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Plural and hybrid environmental values: a discourse analysis of the wind energy conflict in Australia and the United Kingdom

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Wind energy has divided environmentalists. To understand why, disparate groups from Victoria, Australia and the United Kingdom are characterised as discourse coalitions, and their views and arguments are digested into compelling storylines. Drawing on the literature that explains environmental conflicts in terms of contrasting values, a discourse analysis approach is used to identify and define the hybrid and plural values held by the groups within wind energy discourse coalitions. Importantly for future policy development, influences and views that motivate groups to participate in policy and project assessment are identified, the current battles over facts between coalitions are analysed, and the present ignorance of or preference for certain views and types of values are shown as hindering the policy making process.

Keywords: environmental values; environmental discourses; wind energy; Victoria, Australia; United Kingdom

Conflicts between environmentalists

Wind farms are a contemporary example of a land use that has been alternatively perceived by environmentalists as environmentally beneficial and locally destructive (Smith 2003, Kempton *et al.* 2005, Warren *et al.* 2005). There is almost unanimous concern among environmentalists about human-induced climate change and a general recognition that climate change can and should be mitigated by embracing renewable energy technologies. The conflict arises, however, when wind energy and its component wind farms are proposed and pursued as one of those technologies. This conflict cannot be dismissed on the basis of reference to NIMBYism nor as being easily resolved by adopting or favouring a particular environmental philosophy or value. All parties engaged in the wind energy debate in the United Kingdom (UK) and Victoria,

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Australia are, to varying degrees, environmentalists with a mix of multiple values, while parties across the debate share environmental philosophies. Here I attempt to uncover the differences between those groups regularly supporting wind farm developments and those most often opposing the developments, and how any differences are treated in the policy-making process.

Discourse analysis and values

There is extensive commentary supporting the thesis that conflicts about land use can be attributed to divergent values and beliefs (Owens and Cowell 2002). However, the literature on wind energy and wind farms has been predominately discursive and empirical. Arguments for and against wind farms have been presented. The question of how local opponents respond to wind farm proposals, particularly whether their opposition reflects NIMBYism, has been well studied and will provide a strong foundation for this article (see Wolsink 2000, Devine-Wright 2005a,b, Haggett and Toke 2006). A year-long quantitative discourse study has mapped the attitudes of opponents and supporters and the aspects of the environment that they value (Ellis *et al.* 2006). It adds to the growing acceptance that opposition to wind farms reflects strongly held conceptions of, and value for, landscape (Wolsink, personal communication, 2007). Ellis *et al.* (2006) encourage further discourse analysis to complement the large body of quantitative and attitudinal research; studies in this vein include Szarka (2007), who analysed wind energy discourses and storylines in several European countries. Following Ellis *et al.* (2006), this article applies discourse analysis to the burgeoning wind energy literature, written submissions to policy and project debates, campaign materials, internet resources and interviews with the aim of improving our understanding of the values that drive participation and shape argument in the wind energy debate.

Discourse analysis is not a novel research technique. It has been used, particularly over the past two decades, to investigate environmental struggles and conflicts, including identifying values of participants in environmental concerns. A discourse, after all, can be conceived as a 'particular way of talking and thinking' (Hajer 1995, p. 13) or 'a shared way of apprehending the world' (Dryzek 1997, p. 8) or as a social construction that reflect how people interpret, give meaning to and represent the environment. Discourses comprise language, metaphors, analogies, clichés, catch phrases, and concepts and structures of bias. As will be seen in this article, discourses are often condensed into simple, succinct and agreeable storylines that attract actors with disparate views, values and interests (Hajer 1993). These storylines become ritualised, entrenched in the debate and infiltrate common language (Hajer 1995). It is the strength of the storylines present in the wind farm debate that has encouraged this research.

Environmental discourses tend to be dominated by specific emblems or 'issues that dominate the perception of the ecological dilemma in a specified period' (Hajer 1995, p. 19). These emblems and associated storylines frame,

shape and highlight particular knowledge (Hajer 1995) and often mould interests and values into a scientific and rationalist message (Litfin 1994, Rydin 2003): hence the need to look beyond what actors say to what they advocate and do in order to identify the values and motivations of the coalition members (Smith 2000).

Discourse analysis tries to make sense of the motives, success and strategies of actors wedded to particular storylines. It aims to understand the dominance, legitimisation and effectiveness of particular storylines (Rydin 2003). Characterising and analysing arguments and engagement as discourses help unveil the hegemonic ways of arguing in an environmental conflict. When they are compared, discourses can portray a battle for discursive hegemony in a conflict between coalitions of internally diverse groups that rally around a particular storyline or set of storylines (Bulkeley 2000).

