

# Preface

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The analyses and reflections presented in this book have been nourished by more than 25 years of observation and thinking concerning policy responses to climate change at the national and international levels. The work began in 1990 at the International Centre for Research on Environment and Development (Centre international de recherche sur l'environnement et le développement, CIRED), a joint unit of two French research institutions, the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales and the French National Centre for Scientific Research (Centre national de la recherche scientifique, CNRS), under the dynamic stimulus of Jean-Charles Hourcade, a key contributor to research on climate and energy economics on the French intellectual scene over all those years. When we began, one of the key debates among economists concerned the type of instruments that would best fit the climate issue: carbon taxes or tradable permits? Another was about the pace at which the world economy should switch to a low-carbon profile, taking account of pervasive uncertainty, prospects for learning and the limits of adaptation capacities in case of climate shock. A third key debate focused on what would be the best strategy in terms of building an international coalition for action. Over the years I observed how, for legal and political reasons, carbon taxes were dismissed in various countries, notably in France, as well as at the international level, in favour of quantitative emissions targets and, subsequently, of emissions trading: the first choice in favour of quantitative limits on greenhouse gas emissions and emissions trading was made in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 with the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which was later confirmed and amplified in 1997 in Kyoto. The choice of emissions trading has been pushed back to the margins, but not wholly dismissed, in the Copenhagen and Paris Agreements thereafter.

In fact, more than national taxes, international cap-and-trade schemes require an explicit agreement to be reached on crucial distributive issues: how should we allocate emissions quotas or binding emissions abatement targets to countries? In the early 1990s, I saw this requirement as asking too much of international coordination to be a realistic approach. This was quite a different view from the United States (US) proposal being pushed

at the time by Richard Stewart and Jonathan Wiener (see their 2003 book) of the US Department of Justice in favour of a 'comprehensive approach' based on national quantitative limits for all countries and all gases, supplemented by a world market of carbon quotas. To reach my own conclusion, I used the recent works on justification that were then being developed in France under the impetus of Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot. I am grateful to these two social scientists for providing intellectual resources that enabled me to make a leap in understanding the specifics of conflicts concerning environmental issues.

When I joined the Laboratoire d'Économétrie at the École Polytechnique in Paris in 1998, my first task was to prepare a report on emissions trading in the context of climate change policies for the Council of Economic Analysis, reporting to the French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin (Godard and Henry, 1998). This request came from Claude Henry, with whom I cooperated for the report and to whom I am indebted for having invited me to join the Laboratoire d'Économétrie, the team that he formed in the 1970s at the École Polytechnique. Claude Henry was then well known in the field of public economics. He was the author of the seminal paper published in the *American Economic Review* in 1974 on the 'irreversibility effect' under uncertainty.

The next decade, the 2000s, saw increasing international tensions about the enforcement of the Kyoto Protocol and the design of a post-Kyoto regime. A growing contradiction was observed between the framework set by the UNFCCC and its subsequent protocol, with a huge divide between the industrialized countries and the so-called developing countries, and the actual evolution of greenhouse gas emissions and economic power in the different regions of the world. At the same time, some rather extravagant statements and proposals were made under the umbrella of climate justice. I then stepped up my work on this issue, combining a critical examination of arguments in moral philosophy with a mobilization of the conceptual framework provided by the theory of justification, which belongs to the realm of moral sociology and offers, I believe, some penetrating and original insights into these issues.

The work presented in this book has benefited from research on climate change economics developed at the Laboratoire d'Économétrie with the cooperation of Jean-Pierre Ponsard, and the support of the Électricité de France (EDF) Chair in Sustainable Development at École Polytechnique. It has also been stimulated by the Climate Governance Programme of the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence, further to invitations in 2011 and 2012 from Denny Ellerman, a part-time Professor at this Institute. I would like to thank Jean-Pierre and Denny for their confidence and our intellectual interactions.

I acknowledge my intellectual debt to the colleagues I have named and to many others whom I cannot cite, but I remain solely responsible for the analyses I put forward on climate justice, justification and international cooperation. Should a reader disagree with my analyses, they must blame me rather than justification theory or the research institutions to which I am affiliated. I cannot end this Preface without addressing my heartfelt thanks to Anna Kiff, who has undertaken the difficult task of English editing for this book.

## NOTE ON THE TEXT

This book has been developed from several works published since the late 1980s. The main recent resource for chapters 4, 6 and 7 is to be found in a book I released in French in October 2015: *La justice climatique mondiale*, published in Paris by Éditions La Découverte (Series Repères 651). I am grateful to Hugues Jallon, the CEO of Éditions La Découverte, for granting me the permission to use this material.

Apart from a few ad hoc additions reflecting recent events, the text was finalized in the fall of 2016.

Let me address a final note to the reader on how they should understand references to the literature given throughout the text: when it is not explicit, a reference to an author about an argument or an opinion does not mean that the author defends this argument or position, but only that he proposes a reflection on it – whether critical or supportive.

