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BEYOND SELF-INTEREST, A CULTURAL
ANALYSIS OF A RISK DEBATE

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PREFACE

This is one of a set of three working papers concerned with the System Decision Sciences task on Institutional Aspects of Risk Management.

Even a cursory comparison of the way the same technological risks are handled reveals that things get done differently in different countries. And, *within* any one country, the debate about how to improve the handling of those risks is often a debate between the advocates of several of these different ways of doing things.

To understand these differences we need to develop a cultural theory about the *appropriateness* and the *credibility* of risk-handling institutions. Since to invoke gross differences between national cultures would be to ignore the polarized debates within each nation, we need rather the idea of *cultural bias* - the contradictory predilections, ideas of nature, and personal strategies to which different individuals in the same society can adhere. In this way the cultural approach goes beyond the comparative study of institutions to investigate the social processes responsible for the ebb and flow of support between alternative institutional frameworks.

The first paper - *Political Culture: an Introduction* - provides some of the intuitive background for this approach. The second paper - *An Outline of the Cultural Theory of Risk* - gives a more formal treatment of this cultural theory as it emerges in the particular context with which we are concerned: risk. The third paper - *Beyond Self-Interest: A Cultural Analysis of a Risk Debate* - is an attempt to apply this theory to one of the case studies currently being assembled by the Management and Technology group that is investigating the ways in which the risks inherent in Liquid Energy Gases are handled in the process of terminal siting.

BEYOND SELF-INTEREST:
A CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF A RISK DEBATE

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INTRODUCTION

Most analyses concerned with 'the decisionmaking process' begin by identifying 'the interested parties' - the groups and individuals who, in pressing their different advocacies, give a rise to the debate. Such an approach assumes:

- a) that those who are not party to the debate are not interested;
- b) that the reason for the interest of the interested parties is self-evident - it is essentially self-interest;
- c) that what they are talking *about* in the debate is what they are interested *in*.

The cultural approach queries these assumptions rather in the way that the New Journalism¹ queries the assumption that reportage - 'mere reportage' some positivist diehards would say - is just some self-evident data-base from which literary creation takes off. In querying these assumptions it has us ask some unfamiliar and intriguing questions:

- a) what of those who *are* interested but cannot gain entry to the debate, and what of those whose interest is best served by steering well clear of the debate?
- b) How do people who act in their own best interest *know* where that interest lies; that is, how are the goals they seek set?
- c) What about 'the hidden agenda'; if all those parties are really arguing about something else - about what kind of a society we should live in - should we not try to read

the debate in these terms and regard its 'visible agenda' as little more than a medium for the expression of these social concerns?

A Note on Methodology

In this paper I attempt to apply the cultural approach to one of the case studies currently being assembled by the IIASA group working on risk and Liquid Energy Gas (LEG) terminal siting. Following the same sort of procedure as I have followed elsewhere, I have taken as my 'universe' a collection of printed and published material - that pile (about twelve inches high and labelled 'Scotland') which in July 1980 stood on the shelf in the risk group's office along with several other piles (some, like those for France and Japan, much smaller others, like that for California, much larger). The main part of this universe is made up of documents relating to the Public Inquiry into the planning application by Shell and Esso for a LEG processing plant at Mossmorran and for a LEG terminal and storage installation at Braefoot Bay.

Since those who gathered this universe were (at the time they gathered it) unaware that anything called 'a cultural approach' existed, this methodology is admirable for ensuring that, in the collection of the initial data, there is no selective bias in favour of this particular theoretical orientation. On the other hand, it means that a lot of data that, given this cultural approach, you would like to have is missing.

THE MOSSMORRAN/BRAEFOOT BAY DEBATE

Coming to LEG risk from nuclear power and from smoking and health, the most interesting thing about this debate is that it is so boring. Shell and Esso, admittedly, are no *more* boring than British Nuclear Fuels or Phillip Morris; the tedium has to do with the almost complete absence of variety among the groups and individuals who, though not the instigators of the proposals nevertheless feel sufficiently moved by them to speak out...either for or against. In the Shell/Esso corner we find no counterpart of SE₂ (Scientists and Engineers for Secure Energy) and its rasp-voiced spokesperson, Ed Teller - 'The Father of the H-bomb'; in the other corner, instead of a cacophonous assortment of anti groups² with wondrously assorted acronyms like GASP (Group Against Smokers' Pollution) or SCRAM (Scottish Campaign to Resist the Atomic Menace), there is just one quite well-behaved 'nimby' (Not In My Back-Yard) - The Aberdour and Dalgety Bay Joint Action Group - with an instantly forgettable set of initials that cannot even be pronounced!

The ADBJAG aims are modest and localised; they do not want to remove LEG from the face of the earth, they just want it to go away from *them*. Their existence as a group is wholly conditional on the proximity of the threat - it called the group into existence and, if it goes away, so ADBJAG will dissolve back into the social fabric from which it emerged. Of course, such groups are also a common feature in the opposition to nuclear

power station siting proposals but there they do not have the opposition corner entirely to themselves, nor do they always dissolve away once the threat has moved off into someone else's back-yard.

There are, in the general case, two very different kinds of opposition - the *ephemeral local groups* that are mobilised by the threat and that demobilise when that threat goes away from the locality, and the *persistent global* (or, at any rate, non-local) *groups* that are opposed to the technology itself and who use each local proposal as an opportunity to confront the enemy.³ For the latter there is no demobilisation since each instance is but one battle in the continuing struggle to defeat the technology. So, in the debates surrounding nuclear power, we find two kinds of groups - local and global - and what is more we sometimes find that, at the end of a particular battle, the local group does not demobilise but instead transforms itself into (or merges with) a global group.

As it stands, the Mossmorran/Braefoot Bay, debate is deceptively simple and it is no problem to explain it all away in terms of the classic marxist model in which differing perceptions (of the risks involved) are to be understood as being generated by self-interest (for example, Shell and Esso stand to profit so they see the risks as small; the ADBJAG members stand to lose so they see the risks as large, the local authorities see opportunities for increased employment and rates revenue and are disposed to see the risks as small, Donibristle being a tiny firm sees itself losing its small skilled workforce in the general turbulence created by the arrival next door to it of a vast multi-national and is disposed to see the risks as large, and so on...) The advantage of comparing this debate with other debates, such as those surrounding nuclear power and smoking, is that it enables us to question this rather insulting self-interest explanation.

