Preface

[T]he eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend.

Robertson Davies, *Tempest-Tost*

Off the map is a colloquial expression that speaks to the fluctuating and splintering geographies of our contemporary legal globe. It conjures a range of images: atmospheric heat domes and geoengineering; contagion; Russia's occupation of eastern Ukraine; the legal crises surrounding Gaza's bombardment and blockade; the covert dynamics of shadow wars and drone strikes; climate-driven territorial claims over the Arctic and Greenland; the rise of cyberattacks and decentralized e-currencies; and tariffs targeting the geographies of global value chains. From dictionaries we learn that the phrase denotes spatial marginality, remoteness, obscurity, and exclusion from dominant mappings of the world.[1] Yet beyond this descriptive register, the phrase carries a deeper ontological charge – it points to spaces, places, and practices that exist outside prevailing frameworks of cartographic and legal intelligibility.

International lawyers encounter such dynamics whenever legal institutions struggle to *see* or engage actors and practices that do not conform to inherited cartographic coordinates of sovereignty, jurisdiction, and territory.[2] These blind spots are often framed through the language of exception or rendered obscure under categories such as black sites, extraterritorial military bases, informal economies, or digital infrastructures. But these are not mere anomalies. Rather, they reveal novel spatial grammars that disrupt the cartographic

[1] *Collins English Dictionary*, s. v. "off the map," accessed June 18, 2025, www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/off-the-map

[2] David Kennedy, *A World of Struggle: How Power, Law, and Expertise Shape Global Political Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 23–24.

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rationality through which International Law has long organized its view of "the World." These disruptions challenge the assumption that International Law simply reflects an inherent geography of global order; instead, they suggest that law is deeply implicated in a cartographic ordering it purports to govern.

The observation captured in the epigraph frames this predicament at its most elementary level. What appears *off the map* is rarely absent from the world; it is more often misaligned with the visual and conceptual grammars through which International Law has *learned to see* and order planetary space. Legal vision, like cartographic vision, is structured in advance: It renders certain spatial forms legible while consigning others to obscurity. In this sense, being *off the map* signifies an ontological condition as much as a spatial one – an incapacity to read forms of authority, jurisdiction, and ordering that fall outside inherited cartographic frames.

In this light, *off the map* assumes a more critical significance: It denotes a condition of invisibility, illegibility, and unrecognizability within dominant regimes of knowledge, authority, and spatial ordering. This insight gains particular traction when considered vis-à-vis a concept we will explore across the book: *cartographization*. It is a historically consequential – yet largely overlooked – term you will struggle to find in most dictionaries. Cartographization refers to a process whereby the brute and manifold Earth has been transformed into a mapped, institutionalized, and cartographic sphere, rendered legible and governable as a tableau of geometric rationalities. Far from being a neutral or technical experience, this process functioned as a disciplinary project that inscribed the Earth's complex, relational materiality into a singular, bordered, and gridded legal globe. It engineered a cartographic world that continues to underwrite the spatial and ontological assumptions of international legal thought.

To be *on the map*, then, is to have been subjected to the conceptual and visual disciplining of cartographization – to be rendered visible within a cartographic-legal imaginary that privileges state-centric, contiguous, and planar territorialities. Conversely, to be *off the map* is not simply to reside outside geographic representation but to exist somehow disconnected from the globalized image of international legal cartography. This connotation applies to physical spaces as well as to institutional and normative formations that persist in between,

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beneath, or beyond cartographic world-making. It underscores the extent to which International Law depends on a particular spatial imaginary to assert authority and govern the global.

This dynamic is particularly pressing for disciplinary International Law, which has long been predicated on cartographic world-making to ground its spatial doctrines – sovereignty, jurisdiction, territorial integrity. These concepts, however, are not natural givens; they are themselves products of cartographization, which elevates specific contiguous, volumetric, and planar forms as legally self-evident. As Martti Koskenniemi has shown, international legal argument often obscures the contingency of its normative foundations beneath a veneer of technical neutrality, enabling specific spatial and political arrangements to appear inevitable and depoliticized.[3] The "World Map" of states is not a passive reflection of geo-legal reality; it is a legal text, invested with authority through repetition, institutionalization, and the erasure of alternatives.

Failing to recognize the constructed nature of cartographic world-making leads to what might be called an "ontological freeze" – a condition in which the visual grammar of legal space remains static, even as real-world practices of territorial rule become increasingly networked, pointillistic, layered, and noncontiguous – which the ensuing chapters will discuss. While international lawyers may presume that cartography reflects preexisting legal space, the inverse is true: Mapping practices have been actively used to shape and naturalize legal realities. As the renowned critical cartographer J. B. Harley underlined, maps are better understood as texts than as mirrors (see Chapter 6) – they construct narratives, project normative authority, and embed ideological claims under the guise of spatial precision.[4]

Engaging critically with the notion of being *off the map* thus offers more than rhetorical flair; it opens a conceptual and methodological entry point for rethinking geo-legal ordering on a global scale. It compels international lawyers and social scientists alike to examine how legal visibility and subjectivity are produced: whose spaces are included or excluded, which forms of authority are legitimized or denied, and

[3] Martti Koskenniemi, *From Apology to Utopia: The Structure of International Legal Argument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5–6.