Here, discourse analysis is used to try to reveal the motivations and values of groups within the wind energy discourse. This method of research was chosen to guide a more detailed analysis of values in the wind energy debate and to explore the dominant storylines evident in the controversy. The starting point for my research was an acceptance that defining values with regard only to the anthropocentric and the non-anthropocentric duality (O'Riordan 1977) would be limiting and that a research method was required that investigates argument, action and social constructions. It has been argued that individual value orientations are more complex and hybrid, constructed from individual experience, societal and global influences (Brandenburg and Carroll 1995). As Owens and Cowell (2002) note, there will often be common ground on environmental policies among environmentalists despite their divergent environmental philosophies. This is because human health, spirituality and the well-being of future generations are concerns that span the spectrum of environmental philosophies.

Trainor (2006) presents a useful conception of values that I will use and test here. She argues that values are plural and incommensurable and occur at multiple realms. These realms, listed in Table 1, may be found within a range of environmental value orientations. They may be expressed in, and reflect, ecocentric or anthropocentric philosophies. For example, the ecosystem may be valued for its intrinsic worth or its capacity to provide ecosystem services, such as water and air, necessary for human survival.

Overview

Here, I will examine wind energy policies and focus on recent and current proposals for wind farms in Britain (particularly in England and Wales) and Victoria, Australia. These locations have been chosen because of the similar rural landscapes where wind farms have been proposed, because they have a broadly common planning process for wind energy developments and because of the shared controversy that has surrounded recent wind farm developments. They have also been selected because of the different progress governments have

Table 1. Realms of environmental values.

Realms of values	Examples of entities that are valued	Indicative environmental value orientation
Aesthetic	Landscape features.	Anthropocentric
Cultural	Religion, language, cultural heritage, ritual and custom.	Anthropocentric
Economic	Economic development and commodities.	Anthropocentric
Ecosystem	Nature's services, undisturbed ecosystems and native species.	Ecocentric–anthropocentric
Historical/heritage	Historic places or buildings.	Anthropocentric
Moral	Biodiversity.	Ecocentric
Recreation	Solitude, access and opportunity to spend time.	Anthropocentric
Religious/spiritual	Ritual, faith, spiritual awareness or growth.	Anthropocentric–ecocentric
Scientific	Endemic and new species, palaeontological discoveries and archaeological sites.	Anthropocentric–ecocentric
Social	Social capital, community, sense of place and employment opportunity for locals.	Anthropocentric

Source: Trainor (2006, p 12) (modified).

made to encourage wind energy projects and the different goals, approaches, longevity and community standing of leading environment groups that have played a part in the wind energy debate (Doyle 2005). A dual focus aims to broaden the investigation, to identify similarities, and lead to more persuasive conclusions while uncovering any contextual influences in the debate.

I frame the debate as one between environmental groups, dividing these groups into competing discourse coalitions with incompatible storylines (Hajer 1995). I will explore the values of the groups, identify any divergent environmental values and evaluate how the various environmental values are treated in, or influence, the decision-making process.

Wind energy in Victoria and Britain

The wind energy debate began in earnest in Victoria in the late 1990s to early 2000s (Mercer 2003), around a decade after the first policy steps were taken by the UK Government that led to the current wind energy conflict in Britain. One of those initiatives was the institution of the Non-fossil Fuel Obligation

(NFFO) (Woods 2003, Mitchell and Connor 2004). Although the NFFO was principally intended to support a non-viable nuclear industry after electricity privatisation, the NFFO and its successor, the Renewables Obligation, have been the prime drivers of renewable energy developments in the UK (Mitchell and Connor 2004), just as similar subsidies have been elsewhere (Wolsink 2000), including in Australia. These government subsidies, together with renewable energy targets, have supported the growth in wind energy interest and projects to its current booming state.

The renewable energy targets are one of the key policy responses of the British and Victorian governments to their concerns about climate change and their regional and international obligations to reduce carbon emissions. These concerns have also led to a shift in focus in the energy policies of the UK and Victoria, now both in post-privatised landscapes (Victorian Government 2002a,b, Department of Trade and Industry (UK) (DTI) 2006, 2007). It is a paradigm shift from issues of ownership to sustainability, which until recently has been a second order issue (Jessup and Mercer 2001). Government and wind energy supporters cite this greening of energy policy and the availability of renewable energy subsidies to promote and support the development of local renewable energy industries (Strachan and Lal 2004). Predictably, and like all historical wind energy policy, the government and corporate responses to climate change focus on economic and industrial development and pay little regard to social capital (Breukers and Wolsink 2007).

Planning policy documents were prepared to guide decision-makers on the appropriateness of wind energy development but only after the first wind farm projects were approved in Britain and Victoria (Kent and Mercer 2006) in response to community concerns and to manage an increase in wind farm proposals. The policies have not eased conflict over wind energy projects. Rather, they have been criticised as endorsing wind energy while neglecting concerns about landscape and place (Prom Coast Guardians 2003, CPRW 2004). In Britain and Victoria, it is rare to find a wind energy project that is not the subject of conflict. Hence, while the policy framework is slowly evolving, the evolution has not corresponded with or given rise to any consensus in decision-making.