Within the self-interest explanation every debate has to be seen as a Restoration comedy - the characters all share but a single selfish goal and their divergence is generated by nothing more than the different paths down which their craven self-advancement leads them - but, just as not all dramas are Restoration comedies, so not all debates can be fully accounted for by self-interest alone. Some debates are more like Greek tragedies in which the clash of eternal and fundamentally conflicting goals act themselves out through the medium of mere mortals. Amory Lovins and Fred Hoyle (even Joe Califano and the Senator for North Carolina), as they strut and fret their hour upon the stage, are surely playing in something a little more tragic than "Tis Pity She's a Whore"?

So, in comparing the Mossmorran/Braefoot Bay debate with these others, we are encouraged to go a step further and, as well as asking why certain groups are involved, we can go on to ask why certain other groups are *not* involved. In fact, some of these other groups are involved, albeit in little more than walk-on roles, but first of all let us have a look at some of the characters that hold the centre of this particular stage.

The Aberdour and Dalgety Bay Joint Action Group

What is it that makes the local and ephemeral groups different from the persistent and global groups? The answer is that they do not have to organise themselves in order to ensure their continuing existence. It is the imminent external threat that calls the group into existence and, having done that, holds it together. When the whole business has been resolved the group just dissolves back whence it came and this causes no dismay; as far as the members are concerned, that is how it should be.⁴

Because of this, there is little point in trying to analyse such ephemeral and local groups in terms of the criteria for distinguishing sects and castes.⁵ These criteria are concerned with the different ways in which groups can stabilise themselves - recruitment, leadership, internal organisation, representation, definition of aims and issues...the identification of appeals that can be used to maintain the fervour and cohesion of the membership - and the ephemeral and local group does not have to concern itself with all these; the local threat does it all for them. Only in those interesting cases when, for some reason or other, they *do* concern themselves with these matters do such groups continue in existence once the threat has gone away.⁶ Examples of such transformations of local and ephemeral groups into global and persistent groups (of various kinds) are to be found in the history of nuclear power in the United States⁷ and it will be interesting to see whether ADBJAG too lives on to fight another day.

So, at present, local and ephemeral groups such as ADBJAG lie outside our explanatory scheme because that scheme is concerned with the ways in which groups hold themselves together and ADBJAG does not need to do this. But this does not mean that such groups that are held together by outside forces cannot be explained, nor does it mean that we cannot offer any means of understanding how such a group can shift from one kind of cohesion to the other.

The Birth and Death of Groups Under an Acephalous Regime

For a group to emerge from a social fabric there has to exist within that fabric the *potential* for such a group, and the classic treatment of this general and eternal potential and its specific and ephemeral realisations is to be found in anthropology - in the study of how the members of acephalous societies (tribes without rulers) manage to regulate their sometimes turbulent affairs.⁸ Such societies, though they may be weak on leadership, are strong on kinship. When you need help you go to your kin; loyalty is inversely proportional to genealogical distance and, since claims to land are also referred to this ideological basis for validation, it usually turns out that your close kin live close to you whilst your more distant kin live not too far away. So, if two individuals become involved in a dispute, they both set about mobilising the support of their kin until they reach the point where they are both trying to enlist the support of the descendants of a man who is their common ancestor. At this point the loyalties are exactly balanced and the mobilisation process stops. The two mobilised

segments then confront one another and sort out the dispute between their members. Having done this, the reason for their existence is no longer there and they dissolve away. In some future dispute the two sides may find themselves joined together in the mobilisation of some much larger segment or, equally likely, one side may find itself split into two sides as a consequence of a dispute between two of its own members.

Where the threat is external, and this is the case that corresponds to the Braefoot Bay proposals, the process starts where the threat is strongest and continues until, in theory, the whole society (all the descendants of the mythical founding ancestor) is mobilised. In reality, because those who are threatened only want the threat to go away to a safe distance, the process stops when it reaches those individuals who, by joining in, would risk actually bringing the threat *closer* to themselves. There is close parallel between the back-yards of the nimby-members of Fife and the agricultural holdings of the Tiv in West Africa.⁹

So this explains why nimbies are always localised and do not go on growing and growing, but we now need to look at different kinds of social fabric in order to try to say something about their differences in potential - about the different kinds of nimbies that would be mobilised, if a threat was imminent, in different kinds of social fabric. It is here that the British example differs from its West African counterpart. In the acephalous societies studied by anthropologists the social fabric is, by and large, homogenous; in Britain, thanks to 'class apartheid', it is not.

In Britain (and in the U.S.) most nimbies are fairly conservative, fairly elderly and strongly middle-class - they are 'respectable rebels'¹⁰ - and this leads one to suspect that perhaps not all nimbies are equal; that a nimby mobilised from a social fabric richly embroidered with articulate professionals (ADBJAG, for example) is likely to be much more formidable than that which emerges from a blue-collar fabric (Canvey Island, for example) and that there may be some threadbare social fabrics so lacking in manipulative and information handling ability as to be unable even to mobilise any sort of nimby at all (Cowdenbeath, for example¹¹). The result is that planning proposals end up tripping daintily through the nimbies - giving the formidable ones a wide berth, avoiding the weaker ones where possible and, other things being equal, stepping where there aren't any nimbies at all. As any civil engineer experienced in motorway construction will tell you, 'The best soil conditions are always to be found in working-class areas!'

[In the Braefoot Bay case, other things are not equal. There is nowhere else to step (apart from Peterhead); Mortimer's Deep is just about the only place capable of accommodating Shell/Esso's colossal foot and so they have no option but to meet the nimbies head-on. This - the intensity of nimby opposition that had to be faced because of the absence of alternative sites - and not the scale, the nearness and the uncertainty of the risks involved is the most likely cause of the planning application being eventually 'called in'. And of course, if it had not been called

in, the debate would never have developed to the extent and in the directions that it did, fewer and less thorough risk assessments would have been carried out, and the risks of ignition via the potential difference induced in large metal structures by radio waves would have gone undetected. So here is a clear and disturbing example of the sort of thing that those who are interested in 'institutional aspects of risk management' could usefully be looking at. Whether an application is called in or not is, at present, largely determined by the number and strength of the objections to it and this, one suspects, is not a reflection of the level of unease within the local population but of the richness of its social fabric. The result is an inequitable response by government, not the scale of the risk, but to the scale of the perceived risk. The question of the mismatch between what the risk really is and what people think it is, is something else again.]

