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James M. Jasper and Scott Sanders

Big institutions in local politics: American universities, the public and animal protection efforts

Throughout the advanced industrial world, recent years have seen an explosion of local conflicts over new technologies, scientific experiments, hazardous waste facilities and other projects perceived to embody risks for their neighbors. In the United States, at least, struggles over the proper uses of these “backyards” seem to represent a sweeping change in public attitudes toward science and technology. At one time, it would appear, Americans shared a technological optimism that encouraged them to overlook health risks in the hopes of economic gains. Now large numbers of them, from a variety of social classes and backgrounds, express a skepticism about experts and their technologies, and they demand clear and demonstrable benefits before accepting the attendant risks (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982; Dickson, 1984; Piller, 1991).

Because the United States is governed by thousands of local and state governments in addition to the federal one, these technical disputes are usually heightened or resolved through local mechanisms. Different alliances and interests and ideologies hold sway here, in contrast to national politics with predictable battles between Republicans and Democrats over free markets versus government intervention (Jasper, 1992) or “traditional family values” versus individual rights (Luker, 1984; Edsall, 1991). Local peculiarities vary from one-party machines or unusual electoral systems to historical conflicts, special social cleavages or the presence of some dominant

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institutional player — such as a military base or huge industrial plant. Big institutions — whether a corporation, a factory, or a university — tend to dominate the political field of their localities, so that many issues are twisted into battles over the power or the credibility of those organizations (Freudenburg, 1993). The institution's stand on a new issue automatically establishes predictable teams of friends and foes. These are often different alliances from those we expect in national politics.

Indeed, we argue, it is suspicion of large organizations and their experts that fuels much of today's local opposition. Rather than a rejection of science or technology *per se*, opposition often rests on mistrust of large organizations and experts for their lack of sensitivity to public concerns. William Freudenburg (1993) argues that the rapid expansion of science and technology in modern societies has increased public distrust of large institutions, since increased technical complexity renders them more capable of, even more likely to make, dangerous errors (cf. Perrow, 1984). The public today is more vulnerable to scientific and technological blunders.

In the United States, controversies over animal protection have unfolded in both national and local arenas. Innumerable federal bills have been introduced, and several enacted. National groups on both sides of the issue have emerged thanks to sophisticated direct-mail fundraising. At the same time local battles have raged over issues such as the fate of stray animals in pounds, the control of deer populations or the research activities of universities, hospitals, and other laboratories. Vivisection — experiments on live animals — has proven the favorite target of the recent animal rights movement, as well as spawning the most articulate and organized countermovement (Jasper and Nelkin, 1992). Most of the battle fronts over vivisection have focused on carefully targeted research projects at selected universities. Animal rights and “Not In My Back Yard” protestors often support each other. They provide our case studies of local disputes over scientific research; universities are the examples of large organizations embedded in local political fields.

Universities have become lightning-rods for conflict in modern societies for reasons that cannot be put down to their bureaucratic size, much less their interactions with neighbors. They have been involved in creating complex technologies that have been so controversial in recent decades, from nuclear energy to genetic engineering. They legitimate expert credentials, and provide the sites where symbol manipulation (said to be the key to economic power in

so-called post-industrial societies) is learned. The American Right has attacked schools and universities as purveyors of tolerance, multiculturalism and secular values. Educational institutions are a natural focus for political battles for many reasons, but foremost among these are their bureaucratic demeanor and reliance on expertise as a legitimating rhetoric.

Small laboratories, big universities

Scientific researchers see themselves as “little guys”, crushed by federal regulations and paperwork, starved for funds, and pressed to maintain the coherence of small working groups. Like small businesspeople, they complain loudly about every manner of external interference. They do not merely say that filling out federal forms steals time better spent on experiments; they refer to academic freedom of inquiry as a basic moral “god term” that cannot be questioned (Sanders and Jasper, 1994). Thus Nobel-winning biologist David Baltimore:

Biologists are spending their time in the halls of Congress trying to prevent the establishment of the first commission to be appointed to control basic research. I believe that our success or failure will determine whether America continues to have a tradition of free inquiry into matters of science or falls under the fist of orthodoxy. (Baltimore, 1978: 274)

Universities often seem a collection of feudal baronies, with the head of each research group or laboratory ruling his or her fief. Many of these researchers, viewing themselves as the little guys, not to mention the good guys, resent interference by their own university administrators as much as by anyone else.

