



## Spain: words that succeed and climate policies that fail

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### Abstract

Official figures submitted in 2002 showing the trends of GH gases during the period 1990–2000 indicate that Spain is a long way from in attaining its commitments with the international and national programmes on climate change. Both structural and cultural factors are used to explain the evolution in climate politics and the growth of its emissions with particular emphasis given to the lack of public participation in this respect. It is also argued that Spain will have either to buy emission reductions abroad or/and find new ways to reduce GH in a more decentralised manner in tune with its current Autonomous Communities' (ACs) political organisation.

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### 1. Introduction

Climate change issues are coming to the forefront of international environmental policy discussions. In addition to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the UNFCCC reports, extensive and valuable reviews are now available describing the different arenas, and actors as well as explaining the opportunities and pitfalls of current negotiations and mechanisms. Contrasting and even confrontational views on these matters can be found in works like those of [Downing et al. \(1999\)](#), [Grubb \(1999\)](#), [Jäger and O'Riordan \(1996\)](#), [Luterbacher and Sprinz \(2001\)](#), [Michaelowa \(2001\)](#), [Ott and Sachs \(2000\)](#), [Social Learning Group \(2001\)](#), [Tàbara \(2002\)](#), [Verweij \(2001\)](#), and [Victor \(2001\)](#).

However, in the present paper, I am not intending to review the existing and vast literature in this matter but will concentrate my attention on describing and analysing the general and current situation

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of climate change politics in Spain<sup>1</sup> and in particular, with regard to the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol and the European Climate Change Programme (ECCP; EC, 2001). Although climate change issues have been, in theory, on the Spanish political agenda for over a decade, it is only now, as a result of the increasing pressures received *from outside*, mainly from the EU and the UNFCCC, that new, albeit very weak, administrative structures and organisational changes are coming into shape in a more visible manner. Spain lags far behind its European partners in innovation and decisiveness in tackling this complex socio-environmental issue. Indeed, Spain, which emits 10% of all European Community GH gases, is the country furthest away in attaining its emissions targets showing the largest EU distance-to-target indicator, that is, of 26.7 points (EEA, 2002). Thus, it is very unlikely that effective domestic changes can be put in place timely to reduce the growth of greenhouse emissions for the fulfilment of the Kyoto commitments and to participate pro-actively in the set of measures proposed by the ECCP. For a long time, Spanish politics have framed climate change either as a non-issue or as a burden for economic growth and competitiveness, and as a result still suffers from such passivity and inertia which are now very difficult to overcome.

## 2. Evolution of the greenhouse gas emissions in Spain

Tables 1–3 summarise the evolution of six greenhouse gas emissions in Spain which correspond to carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFC), perfluorocarbons (PFC), and hexafluoride (SF<sub>6</sub>) during the period 1990–2000 as well as its distribution per sectors.

Greenhouse emissions in Spain have already increased 33.71% during the period 1990–2000 which means that the current emissions have already more than doubled the limit of 15% to which it committed itself by the year 2008–2012. According to some sources (Santamarta, 2002) by that time Spanish greenhouse emissions could be 60% higher than they were in the base-line year.

With regard to general trends, one can observe that total emissions rose noticeably after 1994, with a spectacular increase after 1998. Energy was the sector with the highest overall contribution to greenhouse emissions—around 76.3% during the period of 1990–2000, while dissolvent and other products use was the lowest (around 0.45% between the same period). At the same time, the sector with the highest GHG emissions growth was waste, while the lowest corresponded to agriculture. In relation to key sources, and according to data for 1999, the major contributors were energy (23.3%) followed by transport (22.1%; showing these an increase of 44.7% since 1990) and in the third place manufacturing industries and construction (14.4%).

If we turn at gases, carbon dioxide is the most emitted gas and hexafluoride the least emitted. In relation to trends, hexafluoride, mainly from industry and electrical equipment, together with hydrofluorocarbons, yielded the largest growth in emissions in CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, while the smallest increase corresponded to perfluorocarbons and nitrous oxide.