[4] See J. B. Harley, "Deconstructing the Map," *Cartographica* 26, no. 2 (1989): 1–20.

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how cartographic mapping has functioned as a medium of rule. In this view, *off the map* is not a spatial aberration but a theoretical and empirical invitation – one that prompts us to examine the multiple, overlapping, and sometimes invisible legal boundaries that structure global exclusion and inclusion beyond formal, cartographic frontiers.

But the implications of being *off the map* extend beyond the perception of global space and rule – they penetrate the metaphorical ground of International Law as a discipline. Just as International Law is implicated in the cartographization of global authority, it is itself subject to mapping – by adjacent fields, institutional and nonstate actors, experts, think tanks, and evolving epistemic formations. Here, the stakes involved are not only territorial or geopolitical but also disciplinary and conceptual. The position of International Law *on the map* of global knowledge production is neither fixed nor transhistorical. For much of its history, international legal thought has drawn epistemic security from its association with a cartographic imaginary that privileges statehood, borders, and the contiguous logics of territorialization. These cartographic conventions helped secure the discipline's ontological authority – anchoring its concepts in supposedly self-evident spaces. But this reliance now faces critical challenges.[5] Scholars, from varied disciplines such as International Relations,[6] Geography,[7] Anthropology,[8] and Science and Technology Studies,[9]

[5] Gail Lythgoe, "A New Legal Geography for International Law," in *The Rebirth of Territory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024), 249–58.

[6] Jens Bartelson, *Becoming International* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023); Tanja Aalberts and Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen, "Sovereignty at Sea: The Law and Politics of Saving Lives in *Mare Liberum*," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 17 (2014): 439–68; and Sarah M. Chih and Mikael Rask Madsen, "Legal Diplomacy: Law, Politics, and the Genesis of Postwar European Human Rights," *Law and Contemporary Problems* 82, no. 1 (2019): 137–61.

[7] Nicholas Blomley, *Law, Space, and the Geographies of Power* (New York: Guilford Press, 1994); Nicholas Blomley, *Unsettling the City: Urban Land and the Politics of Property* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); and Joe Painter, "Prosaic Geographies of Statist Sovereignty," *Political Geography* 25, no. 7 (2006): 752–74.

[8] Annelise Riles, *The Network Inside Out* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000); and Mark Goodale, "After International Law: Anthropology beyond the 'Age of Human Rights'," *AJIL Unbound* 115 (2021): 289–93.

[9] Bruno Latour, "*Onus Orbis Terrarum*: About a Possible Shift in the Definition of Sovereignty," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 44, no. 3

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are increasingly interrogating law's spatial assumptions, drawing on alternative grammars – flows, networks, platforms,[10] ecologies – that defy the gridded coordinates through which International Law traditionally imagines global order.

This disciplinary remapping is not merely metaphorical; it is deeply historical and epistemic. It reflects an evolving struggle over who can authoritatively speak about space, law, and global governance. Concepts once presumed to 'belong' exclusively to International Law – sovereignty, jurisdiction, territory – are now being actively reinterpreted across other disciplines and epistemic communities.[11] To be *off the map*, in this context, does not only mean spatial illegibility; it also signals the risk of disciplinary marginalization amid shifting intellectual and social boundaries. To remain *on the map*, International Law must go beyond defending an inherited conceptual turf. It must confront the contingency of its own cartographic foundations and engage seriously with alternative spatial imaginaries now reengineering and shaping global legal ordering.

What is at stake here is not ontology in the philosophical sense of probing "being" as such, but rather the recognition that International Law is structured through particular ontological schemata that govern what can be perceived, articulated, and acted upon as "legal space." These are not neutral frameworks of description; they constitute the very conditions of intelligibility within which global order is conceived. While much of critical legal scholarship has foregrounded temporality – through genealogies, periodization, or narratives of rupture and continuity – this book instead emphasizes the spatializing work of International Law: the landscaping of global space into contiguous,

(2016): 305–20; Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime* (Cambridge: Polity, 2018); and Sheila Jasanoff, "Subjects of Reason: Goods, Markets, and Competing Imaginaries of Global Governance," *London Review of International Law* 4, no. 2 (2016): 361–91.

[10] Giovanni de Gregorio, "The Law of the Platforms," in *Digital Constitutionalism in Europe: Reframing Rights and Powers in the Algorithmic Society*, Cambridge Studies in European Law and Policy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 80–122.

[11] David Kennedy, "The 'Rule of Law,' Political Choices, and Development Common Sense," in *The New Law and Economic Development: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. David M. Trubek and Alvaro Santos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 95–173; and Martti Koskenniemi, "Miserable Comforters: International Relations as New Natural Law," *European Journal of International Relations* 15, no. 3 (2009): 395–422.

