

Coal seam gas in Australia: can activists be effective from the margins?

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Abstract

Activist groups have dual identities: the way they see themselves and the way others see them. Community opposition to coal seam gas and large-scale coal mining in Australia has highlighted this distinction as the radical "Lock the Gate Alliance" and others attempt to hold back the accelerating momentum of coal seam gas exploitation.

This paper backgrounds CSG development in Australia and applies activism, social identity and risk scholarship to examine this alliance of highly motivated opponents in terms of its self-identified roles and responses to industry and governments. It explores implications for organisations confronted by radical activists who pursue a strategy of non-cooperation and questions the effectiveness of such an approach. The paper suggests that non-cooperation may limit activists' capacity to achieve their objectives.

Key words: activism, coal seam gas, social identity, risk

Introduction

Community social movement or activism has generated a substantial body of research and literature across many different fields of public relations in terms of both promoting and responding to activist causes (Burke, 2005; den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; Hon 2006, Spar & La Mure, 2003). These include corporate communications, political lobbying, stakeholder relations, issue management, framing, community outreach, corporate social responsibility, reputation management, investor communications, and crisis management among others.

However, the many aspects of activism can usefully be brought together in a case study, where focus on a particular activist campaign can effectively illuminate the actions and motivations of parties to an issue and present the strategies used for examination.

Controversy over the extraction of coal seam gas is a classic activist issue, superficially appearing to pit small communities against mining giants. But when this controversy migrated to Australia in the 1990s a more sophisticated scenario emerged involving the contest of national, local, financial, political, environmental and social forces.

An outspoken opponent of coal seam gas exploration and development in Australia is the Lock the Gate Alliance. In this paper, case analysis is used to explore how this radical activist alliance positioned itself within a tangle of competing agendas. We suggest that the group has found itself on the margins of policy development because it is isolated by idealism and a strategy of non-cooperation,

Background

Australia's wealth has long relied on mineral exploitation, going back to the gold rushes of the 1850s and 1860s, although minerals have overtaken agricultural products as the country's most valuable exports. Furthermore, energy resources play a dominant role, with coal being Australia's second largest export earner (second only to iron ore) closely followed by gas, petroleum products and uranium.

While these energy resources came from offshore gas fields or remote mine sites, Australia's largely urban population paid only limited attention. But that began to change in the 1990s with the emerging exploitation of coal seam gas (CSG). It is over 95% methane and is extracted from relatively shallow coal deposits, typically at between 300 and 1,000 metres. CSG is used for industrial and domestic purposes, as well as in gas turbines to generate electricity (CSIRO, 2012)

Most importantly, substantial areas of CSG reserves largely coincide with high-value agricultural land, with some areas also lying above Australia's important underground water resources, particularly in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia.

With CSG development perceived to be threatening farm land and water resources, and moving closer to larger urban areas, the industry has become a lightning rod for public concern about "uncontrolled development", with opposition further fuelled by the claimed environmental risks of hydraulic fracturing (fracking) of coal seams to release the gas.

The three populous "eastern states" are where much of the commercial CSG has been identified and where it is believed many of the political, social and environmental issues will be played out. Adding complexity to the issue is that while the Commonwealth has some regulatory authority over underground aquifers, state governments control mining licences and land use planning.

Queensland has by far the greatest CSG development, with 90% of the state's gas coming from CSG and massive current investment in huge plants to convert CSG to LNG for export. New South Wales also has large CSG reserves, though only very limited current production, but is moving to extend exploration and development after the withdrawal of a temporary moratorium. Victoria also has substantial CSG reserves but no active development. At the time of writing the state has a moratorium on exploration and development pending establishment of national guidelines being developed jointly by the Commonwealth and State governments, based on the work of a Federal Independent Expert Scientific Committee established in 2011.³

Broadly, however, the Commonwealth and state governments all support appropriate development of CSG in the national and local interest, provided adequate safeguards are in place. This is the environment in which the Lock the Gate Alliance finds itself attempting to hold back development.

Theoretical framework

The issue of coal seam gas development in Australia, and how it is managed in terms of the communication and policy strategies of key stakeholders, can be seen in the context of three broad areas of scholarship – activism, social identity and risk.

