The SAGE Handbook of Political Geography
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In a contemporary world of multi-level governance, conflicts around cultural and other forms of identity and difference, and the threat of environmental catastrophe, the concerns of political geographers with spatial organization, variation across the globe and society/nature relationships have resonated more widely and intensely with concerns in other disciplinary contexts than perhaps ever before. This is proving an exciting opportunity for the field, expanding the range of empirical and theoretical concerns within its purview considerably. But it also makes attempts to summarize and encompass current endeavours in relation to the discipline’s pasts and possible futures a hazardous enterprise. One consequence of this was the difficult choice we faced in deciding who we might ask to contribute: this was not an easy task with so much excellent work to choose from. Our degrees of freedom were of course limited by the particular slants which we thought would help achieve various sorts of balance across the book. Political geography has undergone tremendous growth in many different areas, with many original contributions; we hope colleagues who weren’t involved in this particular venture will find that much of their work has received proper acknowledgement in the papers, chapters and books cited by the contributors.

The Handbook has been under construction for several years, with its far-flung contributors all periodically intersecting with its development in the context of their own biographies and other projects. We would like to thank them all for their contributions, patience and good humour as the project originally proposed on a few sheets of paper has emerged into the largest pile of original material any of us have assembled before. Developing the book also benefited substantially from the advice and counsel of an advisory board for which we are grateful: the members included James Anderson, Paul Claval, Ron Johnston, Anssi Paasi, Haripriya Rangan and Paul Robbins.

Robert Rojek, who originally suggested the project, was an absolute rock throughout providing a sense of calm about progress and hospitality at Sage in London. We would also like to thank Sue Searle, Jan Smith and Sheree Barboteau of the Geography Discipline at the Open University for their assistance in formatting much of the material, and the Geography Discipline there for financial support in the production of this book.

No handbook of this size can in the end aspire to being truly contemporary with a world that is always moving on, always in the process of construction. But we hope it can inspire reflection on where political geography has been and might be heading, and inspire others, though their reading, discussion and use of the book, to keep creatively re-thinking the subject’s pasts and futures in relation to the world’s challenges.

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