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bordered, and standardized forms. This spatializing gesture, far from being incidental, has long been secured through a deep ontological standardization that predates contemporary debates about formal and informal "standards" in lawmaking. The legal imagination of the state as a geometric, polygonal unit – flattened, bounded, and equivalent – operates as an unspoken standard that normalizes a symmetry of sovereign equality. It is this silent regularity of the cartographic imaginary, more than any explicit treaty or institution, that has standardized the "thinkable" in international legal thought. To apprehend this is to recognize that the discipline's conceptual foundations are themselves products of a cartographic ontology – one that naturalizes its own abstractions while excluding alternative spatialities from recognition as legal ordering.

Reflexivity or Retromania?

Responding to the spatial challenges of the present requires more than doctrinal reform or institutional adaptation; it demands disciplinary and theoretical reflexivity – a critical reckoning with how International Law's dominant World Map was historically produced, by whom, and to what ends. What forms of knowledge and agency were obscured or effaced in that process?[12] Which worlds were excluded? In a moment when the very idea of a coherent global legal order appears fractured, International Law must ask whether its reigning spatial imaginary remains adequate to contemporary legal practices and global conditions. Without such engagement, the field risks clinging to a cartographic worldview in institutional decline – descending into what might be called a juridical *Retromania*.

Simon Reynolds' concept of *Retromania* – the cultural condition of compulsive recycling of the past – offers a useful lens for diagnosing such a theoretical malaise. In *Retromania*,[13] Reynolds explores how popular culture has become addicted to its own history, privileging nostalgia and repetition over innovation. Artistic creativity, he argues,

[12] See Walter D. Mignolo, "Putting the Americas on the Map: Cartography and the Colonization of Space," in *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 259–313.

[13] Simon Reynolds, *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past* (London: Faber & Faber, 2011), 3–6.

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has given way to curation and reenactment, producing a feedback loop in which the past dominates the imaginative horizon of the future.

International legal thought exhibits similar tendencies. Confronted by transboundary phenomena such as climate breakdown, cyber governance, global financial flows, and algorithmic regulation, it continues to organize itself around a spatial logic rooted in cartographic territoriality.[14] Statist jurisdiction, Euclidean geometry, and contiguous boundaries remain central axioms within International Law's inherited World Map – even as these spatial premises are increasingly outpaced by emergent modes of legal ordering. To borrow Reynolds' metaphor, international lawyers seem to be nostalgically reissuing doctrinal vinyl: reasserting territorial integrity, rehearsing sovereignty, and redrawing jurisdictional lines, as if these containers retain timeless relevance in a world marked by fluidity, networks, and trans-territorial forms of authority. This is not merely doctrinal conservatism – it may signal a deeper ontological and epistemological fatigue. Rather than envisioning new spatial forms, international legal thought tends to curate inherited ones, maintaining a cartographic orthodoxy that forecloses engagement with plural spatialities.[15] The result is a legal map that retains surface coherence while being increasingly overwhelmed by dispersed, noncontiguous, and trans-territorial configurations of authority, power, and rule.[16]

Avoiding juridical *Retromania* requires more than a critique of International Law's cartographic inheritance; it demands a reconfiguration of the discipline's spatial grammar to apprehend the legal geographies reshaping global order. As trans-territorial configurations become increasingly operative – from digital infrastructures and climate systems to global production chains and transnational

[14] See Elden, *The Birth of Territory*, 112–15; and Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 84–88.

[15] Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 62–66; and Sundhya Pahuja, *Decolonising International Law: Development, Economic Growth and the Politics of Universality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 129–34.

[16] See Mariana Valverde, "Jurisdiction and Scale: Legal 'Technicalities' as Resources for Theory," *Social & Legal Studies* 18, no. 2 (2009): 139–57; and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 38–42.

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enforcement regimes – the institutional architectures of International Law are being stretched, reoriented, and, in some cases, fractured. Legal authority now circulates through modalities that defy conventional metrics of territorial presence: via drone operations,[17] algorithmic governance, extraterritorial sanctions, and the infrastructural regulation of flows.[18] In such contexts, foundational coordinates such as sovereign consent, jurisdictional exclusivity, and fixed borders lose normative traction – not merely as tools of enforcement but also as frameworks of legal legibility.

To navigate this shifting terrain, International Law must cultivate a renewed spatial imagination – one capable of theorizing and tracing alternative spatial forms that more accurately reflect contemporary juridical realities.[19] These may include imaginaries grounded in networks, assemblages, and circulatory systems, as well as forms of legal ordering that resist cartographic capture altogether: Indigenous jurisdictionalities,[20] oceanic cosmologies,[21] algorithmically mediated normativities.[22] Only by cultivating such renewed spatial imagination can International Law remain meaningfully *on the map* – not as a legacy discipline recycling a Eurocentric vision of the globe but as a mode

[17] See Grégoire Chamayou, *A Theory of the Drone*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: The New Press, 2015); and Annelise Riles, *Collateral Knowledge: Legal Reasoning in the Global Financial Markets* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 9–20.