Activism

Larissa Grunig was an early researcher in the field of activism whose definition of an activist group has stood the test of time:

".. a group of two or more individuals who organise to influence another public or publics through action that may include education, compromise, persuasion,, pressure tactics or force (Grunig, L. 1992)

Although her definition was satisfyingly broad, much of the subsequent scholarship has focused on what has been called an "organisational-centric" approach to understanding activism, which builds on a characterization of bilateral relationships between organisations – primarily big business or big government – and activist groups.

This "corporate vs activist" approach has produced a substantial literature exploring the development of organisational "response" to what is presented as an activist "problem". This in turn, saw the emergence of a major

³ www.environment.gov.au/coal-seam-gas-mining/index.html

sub-section of the literature which aligns activism with anti-corporatism. Some of this more confrontational literature – from the activist and the corporate viewpoint – specifically addresses both the morality and value of co-operation and warns of the perceived dangers of such co-operation (Beder, 2006; Nicols, 2001).

At the same time two other important areas developed – firstly, attempting to understand and characterise the nature and motivation of activists (Fassin, 2009; Henderson, 2005; Jaques, 2006) and secondly, attempting to define a *modus vivendi* between activists and their targets (Burke, 2005; Galloway, 2005; Taylor, Vasquez & Doorley, 2003)

Updating the original Grunig definition, den Hond and de Bakker (2007) wrote:

Activist groups emerge out of the need for organisation and co-ordination. They are *activist* in transforming shared ideals, concerns and grievances into organized contention, and they are a *group* in the sense that a collective identify enables them to overcome the problem of collective action (p. 903)

When characterising such groups it is a common practice to place them along a spectrum – from those which are willing to co-operate with corporates and authorities, to radical groups which reject any co-operation with the establishment

In the context of corporate social change, reformative groups can be defined as those which believe that although companies are part of the problem they can also be part of the solution. By contrast, radical groups do not believe that companies can part of the solution (den Hond and de Bakker, 2007).

This distinction has led to a great deal of theorizing on how both corporates and activists should develop mutual relationships (Cooper, 2009; Hon, 2006; Susskind & Field, 1996). A very influential early conception was “two-way symmetrical communication” which was developed as an ideal model (Grunig, J, 1992; Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, 2002) However, this approach has many critics, who argue that two-way communication is essential, but that symmetry may be illusory (Derville, 2005; Stokes & Rubin, 2010)

In fact, some activist groups at the radical end of the spectrum reject the win-win philosophy and regard co-operation as a sell-out. As one activist manual proposes:

Be a responsible extremist. Responsible extremism sets the agenda. To move the media, you must communicate as responsible extremists, not as reasonable moderates (Gunther, 1985, para.8).

It is this contest between corporates and confrontation which is explored in the case study here which involves the Lock the Gate Alliance.

Social identity and the social construction of risk

What is it that unites the disparate membership of organisations such as the Lock the Gate Alliance (LTGA) and their individual adherents other than a desire to preserve and protect things they value? Stallings argued that “risk and safety are not objective conditions ‘out there’ simply waiting to be perceived by citizens or calculated by professional risk analysts”; rather, he contended, they are embedded in social structure (1990,p. 80). Risk, then, is socially constructed, not just scientifically assessed. While LTGA is focused on perceived risks associated with coal and coal seam gas extraction, the scope of its attention and activity is wider than hazards alone, so risk theories are not in themselves sufficient to explain the movement’s motivation and growth. Theories of identity provide one way of considering how such organisations are able to link such a diversity of groups.

The theories suggest that social movement organisations are sustained by people who find in them a *raison d’etre* related not only to the organisation’s identity but also to their own. Further, social identity theory advances the notion that while people identify with their own group, they accentuate differences with those who do not belong. For example, LTGA’s activism appears to be founded in a preservationist identity, with its protest tactics expressing an ethos based on protecting what the group prizes against the perceived depredations of outsiders. In the same way, the outsiders, whether governments or mining companies, are positioned as possessing identities which at best are conservationist (where that term is understood to mean the wise use of the world’s resources to

benefit people) and at worst, predatory, profit-driven and indifferent to communities' concerns, setting up a "we care, they don't" dichotomy.