Within the wind energy debate occurring globally there are, according to Warren *et al.* (2005, p. 854), 'green' credentials on both sides of the debate and groups like the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) 'caught awkwardly in the middle' who support wind energy based on the belief that it mitigates climate change but who also oppose some wind farm developments because of feared localised effects. While this characterisation is simple, at a high level it is an accurate division of the discourse coalitions engaged in the wind energy debate and their dominant storylines in Victorian and the UK. A more nuanced and critical analysis of the characterisation follows and can also be found in the work by Szarka (2007), whose work is situated in Europe and focuses on general trends. This study, by contrast, depends on a translocational and detailed analysis. The general division of the discourse coalitions alluded

to by Warren *et al.* (2005) has been adopted as a framework and the storylines presented are the dominant or meta-storylines that drive participation in the debate. These storylines have the salient and federating force referred to by Szarka (2007). Secondary and complementary storylines, which Szarka (2007) also presents, are beyond the breadth of this study.

While membership of the discourse coalitions is fluid (Hajer 1995), for the purpose of analysing the views and values of coalitions and pinpointing their meta-storylines, it is necessary to define the make-up of the competing coalitions. Drawing on media reports, observation and commentaries on the wind energy debate (Elliott 1997, Strachan and Lal 2004, Haggett and Toke 2006, Kent and Mercer 2006, Toke and Strachan 2006, Smith R., personal communication, 2007), the broad memberships of the discourse coalitions and selected representative groups within the coalitions for investigation are identified in Table 3.

The central values and views embedded in each storyline, and the supporters of each storyline are in Table 4. The table summarises the discourse analysis that follows, which is presented in four storylines. The first storyline, 'responding to climate change', crosses the coalition-divide, although it is driven by large environmental groups who have advocated wind farm development. The second storyline, 'building green industry', is the domain of the coalition that promotes wind energy development. The third storyline, 'protecting birds', shifts the discussion into the 'middle ground' and is dominated by bird protection groups who have straddled the pro- and anti-wind farm arguments but is also employed by landscape guardian groups as part of their scatter gun approach to wind farm opposition. Landscape guardian groups established to preserve local environments and the long-standing UK countryside conservation groups lead the final storyline, 'valuing the landscape', which embodies the principal values motivating opposition to wind farm development in the countryside.

The 'responding to climate change' storyline

Climate change is the current emblematic environmental issue (Hajer 1995) in Australia and the UK, and it is a highly political one, particularly in Australia where ideological and political differences between the two major parties have not been diffused like they have in the UK with the promotion of David Cameron to leader of the Tories. In both nations, there is a discourse focussed broadly on the issue of climate change and the need for, and form of, response (Bulkeley 2000). Within the narrower wind energy debate, however, concern over climate change has been digested into a storyline. 'Responding to climate change' is a catch phrase that both supporters and opponents adopt with varying nuance. The large environmental groups most vigorously pursue this storyline but so do governments, business and opponents of wind energy.

The opening lines of their climate policies and submissions (Figure 1) illustrate the gravity with which large environmental groups treat climate change and how they frame their arguments.

‘Climate change is the greatest
environmental threat that we face’
- Rutovitz et al (2007, 5)

‘Climate change is the most significant
environmental issue affecting our planet’
- Environment Victoria (2003)

‘Climate change is the most
pressing issue of our time’
- Environment Victoria (2006)

‘Global climate change is the
single biggest environmental
threat facing the planet.’
- FoE UK (2001)

Figure 1. Opening statements of climate change policies and submissions.

These actors see wind energy as ‘the clearest path to a low carbon future that minimises the dangers of climate change and allows us to meet ... emission targets’ (Greenpeace UK 2005). According to the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) (2006a), ‘we can start the transition to clean emission-free energy, without any delay, by using wind power’. Wind energy is equated with taking action to address and respond to climate change: an ecologically modernist and technocratic equation (Ellis *et al.* 2006). Wind energy is a symbol of action, and threats to wind energy proliferation are treated as threats to the existence of future generations, island states, ecosystems and species: those things most valued by these groups (Friends of the Earth (FoE) Australia 2003, ACF 2006b). Adopting philosophical orientations, their values straddle the anthropocentric and the ecocentric. The realms of their values include the scientific, moral and ecosystem (Woods 2003).

Greenpeace UK (2004, 2006) has been among the most vocal, emotive, political and aggressive of the large groups. For instance, in response to the rejection of the Whinash wind farm proposed in Cumbria, Greenpeace UK (2006) stated:

Climate change will ravage beautiful areas like the Lake District. I hope those responsible will be willing to explain to future generations how they played their part in allowing the savage grip of global warming to trash the countryside and claim hundreds of thousands of lives.

