
Preface

The aim of this handbook is to bring together in a systematic structure advanced but accessible surveys of a wide range of topics in 'environmental and resource economics' (E&RE). These are aimed principally at informing environmental economists about recent progress. E&RE has developed into various specialized sub-areas, indicated by the main structure of the book. Many new tools, theories and empirical studies have appeared over the last decade, which are only partly covered by other handbooks, monographs and advanced textbooks. Environmental economists – whether involved in teaching, research or management – will want to maintain a grand overview of developments in E&RE, otherwise it is virtually impossible to assess the partiality of particular insights. This has been my main motivation for organizing this handbook.

The contributions to the book are generally at an advanced level, beyond the undergraduate textbook level, and require in some cases a certain minimum knowledge of economics or environmental economics. In this sense, the book could act as a useful complement to an advanced textbook in graduate courses. In addition, many chapters can certainly be useful as concise introductions to specific topics in E&RE for a wider group of readers than economists, notably researchers in the natural and social sciences involved in environmental research. Most contributions keep technical discussion to a minimum, focusing instead on a verbal presentation of the main ideas and arguments, and complementing these with technical statements only where these are regarded as being essential to the exposition.

Without doubt, most readers will judge Parts IV, V, VI, VIII and IX as the main distinguishing feature of this handbook relative to other handbooks on E&RE. International and spatial aspects of environmental policy have received a great deal of attention in the last decade, and the same holds for empirical and theoretical macroeconomic research into growth and sustainability. Parts IV, V and VI deal with these issues from many angles. Part VIII contains various contributions that provide basic information on relevant insights from natural sciences, as well as on broader perspectives such as ethics and economic evolution in relation to environmental economics and policy. These contributions have been specifically oriented towards the needs and basic knowledge of environmental economists, but may also be of interest to a wider group of readers. They link clearly to discussions in the younger 'sister field' of ecological economics, which can be regarded as being more pluralistic in approach than conventional environmental and

resource economics. These two fields are, however, closely related, and study similar problems. I think that mutual understanding, interaction and debate between them will be important for development of each. Lastly, Part IX contains accessible introductions to methods that are often used in E&RE, along with short surveys of main applications. Apart from serving as general introductions and surveys, these chapters may provide background information for discussions in other parts of the book where reference is made to specific methods. It should be noted that the other three larger Parts, II, III and VII – although more in line with E&RE as it is traditionally structured, that is, resource economics, environmental policy theory and economic valuation – also contain various chapters that offer innovative perspectives on important topics. Finally, the opening and closing Parts, I and X, offer an overview of the book, a short history of E&RE, and monodisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives on the future of E&RE.

All contributions have been personally commissioned, and I have tried to coordinate the outlines and contents of the various contributions so as to avoid overlap between them, unless it involved alternative (conflicting or complementary) perspectives. Draft chapters were revised in a first round on the basis of my suggestions. Each chapter was then reviewed by two or three referees and revised at least once more on the basis of their comments and criticism. In spite of the suggested completeness, it is inevitable that some readers will feel that certain topics are missing from this collection. I have tried to indicate a few of these in Chapter I, along with suggestions for further reading. This chapter also provides a short overview of the contents and particularities of each chapter in the book, and gives a systematic account of topics that receive attention in multiple chapters.

I hope that this handbook will serve as a useful source of information on past and ongoing research in E&RE and that it will allow readers from both inside and outside E&RE to appreciate the subtlety and diversity of analyses, methods and insights in E&RE. Moreover, it is my wish that the book will contribute to a mutual understanding of supporters of different perspectives on problems and research methods in environmental and resource economics.

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