But in the general case, this simple pastoral scene (tripping through the nimbies) is messed up by the presence of some other kinds of groups which, unlike nimbies, are not rooted to the ground. These are the global and persistent groups - the castes and the sects.

Persistent Global Groups

These are the groups that are conspicuously absent at Braefoot Bay. In the Shell/Esso corner there are none and in the other corner there is only the Conservation Society and a few interesting individual objectors. The ConSoc case is presented by Mr. Bennett, Mr. Grant and Dr. Edwards and it is interesting to note that, while pressing their own objectives, they also support those of the ADBJAG.

When these two groups - the global ConSoc and the local ADBJAG - are compared we find them to be very similar in their membership and preferred styles of operation. They are at home in the setting of a Public Inquiry, they understand and play by the rules, they respect science and expertise, they sort out their differences (if they have any) beforehand so as to present a unified and consistent front in the debate, they respect one another's 'legitimate' areas of concern, and they even sit down to dinner together *and* with the enemy. They are, in our terminology, caste-ist.

The organisational criteria, of course, cannot be applied to ADBJAG because it does not need to organise itself but there can be no doubt what kind of a global group ConSoc is. Mr. Grant is chairman of the Scottish Branch, Mr. Bennett speaks on behalf of the Edinburgh Branch, and Dr. Edwards is a founder member of the Fife Branch. So the ConSoc is a hierarchically organised national (or international?) group with regional branches and local twigs, and at each level there are institutionalised offices - chairmen, founder members...members. Not all global groups are like this. The Fresno Non-Smokers' Liberation Front, for instance, is not neatly nested into some California Branch of GASP; it and every member of it, like every other local chapter, has a direct line to the charismatic leader, Clara Gouin,

in her Maryland home. The fact that ADBJAG members operate in a caste-ist rather than in a sectist style suggests that they are largely recruited from the same sorts of social contexts as are the members of ConSoc and not from the sorts of context that GASP gets its members from. If this is correct, then *social context* should be able to furnish us with a valid and useful typology of social fabrics.

But what of the more sectist global groups that might have been represented? Why were the Friends of the Earth not there? Where was the Oxford Political Ecology Group? These are not idle questions; the FoE and OPEG were there in force at the Windscale Inquiry (as were SCRAM and other anti-nuclear power groups) and both (unlike SCRAM) have legitimate reasons for wanting to be at the Mossmorran/Braefoot Bay Inquiry as well.

And it turns out that the FoE did try to be there, in some sort of partnership with ADBJAG, but that this local group was at some pains to reject these advances.¹² Since ADBJAG did not reject the advances of ConSoc, the local/global distinction cannot be the reason and it looks as if the basis for rejection lies instead in the caste/sect distinction. But why did the FoE, after encountering this rebuff,¹³ not crash on and, in a typically sectist way, appear at the inquiry regardless of the fact that its grounds for opposition might not be wholly consistent with those of the caste-ist objectors?

There would appear to be two possible reasons.

- 1) The British FoE had devoted all its resources to the number one priority - the Windscale Inquiry - which was taking place at virtually the same time.

The FoE and other groups complain about the inequality at Public Inquiries where the pros are usually able to count on considerable financial support whilst the antis can hardly even afford to take the time off work. Nelkin and Pollak¹⁴ have suggested that the procedure would be improved by making public funds available to reduce this supposed inequality; but is it as simple as this? Some anti-groups - the castes - could readily benefit from such public funding but for others - the sects - it would be like selling your soul to the devil. The inequity would not go away and the scheme would provide a strong incentive for sect leaders to abandon their followers and join the castes - something which, though it might be a good idea from the risk management point of view, is scarcely the aim of the proposed exercise. Those who look on the sects with somewhat jaundiced eyes often see them as elitist beneath their egalitarian veneer; the following anecdote may throw some light on this inside/outside dispute.

When I raised the subject (of public funds being made available to objectors) with one of the leaders of the British FoE he agreed that it would do something to reduce the present gross inequities 'but', he hastened to add, 'you couldn't just give it to *anybody*'.

So the only equitable solution would be to force all the parties - the pros, the antis, the sects and the castes - to present their cases within a budget not greater than that of the poorest among

them. Whilst this would ensure fair play it would not enable much to be done in the way of risk assessment. This suggests that there is some fundamental contradiction between *equity* and *efficiency* and highlights the sorts of mechanisms that result in the polarization of measures of welfare between those who argue from the one and those who argue from the other.

Another institutional problem is that there is, at present, no attempt to timetable Public Inquiries so that they do not clash. This has little relevance for the local groups but the global groups find it difficult to be in two places at once, especially when funds and able personnel are in short supply.¹⁵ Whether it was by lucky accident or cunning design, Shell and Esso certainly benefitted from the inquiry into their proposal taking place in the rain shadow of the Windscale Inquiry. Neither equity nor the examination of the risks (efficiency?) were improved.

- 2) The FoE has to impose priorities (the U.S. FoE has a full-time salaried Issues Officer and perhaps the British FoE has as well) and it seems likely that the Mossmorran/Braefoot Bay proposal was a low priority for them.

But why was it a low priority? The risks - the visible agenda - in both the nuclear and the LEG proposals are of the same sort of order (indeed, the terrorist threats are if anything greater in LEG than in uranium oxide reprocessing¹⁶). To get at the answer to this question we need to look instead at the hidden agenda and the great advantage of doing this is that it gives us access to a framework for institutional comparison that avoids all the troublesome intrusions of particular case studies - particular technologies, particular sites, national differences, and so on.

