Discussing the role of scientific associations in policy and governance

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Scientific associations in policy advice and governance

Schofer (2003): professional vs. socially-oriented scientific associations

"I) bringing scientific information to the citizenry or policy makers (...), 2) promotion of science or science policy that directly ameliorates social problems (...), 3) promotion of ethics in the application of science"

Case study: nuclear debate in Portugal









The research project

SOCSCI – Scientific societies in contemporary science

Funding: FCT (national agency)

Duration: 2 years (2010-2012)

Aim: to draw a panorama of scientific societies in Portugal and to study the associative behavior and representations of Portuguese scientists









Nuclear controversies

Nuclear risk: artificial, invisible, uncontrollable, with catastrophic consequences, over future generations

Science as origin of the risk, but also source of monitoring and prevention

Nuclear arms vs. Nuclear energy

Scientific associations: Pugwash Movement, Federation of German Scientists









Nuclear debate in Portugal

Currently no nuclear power plants

Ist attempt to establish a nuclear power plant in the 70s

On and off discussion in the 80s and 90s

The issue re-emerges in the 00s

Spanish nuclear power plants are an ongoing concern









Opening the case (1976)

Government	Legislation for licensing nuclear power		
	plants		
Private	Electrical company commissions studies for the location of the 1st nuclear power		
sector	plant		



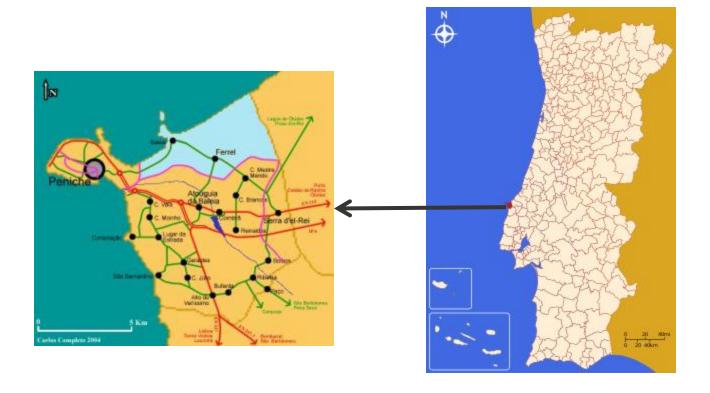








Ferrel











Post-revolutionary period: explosion of grassroots movements

Ferrel as the first environmental protest by local populations, incipient role of ENGO











in response to the relentless chime of their church bells, the inhabitants of Ferrel went out into the street, stopped all the works, closed the ditches that had been opened and warned that if the works restarted they would come back to destroy whatever had been done









CALCAN – Support Commission to the Struggle Against the Nuclear Threat

National appeal: "We are all inhabitants of Ferrel"



Statements: "Portuguese Nuclear Programme

Moratorium" and "People's Creative Intervention in

Defence of a Non Depleted Environment"

Festival: "For Life and Against Nuclear"









The role of scientists

	For nuclear	Against nuclear
Who	Engineers and scientists from the electrical company and JEN/LFEN	Engineers and scientists from universities and JEN/LFEN
Actions	Technical reports White Book Interventions in seminars Books	Interventions in seminars and events organised by the grassroots movement Opinion columns in newspapers Books
Arguments	Need for public information Energy needs Manageable risks	Need for public debate No economic viability Risks

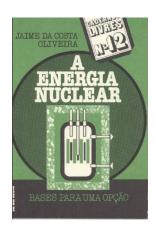








The role of scientists: for





contributing to the public debate of such an important (and exciting issue) such as the peaceful use of nuclear energy in Portugal (...) a global vision that will make easier [for the reader], I hope, to appreciate its relative importance. To emotional and so often ill-founded relations they rise, I seek to counterpoint the serenity that that stems from the scrupulous respect for scientific objectivity (Oliveira 1977: 6)

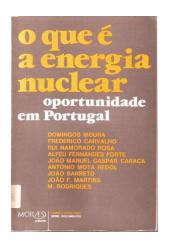








The role of scientists: against



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[the book] stems from the conscience that technicians and scientists have a civic mission of public enlightenment that must be fulfilled within their areas of expertise and to the best of their abilities (...) the debate about the nuclear power plant is an exemplary case of the participation that citizens could and should have in the discussion of undertakings and economic and social policy options that are determinant for the future of a region or country. The authors hope that this book contributes to helping the debate become more useful and fruitful (Moura et al 1978: 16)









Collective action of scientists

Informal groups:

- Manifesto on Energy Policy
- Commission for Promoting the National Debate on the Nuclear Option
- Organisation of seminars and a collective book

No intervention from the Portuguese Physics Society









Closure of the case in the 70s

Technical report shows that there is seismic risk in Ferrel

Unfavourable public opinion

No scientific consensus

Political disagreement (among political parties)









Reopening the controversy in 2005

Private sector	Nuclear Energy of Portugal: a group of business men and energy companies propose the construction of nuclear power plants Manifesto for a new energy policy
Government	No official position, but former ministers and the Governor of the Bank of Portugal seem in favour









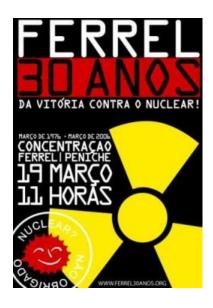


No local protests

Celebration of the 30th

anniversary of Ferrel













ENGO



Stronger ENGOs

dominate the antinuclear movement

Platform No to the Nuclear Option in Portugal









The role of scientists

	For nuclear	Against nuclear
Who	Engineers and scientists from business companies, universities and ITN Members of the Physics Society	Engineers and scientists from universities and ITN
Actions	Manifesto Interventions in seminars Opinion columns in newspapers Association	Interventions in seminars Opinion columns in newspapers
Arguments	Need for public debate Energy needs Manageable risks Climate change	Need for public debate Renewable energies No economic viability Risks









Collective action of scientists

Roundtable organised by the Physics Society

President of PS publicly in favour of nuclear energy

Creation of ADN – Association for the Dissemination of Nuclear Energy

a platform for debate and accurate information on nuclear energy (...) to increase the information and training on nuclear energy (...) [and] widen the debate to society in general









Final remarks

Associations seem to be gaining relevance in terms of policy advice and governance: awareness of the advantages of collective action, increased legitimacy, claims to participation and social responsibility

More research is needed: other case studies