In support of the Romney Marsh wind farm proposed in Kent, Greenpeace UK (2004), as well as making its views and values known through demonstrating in a highly political manner against perceived Tory self-interest and political convenience (see Figure 2), argued that:

Polar bears are just one of many species threatened by global warming, and wind farms like the one proposed for Romney Marsh are the best way to protect our climate. Global warming is already killing 150,000 people a year

Figure 2. Greenpeace protesters demonstrate against former UK Tory leader Michael Howard, whose opposition to a proposed wind farm in his electorate despite pledging Tory leadership on climate change was characterised as being ‘motivated by narrow political ambition’. *Source:* Greenpeace UK (2004). Copyright and permission to reproduce: Greenpeace UK/Sims.

and things are set to get a lot worse. Without renewable energy schemes like this one we’ll see worsening climate change and the construction of new nuclear power stations.

Despite the apparent strength with which the large environmental groups support wind energy as a climate change solution, they are increasingly absent from debates about wind energy, particularly on the individual project level. This trend is observed in both Victoria and Britain. In Britain, Greenpeace UK does not report having made a submission on a wind farm project since 2004. In Victoria, ACF and Greenpeace Australia-Pacific supported the first large-scale wind farm proposal at Portland (Mercer 2003), but they have not supported subsequent proposals. ACF no longer participates in the deliberative processes for individual wind farms because it claims not have the capacity to do so (Richter, personal communication, 2007). Given ACF’s omnipresence in the wider climate change discourse and within Australian climate politics, in particular its pursuit of greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets from the Australian Government, it is likely that it has focussed its campaign effort on that discourse in preference to the one about wind energy. Similar pragmatic and political decisions are likely being made in Britain.

As identified above, governments have relied on, and responded to, concern about climate change by instituting planning policy and developing targets for renewable energy. Business presents itself as concerned with and responding to climate change and, as will be explored below, promotes the view that renewable energy, particularly wind, is an appropriate response (Haggett and Toke 2006). In doing so, they reveal their technological and economic value set. Wind opponents have also engaged in the 'responding to climate change' storyline. Their engagement adds credibility to their stance (Hubbard 2006) and includes them in this current hegemonic political storyline. It gives them a foundation and a frame within which to identify and support alternative renewable technologies and emissions reduction measures, thus challenging the prevailing supporter's view that wind power is a necessary starting point to addressing climate change (Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) South East SA Radio 2006, Campaign to the Protect Rural England (CPRE) 2006a,b). It is on the issue of wind that the divergence with other actors in the responding to climate change storyline appears and this divergence is reflected in the different value realms that each group respects.

The 'building green business' storyline

As well as using emotive, moral, technical and scientific language to support wind energy, the large environmental groups also employ the language of commerce to bolster their arguments about the worth of wind energy (Woods 2003) in an eco-modernist storyline of 'building green business'. This is not surprising given that the wind energy discourse is taking place in a political environment where climate change is viewed, analysed and assessed as an economic issue, and it arguably reflects a strategic adoption of an environmental philosophy. In this regard, Wood (2000) makes the point that the distinction between the anthropocentric and the non-anthropocentric value orientation is often an intellectual one because in practice value orientations are constructed strategically. Reflecting this, Rutovitz *et al.* (2007, p. 10) argue that 'Australia is missing out on jobs and economic development by turning its back on the clean energy revolution'. These environmental groups join government agencies and business groups to perpetuate a building green business storyline. Greenpeace International, for instance has aligned with the Global Wind Energy Council and the European Renewable Energy Council to produce publications supporting renewables and wind energy.

In Victoria, the ACF and Environment Victoria have engaged in 'myth-busting' (Table 2) in common with the government agency Sustainability Victoria. In the UK, the British Wind Energy Association (BWEA) joined with environmental groups to establish the Yes2Wind project (Toke and Strachan 2006), which has engaged in its own fact-presenting exercise. The purpose of this technique is to reduce views and values to facts. While 'facticity' is seen as culturally desirable and responding to a 'society of reason' (Jasanoff 2007), intractable conflicts, particularly those grounded in inconsistent values or

Table 2. Myth-busting.

Sample myth-busting facts

‘Myth: Wind turbines ruin the landscape.

Some people are concerned about the effect wind turbines have on the beauty of the landscape, while others see them as symbols of a better, less polluted future. In contrast to other energy developments, particularly open-cut coal mining in the Latrobe Valley, wind farms have little visual impact.’

– Environment Victoria

‘Myth: Wind farms are noisy.

Modern turbines are quiet! Thanks to advances in technology, today’s turbines should be quiet enough to cause no disturbance to people living just a few hundred metres away. At this distance, noise from the turbines usually goes unheard, masked by the noise of the wind in the trees and vegetation.’

– ACF, Yes2Wind

‘Myth: Wind farms pose a threat to birds.

Fact: Monitoring has found that no rare, threatened or endangered birds or bats have been killed by wind turbines in Victoria.’

– Sustainability Victoria.

