility, organisational associations have an indirect effect on new (extension) product evaluation.
- Presence of organisational associations in the corporate brand scheme has a positive effect on the fit with a new product. Based on the assumption that organisational associations are of a more abstract nature than product-related associations, they are better suited to function as explanatory links between a brand and a new product. By increasing fit, organisational associations positively impact the transfer of quality and credibility associations to the product level.
- Distinguishing between a direct and an indirect route of brand value transfer has defined the impact of fit on extension product evaluations more closely. The direct route of brand value transfer involves the transfer of quality associations from brand to product level. This route is highly dependent on fit between the brand and the product. In case of low fit, brand quality associations have less effect on product quality, and product quality contributes less to product preference. The indirect route of value transfer involves the transfer of credibility associations to product level. This route is less dependent on the fit between the brand and a new product. Even in case of low fit, brand credibility associations influence product credibility. The importance of product credibility associations in determining product preference even increases in situation of low fit, and high perceived risk. Only for experienced customers, transfer of brand credibility associations is obstructed by low fit. But this is not so much of a problem, as experienced customers rely to a higher degree on quality associations and technical product information in determining product preferences (Maathuis, Van Riel & Van Bruggen (1998).

Issues management and crisis communication

A special field of research in corporate communication is crisis communication; more specifically the way managers react on circumstances impacting the reputation of the company negatively. The CCC of the EUR started research in this area in 1995. Source of inspiration was the Brent Spar incident in which Shell's reputation became at stake when Greenpeace attacked them about their environmental behaviour. Later we expended this study to what we call 'second order issues management' focusing on managerial decision making in *potential* crisis situations (Van Riel & Van den Bosch, 1997; Van den Bosch & Van Riel, 1997; Heugens, Van den Bosch & Van Riel, 1999).

First order issues management is in our view equal to the well-known corporate responsiveness approach. In terms of responsiveness business firms should act as promptly as possible to threats in the business environment in order to minimise their harm. An alternative, sometimes complementary approach, is second order management. Five basic features characterise this approach (based on a review of strategic management literature and our own findings in a case study of the Dutch fats and oils industry: 'biotechnological modified soja beans'):

- selecting and focusing on a clear defined business domain;
- creating linking pins with external partners dominating relevant aspects within this domain;
- trying to get control over those actors that dominate the rules;
- outsourcing of a limited number of responsibilities to other parties more suitable to execute specific tasks;
- piloting of strategic actions by means of constraints.

Orchestration of communication

CSF of corporate campaigns

Much space has been devoted in literature to the ideal way of setting up an effective corporate communication program (Dowling, 1994; Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1994; Grunig & Hunt, 1984). These researchers provide various checklists, action plans, and so forth that can be helpful in making the correct communication decisions. The majority of these models have more in common than that they tend to differentiate of each other. All of them can be broadly divided into four distinguishable decision-making stages: definition of the problem, planning and programming, implementing and finally evaluating the program. Adema, Van Riel and Wierenga (1993) conducted a survey among practitioners (both representatives of the business world and their consultants from advertising agencies) aimed at increasing knowledge about 'critical success factors' in decision making about corporate communication programs. In this case we studied the most 'famous' (award winning and peer choice) Dutch corporate campaigns during the period 1989-1992. The case study of Adema et al. showed a broad acceptance of the protocols for corporate campaigns. This ideal approach (protocol) is especially supported regarding the beginning and the finalisation of a campaign. Communication experts fully agree regarding what to do during these phases. Nevertheless they also do agree that the application of these protocols broadly fail to be implemented if one looks at the last (evaluation) phase of a campaign. This seems to be in line with previous research of Helgesen (1992) and Franzen (1994) about the lack of accountability. The Adema et al. study is one of the first attempts by academic researchers to increase understanding of the nature of decision making during the implementation phase of corporate campaigns. The key success factor appeared in this study to be the so-called 'consensus omnium' principle: organ-

ising decision making in such a way that all internal and external stakeholders feel involved. The more stakeholders feel that the information they are given is an attempt by other organisational members to involve them in decision making in order to reach mutual understanding (especially about 'what' needs to be communicated and 'how') the greater will be the effectiveness of a campaign. A comparable study in 1997 (Voorschuur, 1997) confirmed our previous findings, but showed a slight (positive) shift regarding the willingness to apply evaluation research by managers of Dutch companies responsible for (huge) corporate campaigns. In contrast to the observation of Adema et al. (1993) that broad consensus seems to exist about the protocols to be used in preparing and evaluating corporate campaigns, we think that there is still one vital protocol missing: the transformation from corporate strategy into communication. Future research of the Corporate Communication Centre will focus on this area as is already shown in a pilot study by Van den Ban (1997).

