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Local Authority Responses to Climate
Change: A Discursive and Cultural
Analysis

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AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

I graduated from Lancaster in 1991 with a 1st Class Bachelor of Arts degree in combined English and Philosophy. My early employment included an environmental audit of the University, research on student poverty and the construction of 'ozone depletion' as a policy issue, and market research in the Lake District on the subject of tourism and the environment. I have recently helped produce data to be used for the Lancashire County Council waste and recycling strategy, and have collaborated on a research project for the Department For Transport, looking at congestion charging, public transport and social exclusion. Other employment has included archaeology, voluntary instruction at a YMCA and guiding literary tours of the Lakes. In the years between 1993 and 1995 I was actively involved in full-time campaigning on a number of issues, including anti-road, rainforest protection, anti-open-cast mining and anti-greenbelt development campaigns. I am still an active campaigner on environmental and social justice issues. I therefore approach this research as a committed environmentalist, and simply wish to declare these interests in advance.

I now live in Lancaster with my Greek partner Evangelitsa and am bringing up my 5-year-old son, Connor. I am the lead guitarist in the band mobCURIOUS.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis offers a discursive and cultural analysis of the responses of three urban local authorities in the UK to the threat of climate change, in terms of mitigating its causes rather than responding to its effects. The research is qualitative in nature and focuses on data collected through semi-structured interviews conducted at each site and in related organisations. After an examination of theoretical positions on climate change and local government, with a cultural analysis of the dominant discourses in these areas, the local authority responses to climate change are analysed at three levels. The first level of analysis concludes that there are minor differences in the responses of different authorities, explainable by contingent circumstances, e.g. differences in infrastructure and institutional specialisations at each site. The second draws out commonalities in the responses of all three authorities, employing the analytical concepts of following *rituals*, utilising *rhetoric*, and producing *results*, and utilising aspects of New Institutional organisational theory, temporal sociology, discursive analysis, rhetoric and Cultural Theory (Thompson *et al*, 1990). The third level of analysis identifies culturally distinct approaches to climate change, reflective of the 'ways of life' of Cultural Theory, across the authorities, through attention to the discourses employed by respondents. The thesis concludes that authorities' responses to climate change are constrained by the dominance of a 'hierarchist' culture within authorities, and of an 'individualist' culture in broader society, leading to the suppression of conceptualisations of, and responses to, climate change which arise from the other active 'way of life'; egalitarianism. It argues that egalitarianism offers insights and responses appropriate to 'commons' problems, and that to ensure an effective response to climate change within local authorities, there must be a promotion of egalitarian social relations and cultural biases within them.

PREFACE

This thesis has been written as part of a CASE studentship set up between the Local Government Management Board (LGMB) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), and has been undertaken within the Centre for Science Studies (CSS) and the Sociology Department at the University of Lancaster. The title and research outline were decided on before I applied to undertake the doctoral work, and specifically were the result of discussions between Tony Hams (formerly) of the LGMB and Dr. Mike Michael (formerly) of CSS at the University.

Perhaps the only consistent aspect in the process of researching and writing this thesis has been unpredictable change. Within six months of beginning the PhD both of my supervisors (academic and non-academic) had moved from their respective institutions, and the process of replacing them was less than straightforward. The LGMB mutated into the IDeA (Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government), and the Sustainability Unit, of which Tony Hams was the Team Leader, was dissolved. Responsibility for overseeing my work shifted from one officer to another during the processes of re-organisation, making interaction very problematic. At the University, supervision was taken over by Dr. Elizabeth Shove of the Centre for Science Studies (CSS) and Dr. Bronislaw Szerszynski of the Centre for the Study of Environmental Change (CSEC), and Elizabeth has continued to be my supervisor throughout. Due to the re-organisation of the CSS I am now formally positioned in the Sociology Department. Elizabeth's academic interests are based in STS, with particular focus on energy and the sociological of consumption, whilst Dr. Szerszynski's work addresses environment and society, in particular civic cultures, and the roles of NGOs and social movements in environmentalism

To turn to my research question itself, and how I have attempted to answer it, it began as a question about how local authorities make environmental policy, specifically on climate change:

The proposed research aims to investigate the means by which local authorities can contribute to the reduction of factors that contribute to climate change. In particular, the project will examine how local authorities might draft coherent policy that addresses a variety of disparate environmental responsibilities and commitments. Drawing upon recent research in the sociology of the environment, and through such techniques as semi-structured interviews with local authority officials and members of other relevant bodies (e.g. environmental NGOs), the study will examine how local authorities might attempt to respond productively to such programmes

With the original formulation of the question being negotiated by an academic with interests in 'actor networks', there was an initial emphasis on the networks involved in these processes; of authority officers and members, of governmental and quasi-governmental and non-governmental agencies, of the public and international policy elites and so forth. In practice, during my research this focus has shifted to the authorities themselves, as organisations, as institutions, as bureaucracies. Because of this, I have not focussed specifically on how authorities interact with their public and with environmental pressure groups, a focus that might have given my thesis more of an explicitly politically critical edge. However, I feel that I have accomplished my aim of applying a rigorous critique of how authorities do (and could) make local environmental policy on climate change. If I had the chance to do it all again, I would probably try to insist on maintaining a more radical attitude, and perhaps even attempt to engage in 'action research', using my privileged position as a researcher to attempt to influence policy-making.

In essence then, the question that this thesis addresses and hopefully answers is this: how are local authorities responding to climate change, and how can we attempt to understand these responses? I should stress the fact that I have studied the attempted *mitigation* of factors that contribute to climate change, rather than the *responses* being made to adapt to its perceived or predicted effects, which fall outside the remit of my research question. The qualitative nature of my research is reflected in the analysis I have eventually produced, which focuses on the understanding of why authorities have made the

responses they have to the new problem of climate change. These responses have obviously been enabled and constrained by such factors as the availability of resources, both human and financial, the legislative framing, and technological and physical advantages and barriers. These factors might be susceptible to a more quantitative approach, falling outside the social sciences in some aspects. Instead my thesis is essentially an *interpretative* one, focussing on discursive, cultural and to some extent political factors which have shaped the responses to climate change associated with local government in the UK

Structure of the Thesis

The structure of the thesis is as follows:

PART ONE: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

1:1 CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH: An explanation of the background to the research, both practical and philosophical.

1:2: RESEARCH DESIGN: In which I outline the transformation and negotiation of the original research question into a researchable topic, and how my research plan was structured with reference to the relevant research methodologies. The methods used, to carry out the data collection and analysis, are also explained.

PART TWO: THEORETICAL

2:1 DISCOURSES AND CULTURES: AN ANALYTICAL PARADIGM: This section outlines in which ways and for what reasons I have decided to apply a discursive and cultural analysis of the topic. The definitions of the particular discursive and cultural approaches taken are discussed and justified.

2:2 CLIMATE CHANGE: An overview of the subject area of the research, looking at the nature of climate change discourses from the global to the local. Theoretical positions on the subject are also reviewed and assessed.

2:3 NEW DISCOURSES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT: This section looks at local government as the setting of the research, and addresses the other ‘modernising’ and ‘greening’ discourses which have entered this arena in recent decades.

PART THREE: ANALYTICAL

3:1 THREE LOCAL AUTHORITIES’ RESPONSES TO CLIMATE CHANGE: As a first level of analysis, the responses to climate change being made at the time of research in three local authorities are outlined. Background to the authorities is given, and comparisons and distinctions are drawn out.

3:2 RITUAL, RHETORIC AND RESULTS: THE ‘REAL’ RESPONSES TO CLIMATE CHANGE?: The second level of analysis explores the similarities in the authorities’ responses, based on a tripartite model of different aspects of local authority work.

3:3 MULTIPLE CULTURES WITHIN SINGLE INSTITUTIONS: A third level of analysis seeks to explore the existence of different cultural approaches to policy-making and implementation across the authorities, drawing on Cultural Theory.

3:4 CONCLUSIONS: The results of the analysis are assessed, and specific recommendations derived from the data are presented.

CHAPTER 1:1 CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

Background To The Research

The research that resulted in this thesis was undertaken as a CASE studentship. Such an arrangement involves input, both financial and supervisory, from a non-academic partner organisation. As is normal in such cases, the title and nature of the research were set in advance of my application to undertake it, and supervision was to be shared by both academic and non-academic partners. The research was thus framed by the interests of the two initial supervisors, Tony Hams (formerly) of the LGMB and Dr. Mike Michael (formerly) of CSS at the University.

Tony Hams was, at the time of the commissioning of the CASE studentship, in charge of the Sustainability Unit of the LGMB, whose responsibilities were dominated by the implementation of sustainability generally, and Local Agenda 21 (LA21) specifically, in local authorities in the UK. Local Agenda 21 is the process by which each local authority produces an action plan of how it intends to apply the concept of sustainable development to its operations, and the response to climate change is often seen as falling within this area, as explained in the thesis.

Dr. Michael's academic interests are based in Actor Network Theory (ANT), a branch of the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (SSK) or Science and Technology Studies (STS), with a high emphasis on social constructivism. Of particular relevance to the setting of the research question is ANT's attitude to the interface between science and policy, in which attention is drawn to the point that the traditional division between these spheres of activity¹ masks the fact that in both areas contingent social factors are crucial.

¹ Based on a distinction between the 'hard' facts of science as an objective pursuit of truth and the 'soft' values of policy-making, as a subjective and political sphere

The LGMB's interests were understandably less academic and more pragmatic. They framed the research in terms of effective local environmental policy making. In the early stages of the studentship, I was aware that, given the LGMB's role with regard to co-ordinating LA21, local authority responses to climate change, and local environmental policy-making in general, would involve some concentration on the LA21 process. However, as the research proceeded I was directed to focus more specifically on climate change as a separate issue, which I have attempted to do.

CASE studentships ostensibly give advantages over traditional post-graduate courses of study, in that the experience of working for and with organisations outside academia is taken to be valuable in itself. A focus on research that is of interest and importance to 'external' audiences is also assumed to be advantageous in pursuing an academic career. However, my experience of the CASE studentship experience was less positive. Within months of my undertaking the studentship, both my academic and non-academic supervisors had left their respective institutions. In Tony Hams' case, as mentioned in the Preface, re-organisation at the LGMB resulted in the disappearance of the Sustainability Unit, and Tony Hams moved into private consultancy work, still on sustainability issues. Mike Michaels moved south to pursue academia at Goldsmith's College in London. My non-academic contact at the LGMB and later, the IDeA, changed on a regular basis, a number of times without my having met the supervisor or having been informed of their identity.

During the research process, the changing identity of my non-academic supervisors has been a cause of both worry and disruption to my work. In practice, the unavoidable disruption caused by the re-location and retirement of my initial supervisors led to a disconcerting hiatus during my research-training year, which extended into the second and third years of research, when my subject was being refined and operationalised, and fieldwork was taking place. Thankfully, my academic supervision was stabilised at an early point, and so the direction my research has taken has been mostly shaped by academic rather than other concerns. Non-academic supervision was fitful to begin with, and after numerous changes had been implemented without my being informed, regular

contact essentially broke down. Thus during the course of the research, various members of the LGMB and IDeA suggested that I focus my attention on LA21, sustainability indicators, 'best practice' and Best Value, as these programmes and concepts waxed and waned in prominence as the policies of the modernisation of local government. In the end my research has tried to step back from the very specific concentration on particular programmes which was suggested, instead looking at (amongst other things) how the existence of these programmes have in themselves affected local authority responses to climate change.

I now position myself *vis a viz* the philosophy of my brand of social science, before going on to discuss my research design and the methods used.

Approaching The Research

To begin with the broadest definitions, my work is within 'environmental sociology', which is not a discrete discipline in itself (see Redclift and Benton, 1995), but rather an area of research defined by topic and approach. It is safe to venture that the vast majority of contemporary work in this area can be defined as falling within post-empiricism. Using Winch's classic formulation (Winch, 1958), what is being studied is human action, not merely behaviour. Whilst attention has to be paid within social science to what people do (the empirical justification for the validity of theory) the object of study is *why* they behave as they do. To continue the classical formulation, what is being pursued is not a series of laws which can be demonstrated to determine human behaviour causally, but an understanding of the rules which govern and influence human action, with its unique blend of inescapable determined restrictions on courses of action, and the never perfect exercise of free will, within conditions which influence action but which can in turn be influenced by such action. Thus in the general programme of post-empiricism there is a tacit acknowledgement that social science will never produce a corpus of theory which will accurately predict human action in every case, along with an explicit focus on nevertheless producing explanations which can demonstrate a cogent understanding of the factors which most reliably shape human action. In a contingent situation, theory should still pay attention above all to the conditions applying at that time and place, in order to

sensitise the predictions of theory to the complexities of the spatially and/or temporarily specific circumstances.

In social science since at least the 1960s there has been an ongoing tension in balancing the twin desires (a) to produce theory which can meaningfully say something about society, how and why it works (if not in terms of predictive certainty, then in terms of probabilistic confidence), and (b) to avoid the blindness to contingent circumstances, and to humans' reflexive capability to conform to and defy theory, which accompanies generalising, totalising grand narratives. In these senses, environmental sociology and my own research fall within the prevalent paradigm of social science in the post-modern era, where stress is above all placed on the qualities of the social sciences' subject matter (i.e. human action) which differentiate it from natural science, and therefore concentrates on revealing *meanings* rather than *facts* or *laws*.

Social Meanings And Understandings

My work falls within the general social science project of understanding the shared meanings which are ubiquitous in human society and which influence action and make it understandable. These meanings and understandings are not the merely personal (inviting the error of absolute relativism), but shared, social, intersubjective. It may be interesting to come to an understanding of intensively personal meanings and understandings, but *social* science is concerned with society, and therefore what can be said about shared understandings. Although I do not believe that essentialist or realist accounts can adequately explain human action, I do not believe that it is possible to ascribe social constructions with the ability to account for all behaviour either. In contingent circumstances negotiation, discussion, shared meanings, socialisation and other factors may shape human action, but we should always be aware of the contexts within which these 'negotiations' take place. These contexts are not purely social or cultural but also economic, political and physical; in some sense *real* constraints on action.

I feel that this is particularly pertinent in discussions of power, which in constructivist or Foucauldian theory is often described as an emergent property of the combination of claims to authority and the self-disciplining agreement of the ruled. In practice, particularly when power is in dispute, it can be a fairly simple and realist project to identify those who not only claim, but can also exercise, power. At its most naked, power is implicitly based on the monopolisation of violence by the state and its representatives, and the deployment of this monopoly in support of a particular set of economic and social relations. In the case of local government, as I shall explore, a more nuanced form of power is at work, largely exercised through the discursive control of the concept of representation, which acts as a power to control who speaks, and what is to be considered relevant. At any rate, we should remember that such factors act as the irreducible context and setting for much of the 'soft' social action that we as social scientists attempt to address.

Realism And Constructivism

As far as there is argument over the ontology of constructivism, I am again divided. Realists and essentialists point to the *prima facie* intuitively sensible argument that whilst people can construe different meanings and understandings ('constructions') of reality, the reality itself remains unaffected by what we choose to think about it. Constructivists reply that in paying attention to the *social* world primarily, it can be equally simply demonstrated that qualitatively different social realities are constructed, demolished and defended through the attachment of different meanings to actions, identities, institutions, beliefs and so forth. Environmental issues highlight the fact that the nature of events and entities that should be capable of objective, realist description are in actual fact thoroughly socially constructed through the vocabularies used and the social understandings that determine and are determined by their usage. Indeed, recent research questions what is to be understood as 'the environment' (Macaghton and Urry, 1998; Parry, 2002), and in particular controversies, conflicting constructions of actions are explicitly at stake. Parry (2002) gives an example of 'woodland management' being carried out which almost sparked off a tree-sitting protest: one constituency described tree surgeons applying treatments and measures, coppicing for safety reasons; the other,

contractors carrying out wholesale clearance of the woodland, felling and ‘butchering’ trees. It is noteworthy that the phrase ‘woodland management’ was used by the author as a neutral, scientific description of the actions, although it can itself be de-constructed as reflecting a particular construction of nature and human relations with it.

Faced with such conflicts amongst constructions a number of options are available. The realist project might be to describe all social reality in terms of value-free ‘facts’, which is a form of self-delusion as *social* facts by their very nature are not value-free. At the other end of the spectrum, that of the over-interpretation of facts according to social understandings, we can describe all events (even those understood to be susceptible of a more-or-less ‘purely’ scientific description) as if they were social action. My argument is that although the decision of which position to take in the spectrum bounded by these extremes is hotly contested, pragmatically speaking we do manage to agree on which cases belong to which form of description in the vast majority of cases, and where there is disagreement a reflective social science is precisely the tool which helps us to map out the territory of those disagreements. Instead of having to abandon any conception of a uniquely social character to human action like the realists, or arguing for the validity of any *one* of a set of social constructions, I view the social science project as being to collate, analyse, and attempt to explain finite sets of social constructions according to the systems of social reality which they arise from and reinforce. This set of social constructions is not totally open, and therefore not relativistically insidious or dangerous. My position is therefore one of constrained relativism. Reality, and especially social reality, is understood, responded to, transformed and asserted as different things, according to different social constructions, but it cannot be any old thing.

Implications For Research Design

Once this is acknowledged, other problems become salient. How is one to choose between different constructions? Can one assert the validity of one construction over another? Does constructivism rule out a critical theory? These problems seem very valid once one has come to understand one’s own beliefs in a reflexive manner. To my mind, having a reflexive understanding of the social realities that come into conflict in the

operation of human society is an important first step. In everyday life, we know exactly how to deal with the apparent danger of relativism; we argue for our own point of view. The fact that we are aware that our point of view is socially determined, by who, where, when, and with whom we *are* in this life, does not appear to me to take away any of the validity or prescriptive edge from what we propound as the *right* (not 'True') interpretation. The knowledge that one is able to deconstruct one's own social constructions does not impinge on one's ability to deconstruct others', or on the project of establishing sound arguments for one's constructions, interpretations and prescriptions. As will be seen in my thesis, I am less concerned with ontology than in establishing that different interpretations of reality are possible, valid, rational, defensible and so forth. At the end of the day, the only answer to the question of 'what is true?' will be given by a person, and will therefore be of the nature of answering 'what is true for me/us'. Attention can then turn to addressing which interpretations are adequate, sufficient, persuasive, appropriate and morally fitting in any given set of circumstances, a question that will hopefully always be open to argument.

My choice of research methods is therefore tailored by similar considerations. A realist approach to researching the local authority responses to climate change would have to be based on a set of assumptions that took such entities as local authorities, responses and climate change as scientifically ascertainable, discrete entities or processes. In particular the focus on 'responses' through government might lead to assuming the existence of a straightforwardly existent model of policy making. In this model, science objectively determines the facts of the matter in the case of climate change, and policy makers set objectives to address this scientific process, evaluate a variety of policies objectively according to their costs and benefits in a neutral manner framed by objective expertise, and quantify the resulting scientifically determined facts in a process of purely rational monitoring and adjustment of policy.

Indeed, such is the assumed model of science and policy in many of the unreflexive institutions involved in this area. However, the mere existence of disagreement over each and every one of the supposedly objectively ascertainable factors in this model leads

social scientists instead to focus attention on interpreting and understanding the problematisable aspects. The research question therefore re-emerges as how to understand the ways in which people and groups of people can, do, and could respond to their understandings of climate change in terms of policy. The answers to this question cannot be found by counting, but by asking and interpreting. Society as an open system is not susceptible to purely quantitative questions, and so qualitative research is the obvious appropriate alternative. A possible route might have been to collect the 'facts' of the local authority responses by searching their web-sites and their documentary output, but this would necessarily miss out the understandings and values involved, and would run the twin risks of assuming a one-to-one correlation between the documentary presentation and reality, or of deriving the social aspects involved in the processes from arrangements of (most likely one person's) words. The most direct access to people's understandings remains through talking to them.

CHAPTER 1.2: RESEARCH DESIGN

Operationalising The Research Question

The original description of my research topic stated that:

“The proposed research aims to investigate the means by which local authorities can contribute to the reduction of factors that contribute to climate change. In particular, the project will examine how local authorities might draft coherent policy that addresses a variety of disparate environmental responsibilities and commitments. Drawing upon recent research in the sociology of the environment, and through such techniques as semi-structured interviews with local authority officials and members of other relevant bodies (e.g. environmental NGOs), the study will examine how local authorities might attempt to respond productively to such programmes”²

In practice, in designing my research I have deviated from this formulation (essentially a ‘how’ question) in order to re-frame it, for reasons I have begun to address above, in terms of *understanding* the responses to climate change that are being made in local authorities. Nevertheless, this initial brief directed my research design in a number of ways.

The reference to recent work in the sociology of the environment was included primarily as a reference to the qualitative, constructivist or interpretative approaches of Lancaster’s environmental sociology centres within which I was based (the CSEC and the CSS) and as the research outline explicitly suggested, this was to be pursued through the paradigmatically qualitative data-collection technique of semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research is described as an approach based on a philosophy that “understanding is achieved by encouraging people to describe their worlds in their own

² CASE Studentship agreement, personal document.

terms” (Rubin and Rubin, 1995: 2), and this philosophy in itself directs attention towards meanings and discourses. It can be seen as a complement to quantitative research carried out through such methods as questionnaires and surveys, or as a stand-alone approach which focuses on gaining a more in-depth understanding of certain ‘worlds’ (in this case a ‘policy world’) from within, rather than attempting to assess from outside by supposedly neutral or objective criteria.

Yin (1989) claims that

“[t]he essence of qualitative research consists of two conditions: (a) the use of close-up, detailed observation of the natural world by the investigator, and (b) the attempt to avoid prior commitment to any theoretical model” (1989: 24).

He compares this to his definition of case studies, which are intended to ‘test’ theoretical propositions in a manner analogous to scientific experimentation. This would appear to suggest that the two are to some extent incompatible, case study putting theory before data collection, and qualitative research deriving theoretical models from the data. This had implications for my research design.

Case Studies

Given my intention to stick with the approaches that were most consistent with my theoretical approach (i.e. qualitative research as an attempt to uncover the meanings and understandings lying behind social action), I was convinced that I should indeed use interviews as the primary source of data. Collection of other forms of data could serve as a comparison to the ‘real-life’ situation described through interviews. I then had to consider who I would be interviewing, and to what purpose. A ‘scatter-gun’ approach, consisting of numerous interviews, all at different authorities, with different officers and individuals with different responsibilities and interests, would not, I decided, result in a very clear picture of the nature of different authorities’ responses or the factors that affect them. For the interviews to be revealing of local authority responses to climate change, it seemed more interesting and valid to focus on a number of authorities in some depth, within which I would conduct a number of interviews with officers, possibly members,

and others who fell into the category of the authorities' climate change network. This suggested a case study methodology, using qualitative research methods to build up a picture of responses in a small number of research sites for the purpose of comparison and contrast, as

“the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena...the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 1989: 14) and “interviews are an essential source of case study evidence, because most case studies are about human affairs. These human affairs should be reported and interpreted through the eyes of specific interviewees” (ibid: 90-91).

Although, as mentioned above, qualitative research techniques have been theorised as essentially exploratory, investigating social ‘worlds’ with no prior expectations or theoretical explanations in place, my intention to carry out a number of small-scale case studies (supported by my academic supervisors and the LGMB as being appropriate to my research questions) meant that I would have to consider further issues. Given the nature of my research question (to examine the responses to climate change made through local authorities), I would have to select these sites so as to highlight meaningful and theoretically explicable variations in the different responses being made by different authorities or (in Yin’s terms (1989)) to test a rival hypothesis that responses were similar across cases, perhaps being structurally determined. The LGMB initially suggested that I could research four authorities, selected as ‘representing’ different types of local government: city councils, county councils, boroughs and unitary authorities. I resisted this on the basis that to do so would take certain assumptions for granted, namely that findings from any one authority could be generalised to apply to others of that type, and that structural differences were of primary interest in looking at climate change responses. The first assumption goes against case study methodology, which defends itself against accusations of not providing generalisable results by pointing out that “[t]his analogy to samples and universes is incorrect when dealing with case studies...because survey research relies on *statistical* generalisation, whereas case studies rely on *analytical* generalisation” (Yin 1989: 43, author’s italics). I therefore convinced my supervisors that

I would explore a number of rival criteria for selecting my case studies, through carrying out an exploratory, pilot survey of authorities and their attitudes towards responding to climate change.

Criteria For Selecting Cases

My attention turned to how I might select case study authorities from the many hundreds in operation in the UK, and thus I had to decide on which criteria to use. The main problem I was faced with seemed to be justifying the selection of only one or two criteria when clearly many combinations of criteria could be found to be relevant in any selection of examples, given the diversity of the material at hand. Among these potential criteria were:

1) **Structure** as a criterion. This seemed to be the natural framing of the differences between local authorities used by my non-academic supervisor, reflecting the managerial style of the LGMB perhaps, whose ideal typology of case studies has been outlined above. The use of this criterion might reflect the preference (common in the academic/local authority interface) for evaluation and the picking out of 'best practice', assuming that knowledge gained from looking at each 'type' of local authority could be generalised to all, or to each of similar type.

2) **Success** as a criterion. This appeared an intuitively sensible basis for assessing opportunities for action on climate change; comparing environmental 'champion' authorities with others which are similar in some ways, but different in their degree of success in responding to climate change. To the end of identifying suitable candidates I tried concentrating on the ICLEI (International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives) and their CCP (Cities for Climate Protection) sources, which narrowed the search for environmental 'champions' down to those authorities which had been most successful in fulfilling the CCP 'milestones'; namely Birmingham, Cambridgeshire, Leicester, Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Sheffield. Using these sources would of course define 'champion' as 'those who frame and define climate change in the same way as

ICLEI and CCP' and this might prove problematic as a simplistic acceptance of other's assumptions and agendas.

3) **Level of Participation** as a criterion. This was hinted at in an early suggestion for case study criteria in terms of *traditional* and *progressive* local authorities. The LGMB concurred that "I think we all know what we mean by those terms"³. However, I was not sure how to accurately evaluate the level of public participation (seen as an indicator of progressiveness) taking place in each local authority, unless it were by first assessing the LA21 process in each, or looking at case studies by other bodies, e.g. the LGMB.

4) '**Locality**' is the best way I could describe the next criterion. It suggested the possibility of looking at the extent to which each authority interacts with the actors/institutions/civic cultures in their locality, and how these groups and interactions may have constructed or determined the authority's view or approaches to climate change. I suspected that looking for ways of assessing this criterion would entail looking in detail at the many authorities' policies, in addition to knowing something about the situation in the locality. Given the restrictions of time, the question was whether it would be feasible to get this level of detail?

5) **Framings** might provide another criteria, where an authority could be seen as framing climate change in a number of ways. From reading literature it appeared that authorities' responses might be characterised as being predicated on certain framing dichotomies, viewing climate change as either *global* or *local*, an *institutional* or *domestic* issue, concerning *consumers* or *citizens*. This interested me, as it might be possible to draw out the different ways in which climate change has to be framed in order to appeal to, and get some degree of consensus from, different groups. The definition of an authorities' 'framing' might result from the siting of interest in the environment and climate change within the authority, or from a number of other factors.

³ Personal communication.

6) **Specificity** was a criteria I defined as the degree to which an authority already perceived climate change to be a distinct or separate issue, rather than a gloss to apply to other policies driven, in truth, by other objectives. Identifying differences in this criteria might address the question of whether 'climate change' itself was a necessary focus for addressing climate-relevant issues and policies. The 'success' of these different approaches might be fruitful to compare, to see whether and how different groups around an authority could be 'brought on board' in terms of talking to them in their own language about climate change, accepting their own framings rather than imposing them from above. I decided to keep this keep it as a backgrounded concern in my initial approaches to authorities, to assess whether or not it might be useful criteria.

Having found a number of possible criteria upon which to select my research sites, I then asked myself how to judge the criteria against one another. I decided that I must select them:

- a) by their viability, the possibility of successfully identifying authorities with and without the variable, and
- b) by their relevance to the research topic.

Of course, this decision to select research sites according to set criteria is beset with potential problems, a fact of which I was aware at the time. In Yin's words, there are "no textbooks, like those in the biological and psychological sciences, covering such design considerations as the assignment of subjects to different "groups"..." (1989: 27). The criteria that presented themselves as candidates were over-lapping in terms of category, and potentially divided the 'population' of authorities in conflicting ways. In addition, although all the criteria appeared to be relevant to the research question, offering alternative bases on which to hypothesise a theoretical justification for researching certain 'types' of authority, a number of the criteria could only be used to select specific cases after a degree of initial research. This led me to view several criteria as less viable, requiring a greater degree of information than I could hope to gain within a reasonable amount of time.

It was to 'ground' these theoretical questions, and in order to begin to collect some background information on local authorities and their responses to climate change, that I decided to carry out an initial survey of authorities in order to test out the viability of my candidate criteria for selecting case studies.

Pilot Telephone Survey

The LGMB had provided me with a handbook (LGMB, 1998) that listed the 'environmental' contacts within local authorities in Britain, and advised me to use this as a resource to establish first points of contact within authorities when beginning my research. I therefore decided to use this as my 'point of entry' into the climate change 'world' of local authorities. The question then arose of which authorities to contact. In order to avoid an 'infinite regress' in my research design (establishing criteria by which to select the authorities I contacted in order to test my criteria for selecting authorities...) I decided that that I would begin by using personal contacts, contacting local authority 'environmental' officers and members I knew, and proceed by a method of 'snowballing'. This entailed responding to the recommendations of respondents themselves to select the next subjects for interview. This may have had the effect of screening out authorities who had no known or identifiable responses, but in practice, a number of authorities were recommended to me which on contacting them, appeared to be nonplussed as to why anyone would be interested in their (minor or confused) responses to climate change.

Although the survey was based on fairly open-ended interviews over the telephone, I decided that in order to ensure to some degree that I was eliciting comparable response from my subjects, I would draw up a question schedule (see Appendix A) that attempted to address the viability of the various criteria I had identified. This approach had the methodological strength of assuring that the questions I was seeking to answer through my in-depth research were indeed viable in the field. The majority of the officers contacted were Local Agenda 21 officers, although members of other departments were encountered. As to the scope and extent of the survey, I decided to review my findings on

a regular basis (for supervisory purposes), and to conclude the survey when I had come to a decision about the viability of my criteria.

Eventually, 17 interviews were conducted over the telephone before I concluded that I had sampled a rich enough selection of local authority approaches to climate change to firmly settle on two criteria for case study selection. However, early on in the survey process I had evaluated my initial findings and concluded that:

“my suggestion for further work is to continue with my telephone survey, developing contacts at the same time as refining my characterisation of categories of local authorities according to the criterion of **framings**. I propose to use **structure** as a ‘control variable’, concentrating on urban authorities as those with the greatest agency to mitigate climate change, and as the ‘type’ which has displayed the greatest amount of specificity in its treatment of climate change issues” (Cass, 1998).

Using structure as a criterion on its own seemed to have some validity, given that the agencies, responsibilities and so forth of structurally similar local authorities could be expected to be comparable, but of little academic depth or interest, in addition to having the clash with case study aims mentioned above. Using ‘success’ as a criterion appeared problematic as, in looking at the progress of apparent ‘champions’ (as defined by the ICLEI), I noticed that within this supposedly discrete category there were differences in approach that might be caught through attention to yet other criteria. In the case of identifying different levels of ‘participation’ in authorities, I decided that this might be too subjective a criterion upon which to select authorities, given that it was difficult to assess from the survey data. The concept of the ‘locality’ criterion also proved difficult to assess, and therefore less viable. On further examination and discussion, this topic seemed to be likely to emerge as a result from research, rather than a criterion for selection of case studies. Similarly, it proved hard to identify the ‘specificity’ of climate change responses when my questions were drawing attention to this area of policy, and few, if any, of the authorities responded positively to the enquiry as to whether they had a climate change policy as such.

Framings

The criterion of ‘framings’ proved more amenable, although still quite flexible. I summarised the authorities’ framings of climate change according to: its perceived ‘location’ in an authority (where its ‘natural home’ was seen to be, the department to which I was directed for the most comprehensive information); the ‘links’ both formal and informal which the authority had with other bodies in order to collate expertise on climate change; and a more general characterisation of their ‘framing’ of the topic in terms of some of the dualisms mentioned earlier, as well as the areas of policy in which they saw climate change as relevant. Some trends were, however, apparent.

The division between global and local framings of climate change, one that I had expected, was not immediately obvious. Officers’ replies to questions about sources of expertise did reveal that some were linked into wider networks than others, horizontally connected to other cities or authorities through European or international NGOs rather than vertically to regional and national governmental agencies, although it was hard to determine how meaningful these connections were in advance of further research. I refined my definition of the ‘framings’ criteria to include the most obvious (at the time) division between approaches, one of which might be characterised as that between narrow, duty-based responses, and more holistic, opportunity-based ones. Even within the dominant local authority framing (of energy efficiency as the ‘correct’ response to climate change) differences were tangible, for example between authorities seeking simply to fulfil their obligations under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) by retrofitting municipal buildings, and those who were looking beyond council housing stock to approach private dwellings, or even bending planning rules to experiment with sustainable housing estates.

This criterion seemed to me to be highly commendable as a basis for the selection of case studies, and as a basis for identifying groups of authorities that share similarities in their approaches to addressing climate change. It dovetailed with a formulation of the research question as a qualitative one involving the institutional cultures of authorities, as well as satisfying the LGMB’s request for attention to be paid to the extra-authority links that are

relevant in determining a response to climate change. Combination with another criterion as a form of constant (structure, i.e. concentrating on urban councils) would also therefore allow the exploration of the importance of different framings in constraining or enabling effective, interesting or innovative responses. I finally decided that the survey had enabled me to identify three broad approaches towards addressing climate change, which were based upon three framings: a 'network' approach based on a framing of climate change as multi-dimensional; an orthodox approach based on an energy framing; and a 'corporate approach' based on a sustainability framing.

The Case Study Selections: Framings of Climate Change

Multi-Dimensional Framing

It appeared that authorities which have multiple locations for climate change, for example where a number of different departments have addressed the issue or are seen as 'responsible' for it, were more likely to have this internal networking reflected in their links with external bodies, and in the breadth or originality of their framings. By this I mean that the response to climate change might be seen as extending beyond energy efficiency to planning and transport policy, and often, novel ways of addressing it were suggested. It could be argued that seeing climate change as relevant to a number of different departments is bound to lead to a broader understanding and framing of the cross-boundary implications of the issues, but this does not explain why specifically 'horizontal' links and networks should be pursued, along with framings which fall outside the 'orthodox' approach towards climate change. Such authorities appeared to include Kirklees, Sutton, Bristol and Nottingham.

Energy Framing

My definition of an orthodox approach suggested another framing, within which I expected the 'environmental champion' authorities such as the Environment Cities (e.g. Leicester) to fall. In fact there appeared to be substantial variation between the approaches of authorities pursuing a broadly orthodox understanding of climate change

responses. There did seem to be a link between following a strict HECA-based approach⁴ and concentrating on advice to local communities, in the guise of schools, businesses and individuals as consumers or 'households'. This suggested that perhaps a link between a domestic framing of the sources of Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) and a passive construction of 'the public' could be drawn. In addition, as born out by HECA material, there seemed to be a concentration on technical fixes in terms of viewing the passive public's greatest contribution to reducing CO₂ emissions as being investing in new technology rather than addressing the social practices which render such technology an environmental problem in the first place. Newcastle, Newark and Sheffield could be seen to broadly fall into this 'orthodox' category, although with considerable variation between them.

Sustainability Framing

Unlike the case of multi-dimensional framings, another broad grouping of authorities appeared to consist of those for whom there was a single or restricted location for responses to climate change, and a correspondingly vague definition of appropriate responses. For a number of (non-urban) authorities this was most obvious where climate change was easily understood as falling within the remit of Local Agenda 21, sustainability, and general over-arching and often corporate-based environmental strategy. In a number of cases I was unable to identify any specific policies that might impact on climate change, due to reassurance that sustainable development was at the centre of the authorities' commitments, or that it (climate change) was being dealt with as part of the Local Agenda 21 or Environmental Strategy. In an earlier attempt at characterising local authority approaches I called this "corporate vagueness", although it could be pointed out that this broadly defined approach might include wishing to complete a more participative process of identifying specific policies to pursue. These findings went some way to confirming my early suspicions that the subsuming of 'climate change' as an issue within 'sustainable development' or the Local Agenda 21 process leads to less focused and specific policy responses, whereas addressing it as a specific issue can often lead to enthusiastic and directed policy responses which in turn can have

⁴ The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995, which requires authorities to draw up and implement plans for energy conservation measures in their regions' housing.

the drawback of a narrow framing of climate change as CO₂ emissions, with correspondingly 'technical fix' responses. Barrow and Liverpool appeared to fit this grouping.

My initial findings from the survey, then, drew out interesting links between framings and a number of other factors (of institutional structure, specificity of understanding, sources of expertise, originality of policy, the importance of individual versus corporate-led commitments and so on) that I hoped to explore through my case studies and more qualitative research. A single case study of an authority would have been unable to explore the differences in approach which I had tentatively identified, and I resolved to proceed with a multiple case study of three authorities taken from the three broad groups of framing and approach which I had identified.

The Case Study Authorities

Having used a structured interview survey to identify the relevance of my selection criteria, and having identified some way of identifying different approaches to responding to climate change among authorities, I proceeded to contact the 'gatekeepers' in three authorities that fell into these groups (of orthodox, network, and corporate approaches), with an eye to beginning fieldwork proper. These authorities were the City Councils of Nottingham, Newcastle and Liverpool. First I would like to outline, necessarily briefly, my reasons for choosing these authorities.

Firstly, I resolved to research three urban authorities, on the basis that municipal authorities have been highlighted, for example by the ICLEI (1997), as central to any country's response to climate change, due to the high concentrations of greenhouse gas emissions which fall within their remit, if not their agency. Selecting three relatively major cities of roughly comparable size would allow a comparison of roughly similar cases, to focus attention of the differences and similarities in approach. I was furthermore guided in my choices by the approachability of the officers with whom I made initial contact, and their apparent willingness to consider the possibility of being selected as a

case study. By contrast, for example, Lancaster City Council (who would have made a very convenient subject for study) appeared to be in confusion as to who held responsibility for climate change, and were very off-putting in response to suggestions that I could use them as a focus for study. I was conscious of the fact that arranging the research would be more easily accomplished with a willing ally to aid access.

I had to summarise Nottingham's approach from my discussions with the 'gatekeeper' there, the Team Leader of the Sustainability Team. From my initial approaches he came across as keen for me to come to Nottingham to study their climate change responses, mentioning that they had received similar interest from other academics in the past. Given my pre-existing interest in transport and my belief in the need to move beyond narrow and orthodox responses to climate change, I was encouraged by the fact that the authority was apparently keen on more innovative initiatives, including co-ordination from within the Chief Executive's Office (a corporate approach?), a concentration on transport and in particular commuting, and pursuing the formation of a variety of partnerships and the exploitation of expertise from a network of sources. They were to represent the 'network' approach which I had linked with the framing of climate change as a multi-dimensional problem requiring distinctly new ways of responding; in a nutshell, policy innovators.

My initial contact in Newcastle was the energy officer, who had an interest himself in the subject of climate change and responses to it. He was instrumental in the production of Newcastle's energy plan, which was an attempt to budget the total energy production and consumption figures for the whole of the Newcastle area. This approach has obvious resonance with a multi-dimensional framing of climate change, as it involved looking at energy use as a cross-sectoral issue, with implications for a number of departments across the authority. However, his replies to the initial telephone survey appeared to indicate that the authority's main framing of climate change was within their long-established concentration on energy policy, and their responses fell within a fairly orthodox approach linked with existing legislation such as the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA). Background knowledge of Newcastle's history as a local authority leader in the energy field, including the expertise of my supervisor Dr. Shove in the area, suggested that

Newcastle's approach would be firmly energy based, and therefore ideal as an example of orthodoxy.

In Liverpool's case, my initial interviews did not give me a sense that there was a coherent framing of climate change at all in play within the authority. This may have been an unfair assumption to make, and it was based on the fact that the responses given to me suggested that the authority was in the very process of coming to terms with the idea of addressing the concept. However, as evidenced by the fact that I was directed to the LA21 officer, it seemed reasonable to say that Liverpool's responses to climate change were apparently located within the LA21 process, in fact mainly within the remit of a sub-group, and therefore represented the third broad strand of framings of climate change which I had identified. In this, as I have suggested, climate change is framed rather non-specifically, as a sub-issue within the wider (and often vaguer) programme of sustainable development.

Semi-Structured Interviewing

The bulk of my data-collection was to be based on a series of semi-structured interviews (see Drever, 1995, Kvale, 1996, Wengraf, 2001) with officers of local authorities and possibly members of related organisations who made up the authorities' 'climate change world'. The choice of this particular research technique was directed by the qualitative nature of my research, and therefore by a concern to collect a specific species of data; the interviewees' *own* explanations of their own, and their authorities', responses to climate change. It also fits well with the choice of case study as the framing of my research design, as "one of the most important sources of case study information is the interview" (Yin 1989: 88). The intention throughout was to remain open to capturing the varied understandings (of local government, climate change, the environment, and policy efficacies) that lay behind, and justified, the area of responses with which particular interviewees were associated. In order to understand the reasons *why* these responses were being made, it would be helpful to hear from those involved their *views* on the responses, rather than simply a listing of measures being taken, which might result from a more quantitative approach to data gathering.

Interviews allow the collection of data in a face-to-face situation with the subject, and this factor combined with the location and setting of my interviews (all were conducted at the subject's own place of work) allow a naturalistic flow of conversation which is hampered by other methods such as telephone interviews. The face-to-face interaction allows confidence to be built up on both sides, and the reading of non-verbal clues and cues that would be missed by other data-collection techniques. In addition, the tape-recording of the interviews allowed accurate transcription to capture as accurately as possible the data as given, as compared to note taking. . The usual problems were also encountered, with poor quality of recordings, background noise and, in one or two particular cases, regional accents leading to the loss of data that was perfectly accessible to me at the time of interview. I do not see how I could have compensated for these problems.

At the data analysis stage, the highly colloquial and informal tone of a number of the interviews demonstrated that the technique allows the collection of anecdotal and personally flavoured data that would be totally inaccessible through methods that are more firmly located within the quantitative field, such as questionnaires. As I address later in the thesis, one of my most surprising findings was the discrepancy between the response to climate change propounded in such neutral and matter-of-fact sources of data as institutional documentation, and the revelations of individuals as to the degree of implementation, the politics behind the policies, the opinions of those working in the field as to their effectiveness and so forth. These are the very qualitative issues that techniques such as interviews and focus groups can elucidate.

Interviewer Bias

On the other hand, I have to take into account the possible drawbacks of the method. Most prominent of these is the possibility of interviewer bias (see Kvale, 1996; Wengraf, 2001). I should point out that in the interests of parity, all my interviews were conducted in the same outfit, and I therefore presented the same image to all of my subjects, lessening the possibility that different images could on different occasions elicit a different response from the respondents. However, I have to confess that the image in

question may have in itself influenced the nature of data collected. My interviewing outfit consisted of a (subtle) pin-stripe suit with jumper, shirt and tie, and black boots. The formality and reassurance of this 'uniform' may however have been undermined by the fact that my haircut is a 'mohican'. I have no real way of gauging how this rather oxymoronic appearance may have affected the data collection, or the establishment of confidence in my credentials as an academic researcher. On the one hand, my vocal accent, a fairly neutral educated middle class one, conveys my erudition and respectability. On the other, my haircut, combined with the fact that I am engaged in research on climate change, and environmental issues generally, may have betrayed my links with the 'eco-warrior' sub-culture through widespread media stereotyping. In everyday life my clothing choices lead me to be called 'eco-warrior' and 'Swampy'⁵ on a fairly regular basis, and so I cannot discount the possibility that a similar connection was made by my respondents, which may have affected their confidence in me as a neutral researcher, or directed their responses in other ways. In a later chapter I discuss how one interviewee seemed keen at the start of our interview to establish *his* credentials with me, as a member of 'the [environmental] movement', but I should point out that only one interviewee made any explicit mention of my appearance, and that was after the interview had concluded. I cannot say that I was aware of any instance where I encountered reticence to talk about an issue, or any level of defensiveness which could be ascribed to such an identification of myself as a radical environmentalist, and so I must assume that the interviewer effects on data collection were slight if present at all.

Interview Structure And Questions

The looseness of semi-structured interview formats, not being based on a set schedule of questions as used in structured interviews, allow for a "flexible, iterative and continuous design" (Rubin and Rubin, 1995; 43) to be adopted. As my interviews were to take place with respondents from different areas within the case authorities, a 'one-size-fits-all' format of interview would not have been possible anyway, unless it addressed responses

⁵ 'Swampy' was the nick-name of an anti-road protester (Daniel Hooper) who rose to national fame when finally evicted from the tunnel he occupied for over a week at the Fairmile protest against the M35 extension in Devon. His name was quickly adopted as the stereotyped moniker for any 'eco-warrior' style of protester.

to climate change at a highly abstract level. Flexibility allows the topics covered in interviews to be adapted, even within the course of an interview, and it was important to allow the data collection to evolve in an iterative manner: the issues which I might have considered important in advance of an interview were challenged by the respondents themselves, enabling me to build the experience gained in earlier interviews into later ones.

True to the method (Wengraf, 2001; Rubin and Rubin, 1995), I approached each interview with a *guide* rather than a schedule, an outline of the kind of questions I wanted to ask, often in the form of specifically worded questions which were adapted and improvised in response to the flow of the conversation at the time. Two examples of guides that represent the extremes of approach (of loose lists of themes to be covered, and specifically worded questions) are in the Methodological Appendix. The transcriptions of the finished interviews reveal that in almost every case I covered all the areas I set out to cover, with my later questions preceded by a pause as I scanned through my question guide to make sure of this. The questions were worked out through a combination of applying the findings of previous interviews in a iterative process (such as the question about the sense of diminishing returns in Guide 2) and guessing which questions would be relevant through previous familiarisation with the responsibilities and on-going projects of the specific officer, mostly through the telephone conversation which often preceded the interview to arrange it, or from institutional documentation and the suggestions of other interviewees from the same research site. I should again stress that the questions were never read out *verbatim*, but acted like the basic units of structure for a piece of jazz or improvisational music; themes upon which I 'riffed'. At all times, the intention was to allow the interviewee to largely direct the flow of the interview, on the basis that in such qualitative research, it is preferable to allow the subject to reveal their interests and priorities, and to set the agenda for the data, so that what is collected reflects the interests of the subject rather than those of the researcher (as far as is practicable).

In addition, I added a further, non-respondent-specific finishing question which I first used as a random improvisation but which was then extended to the other interviews. This

was to ask the subject to forget the contingent facts of their situation as a relatively powerless individual, and to propose how they would envisage responding effectively to climate change in a utopian situation in which they could arrange any form of policy, from a position of policy-omnipotence. I was perhaps attempting a very small-scale version of the technique of ‘visioning’ that has been utilised to good effect in other areas of local sustainability, particularly within the LA21 process in a number of authorities (e.g. see Parker and Seman, 1997; Davies and Gathorne-Hardy, 1997). The intention is to ‘free up’ the participant(s) from the nitty-gritty of the real world situation, and allow them to project their thought forward in time to imagine the destination that is being aimed at. Once this has been achieved, attention then moves to the processes which will be necessary to achieve this situation, hopefully avoiding the narrow thinking and fatalistic assumption of limited agency which accompanies focus on the tried and tested approaches to policy-making. In my data, there is evidence of interviewees both relishing this opportunity for a broadened perspective, and failing to take it quite as broadly as I imagined, but it certainly elicited interesting data.

Beginning Analysis

Transcription of the data was done by myself using Microsoft Word. I recorded the data as a Word document. The precise format of the transcription shifted slightly over the period. At the beginning of data collection I would transcribe every sound and slight pause, but the later transcriptions became more pragmatic, using abbreviations on occasion and eliminating some repetition, especially of colloquial phrases such as ‘like’ and ‘you know’ which are both highly redundant and ubiquitous in contemporary spoken English. These omissions were avoided for the most part, as they do often convey hesitation or prevarication in certain instances. In this matter I had to rely on my own judgements of genuine redundancy.

The transcriptions were designed to capture the speech of the interviewees, without the level of detail that is required for Discourse Analysis proper (e.g. Billig 1992). Nevertheless, as my analysis demonstrates, I was interested in capturing the speech acts recorded fairly accurately, in order to allow my analysis to be more focussed than a

simple identification of set phrases, I was interested in the ways in which topics were discussed, including the turns of phrase used to address issues. As an example, one officer explained that their authority was attempting to move to a more participatory process, but this information was given in a way which introduced a level of irony into the explanation: “we should get out of calling it consultation [laughs], we should call it participation, we’re trying to move to a much more participatory approach” (BW6). Transcribing the laughter reveals the presence of irony in a way that highlights the knowing use of a linguistic unit that might otherwise be lost. My transcription was therefore for a ‘mid-level’ of analysis, neither merely pointing out the presence of certain discourses in a broad way, nor attempting to analyse the minutiae of speech acts in a linguistic framework.

My coding of the transcriptions was carried out in a flexible and iterative manner, well described by Rubin and Rubin (1995):

“Coding proceeds in stages. First, you set up a few main coding categories, suggested by the original reading of the interviews...start out with a relatively small list of these categories...you might find that important information doesn’t fit into these categories or that one of your categories blurs two or more separate concepts, themes, or stages. Then you have to add new categories to fit the data...and recode the material already examined” (1995: 329)

As the iterative process progressed, broad codings such as ‘SUS DEV’ became more refined to focus in more detail, on references to LA21, Greening and so on. Examples of the broader categories are given in the Appendix, whilst more detailed coding was added to the hard copies of the transcriptions as collection and analysis continued. The flexibility of this approach was important in drawing my analysis from the data, rather than imposing a previously determined structure upon it. Thus I consider that the themes coded for arose from the nature of the data itself, and yet I simultaneously acknowledge that I came to the data with assumptions, beliefs and research interests of my own, which were bound to affect my own perceptions of the data-leading to my highlighting and concentrating on certain issues whilst allowing others to fall into the background. As is

explained in later chapters, my continuing development of a cultural and discursive approach to the data and the research shaped the ways in which I read and interpreted the data, which nevertheless had been coded in a responsive and open manner for the dominant themes.

Use Of Data

Where data are used in the thesis, the following conventions are followed.

Quotations are fitted within quotation marks, and followed by a code in parentheses that identifies the interview subject by initials (to ensure the confidentiality that was promised when the interviews were secured) and the number of the page(s) of my transcription on which the quote is to be found. In the case of notes taken from telephone interviews, and the one interview on which handwritten notes were made, the quotations appear in italics, and expansions on my *verbatim* notes are given in square parentheses thus: “L[ocal] A[uthoritie]s”. Within the text of quotations, three full stops (...) indicate a pause transcribed from the recording, whilst full stops within square parentheses ([...]) denote editing; the removal of text from the transcribed data. Likewise, text within square parentheses is not from the transcribed data, but is my own explanatory material, or inserted text used to make edited material correct according to grammar and punctuation.

Interviews Conducted

In all, a total of 16 full length interviews were conducted, all but one of which were recorded for transcription, one not being captured due to technical problems with my tape-recorder. In addition, I took brief notes during several interviews over the ‘phone which were then written up after the interview. The exact details of the interviews conducted, in particular the institutional positions held by my interview subjects, are given in Chapter 6, where the case study authorities and their responses are analysed.

CHAPTER 2:1 DISCOURSES AND CULTURES

This chapter introduces the theoretical setting of the thesis. It is important to be clear at the outset about the terms in which I am addressing the topic of Local Authority Responses to Climate Change.

The first point has already been made clear, that I am not proposing a quantitative or realist assessment of the 'actual' results of authorities' attempt to ameliorate the effects of climate change (defined as an unproblematic physical process which has easily identified physical causes, and which can be tackled through the employment of a 'tool-kit' of straightforward physical and technological fixes), even if this were possible. Instead, my focus is primarily an interpretive one, analysing how people in a certain set of organisations are responding to a relatively new concept. My ambition is to explain these responses in terms of *discourses* and *cultures*. I take this approach for a number of reasons. I have already explained how my qualitatively based slant on the social science project concentrates on understanding human action as action with meaning. I have also suggested that human action with meaning, if it is to be understood as such, must be understood in terms of social action with social meanings; otherwise it would be the study of individual pathology. As I have outlined, even a cursory exploration of local authority responses to climate change reveals that different people in different institutional situations explain their actions and those of the social groupings within which they are situated in terms of how they understand and respond to the topic. In doing so, they display their commitment to a shared understanding of action which is expressed through the ways in which their actions are justified as natural, apposite, and appropriate. Expressions of shared understandings require the utilisation of discourses, or *are* discourses. Shared commitments to seeing the world in a certain way, and justifying actions as legitimate and 'natural', are cultural, in the sense that anthropologists, for example, use the term to describe the actions of different cultures as 'rational', or at least consistent, within the shared understandings of those particular social groups. To begin with, then, I must explain the senses in which I am using these terms (discourses and

cultures), and offer some explanation of why I consider this form of approach to be theoretically interesting and informative.

DISCOURSES

Definitions Of Discourse

Meanings of 'discourse range from the Foucauldian sense⁶ to the very specific linguistic or social psychological sense used in Discourse Analysis, which concentrates on the minutiae of micro-sociological interactions between people. In fact, Foucault's definition includes these processes as well, but his grander theory tends to neglect micro-level expositions of the workings of discourses.

Although I do not subscribe entirely to Foucault's exposition of discourses as *the* concept through which it is possible to analyse the whole gamut of social phenomena, there are aspects of his position that certainly bear attention. Whilst I am wary of describing power as purely a relational quality, operating exclusively through people's interactions with each other and with institutions which merely claim authority, in certain situations it is clear that discourse alone can have the capability to define what is discussed, which formulations of opinion and policies are to be counted as relevant, and even who should be allowed to talk, where "[d]iscourses imply prohibitions since they make it impossible to raise certain questions or argue certain cases" (Hajer 1995: 49).

In addition, and as will become clear through my analysis, I am utilising a Foucauldian approach in exploring competition between competing discourses in a given arena, seeing how a dominant discourse is able to reproduce itself, given that it is

"the task of a political analyst [...] to explain how a given actor (whether it is an organisation or a person) secures the reproduction of his discursive position (or manages to alter this) in the context of a controversy" (Hajer, 1995: 51).

⁶ Of all-encompassing networks of practices, language and institutions which, taken together, constitute the state, the operations of power, social structures and peoples' places within them, the constitution of subjectivity and so on (see Foucault, 1991).

I use the term 'dominant discourse' in a way that is similar, but not identical to Foucault's hegemonic discourse. Central to my analysis is the recognition that no one discourse ever manages to exclude all others, even in the context of a single institution. In contradistinction to Foucault's position, I believe that this ability to secure reproduction of one's discourse lies as much in the position held by the actor as in his or her persuasive abilities or the acquiescence of those being addressed. Power is to some degree a prior as well as an emergent quality of interaction.

Discourse Analysis, as represented by Billig (1987, 1991, 1992, 1995) Fairclough (1995) or Harré (1995, 1999), also addresses discourses in the sense in which I am utilising the term, especially in their characterisation as routinised forms of expression, rules and conventions. In their model, the dominance of a discourse as a way of constituting the social order is also achieved through its constant reproduction, often as an almost sub-conscious process, so that "legitimate modes of expression, only have meaning to the extent that they are taken up" (Hajer, 1995: 55). These authors also point out that routinising discourses as modes of expression also involves actors routinising the cognitive commitments of their position. This is an argument that provides some support to my employment of culture as an explanatory scheme through which to analyse cognitive commitments, which are exposed through, and which constitute, specific discourses. Indeed, Billig defines discourses as "argumentative resources connecting people to a culture, unifying 'us'" (Myerson and Rydin (1996 :204) paraphrasing Billig (1995)).

Wishing to steer clear of deterministic theoretical claims, I am unwilling to enter a 'chicken and egg' debate on the priority of cognitive commitments, discourses, power structures and cultures. The theoretical position which I am proposing merely identifies that there can be links drawn between sets of cognitive commitments (i.e. cultures, as explained below) and certain modes of expression or constructions of an issue (i.e. discourses), whilst also accepting that in some cases, due to conditions which I shall explore in the thesis, these links can be less simple to identify. I first begin by exploring how I am defining discourses in approaching the study of climate change.

Studying Discourse

Milton (1996) suggests a three-part division in the meanings of 'discourse'. Firstly there is the most general sense of "the process through which knowledge is constituted through communication (Fairclough 1992:2)" (Milton, 1996: 166). Then there are two more specific definitions, in the first of which a discourse is taken to be:

"a particular mode of communication, a field characterised by its own linguistic conventions, which both draws on and generates a distinctive way of understanding the world...discourses can be said to 'compete' in given social situations" (1996: 167).

Examples of this form of discourse include scientific (or scientific) discourse or business discourse. These have their own lexicons and modes of expression, which may appear incomprehensible to outsiders, and which often compete in the sense of offering different descriptions of identical objects or concepts, drawing attention to different aspects. As an example, a forest might be described as: a carbon sink (scientific/climate change policy discourse); ancient broad-leaved woodland (ecological discourse); or as an asset or resource (business discourse).

Secondly, a discourse may be "an area of communication defined purely by its subject matter" (1996: 167), for example the discourse of environment, within which can be included any number of statements, conversations and texts, so long as they refer primarily to an aspect of the environment. Within the latter form, which I will call a topic-discourse, they may be any number of the former type, competing for dominance, in the sense of the right to have the subject matter defined in their own terms.

In this thesis, I use both of the latter, more specific, senses of 'discourse'. My *area* of research is defined in terms of sticking to the subject-based topic of 'climate change', whilst I have in practice been looking at the different ways in which people understand this term. It quickly becomes clear that 'on the ground' in local authorities there is no simple, given understanding of a topic of climate change with neat boundaries and an

unproblematic, commonly held definition. My research is consequently involved in problematising the topic-discourse of 'climate change', as directed by the different understandings represented in my data. Although I will be using the explanatory framework of Cultural Theory to characterise these different understandings through attention to the specific discourses utilized in expressing them, I will attempt to honestly reflect the respondents' own constructions, as "[i]t is important that the participants in a discourse, and not the analyst, define its limits" (Milton, 1996: 169).

