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Dutch consultancies and social scientists in the 1950s and 1960s: developing a field around management issues.

by Luchien Karsten and Kees van Veen

SOM Theme A: Primary processes within firms.
Abstract:
In this report, we discuss the proliferation of the field of management issues in the Netherlands in the 1950's and 1960's. We mainly focus on the role of the consultants and social scientists. The field developed quickly after World War 2. It proliferated itself on a number of issues, such as the stimulation of productivity. The systemic context in which this proliferation occurred was strongly determined by initiatives of the Dutch government and the pillarisation of the society. The government established the agenda in the field of management knowledge and organised a central player in the field: the Liaison Committee. As a result the diffusion and translation of best practices became more successful. Consultancy firms played an important role in these activities. Another important factor in the proliferation of the consultants as a separate group was their necessary role in the realisation of government policies such as the wage developments on the labour market. This situation changed in the nineteen sixties. The government became less directive. The economic restructuring created new demands for managers and added new issues to the portfolio of consulting firms. Issues as strategy, leadership, co-ordination of large organisations and marketing were rising in importance. American consulting firms started to enter the Dutch market and Dutch consultants started to diffuse the new American practices. At the same time, new issues were rising in importance. Especially the social scientists were involved in large-scale research towards experiments with codetermination within companies. In the years to come, the consulting branch was growing rapidly and constituted more and more an independent force in the structuration of this institutionalized field of management knowledge in the Netherlands.
In the twentieth century, an institutionalised field of management knowledge emerged slowly. This field exploded in size in the nineteen eighties and nineties. The number of people involved in all kinds of management activities grew quickly, the number of consultancy offices increased, business schools multiplied within and outside universities, periodicals increased in number and finally gurus began to populate the spectrum. In this field, managers, consultants and scientists are the three main categories of agents which together form a kind of community which carries the knowledge on management issues. Each of these three groups is organised in varied institutional settings that sometimes differ and sometimes overlap. Within these institutional settings, existing knowledge is protected from complete disappearance and is recycled for new generations (Van Veen 2000). At the same time, agents develop new, and often less validated, ideas and knowledge pertaining to management issues. Here we want to focus especially on the development of the Dutch consultants as a separate group. Special attention will be paid to their relations with the other agents, the government and the scientists.

Before entering the detailed discussion, we will first discuss briefly some theoretical background. The reason for this is our view that the three categories of agents in the knowledge community are mutually dependent. These sub groups of agents are involved in an ongoing structuration process that resulted in an institutionalised field around management issues, as we know it nowadays. This institutional field has a varied and ever changing character through time and space as agents interact with each other. Bourdieu stated that: 'the field, as a field of possible forces, presents itself to each agent as a space of possibles which is defined in the relationship between the structure of average chances of access to the different positions and the dispositions of each agent, the subjective basis of the perception and appreciation of the objective chances (Bourdieu 1993:64). These fields can, however, take different forms. Bourdieu concluded for instance that in the literary and artistic field agents obtain positions that are 'relatively uninstitutionalised, never legally guaranteed [...] and non-hereditary' (Bourdieu 1993:61). To that extent these fields are arena's par excellence. In our view this is not the situation in the institutional field around management issues. This field is not just an aggregate of isolated agents, but also contains a configuration of relationships.

In our chapter, we will demonstrate what the role and position of the consultants was in the constitution of the Dutch field and how the development of this category is closely connected to the way the Dutch government intervened in the
field. We therefore will take into consideration the 'systemic context' (Lundvall 1992 Kipping 1995). The development of the field shows specific patterns of interaction over time. The changes were an effect of different meanings agents were describing to statements, artefacts, products and goods which depend on what the individual or collective agents concerned do with it. On the one hand, agents in this field create, produce and diffuse management knowledge. And on the other hand, they modify and adapt any item according to their own interests and purposes. This is especially apparent when management knowledge stems from another systemic context such as another country - for example the United States - and is being transferred into other countries - such as the Netherlands. As Alvarez underlined: 'there is no adoption of ideas by social groups without adaptation of these ideas to the local cultural assumptions, ideological views and interests of social groups' (Alvarez 1998, Benders and Van Veen 2001). The nature of the recipient culture and general societal environment affect the way new practices are received and applied in the new context. In this chapter we will concentrate on the consultants with an 'engineering' and a 'social science' background as distinctive agents and how they defined themselves in transferring and translating management know-how. We will underline how the two groups of consultants developed after World War II in the local Dutch situation and how they translated and transformed management ideas.

Part of the institutional field was already in place when after World War II the constitution of a new field about management knowledge took shape in the Netherlands. As will become clear, the Dutch government played, similar to the government in France (Djelic 1998:205-207), a remarkable and sometimes decisive role in the structuration of the new field. 3 Within the circle of consultants those with an engineering background took the lead, the social scientist as consultant increasingly manifested itself only after the mid 1950s. However, before presenting these details, we want to sketch the background of the Dutch knowledge field by describing its pre-war developments.
2 The premises for Dutch management consulting in the post war period

The first signs of the emergence of a Dutch knowledge community on management issues is probably the establishment of the first bookkeeping firm in 1883 (De Man and Karsten 1994). Accountancy started to develop itself slowly in the following decades. After World War I, the field of management began to proliferate more significantly in the Netherlands. Most interesting in this period was the role of engineers. Civil engineers were trained at the Polytechnic School of Delft in subjects like bookkeeping, economics, business administration and social hygiene. These educational efforts culminated in the foundation of the first management consultancy firm in the Netherlands by two alumni of Delft, Ernst Hijmans and Vincent W. van Gogh, a nephew of the famous painter.

2.1 Dutch management consulting before 1945

In 1922, Berenschot joined Hijmans and Van Gogh but after 8 years, he moved to their main competitor Louwerse. Berenschot became one of the prominent actors in the shaping of the field. He strived for a different reputation of consultants who were, up till then, mainly seen as speed-up drivers and reorganisers. He therefore actively supported the establishment of the Dutch Institute voor Efficiency (NIVE) in 1925 which could enhance the public relations about the new role of consultants and spread the available management knowledge within the Dutch business community. NIVE promoted cost cutting methods and rationalisation practices and became the first institutionalised channel to convey management knowledge to a large audience of businessmen and managers. The issues that had to be covered were broad in scope. In 1938, Berenschot, followed by others, left Louwerse and started his own firm which soon began to dominate the market.

