Acknowledgements

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.
Acknowledgements

Researching and writing this book would not have been possible without the help of many colleagues and friends. My advisers at Portland State University deserve many thanks: Professors Carl Abbott, Sy Adler, Robert Daasch, Robert Liebman, Ethan Seltzer, and the late Craig Wollner supported me during the dissertation. I also had the privilege of working with economist Joe Cortright on a variety of research projects about Portland’s regional economy. During my time at Virginia Tech, colleagues such as Paul Knox and Robert E. Lang shared with me invaluable insights about metropolitan growth patterns in the US. My graduate research assistants at Virginia Tech provided much needed research support: David Bieri, Shana Johnson, Seth Peery, and Roger Zalneraitis – you rock! A special thank you goes to David Bieri, who was instrumental in developing the quantitative analysis presented in Chapter 3. I also owe thanks to Stuart Armstrong who visualized the spin-off activities presented in Chapters 4 and 5. Other friends and colleagues offered valuable comments, including Ron Boschma, Jennifer Clark, Maryann Feldman, Ed Feser, Darrene Hackler, Ned Hill, Chris Hoene, Britta Klagge, Nicola Lowe, Ann Markusen, Sheila Martin, Philip McCann, Max-Peter Menzel, John Provo, and Greg Schrock. I would also like to thank Bruce Katz, Jennifer Vey, and Howard Wial at the Brookings Institution. They allowed me to develop the Kansas City case study and the comparative study of all three regions for two publications with the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program (Mayer, 2006, 2009a). Special thanks to Hilary Russell who edited the book and to Alan Sturmer, who as Executive Editor at Edward Elgar Publishing supported this book project. I would also like to thank the numerous experts who took the time to meet with me and share their knowledge and experiences about their firms, industries, and regions.

Heike Mayer
March 2010
Bern, Switzerland