Preface

This book constitutes the culmination of our research efforts, offering an integrated theoretical approach bringing together the literature on (environmental) policy instruments and (environmental) governance as well as institutional theory and policy learning and transfer. It aims to fill a gap in the existing literature, by using new empirical research to bridge the new policy instrument literature with the new governance literature. In other words, this book assesses whether new environmental policy instruments constitute important touchstones for a critical assessment of widely made claims that traditional (tools of) government has been giving way to new (modes of) governance in Europe (and other highly developed regions) over the last decade.

This book provides a critical assessment of the use of ‘new’ environmental policy instruments in European (environmental) governance across five different European jurisdictions – Austria, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (UK) as well as the European Union (EU) – over a period of four decades starting in the early 1970s. But it also focuses on wider theoretical debates in public policy, particularly policy learning and policy transfer. While much of the existing environmental policy instrument literature tends to examine only one level of governance, this book systematically assesses the member state level and the EU level, whilst also taking into account important (policy instrument) developments on the international level.

It is based on original research which was undertaken between 2000 and 2012. This approximately one decade long period of research should not be interpreted as a misunderstanding of Paul Sabatier’s advice that public policy should be studied over a period of at least one decade. Rather it is the fortunate result of additional funding which we received to continue our original research on ‘new’ environmental policy instruments (NEPIs). The original project was funded (project number L216252013) by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) under its Future Governance Programme with its highly supportive director, Professor Edward Page. Our understanding of European environmental governance in general and environmental policy instruments in particular has greatly benefited from our ability to undertake additional

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