Source: Sustainability Victoria (2007), ACF (2006a), Yes2Wind web page (www.yestowind.org.uk/noisy_debunk.html) [Accessed 14 June 2007]; Environment Victoria web page ‘Wind: why’ (<http://www.envict.org.au/inform.php?item=416>) [Accessed 14 June 2007].

irreconcilable frames, are rarely resolved by recourse to ‘facts’ (Rein and Schön 1991, Putnam *et al.* 2003, Warren *et al.* 2005).

The Australian Wind Energy Association (AusWEA) and BWEA characterise and frame wind energy as a practical, readily available, deliverable and feasible solution to climate change and one that is supported by the majority of the community (BWEA 2007). With developers, industry groups have promised jobs and economic development as a benefit of wind energy (Strachan and Lal 2004), and they expect a return. BWEA (2006), for instance, emphasised that wind energy and other renewables could ‘contribute up to £2.5 billion to the Scottish economy by 2020’ in its submission in support of a reduction in planning decision times and the building of further grid infrastructure: a political agenda being driven by the British Government. Conscious of the political advantage that governments perceive in approving new job-making industry, British and Australian developers have promised to bring turbine-manufacturing jobs to rural towns that host wind farms (Mercer 2003, Bergmann *et al.* 2006). In Portland, this offer was instrumental in the developer getting final approval of the four-site wind energy project (Department of Sustainability and Environment (Victoria) 2003, Mercer 2003). Business and industry’s principal values are anthropocentric and technocentric in the realms of society and the economy. Their discourse is focussed on solutions and outcomes (Strachan and Lal 2004) and not with the consequences of failing to act: indeed they concede that they will not act unless it is in their economic interest to do so (Stephens 2007). By emphasising the support of the majority, they draw implicitly on preference utilitarian philosophies.

According to Mercer (2003), the wind energy industry has successfully promoted a storyline that wind energy and renewable energy are synonymous and that wind energy is the best way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. BWEA has seconded a range of celebrities to help it sell this very message and to challenge the views of the 'vociferous and scaremongering anti-wind groups' (BWEA 2007).

The 'protecting birds' storyline

For most participants in the wind energy discourse, the protection of birds is a secondary issue (Wolsink 2007a,b). However, there is a discernible storyline worthy of attention here. In Victoria and Britain, bird mortality has been 'hotly contested' (Warren *et al.* 2005, p. 858), though for different reasons. In Britain, the RSPB has successfully raised the plight of birds. They are both threatened by climate change and, potentially, from wind farm developments (RSPB 2005). In Victoria, the birds storyline is essentially the storyline of the survival of the orange-bellied parrot and a highly political government refusal for a wind farm.

The Victorian storyline was raised in the Portland wind energy project assessment process by bird groups, but it has since become a cause championed almost exclusively by landscape guardian groups, pragmatically as part of a smorgasbord of opposition (Smith R., personal communication, 2007). The protecting birds storyline has been given oxygen by a highly political and controversial initial decision by the Australian Government to reject the Bald Hills wind farm. In that case, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage misinterpreted a report on the cumulative impact of wind farms on birds (Prest 2007) in such a way as to reject the Bald Hills wind farm, fulfilling a conservative Coalition Government promise to halt the wind farm made in the lead up to the 2004 Australian parliamentary elections.

The RSPB's values are the most ecocentric and conservationist, and the most concerned with ecosystems and species, of those groups within the wind energy debate. Their values also fall into the realm of recreation, and to the extent that they value bird watching opportunities, they become more anthropocentric. The RSPB maintains its storyline about the protection of birds in support and opposition of wind farms. It is has been less likely to veer into arguments about technology and economy than other actors within the wind energy discourse. Its role in the wind energy debate highlights a contrast with the Victorian experience where there is no comparable group and where the birds storyline is mostly not about birds, rather politics.

The RSPB uses the same language of climate change import and threat as the large environmental groups (RSPB 2006), and it is a member with them of the awareness raising initiative www.icount.org.uk. However, it adopts a discourse of optimism on climate change, believing that emission reduction targets can be achieved without harming the environment, particularly birds and their habitat. It has recently commissioned a study promoting this view

(Institute for European Environmental Policy 2009). The RSPB's optimism is contrasted with some of the alarmist threats highlighted by groups like Greenpeace UK and the pessimism of some landscape guardian and national countryside conservation groups.

