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Cultivating trust : how do public policies become trusted

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Cultivating Trust

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Cultivating Trust

How do public policies become trusted?

Proefschrift

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Preface

Trust research has become vitally important in the study of public administration. Many scholars emphasize the importance of trust for society, because it may improve co-operation. The relation between trust and policy making, however, has not yet been discussed very thoroughly. This is remarkable because the formulation of public policies can both increase and decrease trust. A new policy could satisfy one group of citizens while at the same time antagonizing another group. Policies can give hope, but they might also result in frustration; policies can satisfy expectations, but they can also confirm prior cynicism. In other words, administrators and politicians may both establish and lose trust while formulating and adjusting policies. The aim in this study is to understand how these competing processes play out through the study of the history of agricultural policy making in the Netherlands.

I started this study in april 1999. It was co-financed by the Dutch department of agriculture. Initially, Karin Olsthoorn, a fellow AiO from the University of Wageningen started on the same project. She found, however, another position and terminated her study. I want to thank her for those first two years of struggling together. I also would like to thank the Theunissen family. They showed me the joy of farming. Through the many holidays I spent on their farm I came to appreciate my object of study.

Many members of the department of public administration have commented on earlier versions of this book. Especially my fellow PhD-students of the *aio-seminar* taught me to improve my arguments and handle criticism. I remember the fruitful discussions in the beginning with Fleur, Liesbeth, Mathilde, Sandra, Bas, Frans, Jörg, Kutzal, Sander, Torsten, and Udo. In the last two years I received also a lot of (moral) support from Anne-Greet, Celesta, Sandra, Sanneke, Patrick, and Sebastiaan. They kept on telling me to cheer up, finish the book, and get my degree!

Among the "non-AiOs" I would like to thank Frits van der Meer for his continuous support and Paul Nieuwenburg for making me acquainted with some philosophical concepts. I thank Jan-Willem Burgers for editing the book and Lies Steenberg for lending her apartment for a couple of weeks. Finally, much of what I have written is read and criticized by Petra Schreurs. Her comments forced me to write better and intelligible texts. Just as one of the other AiOs wrote before, "it is therefore more than bitter that she will never see the final version."

Preface

Els, the book is finished! Thank you for your patience.

Gerard
Leiden, January 2006