Effective orchestration of communication

Organisations are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that communication is not being fully exploited. The magic word seems to be 'integration of communication'. This can be achieved in various ways. The longest tradition in this respect can be found in corporate design (common house style). In addition to that, one can also think of 'integrated marketing communication', working with common starting points, common operational systems and co-operative structures in decision making in communication.

General notions about orchestration/co-ordination can be found in organisational behavior (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; March & Simon, 1958; Ouchi, 1979), more specialised notions are to be found in public relations (Grunig, L., 1990; Grunig, J. Et al., 1992) and marketing (Schultz, Tannenbaum & Lauterbron, 1994; Nowak & Phelps, 1995). Grant (1996) recently published an article in which he integrates literature on formal and explicit co-ordination, pointing to four mechanisms integrating specialised knowledge (like communication knowledge); 'rules and directives' (procedures, rules, standardised information and communication systems), 'sequencing' (organisation of the primary process in such a sequence that each specialist's input occurs independently through being assigned a separate time slot), 'organisational routine' (application of professional actions in a relatively automatic fashion, implicit protocols) and 'group problem solving and decision making' (to be applied when complexity increases, a more personal and communication intensive form of integration). Applied to co-ordination of communication these typologies result in the following matrix, categorising orchestration mechanism within one of the four categories of Grant (see Table 2).

TABLE 2

<i>Rules or directives</i>	<i>Sequencing</i>	<i>Routines</i>	<i>Group Problem Solving</i>
Common house style (parent visibility)	Organisation of communication function: tasks, responsibilities, budget	Training and education of protocol to be used for: press contact, campaign presentation and implementation, investor relations, etc.	Steering committee
Common starting points (content co-ordination)	Linking communication to commercial life cycle		Annual/quarterly reviewing process
Guidelines for: working with external agencies, internal budget responsibilities			Ad hoc meetings

Source: Van Riel (1997a).

Co-ordination is not a goal in itself, but a means to find a solution for problems of efficiency and effectively in organisations. The logical counterpart of co-ordination is 'differentiation', stimulating entrepreneurship with individuals and/or their business units, enabling them to be responsible for their own decisions in a variety of commercial and non commercial areas. In spite of the popularity of decentralised (differentiated) decision making in organisations it is still necessary to define some 'basic agreements' about the way an organisation wants to profile its *sustainable corporate story*: the key message explaining the 'raison d'être' of the organisation for internal and external audiences. In the last decade corporate communication specialists developed several methods enabling organisations to manage ambiguities in communication. Our research particularly concerns the role of 'Common Starting Points' in creating consistent and effective communication.

Common Starting Points (CSP's)

Common Starting Points (Van Riel, 1992) can be considered as central values which function as the basis for undertaking any kinds of communication envisaged by an organisation. Establishing CSP's is particularly useful in creating clear priorities, e.g. to facilitate an eventual control and evaluation of the total communication policy. A successful balance of communications between the corporate and the Business Unit (BU)-level on one side and between BU's among themselves on the other, does not occur by strictly adhering to the CSP's, but by adapting the CSP's on which the various company divisions wish to base the starting points of their own communication policy.

The degree to which an organisation wants to co-ordinate the content of its key messages (content co-ordination) has a strong impact on the emphasis on the type of corporate communication policy one can apply. Also important is the extend to which one wishes to reveal 'the parent behind the brand' (parent visibility), by using the company name, its house style, etc.

In practice, an organisation can choose a position between two extremes: 'uniformity model' (parent and subsidiary companies are profiled in an identical manner) and 'variety model' (parent and subsidiary companies are profiled as independent; a relationship is hardly noticeable). Between these two lie many variations of the so-called 'endorsement model' (relationship between product, subsidiary company and parent company is apparent in independent profiles). Holding companies like ING Group, encompassing companies like Postbank, ING Bank, Nationale Nederlanden, Barings, Life of Georgia, etc.) must make a choice concerning the profiling of their subsidiaries on the basis of the degree they want them to use the corporate (holding) name - in this case ING - (parent visibility), and to what degree they want them to use similar features in the messages they send to their stakeholders (content agreement). Research of the Corporate Communication Centre shows that the well-known categorisation of Olins (1978) of corporate communication profiles in monolithic, endorsed and branded corporate identity structures only focuses on the visual aspects and neglects the combination of content and visualisation (Van Riel, 1997b). That is why we claim that every holding company can and most probably will differentiate its constituting parts in four types of corporate identity types: appearance, hiding, variety and uniformity (Maathuis, 1999).