Therefore, we can resume the current situation by saying that Spain is the country that is performing worst in attaining its commitments to curb domestic emissions growth in the EU. In addition, there are little signs such trends can be reversed in the short or mid term. As it will be argued later, this will also

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I refer to as *Spain* as the federal state of Spain, composed by 17 Autonomous Communities (ACs), some of them, as it is the case of Andalusia, the Basc Country, Catalonia or Galicia have very distinct cultural traditions and now also political arrangements which explain many of the different domestic approaches and responses to environmental issues, including climate change.

Table 1  
Evolution of greenhouse gases emissions in CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (Gg) in Spain per sector (1990–2000)

Sector	Base-line year 1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	
Energy	216.533	216.533	224.248	234.456	221.601	232.613	244.324	232.218	250.600	258.268	283.103	294.355
Industrial processes	25.015	22.773	21.670	20.412	18.852	22.568	25.015	25.404	27.456	28.659	31.394	32.773
Dissolvent use and other products use	1.343	1.343	1.363	1.360	1.291	1.327	1.368	1.458	1.538	1.641	1.676	1.709
Agriculture	36.378	36.378	36.376	35.907	34.603	36.391	35.659	39.296	38.437	39.745	40.740	42.569
Waste	9.401	9.401	9.913	10.637	11.292	11.773	11.769	12.524	13.136	13.615	14.006	14.581
Total sectors CO eq. (Gg)	288.670	286.428	293.570	302.773	287.638	304.672	318.135	310.899	331.168	341.930	370.920	385.987
Land change use and forest sector	-29.252	-29.252	-29.252	-29.252	-29.252	-29.252	-29.252	-29.252	-29.252	-29.252	-29.252	-29.252
GDP variation	-	3.7	2.3	0.7	-1.2	2.1	2.8	2.4	3.9	4.3	4.0	4.1
Energy	100.00	100.00	103.56	108.28	102.34	107.43	112.83	107.24	115.73	119.27	130.74	135.94
Industrial processes	100.00	91.04	86.63	81.60	75.36	90.22	100	101.55	109.76	114.57	125.50	131.01
Dissolvent use and other products use	100.00	100.00	101.48	101.28	96.16	98.80	101.87	108.58	114.55	122.21	124.83	127.28
Agriculture	100.00	100.00	100.00	98.71	95.12	100.04	98.02	108.02	105.66	109.26	111.99	117.02
Waste	100.00	100.00	105.44	113.15	120.11	125.23	125.84	133.21	139.72	144.82	148.98	155.09
Total sectors	100.00	99.22	101.70	104.89	99.64	105.54	110.21	107.70	114.72	118.45	128.49	133.71

Source: MIMAM (2002c) and INE (2002).

Table 2  
Evolution of greenhouse gases emissions in CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent and GDP in Spain

GHG	Base-line year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
CO <sub>2</sub>	227.233	227.233	234.518	243.023	229.942	242.657	254.411	242.215	261.369	270.130	295.233	306.632
CH <sub>4</sub>	29.648	29.648	30.038	30.860	31.281	32.080	32.822	34.760	35.443	36.552	37.306	38.363
N <sub>2</sub> O	26.260	26.260	25.987	25.282	23.295	25.616	25.372	27.730	26.942	27.715	28.988	30.497
HFC	4.645	2.403	2.179	2.763	2.258	3.458	4.645	5.334	6.507	6.643	8.513	9.878
PFC	790	828.41	787	781	794	785	790	759	784	750	696	409
SF <sub>6</sub>	94	56	61	64	68	76	94	101.34	121.87	140.57	184.42	208.56
Total CO <sub>2</sub> eq. (Gg)	288.670	286.428	293.570	302.773	287.638	304.672	318.135	310.899	331.168	341.930	370.920	385.987
CO <sub>2</sub>	100	100.00	103.20	106.95	101.19	106.79	111.96	106.59	115.02	118.88	129.93	134.94
CH <sub>4</sub>	100	100.00	101.32	104.09	105.51	108.20	110.71	117.24	119.55	123.29	125.83	129.40
N <sub>2</sub> O	100	100.00	98.96	96.28	88.71	97.55	96.62	105.60	102.60	105.54	110.39	116.14
HFC	100	51.73	46.91	59.47	48.62	74.44	100	114.83	140.08	142.99	183.26	212.63
PFC	100	104.81	99.59	98.92	100.43	99.34	100	96.02	99.23	94.84	88.00	51.72
SF <sub>6</sub>	100	59.57	65.51	68.18	72.13	80.89	100	108.29	130.23	150.21	197.06	222.86
Annual index	100	99.22	101.70	104.89	99.64	105.54	110.21	107.70	114.72	118.45	128.49	133.71

