Looking Forward

A Beloved (Epistemic) Community?

Well, it may be all right in practice, but it will never work in theory.
—Warren Buffet, letter to Berkshire Hathaway shareholders, 1984

It's always good to find firm answers, to reinforce unshakable convictions with undisputed evidence. The clarity and confidence that can result can surely provide a roadmap for policy and political change. Unfortunately, it's also the case that simply reinforcing firm prior beliefs—when, in fact, reality is a bit more complicated—can provide the combustible elements for, say, the Crusades, or more recently the Tea Party movement and its attempt to derail the workings of the federal government.

   The conclusions of this volume seem to better fit the admonition of Warren Buffet quoted above. There certainly seems to be something going on, but exactly what it is may seem clearer in the field than in the realms of academic theory. Part of this is that we are, we think, pioneering new ground and there is significant work remaining to be done. For example, the regression results of chapter 2 are consistent with those reported in the international literature and suggest that equity, social cohesion, and jurisdictional alignment are strongly associated with longer growth spells, even in a multivariate setting. At the same time, we have not clearly indicated why that might be, nor have we introduced intervening variables that might explain the causal chain. Similarly, our case-selection process was rooted in a quantitative decision-making process, meaning that our range of case studies may reflect less bias than in most such enterprises. At the same time, we acknowledge that

our version of theoretical sampling—in which we focused not just on places with varying quantitative outcomes but also on locales with well-known reputations for strong epistemic communities—is less analytically satisfying than a reliance on a single classification scheme.

Moreover, while all the case studies were subjected to the same preparation, interview, and write-up process, our categorizations of those regions—particularly the distinctions between planning-led, business-driven, conflict-informed, and knowledge-based—could easily be disputed by those more deeply conversant with the dynamics in those regions and so more aware of what is missing, in nuance even if not in broad theme. Meanwhile, the general conclusions we draw from those cases—that there are epistemic communities; that they are supported by a specific set of social norms and constituted through a specific set of social practices; and that they can lead to more or less favorable outcomes in terms of equity, growth, and resilience—may seem a stretch, given both the relatively small number of cases and the fact that few of the actual actors would label what they're doing the construction of a diverse and dynamic epistemic community.

So, why offer these preliminary and exploratory findings to the world now? Why not wait until the econometric evidence is even more persuasive and the microfoundations that emerge from both our hunches and our real-world examinations are spelled out in mathematical functions, complex game theory, and algebraic symbols? Why bank so much on the ideas that disconnection may be an impediment to regional alliances, that another world of knowledge and collaboration is possible, and that such collaboration could improve economic and social outcomes?

We do so because we believe that the time is short, not just for America's metros but for the nation as a whole. As we insisted at the beginning of this book, the income inequality, spatial sorting, and political polarization wracking America have grown sharper and more worrisome in recent years. While dealing with that social separation by creating shared knowledge and facilitating civil discourse will not necessarily yield a more positive direction, it is hard to see how one might forge ahead in the absence of those elements. As a result, our big challenge as a nation is not about tweaking tax rates but about building community, not about shifting policy but about recreating a polity.

This chapter eventually lifts up lessons for the national challenge, but we begin by first considering whether the sort of collaborations we discuss in this book—the diverse and dynamic epistemic communities—can actually have an impact on economic growth and social equity.

We answer this with a weak but important linkage: while there is no necessary causal chain, the mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence suggests that such communities can at least raise the probability of success in those goals through a variety of specific mechanisms we describe. We then consider issues of scaling regional epistemic communities— that is, how they might be replicated in ways that would improve communications and outcomes in multiple regions. We close by considering implications for the national picture.

IMPACTING GROWTH AND EQUITY

Epistemic communities may be good things in and of themselves—they connect people across boundaries, they develop a shared sense of destiny, and surely they appeal to a sense of identity and purpose. Celebrating these outcomes might sound a bit "soft"—and perhaps surprising for two social scientists who tend to be happiest when downloading census surveys, comparing time series, and swapping tips about how best to run fixed-effect regressions in unbalanced samples. But we think that such a focus on repairing disconnection is important and goes beyond psychic well-being; we have suggested that such sets of relationships might allow regional actors to better coordinate when faced with a sudden external or internal shock.