In the 1930s, the consulting branch was mainly coloured by the activities from the engineers. However, some first signs of social scientists becoming active can be observed in the field, such as the Nederlands Instituut voor Preventieve Geneeskunde, (the Dutch Institute of Preventive Medicine, NIPG). This NIPG was a remarkable organisation within the Dutch society. It was founded in 1930 by two medical doctors to execute consultancy activities for industrial companies such as
Philips, Hoogovens, AKU and the State Mines with the purpose to stimulate the study and application of preventive medicine (Boer 1990). Together with the Dutch Foundation for Psychotechnics (Nederlandse Stichting voor Psychotechniek, NSP) which was founded in 1928, the NIPG tried to involve social scientists and medical doctors in issues as occupational choice, personnel selection and training. Both institutes became quite successful and organised training programs and collected important financial funds for research on the topics mentioned. The NSP even offered courses for bosses and managers and established close connections with universities to improve its research intentions. NIPG redefined the concept of health from that of an absence of illness to one that promoted a state of physical, mental and social wellbeing of the individual. With the establishment of these two Institutes and the emerging consultancy firms out of the engineering tradition, the first institutionalised structures in the Dutch knowledge field about management know-how were installed.

2.2 Contextual developments in the late 1940s.

The Dutch economy had been severely damaged during World War II. Everybody important in the Dutch policy-making-elite agreed that unemployment could only be avoided if the country embarked upon a program of rapid industrialisation [...]. It was therefore necessary to restrain wages and produce more cheaply than in the neighbouring countries' (Visser and Hemerijck 1997:92). The Dutch government embarked on a major publicity campaign to restore a productive work-attitude (De Vries 1997). It decided to establish the Initiating Committee on Labour Productivity in 1946 (Gosselink 1988). The government successfully stimulated a mentality of solidarity and collective efforts by constantly referring to one common and collective good: the restoration of the Dutch society. The propagation of this common good was remarkable in a society characterised by a high level of social and political compartmentalisation - or pillarisation - among the four main social groups of the population, Protestants, Catholics, Social Democrats and Liberals. The Dutch society was organised along the lines of these four different and independently organized groups. The relations between the group members were not very common in daily life, except at the political and governmental level where mutual relations were
arranged (Van Iterson and Olie 1992). This pillarised situation enhanced the peculiar synthesising position of the government: it took an important position above the pillars, while the pillars tried to organise as much as possible by themselves based on the principle of internal solidarity and sovereignty of the pillars.

In order to stimulate the Dutch economy, the government initiated a policy of low wages, which lasted until the end of the 1950s. Politicians and social partners supported consistently the necessity of this new regime. A politics of soberness and hard work accompanied this politics of low wages. Production was the main goal in order to solve all kinds of important product shortages. In this context, the announcement of the Marshall Aid was heartily greeted. Industrial production increased 40 percent since 1947 until it returned to the pre-war level in 1952 (De Haan 1992).

The Dutch government installed a Working-Group Technical Assistance in November 1948 to implement the Technical Assistance Program; it replaced the former Initiating Committee on Labour Productivity. The Working Group was transformed into the Liaison Committee for Improvement of Productivity (Contactgroep Opvoering Productiviteit) in 1950, because of a lack of convincing results. This new body was composed of representatives of the social partners, of several Ministries and of independent organisations -- such as NIVE, Royal Institute of Engineers and TNO. It had to report to the Minister of Economic Affairs but was independent in its actions obtained a broader framework than its predecessor. 5 It dealt with the organisational aspects of the production process, human relations, and the importance of good business training. The Liaison Committee consisted of 13 regional productivity centres and organised 29 business meeting days over a period of nine years. During the meetings, people from the business community met and discussed issues like productivity, cost price calculation, human relations, work instructions based upon scripts being prepared by NIVE. 6 These business meeting days were a specific place where different agents discussed their strategic behaviour and framed it vis-à-vis others. It therefore became a concrete example of the structuration of the knowledge field (Fligstein 1997:35).

The Liaison Committee brought knowledge about productivity very explicitly to the attention of specific companies and industries (Roholl 1992:112). To enhance
the diffusion of knowledge the Liaison Committee initiated research, propagated training programs and installed working groups to cover several aspects of the productivity (Inklaar 1997:60). Consultants played an important role in the distribution of ideas and the realisation of planned activities. Soon, the Liaison Committee broadened its scope and decided that productivity increases should be studied from a wider societal perspective: education, management theories, retail services and consumption patterns should be included in the analyses. It monitored the Technical Assistance activities and set out different projects for consultants as well as for social-scientific research centres.

Put in general terms, the Liaison Committee reflected mainly a diffusionistic approach in which the knowledge transfer from the United States was in itself based on mimetic considerations but created in its institutional setting a coercive pressure on other parties to follow their lead (DiMaggio and Powell 1991: 131-132). The Committee was highly involved in the organisational and technical aspects of the promotion of productivity by dealing directly with consultants. It, however, left the activities concerning the research topics to a special committee, called the Working Group Social-Scientific Research within Industry on Human Relations. Very soon translational issues emerged but they were left to the people who were involved with the application of new practices: the consultants and the social scientists.


In order to promote industrial development and safeguard the policy of low wages the Dutch government was convinced it had to train all kinds of personnel. This initiative, which was supported by unions and employers, legitimised the idea that the skills that were produced would be regarded as useful by firms (Whitley 1997). But it lacked regular training-centres to respond to this urgent demand. Consultancy firms responded to this need and started to offer training-programs for the industry. Even before the Marshall Aid was underway, the consultant B.W. Berenschot and the psychologist J. Herold who was working for the state mines, had become familiar with Training within Industry (TWI) in the United States, and propagated this new method. While some other Dutch companies about the same time tried to obtain
experience with TWI in Britain, the intensity of visits became so large, that the British government started to worry and even complained about it to the Dutch government. Impressed by the sudden interest and the remarks from the British government, the Dutch government refrains these mimetic attempts and decided to embark on a local approach (Karsten and Van Veen 2000).

