Managing Science: Social Sciences in Operation

Lecture on the occasion of retirement as Dean and Professor of Applied Social Psychology

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For my mother
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† 28 August 2009

In the year 1998 the Dutch universities where getting ready to react to the so called 'in-depth strategy.' Money that was taken away from the universities by the government, could be earned back in the form of subsidies to so called 'topresearch-institutes.' For months the university population was busy establishing and describing research institutes in order to get back some of the money that was taken. Eventually, in the first round almost all the money was granted to science or medical science programs. The second round of which it was promised to award the social sciences never took place. Eight years later something similar happened in the context of the so called Smartmix program. Universities were invited to submit research programs in collaboration with organizations from outside the academia. Among the many programs submitted were tens of program from the social sciences. However, once again none of those proposals were awarded. The frustration among social scientist was enormous; they could not believe that among those many proposals none was good enough to be granted. Once again the second round promised was cancelled. In 2008, finally, the minister of research and education announced that m€100 was taken from the universities to be returned via the NWO[1]-Innovation Stimulation Program. We do not know how this will end, but knowing the working of NWO—more about that later—the worst is to be feared for the social sciences.

Underfunding of social science research

Rector Magnificus, ladies and gentlemen,
Three examples of interventions in the science system, that in practice imply a reallocation of resources from the social sciences to science and medical science. Such interventions do not do any good to the already biased state of affairs in the Dutch science system.

The science system concerns 'the field of organizations and institutions involved in the production of scientific knowledge, science policy, and science financing" (Rathenau Institute 2006, p. 12). The latter is in a bad state in the Netherlands. Already for a decade the financing of scientific research is lagging behind in comparison to that in other European countries. The Netherlands is the only European country with zero-growth in expenditures on research & development (Table 1).

Table 1 Increase in investment in research & development: in percentages 2000-2006

Netherlands	**0.0**
Slowakia	3.4
Belgium	3.4
Germanty	9.3
United Kingdom	11.9
Denmark	19.9
Finland	22.5
Austria	44.4

Source: European Commission, 22 Januari 2009

[1] NWO is the Dutch national science foundation

Compare that with countries such as Belgium, Germany, United Kingdom, Finland, and Austria which have growth percentages of 3.5% in Belgium up to 44.4% in Austria. Equally telling are the percentages of GNP spent on scientific research. In 2006 the Netherlands ranks with 1.67% way below the EU-average of 1.84% while countries we would like to compare ourselves with ranks far higher (Table 2).

Table 2 Expenditures in 2006 on scientific research and development as percentage of GNP	
EU average	1.84
Netherlands	**1.67**
United Kingdom	1.78
Belgium	1.83
France	2.09
Germany	2.53
Austria	2.55
Switzerland	2.90
Finland	3.37

Source: European Commission, 22 Januari 2009

But I was discussing the biased relations in the science system. As Table 3 shows the distribution of research fte's between the three science domains has been extremely skewed over the years 2000-2006. Taken the three funding sources[2] together over the years, it comes down to the fact that in this country three quarters of all our research fte's

Table 3 Research fte's per funding source: percentages and absolute numbers							
WP1	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**
Science/Med. Science	64	65	65	63	64	64	64
Social Sciences	**25**	**24**	**25**	**26**	**25**	**25**	**26**
Arts/Humanities	10	10	10	10	11	10	10
Total # fte's	7.879	7.952	7.996	7.997	8.185	8.395	8.384
WP2	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**
Science/Med. Science	77	78	78	78	76	76	75
Social Sciences	**15**	**14**	**14**	**14**	**15**	**15**	**15**
Arts/Humanities	8	7	6	8	9	9	9
Total # fte's	3.050	3.221	3.583	3.804	3.902	4.187	4.139
WP3	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**
Science/Med. Science	85	84	85	87	88	88	88
Social Sciences	**13**	**13**	**12**	**11**	**11**	**11**	**11**
Arts/Humanities	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Total # fte's	4.071	4.189	4.205	4.600	4.706	4.771	4.873