The establishment of preferences concerning the positioning of the subsidiary companies in one of the four corporate identity policy types can be simplified by using the SIDEC model (Van Riel, 1997b). SIDEC stands for strategy, internal organisation, identification, environmental assessment and communication. The presupposition of the SIDEC-model is that the final choice for a certain type of communication policy is determined by the information available about the mutual weight between the nature of the company strategy; the homogeneity or rather heterogeneity of the driving forces on the group and subsidiary company levels; the manner in which the internal organisation takes place, especially as far as planning and control by the head office regarding the business units are concerned; and the nature of the environment in which the company functions. Maathuis and Van Riel discovered (based on both case studies and a survey among general managers and communication managers in European companies) that the choice for a more uniform profile can be predicted by the following propositions:

- fit in scope and activities between the subsidiary companies within the conglomerate;
- fit in core competences between the subsidiary companies within the conglomerate;
- high esteem for the corporate brand resulting in perceived benefits in the eyes of business unit management;
- lack of autonomy regarding visual choices;
- similarity in markets and publics.

Conclusion

This article can only highlight the basic findings of our research. In spite of our network philosophy aimed at creating alliances with researchers within and outside the Rotterdam School of Management I like to stress that this overview does not show the work of colleagues in Rotterdam who are also strongly involved in communication research (e.g. Van Raaij, Riezenbos, Verbeke and others in 'advertising/marketing communication or e.g. Vos in history of communication).

The majority of our publications is published in international academic journals and conference papers. Our first book (Van Riel & Nedela, 1989) was written in English (alliance with USA partner), while a revised edition of 'Identiteit en imago' (Van Riel, 1992) has been translated into English (1995) and Spanish (1997). The Corporate Communication Centre of the Erasmus University Rotterdam, together with the Stern Business School of New York University founded a new academic journal in 1996: *The Corporate Reputation Review*. The internationalisation of our network is not only stimulated by pragmatic reasons (the majority of our teaching is in English (Master of Corporate Communication Program, MBA elective, CEMS) and /or the bureaucratic necessity to produce high-ranked (is equal to English) articles. It is also a logical consequence of looking for co-operation with as much as possible researchers who have the same research focus. We believe that this international network can speed up the process of knowledge creation and dissemination.

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Cees van Woerkum

Communication and innovation research at the Wageningen Agricultural University

Introduction

Before I introduce the main research topics of our group and discuss the basic theoretical orientation, I would like to say something very pragmatic: about the setting of our group in an agricultural technological university.

This setting greatly affects our priorities. Firstly we must deal with all kinds of developments in the field of the university. So, we are concerned with the social, cultural, technological or political changes in agriculture. For instance, the (requested) change of direction from an agricultural model oriented to maximisation of production to a more 'ecological' model can not be neglected. In the same field, we have take into account themes like human nutrition, health, environmental problems and nature conservation. These subjects are – fortunately – linked. They are centred around the main prerequisites for life. Together they give our research a clear focus.

Secondly, we are expected to contribute to these themes in a practical way. Our research is problem-orientated and is related not only to a better understanding of the social world, but also to decision-making processes to improve current practices.

This does not mean that we are inclined to look at methods, at practical yardsticks for communication experts. On the contrary, our group is devoted to a fairly theoretically oriented analysis of processes of social change. It is our firm conviction, that new theoretical approaches can be very helpful to elicit practical problems and to generate new ideas and alternative ways of solving them.

Thirdly, as one of the leading agricultural universities in the world, our outlook is very international. Most dissertations in fact are based on field research outside Europe.

This setting influences our daily work, and of course our network (which also means work). On the one hand there is the network of practitioners and societal institutions (public organisations, the commercial sector, societal groups). On the other hand there is the academic network, consisting not only of the same decision-oriented colleagues, but also of scientists in one of the main social disciplines. Communication science is just one of these disciplines: important, of course, but not a dominant one. Social psychology is needed to understand processes of attitude change, risk experience, social dilemma situations, etc. Anthropology is interesting because of the cultural factor, an essential ingredient in processes of social change. Sociology can be used to explain interactions between groups in soci-

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ety. Policy science can give us a better insight into the mechanisms of the decision making process in public institutions, etc.

It is important to notice the growing interest of these different social sciences just in communication. Outside communication science we can find many very fundamental and inspiring theories about communication! Bringing together some of these theories, and integrating them in new approaches is one of the challenges we perceive. Of course, communication science continues to be a very rich source, as well as an inspiring academic network.