Source: MIMAM (2002c).

Table 3  
Key sources in Spain for 1999

Key source	Gas	Level assessment (%)	Cumulative total (%)
Energy industries	CO <sub>2</sub>	23.3	23
Transport	CO <sub>2</sub>	22.1	45
Manufacturing industries and construction	CO <sub>2</sub>	14.4	60
Other sectors	CO <sub>2</sub>	7.8	68
Agricultural soils	N <sub>2</sub> O	4.9	72
Mineral products	CO <sub>2</sub>	4.7	77
Manure management	N <sub>2</sub> O	4.2	81
Solid waste disposal on land	CH <sub>4</sub>	4.0	85
Enteric fermentation	CH <sub>4</sub>	3.5	89
Manure management	CH <sub>4</sub>	2.1	91
Production of halocarbons and SF <sub>6</sub>	HCFs	1.7	93
Oil and natural gas	CH <sub>4</sub>	0.7	93
Consumption of halocarbons and SF <sub>6</sub>	HCFs	0.7	94
Chemical industry	N <sub>2</sub> O	0.6	95

Level assessment by UNFCCC secretariat. *Source*: UNFCCC (2002).

have important implications in terms of its need to resort to flexible mechanisms: Spain will either have to buy emission reductions abroad, as it has proved incapable or sufficiently interested to cut its own emissions at home or, as I will argue in the discussion, find a new approach to do so more in accord with its current Autonomous Communities administrative structure.

### 3. Climate rhetorics and non-politics in Spain: words are not enough to cut emissions growth

Spanish rhetorical discourses on climate change already occupy a noticeable amount of official documents and plans presented both in national and international arenas.<sup>2</sup> However, and even though climate change has been present in domestic policy talks for more than a decade, Spain still is characterised by a lack of a global, direct, explicit and/or accountable strategy on this matter. This lack of transparency and decidedness makes it impossible for social actors to intervene both in the formulation of particular objective at the national or regional level and improve the mechanisms necessary to comply with its international obligations. The particular socio-economic structure and geographic situation of the country should provide a high potential for contributing to curbing the growth of GH emissions and for taking a significant role in the use of flexibility mechanisms of the European Programme on Climate Change (EPCC). This could be the case, for instance, if Spain were to take advantage of their potential for renewable sources of energy, mainly wind or sun, if several industrial sectors such as chemical were to become pro-active and involved, or by implementing sequestration strategies through forest policies (Labandeira, 1997). Nevertheless, climate change has and is still being framed mainly as a threat to growth and not as an opportunity for social, economic and ecological development and/or modernisation. To a large extent, environmental politics have been understood as symbolic demands with little attention needed to be paid

<sup>2</sup> See MIMAM (1997, 2002a,b,c); UNFCCC (1994); and for reviews, UNFCCC (1996, 2000, 2002).

in real changes and actions.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Spain is missing out on many of the opportunities that climate change offers in terms of developing new research and development strategies, building cooperation agreements with international partners, as well as expanding international environmental service markets.