So, do epistemic communities actually impact economic and social outcomes—and if so, how? The econometric evidence we presented in chapter 2 suggests that the sort of social disconnection such communities try to address is important. In the hazard models presented, not only was a region's initial level of inequality strongly (negatively) associated with the ability to sustain employment growth in subsequent years, but we also found similar effects on job growth for a number of measures of social cohesion, including residential segregation, fragmented metropolitan governance, sharp differences in city–suburb poverty levels, and in a somewhat more modest (or at least complex) relationship, geographic differences in political affiliation.

This evidence certainly doesn't mean that increased social cohesion will necessarily result in greater growth and equity—but in places as diverse as Salt Lake City, San Antonio, and Raleigh, leaders seem to believe that lacking a sense of common destiny dooms that destiny to be less than it might. Formal regional collaborative initiatives have been formed, à la Envision Utah; new public–partnerships have been cemented, à la Raleigh's proclaimed Triple Helix model; and new

understandings about preparing the next America have been developed, à la San Antonio's multisector commitment to fund pre-kindergarten education or Seattle's effort to balance a rapidly growing high-tech sector with the needs and hopes of a working-class population increasingly priced out of the region. None of these new collaboratives, partnerships, or understandings will *necessarily* lead to positive outcomes—structural factors, effective policy, and the capacity to implement all matter—but key economic actors seem to believe that social connection can help.

This is an important finding, albeit not entirely novel. One recent book that is close to this volume in spirit if not strategy (in some sense, we went broad to do regional comparisons while he went deep to concentrate on two cases) is Sean Safford's *Why the Garden Club Couldn't Save Youngstown* (2009). In it, Safford eloquently and powerfully analyzes why Allentown was able to fare so much better than Youngstown in dealing with the economic restructuring of the 1980s and 1990s. At the core of his argument is an understanding that regions have complex layers of identity and affiliation between individuals and organizations. When a crisis in the regional economy emerges, people draw on these social structures to help guide their actions. In his two case studies, deeply rooted crises required individuals and organizations to improvise as old familiar roles for various actors, including local government, universities, unions, civic organizations, supplier companies, and banks, were undermined and new economic possibilities were still unclear—exactly the sort of uncertainty that we argued stimulates the creation of an epistemic community.

In comparing Allentown and Youngstown, Safford argues that actors in Allentown were more successful in their collective evolution in large part because of the diversity of their social connections, not just in breadth but in the multiple economic and social dimensions of those connections:

> The latter structure—characterized by intersecting rather than overlapping multiplexity—is more robust in the face of economic change. This is true for three reasons. First, uncertainty calls for interpretation, and interpretation is facilitated by access to different sources of information. A multiplex structure in which actors are connected to each other along separate dimensions allows diverse information sources to be brought to bear on understanding the problem at hand. Second, that structure provides greater opportunities for actors to emerge who can play leadership roles. . . . It suggests that organizations that span disparate groups in a community can become places where entrepreneurs can emerge and drive change processes. Finally, the independence of relational dimensions ensures that when crisis erupts in one sphere, other spheres will be relatively protected and can therefore serve as a platform for actors to engage each other. (Kindle location 1642)

What Safford describes in his Allentown case sounds a lot like what we would call a diverse and dynamic epistemic community. With very detailed data on both interbusiness and civic ties of key leaders in each of his regions, along with a deep historical analysis of settlement patterns and leadership strategies, he argues that not just the density but the diversity of the types of ties between regional leaders in Allentown was a critical component in helping the region dynamically respond to deindustrialization. While Youngstown was never able to effectively replace the decline in traditional manufacturing industries, Allentown was able to develop significant new growth sectors in health care, certain high-tech niches, financial services, and significant new entrepreneurial activity. Through his carefully constructed paired-case comparison, Safford provides an impressive depth of understanding of the contribution of these diverse knowledge networks to economic growth.

We point to Safford's research because his intensive research methodology provides a detailed picture of some of the processes that we believe underlie the ways that diverse epistemic communities contribute to growth and equity. Our research strategy was a more extensive effort, trying first to econometrically understand the impacts on job growth from broad patterns of social connection and disconnection across the largest 192 metropolitan regions, then to turn to a sufficiently large and diverse number of case studies to help provide evidence that understanding the nature and dynamics of epistemic communities might be important beyond just a few isolated cases. What we may have lost in depth we hope to have made up in breadth and scope.