Identity is one of the main factors influencing sustained participation in social movements (Klandermans, 2002 and Whittier, 1995, in Hardnack, 2011, p.65). However, social movement scholars' studies have extended beyond individual identities to encompassing "the broader collective identities of social movements and social movement organisations (Hardnack, 2011, p. 64). Hardnack notes that "new social movement theory suggests collective identities define personal and social identities" (p.65). Collective identity has been linked to social movement participation and activity (Hardnack, 2011, p.66); Melucci (1989) says it is the way a group collectively defines itself, taking into account "members' common interests, experiences, and solidarity" (cited in Hardnack, 2011, p.67).

Henderson studied the role of identity and power in issues management campaigns, illustrating "how issues management strategies involving the management of multiple identities can motivate significant public activism" (2005, p.117). She cites Heath, who suggested that identity – creating a persona characteristic of the organisation – was one of the key elements of any issue management campaign and commented that people are often simply asked to trust the symbolic identity of an organisation (1997,p. 124, in Henderson, 2005, p.124). Drawing on Cheney & Christensen's view that organisations "must attempt to manage both identifiable issues and their own identities", Henderson comments that, "an interest group resisting the normalised discourse needs, therefore, to articulate a particular identity to facilitate legitimation of this counter-discourse and to gain support" (Cheney & Christensen, 2001, p. 233, in Henderson, 2005,p. 124).

Henderson uses three ideas in discussing identity, suggesting that it may be viewed as "belonging"; "representation" and "a way of organising". She describes the latter concept as "how individuals create structures that build an identity as an organisation or interest group" (Cheney & Christensen, 2001; R.Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998, in Henderson, 2005, p. 125). In this sense, says Henderson, identity management is an important strategy in issues management.

Fielding et al argue that "Whether community members engage in environmental activism is ...likely to be determined by whether they are aligned with a group that encourages and supports this type of behaviour" (2005, p.6). They note that:

According to social identity theory, an individual's self-concept comprises both personal and social identities (Abrams 1999; Tajfel 1981; Turner et al., 1994). Personal identities involve unique self-descriptions, whereas a social identity is the part of an individual's self-concept that stems from membership of a social group (or groups) and comprises knowledge of that membership, as well as the value and emotional significance that the membership entails (Tajfel 1981). Identification and categorisation of the self in terms of a particular social group or category highlights the similarities shared with members of that same group and the differences between the in-group and other out-groups (Turner et al, 1994)

On this basis, we argue that LTGA resists normalised discourse needs, as described by Henderson, and that in line with her analysis, LTGA's articulation and reinforcement of its identity may be seen not only as reactive, a response to CSG developments, but also as strategic and forward-looking.

The Lock the Gate Alliance

According to its website (<https://lockthegate.org.au>, accessed 26 October, 2012)

Lock the Gate Alliance is a national grassroots organisation made up of thousands of individuals and over 160 local groups who are concerned about inappropriate mining. The mission of the Lock the Gate Alliance is to protect Australia's natural, environmental, cultural and agricultural resources from inappropriate mining and to educate and empower all Australians to demand sustainable solutions to food and energy production (*About Lock the Gate*, paras 1 & 2).

The Alliance says it has five central aims: to protect Australia's water systems; agricultural land for food and fibre production; bushlands, wetlands and wildlife; the health of all Australians and Australia's Aboriginal and cultural heritage (LTGA website, *About Lock the Gate*, para.4, accessed 26 October, 2012).

The Lock the Gate Alliance was formed in 2010 following meetings in New South Wales and Queensland of landholders and others concerned about the rapid expansion of coal and coal seam gas development. LTGA president Mr Drew Hutton credits private showings of the controversial 2010 documentary *Gasland*⁴ with sparking the initial interest. The film deals with communities affected by natural gas drilling in the United States, and for many Australians was certainly their first exposure to the issue.

Mr Hutton, an environmental advocate and former Green Party candidate (Macfie, 2012), spent time in regional and rural areas canvassing the issues with farmers. He told New Zealand journalist Rebecca Macfie that during that period, he learned of mounting tensions between landowners and the companies drilling for gas on and around their properties. "[Farmers] were feeling disempowered ... They had no way of organising, or any real strategy to deal with what they were facing. I said to farmers, 'You might not like me [as a prominent environmentalist]', and farmers haven't tended to like environmentalists. But I said to them that they were not going to win this west of the Great Dividing Range⁵ as a farmers' issue, and I didn't think it could be won as a green issue, either. They needed to be brought together." (Macfie, 2012, para. 2). Mr Hutton called a meeting and "suggested either [we] roll over or take [things] to a new level". In an interview with one of the authors he identified a town/country aspect: "Farmers saw the advantage of a strategic alliance – [taking] the fight to the city" (pers comm, 27 June, 2012).

