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This book is about two of my favourite questions in economic geography: why do certain regions develop entrepreneurial and innovative economies, and how can policymakers support knowledge-based economic development? In order to answer these questions, one needs to develop an in-depth understanding about a region’s peculiar strengths and weaknesses. Through this study of three second tier high-tech regions in the United States, I had the opportunity to gain such an understanding. I do not know whether the answers I give in this book shed the right light on the questions and whether they are sufficiently developed to help policymakers understand the complex dynamics of regional economic development. However, I continue to be fascinated by the ability of certain regions in the world to capture entrepreneurial and innovative dynamics.

I grew up near Stuttgart, Germany, and I spent many summers working for small and medium-sized firms that were part of Baden-Württemberg’s industrial districts. I became intrigued by the region’s economic development and during a seminar at the University of Konstanz as an undergraduate I developed a keen interest in understanding the drivers of economically successful regions like this. I continued my studies as a Masters and Ph.D. student in the US, and as a graduate research assistant at Portland State University’s Institute of Metropolitan Studies I had the good fortune to work on several applied research projects about Portland’s economy. Through this work, I gained insights into regional economic development which culminated in a dissertation about the evolution of the high-tech economy in the Portland region. While working at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), I had the opportunity to expand this research and examine two more regions (Boise, Idaho, and Kansas City, which straddles the Kansas-Missouri state border). Through these comparisons I was able to reflect on each region’s growth. I am now working as a Professor of Economic Geography at the University of Bern in Switzerland and I continue to study regional development issues in the US. Writing this book has given me the opportunity to develop some preliminary answers to my initial questions and discover additional questions that I look forward to exploring in the future.
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