To avoid embarrassment at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio in 1992, the Spanish government created the National Commission for Climate Change (*Comisión Nacional del Clima*) just few days before the celebration of the conference. The commission was unable to complete a final version of a national plan for climate change, let alone present it before the Council of Ministers. However, Spain signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 1993 and the Kyoto Protocol in April 1998.

Given that the National Commission for Climate Change proved to be largely inoperative, in 1998 it was substituted by the National Council of Climate Change (*Consejo Nacional del Clima*; [Alonso Oroza, 1999](#)). Originally, the council was presided by the Minister of the Environment and was composed by five working groups together with a technical secretary. The working groups were: (a) industry and energy, (b) agriculture and environment, (c) inter-department coordination, (d) transport, and (e) institutional relations ([Mas Garcia, 2001](#)). In the former structure, there was no direct representation of the 17 Autonomous Communities and there were several overlapping functions and tasks. For example, the Ministry of the Environment was both at the presidency, in the working group of agriculture and environment and in the working group of institutional relations, while the National Institute of Meteorology initially involved both the technical secretary working group and at the inter-departmental working group. Given such circumstances, in July 2001, the functions and structure of the Spanish Office of Climate Change (*Oficina Española de Cambio Climático*) were regulated and assimilated the functions of the technical secretary of the former council. Next, in November 2001, a Decree of the Spanish government decided to reform the whole composition and functions of the National Council of Climate Change. Two types of membership of the new council were established, the plenary and the vocal members. The plenary is presided by the Minister of the Environment together with (a) a Vice-President, the Secretary General of the Environment, (b) the secretary of the Spanish Office of Climate Change, and (c) a representative of 12 ministries. The vocal consultancy group is formed by: (a) five General Directors of research institutes and other governmental agencies, (b) a representative of each Autonomous Community, (c) three representative of local municipalities, (d) two representative of business organisations, (e) a representative of chambers of commerce, (f) two experts designated by the Minister of the Environment, (g) three representatives of ecologist organisations, (h) two members of trade unions, and (i) two representatives of consumer associations. It is aimed that the council meet at least in plenary once a year and in permanent commission once per semester in order to elaborate, assess and monitor the elusive and never accomplished Spanish Strategy on Climate Change. Nevertheless, and although the number of human resources involved now in climate politics have been largely expanded and reoriented towards both new agencies, the legislation that regulates them explicitly states that their functioning will not imply an increase or extra funding than that already available from the Ministry of the Environment or other public agencies that compose them ([BOE, 2001a,b](#); [MIMAM, 2002a](#)).

Before Spain signed the Kyoto Protocol and entered into the internal bubble allocation system of the EU, given the differential economic development the country, Spain was allowed to increase up to 17% until the year 2010 in relation to the levels of 1990. However, and due to the agreements reached at the Council of Luxembourg in June 1998, this percentage was reduced to 15%. Given that in June 2001 the

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<sup>3</sup> As pointed out in the classic work of [Edelman \(1977\)](#).

EU also agreed that it would ratify the Kyoto Protocol and that Spain was to preside the EU the following year, on 1 February 2002 the Spanish government decided to send the protocol for approval to the Spanish Parliament. At that time, Spain had not yet sent the National Communication in which the inventory of GH emissions should be detailed along with the strategy specifying the different measures to be taken (Rivera, 2002). Yet, the Third Communication submitted before the UNFCCC in Spring 2002 does not present a detailed plan quantifying the impact of the different measures on curbing emissions growth (MIMAM, 2002b). Nevertheless, Spain ratified the Kyoto Protocol on 31 May 2002.