In addition, it has become clear that different constructions of 'climate change' arise because individuals are committed to different, other, discourses, through which they interpret the topic. In a sense, I explore how individuals and groups with different cultural commitments, adopt, adapt or reject discourses in the second sense, that of topic-discourses, by narrowing or broadening them using discourses in the first sense, that of particular modes of communication which draw on and generate distinctive ways of viewing the world. As my next two chapters will explore, the topic-discourse of 'climate change' has arrived in local government at a very specific time, packaged in a certain way, as part of a raft of discourses: both new and extant, both environmental- and local authority-related. The interaction of discourses in the setting of the institution of local authority is central to my thesis.

Environmental Discourses

I turn now to contemporary approaches to the topic-discourse of 'environment' that use the theoretical framework of 'discourses', those of Maarten Hajer and John Dryzek.

In the first chapter of *The Politics of Environmental Discourse* (Hajer, 1995) Hajer introduces discourses by talking about discourse-coalitions, which are formed through sharing the same language. He explains that in the case of a discourse-coalition:

"its actors group around specific story-lines [...] although [...] they might nevertheless interpret the meanings of these story-lines rather differently and might each have their own particular interests" (1995: 13).

He has in mind the ways in which different actors unite around a 'story-line' like sustainable development, whilst interpreting it in their own terms, due to their widely different social and cognitive commitments.

Hajer goes on to define a discourse as:

“a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorisations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities” (1995: 44).

This is a definition that obviously displays more than a nod towards Foucault. The coherence of a discourse is not inherent, but becomes so in the contexts of reproduction through practices, and the “institutional environment” (1995: 45). In looking at the way in which the 'story-line' of acid rain and the appropriate response to it have become institutionalised⁷ Hajer is describing a process similar to that which I will be dissecting and examining; namely how one discourse becomes dominant. He largely describes this process in terms of a number of other discourses that are predominant in contemporary society. These include 'ecological modernisation' as the broad means of addressing new environmental problems, “environmental policy making as the socially accepted set of practices through which we try to face” them (1995: 2), 'regulation' as the framing in which environmental problems are rendered tractable, and so on. Although Hajer treats these as 'discourses' I would rather characterize them as cultural commitments and prescriptions, as positions that can be identified through attention to discourses.

Rather than taking the dominance of discourses as given, and as somehow determining the response to climate change as a problem, I want to explore how dominant discourses co-exist with others which find expression and yet are incapable of asserting themselves. Hajer asserts that environmental policy-making is “the dominant way in which modern societies regulate latent social conflicts” (1995: 2). How is it that this has come to be so? In examining discourses circulating within local government I hope to show how certain ways of addressing the environment are asserted as the 'natural' way to do things.

⁷ In the sense of the discourse being successfully reproduced and acted upon in a number of institutional contexts.

However, I shall talk of cultural biases revealed through discourses rather than 'discourses', and of cultural alliances rather than discourse-coalitions.

Dryzek locates a discourse-based approach within post-modernism, where "the idea that people look at the world in fragmented and radically different ways pretty much defines post-modernism" (1997: 10). He also insists that a concentration on discourses should not distract analysts from the influences of interests and power, a view that broadly informs my own approach. He then divides environmental discourses into four broad groups. Of these, the most salient for my thesis are 'environmental problem solving' and 'sustainability'. Like many authors on the subject (Redclift, 1987; Redclift and Benton, 1995; Redclift and Woodgate, 1997; Sachs, 1997b, 1999), he ascribes a more radical edge to 'sustainability' whilst acknowledging that there is an argument to be made that sustainability is more involved in sustaining development than in changing it. His three-part division of 'environmental problem-solving' discourses is interesting both in its connection with cultural theory and in his assertion that these are the discourses deployed by those who treat contemporary environmental problems as "tractable within the basic framework of the political economy of industrial society" (1997: 61). This especially includes the bureaucracies that have been established by governments to deal with these problems, in a straightforwardly Weberian, rational and modernist sense (see Weber, 1983).

Within the problem-solving discourses of environmental policy, then, Dryzek suggests that there are three means by which to solve problems: bureaucracy, democracy and markets, and he identifies three broad churches of rationality or cognitive commitment which advocate these means: administrative rationality, democratic pragmatism, and economic rationalism. He helpfully characterises these positions as advocating that we "leave it to the experts", "leave it to the people" and "leave it to the market". Given the nature of local government, we would expect to find evidence of the first two rationalities (and associated discourses) present in its attitudes towards policy. Given the nature of

contemporary society⁸ we might expect the later rationality to also be in evidence in addressing climate change. What, then, characterises these rationalities, detectable through forms of discourse?

Dryzek argues that administrative rationality has been the justification for dominant methods of addressing problems through the machinery of rationally organised societies since at least Weberian times. It displays a commitment to the authority of the expert rather than citizens or producer/consumers, and “stresses social relationships of hierarchy rather than equality or competition” (1997: 63). In it, government (including local government) is about “rational management in the service of a clearly-defined public interest, informed by the best available expertise” (1997: 74). Although there is often some equivocation on the subject of a clearly-defined public interest in the case of climate change, the ‘fact’ that local authority officers are best placed to make the response to it is frequently asserted, reflecting Dryzek’s administrative rationality (‘leave it to the experts’). The rhetoric of the discourse that expresses this rationality is one of concern and reassurance.

Democratic pragmatism is another rationality within Dryzek’s environmental problem-solving discourse. In this case, decisions are arrived at by ensuring that a ‘plurality of perspectives’ are first sought, discussed, and evaluated. This is, he says, an arrangement that carries no guarantee that ‘genuine’ participation by the holders of different perspectives is involved⁹. In the context that it is highly unfashionable (to say the least) to advocate anything other than democracy, this is a virtually hegemonic discourse within local government, and Dryzek foreshadows my findings by suggesting that ‘radical’ participatory alternatives to the current method of decision-making find it difficult to make headway against this discourse. As Dryzek points out, this is a discourse not limited to the “formal institutional structure of liberal democracy” (1997: 85). Hence, we might expect to find it also espoused in the ‘administrative area’ of local authority departments.

⁸ I will continue to use this term to avoid a restrictive commitment to any one of its theorisations as late/high/post-modernity etc.

⁹ This is the chief distinction between democratic pragmatism and Dryzek’s preferred ‘deliberative democracy’.

Finally, economic rationality is a perspective that, as Dryzek says, goes by many names. In the form of market liberalism, classic liberalism, neo-liberalism or free market conservatism, it is the economic paradigm of today. In the environmental arena, it is a discourse that prescribes that the environment be treated as any other resource, and that problems will be best solved by allowing the unfettered operation of market forces. As Dryzek points out, this discourse has currently failed to achieve dominance in the environmental domain, perhaps due to the fact that “[p]rosaic and uninspirational though it might be, administrative rationalism could always sustain itself so long as it delivered the goods” (1997:79). The increase in concerns over consultation and participation reflect the point at which democratic pragmatism has stepped into environmental regulation as the next most culturally legitimated discourse in the policy field. However, it is important to note that outside the ‘walls’ of local government, the discourses of this rationality have achieved hegemony. My thesis will explore the penetration of some of its aspects into the discourses of local authority officers responding to climate change.

This brief coverage of the main drift of Dryzek’s work helps define a frame of analysis with which to examine local authority responses to climate change. It is important to note that Dryzek elides the distinctions between ‘rationalities’ (views of the correct way to address problems) and ‘discourses’, treating them as intrinsically linked, one reflecting the other. Like Hajer, he uses discourses to mean uniting story lines, such as the ‘limits to growth’, within which there can be competing ‘rationalities’. Given that my respondents work with different constructions of climate change and how to respond to it (with concomitant constructions of agency, responsibility and so on) I will examine the discourses used to express these positions. As Dryzek maintains, the presence of a specific discourse (or rationality) can often be determined by paying attention to how people are described (as experts, citizens or consumers), how the world is described (as manageable resources, a fragile eco-system or as raw materials), and the forms of social organisation which are stressed (hierarchical, co-operative or competitive). I will refer to descriptions like these as ‘discourses’; that is, as linguistic constructions which betray cognitive (cultural) commitments.

That these are not random groupings of constructions (which find their expression through, and are consolidated in, discourses) but are meaningfully related clusters based on sets of beliefs that can be distinguished and to some degree explained through the concept of 'culture', is a theoretical prospect which I will now address.

CULTURES

My approach is cultural in the broad sense that, as I have indicated, my attention throughout has focused on different constructions of the topic-discourse of 'climate change'. Thus whilst I have been gathering data on how different officers and authorities are responding to climate change, I have been less interested in compiling a list of 'actions', and more interested in the question of what kind of responses are being made, and 'why those responses and not others?'. That I have become sensitised to the idea of 'culture' to explain these distinctions is perhaps due to two factors. Firstly, and prosaically, I was introduced to Cultural Theory (the specific body of theory based on Douglas' typology of 'grid-group analysis' (Douglas, 1978, 1982)) very early on in my research training¹⁰ and secondly, because I intuitively recognise *prima facie* plausibility in the Cultural Theory typology, and therefore credit it with some genuine explanatory force. Culture, for me, is the factor that helps to explain why different people and groups hold conflicting, but equally 'rational' (in the sense of 'internally consistent') views, to be true.

For example, I can talk to people who have radically (in the original sense of 'at root') different perceptions of how the world is, what we should do about it and in what ways we should organise the project of responding to the environmental problematique. The explanation that these differences are 'cultural' in the sense that anthropology understands the term makes more intuitive sense to me than explanations offered by the more bloodless, post-modern model of constructivism, which admits that people talk

¹⁰ Where it was dismissed as reductive in comparison to SSK and Actor Network Theory, the theoretical 'paradigms' of my department.

about things in different ways, without these differences being based in any 'real'¹¹ beliefs; in different, shared cultures. By an anthropological definition of culture, I mean a way of life comprising models of social organization, views of mankind's relationship with the universe, customs and norms of behaviour, transactional rules, and the cognitive and belief systems that underpin and legitimise them. In applying anthropological study to such areas as witchcraft (Evans-Pritchard 1971), it has been possible to reveal the cultural basis and rationality of belief systems which might otherwise be dismissed as illogical, irrational, primitive or 'just plain wrong'.

Taking 'culture' to mean the ways in which people understand and relate to the world and each other, commitments to a set of beliefs about how things are and should be which are then expressed through discourses, I believe that Cultural Theory (with capital letters) goes some way to explain the basic differences in people's cognitive commitments. As John Adams suggests,

"Cultural theory might best be viewed as the anthropologists' myth of myths. The validity of such a super-myth is not to be judged by the statistician's correlation coefficients and t-tests, but by the degree to which it accords with people's experience. And its utility can be judged only by the extent to which people find it helpful in their attempt to navigate the sea of uncertainty." (Adams, J., 1995: 38).

I concur with this view of Cultural Theory's plausibility and utility, whilst I remain unconvinced by the more deterministic aspects of the theoretical background to it. To elaborate on these points, I offer a sketch of Cultural Theory as expounded by Douglas, and as modified by her followers and critics.

Cultures As Ways Of Life

A formal crystallisation of her extensive work in anthropology (refs), Douglas' typology of cultural commitments (or 'ways of life') is based on a distinction between two factors of social organisation, which she calls 'grid' and 'group' (see Douglas, 1978, 1982). The variable of 'grid' refers to the degree to which rules, differences and hierarchy stratify

¹¹ Not ontologically real, but part of a coherent and rational set of beliefs.

people in an organisation, whilst 'group' refers to the level of commitment, which those in an organisation have to others as a collective. By this method, she identifies four *ideal* types of organisation, which give rise to four cultural persuasions: fatalistic, individualistic, hierarchical and egalitarian. Ideal type individualists are unaffected by grid or group and hierarchists are subsumed by them, fatalists are stratified by structure with no involvement with group and egalitarians are committed to their groups but against grid.

In later writings (e.g. Thompson, 1982, Thompson *et al*, 1990), a fifth, very much rarer, way of life is also distinguished, that of the hermit. The hermit abstains from involvement with grid or group, and therefore fails to appear on Douglas' four-box schema. The full definition of a culture or 'way of life' is not merely a way (or preference for a way) of organising social relations (defined by attention to 'grid' and 'group'), or a set of cultural biases and constructions of the way the natural and social worlds are and ought to be (cognitive/cultural commitments), but the combination of these factors in a self-reinforcing and legitimating whole.

Table 1: Four 'ways of life' as determined by Grid/Group typology (taken from Thompson *et al.* (1990: 8), Rayner (1992: 89))

strong

GRID	<p>Fatalism: Strong Grid, Weak Group Stratified/Alienated Individuals Example: Un-unionised weaver</p>	<p>Hierarchism: Strong Grid, Strong Group Complex/Nested Groups Example: High-caste Hindu</p>	
	<p>Individualism: Weak Grid, Weak Group Competitive/Central Individuals Example: Self-made Industrialist</p>	<p>Egalitarianism: Weak Grid, Strong Group Egalitarian Groups, Collectives Example: The Communard</p>	
weak	GROUP		strong

Table 2: Ways of life, social relations, cultural biases and preferences (derived from Thompson *et al.*, 1990: 10-66)

Way of life:	Individualism	Hierarchism	Egalitarianism	Fatalism
Grid/group:	Negative 'grid', negative 'group'	Positive 'grid', positive 'group'	Negative 'grid', positive 'group'	Positive 'grid', negative 'group'
Ideal 'social beings':	The self-made manufacturer	The high-caste Hindu villager	The communitarian	The un-unionised weaver
Social 'patterns'	Networks, central positions	Groups, nested ranked, and differentiated	Groups, bounded and unstructured internally	Networks, peripheral positions
Human nature:	Unchanging, self-seeking, competitive	Born bad, redeemed by good institutions	Born good, corrupted by evil institutions	Unpredictably good or bad
Myth of Nature:	Nature benign	Nature perverse/tolerant	Nature ephemeral	Nature capricious
Management of nature:	Laissez-faire	Safe within limits	Pre-cautionary care	Coping
Ideas of Nature:	Skill-controlled cornucopia	Bounty within limits	Strictly accountable resources	Natural lottery
Making ends meet:	Raise needs and resources ever higher	Levels of needs graded so resources can be managed	Fixed resources, so lower needs: 'live simply'	Survive by coping with lottery
Blame:	Bad luck, incompetence	Diffused or put on deviants	Blame the 'system' or infiltrators	Fate
Envy:	Spur of ambition	Inappropriate: differences justified by rank	Controlled through equality of conditions	Felt, but not acted upon
Growth:	Promoted, more for all	Controlled for collective gain	Creates abundance, disturbs equality	Happy to profit
Scarcity:	Rejected, solved by ingenuity	Justifies bureaucratic allocations	Justifies lowering needs	Suffered
Risk:	Opportunity, embraced	Acceptable, when assessed	Unacceptable, when imposed	Avoided or resigned to
Political apathy:	Predictably self-interested	Worrying, but displays consent	In majority of oppressed masses	Rational due to lack of power

Douglas' basic, largely Durkheimian, thesis is that culture is determined by social organisation. As a very vague proposition, addressing whole societies, institutions or organizations as ideal types, this is quite an attractive proposal. Coming from an anthropological and political perspective, the functionalist corollary that cultures exist to maintain the social structures within which their adherents are situated also makes sense in explaining how the 'social glue' of culture holds society together. However, the bald determinism that states that structures come first and shape people's mental commitments is open to a number of obvious criticisms. Milton (1996) points out that the logic of Douglas and Wildavsky's examination of American environmentalism (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982) is seriously flawed. In that book, environmentalism is considered as an egalitarian cultural commitment, where "[e]nvironmentalism [...] developed as a means whereby sects, groups held together by voluntary association, sustained themselves" (Milton, 1996: 94), and yet it is argued that these sects arose because of contingent circumstances which lead to a loss of faith in existing authorities (racial intolerance, the Vietnam War etc.); in effect as a result of *cultural change*¹².

Milton represents Cultural Theory as an *interpretive* theory, examining how:

"cultural perspectives make sense [...] they are related to the activities of those who hold them, [...] their various components-assumptions, values, norms, goals, relate to one another [because w]hat people know, think and feel, forms a basis for their social activities, and these activities generate experiences which both sustain and modify their cultural perspectives." (Milton, 1996: 102-3).

This looser definition discards a strict determinism and allows for the processes through which, for example, people's prior commitments lead them to choose which forms of social organisation they become involved in, likewise involvement in a form of social organisation which is inappropriate to someone's cultural commitments may lead to a gradual erosion or even transformation of those beliefs.

¹² It is important that here Milton is advocating that Cultural Theory concentrates on systems maintenance (which is the focus of Durkheimian functionalism) rather than on *changes* in social organisation, which occur, one would think it is reasonable to assert, *after* people have begun to think differently, and to assert their *choice* on the world.

Thompson *et al.* assert at the start of their book, *Cultural Theory* (1990) that a 'way of life' is a combination of *cultural biases*, and *social relations*, with no causal priority, so that:

“[r]elations and biases are reciprocal, interacting, and mutually reinforcing: adherence to a certain pattern of social relationships generates a distinctive way of looking at the world: adherence to a certain worldview legitimises a corresponding type of social relations.”(Thompson *et al.*, 1990: 1).

Gross and Rayner (1985) mirror this refinement in stating that:

“[t]his is not cultural determinism. It does not mean that individuals can only see the world one particular way according to their experience of grid/group pressures. The grid/group model does not preclude psychological theories of how different personality types might gravitate towards one kind of social context or another [...] however [...] cultural bias is unavoidable and [...] there is a limited number of cultural packages from which people are free to choose when they settle for any particular style of social organisation.” (Gross and Rayner, 1985: 18).

As seen in Table 2 above, these packages of commitments include 'myths' of both nature and human nature, which are highly influential in determining attitudes towards the environment and human relations with it. I will explore these factors in the context of culture.

Environment and Cultural Theory

The four-way typology of Cultural Theory has been linked to work by ecologists (e.g. Holling 1979, 1986; Timmerman 1986) who identify different constructions of the world behind different strategies to manage eco-systems. The 'myths of nature' they describe are similar to the rationalities behind the four 'ways of life' in that they each grasp some essence of the reality 'out there', but each is taken as an incomplete view, and together they are complementary. In assigning each 'myth' to a 'way of life' (see Schwartz and Thompson, 1990: 4-10), fatalists view nature as *capricious*, as beyond management, as

something to be coped with (reflecting their inability or lack of desire to affect human matters), individualists see it as *benign*, as capable of absorbing human impacts with little disturbance (as befits a 'laissez-faire' attitude towards social organisation), egalitarians claim it to be *ephemeral* in the sense of finely balanced and very susceptible to disturbance (which links with the claimed millennialism and catastrophism of their social outlook), whilst the hierarchists have the most complex construction of nature as *perverse/tolerant*, able to absorb a certain amount of disturbance before reaching a crisis position (thus requiring expertise and the recognition of rationally determined limits to our impacts on the earth).

Distinctive constructions of human nature are also associated with each 'way of life'. These combine with the constructions of nature of each to explain and justify the need for a certain set of social relations. To the egalitarian, humans are inherently good and cooperative, and corrupted by evil institutions (especially markets and hierarchies); to the individualist, humans will always be self-seeking, whatever the institutional arrangement; to the hierarchist, a human is naturally wayward, but can be 'redeemed' by good institutions, legitimising institutionally-imposed restraints; and to the fatalist, human nature is unpredictable, sometimes friendly, sometimes not (taken from Thompson *et al*, 1990). As with constructions of the resilience of the environment, these different claims are perfectly 'rational' in the context of the particular world-view, which has as part of its definition the rejection of the claims of the others. Thus to egalitarians, competition is unnatural, authoritarian restraints are oppressive and fatalism is laziness resulting from alienation from cooperation, and so on.

The application of these typologies to my specifically environmental area of research should enable me to identify the cultural commitments which lie behind, and are expressed through, different models of appropriate, 'natural', legitimate responses to the problem of climate change.

The Active Cultures or Ways of Life

In practical applications of Cultural Theory, the fatalists almost disappear from view as a 'passive' way of life. As can be seen from the relevant column in Table 2, the fatalist's outlook tautologically precludes any attempt to act upon the social and environmental reality around him or her. They are, however, considered intrinsically important to the make-up of society. Schwartz and Thompson (Schwartz and Thompson, 1990) take fatalists to be those to whom the members of the other three active cultures appeal, and on whom they depend to distinguish themselves: "[t]he hierarchists see them as deviants, the individualists see them as unmotivated, and the egalitarians see them as downtrodden" (Schwartz and Thompson, 1990: 79). The active cultures do this by pointing to the fatalists' lack of 'achievement', which they attribute to their possession, or lack, of the requisite grid/group characteristics. Schwartz and Thompson point to this as evidence of *the essentiality of cultural pluralism*, the knowledges and understandings of each cultural group being essential to the others, in filling the gaps of their understanding, where the theory is "not saying that we can know nothing; only that we cannot know everything" (Schwartz and Thompson, 1990: 11). Thompson *et al* (1990) specify that "[e]ach way of life needs each of its rivals, either to make up for its deficiencies, or to exploit, or to define itself against." (Thompson *et al*, 1990: 4). This they call the *requisite variety condition*. Given these propositions, Cultural Theory appears to predict that in any given society the four 'ways of life' will be present to some degree.

The active cultures' preferences for different methods of problem-solving (voluntarism and personal achievement for individualists, consent and consensus for egalitarians, and the rule of due process and expertise for hierarchists) have much in common with Dryzek's characterisations of the three environmental problem-solving discourses. In utilising these frameworks my thesis draws out the different discourses adopted by different people and groups in local authority (as proposed by Dryzek). I go on to examine the extent to which discourse, commitments and ways of life link up, without committing myself to a claim that these links are deterministic

Scales Of Analysis

It is important to point out that Cultural Theory is loose enough to inform analysis at different levels or scales of social organization. Thus some writers use the theory to describe entire societies as having a dominant culture (e.g. Johnson, 1998), whilst others focus on the cultural outlook of different sectors of that society (perhaps pointing out that the dominant hierarchy of the state is balanced by an individualist business community). Yet others 'zoom in' to examine individual institutions (such as a hospital (Rayner, 1986)), communities (geographically defined, or in the sense of 'the energy community' (Thompson, 1884) or 'mathematicians' (Bloor, 1982)), down to the level of individuals' cultural commitments and how these vary in different spheres of their life. By concentrating on local authorities and individuals within them, I necessarily focus on specific levels of 'culture'. However, within the thesis as a whole I will exploit flexibilities of scale analysis. For example, I suppose that an individual's use of specific discourses displays his or her commitment to them, as a matter of 'personal' beliefs. 'Personal' beliefs are, however, linked to social relations, from the immediate to the national or global, at a number of levels simultaneously.

Criticisms Of Cultural Theory

The previous section has outlined the ways in which Cultural Theory ties social relations and packages of cultural commitments together, in a way which resonates with the ubiquitous experience, especially when looking at environmental controversies, of people arguing from contradictory, but strongly-held, positions. It is, however, important to address criticisms of Cultural Theory, which have focused not only on its implicit determinism (which I have already considered), but on its perceived reductionism, confusion over the units of analysis, its lack of empirical grounding, and the slippery nature (some would say subjectivity) of its claims.

The criticism of reductionism is based on the fact that Cultural Theory appears to pigeonhole all people, all social groups and all institutions, into one or another of the four 'boxes' arising from its grid-group typology. It is true that the theory proposes that there are essentially four (or five) basic ways of organizing social relations (which have

concomitant cultural preferences and biases) according to a grid-group analysis based on the variables of stratification and solidarity. The first mistake is to view the graph thus produced as a set of boxes. Graphs are intended to show the distribution of data, so that 'pigeonholing' an organization with grid-group analysis amounts to saying that it has for example, a high degree of stratification and a high degree of group solidarity, therefore it belongs in the 'hierarchical' quadrant. This does not mean that Cultural Theorists are unable to distinguish between different positions *within* the quadrant; the Freemasons would probably be seen as occupying the extreme position of strict stratification and group loyalty, for example, Greenpeace lying towards the egalitarian quadrant due to lower levels of stratification/inequality, and an average business towards the fatalist quadrant, with lower levels of group loyalty, but strict hierarchies in place. Empirical studies by cultural theorists have attempted just such 'mapping' exercises (see Bloor 1982). Rayner (1991) has used another model in his analysis of culturally influenced positions on climate change policy, using the image of a triangular space to symbolise the area of 'policy possibilities' which are bounded at the extremes by the prescriptions of the ideal type active cultures. These formulations offer a far richer and nuanced analytical model than that suggested by those who see Cultural Theory as a simple four-box trap, who are arguably reducing the theory more than the theory itself reduces reality.

These mapping exercises do however highlight other criticisms of Cultural Theory, specifically that the units of analysis are ill defined. It is true that the scalar flexibility noted before does exist in the theory's application, but in all cases attention is paid to the congruence of patterns of social relations and cultural commitments, biases and prescriptions. Thus a country can be characterised as broadly hierarchical in nature (compared to others), within which its local government could also be described as hierarchical (compared to other sectors of the society), within which different ways of life can be identified in different departments or policy areas (the purpose, to some degree, of this thesis), within which individuals can be seen as adhering to the prevailing culture, or differing in specific circumstances. Quantitative research methods (for example questionnaire surveys) have been undertaken in response to the charge that the analyst assigns individuals or groups to one or another way of life (e.g. Bloor 1982, Dake 1991,

Dake and Thompson 1993). Even then, it remains the job of the analyst to justify and defend the reasoning behind such assignments that remain largely a matter of interpretation. This leads Adams to concede that “Cultural theory, like the myths of nature it embodies, remains an abstraction beyond conclusive empirical verification” (Adams, J., 1995: 201). The theory continues to rely on the plausibility and genericity of its claims, and their fit with experience, “and in its current form it presents many challenges to those who would frame it as a quantifiable, refutable hypothesis” (Adams, J., 1995: 38).

Another rebuttal of reductionism is that the aim of theory *is* to reduce, to reduce complexity to manageable, understandable and workable abstractions. John Adams (1995) uses Cultural Theory to explain the holding of contradictory certitudes in the face of scientific *uncertainty* in the area of risk (and elaborates on the relevance of this to climate change), admitting that:

“In applying these stereotypes to others I am reducing their complex uniqueness to something that I can (mis)understand [...] Cultural theory postulates a high degree of pattern and consistency in the midst of all the reflexive fluidity [...] theories of behaviour, to be useful and widely communicable, must be simple [...] cultural theory provide[s] a life-raft that saves one from drowning in the sea of reflexive relativism” (Adams, J., 1995: x).

Paying close attention to all the possible attitudes towards responding to climate change would produce a mass of highly contingent data. For Adams, Cultural Theory reduces this in a coherent manner that aids investigation and analysis.

Since my research is based on interviews with individuals, I face a further question of interpretation. In seeking to identify cultural biases and affiliations through looking at the discourses that individuals utilise, I run up against the problems (or rather inevitability) of inconsistencies and contingent ambiguities.

Addressing Ambiguity: The Interaction of Discourses and Culture?

In practice, the discourses and models of nature that people employ do not map neatly onto a single cultural outlook. For example, a Housing officer I interviewed linked the need for a response to climate change to the discourse of 'limits to growth', and elaborated on the danger of uncontrolled capitalism laying waste to the planet, a construction which appears to fit an ephemeral model of nature, and therefore an egalitarian cultural position. He went on to describe appropriate responses in a way that much more clearly echoed a bureaucratic rationalism, and therefore situates him (according to my approach) alongside those who have hierarchical cultural commitments. In trying to explain these discrepancies I have to be careful not to 'second guess' what lies behind these expressions or utilisations of discourses, to claim to know better than those interviewed which of the cultural interpretations is the 'true' one (see chapter 1.1). I shall now discuss a number of theoretical positions that try to explain the reasons why a plurality of viewpoints is possible, or indeed to be expected, including constructivist, cultural theory and rhetorical and discursive approaches.

To begin with the latter, Billig (1987, 1991, 1992) has shown that people are more than capable of holding inconsistent viewpoints and that "people's views and opinions are more variable, context-dependent and inherently contradictory than would normally be recognised in attitudinal surveys" (Macnaghton and Urry, 1998: 93). Further discursive/rhetorical approaches outline the tactics and strategies employed by people in discursive interaction, a relevant example being Widdicombe and Wooffitt's analysis (1995) of how people use discourse to construct a (supposedly) coherent identity in order to explain or justify their actions, often through autobiography. Putting these observations together, I can explain my Housing officer's deployment of a more 'radical' egalitarian discourse before detailing the prosaic nitty-gritty of his everyday bureaucratic work as an example of this rhetorical strategy; he established his credentials as a fellow 'environmentalist' (he made explicit reference to 'those of us in the movement') through the use of the common-place story-line of the limits of infinite growth on a finite planet. This was undertaken in response, perhaps, to a perception (based on my appearance) that I am a committed environmentalist¹³.

¹³ See chapter 1.2 Research Design, on 'interviewer bias'.

Discourse analysis-based approaches are rooted (sometimes explicitly) in rhetorical theory, which points to the employment of discourses as not only revealing underlying cognitive commitments, but in advancing an argument, rhetoric being “the art of persuasion, or a study of the means of persuasion available for any given situation. (Burke, 1989(1969): 191)” (Myerson and Rydin, 1996: 13). As I have described, and will explore further in the next two chapters, the topic-discourse of climate change is frequently addressed via reference to other, more accepted, dominant or hegemonic discourses. Thus in analysing my data I will also be sensitive to the ways in which the deployment of certain discourses reveals less about the cultural commitments and positioning of the speaker than their attempt to legitimate their attitudes or activities within the dominant discourses which inform, and are expressed through, their *institutional* environment. Indeed, in chapter 3:2, I argue that such rhetorical work constitutes one of the main responses to climate change, and one of the central sources, and processes, of the reproduction of a dominant culture; that is, through the reproduction of its discourses.

Issues of contradiction and ambivalence are not only important for theories of discourse. Cultural Theory has also had to address the fact that people advocate positions which appear to be in contradiction to the cultural commitments which the theory predicts that they should hold, based on an analysis of the dominant social relations and cultural biases of their situation. As I have suggested, this is in part achieved through a denial of strict determinism, and an allowance for variation in cultural commitment. Schwartz and Thompson (1990) tackle the problem through the concepts of ‘stolen rhetoric’ and the ‘genericity’ of their theoretical claims. The concept of ‘stolen rhetoric’ seems a little circular to me, in that they argue rather simplistically that whenever an actor displays a selection of risk attitudes which do not appear to square with those expected of his/her culture (assumed through analysing social organisation), this means that “that actor is, for some reason, using *stolen rhetoric*” (Schwartz and Thompson, 1990: 73). They use the example of egalitarians calling themselves ‘appropriate technologists’ whilst actually sticking to their cultural commitment in advocating the use of small-scale, locally

accountable and less expertise-dependant technology. This is in contradistinction to individualists, who truly advocate the use of whatever technology is appropriate in a given situation. By deconstructing the *practical* implications of what lies behind the discourses espoused by people, the examination of stolen rhetoric to some extent reflects the more pejorative sense in which I will be exploring the use of rhetoric in later chapters: of 'mere' rhetoric compared to 'real' action.

In addition, it is allowed that those within a particular organisation will deviate from the expression of views that are based on its cultural preferences (and form of social organisation), as

“all that the cultural theory insists on is that an institution that does not manage to get enough of its constituent individuals to behave and to justify their behaviour in its ideal way, enough of the time, will soon cease to exist. *Genericity* [...] not total compliance, is what the theory predicts.”(Schwartz and Thompson, 1990: 79).

This variation might also be expected through the application of the concept of *essential cultural plurality* to a single institution such as local authority. This is an approach, which has been tested empirically by cultural theorists, most persuasively by Steve Rayner (1986) in his identification of different attitudes to risk among health care practitioners and their staff; attitudes, which he argues fit with a grid/group analysis of these persons' positions within the institution.

Finally, Thompson *et al* (1990) propose the existence of a 'multiple self' which is, they argue, compatible with cultural theory in that cultural bias depends on social *context*, and “we would expect that an individual's bias will be consistent only to the extent that his [sic] social context is consistent” (Thompson *et al*, 1990: 266). Work in CSEC at Lancaster has often highlighted the ability of people to hold ambivalent or contradictory views (Darier, 1997; Shackley and Darier, 1998; Darier and Schüle, 1999), and this has, for example, been theorised as a split in people's roles as a private *individual* and as a (theoretically) political *citizen*. I believe that cultural theory enriches such analysis by offering a model of the ways in which such compartmentalisation reflects different social packages. For example, discussion of environmental problems often leads to a great deal

of agreement on the principles of responding to them (roughly egalitarian, I will argue), and yet individual responses are more difficult to achieve, as they are dis-aggregated from this more inclusive political realm and situated as locally and personally motivated actions.

My thesis will therefore offer an implicit testing of a cultural theoretical interpretation of the links between commitments, expressed through discourses, to cultures understood as bundles of viewpoints related to social organization. It will also examine the ways in which discourses are *used* by individuals with different cultural commitments to legitimise themselves in the context of dominant discourses reflecting, and expressing, the culture of an institution.

A Discursive, Cultural Approach

To summarise the arguments of this chapter, I am proposing to approach my thesis and my data with the help of the following framework of assumptions:

- Discourses are constructions of physical and social realities that express different ways of understanding the world.
- A topic-discourse, such as ‘climate change’, may be interpreted and described through different specific constructions, or discourses, which highlight certain features or understandings of the topic and disregard others.
- Engagement with other discourses may play a part in how people interpret a specific topic-discourse such as ‘climate change’.
- Different environmental discourses (and rationalities) have been identified within environmental problem-solving approaches, and these closely resemble expressions of the rationalities which cultural theory ascribes to the three active cultures of individualism, hierarchism and egalitarianism.
- Discourses can therefore be analysed in terms of the cultural commitments of those who use them.

- The possession of a cultural outlook, and the utilisation of its associated discourses, is linked to some degree to the nature of the social organisation in which one is situated, or which one seeks out, or which one advocates. This is a relation of tendency and genericity rather than determinism.
- The theory of *essential cultural plurality* suggests that we should find the existence of different cultural outlooks in a given situation, linked to different forms of social organisation.

To these I would like to add the following propositions:

- An organisation with a dominant form of social organisation is likely to subscribe to a dominant cultural outlook.
- The existence of a dominant cultural outlook is likely to lead to the dominance of the discourses that express and reflect it, over other which express and reflect different cultural outlooks.
- The reproduction of a dominant discourse or discourses is part of the process by which a dominant culture maintains dominance, holds together the culture of the organisation, and justifies its activities as 'natural'.
- Those subscribing to different cultural outlooks and expressing these through different discourses may 'steal' the rhetoric of other's discourses for legitimacy.

Taken together, these assumptions will be expanded on and tested empirically through the thesis, as a way of explaining responses to the discourse of 'responding to climate change' within local authorities. My main contention is that hierarchical cultural commitments, based in or linked to hierarchical social organisation and practices, and expressed through bureaucratic rationalities in the reproduction of a set of legitimating discourses, act as a restrictive *paradigm* of what constitutes the 'natural' or 'normal' work of local authorities. This has the effect of suppressing other cultural outlooks with their associated discourses, constructions, forms of organisation and action, so that the resulting response to climate change is so culturally determined that a wide range of possible understandings of the problem and how to address it are discounted.

CHAPTER 2:2 CLIMATE CHANGE

This chapter examines the specific topic-discourse which forms the subject of my research; climate change. For the sake of setting the context, I will first look at the contingent historical setting; the received wisdom about what climate change is, and how governments are expected to be making a response to it. This will involve tracing the progress of the climate change discourse from its origins as a highly specific scientific concept (one of Milton's "particular modes of communication...characterised by its own linguistic conventions, which both draws on and generates a distinctive way of understanding the world" (Milton, 1996: 167)) to a topic-discourse with some currency and relevance in a large number of social environments. This can be summarised as a fairly top-down process; from international science through international policy to regional and national policy realms and down to the local level. I then suggest some of the ways in which this dominant construction has been challenged.

I examine a fairly diverse range of theoretical approaches to climate change, from those that focus on the nature of the problem itself through attempts to explain different national positions on climate change, in order to contextualise the dominant conceptualisation of 'climate change' in the UK. I continue by showing how Cultural Theory has been used explicitly in addressing climate change, and also by highlighting its explanatory strengths in conjunction with other approaches.

Having tried to establish what climate change is taken to be, in the context of UK local government, I move on to examine the ways in which the consensual hegemony of a single construction has been challenged, implicitly and explicitly. This is to raise the issue that in practice, there are a number of contemporary understandings of climate change that question the given, 'natural' status of the dominant construction. I propose that at least some of these alternate readings of climate change can be explained in terms of Cultural Theory.

CLIMATE CHANGE: FROM THE GLOBAL TO THE LOCAL

Global Environmental Problems

Perhaps the first point to be made in setting climate change in an historical context is that it is one of a series of *global environmental problems* that have received increasing attention from an emerging global policy community through the 1980s and 1990s. What these problems have in common is an origin in scientific communities that stretch across national boundaries, and causes and effects that similarly defy modernist concepts of the division of responsibilities according to national sovereignty (cf. Beck, 1997). Among these global environmental problems, acid rain and the depletion of the ozone layer stand out as the most contemporary with the emergence of climate change as an international issue.

Acid rain differs in emerging as a largely regional issue, being a source of concern primarily in Europe, but reflects the nature of climate change in that inter-governmental agreements were eventually sought to restrict the effects of the industries of some states on others' environments. The debate on acid rain was more unproblematically open to analysis based on national interests, as individual states took on fairly clearly defined roles (cf. Boehmer-Christiansen, 1991). Scandinavian countries in particular were cast as the plaintiffs, with their still-extant areas of wilderness (forests and lakes) acting as non-human witnesses to the effects of acid rain. The UK was cast as one of the main malefactors, the "dirty man of Europe". With a legitimated inter-governmental body already in existence (the European Community) the result was a Large Combustion Plant Directive, and the 1988 Sofia Protocol calling for a freezing of nitrogen oxide emissions.

The depletion of the ozone layer gradually emerged as a more paradigmatic example of a global environmental problem. The scientific endeavours of a number of states (largely, but not exclusively, the USA and UK) led to a growing scientific consensus (with accepted intrinsic uncertainties) that legitimised inter-governmental action in the form of

the 1985 Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the more substantial 1987 Montreal Protocol on CFC production. Interestingly, while this process is hailed as “the first truly global measure aimed at restricting atmospheric emissions” (Boehmer-Christiansen and Skea, 1991: 256), Steve Rayner (1991) argues that it exemplifies a move from the traditional, ‘realist’ model of international policy-making. In this model

“individual nation-states, acting in their own self-interest determine their policy agendas...[g]overnments then come together and generate an international consensus that is embodied in a treaty, and subsequently is to be implemented and enforced by each of the national governments” (Rayner, 1991: 79).

Poly-Centric Policy-Making

Rayner argues that the ozone issue can be seen as a shift to a regime-based or *polycentric* model. He argues that whereas the Vienna negotiations were characterised by the more traditional patterns of conflict between states with clearly defined interests, by the time of the Montreal talks, the opposed positions of the ‘Toronto Group’ (who had banned non-essential CFCs in proactive response) and the EC (with no such controls) had been softened through the creation of an international consensus by other *trans*-national groups and communities. These included NGOs, the scientific community, environmentalists and corporations. This analysis proposes that such processes are possible where the modernist boundaries of nation-state and the attendant problems of political conflict are transcended through the increased networking of groups linked not by territorial culture but by institutional, occupational or organisation cultures, the very stuff of Cultural Theory. It is argued that this form of ‘horizontal’ consensus building allows action on the environmental problem by relevant constituencies, without the stifling wrangles between the self-interests of nation-states. A similar analysis is offered in the case of international co-operation within Europe in *Saving the Mediterranean* (Haas, 1990), where *epistemic communities* are theorised as similar trans-national constellations of groups linked by shared epistemic commitments and cultures. New problems, then, require new forms of solutions.

Climate Change: A Potted History

To turn specifically to climate change, Grubb *et al* (1999)¹⁴ trace interest in the ‘greenhouse effect’ back to 1827 (when Fourier posited the trapping of solar radiation by the atmosphere) and ‘global warming’ back to the late nineteenth century. This is when Arrhenius

“postulated that the growing volume of carbon dioxide emitted by the factories of the Industrial Revolution was changing the composition of the atmosphere, increasing the proportion of greenhouse gases, and that this would cause the earth’s surface temperature to rise” (Grubb *et al*, 1999: 3-4).

Boehmer-Christiansen and Skea (1991) track the emergence of scientific concern about the possible threat of anthropogenic¹⁵ climate change back to the First World Climate Conference in 1979, where global warming and freezing were discussed as possibilities. This primarily scientific topic gained a policy dimension in the 1985 Villach Conference, which was organised by both the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in which it was established that there was a growing scientific consensus on the possibility of global warming. This led to the UNEP, in 1987, endorsing the meteorologists’ call for an “intergovernmental mechanism to study all aspects of the climate change problem” (Boehmer-Christiansen and Skea, 1991: 256), and in 1988 to the formation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC was divided into three Working Groups (on science, impacts and responses) and charged with the responsibility for identifying the possible contents of a Montreal-style convention.

Rayner (1991) argues that the setting up of the IPCC was at least in part a backlash to the success of the (polycentric) Montreal process (with its circumventing of the traditional, modernist approach to international governmental decision-making). A similar process could be seen as emerging in meetings in Villach and in Bellagio in 1987 of ‘unofficial

¹⁴ On whose treatment of the Kyoto Protocol much of the following summary is based.

¹⁵ Created by human causes.

panels' that seemed to be endorsing policy recommendations on climate change in advance of governmental deliberation and interaction. Perhaps the IPCC can therefore also be seen as fulfilling a role of maintaining the largely illusory separation between science and policy, given that "the IPCC itself is precluded from making policy recommendations. Its purpose is to establish the basis of internationally accepted knowledge upon which other forums can base their negotiations and conclusions" (Grubb *et al.*, 1999: 5). However, it is generally acknowledged that the IPCC has been instrumental in creating a consensus that encompasses science *and* policy, as I will discuss in later sections. Rayner (1991) characterises the workings of the IPCC in terms of a *quasi-realist* model of international decision-making, a synthesis of the *realist* and *polycentric* models. Here the horizontal links of trans-national cultural communities are harnessed in "reasserting the role of government in determining national self-interest and the national agenda" (Rayner, 1991: 83). According to his analysis this explains why implementation has been much slower than the Montreal ozone protocol in effect; that the reassertion of national interests over institutional cultures narrows the possibilities for implementation through non-governmental channels.

Consensus: The IPCC And FCCC

The consensus-building work of the IPCC bore fruit first with its report of 1990, which "emphasised that climatic change was a global issue requiring truly global responses and action [...] likely to have considerable economic and social impacts. Furthermore, the IPCC stressed that both developed and developing countries had a shared responsibility to deal with the problem" (Whyte, 1995: 172).

It is important to note that Working Group III, which was charged with examining potential *responses* to climate change, had the most trouble in reaching agreement, largely because of the highly political nature of their brief, and the variety of positions represented internationally on a still relatively new subject; "[t]he outcome was a carefully hedged report whose one concrete recommendation was to start negotiations on a global agreement on climate change" (Grubb *et al.*, 1999: 7).

This report essentially set the agenda for the 'Earth Summit' in 1992, the UN Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, which resulted in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC). This sought to bring about the "stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system"¹⁶, to "contain the rate of change within safe limits and ultimately to stabilise the atmosphere at safe levels" (Grubb *et al.*, 1999: 37). This is a statement with obvious potential for deconstruction of the terms 'dangerous', 'interference' and 'safe'¹⁷. Although the Rio agreement can be seen as having more symbolic value than regulatory power, it was an important stage in setting the global political agenda for responding to climate change, with 166 nations having signed up to it by June 1993, and 50 having ratified it by December of that year. This precipitated the FCCC entering into force as a confirmed international legal agreement, a rate of acceptance described as "remarkably quick for a global treaty of this scope" (Grubb *et al.*, 1999: 43). The main commitment sought from signatories from the 'developed' world was a stabilisation of carbon dioxide emissions at 1990 levels by 2000; a non-legally-binding commitment, largely thanks to negotiators from the USA. The Rio agreement also famously established Agenda 21, which required individual nations to produce Local Agenda 21s; action plans that would outline how each country and its constituent local governments intend to bring about sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development will be discussed in later chapters, but emerges from the same concerns as, and is arguably intrinsically linked with, the response to climate change.

After Rio, EU environment meetings in 1993 led to Britain offering unilaterally to reduce CO₂ to 1990 levels by 2000, an improvement on their 1990 suggested target of stabilising by 2005 and a move which was largely based on the expectation of achieving this target without specific climate change measures. Other, poorer states in Europe insisted on being allowed to increase emissions, and a 'basket' target for reductions across Europe was not reached. It should be noted however, that the pre-existence of the EU as a policy

¹⁶ UN FCCC, 1992, Article 2., in O'Riordan and Jäger (1996) Appendix 1, p.364.

¹⁷ Given that what constitutes "dangerous" climate change to a coal company CEO...may be diametrically different to that of an environmental advocate" (Schneider, 1998: 1).

regime, and the fact that Europe had already entered negotiations on climate change as a block, stress the importance of the regional, sub-global level in the UK. Europe is another political and institutional environment to which we are wedded in advance of national policy. Also in 1993, the UK blocked European moves for the phasing in of an energy tax, a position that can now perhaps be said to have been partially reversed with the introduction of the climate change levy.

1994 saw the production of the IPCC's Second Assessment Report, accepted in 1995 and published in 1996, which is worthy of note (chronologically speaking) as

“it is this second report, more than any other, that set the context for the negotiation of the Kyoto Protocol [...it] remains the most authoritative summary of the science of climate change” (Grubb et al., 1999: 7).

In short, it confirmed the scientific consensus that anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations had continued to rise, along with global average temperatures (amongst the warmest since 1860) and sea levels, and that they were likely to continue to rise even with a stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentrations. The “discernible human influence on global climate” (Grubb *et al.*, 1999: 8) therefore justified action¹⁸. WGIII concluded that so-called ‘no-regrets’ measures (such as reducing fossil-fuel subsidies and traffic congestion, but also planting trees as carbon-sinks) were available to most economies, and that further action was justified economically by the potential risk of severe consequences if the effects of climate change were to manifest as feared.

Meetings of the Climate Change Convention members have been convened since Rio, in Geneva in 1994 and Berlin in 1995. The science/policy distinction was further reinforced by the creation of two subsidiary bodies, for scientific and technical advice (SBSTA) and for implementation (SBI). Berlin merely confirmed the Rio commitments, asking the industrialised world for policies to be developed and specific reduction commitments with target dates to be set. The second conference of the parties to the convention (COP-2) met in Geneva in 1996, and managed to reinforce the results of Berlin, calling

¹⁸ The existence of anthropogenic climate change, the link between human activities and observed levels of global temperature rise, is still denied by some scientists and sections of the oil industry.

furthermore for a legally binding protocol to be negotiated, thus setting the stage for Kyoto. In 1997, the EU Council of Ministers announced a proposition for industrialised countries to commit to a 15% reduction on 1990 emissions by 2010, and detailed the targets of individual member states. The G77 block of industrialised countries, whilst Japan offered a cautious and complex 5%, supported this figure. Also in 1997 (the beginning of my PhD study period) the USA finally announced a commitment to stabilise greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2008-12, setting out the bargaining positions for the Kyoto Conference, which remains the main international arena for defining global responses to climate change.

The following summarises the implications and commitments of the Kyoto Protocol, as set out by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions:

“The first meeting of the Parties to the Convention took place in Berlin in 1995. There, the parties set themselves a deadline to agree post-2000 reduction targets for emissions of greenhouse gases by 1997 - known as the Berlin Mandate.

This finally came to fruition at the third meeting of the Parties held in Kyoto 2-12 December 1997 when the Kyoto Protocol was agreed. In a significant step forward, developed countries agreed for the first time to take on legally binding targets for emissions of the six principal greenhouse gases: carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆). The European Community and a number of other, mainly Eastern European, countries, agreed to reduce emissions by 8% from the 1990 baseline over the 2008-2012 commitment period. The United States agreed to a 7% cut and Japan and Canada to 6%. Some countries, because of their particular circumstances, will be permitted to increase their emissions compared to 1990 levels, but this increase will be limited. Overall, the targets represent a total cut of 5.2% in developed country emissions.

It has since been agreed, under the UK presidency of the European Union, how the EU's overall 8% target will be shared out amongst the 15 Member States. The UK will contribute a -12.5% cut in emissions. Other countries' contributions are as follows: Austria (-13%), Belgium (-7.5%), Denmark (-21%), Finland (0%), France (0%), Germany (-21%), Greece (+25%), Ireland (+13%), Italy (-6.5%), Luxembourg (-28%), Netherlands (-6%), Portugal (+27%), Spain (+15%) and Sweden (+4%)."¹⁹

The preceding summary is necessarily brief and fails to cover many of the nuances, political, scientific and negotiatory, which were involved at every step in the process of creating 'climate change' as an accepted global threat which demands a global response. My purpose in setting out the history of the concept has been to show that in the context of the UK, individual governments have been involved in both global and EC/EU negotiations during which a gradually strengthening commitment to a unilateral position of quite stringent reduction targets (in comparative global terms at least) has been reached within a block or 'basket' position within Europe. The UK's specific commitment(s) at the current point in time will be elaborated in the next chapter²⁰.

Rethinking Climate Change

In many ways, taking 'climate change' itself as a discrete topic-discourse unifies and reifies an issue which in fact spans a large number of different areas, of science and policy. Arguably, a dominant construction of responding to climate change involves a narrowing of the topic to reducing emissions, and then even more narrowly to reducing emissions of CO₂, and then further to 'energy efficiency', ignores a vast range of other options for mitigation. Some of these options have been dismissed as too contentious, for example the focus on CO₂ rather than methane has been seen as a concentration on industrial rather than agricultural practices²¹, and on the developed rather than the

¹⁹ Taken from <http://www.environment.detr.gov.uk/ga/change.htm>.

²⁰ In 'The View From The Centre', chapter 2.3.

²¹ Where intensive farming of livestock and the growing of some staple crops, especially rice, are implicated in the production of methane.

developing world. Likewise, although transport accounts for some 20% of CO₂ emissions, the focus on energy efficiency has often acted to distract attention from the fact that transport's contributions to atmospheric carbon loading are the fastest rising of any sector, effectively 'out of control'. The political and symbolic significance of the car in modern society, and the supreme importance attached to the 'freedom to drive', can perhaps explain this reticence in tackling transport, but it is also explicable by reference to Beck's (1992, Beck *et al.*, 1994) theorisations of the re-configuration of politics in 'risk society'²². O'Riordan and Jordan (1996) confirm this view, saying that institutions, reflecting societal norms, cannot explicitly challenge the freedom to drive, and so take this for granted as part of the 'rules of the game' (O'Riordan and Jordan, 1996: 71).

O'Riordan and Jordan (1996) state (quoting Rhodes, 1985) that climate change is a 'policy mess', one which spans almost every practice in the industrialised world, "characterised by policy co-ordination problems, conflicts between government departments backed by their respective policy communities" (O'Riordan and Jordan, 1996: 75). This leads to a view that the responses that are being made are too narrowly defined. For those that hold such a view, a comprehensive response would involve re-thinking every aspect of society, a project which is again ruled to be impossibly ambitious and contentious politically. Some theorists do question the current construction and responses. For example Schneider (1998) points out that the Kyoto agreement "implies a long-term future in which CO₂ concentrations will double or triple" (Schneider, 1998: 10), given that *even if implemented fully*, it would achieve an 8% reduction in emissions based on 1990 levels, whereas avoiding the 'dangerous anthropogenic interference' predicted for the mid-21st century would require somewhere in the region of a 40-75% reduction in current emissions rates.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO CLIMATE CHANGE

²² "as side effects the risks fall under the responsibility of politics and not business. That is to say, business is not responsible for something it causes, and politics is responsible for something over which it has no control. As long as this remains the case, the side effects will also persist"(Beck et al., 1994: 227). The Government in the UK do appear to reflect exactly this problem in attempting to tackle transport, as seen in the spectacle of John Prescott's inability to address 'car culture' without public and industrial opposition.

I shall now turn my attention to literature on climate change. My aim here is to demonstrate that the study of climate change and responses to it are susceptible to a cultural analysis²³, and also to illustrate and defend my assertion that the concept of 'climate change' and the legitimated, naturalised responses to it, arrive in the local authority realm, as in all other areas of society, as an apparent given. The scientific consensus on climate change presents it as a pre-established construction that Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (SSK) and Actor Network Theory (ANT) might characterise as a paradigmatic 'black box'. By this I mean that it appears as a

“crystallisation of knowledge”, the result of “social negotiation [...] which later practitioners have used un-reflexively as ‘solid knowledge’”(Yonay, 1994: 39-40), and “a fact, cut loose from its generative social origins...a *social construction* whose origins [have] been ‘forgotten’ once the fact [is] used as a ‘black box’”(Lynch, 1994: 94).

I will however extend beyond an SSK and ANT-derived deconstruction of the given nature of climate change, avoiding what I see as a form of epistemological cowardice in the refusal to spell out what else climate change might be if the dominant construction is found to be socially (and I would argue, culturally) determined. This involves suggesting that even with the often-criticised reductionism of Cultural Theory's four or five ways of interpreting the world, we have three or four *alternative* models to consider after deconstruction the one that is dominant. I also highlight those facets of other positions on responses to, and constructions of, climate change which appear to me to be explicable utilising Cultural Theory, even where the authors have only gone as far as invoking vaguely-defined 'cultural factors' as an explanation.

The Social (and Cultural) Construction of 'Climate Change'

As the title suggests, in this section of my thesis I argue that the concept of 'climate change' and the 'rational' response to it are social constructions, the results of a constructed consensus (achieved through negotiated closure of alternative interpretations

²³ This is something that the social sciences in general have been at pains to point out over the last decade in this largely natural science-dominated arena.

(see Pinch and Bijker, 1987; Hård 1993, 1994)). I will extend this constructivist analysis to suggest that this social construction is also culturally bound, allowing me to offer alternative constructions and rationalities of what climate change might be and how different groups might therefore be obliged (in the name of cultural consistency of beliefs) to consider responding to it. I feel justified in doing so by pointing to the fact that Cultural Theory, from Mary Douglas' anthropological origins (e.g. Douglas, 1966) through more recent elaborations (e.g. Douglas, 1985, Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982), has often focussed on *risks* and risk perceptions, and that is how climate change is largely framed as an environmental problem; the risk of anthropogenic interference with the planetary system of climate maintenance, with all the socio-economic and non-human implications that carries.

In Douglas' view,

“the perception of risk is a social process [and] society produces its own selected view of the natural environment, a view which influences its choice of dangers worth attention” (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982: 6-8), where “the social environment imposes constraints upon choice and sets boundaries on the range of feasible alternatives” (Schwartz and Thompson, 1990: 52).

According to Cultural Theory, then, different cultural groupings perceive risks differently, or are even unable to perceive some categories as risks at all²⁴. That there are such different interpretations of risks does not imply total relativism, which is often attributed to constructivism, or an unreflexive realism, but ‘constrained relativism’ (cf. Thompson *et al*, 1990). This position rejects the view that:

“pollution is merely in the nose of the beholder and [...] the risks that humans and nature pose to themselves and to each other are somehow unreal or mere artefacts”.

It does so by asserting that:

“[t]o argue that some risks are selected for attention because they provide a natural justification for imposing a certain set of moral or political preferences, whereas

²⁴ As often happens, for example, when conventional risk assessment, quantitative in nature, produces a probability figure for a risk which dismisses it as insignificant, incapable of understanding that it is the qualitative nature of the risk (irreversible, imposed against consent, undetectable etc.) to which others are drawing attention.

other risks...are neglected, is a far cry from saying that there are no hazards” (Rayner, 1991: 85).

Cultural Theory therefore posits that there will be as at least as many interpretations of the risk of climate change as there are sets of cultural preferences. In my analysis of the dominant social construction of climate change, I therefore expect both to identify one definition as being identifiably ascribable to one of the ‘ways of life’, and to be able to identify constructions, which better fit the other ‘ways of life’.

I begin with the deconstruction of climate change put forward by Wynne (especially Wynne, 1996), who has been described by cultural theorists as offering “the most pronounced critique (empirically and theoretically) of the conventional single-rationality approach to risk management” (Schwartz and Thompson, 1990: 122). Wynne describes his approach as problematising

“real public issues [by] call[ing] into question taken-for-granted definition of what is at issue”, by focussing on the “institutional and the political-cultural level [arguing that] routine relationships, experiences and negotiations build, obstruct or destroy identifications with particular accounts of the world, through the turnover of material cultural processes” (Wynne, 1996, 359-361).

His analysis details the ways in which various scientific procedures used in climate modelling (specifically feedback loops, parameterisation and flux-correction) are necessary in order to permit the predictions on which the scientific model of climate change are based. This process is to a large extent driven by the demand from the international policy community (embodied most obviously in the IPCC and related bodies, and their Assessment Reports) for accounts of climate change which are framed within the context of a *predictable* process of change, with an agreed consensus on the degree of the risk posed enabling the legitimating of calls for a ‘rational’ response. The unreflexive acceptance of science as based on ‘pure’ facts unsullied by values, and a rigid differentiation between science and policy, are intrinsic to science’s claims for the special, objective nature of the knowledges it produces. This leads to an ignorance of the social influences on knowledge production so that:

“the overall result may be to make it appear as if the smooth and relatively stable climate response to human activities which the GCMs [Global Climate Models] provide, has been *discovered*, when in effect it may have been *preordained* by the culture of modelling” (Wynne, 1996: 370).

His overall conclusion is summed up in the assertion that:

“[t]hus the *intellectual* order of global climate scientific prediction, and the *political* order of global management and universal policy control, based as it is on the promise of deterministic processes, smooth changes, long-term prediction and scientific control, mutually construct and reinforce one another” (Wynne, 1996: 372).