In this article I want to address three basic subjects. Firstly, I will consider our understanding of communication processes. In dealing with this key concept we have gone a long way, from a rather mechanical approach to recent, more constructive ideas. Then, I will discuss two (related) subjects: 1) the relationship between communication and knowledge production and utilisation and 2) the relationship between communication and the production and implementation of policy plans. The main part of our research probably falls under this knowledge and policy perspective. A few words, however, will be spent on methods of communication.

From receiver-orientation to no-receiver orientation

Until late in the 1980s, we were still using a definition of communication in which 'sending a message via a medium to a receiver' was at least an implicit element. Communication was about transfer.

Somebody has to be helped or influenced, at the other end of the process, in a way that enables him/her to make better decisions for him/herself or for society. In the field of agricultural extension as well as in health promotion or environmental communication campaigns, this 'sending- perspective' was an ingredient in many publications, especially in the field of mass communications.

The effects of this 'sending' depend of course on a combination of sender-, medium-, message-, and receiver-factors. The latter formed the corner-stone of every conscious effort to inform or influence people. Knowing the receiver, his/her previous knowledge, interests and attitude (research on predisposition) gives us the opportunity to create effects, with the help of existing theory from several disciplines, that could explain the relationship between input and output (Van Woerkum, 1982). We had – so to speak – an instrument in our hands. At least, that was our way of thinking.

This picture has changed dramatically. 'Sending' is no longer our main concern, and we have a couple of reasons for this.

The first point was that the prediction of receiver-reactions proved to be more difficult than had been expected. The effect of communication cannot be seen as the sediment of well-chosen messages. On the contrary, the receiver himself, in his way of selecting and interpreting the message, is a large part of the explanation of what really happens. The effect of communication is a construction. As we read a story in a book, we form pictures in our head about the key figures

and their environment, on the basis of a few sentences. These pictures count, not the sentences themselves. Secondly, a communication act is not an isolated phenomenon. Communication campaigns are (mostly a small) part of a world full of related messages, that confirm or contradict our message. How people perceive our message is influenced by how they look at us as a particular source. The effect is contingent on the relationship that has been developed. Especially in governmental communication this (bad) relationship between sender and receiver, as many image-studies show, could be very harmful for any effective contact. Thirdly, the sending-metaphor neglects the social dimension. People are not isolated particles of humanity. This well-known fact has been the subject of thousands of studies, but only recently have we been able to analyse in depth how people construct meaning, how they create 'factuality' (Potter, 1996). The consequences of this change in conceptualisation of communication are far-reaching and determine many of our research projects now. Let me give some examples.

One of our themes in the heart of our field and strongly influenced by our 'setting' is communication about biotechnology. We can look at this from the viewpoint of understandability or acceptability. People lack the knowledge to grasp what is going on and they have (positive or negative) attitudes that influence the perception of messages about biotechnology. But we can also look at the way people deal with this kind of innovation by using frame-theory. Within a certain frame, and only then, certain messages acquire some meaning. Frames are social constructions of the world around us, meant to shape order and to enable us to deal with the abundance of messages. A frame like 'biotechnology is un-natural' is perhaps trivial in the eyes of experts, but can guide the interpretation of what is going on considerably (Van Woerkum, 1998).

Frames are linked to more or less hidden structures in our mind, to implicit knowledge and the unconscious. These are new subjects that are currently receiving much more attention.

Another consequence of the departure from the sending perspective is the inclusion of signals, 'given off' by the sender as a very important factor in communication processes. Messages are one thing, but what is 'sent' along with them, is perhaps more important. In our definitions (for instance: 'communication is a process in which a source sends a message or/and gives off a signal by which a receiver can construct information') we stress this 'double' process (Van Woerkum & Kuiper, 1995).

The main consequence is perhaps the change from a 'sending' to an 'interaction perspective'. This is a strategic shift, leading to quite another view of how communication can 'work'. The idea is that for elaboration of arguments involvement is a prerequisite, and that for involvement interaction is necessary. However, interaction cannot be successful unless both actors deconstruct their own frames and learn

to understand their different perspectives. In doing so they change themselves ('reframing'), which offers new opportunities for solving problems.

From 1990 interactivity is the key-concept in our research. It guides our theoretical as well as our practical work. It influences our thinking about methods. It leads to new areas like negotiation theory and studies about public debates.

An important feature is the diminishing attention paid to the big media (tv-campaigns, and so on) and increasing attention to interpersonal communication. The integration of mass media and interpersonal communication is a famous subject in communication science (for a recent contribution, see Rogers, 1998), but now the accent lies much more strongly on the latter.

For the development of these basic ideas we make a distinction between processes of knowledge-production-and-utilisation and processes of policy-formation-and-implementation. We will look at these (related) fields subsequently.

