Preface

The editors of this collection have shared for a long time a deep interest in theoretical and empirical questions related to changing socio-spatialities, particularly the concepts of region and territory, and their shifting roles in academic debates and social and governmental practices. During the last decade or so we have been particularly attentive to the theoretical and practical challenges that the gradual evolution of relational approaches, alongside more traditional territorial approaches, have provided to academic research, regional planning, politics and governance.

The structure of this cutting-edge Handbook has been developed to respond to these challenges and to further regional debates. The Introduction, written by the editors, provides readers with a broad overview of regional debates and an outline for responding to future challenges in regional research. It highlights the need for new approaches and argues for more consolidated regional geographies. The articles in Part I scrutinize the changing geographies of regions and territories from a historical and theoretical point of view, evaluating critically the existing wisdom and pushing debates further. Part II has an emphasis on the relations between the region and economy. Part III problematizes regions, politics and identity. Part IV examines urbanization and the emerging new forms of spatiality in general and in various circumstances. Part V scrutinizes regions and regionalism in context, that is, how these categories have been mobilized in various areal settings. Overall, our aim has been to make this collection a rich combination of chapters that both bring together cutting-edge debates and open scope for further conceptual and empirical examinations.

The compilation of this Handbook has been an exciting project that has taken, as usual, more time than we expected at the beginning. From the publishers, Edward Elgar, we wish to thank Matthew Pitman for his patience and his generous support to realize this project, Barbara Pretty and Sarah Cook. We are also very grateful to all authors that have contributed with their articles to this collection.

As editors we also wish to thank our institutions. Anssi Paasi extends his thanks to the University of Oulu and the Academy of Finland for their financial support to the RELATE (*Relational and Territorial Politics of Bordering, Identities and Transnationalisation*) Center of Excellence (2014-2019) (Grant 272168). Martin Jones would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) for funding WISERD Civil Society (Grant ES/L0090991/1), work package on Spaces of New Localism, and Staffordshire University for supporting the Centre for City Region Dynamics. John Harrison wishes to acknowledge Loughborough University for providing support to realize this project.

All editors wish to thank warmly Mr. Mirko Honkavaara for his careful work in formulating the final manuscript to the publisher and for successful efforts to chase permissions and missing references!

In Oulu, Loughborough and Staffordshire, April 2018
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