While Wynne’s interpretation of the ‘culture’ of modelling ends at its links with policy considerations²⁵, his characterisation of the co-constructing intellectual and political orders is firmly reflective of Drysek’s bureaucratic rationality (‘leave it to the experts’), and Cultural Theory’s predictions of culturally shaped bureaucratic/hierarchist attitudes to natural risks. Such a position views the limits of interference with nature as determinable through expertise, linked to temporal models that stress smooth change and prediction-based, ‘safe’ responses²⁶. Wynne comments on this such science-policy links even more explicitly in talking about the production of consensus on likely climate responses to a doubling of CO₂ concentrations; a global rise in temperature of between 1.5 and 4.5 degrees Centigrade. This figure, he points out, “has been astonishingly stable since well before the IPCC, despite major changes in knowledge and modelling” (Wynne, 1996: 373), and he elsewhere describes it as an ‘anchoring device’ or ‘consensus-summary’ in making science policy-relevant (Van der Sluijs *et al.*, 1998). This figure appears to have been ‘socially tuned’ to keep the science in line with a model of climate change which fits the bureaucratic sensibilities, as ‘do-able’ in both science and policy terms. This is revealed in the head of the IPCC’s scientific working group stating that “sensible planning I would argue needs to be based on the best estimate, not on fear of global

²⁵ Although he states that science and policy have “shared commitments which define them as a single culture” (Wynne, 1996: 377).

²⁶ See chapter 3.2 on temporal frames in bureaucracy.

collapse or catastrophe.”²⁷; the fears that might be expressed by egalitarians. Angela Liberatore (1995) offers a similar account of the processes through which environmental issues related to global environmental change are rendered tractable to policy-makers.

Wynne’s analysis of the construction of climate change as ‘do-able’, and his conclusions about the manageability of climate change as so defined, suggests that ideas about predictability and safe rates of emissions in turn lead to a sense of bureaucratic, rational control which “allows the wider society to go on polluting, competing, consuming and exploiting, right up to those limits as defined by science” (Wynne, 1996: 375). This ignores a definition of climate change as less predictable and do-able, more potentially threatening and therefore requiring a more robust (and rapid, and radical) response. Wynne goes on to request that we should concentrate on examining how constructions of human nature are intrinsically involved in environmental issues, taking up the “cultural challenge of re-examining our dominant tacit constructions of the human subjects, and of renegotiating human relations and identities into something more convivial than mere selfish consumers and individual rational-instrumental choosers” (Wynne, 1996: 378).

In effect, Wynne has outlined the social construction of climate change in science and policy as a dominantly hierarchical cultural construction, and of human nature as a dominantly individualist cultural construction. He then argues for a serious consideration of an egalitarian view of the fragility and potentially catastrophic nature of ‘nature’ and a serious consideration of an egalitarian construction of human nature, requiring us to consider egalitarian-style, precautionary responses. As Radder (1998) points out in his critique of Wynne’s article, “when he states that the SSK problematisation of the long term predictability and the political manageability of climate change leads to the insight that ‘maybe climate change is intrinsically less stable, smooth and predictable than [...] scientific myth-making recognises’” (Radder, 1998: 347, quoting Wynne (1998: 342-3)), Wynne *has implicitly* spelled out his alternative to dominant scientific accounts of climate change, nature and human nature. However, his position within SSK does not allow him to offer an *explicit* alternative, which might require a defence of a claim to a ‘superior

²⁷ Personal communication, quoted in Wynne (1996: 373).

ontology' than that of the construction he critiques. Cultural Theory would suit his purposes better in so far as it allows an exploration (and explanation) of the different accounts of climate change, society and nature he hints at. Its acknowledgement and promotion of the existence of the other cultural worldviews amounts to offering the

“reflexive cultural dimension” which he says is lacking in SSK, widening the “moral and human depth of policy and politics to which SSK ought, with due modesty, to contribute”, allowing us to open up “questions of the future – about what is to be a matter of human agency and responsibility, and what is to be designated as natural – and about whether social realities can or should be ordered in ways which correspond with present [dominant] representations of ‘natural’ order?” (Wynne, 1996: 381).

As we have seen, then, constructivism, and SSK in particular,

“assert that climate change science itself is a social construction that cannot be disentangled from political biases, interpretations and expectations of funders and regulators, with a well meaning but futile attempt to *appear* neutral, objective, and separate from policy making.” (O’Riordan and Jäger, 1996: 3), and “this problematisation of the central assumption that long-term climate change is predictable, also problematises the parallel belief that long-term climate change is politically manageable within familiar cultural and institutional horizons” (Wynne, 1996: 343).

These horizons are those of the hierarchists’ worldview; of bureaucratic rationalism, safety within limits and the rule of the expert.

Theorising Policy Positions On Climate Change

Having looked at climate change’s progress through international science and policy, I now focus on the national level, in particular looking at how different theories attempt to explain the policy positions adopted by different states. Interests theory and coalitions are compared to Cultural Theory work on this issue.

Interests

A number of writers address the differences in approaches to climate change taken by different nation-states. A quantitative *political interests* approach taken by Rowlands (1995), assigning figures and ranges for countries' vulnerability to, and abatement costs for addressing, climate change, fails to accurately predict countries' 'rational' responses. This is because it relies on a single universalistic construction of decision making processes which are assumed to be true for all countries as rational, instrumental and self-seeking choosers; "the assumption that the world can be envisaged as a collection of self-interested utility maximisers" (Rowlands, 1995: 235) in his own words. This is a model critiqued by Wynne and Cultural Theorists (e.g. Schwartz and Thompson, 1990: 43-49), amongst others, on the grounds that it is nothing more than an international extension of cost-benefit analysis; the dominant paradigm of decision-making in a bureaucratic rationality. Rowlands admits as much himself when asking "will all actors – across both space and time – necessarily see things the same way? If not, when will an actor place more value on one instead of another?" (Rowlands, 1995: 246). He offers 'domestic politics' as the variable that affects such differences in positions. Cultural Theory points out that interest-based approaches ignore the question of "how do policy actors who behave in their own best interest come to know where that interest lies?" (Schwartz and Thompson, 1990: 49). They answer that it is social institutions as cultures, not as aggregations of individuals, which determine goal setting and therefore the boundaries of what it is morally and culturally justifiable to select as options for, and alternatives in, decision-making. As Rowlands concludes, "interests are by no means either universal or static" (Rowlands, 1995: 249).

By way of contrast, Johnson (1998) makes a similar attempt to predict national positions and policies on climate change, as held prior to the Rio UNCED, but this time using Cultural Theory. She suggests that:

“[w]hile it is the interactions between the four styles [cultures/rationalities] that shapes the nature of public institutions and decision-making, national political

cultures may well be overdetermined by one characteristic cultural type” (Johnson, 1998: 224)²⁸.

She then ascribes the three ‘active’ cultural types of egalitarianism, hierarchy and individualism to Sweden, Japan and the USA respectively, based on a rapid and admittedly simplistic characterisation of their national political and institutional cultures. Based on the assertion that “policy-making processes are part of a society’s culture”, she goes on to predict which policy tools and approaches will be preferred by each nation. She concludes that “there were enough consistencies to enable us to conclude that a majority of [...the theory’s] projections held” (Johnson, 1998: 242), although the choice of specific policy instruments was hard to anticipate, as each country could be argued to have employed a variety of instruments with different weightings²⁹. Her most important conclusion is that “institutional cultures [...] frame an issue” so that “every country approaches the negotiating table with different ideas of what are realistic and desirable outcomes”(Johnson, 1998: 242), in other words, what is *‘do-able’* and what is *necessary*.

Johnson’s interpretations of Cultural Theory’s limitations, that

“cultural theory alone cannot account for countries’ choices of policy instruments [...as] other variables besides cultural dynamics are likely to influence national behaviour” (Johnson, 1998: 240)

are obviously important, and she adds that Cultural Theory is quite subjectively interpretive, as

“like all models, cultural theory represents an oversimplification of highly complex systems. No country will fit into an exact mould of a given cultural type: all nations exhibit elements of the other cultures” (Johnson, 1998: 241).

Rayner (1992) acknowledges that ‘public culture’ (Goodenough, 1971) plays a part in influencing the policy responses of institutions within a nation (he characterises British public culture as overwhelmingly hierarchist), but says that variability of policy is to be found within this wider cultural context. These factors, of Cultural Theory’s models being

²⁸ As proposed by Thompson *et al.*, 1990: ch.4.

²⁹ See the next section on Rayner (1992).

of ideal types, are explored by myself throughout the thesis, and explicitly treated by Thompson *et al.* (1990).

Other writings on climate change (including Wynne, as discussed before) fall back on vaguely defined 'cultural factors' as an explanation for different response prescriptions. Studies of public responses to, and understandings of, climate change in Germany compared to the UK (Darier and Schüle, 1999) and the UK and Netherlands (Harrison *et al.*, 1996) point to differences in national political 'culture' as explaining different public perception of such issues as responsibility and agency, and Boehmer-Christiansen and Skea (1991) also point out that in Britain, climate change is seen as a more 'expert' realm (and therefore subject to the rule of bureaucratic rationalism) than in German culture

Policy Communities And Coalitions.

In *Human Choice and Climate Change*, O'Riordan *et al* (1998) take a somewhat different route in analysing responses to climate change in terms of *policy networks* consisting of *policy communities* and *issue networks*, whilst explicitly giving support to Rayner's polycentric model³⁰ of the dynamic of global decision-making over climate change. Their definition of a policy community³¹, as having a shared appreciation of what is important and "shared values and a dominant worldview" (1998: 389), seems to describe a regime with a coherent culture. In the case of climate change, where "the policy networks that appear to matter revolve around science, energy supply and use, regulatory agencies, and bureaucracies of governmental machinery" (1998: 389), we can ascribe this culture, broadly, to hierarchism. O'Riordan *et al* argue that "policy communities tend to develop in situations where the state needs the assistance of nongovernmental groups to implement policy" (1998: 389), as in the case of responding to climate change, and say that in the case of climate policy in Europe at least, "entrenched policy communities [...] probably prevail over the more radical and informal issue networks" (O'Riordan *et al*, 1998: 389), which lack the policy communities' formality, stability and cohesion. This

³⁰ See earlier section on Global Environmental Problems, this chapter.

³¹ Stable networks in the policy world with limited numbers of participants, sharing a community view on problems. See O'Riordan *et al*, 1998: 388-9.

illustrates, and to some extent explains the dominance of the hierarchist, bureaucratic culture in the climate change policy realm. They go on to claim that people are excluded from the locus of power and decision-making (the policy community) due to

“less perceptible factors such as ideology, worldview, and legitimacy [...in other words, cultural preferences, where t]o enter the more formalised policy community in particular, pressure groups must show that they will abide by the prevailing ideological consensus” (O’Riordan *et al*, 1998: 389-90).

This suggests that dominant cultures maintain dominance through the reproduction and exclusion of discourses.

O’Riordan and Jordan (1996) stress that it is one of the roles of institutions to “*structure* the channels through which new ideas are translated into policy” (O’Riordan and Jordan, 1996: 68), so that alternative interpretations are ruled out early on, and change can be analysed in terms of “the constant jockeying for power and of the constant interchange between internal views of the world and external forces which are not always controllable by those in power” (O’Riordan and Jordan, 1996: 69). This seems in some sense a battle between discourses that define climate change as *this* and not *that*. Thus those who suggest solutions that are in line with the dominant characterisation of the problem are invited into the fold of policy-making, whilst those who offer different analyses (for example that we should aim not at tinkering with emissions production, but with doing away with it) are shunned.

O’Riordan *et al* (1998) further analyse national level responses to climate change by presenting a dichotomous analysis (Sewell, 1996) of the principal coalitions as those favouring *precaution* and *economic growth*. These they ascribe to catastrophist and cornucopian cultural outlooks, going on to detail that:

“the precautionary coalition is an alliance of egalitarians with one part of a segmented hierarchy, whereas the economic growth coalition consists of another segment of the hierarchy and the market constituency” (O’Riordan *et al*, 1998: 391).

This is the best summary I have found so far of the tensions in local government responses to climate change in the existing literature³². They go on to suggest, as I will explore in later chapters, that the precautionary coalition has dominated the international dimensions of climate change, whilst the economic growth coalition remains dominant in determining national (and local) policies.

Rayner (1992) adds a refinement of his Cultural Theory approach to climate change in addressing the question of 'self-interest'. He suggests that "the functional self-interest of institutions is an important variable in shaping risk discourse" (Rayner 1992: 109) and policy responses. Here he defines 'function' as the degree to which a particular body has environmental protection (rather than broader issues of economic and societal development) as its remit. Rayner persuasively argues that:

"reasoning style varies consistently with culture and is unaffected by function", whilst "the interpretation of prudence [precautionary or proof-first] seems to depend on the interaction of culture and the extent to which the goals of the organisation are dominated by the specific function of environmental protection" (Rayner 1992: 110).

In other words, we must temper the predictions of Cultural Theory (which are based on the social relations within organisations) with analysis of the roles of different organisations. Whilst collectives will always tend to reason in a collective, consent-based manner, for example, individual groups may differ on the policies to be adopted, due to their concentration on purely environmental, or wider issues. This obviously has important ramifications in the area of sustainable development as addressing the social, economic *and* environmental.

Having reviewed alternative accounts of the construction of climate change, and described them as falling largely within a bureaucratic or hierarchist framework, I finish this section with a simplistic sketch of what the non-hierarchist views of climate change, and responses to it, might look like.

³² See Thompson *et al.* (1990: 86-93) and chapter 3:4 for Cultural Theory's take on cultural coalitions; as temporary and pragmatic *ad hoc* marriages of convenience, often to counter the remaining culture(s).

Cultural Theory's Approaches To Climate Change

To summarise, for Cultural Theory *fatalists* believe that climate change may or may not be happening, and if it is we have no way of predicting how bad it will be, or of responding, '*que sera sera*'. *Individualists* believe that the world can absorb the outputs of industrial society, that any costs imposed by bureaucrats to avoid climate change are an insufferable burden to the operation of free markets, and that the predictions of egalitarians are alarmist and based on an unrealistic understanding of the cornucopian nature of the world and society. Meanwhile *egalitarians* believe that the bureaucrats have got it wrong in suggesting that we can set 'safe' levels of consumption, that climate change is happening and will increase in dangerous and unpredictable ways unless we (all of us) take immediate action which involves questioning and reorganising 'familiar cultural and institutional horizons', structures and practices. To this might be added the *hermit's* quasi-mystical construction of nature, that all of the above are in some sense true, and that 'nature knows best'; a view which might be compared to those of Gaians or very deep ecologists³³. To my mind, this allegedly reductive typology covers most if not all of the broad positions which it is logically possible to hold about climate, and the acknowledgement of five possible rationalities extends the number normally accepted from one (where the holders of a hegemonic rationality dismiss all other views as irrational) or two (if a dualistic analysis is allowed).

It should be noted that in Douglas' early Cultural Theory, with its anthropological emphasis on providing a macro-theory of culture (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982), it is alleged that belief in environmental pollution *itself* (and I would suggest by association, climate change) is a characteristic of sectarian, egalitarian, groups. Their closely bounded nature and ascription of blame to those beyond the group, combined with a belief in a fragile nature and a distrust of large institutions and technology, lead them to focus on the spread of artificial material into nature ("hidden technological contamination that invades

³³ Such as those in Earth First! who propose that mankind is akin to a virus for the planet, and climate change is one symptom of a planetary immune system.

the body of nature and of man” (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982: 10) quoted in Wuthnow *et al.* (1984: 93)). If ‘environmentalism’ is a basically egalitarian discourse and commitment, it helps to explain why members of other cultures have to have it ‘translated’ into other discourses and issues in order to take it seriously: *individualists* will listen to talk of incorporating hidden external costs; *hierarchists* can understand resource management; and *fatalists* tend to conceptualise pollution and environment in terms of issues that can be directly experienced as affecting them very personally.

Such an analysis is used by Schneider (1998) who, in outlining the main coalitions of ‘interests’ at the Kyoto Summit, neatly encapsulates various Cultural Theory positions. In his paper, we can see him as characterising the fossil fuel industry in the form of the Global Climate Coalition as *individualists*, with environmentalists and the EU pushing the *egalitarian* line, and the US hedging their bets with a cautious *hierarchist* view. The developing nations are forced into the position of fatalists in international terms, acting as the risk-absorbers of the other three cultures, with little input to the bargaining process.

Having addressed the international and national arenas, and moved progressively from the science to the policy of climate change, I now turn my attention to the public’s constructions and understandings.

Climate Change: Public Resistances To Responding

I have already noted Cultural Theory’s ‘scalar flexibility’. Studies that have addressed public perceptions of climate change are useful in revealing how successfully the dominant constructions of the concept at science and policy levels have, or have not, permeated down to the grass-roots level, the people whose actions arguably determine a country’s response to climate change. I would argue that at this level there is evidence of resistance to the dominant constructions, and furthermore that the attitudes displayed in this resistance can be characterised in Cultural Theory’s terms, in a unique way. I propose that the public (sometimes sloppily regarded as largely fatalistic) can be shown to present a knowing critique of the hierarchist, individualist and egalitarian constructions of climate

change, thus justifying a fatalistic outlook towards taking action. This places them in the role of 'naïve cultural theorists' rather than as *knowledge deficient* (as in the viewpoint of much Public Understanding of Science writing), or simply actively *resistant* to knowledge discourses (as suggested by some ANT and SSK, e.g. Michaels, 1996).

Papers such as Shackley and Darier's *Towards a 'Folk Integrated Assessment' of Climate Change* (1998, draft) follow the paradigm dominating the Centre for the Study of Environmental Change at Lancaster in characterising public resistance to a scientific construction of climate change (and suspicion of the commitment to responding to climate change to be found in Government and business) as resulting from a 'lack of trust in institutions'. However, it seems to me that this work demonstrates a critique of environmentalism (especially in the guise of academia) manifested in citizens' jury situations³⁴. Here, the motivations of government (especially local government) were deconstructed as tokenism (being seen to be doing something, anything), those of business as self-interestedness, and those of environmentalism as ill-informed scaremongering. This certainly justifies the authors' conclusions that in terms of securing public support, action rather than advice is being sought from institutions. However, it also suggests that people are well able to justify a position of fatalism (linked to a perceived lack of agency, and the ascription of responsibility elsewhere) by undermining the accurately diagnosed worldviews of the other cultural rationalities: business' short termism and self-interest; government's promotion of expertise and advice, to legitimate their being 'in control'; and environmentalists' stress on the long term and the need for immediate action to avert catastrophe.

Given that many studies of the public's understandings of climate change show that they feel that 'CO₂', 'greenhouse gases', atmospheric loading' and such scientific constructions are virtually meaningless to their own practices, the question has long been to identify ways of responding to climate change in the face of resistance to the dominant science/policy construction.

³⁴ From Darier, E. 1997 *ULYSSES Manchester IA-Focus Group1 Process Description and Preliminary Observations*, unpublished.

Summary

The previous sections have shown how Cultural Theory can be usefully applied to the topic of climate change, with the following tentative conclusions:

- a) Although it may be argued that international concern over climate change, and the resolution to do something about it, can be seen as egalitarian (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982; O’Riordan *et al*, 1998), the dominant scientific/policy construction of climate change is consistent with a hierarchist/bureaucratic framing of smooth change amenable to prediction and political management (Wynne, 1996; Van der Sluijs *et al*, 1998).
- b) Analyses of trans-national constituencies and communities’ attitudes to climate change in a *polycentric* model of decision-making are susceptible to cultural analysis (Rayner, 1991), whilst national positions are more accurately predicted by Cultural Theory than by competing interest-based approaches (Johnson, 1998; Rowlands, 1995).
- c) Studies which attempt to explain differences in constructions of climate change and the ‘rational’ response to it often fall back on ‘cultural factors’ in an attempt to explain them, whilst others display implicit cultural theory (Wynne, 1996; Darier and Schüle, 1998; Harrison *et al.*, 1996; Boehmer-Christensen and Skea, 1991).

I have also suggested that the UK’s national framing of climate change is characterisable as hierarchist, although this will be explored and substantiated later. I now address the setting within which my research has taken place, local authorities, and consider the response to climate change to exist as one amongst a number of competing modernisation and environmental discourses.

CHAPTER 2:3 NEW DISCOURSES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT

In this chapter I turn my attention to the institutional and organisational arena within which my research is set, that of local government, concentrating on those areas with the greatest relevance to the response to climate change.

To begin with, I address the importance and particular relevance of local authorities' (and especially urban authorities') contribution to addressing climate change. I then give a necessarily summary treatment of the particular response expected of local authorities by the central government, based on a reading of their constantly emerging climate change programme. I draw attention to the discourses which are present in this central view, which give an initial indication of the way in which the response to climate change is itself intrinsically permeated by, and inextricably linked to, other discourses of the environment and local government. In doing this, I hope to demonstrate that in looking at local authorities' ways of understanding climate change and responding to it, I am working against a background of a dominant construction of the problem which is already promoted as the given, naturalised and institutionally legitimated view. This in itself helps to explain the arguably constrained nature of authorities' responses.

I then consider the position of local government from three angles. Firstly I outline what is distinctive about local government and highlight some of the long-standing themes that are of relevance to both local government studies and my thesis. Secondly I introduce some historical background, indicating that the situation of local government at the end of the 1990s results from a series of movements in policy direction, which have affected local authorities greatly in their roles and means of operation. I then contextualise these changes politically and culturally, drawing upon a literature that is fairly consistent in describing local government as falling victim to a broad cultural shift away from bureaucracies and towards markets and politics.

Having provided some background and context, I focus on the new discourses of the environment and local government that are most relevant in looking at the topic-discourse of climate change. Some understanding of these helps us in the context of the thesis as a whole, to understand why the response to climate change in local authorities has taken the character it has. I finish by examining some of the tensions, contradictions and dilemmas which are inherent in local authorities' attempts to reconcile the conflicting demands made of them in adhering to, and reproducing, such divergent and varied agendas. I will then be in a position to turn to an analysis of my data, and to show how certain ways of responding to climate change are readily accepted and promoted by authorities, whilst others are submerged.

WHY LOCAL AUTHORITIES?

To a certain degree my concentration on local authority responses is dictated by the commissioning of my research by the IDeA (Improvement and Development Agency for local authorities (previously the LGMB)) Sustainability Unit, charged with the responsibility to co-ordinate local authority responses. However, I intend to demonstrate that there are arguments beyond this contingent factor for in-depth analysis of this area.

Local Authorities In 'Polycentric' Decision-Making

To begin with, it is significant that the UN Conference on Environment and Development 1992, the 'Rio Summit', saw the first major official representation of local authorities in international environmental negotiations: "local authorities had never before been involved in a UN conference" (Tuxworth, 1996: 278). This was largely due to the involvement of "the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives [who] were vital to [a] campaign for the inclusion of local government in the Rio Summit" (Tuxworth, 1996: 227-8)³⁵.

³⁵ It is also interesting to note that eight years later, it is to the ICLEI that the UK government are turning for help in setting up a pilot scheme to encourage local authority responses to climate change. This is as part

The ICLEI declare their mission to be “to build and support a worldwide movement of local governments to achieve tangible improvements in global environmental conditions through the cumulative impact of local actions”³⁶. This displays a commitment to the idea that despite the international ramifications and sources of climate change as a concept, it is actions at a *local* level that will help to ameliorate climate change, given that all actions are in some sense *ipso facto* ‘local’. I would also suggest that the ICLEI represent exactly the kind of ‘horizontal’ community of culturally-linked bodies across national boundaries which Rayner (1991) suggests might enable implementation of international environmental policy (even in the absence of consensus or commitments from international gatherings of nation-states), in his *polycentric* model of decision-making. As I have pointed out earlier, Rayner (1991) considers the establishment of the IPCC as a re-assertion of nation-states’ power, a ‘quasi-realist’ model’ of international policy-making. Perhaps the ICLEI’s success in stressing local government’s centrality to the issue of sustainable development can be seen as further evidence of successful ‘polycentric’ action.

Local Authorities’ ‘Scope’ for Action

DeAngelo and Harvey (1998) point out that both the UN FCCC and the Kyoto Protocol stress the importance of *national*-level actions on climate change abatement, but argue that:

“given that most of the energy-related GHG [GreenHouse Gas] emissions occur in the urban environment and can be influenced, to some degree, by local municipal governments, there is clearly a role for municipal-level governments in reducing GHG emissions” (1998: 112).

of the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) campaign that the ICLEI has been running since the 1993 meeting of the Municipal Leaders Summit For Climate Change, in New York (see O’Riordan and Jäger, 1996).

³⁶ <http://www.iclei.org.htm> (2001).

This stress on *urban* emissions is reflected in my methodological decision to concentrate on City Councils (now Unitary Authorities) in the UK. O’Riordan *et al* (1998) also underline that

“over 50 percent of the world’s population now lives in urban areas, contributing a significant proportion of global emissions of greenhouse gases[...]many of these factors are more directly under the control of community governments than of national ministries” (1998: 393).

DeAngelo and Harvey’s arguments for the scope of municipal responses to climate change are worth quoting in full:

“Municipalities generally have at least partial control over land use through zoning regulations and official plans; are responsible for issuing building permits and approving major developments; exercise control over parking supply and rates, road and public transit; sometimes own or regulate municipal power and natural gas utilities and district heating systems; play a central role in waste management; can influence the market through their own purchasing decisions; and are well positioned to be able to deliver comprehensive, community-based building retro-fit programmes [...] Municipal governments, because they are more directly involved in local activities and more aware of local conditions and opportunities, are therefore well positioned to be able to capitalise on emission reduction opportunities within their own jurisdiction” (1998: 112).

Local Authorities In The UK

To some extent, the specific arguments put forward for municipalities’ autonomy and agency to tackle climate change by DeAngelo and Harvey are not transferable to the context of the UK. As Collier and Löfstedt point out, in an assessment of local climate change and energy policies in Sweden and the UK (Collier and Löfstedt, 1997), the situation here is that “there is a large scope for CO₂ emission reductions in the UK”, but only because we lag so far behind Europe in pursuing environmentally responsible energy policies:

“Houses and buildings are notoriously badly insulated, CHP [combined Heat and Power] combined with DH [District Heating] does not exist (except a couple of isolated schemes) and most local authorities have neglected energy management in municipal facilities [...] even the most committed local authorities face severe obstacles to realising reduction potentials” (1997: 34).

They identify these obstacles as comprising of a lack of agency, or as they term it, ‘competences’. This includes a lack of influence over energy provision

“controlled by private companies...who put shareholders and not consumers first [...where the] main priority lies with the encouragement of competition, with environmental protection clearly subordinated as an aim” (1997: 28-9)

further complicated by the liberalisation of the energy market. This is because liberalisation has resulted in plummeting energy prices, and “there is a well established link between lower energy costs and a declining incentive to invest in energy efficiency, as it takes longer to amortise energy efficiency investments” (1997: 29).

These observations, along with more general comments about the constitutional lack of local authority agency in the UK (“only able to act under the specific direction of Parliament” (Collier and Löfstedt, 1997: 29)), and the ubiquitous problem of budget constraints, are well borne out by my data. This suggests that those in local authority are well aware of the ways in which they are hamstrung in their attempts to combat climate change. Collier and Löfstedt’s article further suggests that there is a local focus on *energy* rather than transport and, more positively, that energy management of public buildings (inspired by the financial savings it produces) and of dwellings (as required by the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA)) are areas where there is progress, albeit hampered by the afore-mentioned constraints.

More interestingly, Collier and Löfstedt (1997) assert that despite these problems, “local authorities are currently the leading actors and agencies in environmental policy and practice in Britain (Agyeman and Evans, 1994)” (1997: 33). They explain that (in terms resembling Rayner’s *polycentric* model) authorities assert their agency through working

with non-governmental bodies, but also offer more historically contingent reasons. They feel that:

“[i]n many ways, local authorities consider the involvement in Local Agenda 21 and climate change policies as a means to regain some of the power that have been taken away by central government over the last 17 years [of Thatcherism]. Local environmental policies can thus be viewed as self-defence and counter-attack mechanism” (Collier and Löfstedt, 1997: 36).

I will return to the latter point later.

This politicised analysis (of the importance of climate change to local authorities) positions the issue in the context of an ongoing struggle between ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches; between ‘power-over’ and power-to’ (Starhawk, 1979, 1987), or central and local government. This appears to be reflected in Rayner’s (1997) identification of an implicit power struggle in the competing models of international decision-making; between the ‘top down’ model of realist, modernist implementations through state governments, and the ‘bottom up’ polycentric model of policy being created across national boundaries. In this struggle, the *realist*, modernist model is seen as fighting a rearguard action against the implicit threat of the assertion of autonomous, local- or non-governmental consensus and action in the *polycentric* model.

To conclude, as mentioned before, emissions of GHGs are always in a sense ‘local’, and therefore “in the day-to-day lives of most people in the world, local government is the most salient actor” (O’Riordan et al, 1998: 393). Collier (1997) points out that in the context of the EU specifically, there is an added reason to suggest that climate change policies should be addressed primarily at the local level, and that is the concept of *subsidiarity* that is built in to the workings of the Union. She argues that “the local level might thus, at least in some instances, be the most appropriate one for policy-making, with action as close to the citizen as possible, as required by the Treaty on European Union” (Collier, 1997: 37-8). I shall now move on from a justification of the importance of looking at the local authority responses to climate change to an assessment of the context within which these responses largely take place: the central government’s agenda.

THE VIEW FROM THE CENTRE

This section of the chapter summarises the construction of climate change (and appropriate or desirable responses to it in local government) as presented by central government. Ignoring the relevant contributions made by other bodies to local authorities' understandings and treatment of climate change, and glossing over the fact that authorities are primarily responsible to their *electorate* (in political theory at least), I will implicitly subscribe to a modernist or realist interpretation of environmental policy-making by suggesting that it is the central government's programme³⁷ that forms the dominant framework for local authorities' work in this area. I therefore provide a summary of the government's construction of climate change and expected responses to it, looking at the main discourses which are used to describe both, before moving on to provide an account of what the government takes the local authorities' main areas of agency to be. These accounts reveal the government's understandings and prescriptions for action, which can later be compared and contrasted with the constructions arising from the authorities themselves. The initial analysis I carry out serves to identify the *discourses* being used to describe and frame the issues, in the sense of highlighting 'story-lines' (Hajer, 1995) which attempt to convey a consensus on the reality being described. The purpose is to identify a discursively constructed reality that can later be subjected to a cultural analysis.

I will base my account on the "UK Climate Change Programme" web site³⁸, which comprises a number of documents published by the DETR between 1997 and 2000. They help to paint a picture of the changing nature of the contemporary and projected responses to climate change over the period covered by my research and writing. I outline the constructions of climate change embodied in four main papers:

- the *Climate Change Consultation Paper*³⁹, published 26th October 1998, which invited comments on its summary in a period of consultation lasting until 12th February 1999,

³⁷ Itself based on the commitments made to reducing climate change at *international* levels.

³⁸ <http://www.environment.detr.gov.uk/climatechange/index.htm>.

³⁹ <http://www.environment.detr.gov.uk/consult/climatechange/index.htm>.

- the *Climate Change Consultation Report*⁴⁰, published 20th September 1999, containing a summary of responses to the consultation, with some analysis,
- *Tackling Climate Change in the UK*⁴¹, a ‘leaflet’ published 5th November 1999, providing an interim summary of the current state of responses to climate change and progress towards targets, and
- the *Draft UK Climate Change Programme*⁴², published 9th March 2000, the result of this process of protracted consultation, and the spur for another, with the deadline for contributions 2nd June 2000.

Governmental Constructions Of Climate Change

The *Climate Change Consultation Paper* (CCCP) is explicitly concerned with determining a dominant construction of climate change, as it states that it “seeks to establish the consensus that needs to underpin the UK’s approach”. In pursuing this goal, the government appears to be promoting a realist, top-down model of policy implementation. The model put forward is that climate change is susceptible to being addressed through such modernist concepts as the sovereign nation state, representative democracy, shared national responsibility and above all, *consensus*.

The CCCP’s foreword, (ostensibly) by John Prescott, paints a fairly *catastrophist* picture of climate change:

“one of the greatest environmental threats we face today [...] the social and economic consequences [...] could be huge. It could affect food supplies, human health, and even the future of some small island states [...] how vulnerable we all are, even to small changes in the world’s climate. For some, the effects could be catastrophic”.

Tackling Climate Change (TCC) follows suit by reminding us of the importance of taking action now to tackle the threat, based on our vulnerability to changes in the earth’s climate, and the potential costs of inaction The *Climate Change Draft UK Programme*

⁴⁰ <http://www.environment.detr.gov.uk/consult/climatechange/response/index.htm>.

⁴¹ <http://www.environment.detr.gov.uk/climatechange/tackling/index.htm>.

⁴² <http://www.environment.detr.gov.uk/climatechange/draft/index.htm>.

(DUKP) goes further in this direction in calling for “radical changes” in energy production and use, along with “a fundamental change in attitudes”, in order to seriously address climate change. These framings seem to locate the government firmly as utilising the (largely egalitarian) discourse of a *fragile nature* as the spur for action. The CCCP then outlines the targets of emissions reductions being pursued: 12.5% (Kyoto) being mandatory and 20% (a domestic, manifesto target) being voluntary.

Acknowledging the ‘insufficiency’ of the Kyoto Protocol (see Schneider, 1998; O’Riordan and Jäger, 1996), there is a mention that “further cuts in emissions will need to be made over time if dangerous levels of climate change are to be prevented”. Such a view is rare in such documents. The *Climate Change Consultation Report* (CCCR) builds in a call for longer term planning to begin now, to secure more substantial cuts beyond 2010. It also reports that, in consultation, environmentalists and some local authorities supported going beyond the Kyoto target, whilst other authorities and business opposed the 20% goal on cost grounds. TCC also contains a call to meet the *long-term* threat of climate change, a new addition to the official rhetorical/discourse lexicon. This is perhaps a reaction to the issues raised in the consultation report, and mirrored in the addition of an extra ten years’ forecasts in the DUKP.

The CCCP explains that the global response to climate change should include developing countries playing their part (an internationalisation of what I will later call a *multi-sectorality* discourse) “in ways which recognise the common and differentiated responsibilities of all countries to act, the principle of equity and the need of developing countries to grow”. In summary, the construction of climate change as a process is that it is happening, ‘real’, potentially catastrophic in consequence. It further needs to be addressed in the long term, and by all countries of the world.

To turn to the *responses* to climate change, the CCCP regards the challenge of meeting the UK’s targets as an *opportunity* for business and quality of life, a *win-win* situation that will bring “gain not pain”. This is the dominant characterisation throughout the documents, and reflects, in Cultural Theory’s terms, a view of nature as cornucopian and

human nature as striving to create greater benefits from apparent adversity. This is essentially an individualist model, or in Dryzek's term, 'promethean' (Dryzek, 1997: Chapter 2). The *win-win* characterisation of climate change as a positive opportunity is supported in the consultation responses in the CCCR, and in TCC and the DUKP. In deploying this discourse the government is subscribing to a *cornucopian* model of responding to climate change, which appears to be in contradiction to the dominant description of the environmental problem itself as a *catastrophist* threat. It seems as if different aspects of the topic-discourse of 'climate change' are given distinct cultural interpretations, a trend that I will argue continues into local government.

The purpose of the CCCP is given as identifying methods of meeting the emissions reduction targets in ways that do not affect the *competitiveness* of the UK. Although it admits that major investment will be necessary, this will put UK business in a position to "exploit the world markets that will develop as other countries tackle climate change", again stressing the importance of not damaging *competitiveness*. The responses from businesses in the CCCR also include a predictable stress on the importance of maintaining their competitiveness. That the *competitiveness* discourse and economic rationalities are paramount is stressed by a reminder of the fact that there is a principle *higher than international law itself*, worth quoting in full:

"...while we are fully aware that the Kyoto commitment is a legally binding obligation which cannot be jeopardised, we will not introduce measures that would damage competitiveness, nor will we take any action that would bring unacceptable social costs".

Another aspect of this economic approach is the insistence that only *cost-effective* measures will be undertaken. Any policies that arise as a result of the consultation procedure to form part of the climate change programme will be subject to "thorough cost benefit analysis". This reminds us that climate change will be slotted into the dominant paradigms of rational/bureaucratic/economic policy-making processes, epitomised by Cost/Benefit Analysis (COBA). In addition, a *flexibility* of approach is stressed throughout the documents, which seems in the later texts to elide into a willingness to use

the market-style ‘flexible mechanisms’ of the Kyoto Protocol⁴³. There is even an apparent assumption that these may be the (economically speaking) preferred methods of achieving our targets, as the CCCP states that “[w]hile the UK will be able to use the flexible mechanisms permitted under the Protocol, these *may not necessarily be cheaper* than action at home” (my italics).

The results of the consultation, the CCCP states, will be subjected to further *consultation*, showing a commitment to this weaker form of public *participation* in policy-making. Here the reason for seeking a *consensus* through consultation is clear; in responding to climate change all sections of society down to the individual are “responsible for taking decisions on a daily basis that will dictate the success of the climate change strategy”. Thus the position is one of asserting the need for a *multi-sectoral* response, and also spreading the *responsibility* for climate change as widely as possible. This message was again widely supported in the CCCP’s responses, with business “keen to stress that they should not bear an unfair share of the target”. The Government’s role, and that of local authorities, is given as largely that of being an example to others: a transferral as well as a spreading of responsibilities, to other agents and the individual.

Local Authorities’ Roles In Responding To Climate Change

In this section I summarise the specific policies and programmes that the government thinks it appropriate for local authorities to pursue.

The CCCP sums up local government’s responses as coming under the banner of *LA21*, with the specific issue of *energy* mentioned as the most salient; a judgement which is reflected throughout the documents. The concentration on energy efficiency measures seems to be prefigured in the statement that “[s]ome policy options are well tried, and their costs and benefits straightforward to assess”, perhaps a reference to HECA responsibilities already ‘hard-wired’ into authorities’ policy, and to energy efficiency as a

⁴³ Which allow emissions savings to be claimed against technology transfers to other states, or be bought and sold on an international market.

familiar, uncontentious area of activity. This provides some backing for one of my main arguments, that policy up-take is often primarily determined by consistency with pre-existing paradigms, discourses, and practices. LA21 is of course located by the government as within the *sustainable development* framework, but is said in addition to form “an important route for the UK to meet its climate change targets”.

In the area of *energy*, the main plank of the local authority energy efficiency programme appears to be seen as the *HECA scheme*. This is supported financially by the Energy Saving Trust (EST), the Energy Efficiency Best Practice Programme, and by money freed up from the Capital Receipts Initiative. The possibility of securing savings in *schools* under authorities’ control is also mentioned. *Combined Heat and Power (CHP)* schemes are given great prominence in the public sector, with government committed to a target of 5000 megawatts of capacity. The ‘huge potential’ for achieving savings in emissions seems somewhat undermined by the statement that “if present trends continue, many cost-effective opportunities for [CHP] will still not be taken up” due to “future energy prices, rates of return on investment and other factors”. These are factors that are borne out by my data. *Building regulations* are identified in the CCCP as another area under local government agency that might be exploited to increase energy efficiency savings, especially for new-build developments. *Renewable energy*, although hardly mentioned in the CCCP, was revealed in the CCCR to be a very popular area for expansion. The Non Fossil Fuel Obligation (NFFO) provides some support for this, and in responses to the consultation it was pointed out that changing authorities’ planning procedures (and especially the guidance from government under which they are obliged to operate) might help to avoid the blocking of some measures such as wind-farms. Also in the CCCR, authorities asked for powers to become partners in *energy service* schemes, an approach which I have investigated in interviewing EnviroEnergy in Newcastle.

Transport is put forward by central government another climate change-relevant policy area, to be dealt with by local authorities in the context of the Integrated Transport Policy through Local Transport Plans (LTPs) and later, Green Transport Plans (GTPs). The former have been produced by all authorities as of 2002, and were correctly expected to

be “a package of smaller scale measures...to change attitudes and manage demand for transport at a local level. The impact of these initiatives is likely to be small, but the cumulative effect could be significant.”. The CCCR predicted that they might include:

“bus quality partnerships [note the *quality/value* and *partnership* discourses], traffic management and calming, road user and parking charges [to be used to fund transport initiatives, especially public transport etc], and freight quality partnerships [and] will also cover walking and cycling”.

Local authorities’ role as fleet operators will also be addressed through *best practice* advice on promoting ‘cleaner’ vehicles.

Green Transport Plans are intended to be *partnerships* with local business and the community resulting in *voluntary* measures to reduce travel, but are not a mandatory responsibility of authorities yet. My case study of Nottingham reveals some of the aspects of this new approach being tried out.

Local authorities’ domestic responsibilities include *waste*, and this will be addressed, it is hoped, through landfill tax. A government *strategy* (Less Waste: More Value) stresses the importance of reducing biodegradable municipal waste going to landfill. EU landfill directives will also be relevant, along with the support provided for methane recovery under the NFFO. Specific measures are not however really spelt out in the papers, beyond *promotion* of the ‘three Rs’ of “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle”.

In the CCCR we get an indication of local authorities’ response to central government. It reports that in the consultation, local authorities were very positive about their role, and “wanted the Government to set the right strategic framework and to give them the right tools to do the job”. More specifically, there were calls for more *money*, a *strategic framework* from government, and more agency. There was a call for *information* to be made available from electricity suppliers “to gather baseline data and to measure whether their policies were succeeding” (the *monitoring* discourse), and a great number of suggestions on how to manage the public estate. These included:

- EMS (environmental *management* systems),

- green *procurement* (including vehicle fleets),
- buying *green electricity*,
- *CHP*,
- hiring *energy managers* (hampered in schools by ‘liberalisation’; devolving powers to head teachers),
- *recycling*,
- GTPs,
- publishing *energy data*,
- *energy service* schemes, and
- allowing *landfill tax* to be used by authorities to fund *energy efficiency* projects.

This might be said to outline the local authorities’ construction of their responsibilities *as spelled out by the government*⁴⁴.

To summarise, the dominant discursive governmental construction of climate change includes: the *real threat* of climate change, its potentially *catastrophic* nature, the *long term* nature of addressing it, the need for a *consensus* on tackling it, and seeing it as a *win-win* situation. Responses must be *cost effective*, *multi-sectoral* and the result of *consultation*, based on a shared *responsibility* and the need to maintain *competitiveness*. Other themes (that permeate the specific descriptions of policy responses) include the need for *monitoring* (in order to achieve *targets*), the development of *strategies*, the *promotion* of climate-friendly practices, the dissemination of *best practice*, implementation through *partnerships* and *voluntary* agreements, and a framing of *quality/value*. I comment further on the cultural significance of these framings at the end of this chapter.

⁴⁴ In fact, central government in the CCCR places great emphasis on addressing climate change objectives within the ‘Best Value’ programme. This choice of a ‘strategic framework’ is said to have been suggested by ‘many’ authorities, although a graph betrays the fact that this was the least commented on subject in the responses, with around 25 out of around 180 authorities mentioning the subject. This would be implemented by appointing environmental co-ordinators, perhaps located within LA21, to guide strategy (the *strategy* discourse) consistent with sustainable development. This, as will become clearer later, betrays how climate change is frequently re-interpreted in terms of pre-existing modernisation discourses within local government.

This section has utilised a broad level of discursive analysis to highlight the most prevalent discourses operating in the realm of local climate change policy, based on a central government account. It has also provided some finer grain detail of the specific policy areas that the government envisages local government utilising in the pursuit of climate objectives. I will later look at other discourses that ‘jostle’ for attention with that of addressing climate change. However, I now turn my attention to the arena in which this dominant construction of climate change policy arrives, local government itself, and explore relevant theoretical, historical and political aspects in order to provide further background to the responses to climate change.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT: NATURE, HISTORY AND ANALYSIS

In this section I will provide a brief literature review of local government studies, concentrating on drawing out those concepts and issues of most relevance to the response to climate change. As has been pointed out previously, the UK’s local governments have a specific and contingent capacity for responding to climate change, which rests on their nature, history and the existence of broad policy movements. I hope to show that the new discourses of the environment and local government that dominate the central government’s view reflect historically and politically determined shifts in the theory of local government, and its roles and ways of working. I will attempt to describe these in cultural terms through attention to discourses.

What Is Local Government?

A four-part definition of local authorities might include the facts that they are:

“clearly defined physical structure[s...with] geographical boundaries, [...] multi-purpose or compendious bodies responsible for many services, [...] directly elected [...] with] an independent power - albeit carefully circumscribed - of raising taxation” (Hampton, 1987: 2).

The services being provided vary from authority to authority, but can be divided into five main areas: protective (including fire and police); environmental (including highways, transport, planning and waste); personal (for example education, housing and social work); amenities (museums, parks, libraries); and trading services (for example crematoria, markets, and sometimes public transport) (cf. Hampton 1987).

The first feature of British local government that is important to stress is that it is local *government* rather than local *administration*. That is, whilst many definitions may concentrate on authorities' role in providing *services* in their locality, they also stress that:

“the responsibility for providing local services is shared between appointed officials and elected councillors in a way that corresponds neither to the practices found in private organisations, nor to those obtaining in other branches of public administration” (Hampton, 1987: 72).

In theory at least, local policies are made and implemented by bodies that are democratically accountable “both to central government and to the electorate in their area” (Hampton, 1987: 72). The latter form of accountability derives from the election of councillors in local elections, whilst the former derives from another feature of local government almost unique to Britain.

Local authorities have no power to act independently; they cannot initiate policy. They may only act on legislation emanating from central government, according to powers that may be mandatory (it is a duty for them to act in such a way) or permissive (the authority may act if it so wishes). Stoker (1991) points out that central government is essentially ‘non-executant’, whilst “day-to-day service delivery and policy implementation [...are] the responsibility of local authorities and other [...] agencies” (Stoker, 1991: 141). Thus we can see that local authorities are in an ambiguous position, with relation to policy, combining some of the characteristics of a dependent administration with those of an independent representative democratic institution.

This central-local relationship is also complicated by the existence of other governmental and quasi-governmental bodies. These include regional offices of central government

departments and local QUANGOs (Quasi-Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisations), who may share interests in the way in which nationally defined or delegated policy is implemented in a particular locality (see Stoker, 1991; Stewart and Davies, 1994; Skeltcher and Davies, 1996; Leach, 1996, on the rise of non-elected local government). It is further complicated by authorities' involvement in what Dunleavy (1980) calls the 'national local government system'. This consists of informal links between authorities, and between members of identical departments within different authorities, but also of formal links through the regional local government offices. Together these form a "complex web of inter- and supra-authority relations which can exert a strong influence on the policies pursued in particular localities" (Dunleavy, 1980: 105). Dunleavy argues that this may in fact act as a bottom-up policy generation area, where:

"central government policy changes of a substantive or innovative kind...are thus most frequently generalisations of existing local authority practices or responses to demands produced by local authorities' practical experience" (Dunleavy, 1980: 105).

It is the *democratic* aspect of local authorities which gives it its ultimate legitimacy, and on which great importance is placed, both in local government itself and in the academic literature of local government studies. Historically at least, the delegated nature of local authority powers have led to them being viewed primarily in terms of their service provision role, but this has been balanced by a concern to assert that:

"local government cannot be reduced to a series of straightforward commercial or service delivery transactions. Instead, it is suggested, that it must both provide services and be concerned with the rights of its citizens" (Clarke and Stewart, 1991: 40).

In describing the nature of local government in Britain, it is essential to discuss *departmentalism*. This is obviously not unique to Britain, but reflects the quintessentially modernist origins of local government, as well as its structure being "to a large extent the

result of the *ad hoc* way in which local authority services had been established and developed” (Haynes, 1980: 15). Stewart (1996) argues that:

“local government has been seen as an agency for the delivery of a series of services. Its internal organisation reflects that conception, emphasising as it does in its committees and departments a series of separate services.” (Stewart, 1996: 41).

In Weberian terms (Weber, 1983), local authorities are a paradigmatic case of bureaucracies based on *rational/legal authority*, characteristics of which include:

“a functionally specialised and firmly ordered hierarchy with each level [...] subject to supervision and control by the level immediately above it [...] a comprehensive impersonal body of rules and standardised procedures [and] clear, precise definition of the rights, duties and scope of authority for each and every office within the hierarchy” (Haynes, 1980: 8-9).

It has been argued, especially from an organisational theory perspective (e.g. Haynes, 1980), that this structure of hierarchy and departmentalism has persisted in local government through to the 1960s and beyond despite obvious inefficiencies (such as inter-departmental responsibilities being co-ordinated through the ‘top of the pyramid’) due to a naive over-reliance on the classical notions of rational organization. These can be seen to stipulate that “[t]he need to cope with the logistical problems which accompanied the growth in the scale and complexity of administrative tasks” (Haynes, 1980: 10) is best fulfilled through “the highly segmented, strictly departmentalised structure associated with traditional local government organisation” (Haynes, 1980: 39). This clearly reflects a functionalist stress on division of labour and responsibilities. I will later contrast such an analysis with ‘new institutionalist’ organisation theory

Changes In Local Government: Corporatism, Thatcherism And Beyond.

I now sketch some of the more recent (post 1960s) history of local government, concentrating on some of the broader moves to reform it, first through corporatism, and later through the Thatcherite administrations’ policies of centralisation and privatisation. Although by no means a comprehensive historical survey, I intend to highlight the issues that have been raised by these reforms, and the ways in which they reflect a general

cultural trend towards a 'streamlining' of local government. Since this process includes the removal of much of its independence and agency and the introduction of private-sector management and efficiency ideology, I will look at the debates within local government studies that these moves have engendered.

The earliest movements for change focused on corporatism as a response to the fragmented nature of departmentalised authorities. According to Hampton (1987), the Maud Committee of 1967 concentrated on the problem of councillors being overstretched for a variety of reasons, including: their close involvement with what might be seen as purely administrative work; a superfluity of committees; and a fragmentation of responsibilities which led to a difficulty with co-ordination or strategic planning. Maud recommended that committees concern themselves with policy and not administration, that there should be a reduction in the number of committees, that management boards be appointed to oversee strategy, and that a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) should be appointed to oversee the work of officers. The recommendations were not formally implemented by legislation, although they largely reflected what authorities were doing anyway.

The Bains Committee of 1972 followed this corporatist direction of reform, and had as its central theme that "the traditional departmental attitude within much of local government must give way to a wider-ranging corporate outlook" (Bains, 1972: 6). It proposed that the elected council be organised through programme committees, reporting to a policy and resources committee, which would in turn submit policies to full council. The officers, it suggested, should be led by a chief officers' management team, again accountable to a CEO. Most councils followed the recommendations, which have largely set the corporate structure of authorities to this day. Various commentators have seen this focus on corporate management within authorities, as a process of centralisation of control. This gave rise to a form of elitism, as:

"Local Government [...] became more centralist as local authorities adopted corporate management practices and politicians on the policy and resources

committee became the main focus of pressure from local business interests” (Butcher *et al*, 1990: 156).

Meanwhile, within departments:

“the professions become institutionalised in policy networks and their unified view of the world - based on common ideas, values and knowledge [i.e. culture?] - sets the parameters to local decision-making” (Rhodes 1986: 241).

I shall now look at the implications of the more specific context of Thatcherism, and the process of the ‘privatisation’ of local government. Stoker (1991) identifies the three elements of this ideological programme as:

“the sale of local authority assets, the introduction of market discipline into service delivery and the attempt to encourage individual and market sector provision to meet public policy goals [...]. Each in different ways involves limiting the role of the public sector and enhancing the influence and role of private institutions, values and resources” (Stoker, 1991: 205).

He points out that these ‘top-down’ policies found resistance from below, and that some strands had more contingent, short-term aims (such as electoral benefits or as part of a general campaign against the power of trade unions), and yet at the end of the 1990s I think we can concur that the situation intended by these policies has largely been consolidated⁴⁵. I shall outline some of the implications of these processes of ‘privatisation’ for councils’ agency over climate policy.

The first element, the sale of assets, was largely pursued through the sale of council housing stock through the ‘Right To Buy’ legislation of the 1980 Housing Act. This specified that tenants who had been in residence in council housing for a set number of years were empowered to purchase the property at beneficial rates. The policy was intended to empower the public through home-ownership, in much the same way as the privatisations of public utilities (and the purchase of their stocks) was intended to create a ‘shareholder society’, by tying particularly the working classes’ interests to those of neo-

⁴⁵ The Fire-workers’ dispute of late 2002 provides the most contemporary example of an imposition of private sector values into the public sector.

liberal capitalism. In terms of climate change it is clear that 'Right To Buy' has severely reduced the agency of authorities with regard to addressing the emissions arising from domestic energy use. In all three cities studied in my research, the percentage of housing under authority ownership has dwindled significantly, and social housing responsibilities are increasingly undertaken by housing associations.

The second element of market discipline was implemented through *de-regulation* (for example of public transport), the introduction of *competitive tendering* for service provision, and to a lesser degree by *fragmenting* the public service. These were undertaken in the name of providing the competition and choice seen as necessary in the ideological model of society as a competitive market place, and humans as rational-choice, individual economic consumers. Compulsory competitive tendering (CCT, similar to de-regulation in that authorities have no right to provide services if a private tender undercuts them), was introduced in 1987 as mandatory for "a variety of local authority services including refuse collection, street cleaning, internal building cleaning, ground and vehicle maintenance, school meals and catering" (Stoker, 1991: 220). It may have had fewer direct impacts on the capacity for climate change policy, although service provision responsibilities have increasingly been transferred to non-authority bodies, and arguably the emphasis increasingly has been placed on efficiency and cost rather than quality or environmental concerns. Culturally speaking though, it has made manifest Thatcherism's commitment to transforming the world into a market with competition as its guiding principle.

The third strand (of the fragmentation of public services) rests largely on the encouragement of private sector involvement, investment and provision. This brings us back to the consideration of *partnerships* (as the only conceivable way in which local authorities can raise money for some projects) and the democratic theme. The involvement of private sector interests (both through partnerships and the increase in QUANGOs whose memberships are deliberately inclusive of private interests) raises questions about local political accountability. There is a considerable body of literature dealing with the rise of non-elected local government (e.g. Stoker, 1991; Stewart and

Davies, 1994; Skeltcher and Davies, 1996; Leach, 1996), which is seen as “part of a more general process of fragmentation [the] challenge [is] for local authorities to integrate the work of an increasingly diverse set of relevant organisations.” (Leach, 1996: 72-3). With such complexity, the ability for local authorities to exercise control or influence over issues that encompass a number of policy areas (such as climate change) becomes commensurably reduced. Direct policy control is replaced by the need to negotiate, talk, sway and come to compromises and consensus.

These processes have combined to leave local government in a precarious and uncertain situation at the end of the 20th century. Authorities’ levels of direct service provision have been reduced, they attempt to over-see and co-ordinate the actions of any other bodies, their working practices are more open to the vagaries and the dictates of the market, and they are more rigidly controlled through centralized, managerial and corporatist practice. These changes affect every aspect of the workings of local government, and therefore no less the authorities’ capacity to respond to climate change. I now offer an analysis of the ramifications of these changes by looking at discursive and cultural aspects of the processes changing local government.

Discursive And Cultural Analysis

Gyford (1991) gives a review of sociological reasons advanced for the further transformations of local government, focusing on changes in the nature of their electorates. These include general social reorganisation (from industrial municipalities to suburbs and inner cities for example), and the fragmentation of society into diverse categories pursuing more assertive politics. In part this is tied into a pervasive post-modernist argument that “the traditional bonds of social class, party and common nationality are waning, and with them the old restraints of hierarchy and deference” (Kavanagh, 1980: 170). Explanations for these changes are of course the stuff of classical sociology, pointing to the effects of improvements in education and media, but also those of both economic decline (where those at the ‘bottom’ wish to secure their entitlements) and prosperity (where the prosperous bemoan the lack of imagination and choice in

public as opposed to private sector services). This broad social fragmentation, it is argued, has given rise to a political reaction to bureaucracy in the form of (as Gyford quotes Beer (1982)) a 'new populism' demanding quality of life, participation, and decentralisation.

Gyford (1991) traces the changing nature of the 'public' in local government discourses in a way that helps to map how other discourses have slowly infiltrated the classic bureaucracies. The earliest public roles were those of the *ratepayer* and the *client* (with its connotations of the passive object of professional expertise), closely followed (with the extension of the franchise) by the *elector*. The role of a passive *client* began to be replaced by that of a *customer*, but the major change came with Thatcherism, and a concentration on *citizens* and *consumers*. According to Gyford, "by the end of the 1980s the two major parties had both come to talk the language of citizenship and consumerism" (Gyford, 1991: 18). The fact that this process was non-party political underlines the argument that such changes in discourse are *cultural* rather than *political*. The discursive changes can be seen as revealing (or steering) a change in local government from the iron rule of bureaucracy - where the public could be seen as passive sources of revenue (*ratepayers*), sources of legitimacy (*electors*) or objects of imposed professional expertise (*clients*) - towards the arenas of political determination and participation (of *citizens*) and of individualistic economic decision-making and choice (by *consumers*).

To remind us of the cultural framing of all this, I propose that Butcher *et al* (1990) are correct in suggesting that Thatcherism represented "a bid to break with collectivist thought and action altogether" (Butcher *et al*, 1990: 156). Here collectivist thought is defined as holding it desirable that society as a whole should seek to provide services to those who could not afford them in the open market-place, that "the social development of local communities could not be left to the working of the market, to the philanthropy of business, and the good offices of private charities" (Butcher *et al*, 1990: 155). This collectivist view was after all the primary origin and justification for the establishment of much of local authorities' work.

Cochrane (1993) explicitly suggests that:

“the critique of local government which influenced the Thatcher Government was one which stressed the strength of market alternatives and the inherent weaknesses of bureaucratic organisation” (Cochrane, 1993: 4).

This desire to change the culture of a bureaucracy, I would argue, had other unexpected political consequences. Thompson *et al*'s cultural theory (Thompson *et al*, 1990) suggests (in terms of the ‘micro processes’ of cultural change) that a move away from the *hierarchist/fatalistic* cultures dominant in earlier relations between local authorities’ and their publics may develop in a number of largely indeterminable ways. However, they suggest that the direction of change will be towards the two other sectors of the grid/group typology; namely *egalitarianism* and *individualism*. This is how I interpret the significance of both right- and left-wing authorities mirroring the change in rhetoric highlighted by the focus on ‘citizens’ and ‘consumers’. These can be seen as:

“political and economic creatures respectively...representing wholly contrasting concepts of humanity [...] each, whom [Arendt] describes respectively as ‘*le citoyen*’ and ‘*le bourgeois*’, represents a different ‘model of man’.” (Gyford, 1991: 18-9).

These ‘models of man’ are surely those that are predicated by an attachment to packages of ideal-type cultural biases in favour of participation in decision-making (egalitarianism), and individualist, competitive choice (individualism).

How, then, has this shift towards the *political* and the *private* manifested itself in local authorities? In the 1980s and beyond, the two were discursively combined in the concept of an ‘enabling’ authority, one which would relinquish its direct service provision role by working in partnership with the other groups which would take over these roles, whilst striving to increase citizen’s input into the process; their participation. As Bogdanor *et al* (1990) say,

“the culture in which local government in Britain functions is itself changing in important ways. This is particularly true of the relationship between the individual and the state, through the development of ‘consumerism’ and the concept of the ‘active citizen’ [...] in the development of the ‘enabling’ authority” (Bogdanor *et al*, 1990: 1-2).

