

Preface and acknowledgements

This collection is the outcome of a Maastricht Research Based Learning Project (MARBLE) that took place at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Maastricht University in spring 2011. Under the guidance of Jens Lachmund (who is a lecturer at that faculty) a group of nine students worked on eight distinct case-studies on the culture and politics of product labelling. A selection of six of these studies is presented in this volume. The project participants were third year students from the BA programmes “Arts and Culture”, “European Studies” and “Law”. The teaching project started with a preparatory phase of two months, which consisted of seminars on the topic and research methods. Subsequently the students spent two months on researching their case-studies and on writing and revising their respective chapters. The project formed part of the MARBLE program, which is financed by the Dutch ministry of education. It is meant to offer students at the bachelor level the possibility to make first-hand experiences with social science research. The results of the project reflect the educational character of the project. At the same time they reveal original insights that are of interest for everyone who wants to learn about the actual and potential role of product labelling schemes.

We are grateful to all the practitioners and experts in the labelling sector who gave their time to help us in interview and who provided us with other valuable sources. Our thanks are also due to the Faculty of Art and Social Sciences and particularly its Marble-coordinator Pieter Caljé for their support during the process of conceptualizing and researching the topic of this project. Finally we want to thank Colin Behr for his help in the copy-editing phase.