Finally, it will be clear from what is said that the old receiver-orientation has been superseded. The concept of target-groups, so powerful in earlier days, has lost a lot of its attraction. We are no longer thinking in terms of people who move (the classical 'sender') and people who are moved (the 'receivers'). Both parties are engaged in an interactive process, and influence each other. Besides this: I have got a radio-receiver, but humans never 'receive'.

Communication and knowledge

The roots of our group 'communication and innovation' are indeed to be found in innovation studies, more precisely: in the study of the diffusion of innovation. This well-known and very productive research-tradition (with, according to Rogers more than 4000 studies; Rogers, 1995) dominated the first 10 years of our group (1964-1974). We can safely say that the rest of the century was spent on criticising this approach and constructing a new perspective.

A key publication in the early days was the dissertation of Van den Ban, about innovation processes in agriculture, entitled: farmer and agricultural extension (Van den Ban, 1963). The order of words in this title was no coincidence. The social system of farmers, strongly linked by (informal) ties, was the central focus. Neither the knowledge-producing institutions, nor the extension organisation and their methods, were deeply investigated.

The assumption in innovation studies in those days was simple. The social system itself could be held responsible for a lot of dynamics, with opinion leaders as a dynamic force, whereby innovation is seen as an intrinsic valuable and usable 'public good'. Problems arise as one perceives differences in adoption eagerness. Some people know and apply new knowledge; others don't and stay behind. To explain

these differences and to speed up the general process of diffusion was the objective of social science. These efforts resulted in a couple of recommendations, for instance about how to reach these opinion leaders (Van Woerkum, 1972), how to use mass media and how to produce effective messages in different phases of the process, in relation to interpersonal communication (by extension officers), etc. The critical points, however, were numerous and were put forward by many authors (Albrecht, 1969). These critics formed a movement of their own.

One of these points was – of course – the idea that an innovation is ‘good’, what is called ‘the pro innovation bias’. In our department Röling has published many articles which stress that the fruits of science are not always that superior (see for instance: Röling, 1988). Recently, we have found that even nowadays experts involved in creating innovative practices support this idea. A quote from this research on educational planning: ‘A good teacher is according to me somebody who understands what I mean. You think that your book (teaching methods, C.v.W.) is good, that education based on this is good (Adolfse and Van Woerkum, 1996).

Another pitfall was the idea that the system of adopters can be analysed as a coherent entity, and the assumption that therefore everybody could profit from the same innovation. In fact, social systems are by no means that coherent. Innovators can keep innovations to themselves. By applying new technology earlier than others they strengthen their position, often at the cost of the other end of the innovation spectrum: the late majority and laggards. Many critical authors stress the negative effects of marginalisation of these groups. In developing countries small farmers are driven to the slums of the big cities in India or elsewhere precisely by these innovation processes (see Röling, 1988).

Linked with this pro-innovation bias is the idea of rationality, that exclusively is produced by science and promoted by extension. On the one hand science is always ‘restricted’, based on certain presuppositions. On the other hand: practice is often not that irrational if you look at it more closely, as Brouwers has shown in his study of agricultural practices in Benin (Brouwers, 1993). These practices are usually linked to existing norms and values ‘that are rational’ in their own right. Moreover, practitioners experiment to overcome some of the problems they encounter. They are producing usable knowledge themselves.

A great deal of our research of the last 10 years has gone towards creating an alternative to the diffusion model. Whereas the old model was based on transfer of technology (TOT), now we stress the idea that knowledge is produced by interaction between actors involved. This fits in with our basic ideas about communication processes. A range of dissertations is based on this idea of participation, see for instance: Leeuwis, 1993; Engel, 1994; Van de Fliert, 1993; Paine, 1997; Tossou, 1995; Basnyat, 1995; Campilan, 1995; Hamilton, 1995.

One of the most extreme (and also most elaborated) models for a participatory approach can be found in the dissertation of Engel. In his so-called RAAKS-method (RAAKS: Rapid Appraisal of Agricultural Knowledge Systems) the complete network involved in creating and/or solving a problem has to be activated in order to discuss a wide array of topics, by which they can go from global arguments to a specific action plan. One of the main objectives of the RAAKS-method is to deal with the different perspectives of all these actors in a careful way (Engel, 1994; Engel, 1997).

The participatory approach is an international phenomenon, which (in addition to RAAKS) goes under such headings as Participatory Rapid Appraisal, aimed at the mobilisation of local knowledge in a social learning process, Participatory Action Research, focused on research methods to structure the process of change, or Participatory Development, which stresses the transfer and development of responsibilities, including building up local institutions (Röling et al., 1994). Of course, these approaches are not without problematic aspects. They possibly can be blamed for their consensus-orientation, the neglect of internal power differences, and the power that comes from big economic movements and political structures (Van Woerkum & Adolfse, 1998). Yet, they have paved the way to another view on communication and innovation.

