Preface

This book represents the culmination of a pioneering study funded by the ERC Advanced Grant ACCUPOL, which aimed to tackle one of the most pressing challenges in public administration today: the organizational difficulty of managing ever-growing policy stocks. Implementation authorities in advanced democracies face the dual challenge of responding to increasing policy demands while simultaneously contending with limited resources and capacity.

Unlike many conventional studies of implementation, this book delves into how organizations prioritize policies and manage resource constraints. While existing macro-level research often highlights the gaps between implementation burdens and capacities, this work offers a crucial complement by focusing on the intricate organizational-level patterns of *policy triage* that drive decision-making within public administrations. Moreover, it extends beyond micro-level analyses of street-level implementers by concentrating on the organizational patterns that shape the prioritization and management of policies in constrained environments.

The findings draw on a rich set of field interviews with environmental and social policy authorities in six European countries. The research process, however, was anything but straightforward. The COVID-19 pandemic struck just as the interview phase began, causing significant disruptions. Travel restrictions and the suspension of in-person meetings meant that we had to adapt quickly to virtual interviews. Despite these unexpected challenges and the resulting delays, the ACCUPOL team demonstrated remarkable flexibility and persistence. We are especially grateful to Inga Feldmann, Frederico Ferreira da Silva, and Sanja Hajdinjak for their invaluable assistance with the interviews that underlie this book. We would also like to thank Katharina Williams for the many late nights spent on preparing the manuscript for publication as well as Md Imran for the swift indexing

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and Lukas Rohrbach for creating the illustration used as the book's cover.

This project would not have succeeded without the steadfast support of the ERC, whose generous funding enabled the ACCUPOL team to examine this critical area of research in depth. We are deeply indebted to the ERC for recognizing the importance of our work.

Our research journey was further enriched by a spirit of collaboration that went beyond academic endeavors. Unforgettable excursions to Chiemsee – meticulously organized by Christina Steinbacher – and festive Christmas gatherings provided a vital source of energy and unity for the team. These shared experiences fostered an atmosphere in which intellectual rigor and meaningful personal connections could thrive.

Finally, this book also benefits from the generous research fellowship at the Centre for Advanced Studies at Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, whose support created an ideal environment for cultivating academic excellence and facilitating the cross-national collaboration that defined the ACCUPOL project.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all those who contributed to this work and to the institutions that made it possible.[1] This includes the more than 150 public administrators who were willing to talk to us and share their daily experiences and challenges. Lastly, we would also like to thank John Haslam and Carrie Parkinson at Cambridge University Press for their support while preparing this book as well as the three anonymous reviewers who provided us with valuable feedback. We hope this book will prove a meaningful addition to the growing body of literature on public policy implementation, offering insights into how organizations contend with the complexities and scale of contemporary policymaking.

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[1] For the inspiration behind many of our headlines and the playlist accompanying this book, see here: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0uBiXu3Tojo6Wc3mjHQNmU.

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