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To my parents

Preface

When it comes to personal experience with computers, everybody can tell stories of breakdowns, inaccessible software, viruses, and other little disasters. During the work on my dissertation, I was no exception in this respect; but I found out how lucky I was to work in an environment of engaged and cooperative colleagues who helped to keep these disasters very small. It thus should come at no surprise that one result of this book is that the benefits from computer use crucially depend on the people involved in joint work.

Most of the studies of this book originate from the research project “ICT as a General Purpose Technology” commissioned by the Landesstiftung Baden-Württemberg foundation, a project that was initiated to quantify the productivity effects resulting from computer use for firms in Germany. I am indebted to my supervisor Werner Smolny for his continuous advice and for supporting my academic work. Moreover, I am grateful to Bernd Fitzenberger and Rüdiger Kiesel for their critical and constructive comments. I also thank Manuel Arellano whose excellent lectures on panel econometrics at Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona helped me a lot in acquiring the methodological tools necessary for my empirical work.

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Mannheim, July 2005

Thomas Hempell

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