The main idea here is that communication has to precede an innovation and that innovation with a (broad) group of involved people is necessary to create innovations that are really successful (Röling & Wagemakers, 1997). This can be understood better if we look at the criteria, which gradually emerged from research on effective innovations, like the existence of a clear advantage for adopters, compatibility with norms and values or triableness. These criteria cannot be easily met from behind a desk.

Linked to this interaction model is a new view of knowledge. In the old model knowledge is 'stock-knowledge', a) something that exists apart from any person b) is transferable and c) has a quality of its own. In the new model there is only 'flow-knowledge', 'constructed' by each actor in different ways, not transferable and with certain qualities that can only be granted by interaction between involved people. 'Weak' scientific results can become 'strong', and the other way around. Knowledge is a social construction. Acid rain is not the same thing now as it was 15 years ago, apart from the deposition itself. Of course, not everything is 'constructable'; a message has its own dimensions. But the degrees of freedom and the possibilities to link aspects of the message with other subjects are greater than was suggested earlier.

Another important aspect of this suggested interaction is the kind of learning that is at stake. Besides the common technical learning about innovations, social learning becomes a prerequisite in an interactive decision making process. This means learning about the

(social, cultural, economic) background of the perspective of other actors and about their motives. Social learning supports 'substantial learning', learning about other perspectives to interpret reality, including the actors' own perspective. In these perspectives implicit or tacit knowledge is a constructive element, that has to be made explicit (via metaphors, examples, even drawings, etc.) and, by this, usable in the process of creating an innovation (Van Woerkum et al., 1999). Lastly, the knowledge that is needed is not only about the (severity of the) problem or about (alternative) solutions. Of equal importance is knowledge about societal processes that go along with every salient interfering innovation.

Applications of this interactive knowledge perspective can be found in different situations. Most of the studies concerned changes in the agricultural knowledge system. The contribution of Leeuwis is important in the field of computer-based communication technology (CT). CT-development processes are in his view inherently social in nature and presume interaction as well as social learning. He has therefore set up a 'learning-oriented' method for CT-development (Leeuwis, 1993).

The interactive model stresses the reciprocity of the relations, its outlook is decentralised rather than centrist and dynamic: no innovation is 'ready' or 'finished'. With these characteristics we are in the middle of quite another process than we were in our 'diffusion-period'.

Communication and policy

Historically, the lines of development here are in many aspects similar to what we have found in the field of knowledge. They run from a linear, one-sided approach to an interactive approach. There are, however, some differences.

One of the most striking differences is the time-table. In knowledge-studies, the tendency to think about participation and interaction started early in the 1970s and moved on with increasing force towards the present. In the policy realm, there were some early documents about the importance of participation, for example in the dissertation of Van der Haak (Van der Haak, 1972). But in the 1980s the development moved back to an instrumental approach, that had already been introduced by Vogelaar in 1955 (Vogelaar, 1955). Only in the 1990s has 'interactive policy making' regained momentum.

In the instrumental approach communication acquired a place as a well-valued part of the policy mix, together with instruments like regulation, facilities and money (taxes, levies, subsidies). For an elaborated discussion: see the dissertation of Van Meegeren (1997).

Much effort was paid to analysing the function of communication in a policy mix (Van Woerkum, 1990). Partly, communication is just an instrument like the others, with certain strengths and weaknesses, able to realise some desirable behavioural effects. For instance, in the fight against AIDS, communication was seen as 'the only medi-

chine'. Partly, communication has a special function in supporting other instruments, by giving information to make people aware of the existence of these measures, or making these instruments more acceptable, or to promote these instruments, or to increase the efficiency of the implementation (for instance: how to fill in certain forms).

Communication as a stand-alone instrument is attractive in those situations where knowledge or (social) emotions are strong attitude predictors, whereby the attitudes in their turn are influential factors for behaviour change. Social-psychological models such as the Fishbein Ajzen model were, for a long period, very popular in the preparation phase of an instrumental communicational approach. But ideas from policy science literature were also rented to explain why in certain situations communication becomes important or not. One of these situations is the one in which no instrument is really effective, including communication, which does not however stop the policy system demanding a solution. In those cases communication serves as a relatively cheap and visible sign that the government is doing something, as a kind of 'symbolic policy'.

More important probably is the supporting role of communication. The presentation of new policy in understandable terms was and is a big task for any communication specialist in civil service. Another task is 'to gain acceptance'.