So far, most of the actions taken in Spain that can contribute to curbing growth of GH emissions have not been the result of an explicit, national and integrated strategy on climate change but derive from the application of EU directives or are the result of sectorial plans. Among the cited indirect mitigation measures, which in fact do not suppose a constriction to economic growth but a further stimulus to it, stated in such communication are the following:

- (a) *Energy sector*: includes a national plan for the promotion of renewable energies (2000–2010) with the objective that at least 12% of the total production of energy by the year 2010 comes from this type of sources; the application of the directive on large combustion facilities is also mentioned here.
- (b) *Transport*: incentive plans for vehicle renewal (and thus helping to buy more cars), regular control of vehicles emissions, and cosmetic promotion of alternative means of transport as well as improvements in the design of highways and further construction of ring roads; new public investments in railways followed by their progressive privatisation.
- (c) *Residential and end product consumption*: some scant measures relate to improving energy efficiency in buildings, mainly from the application of the Directive 93/76, as well as some dissemination campaigns for the acquisition of more energy efficient utilities at home.
- (d) *Industry*: two programmes for industry, one related to industrial design and production and the other to natural resources have been put in place, with some investments oriented to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (total investments lower in 2001 than in the year 2000).
- (e) *Waste*: some measures directed mainly to the reduction of methane and carbon dioxide emissions generated from urban waste and the use of biogas for the production of electricity.
- (f) *Agriculture, cattle and forest*: measures for the reduction of mineral fertilisers and good practices in the management of manure that should contribute to curb nitrous oxide emissions; measures for the control of carbon dioxide and methane emissions from burning stubble and from animal feed; and a reforestation and forestry plan which also includes some research and modelling objectives.<sup>4</sup>
- (g) *Research and education*: several projects are now carried out by the national institute of meteorology; a national research and development plan was set up in 1995 and Spain also participates in several R&D programmes of the EU. Some scant educational actions are cited, and in the case of the university courses mentioned, but none relates directly or explicitly to climate change.

None of the submitted mitigation ‘measures’ in the National Communication of Spain before the UNFCCC have been quantified in terms of their contribution for curbing CO<sub>2</sub> eq. emissions for the year

<sup>4</sup> At the beginning of 2002, the Minister of the Environment met the National Council of Forest in order to assess the Spanish forest strategy, which may be able to discount up to 60 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent in the next 30 years (Mardones, 2002b). Noticeably enough, however, and given that the Autonomous Communities cannot participate directly in international negotiations on climate change, the cost and management of such plan, will be supported and carried by the Autonomous Communities.

2010. Only 9 measures have done so for the year 2005 at the national level—out of the 75 mentioned without counting research and education—and relate to agriculture, plus four which correspond to the Autonomous Community of Castilla y León on energy policy. With regard to adaptation measures, the National Hydrological Plan, which aims to further exploit hydrological resources and which has been recently highly contested by a wide range of NGOs and academic communities, is mentioned; in relation to the adaptation package, coast and seafront protection together with some measures in the agriculture and forestry sectors are cited. It is clear then, that we face again another long list of big words and vague intentions with little possibilities of being fully attained or effective in terms of cutting the real growth in GH emissions.

Moreover, one can observe the beginning of emerging contrasts between ACs and local municipalities in relation to climate change responses. In Spain, local authorities and ACs are responsible for developing and implementing housing programmes and have many competences in environmental issues (full competences in communities like Catalonia, a region with a larger population than Norway), which allow notable opportunities for intervention in the climate change policy at the local and regional level. This is particularly true for sectors such as waste and energy, as is the case of Navarre, one of the Autonomous Communities where wind power generation is most developed. Also, for instance, Barcelona was the first city in Spain to have legislation on solar power. This local legislation obliged all new buildings and those which consumed more than 2000 l of hot water daily to install solar heat systems. Barcelona, which signed the Heidelberg Declaration commitments on climate change, has also recently approved a plan to augment the energy efficiency of the city. By the year 2010 the capacity of urban use of photovoltaic panels is expected to increase to achieve a total of 14.14 MW. In Barcelona, several public buses are now running on hydrogen ([Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2002](#)).

