Preface

The transformation of energy systems towards a greater incorporation of renewable energy sources (RES) is one of the most impressive examples of political and economic change in Europe of the past decades. Since the late 1980s, European Union (EU) member states from north to south and from west to east have dramatically increased the share of RES in their domestic energy mixes. Today, and despite a considerable slowdown since the beginning of the 2010s, the EU is a global leader in renewable energy policy and is widely seen as proof that the necessary transformation towards a carbon-free energy supply is no longer a utopia. But how did this policy change in the EU and its member states come about? Who were the leading actors, what were the underlying causal mechanisms and how did the unique structure of the European multi-level polity contribute to this outcome? These questions stand at the core of the present book. By systematically comparing the development of renewable energy policies in the electricity and transport sectors in ten EU member states from the 1980s to the present day, we seek to shed light on the complex dynamics of RES promotion in the European multi-level system. The comparative analysis is guided by a common analytical framework that conceptualizes policy change in the EU as a mix of bottom-up, top-down and horizontal interactions between a wide range of actors at the European level and in the member states. It is complemented by a view of the external dimension of RES promotion in the EU; that is, the ways in which the EU and its member states have an impact on renewable energy policies in non-EU countries.

The book is the result of a long and collaborative effort. It started in 2011 when Israel Solorio and Mischa Bechberger met in Barcelona and decided to join forces to carry out research on this topic. In March 2013 they started to develop a book proposal on a guide to EU renewable energy policy. In summer 2013 Helge Jörgens joined the book project when Israel came to the Environmental Policy Research Centre (FFU) of the Freie Universität Berlin for a two-year stay as a post-doctoral visiting scholar funded by the Secretary of Science, Technology and Innovation of the Mexico City Government (SECITI).

In the midst of this process, Mischa took up a new job at GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für International Zusammenarbeit) and decided to step back as co-editor of the book. Shortly after, in summer 2015, both Israel and Helge left Berlin. While Israel took up his new position as Associate Professor of Public Administration at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, Helge headed for Lisbon for a two-year sabbatical leave and a position as visiting professor at ISCTE-Instituto Universitário de Lisboa. At the same time, major developments in the field of climate and renewable energy policy occurred – both at the international level (that is, the Paris climate summit in December 2015) and at the EU level (e.g. the 2030 Climate and Energy Framework and the revision of the renewable energy directive) – that had to be included in the analysis. Also, the Brexit decision had to be taken into account, especially considering the relevant role that the United Kingdom has played in shaping this policy. While all this led to a delay in finalizing the manuscript, the timing of its publication could not be any better. At the time this book is published, renewable energy policy in Europe is at a crossroads. The almost unconditional support to electricity from RES (RES-E) as well as to biofuels has given way to a more sceptical view of the associated costs and Europe's chances of 'going it alone' in the transformation of energy systems. Both developments – the EU-wide surge of EU renewable energy policy as well as first signs of their dismantling – are reflected in our analysis. At a crucial moment in time for this policy, this book provides an informed and empirically rich reflection on where we are in renewable energy policy, how we got here, and where to go from here.

This work would not have been possible without the support and engagement of many persons and organizations. Above all, we want to express our gratitude to the authors of the 15 chapters of this book. Their engagement, their patience and especially their willingness to repeatedly revise and update their chapters in what may easily be one of the most dynamic policy domains in EU policymaking were essential for the successful completion of this book. Our thanks also go to the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the Freie Universität Berlin and the FFU who provided Israel Solorio with the infrastructure and working space necessary to conduct this research. In particular, we would like to thank the director of the FFU, Miranda Schreurs, for supporting this project from its very beginning. We thank Oriol Costa, Christian Hey, Kirsten Jörgensen, Kerstin Tews and Severin Fischer for their valuable comments, criticism and contributions. A special thanks goes to the Fritz Thyssen Foundation for providing instrumental support to the authors

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