From the outside, however, these small units add up to a mighty behemoth with little regard for the surrounding townspeople. The neighbors see not a collection of small research groups but one enormous bureaucracy which acts in unison when dealing with outsiders and closes ranks when criticized. It matters little to them that universities purportedly pursue the truth instead of levying taxes or making nuclear weapons (although they sometimes design those too). Universities are still large organizations run with a surprising degree of autonomy by their own members, who themselves display the distance and arrogance often characteristic of professional groupings defined and legitimated by expertise.

Examples of the arrogance and autonomy of scientists appear regularly in the American popular press. There are classic examples, such as the Tuskegee syphilis study, in which rural African-American men were, unknown to them, left untreated as part of an experimental control group (Jones, 1981). Recent examples also abound, providing evidence for those who wish to argue that there has been little improvement over the decades. In a notorious 1986 case, a post-doctoral fellow at MIT suggested that an immunology article in *Cell* had been based on fraudulent data. Many observers (e.g. Maddox, 1991) were less disturbed by the accusation itself, later upheld by federal investigators (Hilts, 1994b), than by the response of the senior author, biologist David Baltimore, who dismissed the accuser (who by then had been fired) as “disgruntled” and who resisted early investigations as “the fist of orthodoxy”. At a Congressional hearing, he said of the investigators from the National Institutes of Health that “neither was qualified to understand the science” (Kildow, 1989). In a 1990 scandal that eventually forced the resignation of its President, Stanford University was accused of mishandling overhead monies from federal grants — for a total of over \$200 million. Expenses charged to the government included items at the President’s residence: parties, fresh flowers, antique furniture, even \$7000 for bedsheets (Hecht, 1991). The university was later cleared of fraud, but repaid \$3 million in erroneous charges (Celis, 1994). In 1994 two other universities agreed to pay \$1.6 million to the federal government to settle charges that they had covered up an immunologist’s misbehavior (Hilts, 1994a). There have been accusations of fraud over cold fusion, data on lumpectomies and mastectomies, isolation of the AIDS virus and other research. Incidents such as these appear regularly, attracting extensive public attention.

Anonymous surveys often find a widespread belief in misconduct and fraud in science. In one of the most recent, no fewer than half the faculty and graduate students surveyed, from four academic disciplines, claimed direct knowledge of at least one instance of misconduct, ranging from falsification of data and plagiarism through sloppy recordkeeping and honorary authorships to sexual harassment. The *New York Times* headline proclaimed, “Misconduct in Science Is Not Rare, a Survey Finds” (Hilts, 1993), although in the original *American Scientist* article actual scientific fraud (plagiarizing and falsifying data) had been observed by no more than 8 per cent of either faculty or students (Swazey et al., 1993: 544; see also Broad and Wade, 1982; LaFollette, 1992; Greenberg and Goldberg, 1994). So the news media help promote perceptions of fraud.

In addition, the arrogance of professionals is often used in attacks against the biomedical community. A staid editorial writer for the *New York Times*, Fred Hechinger (1991), could write an outraged piece entitled "They Tortured My Mother", which began "The hospital was a torture chamber. Doctors were the torturers." It ended with the phrase "the havoc modern medicine had wreaked on her". In the public mind, professional fascination with the latest technologies, which crowds out human sympathy, characterizes both researchers and practitioners.

