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Political Taboo and the Failure to Recognize Long Term Military Contamination

How a process can remain scientifically unrecognised while its manifestations are measured and published

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PROBLEM

The paradox of scientific taboo

NORMATIVE IMAGE

Claims remain open to examination

Methods remain explicit

Doubt can be stated

No topic disappears without scientific reason

OBSERVED ORGANISATION

Questions acquire unequal legitimacy

Temporal scales become institutionally practical or impractical

Causal links carry different burdens of proof

The preliminary object is the organisation of scientific admissibility.

THEORY

Political taboo as distributed regulation

Political taboo does not require a single prohibition or a single centre of control.

QUESTIONS	Which problems become legitimate
TIME	Which horizons count as practical
CAUSALITY	Which relations may be joined
EVIDENCE	What proof is required
RESPONSIBILITY	Who must preserve the whole problem

Its strength lies in coordination without complete explicit agreement.

THEORY

The implicit buffer of normal science

Observations and questions that have not been refuted but have not been allowed to become a common problem

- **Postponed**
- **Fragmented**
- **Renamed**
- **Localised**
- **Left outside stable programmes**

The buffer neutralises cognitive discomfort without declaring the evidence false.

The research question shifts from ‘What data are missing?’ to ‘Why may existing fragments not be connected?’

Detection and scientific recognition



DETECTION

A local manifestation is measured and described within a specialist object.

RECOGNITION

Separate manifestations become evidence of a developing process with a durable place in research.

A process can be politically visible and extensively documented while remaining scientifically invisible at the second level.

METHOD

Four mechanisms of non-recognition

01	**Temporal suspension**	Too early during war; apparently unnecessary after closure
02	**Disciplinary fragmentation**	Valid local objects remain disconnected
03	**Selective acceleration**	Operational knowledge advances while long-term observation waits
04	**Causality recoded as loyalty**	Material explanation becomes a test of political allegiance

The mechanisms are analytical distinctions. In practice they can reinforce one another.

RESULTS

Temporal suspension removes both the early and the late investigation

DURING WAR

Evidence remains incomplete
Conditions remain unsafe
Investigation appears premature
The question may aid an adversary

AFTER POLITICAL CLOSURE

Responsibility appears settled
The main explanation appears sufficient
Long-term investigation seems unnecessary

Nature does not share the suspension

Contaminants migrate and transform while samples, witnesses, records and early process stages disappear.

RESULTS

Fragmentation and selective acceleration

FRAGMENTATION

Each field defines a valid partial object and closes work by local criteria.

Local resolution increases

The number of interfaces also increases

No field necessarily owns the transitions

SELECTIVE ACCELERATION

War compresses scientific time where results have immediate operational value.

Clear client and rapid testing

Concentrated resources

Long-term consequences remain outside the operational horizon

Acceleration and delay are simultaneous allocations of scientific time.

RESULTS

Material causality and normative responsibility

CAUSAL INVESTIGATION

What material entered the environment?

Through which pathway?

At what time and quantity?

How did it transform and move?

NORMATIVE ATTRIBUTION

Who bears legal responsibility?

How should conduct be judged?

Who must compensate or remediate?

The questions can interact. They cannot substitute for one another.

Scientific explanation does not require moral equivalence between actors.

RESULTS

Pathological uncertainty has an institutional history

1. Common question lacks legitimacy
2. Observation remains local and discontinuous
3. Records and data structures separate
4. Early evidence and institutional memory disappear
5. **The absence of integrated evidence justifies continued inaction**

Uncertainty produced by the system becomes the rationale for preserving the system.

RESULTS

Responsibility without moral accusation

Researchers work under real constraints

- Access and safety
- Funding and project duration
- Institutional permission
- Disciplinary review
- Control of data by other organisations

The relevant duty is to preserve the possibility of later explanation

- Record uncertainty without treating it as absence
- Preserve observations that do not yet fit a model
- Create interfaces through which partial records can later be connected

RESULTS

Three modes of scientific activity

SCIENCE OF ACCOMPANIMENT	Supports current operations and decisions
SCIENCE OF WARNING	Identifies developing processes before consequences become fully visible
CRITICAL RECONSTRUCTION	**Later joins fragments and reveals a process that earlier institutions did not recognise**

Failure occurs when later reconstruction finds that the evidence required for explanation was never preserved.

RESULTS

The scientific community belongs inside the object of study

OBSERVER

Produces measurements and interpretations

PARTICIPANT

Develops systems, classifications and operational knowledge

CUSTODIAN

Preserves records and determines later reconstructability

Expert and artificial intelligence system

Useful for tracing relations across disciplines and generations of documents, provided the expert defines the problem, checks sources and separates observation from inference.

Artificial intelligence can reproduce the omissions contained in its sources.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Recognition depends on the architecture of scientific work

01 Political taboo regulates admissible questions, time scales, causal links and standards of proof.

02 Long term military contamination can remain unrecognised while many manifestations are measured.

03 Temporal suspension, fragmentation, selective acceleration and loyalty recoding obstruct process reconstruction.

04 Pathological uncertainty is produced when the system destroys the conditions for stronger evidence.

05 **Scientific responsibility includes preserving the possibility of future explanation.**

The absence of integration must not be mistaken for the absence of a process.

DISCUSSION

The question for this session

Under what conditions does a scientific community treat refusal to investigate a developing environmental process as a rational, professional, and responsible position?

Selected references

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Thank you