The 'valuing landscape and place' storyline

The most complex storyline in the wind energy debate is the storyline of the value of landscape and place. It is a storyline that may initially appear subtle (Righter 2002, Strachan and Lal 2004, Ellis *et al.* 2006), though upon investigation it is clearly discernable. Opposition to wind energy, and to wind farm projects in particular, is presented as being about: noise, landscape impacts, size and number of turbines, property devaluation, loss of agricultural land, increased traffic, tourism losses, a lack of benefits for locals and, as explored briefly above, impacts on birds. Further, opponents challenge the reliability of wind energy, its ability to displace fossil-fuel generated electricity and its cost and dependency on government subsidies (Wolsink 2000, Tarwin Valley Coastal Guardians 2003, CPRW 2004, Warren *et al.* 2005, Szarka and Blühdorn 2006). Tim LeRoy from Coastal Guardians Victoria suggests that these perceived faults of wind energy distract opponents from fighting on landscape concerns. He says:

If it was very efficient in the way of producing energy, we'd only be fighting this on landscape alone, but now we're highlighting the inefficiencies of the whole industry. (ABC Radio National 2003)

In fact, the discourse analysis suggests that the groups that were established notionally to protect landscape values primarily engage in fact-busting and scientific and technological argument. This is likely because they, and the national countryside conservation groups, have difficulty articulating subjective views about landscape values (Schwahn 2002), the policy-making process is weighted towards apparently rational and science-based decision-making (Ellis *et al.* 2006), and because there is a dearth of policy support for landscape, community and place (Smith R., personal communication, 2007). Hence, groups seek to articulate what they see as scientific, measurable and rational concerns about the environment and the economy in addition, and sometimes in priority, to subjective concerns about landscape, community, nature and place. For example, the CPRW (2004) in its letter on the draft TAN 8 described the Welsh environment as 'an invaluable resource worth over £8 billion to the Welsh economy each year [and that] ... directly and indirectly provides employment for 1 in 6 people in Wales'. By and large, these groups do not attempt to describe landscapes and they do not articulate an assessment of the impact of wind turbines on landscape values (Smith R., personal communication, 2007). I will return to explore and support these theses after I characterise the values embodied in the protecting landscape and place storyline.

The introduction page to the internet site of the Prom Coast Guardians (Figure 3) illustrates the principal concern and the mission of the group established to oppose the Bald Hills and Dollar wind farms in south Gippsland, Victoria. The landscape is described as being a 'scenic wonderland', drawing on anthropocentric concerns about amenity and visual impacts, and 'precious', based in more personal and inherent, human-centred concepts of landscape. Wind turbines are portrayed as being oversized and prolific.

Prom Coast Guardians and other guardian groups in Victoria, including the predominant Tarwin Valley Coastal Guardians and the Coastal Guardians, Victoria, were set up in response to proposed wind farm developments. Aside from the National Trust, with its landscape heritage arm, Australia has no large group with a long history in opposing industrialisation of the countryside comparable to the CPRE or the CPRW. However, the establishment of landscape guardian groups suggests that strongly held rural and countryside landscape values exist in Victoria and highlight the transnationalisation of landscape concerns.

The CPRE, in its campaigns on countryside futures, tranquillity in landscapes, and countryside character, emphasises the personal and subjective value in landscapes, community and rural place (<http://www.cpre.org.uk/campaigns/landscape/tranquillity>). In addition to the anthropocentric values about beauty and personal landscape experience, opponents sometimes also adopt ecocentric beliefs about the appropriateness of wind turbines within a particularly constructed 'nature', community or place (Brandenburg and Carroll 1995). Their beliefs are a new exposition on Douglas's (2002) explanation of pollution as matter out of place. The CPRE's (2006b) view that wind turbines should be prohibited from nationally designated areas is a reflection of this belief that wind farms simply do not belong in certain areas – those valued for anthropocentric or ecocentric reasons. Claims that wind farms

Figure 3. Introduction to Prom Coast Guardians internet site (www.promcoastguardians.org) [Accessed 13 May 2007]. Permission to reproduce this image was granted by Peter Wingett of Prom Coast Guardians Inc.

industrialise the rural and nature, and characterisations of wind turbines as ‘mechanical weeds’ (Brittan 2001) reflect this belief that wind farms are often out of place (Brittan 2001, Prom Coast Guardians 2003, Woods 2003, Planisphere 2004, Kempton *et al.* 2005, Ellis *et al.* 2006).

It is this aspect of the storyline that also draws in some of the large environmental groups. In Victoria, these groups support the exclusion of wind turbines from designated reserves and ACF now checks its support for wind farms in places highly valued by communities (Richter, personal communication, 2007).

Landscape, community and place values are poorly represented in the policy and decision-making process for wind energy and wind farms (Planisphere 2004). Mostly, visual amenity assessment is conflated with landscape assessment (Kempton *et al.* 2005) and, at least in Victoria, a specific landscape and place assessment is rarely carried out (Sinclair Knight Merz 2001). The experience at Portland, where opposing sides engaged in a discourse of photomontage display and arguments about aesthetics (Mercer 2003), has been replicated and is encouraged by the guiding policy. Further, social impact assessments have rarely grasped the complexity and hybridity of community values. The tendency to map, classify, and objectify landscape (Lothian 1999) and community, which disguises subjective and varied values, has been followed by the Australian Council of National Trusts and AusWEA in their joint effort to develop a policy and assessment process for landscape within the wind energy debate (Planisphere 2004).

