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Problems of institutional design and redesign, structuring and restructuring, acquired particular poignancy through recent developments from eastern Europe to southern Africa. At the same time, scholars in each of several disciplines – political science, economics, sociology, history, and philosophy – have increasingly come to appreciate the important independent role that is, and should be, played by institutional factors in social life.

In this volume, disparate theories of institutional design given by specialists in each of those several disciplines are synthesized and their peculiar power illustrated. Drawing upon traditions from Kantian ethics to public choice economics, from organizational sociology to discourse analytics, the contributors emphasize the important interpenetration of normative and empirical analysis in examples ranging from changes in the British welfare state through the reward structure of the modern university to the transition of eastern European societies.

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THEORIES OF INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN

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*Research School of Social Sciences
 Australian National University*

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Social scientists have rediscovered institutions. They have been increasingly concerned with the myriad ways in which social and political institutions shape the patterns of individual interactions that produce social phenomena. They are equally concerned with the ways in which institutions emerge from such interactions.

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Theories of Institutional Design is insistently multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary, both in the institutions on which it focuses, and in the methodologies used to study them. There are interesting sociological questions to be asked about legal institutions, interesting legal questions to be asked about economic institutions, and interesting social, economic, and legal questions to be asked about political institutions. By juxtaposing these approaches in print, this series aims to enrich normative discourse surrounding important issues of designing and redesigning, shaping and reshaping the social, political, and economic institutions of contemporary society.

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Preface

This collection faces two directions at once. Looking inward, it serves to showcase work done under the auspices of the Institutional Design Project, sponsored by and conducted within the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University. All of these chapters grow out of work originally presented at seminars and conferences of that Project, the bulk of them at a pair of conferences in July and December 1992. We are grateful to the many other participants in those conferences, and to the many other visitors to the Project over the years, for exchanges that have enlivened and enriched the intellectual life of the School. Such close collaboration among economists, political scientists, lawyers, sociologists, and philosophers is precisely the sort of thing that a research school of social science should stand for and hope to foster.

Looking outward, this collection serves as both flagship and sampler for the new Cambridge University Press series on Theories of Institutional Design. That series, like this book, will be insistently cross-disciplinary – looking to law as much as to political science, to history as much as to sociology, to philosophy as much as to economics. The thematic core underlying all this interdisciplinary effervescence is a concern with the role of institutions in social life, and the way in which societies shape and reshape those institutions in turn. Behind all that is a continuing quest for theories, normative as well as empirical, to guide as well as explain those important institutional transformations.

In its own formative period, the Institutional Design Project was well served by a highly talented administrative assistant, Annette Ritchie. We are grateful for her help in getting the Project off the ground, in organizing the conferences and seminars, the final fruits of which appear herein, and generally in keeping us all on track. We should also

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PREFACE

record various other debts: to John Braithwaite, as head of the larger Reshaping Australian Institutions Project within the School, which came to subsume our own more modest venture; to him and Barry Weingast, for excellent advice on the overall shape of the book; and to Robin Derricourt, who eased this book's way into print.