Increasing *participation* has been a discourse prevalent in local government at least since the Skeffington Report of 1969, which allowed representations from the public on planning matters. The Seebom Committee (1968) on social services and the Taylor Committee (1977) on education placed similar emphases on the involvement of the public. As Hampton (1987) points out, in the aforementioned sociological context⁴⁶ of increasingly segmented and therefore more demanding publics, the focus on participation has been argued to be a form of placation. In this view, “[p]ublic participation is a way of incorporating prospective protests into the strategies of the state” (Cockburn, 1977: 225-6). Boaden *et al* (1982) argue that “participation has served the purposes of building up a consensus for the proposals of those in power, thereby legitimating them” (Boaden *et al* 1982: 179).

In contrast to these elitist interpretations of the workings of local authority, the ‘enabling’ authority as theorised classically by Clarke and Stewart (1985, 1989, 1992) involves ‘genuinely’ empowering the public not simply as consumers but as members of a *polis*, where:

“the power the local authority has is not justified in its own right, but derives from the public [...and t]hat power is dangerous if in some way it becomes separated from the public [...who] are entitled as citizens to a share in decision-making on issues in the public domain” (Clarke and Stewart, 1992: 22-3).

Thus in theory an ‘enabling’ authority should compensate for its lack of direct control over service provision by increasing its democratic legitimacy, “adopt[ing] a democratic enabling role which pursues the empowerment of excluded groups as citizens of equal worth” (Lamb, 1992: 189). It should pursue a “different conception of local government [...] as the community governing itself” (Stewart, 1996: 41), a conception which DeAngelo and Harvey (1998) point out is more familiar on the continent.

⁴⁶ This is a context of increasingly fragmented and assertive publics, with a swelling voluntary sector using “self help, protest, campaigning and mobilisation” (Gyford, 1991: 38), and more informal social movements preferring “limited organisational hierarchy, a high level of grass roots activism and participation” (Dunleavy, 1980, 157).

This theme of *participation* in local authority work is, however, in large respect a reaction to the realities of 'privatisation', which have been discursively presented as a promotion of 'consumerism'. The main thrust of this re-definition of a local authority's relationship with its public has been the importing of private sector attitudes and values; in other words, culture. Thus whilst for some, the authorities should simply act like sensible businesses by focusing on quality and responsiveness in their service provision, for others a focus on consumerism represented "an actual shift in organisation cultures" (Pollitt, 1988: 121). This included turning to private sector managerialism for inspiration (see Pollitt, 1990, Cochrane, 1993), an increase in corporatism, the marketing of authorities, their services and areas, and "[a] stress on 'development' rather than welfare" (Cochrane, 1993: 97).

Cochrane (1993) goes into the implications of these shifts in some detail, showing that "in this new framework, local (entrepreneurial) initiative is of greater importance [policies] increasingly need to be pursued in a 'business-like' fashion" (Cochrane, 1993: 5). This occurs as the market obligations, of providing 'value for money' and 'accountability to customers', become more relevant. Corporatism involves authorities increasingly competing against each other in order to attract investment and employers to their areas. The focus on *development* has arguably become hegemonic even in rural authorities, from its origins in the *regeneration* of the inner cities in the 1980s. In the new spirit of corporatism, cities are 're-branded', and in this context environmentalism, in the form of the promotion of a 'green city', gains some new importance as a marketing ploy, whilst policies of provision become "part of the selling of the city and an essential element of business infrastructure rather than being seen as a something provided for residents" (Cochrane, 1993: 98).

As mentioned before, direct and indirect involvement of the private sector is a major factor of this process. However, in the era of reduced central budgets in authorities, funding from other sources is often very focused, and under partial or complete control from other bodies:

“the language of business [...] is used as a focus for policy development [...] the new teams are advised to aim for flagship projects, rather than integrated programmes such as those which elected government is expected to develop. They are exhorted to act like businesses” (Cochrane, 1993: 102).

These developments have direct implications for climate change policy as I have hinted, increasingly so in the context of *partnerships*, which are an essential part of this process of ‘marketisation’. In a model of local authority work in which power is shared amongst numerous bodies, and a growing percentage of funding arises from non-public sources, it is inevitable that the direction of policy over specific schemes and more general development policy will increasingly be dictated by market interests and rationalities.

I believe that it is not difficult to see these changes in the roles and ways of working of local authorities in terms of a broad cultural shift affecting the whole of society. This shift is from an era of bureaucratic provision by ‘the experts’ based on a bureaucratic rationality, towards a global market economy, in which the very nature of the state and its role are re-cast in terms of economic rationalities. Nevertheless, and in local government in particular, there are other values that cannot be reduced to economic rationalities: the political and cultural. Responses to climate change are framed by these co-existing values, and cannot help but be affected by them. After a brief exposition of some of the explicit discourses which frame authorities’ responses to climate change, I will spell out some of the tensions and dilemmas resulting from these conflicts in priorities; between seeing the public as customers, citizens, consumers and communities.

NEW DISCOURSES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

New Discourses Of Local Government

The preceding sections have highlighted some of the discourses that have come to dominate local government in the 1990s, those of *participation* and *partnerships* being predominant amongst them, *managerialism* and *corporatism* to a lesser degree. That these

are discourses in the sense of containing identifiable rhetorical tropes is underlined specifically, again by Cochrane (1993): “[o]ne feature of the rhetoric which accompanied the reforms of the 1980s was the frequent use of the term ‘enabling’” (Cochrane, 1993: 4). He also suggests that the emergence of new discourses of (or new *roles* for) local government may have been forced by circumstances, as “it may just be that accepting the inevitability of continuing assault from above has encouraged [local authorities] to look for acceptable survival mechanisms which then have to be justified as new opportunities” (Cochrane, 1993: 46) These new opportunities might include *enabling*, increasing *participation*, furthering *partnerships* and becoming the flagship promoters of environmentalist policies and *sustainable development*.

In the case of *participation*, as I have suggested, there is a case to be made that the actual degree of public participation in authorities’ decision-making remains low, and the importance attributed to participation remains highly symbolic, rhetorical and tokenistic. Gyford (1991) quotes Arnstein’s ‘ladder of participation’ (Arnstein, 1971), which suggests that participation may be implemented at a series of levels. These range from the non-participation of ‘manipulation and therapy’ through the tokenism of ‘placation, consultation and informing’ to the genuine participation of ‘citizen control, delegated power and partnership’. Stewart argues that with authorities’ legitimacy resting on their function as *representative* democratic institutions, this “allows little or no place for that participatory democracy which is the potential strength of local democracy” (Stewart, 1996: 47). However, documentation of the programmes which authorities are supposed to pursue constantly reinforces this discourse of greater participation as being an end in itself, perhaps with little recognition of the resistances to participation which numerous studies (including my own research) have found in the attitudes of those working within authorities.

Partnership has, perhaps similarly to participation, been largely forced on authorities by circumstances, as a means of attracting finance for projects that cannot be funded through central budgets, as well as a means of coping with the fragmentation of service provision and the rise in importance of other, quasi- and non-governmental organisations. Stoker

argues that partnerships often have a common objective, “a concern to use a small amount of public sector money to ‘lever in’ a larger amount of private sector money” (Stoker, 1991: 227). This is a purpose explicitly endorsed and promoted by central government and the private sector. It is argued, as I have mentioned, that this leads to isolated projects being pursued, and there has been a link drawn with ‘gentrification’ or ‘yuppification’ in the sense that in the case of urban renewal or development, “[t]he strategies’ market orientation leads to a rather narrow range of land-uses: office building, housing for owner-occupation and, in the retail field, ‘exclusive’ shops or large hyper-markets” (Stoker, 1991: 227). All of these factors have substantial implications for climate change, in terms of altering transport patterns and energy consumption.

The notion of partnership has a long history in the language of the private sector, and Cochrane (1993) points out that *management* rhetoric has also been smuggled into local government. This is not a ‘merely’ rhetorical change, as

“notions of management are being used as to change the old ways of running things [...] these are not just ‘neutral’ techniques which necessarily improve organisations and the way they operate, but themselves reflect (and reinforce) new sets of power relations.” (Cochrane, 1993: 106).

He identifies as elements of this new arrangement that “many key professionals are seeking legitimacy not from the electoral process, but from their ability to fit in with the latest management language” (1993: 106). This can be seen as including the re-branding of the public as ‘consumers’, the business-like stress on ‘visions’ and ‘strategies’, and even the renaming of the Local Government Training Board as the Local Government *Management* Board, and then the Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government (with its acronym: IDeA). It is important to note that most of the appropriate responses to climate change are seen in terms of *visions* and *strategies*, a rhetorical appeal to the existence of corporate managerial unity, which may not in fact exist given the fragmented nature of authorities’ work.

That this stress on *corporatism* continues is highlighted by the IDeA’s (and other governmental agencies’) means of working, with great emphasis placed on *best practice*;

this should be identified in individual authorities' policies, and then disseminated to other authorities for implementation through corporate-style *strategies*. This policy does not, in my opinion, pay enough attention to the contingent circumstances affecting the agencies of particular authorities, or to the fact that *best practice* is often drawn from flagship projects which have only been able to succeed through unusual funding and support from central government and/or the private sector. Newcastle's pioneering energy policies are a prime example of this⁴⁷. In response to this criticism, it should be pointed out that central government appear to view such public/private ventures as *the* model for the future provision of 'public' services.

Finally, the concept of 'Best Value' represents yet another new discourse of local government. It can be seen as an attempt to bring back political and social considerations into the ethic of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) in which services provided by an authority must be opened to private tender. In the comparable situation of public transport deregulation with CCT, for example, local authorities could only "support unprofitable but socially desirable routes [...] after bids to operate the route had been the subject of a competitive tender" (Stoker, 1991: 217). The introduction of 'Best Value' changes the Thatcherite focus on producing efficiency in service delivery to a typically 'New Labourite' focus, on the more qualitative and yet vague concept of 'value' or 'quality'. In a sense, its introduction is a governmental acknowledgment that "[t]o attempt to manage a service in the public sector as if it was in the private sector is bad management because it is management contrary to the distinctive purposes, conditions and tasks of the public sector" (Stewart, 1992: 28). In another sense, 'Best Value' is a rhetorical re-branding of CCT, reflecting authorities' new duty to promote the tripartite aspects of their areas' 'social, environmental and economic' well being, although the definition of 'value' and its rhetorical associations with the discourse of 'value for money' may in practice undermine this new direction.

⁴⁷ See chapters 3:1 and 3:2.

Having set out the changing contexts and discourses of local authority action, I now reflect on the positioning of climate change as an *environmental* discourse within this landscape.

New Discourses Of The Environment

Climate change is not unique in being an environmental discourse within local government. Of course, environmentalism itself as a discourse is relatively young, arguably being established as late as the 1960s. Dryzek's analysis of environmental discourses (Dryzek, 1997) gives us a useful overview of some of the ways in which the environment has been understood from the viewpoints of different rationalities or cultures, as I have outlined, and it is clear from some of my data that people in local government are able to conceptualise and contextualise climate change in terms of these broader discourses. As examples, one officer described climate change in terms of the "limits to growth" (CM2) discourse of the 1960s and '70s⁴⁸. Another talked of putting a price on energy "just like any other resource" (BP6), an expression of Dryzek's economic rationality.

In my analysis of the data I will draw out some of these distinct ways of viewing climate change and the environment, but here I wish to point out the more recent, 'formal' discourses within which the response to climate change is often couched in the local authority realm. The primary examples of these are *sustainable development* or *sustainability*, *Local Agenda 21* (which can be seen as a sub-set of the *sustainability* discourse) and the more vague concept of 'environmental friendliness' or 'greenness'.

Beginning with the latter, the point has long been made that the *global* problems of environmentalism will only be addressed through attention to *local* actions. Friends of the Earth's slogan "Think Globally, Act Locally" can be quoted not only as the rallying cry of the environmental movement in general, but as a spur for local authority's need to in some way adopt environmentalism as its own concern. Peattie and Hall (1994) list the

⁴⁸ cf Dryzek, 1997, chapter 2.

roles which authorities play that demonstrate their capabilities for addressing environmental issues: as service providers, guardians and planners, facilitators (in the sense of an 'enabling' role again), employers and landowners, and educators. On the basis of these roles (even before Local Agenda 21 gave authorities a more specific and mandatory role in addressing the environment) agencies such as the LGMB were charged with co-ordinating environmental strategies within councils. These stressed the setting up of environmental committees, auditing, consultation, charters, working groups, action plans, targets and monitoring. This seems to display the fitting of a new discourse into recognisable bureaucratic practices. In their review of these strategies, Peattie and Hall found that in practice, different authorities came up with radically different approaches. Some saw the process in terms of auditing and green purchasing, others concentrated on consultation and awareness raising, yet others implemented specific policies on such abstract topics as tropical hardwoods, geo-thermal heating and CFCs. They concluded that whilst authorities had accepted a primary responsibility for addressing environmental issues, the focus was often on reducing environmental degradation rather than adopting a pro-active approach; tackling the positive ways in which they could enhance their environment. The lack of consistency among strategies was seen as unproblematic, reflecting the fact that each authority had different environments and publics, with different priorities. A critique of the prevalent attitude of corporate managerialism was perhaps expressed with a conclusion that authorities should concentrate more on setting "firm environmental targets" rather than producing "impressive sounding environmental strategies and statements" (Peattie and Hall, 1994: 484).

As outlined above, the Rio Summit and *sustainable development* provided a more tangible spur and role for local authorities in addressing the environment, and yet it is important to stress that the concept itself is not reducible to *environmental* concerns. As the title page of the UK Local Government Declaration on Sustainable Development states:

"Sustainable Development is not just another name for environmental protection. It is concerned with issues that are long term and effects that are irreversible. A new approach to policy making is required which does not trade off short term costs and

benefits but regards some aspects of the environment as absolute constraints.” (LGMB, 1993: 1).

The definition of sustainable development as “[d]evelopment which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1991) has led to a largely consensual interpretation which sees it as encompassing “developmental, social and economic concerns” (LGMB, 1994: 4) as well as environmental ones. Thus Agenda 21’s insistence on the need to reduce the use of energy and raw materials and to protect ecosystems is also entangled with equity issues, a stress on democratic processes and, once again, partnership between different sectors of society. Indeed, the LGMB define Local Agenda 21 as a process that is about “applying the partnership approach to achieve action for sustainable development at local level” (LGMB, 1994: 5). This ‘meta’-partnership includes industry, trades unions, the voluntary sector, women’s organisations and higher education in addition to local government.

Despite the apparently novel nature of this discourse, the earlier strategies of ‘greening local government’ seem closely reflected in the steps which authorities are urged to take in their Local Agenda 21 process. These include in-house audits and management, creating sustainability ‘strategies’ for each area of departmental work, awareness raising, consultation and participation, facilitating partnerships and finally monitoring progress. In these guidelines taken from the LGMB we can see that the meta-discourse of sustainable development has been translated into discourses and practices within which local authorities are already embedded.

Although the response to *climate change* is defined as a separate programme to sustainability and Local Agenda 21 in theory and in the minds of central government, it should be noted that in practice the different policy strands are often conflated. On the one hand it is admirable that there is an understanding that climate change should be a concern for the actions of all departments (hence its location in strategy or corporate policy). On the other hand there is a danger that the importance of the issue becomes diluted in being dealt with at the level of generalised commitments, so that climate

change as a discrete policy issue might be subsumed. In practice the make-up of working groups set up to deal with climate change is likely to influence the direction of responses and the nature of specific policies to address it.

I will explore these factors in later chapters, to describe how different cultural biases (identifiable through the different discourses employed by officers from different parts of the local authority networks) might explain the approaches being taken. I wish to show that these individual positions are based on the translation of climate change through discourses of the environment and local government already in place in the institutional environment. These are selectively reproduced due to individuals' prior commitments to those discourses that fit their cultural outlooks. To some degree, it seems that climate change is re-defined and unpacked into constituent concepts with regard to responses, with each aspect being dealt with by the grouping to whom it makes most sense, culturally speaking.

CLIMATE CHANGE: DISCURSIVE RIVALS AND DILEMMAS

In summary, then, the new discourse of 'responding to climate change' has appeared in the portfolio of local authority concerns along with a whole raft of 'modernising' discourses, and has to jostle for attention amongst a whole range of other, pre-existing discourses which define authorities' roles and identities. Historically, this has happened at a time when the society within which local government is embedded is moving from a traditional modernist era of communal provision and social welfare towards a re-conceptualisation of society as a global market. Faced with this transformation, local government has turned to a number of strategies to maintain its position as an essential and unique institution. Among these are maintaining and extending its legitimacy as a democratic institution, in a process of what has been called 'democratic renewal' (e.g. Stewart, 1996), and in developing a role as a key agent in addressing the world's environmental problems through the concept of sustainable development. Responses to climate change span, or are subsumed within, both of these strategies.

However, the success of these ‘survival strategies’ is by no means guaranteed given authorities’ weakened position as a result of processes of centralisation and privatisation implemented by central government. The discourses of *enabling* and *partnership* appear to be of special value in implying that even a weakened institution can hope to continue to wield meaningful influence in a position of reduced agency. However, as Cochrane points out, “[i]t is difficult to see how councils can be in the position of ‘enabling’ others to act when they themselves are in a relatively weak position” (Cochrane, 1993: 4). As my data bears out, there is a sense that in being asked to play a part in the response to climate change authorities are taking on responsibilities without the requisite agency.

In addition, there are important dilemmas thrown up by the adoption of these strategies, ones that are linked to local government’s essential nature and role. As I have pointed out, local government is seen first and foremost as a *democratic* institution, and so the discourses of *participation* that permeate local government and environmental discourses such as sustainable development are taken up as a means of enhancing its democratic legitimacy. However, the transition to a more participatory form of democratic legitimacy is bedevilled by local government’s modernist origins: by its basis in *representative* democracy. In this paradigm, the public exercise their participation in local government through their election of councillors, who are then empowered to act on behalf of their constituencies. Although I have no room to engage in a critique of representative democracy here, it should be noted that proponents of participatory democracy highlight the short-comings of the system, where “there is a tacit suggestion that the ‘representativity’ [sic] of those elected to local authorities is not adequate to reflect the interests of [...] a local community” (Tuxworth, 1996: 295). This is due to a number of factors, including that:

“[t]he vote is a limited instrument. Elections take place only at intervals and the choice presented is a broad one, between political parties whose general programmes are unlikely to correspond exactly to the views of citizens, which will differ on many issues. In no sense do those elected directly represent those who elect them” (Clarke and Stewart, 1992: 19).

In return, there is suspicion, in local authorities, of participation that seems to usurp or undermine the rights of the elected representative to make policy. Tuxworth's review of LA21 development in local authorities (Tuxworth, 1996) points out that whilst councillors are often aware of the

“potential for LA21 to revitalise local democracy and by extension the mandate of local government”, “[t]he ‘representativity’ of those involved in [participative] structures is bound to be questionable”, leading many councillors to be “justifiably alarmed” (Tuxworth, 1996: 294-6).

The fears are over the lack of accountability if decisions are made by un-elected members of the public, but also that participatory structures:

“can give a platform for unrepresentative and even dangerous views [...] there is a danger of agendas being dominated by dogmatic viewpoints [...] being monopolised by, for instance, articulate professionals, consultants or radical activists” (Selman and Parker, 1997: 178).

Another dilemma arises when considering the nature of ‘development’. Rather like sustainable development, this term is open to interpretation, but in the context of local government, as I have hinted, it often means the encouragement of private sector investment and activity within the authority's area, supported by the provision of necessary infrastructure. Given the ‘privatisation’ of society in general, and local government in particular, this translates on the ground into a constant push for economic growth based on development and construction. This largely consists of, or encourages, what might be defined as unsustainable practices, such as increases in commuting, an increase in the need to travel due to the replacement of local services by supermarkets, leisure complexes and so on, and the ever-increasing energy use which accrues from each new house, shop, office or factory.

That no conflict with *sustainable* development is perceived is perhaps due to the sense in which the concept is an empty signifier, successfully adopted as a model of future behaviour precisely because it can mean different things to different people (see Redclift, 1987; Sachs 1997b). Sachs points out that:

“Sustainable Development, as a field of discourse, emerged in the 1980s out of the marriage between developmentalism and environmentalism. Before that [they] were seen as distinct, if not contradictory, concerns [whose protagonists] inhabited two different mental spaces and regarded themselves as opponents. Out of a liaison between these two camps, ‘sustainable development’ was born” (Sachs, 1997b: 71-72).

I will argue that the different interpretations that ensue are largely based on cultural differences, and especially the models of nature that accompany them. Crucial to the internal dilemma of sustainable development is the view taken of *growth*. A *cornucopian* attitude towards development is of growth as a seemingly infinite production of value from the finite world through the application of human endeavour. Here “[g]rowth is regarded as part of the solution, no longer as part of the problem” (Sachs, 1997a: 20). Others in an authority may instead view the planet as fragile, and seek to halt or slow growth as an intrinsically unsustainable venture in a finite world; inspiring a search for “new models of prosperity which are not based on permanent growth” (Sachs, 1997a: 22).

Finally, looking back at the discourses that are woven through the central government’s constructions of climate change and the nature of appropriate responses to it in local government, we can see that the central definition of the programme to address climate change can be re-conceptualised as an exercise in discursive diplomacy. The central government’s documents reviewed represent an attempt to create a *consensus* on climate change, by utilising discourses taken from all the sectors, and cultures, whose help is necessary to make it succeed. In the more general characterisation of climate change as potentially *catastrophic* and requiring *immediate* responses, the construction seems to fit an *egalitarian* model of a *fragile earth*. The suggestion that it is a *long-term* challenge with differentiated *responsibilities* suggests a *hierarchist* or bureaucratic sensibility. References to shared, yet individual *responsibility* is more problematic, but the suggestion of a need for *consensus* again suggests *egalitarian* culture, with its stress on direct consent for decisions, reinforced by the perceived need for *consultation* (although as we have seen, this can be considered a very weak form of *participation* in decision-making). *Cost-effectiveness*, *targets* and *monitoring*, and perhaps *best practice* are discourses

which fit well with the bureaucratic or *hierarchist* rationality, whilst the more market-driven culture of *individualism* is reflected in the emphases on *competitiveness*, *strategies*, *promotion* and *voluntary* agreements, *quality/value* and *partnerships*, as well as the over-riding depiction of the ‘challenge’ to address climate change as a *win-win* situation.

On a purely enumerative analysis, we might conclude that in the central government’s constructions of climate change:

- a) the *nature* of climate change is constructed in an *egalitarian* way,
- b) the *justifications* given for responding to it reflect the rationalities of all three cultures, and
- c) the specific *responses* proposed seem to reflect a mixture of *hierarchism* and *individualism*.

In looking at the responses to climate change to be found in local government policies and activities, it would not be surprising for us to find a reproduction of these dominant constructions, particularly in the first two cases; the definition of climate change and the arguments for taking it seriously. These are meta-discourses that have fairly successfully penetrated down from climate change’s origin in the international arena. Likewise, in the area of specific responses, we might therefore expect to find that whilst local governments have to deal with different contingent circumstances in determining a response, the dominant cultural shaping which has already taken place at the ‘higher’ levels of government policy might also be reproduced.

This chapter has helped to highlight that the framing of almost any new programme of work in local government (and more especially environmental ones) would be likely to incorporate the discourses and concerns which are already extant, and also that we should not be surprised if the prescriptions for ways of tackling this new programme tend to reflect the cultural shift from hierarchism to market taking place in this area.

CHAPTER 3:1 THREE LOCAL AUTHORITIES'

RESPONSES TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Introduction

This chapter opens the empirically based section of the thesis. Along with the following two chapters it offers a tripartite analysis of my research. In this first chapter I will look at the three main sites of research-Newcastle City Council, Nottingham City Council and Liverpool City Council-and attempt to describe some of my findings in each as to their responses to climate change. In the next chapter I propose to offer an analysis that cuts across the 'vertical' institutional divisions, describing some of the main ways in which local authority responses to climate change can be compared as similar, as familiar processes of governmental bureaucracies addressing a new discourse in a highly institutionalised environment. Finally, in my chapter on multiple cultures within the single institutions of local government, I will 'cut the cake' in yet another manner, showing how distinctive discursive and cultural concepts, biases, definitions, goals and ways of working can be seen to be held by different groups across all three authorities.

This chapter acts as an ambiguous entity, halfway between description and analysis. In it I will give background to the three research sites, and to my research and findings within them. I will begin by describing briefly the locations of research themselves, the cities, in order to familiarise the reader with the distinct aspects of each site. Next I will provide information on local authorities and their organisation with regard to addressing climate change, and on the particular situation in each research site. In the course of my research I found it almost impossible to ascertain exactly how many layers of departments, working groups, sub-groups and partnerships were in operation at each site, and so this section will hopefully help to clarify matters. I will then offer some brief information as to the interviews carried out at each site (as promised in my Methods section) as these provide the majority of the data used in subsequent analysis. I will then go on to provide a

necessarily simplistic sketch of the responses to climate change being made by each authority based on the interview data, documentary data collected during the interviewing process, and other information derived from other sources, e.g. web-searches. To round off the chapter I will offer some analysis of these findings, in particular offering an account of how the authorities' responses resemble each other and differ, and proffering explanations for these factors.

The Research Sites

As explained in my Research Design chapter, the research sites were chosen on the basis of having 'structure' in common. In the terms of the criteria I was using at the time, this meant that I would chose a number of authorities which had responsibilities and organisational factors in common, in order to investigate whether or not differences in approach to climate change could be drawn between them. In addition, I decided that I should look at *urban* authorities, due to a number of factors. Foremost among these is the fact that "[t]he abatement of fossil fuel emissions [...] will require policies and initiatives based on a thorough understanding of the urban environment as an energy system"⁴⁹. Central to most, although not all (see Climate Change chapter), of the consensuses on addressing climate change focus on the fact that it is a problem associated with industrialism and urbanism. Leaving aside for the moment the production of methane through agricultural practices, greenhouse gas production is associated primarily with energy use, and energy use is focussed to a great extent in urban areas. This, combined with the fact that more than half of the world's population lives in cities [need ref, footnote] means that urban, municipal authorities "will play a vital role in reducing the energy intensities of urban environments and their greenhouse gas emissions, and can thereby contribute significantly to the implementation of the [FCCC]" (ICLEI, 1993: article 1) if climate change *is* to be addressed.

⁴⁹ I.C.L.E.I Cities for Climate Protection, *Declaration on Climate Change and the Urban Environment*: <http://www.iclei.org/declars/declar.htm>, Article 1.

The authorities chosen are also comparable in that they have achieved unitary status. More details on what this entails are found in the next section, but essentially it means that they have the same responsibilities with regard to service provision, with some scope for individual variance in the actual details of organisational structure.

Newcastle

Newcastle-upon-Tyne stands within the urban area of Tyneside, which has a population of 881,205⁵⁰, comparable to the population of Liverpool, and slightly larger than that of Nottingham. The city itself has a population of around 200,000, again comparable to the other case cities.

Probably the most ancient of my case cities, its heritage stretches back over 2,000 years, as exemplified by the proximity of Hadrian's Wall, the defences forming the northernmost limit of the Roman Empire in its hey-day. A typical Norman castle from 1080, and the medieval city walls further demonstrate the city's development through the ages. The city's money was bolstered through the proximity of the rich coalfields that rendered it of central importance in the Industrial Revolution. This combined with the city's port explains why development preceded that of other northern 'mill-towns', as 16th and 17th century merchants' houses sprang up at the very beginnings of industrialism.

The city is based on the River Tyne, and as such has typical port-related industry, including a history of shipbuilding and related heavy engineering. Also typically, this manufacturing base has been severely eroded over the latter half of the century, leaving a proportionally higher unemployment level than the average in the country, explaining the high strategic importance given to job creation in the council's activities. Architecturally the city is a patchwork of areas with internally distinct characters, although the ubiquitous northern housing patterns of terraced housing and back-to-backs are well represented. In amongst these are housing re-developments of the 1950s and '60s typified by areas such

⁵⁰ This and subsequent population figures (unless otherwise noted) are from Office for National Statistics, *1991 Census*, 1991.

as Byker, where modernist solutions to 19th century social problems stand anachronistically. Green areas are not abundant in the city centre area, but Jesmond Dene, near Byker, stands as a monument to 19th century private philanthropy. As in Liverpool, the waterside area of Newcastle has been the site of extensive redevelopment in the promotion of retail and leisure industries, with tourism more regionally than locally focussed.

The city is served by a central railway station, and has a metro system that helps to facilitate access to the city centre from the surrounding areas. Despite this, there has been typical suburbanisation, leading to greater numbers of people moving to the periphery of the city, with all the commuting-related transport problems that this trend encourages. The Energy Plan Review published in 1997 (City Of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1997) outlines that energy saving (and therefore climate-friendly) progress made in the early nineties has been largely fruitless given the concomitant traffic increases and their related emissions. However, transport initiatives were not highly in evidence in this authority by comparison with the concentration on energy.

Politically, Newcastle is a traditional Labour heartland, with not a single Conservative councillor at the time of writing. This position has been the case for a large number of years, and may explain the authority's keenness for large scale schemes in energy and transport (as socialist endeavours), and the slightly 'Old Labour' flavour of the views I detected amongst some of its officers.

Liverpool

Liverpool is another typical British city with an industrial history, this time primarily as a port. The urban area of Liverpool's population is 827,666, a figure that has actually declined during the century, as shown by its 1937 figure of 868,000 (Liverpool DESD, 1998: 8). This is largely due to mid-century slum clearances and housing developments that have seen people move from the city itself to surrounding districts. The city's economy was based on its position on the Mersey, and its phenomenal growth to become

the country's second largest port was due to the trading opportunities which arose from having a coastal river port on the north-western coast, facing both Ireland and America across the Atlantic. The city's waterfront presents an impressive frontage of 19th and early 20th century edifices such as the 'three graces' (the Liver Building, the Cunard building and the Royal Insurance building), which reflect the prosperity drawn into the city in its trading heyday. These remind the onlooker of New York's Manhattan, with its similar commercial history.

Its population boomed, leading to numerous social problems centred in the slum areas that have been subject to redevelopment over the century, leading to a higher quality of life for many of its residents, and also to a spread of 'suburbanism' with its related environmental impacts. Like many cities, Liverpool saw the establishment, or conservation, of a number of large green areas in the form of Victorian parks such as Sefton Park.

As is the case in most British cities, Liverpool's industry has been in decline for some time, with its most visible traditional industry, the Cammell Laird shipyards (technically speaking across the river in Birkenhead) due to close as I write. It has a typical city centre commercial district with a pedestrianised retail area and a number of shopping centres, although these are perhaps less 'developed' than in Nottingham, the St. John's Centre perhaps being typical with its cheaper stall-style market in the centre of an otherwise typical retail development. Tourism provides an increasing proportion of the city's income, with the redevelopment of the 'inner city' after the Toxteth riots of 1981 having been followed by intensive redevelopment of the docks area and promotion of the city's musical and football heritages. Mathew Street, with its Cavern nightclub, Cavern pub and Lennon's Bar, perhaps typifies the keenness to attract the tourist dollar.

Liverpool is served by impressive public transport, with a central train station with two large bus stations nearby and a metro system. Although I have not been aware of many cycle routes whilst visiting the city, Liverpool is notable in that it has an unusually low car ownership level, a fact pointed out to me in more than one interview, and which must

be due in part to the degree of accessibility to the city centre provided by the radial links of metro and bus routes reaching out into the suburbs.

The council in Liverpool is controlled by the Liberal Democrats, who have continued the stress on regeneration begun in the 1980s. In the late 1980s the council was a power base of the left wing sections of the Labour party, including the Militant group that was ousted from power in the city and in the party. Contemporary politics at the council are more subdued, although there is still a strong socialist presence in the city.

Nottingham

The 1991 Census gives the population of Nottingham City itself as 268,765, but as with the other cities, this is within the larger urban area of Nottingham with its population of 607,344, an area that is mostly under the jurisdiction of the City Council. It is known internationally due to its role in the Robin Hood sagas, with the Sheriff of Nottingham a notorious international anti-hero. Its castle, on a rocky ridge riddled with man-made caves, was originally founded after the Norman Invasion, making the city more typical of medieval cities than either Newcastle or Liverpool. Its first period of development and growth can be traced way back into the middle ages, and prosperity came from the traditional industries of that time; trade and farming. It acted as a market town for centuries, and this combined with its textile production based on the wool produced in the surrounding agricultural land, formed the base of its wealth. Unlike the other cities, it enjoyed royal patronage in the Middle Ages due to its location (controlling a strategic road to the north as it crossed the River Trent) and the fact that the legendary Sherwood Forest is nearby. This undoubtedly gained the city prestige, as seen in the fact that it acted as a county town from an early date (it received its Great Charter in 1449). As late as the opening of the 19th Century, woollen textiles remained a substantial factor in the city's economy, and the Industrial Revolution's initial impacts were felt in this industry, with the local Luddite riots a symptom of the social changes wrought by the introduction of machinery into such a traditional industry.

Despite this, Nottingham's industry developed in a respectable manner for a Midlands town, and manufacturing industry is still quite strongly in evidence around the city. Most famously, Boots pharmaceuticals and Rayleigh cycle engineering companies are based in the city, and the latter have been exploited in the promotion of cycling initiatives whilst the former have been key players in the Green Commuters' Club as major employers. The city's central, rather than coastal, position perhaps explains why industrial growth and trade have not played such a part in its development by comparison with the other case cities. It too has seen slum clearances in the mid 20th Century.

In transport infrastructure terms, Nottingham has substantial suburban development, stretching out to meet nearby towns such as Newark, and has radial routes of both rail and roads stretching out to the other cities that surround it. The nearby presence of the M1 north-south motorway connects it favourably to London and to the conurbations of Birmingham, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire. Unlike Birmingham, however, it has not been significantly linked into the extensive canal systems that explain that city's industrial prominence. A well-developed cycle lane system is also obvious from a visit to the city, but it lacks the metro of the two larger cities, although at the time of my research there was optimism that a tram system would be given the go-ahead.

Nottingham City Council is Labour dominated, and this has been the situation for more than a decade. The authority is known for pioneering work in both transport and planning.

Local Authority Structures In The Response To Climate Change

I now move on to an explanation of the institutional 'hardware' in place at each authority: the structures and groups that have been brought to my attention as playing a part in responding to climate change. In addition I will mention those extra-institutional bodies with which the authority is involved in what might be called the climate change network. In many cases, of course, these bodies are by no means concerned primarily with climate change. This apparently neutral and descriptive data is actually useful in gaining insights into the nature of the authority, how it may be forced to interpret or translate climate

change through pre-existing filters, and therefore how it frames both climate change and its responses to it.

In each case I will cover the structure as explained to me, and the areas of policy or service provision that were touched upon by my research. I make no claim to have an exhaustive or authoritative picture of the structure and working of local government. For the sake of intelligibility and consistence, I will deal with the structures addressing each of a number of areas: energy; transport; local agenda 21; housing; and planning.

Newcastle City Council

- Within the council, the Energy Manager holds overall responsibility for energy matters, and is located in the Architect's Department, or City Design. His responsibilities cover energy efficiency measures in the council's buildings, schools and housing stock, but also energy efficiency education to schools. Private housing falls within the responsibilities of the Housing Department, who are also promoting CHP. The Energy Centre (again within City Design) offer energy budgeting and monitoring, as well as promoting energy efficiency measures, to institutions, business, and domestic users. NEEDS (Newcastle Energy Efficiency Discount Scheme) is the city's version of HEES (Home Energy Efficiency Scheme) and is administered in partnership with Eaga and KNW (Keeping Newcastle Warm), both not-for-profit organisations who install the actual measures. Neighbourhood Energy Action also promoted measures to households. Other linked bodies were Northern Electric, the consultants Northern Energy Associates, the Renewable Energy Agency, and Newcastle Energy Initiative, all local.
- Transport measures were dealt with by the Planning and Transport Department, mainly focussed on strategic matters associated with the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and a City Centre plan. There was an LA21 Transport group mentioned as well, although I was told that it, along with other LA21 groups, had been inactive for some time.

- LA21's co-ordinator was located in the same building as the Newcastle Healthy City Project (NHCP), and appeared to be heavily linked with it. The NHCP provided secretarial support to the Newcastle Environmental Forum (NEF), and provided office space for the Newcastle Community Environmental Trust (NCET), who both focus on LA21 style education and out-reach to school and community groups, supporting such initiatives as food groups and recycling. Official, council rather than voluntary, LA21 groups were split into working groups on the usual topics, with two on energy. They were made up of officers and representatives of the utilities, transport operators, consultants, academics, and the other voluntary sector groups already mentioned. The groups, reporting to an Officer Group and to the LA21 Sub-Committee (formerly the Environmental Management Sub-Committee), were 'fizzling out' in a perceived transfer of agency to the voluntary groups such as NEF, who were looking to set up a charity, Sustainable Newcastle, to further this process.
- The Housing Renewal section was responsible for putting energy efficiency measures into council housing as part of a standard renewal cycle. As mentioned under energy, other agencies were responsible for the promotion of energy efficiency to other sectors. In central government, they relied on advice from the DETR, the Energy Efficiency Unit and the Energy Savings Trust, but were disparaging about their usefulness. The Housing Unit discharged HECA responsibilities (The Home Energy Conservation Strategy), and wanted to push CHP, but felt hampered by the usual financial restrictions on investment.
- Planning was linked with energy through the person of the head of Planning and Transportation, the council's energy strategy being written by the Chief Planning Officer, also within the LA21 energy group. Strategically, most important were the considerations of the UDP and the city centre plan, which was being implemented through CPP (Corporate Policy Priority?) groups, one of which was focussed on the environment and sub-divided into groups on environmental management, waste, energy and transport.

- An Energy Unit was responsible for council buildings and housing stock energy efficiency. I presume this is the same as the Energy Management Office where the Energy Manager was located. Corporately, each of the council's 8 Directorates had an energy liaison officer, reporting to the Energy Manger in the pursuit of an internal corporate Energy Policy (saving energy and therefore money). Energy Efficiency Resource Packs for schools were being issued by the Urban Renewal Services unit of the Housing and Consumer Services Directorate, or rather their Housing Associations and Initiatives Group. For individual household energy efficiency, see below on housing.
- The Transport Planner was responsible for implementing the Road Traffic Reduction Act and its targets, as well as producing the Local Transport Plan (LTP) in conjunction with others. An LA21 Transportation Group was also in place, and a Transport working group in the Liverpool Environmental Forum (LEF). MerseyTravel (MT) were in charge of public transport, and worked with the five local authorities in order to manage transport regionally, including working on the Transport Package Bids which formed a basis for the later LTP. Details of structure were confused, as this quote from MerseyTravel on the structure delivering the package bids shows: "there's a high level management group, then there's a chief officer, a high level chief officer group, below which there's a steering group, and below that there's the working group [...] but then again below the working group [...] are the sub-groups" (BW3)
- The LA21 officer was based in the Environmental Strategy Team, within the Policy and Information section of the Planning, Transportation and Building Surveying Service, itself within the Development and Environmental Services Directorate! The LA21 process was split into topic groups, which were in turn mirrored by topic groups of the LEF. The LA21 officer explained that the 'community' could be split into four groups – business, public and voluntary sectors, and the public – and that groups in the LA21 groups represented 54% of the public. I attended the Energy and Pollution group.
- The Housing and Consumer Services Directorate were responsible for HECA related energy strategy, which showed a focus on forming and 'developing' partnerships

internally (such as an Energy Working Party and a CHP Working Party) and externally (with MERCWEEAC (MERseyside, Cheshire and Deeside Energy Efficiency Advice Centre), HEES installers and Housing Associations etc. Without its own Energy Advice Centre, promotion of energy efficiency was achieved in partnership with the Wirral EAC. Further grants were available from the Liverpool City Council Energy Saving Partnership. The LEF also has a 'built environment' working group.

- Transport Planning was regionally based on MERITS (the MERseyside Integrated Transport Strategy), produced by the five regional authorities and MerseyTravel. There was also links with the UDP again, but also with the Merseyside Development Corporation. MerseyTravel also liased with the Planning Department in analysing the transport implications of major new developments.

Nottingham City Council

- The Energy Manager was responsible for the council's own buildings and housing stock, and was proposing setting up an Energy Supply Partnership with the utilities. He was located within the Energy Management Service and reported to the Sustainability Sub-Committee. The Energy Management Service also had an Energy Conservation Fund (of around £1M) from which to lend for efficiency measures. A regional approach was also evident with the existence of the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Local Authorities' Energy Partnership. Nottingham Energy Partnership (launched in 1998) are a partnership between the council and EnviroEnergy Ltd, run as a not-for profit venture, offering the usual energy surveys and monitoring, plus implementing energy efficiency schemes. They have four Task Groups, on Industry/Commerce, Public Buildings, Transport and Housing. EnviroEnergy seemed to be the main agency promoting energy efficiency measures to households.
- The Chief Executive helped set up a Sustainable Transport Working Groups as early as 1994, a corporate policy unit. The STWG started a discount bus scheme in 1994 as part of the council's GCP, which continued with the appointment of a Staff Travel Co-ordinator in 1997 (one of my interviewees). The Commuter Planners Club is an

extension of this approach to other major employers in the area: business, hospitals, schools and the public sector. The Nottingham Bicycle Friendly Employers Group has successfully bid for money to improve cycling facilities at workplaces. The EU MOSAIC (MObility Strategy Applications In the Community) project has been used to survey mobility management possibilities. The Car Free Cities organisation, of which NCC is a member (more influential in Europe), was another source of expertise for this process. Transport 2000 (T2000) were close partners in a number of transportation matters.

- Local Agenda 21 was subsumed within sustainability, overseen by the Sustainability Team, and its leader. The Sustainability Team was within Policy Development, in the Chief Executive's Office. A Sustainability Sub-Committee had overall control, and seemed to be concentrating on setting indicators. The Nottingham Green Partnership developed out of the council's pursuing a Friends of the Earth-inspired Green Charter, and are sub-divided into 8 topic groups, co-ordinated by a steering group. The LA21 report itself was seen as a combination of the NGP's sub-group expertise and a more traditional styled community consultation carried out by the LA21 Officer, also within the Sustainability Team.
- As mentioned before, EnviroEnergy appeared to be the main agency promoting and arranging energy efficiency to the private sector. Housing improvements are also carried out with funding from Estate Action and City Challenge programmes, whilst the Energy Manager in Housing dealt with HECA responsibilities.
- As mentioned before, details on planning were limited to the duties of the planners in implementing travel packages with employers on the occasions of new developments, with overall responsibility for this and other planning matters residing with the Transport and Planning Department.

Interviews Conducted

In this section I list the interviews conducted at each research site, preserving interviewee anonymity as promised in the arrangement of interviews, to some degree, by referring only to the subjects' institutional positions. This is partly to provide some confirmation as

to the robustness of my methodology, as in each case I have attempted to interview officers associated with the main departments who are seen to have some degree of agency in responding to climate change. Additional interviews were conducted primarily on the recommendations of earlier interview subjects, and in some cases were with bodies linked to, but not within, the authority itself (this perhaps demonstrates the extent to which the discourse of partnership is being actualised in local authority practices). This concern with interviewing the primarily responsible departments in each authority arose as an attempt to ensure that I was not getting a lop-sided view of the nature of each authority's responses. Despite these concerns, however, the largely informal manner in which interviews were arranged means that I cannot insist that I can claim to have provided a 'representative' sample of the work going on at each site, in the sense of having interviewed exactly the same number and type of subjects at each. Such concerns might be more directly relevant in a study with a quantitative methodology, such as a questionnaire survey. In carrying out qualitative and semi-structured interviews my principal concern was to gain a sense of the responses being made to climate change from the perspective of, and reflecting the priorities of, those who are most directly involved, and therefore to follow up the 'leads' supplied by my 'informants', somewhat in the manner of a detective.

Newcastle City Council

At Newcastle, the site at which the fewest interviews were obtained, my first interview was with my 'gatekeeper', as in the other authorities. He was preparing to leave the authority in order to join his wife in a private energy consultancy, demonstrating perhaps the expertise in this area in Newcastle. His actual title within the authority was **Assistant Head of Planning and Transportation**, but telephone discussions and the interview itself displayed that he had a very strategic view of energy as the main framing for climate change. Indeed, he was one of the people described to me by another officer as forming a 'triumvirate' of officers who acted as the corporate policy-generating group in this policy area, and had been one of the prime movers in producing an energy plan for the city. This was an attempt to calculate as accurately as possible the energy inputs and

expenditures of the entire Newcastle district, along with analysis of the sources of this energy, for example from which power stations electricity was sourced. The plan also outlined plans for reducing energy uses, and a disappointing five-year review of the plan was published shortly before my interview. A large percentage of the interview focussed on transport and planning issues, as well as the history of Newcastle's energy projects.

Other interviews were conducted with the **Energy Manager**, (interestingly in the Architects' Department), the head of **Housing Renewal** (which was primarily responsible for introducing energy efficiency measures in the authority's own housing stock), and the **Local Agenda Officer**. Telephone interviews were also conducted with two other members of the **local Agenda 21 Team**, including the **Local Agenda 21 Co-ordinator**.

Liverpool City Council

At Liverpool, my initial interview was with the **Local Agenda 21 Officer**, who was able to help me arrange most of my interviews in the authority personally. He submitted himself to a number of telephone interviews during the course of arranging interviews with others, and also invited me to a meeting of the **LA21 Energy Sub-Group**, which I attended and wrote up from my notes. Also present at that meeting was the **Energy Manager**, who I had interviewed, and who agreed with my 'gatekeeper' that I should conduct a further interview with the head of the **Housing Energy Unit**. Another interview was conducted with Liverpool's **Transport Planner**, who stressed that in this area, Liverpool's attention to climate change had primarily been directed by the requirements of central government, in that his contributions to the preparation of the Local Transport Plan had involved addressing its effects on climate change as a duty imposed by the guidance. To pursue the transport angle, I was also able to interview the **Transport Planner of MerseyTravel**, the body promoting public transport in the Merseyside district.

Nottingham City Council

In Nottingham, my 'gatekeeper' was the **Sustainability Team Leader**, located within the Chief Executive's Office. He was also able to provide details of Nottingham's **Local Agenda 21**, whose primary officer I did not interview, but was responsible to the Team Leader, with LA21 subsumed within the Sustainability Team in Nottingham's somewhat corporate approach to environmental policy. My 'gatekeeper' displayed a wide-ranging knowledge of the different strands of policy that had links to climate change, and his primary interests seemed to be in the area of transport, on which he was keen to stress Nottingham had nationally acknowledged expertise. His reassurances that Nottingham could, and soon would, draw together some of their policies under the 'banner' of climate change responses seem to be borne out by recent press releases by the council, which describe the signing of Nottingham's Declaration on Climate Change at a prestigious conference on Local Authority Action for Climate Change⁵¹.

Following up his suggestions and interests, I interviewed one of the two officers developing and implementing green commuter plans, the **External Green Commuting Officer**, whose responsibilities involved encouraging other large employers in the city to develop their own commuter plans in partnership with the council and the Green Commuters' Club. A further interview was conducted with the **Energy Manager**, and with the boss of **EnviroEnergy**, a private company in partnership with the Council and specialising in promoting energy efficiency schemes in the city.

Therefore in each authority I was able to secure interviews which covered the areas of LA21, energy, transport, planning and housing, with the exception of Nottingham, where I have to admit to have been swept along by my gatekeeper's enthusiasm in promoting his own personal interests; his keenness to stress the more innovative aspects of Nottingham's policy direction to the exclusion of my covering the more mundane aspects of housing and planning. Despite this, most of the aspects covered by transport planners in other authorities were also covered in my interviews with the Team Leader and the Commuting Officer, for example the use of 'Section 106' in dealing with large scale developments to force businesses and employers to create their own commuter plans or

⁵¹ The conference took place at Nottingham's Council House, 25th October, 2000.

traffic reduction schemes. In addition, my discussions with EnviroEnergy were focussed (among other topics) on the promotion of energy efficiency to households, the policy that forms the main response to climate change in energy or housing departments in the other authorities. Nevertheless, this shortcoming provides a lesson for similar or future research of this type; to exercise caution in dealing with enthusiastic gatekeepers to avoid biasing of the data collected.

Other Interviews

In addition to the above interviews conducted at the authority research sites, I was able to secure an interview with Mike Summerskill at the **DETR**, who had responsibility for the implementation of HECA throughout local government in the UK, and Catriona Reeby at the **Energy Savings Trust**, which is the quasi-governmental organisation charged with promoting energy efficiency throughout the country, not only in local authority (although they are the source of much authority funding for energy efficiency schemes) but also to households and business. It may be noted that no interviews were conducted with members of the respective councils, and this omission deserves explanation. The following section addresses the issue of the political aspect to the policy process.

Policy and Politics

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, and again in discussing the operationalising of the research question, my original research outline was focussed on the process of climate change and environmental *policy*-making. I have also described how my non-academic supervision from the LGMB, and then the IDeA, suggested that I focus on one or another of the programmes of greening and modernising local government, for example LA21, best value, sustainability indicator and so forth. The strongest advice I received was not to research the LA21 process, as that was already the subject of extensive enquiry and evaluation, but to focus on climate change as a specific policy area.

In my initial telephone survey of local authorities, it became clear that there was no such thing, in the overwhelming majority of authorities, as a *specific* climate change policy. This is covered in chapter 3.2, where the reasons for and against having such a policy are assessed by the research subjects. My attention was therefore drawn away from looking at the (political) policy-making process as such, and towards an assessment of what actions local authorities were in fact taking to address climate change. In addition, as I discuss in my Research Design chapter, interviews were obtained with officers, rather than members of the case study authorities, as a result of utilising a ‘snowballing’ approach to building up a list of interviewees. These were indeed the people who were seen as holding primary responsibility for addressing climate change.

Policy analysis is an area of political analysis that would have had interesting contributions to the study of responses to climate change, in that sociologists have had a significant input into the understanding of how such issues come to be recognised as susceptible to policy management (Liberatore, 1995; Wynne and Simmons, 2001), and there is a policy studies literature which addresses the processes through which certain issues become the focus of attention and action for political institutions. In addition, academic work such as that published by the journal *Local Environment* focuses specifically on the many issues surrounding local authorities and sustainability, although more work has been done on LA21 than climate change *per se*.

The influence of party politics in politicising the ‘environment’ and environmental issues (e.g. Entwistle, 1998) is another area that this thesis does not address. My case study authorities are controlled by Labour in two cases and the Liberal Democrats in the third, with substantial majorities, and the influence of these factors was not mentioned by any of the respondents. I have chosen not to follow this path of a more conventional political analysis partly because of the IDeA’s interest in how the institutionalisation of the climate change issue worked in local authorities, rather than on how or why the issue relates to e.g. electoral success. Most mentions in the data referred to the issue as of very low political interest. Instead, the issues of commitment and interest from the members were

seen as more relevant, more commonly, the 'politics' of the environment and climate change were not an issue that registered at all.

However, in approaching the response to climate change in the authorities with which I have had contact, the issue of the role of members has been notable by its absence from the concerns of the officers. This is itself relevant, hence the following section highlights some of the references made to the role of the council and councillors in the case study authorities. Further background information on the political framings of the authorities is given in chapter 3.1.

Importance Of Members' Commitment

Specific mention was made of the importance of support from the authority's members in furthering environmental policies and ambitions, mirroring the conclusions of much research into this area (Lusser and Riglar, 1999; Blake, 1999; Tuxworth, 1996; Tuxworth and Thomas, 1996):

“CC: A lot comes down at the end of the day again to whether the council will give it sufficient priority backed with the resources to actually make it work. That's the key issue, you know, is the sort of will, the er, commitment from the council.

INT: I know that er, [officer] mentioned er, fact that there used to be a councillor who, was a champion for energy efficiency and for environmental, green issues, as well, and he said that [illegible] the council, do you think that that is an important part, that there must be the membership on board as well?

CC: Yeah...absolutely.” (CC3)

However, this was also stressed as a potential problem. In the case of low political support, especially in the face of other more influential priorities, environmental agendas were seen as being relegated in importance, and therefore not pursued with the necessary commitment:

“CC: Yeah, I mean it is er, I think, the bottom line is I mean, this is the political process, you know, local government is a political process by its very nature

obviously. Erm, they have their own agenda and their own sort of hidden agendas, and they have *priorities*, erm. and by and large *sustainability and environmental issues has never been a priority*.

INT: Right,

CC: And, why I don't know, other than, there's bound to be an element of personalities and champions. You know, you get some local authorities, where it is a big issue, and you find that the leader's inevitably into green issues themselves, they sort of believe in the process, they understand it, and therefore they go down that line. We haven't got, you know, our *leader and the key politicians, aren't particularly green.*" (CC4)

"CC: We had a conference last November which we launched this [LA21] strategy, I don't think any of the chief officers came, er, *very few of the councillors* came, we talked about setting up a multi-sector steering group to steer this process, there was *no political commitment* to do that now really. What they're talking about is trying to come to some arrangement where they actually, and you know, it might be a good thing but I think it's simply being done because there's no ruling [?] in the council" (CC6)

The nature of the dominant priorities in local authority was consistently spelt out as primarily economic, as detailed later in the thesis.

In the only direct reference to an environmentally committed individual in a council, his contribution was portrayed as negative:

"CC: I think if you spoke to most councillors, did a poll of most councillors and said you know do you feel that you have a responsibility to climate change, what do you think the...? Erm, so, that's the difficulty [...] the odd councillors that were committed like [member], unfortunately [member]'s got a manner that puts people off, and I've heard other councillors saying you know, 'You haven't seen [member] today have you?' and you say 'why?' and they say 'he was going about me the other day about you know, not driving to work, you know, he gets on my fucking tits that guy' and that's the way they talk about him, they just try and avoid him,

you know. Erm, and you felt like you can have a negative impact on people because of his, things like hectoring approach” (CC8)

In fact, the commitment of individual *officers* (rather than councillors) was seen by this officer as of higher importance:

“CC: [...] because [officer] was also the *policy officer*, er, responsible for developing the Unitary Development Plan, again, because of his own *personal commitment* and interest, he made sure that issues around energy and climate change were actually built in to the Unitary Development Plan,

INT: Right,

CC: If he hadn't have been here I'm not sure it would have happened, you know, so a lot, so much comes down to *personalities* and having the *right people* in the *right place*.” (CC13)

The intimation of this passage is that the right place for ensuring that policy is furthered is a high level officer's position, preferably within policy development.

A number of officers stressed that climate change as a policy area had little political support, whereas there was member commitment to a number of the more generally environmental policies that were taken to be relevant to addressing climate change:

“INT: Talking about democracy as well, er, actual council members, has there been any push from, from council members on climate change. Is it something that's primarily officer-led or...?”

SW: Well, I mean, that, climate change isn't a phrase that most of them will use yet [...] I suspect that from Wednesday onwards we will begin to use that phrase more, and so will they. Erm, that's not to say that they haven't got passion for the *individual policy initiatives* that you can take within that, there are some very passionate *green commuter plan* people, and they, they have definitely been behind the tram [...] and they, er, are very definitely behind...er, recycling” (SW30-31)

Another officer from the same authority stresses that having an influential and environmental Chief Executive is helpful, but that specific initiatives rather than wider policies are the beneficiaries of such interest, and that again officers bear the greatest responsibility in forwarding agendas:

“INT: Can you tell me a bit about, talking about [chief executive] and SOLACE?

MM: Yeah, erm, I’m not sure of the exact details, but there is a Society of Local Government Chief Executives, it’s obviously quite an influential group, ‘cause it’s all people that are heading, you know, large authorities. And, he’s either chair of the whole thing or he’s chair of the *environmental working group*.

INT: Right so has he sort of sponsored environmental programmes in [city], has he been pushing for them or is it just..?

MM: Erm, yeah, I think the thing that he has a particular interest in, and sort of picks up on, which makes it, you know, if obviously he supports a *particular initiative*, you know, that makes it a lot easier for that thing to go forward, but erm, you know, similarly, you know, there’s a tremendous breadth of getting the message across and things have to be co-ordinated [...] you know, the integration and finding the links between things we’re doing in this department and things they’re doing in other departments is, you know, involves a much more on-going, continue, get the message across approach rather than *just championing particular things*.

INT: Yeah, but do you think the emphasis on, well, the fact that [city] is seen by some other authorities as well as actually being, in the vanguard of green policies, do you think that is to do with having someone who’s interested in it in the...the Chief Executive’s office.

MM: Well, I mean, I’ve only been here three years,

INT: Right,

MM: But in my perception, it’s because of the, some of the *senior managers* in this department, the development department, have a lot of vision, particularly on the links between planning and transportation.” (MM2)

Here we see that a corporate commitment to integrating responses to climate change is sought by the officer, whilst he also suggests that if there is progress on specific projects, it is primarily due to officers’ work rather than political support. The institutional influence of a committed chief executive is appreciated, primarily in easing officers’ implementation of specific projects.

Finally, the transient nature of political positions and re-organisation of officers' responsibilities are seen as a problem in maintaining policy continuity over long periods of time:

“CC: And the issue came up about some of the things that we produced over the last few years as part of the LA21 process or in tandem with it like the, the HECA strategy, the energy conservation strategy and also the Energy and the Urban Environment document [...] and the planner who's now the representative on the [committee name?] knows that either of these documents actually existed, never heard of them, and it's just as if they've gone out the window now, and both [officer] and [officer] were making a plea that we actually bring them back in line because they were, particularly the Energy and the Urban Environment you know, was quite a ground breaking document and it is just being put on the bottom shelf and forgotten about, it really has, it's just gone, you know [...] all of the findings from that just disappeared out the window, they were forgotten about you know, within the reorganisation, all *the officers* that were, *are sort of being cleared out*, we've got *all new chief officers* with new agendas coming in, councillors are sort of knives [?] and sort of *in fighting* and some *councillors* that were, that were sort of pushing the agenda from down the, from down the erm flavour of the month list and so, you know, so I can't talk about councils in general, but this council is er, has always been a very sort of *fluid council* in terms of all sorts of *political in-fighting*”
(CC8)

Policy Process

In most of the data, the structures of committees and sub-committees are described in greater detail than the policy processes that created them. In one instance however, an officer situated in the Chief Executive's department, in Policy Development, was able to explain the processes by which the agenda of 'greening' the authority has progressed to encompass LA21 and widening multi-sectoral partnerships. This story-line is interesting from the perspective of policy studies, but also illuminating, in that over a decade elapses

between the first adoption of a 'Green Charter' and the eventual publishing of a sustainability action plan as a result of LA21:

The authority's Green Charter was seen as an important and innovative step, in the vanguard of environmental policy:

“SW: [...] let me just say a little bit about [city] Green Partnership. And to do that I need to go back to October 1989, when the council launched it's Green Charter,

INT: Right, so this is the same time as Thatcher's speech?

