

Metamorphoses of the Dutch universities, 1950-2025

Proposal for a NIAS Theme Group, 2022-2023¹

Hans Radder: group programme

Abstract

Recent years have seen increasing calls for changes in the politics of higher education and the structure and culture of Dutch universities. This programme aims to feed the debate on the ends and means of these changes. First, through socio-historical and philosophical research about the various metamorphoses of Dutch universities since the 1950s; second, through exploring their possible futures with the help of systematic analyses and assessments of the pros and cons of these historical and recent developments. By combining socio-historical sensibility and philosophical depth it will contribute both to academic discourse and to public and political debates on its subject.

The research topic and its societal relevance

Over the past decade, the organization of Dutch universities has been discussed and criticized by several groups of academics and students. Recently, the legitimacy of such critiques has been acknowledged by university administrators, science policy organizations and national politicians.² Their calls for ‘modernizing’ the universities will imply significant changes to the current structure, culture and organization of these institutions. Realizing such changes needs to be based on a thorough understanding of the nature and aims of academic education and scientific research and it requires a broad involvement of all relevant stakeholders.

The proposed research programme will contribute to achieving these aims, first, through socio-historical and philosophical research about the various metamorphoses Dutch universities have undergone since the 1950s; second, through an exploration of their possible futures based on systematic analyses and assessments of the pros and cons of these historical and recent developments. Results will be disseminated to both academic and broader public audiences, relevant policy organizations and political parties.

The main idea of the theme-group programme

Since 1950, Dutch universities have gone through several complex transformations. The programme conceives of these metamorphoses with the help of three major, *ideal-typical models*. The university between 1950 and the end of the 1960s can be characterized as the *professors’ university*. It was, primarily, the full professors who possessed the authority and responsibility regarding education, research and administration. The huge growth of student numbers and the social pressure for democratization in the 1960s necessitated a new administrative structure. It took the form of the *democratic university*, legally formalized in 1970 by the ‘Law for Revision of the University Administration’. What followed was a period

¹ This document is an application for subsidizing a theme group at the Netherlands Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) in Amsterdam. Its subject is the history and future of the Dutch universities. After a positive review of a pre-proposal, the above full proposal (consisting of the same participants) was assessed in December 2021 but not approved. The proposal was judged to be very important and it had also acquired good scores by its reviewers. It was nevertheless rejected because accepting it would disturb ‘the overall balance between Dutch and non-Dutch fellows of the NIAS year-group’. Because the content of the programme may be relevant to the still topical debates on the predicament of the current universities, we have decided to make it public.

² See for instance the position paper [Ruimte voor ieders talent](#), endorsed by VSNU, MFU, KNAW, NWO and ZonMw; the proposal by the KNAW to offer academics a [free rolling grant](#) for basic research; and the [motion](#) accepted by a substantial majority of the Dutch Parliament asking for a more democratic administration of higher education.

of experimentation, with different ways of shaping this democratization. This resulted, for some, in too little and, for others, in too much democracy. Gradually, proposals for a new structure were developed. This new structure came into being in 1997, with the 'Law on the Modernization of the University Administration'. It paved the way for the *entrepreneurial university*. It was based on a business model that emphasized its financial dependence on external, private and public funders. Its mission was to produce saleable skills and knowledge and functionally specialized graduates. Scientists and administrators were subjected to detailed bureaucratic assessment procedures, while democratic practices were, for the sake of efficiency, replaced by a hierarchical corporate structure.

The outcome of the presently occurring metamorphosis is, of course, still unclear. A worthwhile option to explore is the *public university*. That is, a university that is genuinely public, not merely through public funding but primarily by promoting and advancing both basic science as a public interest and an approach to education and research directed towards more specific public interests (where the latter are explicitly seen as much wider than their economic significance). A central question, then, concerns the organizational structure that can be expected to facilitate and foster such a public university.

Methodology and relation to existing literature

The programme primarily involves the selection, study, analysis and assessment of relevant written sources. Its socio-historical part includes the option of interviewing central actors in its area of research. Theoretically, the three historical types of universities should not be seen as themselves normative ideals but as *Weberian ideal-types*: heuristic models that enable a meaningful ordering of the manifold empirical data. They are hypothetical constructs that might have to be adjusted or supplemented depending on specific research results. Furthermore, while traditional philosophy is often rather abstract, this programme acknowledges the theoretical character of philosophy but requires that its analyses and assessments need to draw on detailed socio-historical studies of the relevant subjects. By taking seriously the legal task of Dutch universities 'to pass on knowledge *for the benefit of society*' it also goes beyond a purely empirical approach.

Carrying out this broad-ranging programme will require engaging with (the body of literature on) a range of major subjects. These will include, among other things, the pillarization of the Dutch society, and its demise; the student, women's and environmental movements; New Public Management and its politics of evaluation and commodification; the claimed 1980s epochal break in the practice of science; the diversity of academic disciplines, academics and students; the digitalization in research and teaching; internationalization and the dominance of English as the language of academia; the public interest of science and science as a commons.

Academic relevance

The *central aim* of this research proposal is: to support the emerging transformation of the Dutch universities and to explore their possible future by means of socio-historical and philosophical analysis and assessment of their (recent) history. The focus is on the organization of research, teaching and administration. However, an appropriate organization depends on how the aims of these activities are conceived and how they are implemented. Therefore, a first specific feature of the programme is the analysis and assessment of these two aspects of the relevant universities: the often idealized conceptions and how (and to what extent) they have been realized in practice.

The programme will be structured from *three perspectives*: the institutional history of the structure and culture of particular universities, the broader political history (also informed

by international developments), and a philosophical approach which combines conceptual analysis and normative assessment of academic ideals and practices. The institutional and political histories will be developed in close interaction, and together they will both benefit from the philosophical analyses and feed their assessments. The second special feature of the programme is the interdisciplinary cooperation between historians, social scientists and philosophers. The integration of socio-historical sensibility and philosophical depth promises to make a unique contribution, both to academic discourse and to public and political debates about the future of our universities.

