

Preface

I have been researching various aspects of risk governance since the late 1970s, first examining views from the perspective of regulatory inspectors and then researching business responses to state regulation. The research presented in this book extends the focus to encompass non-state sources of regulation. It considers the relative importance of state regulation alongside other influences on business risk management. This further develops our sociological and socio-legal understandings of the social control of economic life in contemporary society. There are many gaps in our knowledge of how risk regulation works in practice. This book goes some way towards filling these gaps but as I have developed this research it has become clear that some areas of non-state regulation demand much closer empirical scrutiny. This is important for the development of theory and also to inform policy making and business decision making.

The particular area selected for this research is one that affects each and every one of us, namely, the regulation of food safety and food hygiene risks. This connects back with my earliest research to the extent that it once again considers part of the governance system implemented by local authority environmental health officers in the UK (Hutter 1988). But it does this by following a series of food crises in the late 1980s/1990s which radically changed part of the UK risk regulation regime for food safety and hygiene yet left local authority enforcement largely untouched. Many of the policy lessons emerging from this book are very similar to those arising from my earlier work.

There are also lessons which may be useful to other regulatory regimes, in the UK, the European Union (EU) and beyond. Food safety and hygiene are global issues and the regulatory problems encountered within the UK are replicated across numerous regimes. This has been underlined by the responses to presentations I have given on this research in many different countries, which in turn have helped to shape this book. My hope is that this research will contribute to broader understandings of how to manage the risks generated within contemporary societies. I hope to contribute to an improved understanding of the place of regulation in managing these risks, and also of the role and limits of state activities such as regulatory law. Important here is an appreciation of how varying social, economic and political situations may influence the governance of risk. In particular, researchers need to examine those features of risk regulation which seem to cross boundaries and also scru-

tinize the limits of transferability and generalization across domains, regions and cultures.

Research such as this is always a product of the broader intellectual environments we work in and the support of key people. This research would not have been possible without the very generous funding of the Michael Peacock Charitable Trust which supported my chair at the London School of Economics (LSE) and this research for five years. Michael Peacock also provided unstinting intellectual and moral support to the Centre for Analysis of Risk and Regulation (CARR) at the LSE and this was invaluable in setting up CARR and sustaining it in its early years. This research was undertaken while I was Director of CARR and colleagues there provided a vibrant intellectual environment within which to work. I am grateful to them and especially to Mike Power. The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) should also be mentioned for facilitating this environment by providing crucial centre funding for a decade, funding which helped to establish risk regulation studies in the UK and abroad.

Clive Jones should be singled out as a co-researcher at the data collection phase. Clive took much of the responsibility for managing the data collection and its analysis. Without his efficiency and persistence the participation of practitioners in the study would not have been as high as it was. His management skills are excellent and this study is a true testimony to this. Attila Szanto has assisted with this project throughout, helping with data queries, bibliographic and literature searches and the preparation of the manuscript for publication. As always his meticulous attention to detail has been invaluable. Sally Lloyd-Bostock and Clive Briault gave up precious time to read drafts of the manuscript, and their useful comments were very much appreciated.

This study could not have been undertaken without the involvement of the many individuals and businesses from the food sector who participated. Time in the food retail and hospitality sectors is precious and I am very grateful to those who found the time to talk to us and complete the survey. There are many people in the industry who are dedicated to high-risk management standards and many of them expressed the wish that research such as this could help to promote and sustain high standards. I sincerely hope that this research does indeed help to achieve this.

As always my family offered enormous support. Food is dear to them all and I sincerely hope that studies such as these can help promote high standards of risk management in food safety and food hygiene both in the UK and abroad. Each of my children has been promised a dedicated book and this one is for Esther.

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January 2011