Preface

Since the European Union (EU) Cohesion Policy (and Regional Policy) was introduced, it has changed several times, the ambitions have been raised and many positive outcomes have been reached. Moreover, over the last decade, policy-making at the European level has increased considerably, and in most cases without the transfer of the respective competence. Cohesion Policy, however, operates largely through financial incentives or co-financing schemes, as well as in spatially relevant policy areas. This enlargement in policy themes, (sector) policy initiatives and areas of interest on the one hand, and the increasing multi-layered (cross-border) governance in the EU multiplied by new governance tools such as macro-regions or the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation on the other hand, raises the need to discuss what is being tackled at the EU level to foster cohesion and to ask what falls through the cracks to reach a more effective outcome. Parallel to this expansion of areas of cooperation, and new governance tools, several issues remain unresolved on the policy agenda – for example, the promotion of ‘urban growth machines’ and its downside for ‘places that don’t matter’. Solving these problems is challenging, but important to reach a truly cohesive Europe.

The inspiration to compile this edited volume partly originated in intellectual curiosity to explore new theoretical and empirical approaches to the EU’s Cohesion Policy. Partly it originated from the perspective that whilst Cohesion Policy seems to subsume evermore policy themes under its umbrella, what it encompasses seems to remain vague. Slowly, an edited volume, its themes and structure started to emerge. One particularity of our approach is that we did not only aim to address individual themes covered in the individual chapters. From the start it was our goal to make sure that the chapters do not only stand alone but are discussed in relation to one another. The discursive structure of the book – cross-linked theme introductions, regular chapters and commentaries – represents the ever-evolving, ever-unfinished, discursive nature of EU Cohesion Policy. Particularly, we invited senior scholars to provide a reflection on the different sections of the book with a personal view. In late 2018 we started to distribute a call for papers and in early 2019 we had all the contributors we wished for.

We thank the contributors for their erudite papers. It has been a stimulating experience working together and we have had many interesting and illumi-

nating discussions. The contributors deserve much praise and thanks for their originality and quality of their work, and for their patience in the face of our numerous editorial questions and comments. Our thanks to all of them. We also want to thank Katy Crossan at Edward Elgar Publishing for her help and support during the different stages in the publication process, as well as three anonymous reviewers and the whole Edward Elgar publishing team. The comments to the original book proposal helped to refine the structure. Further thanks go to Julia Haberfellner and Ada H.Y. Lee for supporting the editing process of the manuscript.

This edited volume should not be seen as a technical critique of the EU Cohesion Policy, but rather as an attempt to stimulate a discussion on, for example, how to fine-tune policies and if most relevant policy issues actually are addressed. The book is primarily intended for researchers, students and professionals with some background and interest in the research field of the EU Cohesion Policy. We presume the reader understands the multifaceted and contextual nature of multi-level governance of the EU. Hopefully, the present volume will constitute an easily accessible introduction for those interested in specific aspects of how the EU and the Cohesion Policy functions and what the questions in need of settling are. We very much look forward to multiple discussions to come. Indeed, this edited volume was never supposed to finalise a discourse but to foster it and to suggest new directions.

Daniel Rauhut acknowledges the financial support from the H2020 project 'Relocal' under Grant Agreement No. 727097. Franziska Sielker acknowledges the financial support from the British Academy, grant number NF161284. Alois Humer acknowledges the financial support from the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), grant number J 3993-G29.

November 2020

Daniel Rauhut
Franziska Sielker
Alois Humer