

Preface

This work is the fruit of an initiative on the part of the University of Liège, which invited me to occupy the Francqui Chair and give a series of lectures during the 1984–1985 academic year.

The theme of the work has been inspired by a certain radicalization of positions vis-à-vis our decentralized economies, a radicalization that has no doubt been encouraged by the crisis. In the light of recent works in industrial organization, it seemed useful to present the analyses that underlie such positions and to show their contributions and also their limits and the dangers inherent in their normative use.

Although this work is principally based on theoretical studies and uses empirical research only occasionally, technical analyses in the text have been deliberately limited, and the notes provide suggestions for further development of the ideas and for complementary reading. For this reason each chapter incorporates corresponding notes and references.

Before delivering myself to the invisible reader or being relegated to the “hypothetical shelf,” as Italo Calvino calls it, I must thank C. d’Aspremont, P. Dehez, and P. Regibeau, who, by agreeing to read one version of this text, have perhaps enabled me to reach a second best solution.

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