The Hidden Agenda

If LEG is likely to kill as many people as uranium oxide reprocessing (and unlike reprocessing, it has already killed a considerable number) why does it have such a low priority and why, conversely, does nuclear power have such a high priority? The cultural theory puts forward the following hypothesis:

The invisible agendas consist of a small number (five) of partially contradictory ideas of the good society. The priority of issues is decided by how effective a lever a debate on the visible agenda (the risks to life, in that technology, on that site) will provide for the advancement of the hidden agenda.¹⁷ Two of these hidden agendas - those appropriate to the social contexts of the hermit and the life-is-like-a-lottery man - never enter into the debate at all; the first because the hermit's interest is best served by keeping well clear of the debate, the second because he cannot gain entry to it. The way in which the other three hidden agendas enter into the debate will very much depend on which 'party' (or coalition of 'parties') sets the ground rules for the debate. To put it more precisely, the

nature of the debate (thanks to these hidden agendas) will very much depend on the nature of the *regime* within which it takes place. By turning this argument around, we can, once we have used the cultural analysis to reveal the hidden agendas¹⁸ and the different kinds of debate, begin to approach the main objective of political culture - a typology of possible regimes. But, before we can move on to the description of this universal frame, we will first have to understand something of how the hidden agendas enter into this particular debate.

For a sectist group, according to the cultural hypothesis, an issue will have a high priority:

- 1) If the risks threaten the sinister unseen penetration of the body. This is because a sect has no internal differentiation and but a single boundary and, in consequence, all its considerable concern with pollution has to be concentrated at his one boundary. In addition, in the social context of sectism, the supply of media for the expression of such social concern tends to be somewhat limited and is often restricted to the physical body as a metaphor for the social body. Since the human body, with its fragile skin and its tempting orifices, provides a very apt and powerful natural symbol¹⁹ for the soft vulnerable sect forever threatened by a nasty, devious, predatory 'them', this is no great disadvantage. The penetration fear is not so much of good straightforward rape as of the corruption produced by invisible penetration or by agents that, although visible, are not what they appear to be (witchcraft fears). The risks in LEG (apart perhaps from those involving ignition caused by radio waves) are honest, visible and do not get inside the body.
- 2) If the risks extend to the long-term and, better still, if some of the risks are *restricted* to the long-term²⁰.

Nuclear power scores very highly on both these counts; indeed, if you set out deliberately to design a technology that would provoke the maximum sectist opposition, you could scarcely do better.²¹ LEG, on the other hand, scores badly; it provides little by way of leverage for the advancement of the sectist hidden agenda.

Even so, one objector - Mr. Jamieson - does his best to make sectist bricks without long-term straw and it is well worth looking at his argument as a way of opening up the investigation of cultural bias in the Braefoot Bay context. If Mr. Jamieson is not already a sect member, he is certainly ripe for recruitment!

Cultural Bias

Mr. Jamieson manages to extract from LEG a risk that is unique to the long-term. Quite apart from the deaths that might result at any time as a consequence of fire or explosion, Mr. Jamieson believes that, years hence, our great-grandchildren

will starve as the direct consequence of a decision taken today. For such a risk to be credible one has to make a number of assumptions and this Mr. Jamieson does. First he states that 'we hold the nation's resources in trust'. He then goes on to point out that the land at Braefoot Bay is grade III agricultural land and that therefore it is among the best in Scotland. He concludes by stating that turning this priceless asset over to industry means 'throwing away the land that fed a thousand Scots'.

Seldom is the anthropologist privileged to hear so perfect-so Cobbett-like²² - an exposition of the sectist cosmology:

- a) xenophobia;
- b) sacred stewardship of fixed and finite resources;
- c) land synonymous with wealth;
- d) zero-sum mentality (he ignores the possibility that the wealth created by LEG might be able to provide a good livelihood for rather more than a thousand Scots);
- e) over-riding concern with survival;
- f) the need for radical change now to avert long-term disaster.²³

Mr. Jamieson is a local resident and one wonders why he registered as a individual objector rather than expressing his views through ADBJAG. The reason might well be that ADBJAG, being a caste-ist group, did not want to express such views (we know for certain that they did not want to be associated with the rather similar views held by the FoE).²⁴ Poor Mr. Jamieson's views do not receive much attention in the Recorder's recommendations at the end of the Public Inquiry either, nor is there any concession to them in the detailed provisions that accompany the Secretary of State for Scotland's final decision on the matter, all of which leads one to suspect that such sectist fears do not elicit much credence in these governmental and bureaucratic circles.

THE DEBATE AND THE REGIME

All this is rather speculative and based on somewhat fragmentary evidence but it does serve to bring us to the final stage which is to try to say something about the relationship between the three levels - populace, debate and government. The evidence, however, is clear on one point and that is that the sectists scarcely get to speak in the Braefoot Bay debate and, when they do, they are not listened to. But perhaps this is simply because there are very few of them in the populace - in the social fabric - to start with? Again, in the absence of any grid and group survey data for Fife, we will have to resort to whatever unobtrusive measures we can lay our hands on, and one such measure lying conveniently to hand is Mr. Currie - the prospective parliamentary candidate for the Scottish Nationalist Party in the Kirkcaldy constituency.

Mr. Currie has little to say directly about the risks; his concern is more to do with the economic health of the region, and of Scotland in general. In his pursuit of employment opportunities he outdoes even the local authorities and his misgivings are not

so much that all this development might descend upon Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay but that, when it does, it will not be enough. He is concerned that the LEG will be exported before everything that can be done to it has been done to it. He wants all the 'downstream' processing to be carried out before it leaves those northern shores and he criticises the present proposals because, he claims, they will allow Scotland's life's blood to drain away.

Clearly, Mr. Currie is using the Public Inquiry as an electioneering platform; he is trying to appeal to individuals in several different social contexts. There is something of the 'richer is safer'²⁵ argument that will go down well in the entrepreneurial context, there is a dash of the right-to-work and a *souppçon* of multinational-knocking that will tickle the palates of both caste-ist trades unionists and those (the unemployed, for instance) whose life at present is 'like a lottery', and there is a very strong appeal (via body imagery, finite resources, and Scottish chauvinism) to those, like Mr. Jamieson, who are of a sectist disposition.

So Mr. Currie, though he may not have contributed much to the debate, has certainly covered all the bases and one assumes that, being a shrewd and well-informed politician, he has covered all the bases because there are worthwhile numbers of votes to be gathered from all those bases. In other words, it looks as if all the social contexts are fairly well-stocked; it looks as though, in the wide area surrounding Braefoot Bay, there is a not too uneven spread of individuals among the various social contexts.²⁶ That really is all that we can say about the populace level; it may not be much but it is better than nothing at all.