[18] Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (New York: Public Affairs, 2019), 312–16; and Dan Jerker B. Svantesson, *Solving the Internet Jurisdiction Puzzle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 52–55.

[19] Approaches include Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 16–20; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 45–49; and Benjamin H. Bratton, *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 98–102.

[20] See John Borrows, *Canada's Indigenous Constitution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

[21] Upolu Lumā Vaai, "Philosophical Vectors of Oceanic Diplomacy and Development: The Samoan Wisdom of Restraint Meets the Australian Indigenous Relationalist Ethos," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 77 (2023): 677–81.

[22] Denise Garcia, "Algorithms and Decision-Making in Military Artificial Intelligence," *Global Society* 38, no. 1 (2024): 24–33; Joshua A. Kroll et al., "Accountable Algorithms," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 165, no. 3 (2017): 633–705; and Karen Yeung, "Algorithmic Regulation: A Critical Interrogation," *Regulation & Governance* 12, no. 4 (2018): 505–23.

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of legal thought responsive to the dynamic spatial architectures that now configure global power.

Politically, recent appeals for national reassertion and geopolitical restoration reflect a nostalgic desire to recover the ontological security once promised by the cartographic World Map of states.[23] These calls express a broader anxiety provoked by the erosion of spatial certainties – when identity, authority, and geography no longer align neatly within the territorial grid. Yet this perceived unravelling obscures the imperial and racialized foundations of the modern legal map, which was built through logics of enclosure, domination, and exclusion.[24] Efforts to preserve or restore this mapped order frequently conceal its historically contingent and hierarchical origins. To confront this inheritance critically is not to reject cartographic ordering itself but to interrogate how emergent spatial logics – such as digital sovereignty,[25] planetary risk governance,[26] and climate-induced displacement[27] – are being grafted onto the legal architectures of cartographic modernity. These new geographies do not displace classical legal categories such as territory, sovereignty, or jurisdiction; rather, they hybridize them, generating layered, sometimes contradictory, formations of governance that international lawyers must learn to navigate and theorize.[28]

[23] John Agnew, "The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory," *Review of International Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (1994): 77–80; see also Chris Rumford, "Theorizing Borders," *European Journal of Social Theory* 9, no. 2 (2006): 155–69.

[24] Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 32–40; Lauren Benton, "Anomalies of Empire," in *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1–39.

[25] See Chenchen Zhang and Carwyn Morris, "Borders, Bordering and Sovereignty in Digital Space," *Territory, Politics, Governance* 11 (2023): 1051–58.

[26] See Duncan McLaren and Olaf Corry, "Clash of Geofutures and the Remaking of Planetary Order: Faultlines Underlying Conflicts over Geoengineering Governance," *Global Policy* 12, no. S1 (2021): 20–33.

[27] Cristiano d'Orsi and Gino J. Naldi, "Climate-Induced Displacement in the Sahel: A Question of Classification," *International Review of the Red Cross* 103 (2021): 1029–65.

[28] See Mariana Valverde, "Theorizing the Space and Time of Law," in *Chronotopes of Law: Jurisdiction, Scale and Governance* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 30–53.

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This is not a moment of disciplinary decline but one of generative dislocation – a rupture that opens space for reimagining the spatial imaginaries at the heart of international legal thought.[29] The cartographic inheritance of the discipline may endure, but it can no longer serve as the sole compass for navigating the plural, dynamic, and contested terrains of global legality. To remain epistemically responsive, disciplinary International Law must reimagine its mapping of the legal globe – not to recover a lost coherence but to render visible the emergent legal forms[30] – assemblages, infrastructures, atmospheres – that now constitute global ordering. Only by recalibrating its conceptual repertoire can the discipline enhance its relevance – both within the coordinates of a familiar map and within a legal world whose spatial grammars are still being written. The task, then, is not to discard the incumbent World Map but to expose it as a constructed and unfolding text. Through critical and imaginative engagement with the spatial assumptions being reworked by overlapping legal, technological, and environmental forces, International Law may avoid the temptations of *Retromania* and reorient itself within trans-territorial landscapes that increasingly define the legal globe.

Mapping the Innumerable

Reimagining International Law in an era of spatial rupture requires confronting not only the cartographic logic of conventional legal thought but also its epistemic mediums. If maps have historically shaped the way modern law perceives space, so too has *the book* shaped how it thinks. The ensuing challenge, then, is not merely one of spatial remapping but of intellectual mediumship: how International Law conceptualizes, constructs, and circulates its core ideas. In this context, the future of the book is not a question of form alone but also of disciplinary capacity.

[29] Some examples include: David Delaney, *The Spatial, the Legal and the Pragmatics of World-Making: Nomospheric Investigations* (New York: Routledge, 2010); and Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, *Spatial Justice: Body, Lawscape, Atmosphere* (London: Routledge, 2015).

[30] For example, consider how the perception of territory may be re-examined relative to property: Nicholas Blomley, "Precarious Territory: Property Law, Housing, and the Socio-Spatial Order," *Antipode* 52, no. 1 (2020): 36–57.