If the public is widely ambivalent about biomedical research, the neighbors of laboratories are often unambivalent in their opposition. Like all organizations in modern societies, universities appear to be driven to expand constantly, leading them into direct conflict with their neighbors; academic administrators seem to measure their success by institutional expansion. The acquisition of existing buildings, the construction of new ones, and a host of other land-use questions lead to frequent and inevitable tensions. Students push up apartment rental rates and push down vacancy rates in places like Ann Arbor, Berkeley and Cambridge. In the last 20 years, local citizens have become increasingly likely to organize themselves to resist such undesired incursions, and the acronym NIMBY (for Not In My BackYard) was coined to describe them (Freudenberg, 1984). Such groups foster a feeling that "outsiders" are imposing something undesired on local communities — even when those outsiders are a large institution based locally. Universities are hardly exempt from this kind of opposition.

Another common complaint is that universities do not pay regular property taxes on their sometimes vast holdings. A Cambridge, Massachusetts newspaper complained in 1989 that Harvard had 7.3 million square feet of city land that was untaxed; the university's payments of one million dollars per year in lieu of taxes was far lower than property taxes would have been (Premo, 1989). A city official contrasted MIT's annual payment of \$500,000 with the \$9.2 million it would have paid in taxes if its holdings were not exempt (Blodgett, 1982). Worse, tax exemption and university expansion interact with each other. When Harvard bought a Quality Inn in Cambridge, critics pointed out that \$155,000 would be removed from the tax assessment books. Cambridge is unusual in containing two large universities — more than half the land in the city is tax exempt, since the city itself and the state of Massachusetts also have tax-exempt holdings — but other university towns feel similar pressures.

With universities, in addition, such complaints are often coupled with populist class resentment. The United States sends more of its young people to colleges and universities than any other country, but higher education is still an experience reserved primarily for the top half of the social strata. Attendance at private universities, especially prestigious ones, is popularly (and accurately) associated with privilege. Pretty, sheltered campuses, relative job security and light teaching loads — although sometimes the myth as much as the reality of American universities — could understandably stoke resentment among those on the outside. Even state universities are viewed with some resentment by the surrounding “locals”, as the 1979 movie *Breaking Away* captured in its depiction of working-class youths in a midwestern university town.

The discrepancy between the view from inside and that from outside universities explains much of the rhetoric in the political battles of cities and towns containing large universities. Longstanding populist suspicions of large organizations, combined with a history of conflicts over land use, keep universities at the center of many local political battles. Animal protectionists have tapped into surprisingly deep distrust of universities in their efforts to regulate and curtail vivisection. As a result, what appear to be battles over vivisection are often, in part, conflicts over the role of large institutions in local economies and political systems. Universities are only one example of large organizations embedded in local politics, and the cultural resonance of military installations or large corporations would be different. But all trigger strong emotions, both for and against, in their neighbors. All are inevitably central players in the struggles that unfold.

The Cambridge Ordinance

As home to Harvard, perhaps the world's wealthiest and most prestigious university, as well as to MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts contains perennial “town-gown” battles. These intensified in the mid-19th century, as the eastern part of the city became an industrial center, based on Irish immigrants — later replaced by Italian and Portuguese — working in rail and waterfront facilities. For much of the 20th century a traditional political machine ran the city, relying on working-class votes. But 1941 reforms curtailed its influence, and working-class influence has been further muted in recent years

by the voting presence of many Harvard employees and students, and other sympathetic middle-class professionals. Although a slight majority of Cambridge adults are middle class — 55 per cent have college degrees — 18 per cent have an eighth-grade education or less, and another 27 per cent only a high-school diploma. The eastern portion of the city retained enough working-class voters to elect two anti-Harvard city councilors during the 1970s and 1980s in the city's at-large elections. In the late 1980s, the two helped promote city legislation regulating the use of animals in scientific research.