3.1 Consultancies
With the Dutch industry growing rapidly after the war and the demand for trained personnel exceeding the supply, the Berenschot consultancy firm started to expand its work on the introduction of a system of accelerated training. These training schemes were meant to train unskilled workers within weeks and months to a skilled level. The concept they used was actually developed during World War II with the support of Plesman the founding father of KLM. He worked with Berenschot to create internally a department of Business Psychology to offer another consultancy product to their clients: the selection of personne (Metze 1994). The training program was directly linked to a selection program, although initially no trained psychologists were involved in the selection-process at all. In order to improve this, Berenschot very soon established linkages with Révész, professor in psychology and director of the Psychological Laboratory of the University of Amsterdam. Later on psychologists and sociologists were employed to improve the testing and selecting methods.

This training program was quite successful and Berenschot grew quickly in 1949 from 20 to 100 employees. The Liaison Committee supported the propagation of this training program. In the years to come, accelerated training turned out to be not only a national success, but became also a highly valued export product. In 1951 Berenschot carried out its first training assignment in the United States and opened an office in White Plains (New York). Very soon these assignments were called 'Truman’s point 4 in reverse' while they sold their consultancy practices to the USA instead of the other way around (Karsten 2000). In the sixties this office offered Berenschot consultants possibilities to built up practical experiences in America and discuss their work with consultants like Igor Ansoff, Chris Argyris and Joseph Juran to improve their theoretical insights. Juran even became coach for the Berenschot consultants in the USA. Until the 1970s the office in the United States was very
profitable with start-ups and accelerated training. The economic crisis of the 1970s, however, blocked the further development of Berenschot in the USA.

Another area were consultants were very active was the measurement of productivity. Although this is a classic theme in the consultancy branch, it had a very specific flavour in the Dutch situation. In the nineteen fifties, the government tightly controlled prices and wages. Wage increases could only be granted by the government if they were accompanied by higher productivity. This centralised policy created problems within companies because they were not free to increase the wages as they pleased. One important way to make a higher productivity visible and, as a result, have the higher wages approved, was to hire consultants. Consultancy firms with strong engineering background such as Berenschot, Bosboom and Hegener (REB) and Ydo employed industrial engineers to execute these auditing and monitoring assignments. These consultants did the analyses of labour-output and matched them with corresponding measured tariffs. This way, the consultants obtained an important position in the institutions which were regulating the labour market. Sometimes they had to take a remarkable stance. Consultants were sometimes invited by companies to be present within their offices when necessary, but were not allowed to interfere in the way the firm was organised. Their mere presence was enough to convince government officials that serious study was being done to set up a tariff system and that therefore salaries of employees could be increased. Meanwhile, the consultants were paid to go fishing behind the factories (Hellema and Marsman 1997:216).

The strict centralised wage policy not only promoted the work of consultants in this area but in others as well. Consultants also became active in work classification, another area of national interest. Work classification depended on the identification of the main characteristics and the content of a job. With such a classification employees would receive the same salary for the same job. Several consultancy firms developed different systems for classifying jobs (Hellema en Marsman 1997:220).

Companies labour studies also measured labour intensity by stop-watching the work. Consultants were invited to execute time studies. American practices were well-known in this area. Berenschot, Bosboom & Hegener (REB), Ydo, Van der
Bunt, (who since 1933 ran a consultancy firm positioned between consulting engineers and accountants) Kerkhoven (who had founded his firm after successful publications about time-measurement techniques) and Bureau Univers (which had been established as a spin-off from the Foundation of Labour-time-Measurements in the late 40s) sent some staff-members to a Method Time-Measurement Training Program, which was developed by Maynard. 8 In 1952 those six Dutch consultancy firms created - with the support of Philips, Unilever and AKU - a Dutch MTM society. However, MTM did not become widely popular in the Netherlands. Philips even resigned after a few years since it preferred another time measuring method offered by the Work Factor Company. 9

In general we could say that in the 1950s the activities of consulting firms were strongly connected to specific institutional arrangements which were defined by the Dutch government. Especially their strong position in the realisation of the labour market policies created a large push to diffuse many of the techniques related to productivity and job design that originated in the United States. The same consultants of the Berenschot firm who brought one Dutch technique to the USA were under strong normative influences and diffused these new ideas within the knowledge field. Those returning from the American subsidiary instructed the consultants still working in Holland and they made them familiar with American practices. The diffusion of practices was also strongly stimulated by institutional incentives such as the wage policies of the government. This way, the Dutch government implicitly used coercive mechanisms in order to spread management practices within the knowledge field.

In the community of consultants, however, not everyone shared a straightforward application of these American practices. Some engineer-consultants rejected the narrow-minded Taylorist measuring policies which consultants used to analyse productivity increases and tariffs. The engineer Ydo more in particular resented the lack of any moral element in the studies of consultants and resisted plain Taylorism as it had been propagated in the United States, where measuring productivity with the stopwatch was all that seemed to matter. Instead he preferred to develop calculated tariffs which meant that he discussed a lot with the employees involved and based his calculations on the analyses of the prevailed working habits and methods. He was of the opinion that measured tariffs- although they were based
on time studies – did not take into consideration the specific organisational context and the attitudes of the working people whereas his calculated tariffs did. Ydo was convinced that the whole of the company should be taken into consideration while setting the tariffs (Hellema and Marsman 1997:199). He did not accept a straight diffusionistic application of time measuring techniques but insisted upon translating them to the specific Dutch situation. Counting was for him not merely a matter of numbering, but, more generally of assigning determinate values that had to be an expression of the company’s identity.

Ydo’s criticism, however, was somehow limited because he did his analyses in companies with a small batch production. Berenschot and other consultancy firms, on the other hand, audited large-scale companies with standardised production processes. In the first case, improvement of organisational structures and workflow preparation were more important than the application of sharply measured production norms (Kijne 1986 1990). Still the issue itself was given serious consideration within the business community and it was left to social scientists to pursue this matter. However, attempts of Ydo show that management practices were not always seen as neutral, efficiency raising, tools which serve the main goals of a company. These practices directly intervene in existing employer-employee relations that are strongly determined by the national and historical context that makes translation questions around management practices rather pressing. The discussions around these translational issues did not stop the consultancy branch from its further proliferation. Part of their junior consultants were trained at a newly founded institution: the Foundation for Interacademic Training in Business Administration (Stichting Interacademiale Opleiding Organisatiekunde, SIOO) that was established on the 24th of October 1958. Academics with a background in engineering or economics who wanted to become professional consultants were trained at this institute. They were offered courses on leadership, based on American textbooks. Interestingly in this context is that this institute was founded in a collaborative effort between 8 different Dutch universities and agents from the consultancy branch. In this sense, a close connection between science and consultancy was institutionalized and the Foundation is, even today, an agent with a good reputation within the consultancy field.
3.2 Social Scientist as consultants.