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The medium of the book has long served as a vehicle for theoretical synthesis and conceptual innovation in International Law. It is the format through which landmark arguments have been staged and scholarly lineages established – from Lauterpacht and Chimni to Koskenniemi, and from Kennedy, Knop, and Orford to Anghie – to name but a few. These texts have done more than inform; they shape the contours of disciplinary memory, anchoring debates across generations. Yet the monograph today finds itself increasingly *off the map* of institutional value. The reasons are both structural and philosophical: The generative temporality required for the book – slow thinking, recursive development, speculative inquiry – is at odds with the accelerative demands of the metrified university.[31]

Recent decades have witnessed an escalating emphasis on research metrics, performance benchmarking, and knowledge valorization.[32] These managerial frameworks increasingly determine what kind of scholarship counts, how it circulates, and where it sits within hierarchies of institutional prestige.[33] Under such governance, the book is often framed as a costly and an imposing albatross, where the return on intellectual investment is difficult to quantify,[34] and its temporal horizon often exceeds the reporting cycles of research output audits.[35] Accordingly, this preface offers an apt moment to reflect on the changing place of the book in international legal thought amid the rise of digital media, research assessment regimes, and accelerated publication cultures.[36]

[31] Maarten Hillebrandt and Michael Huber, "Quantifying Higher Education: Governing Universities and Academics by Numbers," *Politics and Governance* 8, no. 2 (2020): 1–5; see also Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[32] See Ingo Venzke, "Against Impact," *Leiden Journal of International Law* 37, no. 4 (2024): 757–62.

[33] See Deborah Lupton, *The Quantified Self* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016).

[34] Wendy Laura Belcher, *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 5–7.

[35] See Stefano Collini, *What Are Universities For?* (London: Penguin, 2012), 168–77; see also William Germano, *Getting It Published: A Guide for Scholars and Anyone Else Serious about Serious Books*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[36] Sally Engle Merry, *The Seductions of Quantification: Measuring Human Rights, Gender Violence, and Sex Trafficking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 9–21.

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It asks how the book might be relocated – not nostalgically defended but critically repositioned – in a scholarly landscape increasingly structured by speed, visibility metrics, and compressed formats. Under such managerialism, knowledge becomes legible primarily through quantifiable outputs: citation indexes, impact scores, h-index rankings, and grant income.[37] These instruments have transformed scholarly value from a question of intellectual contribution to one of statistical visibility.[38] As Maggie Berg and Barbara Seeber observe, the "supermarket model" of research tends to prioritize output over insight and performance over patience.[39] Monographs, by their nature, resist such economization. As a result, they are frequently cast as indulgences: viable perhaps for the senior – or delinquent – scholar with institutional security but risky for those navigating academic precarity. To write my book in such a time has often felt like an act of resistance, rather than an essential journey needed for disciplinary reflection and, possibly, regeneration.

This epistemic marginalization has implications beyond institutional career pathways. As the book is marginalized as a contribution of academic value, the forms of thought it sustains – genealogical excavation, conceptual synthesis, historical contextualization – are rendered more difficult to maintain. In a discipline that must now grapple with algorithmic governance, climate collapse, and noncontiguous territorialization, this is no minor loss. The book supports a long arc of inference, allowing ideas to traverse temporal, disciplinary, and methodological registers in ways shorter formats cannot.

The proliferation of legal blogs and digital platforms has only intensified this shift. Websites such as *EJIL: Talk!*, *Opinio Juris*, and *Just Security* have become critical spaces for real-time engagement with international legal events. They facilitate dialogue and

[37] Sarah de Rijcke et al., "Evaluation Practices and Effects of Indicator Use: A Literature Review," *Research Evaluation* 25, no. 2 (2016): 161–69.

[38] David Barton and Sharon McCulloch, "Negotiating Tensions around New Forms of Academic Writing," *Discourse, Context & Media* 24 (2018): 8–15.

[39] Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber, *The Slow Professor: Challenging the Culture of Speed in the Academy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 57–58: "Slowing down is about asserting the importance of contemplation, connectedness, fruition, and complexity. It gives meaning to letting research take the time it needs to ripen…. It gives meaning to periods of rest, an understanding that research does not run like a mechanism; there are rhythms, which include pauses and periods that may seem unproductive."