The first animal-protection ordinance was proposed in 1986 by Al Vellucci, whose Cambridge political career has centered on attacking Harvard. Periodically holding the post of Mayor as well, Vellucci was a member of the City Council continuously from 1955 to 1989, appealing to the working-class areas of East Cambridge. A bumper sticker on his car proudly announced, "The People's Councilor". His populist rhetoric sometimes edged into buffoonery, as in his suggestions that Harvard Yard be paved over as a parking lot and that the Harvard Lampoon building be converted into public restrooms. Yet even these comic recommendations contained a serious anti-Harvard edge. He had led a victorious fight in 1976 and 1977 to regulate recombinant DNA research in the city, establishing a community representative on each institutional committee overseeing rDNA research as well as a city committee to review all rDNA proposals (Krimsky, 1982, 1986).

In his flamboyant political style and his unflinching suspicion of Harvard, Vellucci embodied the Italian-American and Portuguese-American neighborhoods that returned him to office. Presenting himself as the "councilor from the wrong side of the tracks", he harbored intense class resentment of the social privilege that Harvard represents to its neighbors who could only dream of attending. In many ways, though, Vellucci simply gave a working-class accent to the same suspicions about large organizations that many Americans share.

The only city councilor to join Vellucci in his antivivisection campaign was Sandra Graham. She was first elected to the Council in 1971, in part buoyed by her role in organizing demonstrations against Harvard. From a poor but respectable Cambridge family, Graham had spent a short time on welfare after a divorce. In the 1960s she was living in a Housing Authority project not far from Harvard's dormitories along the Charles River, and she was drawn

into organizing in the neighborhood, mostly to get the garbage collected and rats exterminated. Harvard began buying property in the vicinity to build tall dormitories. "Think of a trapped rat. That's what I was feeling like and thinking about then. That's what I was, a rat trapped in a small area with this monster, Harvard, closing in and closing in" (Ackerman, 1989: 150). She forced a meeting with Harvard administrators by sneaking into the university's commencement exercises and grabbing the microphone, aided by sympathetic student protestors.

Vellucci's proposed laboratory-animal ordinance, ghost-written by a moderate animal-rights group named the Cambridge Committee for Responsible Research (CCRR), would have gone considerably beyond existing federal guidelines for animal research. It would have established a city board that could review the proposals or protocols of any research using live animals, conduct unannounced, on-site inspections and investigate allegations of mistreatment. All research labs, including those of private companies, would have had to follow the stringent guidelines which the National Institutes of Health had created for federally funded research. The proposed ordinance also ambitiously defined the animals to be covered as "any non-human sentient being". The existing Cambridge Animal Commission, hitherto charged primarily with animal population control, would have enforced the laws by means of the right to shut down any institution deemed to be in violation (for more details, see Sanders and Jasper, 1994).

Vellucci had a history of antagonistic interactions with David Baltimore, a Nobel Laureate and former MIT professor who in 1986 was Director of the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research in Cambridge. Baltimore had testified at City Council hearings on recombinant DNA regulation, and he returned in 1986 to assert that a laboratory-animal ordinance was unnecessary. While Baltimore was delivering his prepared statement, Vellucci suddenly interrupted him: "David Baltimore! What's a hyrax?" (Vellucci had been browsing through a report listing the animals to be found in Harvard research labs — including ten hyraxes.) Rattled, Baltimore paused and stared, then continued reading. After his testimony, Vellucci peppered him with questions, in particular insisting that the public had the right to know what was being done with federal research monies (Wright, 1987). During the hearings Vellucci referred to the interests of "the Cambridge that belongs to the people who live in it", in contrast to the interests of Harvard (Meyers, 1987).

Local research institutions were aware of Vellucci's ability to cast himself as David to their Goliath. In 1987, when it appeared that there would be a referendum about animal research on the Cambridge ballot, Harvard's community affairs officer Jane Corlette wrote a strategic memo for her university suggesting that future pro-research testimonials come from plain citizens who had benefited from animal experiments, and not from prestigious scientists, "since testimony from scientists and the bio-technology industry only provides a forum for Councilor Vellucci to attack them [the scientists] for their role in 'big business research' ". The animal protection group CCRR was also aware of public attitudes toward large universities. One of its board members, MIT political scientist Harvey Sapolsky, insisted that the group stress issues of openness and accountability in the use of public funds. "The public does not trust big institutions", he wrote, "and that is our opportunity."