Source: Report of the NWO-evaluation Committee, April 2008

[2] In the Dutch science system three income sources are distinguished: WP1, the so called first stream—that is central government money; WP2, the second stream—that is NWO; WP3, the third stream—that is contract research. There are some finer distinctions but these are the major sources of funding.

are spend on science and medical science against one fifth on social sciences and one twentieth on arts and humanities. The table also demonstrates that over the past years the relations between the three domains has hardly changed. VU-University reveals in 2008 almost the same figures: 73%, 21%, and 6% resp. By the way, in that same year the science/medical science fields served 35% of the university's students, the social sciences 54%, and arts and humanities 10%. Note, that these figures do not refer to expensive equipment or laboratory personnel, but actual academic researchers. Indeed the NWO-evaluation Committee concludes that research in social sciences and arts and humanities is "structurally underfunded" (Report NWO-evaluation Committee, 2008).

One could argue that the skewed distribution results from quality differences the researchers in the domains. I wished it was true. It would have meant that scientific and societal relevance and quality of the researchers determine the dynamic of the science system. The truth is very different.

In order to understand the matter it is important to know that the allocation mechanisms are very different in the three funding sources. To start with the third stream—through a complicated system of demand and supply the money is distributed over the three domains in ways that are hardly understood in a systematic way. The skewed distribution in the first stream is basically a matter of government and university policy. As long as these policies do not change the skewed distribution will continue to exist. Our recent experience with attempts to change the VU-University's allocation models illustrates the difficulty of subject. NWO, finally controls the third stream. The role of NWO I will discuss in some what more detail.

Restricting myself to the social and behavioral sciences, I conclude that NWO is not functioning well. The eye catcher over the last few years has been the chaos in the so called open competition.[3] One could attribute the chaos to malfunctioning of the Section of Social and Behavioral Sciences (the NWO-section that caters the social and behavioral sciences), but that would neglect the fundamental cause of that chaos, that is, the structural underfunding of social and behavioral sciences. The derailment of the open competitions in 2008 and 2009 was in both cases due to measures to artificially restrict the number of applications. That failed completely at the expense of many a researcher. The outrage among social scientists is still great.

Table 4 Success rates of all NWO-programs in 2006

	# Applications	# Awarded	Success rates
Science/Med. Science	1901	599	32.5%
Social Sciences	**677**	**168**	**24.8%**
Arts/Humanities	329	128	39.4%
Total # fte's	2907	895	30.8%

Source: Report of the NWO-evaluation Committee, April 2008

[3] The open competition is an open call for proposals issued in some annual rhythm which over the last few years in the social and behavioral science got so many applications in comparison to the money available that the system collapsed completely.

But there is more that goes wrong. Let me start with the observation that the increase in resources between 2000 and 2006 with more than one third has *not* been used to make the distribution across the domains more balanced (Table 3, WP2). As a consequence, the success rates in all NWO-programs for the social sciences remain too low (Table 4 & 5). While the NWO-evaluation Committee holds a success rate of 30 % desirable, the social sciences do not even reach 25%. Equally, discomforting are the figures for NWO's showpiece the so called 'innovation stimulation program' which reveal success rates for the social sciences between 11 and 20 %.

Table 5 Success rates Innovation Stimulation Program 2002-2006

	VENI			VIDI			VICI		
	A	**H**	**P**	**A**	**H**	**P**	**A**	**H**	**P**
Science/Med. Science	1503	373	25%	1103	274	25%	489	99	20%
Social Sciences	**648**	**110**	**17%**	**348**	**71**	**20%**	**188**	**20**	**11%**
Arts/Humanities	364	84	23%	155	46	30%	86	16	19%
Total # fte's	2515	567	23%	1606	391	24%	763	135	18%

A = # of submissions; H = # awarded; P = success rate
Source: Report of the NWO-evaluation Committee, April 2008

The Committee concludes that the success rates of MaGW are "unacceptable low." (p. 46). Note, that the Ministry of Education's intended reallocation is thought to take place via NWO. In the light of the discussion above, this does not look promising at all for the social sciences.