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incubation and broaden the field's public reach.[40] In doing so, they have altered the public face of international legal scholarship. However, these platforms also privilege particular epistemic aesthetics, which demands clarity, speed, and topicality. Legal commentary flirts with a genre of "performance"[41] – the timely insight, the authoritative voice, the conclusive tone. These constraints are not merely formal. As Marshall McLuhan famously argued, the medium of communication structures the very thought it conveys.[42] Digital platforms prioritize brevity, linearity, and summary. They resist recursion, contradiction, and slow synthesis. They are optimized for shareability rather than difficulty. The consequence is an epistemic contraction, wherein thought is increasingly flattened to match the logics of the platforms that host it. As Richard Lanham noted, "the economics of attention" now shape not only what is written but also how and why it is written.[43]

In such an ecology, the book assumes renewed critical importance. It offers a different scale of argument as well as a different mode of engagement. It supports temporality rather than urgency, reflection rather than reaction, structure rather than succession. It allows law to think genealogically, historically, and speculatively. In the face of planetary disruptions and normative uncertainty, these are essential capacities. To advocate for the book, then, is not to reject the blogosphere or digital scholarship. It is to insist on a broader epistemic ecology – one that values the complementary affordances of different media. Legal blogs are vital for immediate response; books, for reflection. Blogs facilitate entry into the debate; books can transform its grammar. What is at stake is not preference but possibility: the kind of knowledge International Law can generate and the kind of futures it can envision. If legal blogs provide the first word, books

[40] See Panagiotis A. Kyriakou, "International Law Shaping and Digital Ecosystems: Between Sensationalism and Empowerment," *Asian Journal of International Law* 15, no. 1 (2025): 232–51, https://doi.org/10.1017/S2044251324000328

[41] See Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Performance and Power* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011).

[42] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 7–21.

[43] Richard A. Lanham, *The Economics of Attention: Style and Substance in the Age of Information* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); see also Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy* (New York: NYU Press, 2011).

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are often essential for the second thought: the reflective, speculative, and recursive thinking that underpins serious legal theory. And if International Law is to remain intellectually responsive to planetary conditions, infrastructural entanglements, and plural legal orders, it must preserve the scholarly ecologies that make such thinking possible.

To relocate the book within the epistemic map of International Law is to reposition thought itself. It is to affirm that form shapes content, that intellectual labor requires time, and that theory needs room to unfold. Being *off the map*, in this sense, is not a loss but an opening. It is an opportunity to rethink what International Law sees, as well as how it sees – to imagine anew the media through which law thinks. To remain *on the map* in a world of shifting legal geographies, International Law must also reflect critically on the spatial and institutional coordinates of its own knowledge production. This reflection includes revaluing the temporal, epistemic, and conceptual affordances of the book – not as a nostalgic artefact but as a vital medium through which International Law might yet think otherwise.

As with any project that unfolds across shifting conceptual and disciplinary terrains, the arguments assembled here did not emerge all at once but rather through earlier avenues of inquiry. Portions of the arguments developed in this book first appeared along various itineraries of thought. Several chapters draw upon, revise, and considerably expand fragments of my previous writings, including "On Fragments and Geometry: The International Legal Order as Metaphor and How it Matters" (2013), "The Visual Conquest of International Law: Brute Boundaries, the Map and the Legacy of *Cartogenesis*" (2018), "International Law and the Ides of March: A Response to David Kennedy" (2018), "The European Union and Critical Legal Cartography: Old Geopolitics, Worn Geopoetry, and the Return of Geopower" (2022), and "What Is the Global? Reassembling How International Lawyers See Space and Time" (2025). These earlier texts served less as blueprints than as provisional coordinates – conceptual waypoints that helped orient the broader cartographic and theoretical journey undertaken here. While this book recasts those materials through new vantage points and expanded argumentation, I acknowledge their presence as part of the evolving cartography of ideas that ultimately gave shape to *Off the Map*.

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Mapping the Incontiguous: Acknowledgments

Every book is a journey, and book writing rarely follows a straight line. This book, like many others, was written along discontinuous paths – through detours, hesitations, and moments of both clarity and doubt. My intellectual trajectory cannot be fully mapped by institutional affiliations or disciplinary coordinates alone. Rather, it is indebted to a more intricate and incontiguous geography of support: one formed across time, space, and people.

Acknowledgments, like maps, are selective and inevitably incomplete. They cannot capture the full terrain of gratitude or trace every influence with precision. They nonetheless gesture toward the broader ecology within which scholarship emerges: a field composed not only of citations and conferences, but also of shared meals, read drafts, enjoyed drinks, and encouragement offered at just the right moment. In what follows, I offer thanks to those whose presence – near and far, continuous and intermittent – shaped this book's becoming. These connections form their own kind of cartography: layered, shifting, and *off the map*, but no less real for it.

How one enters a field of inquiry profoundly shapes how its horizons are perceived and navigated. Before turning to academic International Law, I was a litigation lawyer practicing in domains where the legal and extra-legal were deeply entangled. Whether working on matters involving medical malpractice, commercial transactions, corporate governance or labor grievances, the cases I encountered were never merely legal disputes. They were complex assemblages of juridical form, social context, institutional dynamics, and affective undercurrents.

Success in litigation often depended as much on doctrinal mastery as on an interpretive sensibility attuned to adjacent fields – medicine, finance, business, organizational culture, and human psychology. To lead a case effectively required grasping how legal and nonlegal elements co-constituted its stakes and form.