SW: Erm, it was, yes, but it was a month or two before Friends of the Earth's Environmental Charter for Local Governments, so we just got in there before Friends of the Earth, which was quite nice to be able to say.” (SW21)

The city's Green Partnership was set up as a result of a commitment to a multi-sectoral discussion of environmental policy (a 'round table' approach) in the Green Charter:

“SW: In 1989 we launched this Green Charter in the council, and right at the end of that was an expression of [...] developing commitment, was this wish to set up this...erm, *debating forum* as the view was in 1989, primarily with the voluntary sector, to get them involved in helping the city council frame its environmental, subsequent environmental policies.

INT: Right,

SW: But by the time I got appointed and we got around to doing something about that particular part of the Green Charter, we'd got to the end of 1990, and by then, the agenda had broadened, so that we began to invite not just voluntary sectors, but to have the first meeting to include businesses, the public utilities...and both the Universities. And, that first met in February 1991, it took a year of debate and discussion before it became the structure [...] and call itself [city] Green Partnership.” (SW23)

Finally, the LA21 process (which the officer describes very accurately: “we reserve the term Local Agenda Twenty One, we only use it in the way in which it was intended to be used by the Agenda Twenty One Agreement in Rio [...] that is, to the title, or to describe that process of engaging with local communities to produce an action plan for

sustainability” (SW 22)) is described as resulting from co-ordination between this Green Partnership and the City Council:

SW: But, the actual consultation strategy was agreed between [city] Green Partnership [...] and the City Council, the city-, in 1995, the council made a full, a motion to council in December 1995 to support Local Agenda Twenty One and the consultation strategy, which was quite detailed about how we go about doing it, whom you involve, what mechanisms we have,

INT: Right,

SW: Was jointly developed by Nottingham Green Partnership and was agreed by them, and then by the relevant council committees in turn.

INT: Right,

SW: Throughout the Autumn and Winter of 1995. So it was Environment Committee, our main committee for policy resources and then a motion, the last thing was a motion through full council, December 1995, to say that we would support any organisations, community groups, businesses, whatever, want to join with us in developing a plan for sustainable development in [city].

INT: Right,

SW: Under the banner of Local Agenda Twenty One, and that was a most, a nicely worded motion through council, interesting process there.” (SW21)

It is noteworthy that the LA21 process appears to have been taken up first by the Green Partnership (itself a multi-sectoral discussion forum), then to have been endorsed by environmental committees within the council before being passed by the council itself. This process was finally nearing completion at the time of interviewing:

“No1: And the process is, at the moment, is at this stage at the moment, trying to combine these two views [community and Green Partnership views] into a draft action plan for sustainable [city], as it’s called here. Goes out to a process of *consultation* during the next year, so that by the end of nine-, next year, or some time during 1999 we will have our action plan for sustainable development [...] That will be our fulfilment of our Local Agenda Twenty One process, I mean, quite where we go from there is, well is in implementation I imagine, really” (SW26)

Beyond these contributions, the officers interviewed made little of the role of politics and the policy development process in the response to climate change. The institutional position of those interviewed also appeared to determine the level of their interest in talking about such matters. The data above comes in the main from a policy developer and an LA21 officer. Energy, transport and housing officers, at a lower level in the institutional hierarchy, were more attentive to the details of how they were fulfilling the statutory requirements and duties handed down to them as already 'given' policy. Chapter 3.2 of the thesis, however, deals with a number of issues relevant to this topic in addressing the generality and vagueness of corporate policies, and their denigration in comparison with concrete (although often not specifically climate change related) projects and initiatives.

Having outlined these issues, I now compare the three authorities' responses, assessing the similarities and differences in approach.

Responses To Climate Change: A Summary With Initial Analysis

What follows is a summary of each council's responses to climate change, in necessarily truncated and summarised form. In each I will attempt to point out how each authority has a slightly different framing of climate change, and is responding to it in a slightly different way, whilst acknowledging that because of the existence of legislation and statutory duties, they will of necessity be a high level of similarity in the responses being made. I will compare these analyses of the differences in approaches with my original characterisations of the authorities in their selection for study, and offer explanations of why differences have been apparent.

Newcastle City Council

In my very first contact with Newcastle, I was told that they had no climate change policy as such, but that their understanding of addressing it was very firmly based in energy

efficiency. Newcastle is nationally acknowledged as having a high concentration of expertise on energy matters, and so this came as no great surprise. The history of Newcastle's involvement with cutting-edge energy initiatives includes its creation of the Byker waste-to-energy plant back in the 1970s. This demonstrator project was co-funded by the council and the government with special fiscal arrangements such as guaranteed prices for the electricity it produced, to ensure its success. In an ideal world it might have shown that cities in Britain could take the route of many Scandinavian countries in combining waste reduction, cheap energy production and the provision of very cheap heating to houses and business in the form of hot water resulting from the energy creation process. Indeed, there was a lot of concentration on pursuing the possibilities of CHP in Newcastle, as an obvious response to climate change, with capital spending restrictions and other aspects of local government finance being quoted as the main barrier to exploitation of such initiatives. To my mind this attitude represents an approach that falls strangely between the traditional and the radically innovative. On the one hand a large scale technological system is proposed as a solution, one which in a sense smacks of old style socialist planning, of over-ruling the individual in order to provide long term benefits to all. Responsibility is seen to rest with the (local) government to over-ride the selfish and self-interested motivations and behaviours of individuals for social reasons, which in fact would also be of personal benefit, as households' energy bills would be slashed. On the other hand, proposing such a re-thinking of individual choice and of the 'rolling back of the state' that has characterised British government since 1979 is radical these days, and proposing to invest large amounts of money in order to achieve savings is similarly out of step with current thinking.

The energy plans in Newcastle also demonstrate that a nascent climate change policy exists in theory. In these plans, a number of dedicated individuals secured European funding to undertake a multi-sectoral approach to energy, looking at all its sources and uses, across the traditional boundaries of local authorities, and proposing a plan of action to secure savings. Such an approach reflects a broad understanding of the all-pervasive nature of energy issues, but perhaps misses out some of the other strands of climate change, such as its links to the social values represented by LA21. In the course of

research, I was told that the energy plan had not been implemented, and that although savings were being made as a matter of course in many areas, energy use increases in the transport sector were effectively undoing any of the good work done in other areas. The first fact may be explained by the plan's lack of institutional 'mooring', it was not produced by the Chief Executive's Office or as a corporate Sustainability Policy, but through the dedication of a few officers. In addition, changes in personnel were quoted as a reason for the plan's falling by the wayside, perhaps resulting in the duplication of effort so commonplace in large bureaucracies. In the area of transport, I was unable to unearth many new initiatives, but then Newcastle is served by an extensive underground and bus network, which appears to many to be adequate but not taken up. The reasons for this were given as 'suburbanisation' and increases in commuting, which were seen in terms of issues of individual choice. It was thought that expensive public transport measures might only result in the redistribution of the non-car travelling public, and that planning measures could only have marginal effects in the face of ever-increasing car use. The pro-active attitude of Nottingham towards commuter plans might be of great benefit here, as Newcastle is the site of a number of large-scale employment sites.

The LA21 process appeared to be languishing, and at the time of research it appeared that there was frustration with the council for not doing much, whilst other agencies appeared willing and eager to take on the business of promoting small-scale sustainability initiatives themselves. In many senses they were taking an orthodox approach, for example using the LGMB's documents on 'how to do an LA21' as a template for their own processes. However, the difficulties that are intrinsic to LA21 were apparent, for example the virtual impossibility of involving the whole community in discussing how to bring about sustainability with meagre resources and officer time. I was however encouraged by the degree to which people outside the authority seemed to be keen to take up the programme themselves, and to translate 'sustainability' into focussed projects. However, not many of these were relevant to climate change. Others in the authority seemed to consider that the existence of working groups constituted the existence of an LA21 process, when to those 'on the ground' it was clear that this was not the case, and that the process was not being taken very seriously.

With its history of energy expertise, and a focus on fuel poverty, housing was being addressed adequately in an orthodox manner through HECA. A preponderance of agencies and initiatives existed to promote the standard technical-fix solutions to energy efficiency. Despite this, there was an acknowledgement that all of this effort was achieving too little, too slowly. As in each case study authority, the main complaint was that private households and particularly landlords were difficult to access and convince.

In the most general terms, it appeared that Newcastle's particularities meant that job creation and inward investment and development were far higher in the council's list of responsibilities than such 'soft' social issues as participation and LA21. Climate change was being addressed through the most orthodox means of energy efficiency, whilst it was acknowledged that other areas needed to be addressed for this approach to secure a response to climate change. District Heating, CHP, waste-to-energy, even Photo-voltaic demonstration schemes were all present in the city, but there was awareness that these would not be mainstreamed into common usage unless there were fairly substantial changes in legislation and financial restraints. In this manner, the 'orthodox' framing of climate change went along with an ascription of responsibility and agency that followed a 'top-down' hierarchical model. Ideally, it was felt that national government would have to provide for the local government to be able to provide for its citizens on a large scale. Although this approach fits with more socialistic ideals, we can see that it ill fits the models of local governance being promoted by the government, where public funds and public grants are frozen or withdrawn and partnership with the private sector is promoted.

Liverpool City Council

My initial impressions about Liverpool's framings were largely borne out by my research. My first contact was with the LA21 officer, and we had a number of interviews on the telephone before meeting for an interview. I became convinced that Liverpool primarily viewed climate change in terms of LA21 if at all. Further interviews also led to a general impression that the concept of climate change itself had not made much of a mark on the

authority's consciousness, much less on its structures or workings. To the energy manager, the environment was a resource to be managed like any other, a very managerial and bureaucratic outlook which was also allied with a genuine belief that traditional and common sense approaches of monitoring and applying technical fixes could go a long way towards reducing wastage. In addition, the government's approach towards spreading the message of energy efficiency was seen as wasteful of resources itself, a pouring of money into gimmicks and advertising which would be better spent on technology. By contrast, I saw some very good material that was being sent out to schools from the Housing Department to educate children about energy efficiency as part of the science requirements of the national curriculum.

In the area of transport, I got the impression that Liverpool's regional links were of supreme importance. As a part of the larger urban area of Merseyside, there was a concentration on co-ordinating what all the authorities in the district were planning. It has to be said that MerseyTravel were very impressive in their grasp of environmental and social questions relating to transport, and their keen pursuit of new discourses. This is perhaps demonstrated by the fact that they have a community links unit that uses the new research methodologies of citizen's panels and focus groups to maintain input from many different groups within the city, in a way that appeared to put the council to shame. I was surprised that the council was not better exploiting this network. On the other hand, documentation from the transport bodies within and without the council seemed to show that achievements in initiatives such as low emission or alternative fuel vehicles, as well as the fulfilment of various performance indicators, were lagging behind the obvious keen commitments displayed. Another factor often commented upon was the low level of car ownership and therefore congestion in the city, added to which there was local expertise in the area of health and transport, so that references to emissions were conceived primarily in local terms as sources of ill health. Given these factors (and the high usage of public transport anyway), climate change was not perceived as an issue which could galvanise action locally on traffic reduction, and the measures suggested by the government (of road user charges and workplace parking levies) were seen as very hard to justify to Liverpoolians.

My attention on the LA21 process as site for climate change responses was somewhat optimistic. There were sub-groups meeting on the usual topics, and these appeared to be mirrored by groups of the Liverpool Environmental Forum. On the one hand different officers informed me that this body were active in promoting sustainability, but on the other I got a sense that there was hostility between themselves and the authority. This seemed to rest on the issues of representation and inclusiveness. The LA21 officer explained that the community was seen as comprising of four sectors (the public, voluntary, business and 'community' sectors), and claimed that the (authority's) LA21 groups' memberships covered 54% of the community in these terms. I presume that this means that a person from the Chamber of Commerce can be said to 'represent' all businesses, or that a person from an ethnic organisation can be said to 'represent' their racial community. By contrast, the LEF was described as being dominated by the voluntary sector, of having an under-representation of business interests, and of being adversarial, bringing up criticisms of the council's activities. This appears to be a common problem in LA21 processes where there is a perception of the process straddling the 'inside' and 'outside' of the authority, areas with different (cultural) understandings of legitimacy. It appears that participation or input from the very people who are keen to apply sustainability principles was being taken as aggressive interference from un-representative 'outsiders', this despite an acknowledgement of the need to operate an 'out-reach' policy to ensure that the views of the dis-empowered were heard.

The HECA strategy was unremarkable, based on applying energy efficiency measures where possible to the 20% of housing stock being managed by the council, with advertising being used to promote the same to the private sector and housing associations. The high level of HMOs (Homes of Multiple Occupancy) in Liverpool was noted, and the difficulty of reaching this sector stressed. As in Newcastle, the overlap with fuel poverty and job creation issues were exploited, so that, for example, a scheme to train up the unemployed to install insulation had been funded as a priority. It was hoped that 'competition' between installers could also be stimulated, to make the measures more financially attractive to those who were above the scope of means-tested schemes of aid.

As in all cases, private landlords (individualists in my schema) were seen as the hardest to persuade, requiring financial inducements to invest in their properties.

In summary, climate change did not appear to have found a home in Liverpool, it was being treated in fragmented ways in the separate departments, with co-ordination only in the area of energy, with the energy policy (of saving money) being mainstreamed through energy liaison officers in each directorate. The prominence of health issues in relation to transport along with the factors already mentioned meant that climate change was not making discursive headway, and the LA21 process was progressing slowly and with some degree of conflict due to questions of who 'owned' the process.

Nottingham City Council

To remind you of my reasons for choosing Nottingham as a research site, I had characterised it as an innovative, networking authority; one with links to numerous organisations beyond the authority and with correspondingly original framings of climate change. In particular, they seemed to be at the forefront of promoting green commuter plans as part of an LTP, thoroughly in line with governmental 'best practice'. In addition to this, the location of the Sustainability Team within the Chief Executive's Office appeared to give the environmental projects being pursued the institutional and corporate 'clout' needed to force change through, a situation not so evident in the other authorities. I suspect that this was due to the influence of the Team Leader, described by others as the centre of the network, holding everything together at the centre.

I think it is fair to say that Nottingham came across as the most 'modernised' of the authorities in its approach to climate change and environmental initiatives in general. Its approach can be said to combine three strands: corporatism, partnership, and voluntarism. In the first case, as I have said, sustainability policy was directed from the centre. The Chief Executive was also involved in the setting up of the Sustainable Transport Working Group (STWG) as early as 1994, leading to the concentration on commuter plans, and is the head of the environment working group of SOLACE (Society Of Local Authority

Chief Executives), another network with high prestige. Secondly, partnerships of the kind that the government are promoting were evident in all areas of climate change policy. In energy, the Nottingham Energy Partnership (NEP) was launched in 1998 as a partnership between the NCC and EnviroEnergy Ltd, to offer the usual grant and discount schemes, but also to produce energy budgets and estimates of savings. In transport, the Commuter Planners Club is an informal association of employers to pool information on how to set up and run their own commuter plans. The Bicycle Friendly Employers' group performs a similar function for cycling initiatives, and the council's special deals for cyclists are provided thanks to partnerships with Raleigh and a city retailer. Unlike in the other authorities, a more 'political' campaigning group (Transport 2000) have also been involved in many aspects of transport policy, and numerous other bodies are said to be linked to the council, from the European Car Free Cities organisation to the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Local Authorities' Energy Partnership. Documentation makes it clear that wherever possible, funding has been sought from external sources (especially European) to support environmental initiatives that carry *cachet* due to their fit with the latest 'best practice'.

Voluntarism is evident in the council's approach to dealing with implementing transport initiatives. Although it is true that much of the 'advertising' schemes (such as those in HECA plans) aim to secure voluntary action, but in Nottingham's case the approach is more explicit. In cycling, the emphasis is very much on the 'carrot' of making cycling easier, rather than the 'stick' of punishing drivers (although that element exists as well). In the Commuter Planners Club every effort is made to make employers feel like members of an informal club, and persuasion rather than compulsion is stressed. Even in Planning, I was told that Section 106 (which obliges employers proposing a major development to consider traffic reduction measures) was negotiated rather than imposed.

Despite Nottingham's obvious enthusiasm for 'surfing the zeitgeist', attracting prestige and funding by pursuing the most cutting edge policy formulations, I still have questions as to the effectiveness of a reliance on the individual or individual employer to secure major changes in behaviours through their voluntary magnanimity. As an example, the

NEP's 1998-9 Report reveals that CO₂ savings of only 1.01% from 1996 levels had been achieved. Another weakness appears to be the LA21 process. In effect, the Nottingham Green Partnership seem to function as the LA21 group, with sub-groups on energy, transport and so on, They emerged from the process of the council expanding their commitment to a Friends Of the Earth Green Charter in 1992, again showing the authority's keenness to climb aboard a bandwagon. However, the weakness appears when it is seen that the proposals of the Partnership have been developed directly into the LA21 plan, in combination with a very traditional public consultation. This involved asking households, via questionnaire, to rank the priority of different environmental goals. The resulting bar chart shows the priorities for the populace in a way that appears to neglect a qualitative dimension.

Despite these minor complaints, I am sure that Nottingham will continue to be rewarded for its 'pioneering' spirit in latching on to the latest thinking in every area of environmental policy, an approach that attracts legitimacy and resources, as I will discuss in later chapters.

In conclusion, the authorities did not fit exactly with my original characterisations of them, with the possible exception of Nottingham. Newcastle indeed had a fairly orthodox approach in utilising whatever legislation was available to pursue energy efficiency in a fairly straightforward manner. However, they also had an 'old fashioned' approach to solving problems, in a control economy manner, one that is transformed into a radically *innovative* approach in the context of modernisation and the retreat from a model of government provision. Liverpool's LA21 process turned out to be less central than I had envisaged, and indeed the city appeared to be picking up on *other* modernising discourses such as minority rights and the link between health and transport, whilst still being relatively inexperienced in adapting to the specific one of climate change.

CHAPTER 3:2 THE 'REAL' RESPONSES TO CLIMATE CHANGE: RITUAL, RHETORIC AND RESULTS.

INTRODUCTION

Aims

This chapter serves several purposes, and begins the process of analysis of my data with reference to a number of theories. In comparison to the last chapter, which offered a 'vertical' division of the responses to climate change in three local authorities, this chapter's analysis will proceed on a 'horizontal' basis. In essence I draw out similarities in the ways in which the case study authorities address the issue of climate change, and categorise these processes in terms of the concepts of: (the ceremonial adherence to) 'ritual'; (the adoption of) 'rhetoric'; and (the construction of) 'results'. This is not intended to be a comprehensive or exhaustive analysis, but an analysis of local authority approaches in this area from a perspective influenced by organisational, anthropological, discursive and constructivist positions.

Secondly, the chapter will suggest that these processes are by no means unique to the addressing of climate change within local authorities, but that together they form a significant component of the 'normal' work of authorities. They are processes through and by which an authority defines its identity, its nature and its legitimacy. If a local council were not to discharge its multifarious responsibilities through such methods, it would lose legitimacy. In this sense I am attempting to define at least some of the central characteristics of (modern) bureaucracy; those which are less to do with dry details of rational organisation and formally defined structure and more to do with the functions which cement authorities' existence as organisations, institutions or social forms. In this way my analysis falls within a respectable tradition of sociological approaches to

organisations seen as 'social systems', where a social system is defined as "a model of a social organisation that possesses a distinctive total unity beyond its component parts, that is distinguishable from its environment by a clearly defined boundary, and whose sub-units are inter-related within relatively stable patterns of social order" (Olsen, 1970: 228-9).

Finally, I will also be offering a critique of this 'normal' work of authorities, in a manner that ironically overturns the title of the chapter. If these tactics, techniques and processes constitute the 'real' response to climate change, and that response is found to be largely cosmetic and superficial in its implementation and effects, then my conclusion will have to be a very contentious one, that there is little 'real' response to climate change in local authorities; real in the sense of meaningful, serious, or effective. My examination of multiple cultures within local authorities in the next chapter will then attempt to examine how and why I feel this is almost necessarily the case.

Approaches: New Institutionalism And The '3 Rs'

By way of introducing the '3 Rs' analysis of local authority responses to climate change, I will first delve into a branch of organisational theory, New Institutionalism. This may seem a rather abrupt departure from my approaches so far, but it is justified in that, having outlined to some extent the nature of local authorities and some interpretations of 'climate change' as a discourse and concept, I am now turning my attention to the detail of how authorities might hope to incorporate a new set of discourses, responsibilities and duties into their ways of working, *as* organisations. This is exactly the kind of question which organisational theory attempts to explore, and New Institutionalism in particular deals with both the dilemmas faced by organisations in their efforts to incorporate new programs in their operations, and the tactics that are used to cope with (or avoid) them.

I will then move on to the '3 Rs': my particular formulation of some of these conflict-resolution tactics. Again, I will bring different theories to bear on the analysis of my data in these areas, although it should be borne in mind that the three concepts bleed into each

other, with authorities following the relevant procedures and adopting the correct language in order to present the outputs which constitute their responses to climate change.

'Ritual' is a concept with almost religious connotations, but I use it here to mean (in its broadest sense) the following of a set of rules and procedures, in a series of temporally repetitive performances, accompanied by the belief that these actions will be efficacious in the pursuance of some objective. In the case of 'rhetoric', my concentration on discourse has already outlined how this theoretical area is relevant to understanding authorities' work, for example in examining the adoption, adaptation and rejection of different strands of the over-arching discourses of environmentalism and modernisation in local government. New Institutionalism adds a summary of how language is important in organisations' fulfilment of their aim of becoming 'isomorphic' with their institutional environment for legitimacy, and I will also refer to the insights of Fairclough's strand of Critical Discourse Analysis in examining the use of language in the broader frame of Blair's 'New Britain' (especially Fairclough, 2000). With this concentration on the ways in which much of what authorities do is focussed on language and rule-bound action, my addressing of the question of 'results' looks at what the *outputs* of the process of responding to climate change might be. I will suggest that attention to how many of the results of the authority responses fall into the category of concrete action will to some extent attest to how 'real' the response has been (in a self-consciously realist interpretation of the correct response to climate change). In order to address this, I will explore the importance of the myth of 'progress' in local authorities, and will also utilise a constructivist position to look at the construction of 'results' demonstrated by those within local authorities

NEW INSTITUTIONALISM AND LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSES TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Introduction To New Institutionalism

This summary of the central insights of New Institutionalism is heavily based on one particular paper which seems to be considered seminal in defining the concerns of New Institutionalism; *Institutionalised Organisations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony* by John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan (Meyer and Rowan, 1992). I sketch the arguments in that paper whilst drawing out the resonances with my own approach and highlighting the areas that I consider are of most importance and interest. New Institutionalism helps to explain my use of the '3 Rs' as a conceptual framework for characterising responses to climate change in authorities.

New Institutionalism breaks from 'traditional' organisation theory in suggesting that the ubiquity of rationally structured organisations is not due *purely* to the demand of efficiency through "the imposition of rigid, hierarchical structures and authoritarian practices and procedures"; the classical Weberian position elaborated by Fayol (e.g. Fayol, 1916). This position relies heavily on Weber's 'iron cage of rationality' (Weber, 1983), and his concept of *rational/legal authority* to explain the structures of organisations, including local authorities, as having centralised authority, discipline, obedience, division of functions, order, clarity and simplicity as their guiding principles. The rational structures thus derived are theorised as the maximally efficient, the "most effective way to co-ordinate and control the complex relational networks involved in modern technical or work activities" (Meyer and Rowan, 1992: 23). I have already outlined authorities' classically bureaucratic structure in my earlier chapter on the nature of local authorities. New Institutionalism's switch of focus is required because although "prevailing theories assume that the co-ordination and control of activity are the critical dimensions on which formal organisations have succeeded in the modern world [...] empirical research [...] casts doubt on this assumption" (Meyer and Rowan, 1992: 23-4).

New Institutionalism And 'Ritual'

New Institutionalism instead suggests that many organisations "are driven to incorporate the practices and procedures defined by prevailing rationalised concepts of organisational work [...] in society" (Meyer and Rowan, 1992: 21) primarily in order to secure

legitimacy. These organising concepts are variously (and confusingly) discussed as myths, rules, structures, but the central definition is of 'institutional' structures, values and norms, such as *programs*, *professions* and *practices*. Thus they argue that the formal structures of many organisations are based not on the efficiency of the structures in getting 'results', here defined as *technical efficiency*, but on norms of rationality that "are not simply general values. They exist in much more specific and powerful ways in the rules, understandings and meanings attached to institutionalised social structures" (Meyer and Rowan, 1992: 24).

Thus structures such as (in the case of local authorities) working groups based on professional expertise, reporting to sub-groups which evaluate their suggestions and pass them on to sub-committees and committees, who in turn submit them to council for approval, act as "elements of rationalised formal structure [which] are deeply ingrained in, and reflect, widespread understandings of social reality [...They are] highly rationalising and binding myths on particular organisations" (Meyer and Rowan, 1992: 24). I would add that these 'understandings of social reality' and "myths depicting various formal structures as rational means to the attainment of desirable ends" (Meyer and Rowan, 1992: 27) are firmly located within a culturally specific form of rationality, that of Cultural Theory's hierarchism and Dryzek's 'administrative rationality'. Many of the ways of working enshrined in local authorities owe at least as much to these societally and institutionally based myths of 'the way things are done' as to their ability to efficiently produce results. This, then, is the main basis in New Institutionalism for my concentration on the operation of these structures as 'ritual', where "institutional theories in their extreme forms define organisations as dramatic enactments of the rationalised myths pervading modern societies" (Meyer and Rowan, 1992: 28), and rituals are dramatic enactments of binding myths.

New Institutionalism And 'Rhetoric'

This process, of organisations adopting institutionally and therefore socially legitimated structures and practices, also extends to the realm of language. New Institutionalism

appears to elaborate the adoption of dominant *discourses* (where discourses are defined as Foucauldian webs of language, practices and structure (e.g. Foucault, 1991)), but from an organisational standpoint. It does this by suggesting that “organisational language [...is] analogous to the vocabularies of motive used to account for the activities of individuals” (Meyer and Rowan, 1992: 31), and that organisations who can explain why they are doing what they are doing in the ways that they are doing it can therefore justify and legitimise their actions in society’s eyes. It is important to note that in my discussion of ‘rhetoric’, I will not only be looking at how language is deployed along with practices and structure to legitimise authorities’ activities in ‘traditional’ forms of activity, but is also deployed in the responses to *new* institutional myths.

New Institutionalism And ‘Results’

The question of what counts as a ‘result’ of organisational activity is implicit in New Institutionalism’s treatment of organisations’ attempts to reconcile the fulfillment of often-contradictory *ceremonial* criteria (which are the basis of institutional and therefore social legitimacy) and the *efficiency* criteria of their ‘formal’ work activities. The theory asserts that organisations survive and prosper not purely by displaying high efficiency in their work activities, but also by demonstrating their fitness, legitimacy and social worth through the following of numerous institutionally based *ceremonial* functions⁵².

This approach suggests that an organisation’s outputs will consist of a variety of variably assessable ‘results’, some quantifiable, others more qualitative in nature, and hard to assess, with Meyer and Rowan explicitly stating that “governmental bureaucracies use variable, ambiguous technologies to produce outputs that are difficult to appraise” (1992: 36). In the case of the response to climate change, to be specific, not only is an authority’s contribution to addressing it difficult to quantify in strictly technical terms, but the program includes ceremonial activity designed to demonstrate that the council is simultaneously increasing participation, involving the public, and adhering to a number of

⁵² In the case of local authorities, through demonstrating innovation in practices, incorporating ‘best practice’, adhering to anti-discriminatory programs, increasing participation, inculcating an environmental sensibility in their strategies etc.

other statutory obligations as well. This “[c]eremonial activity is significant in relation to categorical rules, not in its concrete effects (Merton, 1940; March and Simon, 1958)” (1992: 37) and so the demonstration of a satisfactory ‘result’ or ‘response’ may rely as much on the presentation of the achievement of such *categorical* goals (as ‘more participation’, ‘lowering emissions’, ‘adopting a policy’ and so on) as on quantifying tonnes of emissions saved. Thus New Institutionalism provides a good introduction to my discussion of the ‘results’ of authority responses to climate change.

LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSES AS ‘RITUAL’

So in what ways do I think that the local authority responses to climate change involve ritualistic activity? For a start, the very nature of ritual is two-fold. In anthropological terms, de Coppet quotes Goody (1977) as concluding that we should “see ritual within ‘a hierarchy of organised skills and processes’ which include formal, repetitive behaviour” (DeCoppet, 1992: 13). The rules of behaviour are not self-evident, but “follow some *time-hallowed* precedent in order to be effective or simply to be a proper performance” (DeCoppet, 1992: 15) (my emphasis). Thus ritual involves specific actions and utterances in a prescribed setting, but also some degree of repetition. A ‘one-off’ ritual is not really a ritual: it is an occurrence.

Authorities’ Activities As Ceremonial Action.

New Institutionalism⁵³ helps to explain how the first aspect of ritual, that of formal, organised action, relates to the processes of authorities, through the concept that their organisation and practices are institutionalised. Definitions of institutions in New Institutional thought include those of “supra-organisational patterns of activity through which humans conduct their material life in time and space, and symbolic systems through which they categorise that activity and infuse it with meaning” (Friedland and Alford, 1991: 232), of “symbolic systems which have non-observable, absolute, trans-rational referents and observable social relations which concretise them” (Friedland and

⁵³ As I have mentioned, the majority of this text is based on Meyer and Rowan (1992).

Alford, 1991: 349). These definitions tend to refer to wider institutions such as capitalism, bureaucracy, democracy, Christianity and nuclear family.

Understanding what is meant by an ‘institutionalised rule’ appears to be crucial to understanding what kind of rules, norms, practices and structures are imported from the ‘institutional environment’, and therefore define the activities of an organisation as ceremonial or ritual activity. Meyer and Rowan offer the distinction that “institutionalised rules are distinguished sharply from prevailing social behaviours. Institutionalised rules are classifications built into society as reciprocated typifications or interpretations (Berger and Luckmann, 1967: 54)” (Meyer and Rowan, 1992: 22), and may also be so highly institutionalised as to be supported by law. Examples given include the role of a doctor in managing illness, the activity of research and development, and even single rules such as that enforced by a ‘No Smoking’ sign. In this definition, the concept of an ‘institution’ or ‘institutional rule’ appears to mean some pattern of activity that has become so regular and expected that to omit it has become socially unacceptable, or even illegal.

Meyer and Rowan (1992) describe these institutional rules as myths; that such a way of behaving is the expected and effective one in such a situation. *Professions, programs* and *techniques* are all highly institutionalised elements of organisations based on such myths.

In the context of local authorities and climate change, we can see that different *professions* such as energy officers (and more recently, energy *managers*), planners, corporate policy makers and LA21 officers all have some claim of expertise in the areas affecting and affected by climate change, and “the delegation of activities to the appropriate occupations is socially expected and often legally obligatory over and above any calculations of its efficiency” (1992: 25). My finding that the primary responsibility for addressing climate change is held by different officers in different authorities is itself predicted by New Institutionalism, which argues that:

“one cannot make up a new role [...] without disturbing institutionalised occupational rights and agreements, and even a new committee is a little frightening. New activities are taken on [...] by half-tacit allocations of them to

extant occupational roles [...] one often finds the same people or occupations playing multiple and inconsistent roles” (Meyer, 1992: 279). In addition, “societies promulgate sharply inconsistent myths [...] organisations in search of external support and stability incorporate all sorts of incompatible structural elements. Professions are incorporated, even though they make overlapping jurisdictional claims” (Meyer and Rowan, 1992: 38).

Climate change presents such a problem for institutionalised modernist organisations because it is a ‘policy mess’ with no clearly defined jurisdiction (see O’Riordan and Jordan, 1996: 75).

Programs relate to the functions appropriate to an organisation, its *raison d’être*. Local authorities’ institutionalised programs include the democratically supervised provision of services, and now increasingly the economic development of their constituent areas and the addressing of social and environmental aspects of this process. I propose that responding to climate change is a new and weakly institutionalised program in authorities. This is implicitly supported by Meyer and Rowan’s use of ‘environmental protection’ as an example of just such an institutionalised program adopted by different organisations in search of ‘external’ legitimacy. They point out that:

“as the issues of safety and environmental pollution arise, and as relevant programs and professions become institutionalised in laws [...] ideologies, and public opinion, organisations incorporate these programs and professions” (1992: 26).

Also writing on New Institutional lines, Friedland and Alford (Friedland and Alford, 1991) describe institutionalised meta-programs through the concept of institutional logics, where the logic of an institution is:

“a set of material practices and symbolic constructions-which constitutes its organising principles [...] that of the state is rationalisation and the regulation of human activity by legal and bureaucratic hierarchies. That of democracy is participation and the extension of popular control over human activity” (Friedland and Alford, 1991: 248).

Local authorities attempt to balance these apparently intrinsically conflictual logics in their practices and structures, to maintain their legitimacy in the eyes of state and the people. That there are still tensions is seen in my data, for example where we see an officer (who is un-elected), defending the limited ‘participation’ of representative democracy over ‘the extension of popular control’ in the form of their (consultation based) LA21 process.

By *techniques* in organisations, Meyer and Rowan mean:

“myths binding on organisations [...] taken-for-granted means to accomplish organisational ends. Quite apart from their possible efficiency, such institutionalised techniques establish an organisation as appropriate, rational and modern” (1992: 25).

In local authorities, I think we can certainly include in this category the structural aspects of departmental divisions, committees and sub-committees and working groups, and the associated practices that combine to confer the legitimacy of ‘due process’ on their work.

In incorporating such institutional rules⁵⁴, organisations link their activity to ‘external’ myths and norms of effectiveness, such that the performance of *ceremonial activity* in concordance with these myths garners legitimacy from ‘outside’ the organisation. Meyer and Rowan call the process by which an organisation practices *ceremonial activity* to gain legitimacy becoming ‘isomorphic with the institutional environment’. This entails that the organisation “incorporate elements that are legitimated externally, rather than in terms of efficiency”, by which “an organisation demonstrates that it is acting on collectively valued purposes in a proper and adequate manner” (1992: 30-31).

Dilemmas Of The ‘New’

⁵⁴ It should be stressed that Meyer and Rowan’s coverage of these issues also blurs the distinctions between rules, myths, programs, techniques and so forth.

The following of 'due process' in the creation and implementation of authorities' policies is of course so highly institutionalised as to be legally required, but the introduction of a new program such as 'responding to climate change' introduces new dilemmas.

Firstly, there is the problem that the existing (highly institutionalised) structures and practices are so well established that their use in dealing with *any* problem is a matter of second nature in the organisation's prevailing institutionalised rationality, as "these rules define new organising situations [...] They enable, and often require, participants to organise along prescribed lines" (Meyer and Rowan, 1992: 25). Thus a frequent response in my data to the question of how an authority responds to climate change involves a detailed description of the levels of working groups, sub-groups, sub-committees and committees, along with their memberships and frequencies of meeting. The mere existence of these aspects of formal structure (or rather their existence in space *and* time, see later) is seen as a sufficient reply, due to the fact that adherence to the myth of their rationality (and therefore the ceremonial value conferred through this 'institutional isomorphism') "provides an account (Scott and Lyman, 1968) of [...an organisation's] activities that protects the organisation from having its conduct questioned. The organisation becomes, in a word, legitimate" (Meyer and Rowan, 1992: 31). Because such institutionally derived structures and practices come as packages with in-built organisational and external legitimacy, they are often used un-reflectively to frame any new function that the organisation is required to address.

Secondly, it is often made clear that becoming isomorphic with a *new* aspect of the institutional environment (such as responding to climate change) is a further source of legitimacy, such that the authority ignores this challenge at its peril. Meyer and Rowan stress the opportunities for adopting such new programs, as:

"these myths present organisations with great opportunities for expansion [...and t]he incorporation of structures with high ceremonial value, such as those reflecting the latest expert thinking, or those with the most prestige, makes the credit position

of an organisation more favourable”⁵⁵. However, the dilemma is that “organisations that innovate in important structural ways bear considerable costs in legitimacy” (1992: 34),

and in many ways innovation *is* the key to adopting new programs.

Temporal Aspects Of ‘Ritual’ Activity

Having discussed how authorities’ structures and practices can be defined as *ceremonial*, in the sense that they are followed not for reasons intrinsic to themselves, but through reference to external and internalised logics, I now wish to explore how they might be characterised fully as ‘ritual’, through attention to their temporal aspects.

Temporal Frames

The work of local authorities is dominated by *medium-term* temporalities, which stretch from day-to-day routines, through monthly meeting cycles and annual budgets to five-year plans, electoral cycles and the life spans of individual careers. These actively militate against the likelihood of addressing the *longer-term* aspects of climate change or the need to focus on the *present* as the time for action. In other words, local authorities can be seen as ‘stuck’ in modernist time frames, by comparison to the instantaneous and long-term time-scales that have to be addressed in tackling post- or high-modern problems such as climate change. Numerous authors (e.g. Adams, 1990, Beck, 1992, Giddens, 1991) suggest that the modernist era was characterised by the imposition and hegemony of ‘clock-time’, as embodied in such various social forms as; Greenwich Meantime, rail timetables, municipal clock towers, factory based co-ordination of workers’ time for mass production, the standardisation and globalisation of the twenty-four hour day and the Julian Calendar and so on. By contrast, in contemporary society there has become evident a shift in both temporal directions, towards ‘instantaneous’ time (obviously best exemplified by the development of information technologies with its resultant ‘time-space

⁵⁵ This is what I think we are seeing in the cases of authorities acknowledging that by essentially exploiting the ‘zeitgeist’ qualities of climate change, participation, partnership and suchlike discourses, they can attract praise, prestige and funding to themselves: I will give specific examples in the next section, on rhetoric.

compression' (Harvey, 1989)) and also evolutionary, expanded or glacial time. The latter shift in emphasis, it is argued, results from the increasing reflexive nature of contemporary thought, and the emergence of a long-overdue attention to the large-scale and qualitatively slower nature of environmental and natural processes.

Bureaucratically tied into clock-time and medium-term cycles, for local authorities there is neither the space to 'step aside' and consider things from a longer term view point, or the sense of urgency which derives from a different 'way of life' and which promotes pro-action, precaution and radicalism. As Barbara Adams notes with reference to the un-reflexive domination of society by clock-time; "[t]oday it is neither questioned as a practice nor doubted as a principle: it is simply taken for granted. Without alternative vision and choice the participants surrender to the bureaucratically organised institutional beat. [A strict temporal order] particularly pertinent for rationalised, bureaucratically structured organisations" (Adam, 1990: 106) as I have elsewhere argued local authorities (still) are.

Regularity And Repetition

Regularity is almost a by-word of local authority activity. To almost every enquiry about how climate change was being dealt with in my fieldwork, I was given details about the regularity of meetings, rather than, or before, I learnt anything about what they achieve. There is a faith in the efficacy of regularity. The regularity of meetings and of the documents which are their prime output are institutional structural arrangements which are central to these organisations' conception of what they do; the "recursive, that is to say structured and repetitive, patterns of organisation affairs [which, as temporal frames] may not seem as durable as organisational hierarchies and superstructures, but it is through just such social practices, chained across time and space, that the stuff of societies, here treated as institutions, is woven" (Boden, 1997: 28).

The issue of regularity is presumably of such importance in local government circles because of the way in which individuals in the organisation have their working lives tied

to a series of repetitive or reiterative cycles. Meetings, as rituals performed with regularity, have a mystique of efficacy that perhaps can be undermined by attention to what goes on in them. Although I am not qualified to offer a detailed critique or analysis of the micro-sociological processes involved, attendance at an LA21 sub-group led me to believe that the very form of such regular, bureaucratic meetings militates against the possibility of much being achieved within them. In this group at least, a discussion about the 'vision statement' for the group, the minutes of the previous meeting, an outline of what was to be discussed and background information and agenda setting took up the majority of the time available, with tasks then being delegated for people to pursue and then report back at the next meeting. The ritual importance of procedural matters may thus preclude the efficacy of the ritual.

The belief in the efficacy of regularity in the form of *repetition* (as a way of securing change in behaviours in this case) is beautifully demonstrated by an officer's insistence that awareness-raising projects were successful because they ran

“day after day after day for each of the six days for each of the four weeks for both of these two campaigns.” (SW12).

Although it is understandable that this is how work is organised (with pressures on *time*), my argument is that in such a bureaucratic agency, there is a 'mystique' of efficacy given to the process of regularity itself, a commitment to a myth which is important to the institution or organisation as a whole, which is enacted at set times in set theatres, with no possibility of other ways of addressing the issue being adopted without displaying a betrayal of the binding institutions of the authority.

LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSES AS 'RHETORICAL' ACTIVITY.

The Importance Of Language

I have already hinted at the way in which New Institutionalism considers language as a vital part of organisations' *ceremonial* activity. Once again the stress is on organisations'

attempts to become isomorphic with their institutionalised environment. Thus, for example, before it was common practice for companies, authorities (as highly institutionalised organisations) would always include the phrase ‘working towards equality/against discrimination’ when advertising a job vacancy. I would suggest that such statements are used in a similar way to magical formulae and mantras, in that the use of the appropriate formula is held to have effectiveness, acting to remind both applicants and interviewers that such socially legitimated programs are being correctly adhered to. In this sense, the use of language is in a sense performative, as it “enacts or produces that which it names” (Butler, 1993: 23), performativity of language being “the reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains” (1993: 2).

Critical Discourse Analysis And ‘The Third Way’

I have outlined the way in which the modernisation of local government includes the adoption of discourses in an earlier chapter. Fairclough’s work within the discipline of Critical Discourse Analysis (e.g. Fairclough 1989, 1992, 1995) approaches these processes from a linguistic viewpoint, and most recently (Fairclough 2000a, 2000b) has concentrated on central governmental discourses (of New Labour) and how these are located within even larger discursive re-alignments associated with the promotion of a hegemony of neo-liberalism. This approach reminds us that:

“[t]he language of politics and government has always been important [b]ut not this important: in New Labour [and, I would argue, New Local Government], the style is part of the substance” (Fairclough, 2000b: 3), and “[p]art of the project of reinventing government is therefore getting people to change their language, take on new discourses” (Fairclough, 2000b: 20-1).

Many of the insights he reveals are extremely pertinent to my work here, including the way in which discourses which I would characterise as individualistic or market-based (such as competition, enterprise, modernisation itself, partnership, participation in a specific sense) are deployed in the definition of the ‘third way’ to reconcile previously *contradictory* discourses from the left and right sections of the political spectrum. This

achieves the twin objectives of a) mystifying the acceptance of global domination by corporations and their individualistic values, as an inevitable process of history, and b) simultaneously re-packaging the policies which accompany this process in terms which garner tacit support from as many sections of society as possible. As Fairclough notes,

“[t]he meaning ‘not only but also’ is pervasive in the political language of New Labour [...] it draws attention to assumed incompatibilities only to deny them [...]the rhetoric of the ‘Third Way’ is crucial in carrying people along with the message and covering over its unresolved paradoxes and perhaps fatal contradictions” (Fairclough, 2000b: 7).

Such contradictions are also evident in local government’s sustainability and climate change policies. In the words of one officer,

“government policy is contradictory really, I mean on the one hand we have the government policy which has allowed the [out-of-town retail development] to be developed, which is almost totally car dependent...it totally flies in the face of everything in PPG6 and everything that the government have been saying over PPG13 about, about centralising development, totally, totally...” (AS18).

This leads him to conclude that:

“really everyone wants everything, basically...they want economic development [...] but they also want, we also want, an improved environment, less use of resources, less CO₂ etc. So we basically want everything” (AS22).

And where are those priorities argued out?

“At the moment, I would say that they’re probably not, to be honest, I don’t think that they are” (AS22).

Sustainable development is the prime example of a discourse which papers over contradictions (between development and sustainability (Sachs, 1997a)), and is the framing behind climate change policy for many in local authorities.

Data Analysis Of Rhetoric

To return to my data, I wish to display the importance of language in local authorities' responses to climate change in a number of ways, my analysis primarily arising from the data themselves, but also concerned with highlighting the relevance to the 'theoretical' issues within which I have set it. Although my analysis is not predicated on traditional forms of rhetorical analysis, it identifies the authority officers' deployment of language as an intentional process that can be understood in rhetorical terms. The interview situation is not one that has normally been subject to rhetorical analysis, primarily because it is an interactive event rather than a pre-prepared presentation (this in itself may explain why the data contains evidence of the subjects reflexively identifying their falling back on 'prepared' or 'packaged' language *as* rhetorical activity). Nevertheless, as Leith and Myerson (1989) point out, almost any utterance can be analysed in terms of a number of simple rhetorical concepts including *address*, *argument* and *play*, with the first two concepts certainly applicable in the interview situation. Language is always addressed to someone, and involves replying to previous utterances in a process of forwarding an opinion.

Looking at the interview data therefore requires that we think about the situation in which it was collected. The officers interviewed are to some extent representing and defending their authority, or their department, and its approach to climate change. They are addressing themselves to someone who is interested in a particular area of policy (climate change), and are implicitly being asked to frame their responses in terms of that topic-discourse. There is no prepared script for answering the researcher's questions, and so the subject falls back on his or her own linguistic resources, and the marshalling of resources provided for them by their institutional position. These include shorthand labels for aspects of policy, buzzwords with externally granted legitimacy, and reference to other policy discourses through which they translate 'climate change'. Indeed, the very nature of a 'policy' means that it can be seen as a rhetorical tool. In answering my questions, a number of the interviewees paused to fetch documentation which could be deployed as 'proving' that the authority considered environmental issues as important, as shown by the existence of a set form of words in a text⁵⁶. The policy acted as an 'immutable mobile'

⁵⁶ Although, as I show, the 'authority' of such expressions was undermined by the officers themselves.

in Latour's (1987) terms, a visual/verbal crystallisation which can be deployed in different contexts to foreclose argument. The following analysis looks at how the subjects marshal these resources, and themselves reveal that this is a conscious ('rhetorical') process. I finish with a discussion of how 'climate change' itself fares as a new label which can be applied to their work, as a discourse which may be adopted, adapted or rejected.

Reproduction Of Discursive Elements

In scanning my data, it is clear that to a large degree, the replies of officers fit a kind of 'one-size-fits-all' bureaucratic style; wording things in a manner that sounds very impressive, if leaving the actual detail vague. Thus one officer describes the policy development department as:

“majoring on the corporate interface with health [...] and democratic renewal” (SW18).

He further represents the work of an environmental partnership as having the

“role of a project generation and project management initiative” (SW23).

Although the use of this kind of obfuscatory language is of interest in general, I have tried to apply a more specific analysis, one which looks for specific lexical units or phrases and can be traced to what Myerson and Rydin (1996) call *new-information*, *-concept*, or *-practice discourses*. They use these as terms for units which can be identified rhetorically as the bases upon which an argument for a particular version of environmental thought are founded, and suggest that through attention to these lexicons of discourse units we can help to elucidate the concepts which different actors use to advance their position.

In practice these are quite easy to spot in the data, phrases stick out as intrinsically unnaturalistic; such a phrase is often an arrangement of words which does not appear to arise from the speaker themselves, but is a learnt response, a 'falling back' upon a stock phrase which originates from the institutional environment, and therefore carries its own (sometimes spurious) legitimacy. In Myerson and Rydin's rhetorical schema (1996: 27) it

is often intended to convince the listener, to foreclose further discussion. As examples, an officer fended off talking about LA21 by answering that:

“it certainly is like a practical aspect of our, *our commitment to local action on the environment*” (MM15),

and his tone was such that my transcription notes that he was sounding annoyed. Others describe the whole process of policy, as simply a “carrot and sticks” approach (SW6, RS2).

Table 3 below offers an indicative list of stock phrases that can be found in abundance in my interviewees’ responses. Some are simply topic indicators, which reference the aspect of local authority work that is being discussed as climate change-relevant. They stand out mostly through repetition. The others are discursive units which carry institutional and external legitimacy, used by the officers to display that their authority is attending to the issue of climate change within the correct policy discourses and through socially-legitimated practices.

Table 3: Indicative List Of Topics, Buzzwords And Phrases Taken From The Institutional Environment In My Data

Topics: sustainability and sustainable development, green commuting, fuel poverty and affordable warmth, congestion, air quality, traffic reduction, carbon trading, pollution, transport, energy, energy efficiency, emissions, renewables, package bids, LTPs, HECA, travel awareness, social inclusion, economic regeneration, health, recycling, and commuter plans.

Buzzwords: cultural change, partnerships, participation, involvement, best practice, corporate response, modernisation, windows of opportunity, branding, consensus and consensus-building, networking, co-operation, quality, carbon trading, resources, payback times, Best Value, 'political' and social factors, guidelines, targets, monitoring, baseline, drivers, finance, requirements, strategy and strategic, awareness, promotion, day-to-day reality, indicators, demonstration projects, round table approach, seamless journey, legislation, statutory requirement or duty, good relationships, managing resources, greener, integrated, holistic, priorities, agendas, renewal cycle, investment, modernisation, and re-organisation.

Phrases: "building our partnership" (SW15), "engaging with the community" (SW21), "promoting alternatives" (MM6), "all-win situation" (MM7), "singing from the same hymn sheet" (MM18), "carrots and sticks" (RS2), "initiative fatigue" (RS6), "joined-up government" (RS8), "joined-up-thinking (CC9), "economic, social and environmental" (CC3).

Obviously this is not a rigorous linguistic analysis, but my more modest interest lies in simply demonstrating that the ‘local authority response to climate change’ falls within an area of policy that is defined by adherence to a series of pre-given discourses. Regardless of to whom a question about climate change is addressed, from a government official to an energy manager to an LA21 officer, an answer emerges which rhetorically expresses a broad commitment to the bureaucratic model of policy-making in late 20th century local government, to a series of discourses which hover at the level of the abstract, and may even obscure what is actually being done. Thus we might imagine a properly programmed bureaucratic computer explaining that responding to climate change involves the ‘importance of *commitments to targets* (set after establishing a *baseline*, and followed by *monitoring of progress towards indicators*) and of *implementing policies in partnership* with other *organisations*, in line with *corporate strategies* which result from extensive *consultation* with, and the *participation and involvement* of, the *community*, in order to bring about a more *sustainable situation socially, economically and environmentally*’. In investigating the co-existence of different cultural outlooks within local authorities in the next chapter I will attempt to tease apart this apparent consensus.

The Importance Of Rhetoric

I now demonstrate that the officers themselves reveal that certain programmes and phrases are adopted because they are from the institutional environment, often from government, and therefore that their use will be required, preferred or in the case of following strict guidelines, absolutely necessary to legitimise their activities.

‘Selling’ The Environment

Myers and Macnaghton (1998) point out that rhetoric in the traditional sense is concerned with persuasion, and argue that “effective rhetoric is a precondition, not an alternative, to environmental action” (1998: 335). Similarly, in my data one officer describes the environmental strand of the policies of the LTP as being essentially:

“about selling it to people, you must sell it to the population [...] you must sell it to business and so on [...] showing them that *this is of benefit to you, you and your kids, whatever*, if this pollution, *blah blah blah*, it’d be better” (PE7-8)⁵⁷.

The environment is also seen as a ‘selling point’ to internal audiences through reflexively revealed stock phrases:

“Erm, we tend to talk about the environment, and, and the environmental issues and in fact it’s a very important *educational hook*, that you go ‘it’s good for you, it’s good for the environment” (CM4);

“we hit it from ‘*it’s good housekeeping for us*’ [...] ‘*it’s good for the people who live in our houses, and it’s good for the environment!*’ [...] even the right wing Tories go ‘oh, you’re saving money on, that’s good housekeeping’ [...] you know, they always went for it *in terms of the good housekeeping*” (CM4).

In this quote, we see how an officer is well aware of the ability to use rhetorical strategies in order to create consensus, to attract support from particular groups. The use of commonplaces such as ‘housekeeping’ displays the use of *amplificatio* as an aspect of ‘re-branding’. Myerson and Leith (1989) define the rhetorical device of *amplificatio* as “the principle of using commonplaces to stir the hearers” (1987: 212).

Isomorphism

My data reveal the importance of rhetorically adopting the lexical units of discourses in maintaining legitimacy (displaying adherence to socially and externally legitimated programmes and discourses) quite explicitly, especially with regard to the government as the source of legitimacy and resources.

As mentioned before, sustainability as a discourse is seen to be given importance by the government,

“the *word* sustainability is creeping into all sorts of, you know, formal and official documents now, so, I think *for that reason* the council is going to keep it going” (CC4).

⁵⁷ This extract combines a revelation of the persuasive value of the policies, whilst using an aspect of ‘fuzzy’-ing (see later) to undermine some of the stock phrases used to do it.

In other words the institutional importance of the topic will ensure that the authority maintains some level of involvement. Another officer suggests that isomorphism is being sought (albeit in a hollow manner) where the environment is on ‘the agenda’ because “government want it in there” (CC9). The intention to be seen as ‘surfing the *zeitgeist*’, exploiting the fact that benefits accrue from isomorphism with the institutional environment⁵⁸, can be seen in the following quotes about placing great stress on health issues around transport:

“BW: So yeah the environment sub-group is good, is a really worthwhile group and last year, one of the things that they campaigned heavily about and were successful in achieving was er having a health impact assessment done on the strategy document as a whole,

INT: Right,

BW: So, all then policies that are in the package bid, will just transfer [from the package bid to the LTP]. But the health impact assesment that was done, was done by the [University Health Observatory] and the Health Authority, and that was, it’s been *pioneering* really in this country, that nobody else has ever done anything like that let alone done it on a strategy document [laughs] And since then, [city] has become I suppose the centre of Health Impact Assessment knowledge [...] it’s a *topical* thing, and we hope that we’re right up there, and *at the forefront* of, and moving it forward, blah” (BW4).

The ‘blah’ simultaneously acknowledged and undermined the rhetorical nature of what is being said, whilst also showing the unavoidable influence of pioneering or topical discourses on local authority language and practice.

Consensus

Another aspect, of rhetoric being adopted throughout an authority, is a concern with presenting a united front to the world. A single phrase was used to describe this by more

⁵⁸ Given that “[t]he incorporation of structures with high ceremonial value, such as those reflecting the latest expert thinking, or those with the most prestige, makes the credit position of an organisation more favourable” (Meyer and Rowan, 1992: 32-3).

than one interviewee. One describes the combination of planning and transportation responsibilities⁵⁹, as important because:

“y’all have to be singing from the same hymn sheet” (MM18).

Another from a different authority talks of:

“interdependence, between a number of different agencies, authorities, starting from central government, it requires this kind of co-ordination or this ‘all singing from the same song-sheet’ approach” (AS7).

The benefits of diverse actors speaking with the same voice is thus emphasised by officers themselves.

The Hollowness Of Rhetoric

Far more numerous are examples of local authority officers revealing cynical attitudes towards the parroting of phrases and discourses which carry legitimacy. The following examples highlight that authority officers themselves draw attention to the hollowness of some of the rhetorical strategies adopted in their work. They expose gaps between authority pronouncements and action, and bemoan policies as ‘just talk’.

Direct Refutation

Most direct evidence of the hollowness of much of the current rhetorical dealings with the response to climate change is provided by data containing direct refutations of the reality or efficacy of certain approaches. On recycling, a council’s recycling plan is described as including

“a strong commitment to doorstep recycling”, whereas in fact, “there is no chance whatsoever of councils achieving that recycling rate [...] commercially, it’s suicide” (SW32).

There exists Planning Guidance that attempts to deal with climate change related issues, however,

⁵⁹ Reflecting the governmental move: “first day of the new Labour Government in May ’97, they combined Environment, Transport and the Regions” (MM3).

“to what extent planning departments actually think about it is another thing” (PE6).
An LA21 process is similarly described as:

“a sort of integrated, holistic approach *in theory*”, whereas “[laughs], it’s not *really*, you know, there’s no way that we *really* consulted and involved all the public [...] it’s completely impossible” (CC2-3).

The same officer, incidentally one of the most critical of his authority, points out that LA21 is *officially* a corporate priority, but one to which the authority is not *really* committed, and summarises a list of governmental discourses and programmes before dismissing them;

“theory and practice are often so different, if we actually look at erm some of the things that’s come out of the new government, some of the issues around modernising local government, about best value, in theory they sound quite good, in practice they’re not actually, some of them are just going to make things worse. Erm [sigh] “ (CC17).

Just Talk

Another officer addresses the rhetorical, discursive nature of many of the responses to climate *directly*, in characterising a number of initiatives and ways of working as ‘mere’ rhetoric, of just talk. The corporate approach described earlier as important as a response to the attacks on local government by Thatcherism, is brutally undermined. The officer acknowledges that

“a sort of co-ordinated response to some of our responsibilities [is...] in some cases, not actually having any money but [...] *just saying* ‘this is a good idea’, *just* sort of, underpinning it”.

He then retrieves the relevant document and explains:

“yeah, we have five corporate priorities of which erm, local agenda twenty one and *things like that* is an underlying priority, and environmental improvement is...er, it’s *worded in some way*...it’s [quietly], I’m afraid *it’s just bull*, but, but, concern for the environment is a, is one of the key [priorities]...” (CM11-12).

The rhetorical focus on partnerships is similarly critiqued, as

“you go into as many partnerships as you like, but in the end, it’s *all complete bollocks* unless you actually go ‘there’s some money and we’re going to do that with it’ [...] I just think we’re going to be *talking* about it for ever more” (CM16) whilst the environmental problems continue to worsen. He concludes that

“I’m really concerned about this sort of *glib talk* of partnerships because I don’t think [...] it *sounds* too like the civil service, you know, like a *stuck record* from the last government, which is an excuse not to actually do anything” (CM29), in which we see rhetoric (described in terms of words, sounds, talk) contrasted with ‘real’, ‘actual’ action, as it was earlier contrasted with money, resources etc.

Subversion Of Rhetoric

The data contain numerous examples of the officers themselves undermining the value of the lexicons of legitimacy, by making clear that phrases they are using are bureaucratic shorthand, buzzwords (cf. Collins, 2000), or discourses with external legitimacy. I explore the ways in which they do so below.