Finally, this Spring to many onlookers dismay we witnessed another round of the Spinoza-prize—also called the Dutch Nobelprize—in which none of the laureates were from the social sciences, though not from humanities either. So far, together with the most recent round 44 prizes went to science or medical science scholars, 5 to social scientists and 6 to scholars from arts/humanities. The selection committee in 2009 argued that none of the candidates from the social sciences and arts and humanities were good enough. This was hard to believe. Doubts about the judiciousness of the committee abound. As evidenced by the angry column by Marita Matthijsen in the science section of one of the national newspapers.

This brings me to the question that concerns me today: is the science system capable of assessing the quality of social science research? And if so, is it able to turn this into management? Good research is conducted by good researchers. My faculty heard me saying it umpteenth times. The implication of this observation is simple: don't invest in poor researchers but in good researchers. But how do we recognize good researchers? What evidences the quality of researchers and is this the same in every science domain?

Quality assessment

Rector manificus, ladies and gentlemen, the answer that is given increasingly within the science system reads: Let us count. Let us count how many euros have been acquired, how many publications are realized, and how many citations that generated. The higher

the score, the better the researcher. However, it is not that simple. I showed how different the opportunities are for the three science domains to acquire research funds. A report of the Rathenau Institute about the working of various types of grants of MaGW suggests that it are not necessarily the best researchers who are granted the euros (van den Besselaar & Leydesdof 2007).

The authors compare successful and unsuccessful grant applications of the years 2003, 2004, and 2005. They question they wanted to answer was: Does the money go to the best researchers? In order to answer that question they employed the Social Science Citation Index to compare successful and unsuccessful applicants in terms of the number of publications and citations in the three years before the year that the application was submitted. Although the employment of publication and citation counts from citation indices is questionable, more about that in a while, it remains of interest to know whether successful applicants have published more and are cited more frequently than unsuccessful applicants. If only because such figures are ever more frequently used as the equivalent of quality. The analyses produce unexpected results (Figure 1).

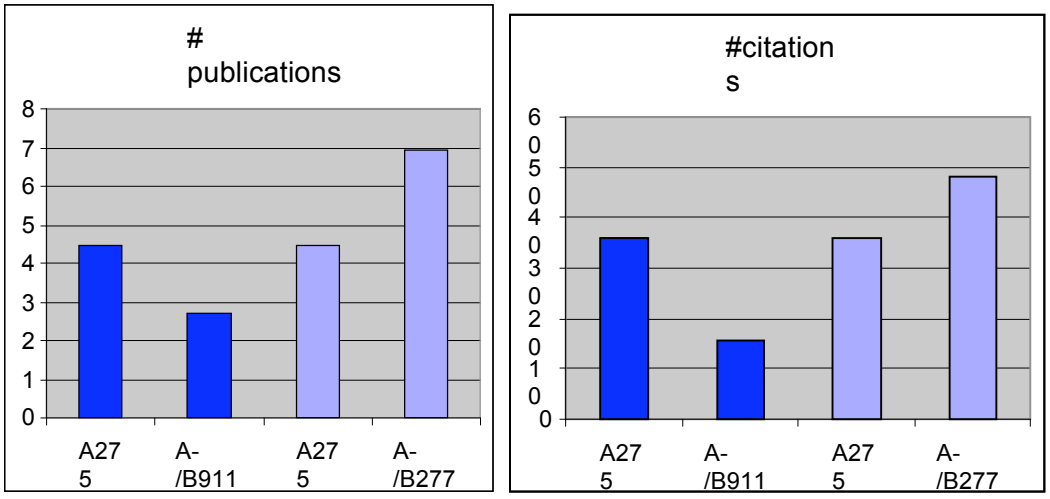

Figure 1

The bars at the left show that the 911 applicants (A-&B911) who were unsuccessful did indeed publish less and were cited less than the 275 (A275) who were successful. So far, so good—apparently quality pays. Upon further inspection the figures are less comforting, though. The problem is that the data are rather skewed. In other words—among the unsuccessful application are quire a few poor applications. If one takes the poor applications out a surprising picture emerges. On average the best 277 applications of those that were *not* granted are from better researchers than the 275 that were granted—this is what the bars to the right demonstrate. In other words, once the wheat is separated from the chaff it is no longer the quality of the researcher that controls where the euros go, on the contrary and that is not comforting.