In any case, the lessons from our case studies echo the findings of Safford. The strength, diversity, and dynamic character of what we call regional epistemic communities can shape the likelihood that a region will achieve more resilience and equity in the face of economic changes. To be sure, an epistemic community, no matter how diverse, is not a single silver bullet that can explain all growth and equity outcomes or overcome deep structural challenges (even for Safford, the real question is which region did less poorly as deindustrialization gripped the Midwest). But diverse and dynamic epistemic communities can offer more fertile soil for positive outcomes.

And as with Safford's analysis, a caveat is in order: "more positive" can simply mean "less worse." After all, the economic shifts of the last thirty years have been dramatic, with the loss of industry, the rise of global competition, and rapid and disruptive technological change all constituting headwinds for any trajectory of employment growth. With

median incomes falling, inequality rising, and financial sectors collapsing, it may well be that the contributions of diverse epistemic communities to outcomes in many of our cases is about moderating the overall negative trend—that is, performing better relative to the average rather than against some golden standard.

Grow, Baby, Grow

So how can knowing together contribute to growing together? We start in this section with the "growing," acknowledging first that while our frame of diverse and dynamic epistemic communities may be novel, this perspective—and its implications for the economy—really builds on earlier work about untradeable interdependencies lifted up by economic geographers (Storper 1997, 2013), as well as research suggesting that networks and other social relations are a fundamental defining feature of a new economic order (particularly in regions with strong information industries; see Castells 1996 and Benkler 2006). Those strands of research have emerged precisely because one of the new key drivers of growth is innovation—and this requires the sort of coordination that epistemic communities can provide.

Innovation is defined as the ability of firms, industries, and regions to continually translate information and knowledge into viable new products, services, and production processes in the face of changing technology and market conditions. Innovation is an interactive process which occurs through complex communication channels, both internal to and across firm boundaries. As it turns out, much of the important interaction happens within regional industry clusters and through the sort of face-to-face communication that can occur within a regional context (Clark 2013). And while many innovations incorporate important new scientific or technological developments, most innovations actually occur in more everyday processes, such as in design, marketing, business process, or other aspects of business operations that are rooted in nonscientific knowledge and in day-to-day activities (Benner 2003; Gertler 2003; Howells 2002; Lawson and Lorenz 1999; Leonard and Sensiper 1998).

Given the above, it seems reasonable to believe that diverse and dynamic epistemic communities might contribute to improved innovation as they facilitate relationships and the sharing of data and knowledge about regional realities and possibilities. More directly, our case studies have shown that such communities facilitate a collective response to shock, as in the coming together of Oklahoma City business leaders, the

response of Joint Venture Silicon Valley to slippage in Silicon Valley and now to rising inequality, or the shifts in business and civic leadership in San Antonio. All of these interactions helped position regions to be more resilient—and while some of the resilience may be attributable to more structural factors, surely the collective understandings played some role.

Epistemic communities can also make sure that diversity works for a region rather than against it. Increasing diversity can contribute to economic growth through a variety of processes, including increased ethnic entrepreneurship and better ties to international markets, and there is evidence from both the United States and Europe that greater racial and cultural diversity actually contributes to economic productivity (Bellini et al. 2013; Lee 2011; Sparber 2010). Though there is also some evidence that ethnic diversity can have a negative effect on economic development, through for example reduction in investment, suboptimal provision of public goods, or declines in trust and social capital (Habyarimana et al. 2007; Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2005), the sort of community-building we have outlined can build interethnic bridges and make it easier for regions to realize the potential economic gains of greater diversity.

Shared processes of knowledge generation and interpretation can also facilitate growth through their impact on regional workforce and economic development systems. Workforce quality depends on formal education and training programs—including community college curricula and public, private, and nonprofit workforce development and training programs—and crucial to their success is coordinating to make sure skills meet clusters (as with Project QUEST in San Antonio). Likewise, individual entrepreneurship is important, but business growth depends on access to capital, local government land-use regulations and zoning provisions, and the presence of multiple supplier companies and providers of specialized inputs ranging from customized software and technical expertise to market research, design, and advertising firms. In short, it takes a village to make a regional economy thrive, and when that economy is shifting, the more the village can work together in both recognizing and then capitalizing on positive new directions of change, the more likely it is that economic performance will be positive and sustained.