Intended research output

The main academic end product will be a comprehensive, Dutch-language book, consisting of research chapters on the socio-historical and philosophical dimensions of the recent past and future of the Dutch universities, as well as substantial introductory and concluding chapters. The introduction and conclusion and some of the research chapters will be written by members of the theme group. They clearly address several major aspects of our research topic. But of course the five NIAS fellows cannot be expected to cover the many dimensions of this topic all by themselves. Therefore, the book will include a substantial number of other contributions: first, chapters commissioned from additional Dutch scholars; second, suitable re-publications of relevant past work; and third, translated articles that illuminate the international context. A further important end product includes outcomes aimed at the general public, policy makers and politicians. It will consist of written and oral contributions to public debates on the history and future of our universities.

Time schedule

To achieve these ends, two *major activities* are planned. The first is a three-day workshop at NIAS with the authors of the book chapters (which will significantly contribute to the quality and coherence of the book). The preparation of this workshop (making an outline of the book, and contacting prospective authors) will start before the stay at NIAS. Secondly, a symposium will be organized with relevant stakeholders, including representatives of academic movements, university administrators, science policymakers and politicians. In addition, we will seek opportunities to invite foreign academics for guest lectures at NIAS.

The added value of the interdisciplinary NIAS environment

We expect to profit from carrying out this research at NIAS, in three ways. Our integrated, interdisciplinary study of historical, sociological and philosophical topics promises to fit seamlessly within the NIAS context. Furthermore, we expect to profit from (formal and informal) exchanges with the other NIAS fellows, who will surely add significant experiences and insights from their own academic backgrounds. Last but not least, work pressure at universities is high, and usually is at the expense of research. In this situation, the NIAS grant enables us to spend a full semester on research.

*Theme group members.*³

1. Prof. Dr Hans Radder, professor emeritus and affiliated researcher in philosophy, Department of Philosophy, VU University Amsterdam (main applicant).
2. Dr René Gabriëls, UD sociology and philosophy, Maastricht University

³ This group clearly meets the NIAS criteria of ‘gender balance and balance between early, mid and late career scholars’. Because the large majority of our sources will be in Dutch, inclusion of foreign fellows who do not understand this language would hinder rather than facilitate meeting the NIAS criterion of providing ‘evidence of the benefit of group collaboration’.

3. Dr Hieke Huistra, UD history of science, Utrecht University
4. Prof. Dr Sarah de Rijcke, professor in science & evaluation studies and scientific director at the Centre for Science and Technology Studies, Leiden University
5. Dr Pieter Slaman, UD history of education and policy, Leiden University

Literature

The body of relevant literature is large. Here, we include a brief selection. For more, see the items added to the projects of the group members.

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Some relevant journals

Tijdschrift voor vrouwenstudies; Wetenschap & Samenleving; Universiteit en hogeschool: Tijdschrift voor wetenschappelijk onderwijs; Studium: Tijdschrift voor wetenschaps- en universiteitsgeschiedenis.

Relevant websites

[Beter Onderwijs Nederland](#), [CWTS Leiden](#), [KNAW](#), [Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap](#), [NWO](#), [Platform Hervorming Nederlandse Universiteiten](#), [Rathenau Instituut](#), [Science in transition](#), [VSNU](#), [WOinactie](#).

Competition management: The transformations of national university administration and their influence on academic life in the Netherlands, 1950-2025

Pieter Slaman: individual project

Abstract

This individual research project participates in the NIAS Theme Group Metamorphoses of the Dutch universities, 1950-2025, to be carried out in the academic year 2022-2023. It is intended to provide the Theme Group's work with a historical background of political and administrative developments that have exerted a major influence on culture and organisation in academia

Since 1950, a gradual transition took place from a centralistic, distributive form of national university administration towards an indirect, decentralised and market-oriented governing system. The new system strongly influenced academics' daily practices by rewarding measurable 'output'. By focusing on four key moments in this gradual change, the proposed research creates an overview of changing financial and administrative conditions for the university's functioning. It is guided by the central question: how did administrative and financial relations between the Dutch state and universities develop since 1950, and how did they shape the conditions for academics' daily practices?

Research topic and research question

The proposed research maps a fundamental shift in the way Dutch universities were governed since 1950. A centralised bureaucratic system of university administration rooted in the early nineteenth century was gradually replaced by an indirect, decentralised and market-oriented system. This shift had a major impact on the professional autonomy experienced by academics in their daily practice of education, research and administration.

Dutch universities in the 1950s were primarily administered by the national government as public educational institutions. Public funding was directly linked to student enrollment numbers. Professors were primarily appointed to teach in a certain field of knowledge. Additionally, they were provided with sufficient time and means to freely conduct their research. In the Netherlands, as in many continental European countries, government took care of academic 'hardware' (buildings, facilities, appointments, salaries) by means of a centralised bureaucratic system. Despite their dependence in material terms, this system did leave academics a large extent of professional freedom and self-government in matters of research and education. Professors were formally civil servants but reigned in academic affairs. Hence the old *ideal-typical model* of the *professor's university*, a nineteenth-century concept.

The sudden quadrupling of student numbers between 1955 and 1975 undermined this system in three ways. (1) The growing numbers of students and assistant professors weakened the full professors' omnipotence, as new academic community members cried out for democratic reform. (2) Time and financial means for research grew scarce, causing vehement internal competition over resources and political interference in research agendas. And (3), government failed to keep up with its quickly expanding financial and administrative duties, causing uncertainty and delays.