Formation

In late 2010 a forum representing over 40 community, professional and environmental groups from across Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia found that communities across Australia faced common issues wherever coal mining and coal seam gas was being expanded. The forum "considered the role of government in the expansion of the coal and coal seam gas industries and the lack of consideration for the will of local residents and communities in the approval of these coal and gas projects." (LTGA website, *History*, para.2, accessed 26 October, 2012).

Meanwhile in south-east Queensland, local landholders, farmers and environmentalists gathered to consider a response to the state government's approval of a number of major coal seam gas developments. At this meeting "the 'Lock the Gate' name was decided, and so began the campaign calling on all landholders to refuse to negotiate access to coal seam gas companies and refuse to negotiate sale of their properties to coal companies" (LTGA website, *History*, para.3., accessed 26 October, 2012).

The Lock the Gate campaign was launched in November 2010, while The Lock the Gate Alliance (LTGA) was incorporated in NSW in December 2010 and became a registered company in March 2012. Member groups (167 at time of writing) range from animal advocates (Australians for Animals NSW) to chambers of commerce (Bulahdelah Chamber of Commerce) to churches (Community Church of St Mark, Clifton Hill, Victoria) to environmental issues advocates (Friends of the Earth) to water users (NSW Artesian BoreWater Users Association) to indigenous groups (the Plains Clan of the Wonnarua People).

Principles

⁴ www.gaslandthemovie.com

⁵ The Great Dividing Range separates the east coast of Australia from the inland (<http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/austn-rocks-and-mountains>)

The Alliance says it is committed to three core principles:

1. That robust scientific assessment, the precautionary principle, and the principle of intergenerational equity should guide decision-making.
2. That communities should have the ultimate say, within the context of principle 1.
3. That it will support all and any communities who support the objectives of the Alliance (LTGA website, *About Lock the Gate*, para.3, accessed 26 October, 2012).

[The precautionary principle “asserts, essentially, that ‘when there is scientific uncertainty as to the nature of [the] damage or the likelihood of the risk’ posed by some activity...’then decisions should be made so as to prevent such activity...unless and until scientific evidence shows that the damage will not occur” (Sunstein, 2005, in Slovic, 2010, p. 190)].

In an interview with one of the authors, Mr Hutton outlined other Alliance values:

- Autonomy and “self-activity”. “A blockade [of a farming property to prevent drilling] is always run by the local group. There is never any hint of the central organisation taking over. There is an ethic of we’re here to help, not take over.”
- Guarding the land: “It’s almost nationalistic – about protecting [our] country”
- Community cohesiveness on the CSG issue (and also on coal mining issues – the Alliance is against both). This means looking to what the Alliance sees as the community interest rather than individuals’ interests: “We are not just leaving it to the landowner as, if one lets them [the coal seam gas miners] on [to their land], it divides the community.”
- “Respect for rural people – farmers” (pers comm 27 June, 2012).

An earlier version of the LTGA website, accessed on 22 June, 2012, included material on the Alliance’s views about governments’ role, stating that the grouping was concerned about

the devastating impact that certain inadequately addressed and inadequately-regulated fossil fuel extraction industries are having on our short and long term physical, social, environmental and economic wellbeing.

Under the heading of *What does LOCK THE GATE want?* The Alliance was unequivocal about its view on governments’ role:

neither we, nor our governments (at all levels) are sufficiently well informed about these industries, about their true role in our economy and their impact on our health and welfare as a nation...We are concerned that the short-term greed associated with these industries (including that of governments through royalties and other returns) is compromising the welfare of future generations of Australians and our future ability to thrive in a new world driven by renewable energy sources. We believe that the interaction of these industries with our governments and the extreme imbalance between the way their rights are measured against the rights of others in the community is indicative of a system that is no longer working for all Australians and that has lost a moral and ethical compass.

The Alliance added that its mission was “to hold our governments to account for past decisions regarding the operation of destructive fossil fuel industries and ensure that future decisions incorporate the rights of current and future generations of Australians to sustain their communities...” (LTGA website, accessed 22 June, 2012).