Who's In? Who's Out?

While the discussion above emphasizes the potential impacts on growth, we are even more convinced that epistemic communities have the potential for contributing to greater social equity and opportunity. In a region

that is more interconnected and relational in its leadership, low-income people, and those living in poor urban neighborhoods or older suburbs, may be more likely to be aware of opportunities in more fortunate parts of the region, or have personal ties with people in better-off economic circumstances. These links may make it easier for low-income people to access better jobs and improve their social mobility over time. Indeed, a wide range of research has documented the importance of such "weak ties" and "bridging social networks" (as distinct from "bonding social networks") in facilitating improved economic outcomes (Beugelsdijk and Smulders 2009; Granovetter 1973, 1995; Johnson, Bienenstock, and Farrell 1999; Saegert, Thompson, and Warren 2001; Wial 1991).

While creating conditions that can improve individual outcomes is important, it doesn't necessarily change broader social patterns of income distribution. Shuffling who's a millionaire and who's a low-wage worker does not necessarily shift the proportion of residents in each category. But the case studies suggest that the existence of diverse epistemic communities might also create conditions in which policies that actually can reshape patterns of economic opportunity might be developed and passed. In public education, this might include efforts to equalize spending in schools, like we saw in the MAPS for Kids program in Oklahoma City, the pre-K effort in San Antonio, and the attempts to equalize educational opportunity in Raleigh. In the arena of housing, it could include the commitment to a housing levy to address affordable housing shortfalls, as we saw in Seattle. The point is that such interactions between groups in the process of knowledge generation and interpretation can impact whether key actors see equitable investments as being in the region's overall interest.

We are not naive. We understand that the interests of those who are on the bottom of the income distribution or racial hierarchy only get addressed when there are strong social movements that can articulate needs and strategize to gain decision-making power. But the workings of an epistemic community hold out the possibility that those demands and strategies to address disadvantage will be a little less contentious, a little more successful, and a little more effective over time.

SCALING EPISTEMIC COMMUNITIES

After it went through its brief stint as a family destination, Las Vegas wanted to signal its return as a place more famous for discreet mis-behavior by adults. The new slogan to highlight the shift was "What

happens in Las Vegas stays in Las Vegas." Of course, Sin City was not one of our case studies—although surely there is a particular sort of knowledge being generated there. But we raise it because if diverse and dynamic epistemic communities have their benefits, if they can be identified by key characteristics, and if there are ways to jump-start them into existence—that is, to ensure that what happens in San Antonio or Salt Lake City does *not* stay there—then it would be useful to know how to replicate and scale them.

The More, the Merrier

One strategy for replication of metropolitan innovations in the past has involved connecting different metros for shared learning experiences. This was the logic of the Alliance for Regional Stewardship that we described in chapter 5, a mostly business-led effort that held a series of key conferences and eventually became a programmatic part of the American Chamber of Commerce Executives. It is also part of the intention of the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, which has highlighted the experiences of metro business and civic leaders, and sought to articulate a national agenda that would facilitate their work. And creating such connectivity and learning has also been the objective guiding the various Regional Equity conferences, webinars, and networks organized by PolicyLink, one of the premier equity-oriented intermediaries in the country.

Under the Obama administration, the federal government has also gotten into the act. Indeed, one of the more conscious attempts to develop regional diverse epistemic communities—not phrased that way, but it might as well have been—has been the Sustainable Communities Initiative supported by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The initiative has two components, Regional Planning Grants and Community Challenge Planning Grants. The former are described as follows:

> Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grants support metropolitan and multijurisdictional planning efforts that integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments. The Regional Planning Grant Program places a priority on investing in partnerships that direct long-term regional development and reinvestment, demonstrate a commitment to addressing issues of regional significance, utilize data to set and monitor progress toward performance goals, and engage stakeholders and citizens in meaningful decision-making roles.[1]

