

# Preface

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How do we make the climate change? We now know so much about climate change that even the staunchest sceptics have had to acknowledge that it does change; that the change is in all likelihood largely manmade and that the changes move faster than foreseen.

Yet how did the climate change about climate-change? How did those who warned about the dangers of climate change convince public opinion that this needed to be a prime concern? How did political parties respond to the need for setting public priorities differently? How did religious leaders come to include the notion in their moral set of values? How did intellectuals convince academics that their research priorities needed urgent review? How did academics convince the upcoming generation that sustainable development was more than just another fad, particularly since it concerned that very same generation's life chances?

Hans Opschoor's professional life touches each of the foregoing questions, from his doctoral dissertation on *The Economic Valuation of Environmental Pollution* (Amsterdam, 1971) until the granting of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in which he participated (Oslo, 2007). After 1987, Opschoor was committed to applying economic analysis to environmental issues in the context of sustainable development; first and foremost as an academic, but as I will argue, just as much as a committed social democrat working in the Dutch Labour party to change political priorities. Opschoor is also the concerned (post-) Christian ecumenicalist, contributing to the reformulation of moral priorities. He is the intellectual, convincing fellow members of The Netherlands Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences of the need to take a new look at climate change. All the while, working as a teacher, translating research results for the next generation of national and international students, be they in The Netherlands, Botswana or China. Last but not least, he practises what he preaches on the Board of Royal Haskoning, a company engaged in sustainable development.

In a way, Opschoor's academic career between 1971 and 2009 coincides with the sea change associated with the original benign neglect of the 1970s, until the conversion of climate change negationists some 40 years later. Opschoor's biography reads like a case study in 'making climate change' as he sought to change public perceptions, problem formulations

and political priority setting, for it took a concerted effort spanning very different realms of life to make that change.

Hans Opschoor first became aware of the limits to industrial growth as a research assistant in 1966 to Prof. Harm Booij at the then Rotterdam School of Economics, and soon became concerned with welfare theory and health economics. By 1971, he had moved to the Institute for Environmental Studies at the Vrije Universiteit van Amsterdam, where he stayed until 1978, when he left to go to Botswana. During his three-year stay there, he became acquainted with African environmental and rural development realities; at the same time, he got the taste for international education. His appointment as Director of the Institute for Environmental Studies brought him back to Amsterdam for eight years. In 1990, he took up the prestigious post as Chairman of the Netherlands Council for Environment and Nature Research through which he came into close contact with politicians and policymakers. In 1996, his love for international education brought him to the position of Rector at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, where he revamped the research programme and remained involved in teaching and research. In 1998, he became a member of the prestigious Netherlands Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences, which allowed him to engage fellow academics on the urgency of environmental research and policymaking. As an Honorary Professor of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and at Nanjing University, Opschoor formed a link between European and Asian academics.

In The Netherlands, Hans Opschoor was, between 2002 and 2007, chair of The Netherlands Research School for Resource Studies and Development (CERES). He saw the importance of an international agency for doctoral training, for research coordination and for stimulating a more active science–policy–society interface. He made the Institute for Social Studies into a core member of CERES and supported attempts to develop a valuation tool for assessing quantity and quality of scientific production.

His academic work resulted in (contributions to) 13 books and more than 175 scientific articles. Some of these, such as the ones on *GNP and Sustainable Income Measures* and *Chain Management in Environmental Policy* have received wide academic acclaim and are cited in this volume as well. Still his intellectual interests are much broader. They include essays on traffic noise; capacity development; social justice; knowledge sharing; biodiversity; economic, social and cultural rights; North–South research cooperation; the ecological footprint; ecumenism and ecology; disarmament; and, of course, the intricacies of the Botswana range cattle system. See appendix for a sample of Hans' many publications on sustainable development and climate change.

Yet, Hans Opschoor is not just the successful academic; he is a public intellectual who engages in debate, who raises his voice in passionate disagreement and who carefully tests a moral stance against his commitment to Christian values and social-democratic principles of equity and justice. If his friends have prepared this *Liber Amicorum* for him, it is in recognition of his work in Rio de Janeiro and in Johannesburg, for his contributions to international peace and justice movements and for his inspiring lectures as a teacher and committed colleague.

How do we make change happen? Only by continued engagement. Through 40 years of professional and personal commitment to environmental economics, Hans Opschoor contributed to changes in public opinion from benign neglect to general concern. He is one of those thousands of IPCC members honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize. He will remain the respected public intellectual who is not swayed by new ideas, but who generates them. His friends all over the world and at the Institute of Social Studies prepared this volume for him as another contribution to making climate change.

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