One could argue that possibly the granted applications are of better quality than those that were not granted, but this is not true either. External reviewers evaluated all applications.

As it turns out, on average the quality of the 275 successful proposals hardly differs from the best 277 unsuccessful proposals. The authors conclude that after elimination of the poor applications one could just as well draw lots among the remaining applications. The average quality of the awarded applications would not be affected, while the average quality of the awarded applicants would even improve. In sum, success and failure in the second stream of funding is not fitted very well as a criterion of quality.

Equally problematic are two other frequently employed criteria of quality—the number of publication and citations. To be sure, we all agree that good researchers publish and are cited, but how do we assess that someone publishes and is cited? Obviously, I can ask somebody's c.v. and count her publications and assess how frequently she is cited. Yet, this is easier said than done. In the first place, in order to count citations I need a database and if I want to know whether someone is publishing in comparison a lot or a little I need databases as well. And that's where the misery begins, as the most frequently employed database—Web of Science—is demonstrable biased against the social sciences.

In order to underscore this argument I must take you to the world of the bookkeepers of the science system—the scientometrist. As not everybody knows what that world looks like, let me take you on a short excursion. The Web of Science is a database where publications in so called ISI-journals are registered. In addition to the title and the text the references are entered. On the basis of these references citation indices can be calculated. These citation indices are an important source for scientometric analyses. Who cites who? How often is an article or an author cited? How often is a journal cited? Are questions that are dealt with. On the basis of such data Impact Scores of journals can be calculated. The higher the impact factor of a journal the more desirable is a publication in that journal. In order to be included in the ISI journals must go through a procedure that takes six years. As a consequence, young, innovative journals are not taken into account initially (Abel & Harzing 2009). The ISI primarily contains Anglo-Saxon journals and no books and other outlets.

The problem with the Web of Science is that only a limited proportion of the output of the social sciences is taken into account. Scientometrist of the Centre for Science and Technology (CWTS) of the Univeristy of Leiden have calculated that not even one third of the output worldwide of the behavioral and the social sciences between 1994 and 2003 was registered by the Web of Science (van Leeuwen 2006). In that same period between 80 and 95% of the science/medical science domain was covered. Since then not much changed. For example, for the year 2006 the CWTS reports for the U.K. a coverage of 24% for political science and public administration, 43% for economics and 35% for the other social sciences (CWTS 2007). With a coverage of 75% psychology seems to have figures comparable to those of science and medical science, but still a quarter of its output is not covered.

Tabel 6 Coverage of ISI-publications 2002-2007 of the two Amsterdam universities		
	VU University	University of Amsterdam
Science/Med. Science	87%	86%
Psychology, Psychiatry and Behav. Sciences	75%	71%
Social Sciences (average)	**47%**	**47%**
Arts/Humanities	27%	22%

Source: Visser et al. 2009, p. 15

Nearer home the two Amsterdam universities reveal a similar picture (Visser, van Raan & Nederhof 2009). Although the percentages for the social sciences are more favorable than those mentioned above, the Web of Sciences misses a large part of the output of the social sciences of both universities (Table 6). While the science and medical sciences have a coverage higher than 85%, reaches psychology 75 and 71 %, social sciences 47 %, and the humanities 27 and 22%.

Such differences do not result from differences in quality, but from differences in publication and citation culture. Diana Hicks, for example (2008, see also Hicks 1999 & 2004), an international expert in scientometrics, shows that journals where social scientists chose to publish more often than those in science and medical science are *not* included in citation indices, and while the latter hardly publish books and national journals—social scientists frequently chose such outlets. Publication records of the VU-University serve to illustrate (Table 7).

Table 7 Publications by faculty of the VU in 2008		
	# scientific publications	% professional publications
Science/Med. Science	3910	5%
Social Sciences	**2212**	**28%**
Arts/Humanities	886	28%

Source: Annual Report 2008 VU University

Yearly, Dutch universities must register the scientific output of their personnel. The registration distinguishes between scientific publications and professional publications, books etc. Scientific publications might be included in the citation indices; professional publications certainly are not. The first column in Table 7 presents the total number of publications of the three domains; the second which proportion of the total are professional publications. Only 5% of the publications in science and medical science are so called professional publications against 28% in the social sciences and humanities. In quality assessments that employ Web of Sciences such output is not taken into account. The effect of this for the social sciences and humanities is many times larger than that for the science and medical science (cf. Butler & Visser 2006).