CCRR consistently stressed "responsibility", avoiding substantive issues of animal treatment. Vellucci, regularly invoking the arrogance of the local universities, brought a dictionary to one public meeting to look up "responsible". Public hearings attracted a number of animal activists and scientists who addressed general issues of animal protection and free inquiry (with both sides largely ignoring the text of the proposed ordinance). Continuing to concentrate on trust and responsibility, CCRR pointed to the Congressional hearings about fraud involving David Baltimore, as evidence that scientific researchers could not always be trusted. In letters to the editors of the local newspapers, CCRR director Ole Anderson concluded: "If fraud may be found in research conducted by Cambridge animal laboratories, what about claims of humane care of animals?" His implication was clear: outside regulation was necessary.

Cambridge politicians tended to line up either with or against the local universities, rather than taking clear stands for or against animal protection. Those who normally trusted the universities went one way on the proposed ordinance; those who mistrusted them went the other. In addition to Vellucci and Graham, there were two councilors who favored some community regulation of large institutions, but who were uncomfortable interfering with scientific research. In the words of one, "Certainly as academic institutions, both MIT and Harvard are a credit to the city, but they both have business aspects which have created problems for the city in different respects" (Blodgett, 1982: 1). Indeed, these councilors soon offered their own compromise proposal for an ordinance.

The pro- versus anti-academic cleavage in Cambridge politics was reinforced by the contrasting viewpoints of the city's two weekly newspapers. The *Cambridge Chronicle*, a family business since the 19th century, is more staid, respectable and favorable toward the universities. Avoiding an editorial stance, it ran letters on all sides of the issue, and its coverage was relatively balanced. Its rival, the *Tab*, is a free tabloid, more countercultural in style. Its editorial writer on animal issues, Russel Pergament, spent equal amounts of time promoting animal protection and attacking the universities. In "What Do They Fear?" he insisted: "There's no reason why research paid for with public dollars should be beyond public scrutiny". He went on to criticize universities for their complete resistance to any accountability (Pergament, 1987). He later accused MIT of "double-talk" in resisting inspections of its research laboratories. The slants of these two newspapers help to maintain underlying cleavages by applying them to new issues as they arise.

In 1989, the city council passed a weak animal-protection ordinance that primarily extended federal (National Institutes of Health) guidelines to all laboratories whether or not they had federal funding. This was a change for private labs more than for MIT and Harvard, which already followed NIH regulations. The universities embraced the compromise ordinance; CCRR supported it but complained of its inadequacy. The pro-university forces had defeated proposals for additional interference, but Vellucci and CCRR had gained a symbolic statement supporting animal protection. How did this happen?

Harvard is such a rich "condensing symbol" that it inevitably helps to frame public debates whenever the university is involved. Even the 1983 repeal of the Massachusetts "pound" law, allowing research institutions to buy unclaimed animals, was seen by one animal activist as a battle against Harvard. In a later interview, after the pound law was revoked, she expressed her surprise at "beating Harvard".

The animal-protection controversy focused on Harvard even though it uses fewer live animals within Cambridge than MIT does (one reason is that Harvard's medical school is in Boston). To many of its neighbors, Harvard represents a rarefied social elite. MIT is a less potent symbolic target because it has fewer of the class connotations of Harvard. MIT students come from less privileged families than those at Harvard. In contrast to MIT's traditional fraternities, for example, Harvard has 12 exclusive eating clubs with refined accommodations and large endowments. Their membership

is restricted even within the Harvard community (only men can belong, and only 5 per cent of male undergraduates are invited to join), and they certainly remind outsiders of extreme social privilege. Working-class resentment of Harvard, to which Vellucci and Graham played, has both a symbolic and a material basis.

