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"Science and Society in Historical Perspective: Implications for Social Theories of Risk"

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Over the past decade risk society theory has become increasingly prominent within the field of environmental social theory. This perspective contends that conventional political divisions based on class are becoming less salient and are giving way to a politics predicated upon the distribution of risk. There is much in risk society theory, especially its central contention that public anxieties about high consequence-low probability events undermine the legitimacy of science, that has a distinctly German stamp. Through a comparative analysis of how national context has differently shaped science as a public epistemology this paper suggests we should tread carefully in moving to accept the general applicability of this theoretical approach.

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