Preface

That ‘geography matters’ in energy systems is obvious to anyone with even a cursory interest and rudimentary understanding of energy systems. Energy supply mixes and demand profiles, for example, are shaped to a large degree by geographical comparative (dis)advantages, and the landscapes around us have been shaped directly and indirectly by activities related to energy production, distribution and conversion. Less obvious, however, is the value that the combination of geographical scholarship and energy studies can add to our collective understanding of the world around us. How can scholarship from energy studies improve our understanding of phenomena that matter most to geographers: biophysical systems, people, places and human-environment interactions? And how can scholarship from geography improve public awareness, political discussions, policy and investment decisions, and community organization around energy systems? The collection of chapters in this Handbook are intended to contribute some answers to these general questions. Our aim is to bring a deeper understanding of the geographical tradition to energy studies, going well beyond (but certainly building from) ideas of geography as location, proximity and scale.

Indeed, the motivation for the book stems from internal reflection and years of discussion about what it means to bring a ‘geographical perspective’ to energy studies among the two editors; one at the beginning of his career (Calvert) and the other recently retired (Solomon). When looking across these two generations of energy geographers it is clear that the field of study has evolved considerably, along with the major worldly issues and disciplinary debates which serve as its larger frame. The time was right, we firmly believed, for a compendium of work that brings generations of energy geographers together, and which captures the variety of perspectives and trajectories that operate at the nexus of geography and energy studies.

The Handbook will serve, as the title implies, as a handy resource that is intended to serve as a guide through the complexities and nuances of the various geographical perspectives as they are brought to bear on energy issues. As such, the primary audience of the Handbook is graduate students, faculty and researchers with an interest in the geographical dimensions of energy. For those in other disciplines who hope to engage geographers as part of an interdisciplinary project, the Handbook can be read as a compendium of ideas and concepts, vocabularies and questions that are top-of-mind for geographers who have an ongoing interest in energy. For graduate students, the Handbook should help to identify core concepts, tools, knowledge gaps and trends upon which meaningful research programs, as well as individual projects, can be built.

We resisted the trap of trying to make this volume fully comprehensive. While comprising 37 chapters, inevitably there are some missing pieces to the puzzle. For example, it would have been possible to add more chapters on a variety of quantitative methods that are used in energy geography, such as spatial econometrics, remote sensing, factor analysis, point pattern analysis and so on, and more regional energy case studies, such as on Indonesia, Australia or Mexico. Such studies can be found in a variety of scholarly

journals and books. But the list of relevant topics may seem never-ending and perhaps rather timely to the twenty-first-century globalized world, which was precisely the rationale for producing a long Handbook at this time.

Nevertheless, we are delighted at the large number of high quality contributions and scholars, junior and senior alike, who have contributed to this Handbook. To all contributors we give our big hearty thanks. Most but not all are geographers, and along with many established research leaders the reader will find several promising new entrants to the field. While the Handbook is clearly lengthy, we strongly believe that it will serve its purpose well, namely, an accessible entry point into the major research strands and directions in a variety of energy geographies. It will thus not be necessary for readers of this volume to go through all the chapters, though we hope that many will indeed do so.

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