As of early 2015, Sustainable Communities Regional Planning grants had been awarded to 74 regional grantees in 44 states, including

some of the regions mentioned in the case studies.[2] In 2010—as noted in chapter 4—Salt Lake County was awarded $5 million to continue Envision Utah's work around regional transportation and affordable housing planning; Salt Lake was one of only two regions awarded the maximum grant that year. And as mentioned in chapter 7, the Puget Sound Regional Council was awarded nearly $5 million to support its Growing Transit Communities project, which built a partnership of cities, counties, and public and nonprofit partners with a vision to connect jobs to where people live. The Sustainable Communities Initiative has included the creation of new civic conversations in metropolitan regions, annual conferences with representatives from multiple regions, and a slew of technical-assistance efforts that aim to lift up broad issues of sustainability and equity as well as economic development. This is exactly the sort of community-building we see in our cases, and it is heartening to see federal incentives for replication.

However, part of what such efforts need to do, particularly if they want epistemic communities to be diverse, dynamic, and effective, is to shore up the weak links in any particular area. When we interviewed key informants in our case-study regions, one pattern that jumped out at us was that there was often an easily identified source of economic and maybe environmental data but generally—with the exception of the North Carolina Justice Center—respondents drew a blank (or offered a very fragmented answer) when asked about any "go-to" places for information on equity and opportunity. PolicyLink is seeking to address this gap with a new website (NationalEquityAtlas.org) that includes equity indicators for America's top 150 metropolitan areas; one of the authors of this book has been actively involved in that project, while the other has been involved in the creation of a Regional Opportunity Index that measures neighborhood opportunity *within* the regions of California (interact.regionalchange.ucdavis.edu). Both of these sorts of activities (and others) can help make sure that equity concerns are an initial part of the data being used to organize regional collaboratives.

But it's not just data breadth and depth that are key. Replication of regional epistemic communities will require a better understanding of the key investments in the technical, communicative, and organizing capacities that can make them happen. As we have stressed, there is no guarantee that the widespread development of such knowledge communities will yield stronger growth, improved equity, and enhanced resilience—but it does seem that their absence is associated with decline and stagnation. And surely it is worth a try. In a world in which

your economic returns are increasingly generated by association with particular co-workers, where your educational and health trajectory is affected by the neighborhood and region in which you reside, an approach which tries to more consciously capture those externalities seems helpful.

Where in the World?

Of course, replication is always easier said than done, and one of the limits to replication comes in what seems to be a special ingredient of success: place consciousness. In the cases we examined, the particular roots in a region helped forge an identity that worked to bind people to each other and to a common long-term future. Indeed, each place has its own sort of "regional narrative." We were struck by the sense in Salt Lake City that this was a place where one's children deserved the right to live and so long-term investment and good planning were key. We were amazed by how nearly everyone in Raleigh could repeat the Triple Helix mantra, echoing a sort of shared origin story that reverberated with an underlying pride that they had found just what the doctor ordered for sustainable growth. And in San Antonio—a place where the Alamo itself is seen by some as a defense of liberty and by others as an Anglo effort to maintain the rights of slave-owners—there has emerged a sort of common and quiet story of how the divisions of the past have given way to a booming downtown, a vibrant regional economy, and a secure and growing Mexican American middle class.

Fresno stands in unfortunate contrast to this picture. The region is seen as a place from which young people depart to seek a fortune beyond that available to farmworkers, partly because the civic elite has a seeming interest in maintaining poverty. One major political figure indicated that the biggest obstacle to progress is whether people believe that change is even possible. When your regional narrative is about departure, oppression, and hopelessness, it's hard to form a positive sense of place. Greensboro offered up a particularly fragmented sense of place. White leaders we talked to wondered why Black leaders could not look past the past. Actually, it's easy to understand why—when a place is infamous for lunch-counter protests and killings by the Ku Klux Klan, memories might just haunt the landscape. For our purposes, what is most significant is the divisiveness in even the *story* of the region; this bodes poorly for creating a diverse and shared epistemic community.