In sum, Web of Sciences fails as an indicator of the quality of research and researchers in the social sciences. In comparisons between disciplines this could lead to the erroneous conclusion that researchers from the one discipline are doing better or worse than those from another. This is already true for comparisons within one domain let alone for comparisons between domains. To be true, scientometrist warn against such comparisons (cf. van Leeuwen 2006, p.138), but such warnings are not heard by university administrators, policy makers, selection committees, and constructors of rankings. This

lead Adler and Harzing (2009) two other scientometrist to call for a 'moratorium on rankings.'

However, for some time 'Google Scholar' offers an alternative for Web of Science. Scientometrist are still a bit hesitant; partly because Google is not very forthcoming with information about its procedures, possibly because of matters of copyrights, but there seems to be a compromise in the making. In any event, the impression of scientometrist is that Google Scholar is rapidly improving and becoming more reliable. Moreover, software is available now (Harzing 2009) that enables the same analyses as Web of Science offers. This is good news for the social sciences as Google Scholar covers a much wider range of publications than Web of Science. Let me illustrate that with the example of two scholars. For the sake of anonymity, I name them 'Bèta' and 'Gamma.' 'Bèta' is a scholar from a domain Web of Science covers for around 80%; 'Gamma' is from a domain covered by Web of Sciences for around one third of the publications (Table 8).

Table 8 Web of Science vs Google Scholar

	Web of Science			Google Scholar		
	# publ.	# citat.	h-index	# publ.	# citat.	h-index
Scholar Bèta	255	3092	28	447	4084	31
Scholar Gamma	33	588	11	320	4294	28

The differences are spectacular. For Scholar Bèta Web of Science finds 225 publications, 3.092 citations and an h-index of 28. Google Scholar finds 447 publications, 4084 citations and an h-index of 31. For Scholar Gamma Web of Sciences finds 33 publications, 588 citations and an h-index of 11; Google Scholar, on the other hand, finds 320 publications, 4.294 citations and an h-index of 28. Better than these figures I can not illustrate what goes wrong. Viewing Google Scholar the two researchers are more or less the same: To be true, 'Bèta' has more publications but citations and h-index are approx. the same. Web of Science, however, suggests an enormous difference between the two; and indeed, in line with the reported figures on coverage of Web of Science the difference between the two databases is much larger for Scholar Gamma than for Scholar Bèta. Erroneously, one would conclude from Web of Science that Scholar Bèta is many times better than Scholar Gamma.

Databases such as Web of Science or Google Scholar remain problematic in many ways. Hicks (2008) and van Leeuwen (2006) recommend falling back on original output sources when possible. Examples of such sources are the annual reports of Dutch universities. Table 9 gives an overview of the output of the three scientific domains for the VU-University. The report distinguishes between three types of publications: PhD-dissertations, scientific publications and professional publications. For sake of comparison I calculated the number of publications per research fte.

Table 9 Output VU University 2008 standardised per research fte-first, second plus third stream sources				
	Diss/fte	Sci.publ./fte	Scie.+Prof. publ/fte	% researchfte
Science/Med. Science	.17	3.5	3.7	73%
Social Sciences	**.22**	**5.0**	**7.0**	**21%**
Arts/Humanities	.22	7.5	10.3	6%

Source: Annual Report 2008 VU University

The figures are clear: with apologies to my colleagues from science and medical science who perhaps were not aware of the matter. Whatever set of publication we take into consideration the output per research fte in the science and medical science domain lags substantially behind that of the social sciences and humanities. The last columns reminds us that the distribution of research fte's between the three domains is precisely the reverse. There appears to be a strong, negative correlation between the number of fte's invested in a domain and the output per fte.

Why is there no protest?