Revolting students enforced a first breakthrough in 1969. Government gave in quickly to their demands by prescribing new democratic forms of university administration, the *ideal-typical model* of the *democratic university*. From a central governance perspective, this made matters worse. While more efficient styles of administration were badly needed, the democratic university lost much time on ideological debates and consulting all those involved. It was hardly able to address the pressing issues of growing scale and decreasing funds. On top of that, the democratic university complicated the national governments' failing attempts

to maintain an effective centralised administrative system. A second crisis followed in 1984. Facing acute financial problems, the Dutch minister of education closed down at least forty university departments all over the country. This dramatic step caused a deep crisis of confidence between government and academia.

In this hour of need, the logic of *new public management* was pushed forward by just a few influential policy experts as a comprehensive solution. Starting in 1985, government left its traditional directive style and turned to a system based on financial incentives. It allowed universities a far-reaching institutional autonomy in matters of internal administration. Here, the state backed out. To ensure that universities would use this autonomy to lower their expenditures and boost academic performance, Dutch government introduced ‘output funding’. Allocation of public funds was based on objectively quantifiable ‘products’: numbers of students, graduations, scientific publications and citations. Academics could improve their financial position by producing higher measurable numbers than their competitors. Quality was to be understood in terms of sheer quantity. Academic virtue would only be rewarded if it could be expressed in numbers.

A remarkable change of roles took place. Government saw its administrative burden decrease. University boards gained in terms of responsibilities and competences. But this new institutional autonomy did not function as a condition for academic freedom, as university boards effectively pushed for efficiency and institutional maneuverability. The *democratic university* was replaced by a hierarchical governing system inspired by large commercial companies, introducing the *ideal-typical model* of the *entrepreneurial university*. This top-down system was supposed to be quicker and more flexible in its decision-making process, allowing universities to keep up in a competitive, market-like environment. Academics paid the price for these reforms in several ways. (1) From now on, their education needed to be more attractive to incoming students, to reach higher graduation rates and to meet the quality standards imposed by external supervision committees. (2) As their research came to depend more heavily on external competitive funding mechanisms, they had to meet rather compelling funding requirements. And finally, (3) academics lost influence on university governance. The shift mentioned above turned over the classic relationship between government and academia. A state responsible for providing academic ‘hardware’ and freedom, turned aloof and focused on competition management. The responsibility for hardware (housing, appointments, equipment) was transferred to professional university management. Academics pulled the short straw of competitive funding, compelling them to run a tightly regulated race for larger ‘output’.

As explained in the joint Theme Group proposal, the political and managerial interference in academic affairs raised growing criticism on the administrative and financial system as it functions today. For a proper critical assessment of this functioning, a historical overview is helpful as it explains the origins and logic of the system. Hence, the central research question is: how did administrative and financial relations between the Dutch state and universities develop since 1950, and how did they shape the conditions for academics’ daily practice?

Methodology and relation to existing literature in the field

A historical overview of administrative and financial regimes in the post-war era can be constructed by combining existing literature (Vossensteyn, De Boer & Jongbloed 2017, Faasse 2018, Lintsen & Velzing 2012, Van Lunteren 2020, Slaman 2018) and primary sources (Handelingen Tweede Kamer, interviews). The developments can be mapped by focusing on formal key moments: the passing of the *Higher Education Act* (Wet Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs, WWO), 1960; the *University Administration Reform Act* (Wet

Universitaire Bestuurshervorming, WUB), 1970; the policy paper *Higher Education: Autonomy and Quality* (Hoger Onderwijs: Autonomie en Kwaliteit, HOAK), 1985; and its legal follow-up, the *Higher Education and Scientific Research Act* (Wet op het Hoger Onderwijs en Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek, WHW), 1993. The developments will be embedded in an international context, as for instance described by Braun & Merrien (1999), Ruëgg & Sadlak (2010) and Whitley & Gläser (2014).

Recent and contemporary history has been a blind spot for those working in the field of university history (Frijhoff 2013), as it is difficult to assess for many historians. On top of that, by focusing mainly on individual institutions university history tends to neglect the history of higher education as a national system. Topics in contemporary higher education are largely left to scholars of law, public administration and econometrics (De Boer 2003, Groen 2017, Louw 2011, Vossensteyn, De Boer & Jongbloed 2017), who tend to leave out social and cultural factors. Important exceptions to this blind spot have been the series ‘Universiteit en samenleving’ as edited by Dorsman en Knegtmans (f.i., 2016) and continued by Flipse and Streefland (2020), and an excellent volume on academic freedom edited by Van Bruggen and Van Berkel (2020). However, these publications do not offer the comprehensive account of system changes that is being proposed here.

Academic and societal relevance of the research project

The limited attention of historians has left many contemporary questions unanswered, one of them concerning the effect of administrative and financial regimes on academic culture. This is a major topic given the large influence of these regimes on daily academic lives and practices as reported by academics themselves (De Boer 2003, Halffman and Radder 2013, De Jong 2015). These practices largely determine the university’s actual functioning and role in society, as they shape its contributions through education, research and different forms of public service. The current debate on improving these contributions, as mentioned in the Theme Group proposal, can be enriched by giving an historical account of prior interactions between formal administrative structures and academic practices.

Time schedule

I am planning to spend three months on the study of primary sources and on interviews. Literature study can remain very limited as the proposed research connects closely to recently finished projects. In five weeks, the actual writing of the proposed chapter will take place. Three weeks are preserved for a contribution to the proposed workshop and symposium.

Intended research output

The primary output of the project described thus far is a substantial research chapter for the intended volume *Metamorphoses of the Dutch universities, 1950-2025* to be edited by Hans Radder et al. (see the Theme-Group application). Other output will consist of contributions to the proposed workshop and symposium.

The added value of the interdisciplinary NIAS environment

As our theme group aims at combining historical, philosophical and sociological perspectives on the topic at hand, a challenging task, it could profit thoroughly from the long-standing expertise and experience of NIAS with advanced interdisciplinary research, and from its specialised infrastructure.

Literature

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Dutch universities in transition: Evaluation as change agent?