In sum, however, at the time of writing this paper (spring 2002) and from the documentation reviewed, one can definitively say that Spain still does not have an integrated and detailed strategy to comply with its commitments with the Kyoto Protocol and to curb greenhouse emissions growth. For instance, apart from the weaknesses already stated, in the Third Spanish Communication before the UNFCCC no reference is provided on *how* the Spanish government and the different actors will participate in the flexible mechanisms, nor in particular, in the emission trading system, as stated in the EPCC. This makes the whole (non) Spanish policy on climate change subject to many inefficiencies and inequities with at the same time entail losing many opportunities and benefits for early action in this regard.

#### 4. Discussion

Very likely, Spanish GH emissions will be around four times larger than it committed itself after the Kyoto agreements for the period 2008–2012. In the year 2000 they had already increased up to 33.71%—that is, more than double its targets—and no explicit and accountable strategy has been opened to public debate to know how Spanish authorities will deal with its non-compliance. However, I believe that like a boomerang, the throw of Spanish Climate Policy as far away as possible from the current political agenda will surely come back in the next few years, as a result of external pressures with more perverse and strong effects on Spanish economy and politics, which in turn, will make it even harder to the attendant effective measures and instruments to be adequately accepted and implemented.

The environment still has a very low salience in the Spanish political agenda. Spain shows some of the lowest percentages of green votes and environmental civic membership in Europe, the former being below

5% in almost all types of elections and the latter around 1% of the whole population. In contrast with the political culture of many of the Anglo-Saxon countries, where environmental problems, measures and conflicts tend to be discussed and oriented towards civic society (e.g. by means of large voluntary public campaigns to set aside private land—in Spain, as it occurs in many other Mediterranean and some central European countries), environmental issues tend to be oriented towards the State. It is within the reduced circles of government and the different levels of administration where interested parties expect to obtain regulations and enforcement measures which then will oblige private parties to act accordingly and respect the new institutional framework for individual action. This environmental political culture, which confers a stronger authority to the State and to the community above the individual at the same time means that it demands less commitment from the citizen in terms of individual participation and reflection, in turn has resulted in a peculiar approach to the way environmental questions are dealt with in Spain. On the one hand, and in certain areas, it has allowed for greater levels of protection than for their European partners, by means of regulatory measures as is the case of nature land conservation. But on the other hand, it has led to a situation where many of those improvements in environmental quality which required strong individual pro-environmental action and organisation before the administration most urgent priorities have been very low if not completely paralysed.

Similarly, most of the social actors that usually contribute to the perception of climate change as a social and political problem in other western contexts, have not played much of a significant role in Spain. The lack of an environmental movement able to overcome the level of action of the ACs and even less to deal with global problems, as well as the weakness of national epistemic communities, and the low level of importance placed on environmental issues by the mass media can explain partly the lack of collective action in this area. The inexistence of a green party with representation at the Spanish Parliament is indicative of this political fragmentation in relation to environmental issues. But above all, it seems that Spain, having emerged from a situation of dictatorship and relative underdevelopment in the 1970s and trying to catch up with the economic standards of living of its European partners, has grossly relegated environmental issues to the very end of the political portfolio. And when these issues have penetrated political discourses, it has been as a reaction to external pressures, mainly from the EU directives and regulations. This is why Spanish environmental administrative capacity has always been far behind its needs, reactive and sluggish, unable to incorporate complex and global issues like climate change that go beyond the boundaries of its perceived national priorities and competences.

Thus, climate change policy in Spain has been and to a large extent still is perceived either as a non-issue or as a threat to economic growth and competitiveness.<sup>5</sup> However, although very slowly and in a very peculiar way, such perceptions seem to be changing and re-framed. Climate change now offers new and very attractive windows of opportunity for Spanish corporate interests which have little to do with the improvement of environmental issues, of safety and/or sustainability standards. To give an example, the former conservative Spanish Minister of the Environment, an allegedly very keen supporter of the nuclear lobby, Ms. Isabel Tocino, is pressing hard together with Spanish power companies for support for nuclear sources of energy as a means to meet the Kyoto commitments. Such corporate demands are receiving serious consideration at the EU level by the current Vice-President of the EC and Transport Commissioner, Ms. Loyola de Palacio, who is coincidentally from the same party, despite the fact that