The alternative, however, are the subjective tests employed by the UK countryside conservation and guardian groups, which are value-based and highly judgmental (Bell *et al.* 2005), and would be no better at averting conflict. Indeed, the CPRW’s application of its subjective criteria has caused it to oppose almost all proposals in Wales (Toke and Strachan 2006) except for ‘single turbine and small clusters for community use . . . where their impact has been acceptable’ (Ogden, personal communication, 2007).

The hybridity of arguments of landscape guardian and national countryside conservation groups – including concerns about landscape and place, protection of birds, the conduct of proponents and suspicion of the technology (Ellis *et al.* 2006) – are illustrated in Figure 4, a poem published by Country Guardians, and a pamphlet created by a member of the CPRW without official

*like chain saws in the hills,
catching birds in their arms,
killing the peace of Llywernog,
they came as sly as a fox,
rising like mushrooms overnight
and standing in a row on the moor,
practising karate with their arms,
splitting the wind and the quietness.*

Figure 4. Poem on Country Guardian web page attributed to Welsh school children (www.countyguardian.net) [Accessed 18 May 2007].

sanction (Ogden, personal communication, 2007; see CPRW pamphlet at <http://bradjessup.wordpress.com/?p=90>).

The concept of hybridity of environmental argument and values is not well explored. It has a much firmer academic foundation in development and cultural studies (Radcliffe and Laurie 2006). However, through the increasing transnationalisation of environmental concerns and knowledge (Doyle 2005) at the supporter level (through international networks) and the opponent level (through more informal networks of landscape guardians), the hybridisation of arguments and values has been promoted.

The production of pamphlets by individuals within the discourse coalition exemplifies the diversity of expression and composition within the landscape guardian groups and countryside protection groups and internal politicking within them. Because the landscape guardian association is being used as the model for wind farm opposition, they will invariably attract and include within their collective views and values climate change scepticism (Smith R., personal communication, 2007) and the small quotient of 'pure' NIMBYism (Wolsink 2007a,b). By way of warning, however, while there is a 'fixation with NIMBYism' within the wind energy debate (Ellis *et al.* 2006, p. 7), consolidating and conceiving concerns such as those in the CPRW pamphlet as NIMBYist ignores the plurality of views and beliefs about wind energy, nature and place (Kempton *et al.* 2005). Indeed, despite the trend for wind energy proponents and policy-makers to employ the NIMBY concept, there is disagreement within academia over the existence of NIMBYs in the wind energy debate (Righter 2002, Devine-Wright 2005a, Hubbard 2006, Wolsink 2006).

Discussion and conclusions

The actors within the wind energy debate, irrespective of their views about wind energy and whether they are active or passive participants in the present transnational conflict in Victoria and Britain, have deeply held and plural values. They are values that transcend the anthropocentric and the ecocentric duality, though they differ in realm: from those based in economy and society to those grounded in ecosystem and morality, and others in aesthetics and place. The findings of a discourse analysis of the wind energy controversies in Victoria and Britain are summarised in Tables 3 and 4. The discourse coalitions, their meta-storylines, and the values associated with and driving the distinctive actors within the coalitions are identified in the summary tables. The discourse analysis was able to draw from the modes of argument, the frames and language within submissions, media materials and policy documents, the motivations of the broad discourse coalitions despite the hybridising of arguments often hinting at alternative motives and concerns. Coalitions comprise actors with common values but also different outlooks and specific interests. By analysing only the meta-storylines, which were those most agreeable by coalition actors and most accommodating of values from the spectrum of realms and duality of anthropocentric and ecocentric philosophies,

Table 3. Coalitions and membership.

Coalition	Membership	Groups studied
Wind farm advocates	Large environmental groups	ACF, Australia Environment Victoria, Australia Greenpeace Australia-Pacific, Australia Greenpeace, UK FoE, UK Sustainability Victoria, Australia AusWEA, Australia BWEA, UK
	Government Renewable energy industry	
Middle-ground	Bird protection groups	RSPB, UK Birds Australia (Victoria), Australia
Wind farm opponents	National countryside conservation groups	CPRE, UK CPRW, UK
	Landscape guardian groups	Country Guardians, UK Prom Coast Guardians, Australia Tarwin Valley Guardians/Coastal Guardians, Victoria, Australia
	Heritage conservation groups	National Trust (Victoria)/Australian Council of National Trusts, Australia
	Recreation groups	

internal divisions were largely disguised. The very different histories and approaches of the national countryside groups and the landscape guardian groups were not, for example, fully revealed.

