

The Paradox of Scientific Authority

The Role of Scientific Advice in Democracies

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Preface

Like any piece of scholarly work, *The Paradox of Scientific Authority* has a frontstage and a backstage. This preface is one place to say a few words about the research process and the writing of our book, especially by thanking the numerous people with whom we worked in the course of this project. The other places are the third and last chapters, where we will say more about the research and the writing.

Doing fieldwork at the Gezondheidsraad (the Health Council of the Netherlands) in the intimacy of its secretariat, meeting rooms, and offices was a true pleasure. In this book we describe how the Gezondheidsraad's openness and self-critical attitude play important parts in its coordination work and enable it to live the paradox of scientific authority. Here we put our analytical distance aside and express our gratitude for the hospitality and cooperation we experienced.

We are indebted to many people. First and foremost, we thank the Gezondheidsraad for giving us the opportunity to enter the sanctuaries of science advisory work, to talk with members of the Gezondheidsraad's scientific and non-scientific staffs, and to use the Gezondheidsraad's archives. In addition to the interviewees and focus-group participants mentioned in the appendixes, we thank Marja van Kan, André Knottnerus, Wim Passchier, and Jan Sixma. Research assistants Marjo Hermans, Marlous Blankensteijn, and Agnes Kovacs helped us at various stages of research and manuscript preparation.

One risk of getting close to the culture you are studying is to lose critical distance. To help prevent this, our colleagues in science, technology, and society studies played a crucial role at the backstage of our project. In various research seminars, our colleagues at the University of Maastricht (especially the STS research group in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences) and

at the Erasmus University Rotterdam (the Healthcare Governance section of the Department of Health Policy and Management) critically examined both the empirical findings and our interpretations of them. We also thank discussants and audiences at conferences of the Society for the Social Studies of Science and the European Association of Science and Technology Studies. We thank Willem Halffman, Gerard de Vries, and Ruth Benschop for sharing their thoughts and insights on earlier versions of this work.