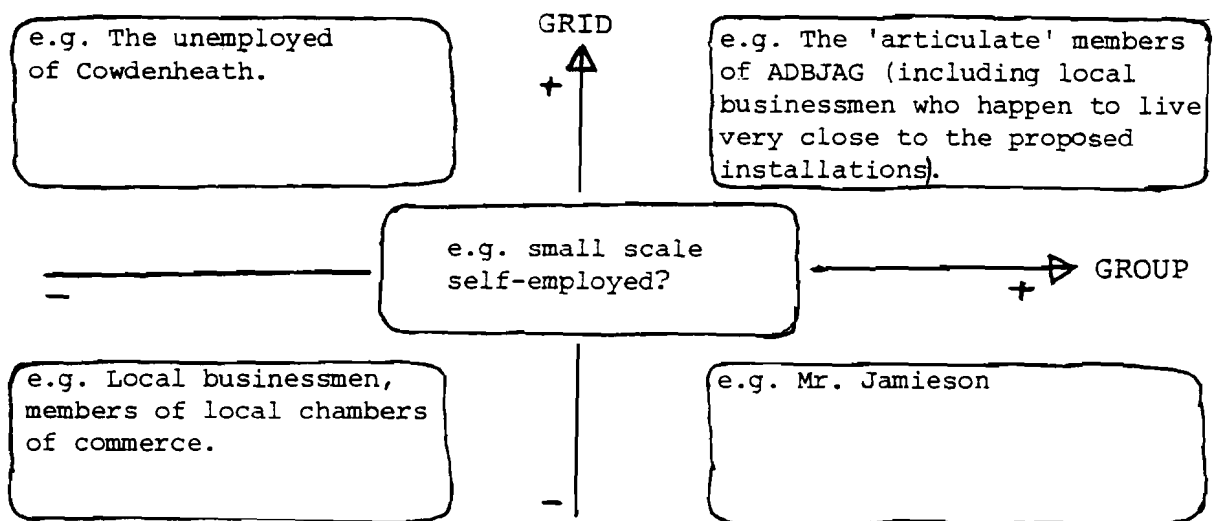


Figure 1. The Populace

When it comes to the debate, we can say a great deal more. It so happens that there is quite detailed data on two of the main parties to the debate - Shell/Esso and ConSoc. These are Cotgrove and Duff's²⁷ *cornucopians* and *catastrophists*, respectively. Unfortunately, the Cotgrove/Duff conceptual scheme makes no distinction between caste-ists and sectists but there can be little doubt that both the Shell/Esso spokesmen and the ConSoc representatives occupy social contexts that lie on what is called *the stable diagonal* - the Shell/Esso individuals are in the entrepreneurial context (and their case is what one would expect from those who find the 'business as usual' scenario credible) whilst the ConSoc members are in the caste-ist context (and their case is what one would expect from those who find the 'middle of the road' scenario credible; certainly neither party espouses the radical-change-now advocated by those who subscribe to the 'no growth' scenario).

When we look to *the unstable diagonal*, we find that, in marked contrast to the Windscale debate (and to almost any debate in the United States), it is scarcely represented at all. Of course, the life-is-like-a-lottery men and women never get to speak in *any* debate, though, we often hear individuals who are not from this context credibly claiming to speak on their behalf.²⁸ These latter are the sectists and, in the Braefoot Bay debate, there is just one of them - Mr. Jamieson.

The real mystery-men are the consultants who compile the various risk assessments. Now these men are professional scientists whose stock-in-trade is impartiality and objectivity and we might expect them to be caste-ists to a man; but are they? Since the risks in LEG are by no means certain, their integrity is not threatened when their conclusions do not exactly coincide with one another; such variance is only to be expected given the uncertainties that they are so skillfully handling. But what is not to be expected is that those who vary towards the risks being on the high side should be employed by the objectors to the proposal whilst those who vary on the low side should be employed by those who are in favor of the proposal. Yet this is what happens.

If we look a little more closely we will see that these scientists are self-employed consultants and that risk is for them not so much a problem as a great opportunity. Only if they strayed beyond the limits of the band of variation that they are all agreed on, would their competence be called into question and, since this band is quite broad, they have the entrepreneurial gift of being able (within these limits) to be all things to all men. So it looks as if they are not in the caste-ist context but in the entrepreneurial context; they are not so much respecters of science as users of science.²⁹