‘Fuzzy-ing’

The first is the subversion of official language through its combination with, or contrast to, more ‘fuzzy’ and less serious lay language. To be more specific, the reflexive, self-undermining of language I have noted is often accompanied by contrasting the highly specific phrases of governmental and environmental discourses with the indeterminacy of such phrases as ‘stuff’, ‘suchlike’, ‘sort of thing’, ‘all that’ etc. For example, a list of the commitments of an authority’s Green Charter is described as including

“*all the usual stuff...the usual green agenda*” (SW22).

Undermining the government rather than his own council, the same officer ‘plays’ with their buzzwords:

“their consultation on waste, More Waste, Better Value, Less Waste, Better Value, *or something, forgotten what it’s called*” (SW24).

Another interviewee provides some of the best examples of lay language puncturing the rhetoric of policy:

“we’re all trying to move to a sustainable environment *or whatnot*” (BW3); “it’s a social inclusion *thing*, it’s all *that kind of stuff*” (BW4); “Best Value and government legislation and the democratisation of local government and *all that kind of stuff*” (BW6-7).

Yet another describes his council as focusing on:

“best value and *stuff*, and is *sort of* becoming very performance indicator, target, monitoring oriented” (CC7),

and describes the LA21 process as beginning by aiming to:

“become *sort of* greener and more sustainable as a local authority, *erm...*” (CC1).

It is perhaps worth mentioning that ‘Best Value’ appears to bear the brunt of a lot of this rhetorical undermining, perhaps because at the time of interviewing it was the newest strand of the government’s modernisation strategy, and therefore open to some gentle teasing and ridicule, whereas other discourses have had time to begin to be familiar, and to be utilised less reflexively and more automatically.

Self-Translation

Secondly, although less common, the interviewees offer their own translation of the rhetoric they are using, for example talking of:

“Community Safety, crime *in other words*” (SW18),

or describing green commuter projects as:

“The Commuter Planners’ Club, *as we call it*” (MM9).

The first example in particular shows that officers are aware that the nature of the institutional language is capable of translation into more straightforward, colloquial language. As such, it is acknowledged that the use of such language is in a sense rhetorical.

Commonplaces And Clichés

Thirdly, the further presence of rhetorical strategies is revealed by the use of clichés, stock phrases and so on. Myers and Macnaghton address this aspect of rhetoric in their article *Rhetorics of Environmental Sustainability: commonplaces and places* (Myers and Macnaghton, 1998), where they describe the way in which diverse actors rely upon a few commonplaces (in this context, phrases which appeal to senses of futurity, equity, inter-generational responsibilities and so on) in forwarding their argument on the environment. This is very similar to Myerson and Rydin's work on *ethos* (1996: chapter 4), where they claim that an argument must convey the correct moral tone, for example of outrage or concern, often achieved through reference to the same kind of commonplaces which Myers and Macnaghton highlight. One officer suggests that:

“it's just too beyond people's immediate concerns, the climate change issue. When I used to work in [area], *real pollution...in tears, 'my baby's suffering from all the dust'...*” (PE10).

Climate change is here presented as a distant concern, and the immediacy of real pollution is provided by using adopting a colloquial voice and employing cliché.

In another case, an officer reflexively recognises that 'partnership' is a rhetorically significant phrase, but then backs up its importance using other stock phrases that characteristically accompany it:

“it's a buzzword of the nineties, partnerships, isn't it? [...] I think there is potential, for a number of reasons [...] *sharing ownership of the problem, and sharing ownership of the solution* [...] there are the opportunities *to share the issues, share the problems, share the solutions*” (SW9).

Further examples were given above, where stock phrases are used to underline how policies are 'sold' to internal and external audiences.

Revealing Discourses' Origins

Another indicator of respondents' reflexive awareness of employing institutionalised language is the referencing of a concept being discussed *as* a concept, an identifiable idea, with identifiable origins. This is seen when one officer reveals that

“we had already shown an interest in Green Commuting as we call it, which *is an idea we’ve imported* from the States” (SW3),

and when another admits that:

“it’s kind of like *coming out of the government’s work*, trying to promote *this idea* of a seamless journey” (BW6).

Similarly, other examples reveal officers themselves describing how a particular phrase or concept makes its way into local government work, reflexively addressing the rhetorical work of policy-making. For example, in the case of LA21,

“Government *supposedly is seen to be* committed to it, the *word* sustainability is creeping into all sorts of, you know, formal and official documents now” (CC4).

The same officer elaborates that:

“the government is now *using the language, using the jargon*, but it hasn’t really translated into action on the ground” (CC19).

Most blatantly, the discourse of ‘participation’ is revealed as a simple, modern gloss for the more traditional (and passivity inducing) ‘consultation’ in an act of self-correction:

“we *should* get out of *calling it* consultation [laughs], we *should call it* participation, *we’re trying to move to a much more participatory approach*” (BW6).

The latter phrase particularly stands out as a stock phrase (more like a quote from documentation than a natural speech act), and its normative flavour emphasises that there is an expectation from ‘outside’ the organisation, from the institutional environment, such that using the correct language is ceremonial activity, a means of securing external legitimacy.

These examples show that the subjects themselves betray the nature of their use of language as a rhetorical exercise, referencing lexicons of discourses with pre-existing legitimacy in the policy world of local authorities. In addition, some officers consider such activity as ‘rhetorical’ in the pejorative sense of merely paying lip service to ‘official’ discourses.

In conclusion, a large proportion of my data, in which local authority officers explain and defend their responses to climate change, consists of their using lexical and discursive units rhetorically as a way of demonstrating their adherence to more broadly legitimised discourses. They also manage to display a reflexive understanding that what they doing is rhetorical work, and in some cases criticise this aspect of local authority work.

Climate Change: Banner, Badge Or Brand?

I now turn my attention more specifically to climate change, and those aspects of the data that reveal respondents' reactions to the idea of addressing it *as such*, as 'climate change'. At a very early stage I became aware that most of my direct questions about climate change were deflected, as the topic would very quickly be switched to other discourses, other ways of discussing the policies that comprise the response to climate change. I have already outlined some of these other discourses, but to recap they consist mainly of themes relating to:

- participation, sustainability and sustainable development (largely, but not exclusively, in the case of LA21 staff)
- energy efficiency or management (housing and energy staff) and
- transport planning, traffic reduction, air quality and health (transport and planning staff).

In this section I will use MY data to illustrate local authority views about the success of 'climate change' as a discourse through which to organise policy and action, to explain why they think it is failing or has value, and to illustrate the other discourses which they translate climate change into (and the reasons these discourses have greater relevance or efficacy). At the same time I will pay attention to the respondents' own views on 'climate change' and their representation of this as little more than a new rhetorical spin on existing policies which exist in institutional space as a loose network of issue. I, and they, use the terms banner, badge and brand to describe the role they think 'climate change' has.

Climate Change?

To begin with, here are some fairly typical responses to my asking about climate change and how it relates to officers' work.

- "...we don't have a climate change policy as such" (AS1)
- "I think it's fair to say that we prob-, well, we'd never, we'd never label what we do under the *banner* of climate change" (SW1)
- "you know, we don't necessarily *brand* all our initiatives on transport as local agenda 21" (MM5). Note the instant translation of CC into LA21
- "day to day we don't go 'oh, my god', you know, 'we haven't changed the climate today'" (CM1)
- "*CC mainly something to show importance of what doing...don't need policy on CC - is done in normal work of LA...CC another coming from centre*" (RS5-6) [interview notes]
- "I think there would be a few officers that feel that er climate change has something to do with them, but they'd be very, very few." (CC9)
- "it's an issue we haven't really tackled until very recently...until this year, to be perfectly frank with you, we haven't really considered [...] climate change" (PE1)
- "*again he stressed that climate change was not the explicit remit of the transport group*" (SLa1) [telephone interview notes]
- "in practice, we shouldn't treat climate change separately from what we're doing now, I mean, we've got the structure [LA21 and EMS...] that would allow issues around climate change to be dealt with as part of that process" (CC3)

These quotes paint a fairly negative picture of the success of climate change as a distinct discourse, a way of framing the environmental problematique⁶⁰. At the time of interviewing at least, with the government's climate change programme still in the making, it was clear that most of the local authority staff interviewed did not consider that

⁶⁰ One that has an acknowledged (and contested) international consensus on its nature and desirable responses

their authorities were addressing it *as such*. More interesting are the responses which detail why there is resistance to climate change as a unifying discourse, and those which show a willingness by some officers to ‘climb aboard’ the climate change bandwagon. In a number of instances, I got the impression that my very presence as an academic researching the issue was a spur to considering the issue more carefully.

Addressing ‘Climate Change’

A number of officers interviewed pointed out the ways in which ‘climate change’ could or would be used as an organising discourse for local authority work, whilst also revealing that although this might be a ‘purely rhetorical’ strategy, it could have ‘real’ effects.

The most enthusiastic officer in this respect was keen to demonstrate that his authority would attempt to latch on to the new discourse, explicitly because of its importance in central government:

“we’d never label what we do under the *banner* of climate change, I mean [...] you’ve seen no doubt the UK Climate Change Programme, the draft strategy that Prescott launched...I think increasingly we will do that [...] the obvious things like energy, like transport, like waste, and [...] I could imagine us beginning to combine those policies under the *banner* of climate change” (SW1).

He stressed that the connections had been seen, but

“we’ve not *badged* them up under a climate change programme, but I think [...] I could imagine if you re-visited in 6, 12 months time [...] you would see some kind of climate change strategy for [the authority]” (SW1).

Later he re-asserted that this might be the case, but that the dominant discourse of sustainable development will remain dominant:

“I could see us *using* climate change more, but I think that what we end up with will be a sustainable development strategy” (SW16).

He went into some detail about the effects that such a ‘re-branding’ might have, structurally or organisationally, as

“I can imagine us *badging* this is what we do [...] and *calling it* climate change [...] one option would be to bring more of these specialists into this team here” (SW20), but this is mitigated against by the wish to have each department take some responsibility for ‘sustainability’, and secondly the policy of keeping the central policy team in which he works as the smallest in the authority; both essentially anti-centralisation aims. As he says,

“some of these things can be quite political [...] you’ve got a number of forces, some of which are structural, and some of which are about the best way of dealing with things” (SW20).

The suggestion that the value of adopting a new discourse is primarily financial was a view expressed by many. One suggested that

“I think that unless central government actually says, ‘here’s a climate change pot’ [...] and we divvy it out [...] there’s the money for it, I think nothing will come of it,” (CM6)

and another stressed that the increasing institutional importance attached to climate change had increased the ceremonial stock of his department’s work. Yet another conceded that an effort would be made in future, where

“making the link with climate change was difficult [...] he did however stress that the Energy and Pollution Group (as a result of my presence?) were now effectively coming up with a ‘Climate Change Plan’ for [area]” (SLa1) [notes].

A specific response to climate change was also seen as arising out of specific legislation and guidance, again to ensure the best possible chance of securing funding:

“to be honest, it’s only been with the recent guidelines which I’ve got here, the guidance of provision of local transport plans [...] that’s got a specific requirement for [...] climate change [...]. The point with that is, as a bidding process, depending on how closely you follow the guidelines, relates to the amount of money you get, so the more ticks you have in the boxes, the more money you get, so it’s not necessarily that we are very sort of aware...[laughs], but we just try and stick to the

guidelines [...]. At the end of that process we will need targets on air sort of things and one of them will be CO₂ emissions” (PE1).

In summary, then, the advantages gained from discussing policy under a banner of ‘climate change’ were mainly claimed to be those of isomorphism with the institutional environment, where discussion of the topic, and a presentation of policies as addressing it, would align the authority’s discursive work with those outside the institution. I now demonstrate that there was little support for the *direct* relevance of ‘climate change’ to authorities.

Rejecting ‘Climate Change’

The reasons given, for *not* addressing climate change as a distinct policy-discourse area, fall into some fairly identifiable categories.

Firstly, the concept was seen as falling under a wider ‘banner’ of LA21, sustainability or sustainable development (and would therefore be dealt with anyway), or, as in the above quotes, was considered to refer to actions already being undertaken by the authority. Actions that were being undertaken for a variety of reasons (or ‘drivers’) were seen as having the useful corollary that they might help fulfill climate change objectives. For example,

“we might well have targets for reducing traffic [...] which will then have repercussions such as CO₂ reductions” (PE2).

Secondly, the importance of other ways of framing energy, transport, planning or environmental issues were seen as more relevant (to internal or external audiences), more ‘sellable’, or more politically prioritised. Examples are very easy to find, with almost every officer offering their own translation:

- “in the general excitement of climatic change, almost, the, the *resources* thing, the [...] finite resources, has almost been forgotten” (CM3)

- “ a lot of what we’ve been doing [...] is driven from two angles [...] one is *fuel poverty*, now changed to *affordable warmth* [...] and secondly is, erm, the *environmental consequences*” (CM1)
- “one of the motivations is *air quality* [...] *space*, and *land use* [...] and it’s about *congestion* [...] of course there’s the *environmental* dimension, and the sort of relationship with their neighbours [...] people’s *health* is important [...] whether it’s *reducing traffic* or reducing congestion or *promoting alternatives* to individual car use [...] that’s going to [...] help with, you know, CO₂ targets” (MM6)
- “[we] are not thinking *green*. What happened was *financial*. You know what I mean [...] from our issue [sic], it’s not a climate change issue at all [laughs], it’s for other sort of reasons” (PE6)
- “*the emphasis was much more on local air pollution and health*. He said that making the link with climate change was difficult (because of low local priority)” (SLa1) [telephone interview notes]
- “in neither of those groups is the sort of issues around energy in its, or transport, in relation to climate change mentioned at all, they’re just talking about energy in terms of trying to save it so you can *save the council money*. We’re talking about transport just in terms of maybe *air quality*, but mainly in terms of it as an issue around *accessibility*” (CC8)

The latter interview contained more suggestions about why climate change had low priority in the council, mostly involving personal and political factors, painting a picture in which changes in personnel could be very influential in affecting the ‘profile’ of climate change and related issues. It was suggested that:

- “whether climate change [is] taken seriously really depends on [...] a combination of the right councillors and the right officers in the right place at the right time” (CC8)
- “we’ve got chief officers and councillors who’ve got very different agendas [...] about *jobs, inward investment, regeneration*, you know” (CC9).

Thirdly, the issue was seen as too global, too vague, too far from understandings of the environment held by the public at large, which were implicitly or explicitly constructed as

'everyday', 'day-to-day', more domestic and immediate. The issue of immediacy (which relates to the lack of fit between time-scales discussed above) was addressed very explicitly by an officer stating that

"it's the time-scale isn't it? You know, climate change isn't something I need to worry about today, it's something I need to worry about in the long term" (MM22).

He went on to suggest that:

"the motivations of business is about *space*, and *land use* [...] and it's about *congestion* [...] because they can't get their vehicles and deliveries and staff on and off site, you know, it's a, a *direct* problem" (MM6).

Another, comparing CO₂ emissions with pollution, suggests that

"it will have beneficial effects, but CO₂ is [...] in a global chain, it's a bit more 'airy-fairy' if you like [...] the problem is it's very hard to sell" (PE2), and later that "I have the feeling it's probably the *local* air quality issues that [have] more effect than global climate change..." (PE7).

However, another denigrated thinking that was too localised as narrow:

"most people still think in very narrow boxes [...] which is very localised and they don't see the sort of connections between things, you know, the, the joined-up thinking isn't there to be honest [...] I find it continually frustrating [...] just how narrow people's vision and grasp of the issues is" (CC9).

In conclusion then, climate change appears, at the time of research at least, to be losing a battle as an organising discourse for various aspects of local government work in the area of environmental improvement. It not only loses out to other environmental discourses such as 'greening', environmental management, the management of resources, energy efficiency, traffic reduction, air quality and health, but is also subsumed by the more mainstreamed and institutionally validated discourses of sustainability, sustainable development and local agenda 21. Added to this is the perception of many officers that these discourses in turn are given low priority politically by authorities:

"sustainable development is not very popular in the city council at the moment" (AC1); "the bottom line is, I mean, this is the political process, you know, local government is a political process by its very nature obviously. Erm, they have their own agendas and their own sort of hidden agendas, and they have priorities, erm,

and by and large sustainability and environmental issues has never been a priority” (CC4).

The priorities which are seen to hold sway are almost unanimously given as finance, economics, job creation, inward investment, development, competitiveness, and other euphemistic definitions of the onward march of ‘progress’ in its guise of a globalised hegemony of neo-liberal free-market capitalism.

In conclusion, at the time of fieldwork, the discourse of climate change was making difficult headway against other, more established discourses in unifying local authority policy. It has shown some value in cutting across traditional departmental divisions to link up policies in disparate areas, however this linkage appears to exist mostly at a rhetorical or discursive level. None of the authorities had anything called a climate change policy. This section has also demonstrated that there is a level of critical and reflexive awareness of the use of terminology in local authority work. The officers themselves are willing to undermine the rhetorical power of the discourses of reassurance in offering more personal responses of distrust, cynicism or disillusionment

THE ‘RESULTS’ OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES’ WORK

I now turn from a consideration of how language is deployed in the creation of a ‘response’ to the discourse of climate change to an exploration of the ways in which authorities can be said to be producing ‘results’ in their policies. I begin with an analysis of how authorities can be said to be typical of highly institutionalised organisations in their production of vague, categorical results, before looking at the specific production of results in the climate change policy arenas.

New Institutionalism And ‘Results’: Reconciling Technical And Ceremonial Outputs

Even the most highly institutionalised organisation has as a function the production of ‘results’ in some sense. As Meyer and Rowan (1992) point out, organisations in a highly

institutionalised environment may devote the *majority* of their efforts to the fulfilment of ceremonial criteria (“A bus company must service required routes whether or not there are many passengers. A university must maintain appropriate departments independent of the departments’ enrolments” (1992: 37)), but they too must produce evidence of their usefulness. New Institutionalism suggests a number of ways in which organisations manage to a) fulfil technical efficiency criteria (‘getting things done’) when their structures and ways of working are primarily devoted to the fulfilment of ceremonial criteria, and b) satisfy the demands of evaluation and inspection, designed to elucidate the organisation’s ‘results’. Some of these insights have great relevance to my data and should be commented upon.

Firstly, “conflicts between categorical rules and efficiency arise because institutional rules are couched at high levels of generalisation (Durkheim, 1949)” (Meyer and Rowan, 1992: 37). In local authorities the generalised, categorical, institutionalised rules can be seen to be the corporate policies, the over-arching policies and commitments which are assumed to be ‘mainstreamed’ throughout the organisation’s work. In the case of energy efficiency in housing renewal, my data reveals that although there is an acknowledgement that the progress being made is woefully small in scale, for example in admitting that

“HECA as an act says 30% energy savings in 10 years. Two years down the line, we reckon we’ve moved about, ooh, 1% towards it” (CM8),

the advance fulfils the *categorical* criteria of constant improvement, the paradigmatic discourse of *progress*. Another energy manager stresses the importance of this myth by asserting that

“I can categorically state that there has been a large improvement over the years [...] since 1990 we have, as an authority continually, continuously [...] saved and saved and saved with each and every year, so, we still have a lot of work to do, but we’re always, each year we’re going in the right direction” (BP2).

Secondly, an organisation may be attempting to fulfil incompatible criteria, as “[p]rogrammes are adopted that contend with each other for authority over a given domain” (Meyer and Rowan, 1992: 38). That, in the domain of ‘development’, economic-

and sustainable-development programs are both being pursued in order to satisfy different key objectives cannot be denied.

Meyer and Rowan offer a number of partial solutions to these problems. Given that “[i]nstitutionalised organisations must not only conform to myths but must also maintain the appearance that the myths actually work”, one option for an organisation is to “cynically acknowledge that its structure is inconsistent with work requirements; but this strategy denies the validity of institutionalised myths and sabotages the legitimacy of the organisation” (1992: 38). This option can be seen in the cynicism I have encountered in the data, for example the admittance that the corporate commitments and priorities are “just bull” (CM11). However, these acknowledgements would never be countenanced as an official organisation pronouncement.

Alternatively, “an organisation can promise reform. People may picture the present as unworkable but the future as filled with promising reforms of both structure and activity” (1992: 38). This is another strategy encountered in the data, and again relates very clearly to the (Enlightenment, liberal, or ‘cornucopian’) myth of ‘progress’. For example in direct reference to addressing climate change, one officer says that

“we have set up a whole series of officer working groups [...] so...if, we have the *makings* of it all feeding together” (CM12).

Another refers to “lots of projects *in the offing*” which will help to increase their rates of progress, and yet another describes the limited efficacy of energy efficiency projects as

“really something to do whilst we’re *waiting*, you know, ‘cause we’re all *waiting*, and, you know [...] they’re all just three month promotions or six month promotions” (CM20).

In many of the interviews the sense of realism about the paucity of action is balanced by a vague sense of optimism, that as society is continually progressing, in the future there will be further legislation, tools and resources to move towards fulfilling eternally projected deadlines:

“we have probably not...I wouldn’t say scratched the surface, but I suggest that the more we’ve gone on, the more ideas we can do” (BP2).

In comparison to these 'partial' solutions, Meyer and Rowan postulate three further strategies which help to resolve the conflicts of a discrepancy between what an organisation says it does and what actually happens; *de-coupling*, *logic of confidence*, and *ceremonial inspection and evaluation*.

De-coupling involves the protection of "formal structures from evaluation on the basis of technical performance" as this usually "merely makes public a record of inefficiency and inconsistency" (1992: 39). In de-coupling:

- "activities are performed beyond the purview of managers [...] delegated to professionals"
- "goals are made ambiguous or vacuous, and categorical ends are substituted for technical ends"
- "program implementation is neglected, and inspection and evaluation are ceremonialised"
- and "human relations are made very important [...] individuals are left to work out technical interdependencies informally" (all quotes 1992: 39).

Delegation to professionals by (political) managers is characteristic of local and national government work. The second strategy, of ambiguous or vacuous goals, is reflected in the dubious efficacy of corporate policies and potentially unattainable targets:

"Well, in terms of that [a 20% reduction in CO₂], it's just not realistic at all. I mean, the best we could hope for, I would say [...] is to reduce the growth of traffic" (PE3)).

Implementation of policies appears less certain than the making of policies themselves, as seen by the reaction of one officer to a question about the next stage of the LA21 process after consultations and publication:

"That will be our fulfilment of our Local Agenda 21 process, I mean, quite where we go from there is, well, is in implementation I imagine really, erm..." (SW23).

It is also seen in a situation where

"[officer's] study's not active and being actively sort of used and trying to be implemented by the planning department" (CC14).

The final point about personal contacts and informal work is reflected by my data, where formal structures (for example inter-departmental committees) are nominally set up to facilitate implementation, and yet many of the actual projects which go ahead are ascribed to the actions of individuals in different departments, going 'around' the structure to initiate things themselves;

“there was [officer] who was our policy planner [...] and then there's [officer ...] who used to be our energy management information unit, and me, who ran the housing programme, so...you know, we, that was our three-way, sort of corporate...that's as corporate as it got.” (CM12).

The importance of informal work is also suggested by a number of references to 'good relations', 'good relationships' and 'good links' in describing inter-agency dealings. This displays evidence that “committed participants engage in informal co-ordination that, although formally inappropriate, keeps technical activities running smoothly and avoids public embarrassment.” (Meyer and Rowan, 1992: 41).

The *logic of confidence* is Meyer and Rowan's (1992) description of the ways in which the myth of 'progress' suffuses an organisation in such a way as to enable everyone to get on with their job in the self-supporting belief that what is being done is for the best. In effect, this is maintained through the strategies of de-coupling, so that “[t]he assumption that things are as they seem, that employees and managers are performing their roles properly, allows an organisation to perform its daily routines with a de-coupled structure” (1992: 40). It also involves “the public displays of morale and satisfaction that are characteristic of many organisations. Organisations employ a host of mechanisms to dramatise the ritual commitments that their participants make to basic structural elements” (1992: 40). I suggest that in local authorities, the publication of glossy reports and strategies, the statements of commitment and 'vision', and the setting up of new structures can be seen as ritually dramatising their work.

To turn to *ceremonial inspection and evaluation*, the policy documents and progress reports produced by authorities are infrequently analysed, except perhaps in the case of particular local controversies. Such documents are part of the process whereby authorities

present their 'results' to external audiences. Meyer and Rowan suggest that "the more highly institutionalised the environment, the more time and energy organisational elites devote to maintaining their organisation's public image and status [...] in such contexts managers devote more time to articulating internal structures and relationships at an abstract or ritual level" (1992: 44). A number of authority documents offered to me in fieldwork⁶¹ present a sanitised 'map' of their departments' organisation and the responsibilities of officers. These convincingly convey the impression that everything is being taken care of. Paying close attention to some of the progress reports which have been produced for example on energy efficiency and transport schemes has, however, given the impression of 'fine words, little action' in many cases. This is why Meyer and Rowan propose that "institutionalised organisations minimise and ceremonialise inspection and evaluation" (1992: 41); in order to avoid the detailed examination of deviance which might undermine legitimacy. The production of such documents is required by 'due process', but their dissemination or perusal is not often encouraged. It is suggested that such strategies of avoiding inspection are successful because:

"accrediting agencies, boards of trustees, government agencies, and individuals accept ceremonially at face value the credentials, ambiguous goals, and categorical evaluations that are characteristic of ceremonial organisations. In elaborate institutional environments these external constituents are themselves likely to be corporately organised agents of society. Maintaining categorical relationships with their organisation subunits is more stable and more certain than is relying on inspection and control" (1992: 42).

The government is probably likewise keen to accept claims of progress and results from local authorities on climate change, as the authorities are fulfilling targets accepted on their behalf by the government itself. My interview with a DETR official responsible for HECA provided data that supports this view:

"The reporting requirement is statutory certainly, but we don't want local authorities focusing on the reporting requirement [...] Don't chase the data, don't get hung up on data collection, tell us what you know, what you're in control of,

⁶¹ This is a ritual of a kind in itself. Most commonly at the start of an interview, but also at key points, an interview subject would present me with a document (of policy or progress), and then translate its meaning for me in words. If discourses are institutional 'mantras', then documents are its 'fetishes'.

and if you like provide us with examples, anecdotal's not the right word, examples and evidence of other activities that you are undertaking to promote other initiative in your area, so if you told your residents about the SOPs, or the EST's cash-back schemes, show us the leaflet you sent out, that's all we want to know, *we don't need to know what that leaflet has achieved, just tell us how many copies you sent out.*" (MS6)

I now approach the question of what these results are, and how they are constructed.

The 'Results' Of Local Authority Responses To Climate Change

As the preceding sections have explored, it is plausible to view the 'response' to climate change in an almost linguistic sense, in which the various corporate strategies and policies, commitments and vision statements comprise a web of responses to the question "so, what do you think about climate change?". The following are some of the categories that comprise the 'results' of climate change policy as presented to myself, the government and the public at large.

Corporate Policies

As has been elaborated in the foregoing sections, one of the areas of 'results' in local authority responses to climate change has been the setting of targets, the passing of corporate strategies, priorities and policies, all of which add up to the establishment of *commitments* that are supposedly binding on all the work of the authority. As I hope the foregoing has established, there is evidence for considering these corporate policies as:

- an attempt at *institutional isomorphism*, utilising the correct rhetorical units to secure legitimacy from government and the public,
- problematic in implementation, as they are in competition with other, more politically prioritised agendas such as job creation, inward investment and economic regeneration or development,

- part of the process, specifically, of municipal corporatism, the competition between municipalities to present an attractive public image to the world, as discussed in chapter 4, and
- part of the ceremonialisation of inspection and evaluation, by setting ambiguous and categorical goals that are difficult to assess as technically achievable ends.

'Hard' Figures

Another response to climate change appears to be the 're-branding' of policies and projects that the authorities are pursuing under other titles, which also effect carbon dioxide emission reductions. In this narrower translation of 'responding to climate change' as 'quantifying emissions savings' (which is obviously pre-dominant in energy matters, but which filters into transport, planning and sustainability), it seems that 'technical efficiency' criteria are being attended to, with references in my data to actual figures of savings. When considering such data as evidence of a concrete response to climate change there are a few points that should be borne in mind.

Firstly, there is the question of whether bare figures and naked quantification portray the situation in its entirety. Attention to the detail helps us to explore how the production of quantitative data may obscure vital social factors (see Latour, 1987), and also sheds light on the processes involved in the production of such data. A salient example arises from domestic energy efficiency. The HECA scheme, and the energy efficiency measures that arise from it, are quoted as one such 'concrete' response to climate change, in the sense of reducing emissions of CO₂. In fact in my interview with the HECA coordinator at the DETR, he expressed the belief that HECA alone would be capable of fulfilling local authorities' quota of emissions reductions. In summarising the results of energy efficiency measures, very generalised standard formulae are applied in order to generate an authoritative figure from the necessarily partial information available to officers. Indeed, specific software has become available for just such purposes. To grasp the extent to which the end figure is 'constructed', consider the following factors:

- Houses that have had energy efficiency measures applied are assessed according to general classificatory systems, such as terraced, semi-detached and detached, or by age or area. This classification is used to determine their expected energy usage.
- Large numbers of houses are therefore collated indiscriminately, and a value for energy use and savings determined by multiplying their number by a standard figure.
- The savings produced by different measures are similarly deduced using formulae; a house of type x being installed with efficiency measure y will accrue z amount of savings.

Obviously, these methods leave out a great deal of detail, some of which is in a sense technical (how much energy *does* house x actually use/save?) and amenable to monitoring, but much of which is highly contingent and social. These factors remain taken-for-granted in quantitative modeling, a 'black box' in the sociology of science's terms (Latour, 1987, Yonay 1994, Latour and Woolgar, 1979). For example, how many people live in a typical three-bedroom house? What are the occupants' energy needs and practices? Do they keep the entire house centrally heated or just one room? Will they consider an energy efficiency measure an incentive to produce *more* 'affordable warmth', especially in the circumstances of consistently cheaper energy prices? Thus, even with the co-operation of the utility companies in providing data to officers, figures calculated in this manner will remain 'guesstimates' as to the actual savings in energy, and therefore CO₂, that are resulting from authorities' work. Certainly in some cases there is evidence of 'follow-up' monitoring of energy savings (and changes in practices) in individual households, but these figures may in turn be extrapolated to produce figures of cumulative savings.

That there is a response being made is thus without doubt. Real, physical changes are being made; technological fixes are being applied in 'end-of-pipe' measures to reduce energy use and therefore CO₂ emissions. It is certainly valid for an authority to announce that it has installed x amount of energy efficiency measures in domestic situations, however the preponderance of contingent social factors make it considerably less valid

for energy officers, housing departments, the EST and the DETR to announce tonnages of carbon dioxide emissions savings based on these methods of quantification.

Added to this is the fact that many of the figures upon which the DETR bases its calculations of the 'real' contribution of local authorities in this area are derived from *prospective* plans and estimates, which the officers who produce them freely admit are optimistic rather than realistic:

“HECA as an act says 30% energy savings in 10 years. Two years down the line, we reckon we've moved about, ooh, 1% towards it” (CM8).

This is understood by authorities themselves, who find it considerably easier to concentrate on their own building stock and other institutional energy consumers such as schools, hospitals and business premises when outlining demonstrable savings, which it should be remembered are driven by to a large extent by financial rather than environmental benefits. The DETR official responsible for HECA himself suggested that in some cases, the provision of some data, any data, was seen as fulfilment of the authority's duties:

“I'm convinced in some authorities, not many but some, the person dealing with HECA is the person who fills in the progress report at the end of the 12 months, and does nothing in between.” (MS7)

Projects

At the other end of the 'results scale' from corporate strategies are 'projects'. The term 'project' appears to be used for any piecemeal implementation of a scheme in the 'real world', although in the fieldwork I was frequently given extensive detail of particular schemes which later turned out to be at the 'development' stage. My data contain numerous references to projects, probably because they are the best examples which officers can use to demonstrate that there is genuine implementation occurring. I shall outline the details of two of these projects to demonstrate the kind of action that is taking place, but also to highlight the officers' own attitudes towards these schemes.

Many of the schemes that do get implemented fall into the category of ‘case studies’, ‘flagships’ or ‘demonstrator projects’. This explains why they are used as examples to show that the authority is a) doing something, and b) doing the right thing: following the best available advice and expertise in their actions. The Byker ‘waste to power and heat’ plant in Newcastle is one such scheme, as one officer pointed out:

“we’ve got good practice models, I mean, we were a greenhouse flagship for Byker” (CM7).

Different officers emphasised that this historically significant project (in the energy world) came about because of very contingent factors relating to Newcastle’s prominence in the energy world, and

“there was a genuine attempt to do something different and innovative and look at it importantly” (AS13).

The scheme was built with matched funding from the government, and its future is presently being re-negotiated. This is because it has an increased electricity output, but the extra heat produced cannot be utilised in local networks due to the inadequacy of the original piping, and there is an inability to fund further piping.

The officers stressed that the scheme has had preferential treatment to get it built and keep it viable:

“Guaranteed price, it was a very, very high price [...] they get for the electricity from Byker. The margins on the more recent network schemes were tiny in comparison” (AS15).

This led one officer to the conclusion that:

“at that point we did it, and you go, ‘and we saved...you know, many thousands of pounds’...you know, just for the district heating fund, and we probably saved loads of CO₂ and all that sort of thing, and that’s all very interesting, but you go, ‘it’s not progress’, [...] it was like fifteen hundred houses, and we own forty thousand, you know. And then the private sector owns another seventy thousand” (CM7).

Flagship schemes are useful to demonstrate the possibility of one or other course of action, but when they are made possible by exceptional conditions,

“it’s unique, and I don’t think it’s happened anywhere else” (AS24), then officers justifiably raise the question of why the government doesn’t introduce legislation or vary local authority powers to enable them to streamline these ideas. This cynicism was extended to all ‘best practice’ cases by one officer:

“you get some of these case studies that are written up, particularly by people like the Department of the Environment and the Energy Efficiency Unit and, even worse, the Energy Savings Trust, which are all designed to say what a good job they’re doing and what a good job somebody else is doing, and they, they write all this blurb [...] and it may have gone ahead, but in the end you go, ‘that’s one scheme’, ninety properties, you know, yeah? You go ‘but what really happened?’, you know, ‘what happened to everything else?’” (CM6-7)

Similarly, another authority’s transport coordinators (actually a QUANGO in partnership) were keen to tell me about a scheme to introduce LPG (Liquid Petroleum Gas) and other ‘environmentally-friendly’ fuelled buses. Firstly, there is a policy of requiring two bids from a bus provider, for similar standard and alternative fuel vehicles, the bidding mechanism being that:

“if the difference in the contract prices, when they come back, isn’t that different, isn’t that great, then obviously we’ll go for the alternative fuel vehicle one [...but...] there aren’t that many in the general market at the moment, the prices can still be quite different” (BW1).

This shifts responsibility for the potential failure of the policy to the market, or to the non-existence of policies that slant the field in favour of the more ‘green’ alternative. Again, mainstreaming is prevented by factors extrinsic to the authority, which are almost always listed as taxation policy, spending limits, the market, and lack of resources; the responsibilities of the government in influencing markets.

Secondly, this organisation runs a demonstrator project with European money, which provides CNG (compressed natural gas) and electric minibuses,

“obviously the idea being that we can show to the commercial operators that there is a market here for alternative fuel vehicles, and that should have its benefits” (BW2).

But is there a market when the project is externally supported? As she points out,

“it’s taken a long time to actually get the buses to a point where they’re delivered, and being used [...] there is quite a long lead-in [...] because we don’t feel that you put an alternative fuel bus on and everyone will start to want to use it, you know?” (BW2).

To encourage use, there is a set of other measures that were elaborated, before the admittance was made that:

“it will be eventually, [laughs] again it’s not quite there yet! And obviously they’ve all been done, because you’ve asked about how many measures there’ve been done, they’ve all been done in co-operation with the land and planning authority as well, so it’s a package of measures and a package and partnership approach, and it’s got to be that way, that’s just the way it is” (BW 2-3).

Does this mean that the necessities of not implementing individual projects but packages, and of adopting a partnership approach, imply that any action will ‘obviously’ take interminably long in delivery? In fact, fleet purchase of LPG and other alternative fuel vehicles is manifesting as one of the success stories of climate change policy, with Newcastle having progressed far at the time of writing

Awareness Campaigns

Another strand of authority ‘results’, those actions which can be pointed to as having been implemented, comprises of awareness campaigns, in all the areas which comprise a response to climate change: notably energy efficiency, travel, and waste. Work on the public understanding of science (e.g. Michael, 1996: chapter 5) stresses that awareness campaigns often construct the public as deficient in knowledge, lacking the information that would lead to action. This rather simplistic model relies on a number of assumptions which remain un-stated, for example that the public want to take environmental action, but don’t know how, or that they receive and absorb information presented to them

automatically, rather than reflexively critiquing: the source of the information; the reason it is being provided; the agencies involved; the implied prescriptive attitude to their own behaviour and so forth. Lancaster's CSEC (Centre for the Study of Environmental Change) has been at the forefront of untangling the reality hidden by this model's simplistic prescriptions. It nevertheless seems that many in local authorities are willing to take at face value the argument that if enough information is aimed at the public, some of it will 'stick' and change will occur. However, they themselves critique naïve models of behavioural motivation propounded by others:

"I don't think it [transport modal choice] will be changed by exhortations from Prescott"(AS16).

One area in which it was stressed that awareness campaigns might be effective was that of educating children. In a sense, this source of optimism fits into the technique of *de-coupling* described above, where the effectiveness of a particular policy, and of an organisation in general, is eternally deferred to the future. In one officer's words:

"there's a lot of awareness [...] and, that's actually a lot of awareness that, that is in private households, mainly from the kids. The kids are much more aware than the parent. So actually when, I mean, we spend a lot of time at schools [...] coming at it through schools, and schools are much more knowledgeable about the greenhouse programme, climatic change, you know, shifting deserts, they're quite interested in that" (CM18)

This optimism was however undercut by the realism of accepting that:

"I don't think that we can wait that long [until they've grown up]. Because, because, when, you know, but the problem is once they, once they become, you know, erm, married, mortgage et cetera [...] they go 'yep, I'm very interested in it, I'd love to do it, BUT I need a new carpet', you know, 'I need a car to get to work', you know, 'and I want to keep a roof over my head'" (CM19).

This view proposes that entanglement in the system of capitalist consumer society will lead to new 'drivers' overcoming environmental concern in the immediate, day-to-day life of future adults.

The most obvious critiques of awareness campaigns in my data relied on a comparison with ‘real’ action, or action in the ‘real world’. One referred to ‘paraphernalia, gimmicks’, characterising awareness campaigns and information as ‘just advertising’ (BP4), whilst another pushed the provision of energy-saving light-bulbs in comparison with information and advice provision:

“it’s an educational thing [...] it’s quite a nice way to keep the, the sort of energy advice message going through, and it’s real, it’s not like advice. You know, advice which goes [whistling noise] in one ear, out the other [...] you can take it home, plug it in” (CM23-24).

Here we see a very cheap demonstrator project, in which provision of a domestic, non-expert technology enables the financial concerns and motivational aspects of advice to be circumvented directly. Its benefits are obviously appreciated by authorities, as

“most authorities give away plugs or something” (CM23), and indeed, the main ‘result’ from the LA21 sub-group meeting which I attended was the intention to explore the possibility of setting up a partnership with a manufacturer to provide exactly such a scheme, with cheapness, feasibility and ‘real world’ benefits being the motivators over the nebulous efficacy of awareness.

The success of other awareness campaigns was justified to me in terms of the partnerships that were built in delivering them, for example through local television and newspapers. That the creation of partnerships was a success in itself was not explained on the basis of their intrinsic value, but on the basis that these schemes acted as demonstrator projects, on the basis of which more funding could be attracted from external sources. This appears to me to be exemplary of the ‘entrepreneurial’ style in local authority policy-making, where institutional isomorphism is sought not purely for kudos, but in a deliberate policy of ‘turning a profit’; levering in funding in the ways promoted by the central government’s response to the lack of resources in local government, in promoting the pursuit of public-private partnerships, joint funding etc.

Partnerships

The partnerships that play a part in local government responses to climate change are far too numerous to list (although some were given in chapter 3.1), and span a number of activities. As I have pointed out, the existence of these partnerships is in some sense itself a 'result': a broadening of networks of influence and access to resources. Some partnerships extend across Europe or the world, others are highly locally centred, yet others are regional. The main benefits accruing from the partnership approach appear to include:

1. the exchange of information,
2. getting others 'on board',
3. gaining legitimacy,
4. attracting funding and resources,
5. delegating implementation to other agencies, and
6. coordinating responses.

Yet there is also, as I have demonstrated, some resistance to the rhetoric and practice of partnership, with it being described as ineffective or excuse not to do anything. Transport provision partnerships (specifically the creation of a new 'bus quality partnerships') have proved a positive example, particularly in seeing the extension of routes, and the introduction of newer, more accessible buses with provision for wheelchairs, pushchairs and the elderly.

Public transport may be one area where partnerships are effective in securing tangible change. In other areas, officers questioned the realism of trying to set up partnerships where there was seen to be little to offer other partners apart from the opportunity to donate money. From the data, it would seem that 'partnership' was here being seen as little more than a euphemism for 'touting for investment'. The major barriers to setting up 'real partnerships' were seen as short-termism (where, for example, authorities were attempting to lever in money from Building Societies to fund CHP, with its extended pay-back times), and the fact that other bodies have other priorities, values and programs; in other words, cultures. In particular, private sector individuals and bodies were seen to operate on the basis of self-interest and financial imperatives, and therefore appealing to

them on the basis of benefits for the community, citizens, or the planet failed to match up with their construction of the public as clients and shareholders first:

“‘What’s it got to do with us?’ is the first reaction, second reaction is ‘[sigh] ah, goodness me, couldn’t lend, we couldn’t lend on some of those things, you know, on energy efficiency’, and then said, ‘but really, we’re actually only there to serve our customers, and if our customers don’t demand it, we won’t give it’ [...] and they go, ‘well, that’s not our role. Change the legislation, you could do that, but our role is to respond to what our client wants’”(CM15-16).

Once again, specific legislation, with the corollary of additional powers, and finance available to offer to others, were seen as the main sources of agency, in a society where money is the ‘bottom line’, and the main source of enticement for promoting change in behaviours and technologies.

Promotion Of Alternatives

This was a strategy used frequently in the area of transport, where it was seen as the first stage in encouraging ‘modal change’, that is the switching of people’s travel arrangements from the private motor car to public transport, cycling or walking. Awareness campaigns also played a large part in this process. Once again it is an ambiguous result. At the end of implementation, an authority can point to the fact that it has made modal change more appealing, and therefore in theory likely, through the provision of information, showers, bicycle lockers, and even competition-based incentives.

I would like to point out that this is indeed welcome and worthy action, but its results still remain at the level of the symbolic, where a policy of ‘promotion’ has not only been passed, but also implemented, and yet this in itself constitutes the result. The fulfilment of ceremonial criteria satisfies the limited inspection and evaluation procedures in such a way that the question of how many people take up modal change (and therefore how much of a realist response to climate change - in terms of emissions reductions - has been made) remains unanswered.

Conclusion

I have attempted to look at the responses being made to climate change across my three case authorities, in a way which draws attention to their fit with the expectations made of modern local government activities in the framework of the modernising discourses identified in chapter 2.3. In addition, the adaptation, adoption and rejection of new discourses can be seen as the assimilation or otherwise of the dominant discursive construction of the expected response to climate change outlined in that chapter. Aspects of *ritual* still dominate local authority business, as they are the ‘social glue’ that cements bureaucratic activity as legitimate ‘due process’. *Rhetoric* is deployed in numerous ways to lend a new gloss to old policies, to display that discourses which they are expected to absorb have been absorbed, and (in the case of resisting ‘climate change’ as a new discourse) to explain that climate change policies are best deal with in other discursive frameworks. The *results* of the process are rendered ambiguous, which seems to be a result of the difficulty in accounting for *progress* in this area. The existence of a ‘myth of progress’ seems to demand only that figures are produced (even if their accuracy is questionable), or that categorical goals represented by commitments to ‘do more’ and ‘do better’ are satisfied, in the interest of fulfilling ceremonial criteria.

In the next chapter I turn my attention to an analysis of how different people within authorities may be following different agendas in their responses to climate change, by identifying the existence of distinguishable cultural commitments in the discourses employed by different individuals.

CHAPTER 3:3 MULTIPLE CULTURES IN A SINGLE INSTITUTION

Having examined different local authority responses to climate change, and traced commonalities between the responses, I now turn my attention to a third level of analysis. I aim to use a version of Cultural Theory to identify the existence of multiple ‘cultures’ within local authorities, cultures that bring with them necessarily different interpretations of what climate change is and how it should be responded to. In a sense this is utilising Cultural Theory as a purely descriptive form of analysis, looking at the beliefs and cognitive commitments held by various people through paying attention to their discursive constructions of climate change, and attempting to correlate these with the speakers’ experiences of social relations. Cultural Theory enables us to predict who should be espousing which beliefs, and so its applicability or validity is to some degree tested through this analysis.

However, my thesis is not purely concerned with ‘road-testing’ a particular interpretative typology or theory, rather, I am attempting to analyse *why* the response to climate change in local authorities has been such as it is. In order to do that I will explore a number of themes which introduce normative elements to Cultural Theory’s largely non-prescriptive stance. These relate to the *dominance* of a particular culture, or cultural ‘style’ in local authorities (linked with the dominance of the discourses which are its ‘manifestation’ in social action), and the question of whether we can use Cultural Theory in conjunction with notions of the desirability of cultural plurality and the appropriateness of certain cultural styles to certain areas and scales of policy, in order to promote the cultural positions suppressed by such hegemony.

Outline

I am proposing to deal with the issues in this chapter in the following way. Firstly I outline what exactly the ‘cultures’ that I am looking for *are*, and how to recognise them. I then peruse some of the different ways in which the cultures of Cultural Theory have

been identified by different authors in different areas, not all of them working within Cultural Theory. Indeed, Mary Douglas says that “[t]he object is not to come up with something original but gently to push what is known into an explicit typology that captures the wisdom of a hundred years of sociology, anthropology and psychology” (Douglas, 1982b: 1). Here she suggests that Cultural Theory systematises observations that are consistently made by social scientists, and provides a typology that not only organises them, but also attempts to account for them. Next, as I am claiming to be able to identify multiple cultures, I will look at how different authors have argued that a plurality of cultural outlooks is desirable or logically necessary. At the most general level, Rayner proposes that “there are as many cultural variations within nations as there are among national public or political cultures” (Rayner, 1991: 77), extending the analysis of culture further than the more traditional political science approach of ‘national cultures’. At the most particular level, Thompson *et al* (Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky, 1990) go further, suggesting that an individual may hold apparently incommensurable cultural beliefs in different areas of their life. I will be mostly focussing on the societal level of the institution, with references to the importance of the macro-societal scale.

There then follows an analysis of my data, drawing out some of the cultural biases, preferences of social relations, discourses and constructions of nature and human nature that Cultural Theory predicts. As outlined in my first chapter, I am not attempting to establish any causal priority of organisation or beliefs, believing this to be a distraction from the more useful social science project of establishing that there are connections between the different core beliefs of individuals and the social relations in which they are positioned, which amount to the existence of ‘ways of life’. These are cultural packages that are discernable through attention to the discourses with which people explain their attitudes towards a plethora of issues. Thompson *et al*’s *Cultural Theory* (1990), offers suggestions as to what the four cultures’ attitudes towards nature, human nature, needs and resources, preferences, blame, envy, growth, scarcity, risk, apathy, change and surprise (among others) might be, and other authors have extended this list. At the end of this section I hope to have demonstrated that the constructions, biases, solidarities, and

policy prescriptions of the hierarchist, individualist, fatalist and egalitarian are *all* represented within the climate change world of local authorities.

I then go on to look at the issue of the *dominance* of cultures and discourses in society and organisations. In a sense this is ground I have already covered in terms of the dominance of certain discourses in local authorities, and the nature of local authorities as essentially bureaucratic or hierarchical. However, I now suggest that the hegemony of certain cultural outlooks leads to blindness and deafness in the policy world in terms of trying to react flexibly to climate change in different areas and spheres of life.

I finish by moving from description to prescription. I point out that Cultural Theory claims in the name of ‘constrained relativism’ that none of the cultures’ views is entirely, universalistically true, but that each has a valid grasp of those aspects of reality towards which it is primarily orientated. This seems to me a quite broad-minded, liberal, pluralistic attitude to epistemology and social reality, in which the central question in a given social situation is to ask which of the cultural outlooks it is *appropriate* to pursue. This involves rejecting the Foucauldian position that “individuals are for the most part subject to the discourses in which they move, and so seldom able to step back and make comparative assessments and choices across different discourses” (Drysek, 1997: 20)) in order to draw out those aspects of new environmental problems such as climate change which suggest that they are more susceptible to being addressed in an egalitarian manner (egalitarian, that is, in terms of Cultural Theory) than through the dominant social relations of markets and hierarchies.

Ways Of Life

To begin, then, I need to clarify what these ‘cultures’ are. Although disagreements between proponents of hierarchist, egalitarian, individualist and fatalistic ‘cultures’ bear a high degree of similarity to those disputes which we claim are irresolvable due to ‘cultural differences’, often involving the clash of incommensurable beliefs, it is important to realise that the traditional concept of ‘culture’ (in a national or ethnic sense)

does not accurately map onto these divisions. Groups identified as characterising Cultural Theory's ways of life share a great deal in terms of cognitive commitments and ways of working, across national or ethnic boundaries.

What do such groups share? In the examination of culture in organisations (local authorities specifically), Haynes (Haynes, 1980) argues that "an organisation's behavioural rules and norms are the product of its central value system or culture" (1980: 118-9), and that with increasing complexity, an organisation "will probably have developed a dominant ideology or culture with all-encompassing, precise and rigid expectations for all organisational rules" (1980: 11-9). This is the well-known, functionalist argument for bureaucratisation, but notice that it draws attention to two sets of factors: the value system, culture or ideology; and the rules, structures and procedures that determine the legitimate work of the organisation. These are the factors that Cultural Theory addresses as *cultural biases* and *social relations*. Cultural Theory concurs with Haynes that "a direct correlation and supportive alliance will invariably exist between the dominant structural and procedural characteristics of an organisation and its cultural make-up" (1980: 119).

The inevitable or self-evident nature of such an alliance is what makes it ideological, as well as self-supporting. Just as socialisation involves the reproduction of societies' expected behaviours and norms by individuals, acculturation is achieved explicitly or automatically in social set-ups where stability relies upon the sharing of a 'way of life'. Indeed, according to Douglas, "each individual who enters a social relation is drawn at the same time into a debate about what the relation is and how it ought to be conducted. This is the normative debate on which cultural analysis fastens attention" (Douglas, 1992: 133). The nub of the theory is that each way of organising social relations will only hold together if the nature of the relations can be justified by the participants to one another, as each "will fail to make any sense of his [sic] surroundings unless he can find some principles to guide him to behave in the sanctioned ways" (Douglas, 1978: 6).

A confirmation of the primacy of these links between biases and social relations is provided by a methodological comparison between various social science approaches in explaining views on climate change. In this study, Jaeger *et al* (Jaeger *et al*, 1993) found that “variations in public perceptions and values relevant to climate change are better explained by the socio-cultural variables of network density, inter-connectedness, and rule-sharing, than by either traditional demographic variables or general notions of post-materialism” (Thompson and Rayner, 1998: 279). This validates Cultural Theory’s claim that “social relations, rather than individual preferences, stabilise the public’s expression of values about what is natural and what is right” (Rayner and Malone, 1998: xxiv).

Multiple Cultural Attitudes Towards Environmental Issues

In looking at local authority responses to climate change as represented in my interviews with authority officers and others, I draw out predictable and predicted links between the *social relations* in which an individual is involved, and the values and *cultural biases* to which they are committed, and find these links based in the four ‘ways of life’ of hierarchism, individualism, egalitarianism and fatalism. It is worthwhile reproducing a summary of some of Cultural Theory’s predictions⁶² about the cultural biases held by institutions that conform to the four ways of life. These include:

- their responses to global environmental changes and the components of their decision making processes (Rayner, 1991: 86-89),
- their preferences for policy instruments (Rayner, 1991: 98), and
- their understandings of climate change’s causes and the principles on which they would seek to respond to it, as revealed in negotiations (Rayner and Malone, 1998: 309,331).

⁶² This analysis is particularly based on the work of Steve Rayner.

Table 4: Attitudes to global environmental change, decision-making, policy instruments and climate change according to institutional ‘way of life’.

Way of life:	Individualism	Hierarchism	Egalitarianism
Response strategy to global environmental changes:	Adaptation	Sustainable Development	Prevention
Sovereignty:	Consumer	Institution	Collective
Procedures:	Skills	Rules	Ethical standards
Criteria:	Experience	Evidence	Argument
Consent:	Revealed in market	Hypothetical	Explicit
Liability:	Loss spreading	Re-distributive	Strict fault
Trust in:	Successful individuals	Procedures	Participation
Time depth:	Short termism	Long termism	Compressed (millenarian)
Future generations:	Self-sufficient	Resilient	Fragile
Preferred policy instruments:	Carrots (incentives)	Sticks (regulation and fines)	Carrots and Sticks
Climate Change causes:	Incorrect pricing	Population growth	Profligacy
Policy bias:	Libertarian (market utilitarian)	Contractarian (administrative utilitarian)	Egalitarian (anthropocentric and nature centric)
Allocate emissions by:	Priority (we were here first)	Proportionality (to each his needs)	Parity (equal rights to emissions)

Other authors have identified similar distinctions, between approaches to environmental issues. Hajer (1995) asserts that the existence of analysable differences in approaches to the environment “is what makes the study of environmental discourse into the crucial activity it is” (1995: 41), and many other authors, including Milton (1996), Wynne, Jasanoff (Jasanoff and Wynne, 1998), Hajer and Fischer (1999) and Sachs (1997a and b) share an interest in discerning such differences.

For example, Wolfgang Sachs (1997a and b) offers a credible survey of different perspectives on sustainable development, which he entitles the *contest*, *astronaut’s* and *home* perspectives. Describing these respectively, he suggests that “[f]or players in the free market, the environment is a field of contest. For techno-fixers it is a problem of global management. For radicals the earth is a home” (1997a: 20). He locates these perspectives paradigmatically in: northern industrialised elites; global ecologists and their international political wings; and “small NGOs, social movements and dissident intellectuals” (1997a: 22) respectively, a convincing alignment with the three ‘active’ cultures of cultural theory.

Similarly, Jasanoff and Wynne view policy formation as the result of bargaining and negotiation between “four main policy cultures-bureaucratic, economic, academic and civic [...where e]ach policy culture has its own doctrinal assumptions, its images and ideals of science, and its own political constituencies” (Jasanoff and Wynne, 1998: 14).

With regard to climate change specifically, Rayner (1991), outlines the three response strategies to global environmental changes as *prevention*, *adaptation* and *sustainable development*. He argues that “cultural theory does suggest that the social organisation of institutions [...] may lead them to frame their internal discourse in such a way that one or another of these strategies will tend to set the terms of the discussion” (Rayner, 1991: 88). Here, *prevention* is the egalitarian strategy, based on the myth of a fragile earth, *adaptation* is the confident policy of the individualists, whose planet is benign or resilient, and *sustainable development* is given as the preferred response of the hierarchists, who view nature as tolerant within limits.

Rayner and Thompson's chapter in *Human Choice and Climate Change* (Rayner and Malone, 1998) is exhaustive in dealing with cultural theory insights into climate change⁶³. It "ties the value commitments of climate discourses to the institutional arrangements that human beings use for making collective choices about society and the environment" (Rayner and Malone, 1998: xxv), and therefore applies Cultural Theory at a very detailed level to the issues which are tied to climate change policy making: mostly at the global and national levels. Rayner and Thompson (1998) identify different diagnoses of the climate problem which blame: *profligacy* (on the part of the global North), stressing values; incorrect *pricing* (seeing climate in terms of scarcity and cost), stressing technical, market solutions; and *population* growth, requiring rational management of the economy and environment (sustainable development). Here again are manifest the three active cultures' preferences. Similarly, they look at the differing concepts in international climate discourse of equity (distributional and intergenerational), procedural fairness, and 'epistemological and moral relationships' with nature (the four myths of nature explained before). In each case their framework, Cultural Theory, "explicitly focuses on the modes by which people bind themselves to each other in social institutions" (Thompson and Rayner, 1998: 328). These assessments of the diagnoses of and reactions to climate change according to cultural persuasion are helpful in addressing the data, in highlighting the discursive formations that we might expect to find.

Multiple Cultures Within Institutions

Whilst the preceding examples refer to efforts to identify cultural differences at a macro level, other researchers have looked for cultural differences within a single sector or research site.

For example, Celia and David Bloor (1982) found evidence of the four predicted cultural biases amongst industrial scientists (which correlated with their form or experience of social organisation). In their research, a scientist who characterised his work environment

⁶³ See Table 3.

in strongly hierarchical terms held a 'cosmology' consistent with hierarchism, a 'loner' who holds himself responsible for his advancement had an individualist 'cosmology', and so on. The similarities with my own work should be noted, especially the difficulties encountered in identifying the nature of organisational variables (social relations) and 'cosmologies' (cultural biases) from interview data. However, the Bloors were convinced of Cultural Theory's applicability and validity, and I largely follow their presentation of their findings in terms of 'ideal type' individuals who exemplify the cultural positions. Their methodological objections are important to note, especially the fact that without any other data on 'actual' organisational details, the interview data were taken to accurately represent the interviewees' grid and group structuration. The Bloors suggest that 'psychological coloration [sic]' might lead an individual with a very strong cultural bias (which they identify as a psychological matter) to perceive their social experience as existing in a way predicted by that bias. They go on to dismiss themselves the suggestion that 'self-selection' or 'institutional screening' (whereby the individual or institution places people in social situations which fit their cultural biases) are incompatible with Cultural Theory. Indeed, it is what it predicts.

An early essay on culture in (primarily business) organisations by Harrison (Harrison, 1972) suggests that conflicts between and within organisations are caused by cultural differences. He argues that four basic type of organisational culture exist: *power*, *role*, and *person* cultures (which can be identified as sharing many characteristics with individualist, hierarchist and egalitarian cultures) and *task* culture. The last, he admits, is a short-term 'culture', a technique rather than a stable system of organisation, in which people are thrown together in a team situation with a focussed end in mind.

