Preface

The idea of this book emerged when an unpublished manuscript by Egon Matzner was discovered ten years after his untimely death (2003). Egon Matzner had been Professor of Public Sector Economics at Vienna University of Technology, and Director of the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB). His latest thoughts centred around *res publica* in times of globalization. How can the public sphere be protected when nation states lose political ground? What should be the *res publica*, the public matter, in a changing world?

This book takes up these thoughts. It is the result of a joint research project, ‘Res Publica’, of the Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut (WSI, the research institute of the German trade unions), and two international universities: Utrecht University School of Economics in the Netherlands, and the Vienna University of Technology’s Center of Public Finance and Infrastructure Policy in Austria. This multidisciplinary and international project was financed by the Hans Böckler Foundation (HBS) in Düsseldorf.

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Our endeavour was a multidisciplinary one, bringing together scholars from various disciplines: economic research, sociology, political science, geography and spatial planning. This approach was both challenging and rewarding. When crossing disciplinary borders, we have to learn to speak each other's language and navigate across paradigms, yet we encounter new ideas which help us to understand, describe and justify the broad societal and political shifts we encounter in the world today. And this book is our attempt to share our insights on the matters of *res publica*.

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