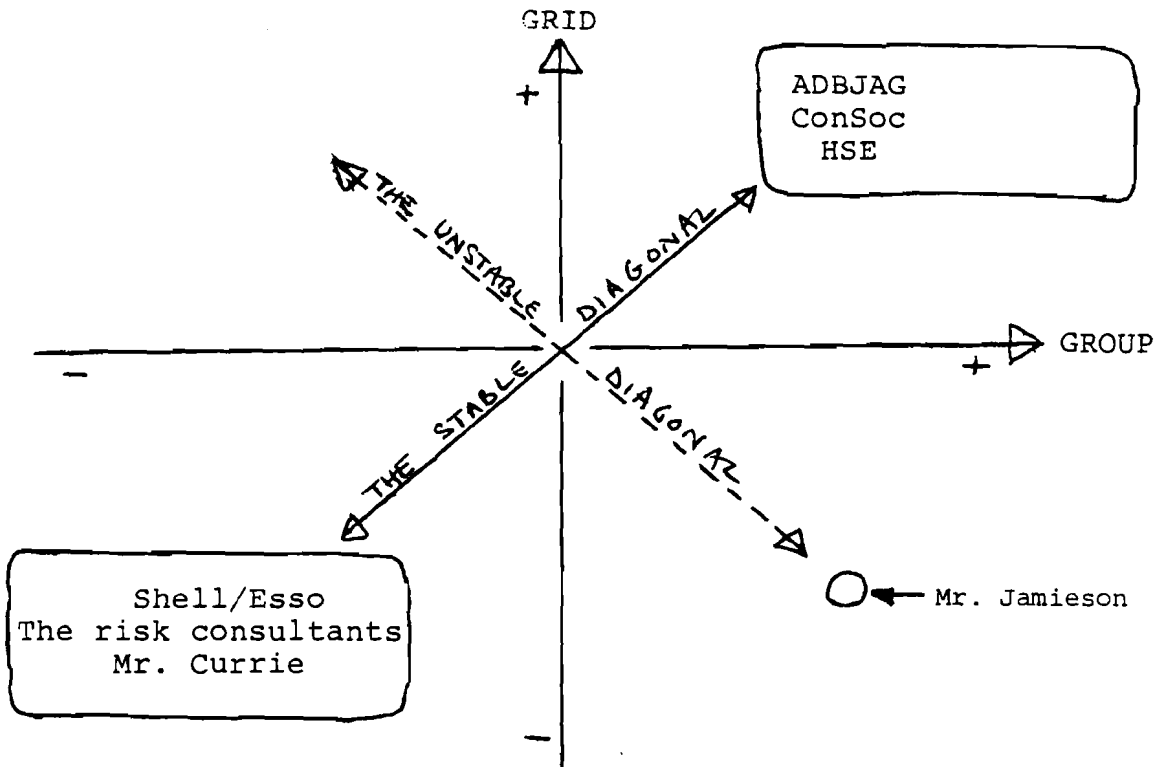


Figure 2. The Debate

Finally, what social contexts are to be found at the top-most of these three levels - a level I label 'government' though really it covers all those who, having listened to the debate, are responsible for arriving at the final decision? At present, it is not possible to give much of an answer. We do know, however, that in the United States sectist arguments carry much more weight at governmental level than they do in Britain and we do know that in the U.S. unrepentant sectists have made it all the way into governmental agencies. The fact that Mr. Jamieson's arguments received pretty short shrift suggest that few individuals in this topmost level in Britain occupy the sectist social context, and so one is left with the fairly realistic conclusion that the cultural biases at this level are restricted to those appropriate to social contexts that lie on the stable diagonal. Unfortunately, there is little indication as to whether they are predominantly caste-ist or entrepreneurial; but there are some hints.

In Scotland the final decision is a political decision - the Secretary of State for Scotland is a political appointment - and in his final decision on the Mossmorran/Braefoot Bay proposals weight was certainly given to the employment and wealth-creating arguments that tend to be advanced in the entrepreneurial context (the government at the time of the decision being Conservative). But, in the judicial process of the Public Inquiry, we find weight being given to the arguments of those who have standing (in the legal sense of the word) within this essentially caste-ist framework - to the Health and Safety Executive, for instance,

to the initiators of the proposal, and to the caste-ist global groups such as the Conservation Society. Little weight can be given to those who do not have standing 30- the local group ADBJAG, for instance - though those responsible for the orderly conduct of the proceedings will admit (off the record) that ADBJAG has secured a great many conditions that, had they not fought tooth and nail, would not have been attached to the final approval. So this sharing out of 'governmental' power between the political final decision and the judicial process that precedes it suggests a fairly even balance between these two ends of the stable diagonal.

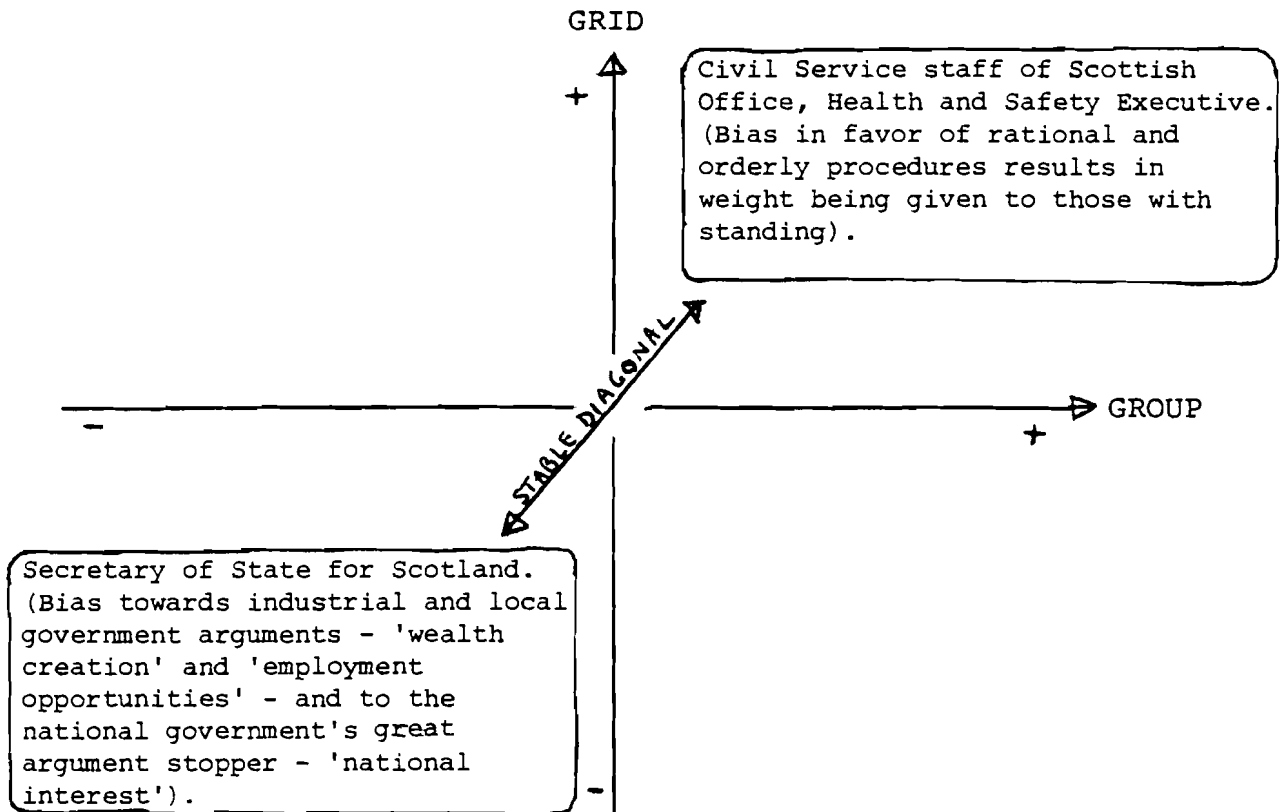


Figure 3. Government.

