

Governing by the price signal? On the performativity of corporate carbon pricing

Raphaël Olivier, Université Paris Dauphine – PSL & Climate Economics Chair

Under the supervision of Pr. Nicolas Berland and Pr. Anna Creti

How and why do companies implement carbon prices internally? Anchored in management sciences, which are considered a porous branch of social sciences, this thesis mobilizes interdisciplinary resources to answer this question.

First, a reflection on the concepts of action, power and technique is developed by re-reading the actant-network theory in the light of the Foucauldian perspective. With the preliminary reformulation of the concept of performativity, an innovative triptych is proposed. It distinguishes the generic process of agencing from the states of dispositive and agencement, the two latter being differentiated by the way in which intention and temporality frame their existence. The interest of this theoretical operation is to contribute to works that think about the responsibility of organizations and individuals. Also, the analysis of the mode of governmental power through the rationalities, programs and techniques that compose it suggests that the incentive logic, as opposed to the prescriptive one, is a way of conducting conducts that is particularly prevalent in the contemporary West.

Then, this theoretical framework is applied to carbon pricing, conceived as a particular technique. The concern is then to highlight the capacities for action and the power networks of this form of economic-managerial instrumentation of climate change consequences. To do this, a genealogical method is used on two different levels of analysis.

On the one hand, a genealogy of the carbon market agencement is carried out, to show the significant role of corporate carbon prices in the construction of climate policy. This genealogy is mainly based on secondary data from a review of the academic literature in various social science disciplines and a review of the grey literature.

On the other hand, a genealogy of the energy company's, anonymously called En-Ut, climate change consequence management dispositive, is being carried out to show the difficulties and potentialities of decarbonation related to carbon pricing practices. This genealogy is mainly based on primary data from confidential and public archives, interviews, and observations.

Recommendations are made based on these two genealogies. They deal respectively with public climate policies relating to Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, and with the place of management control in the climate strategies of energy-utility companies. The interest is then to create a dialogue between these two levels of empirical analysis, the combination of which provides a detailed understanding of what is at stake in the relationship between business and climate change.