Sarah de Rijcke: individual project

Abstract

In the past couple of decades, most European economies have dedicated significant resources to restructuring their science and innovation systems to meet global challenges. They have done so through concrete science policy interventions, including research evaluation and accountability dictates. In this project I will analyse how policy discourses and practices are shaped in the Dutch national policy context with respect to the role of universities in and for society, by studying a very concrete science policy - science interface. I will focus on a recent, national-level attempt by a consortium of Dutch science-policy organisations and research funders to shift the evaluation system in order to drive change (toward more Open Science; a better balance between teaching and research; greater recognition of collaboration; and the elimination of simplistic performance indicators). Building on a rich tradition in Science and Technology Studies (cf. Callon, 1986; Jasanoff, 2015) and recent policy studies (Clarke et al., 2015), I will focus on the specific criteria and concomitant values (e.g. about quality, relevance) that guide this concrete steering effort with respect to the role of Dutch universities in and for society. Methodologically, the project will combine document analysis with semi-structured interviews. Its intended output is a chapter for the collective volume of the NIAS Theme Group *Metamorphoses of Dutch Universities*, as well as presentations of work in progress.

The research topic and its societal relevance

Research and innovation have become the central locus of hope in the European Union. Many universities are currently being structured along market economic principles in order to simultaneously encourage competitiveness and responsiveness to societal needs (Nowotny et al., 2001; Müller, 2012). Recent shifts in the governance of science include significant changes in the funding structures (Whitley, 2010), increasing formalization of scientific work by way of project management (Fowler, 2015) and the integration of multiple quality control mechanisms into academic settings (Power, 1997; Whitley & Gläser, 2007; de Rijcke, 2016). Central elements of this emergent “normative vision” (Müller 2012) are engaging in international mobility and global competition, as well as undergoing periodic application, selection and assessment trajectories (Krücken et al., 2007; Felt, 2009).

Science policy operates under the assumption that research needs to be steered in order to produce solutions to societal or political problems (Jasanoff, 1990; Sarewitz, 2004). Research in the field of Science and Technology Studies has often shown how this hope does not work out, e.g. because science cannot be disentangled from political convictions that shape knowledge production (political convictions of funders, policy makers, scientists), because scientific knowledge across disciplines usually does not form a coherent singular answer to a “problem,” and because the scientific results often do not bring closure to political debates but serve as further political ammunition (cf. the selective reading of climate change research).

This project is an especially topical case of a longstanding debate about science as a solution to policy-problems, that moreover brings into the analysis the detailed institutional and organizational reforms through which policy tries to make science relevant to political problem solving. Effects on the institutional fabric of science are left unaddressed by most analyses of science in and for policy, which typically look at how science is mobilized in political discussions.

The main idea of the project

Evaluation systems simultaneously reflect broader notions of the role of science in and for society, *and* affect and call on universities in different ways in their respective national contexts. The main idea of this project is to analyze the specific values (e.g. about quality, relevance) that guide a concrete, ongoing policy steering effort with respect to the structure and culture of Dutch universities. I will focus on a recent high-level initiative by a coalition of Dutch science-policy organizations and research funders to shift the evaluation system.⁴ The position paper published by this coalition is meant to drive change nationally for research assessment, among other things by reforming the balance between education, outreach and research duties, and hence tackling the dominance of research at the expense of other important missions of the university - with potentially far-reaching effects on the organization of Dutch universities. My focus will be on the encounters between different 'evaluative principles' (Stark, 2009) that are becoming apparent in the process of implementing the recommendations in the Position Paper at Dutch Universities. I expect that these encounters will make visible the different conceptions of the role of Dutch universities-in-transition (cf. Abma, 2020; Bod et al., 2020; Rathenau & VSNU, 2014). Importantly, I will explore to what extent arguments for certain conceptions go back to ideas and practices of the *professors' university* and the *democratic university*. And how convincing are these arguments?

Methodology and relation to existing literature

Methodologically, the project will combine document analysis with semi-structured interviews. I will build on the literature in policy studies that puts policy documents at the center of its approach as textual, (digital) material and social entities (Hunter, 2008). This literature brings an important but often implicit dimension of science policy making to the forefront: the specific valuation practices inherent in science policy making. Policy documents function as mediating technologies by defining which entities are relevant actors and by institutionalizing relations between them. Hence, policy documents can envision and bring into being a particular future of - in this case - universities. Through discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews with relevant academic and policy actors, I will specifically focus on how the role of Dutch universities is envisioned in this policy steering effort. As Chair of the Steering Group Recognition & Rewards at Leiden University, access is granted through existing contacts and networks.

Academic relevance

Studies describing the rise of 'New Public Management' have positioned evaluations as tools used to steer academic institutions towards becoming more market-oriented organizations (Leisyte and Dee, 2012; Lorentz, 2008; Parker and Jary, 1995; Willmott, 2011), albeit that the overall impact of reforms of different higher education systems is often contested (Bleiklie and Michelsen, 2013). Studies have shown how the spread of new public management (Shore 2008), combined with increasing scarcity of funding for research (Alberts et al. 2015) are not only fueling competition for resources, but also reinforce the drive towards accountability and commodification of research (cf. Radder, 2010). Further analyses have reflected on and criticized part of the changes that came with the rise of new modes of evaluating academic work, displaying a growing sense of urgency in examining 'academic capitalism' (Jessup, 2017, Fochler, 2016; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004) especially as this relates to the changing

⁴ VSNU, KNAW, NFU, NWO and ZonMw (2019). Room for everyone's talent: towards a new balance in the recognition and rewards for academics. <https://www.vsnu.nl/recognitionandrewards/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Position-paper-Room-for-everyone%E2%80%99s-talent.pdf>

political economy of research and innovation (Birch, 2017; Tyfield et al., 2017), or the influence of particular political-economic regimes (e.g. neoliberalism). Implications are that academics have become increasingly disciplined by evaluations in order to fulfill informational and control requirements within a neo-liberal higher education system (Power, 1997; Sauder and Espeland, 2009; Shore, 2010). The findings of these studies and the concerns raised are empirically important. At the same time, they can sometimes pass over the more detailed contingencies of evaluations in different higher education systems. This attention to national context becomes crucial if one takes seriously the idea that evaluation criteria acquire meaning through their contexts of use (Dahler-Larsen, 2013).