Cambridge's political system played a role in Vellucci's ability to win a modified animal-protection ordinance. American politics at the national level features only loose party attachments or discipline, but these are even more tenuous at the local level. Party ties are especially inconsequential in Cambridge, where registered Democrats outnumber Republicans by roughly ten to one. So instead of Democrats versus Republicans, the Cambridge Civic Association (a liberal, good-government group) faced a collection of candidates known, for historical reasons, as Independents. A few other cities dominated by large universities are also liberal enough that new affiliations replace mainstream partisan labels — Berkeley, California comes to mind. As with American politics more generally, political parties have limited power to discipline their members, who find their own issues and styles to appeal to the public (Schattschneider, 1942; Key, 1956; Wilson, 1973; Polsby and Wildavsky, 1980). Vellucci was a master at finding new issues.

Longstanding tensions between many Cambridge politicians and the two universities in their jurisdiction have helped Al Vellucci remain on the city council, and thereby allowed animal advocates to get their ordinance onto the docket. The animal protection ordinance, accurately perceived as partly an attack on Harvard, played into an existing cleavage between those favorable and those unfavorable to the university. The result was that the proposal had more support than it would have had simply on its specific merits. Neither the two councilors who supported a strong measure nor the two who supported a compromise were anti-vivisectionists, after all. Positions in the debate were driven by feelings about Harvard and, to a lesser extent, MIT. In the end, the pro-Harvard councilors outnumbered the anti-Harvard ones, but only by enough to water down, not defeat, an animal protection bill.

The Laurel Heights incident

Animal activists tapped into a different range of suspicions and resentments in Laurel Heights, an affluent San Francisco neighborhood. From 1984 to 1991 local residents battled the University of

California at San Francisco (UCSF) over its purchase of a new building 2 miles from its existing campus. This was one of several San Francisco Bay area cases in the late 1980s when local activists used environmental impact regulations to delay the construction of new university research laboratories. At Stanford, Berkeley and UCSF, coalitions of animal-rights protestors, environmentalists and angry neighbors delayed construction of new research facilities for several years by means of lawsuits alleging incomplete environmental impact statements.

After buying the Laurel Heights building from an insurance company in 1984, the University of California announced: "We see this as a place where many of our campus administrative functions can be centralized and where we can also provide space for certain academic programs" (Piller, 1991: 123). Only after the purchase did the university begin to contact local residents and groups to show that it wished to be a good neighbor. This may have been too late. When UCSF held its first public meeting, 150 nervous neighbors attended. They were assured that the building would house fewer people than under previous ownership, and that the bulk of the activities would be administrative, with some "academic" programs. Several months later, however, UCSF announced that it would be moving the basic research laboratories of its School of Pharmacy to the new site — contrary to what officials had implied.

Local neighbors were outraged. Many of their grievances seemed minor: street congestion, construction of a new loading dock and additional parking places, 12-foot-high ventilation stacks, the possibility of noisy protest outside the meetings of the University of California Board of Regents. These complaints resulted in modifications to the UCSF plans. The central point of contention that emerged, however, was the research labs themselves, in particular the possible presence of "toxic materials". This was, no doubt, a genuine fear on the part of residents. But it was also the rhetoric that seemed most compelling, most likely to appeal to broader audiences. It made UCSF look disingenuous in its previous claims; one official conceded: "Mistakes were made. . . . The description of laboratory work, while it certainly is a form of academic activity, should have been more explicit from the first" (Petit, 1988). This slant also allowed the Laurel Heights Improvement Association to sue on the basis of the California Environmental Quality Act after the UC Board of Regents approved an amended environmental impact report in 1986. Animal rights activists from around the Bay

Area joined protests on the grounds that lab animals would be abused in the new research facilities. In an interview with the authors, one of them said: "Anywhere there's labs, there's animal abuse; we'll protest any lab we can" (anonymous, 1989).