Goddard (1995) quotes an application of Harrison's schema to local government (Kakabadse (1982)) that concluded that "the different managerial focus of each level leads to different cultures" (Goddard, 1995). Goddard's own research provides some confirmation of Cultural Theory's predictions *re* 'ways of life' in concluding "that organisational and professional groupings may display different cultures" (1995:215), where "[p]rofessional dimensions seem more associated with the deepest levels of

personally held values and beliefs and underlying assumptions” (1995: 219), which are identifiable as cultural biases. Here, again, is some suggestion that different groupings within an institution can display different cultural styles and biases.

Cultural Plurality

I wish to demonstrate that the institution of local authority contains a plurality of ways of life, with different individuals within it being situated in different forms of social relations, and holding the cultural biases and preferences which justify, and are justified by, those arrangements.

The stress placed at the societal level of *institutions* is one example of Cultural Theory’s attempts to transcend the traditional dichotomies of social science⁶⁴. Thus, rather than granting collectivities a mind of their own, to which individuals subscribe, or treating individuals as the sovereign rational choosers of much social science and economics, the coming together of people in social structures itself is seen as the way in which free-will and determinism are negotiated. As Schwartz and Thompson claim in *Divided We Stand*:

“The strength of the cultural theory, however, is that it sets off by treating individuals [...] as social beings; people who, in deriving their individuality from their involvement with others, are already connected up into the wider scheme of things. Consequently, it has no difficulty in conceptualising social organisations [...] as aggregations of similarly institutionalised individuals.” (Schwartz and Thompson, 1990:71)

Since my thesis is about multiple cultures within a single institution, this approach requires further elaboration, and fine-tuning of theory. My main point is that within an institution (which is most easily perceived as having a unitary culture, a single mode of organisation and so on), different individuals may experience their social relations differently. I have already pointed out the Bloor’s questioning of individual’s *experience*

⁶⁴ See Thompson *et al*, 1990: 21-22 on structure/culture, individualism/collectivism, stability/change, fact/value and rationality/irrationality.

of social relations as being ‘psychologically coloured’ (Bloor and Bloor, 1982), this seems quite a valid observation, but not incompatible with Cultural Theory. In the institution of local authority, nominally a hierarchy, there are, I argue, centres and peripheries, networks, hierarchies and small groups, and a looseness of organisation such that there is a plurality of experiences of group membership and regulation sufficient to allow the concomitant plurality of cultural biases. In short, there is a plurality of cultures. I would like to draw attention to those aspects of Cultural Theory that stress the inevitability of cultural plurality.

Cultural Theory itself contains a commitment to the proposition that *all* four ways of life will be found in an institution in some form. *Cultural Theory* (1990) explains its *requisite variety condition* in summary thus: “[e]ach way of life needs each of its rivals, either to make for its deficiencies, or to exploit, or to define itself against [...] If, as we are arguing, each way of life depends upon each of the four rival ways of life for survival, then it follows that for one way of life to exist there must be at least five ways of life in existence.” (Thompson *et al*, 1990: 4). Thompson (1999) puts forward a strong claim, his *proposition of interdependence*, that “all four cultural styles (all four solidarities) are to be found at every scale level: all the way from households to Global Environmental Facilities” (1999: 145). Thompson *et al* (1990) extend this descriptive claim to suggest that “[a] nation in which ways of life are nicely balanced (or, at least, “never entirely excluded”) is less prone to being surprised and will have a wider repertoire to draw from in responding to novel situations [...] the more ways of seeing that are included, the less there is that will go unseen” (1990: 96).

This plurality is thus seen as desirable for the point of view of anticipating *surprises*⁶⁵, and of having a flexibility of responses. To go back to Harrison’s organisational work on culture, he concludes that the ‘ideal’ organisational culture would include all four cultures of *power*, *role*, *task*, and *person*, to some degree, to allow responsiveness and flexibility to changing circumstances. Haynes (1980) even uses Harrison to suggest how this may be

⁶⁵ Surprises being what happen when pursuing a way of life reveals itself to be inappropriate, to be causing more problems than it solves.

possible within a single organisation, as “different cultural atmospheres meet different needs which exist concurrently in most organisations”, and therefore “organisations may have to be comprised of units which are ideologically homogeneous within themselves and yet still quite different from each other” (Haynes, 1980: 123). I argue that a similar situation does indeed exist in local authority, and yet the expected plurality and flexibility does not result, due to the different ways in which dominance and hegemony work to favour some but not other ‘ways of life’.

‘Plural Rationalities In A Single Institution’

The attempt to identify different ways of life within a single institution has not often been attempted. Douglas’ *Essays in the Sociology of Perception* (1982) contains a number of exploratory studies, looking for cultural styles amongst ancient Chinese philosophers, post-doctoral scientists, geologists, mathematicians and other groups, but the closest parallels to my project are to be found in Rayner’s (1986) examination of attitudes to risk within hospitals: *Management of Radiation Hazards in Hospitals: Plural Rationalities in a Single Institution*. I want to offer some initial, exploratory thoughts as to the similarities between my approach and his study, before addressing my data specifically.

Rayner’s methodology resembled my own in that he did not base his study on a single research site, but on interviews with a variety of staff from a number of hospitals. Similarly, he was researching attitudes towards a single topic, in his case radiation, and comparing the attitudes he discovered to the occupational categories of those who held them. Like him, I feel that “[t]he mechanics of the study were rather like guessing the objects on a table which has been covered by a heavy cloth. The objects being the diverse, organisationally induced attitudes, the heavy cloth being the unifying norm of ‘it’s safe because we stick to the rules’” (1986: 576). In my case, the cloth was similarly the commitment to the legitimacy of the institution within which (most of) the interviewees were situated, and to the myth of the effectiveness of its dominant ways of working.

Social Relations

Rayner had some difficulty in identifying *egalitarian* groups within health-care (although he settled on not-for-profit clinics and rights-advocacy groups), and it can be argued that genuine, ideal type, egalitarian social relations are unlikely to exist in a local authority. If and when they do, it is most likely at the periphery, including the groups that intersect with a council in its environmental work. I think it is valid to suggest that those Local Agenda 21 officers who attempt to involve the public rather than purely authority ‘experts’ in LA21 meetings, who stress participation over consultation, in other words, who are attempting to establish egalitarian-style small groups within authority work, can be characterised as tending towards (and promoting) egalitarian social relations. Indeed, the possibility of working under such conditions may be among the main incentives for entering in this area of local authority work.

With regard to *fatalism*, Rayner had access to a range of what he calls ‘stratified individuals’ (maintenance staff, junior nurses, cleaners and porters) with whom I have had no equivalent contact. I therefore run the risk of succumbing to circularity, of portraying dissatisfied or apathetic individuals within hierarchies as ‘stratified individuals’ on the basis of their expressed cultural bias. However, this is again precisely what Cultural Theory predicts, that those whose *experience* of sociality contains a high degree of stratification and regulation, but no sense of linkage to a group, will have a fatalistic attitude towards a large number of issues, such that it flavours their outlook on their work, and life.

Identifying *individualists*, and their social relations, in local authorities, is more straightforward. Cultural Theory defines the individualist sociality as being at the centre of ‘ego-based networks’, and the comparison is often made with the anthropological classification of “[t]he Big Man [...] a forceful, competitive entrepreneur who builds up a massive personal network through his many wives, his relatives, his followers and his students or henchmen” (Thompson 1982: 40). These people are the go-getters, those who often feel stifled by working in traditional hierarchical structures, being more willing to

set up, extend and exploit their own networks. They believe that power (or efficacy) depends on whom you can talk to, or call on. In Rayner's case, these people were to be found among the high-status professional specialists, the radiotherapists, diagnosticians and nuclear medicine specialists. In a local authority, heads of department or 'teams' are the ones who might be classified as the competitive individuals, working within a hierarchy but very much on their own terms wherever possible, at the centre of networks of influence

Cultural Bias

Rayner's study focussed on *attitudes to risk* (towards which there is considerable interest in Cultural Theory writings, e.g. Douglas (1985), Douglas and Wildavsky (1982)), but in order to interpret these attitudes in relation to the theory, he applied more abstract categories of analysis: the rules of procedure, modes of decision-making, over-riding values, trust in the institution and so on as expressed in the data. I apply a similar approach, as well as looking at aspects that I have already discussed, such as models of nature and human nature, of concern, responsibility and agency.

Given the emphasis on policy in my research, one of the major criteria for identifying cultural bias is that of policy preferences. According to Rayner (1991) and Thompson and Rayner (1998), we should expect:

- *individualists* to favour *economic* instruments, especially *incentives* such as tax breaks, and policies which are *libertarian* in nature and rely on *voluntary* action with *minimum regulation*
- *hierarchists* to favour a combination of 'carrots and sticks', *incentives* but also *direct regulation* in a *contractarian* model, and
- *egalitarians* to favour 'sticks', enforcing policy on the 'bad guys', especially in the name of equality and 'fairness'.

In theory, *fatalists* will privately not believe in the efficacy of any policy measures. In my research this manifested as a commitment to the authorities' policies, combined with personal pessimism as to their usefulness. In the final analysis, Cultural Theory is an

interpretative approach, and it is up to the individual researcher to look where they can to find evidence of the different biases and 'ways of life'.

DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS

Individualism

I will begin with the 'big men'. The following quotes are taken from a head of department, an energy manager, and a sustainability team leader.

Cultural Theory posits that individualists perceive nature and society in terms of *competition*, and see competition as a healthy state for innovation and progress. Exemplifying this view, one officer praises the privatisation of energy as being useful in acting as an incentive for investment in energy efficient CHP:

AS: I don't think CHP will happen until, until that time. I don't think we need new legislation, I think privatisation has made it a lot easier, in terms of institutional structure, primarily, as against pre-privatisation, the CEGB, Electricity Board, so it's much easier.

INT: How, how, how does privatisation help?

AS: Well I think firstly by introducing an element of competition so that whereas before it was just, it was just the monoculture of the state providers, the state-owned providers, and they had very little incentive to do CHP

INT: Right,

AS: So they didn't do it. In fact they argued it was against, CEGB I think argued historically that it was against...they would have been acting *ultra vires*, it would have been against the, you know, principles that were laid down on the CEGB [...]

INT: Is that because they were providing too much benefit...?

AS: Well, no, no, they were to provide a profit, the best profit, and they, they took the view that providing straight electricity was more profitable than providing electricity in CHP and use, that's the view they took, and they might have been right. (AS10)

Likewise, liberalisation is praised, albeit ambiguously:

INT: So as well as privatisation, do you think liberalisation of the energy market will help...?

AS: I think liberalisation of the market is two-edged. I think it has some benefit in that it allows other companies to enter the market-place who wouldn't have been there previously so we're beginning to see I think energy supply companies and alliances taking place between authorities and suppliers etc, so doing things in a different way. Companies like City Heat, coming into the market place and wanting to supply heat and power. So that's good, but liberalisation, I think sends us, it's good in an institutional and organisational way, but it basically sends a message that prices are going to go down, you just shop around, you keep changing your supplier, and erm you know if you don't like it from here you buy it from there. (AS11)

In another instance, he points out that planning rules do not take competition into account, so that supermarkets or other developments may be allowed in each other's 'catchment areas':

"you don't actually worry about competition between centres [...]o if you have a centre with a supermarket, and somebody comes along with a superstore, and it wipes that other one out, well, that's just hard luck, that's just competition." (AS9)

This suggests a preference for the workings of the market over regulation to sort out such problems. Likewise, policy commitments are seen as failing because of market conditions, where waste-to-heat is "a very positive way of disposing of waste because the heat is all used and in fact at surplus times, sales of electricity to the grid". Road-pricing, although an economic measure, carries for another officer "the fear of making the city *economically* unattractive [...] we would risk putting ourselves at an *economic disadvantage*, which they will not do, and I can't blame them" (SW34).

In this example, decisions and transactions are primarily characterised as individual, economic decisions. The following discussion of trying to curb car use shows a similar

commitment to continued growth, and an assertion that only a change in the financial factors that influence the decisions of individual rational choice actors will be effective:

AS: I think there's a lot more scope for traffic growth, even, over and above, especially in this region,

INT: Yeah,

AS: Where we have quite low car ownership still.

INT: Right,

AS: So there's still considerable scope for growth in car use and therefore...

INT: And do you think that's likely as well, that the growth will actually...

AS: Well I think it is unless something happens...to stop it, I mean, erm, the things that stop are ...recession, people can't afford cars, can't afford to use them. Erm, again, fiscal measures, I don't think it will be stopped by exhortations from Prescott, I don't think it will be stopped by planning policy which is saying that they won't build of centre malls any more, only in town. (AS 16)

In terms of policy preferences and motivating change or action, forcing cuts in traffic through using the 'stick' of, for example, parking charges, is rejected from an individualist perspective of personal freedom:

AS: Yes, well, I think my experience of Germans is that they probably have got their city centres better organised, they've got better public transport, far, far better, but if you drive on the Autobahn in Germany, I mean there's no shortage of cars, it's chocka [...] Even though they've got really excellent public transport, so it's not, just doing good public transport and just traffic calming is not the answer, you can get, it's a bit like the other thing we were talking about, you really have to want to do it,

INT: Yeah,

AS: And that's going to be hard to force people to do, adjust into less...er....well it's cutting down people's freedom of choice. That's basically what it amounts to, that's no, that's not, politically an easy one to grapple with. (AS20)

The individualist stress is instead on obtaining *voluntary* agreements, with the denial that people are motivated by altruism or long-term thinking, as “there’s a small minority of people who, yes, would say, look, this is tragic, I’ll get on my bike” (AS21). By contrast, the sustainability team leader elaborates the ‘carrots’ of policy, of encouraging voluntary up-take of alternatives, including:

“the interest-free cycle loan [...] good discounts to council staff [...] a whole raft of freebie add-ons [...] and] once a month a staff draw [where those who take out a loan and/or cycle to work are entered in a computerised lottery which picks out two lucky winners and an officer] then phones them up and says ‘did you cycle to work today?’ and if the answer’s ‘yes’ they get a £25 voucher [...] if no-one wins it, it rolls over to the next week” (SW7-8).

I could hardly make up a better example of the individualist model of appealing to self-interest, whilst getting the desired behaviour in a manner clearly modelled on the competitions of TV and radio companies. Other measures include cycle tours, a ‘bike doctor’ service and another prize draw, on the basis of “simply by buying one [bike], he’s got one free” (SW8). The same officer also rejects the notion that congestion itself will affect individual’s travel choices; at the same time undermining the case that (voluntary) modal shift is possible:

“SW: Well, look at London. I mean, you know, you have the best public transport system in the UK, in terms of, you’d have over-ground train, you’d have underground and you’d have a bus system and you’d have the taxis there, but there’s still massive congestion. So, you, you’re right, I mean, I think environmentalists probably feel that, if you make congestion bad enough, people will automatically choose something else, but human nature is so bloody stubborn that it’s, I mean, we have erm... [laughs], I’ll leave it like that.” (SW7).

On the subject of planning, the first officer quoted considers that development planning and building regulations (primarily hierarchist tools for constraining growth of unsustainable development) will only have marginal effects. For example, he explains that his urban area has deliberately extended out into the greenbelt, on the basis that:

“AS: [...] it would be better to expand the city peripherally, even if that meant going into the greenbelt, and to see more dispersal of development further afield. The planning inspector took that view and our greenbelt has changed as a result. So that’s important, and like, when those houses are built, which hasn’t started yet, but when they’re built [...] those people will use less petrol, I guess, on average, if one could work it out, you’ll never prove it, than if they were scattered [...] all around the edge.

INT: Yeah?

AS: I think that’s fairly self evident, I can’t prove anything. So I think it’s worth, that’s worth doing. And it’s worth doing traffic calming, and erm, yeah, a whole range of traffic calming measures on housing estates and in the city centre etc etc. All that’s worth doing, but that doesn’t actually address the fundamental question, it effects it at the margins.” (AS17).

Here, suburbia is allowed to spread in the hope that shorter commuting journeys will lead to a net reduction in transport-related emissions, even though additional trips might be generated by the development.

These accounts display a rejection of hierarchist and egalitarian models of decision-making, suggesting that the public is made up of intrinsically selfish individuals who make all decisions based on an instrumental calculation of (financial) costs. In their view, financial disincentives are the most likely method of reducing car use, and yet they are unwilling to impose such restrictions on personal liberty, instead sticking to the individualist policy of offering incentives (alternatives), whilst at the same time reflexively critiquing the voluntarist model being promoted. This stress on the voluntary is seen as in line with government’s view, as “the government’s made it very clear that at this stage, they only want to consider, what they want to explore, what you can do on a voluntary basis with green travel plans” (SW34). In the terms of Table 4, these individualists stress that the problems are of incorrect pricing, and are resolvable not through the management paradigm of planning, for example, but through technical, market solutions.

Cultural Theory suggests that individualists ascribe blame to bad luck or personal incompetence (Thompson *et al*, 1990: 59-60), and I have found evidence of this in the discussion of a planning decision that went against government guidance:

AS: And they're approved it, that was, that was a while ago, but they've just approved it, an out-of-centre multiplex on the A19 in North Tyneside, this huge leisure, I think some retail, and entertainments...and it's just totally against anything...

INT: So how do they get the go ahead?

AS: That was a call-in enquiry, it was enquiry, there weren't any objections to it, the council, North Tyneside Council, were minded to grant, it was called in because it was contradictory to the development plan.

INT: Yeah,

AS: And erm, there was an enquiry and the inspector, I can't understand the reasons, they're perverse, concluded that it was OK. I haven't seen the decision, I haven't read the decision myself, but it totally flies in the face of everything in PPG6 and everything...

INT: Yeah,

AS: That the government have been saying over PPG13 about, about centralising development.

INT: Right,

AS: Totally, totally...

INT: But at the end of the day it comes down to an individual's decision?

AS: Well, that was a [...] the inspector, the inspector decided to support the project, and the secretary of state, you see, it went, it was a ministerial or secretary of state decision, simply enquiring, erm, the inspector's decision...And agreed with the inspector and allowed it to go through. What's happening here? It's crazy [laughs], that is totally wrong! So I think, you ca...in, if you have, even with the kind of, the, you know, reasonably well, pointing in the right direction kind of policies we have at the moment, things still go wrong, and you can't explain why. Now there's no way I'll ever be able to find out why. You just can't find out, it's impenetrable. (AS18-19).

The decision is seen as 'perverse', a matter of incompetence in an individual case rather than just fate, a legitimate expert decision, or a sign of systemic corruption as those located in the other cultures might conclude.

Personal responsibility is very important to individualists, who value making one's own way and shouldering the burden of the task. This applies to the 'big man's' sense of his own role in his organisation, where the individualist feels personally responsible for the success or failure of initiatives. This view is betrayed in comments such as "I'm boasting now, but I'm quite proud of that" (SW13), "that depends what they think about me" (SW20) (on being asked about his department enlarging), and even in speaking on behalf of the council: "I, my council, I don't think, would go down that route" (SW33); "I think my council recognises..." (SW33); "my council takes the view that..." (SW34) etc.

My second 'ideal type' respondent fits another individualist stereotype, that of the entrepreneur. In stressing the importance of market forces, I have already quoted his reasons for the dropping of recycling commitments, namely that "the market for most of these products is so poor [...] they realised that the market for recycled products fluctuates so badly that commercially, it's suicide" (SW32). He proposes that it is the government's responsibility to stimulate markets in this area, so that market forces can enable the policy:

"SW: So, I don't know if you saw their consultation on waste, "More waste, better value", "Less waste, Better Value" or something, [I've] forgotten what it's called, earlier on this year. [It a]sked opinion on, you know, what kind of intervention mech-, economic intervention they could make to try and stabilise the market for the recycled product, whatever it is, paper, glass, cardboard, textiles, whatever it is. So I mean I, my council, I don't think, would go down the route of doorstep [collection], unless it's required to by legislation, or if the government manages to stabilise the market for the end product.

INT: Right,

SW: Or, probably, both." (SW33)

Both the head of department and the sustainability team leader make calls for legislation to strengthen authorities' hands in dealing with these issues, a position held by most respondents regardless of cultural bias.

Elsewhere, this officer's interest is in demonstrating that his authority are innovators, especially in the transport field, and he goes to great lengths to stress the importance of partnerships in attracting ceremonial credit and funding:

“SW: [...] OK, so what we have, we have a track record of *innovative* travel and transport initiatives. Back in the early nineties, the [...] City Council when it was [a] Highway Authority and Transport Authority then, flirted with a *new* programme called ‘zone and collar’ [...] it was basically about traffic segregation, trying to keep cars in, in certain areas and trying to create traffic-free zones or car-free zones.

INT: Right,

SW: So quite *imaginative* stuff, it was an experiment that lasted only six months because there was no public support for it. I mean, the travelling public was not interested, and quite honestly, the level of, the volume of traffic obviously was only half of what it is today.” (SW2)

“SW: So were are [a] Highway Authority and we now are a Transport Authority as well. So we've regained those as duty powers. So we, but my point is, Noel, is that we have had this history of *experimenting* with very *novel*, and that was *unique* in the UK, very *novel* ways of trying to manage traffic,

INT: Right,

SW: And trying to manage demand as well. So against that background, I mean, it's not surprising that [in] 1994 we began to develop an interest in Green Commuting” (SW3)

In describing the policies being applied in pursuing Green commuting, he promotes a ‘carrots and sticks’ model, whilst making it clear that carrots are the preferred option:

SW: In [...] City Council's case, in the kind of *carrots* we've had, the kind of *incentives*, we've had *discount bus travel* since nineteen ninety four for a start, we've had *interest-free cycle loans*, *cycle mileage allowance*, and *other benefits* of

that kind. And the main *stick* that we're working on is a review of *car-parking* arrangements to try and set criteria, what appear to be fairly stringent criteria for allocating the car-parking spaces. So you take away people's car-parking spaces, and they're almost inevitably forced to look for another form of travel to work.

INT: Right,

SW: And if you can influence their work-related journeys by offering them some *alternatives*, *pool bikes* we have but we're looking at *pool cars* as well, if you can offer them *alternatives* for work-related journeys, then again you're removing the need for them to commute by car to work.

INT: Yeah,

SW: So there, it's that combination of looking at those combinations of carrot and sticks, most green commuter plans start with an emphasis on the car, inevitably, what are the *positive incentives* I can do to offer staff an *alternative*." (SW6)

The fact that the initiatives that have been introduced are represented to the wider policy world as innovative, as best practice, is also important in this entrepreneurial model:

"SW: Talking about partnerships, Noel, this is a good example [...] we combined three years ago nearly, on this European funded thing [...] to develop training and information packages on sustainable development for local authorities, primarily for ourselves, for the five local authorities involved. One of the information aspects is this web site, of which that's the address, and it consists of model policies, and a whole range of case studies, and you'll see the Green Commuter Planners Club [...] written up as one of the transport case studies [...]

INT: Right, so is this, this is offering advice mainly to local authorities, it's not...?

SW: It provides training up for members of, senior officers on sustainability, and it provides an information package which obviously, as it's on a web is available for anyone to use, but the training has been for ourselves, for the five local authorities involved [...] we've done pre- and post-surveys to try and test the impact of the training, pre- and post- surveys trying to test the impact of the development of the information package and the web-site,

INT: Right,

SW: To try and show to Brussels the impact of both the training and the information package.” (SW10-11)

In yet another example this officer explains how the process of building partnerships attracts institutionalised credit:

“SW: But, it’s necessary to have a regional campaign to get the BBC involved, which is regional, [...] and to get the Environment Agency regionally involved as well [...]

INT: ...having those as a partner is obviously a benefit?

SW: It, it’s excellent, and on the strength of this, and on the strength of that, we’ve put in another European funding bid” (SW14)

In addition, presentation and image are uppermost in his mind, in discussing using sustainability as a label rather than sustainable development, in describing where promotional material can be found, in revealing arguments over logos, and in wanting to present graphics:

“SW: We, we, we produced a leaflet, [...] it had ‘Changing Times in [city]’, it had Local Agenda Twenty One in tiny printing along the bottom,

INT: Yeah,

SW: I was all in favour of not having it at all but [officer], quite rightly felt that, let’s use the term, because there are some people out there looking for it,

INT: Uh-huh.

SW: But we wanted a phrase which, and an image, I’d better go and get it, stop it and I’ll find you one...the *graphics are so great* [walking off, gap in tape]

SW: This was the leaflet, the local agenda twenty one, the ‘Changing Times in [city]’ leaflet that we produced, which is quite a fortunate graphic because it has the tram on the front.” (SW28)

The LA21 process described here again relies on presentation and a private sector model of market research:

“SW: But we tried to explain local agenda twenty one in erm in popular terms, and to say that [...] it’s about ordinary, everyday activities, and to say it is about neighbourhoods as well, so *we commissioned all these graphics* to show that it was,

hopefully that it was real. We *offered prizes and incentives*, and we asked people to say three things that they would like to see changed.

INT: Right,

SW: Make it as simple as possible, [we] produced ten thousand of these and we got five hundred of them back, [we] produced a community group version, which is, [it] took people to a self-visioning process” (SW28)

The latter phrase is a neologism based on the ‘visioning’ techniques developed for LA21 processes and seen as one of the most innovative approaches to the field.

These entrepreneurs are also the ‘zeitgeist-surfers’ who most value innovation and the power of latching onto the new. Thus green commuter plans are taken up as “an idea we imported from the states, where in California it certainly is fairly well established” (SW3), and there is considerable pride in being ahead of the competition, whether it be in terms of the Byker waste-to-heat plant and Newcastle’s pre-eminence in energy matters generally, or Nottingham’s focus on new transport initiatives, and its ‘holistic’ approach to sustainability. Such innovative entrepreneurship is seen by the individualists as a practically efficacious approach, as it opens up access to sources of outside funding, a process of ‘building our partnerships’, so that individual projects are used to lever in further funding.

My ‘policy entrepreneur’ also reveals interesting insights into his authority’s pre-LA21 ‘greening’ process (itself innovative at the time, as he points out), when it is shown that he was personally responsible for involving the private sector:

“SW: And right at the end of that was where they looked at developing commitment, [there] was this wish to set up this...erm, debating forum as the view was in 1989, *primarily with the voluntary sector*, to get them involved in helping the city council frame its environmental, subsequent environmental policies.

INT: Right,

SW: But [by] the time I got appointed and we got around to doing something about that particular part of the Green Charter, we’d got to the end of nineteen ninety, and by then, the agenda had broadened, so that we began to invite *not just voluntary*

sectors, but to have the first meeting to include *businesses, the public utilities...* and both the Universities. And that first met in February 1991, it took a year of debate and discussion before it became the structure that's come about and called itself Nottingham Green Partnership.

INT: Right,

SW: And [we] set up a structure here of eight topic based sub-groups co-ordinated by a steering committee, and these were the eight groups, they're the familiar green agenda, from energy through to publicity, and er, *my intention* was to draw, to try and make, each of these sub-groups, and the steering committee, *reflect the multi-sector* nature of [the city]. And here's a list of the forty initial members or as they were in 1993. We produced a *video* to support this as well, and some additional *promotional material*, the video actually was shown on BBC Two in erm 1996?" (SW22).

Notice also the adoption of the government's multi-sectoral discourse, and the pride in image, in the form of promotional material and its exposure.

These individuals, for example in quoting other modes of motivation beyond the economic, show some degree of awareness of other cultural styles. Both officers appear to accept that the public promote the more radical and regulatory policy prescriptions of egalitarians, before in the first case dismissing these views by 'second-guessing' their 'true' individualist nature:

"AS: Yes, good point. I think that, you know I've seen some other studies which have shown that the public are generally *ahead of the politicians* on this one, there is a *desire for change*, a desire for less traffic etc etc,

INT: Yeah,

AS: But whereas the politicians are holding back thinking 'well, I can never sell this one' you know, 'I'll get the chop if I do this', in fact the public are ahead of them, in general terms. But I think there is this problem, yeah this is right for everybody else but actually I want to use my car, when I want to use it." (AS21)

In the second example, egalitarian notions of participation through LA21 are denigrated in comparison with the process of representational democracy as practised by the council:

“SW: I mean, most community, most ordinary people are much more *draconian* or *drastic* in their thinking, than the council might ever dare be,

INT: Right,

SW: Inevitably, I suppose, I mean you give people, you know people can easily think twenty or thirty years into the future,

INT: Yeah,

SW: The reality of bringing it about is that it is, it takes twenty or thirty years...

INT: Yeah,

SW:...

INT: That’s particularly what I’m interested in, as well,

SW: oh yeah?

INT: The idea of, erm, there is actually a mandate out there for change? [...]

SW: I would have to offer a cautionary tale there,” (SW27)

The officer went on to describe a consultation process in which leaflets were sent to households, groups and business, asking for their views on how the authority should address the city’s future sustainability.

“SW: [...] the householders’ bit was just as successful as we’d hoped it would be, we hoped we would get five hundred back and we did. We think [officer] was a little bit disappointed about the response from the community groups,

INT: Right. What sort of...?

SW: We got thirty to forty of these back. Which was not as many as we’d hoped. But, it was a big commitment asking people to do a lot. I think with more, with more money we would have distributed one to every house in [city], a hundred and twenty thousand,

INT: Individually,

SW: Individ-, and with more resources we would have employed more, go out and help groups go through the leaflet [...] what I’m trying to, the point I’m trying to get across, we have a hundred, two hundred and eighty two thousand people living in [city], we got five hundred of these back.

INT: Yeah,

SW: So, let's not say that local agenda twenty one replaces democracy, it just adds a little bit to it,

INT: Right,

SW: And it does answer-, it does give an opportunity for people to get involved by either *filling one of these* [leaflets] in or *attending a conference*, or *filling in a questionnaire*, it gives, [they are] *new and imaginative ways* of getting ideas from people. And the quality of responses in the main was extremely high, we were really impressed. We had other mechanisms, we had [a] *kids' poster competition*, we have a twenty five foot long banner with messages from young people on, we did lots of, last year [officer] and I did so many festivals, you know, open air things, it was, every bloody, every bank holiday, it was exhausting, quite frankly, not something that you could keep up, you know, three day festivals, two day events, one day meetings here,

INT: HM-Mmm

SW: It was really hard work. But, the quality of the results and the interest and the passion that developed as a result, makes it all worthwhile.

INT: Right,

SW: But don't let's pretend that numbers-wise it is replacing democracy, because it ain't.

INT: No,

SW: You would really need to get forty perce-, you would need to get the sort of numbers that participate at elections, which can be anything between as low as ten percent sometimes, but it can be forty, forty five percent, so I mean if you were able to get nearly half the population of [city] to contribute something in some way then I think you could really, genuinely say that what we've done has really paralleled the, the political process that we've got." (SW29-30)

It should be noticed that representation is defended whilst the innovative nature of the LA21 process is stressed, although it appears to be mostly passive, involving a consultation exercise or opinion poll. Once again competitions are seen as the method to engage the public on the basis of competitive self-interest.

Despite all these indications of individualism, it should be remembered that these examples are drawn from data which also includes many prosaic details of on-going, bureaucratically organised work and structures, and that the individualists are well aware of the ‘real-world’ restrictions of lack of resources, personnel and time which frustrate their grander schemes. However, this is viewed through the individualist lens of a cornucopian nature. Essentially, this is an optimistic construction that is based on a core belief that more ingenuity leads to ever-increasing resources and agency.

The discourses associated with individualistic and entrepreneurial approaches to policy are evident in the data, and link convincingly with the predicted social relations. These officers are very much at the centre of ego-based networks, as the heads of their respective institutional groups, and display an interest in linking with wider networks.

Egalitarianism

As I hinted earlier, discovering a purely egalitarian set-up in local authority would be a rare find indeed. In fact it is hard to imagine what it might look like. However, I believe that some of the characteristics of an egalitarian outlook are clearly identifiable in the data provided by an LA21 officer who displays a great deal of frustration in his dealings with the hierarchy in which he feels so uncomfortable.

This is primarily manifested in the classically egalitarian outlook of holding ‘the system’ responsible for society’s ills, and leads to blaming mechanisms which imply that he is campaigning against ignorance, indifference, bureaucracy, maliciousness, and self-interest. He suspects the motives of others beyond his ‘group’, who he defines as follows:

“CC: Well, I think there would be a few officers that feel that er climate change has something to do with them, but they’d be very, very few. [...] And I don’t know what the answer to it is, we’ve been trying I suppose, I say we, [laughs] it’s sort of *me and one or two other sort of interested officers* like [officer] was very

committed, erm, to the whole energy climate change thing, er and then people in the *voluntary sector* through the healthy city project you know, try and raise awareness of issues but...erm, it's only so much, you know a few people can do." (CC9)

This 'insider' group includes the voluntary sector group with whom he shares office space. He treats the arrival of newcomers to the extended 'group' of the authority as a threat to his, and others', ideals and efforts. Almost immediately in the interview, the problems of advancing the sustainability agenda are blamed on 'the system', where:

"CC: On the er on the Local Agenda 21 Strategy we use this three legged stool as our logo, the sort of idea of balance and the, the stool is symbolic of the sustainable city, and to get the sustainable city you need the three stools to be in balance, you know the environmental, the economic and the social stool. The reality is that the economic stool's probably like ten feet long and the others are about two inches you know, so, erm, if you sort of talk to *people in the sort of environment department* and this certainly goes for the *new director, this is where I probably start being critical of my own sort* of ...but the feeling is that LA21 is still seen on the margins, er, there's obviously a commitment to it to the extent that they know that certain councils are promoting it." (CC4)

Here we see the officer critiquing the authority's over-emphasis of the economic over the environmental, blaming his 'own sort' and also referring to other groups which he believes are trying to advance the environmental agenda, notably in the voluntary sector. He also mentions that the council is paying lip service to environmental discourses due to their external legitimacy, other councils promoting it.

An air of suspicion over *motives* permeates the whole interview:

"I'm very sceptical about [laughs] a lot of the er the sort of motives if you like of the people in the positions of power like the chief officers and the councillors [...] we've got all new chief officers with new agendas coming in, councillors are sort of knives out and sort of in-fighting [...] pushing the agenda down the flavour of the month list [...] all sorts of political in-fighting." (CC6-8)

This is all in accordance with Cultural Theory's predictions, in which the 'insiders' of egalitarian groups attempt to hold and further moral positions of co-operative abstinence,

and in which any threat to those ideals is characterised as being ‘tainted’ by the influence of the ‘evil outside’. They see the system of *status quo* as being comprised of individualists and hierarchists leading the deluded fatalists into dangerous and self-interested ways of life. This officer even suggests that a ‘conspiracy’ of the *status quo* can be threatening, referring to a situation where commuter plans have been resisted. He refers to the case of a colleague who:

“said that one big failure was parking, and cars, and she gave up in the end because she was almost warned off it by the estates people, you do not touch parking, if you do, yeah, you’re going to find your job’s going to disappear, it’s almost like threats [...] you can do recycling, you can save a bit of energy, you can do some environmental education, but forget cars” (CC10).

The interview builds up to a critique of capitalism, based firmly in cultural preferences and reflecting the dilemmas inherent in the notion of sustainability, concluding with the following exchange:

“CC: The whole idea that, you know, we talk about sustainability so we actually need a sustainable process to do that, and for that there needs to be some sort of genuine commitment and understanding at the top, I mean, the government is now using the *language*, using the *jargon*,

INT: Yeah,

CC: But it hasn’t really translated into *action* on the ground, and to be honest, you know, they’re still, they’re almost like following two parallel but conflicting scenarios with it, you know, the way over-riding one is the *competitiveness, market-driven* agenda, and they’re trying to sort of introduce a *sustainability* agenda parallel with that, and if they actually sat down and looked at that and analysed that they’d realise that the two are actually *totally incompatible*. They’re trying to run two incompatible systems side by side, until that’s actually recognised, and we almost need to sort of, you know, to start again in some ways really, some completely new form of economy, and sort of devolution of power. This is radical stuff and isn’t going to happen, and you’re not going to recommend to the LGMB [...] You could sort of recommend that we scrap *local government* and get rid of

capitalism, you know, we might be on our way to setting up a structure that might solve the problem of climate change [laughs]” (CC22).

This total systemic critique is phrased in terms of rejecting the hierarchism of government and the individualism of the market to find a third form of social organisation which (allegedly) has environmentalism in its value system, i.e. small group egalitarianism.

The resistance of others within the authority is described as being linked to this respondent’s explanations of what the authority’s real priorities are:

- “by and large sustainability and environmental issues [have] never been a priority” (CC4)
- “it’s not a priority, indeed there’s sort of fairly traditional, you know, inward investment, jobs at all cost approaches, are by far the dominant philosophy here.” (CC4)
- “the key agendas are about jobs, inward investment, regeneration, you know, environment is OK as long as it doesn’t, push a bit, you know, you need to have it in there because the government want it in there and it’s probably, you know, we *ought* to, but, that’s really as far as it goes.” (CC8)
- “in neither of the [LA21 sub-]groups is [...] climate change mentioned at all, they’re all just talking about energy in terms of trying to save it so you can save the council money [...] transport just in terms of maybe air quality, but mainly in terms of it as an issue around accessibility” (CC8).

This clearly reflects the egalitarian stress on values rather than finance or management, the chief frustration being with the suppression of the importance of environmental values by economic considerations. It is interesting that this skewing of priorities is seen to be evident in the council members as well as in the officers:

“this is the *political* process, you know, local government is a *political* process by its very nature obviously. They have their own agenda and their own sort of hidden agendas, and they have priorities” (CC4)

Unlike the individualist view, egalitarianism displays a commitment to genuine participation in policy, linked to the egalitarian belief in the *explicit* consent of decision-

making rather than the *revealed* consent of market choices or the *hypothetical* consent of hierarchists' voters. This is revealed by the officer's frustrations about the LA21 process:

“CC: Yeah, every department in the City was represented, erm, in practice, *they didn't all participate equally*. Erm, I think it was a fairly open brief really, the brief was to, to, to follow, I mean we followed the LGMB six step approach, that was their decision, we had to follow the six step approach, you know the six step approach do you?

INT: Maybe, yeah.

CC: Basically, it was, er, the first two steps are about us as a local authority, we're sort of facilitating the LA21 process but we try and put our own house in order and we become sort of greener and more sustainable as a local authority, erm, which, in theory means that we will try and somehow integrate sustainability right across County services, however defined. Erm, the third step is about environmental education process, that, you know, it's actually reaching out to everybody, both in a formal and informal sense and trying to raise awareness about sustainability issues. The fourth step is about our *consulting and involving* the public, the fifth is about, erm, setting up *partnerships*, public sector, private sector, voluntary sector, academia and so forth, getting everybody together and a round table approach is the methodology used, the final step is setting up indicators to measure progress and then finally, having you know, got all six steps under way, in practice, it's not like a step by step, it's, no, I mean you're doing them all at the same time, as a sort of integrated, *holistic* approach in theory. In practice with one sort of coordinator, and a few officers working part time, if, [laughs], *it's not really, you know, there's no way that we really consulted and involved all the public.*” (CC1-2)

In fact, his authority has probably consulted and involved the public to the same degree as any other, but to an egalitarian cultural outlook this is not genuine participation. He defines his (egalitarian) vision of genuine participation in a sustainable system:

“CC: My own situation is that I've worked in local authorities most of my life, and now that I've sort of, come to the conclusion that they're unworkable bodies...

INT: Yeah,

CC: They're too huge, *too bureaucratic*, most of the politicians are egomaniacs, you know, basically, in it for themselves, you know, and it's *not a democratic* process. Erm, and somehow, it needs to be much, much more localised, have to find a way to *devolve power* much more to sort of very local based *communities* I think, on most issues, I mean, issues like Climate Change, obviously can't be handled in that way, we need a different structure to handle that, perhaps at the regional level. So I would sort of see a sort of, a structure whereby you've got a regional level dealing with big issues like transport, energy and climate change, and then very local, almost neighbourhood based, people dealing with neighbourhood issues, where it's actually like, *local people are actually running services for themselves within their communities* [...] which would involve devolving power to sort of locals, local committees almost like at street level, do you know what I mean? If you actually wanted *genuine involvement* (CC16-18)

This radical vision of local, small group self-government is clearly egalitarian in nature, and it is interesting that the officer still positions climate change as a regional issue, one which is linked to areas of life (transport and energy in particular) which require a higher level of organisation; perhaps to impose the necessary 'sticks' of policy implementation.

The *holistic* conceptualisation of sustainability (the discourse within which climate change is situated) is displayed by the officer in numerous places, for example:

"I think most people still think in very narrow boxes, you know, like have a very narrow box that they think in which is very localised and they don't see the sort of see the connections between things, you know, the the the the, the joined-up thinking isn't there to be honest, it really isn't, and I find it just sort of, continually frustrating that, just how narrow most people's vision and grasp of the issues is." (CC9).

This holistic view extends to an egalitarian belief that 'the personal is the political', and the putting forward of a value-centred critique of the entire structure of society rather a proposal for tinkering with aspects of it (cf. Dryzek's 'radical environmentalism', or those views which Fischer and Hajer (1999) feel have dropped out from sustainability discourses: the cultural critique):

“I mean, the *bottom line is that sustainability is about everything, it’s about our entire quality of life, it’s about the whole integration of social, environmental and economic issues* so, in other words, you know, [laughs] you’re gonna consult the entire community on everything? You know, erm, so, at the one end it’s the complexity of that issue, what does it actually mean, consulting and involving the public on sustainability and development, and the other one is actually that having the sort of time and the resources to do it.” (CC3)

Like officers from all cultural persuasions, this officer blames the lack of governmental commitment and resources for not being able to address climate change, but sees this in the framing of an egalitarian total critique.

Energy efficiency policy is also assessed in egalitarian terms, with the actions of a not-for-profit agency implicitly praised through reference to egalitarian discourses, whilst the authority’s in-house programme is implicitly criticised for being based on a profit motive rather than environmental drivers:

“INT: I’m not sure that they’ve ever been employed by the council, er, it was certainly, er, originally set up by the council, funded by the council and, I think, you know, it’s gradually become an *independent non-profit making* company.

INT: Right,

CC: That is about, you know, employing *local* people and helping mainly *inner city, poorer* areas to get their houses *decently* insulated,

INT: Yeah,

CC: And I think they presumably work quite closely with other organisations like Neighbourhood, or it is National Energy Action, it used to be Neighbourhood Energy action [...]. National Energy Action or Neighbourhood Energy Action again are a campaigning organisation with er the emphasis on *fuel poverty* [...] Well the city hasn’t actually had an energy policy [...] I sort of said to [officer], you know, have we actually got an energy policy, he said, well no we haven’t really,

INT: Right,

CC: And his I suppose was to, his brief was just to try and,

INT: To save energy,

CC: Huh?

INT: To save it,

CC: Yeah, in effect, it was to reduce the council's energy *bill*, you know, that's the sort of *bottom line* of what [officer's] about,

INT: Yeah" (CC11)

The emissions-reducing techniques of Neighbourhood Energy Action are the same as those used by other schemes, but the values being promoted (altruistic, egalitarian) and the structures to promote them, carry egalitarian justification.

"CC: So there's no real strategy, there was like little bits and pieces I suppose, [officer] was really about, you know, *reducing the council's energy bill* and saving energy within council buildings, erm, so he could do that either by looking at energy conservation or what has actually happened is, you know, in re-negotiating tariffs and stuff like that,

INT: Right,

CC: So often he's actually seen the bill go down, but the energy use, we found that the *electricity use has actually being going up*,

INT: Right,

CC: So I think in the last say five years we've, we're *saving over a million pounds a year* as a council, but we're actually *using more energy* now than we were six, er, you know, five years ago." (CC12)

This reinforces the points made about the negative effects of energy liberalisation earlier, and reflects an approach confirmed by another interviewee about energy *management*. With economic savings as the main driver of energy 'efficiency', rather than climate change issues, the competition within the energy supply market may actually foster increases in energy consumption.

This respondent also highlights the work of (voluntary sector, charitable, not-for-profit) organisations outside the authority (and the immediate area), who have gone ahead with renewable energy projects:

"CC: Yeah, the Groundwork Trust they er commissioned this new office a couple of years ago, and they wanted it to be the most environmentally friendly building in

the country, and they're actually self-sufficient in energy. Erm, they get part of it through bringing up water from underground,

INT: Geothermal

CC: Yeah, which, I don't think it is actually, no, I think, think it's just er, a process that er, pumping the water up actually generates heat, I don't think it's actually geothermal heat.

INT: Increased pressure or...

CC: Yeah something like that and erm, so there's that, there's solar gain and they've actually got a huge windmill that generates, and they're planning another windmill to, to, in parallel, and they reckon next year they'll actually be exporting to the grid,

INT: Right,

CC: And selling energy to the grid, erm." (CC14-15)

The implication is that such initiatives can be undertaken, but that the authority is unwilling to pursue such options, reinforced by the officer laughing that this project was "obviously" not in his city.

The commitment to hierarchist principles within the hierarchist organisation of the authority (the 'heavy cloth' disguising cultural differences, in Rayner's terms) is yet again represented by a call for resources and commitment from central government. In egalitarian terminology, this is explicitly described as a rejection of the general expectation of *voluntary* action:

"INT: The last question, talking utopian dreams now, what would you like to see changed, either it could be the LA21 process or councils'....operations more generally, how could they, you know, work with more people and also actually have some product at the end of it, some policies that are going to address climate change and sustainability?

CC: It's a hard one really because theory and practice are often so different, if we actually look at erm some of the things that's come out of the new government, some of the issues around modernising local government, about best value, in theory they sound quite good, in practice they're not actually, some of them are just

going to make things worse. Erm [sigh] I think that the things that I suggested I mean, you can always look at *resources* and say that the whole LA21 process has been a shambles because it's been massively *under-resourced* and that is a fact, but I don't think that's, that's certainly not the only answer, I think it's one truism, but it's not the only answer, and I think, it'll only work erm if somehow it was *taken more seriously, nationally,*

INT: Right,

CC: At a *national* level, at a *government* level, I think in some ways that if there was more sort of *legislative* element to it as well, there's no doubt Councils will respond to *legislative* requirements more than...

INT: Duties...

CC: Yeah, something that's er, it's *voluntary*, and I do think that it needs structural changes." (CC17)

The overwhelming impression gained from this interview is of a cultural critique of modern society, in its industrial and political forms. This suggests that the challenge of climate change (nested within the discourse of sustainability as encompassing 'everything' we do) needs desperately to be addressed, by people working in small groups to re-organise their own behaviours (there is a presumption that small-scale organisations will be automatically environmentally 'friendly'). There is also the recognition that in reality, hierarchism and the individualism of the market will not further these ends. What is required in the egalitarian view, therefore, is radical social change.

Hierarchism

In a sense, as I have suggested, the majority of my data reflects hierarchism, in that all the interviewees are in large part concerned with detailing those policies being undertaken through the top-down process of 'normal' local authority work. As examples of proponents of the hierarchist positions, I will look at data from a number of officers, including an energy manager, a housing officer and a transport officer. Firstly, I will quickly look at the governmental point of view.

As my interview with the DETR representative on climate change and energy matters revealed, the *epitome* of this style of policy (in climate change terms) is perhaps HECA 1995 (the Home Energy Conservation Act). This is because it is an Act passed by central government that imposes *statutory* duties on authorities to address certain issues and perform set duties. These are the preferred social relations in hierarchism, with the experts at the 'top' telling the people 'below' exactly what to do, in their functionally organised sub-groups. Not surprisingly, the views of this high-ranking civil servant show a great deal of correlation with expected hierarchical biases. His job is to see that 'normal' work progresses adequately:

“[c]ertainly HECA has raised energy efficiency up the agenda, and it is now more of a *mainstream* item, in, in housing programmes [...] certainly in the social sector, their own stock, they are now nearly always encompassing energy efficiency and energy conservation in the wider renovation programme” (MS1).

Here efforts concentrate on that which is easily achieved, on those aspects that are straightforwardly managed through their inclusion in standard authority work. In essence, the view from the DETR suggests that authorities' role in responding to climate change is a combination of lagging pipes and advertising pipe-lagging:

“the ways they can contribute are through the HECA, through maintenance of their *own* stock, through development of initiatives, locally, to encourage owner-occupiers and home-owners to take up energy efficiency as *a matter of course*” (MS5).

This model (of promoting energy efficiency) still relies on encouragement and voluntary up-take of the energy efficiency measures, perhaps cause for frustration from authority staff who would like to impose measures in a more straightforwardly hierarchist manner:

“Yeah, I mean it needs to be a *properly administered public sector grant* [...] I mean, the HECA as an act says thirty percent energy savings in ten years. Two years down the line, we reckon we've moved about, ooh, one percent towards it, and we have a policy of including insulation in all our schemes where you could possibly insulate.” (CM8)

These are seen as the core activities of local authorities in regard to climate change, and in regard to HECA, there is a suggestion that local authorities should concentrate “on exactly what you as a local authority, think you can deliver, in other words, focus on the things you can control” (MS5). This is the cautious voice of the hierarchist rather than the expansionist ideals of the individualist or the egalitarians’ alarmism and frustrated idealism.

Energy efficiency is represented as the ‘technical fix’ for climate change (in the hierarchist perception). Since this is the domain of energy managers and housing officers dealing with the maintenance of local authority building stock, it is not surprising that these are the officers who most typically display hierarchist preoccupations, where energy efficiency is seen as the “quickest, simplest, easiest, cheapest way of actually reducing carbon dioxide” (BP12). Such an assessment expresses the hierarchists’ dominant mode of policy selection, by cost-benefit analysis. The bureaucratic model of ‘progress’ is often used to back up this approach, with the stress being on making progress, heading in the right direction:

“L1: From our viewpoint, from the energy side, I can categorically state that there has been a large improvement over the years, during...especially during the nineties, since nineteen ninety we have, as an authority continually, continuously over [...] one year, saved and saved and saved with each and every year, so, we still have a lot of work to do, but we’re always, each year we’re going in the right direction...”

INT: Is that with the council’s own energy use?

L1: We have an energy management office, which, I’m the energy manager, we have a *corporate energy policy*, with *targets* and *performance indicators*, these have been more or less *continuously* achieved and over-achieved in some instances. We have been *monitoring* the system, we have blips like everybody else, but effectively, over the nineties, we’ve *continued to move in the right direction.*”

(BP1-2)

This assertion of progress, fulfilling categorical goals, reflects Dryzek’s ‘muted rhetoric’ of administrative rationality, this being “a mixture of concern and reassurance” (1997: 75).

In the realm of transport, the policy measure that seems to be mentioned most often by predominantly hierarchist officers as a ‘technical fix’ is parking control. This involves rationalising the administration of parking in an authority’s area, bringing it more clearly under their control whilst also accessing more revenue. It is framed as a policy to reduce congestion and to promote modal shift, and acts as a mixture of ‘carrot and stick’ policies whilst focussing on hierarchist centralisation, control and regulation:

“INT: So you said, politically, trying to use that as one of the drivers for pushing through different things might be tricky, but which actual policies or measures do you think would be more acceptable, which do you think would be less acceptable in trying to achieve road traffic reduction, or CO₂ reductions?

PE: Erm, well [lowering intonation]. Er, I mean the main issue, really is the amount, *management of car park controls*, er, and really the *road pricing* as well, I don’t think, I don’t think there’s much chance of that happening, in [area] We did actually work out, we all came together and did the best we could in terms of having a general demand *management* strategy, which was to say we’ll cap parking in the main centres, erm, so there wouldn’t be any increase in parking spaces, that’s about the furthest we got [...] Now really, now having done that we haven’t really very far, for various reasons [...] Er, I mean the main issue has been *financial feasibility* [...] Erm, and we have to show it breaks even, so as a council we can’t actually start spending money, and getting money back from it. Erm, so....that sort of thing we’re investigating at the moment.” (PE4)

Apart from these very specific policy suggestions (in which parking control is seen as a possible pre-requisite for workplace parking charges), the majority of this officer’s responses involve spelling out what the superior authority (the DETR) require him to and his authority to do, mostly through reference to guidance:

“INT: OK, erm, responses to the New Deal for Transport, but I presume that’s in the LTP, that is the LTP...?”

PE: Well, I mean, from the White Paper came this...a lot of the actual work will be done by local councils, and so if they’re based on the white paper, this came out so it’s in there, yes, and these are the guidelines [...] they’ve actually given us all these

pages and all these, so when the document goes in, we'll actually be ticked off against all these...marking us, if you haven't done all this stuff, they won't give you the money [...]

INT: Having seen this, it looks quite...detailed scheme for you to be following anyway isn't it?

PE: Well, yeah I'm sure we couldn't do, even if we more linked into it I don't think they do any more. In the sense that er, don't build more roads, don't build more highways, do the best for cyclists, walkers, public transport passengers, all see you must link, *this tells us* to link into health issues, we read a health impact assessment report or plan last year, so we've got good links with the health stuff side and also worked with education authorities, working out school travel plans, to reduce the number of journeys in the morning and the evening, by parents, we're also looking at hospitals, erm, er, access, both for patients and green commuter plans, ...big business as well, *it's all in there we must do* green commuter plans, we *must* persuade people to use their cars less, and then. *I think they mention in there*, well we *should* look into travel awareness campaigns as well, say with climate change” (PE7-8)

Here there is none of the entrepreneurial spirit of individualism, or the sense of helplessness of fatalism, or the desire to include the public in policy seen from egalitarianism. There is simply the requirement to fulfil those parts of a centrally determined plan of work which one is personally responsible for.

Typically for the management paradigm within which hierarchists fall, the environment is conceived of in terms of resources, which must be managed:

INT: Right, and having made the improvements that you have, are you actually running out of areas where you can still improve? Or is there always...?

L1: Not at all, if you stop looking after the environment, if you stop looking after the environment, if you stop looking after any *resource*, you have minefields of problems which just go off in their own wayward directions, yeah?” (BP2)

Essential for management is effective monitoring, and therefore agency is associated with information. This information allows both the identification of savings to be made, and

therefore the proof of progress, the achievement of (or more often progress towards) targets:

“if you’ve got the information, I can tell you which building, which area of the building, which fuel, which meter, is the problem, in the city [...] we have actually taken information, and actually have to use that to get the results, we have targets to meet [...] analysing the information and fulfilling a target.” (BP8-9)

The collection of data is seen as an essential part of the monitoring/target paradigm that enables the fulfilment of the management targets of hierarchism. However, it is also a potential distraction from the ‘real’ business of implementing measures, as acknowledged by the DETR official:

“MS: So the local authority role is very important, or will be very important in the climate change programme, but their role, or their perceived role, may change slightly in terms of, what they are reporting on in their HECA strategy [...] Without losing sight of the statutory reporting requirement of HECA which is a useful lever for government to use, I think it does serve as a focus for authorities to actually undertake some energy efficiency activities, but *we’re concerned* at the moment that a lot of local authorities are *concentrating on the reporting* element, collecting data, *rather than actually going out and getting energy efficiency measures installed* as it were.

INT: Right, that’s exactly what I was going to ask you, a bit, the whole monitoring aspect, I mean, with there being targets that are being chased and that makes the monitoring side of it one of the most important parts, and, so you get a sense that on the grounds, there are the activities going on which the figures show, the figures that are being reported back to you?

MS: The quality of the progress reports under HECA differ, vary, wildly. There are some authorities that are clearly doing nothing, some authorities who are trying to chase every piece of information available, there are those in between who are reporting sensibly if you like, activities they know about, activities they can control, and they’ve contacted other agencies and organisations for info on schemes that those other organisations run. We don’t want, *we never did want the authorities to chase data*, as it were.” (MS5)

Here we see the official trying to balance the contradictory elements of the bureaucratic organisation. The presentation of results, of progress, is central to the hierarchist model, and yet is in itself a performance of ritual and ceremony that diverts resources from more tangible action. This dilemma is highlighted by an energy manager claiming that collecting all the information they needed would take “your every waking moment [...] unless you had a specific team” (BP9) for the task.

Another officer’s data display evidence of a classically hierarchist perspective. In being asked about responses to climate change, he essentially replies by referencing every way in which he is required to address the issue in statutory duties. It is clear from his answers that climate change (in the form of CO₂ emissions) are to be taken into account simply because it is required by central government:

“INT: First of all can you just tell me about how you think the work in transportation has an effect on climate change?”

PE: Erm, right, well it’s an issue we haven’t really tackled until very recently, erm, recently, a few years ago the government came out with the *requirement* to consider air quality, local air quality, so we did start to look at those issues. To be honest, it’s *only been with the recent guidelines* which I’ve got here, the guidance on provision of local transport plans...

INT: I haven’t seen it yet

PE: Right, that’s got a *specific requirement* for air quality and climate change, so it’s the first time we’ve really been asked to *specifically* look at that topic. So until this year, to be perfectly frank with you, we haven’t really considered air quality and climate change

INT: So it’s the steps that you have to follow. OK, so given that this has only just come in and this is just guidelines as well isn’t it, rather than actual sort of requirements?

PE: Well, they are requirements [...] This year we’re doing a provisional LTP, which will need further work before the full LTP next July 2000, which will last for 5 years, now, so we’re doing that if you like in a step process to July 2000, but at

the end of that process we will need targets of air sort of things and one of them will be *CO₂ emissions*

INT: Right

PE: Erm, so that's where we're coming from. This then leads back to road traffic reduction, as part of the road traffic reduction process, it's an act, the Road Traffic Reduction Act, erm, and that's all tied together, that's part of the LTP. We're being asked to work out *CO₂ emissions*, relate that that to RT reduction targets. So it is, quite a big, a big issue I would say. And, from the point of view of road traffic reductions, CO₂ emissions are very important consideration." (PE1)

This process is tied to the necessity of filling in the correct sections of policy responses, to secure funding for the proposed measures, in essence a process of 'jumping through hoops'. Thus climate change policy will be 'created' from the policy requirements of other areas, even where there is doubt as to its effectiveness or relevance:

"PE: That is the change now because as part of the LTP process there will be a chapter there which will say, not just, we want a local air quality, but there'll also be one on climate change. And that will have to link into the RTR Act, because they say that in there.

INT: So is there actually a set figure for road traffic reduction, do you have a percentage undertaking?