Rector magnificus, ladies and gentlemen, behold the state of the social sciences: financing that fails, quality assessment that fails, funding which is demonstrable lagging behind despite excellent achievements. In the field where I am at home best—the study of protest behavior—this would be characterized as illegitimate inequality—known as the engine of protest, but apparently not for social scientists in the Netherlands as they do not seem to protest. This raises the question why not? To be sure, there are protests but staged—oddly enough in view of what I said before—by scholars from science (see below). This by the way is in line with the literature; in case of decline protest is more often staged by those who are in comparison better off. But, back to the question of why social scientists do not protest. Why do they not gather at the doorsteps of the Ministry of Education, at the offices of NOW, the VSNU, or our the university administrators. This relates to characteristics of the science system.

Scholarly work still is in many ways an individualistic endeavor; that holds for the social sciences and humanities even more than for science and medical science. In fact, social scientists are a collection of single-worker enterprises that compete with each other for scarce resources. In such settings failing to acquire funds to do research, is easily viewed as individual failure. Under such circumstances, structural underfunding, like in the case of the social sciences, manifests itself to the onlooker as an underachieving or at least unsuccessful discipline. Indeed, the science system prefers to see itself as a meritocracy that awards quality. In a system of which people pretend that everybody has equal chances, inequality if noted at all is seldom defined as illegitimate. Awareness of shared grievances—a necessary condition for protest to occur—is unlikely to develop in such situations.

WOENSDAG 22 JULI 2009

Plasterk, investeer in Wetenschap

Dagblad Trouw 22 juli 2009:

Plasterk, investeer in wetenschap

Ooit pleitte Plasterk voor meer geld voor wetenschap. De bezuinigingen gaan echter gewoon door.

For the same reason another condition for protest to occur—the formation of collective identity—is unlikely to be met. To be sure, we are all social scientists but when it comes to that point, we are, if not each others competitors, at least coming from different disciplines such as psychology, sociology, communication science, economics, and so on. This explains also why another condition of protest is so difficult to be met, namely the establishment of effective organizations that interpret grievances, represent interests, and organize protest if needed. The only institution in this country that brings representatives of all disciplines at one table, is the so called Disciplinary Consultation Social Sciences (DSW) also called Deans' Consultation. This group of gentlemen and one lady of which I had the honor to be the chair during the last years is not the most suited to operate as a protest organization and to mobilize for collective action, although we did warn NWO, the Academy of Sciences (KNAW) and the VSNU repeatedly, without much effect though.

Managing social sciences

Under such circumstances, is there much a dean can manage? Or is a dean more like the little boy in a merry-go-round who turning the steering wheel of his little car proudly makes the prefixed circle. In other words, what has Klandermans been doing during those eight years that he was a dean? Of course, there is a lot to manage; I hope to make that

clear in the last part of my lecture. Also social sciences can be managed if not thanks to, than at least despite the working of the science system.

Good research is done by good researchers; let me start there one more time. Good researchers you can have and then you must cherish them; you can buy them and then you must offer something, or you can train them and then you need good PhDs. We worked at all three levels. For that we needed money, and fortunately the then Board of the university made additional money available. The additional money we used to grant departments extra money for each researchers who met some predefined output level during three years in a row; to attract top-researchers; and to appoint PhDs. In addition we established the Center for Comparative Social Studies (CCSS) that controlled a number of funding opportunities to stimulate research and accommodate the faculty's graduate school. Those who met the output-level were illegible to the additional funds the CCSS controlled. This and other measures were instrumental to make a transition from a teaching faculty onto a research faculty as witnessed by the figures in Table 10.

While initially roughly 30% of the faculty met the publication norm, today this holds for almost 90%. The norm concerned publication in English language, peer-reviewed outlets.

