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The cliché is that science is a team game, with the result being more important than the individual who scores the goal. However, all of us in science know that we are all under immense pressure to perform as individuals. We are measured, monitored and managed as individuals, whilst the business of creating interesting and useful new knowledge is a collective affair. It has therefore been a great privilege to work as part of a dynamic, enthusiastic and dedicated group of scholars who are keen to explore the roles of universities in peripheral regions. Although ultimately it is my name that stands on the cover as editor, in this preface I wish to draw attention to and recognise the contribution of participants in our wider scholarly community that have made this volume possible.

This book reports results coming out of the PERIF-EU project, a collaboration between Agderforskning in Norway and a number of higher education research centres in the Czech republic. Many thanks are due to Rómulo Pinheiro, senior researcher at Agderforskning, for acquiring and overseeing the project and supporting my participation in the project through AF. The project was a fascinating opportunity to concentrate on truly peripheral regions, and the core set of case studies was sufficiently exciting to help enrol a list of other researchers with their own cases to contribute to this volume. The research leading to these results has received funding from the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009–2014 and the Czech Republic’s Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports under Project Contract no. MSMT-5397/2015. I am a very demanding editor to work with, and I’d like to thank all the authors in this volume for their willingness to submit to my dictates as well as their patience as I suffered with RSI over the summer of 2017.

A word of thanks is certainly due to the publishers, Routledge, and in particular their dedicated staff on the Regions and Cities series who worked with me on this volume, namely Lisa Lavelle, Emily Kindleysides, Elanor Best and Natalie Tomlinson. This is my fourth volume in this series, something that reflects the great enthusiasm and support they provide their editors with, at a time when academic publishers are increasingly driven by profits rather than the nurturing of new ideas. It has been a great pleasure to work with them on this volume, and I hope to continue this relationship into the future.
The last year has also seen some rather unpleasant shocks. One year ago we received the unexpected news of the passing of Professor Susan Christopherson, editor of this series. She has been a great inspiration to all of us in the field of economic geography, and made a number of leading contributions to debates around innovation, universities and uneven development. As we were finalising the volume, we were also told of the untimely death of our colleague on the PERIF project Olga Šmídová. Although she was not a contributor directly to this volume, she was an enthusiastic participant in the project meetings and the email discussions in which the ideas presented in this volume emerged. Our thoughts have been with those nearest and dearest to Olga and Susan, and they are being sorely missed by us both professionally but also personally.

Finally, an acknowledgement is also due to Martha Barbara. When I submitted the proposal on 17 October 2016 to the publisher from the Coffee Bar in C pier of Schiphol en route to Lisbon for a meeting of the Forskningsrådet-funded Digitalize or Die project, we hoped that we’d not be seeing you for another six weeks. But you popped out at the end of the week, and thankfully you have grown as rapidly as the manuscript. Your growth has been an inspiration to me as I have sought to finalise this volume and I am delighted to have both a healthy happy daughter and my long-dreamed-of volume on universities and regional development in the periphery. The making of this volume was inextricably bound up with you, and for that reason, I dedicate this volume to you, Martha Barbara Benneworth.