The earlier mentioned Technical Assistance Program made the Dutch industry familiar with the concept of Training within Industry and similar American training techniques. There was a general concern to apply these techniques efficiently although the pressures to adapt them to the local Dutch situation were strong. Consultants helped to improve organisational structures in which production, planning and training were properly matched to each other. Training within Industry or Business Executive Training (Bedrijfskadertraining, BKT) became quite popular in a number of large industrial enterprises, including Philips, the State Mines, Hoogovens, retailer Honig, textile companies such as Van Heek & Co, Unilever and in several Banks. But some distrust was noticed about the rigidity of this American approach and its lack of attention to the human side of work.

Especially the quality of the Human Relations element within these training-programs was questioned and the Dutch reports based upon company visits in the United States financed by the Marshall Aid -- the so called productivity-teams -- recommended a cautious approach to adopting American management practices. A proper translation of the American practices into the Dutch situation was requested. This kind of criticism once more reflected a broadly expressed consensus in the after-war years that a new Dutch society should be based upon harmony sharing Christian humanistic principles and norms. Important members of the Dutch business- and governmental elite were sensitive to this criticism while under the spell of the European Moral Rearmament Movement and they feared social disintegration if a purely American approach would be pursued. The Dutch government was sensitive to this Movement too and decided to assign the Dutch branch of this Movement -- Foundation Truly Serving (Fundatie Werkelijk Dienen) -- the task to organise the proper training of foremen, bosses, managers and directors in the spirit of Christian humanistic and spiritual values.

In 1946 the Foundation Truly Serving had organised a conference with representatives of trade and industry, trade unions and of governmental departments to discuss the future training of bosses and businessmen. The conference paid a lot of attention to Training within Industry (TWI) and the works of the Swiss psychologist
A. Carrard – a fervent defender of the Moral Rearmament Movement. The conference led to the creation of the Dutch Institute of Personnel Management (Nederlands Instituut voor Personeelsleiding (NIPL) and was granted a national monopoly on instructing the trainers for TWI by the Dutch government. The NIPL would offer a training-program for trainers who then would apply programs such as Training within Industry to junior staff-members of consultancy firms. It was left to the consultancy firms themselves to commercially implement those programs within their client enterprises. To set up a proper structure for this new organisation, Philips delegated its expert in Training within Industry, Leopold, to help out for the first year.

The NIPL however, had a co-creator, the earlier discussed Dutch Institute of Preventive Medicine (NIPG). After the World War II the director of the mental health department of the NIPG, Koekebakker, was convinced that only multidisciplinary teams were capable of research in accordance with the new prescription on mental wellbeing within firms. 12 He pursued a policy of co-operation between medical doctors and social scientists at the University of Leiden and established strong linkages with the Liaison Committee for research projects financed by the Marshall Aid. He even became chairman of the Liaison Committee’s Working Group Social Scientific Research on Human Relations (COP, werkgroep sociaal wetenschappelijk onderzoek binnen de industrie) and had direct contact with government authorities.

To reinforce its research capacities in the area of mental well-being the NIPG started to establish linkages with the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London, that had been created in 1946 with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Research Centre for Group Dynamics and the Survey Research Centre, both at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. From Tavistock, they imported the sociatry, originally coined by Moreno as sociometry (Guillén 1994:63), as a psycho-social intervention practice based on applied social research to improve the ‘health’ of the relations between company-members (Hutte 1960). NIPG accepted the moral overtones of the Moral Rearmement Movement to translate the Training within Industry techniques to the Dutch context and train the trainers accordingly. But for its scientific research it was clearly inspired by the scientific developments at Tavistock and the research centres of Ann Arbor. The NIPG obtained a central position in the knowledge field and promoted applied scientific research based on methods coming
from Anglo-Saxon countries. However, the translation of many practices were discussed in terms of their applicability in the Dutch context. Besides the diffusionistic overtones, the translational problems became strongly underlined amongst this group of the knowledge field and attention was paid to the moral aspects connected to the application of new management practices.

3.3 Pillarisation and the consulting market.

Both the NIPG and the NIPL became highly influential in the Dutch economy through their interference via the Liaison Committee. However, other research based consultancy firms were also active and became equally important. To understand why, we have to refer once more to the pillarised features of the Dutch society. This pillarised system offered ample opportunities for the psychosocial sciences and associated practices. At that time within industry too, the rule that people of one’s own side should be favoured applied to a great extent. This contributed much to the deep penetration of these sciences into Dutch society'. (Van Elteren 1992:157). This had specific implications for the proliferation of the field. Especially the Catholics and Protestants wanted to have their own consultancy firms based on their own denomination.

Before 1940 some scientists were already active in practical work in psychotechnics. This had led to the creation of several institutes like the Dutch Foundation for Psychotechnics in 1928, but they were only focusing on selection procedures for individuals and occupational choices and did not address organisation problems yet. After the war this situation changed completely. Here is one illustrative example of this strive for a more dense, but fragmented field of institutions. The Catholic University of Nijmegen, created in 1923, decided in 1946 to establish a para-university institute to offer paid consultancy activities. The new institute sought to support the restoration of Dutch society through applied psychology, to reinforce the position of the catholic religion in the Dutch society and to promote scientific research (Van Ginneken 1994). The Catholic University knew that in the pillarised Dutch society the Protestant Free University of Amsterdam already had its own laboratory for applied Psychology and that the Catholics could not lag behind. In
1947, it created together with the Catholic Polytechnic of Tilburg the Joined Institute for Applied Psychology (het Gemeenschappelijk Instituut voor Toegepaste Psychologie, GITP). At the opening ceremony not only representatives of the Catholic Church were present, but officials of the Ministries of Economic Affairs, Social Affairs and Education as well. Their presence illustrated the importance the government attached to this kind of initiative.

The first clients of the GITP were companies such as the Dutch Railway Company, retailer Vroom & Dreesmann, Philips and a professional textile school. GITP reviewed and selected applicants for companies. Once big companies started to install personnel departments themselves, the demand for this activity declined; GITP shifted its portfolio and started to focus on the selection of managers at all levels, offered a program for individuals to select their proper profession and developed a full-range of training-programs.