Tabel 10 Results of policy

	2001	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
% norm	30	38	46	57	65	76	81	87
#publications ER*/fte	2.9	3.2	4.1	4.4	5.5	6.1	6.6	6.2
% publications ER*	29	32	45	43	48	47	50	52
# PhDs	22	37	38	62	74	82	77	75
2d & 3d stream money	M€0.7	M€0.4	M€1.0	M€1.2	M€0.8	M€1.5	M€2.9	M€3.5

* English peer reviewed

As a consequence, over the years the number of publications in such outlets more than doubled from 2.9 per research fte in 2001 to over 6 during the last three years. This implied a change in publication strategy as well. While in 2001 one quarter of publications was English/peer reviewed, this held for more than half of the publications in 2008. In a dissertation that is to be defended shortly, Mark Pen (Pen, in prep) concludes on the basis of comparisons of various systems of achievement related awards in the scientific world that our system of awarding dept. for every worker that meets the publication norm is both the simplest and the most effective system. It encourages individual workers to publish and to continue to do so; it makes that dept. heads continue to monitor there personnel and hire people that meet the criteria already, because otherwise they miss the additional sources. Moreover, once a rhythm of regularly publishing is established, people continue to do so and more easily meet the norm. The presence of top-researchers who could serve as a model and who could supervise certainly helped. In a faculty where close to 3.000 students are enrolled, faculty must spend substantial time on teaching. Under those circumstances, it is crucial to have good PhDs who keep the research-programs going. The social sciences in the Netherlands have been much later in realizing this than their science- and medical science colleagues. Gradually, during my term we increased the number of PhDs from approx. 20 in 2001 to 75-80 in recent years. Partly, through first stream money, partly by subsiding projects that were rated excellent by NWO but due to shortage of funds were not subsidized, partly by

matching third stream projects. The latter two measures stimulated the acquisition of 2nd and 3rd stream money, which in turn led to an increase in such funding from negligible amounts at the start of my term to m€ 3.5 in 2008, while end of July 2009 the counter already hit m€ 4.0. As a result, today close to fifty percent of the faculty's research is externally funded.

To conclude

Rector magnificus, ladies and gentlemen I am not saying all this to praise myself, but to illustrate that even under unfortunate circumstances policy that consistently and enduringly aims at quality improvement can be fruitful. Let alone what the results could have been under more favorable circumstances. You may after all this wonder why we should bother. Does society need social sciences? If my answer to this rhetorical question would have been negative, I would not have bored you for more than half an hour. May I remind you that most of the smaller and larger disasters of the world's history are men-made, caused by human or organizational failures. I do not pretend that social scientific knowledge would have prevented such disasters from taking place, but when the Russians lanced their first satellite, the U.S. began to invest on a large scale in spatial research with impressive results. No single science got any far, if society is not willing to invest in it. In that respect a society gets the research it deserves. I began my lecture by pointing to interventions in the science system that were detrimental to the social sciences; the more so because social sciences are underfunded already. Let me close with a call for interventions in the sciences system in favor of the social sciences.

Rector magnificus, ladies and gentlemen the circle is closed, I am back to where I started. But I do not want to finish without words of thanks to those who supported me all along.

Words of thanks

During eight years I was the dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences. But my bond with the VU-University goes much further back. Obviously, I can not commemorate all those years, but thinking of the VU reminds me including my time as a student of 46 years. Most of those years I spent in the dept. of social psychology, as a student first, as junior faculty later, and finally as professor. Those years at social psychology were the forming years, both as a scholar and as an administrator. I have never denied those roots. 'I am a social psychologist by training' 'in social psychology, where I come from' people have heard me saying umpteenth times. If I dwell mostly on my years in Social Sciences this is not to deny my roots but because those years are fresher in the memory.

First, I want to thank the Board of the University that they have trusted me to be the Dean of Social Sciences. The collaboration between a dean and the university board is a subtle one. On the one hand, the dean has to represent the interests of his faculty and as a consequence he must keep some distance from the Board and sometimes say 'no.' On the other hand, for the Board it must be possible to count on the deans. I hope to have been

able to walk on this thin ice. In any event, I have felt supported by the Board when I needed it, although I will not easily forget that my faculty was forced to take measures that worsened our teaching. Rene, Lex, and Kees and from an earlier period Wim Noomen and Taede Sminia thanks a lot.

