

Acknowledgments

This book is nothing like I imagined it would be when I embarked on a study of the transnational history of the risk assessment-risk management framework. Like many others, I knew I needed to study in-depth what had happened at the National Research Council, which published *Risk Assessment in the Federal Government*, or the “Red Book,” in 1983, often presented as the unique point-source of the framework. I also knew that the Red Book earned an aura because William Ruckelshaus gave it visibility, in a moment when it was working to restore the authority of the Environmental Protection Agency. As I made progress through archives and interviews, though, it very quickly became clear that the institutionalization of risk decision-making and of the EPA were inseparable. They have emerged together, gave form and credibility to one another, and changed jointly over time. Risk decision-making is the bureaucratic translation of the ambition to govern uncertain hazards in a rational, optimal, and scientific manner. It is an instance of Max Weber’s ideal type of the bureaucracy as administration legitimized by expertise, except that in this case science does not represent a historical force progressing in our societies in a linear fashion. It gives shape to bureaucratic institutions from within, responding to their difficulties to govern risks and the public controversies they give rise to.

Many people helped me along the way, and were indeed essential to make the most out of this moment of serendipity: Pierre-Benoit Joly and Mike Power saw this work in its early stages and helped me bring it to fruition. The conversations with them were essential to gear up to perform this research. Two persons made the journey with me: I worked for a couple of years with Soraya Boudia on the subject, which was a great pleasure and an important source of inspiration, and method. I have had recurrent

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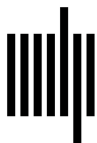
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