While the challenges were slowly working their way through three levels of courts, several events seemed to demonstrate incompetence or arrogance on the part of UCSF. In March 1987 it was cited for 33 violations of radiation-safety regulations. Then an expert on deadly parasites moved her lab from an Oakland Naval station to the UCSF campus; officials claimed that university regulations prohibited her from conducting classified research on biological warfare for the military — ignoring the unclassified grants she had received for this research. Later in the year very high radiation readings were measured at the main UCSF campus. In 1988 embarrassing news continued: two laboratories lost shipments of radioisotopes, and several employees contracted Q fever, a flu-like virus they got from sheep in the university's animal-care facilities. These are the kinds of organizational vulnerabilities and blunders that provide ammunition to protestors (Jasper and Poulsen, 1993).

The case of molecular biologist Nina Agabian shows the gap between how research is seen within the university and outside it. An expert on parasites such as those causing malaria and sleeping sickness, she was leaving her position as acting director of the Naval Sciences Lab in Oakland to join the UCSF faculty. The university saw her hire, and the acquisition of her research group, as an important prize. UCSF's opponents insisted that the new building would contain biological-warfare research. To Agabian and UCSF this charge was absurd: she worked on antidotes to deadly microbes, and the university prohibited classified research. To opponents, the precise uses of the microbes mattered little; they also knew that there had been early discussions with the Navy about having it finance Agabian's new laboratory; and they pointed to unclassified grants received by UCSF over the years to study chemical-warfare antidotes (Piller, 1991: 137–8). To them, UCSF's denials were a case of misleading hair-splitting. The credibility gap widened.

The university was able to mobilize supportive members of the community. Many testified about how UCSF clinicians had saved their children. Others praised the importance of the university's research more generally. The university also received advice from pro-research organizations such as the California Biomedical Research Association on dealing with public protest. But an

organized countermovement never emerged, largely because it did not seem necessary.

The courts found little evidence of substantive environmental problems with the proposed labs, but slammed UCSF on procedural grounds, throwing out its environmental impact report and awarding legal fees to its opponents. UCSF wrote a new report, releasing it in October 1989. It contained a more extensive discussion of alternatives to placing labs in Laurel Heights. It also vastly increased the scope of activities and construction which it foresaw for the new building: more people, more ventilation shafts, more new construction and building extensions. Those UCSF scientists (many of them working as administrators) who responded publicly gave bland assurances of safety, and questioned public objections as misinformed. This arrogant tone of "father knows best" further infuriated local opponents, but they had little recourse. The new environmental impact report was approved by the courts in January 1991.

The Laurel Heights case is typical of many clashes between universities and their neighbors. UCSF appeared to withhold key information and made misleading statements, confident in the assumption that its laboratories were safe and its critics uninformed. UCSF's final plans for the building bore little resemblance to its original claims. What had, in the beginning, been a natural uneasiness in the face of a large institutional neighbor grew into outrage through a series of arrogant and dismissive responses. And here too, as in Cambridge, there was a long history of tension. One neighbor spoke of problems with the existing campus: "There has been a history of development insensitive to the needs of a residential community — a history of destroying residential blocks and turning them into the university" (Chui, 1988: 1230).

In this case, animal protection issues never dominated. But they received an airing due to the presence of many neighbors angry at UCSF. As in Cambridge, the environmental and animal-protection issues received considerable extra support by appealing to public suspicions of large organizations and of science. The town-gown conflicts were longstanding in both communities, with similar perceptions of bureaucratic highhandedness, social distance and arrogance. Some universities even seem intent on creating enemies.

Broader symbolism

Many local battles feel like much more. For both participants and observers, they often come to symbolize larger issues, identities and controversies. The Cambridge Committee for Responsible Research saw itself as setting a precedent for other animal protection groups, and other cities, to follow. The research community agreed, perceiving the Cambridge ordinance as the first step toward abolition of scientific progress. With such prestigious universities involved, the outcome in Cambridge would be widely discussed and, perhaps, emulated. The rhetoric on both sides referred to national trends and historical precedents. The UCSF conflict was also partly felt to have wider implications: the new building was crucial to the university's research programs, and the controversy was part of a wider battle over public support for scientific research in California. When the stakes are broader than your own interests, you feel yourself part of a moral crusade to help define what society should look like — whether that involves protecting animals or protecting science.