In this context, LTGA’s diverse membership and sweeping aims need more than an anti coal-seam gas agenda to unite them. As previously outlined, social identity theory is one way of explaining what that “glue” might be: a shared identity based on a perception that the alliance’s persona is that of a guardian preserving the environment, farmland and rural ways of life for the future. The more this preservationist manifesto is articulated by, and within, the alliance, the more differences between alliance members and mining companies and others are underscored. The mining companies are not only conceptually on the outer; they are to be physically placed outside locked gates and denied access to landholders’ property. They are positioned as predators, particularly urban predators, whose depredations may be irreversible and are therefore to be resisted.

Activities

In addition to its website, LTGA operates a Facebook page and Twitter feeds. An indication of the spread of its activities is available on its website under the heading, *Latest news* (accessed 26 October, 2012). The news section describes how a

week of action saw thousands of Australians take part in local events to protest the rapidly expanding unsustainable coal seam gas and coal mining industries that are threatening to do irreversible damage to our land, water and the health of our communities.

The events included towns declaring, or moving towards declaring themselves CSG-free (Nattai, in the Sydney basin, and Poowong, in Victoria, respectively); thousands of people turning out to form two massive human signs spelling out “Stop CSG!” and “Protect H2O, Stop CSG!”; a big “Rock the Gate” concert and a group called “The Knitting Nannas” hosted tours of “Gasino” (the town of Casino, home to coal seam gas mining company Metgasco). In addition, abseilers from six regions in Queensland dropped banners from a cliff at Kangaroo Point, Brisbane, protesting coal and coal seam gas encroachment.

Day-to-day promotional and advocacy activities are indicated by the range of resources available on the LTGA website, such as a model advertisement for a rally in various centres; sample letters such as a generic letter to a Minister and a template letter of objection to coal seam gas exploration/production; copies of flyers in printer-ready format; petitions, lists of chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) to release coal seam gas; presentations; posters; white papers and even a state election “scorecard” to rate candidates by their position on LTGA issues. There are also sample parliamentary submissions, contact lists, and documents and links for registered LTGA members.

Non-cooperation

The Alliance’s platform does not promote negotiation as a desired outcome of its activities. According to Mr Hutton, “The core of the LTGA campaign is a non-cooperation campaign”; a “Ghandian style campaign” (pers comm 27 June, 2012).

Mr Hutton reportedly told Rebecca Macfie that, “We’ve had farmers who have never broken the law in their lives, and who are some of the most conservative people in the country, stand on blockades and even get arrested ... Our strategy is basically to harass [the gas companies], slow them down, make their lives as miserable as we possibly can, so that governments are forced to say there is a moratorium on until we are absolutely sure what the impacts are. And we’re going to narrow their [commercial] margins along the way (Macfie, 2012, para.5.)”

In Mr Hutton’s view, the broader environmental movement has allowed its strength to be sapped through compromise: “[It] has been weakened almost to the point of not being able to campaign. You don’t negotiate with the Government – that’s the last thing you’d do” (pers comm 27 June, 2012). He is sceptical about industry and government assurances that environmental regulation and monitoring of the industry is robust, alleging that both the sector and the Government have a “suck it and see” approach that “throws the precautionary principle out the window ... They simply don’t know what the impacts are going to be on people’s health or the water or land” (Macfie, 2012, para.6). His advice to people in New Zealand, where the Government aims to accelerate the development of oil and gas industries, was to “call on the Government to introduce a moratorium until all the research is done on the impacts” (Macfie, 2012, para. 7).

LTGA is an alliance of groups with a broad sweep of concerns, identifying themselves with oppositional, activist positions on issues that go well beyond the immediate questions around coal resource development and coal seam gas mining. For example, an earlier version of their website (accessed 22 June, 2012) referred to the

possibility of falling property values and potential road damage and traffic hazards from the transport of heavy machinery. “Thousands of hectares of remnant vegetation will be destroyed...Losses will include endangered communities and the habitat of threatened species,” the website said. LTGA, therefore, is much more than a grassroots movement centred on a perceived need to mitigate a hazard-related risk or set of risks.

Although the Alliance has asserted it is not against mining as such, it argues for application of the precautionary principle to prevent mining activities until they can be proven safe. As long as the relevant science on subjects such as fracking remains disputable, such a point may never be reached. Its own statements, whether via the website or its leader, characterise LTGA as a largely preservationist movement seeking its risk mitigation objectives in the context of a wider agenda to guard everything from prime agricultural land to wildlife and ways of life, such as those of farmers.