GITP was eager to get involved in Training within Industry projects because they were afraid that non-Catholics would not properly train Catholic bosses, foremen and supervisors. In order to pursue this target effectively, GITP developed together with other Catholic research institutes, some research proposals concerning the selection, training and tasks of bosses and foremen as well as a project on the problems of adjustment to industry (labour neurosis) in close co-operation with the Liaison Committee. The Committee approved the proposals and assigned the budgets, but it forced the Catholic institutes to co-operate with institutes of other denominations.

This way, a dense network of consultancy firms and research centres emerged in the field, which proliferated partly along the lines of the pillars. The Liaison Committee propagated contacts over the borders of the pillars in order to stimulate research. However, the organisations themselves usually found their clients within the pillars they were connected to and diffused American practices only when they could be related to their own moral convictions. As a result of this particular Dutch situation in the 1950s, many activities within the field were implicitly or explicitly co-ordinated by the government or government related institutions and all kinds of links between knowledge diffusing and translating organisations have been stimulated on purpose.
As most people within the Protestant and Catholic pillars, the social scientists in these groups worried about the ways Christian-humanistic and spiritual values could be safeguarded after the outbreak of the Cold War. Although fear for communism was felt in large parts of the society, many intellectuals also maintained a critical distance from what they considered the materialistic and pragmatic way of life and the shallowness of the American culture. In that period, Dutch sociologists were to a large extent still embedded in German Geisteswissenschaften. Only a few took a growing interest in the work of modern sociologists like Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton, Daniel Bell and Gunnar Myrdal (Goddijn 1977) who were quite critically opposed to Human Relations. Bell even called the manipulative aspect of human relations 'cow-sociology' (Guillén 1994:72). Academic psychology mainly focused on psychological testing and qualitative diagnostics operated in selection and occupational guidance. Increasing contacts with the Anglo-Saxon world fostered analysis and prediction based on statistics. Although in general sociology and psychology kept some distance from the 'American way of life', this was not the case with social psychology and psychology of work (Haas 1995).

In those areas an interesting link with American practices took place. In 1960 about a hundred psychologists worked in companies (Veldkamp and Van Drumen 1988). Many of these Dutch social and industrial psychologists were trained and socialised within the framework of mainstream American social psychology and industrial psychology. However, the application of modern methods such as Sociatry assumed typical Dutch moral overtones that sprang from the Moral Rearmament Movement. Dutch social psychologists, financed by the Liaison Committee, got involved in different kinds of research projects. But in the mid 1950s, the general interest in Training within Industry waned (Gosselink 1988:54-55). According to Gosselink, standard American practices did not meet the specific training needs amongst the Dutch bosses, foremen and managers and did not fit Dutch prevailing practice.

At the end of the 1950s the Liaison Office started to initiate social-scientific research activities that analysed the Dutch human-relations within companies from a broader perspective taking into consideration the pillarised character of the Dutch society. Koekebakker of the NIPG became the chairman of the Working Group to
promote research. He was much inspired by the Tavistock vision that perceived labour organisations as sociotechnical systems for which management needed to balance the requirements stemming from new technologies and social structure of occupational roles in order to achieve optimal results (Guillén 1994:239). The Tavistock approach helped Koekebakker to structure large survey research financed by the Liaison Committee. He started to employ social scientists in this kind of research, a policy initially not much appreciated by the medical doctors of the NIPG (Boer 1990:35). This way, part of the Dutch knowledge field started to shift its attention and began to ask and answer its own research questions about human relations in companies. Besides these new initiatives, research centres willingly introduced consultants to new research methods: some staff members of the REB-firm for example were trained by NIPG to apply research methods based on Kurt Lewin’s sensitivity training as it was practised at the National Training Laboratory (NTL) in Bethel (USA) (Hellema and Marsman 1997:104).

NIPG, GITP, NIVE and TNO among others, became highly involved in the research projects being financed by the Liaison Committee. The NIPG managed projects that examined methods to improve co-operation within industries and that studied the improvement of communication lines between top and middle-level managers using sociotechnics as approach (Boer 1990:29-30). The report *What do you think of your work* (Hoe denkt u over uw werk), published in 1958 and based on a standard survey amongst eleven thousand employees, had quite some resonance as several consultancies embraced this issue to set up methods to improve communication within firms. GITP managed projects concerning the proper adjustments of individual employees to industry and gauging the selection methods and training of foremen. The research results were again applied by all kinds of consultants. Another remarkable project was an investigation into shift work. The Liaison Committee presupposed that shift work would promote productivity increases, but there were quite some prejudices against this kind of work. A scientific research supervised by a university professor elevated these unfounded misconceptions. A project team of economists, medical doctors, psychologists and sociologists from three university departments participated. They concluded that people perceived shift-work as an 'apartheid' problem: shift workers wanted to be free
when every one was free and they wanted to live a regular life like everybody else. Better scheduling of shifts, improving communication, and reinforcing consciousness about side effects of shift-work amongst bosses and foremen could, according to the research-team, solve the problems (Van der Eng 1987). Several projects resulted in dissertations by researchers who had been actively involved in the analysis of the obtained material. 14

Although the Liaison Committee had used only one percent of the total Netherlands fund of the Marshall Aid to improve productivity (Van der Eng 1987), its effects on technical progress and modernisation of management techniques were quite important. The Committee had a, if not the, key function in the further development of the knowledge field on management issue in the 1950s. Its original focus on the diffusion of American techniques was gradually replaced by the stimulation of indigenous research. The growing emphasis on translating concepts to the local context - as that was pursued in the social research projects- had quite some impact. When the American professors Argyris and Cumming reviewed the projects financed by Marshall Aid while visiting the Netherlands for the European Productivity Agency (EPA), they concluded that the Human Relations concept had its own life in Holland and that the assigned meanings to the concept were rather heterogeneous. Although the EPA had certainly been a necessary institutional force to transfer information on training techniques and improvement of management, that in itself had not been sufficient to implement the Human Relations concept as it had been developed in the United States. Argyris and Cumming noticed that in the Netherlands Human Relations had obtained a peculiar translation and they even spoke of a particular Dutch Human Relations hype (Inklaar 1997:221).