Yet as I transitioned from legal practice into academic scholarship, I was struck by a curious inversion in the ethos. Where practice demanded a capacity to traverse boundaries, to draw pragmatically and creatively across knowledge domains, disciplinary International Law seemed consumed by a logic of boundary maintenance. Disciplinary rigor was measured not by capacious synthesis or interpretive dexterity, but by fidelity to methodologically enclosed terrains – doctrinal,

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historical, or theoretical. Interdisciplinary gestures were sometimes tolerated and often suspicious, and thus rarely integral. The governing imaginary was one of jurisdictional demarcation and preservation, rather than of intellectual bridging and innovation.

This shift was more than merely stylistic; it revealed deeper assumptions about what constitutes relevant knowledge – and who may be recognized as an "international" lawyer. In practice, knowledge is often situated, contingent, and improvisational. It emerges through embodied encounters, interpretive leaps, and an attunement to the entangled legal and extra-legal dimensions of complex problems. In this sense, the move from practice to theorizing was not merely a change in vocation – it was a crossing into a different epistemic geography, one that often conceals its borders even as it polices them. Entering this space, I often felt intellectually *off the map*: familiar with the terrain, but unsure of my coordinates within it.

It is for these reasons that I begin my acknowledgments with David Kennedy. His founding of the Institute for Global Law and Policy at Harvard Law School (IGLP) has been profoundly transformative, shaping both my own trajectory and that of a generation of international legal scholars seeking to navigate the field otherwise. For many of us, the IGLP offered a refuge from rigid disciplinary cartographies: a space where the boundaries of legal scholarship could be stretched, challenged, and redrawn. It has served as a rare intellectual commons – a site for those whose inquiries routinely traverse doctrinal, historical, political, and economic dimensions. The IGLP became a space where being *off the map* was not a liability, but a virtue. David could have used his intellectual capital to further entrench the discipline's dominant maps. Instead, he chose to redraw them – investing outward, not inward; opening space rather than enclosing it. It reflects a vision of the field as dynamic and revisable, and of scholarship as something capacious enough to accommodate voices and horizons not yet *on the map*.

Within the IGLP, I encountered some of the most generative and intellectual relationships of my academic life – colleagues, sparring partners, and friends who accompanied me along unmarked paths and unexpected turns. I am deeply grateful to Antony Anghie, Diamond Ashiagbor, Maddy Chiam, Dan Danielsen, Dennis Davis, Aziza Ahmed, Arnulf Becker Lorca, Cyra Choudhury, Richard Clements, Seamus Darby, Karen Engle, Günter Frankenberg, Chris Gevers, John Haskell, Jason Jackson, Vidya Kumar, Lucas Lixinski, Vasuki Nesiah,

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Daniel Pinheiro Astone, Hani Sayed, Poul Kjaer, Michelle Le Roux, Martti Koskenniemi, Zina Miller, Vasuki Nesiah, Scott Newton, Zoran Oklopčić, Akbar Rasulov, Kerry Rittich, Leo Specht, Chantal Thomas, Kristen Verdeaux, Dina Waked, Robert Wei, and Lucie White. This book is indebted to that vision, and to the people and many places that have made it possible to find my bearings without always needing to stay on the charted path.

The erratic topography of a scholarly life is rarely traversed alone. It requires perseverance and imagination alongside the presence of devoted mentors, colleagues, and friends – intellectual sherpas who, for reasons that remain both humbling and cosmic, saw value in my questions and potential in my voice. I have been extraordinarily fortunate to journey alongside some of the most courageous, generous, and unwavering companions one could hope for. From the very inception of the project, they believed not only in the viability of this book, but in the possibility that it might matter – that it could chart something worth reading on the intellectual terrain of International Law.

I am especially grateful to Friedrich Kratochwil, who took a chance on a litigator-turned-PhD-candidate and opened the door to a new academic world. To Nicholas Onuf (and his wife, Sandy), who has been a steadfast presence throughout this journey – a wise interlocutor, a generous mentor, and one of the earliest champions of this book. His belief in the project gave me confidence long before the arguments had coalesced. Hans Lindahl has offered not only deep and sincere friendship but has also been an institutional and intellectual anchor – mentoring me with care, supporting this project with conviction, and investing in its promise from its earliest, most speculative phase. Geert Vervaeke, my former Dean at Tilburg Law School, grasped the arc of this research with a clarity that surprised and moved me. His expressions of confidence, and the concrete steps he took to carve out the institutional space and time for this work to take shape, were pivotal. I am grateful to John Haslam and Carrie Parkinson at Cambridge University Press for providing their sound guidance during my drafting process.

There is also a broader network of allies and friends whose support – extended at key moments – proved indispensable. One pivotal supporter was the European University Institute (EUI). Joanne Scott, then Head of the EUI Law Department, granted me a Ferdinand Braudel Fellowship that enabled the earliest chapters to be drafted. Together

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with Erik Jones of the Robert Schuman Centre, she also co-sponsored a collaborative research workshop at the EUI, which provided a space for exchange and reflection that deeply influenced my thinking. Later, Nicolas Petit, Joanne's successor as Department Head, generously extended my Visiting Fellow status over several years, ensuring that I could access the remarkable resources of the EUI Library. Equally formative was the engagement of the International Law Working Group at the EUI, which hosted two seminars on my early draft chapters.

