Acknowledgments

The publication of this *Research Handbook* is the fruit of a five-year-long process, which started in 2016 when the two editors of the book met on the occasion of a panel of the ICON meeting in Berlin that was dedicated to the notion of the ‘right to the city’. At the time, the role of cities in international law was still very much a marginal topic but we had the sense that there was something coming. In our conversations at a sushi restaurant around the corner from Humboldt University, the idea developed that it was time for a broad and systematic treatment of what the city could bring to the study of international law and how, in turn, cities are shaped by international normative influences.

Hence, the idea for this book was in the world and we started to plan and plot. Ever since, we have been extremely fortunate with respect to the further process towards the publication of this book: our strain of luck started with an enthusiastic publisher, Luke Adams, who immediately jumped on the idea – and whose courage to embrace new topics we would like to praise; a group of authors who responded positively to our invitation for participation; and our respective teams in Berlin and The Hague who have worked behind the scenes to make this volume a reality.

The evolving work on the *Handbook* also benefited from the setting up of a Study Group of the International Law Association on *The Role of Cities in International Law*, which we have the privilege to co-chair. It is our hope that the *Handbook* will in turn also bolster the further work of the Study Group, which has presented its initial report for the 2020 Kyoto meeting and is set to continue its work in the future. We reprint the original mandate of the Study Group as an Annex to this volume. By now, the Study Group is engaged in collecting city reports on the practice of local governments and other urban actors in the field of international law.

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his mesmerizing paintings appear on the cover of our book. We hope that both our readers and authors find as much inspiration from this image as we do.

Our *Handbook* is put together with a view to sparking fresh ideas and paving new paths of research in international law – we would like to dedicate this volume to the future generations of city scholars who will travel down this road and from whose ideas we cannot wait to learn.

Helmut Philipp Aust and Janne E. Nijman
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