Despite these far-reaching implications, the Cambridge and UCSF controversies were shaped from the start by local tensions, fears and suspicions. Harvard especially but MIT too loom over Cambridge in many ways, not only affecting the local economy but providing living images of large institutions. UCSF was a newcomer to Laurel Heights, but it quickly took steps that polarized that neighborhood in much the same way. The side one took in the local research controversies was linked to one's opinions about these universities. If one tended a priori to trust them, one typically continued to trust them; if not, one suspected and sometimes even opposed them.

Political positions provide an opportunity for politicians, newspaper columnists and the public to “choose sides”, expressing solidarity with certain groups and individuals and against others. The result is that no issue is a simple matter of objectively deciding which policy is in line with one's goals, since one's goals include reinforcing alliances and making statements about “the kind of person” one is. Issues then are twisted slightly to allow clearer positioning. When Jasper (1990, 1992) studied nuclear debates, for example, he found that the issue shifted from that of a safe and reliable energy source to that of free markets versus government intervention — the convenient shorthand by which Republicans and Democrats' stake out territory and distinguish themselves.

If tensions between universities and their neighbors are always present, they seem to erupt especially over issues of scientific research, as these tap into public ambivalence about modern science that is anything but local. Recent Congressional investigations and allegations of financial and scientific fraud are just more evidence of the public's complex mixture of positive and negative feelings about modern science.

Many commentators see antivivisection and other opposition to scientific projects as simply anti-science, a modern form of Luddism. They see no difference between a whole-hearted opposition to science and protest against specific institutional arrangements of research. Stanford President Donald Kennedy, an outspoken defender of research, blames "a vague and alarming mistrust of science, indeed of the elitism of expertise. . . . Unfortunately, part of it relates to the disappointing level of scientific literacy displayed by the voters — and by their elected representatives" (quoted in Chui, 1988: 1232; see also Kennedy, 1987). Larry Horton (1989: 736) says that "the current debate is a rehash of a very old dispute, and some observers would trace the bloodlines of current activism back to Luddites, creationists, and others upset with science". Those who enter these debates on the side of science try to portray science as progress, not as big business or big bureaucracy. But science represents, to many Americans, something which powerful and privileged professionals carry out. It is also associated with technologies, new and old, used by corporations to make *other* people rich. In an era when universities and for-profit companies join forces in biotechnology, this image has considerable plausibility (Krimsky, 1982; Teitelman, 1989). From the inside, university research looks like small laboratories; from the outside, it seems to be big bureaucracy, if not big business.

Scientists seem unable to overcome their image problem. During 15 years of disputes over animal research, the research community has learned that its most effective public spokespersons are regular people with horrible diseases or the loved ones of such victims. In public forums scientists have regularly exacerbated the distance between them and their public audiences. Sometimes they would be too technical; sometimes they would make jokes at inappropriate times; often they were simply arrogant, falling back on their expertise. Nobel laureates, in many cases, simply do not come across to the public as the guy next door. They look and sound like Nobel laureates. Communication has not always led to understanding.

In the past, movements based on populist resentment have typically rallied against big business and big government. A secondary but persistent theme, though, has been suspicion of experts, of intellectuals, of Eastern elites and of the universities linked symbolically to all of these. Anti-intellectual populism received a big boost 20 years ago when Richard Nixon and especially Spiro Agnew used it to attract voters angered by the counterculture of the 1960s (Edsall, 1991). It has burgeoned since then, as both the Right and the Left have elaborated critiques of expertise and bureaucracy.

Animal protectionists and environmentalists may not themselves be motivated by suspicion of large universities. But they can use these resentments to their advantage in local arenas, where such resentments may have simmered for years. In fact they may not be able to maneuver in local politics without getting caught up in these often longstanding cleavages. These cleavages are part of what politics "means" to its practitioners. They are part of the symbolic landscape in which political players orient themselves. What on the surface seems to be an animal rights or environmental controversy may actually be tapping into deeper and older cleavages.

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