Yet the network of allies behind this project extended far beyond Tilburg or Florence, tracing a variegated and generous geography of guest lectures, workshops, and scholarly encounters that enabled me to road-test, refine, and rethink the arguments that unfold in these pages. Each stop along the way added a topographic layer – new vantage points from which the contours of the project came into sharper focus. John Haskell arranged what proved to be a breakthrough moment: my first invited lecture on the book's central claims, delivered at Mississippi College of Law in Jackson. In Tokyo, Takao Suami of Waseda University generously hosted me for two days of sustained scholarly exchange. During that time, a remarkable group of scholars from across Japan convened to engage each chapter of the manuscript. In South Africa, Juanita Pienaar and Nicola Smit supported and organized a collaborative workshop at Stellenbosch University, which opened up new conceptual pathways, particularly around questions of scalar geometries, jurisdictional layering, and trans-territorial rule.

Further north, Pål Wrange arranged a seminar at Stockholm University, where I benefited from conversations with Jens Bartelson and Anne Orford. Their insights, each from distinct but intersecting critical traditions, helped me rethink the book's theoretical framing. Soon after, Carl Lewis welcomed me to the Asser Institute in The Hague, where I had the opportunity to present the work to a multidisciplinary audience of scholars and practitioners. Each of these encounters – across vastly different institutional and geographic settings – contributed to the reshaping of the manuscript in crucial ways. They reminded me that scholarly thinking is always embedded in place, even when it aspires to move beyond inherited maps.

The project also developed considerably through an annual minicourse I co-taught at the IGLP Global Scholars Academy, held in Bangkok (with Günter Frankenberg), Budapest (with Hani Sayed), and later in Stellenbosch (with Scott Newton and Marius Pieterse),

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titled "Mapping the World: Law in the Global Geography." These teaching encounters became conceptual laboratories where ideas were sharpened through dialogue with emerging scholars and policy leaders from across the world. Each of these moments, though geographically dispersed and temporally staggered, helped to reorient the project at key junctures.

Writing any manuscript is a marathon – marked as much by moments of fatigue as by flashes of insight and clarity. What sustains that journey, beyond scholarly community, are friendships that remind one of life's richness beyond the page. Throughout this long process, I have been fortunate to share time with a remarkable group of friends whose presence brought levity, perspective, and joy to even the most demanding phases of writing. These companions – diverse in background, temperament, and geography – offered a kind of companionship that is difficult to name, let alone footnote, but remains indelibly etched in memory. My heartfelt thanks go to: Tanja Aalberts, Guillaume Boutry and Marie-Hélène Pineau; Michele Capecchi and Elia Nichols; Jin-Young Chung; Elai and Iveta Davicioni; Caterina de'Medici and Alberto Statti; Jeffrey Dunoff, Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen; Vivek Hajarnavis; Juho Harkonen; Madeleine Hallward and Alex Purkiss; Konrad and Katarzyna Jagodzinski; Alex Killoch and Heather Fraser; Gail Lythgoe; Iassen "Punky" Lazarov; Rob and Kim Murgatroyd; Noora Arajärvi; Hannes Peltonen; Sergio Puig and Negi Katirai; Sofia Ranchordas and Gianluca Rossi; Vikas Saraf and Joli Divon; Gavin Sullivan; Martin and Sonia Simich; Bill Tompson and Gabriella Meloni; Neil Walker. Each of you, in your own way, made this long road lighter – and far more interesting.

Last but not least, no journey of this scale unfolds without the enduring shoulders of family – those who, often without fanfare or formal recognition, absorb the temporal, emotional, and practical dislocations that academic writing entails. Writing a book involves a preoccupation that often feels opaque to those not living inside its pages. That my family understood – even when they could not always see – why I needed to disappear into thought is a generosity. More than that, they helped create the conditions for this work to happen: making room for solitude, protecting time for writing, and offering support that was as logistical as it was emotional. Foremost I am grateful to our children, Aleksander and Viktoria, for their presence, and invigorating me with their energy, curiosity, and fun. To my

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supportive wife, Anna Sobczak, for her care, compassion, and sacrifices, and for reminding me of the importance of finishing the book. Special thanks to my dearest and caring mother, Dragica Rajković, my kind in-laws, Jerzy and Natalia Sobczak, and generous Aunt Lida for providing many important weeks and months of support at home. My appreciation to Daniel Rajković (brother), Ljubiša Ristić, Slavica and Bojan Stamenković, Ivana and Milan Nikolić, Nedeljko and Ružica Vukomanović, Marko and Marija Jovanović, Čedo Stepanović, and Anna-Maria and Kristina Kaneff for their sincere interest in this project. My gratitude to my nieces, Mina Milovanović and Natalija Rajković, for their assistance at home during my final phase of drafting. While my father, Božidar Rajković†, is no longer with us, I can imagine his anima is smiling somewhere *off the map*. To the many more who shared their care and interest, but have gone unnamed through my oversight: Thanks to you all!

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