Preface

From 27 May to 2 June 2018, we had the good fortune of making a trip to Ny-Ålesund to visit the UK Arctic Station. The settlement of Ny-Ålesund, a former coal mining centre, was transformed into a site for Arctic tourism and science in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1992, it was decided by the Norwegian authorities that the settlement should be opened up to international scientific establishments.

As British and German scientists were joined by their European counterparts, it was in 2004 that Asian countries started to send their representatives to this part of the world. Indeed, during our stay at Ny-Ålesund, we were given the opportunity to explore the Chinese and Indian research stations, and hear about how Asian scientists often forged informal collaborative networks with other scientific communities on the settlement to advance knowledge related to Arctic climate change and terrestrial ecology. Such insights provided a timely reminder that Asian states' interests and contributions to Arctic affairs cannot be reduced and confined to the remits of the Arctic Council.

Indeed, we were confronted with further evidence of the co-presence of different kinds of '*Asias*' in the Arctic – those which defy neat classification as either state-affiliated actors or observers in the Arctic Council. In our brief layover in Longyearbyen for instance, we couldn't help but notice the significant number of Thai and Vietnamese restaurants and shops in the small town area. This provided important traces of the Asian diaspora and their migratory routes that helped to carve out different trajectories of Arctic development. These encounters and experiences (amongst others) have inevitably informed the thematic premise of this edited volume where we have sought to bring together a diversity of perspectives to conceptualize and cast empirical attention on Asian states' forays into the Arctic Council and beyond.

The process of coming up with an edited book that is interdisciplinary in its orientation is never easy and we are grateful to many individuals and institutions that have helped us along the way. We would first like to acknowledge the generous funding from the British Academy's International Mobility and Partnership Scheme. It not only allowed us to venture into the familiar and unexpected sites and landscapes associated with 'Asia in the Arctic' but also gave us the space to engage in intellectual exchanges with like-minded scholars. This book emerged from a workshop that was held at the National University of Singapore in June 2017 and thanks are due to the participants and

audiences who were present at the event. We were subsequently able to present our wider findings on Asia's relationship to the Arctic at the 2018 Association of American Geographers meeting in New Orleans.

We have also accumulated a great deal of intellectual debt over the years and while this community of scholars is too numerous to list individually, we are particularly grateful to Duncan Depledge, Gabrielle Falardeau, Rikke Jensen, Shaun Lin, Nengye Liu, Ian Storey and Aki Tonami. Nicholas Cox at the British Arctic Station was invaluable in organizing our trip to Svalbard and for sharing with us his rich experiences of working in the High North, as were Henry Burgess and Nicola Munro at the NERC Arctic Office. We also acknowledge the support and interest of the British Antarctic Survey and their director, Professor Dame Jane Francis.

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