The Marshall Aid nevertheless had galvanised economic and technical activities within the Dutch economy and promoted contacts between the Dutch and American business communities. The Dutch government had followed a corporatist adjustment strategy with the promotion of industrialisation, with capital imports and knowledge diffusion made available under the Marshall Aid. It stimulated exports of manufactured goods driven by low wages and a particular Human Relations policy, which gave the Netherlands over the period of 1945-1959 a competitive edge over neighbouring economies (Visser and Hemerijck 1997:92-93). Consultants played an
important role in the distribution and application of these ideas. Things started to change in the 1960s, however, and although economic growth continued, a slightly different 'systemic context' started to emerge.

4 Dutch consulting in the 1960s.

In the sixties, the field in which consultants, social scientists and governmental bodies had developed particular positions vis-à-vis each other, came under pressure due to some contextual developments. Although the economy blossomed in the early sixties, a tighter labour market made it impossible for the government to safeguard centrally regulated industrial relations. In a short period of time the Netherlands developed into a high-wage economy. From mid 1960s onwards Dutch companies were active in mergers and acquisitions, which led to an important increase in the level of concentration in Dutch industry. At the same time, it became saddled with a series of structural crises within its mainly labour intensive manufacturing industries. 'In the second half of the 1960s coal mining was shut down, textile, clothing, footwear and leather manufacturing all but disappeared, and shipbuilding began its long-term decline. Ten of thousands of workers lost their jobs' (Visser and Hemerijck 1997:93 121) and social unrest forced the Dutch government to intervene. State involvement primarily focussed upon creating a favourable climate and addressed itself to the Liaison Committee for active participation. Due to the fact that the Marshall Aid had dried up, the Liaison Committee obtained in 1962 a new mandate as a consultative body under the Social-Economic Council (Sociaal-Economische Raad, SER) added to its activities dealing with management and research issues concerning structural readjustments of several industries and branches. The SER was founded in 1950 as the top of a three tiered-nation-wide, sectoral and firm level system of consultation. The SER functioned mainly as advisory council to the government. In the period 1950-1965 it had concentrated on setting the targets for wage policy, which were closely connected with increases in productivity as earlier described. After mid 1960s it had to deal intensively with the restructuring of the industrial sector and therefore needed the support of the Liaison Committee. Matters became even more complicated while at the same time the pillarised society broke up. Trade unions
radicalised due to the changing economic climate, which finally led to the merger of the socialist and Catholic trade unions into a new confederation, the FNV (Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging). The Liaison Committee addressed itself again to consultants and social scientists for support.

4.1. Consultancies

In the beginning of the 1960s consultants, who as industrial engineers had primarily been focussing on production, personnel and other services, began to broaden their scope. The introduction of the European Economic Community in 1957 opened new industrial markets for growing Dutch companies but it also threatened their Dutch markets when large French and German companies suddenly started selling their products in Holland. An increased emphasis on internationalisation changed the focus of Dutch firms on industrial production. Dutch companies needed more advise in areas such as marketing and corporate strategy. Several industries became increasingly aware of the fact that all kinds of marketing and strategic management practices were needed. Igor Ansoff, author of Corporate Strategy (1965) became a regular visitor to the Netherlands to explain the business community what strategy was all about. Shell, Philips, Unilever and Hoogovens soon developed strategic planning departments and asked their internal company consultants to promote the development of new company structures. Not every company, however, could respond so quickly. The management team of a Dutch firm like the sugar producer CSM, however, still faced problems applying the concept of Ansoff and stopped the implementation of diversification strategy for its company according to the lines of Ansoff (Sluijterman 1995 166).

Some indigenous Dutch consultancy-firms responded quickly to the new interest for marketing and strategy. Berenschot set up a marketing group, which received many assignments in the 1960s helping Dutch firms to learn about and operate in the European Economic Community. But it did more. In 1960 the Berenschot firm entered into a joint venture with John Diebold for electronic data processing work. In 1964 the non-profit market like health care and councils of cities and provinces began to attract its attention. By 1972 Berenschot had a separate
health-care division. The firm started to serve financial institutions in 1967 and by 1972 it had captured a large segment of the consulting market for Dutch banks, brokerage houses and insurance companies (Monroy 1970 Loudal 1973). The firm grew to a size of 300 consultants and was for years the largest indigenous Dutch consulting organisation. Around 1964, however, it faced an internal management crisis and partners, such as Twijnstra, left and created their own firm. Besides these internal developments, there were other international economic processes, which forced Dutch consultants to discuss the products they where offering.

With the industrial growth of the European Market some American companies started to set up subsidiaries in Europe. These companies followed their clients preventing European competitors from dealing with them. Other consulting companies expanded to Europe to promote their own strategy-concepts and disseminate corporate organisational concepts. Following a study for Shell, McKinsey had opened an office in London in 1959. With its top level organisational studies, McKinsey proved to have the most important and long lasting influence on the consultancy market in Europe. (Kipping 1996 1999). Dutch consultancy firms were well aware of the new threat coming from the Americans as well as British firms such as Booz Allen & Hamilton, McKinsey & Co, Associated Industrial Consultants, P.A. Management consultants and Urwick International that had opened Dutch branches in the 1960s. However, Dutch consulting companies did hardly develop their own approaches in those areas. Instead they followed a more diffusionistic approach and implemented as craftsmen what was developed by consultancy firms coming from abroad. Economic arguments prevailed while imposing new management concepts in these areas.

McKinsey more in particular attracted quite some attention. It had obtained a well known name amongst the business elite after consulting the Dutch airline KLM on its strategy and KZO (Koninklijke Zout Organon – a forerunner of AKZO) on introducing a divisional company structure. Mergers and acquisitions amongst Dutch enterprises striving for economies of scale constituted another area in which McKinsey became an important player.