Intended research output

The output of this project will be work in progress presentations to the team and where possible a broader audience, as well as a chapter for the edited volume on the metamorphoses of Dutch universities that is foreseen as a main outcome of the Theme Group. I will also look for opportunities to publish results of the work in international, peer-reviewed journals.

Time schedule

I will spend the first two months (M1-2) on collecting policy documents and setting up appointments for the interviews, which are to be held in M2 and 3. The latter three months are reserved for analysis and presenting work in progress (M3-4) and writing the book chapter (M5).

The added value of the interdisciplinary NIAS environment

Working with the Theme Group at NIAS will provide exciting opportunities for new and fruitful academic exchange across disciplines. This is a rare occasion to work together on a shared object of study for an extended period of time, in an environment dedicated to facilitating academic exchange at the highest level.

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Language policies and practices at Dutch universities

René Gabriëls: individual project

Abstract

The goal of this individual research project is to explain the transformations of language policies and practices at Dutch universities between 1950 and 2025. This project is part of research carried out by the NIAS Theme Group *Metamorphoses of the Dutch universities, 1950-2025*. By focusing on a specific phenomenon of the academic world - language policies and practices - the project aims to highlight a variety of interesting phenomena in higher education. On the one hand, the transformations of official language policies are investigated. On the other hand, it is examined whether and to what extent the practices in research and education comply with this. From a diachronic as well as synchronic perspective, it is investigated whether official language policies are at odds with research and teaching practices. In this respect, special attention is paid to the differences between the natural sciences, the humanities and the social sciences, as well as to the question to what extent the language of scientific experts matches the ordinary language of citizens. Should scientists play the role of public intellectual to bridge the gap between the language of scientific experts and the ordinary language of citizens? The intended output of this research project are presentations of work in progress and a chapter for the book of the NIAS Theme Group.

The research topic and its societal relevance

The topic of this research project - language policies and practices - is not only of great scientific relevance (especially in the field of sociolinguistics), but also of societal relevance. Since 2017, there has been a serious public debate in the Netherlands about the so-called Englishization (*verengelsing*) of higher education. Almost three-quarters of the master's courses at Dutch universities are in English. In addition, more and more bachelor's programmes are switching to English-medium instruction. Many contributors to the public debate have expressed their concern about the consequences of the Englishization for the quality of education and research and the cultural identity of the Netherlands (Jensen et al. 2019; De Groot 2020a). It is argued that the proficiency of those whose native language is not English is not good enough to deliver sufficient quality in education and research. The importance of language for cultural identity is demonstrated by the report *Thinking of the Netherlands* (SCP 2019). For this research report, Dutch citizens were asked which elements they consider constitutive of the Dutch identity. In addition to symbols (Dutch flag, Amsterdam canals, windmills, etc.) and traditions (King's Day, winter ice-skating event 'Elfstedentocht', Liberation Day, etc.), the Dutch language was mentioned as the most important binding factor of the Dutch identity. In addition to the quality of education and research and the cultural identity, there are two other socially relevant themes that are discussed with regard to Englishization: voice and inequality. In practice, stakeholders who are involved in Englishization or bear the consequences thereof often have little opportunity to voice their concerns about language policies. In this context, the issue of inequality concerns the opportunities of citizens to access English-medium instruction programmes at Dutch universities. The question is whether the Englishization entails new enclaves in which some are privileged and others marginalized.

The main idea of the project

This sociolinguistic and cultural-historical research into the transformation of language policies and practices in higher education in the Netherlands after 1950 is intended as a history of the present. For a nuanced view of the present, it is very important to look at what

language policies and practices were in the past. Were language policies less focused on the English language in the past? Did research and education draw less on Anglophone sources and more on, for example, German and French sources? What kind of arguments have been provided to support Englishization, and how should they be assessed? Will Dutch as an academic language disappear because of the Englishization? Does this process widen the gap between the academic world and the non-academic world? What are the consequences of the transformations of language policies and practices at Dutch universities? Do they pose a threat or do they offer researchers and students new opportunities?

The research project is not only aimed at describing historical developments with regard to language policies and practices in the Netherlands, but also at explaining and evaluating them. To explain the reconstructed history of language policies and practices at Dutch universities, use is mainly made of concepts derived from the sociological theories of Pierre Bourdieu (1988) and Richard Münch (2007; 2009). Moreover, the way in which philosopher of science Philip Kitcher (2011; 2012) theoretically conceptualizes the concept of public knowledge is used to reflect on the repercussions of Englishization for the relationship between the language of scientific experts and the ordinary language of citizens. The crucial question here is whether the acquisition of public knowledge is frustrated by the language policies and practices at Dutch universities. This research project deliberately considers three levels that are involved in language policies and practices: the micro-level (everyday research and education at the faculty level), the meso-level (the university and the immediate environment), and the macro-level (nation state and the global context). Only by examining all these levels from a diachronic and synchronic perspective can an answer be found to the central research question: how to explain the transformations of language policies and practices at Dutch universities? An open question is whether the answer shows significant differences between the natural sciences, humanities and social sciences.

