

Energy Tribes & Energy Policy

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May 2018

Different
sets of beliefs

Different
cultural values

Overlapping
sets of rationality

Policy for whom?

Policies can move forward
only if embraced
by a large majority
for a long time

Politicians are not motivated
to legislate for benefits
that will be realized
beyond their term

Difficult problems

Representative democracies

Responsive to electorates

Stable approaches

Cultural Anthropology

Cultural Theory

Disparate views

“*Clumsy*” solutions

“Energy Tribes”

Different attitudes

Different beliefs

Different solutions

Different
political & personal
world views

Fashion policies
so that they acknowledge
different ways people
see reality

4 primary ways of organizing, perceiving & justifying social relationships:

Caputo, R.
(2009). *Hitting the Wall: A Vision of a Secure Energy Future*. Morgan & Claypool Publishers.



Egalitarianism

Individualism

Fatalism

Hierarchy

These world views
determine the way people
perceive & attempt to address
climate change or energy security!

Egalitarian social setting

Nature is fragile,
interconnected & ephemeral

Man is caring

Institutions distribute
unequally & are distrusted

“Ecologists”

Hierarchical social setting

World is controllable, nature is stable as long as it is not pushed beyond limits

Man is flawed but redeemable by long-lasting, trustworthy institutions

Hierarchical social setting

Environmental experts
determine the limits of nature

Statutory regulations ensure
economic activity is kept
within those limits

Individualist social setting

Nature is benign, resilient & able to recover from exploitation

Man is self seeking & atomistic

Markets should be unfettered

Individualist social setting

Inequity is good

Massive benefits to
top executives (US)

Institutions should work with
the grain of the market

Fatalistic social setting

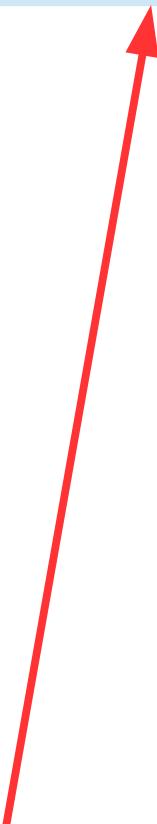
Man is fickle & untrustworthy

Fairness is not to be found
in this life

Neither rhyme nor reason
works with nature!

No possibility of effecting
change for the better

Another look at Energy Tribes



Business as Usual

Middle of the Road

Radical Change Now

Thomson, M. (1987). Among the Energy Tribes: A Cultural Framework for the Analysis and Design of Energy Policy. *Policy Sciences*, 17, 321-329.

Different bounds on what is:

Credible/incredible

Possible/Impossible

Sensible/Foolish

Rational/Irrational

Cultural Theory is descriptive
but has normative implications

People argue from different
premises & will never agree

Failures & successes
make sense to only
a subset of the public

Each way of organizing & perceiving distills elements of experience & wisdom!

These are missed by the other mindsets!

Only “messy”, “clumsy” solutions work!