There was, however, one domain where McKinsey and Dutch consultancy companies and accountancy firms frequently met and collaborated. Due to the
quickly rising wages, labour-intensive industries lost important market positions. The Liaison Committee promoted sector-specific studies to bring forward proposals for survival strategies of those labour intensive industries. Companies in the threatened sectors of industry had to modernise or would run into bankruptcy. Modernisation meant concentration, larger production units and the adoption of technologies that made mass production possible. Several consultancies -- that for several years had been involved in finding solutions for the problems of lead firms dealing with rationalisation and efficiency, training and improvements of company-administration -- suddenly were asked to conduct sectoral analyses in close co-operation with civil servants from the Ministry of Economic Affairs. They evaluated survival potentials of those industries on the basis of technological, economic, financial and social criteria. McKinsey was often regarded as the company to set the strategy-agenda for the sectors involved. The shipyards were the first branch where such a research was executed. Accountancy firms were invited to study the financial consequences of industrial restructuring, to determine the fair value of the companies concerned and to audit the final results. Consultancy firms specialised in organisational change and personnel issues were asked to deal with the social topics once a plan for restructuring had been approved.

Due to conflicting interests, companies within the threatened sectors did not always accept, the blueprints for sectoral restructuring and organisational renewal. This generated new activities for consulting firms that were hired for second opinions. As a result, the consultancy market itself expanded quickly. Whereas in 1947 there were only 15 consultancy firms registered as members of the National Organisation of Consultants (Orde van Organisatie-adviseurs - OOA), which doubled in 1963; by 1971, however, there were about 200 independent firms (Karsten and Van Veen 1998:99). A Dutch Management Journal reviewing the development of the consultancy business in Holland nevertheless talked about the Dutch consultants being weighed down by a McKinsey-complex. Apparently the ‘outsiders’ were spreading an American approach to management with which many Dutch consultants were not yet familiar, although it became quite popular amongst their clients.
4.2 Social Scientists as consultants.

Whereas Dutch consultants faced competition from American and British consultancy firms, the social research centres continued to propagate their own version of Human Relations by extending their approach which had been developed in the late 1950s. The Liaison Committee, with its 27 members, continued to play a key role in this extension and commissioned further research in several areas like management, social integration within the firm, work motivation and salary systems, automation, quality control, planning and labour market issues. In general a lot of young recently graduated researchers and consultants obtained the opportunity to be involved in those research topics. A few of these topics dealing with social-psychological issues drew quite some public attention. The social integration within the firm was one of them. Research centres were asked to make comparative analyses in Yugoslavia and Scandinavian countries to improve the Dutch labour relations within firms. The research in this area finally led to an international conference on 'Industrial Democracy in the Netherlands' in 1969, which was attended by eleven European delegations. All the Dutch key note speakers had a background in the social sciences and worked at universities, the Royal Naval Institute, the SER or Hoogovens. The conference itself marked the fact that social scientists in the 1960s had shifted their attention away from the United States and were focussing instead on European business developments. Presentations were covering issues such as the role of work councils, integration of white and blue-collar workers and responsibility on the job. The results reported were based on field research and company visits in Europe. 16 Another area of interest that drew similar attention dealt with topics like work-classification, merit rating, job-satisfaction and pay-schemes, job-motivation and job-enrichment to promote productivity increases, thereby respecting the particular Dutch circumstances to implement these techniques. To share the results with the general public a conference was organised in 1971 entitled 'The Management of Applied Social Science Research by Productivity Centres'. Both conferences had been organised under the auspices of the European Association of National Productivity Centres (EANPC) which promoted comparative studies within Europe and had replaced the former European Productivity Agency. 17
There was one other area within which quite some social scientists and consultants began to manifest themselves during the second half of the 1960s. In those years the business community became sensitive for social changes that were actually taking place in the society at large (Bergsma 1965). With the growing interest in industrial democracy, trade unions put the government under pressure to commission extensive research on co-determination. Their enthusiasm about the Yugoslavian system of self-management was one of the important factors to ask for research (Broekmeijer 1968). The issue of co-determination had initially been settled in 1950 when an act on works councils had been adopted, but this act was much resisted and the implementation had not been very successful; few employers felt the urge to install work councils. The act had not been designed to encourage the independent expression of workers interests but was meant to contribute, with due recognition of the autonomous function of the employer, to the general interest of the enterprise. A representative role of the elected council members on behalf of their constituency was excluded since it would betray the view of the firm as a community (Visser 1993). During the 1960s trade unions asked for further research to explore new perspectives on co-determination.

A younger generation of scholars in the social sciences and critics from the left began to raise their voice against the professionals who were working for the social research centres, characterising them simply as ‘servants of power’. They were not convinced that those professionals seriously executed consultation that was agreed not only by the management group but by representatives of the workers as well, as Jacques (1951) from the Tavistock institute had clearly issued as a principle. A political anti-Americanism arose and subjects like corporate responsibility, co-determination, worker participation, alienation and emancipation gained popularity. Approaches such as sociatry and sociological studies of shift-work fell into disfavour because they either did not emphasise technical and organisational aspects of firms at the same time or did not analyse power and conflicts in organisations. The student union (Studentenvakbeweging SVB) became involved in the creation of the ‘critical university’; a label used to criticise the prevalent positivism within applied social research. Students protesting for democratically organised universities occupied the
Academic and societal critique put a high pressure on the authorities and a network of radical social scientists that had established connections within the Ministry of Social Affairs enforced the experiments trade unions had been striving for (De Man 1988). In 1973 a new left-centre government announced action plans with respect to co-determination and work-councils. The government wished to stimulate scientifically guided experiments in close co-operation with the social partners to promote industrial democracy. Social scientists of several different universities defending the interest of emancipation became involved in the experiments. This new development diminished the American influence and forced the traditional social research centres and consultants to readjust their former approaches. Their perspective on planned change in companies based on order, stable structures and adaptation had to switch to one of fundamental change. New approaches were discussed but the oil-crises of the 1970s dampened this new challenge.

An interesting development is the emergence of a clear Dutch variation of SocioTechnical Systems Design, or STSD, paradigm (Van Eijnatten 1993). This line of thought started in 1949 when Eric Trist of the Tavistock Institute and Ken Bamforth described semi-autonomous groups. From their study, a large and international debate emerged around new ways of organising. The discussions resulted in different variations of the concepts in different 'systemic context'. In the Netherlands, the Integral Organisational Renewal was a new variation. It was especially De Sitter who worked first on the scientific aspects and started publishing on the subject in the beginning of the nineteen seventies. The basis for these discussions can be traced to the fifties and sixties, but it was only in the nineteen seventies and eighties that it became popular in the consultancy branch. In that period, the 'Modern SocioTechniek' became more and more an applied consultancy tool and it even led over time to the emergence of specialised consultancy firms as the 'ST-groep' in 1990.
4.3 Comparing the 1950s and 1960s.