Then, I want to thank the Board of Trustees that they trusted me to serve three terms as a vice-rector. The VU is the only university in the country that has vice-rectors. A company that derives its status from the fact that it does not have a status. Some call it the managing team of the College of Deans, which in a way it is; some call it a soundboard of the Rector which it is as well; some define it as a strategic platform which it also suits, but I tend to see it in addition to all this as the conscience of the university. Anja, Harmen, Lex, and earlier Pier Vellinga, Paul Vlas and Taede Sminia and not in the least Peter Brasik I have the best memories of our weekly meetings. To the Board of the University I want to say cherish the Rectorium, it is unique and in my opinion has prevented some disasters to occur. Esp. to Harmen enjoy the position of oldest vice-rector, it took some time, but eventually you made it.

Colleague deans. The Board and the Rectorium may be important, the beating heart of the university is the College of Deans. It might have rhythm problems and infarcts but without the deans the university would not exist. The administration of the university consists of three board members and twelve deans nothing more, nothing less. Whether they like it or not this group of people must define the policy of the university. During the numerous meetings of the College of Deans I have attended, I was always impressed by the sphere of collegiality and mutual respect. Thanks to all of you.

Colleague deans of social sciences. Twice a year we gathered for half a day to discuss matters of importance to the social sciences. Our meetings were always inspiring. There is work to be done, so much is clear. I wished the social sciences would act more as a unity. Edward de Haan my successor as chairman I wish all the best.

Dept. heads of social sciences. What deans are for the university, dept. heads are for the faculty. Without a good collaboration between the dean and the dept. heads the faculty would not be able to function. Obviously, the dean is responsible for the faculty, but what would he be if not dept. heads would take part of that responsibility? The years of my deanship I have enjoyed your critical loyalty. Thank you for that.

The position of a dean is a strange one. On the one hand he is integral responsible for the matters of the faculty, on the other hand, he shares this responsibility with the faculty board. All those years I felt supported by the members of the faculty board. Betteke, Theo, Paul, Frans, Peter and Marjolein through the years we have been working to make the faculty blossom. It was a pleasure to work with you.

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the faculty. I was hired at the time to lift the faculty to a higher level. Without your efforts that would have never been possible. I know I have asked a lot from you, but we have succeeded in a wonderful manner. Positive research

and teaching evaluations witness what is accomplished. I want to thank you all for this, we can be proud.

Ladies and gentlemen students. I have always saluted myself with the commitment of our students. A student association that organizes most of the students, and knows how to find students that are willing to take managing responsibilities. I was always impressed by the quality of your contribution. I want to thank you heartily.

Colleagues from all over the world. I am honored to have you here at this occasion. What an inspiring conference we had during the last two days. The good news is that I am back on the block. No more time to spend on administration, plenty of time to do research, to write, and to pay visits abroad. Hence, no farewell, but glad to be back again.

Ladies and gentlemen PhDs. What would a researcher be without good PhDs? Since I got my own PhD I have had PhDs working with me. Many of them are present today. I have always found it an advantage to have gifted young researchers working with me and to train them to become good researchers. I hope I succeeded in that regard.

Ladies of the 'Bert-team' Marije, Saskia, Marjoka, Jacomijn en Jacquelien. Four PhDs and a postdoc. Some months ago we were preparing our presentation for NWO-bessensap. A day at which researchers can present themselves to the media. Discussing what our research had in common we figured that we all tend to go to seek the controversy and stand with our feet in the dirt. That also characterizes good researchers. I enjoy our collaboration, both individually and collectively and I am sure I will continue to enjoy.

A special word of thank I want to address to what some have called 'Bert's women' Paola, Marjan, Liduine and later Mareanne. All kinds of people are important for a dean, but some are extra important: the secretary, the personnel officer, the director of operation. I am not going to elaborate on this but let me assure you that all four were of immeasurable significance to me. My dear ladies my thank is enormous.

And finally, Bert's real women: Carien for quite some years my buddy who has bought a pile of Lonely Planets in the firm conviction that we will travel more. Catharina and Brechtje my two wonderful daughters whom I have proudly seen develop into the professionals they are.

At last my mother—94 she was; she was present when I did my exams, she was present at my oral defense, she was present when I gave my inaugural and she had looked so much forward to being with us today. Five weeks ago, August 28, she died. I dedicate this lecture to her.

I thank you for your attention.

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