I can conclude this initial explanation by trying to summarise the way these three levels - populace, debate and government - fit together by means of superimposed scatter diagrams and it is interesting to compare what seems to be happening in Britain (with LEG) with what seems to be happening in the United States (with nuclear power).

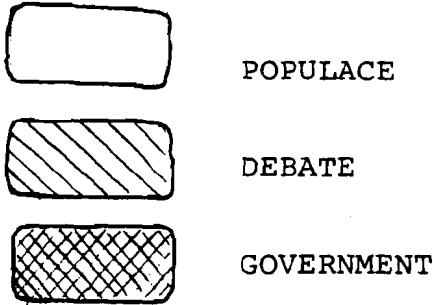
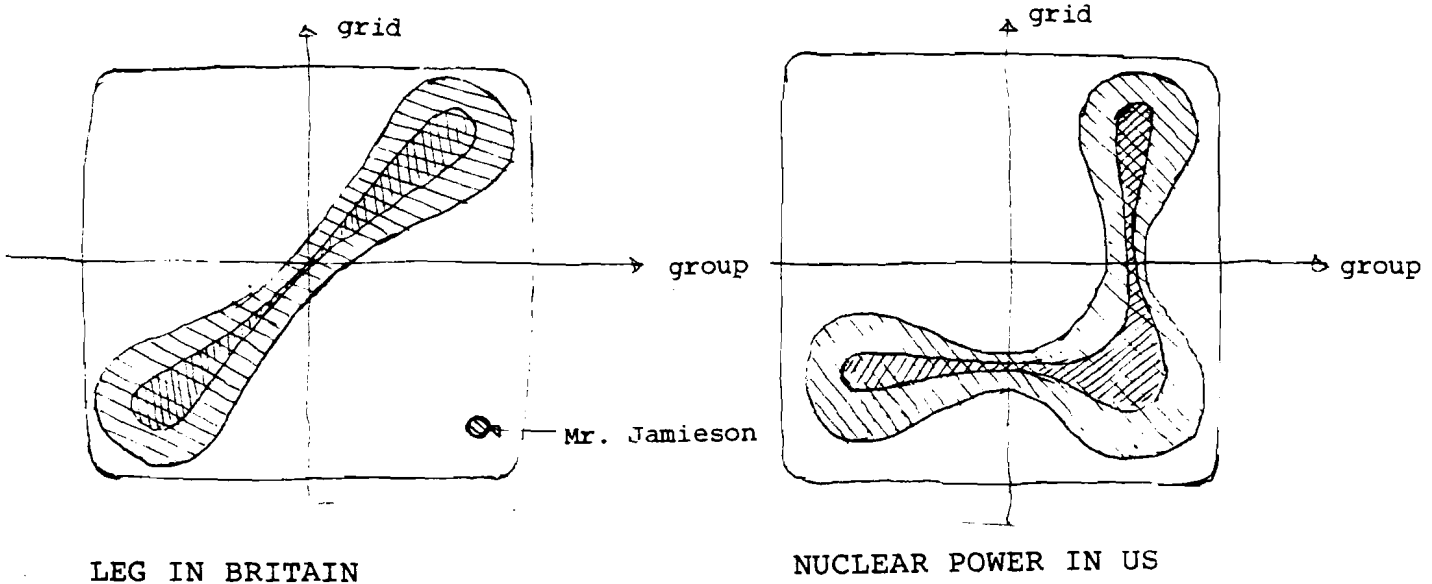


Figure 4. Scatter Diagrams for Debate and Regime.

Obviously, at this stage, these little pictures are highly speculative and it would be unwise to read too much into them but it is worth noting that, while the British one is nicely symmetrical and with little skewing as we go from level to level, the U.S. one is impressively asymmetrical and each level is strongly skewed from the one below. Would it be too fanciful to suggest that this reflects the difference between debates that are Restoration comedies and those that are Greek tragedies?³¹

NOTES

- 1) WOLFE, Tom (ed.) *The New Journalism*. 1975. (Especially the introductory essay by Tom Wolfe.)
- 2) Over 40 in anti-smoking in the U.S. at the last count.
- 3) And, since such groups are to be found on both sides, we need to add the complementary situation - that of the group that is opposed to the opponents of the technology and uses each local proposal as one battle in the struggle for the triumph of the technology.
- 4) In the ADBJAG case, it will probably be the members who will go away and the threat that will stay but, either way, the group (provided it has not transformed itself into some other kind of group) is demobilised.
- 5) See the first working paper in this set *Political Culture: An Introduction*. pp. 11-12.
- 6) The group can still persist, with some difficulty, even with the reciprocal outcome where the threat stays and the group members go away. If they have been sufficiently radicalised by their shared experience they may overcome these difficulties and maintain community without propinquity.
- 7) See RIGGS, Katherine. 'Anti-nuclear groups: The goals, tactics and composition of the American anti-nuclear movement.' Institute for Policy and Management Research working paper. 1980.
- 8) This relationship between *actuality* and *eternal object* - between *substance* and *structure* - is one of the most difficult questions in philosophy and in anthropology. For some discussion of this see Ch. 3 of THOMPSON, Michael, 1979 *Rubbish Theory* Oxford University Press.

- 9) See BOHANNAN, Paul. *The Tiv*.
- 10) KING, Roger and NUGENT, Neill (eds.) 1979. *Respectable Rebels: Middle Class Campaigns in Britain in the 1970's*. Hodder and Stoughton, London.
- 11) Cowdenheath is a depressed one-time mining community with a very high level of unemployment. It is near to both Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay and its inhabitants (when asked by television interviewers) are almost unanimous in their support for the project which they believe (wrongly in the opinion of many experts) will bring them the employment they crave. They are dismissive of the risks entailed in LEG technology, not so much because they have clear perceptions of these risks as being lower than their questioners suggest, but because they need work and are prepared to accept a high level of risk to obtain it. In the happy days when they had work it was in the now defunct coal mines and they claim, with some pride, to be used to living with a high level of risk. So their perceptions of risk are consistent with the predictions for the life-is-like-a-lottery social context, as in their evident lack of control over their destiny. They, clearly, have every bit as much incentive to form themselves into a pro group as the articulate professionals of Braefoot Bay have to form themselves into an anti group, yet the pro group does not form whilst the anti group does.