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<sup>5</sup> For instance, in March 2002, the Spanish Business Organisation asked the government to postpone the transposition of the Emission Trade Directive. According to some latest press news, the application in Spain of the Kyoto Protocol will cost Spain at least 1.650 million €, that is the 0.1% of the GNP (Mardones, 2002a).

the EPCC explicitly advocates non-nuclear renewable sources of energy. After over a decade of inaction in curbing emissions growth, Spain, together with its echoing and amplifying conservative voice at the EU, defends that there is no other way to meet Kyoto goals than to push harder, in an unsustainable and high-risk manner, the nuclear wheel (Carcar, 2002).

One alternative would be to consider another possibility to meet the Kyoto Protocol commitments in decentralised countries like Spain. This would be to allow for greater opportunities for different ACs or regions to participate in some of the existing climate change flexibility mechanisms like emission trading as if they were countries in their full status. Creating a domestic emissions trading system within the country would also increase the feasibility and flexibility of existing policy instruments and might adapt them more closely to current administrative reality. In my view, this will have several positive immediate consequences, like increasing the regional capacity to monitor and account for the own emissions, create more cost-efficient specific plans and strategies to meet their own objectives and to follow own measures within a national plan, and to avoid, as is the case of Spain, recurrent problems of environmental coordination between its 17 Autonomous Communities.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, and as a result of the large administrative reform that followed the end of the dictatorship in the late 1970s, most environmental competences were transferred to the Autonomous Communities. In those days, environmental issues may have seemed—even less than now—of little importance in relation to other issues that were reserved to the State. However, and according to Aguilar (1997, pp. 120–126), the transference of environmental functions to the ACs was done without a legal framework able to provide homogeneous state criteria for its adequate management. In her opinion, such process yielded confusion, disorganisation, and lack of vertical coordination in the environmental administration. In fact, when the Spanish Environmental Ministry was first constituted in 1996, environmental competences were already distributed among 61 regional sub-ministries and agencies. Nevertheless, some ACs governments are now learning to react faster and in some cases even more effectively in adopting some environmental EU directives than the State as a whole (as the IIPC IPPC Directive in Catalonia and others). Despite some pressures and tensions, it seems unrealistic to believe that these regional governments will give back to the central government those administrative gains achieved during the last two decades and particularly, in those matters of increasing development implications such as are now environmental issues.

Obviously, a more important role given to the ACs as climate actors would have important economic and political consequences. It is no surprise that some of the most pro-active regional governments in environmental issues in Spain are also the most industrialised ones and which currently enjoy higher levels of per capita income. But these regions are also some of the higher greenhouse gas emitters, and so, if the criterion of common shared but differentiated responsibility were to be applied, these regions also should pay more or do more to compensate for their emissions, which in turn, would make even more necessary to develop some kind of regional ET system. In this way, inaction from some regions or from the State as a whole could be partly compensated by a greater involvement of those institutional actors which traditionally have also been more active and have now the administrative competences in dealing with the environment in Spain.

In conclusion, the low-profile history of climate change politics in Spain is characterised by a series of administrative hiccups that result from ‘expected surprises’ when confronted with unavoidable international tasks that Spain had to perform almost in a compulsory way—e.g. first at the Rio conference, or now, at the Presidency of the EU. To what extent such reactive, messy and diluted responses materialise

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<sup>6</sup> Some ACs are also beginning to produce their own GHG inventories.

into effective implementation of the ECCP and Kyoto commitments, the growth trends of GHG emissions and real actions will tell. And what they have told us so far is not precisely what the words and good intentions have told us that they would do. Needless to say, additional and strong measures, different to those of the indirect kind now being adopted are needed if Spain is to fulfil its commitments before the EPCC and Kyoto. Furthermore, if eventually Spain is not able to curb emissions at home as a whole nation, then, it will have to buy reductions abroad or do so in a more regionally decentralised way, or both.

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