The alliance’s approach is reminiscent of the preservation movement in the US, which emphasises protecting the environment for its own sake, rather than that of scientific conservationists, who were interested in saving the environment for human purposes (see http://library.thinkquest.org/26026/History/preservationists_versus_conser.html.) It is logical, therefore, for a preservationist movement to reject any responses to its activities that do not amount to a continuation of the *status quo*, as compromise would inevitably entail an agreed loss of some at least of what the is determined to keep safe.

Discussion

As previously described, reformative activist groups believe they can work with target organisations to achieve positive outcomes, while radical activists regard co-operation as a sell-out. While labels can be superficial and pejorative, it is useful to consider LTGA within that context. Derville (2005) says radical activist organisations manage their communications in ways that significantly differ from other organisations, and she offers this definition:

A radical activist organisation is a group of two or more people who come together in opposition to something in their environment, including threats to the status quo: they work outside of the system to express their objections; influence social goals, or both, through means such as agitative communication with key organisations that contribute to the phenomenon they oppose (p. 528)

On this basis we suggest LTGA would be classified as radical. The organisation is generally neither militant nor extremist, yet their policy of non-cooperation and no compromise is unambiguous. A Derville concludes, radical activists “view moderate approaches as ineffective compared with hard-line positions, and demand more ground than their targets are willing to give” (2005, p. 529).

The issue under discussion here is not the merits or morality of this approach, but whether it is effective. By setting itself aside from establishment groups and moderate/reformative activists, LTGA has positioned itself outside the ambit of policy decision-making and influence.

Its inclusive involvement of a wide variety of social, cultural, heritage and moral factors has widened its constituency but weakened its focus. Accordingly, effort and expectation is committed to areas which are not on the immediate agenda of the principal actors in the issue.

Moreover, LTGA’s strategy has little alignment or correspondence with the key proponents, regulators or moderate opponents.

For instance, while LTGA purports to represent rural interests, the leading farmer associations have clearly stated that they do not oppose appropriate CSG development in principal and do not support a general farmer veto. Similarly, key local government organisations, which stand to benefit from rural jobs and regional investment, also support appropriate development, as do Federal and State governments and both main political parties.

We do not suggest that the social, cultural, heritage and moral factors embraced by the alliance are unimportant or insignificant. But we do believe the result has been that LTGA has effectively dealt itself out of mainstream contention.

Implications for PR practice

From an activist viewpoint the LTGA example can be seen in two different ways – in terms of participation and identity, and in terms of policy effectiveness. There is no doubt that LTGA has raised and mobilised a range of legitimate concerns and provides a focus for that nexus of issues. Furthermore, by acting out against the enemy, activist organisations “declare themselves winners even when no social territory is gained because of member fulfilment” (Derville, 2005, p 530)

However, in terms of effectiveness, the policy of non-cooperation appears to be a flawed approach. The Gandhian principle of non-cooperation - which LTGA evokes – was a non-violent mass movement to end British rule in India (Bakshi, 1983). It aimed to bring Government to a standstill by withdrawing support for government institutions and a boycott of British goods. Its strength was a united mass population used in a “decidedly nationalistic context” (Ramanathan, 2006, p.235) against unfair and unjust government, which is hardly an appropriate comparison to the LTGA and its cause. For a genuine grass-roots movement to be effective it needs to be relevant and connected, and focused on specific and readily expressed objectives. Politics is often described as the art of compromise, and the CSG issue is fundamentally a political issue.

From a corporate/government perspective the CSG debate in Australia is largely a process of “finding a way to make it work.” There are many genuine, practical concerns, but the end-point is to develop the industry in what is seen as the national interest. Major concerns raised by government and industry groups and reformative activists include encroachment on prime farm land; threats to surface and underground water; land access; sustainable food production; environmental emissions; compensation for land-holders; equitable sharing of royalties; and adverse impact on small communities.

But all of these are presented as operational details which can be negotiated by using a mutual gains approach (Susskind & Field, 1996) as opposed to the ethical and moral issues predicated by the alliance. Meantime, apart from the state of Victoria where a moratorium remains in place, CSG exploration and development is proceeding, albeit cautiously. By marginalizing itself, LTGA has become effectively isolated from any meaningful part of that negotiation, and this very important social and economic development seems likely to proceed without their participation.

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