It is just this last objective that has proved to be very problematic and forms the starting point for interactive thinking.

The assumption was that, by explaining the assessed policy plan, people got the arguments and would move from a negative or neutral position to a more positive attitude.

This thinking resembles the optimistic sending perspective, of which I spoke. By giving the arguments, presented in the right way, and distributed via the right channels to target audiences, the support of the people could be 'won'. This model does not work however. Put in extreme terms: particular arguments do not count at all, except for people who are looking for them. And this is what they often do not do. They have their own priorities, and they have their own arguments.

We studied the acceptance of the Nature Policy Plan (Aarts, 1998) and came to the conclusion that farmers have not accepted this plan. One of the reasons for this was the different perspective or frame from which farmers approach nature. The (communication about the) Nature Policy Plan stresses things like biodiversity and the preservation of some rare plants and animals. In the daily experience of most of the farmers these things are not in their minds if they think about nature. The stories of biologists are not especially relevant for them. Farmers were absolutely against 'new nature' areas. This 'clash of cultures' has been studied from different angles, for instance by using the established-outsiders theory of Elias. To overcome the assessed acceptance problems we had to look at the process that preceded a particular policy plan. In this process rela-

tions were developed or destroyed, involvement was won or lost and eventually an effective policy plan was created or not. Interactive policy making has been an important current in our research-programme in the 1990s. It is studied from a 'detached' position: we are aware of its benefits or even inevitability's, but – also – we analyse the difficulties or even impossibilities. Certain situations are simply not suited to such an approach, for instance where principles are involved (The Organisation for Animal Welfare reacting to biotechnological experiments with cows), or aesthetic norms prevail (discussions about public statues, modern architecture) or where great inequalities exist in power or interests (see further: Van Meegeren, 1997).

One of the most promising theoretical perspectives in interactive communication has proven to be negotiation theory. It can be applied in the relationship between government and special interest groups, but mostly we look at the situation in which the government tries to escape from its role as regulator and becomes a director of a process in which different actors with different interests have to come to an agreement ('communication as policy'). Some roles in this process (the role of the mediator, information roles) are played by communication specialists appointed by the government. Negotiations take place in the field of land use planning, water management, environmental problems, etc.

Key words in our studies of negotiation processes are interdependencies (Van de Poel & Van Woerkum, 1995), learning processes and types of negotiations. Especially the last distinction of negotiation types is a very important one. Distributive negotiations are based on positions, compromising (from overcharging or even threatening to the finding of some 'middle point') and little active communication with a constituency during the process. In integrative negotiation one tries to look at the interests or philosophies behind particular opinions, new approaches are developed with new information ('joint fact finding') via intensive contacts with constituencies. We see for instance in the field of land use planning how agricultural groups ('environmental co-operatives') together with the traditional nature organisations move to new perspectives.

Two PhD projects deal with these negotiations, in quite different ways. In the first the starting point is social dilemma theory, in which bargaining is one of the solutions. Maarleveld studied the water management in the province of Gelderland in successive phases. Using different theoretical perspectives, she analyses the process of coming to an agreement between an ever-widening circle of involved groups trying to tackle increasingly complex issues (Maarleveld & Dangbegnon, in press).

The second project is the analysis of the characteristics and opportunities of electronic debates on public issues. The Internet is perhaps a modern equivalent of the Paris Salon of the late 18th century. We

look after the typical differences between electronic and 'normal' face-to-face interaction and how people in such indirect debates construct their identity and accountability ('factuality').

In the latter study we are greatly helped by a more fundamental orientation, as is developed in our group by Te Molder (Te Molder, 1995; 1998). Using discourse analysis, Te Molder studied what communication planners in governments are really doing, in their interaction with each other and policy officials. The main idea is that they are not just representing the existing policy line, but are active as well in the process of formulating and reformulating governmental policies. They are by no means passive translators. In addition to these results the study offers a research methodology, that is also used to study public debates (Aarts and Te Molder, 1998). In our study of electronic debates, discourse analysis has an important place.

The emphasis on studying language as a mean to understand processes of change can also be found in the research of Martijn (Martijn, 1995; Martijn et al., 1996).

Methods

As was said at the beginning: the intention of our group is to offer new strategic devices for communication practitioners. In the 1970s the analysis of the interaction between communication specialists and clients was one of the main issues, leading to a long series of 'media studies'. We have to a large extent lost this orientation in methods, but the beginning of a rediscovery of this field of study is visible.

This renewed attention is partly caused by the change towards an interactive approach. This approach costs a lot of energy and money that can be spent well or badly. We cannot neglect the cost-benefit aspects of these new models of societal decision making.