Methodology and relation to existing literature

In order to answer the research question, data are collected using various methods. Firstly, official policy documents are studied to reconstruct how the official language policies changed over time. Secondly, through archive and literature research three disciplines (physics, Dutch studies and sociology) are investigated with regard to the language-related sources scholars use and to the languages in which they publish. Third, the focus group method is used to openly discuss with various stakeholders the relevant language policies and practices and the associated opportunities and dangers (Hennink 2007; Barbour & Morgan 2017). Fourth, use is made of two case studies: both Utrecht University and Eindhoven University of Technology are systematically compared with each other. This choice was partly prompted because both universities explicitly distinguish themselves from each other in terms of language policies. While Eindhoven University of Technology has radically switched to English since January 1, 2020 and in fact puts a monolingual policy into practice, at Utrecht University several linguistic flowers still flourish. The data gathered via these four methods will be analyzed from the theoretical perspectives of – among others - Bourdieu, Münch and Kitcher.

Academic relevance

This individual research project is interdisciplinary in nature and builds on ongoing research into English as a medium of instruction in higher education (Gabriëls & Wilkinson 2020; Wilkinson & Gabriëls 2017 and 2020). It is located at the crossroads of sociolinguistics and cultural history and has a spin-off for the philosophy of science. In recent years, sociolinguistics has intensified research into the consequences of language policies and

practices for four related issues: the quality of research and education, the cultural identity of collectives, the inequality regarding access to the fruits of academia and the voice of stakeholders. Because these four issues will be explored from a diachronic perspective, that is through the lens of the development of Dutch universities between 1950 and 2025, this research is relevant for the field of cultural history. Since this is a history of the present, it is philosophically interesting to raise the question of what it yields for contemporary discussions about public knowledge, i.e. knowledge that is the result of collective efforts and available for all people and not just for those who consider it private property. For example, the question is whether the Englishization of research and education structurally hinders the acquisition of public knowledge (Kitcher 2012), and whether this does not raise new questions around the issues of quality, cultural identity, inequality and voice.

Intended research output

The output of this research project will be talks in which the work in progress is presented to other members of the research group and the writing of a chapter for the intended book on the metamorphoses of Dutch universities. It is expected that the research will also yield material for other publications.

Time schedule

The first two months are mainly spent on collecting data on the basis of the indicated methods. The remaining three months are used for analyzing the data and writing the chapter in which the research results are presented.

The added value of the interdisciplinary NIAS environment

It is expected that the formal and informal discussions and the new contacts and support at NIAS will contribute enormously to the quality of this research project. Moreover, it is expected that the basis for interdisciplinary cooperation in the future will also be laid here.

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Plain words: Why most academics don't write for the general public, and what to do about it

Hieke Huistra: individual project

Abstract

Academics mostly share the results of their research in peer-reviewed journal articles, written in formal English. Yet, the 'public university' that our theme group envisions, needs academics who contribute to society as well as to academic debates. This requires researchers to publish their results not (just) in peer-reviewed journal articles, but also in easily accessible Dutch-language books, newspaper articles, blog posts and tweets. To enable this shift in publication types, we need to know where our current publication practices come from. That is what this project wants to find out.

With history writing as its main case study, this project aims to uncover how individual academics researchers decided upon content, form, language and style of their written research output between 1970 and 2020. It combines oral history interviews with archival researchers, in order to better understand our current publication culture – and help shape a new one.

Project aim and societal relevance

Academics mostly share the results of their research in peer-reviewed journal articles, written in formal English. Yet, the 'public university' that our theme group envisions, needs academics who contribute to society as well as to academic debates. This requires researchers to publish their results not (just) in peer-reviewed journal articles, but also in well-written, easily readable, Dutch-language books, op-ed pieces, blog posts and tweets. To enable this, we need to know what hinders academics in writing such texts, and what would help them – that is what this project wants to do.

Main idea, relation to existing literature and academic relevance

The project takes a historical approach: it asks where our current publication practices come from. The main research question is how and why researchers decided upon content, form, language and style of their written research output between 1970 and 2020.

As our theme group proposal has explained, at the start of this period, the 'democratic university' emerged. Here, movements like the student movement or women's movement pushed for societal relevance and accessible output. The ideal climate for a wide variety of publication practices to flourish, aimed at both academic and lay publics. But over the next five decades, as universities transformed into the 'entrepreneurial university', publication practices turned more monotonous. Increasingly, research output became directed at other academics, written in English, shaped peer-reviewed journal articles, with the formal tone and style many academics consider 'proper' for such articles (Billig 2013; Fuller 2010). Thus, insights from academic debates nowadays often don't travel far beyond these debates. This is particularly problematic for the humanities, because it disconnects them from the general public. Without this connection, they struggle to contribute to society. In the natural and medical sciences, broad access to specialist research output is less essential. As medieval historian Peter Raedts explained in an interview with Martine Zuidweg (2021): citizens don't have to read articles on kidney stones, as long as the experts –doctors – read them and apply the knowledge to relieve us from our kidney stones. Humanities, however, don't have cures or technologies to offer – they trade in stories, and this means these stories should be shared as widely as possible.

This project, therefore, focuses on humanities writing. Within the humanities, it zooms in on academic history writing. Such writing is often, but not always, carried out in history departments, by historians. To avoid overlooking interdisciplinary publication practices, I will also study 'historically inclined' sociologists, language scholars, literary scholars – whom I will for convenience include under

the label ‘historians’ in the remainder of this proposal.

History writing makes an excellent case study because it offers a striking contrast between society’s demand and academia’s supply. Society craves history as the enormous popularity of well-written history books by non-academic authors shows. Academic historians regularly complain about the quality of these books, but currently few of them offer attractive alternatives.⁵ As historian of science Naomi Oreskes (2016) has noted: ‘People are interested in what we do, but not in the way we do it.’ Oreskes calls for change; others before and after her have done so as well, myself including (e.g., Huistra 2018; Shapin 2005; Sword 2012). Current attempts to bring about this change focus mainly on changing the evaluation criteria used by universities and funding bodies. This can be seen in the new systems for ‘Recognition and Rewards’ that are currently being developed by Dutch universities and funding organisations (VSNU et al. 2019). The hope is, that if public outreach ‘counts’ for grants or tenure, academics will be more inclined to reach out to the public.