When we compare the sixties with the fifties some similarities and differences come to mind. In both periods the Liaison Committee played a dominant role in promoting and structuring the field of management know-how. Although the 'systemic context' changed, the role of social scientific research centres did not alter dramatically. In both periods they were able to execute research projects which offered a sound base to consult firms either by themselves or by other consultancies.

In our view the role of the consultancies however changed from one period to the other. Under the banner of productivity consultancies focussing on matters of production were invited directly or indirectly by governmental bodies to be involved in disseminating management concepts that were linked to the productivity drive. It was left to them to translate these concepts into local practices respecting governmental policies. In the sixties a lot of consultants continued their involvement in similar activities. Some of the consultancy firms like Berenschot, however, broadened their scope and became involved in areas of marketing and strategy too. But they applied new management concepts in these areas in a more mimetic way respecting the American flavour.

5 Conclusions.

Before World War II, the first signs of a developing Dutch consultancy branch can be observed. Both consultants with an engineering and with a social science background established their first firms. After World War II, the field developed quickly and proliferated itself on a number of issues, such as the stimulation of productivity, training within industry, occupational choice and personnel selection. The systemic context in which this proliferation occurred was strongly determined by initiatives of the Dutch government and the pillarisation of the society.

The government established the agenda in the field of management knowledge and organised, with help from the Marshall funds, a central player in the field: the Liaison Committee. Once the Liaison Committee was in position, it started to direct the efforts in the field by defining issues, distributing money and assigning
responsibilities to other agents in the field. The Liaison Committee became a spider in the web of relationships and networks within which activities of consultants and research centres were co-ordinated. This Liaison Committee opted as a national centre for the execution of the Economic Co-operation Administration for the diffusion of foreign management practices, it nevertheless demanded that the norms, rules and regulations imposed by the Dutch government be respected. As the network between the different agents in this field of knowledge became more strongly aligned, the diffusion and translation of best practices became more successful. Consultancy firms played an important role in these activities. The alignment itself was the result of a properly functioning set of typically Dutch codifying regulations which had not been created within the network itself but were - as the case of the Moral Rearmament showed - imposed externally. Although the Liaison Committee threatened to be dissolved as a body financed by the Marshall Aid it was kept alive under the umbrella of the Social Economic Council and continued its activities.

Another important factor in the proliferation of the consultants as a separate group was their necessary role in the realisation of government policies such as the wage developments on the labour market. The pillarisation of the Dutch society stimulated a further fragmentation of the field as result of the need to establish similar institutions within different pillars. As a result, the development of the consultancy branch was strongly determined by the directive activities of the government and some peculiar characteristics of Dutch society.

This situation changed in the nineteen sixties. Some policy areas of the government changed and became less directive due to economic (such as a new labor market policy as result of a tight labour market) and political developments (such as a next phase in the development of the European Union). The subsequent economic restructuring created new demands for managers and added new issues to the portfolio of consulting firms. Issues as strategy, leadership, co-ordination of large organisations and marketing were rising in importance. American consulting firms started to enter the Dutch market and Dutch consultants started to diffuse the new American practices. The government was mainly focussing on issues related to the restructuring of the economy, which generated a new kind of demand for consultants. The field was more and more fragmented due these developments. At the same time,
new issues were rising in importance. Especially the social scientists were involved in large-scale research towards experiments with codetermination within companies. In the sixties, the conductors role of the government was decreasing in the field. This was, however, only the first step in this direction. In the years to come, the consultancy was growing rapidly and constituted more and more an independent force in the structuration of this institutionalized field of management knowledge in the Netherlands.

From the 1970s onwards, Dutch consulting firms were facing more competition. Although in 1978 1600 consultants already were active in the Netherlands in profit as well as non-profit sectors, new competitors challenged their positions. Once the Dutch associations for accountants (Nederlands Instituut van Register Accountants, NIVRA) no longer prevented foreign accountants to be active in the Netherlands the accountancy firms Klijnveld set up an alliance with German and British partners which resulted in the establishment of KPMG. The creation of a new international organisation opened doors to introduce business advice in order to retain existing clients and obtain new ones (Volten 1992). With the influence of accountants in the area of business consultancy, a new group of agents began to present itself in the field of management know-how.
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2 Galaskiewicz (1991 pp.293) describes such process as `Our focus … is on how, within organisational fields, programs or rule systems come about which are neither imposed by external authorities nor absorbed from the larger culture, but rather are built or created by system participants and lead actors to pursue collective goals’.

DiMaggio (1991 pp.267) makes a similar statement which is closely related to our approach. He writes: ‘… to understand the institutionalisation of organisational forms, we must first understand the institutionalisation and structuring of organisational fields. Where institutional process have the greatest impact on organisational change, such fields are not simply investigators’ aggregative constructs, but are meaningful to participants and include specialised organisations that constrain, regulate, organise, and represent at the level of the field itself’.

3 We will, to a large extent, leave the Dutch universities aside because they played a highly ambivalent role and had initially mainly an indirect role as the field shaped itself. We refer to a publication of P. van Baalen en L. Karsten in a book to be edited by R.P. Amdam covering this role.

4 Later to become AKZO.


7 Engineer P.H. Bosboom took Hijner’s position who died in 1943.

8 Maynard became by the late 1960s one of the largest American consultancy firms in Europe with about 330 consultants in eight European countries (Compare Volz and Maarschalk 1955, Kipping 1999 205).
We owe this information to dr. I. Blanken, the Philips company historian who provided us with relevant sources as Verslagen Groepsleidersbesprekingen, Philips Nederland, 1951-1954.

Some people were not pleased with this particular translation (Penders 1962 99). Penders had been head of the department of the State Mines.

The Moral Rearmament was created in 1938 by the American Protestant reverend F. Buchman and became influential among leading elites in Europe.

J. Koekebakker became subsequently professor of social psychology at the University of Amsterdam.

Examples are Daniels, Mulder and Ijzerman.

F. Inklaar, Van Amerika geleerd, Den Haag 1997, p.221

Industrial democracy in the Netherlands, Meppel, 1969.


The phrase ‘Servants of power’ is coined by L. Baritz’s (1960) in which he argues that social psychology and anthropological studies and especially the Hawthorne experiments are paradigmatic of the relationship of intellectuals to the American society.