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Careful trusting in intensive farming

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Despite the attempts of farmers and researchers to develop innovative, sustainable and animal friendly husbandry systems, many citizens and interest groups remain negative about intensive farming. Consequently, policymaking on intensive livestock farming progress very slowly and especially the construction of mega stables causes societal commotions, protests and even distrust. In our contribution we show with a case study how the decisions about the settlement of a mega-stable resulted in a spiral of distrust between a municipality, stakeholders, and local protest organizations. Humans base their interpretations of events like intensive farming, on previous experiences, their identity, and their background values and frames. These phenomena constitute their 'worldview' and trust is won if others appeal to this worldview with the right words and deeds. In our case we found five different worldviews:

1. Mega-stable as mega-sustainable
2. Mega-stable as mega-wrong
3. Innovative, sustainable company in our area
4. No mega-stable in this area
5. Following procedures

All five groups reasoned and acted in different ways, and they were not able to speak to each other although they communicated intensely. The more information and knowledge by means of research reports and information exchange evenings became available, the more people began to distrust their administrators and vice versa. We draw the following conclusions. Trust building requires knowledge of each other's worldview. Policy-makers should not only stay with their own line of reasoning, but they should take the other ones' positions and crawl in their worldview. And finally, only providing information or producing research reports does not take away suspicion; on the contrary, it may even contribute to the uncertainties, which make it even harder to gain and maintain trust.