Indeed, currently there are few incentives for academics to write for a general audience. Both funding bodies and research institutes rely mainly on a candidate’s peer-reviewed articles to gauge her qualities as a researcher. Texts aimed at a broad audience may count as a nice extra, but they are not seen as reliable indicators of the candidate’s quality. (In fact, the NIAS application form is no exception.) Funding bodies and other evaluators have no doubt shaped publication practices, both in form and in content (Van El 2002; Gläser and Velarde 2018; Hammarfelt and De Rijcke 2015; Solovey 2019). But they didn’t do so all by themselves. Evaluation criteria don’t emerge out of nowhere; they are themselves shaped by academic culture. If we scrutinize this culture, we find that ‘the funders want them’ is far from the only explanation for academics’ love of the English peer-reviewed academic journal article. Writing in English helps academics communicate with international colleagues. Peer-review functions as quality control not just for evaluators, but for scholars as well. And perhaps, as some historians have argued, disciplinary standards for describing and analyzing evidence are simply incompatible with the rules of writing engaging narratives for a broad audience (Gascoigne 2007).

All these things may be taken into consideration by individual academics deciding what and how to publish. Thus, to change our publication practices, it does not suffice to solely change our evaluation criteria and hope for the best. We also have to take into account other, perhaps less tangible personal and cultural factors. To do so, we need a clear view of them. This project aims to provide that view through studying publication practices at the level where they ultimately take shape: the individual researcher.

Methodology

The project aims to compare publication practices in the 1970s with those in the 2000s and 2010s, and to contextualize and explain the differences between the two. To do so, I will combine oral history techniques with archival research.

I will select a set of researchers to focus on for both periods, which will include researchers from different institutions and subfields. I will chart their publication outputs and compare these, thus revealing the differences in publication practices between periods, which I will start to contextualize with help of secondary literature and findings from the other researchers in our theme group.

The main focus of the project, however, will be a series of oral history interviews, with as many of the selected academics as possible. Interviewing individual academics about their personal publication decisions will allow me to ‘look behind’ explanations focusing on structure and take into account the particular and the individual. This is what I as a historian want to add to the social science approach of some of our other theme group members.

I will complement the results from these interviews with archival research whenever necessary and

⁵See for example the debates on non-academic history writers Geert Mak or, more recently, Bart van Loo (Demets and Haemers 2021; Van Loo 2021; Melching 2007; Rietbergen 2005).

possible.

Intended research output

In order to practice what I preach, I intend this project's written research output to be accessible to a broad audience, well-written, and in Dutch. The main output will be a book chapter for the Dutch-language book that our theme group aims to create. In addition, I will use the outcomes of my results in contributions to the public debate. I write a biweekly science column in the national newspaper *Trouw*, in which I intend to disseminate the results of this research as they unfold.

Furthermore, I will work with the rest of the theme group on organizing the workshop and the stakeholder symposium. For the symposium, I intend to create a list of concrete recommendations for helping academics publish their research findings for a broad audience.

Time schedule

Before the fellowship starts

To ensure a smooth start of the project, I will take care of two administrative issues well before the fellowship starts:

- Ask for ethical approval for the oral history interviews through the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Science at Utrecht University;
- Set-up a data storage plan which allows for access to the oral history interviews for other interested researchers.

Month 1 and 2

- Selecting 'research subjects', study their publication records and chart changes in publication practices between 1970 and 2020;
- Literature research to contextualize findings;
- Arrange interviews.

Month 3 and 4

- Conduct interviews;
- Start analysing interviews;
- Conduct archival research to complement information gathered in the interviews.

Month 5

- Finalize analysing the research results;
- Write book chapter.

Added value of the interdisciplinary research environment

My approach is historical and focuses on uncovering particular decisions made by specific individuals. I am convinced that we need to understand publication practices at this level, because ultimately, this is the level where change needs to materialize – this is the level at which publications are made. However, the individual is of course always embedded in existing societal structures. Our interdisciplinary theme group, with both historians, social scientists and philosophers, allows me to embed my particular-individual-focused results in the more structural, systemic interpretations of the other researchers in our group.

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If science is ‘for the common good’, how should universities be organized?

Hans Radder: individual project

Abstract

This individual research project participates in the NIAS Theme Group *Metamorphoses of the Dutch universities, 1950-2025*, to be carried out in the academic year 2022-2023. It aims to flesh out the suggested option of a public university as a worthwhile end of the presently occurring metamorphosis. This will include, first, presenting convincing accounts of science (including basic science) for the common good and in the public interest. For this purpose, the project will draw on earlier work, both by myself and by a range of other authors. The important second step, then, involves a detailed study of the implications of these accounts for the structure and culture of academic research, teaching and administration, with a focus on the Dutch universities. The project involves the synthesis of relevant literature in philosophy of science, socio-political theory and moral philosophy. It will be developed in close interaction with the institutional and political histories of the metamorphoses of the Dutch universities that will be carried out in the research programme of the Theme Group. Its intended output is a substantial chapter for the planned collective volume of the group, as well as contributions to the introductory and concluding chapters of this volume.

The research topic and its societal relevance

As explained in the Theme-Group application, there is a growing consensus that the structure and culture of Dutch universities requires substantial transformation. As an option for such a reconstructed university we mention the possibility of a public university. It is briefly described as ‘a university that is genuinely public, not merely through public funding but primarily by promoting and advancing both basic science as a public interest and an approach to education and research directed towards more specific public interests (where the latter are explicitly seen as much wider than their economic significance)’. Central questions, then, concern which academic structure and culture and which broader political conceptions and policies can be expected to facilitate and foster such a public university.

The aim of my project is to develop this suggestion in much more detail. The project builds on a conception of science for the common good and in the public interest, and it argues for the societal value of basic science. The primary challenge, then, is to scrutinize the implications of this conception for the structure and culture of academic research, teaching and administration.