[These comments have been confined to a footnote because they are based on information gleaned from a television programme which did not form part of my original universe.]

- 12) There is some doubt over the facts here. It may be that the FoE did not make any advances and that ADBJAG just made it plain that, if there were any, they would not be reciprocated.

Such an interpretation gains support from the 'event structure' associated with the more recent 'Two Lakes Inquiry.' Thanks largely to the efforts of Mrs. Naylor - the wife of a Wasdale farmer - a local group emerged to fight the proposal to increase the extraction of water from Wastwater (and nearby Ennerdale Water). This group, anticipating all kinds of approaches from global anti-nuclear groups (some of the water was needed for Windscale), began by spelling out very clearly that it was not opposed to the uses to which the water would be put but only to the despoilation of Wastwater and their argument was that the water could be obtained, at a slightly higher cost, from the River Derwent instead. Since Wastwater is, in terms of the sacred geography of Britain, a very holy place they were able to argue convincingly that the benefits of extraction from the River Derwent far outweighed these extra costs.

An anthropologist would point out that the value placed on a landscape is a quality that is *socially conferred* rather than intrinsic and that, since landscape value is an extremely important factor in planning decisions, we should look to 'sacred geography' rather than 'location theory' for an understanding of what is going on. (See, for instance,

FREEDMAN, Maurice. Articles and book about geomancy in the New Territories of Hong Kong; POCOCK, David, *Sacred Geography*; LOWENTHAL, David, articles on landscape quality.)

- 13) Or, if they did not make an advance, after becoming aware that if they did make an advance it would be rebuffed.
- 14) NELKIN, Dorothy and POLLAK, Michael. 'Consensus and Conflict Resolution: the Politics of Assessing Risk' in SCHWING, R., and ALBERS, W. (eds) *Societal Risk Assessment*, Plenum, New York, 1980.
- 15) The FoE spent £40,000 - its entire budget-on presenting its case at the Windscale Inquiry.
- 16) Even if they cannot get it to explode, it burns quite easily and, unlike nuclear, terrorist attacks are not just hypothetical; at least one has already occurred (in South Africa, though this was on a synthetic fuel not an LEG installation, but the principle is the same).
- 17) Some opposition groups have expressed dissatisfaction with what they see as the too narrow terms of reference of Public Inquiries. Some anti-nuclear groups want to be able to discuss national (or even global) energy policy and some of the global anti-motorway groups want to be able to argue that Britain already has all the roads it needs. It should be stressed that these are not attempts to make the hidden agendas visible but are attempts to change the visible agendas so that they provide more leverage for the advancement of the hidden agendas.
- 18) This is not to claim that the cultural analysis will make the hidden agendas visible. All that the cultural hypothesis does is to suggest that these *are* hidden agendas and to put forward some suggestions as to what they might consist of. Since a hidden agenda is (by definition) hidden, it must always remain hypothetical. The hidden agenda is a crucial but untestable stepping stone: if we assume that it is there, then what? Hidden agendas have to be inferred from visible cultural biases.
- 19) See Douglas, Mary. 197 . *Natural Symbols*.
- 20) See Fig. 4 in working paper: 'An Outline of the Cultural Theory of Risk.' p. 8.
- 21) It is this, not its 'hypotheticality,' that gives nuclear power its 'pathfinder role ' Since few other technologies are likely to share these characteristics, nuclear power will be a poor pathfinder, (See: HAEFELE, W. 1974, *Minerva* 10, 302).
- 22) Cobbett William, *Rural rides*. Circa 1800. Cobbett's obsession with finite resources and the need for the population to feed itself led him to deny that Britain's population was increasing. The increase, of course, was happening in the towns (in connection with wealth creation) and so was

invisible to Cobbett who only saw the countryside. He was also full of admiration for Spain for getting rid of its Jews.

- 23) For some elaboration of this cosmology see working paper: 'The Social Landscape of Poverty.'
- 24) Mr. Jamieson, it turns out from the television films about Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay, has it both ways - he is a member of ADBJAG and he speaks out as an individual objector. This lends support to the argument that local groups, being held together by the external threat, do not have to worry themselves over organisational criteria in the way that the global sects and castes have to.
- 25) See WILDAVSKY, Aaron. 'Richer is Safer.' *The Public Interest*. Autumn 1980.
- 26) Though we can say little about the context of the autonomous individual - the hermit. This is one base that Mr. Currie appears not to have covered, perhaps for the very good reason that he would be wasting his time if he did. Individuals in this context, though they would probably never themselves get around to actually writing it on the wall, tend to go along with the slogans: 'Don't vote - it only encourages them' and 'It doesn't matter who you vote for, the government always gets in.' So there is no way of telling whether Mr. Currie has failed to cover this base because there is no one in it or because there is no way that he can appeal to those who are in it. However, data from the IPMR poverty study suggests that, in both Britain and the U.S., there are often a surprisingly large number of people in this context.
- 27) COTGROVE, Stephen. 'Catastrophe or Cornucopia.' *New Society*, Vol. 47, No. 859, March 22, 1979.
- 28) In so doing they become the *bêtes noires* of American neo-conservatives. See BRUCE-BIGGS, Barry (ed) 1979. *The New Class*. Transaction Press.
- 29) A policy implication of this is that, whilst one would not want to accuse these entrepreneurs of actually making this band of uncertainty wider, one can hardly expect them to make much of an effort to narrow it. We can no more expect them to reduce its width to zero than we can expect the police to defeat crime or lawyers to tidy up the law.
- 30) In the United States, by contrast, all groups, local and global, have standing - indeed, as the Sierra Club never tires of pointing out, even trees now have standing. The cultural theory argument is that the allocation of standing in the debate is a function of the regime within which it takes place. This crucial relationship will be examined in the next working paper.

- 31) Of course, the British picture loses its symmetry, and becomes wildly skewed, if we do not ignore Mr. Jamieson and all those groups that might well have been there had it not been for their prior engagements at Windscale.

(Some references are still incomplete)