

Book Review

Democratic Values and Technological Choices. By Stuart Hill. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992. 267 pp. \$37.50 cloth.

Stuart Hill takes issue with two bodies of social science that argue against much in the way of citizen participation in public policy making. The first, prescriptive policy analysis (which he equates with cost benefit analysis and multiattribute utility analysis) assumes that individual preferences are fixed prior to any instance of policy choice, such that it is the task of analysis to specify or elicit the utility functions of relevant individuals, and then determine which policy will best maximize some aggregate of these preferences. The second, political opinion survey research, has for the most part found that citizens do not have any preferences worth incorporating in policy; ordinary people prove ignorant, unstable, and unreasoning in their reactions to policy issues.

Against these two schools, Hill argues that individuals have preferences that are neither predetermined nor absent. Instead, they are formed in the crucible of policy debate. Upon engaging that debate, ordinary people prove quite capable of reasoning in sophisticated fashion about the complex issues involved. Indeed, they do so better than "political veterans" (activists) because the latter are prisoners of their preconceptions; only the laity is capable of forming its perspective in the context of the issue at hand. If so, then the obvious implication is that rational policy making actually requires the participation of the laity, for only they can produce "present-structured" judgments, as opposed to the "past-structured" judgments of political veterans (pp. 106-7).

The argument is grounded in a study of opinion in San Luis Obispo in California concerning the nearby, and highly controversial, Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant. Q methodology figures prominently in this study. While a before/after study would have been nice, Hill contents himself

with a one-shot study of local activists (on both sides of the issue) and local laity as the issue is resolved and the reactor is licensed to operate.

Hill's evidence concerning the competence of ordinary citizens comes from his finding that they are polarized on the issue, and (he assumes) this polarization is a product of their attention to the highly-charged local debate. (Note that this is an R-methodological argument.) Why should polarization constitute evidence of sophistication? Because survey researchers have always presented randomness of opinion as evidence of unsophistication, and randomly distributed opinions would not of course be polarized. However, advocates of deliberative democracy have often emphasized an orientation to the generation of consensus; in which case, polarization at the end of deliberation would hardly constitute evidence of the success of deliberation. Quite the opposite would apply.

The evidence that political veterans are prisoners of their past comes from the strong correlation between their general ideological orientation and their opinion for or against the reactor. No such correlation is evident among the laity.

These two empirical arguments are basically R-methodological ones. Q methodology enters prior to this R analysis. For his political veterans and laity alike, Hill carries out four Q sorts. The four Q samples refer respectively to "common orientation" (i.e., general political ideology), "procedural judgment", "personal control", and "substantive effects" (of the reactor's construction and operation). Three of the Q samples have 26 statements, the fourth only 13. Given these small numbers, Hill argues that factor analysis of the Q sorts is inappropriate (because there are more subjects than statements), and he uses cluster analysis instead. If this is a problem, it is of his own making; he could have used more statements. But recent ruminations among Q folk suggest that the issue of the ratio between subjects and statements is less crucial than sometimes thought.

For each of these four Q samples, Hill imposes a one-dimensional scale on which every subject's Q sort can be placed. This scale runs from extremely pro-reactor at one end to ex-

tremely anti-reactor at the other. (Exactly how the scale is constructed eludes me.) He shows that subjects' Q sorts generally cluster at positive and negative ends of this scale. This finding applies to activists and laity alike, as does the strong correlation between procedural judgment, personal control, and substantive effects, on the one hand (all measured through reference to the one-dimensional scale), and position for or against the reactor on the other. The main difference between these two groups is that common orientation only has a strong correlation with the other variables for the activists (which is why they are prisoners of their pasts).

Q purists might object to the degree to which Hill's scaling procedure leads him to impose his own preconceptions on what the subjectivity revealed by his subjects' Q sorts actually means. But Hill appears in more defensible light if we interpret him as an R methodologist who uses Q in order to come up with more defensible attitudinal variables than those normally available to survey researchers. Q methodologists should welcome such mixing of methods, even if it does sometimes fall short of their own metatheoretical commitments.

Hill's claims about the rationality of citizen participation on complex policy issues is also a welcome contribution to the study of democracy and public policy. In this respect, Hill leaves the reader hanging by pointing to the need for procedural innovation in policy making, but refusing to give any indication as to his own preferences for the content of these innovations. Still, his claim about the essential rationality of extending citizen participation in public policy is an important and original insight.

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