PE: We don't, erm...I mean this is one of the main questions we have to address, what will be the main target for RTR, and it appears that CO₂ will have to be one of the main ones, but the problem is it's very hard to sell." (PE2)

The hierarchists' stress, therefore, is largely on 'more of the same', 'business as usual', in terms of applying known technical fixes to existing and new technologies. They concede that it is difficult to apply the hierarchist model of agency to other sectors; all of them mentioning that there are problems for authorities in attempting to influence the private sector. The preferred model in response to this is one of 'encouragement', i.e. advertising the alternatives to people and hoping that they take them up, but also some stress on the need to centrally fund and implement larger-scale projects such as CHP. CHP is desired

as a 'technical fix', but frustrated by the financial restrictions on authorities' spending. Here we see what is essentially a combination of individualist and egalitarian policy prescriptions, the hierarchist 'carrots and sticks', to be implemented in strict accordance with the instructions and resources emanating from the higher authority of central government.

Fatalism

As I have already suggested, an officer's position in a hierarchy may seem to be guaranteed to produce hierarchist cultural bias, but in practice the individual's experience of the structures within which (s)he is contained may lead to an awareness of being a 'stratified individual', constrained as to what (s)he can achieve and therefore developing or maintaining a fatalistic cosmology. I think there is some evidence of this in my data. For example, the exemplar of egalitarianism quoted above has obviously some difficulty in reconciling their beliefs with the structure and working of local government, and whilst preserving the egalitarian outlook to a large extent, I think we can see how easily such an individual becomes isolated within such an un-accommodating environment leading eventually to the self-fulfilling prophesy of fatalism. Amongst hierarchists, too, we can sense a creeping sense of isolation and powerlessness.

Interestingly, the most obvious example is that of an officer who begins by displaying allegiances to a number of different environmental discourses which might be seen as linked to egalitarianism: the 'limits to growth' discourse (cf. Dryszek, 1997) and the anti-capitalist and millenarian discourses.

“INT: Right, the first question I'd like to ask you, to start with, is er, what do you understand by climate change? And, how, how do you think it...affects the work you do in the council, or how does the work you do affect it?

CM: A lot of what we've been doing over, oooh, probably the last twenty years, is driven from two angles, if you take our insulation and, and heating programmes, that, one is, used to be, fuel poverty, now changed to affordable warmth.

INT: Right,

CM: And secondly, is erm, the *environmental* consequences,

INT: Yeah,

CM: Which at one stage [were] driven by the erm, there is only *finite* resources, so, you know, that's the sort of, you know, mineral, fuels et cetera." (CM1)

"CM: And at that point, and the tail end of the seventies and the early eighties, climate, climate change wasn't really on the agenda. So, I've been here since nineteen eighty and, you know, it wasn't, in our, in our focus at all. Erm, but obviously, you know, it doesn't take you much to get, well, you know, sustainable, you know, we come out of the sustainable development back in time and, you know...I suppose it's sort of the sixties and early seventies agenda of er, does *capitalism just continue to grow and grow and grow* and, erm, just eat up everything,

INT: Right,

CM: So, those of us that came out of the movement know that there must be a better way. It's not very difficult to take on energy efficiency policy as a result [...] Almost, the, the, resource thing, the...*finite resources*, has almost been forgotten" (CM2-3)

The critique of capitalism is extended to suggest that growth itself is problematic:

"CM: Erm, and particularly with, like, the privatisation of the fuel companies, erm, at that point they're all driven by sell, sell, sell, and no-one's actually going, 'but hold on, maybe you should be more efficient and be selling, to sell less is good!'" (CM3)

Furthermore, the UK is portrayed as even less forward thinking than other countries:

"CM: And, the...American market is much more, and Canadian market is much more developed in that respect, in that they go 'oh we won't build another power station we will invest in insulation'. So we seem to be way behind, even, we appear to be the *worst of all capitalisms*, you know." (CM4)

This might be an example of an officer using discourses to position themselves as a member of 'the [environmental] movement', of creating a persona and expressing the correct *ethos* with regard to concern for the environment. It may also however be significant that these largely egalitarian positions are articulated by the most fatalistic

of my subjects. This then, is the officer's scene-setting of the structural reasons for fatalism, which he identifies with an unwillingness to invest in the future, a theme that runs throughout the interview here expressed as the view that: "we're doing what we can, but the major impediments are central government and resources" (CM2).

I will detail the areas in which this officer feels he or the authority are lacking in agency, and show the reasons he gives.

In the transport arena, he characterises the position of another officer thus:

"he will no doubt have the *frustrations* of what you *can't* reach and so on, what you *can't* influence, what you can *only encourage and cajole*, but you can't actually say, well, if you don't have the money [...] you can't, *what can you do?*" (CM15)

Here the discourses of promotion (of alternatives, of modal shift) are represented as mere cajoling, which is likely to fail without resources to back it up. Compared to the individualist enthusiasm for entering into partnership with the private sector, this officer complains repeatedly about the fact that no-one is interested in working with the council

"CM: Well, we had [...] sort of er, we have, we have working relations with people like housing associations, and we have working relations with, with like building societies, and we have working relationships with private landlords associations,

INT: Yeah,

CM: But, you know, if you ever want to get anything done, you know, you can spend, you know, fifty weeks of the year trying to *encourage* and, you know, *work with*...I mean building societies, classic. 'What's it got to do with us?' is the first reaction, second reaction is '[sigh] ah, goodness me, couldn't lend, we couldn't lend on some of those things, you know, on energy efficiency...' [...] and then, 'but really, we're actually only there to serve our customers, and if our customers don't demand it, we won't give it'. So, you go 'what?' 'well, you know', it's just crazy [...] they'll just go, [the] building society goes 'if someone comes in and says 'I want a new kitchen', then like...yeah, five thousand quid, no problem', you know, providing they check out. But they don't go 'you can't have a new kitchen unless

you have cavity wall insulation as well', and they go 'well that's not our role. Change the legislation, you could do that, but our role is to respond to what the client wants'. So at that point you go 'well, it's going nowhere is it?' You know. And they're the biggest influence, potential influence, you know, 'cause people go, when they buy a house they go 'oh, I'm going to need another couple of thousand if I'm gonna do some improvements,'" (CM15-16)

This theme continued, with the officer taking on the voices of different private sector bodies or householders in rejecting the need to invest in energy efficiency. His view is summed up in this section:

"CM: So, there's a sort of mis-match in the private sector, so, you could end up having meetings coming out of your ears, which we do, erm, and, you go into as many partnerships as you like, but in the end, it's all complete bollocks unless you actually go 'there's some money and we're going to do that with it'" (CM16)

Even when I identified the positive benefits of partnership, and of utilising climate change in order to attract funding (in an entrepreneurial manner), this strategy was rejected quickly. I gave the example of a group of tower block residents campaigning for funding for refurbishments:

"INT: The climate change issue was brought into it, 'there's another benefit to this...proposal', and so the money came in. Do you think that's the, possibly the way forward for...for these costly, or more costly schemes? Do you think that climate change will be increasingly used as a way of attracting funding?"

CM: Erm, ...probably not, no. I think that unless central government actually says, 'here's a climate change pot' and, you know, we have a target of doing so much [...] and we divvy it out to...everyone, local authorities, whatever, and we come back, so we get an allocation that is, you know, insulate...energy efficiency heating, whatever else they wanna do, that's the...there's the money for it, I think nothing will come of it" (CM6)

Similarly, the officer rejects the value of projects that have received special help or funding, as minor contributions. Even 'best practice' is dismissed from a fatalistic point of view as anomalous:

“CM: Erm, I mean, you get some of these *case studies* that are written up, particularly by people like the Department of the Environment and the Energy Efficiency Unit and, even worse, the Energy Savings Trust [they] are all designed to say what are good job they’re doing and what a good job somebody else is doing, and they, they write all this *blurb*, most of it, you know, if we weren’t on tape, would just be described as complete crap [...] You know, I mean it, it is very interesting, and yes people might have made all sorts of arguments but in the end, you go, and it may have gone ahead, but in the end you go ‘that’s one scheme’ [...] Ninety properties, you know, yeah, you go ‘but what really happened?’, you know what happened to everything else. So we’ve got good practice models, I mean, we were a *greenhouse flagship* for [scheme],

INT: Yeah

CM: We had to do [scheme] anyway. You know, we put in fifty percent of our money, we got fifty percent extra allocation from central government, which was again our money, not theirs, but, it, you know, it got us an extra allocation, at least we can borrow more, and erm, and at that point we did it, and you go, ‘and we saved...you know, many thousands of, you know, of pounds...you know, just, for the district heating fund, and we probably saved loads of CO₂ and all that sort of thing’ and that’s all very interesting, but you go...

INT: How can you apply it...?

CM: But it’s *not progress*, I mean it’s, because it’s, it was like fifteen hundred houses, and we own forty thousand, you know. And then, the private sector owns another seventy thousand. You go, ‘so what do we [do]?’” (CM6-7)

The policy model supported by this officer is essentially a hierarchist one, of centrally allocated funds being used to pay for the initiatives that are required. In essence the responsibility for tackling climate change is being pushed back ‘up-wards’ to the highest authority, which is seen as having the necessary agency in the form of finance.

Not only is the partnership model of progress rejected, but also the priorities of other individuals and organisations are constantly cited as the reasons for lack of progress:

“CM: CHP plants and so on and I think that that is an area that ought to be, sort of having its lid taken off here, and in particular, that is where you really can have investment partnerships, you know, so, there is tremendous scope to get private sector money involved there,

INT: Yeah,

CM: And have real partnerships, but it’s not going to happen unless local authorities are one, you know, encouraged to do it and *all the impediments are taken away*,

INT: Yeah,

CM: And secondly, it is promoted by central government and, whenever we run into trouble, they come in and *help us sort it out* sort of thing. And in, you know, so like, if we’re going to do a City Centre district heating scheme, I mean it can take five years in the planning, and all *fall down because some, like a university goes “ooh, not much interested now”* you know. Er, so it has to be hit from every angle,”
(CM26)

This is not the hierarchist’s blame-spreading technique, the individualist’s personal responsibility or the egalitarian’s stress on the system (although it comes close), it seems to be more a frustration that the different bodies which are required to work together are merely self-interested, and lacking in coordination. It seems as though others have to approach the authority in order for progress to be made: “no-one’s bringing any money to the table [...] no-one ever comes up to us and goes ‘got a great idea? Here’s 50% for it’” (CM16).

The role of legislation and statutory requirements stressed by other officers (in particular HECA) is also played down. The respondent here makes an analogy with a ‘Cure Cancer Act’ in order to show that the attribution of responsibility is not, in itself, sufficient:

“if you say you want to, you know, cure cancer, you can have a bill that says ‘Cure Cancer Act’, and it’s the responsibility of all local authorities to cure cancer, and you go ‘but, but’, so what are you going to do? [...] there’s no money, so what are you going to do? I mean, you know? You might have some enthusiastic amateurs,

but unless someone puts their money where their mouth is, no-one's ever going to do anything, and that, that's the central problem." (CM17-18).

Agency is very simplistically associated with financial power throughout this officer's response:

“INT: So you see legislation, well, legislation for one thing, but when that has come in, like HECA, it's actually...

CM: There's *no more money*.

INT: No, it's forced some, er, it's basically forced a responsibility and, a duty, that hasn't been backed up...?

CM: But with *no money*, it's complete, it's just completely ridiculous [...] I just think we'll be talking about it for ever more, and you know, we've already been talking about it for 5, 5 to 10 years, and it's getting worse" (CM17)

The sources of money, and therefore agency, are seen as central government (in the main), and private sector bodies. However, the invective against other agencies betrays the fact that this sense of powerlessness is explained by Cultural Theory: whether it is a University pulling out of a project, banks being unwilling to fund, everyone out for themselves, the private sector having a free hand, or individuals wanting a new kitchen rather than energy efficiency improvements. In every case, the fatalism seems to derive from a sense of the *structural* context; of inter-linked structures with varying responsibilities, which are not working together as a group. It is insightful that a question about linkages with other parts of the council was answered with reference to the corporate policies, which were then demolished as 'just bull':

“INT: So it, this is what I'm asking you [...] if there is a policy on climate change, or if there is [...] an overarching policy, how, how are you sort of *linked* with other parts of the council, with other departments which also have an effect on climate change. Is there *co-ordination* between...?

CM: Oh yeah, not bad. And we actually have, I mean, first of all, I mean, we see a sort of community leadership role as very important, and unfortunately we've had, you know, eighteen years of Thatcherism which sort of, knackered local authorities as a top priority. Erm, but in terms of, you know, wherever we are in trying to have,

erm, ah, a sort of *co-ordinated corporate* response to some of our responsibilities [...] we have five corporate priorities, of which erm, local agenda twenty one and things like that is an *underlying priority*, and environmental improvement is...er, it's worded in some way,

INT: Yeah,

CM: It's, [quietly] I'm afraid it's *just bull*, but, but, concern for the environment is a, is one of the key...

INT: And that's for the council as a whole?

CM: Yeah, that's right." (CM12)

Also in a structural context, the lack of agency is often blamed on re-organisation, of the council as passenger transport executive, of the deregulation of buses, of planning and so on:

"CM: And one of the unfortunate things on transport, was that transport was the one that got blown apart from local authorities when Tyne and Wear got erm...er, when all the metropolitan County Councils got disbanded,

INT: Right,

CM: And so all the transport planning, running the Metro system, passenger transport executive, de-regulation of buses, that all got blown apart, and that's a fundamental problem" (CM13)

These factors come together to represent the classic the classic fatalistic experience: of structure without cohesiveness or agency.

Explaining Dominance/Hegemony

Given that the discourses of different cultures are detectable by talking to those in local authorities (and reading official documentation), how is it that the majority of policy responses are reliant on such straightforwardly technocratic approaches as energy efficiency measures? Where is the challenging criticism (of values, goals and systems) of egalitarianism, or the innovative networking approach of the individualists? They are there, but very much as the exception rather than the norm, especially in terms of the raft

of policies which are implemented successfully (see chapter 3.2 on 'results'). The answer, in general terms, appears to lie in the dominance of hierarchist definitions of problems and acceptable solutions, in what is after all a hierarchical institution. Aspects of dominance or hegemony are addressed by a number of authors already quoted, who look at the role of discourses in particular, but also at power and interests: through a political, cultural critique.

Hajer (1995) proclaims his aim as being "to illuminate how certain dominant perceptions of a problem are constructed, and how policy decision-making takes place in this context" (1995: 15), suggesting that political analysis is essentially the study of struggles over perceptions (1995:19). He suggests that policy-making is aimed at creating, from a plurality of viewpoints and statements, "the sort of problems that institutions can handle and for which solutions can be found" (1995: 15). Angela Liberatori traces similar processes in the framing of environmental policies as tractable (Redclift and Benton, 1995). In this interpretation, a hierarchy is highly likely to represent *any* problem in terms which allow it to be tackled using those techniques and policies which it has already determined are the most fit - hierarchist ones. In Cultural Theory terms, we should therefore expect to find climate change described as a problem of resource management, with safe limits being set by technocratic experts, and maintained through a series of technical fixes and a mixture of 'carrot-and-stick' measures.

Hajer stresses that "in this process of setting the terms of a policy discourse, credibility and authority are allocated, for instance by emphasising a tradition of effective policy-making in a particular field" (1995: 24), and this also seems to be the case in local government. Here the reasonably familiar field of 'energy efficiency/conservation' (dating back, as has been pointed out, to "the seventies and eighties and sort of, resources running out, and that..." (CM2)) has been leapt upon as the 'obvious' route through which to tackle climate change. The problem has been defined in familiar terms, for which the institution has an established field and set of technical measures, and it is therefore constructed as a manageable problem.

Hajer himself seems to appreciate the *cultural* aspect of this broad trend in policy-making, in suggesting that ecological modernisation “does not call for structural change but is, in this respect, basically a modernist and technocratic approach to the environment that suggests that there is a technical-institutional fix for the present problems” (1995: 31). He furthermore underlines the point that the dominant mode of policy-making has no room for egalitarianism’s critique of values in asking “[i]s ecological modernisation in fact a rhetorical play that tries to reconcile the irreconcilable (environment and development) only to take the wind out of the sails of the ‘real’ environmentalists?” (1995: 34). Of course, Hajer represents ecological modernisation as a ‘story-line’, a meta-discourse that binds a ‘discourse coalition’. I would also describe it as an aspect of the dominant culture permeating environmental institutions, basically hierarchist with a touch of individualism, where “what first appeared as a threat to the system [capitalism/the market] now becomes a vehicle for its very innovation” (1995: 32), a re-writing of the individualist’s cornucopian approach to escaping environmental problems through ‘more of the same’. Hajer claims that his analysis avoids commitment to “theories that ground their argument in the idea that actions and perceptions should be understood against the background of deeply held beliefs or belief systems” (1995: 59). However, I find most of his argument entirely consistent with the assertion that those institutions which have co-defined climate change and responses to it are an allegiance of hierarchists and individualists (cf. O’Riordan *et al* 1998: 391), painting a picture of the problem as manageable through present institutions, in a way which reflects dominantly hierarchist preoccupations.

Hajer and Fischer (1999) elaborate on the missing cultural critique in the dominant environmental problem-solving discourse of ecological modernisation, sustainable development: “missing is the critique of industrial progress, in particular the question about the viability of endless material growth and consumption [...] sustainable development remains caught in [...] the ‘culture of progress’” (1999: 3), i.e. that of hierarchism and individualism in alliance. This ‘culture’

“presumes that our knowledge is sophisticated enough to reveal the limits of nature, thus permitting us to exploit nature safely up to that limit [...] an institutional

approach that purports to deal with the challenges of environmental degradation, whilst leaving aside basic cultural and political questions about the institutions implicated in producing the crisis in the first place [...] a critique of a particular way of relating to nature” (1999: 5-6).

This perfectly outlines the dominant culture’s problem-setting agenda, and the egalitarian’s value-based total systemic critique that is excluded from it. Perhaps more provocatively, Hajer and Fischer implicate ‘the academy’ in a process of exclusion that has “exorcised the cultural critique from environmental debate”, as students enter with such critical ideals, founded, I would argue, in egalitarianism, and leave “as technocratic practitioners of ecological risk analysis and environmental management” (1999: 15).

By contrast, Dryzek (1997) suggests that ecological modernisation (which he appears to define in simpler hierarchical terms) has not begun to hold sway over policy-making, because it

“requires a consensual and interventionist policy style consistent with corporatism [...] anathema to governments under the sway of market liberal doctrines [...] and it threatens to deflect [radicals’] critiques of industrial society” (1997: 151-2).

Here again we can see a battle between cultural styles, and explicitly policy styles. However, he also offers a more pragmatic, interests-based explanation of the limits of discourses’ ability to sway policy, as he wishes to base his discursive approach within a critical field that acknowledges interests and power in a more realist manner. Thus he argues that

“governments in capitalist economies have to perform a number of basic functions [...] irrespective of any discourses which may have captivated government officials (see Dryzek, 1992,a). These imperatives include, first and foremost, continued economic growth” (1997: 11-12).

Thus Dryzek defines state and corporate agencies as

“powerful actors who see established or emerging discourses as threatening their vital interests [and] can attempt to override developments at the level of discourse” (1997: 11).

This is a bald but compelling explanation of why the apparently radical discourses of sustainable development have been adopted, whilst the dominant cultures hold sway over actual policy matters. Dryzek writes that

“[t]hese actors may have conceded at the level of discourse, but their particular interests subsequently led them to stick to more established policy practices” (1997: 11).

This view is implicitly backed up by Rayner and Malone (1998) who argue that implementation of policies on climate change is contested and ‘messy’, largely because

“interest group mobilisation and representation help to sustain a bias in favour of activities that lead to greenhouse gas emissions [and] the status quo is insulated from fundamental change by the influence of routines, established procedures, and traditional and close ties among economic and political elites” (1998: xxvi).

The concession to the importance of ‘the environment’ at the level of discourse is discussed by Thompson and Rayner (in Rayner and Malone, 1998) in terms of a *hegemonic myth* of global fragility. They suggest that a hegemonic myth (another sort of meta-discourse) consists of:

“fundamental propositions or assumptions that are un-questionable within the context of a particular [in my terms, topic-] discourse [and] set the rhetorical terms within which rival views and myths continue to compete [...] the myth of global vulnerability and fragility [an egalitarian construction of nature] is the hegemonic myth that has emerged in the course of both the climate change debate and the broader global environmental change debate of which it is a part (Cantor and Rayner, 1994)” (1998: 289-290).

Even in global politics, acceptance of the myth or at least its rhetorical tropes and *ethos* of concern (Myerson and Rydin, 1996) is necessary to enter the debate. Thompson and Rayner point out that George Bush (Snr.) did not accept this ‘myth’, and was (relatively) isolated in international environmental talks, whilst Clinton and Thatcher were both willing to advocate the hegemonic myth, whilst pursuing openly free market policies in

every other respect. George W Bush's abandonment of the Kyoto Protocol⁶⁶ reveals that he shares his father's distaste for this 'myth'.

Policy Dominance In Local Authorities

Rayner (1992) offers a convincing analysis of the reasons why departments and groupings in local authorities might display different policy responses to climate change in a paper written in defence of Cultural Theory's relevance to risk analysis, using climate change and government agencies as his primary examples. Reflecting the hegemonic myth argument, he stresses that "[m]ost institutions concerned with the threat of global climate change urge prudence", however two main forms of prudence arise from consideration of the same scientific and economic facts, the *precautionary* and *proof-first* approaches. He suggests that divisions in approach occur even *within* government departments, due to the "functional self-interest of institutions" (1992: 109), and creates a typology of different organisations based on their organisational formality (from hierarchical through market to collective organisation) and the generality of their functions ("from the specific goal of environmental protection to the broadest issues of economic and societal development" (ibid.)). I reproduce a table from his paper below.

⁶⁶ One of the first actions of his Presidency, early 2001.

Table 5: Interaction of Organisational Function and Structure in Framing Uncertainty (taken from Rayner, 1992: 110)

Structure	Environmental Protection Function	Social-Political Regulation Function	Economic Development Function
Hierarchy	Reductionist Precautionary <i>e.g. federal and state environmental regulators</i>	Reductionist Proof-first <i>e.g. courts, public utility commissions</i>	Reductionist Proof-first <i>e.g. federal and state energy and commerce departments</i>
Market	Pragmatic Precautionary <i>e.g. environmental entrepreneurs, energy service companies</i>	Pragmatic Mixed Prudence <i>e.g. federal and state legislators</i>	Pragmatic Proof-first <i>e.g. utilities, manufacturing companies</i>
Collective	Holistic Precautionary <i>e.g. grassroots environmental groups</i>	Holistic Precautionary <i>e.g. town meetings</i>	Holistic Mixed Prudence <i>e.g. alternative economic think-tanks</i>

The terms indicated in the boxes above characterise the reasoning style and type of prudence promoted by organisations in each segment of the typology, the conclusion being that the “prediction of reasoning style varies consistently with culture and is unaffected by function”, whereas “the interpretation of prudence seems to depend on the interaction of culture and the extent to which the goals of the organisation are dominated by the specific function of environmental protection” (1992: 110).

The implications for my work are that, even if an authority is organised in an overwhelmingly hierarchist manner, different groups in it, charged to different degrees with environmental protection, will advocate different attitudes to prudence. An environmental sub-group should occupy the top-left position, using cost-benefit analysis to assess policy measures but believing that prudence requires expenditure to mitigate climate change. The legislators (the council?) should assess policy in a pragmatic manner, and have mixed views on the prudence of investing to counter the threat of climate change, and energy departments in national and local government should be un-willing to spend heavily without evidence of the need. Other actors in the climate change policy world can also be identified in this grid, the ‘environmental entrepreneurs’ in transport policy and energy QUANGOs, the unwilling investors in the private sector, the environmental pressure groups at the fringes of the policy process, and so forth.

It would appear that egalitarians attempting to engage with policy-makers are hamstrung from the beginning, by being absorbed into the hierarchical social relations that constitute this arena. Interestingly, Dryzek (1997) suggests that the dominant mode of policy-making within society acknowledges the plurality of cultural viewpoints, only to co-opt it or wish it away. Speaking from ‘within’ the discourse of administrative rationalism (which I equate with Cultural Theory’s hierarchism), he quotes Kai Lee (1993) as arguing that:

“the proper function of political conflict is to raise issues which managers might otherwise miss [...] recognising that political conflict cannot be eliminated, he suggests taming it by establishing forums in which political actors can express their

concerns [...] rather than waste energy in adversarial processes which produce only stalemate or uncreative either/or decisions” (1997: 78).

This, it would seem to me, is exactly the response to a plurality of cultural styles in policy-making. Those who hold contesting views are silenced through the flattery of absorption into the machinery: in short, co-option. In terms of Cultural Theory, this process involves no great mystery, merely being the result of introducing dissidents to the social relations, problem definitions and culturally biased terms of reference of another discourse, with the almost inevitable effects on the package of cultural beliefs. Talking of how an egalitarian might be incorporated, Schwartz and Thompson write as follows: “[t]he more time he [sic] spends hob-knobbing with the hierarchists in the corridors of power, the less time he has to sit around with those on whose behalf he speaks” (Schwartz and Thompson, 1990: 60). Understandably, egalitarian environmentalists are often forced to admit that:

“participation by environmentalists [...] might dissipate energies that would be better spent on other activities, if the [...] process merely legitimates decisions already made elsewhere on the basis of economic values or corporate profit (Amy 1990:60-4)” (Dryzek, 1997: 99).

The position of those promoting egalitarian social relations and cultural biases, not to mention policy prescriptions, within local government thus seems marginalized. And yet there is an argument to be made that egalitarian concerns mesh with those of the environment in fundamental ways, a case that I now consider.

The Case for Egalitarianism

Since the egalitarian myth of nature, that of ‘nature ephemeral’, is given at the very least lip service by the global institutions attempting ecological management, can we argue that corresponding prescriptions for action should be adopted in a more rigorous way? The present situation appears to be one of ‘stolen rhetoric’, in Cultural Theory terms (Schwartz and Thompson, 1990). The dominant cultural alliance of hierarchists and individualists appear to have taken the wind out of the egalitarian’s sails in adopting their

discursive construction of the problem, whilst maintaining their control of the policy-making arena.

Thompson (1999) argues that most cases of environmental degradation today can be traced to the operation of ruthless competition, and that the parable of the ‘tragedy of the commons’ is still the most rational way of understanding problems like climate change, where a shared, essential resource (the atmosphere) is becoming ‘scarce’ through inappropriate exploitation. Thompson points to the example of Davos, an alpine village in which the ‘commons’ of woodland between the valley and the high pasture have been managed in various ways over the centuries. He points out that in terms of managing this resource,

“[t]here is no way of ever getting it right, because managing one way inevitably changes the forest, eventually to the point where that way of managing it is no longer appropriate”⁶⁷,

but the same response is always seen as appropriate when the shared resource is in *danger* of total depletion:

“[e]very time this unpleasant surprise has befallen them the Davosers have responded by switching their forest management to the all-in-the-same-boat, egalitarian style” (1999: 145).

Thompson’s (1999) parables of Davos and Tibetan forestry management draw our attention to the fact that *scales* of response are important as well as the choice of cultural style itself, so that if forestry management is organised at too large a scale, in effect it is unworkable locally, meaning that the tragedy of the commons may be allowed to continue unchecked.

It is, then, perhaps vital that the egalitarian approaches to climate change are adopted at a local level, in every locality, in order for their legitimated description of the state of play on a global scale to be translated into a focussed critique of the *status quo* at the local level. If the global prescriptions of the IPCC are to be taken seriously, there must be effective operationalisation of the egalitarian preferred policy ‘sticks’ at a local level. As

⁶⁷ This is an ecological aspect of Thompson’s *surprise* theory mentioned above.

egalitarian groups tend to have limited personal agency beyond a voluntary adoption of less impacting behaviours, this suggests that this will best be accomplished through the establishment of genuinely egalitarian contributions to the policy-making process through an alliance of egalitarian and hierarchist cultures. This O’Riordan *et al* (1998) rightly characterise as the *precautionary* alliance. In this alliance, the capabilities of the hierarchist power structures would work with the commons-preserving insights of the egalitarians to effectively veto local proposals by individualist-dominated business interests to promote economic growth in every locality, and to enforce the cuts in emissions which it is admitted are necessary, primarily through the use of regulation and legal sanctions; the egalitarian methods of securing effective action.

CHAPTER 3:4 CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter serves a dual purpose. Firstly, I intend to draw together some of the main strands of the previous chapters to show how I have dissected the local authority responses to climate change. As explained in Part Two, I have sought to use the concepts of discourses and cultures in combination to explore the twin settings of my research: climate change and local authority. Even in advance of focussed empirical research it is clear that in both areas there are dominant constructions of what is to be understood by those terms. Part Three set about the project of looking in detail at data from the fieldwork based in three research sites, three urban city councils, and analysing them according to three models. I began by taking a 'neutral' look at each authority in turn, summarising the responses that have been begun according to documentation and the officers themselves. I then explored what the responses to climate change consist of across all three sites, through the concepts of ritual, rhetoric and results. I finally applied Cultural Theory to identify the cultural styles with which different groups in local authorities approach the issue of climate change. It remains to draw these strands together to attempt to demonstrate in detail how the cultural biases of one or two of these groups have achieved dominance over the others, by their greater ability to display a close fit with the dominant constructions already identified in Part Two, and with the dominant modes of conducting local authority work, identified as a modified form of classical bureaucracy which has adopted to fit the era of 'modernisation'.

Secondly, I will make different recommendations which arise from my findings, ranging from a utopian call for a reinvigoration of egalitarian culture through society, and particularly in localities and their governments, to the 'nitty gritty' of passing on some of the concrete requests for changes in policy, funding and organisation which have come from local government itself. Although the general tenor of my conclusions can be seen as fairly pessimistic (arguing that climate change is a challenge that requires responses which are intrinsically difficult for local authority to conceive of or put into action), I will nonetheless attempt to identify a way forward for local government, and for authorities

that have not yet exploited the potential of addressing global environmental problems as a tool for their strengthening.

CULTURAL DOMINANCE

The ideology behind the structure, workings and culture of local authorities remains a largely modernist one, based on ideals of rational organisation, pyramidal power structures, rule of expertise and so on. These I have compared to Cultural Theory's cultural style of hierarchism, Drysek's administrative rationality, and other formulations of cognitive convictions that are strongly correlated with classically modernist forms of social relations and organisation: in a word, bureaucracy.

Cultural Challenges In Local Government And Climate Change

For many decades, the idea that local government should be run according to a bureaucratic rationality, has been unquestioned. However, over the last half a century other models of the proper functions of local government and its relations to its public/citizens/consumers have emerged. In the light of my teasing out the ramifications of Cultural Theory, I have demonstrated that this has been a largely *cultural* process of transformation, and in so far as discourses are the binding myths of cultures, their rallying cries and means of cementing change, the process has also been a *discursive* one. The two other active cultures of individualism and egalitarianism have both made in-roads into the bureaucratic heartland of government, forcing authorities to respond to the demands of publics newly empowered as consumers and citizens, seeking market style service delivery and political accountability. Used in this way, I believe Cultural Theory provides a compelling account of the changing roles of local authority.

In the case of climate change, a similar story can be told. Climate change is a new kind of problem, one which perhaps could not have existed until relatively recently, because of the co-evolution of its causes (the spread of rampant industrialism globally) and the means of its detection and conceptualisation (the spread of global climate science). It may

not seem to make sense at first sight to apply a cultural analysis to what is portrayed as a purely scientific issue. However, I hope that my examination of what 'climate change' is taken to be has shown that cultural factors indeed play a major part in its genesis and its continuing existence as a subject of global discussion and political management. In the last couple of decades the very project of identifying, measuring and predicting it has been a joint effort between global scientific *and* policy elites, such that climate change has never been merely a process, but always simultaneously a problem, and a challenge for political and social management. Simply in talking about the establishment of facts of nature through the application of *expertise*, and of *management* through global power structures, we can see that from its inception the handling of climate change has been in terms of modernism, of experts and management, of hierarchism. We can again apply a cultural critique to trace the presence and the influence of the other cultural styles in the world of climate change.

Individualist cultures across the world (but concentrated in the major industrial nations, and especially in the US) have argued against the very existence of anthropogenic climate change, or even climate change itself, unreflexively voicing their deeply ingrained myth of nature as resilient and cornucopian. Their policy prescriptions amount to subjecting the common good of the climate to the workings of the market, innovating their way out of trouble, and ensuring endless economic growth to deal with the consequences of climate change if and when it arrives. Conversely, egalitarian cultures across the globe (but particularly concentrated in Europe, the developing nations and those states whose very existence is immediately threatened by the consequences of climate change) have brought their myths of nature to bear on world opinion, even in advance of more certain scientific evidence, stressing that caution is necessary to avert calamity in a fragile nature. The discourse of sustainable development has been the dominant hierarchist response to these cultural challenges to the dominant model of global management, and has managed to attract some adherents to the developmental and environmental paradigms. Meanwhile, the 'precautionary' and 'adaptive' coalitions pull hierarchists towards either the egalitarian or individualist positions.

Bureaucratic Dominance Of Local Authority Responses To Climate Change

In each arena, that of local government and that of climate change, the situation is that dominant hierarchist paradigms (bureaucracy, sustainable development) hold sway over the voices of egalitarians and individualists, which struggle to be heard, never mind enacted. In this thesis I have cast some light on the details of this process in one particular field, local authority responses to climate change. The 'secret' of the dominance of hierarchist culture in local authority responses to climate change lies in how well the three active cultures are able to justify their aims, methods and effectiveness in the terms set by the dominant hierarchist culture.

There appears to be a cultural 'division of labour' with regard to climate change, one which maps onto an analysis of the policy process as revealed through concepts of rhetoric, ritual and results. The characterisation of climate change as a real threat, requiring a co-ordinated response by all actors, in all sectors, globally, is a clear demonstration that the hegemonic myth of global fragility has indeed won the battle of words, the rhetorical battle. Agencies such as Friends Of the Earth drafted climate policies and emissions reductions targets for local authorities before any governmental body, and indeed the ICLEI's Cities for Climate Protection campaign has been pushing, for almost a decade, for exactly the kind of climate policies for local government which central government is now acknowledging as the way forward. Egalitarians' role has been at the moral, rhetorical, problem-defining end of the policy process, creating, and sustaining, the conviction that the problem is real and the responses are necessary, now (see Haas *et al*, 1993).

The hierarchist cultures of global science, global policy, and government have their greatest input in the second stage of the policy process, that of assessment of climate change itself and of the costs and benefits of different responses to it. Hierarchists are comfortably the appropriate rulers of the realm of ritual, passing all options through a filter of bureaucracy until what remains is the tried and tested, that which we know already. Here the other cultures submit their desires and programmes to the iron rule of

COBA (cost/benefit analysis), with unsurprising results. Egalitarian calls for large scale investment, sweeping changes, vigorous regulation with penalties on those identified as at fault, decentralisation and a radicalisation of the concept of democracy, are ruled out as too costly, too extreme, too outlandish or a threat to institutional values themselves. The public or NGO representatives, who may be the only source of egalitarian input available to the authority, are often the audience of due process rather than participants in the ritual of *policy-making*.

Individualist policy preferences (the pursuit of *voluntary* changes in behaviour, of *voluntary* up-take of alternatives) seem to be the dominant model in most areas of policy *implementation*. In the implementation of HECA in energy, in the promotions of alternatives in transport, in stressing nationally and locally that we are all individually responsible for climate change and for responding to it, the dominant policy responses have relied upon and reinforced individualist notions of choice, market, and voluntarism. There are of course exceptions, but by and large it seems that the policies that most often pass the test of COBA are the ones that allow authorities to spend modest amounts of money, and to 'promote' environmentally responsible behaviour, sometimes by offering incentives on a private sector model. Innovation and technological progress are seen to belong in the realm of the individualists, and along with the economic attractiveness of new businesses and employment being created in a market for environmental improvement, the cheaper option of looking to the semi- and wholly private sector seems to appeal most in term of results.

Hierarchist policies are also able to fulfil the ritual assessment of results. Energy efficiency schemes, implemented by authorities or other bodies are cost effective in that the emissions savings that result can be roughly estimated, whilst other sources of funding for these technical measures are increasing. At heart, the 'results' that the egalitarians pursue are not as unproblematically subject to quantification, making it difficult for them to attract the necessary funding and support. Their preferred policies for direct emissions reductions are adjudged too investment intensive: public transport, alternative energy, CHP, and all those policies that would involve a long time scale to show 'results'. These

represent an investment in the future towards which egalitarian concerns are always directed, but which cannot fit into the other cultures' truncated temporal frames. Participation, democracy, community, involvement, self-determination, control, are all intended results of egalitarian policies, but they simply cannot be factored into an end-of-year balance sheet. At best, authorities submit to the rhetorical necessity of supporting these values for ceremonial kudos, and treat the money that is set aside for their attainment as necessary, while still begrudging their loss.

In these ways (the differentiation between the contributions which different cultural groupings can make to the making of climate change policy in general, and specifically the ways in which the 'three Rs' of local authority processes act as filters to the uptake of different cultural approaches) the dominance of hierarchist culture is maintained in local authorities.

THE 'WAY FORWARD' FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSES TO CLIMATE CHANGE

In concluding this thesis, I put aside my pessimism about the likelihood of a branch of government, and an agent of the *status quo*, addressing climate change, and offer some thoughts on where we might go from here. One way of achieving this is to pass on some of the recommendations from my interviewees themselves, and to review their views of how to remove the barriers to an effective response. The other is to summarise the personal recommendations derived from my discursive/cultural analysis of the situation, using Cultural Theory's insights to suggest ways in which local authorities can attempt to 'enable' the egalitarian groupings within local government and the community to make themselves heard. As I have argued, this is necessary if local authorities are to have a full cultural repertoire of understandings and prescriptions, so that no constructions of the problem are ignored and all possible options for responses are utilised. In a sense, this will involve suggesting ways in which the 'culture' of egalitarianism can be promoted within local authority practices. Although I do not subscribe to the 'best practice' model of presenting findings, I will also suggest ways in which my case study authorities have demonstrated the advantages of different approaches in different areas of policy, as I

believe that it is only through such flexible and diverse responses that climate change will be effectively addressed.

Specific Recommendations

By far the most common call from those I interviewed in the course of the research was for greater funding from central government. This arises from a common perception that local government has been handed a degree of responsibility over climate change, without any concomitant agency. In the majority of cases, officers translated agency very simply into resources and, even more simply, into money. Furthermore, it was frequently stressed that this should be *targeted* funding. A number of officers commented on the fact that money could disappear into the centralised funds of an authority unless its intended usage was specifically identified.

Linked to this was the call for a standard policy on 'ring-fencing' or hypothecation of financial savings achieved through measures that are primarily aimed at addressing climate change. This was frequently asserted with regard to the savings from energy efficiency and energy management within authorities and their building stock. Whereas in the case of energy management careful contract re-negotiation with the utility companies could result in financial savings with no actual energy savings or GHG emission reductions (and therefore this money might be said to be a simple institutional saving), in the case of savings made ostensibly for environmental reasons it was strongly felt that the money saved should be made available for further energy efficiency or climate change measures. Although some authorities have taken this approach already, there was an appeal to central government to safeguard these advances so that further investment would be freed up. Legislation on this issue would undoubtedly enable more measures to be undertaken by authorities, and would help to stress the non-financial motivation for this programme which authorities seem to forget in their grateful receipt of money from their Energy Conservation programmes. Nottingham City Council have managed to set up something along these lines, an Energy Conservation Fund of around £1M, from which money can be borrowed on a no-interest basis by institutions such as authority-run

schools in order to install energy efficiency measures, In this scheme, the money is paid back directly to the fund until the end of a pay-back period, when savings accrue to the borrowers. It is noticeable (and appreciated) that the provisions for Road User Charges and Work Place Parking Levies include such a feature, ensuring that any finances raised are targeted to further sustainable transport initiatives.

Continuing in a financial vein, it was thought that spending restraints on authorities, and the imposition of short payback times for major investments, were rendering some schemes, which would be of undoubted benefit with respect to climate change, financially un-viable. Foremost among these were CHP projects, renewable energy and transport schemes. Although being aware of the tight restrictions on spending which are in place in local government generally, it was felt by many that some relaxation should be allowed where such schemes were of benefit to all involved: the authority, the 'consumer' and the environment. One energy officer admitted to me that he had been able in effect to 'fiddle' the figures in order to bring the pay-back times of various schemes within the guidelines necessary to secure funding. It seems ridiculous that such methods should be resorted to in pursuing a programme that is primarily driven by the government in the first place. In addition, in the case of energy at least, there is the problem of the wider national policy, where ever-decreasing energy prices due to liberalisation and competition lead to ever-increasing pay-back times for energy efficiency measures, and a decreasing likelihood of their being undertaken.

The findings of the Newcastle Energy Plan 5-Year Report⁶⁸ can perhaps be generalised as a message to central government as well as local government. The fifth point of its executive summary being that "all the energy savings achieved over five years have been "wiped out" by traffic growth" (note 24, p.8). All indications are that traffic levels continue to rise despite the alleged concentration on transport by the government and local authorities. It is almost inconceivable that the situation of transport policy has reverted to the position in the early nineties, with LTPs containing major road-building

⁶⁸ Newcastle City Council, *Energy And The Urban Environment: 5 Year Review*, 1997, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne.

schemes in over 100 cases, given that the argument for building a way out of congestion was comprehensively demolished by transport campaigners in the mid-nineties, and officially renounced with government reports such as SACTRA 1994.

Responding To Climate Change: A Cultural Challenge

It may be remembered that in my data there were instances of officers characterising the changes in behaviours and attitudes necessary for a realistic response to climate change as specifically *cultural* in nature. In some ways this concept of cultural change is used to signify major changes that go beyond the merely superficial. In other areas, especially of government rhetoric (cf. 'ending the culture of dependency' in New Labour's programme, 'creating an enterprise culture' in Thatcher's), it represents a concept stolen from managerial speak, referring originally to a motivational atmosphere for employees, which can be manipulated by managers to extract greater commitment and productivity (Collins, 2000). It will be clear from my thesis that I take the issue in a more specific way; that I view the neglect of egalitarian problem-definitions, solutions, and social relations in the response to climate change as a major shortcoming, one which is perhaps of particular importance to local authorities in their position as the closest level of governance to 'the people', the 'community' of Local Agenda 21. It remains, therefore, to offer some pointers as to how such a concept of cultural change can be applied, particularly in the local authority arena.

Cultural Theory does not concentrate on how to engineer 'cultural change', however some of its authors have outlined a coherent theory of how it happens, which may be utilised to formulate how such an active programme might shape up. To begin with, it suggests that broad cultural change observed as taking place over a period of time within a particular society or institution can be grasped as an aggregation of an infinitely greater number of 'cultural changes' at the level of small groups and even individuals. These may be movements in every direction on the theory's 'map' of the four ways of life, including changes in the opposite direction from that of the aggregated macro-change. In *Cultural Theory* (Thompson *et al*, 1900) this more dynamic view of a cultural theory of change is

illustrated by examples of the twelve possible changes in cultural outlook from one way of life to another. The examples given of change to an egalitarian outlook are perhaps instructive. The transition from hierarchist biases to egalitarian (which we might hope for *within* local government) is “the path taken by the schismatic: the loyalist who becomes the heretic.”; from individualist to egalitarian is ““Saul on the road to Damascus”[...] British captains of industry who lose their achieved positions [...] sometimes take this path, becoming prominent figures in activist groups (like the Soil Association or the Findhorn Community)”; and from fatalist to egalitarian “is the path taken by the isolated individual who, by chance, happens, to display the characteristic that members of some tight-knit group are looking for” (Thompson et al, 1990: 76-77). I would suggest that all of these possibilities for change exist within the local authority/climate change interface.

In pursuing my call for a promotion of egalitarian ways of life (and therefore cultural change) in local authority, I have to rely more on the slightly more deterministic strand of Cultural Theory that suggests that “as people organise so they will behave” (1990: 97). This means that the only hope for encouraging egalitarian attitudes and behaviours in authorities and their constituencies is to promote egalitarian social relations, as these are seen as strongly influencing (if not determining) the cultural outlook of those who experience them. Alternatively, it could be worthwhile exploring how egalitarians can form alliances with the other ways of life in order to further their objectives.

Promoting Egalitarian Social Relations

To take the first proposal, I believe that the physical and temporal structuration of local authority activities can be quite simply shifted in an egalitarian direction. As an example, I offer a meeting between local community members and the representatives of various institutions (police, social services, the council etc.) arranged as part of a colleague’s research. An egalitarian arrangement of seats (in a circle) was immediately transformed into a physical reinforcement of hierarchical relations (‘experts’ at the front behind a desk, ‘audience’ facing and below) upon the officials’ entry. Such unthinking reproductions of cultural categories, reinforced by the adoption of hierarchist agendas, roles and so forth, are of the essence in cultural domination and the maintenance of

hegemony, in the context of institutional meetings everywhere. It is an intensely common-sensical and well attested social fact that the experience of an 'official meeting' is for many a dispiriting and disempowering one, creating despair, distrust and anger in equal measures. It is therefore hardly surprising that 'participation' in council-run initiatives, even if they are predicated on achieving egalitarian ends, often amounts to the voluble contributions of experts with 'interests', and the silence, indifference or active antipathy of others.

To these factors can be added temporal ones, the nature of 'meetings' for example as conventional, limited windows of opportunity for ideas to be raised, where the demands of reporting back, passing minutes and delegating sub-groups can effectively squeeze out any positive discussion, or actions actually being taken. Egalitarian meeting structures (the *epitome* being consensus decision making) are characterised by equality of input, deliberation and a temporally open-ended nature. Entire literatures exist on the use of techniques of facilitation, visioning and consensus decision-making, and they have filtered into local authority mainly through the Local Agenda 21 process (e.g. Weisbord and Janoff, 1995). Surely local authorities can harness some of this knowledge and apply it whilst following its principles? A six hour 'event' aimed at genuinely inviting as many people as possible to deliberate over the possibilities of responding to climate change may provide exponentially more policy and initiative proposals than six one hour meetings on the same topic. Furthermore, it might be more likely to result in implementation, given that the proposals might come from people interested in organising action at a local level, rather than the same coterie of authority and business experts.

I have outlined at length in the thesis, through the concept of institutional environmental isomorphism, how authorities may derive great ceremonial benefit, and actual resources, from addressing new discourses that have contemporary *cachet*. However, there is a danger that scant resources are wasted in the response to climate change when great effort is taken *to be seen to be* addressing it (for example in calling a 'conference' with invited politicians, scientists and academics) rather than paying attention to the question of how best to galvanise the various and highly heterogeneous constituencies which must be

approached, addressed, and encouraged *on and in their own terms* in order for there to be any progress in this area.

In a sense these issues have already been addressed in the unfolding of the LA21 process. The raft of 'modernising' discourses which come under the heading of 'democratic renewal' attempt to address this very question of securing direct consent and participation by introducing more egalitarian methods into local authority methods. The hierarchist response from defensive authorities is usually over the 'ownership' of the process, and the 'un-representational' nature of participants. These are essentially (culturally biased) power issues, involving the inevitable responses of people with expertise when it is suggested that others might have a valid contribution to make.

In addition to spatial and temporal factors there is the issue of *scale*, linked to motivating changes in behaviour. The hierarchist paradigm dominates in the appeals from the government to various 'sectors' of society to achieve targets, as the hierarchists' message is that the result of each different and ranked group doing what the experts decide is best, will be an improvement for all. In addressing the wider public, local and national government often relies on an individualist paradigm, hoping to entice individual household or business leaders to take up the cause of climate change in order to profit personally, or simply to feel that they have discharged a personal responsibility. As I have discussed above, these efforts are frequently misdirected. Private landlords, small businesses, car drivers and so forth are so firmly located within an individualist culture that they are unwilling to 'invest to save', or to sacrifice their car, because the motivations for doing so are egalitarian in nature; long term, altruistic, sacrificial, and disinterested. The answer to the question of how to appeal to people in the name of an egalitarian cause, in an egalitarian manner, must surely involve engagement with the intermediate scale of egalitarianism's small, bounded groups. This is why I feel that Nottingham's approach to green commuting through an employers' *club* is more likely to succeed, and why such initiatives as paper recycling used to be successfully organised through schools and scout groups. Communal bonds, a common identity, a shared cause, a commitment to others who you actually know, and a sense of the 'communal good' which is not merely an un-

quantifiable abstract but a personal emotional experience, are all factors of small, bounded groups' social relations and cultural biases: of egalitarianism.

Thus, given that the re-invention of community and community values is exactly the nature of the cultural change required to secure commitment to the values at the heart of sustainability, LA21, climate change and similar 'whole system' issues, it follows that local government's contribution should be to foster its engagement with, and support of, small scale social groups who already have the relations conducive to co-operative, selfless and altruistic behaviour. Where these are lacking, they should seek to instigate them. In effect this might mean working through schools, hospitals, and other institutions, working with the social networks which already exist to establish energy efficient behaviours, car-sharing and the uptake of renewable energy. It might mean establishing commuter clubs of businesses, so that others copy policies implemented by one member. This will occur not purely for the initiatives' economic benefits, but because the members want to fulfil the *moral* obligations of being involved in such a progressive organisation. It might mean attending community group meetings as a local person rather than as a representative or expert, and proposing how travel to the local school can be altered with the co-operation of parents, or lobbying on their behalf for more accessible recycling facilities. It might mean working with, rather than against, local campaigning groups to ensure that the interests of local people in their roles as social networks of pedestrians, cyclists, disabled people, single mothers, ethnic minorities or whatever are not only noted and recorded, but developed and utilised in the furtherance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It certainly means that 'partnership' and 'participation' should be genuinely pursued on an equal footing, rather than symbolically through inviting 'representations' from 'representatives'. All of this requires commitment from officers and councillors who are already in some sense committed not only to environmental programmes, but also to supporting and promoting the egalitarian 'way of life'. This also requires that authorities be willing to consider such commitment when appointing LA21 officers, sustainability co-ordinators, or climate change forum facilitators.

There is at present no 'duty' to behave in a way that mitigates the likelihood of climate change, other than a moral one. Those who already recognise this duty are most likely doing as much as they can personally. Those who do not recognise such a duty will not have it imposed on them by law, and will certainly resent it being imposed on them by financial measures. Only by fostering the communal commitments of groups of people is such a duty likely to grow and bear fruit in the form of environmentally conscious practice.

Cultural Alliances

Cultural Theory addresses the question of how different cultural groupings can work together for a common good, given that their senses of the 'good', and the ideal means of reaching them, are different. Reflecting much of what I have elaborated, they suggest that the holding in common of either the 'group' or 'grid' dimension is often responsible. Thus in a highly hierarchical society, we should not be surprised to see individualists and egalitarians banding together, ignoring their differences on 'group' matters (individualism versus solidarity), to combat the stratifications, restrictions, bureaucracy and authority of the high 'grid' culture of hierarchism, on the basis of the principle that 'my enemy's enemy is my friend'. Thompson *et al* (1990) suggest that the commonest, and most familiar, cultural alliance is that of individualism and hierarchism in what we know familiarly as 'the establishment':

“Despite their disagreements with each other, hierarchists and individualists often opt for an establishment alliance instead of joining up with egalitarians. Individualists, for instance, may put up with the disabilities of hierarchy rather than submitting to the egalitarian demands for redistributing wealth. Similarly, hierarchists may prefer the defects of bidding and bargaining to being undermined from below by egalitarians, who reject differences in rank.” (Thompson *et al*, 1990: 89)

It seems that the only hope of promoting an egalitarian agenda in the response to climate change in local authorities might be to hope for an egalitarian-hierarchist alliance. Internationally speaking this is indeed the nature of the 'precautionary' (as opposed to the 'adaptive') coalition that seeks to mitigate climate change. In the context of local

authorities, what might such a coalition look like? I suspect it would involve a council willing to work with egalitarian style groups as I have outlined, the alternative being more egalitarians working within hierarchies. The latter primarily results in egalitarians settling into and accepting hierarchist social relations, and gradually taking on the cultural biases that they enact and support, this being why such an alliance is sometimes considered by hierarchists, “as a way of bringing dissidence under control”(Thompson *et al*, 1990: 89).

The hope of egalitarian ideals being imposed through hierarchist methods seems the most realistic option for addressing climate change in the UK. And there are signs that the UK is waking up to this fact, for what else are the climate change levy, road user charges, and workplace parking levies but egalitarian, re-distributive goals achieved through centralised bureaucracy? I concur with the majority of local authority officers whom I have interviewed in feeling that this commitment has to come from central government. I also share their pessimism that such a commitment is unlikely given its political unpalatability. The egalitarian-hierarchist cultural alliance is arguably the foundation of the ‘social democratic’ outlook of many European societies, especially the Scandinavians whose economies are probably the most energy efficient and therefore climate friendly in the global North. I end with the words of one of my interview subjects, from the authority that pioneered waste-to-energy and Combined Heat and Power in this country:

“Newcastle’s more Scandinavian than Mediterranean, and therefore we actually have more of a mentality [...] of Scandinavia, and believe that central government policy for far too long has been run from, you know, the Mediterranean [...] rather than Scandinavia, and, and that’s a real problem [...] we’re doing what we can but the major impediments are central government and resources [...] the current government, we hope, will actually get around to actually producing some money, because...you know, it’s ultimately about investment.” (CM1)

METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

This appendix contains material removed from the Research Design chapter (1.2).

A: Interview Schedule Used In Telephone Survey Of 17 Local Authorities' Climate Change Contacts

The question schedule used was exactly as follows, and was stuck to fairly rigidly, with unavoidable conversational deviation. Comments in parenthesis explain the areas of interest that the questions were intended to elucidate. The abbreviations refer to L(ocal) A(uthorities) and C(limate) C(hange).

1. Introduce research, pointing out that it is funded by the **ESRC** and by the **LGMB**.
2. Give the title, then stress that it is about **mitigation** of the causes of **CC**, not responses in terms of adaptation.
3. Explain that I am asking questions of 'environmental contacts' in LAs in order to identify possible **case studies** for research, but also that I am at a very early stage of the research, and so my questions are fairly simple at this stage.
4. Ask whether or not the person I am talking to is the **right person** to be talking to (mostly the LA21 co-ordinator), and if not, take the details of who is. (*location of CC according to LA*)
5. Ask if the LA has a **specific policy** to address Climate Change, will probably be told it is FOE resolution etc. (*specificity criteria*)
6. Ask if any amendments were made when it was adopted. (*framing?*)
7. Ask who put forward? (*location*)
8. Ask who the LA has turned to in order to address CC, and who would be their first port(s) of call if they wanted to find out information now.
9. Ask if there is **expertise** within the LA, or whether outside experts are more often consulted. (*expertise sources*)

10. Explain that my research will mainly consist of interviews with LA officers or members who are interested in addressing CC, or whose departments either have drafted, or might in the future be drafting **policy** to address it.
11. Have they any suggestions as to who I might approach within the LA?
12. Which departments do they think I should approach about policy?
13. Have initiatives already begun, and if so who should I talk to about them? (*location, framings*)
14. Which **other** LAs would they recommend to research about response to Climate Change, and why? (*criteria relevant to LAs*)
15. Thank, and ask if they have any questions, comments or suggestions about the research, what they would like to see investigated etc.

B: Interview Guides Used In Data Collection: Two Examples

Again, these guides are verbatim copies of guides taken to interviews. The first is an example of the most brief versions used, the second a more typical and specific example.

Interview Guide 1 (SW):

- Teams?
- Committees?
- Freedom to innovate?
- European Links?
- Partnerships?
- Why commuting?
- Sustainability-priority? Link?
- Fit w LA 'way of doing things'?
- LA21 + participation?
- Location in CEO [Chief Executive's Office]?
- Green Commuter Planners' Club?

Interview Guide 2 (BP):

- What do you understand by climate change, and how is it relevant to your/the council's work?
- Which bodies or people outside the council do you work with? Partnerships.
- What constraints are there, other than lack of resources?
- How are you connected with other parts of the council, on CC/Env matters?
- How could council reduce CO2 emissions/avoid climate change better?
- Is 30% target reduction achievable? Why not?
- Is Env protection/anti-CC measures compatible?
- Do you attempt to reach other sectors of housing in area-i.e. work with private landlords/housing associations?
- Do you share expertise (on CC etc) with other councils/bits of Govt./NGOs etc?
- Is there a sense of running out of improvements to make?

C: Codings

As explained in the Research Design chapter, coding was undertaken textually on hard copies of the transcripts of interviews. Examples of the codings used to highlight pertinent sections of data include:

- ⊕: Used to highlight all mentions of temporal factors, and therefore those useful in analysing such concepts as regularity, repetition, change, progress, discontinuity and so on.
- SUS DEV: An umbrella term used to code for mentions of the other broadly environmental discourses within which climate change was being discussed; the environment, greening, resources, local agenda 21, sustainability etc.
- EX: Short for excuses, this was used to highlight where reasons were given for lack of progress, or other agencies were blamed for inadequate responses. This was linked to issues of responsibility and agency, but focussed on explicit examples of excuses being proffered.

- **MAN:** Short for management, this identified where managerial discourses were used to describe responses, including such themes as baselines, monitoring, indicators and targets.
- *****: Used where details of authority structures and inter-departmental links were referred to. Often covered lists of groups and sub-groups, the frequencies of their meetings and their make-up, but also details of partnerships with other bodies.
- **RESP:** Used to single out references to responsibility for responding to climate change, within or beyond the authority.
- **£:** A simple code for mentions of financial details, sources of funding, lack of resources, spending restrictions and so forth.
- **PRI:** Priorities, a code for discussions of the relative importance placed on different objectives of the authority in question.
- **CG:** Acronym for central government, particularly for identifying their perceived role in climate change responses, or their demands of local government.
- **MOB:** An early formulation, which stood for mobilisation, in the sense that what was being discussed was the different motivations of various groups or sectors, the ways in which environmentally beneficial behaviours could be encouraged. It also served to pinpoint attitudes to the scale of perceived necessary changes, for example the large scale of national taxation changes through the medium scale of combined heat and power projects (CHP) to the small scale of household or individual responses.
- **AG:** Agency, the ascription of the actual scope for agents to wield influence over climate change-related practices.
- **FM:** Another slightly crude acronym, for free market, it was used to code for references to the discourses of the market, for example demand and supply, incentives, choice, business drivers etc.
- **PART:** Participation, used to code for discussion of this aspect of responses, usually but not exclusively associated with local agenda 21.
- **RHET:** Rhetoric, a later code for explicit references to the importance of language in climate change issues.

- **RES: Results, used to code for discussions of authority outputs, in terms of documentations and the practical outcomes of initiatives.**
- **RIT: Another later coding that identified structural and temporal discourses under the concept of ritual.**
- **LA: Used to code for references to Local Agenda 21 issues**

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