Method-oriented projects are to be found in the works of Paul Engel (mentioned above, see also Groot, 1998) who developed the so-called RAKS-method. Another, already finished, project is the 'Super-project', a design for an interactive approach in local communities, aimed at the creation of better health conditions, especially concerning food (Vaandrager, 1995): At this moment an interactive approach is being designed for internal communications in health institutions. This field requires more attention.

Apart from these, methods are also studied in the dissertation project of Heymann, who looks at the very first steps in any decision making process, trying to come to grips with the problematic concept of 'information need'. In a couple of experiments she developed a new way of dealing with people with less articulated needs (Heymann, 1992).

Communication methods require particular research methods. In the case of instrumental communication, these research methods were highly programmed, in a tradition that sought standardisation (baseline, and follow-up measurement). Interactive communication

is much more contingent on many contextual factors. We try to develop research methods that are usable precisely in these dynamic situations (Koelen & Vaandrager, 1995; Koelen & Hanrahan, 1997).

Conclusion

Research in the Communication and Innovation Studies Group focuses on interactive communication, reacting to earlier orientations in the field of knowledge utilisation (diffusion studies) or instrumental communication (research on attitude change, research supporting campaigns, etc.)

At the moment this choice appears obvious to us. It reflects the change in practice. Of course, we take a critical standpoint: interactive communication is not effective *because* it is interactive. We have to study more closely how to cope with many interfering factors, we have to analyse the actual condition that precede interaction, looking at the policy system, or at the attitudes of participants. We are still far away from a well-developed methodology. But the choice itself is no longer a matter of debate.

Yet, it is challenging to look at what will come next. Is there anything beyond interactivity? Here, we can only speculate. The interactive approach stresses equality. It belongs to the general movement towards a civil society, in which each group of citizens takes responsibility to promote its own interest in accordance with the interest of others, recognising the needs of the social system as a whole.

In practice, we see that people differ in their involvement in public issues. Some take a fairly passive position. Even in the world of politics and government many representatives and officials are 'coping' rather than initiating. There is a need for informal as well as formal leadership. Perhaps the function of leadership in processes of social change could be a new area for study and research.

Another question arises regarding the boundaries of 'communication and innovation studies'. At this moment we tend to look much more closely at communication processes within and around organisations. Communication management based on organisation-environment dynamics is a strategic concept that receives our attention. Knowledge and policy is largely produced by organisations, not by individuals. The organisation as a centre of communicative activities could become an important subject.

The interactive approach leads to a strong preference for interactive communicative methods. This means that the meeting is the crucial form to be studied. Yet, there are also other alternatives to the traditional instrumental approaches, like the entertainment-education formula, the effectiveness of which is analysed by Bouman (Bouman, 1999). Here, the link with media studies is preserved. We could go further along this track.

One thing is striking in all these approaches: we have lost 'our' professional (in the field of agriculture: the extension worker). In former days, like many scholars in the field of education, we had a clear

picture of a practitioner, who had to solve typical problems and whose decision-making process had to be supported by (our) science. Teachers are still there, but the profession of 'voorlichting' (not translatable) has been eroded. In fact, many professionals (researchers, policy makers, advisors, representatives of interest groups, managers, general practitioners, politicians, TV-programmers, journalists, etc.) are involved in innovation and communication. This simple fact largely explains our new, much broader perspective.

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Een nieuwe traditie?

**Op 9 december a.s. organiseert het tijdschrift *Communicatie* een eindejaarsdebat.
Het thema is: Interne Communicatie: de stand van zaken**

Een ééndaags congres over de state of the art in theorie en praktijk. Met een pittig debat tussen bekende auteurs op het gebied van interne communicatie, forumdiscussies en lezingen van IC-managers van grote ondernemingen.

Tijdens een ochtend- en een middagsessie komen thema's aan de orde als:
Heeft interne communicatie als vak een toekomst?
Sluit de theorie voldoende aan bij de praktijk?
Hoe ziet de functie van de IC-functionaris er in de toekomst uit?
Over welke competenties moet de IC-functionaris beschikken?
Wat is het profiel van nieuwe functies als webmaster en manager intranet?

Sprekers zijn:

Mieke van Putte, auteur van *Interne Communicatie: van theorie naar praktijk*,
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Het congres vindt plaats op donderdag 9 december 1999,
Internationaal Perscentrum Nieuwspoort, Den Haag.

Het congres begint om 9.30 en eindigt om 15.30 uur.
Deelname kost f. 795,-. Abonnees van *Communicatie* betalen slechts f. 595,-.
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