The finding that participants in the wind energy debate on both sides of the debate have plural and hybrid values is important because it underscores the frailty of the arguments that the conflicts in Victoria and Britain can be explained by incompatible values, a division between local and global interests, or by selfishness branded as NIMBYism. This study has shown that opponents and supporters alike reflect a mix of values and interests. Ecocentric and anthropocentric philosophies are prevalent among large environmental groups with their support of wind energy developments on the ground that the protection of humans and non-human species warrant protection. They are also present in the RSPB with its concern for birds, and among national countryside groups, and to a less clear extent within the landscape protection groups, with their concerns for place and landscape and their belief that wind farms are out of place in those settings. Further, the study has shown a degree of self-interest within the broad membership of each coalition. Business has pursued profits and environment groups their agendas just as local residents, often drawn to the grassroots landscape protection groups to communalise their concerns, advocate the protection of their landscape, community or property values.

Table 4. Principal storylines and actors.

Storyline	Central values and views	Principal actors	Other actors in storyline
Responding to climate change	Ecocentrist and deontological – emphasis on environmental protection and the well-being of future generations, who are characterised as having a right to an unharmed environment. Moral values and ecosystem values.	Large environmental groups	Government Renewable energy industry National countryside conservation groups
Building green industry	Utilitarian and technocentrist – emphasis of establishing and growing a renewables industry that will provide economic development and jobs – green tinge – reflecting weak ecological modernist view of environment. Economic values and social values.	Renewable energy industry	Government
Protecting birds	Ecocentric and biocentric and partly anthropocentric – emphasis is on environmental protection for the benefit of bird species. However, elements of human recreation interest are present ‘for birds for people for ever.’ Recreation values, ecosystem values, scientific values and moral values.	Bird protection groups	Large environmental groups Landscape guardian groups

(continued)

Table 4. (Continued).

Storyline	Central values and views	Principal actors	Other actors in storyline
Valuing the landscape	Anthropocentric – emphasis on preserving landscapes – both ‘natural’ and rural – because of pleasure and tranquillity these environments bring people. Elements of non-anthropocentric, ecocentric values – a belief that turbines do not belong in the landscape whether seen or not. Aesthetic values, cultural values, social values and recreation values.	Landscape guardian groups National countryside conservation groups	Heritage conservation groups Recreation groups Large environmental groups

These findings cross hemispheres. Very similar events and hybrid arguments have been seen and heard in Victoria and Britain. By and large, the Victorian experience has mimicked what has occurred earlier in Britain. Large environmental groups are repositioning their climate change policies away from the project level to the political wrangling over targets and international agreements, the landscape guardian phenomenon has been translated from the UK to Australia, and it is these grassroots collectives that have principally driven opposition to wind farms just as industry and government have been left to advocate wind farm developments. The opposition led by the landscape guardian groups has not generally been a call for protection of landscape and community. Rather, these groups have adopted a scatter-gun of opposition approach. Industry groups, the Victoria Government and large environmental groups in Australia have responded by a factual retort. Where the jurisdictions differ highlights the difference in politics and social movements with each country. The absence of a group like the RSPB and movements like the CPRE and CPRW in Victoria has meant that arguments and values concerning birds and countryside are not always consistent and are rarely offered by an authoritative voice. This has particularly lead to the politicisation of the question of the effects of wind farms on birds and has meant that wind farms are rarely, if ever, refused on the basis of their effect on landscapes and communities. Australian opponents have been unable to influence policy with respect to the countryside in the way that the CPRE and CPRW have over many years.

Unsurprisingly, and not for the first time, this study has shown that despite the observed and analysed hybrid and plural values that exist within the coalitions engaged in the wind energy debate, the values most firmly grounded in objectively assessed realms – business and the economy, as well as ecosystem – are the values that dominate the policy-making process. Most of the discourse that was analysed was presented in these realms and the hegemonic storylines of climate change response and economic benefit. The way that groups apprehended the world was not always the basis for the way they made their arguments. The discourse analysis has shown that many of these arguments are being made strategically and pragmatically.

There is a danger that the debate has already been skewed and policy designed or preferred in response to the rational and scientific arguments. Certainly, despite the identified presence of a diverse set of values within the wind energy debate, the policy and decision-making processes are focussed on a narrow set of values. Proponents and policy-makers have appealed to science and rationality as well as principles of sustainable development to argue for, and assess the merits of, wind energy and wind farms (Ellis *et al.* 2006).

The wind energy experience is not unique. Broadly, in environmental politics, there is a tendency to characterise environmental conflicts as disagreements about facts. This tendency encourages the use of frames, to formulate views, knowledge and arguments in a way that the advocate understands in a complex and conflicted setting.

The consequence of the narrowing or preferencing of scientific and rational argument and values is that consensus outcomes will be rare in matters concerning wind energy within the present political and social environments, and that wind energy may be an ‘intractable’ dispute (Rein and Schön 1991, Putnam *et al.* 2003, Warren *et al.* 2005). This is particularly the case because participation is increasingly narrow and between those actors with the most divergent philosophical views and who have entrenched the conflict through a dependence on facticity of argument and a myth-busting dialogue.

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