The main idea of the project

The project draws on a variety of earlier publications and investigates their implications for the reconstruction of the Dutch universities. For a start, I will revisit the major criticisms of the current universities, both abroad and in the Netherlands, especially their hierarchization, bureaucratization and commodification (see Radder 2010 and 2016; Halfman and Radder 2015 and 2017). Where needed, they will be updated, further developed or adjusted. Although the current project is primarily constructive, justified and well-developed criticism often includes helpful pointers for how to change the situation for the better.

Next, the central notions of the common good and the public interest will be tackled. In Radder (2019, chaps. 4-8; 2021a; 2021b) I have developed an account of the common good of science and technology. It is based on two major ideas. Negatively, scientific knowledge for the common good excludes its privatization for the benefit of narrow commercial or political interests (as happens, for instance, in current patenting practices). Positively, science for the common good should be in the public interest, an interest that involves an inclusive

notion of the public and needs to be supported on the basis of a multidimensional notion of democracy.

The present project investigates what these notions imply for the structure and culture of the (Dutch) universities. It will involve, among other things, examining the epistemic and societal benefits (and limitations) of the sciences, the role of (higher) education in a democratic society, the relationship between democratizing science and the value of (academic) freedom, and the tensions between, on the one hand, the hierarchization, bureaucratization and commodification of the universities and, on the other, the ideal of science for the common good. The available literature contains a wealth of fruitful ideas and arguments concerning these topics.⁶ A comprehensive analysis and assessment of this work will be used to develop and argue for a viable and valuable conception of a public university.

Methodology and relation to existing literature

The project primarily involves the selection, study, analysis and assessment of relevant written sources. Furthermore, while traditional philosophy is often rather abstract, this project acknowledges the theoretical character of philosophy, but requires that its analyses and assessments need to draw on detailed socio-historical studies of the relevant subjects. It also goes beyond a purely ‘empirical’ approach by taking seriously the value-laden, legal task of Dutch universities ‘to pass on knowledge *for the benefit of society*’.

As a form of ‘synthetic philosophy’ (Radder 2019), the project requires engaging with (the body of literature on) a range of major subjects. These include, among other things, accounts of the science-technology relationship (Nordmann et al. 2011; Radder, 2019, chap. 2-3); studies in social philosophy and ethics of the common good and the public interest (e.g., Stiglitz 1999; Box 2007; Offe 2012); conceptions of the notion of democracy and its relevance for science (e.g., Brown 2009; Kitcher 2011; Lacey 2016); views concerning open science and science as a commons (e.g., Vermeir 2013; Mirowski 2018); arguments in research ethics (e.g., Resnik 2007; Schienke et al. 2009); models of appropriate academic education (e.g., Flikkema 2016; Koster and Boschhuizen 2018); investigations of the notion of academic freedom (e.g., Van Berkel and Van Bruggen 2020). Last but certainly not least, the project will build on the results of the socio-historical findings about the metamorphoses of Dutch universities by the Theme-Group members and by the other contributors to the intended group volume (see the Theme-Group application).

Academic relevance

Many authors in social philosophy, in political theory and in ethics have discussed the notions of democracy, the public interest and the common good. Similarly many philosophers of science have addressed the normative issue of how to conceive of ‘good science’. By and large, however, these works have been developed independently of each other, within their own fields. In contrast, by addressing in tandem the issues of good science and of the good of science for society this project will draw on both bodies of work. Second, the project will employ the European notion of science, according to which all disciplines that are being taught and researched in universities (and in other academic institutes) count as ‘scientific’. An important implication is that a variety of disciplines (including their differences) need be taken into account in studying the common good of science and the implications for the

⁶ Here is a brief selection of this literature: Radder (2010); Holmwood (2011); Kitcher (2011); Hallfman and Radder (2015); Flikkema (2016); Radder (2016); Halffman and Radder (2017); Koster and Boschhuizen (2018); Abma (2020); Bod, Breuker and Robeyns (2020); Cohen (2020); Peels et al. (2020); Van Berkel and Van Bruggen (2020). Furthermore, much valuable digital material can be found on the many websites dedicated to the issues under discussion.

structure and culture of universities. Finally, the interdisciplinary character of the project, noted above, sets it apart from exclusively philosophical and exclusively socio-historical studies. In this way, the project aims to provide a fruitful synthesis of the mentioned separate approaches.

Intended research output

The primary output of the project described thus far is a substantial research chapter for the intended volume on the metamorphoses of the Dutch universities. Furthermore, the project can be expected to be helpful in composing the introductory and concluding chapters of this book and in editing the other research chapters. In addition, I will explore opportunities for publishing (at a later stage) parts of the results of this research project in international journals.

Time schedule

Part of the work will consist of interaction with the other Theme-Group members and with potential contributors to the intended collective volume. This will include both issues concerning content (especially, making the plan of the volume) and matters of organization (especially, the planned workshop and symposium). I have ample experience in organizing such events and in editing the resulting comprehensive volumes. The making of Radder (2003) and (2010) included workshops (in which the authors participated and where we discussed their pre-circulated papers), which were followed by a pre-publication phase of substantive editorial interactions.

A part of this work will already start before and a part will continue after the stay at NIAS. At NIAS itself, my estimate is to spend about 3.5 months on the content of the volume and about 1.5 on organizational matters.

The added value of the interdisciplinary NIAS environment

An important value of working in this Theme Group at NIAS is the opportunity to carry out substantial research of great academic and societal relevance with an engaged and competent, interdisciplinary group of colleagues. Furthermore, I also expect to learn from formal and informal discussion with the other NIAS fellows, who may contribute experience and insights from their own academic contexts. Finally, I am sure that the excellent support facilities at NIAS will be much appreciated in organizing the planned workshop and symposium.

Literature

The body of relevant literature is large. Here is a brief selection. For more, see the bibliography in Radder (2019).

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