

## Administrative History and Ethics of Administration: A Case From the Dutch Batavian Republic in 1798

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## Use and Relevance: History and Ethics

- Actual ethics in historical context?
- Evolving ethics and changing values?
- Origins of contemporary ethics?
  
- Connection between historical and contemporary structures, practices and institutions
  
- Providing perspectives on dynamics, mechanisms and social processes

## The Case Study: A Brief Description

- Abuse of office amidst political turmoil (1798)
- Turning point in institutional development
- Administrative reform and strong focus on ethics and moral decline
- Gin, cloth, salted meat and abuse of office: the first Dutch 'parliamentary inquiry'

## Three Purposes and Three Sets of Questions

1. Empirical:
  - Actual ethics, values and value systems
2. Theoretical: institutional reform and ethical change:
  - Path or punctuation: incremental or abrupt?
  - Functional/rational choices or established routines?
  - Impact of social-political and economic environment?
3. Methodological:
  - Scandals of corruption: explicit ethics and the influence of debate and strife
  - Multiple sources of public values: interplay, overlap and differences

## Conclusions (1): Empirical

- From individualistic to communal: emphasis on the nation, the common good, society at large and popular sovereignty
- A separation of public and private: personal benefit from a public office increasingly rejected; emphasis on public trust invested in public office; increased importance of public opinion
- The emergence of (now) traditional public values: emphasis on legal rules of office, neutrality; merit; openness and proper procedures
- A general lack of 'modern' (managerial) values: hardly any debate on efficiency or effectiveness

## Conclusions (2): Theoretical & Methodological

- Theoretical
- A mix of path and punctuation:
    - Timing proved crucial: a coup of rational reformers
    - Path was punctuated: radical breaks with the past
    - Influence of old traditions and earlier attempts
  - Impact of environment:
    - Economic decline
    - Wider political (international, revolutionary) developments
  - What comes first: an idea, a policy or an organization?
    - New institutions provided new moral templates
    - Chicken & Egg problem?
- Methodological
- Use of focus on scandal and debate
  - Multiple sources provide broad view of prevailing ethics and possible reasons for change?

**What's next?**

- More case studies and more (international) comparative research
- Testing theories of value change and institutional reform
- Acknowledge need for combining multiple theoretical models

**Questions and Remarks!**

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