The importance of the sense of place was also evident where it was slipping. In Silicon Valley, respondents noted that globalization was eroding the commitment to the region that had given rise to organizations like Joint Venture Silicon Valley and the Silicon Valley Leadership Group—and that this allowed for more tolerance of inequality in a place that had once boasted of a large middle class. A similar erosion of "place-sense" seems to be underway in Charlotte, where the newcomers attracted by the booming economy have raised objections to what was once considered a symbol of Charlotte's special place in the New South: the integration of the schools via bussing policies. Meanwhile, the turnaround in Oklahoma City seems to have been driven by a sense of wounded pride. Upset emotionally as well as financially by the fact that United Airlines executives sited a maintenance facility elsewhere, civic leaders took it upon themselves to build a stadium, revitalize the downtown, and turn around the region's image.

Pride of place may seem an accident—but it can be built, and the resulting sense of identity can move people to action. The creation of geographic loyalties is embodied in the very name of Envision Utah or SA2020—people are invited to think of themselves as a part of the landscape, as rooted in the region, like the Great Salt Lake itself, or the river that ambles its way through downtown San Antonio. Critical to such identities seems to be an origin story—the historical narrative, true or not, that becomes a shared belief about why your region is now what it is. The tale of Tom Frost of San Antonio—the banker who reacted to movement organizing by distributing Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* to other business leaders but then eventually joined the workforce development board the same organizers had willed into being—has the virtue of being true. But for many in the region, it is also an apocryphal story: it says everything you need about the pathway from conflict to cooperation in that city, and it is therefore an origin myth, even if every element of the history is true.

The implication for replication is simply that there is a point to calling on people's pride of place and sense of regional identity. We think that this can be done in productive ways, fostering not excess competition between regions (as in political leaders in Texas seeming to boast every time a business relocates there from California) but the sort of healthy crosstown rivalry that can facilitate positive outcomes for multiple teams (or regions). We're not pushing boosterism for the sake of boosterism—but it's certainly hard to forge coalitions for regional resilience when residents secretly want to live someplace else. Rootedness matters, and it can be encouraged.

The Fork in the Road

A key skill in creating and replicating diverse epistemic communities is striking the sort of balance between conflict and cooperation illustrated by the story of Tom Frost. Our earlier work has been criticized for offering too rosy a picture of regional collaboration across sectors (Lester and Reckhow 2013)—and the critics have a point. The San Antonio case, in particular, illustrates the importance of what Lester and Reckow call "skirmishes," that is, the fights over policies and priorities that allow issues of equity to take a place in the public square. While we do not cover it here, the way in which issues of fairness have been lifted up in Los Angeles seems to have had a transformative effect on that metro (Meyerson 2013; Pastor and Prichard 2012). Concerns about both equity and growth can become second nature to a particular metro over time—think Seattle—but raising the issues of distributive justice and keeping them raised often requires a fight.

At the same time, an epistemic community needs to help create certain boundaries on these fights such that they create an opportunity to hash out difference rather than drawing the battle lines for permanent trench warfare. Of course, boundaries that are too tight can also become an excuse to avoid issues; to some degree, that's true in Salt Lake, where an aversion to conflict has led Envision Utah to steer clear of some tough and touchy issues, and in Seattle, where the infamous Seattle process can lead to issues' being talked over to the point of exhaustion and inaction. On the other hand, when every issue becomes a fight to the death, it's hard to come back to working together.

Part of what can moderate conflict is a sense that everyone is in it for the long haul. As we have stressed, this requires both vision and a set of repeated interactions that makes it more obvious that the "other," no matter how irritating he or she may be, is not leaving. This is in contrast to the kind of short-term thinking that one finds in Fresno, particularly among developers hoping that their homes will be bought before anyone notices the damage done by the suburban sprawl they facilitate. In any case, what is clear is that when actors are at each other's sides rather than at each other's throats, there are more possibilities to channel conflict into collaboration.

The challenge here is that epistemic communities are path-dependent, though not path-destined. History matters, although not absolutely. The long-standing racial conflicts in Greensboro made it harder to emulate the New South character of Raleigh and Charlotte, while the shared

Mormon history and culture helped civic leaders in Salt Lake City call for envisioning a state in which the children of current residents would also find a place. Such path dependence might simply suggest that success breeds success—but from some of the darkest circumstances a set of common understandings can emerge. Consider the community–business conflicts in San Antonio or the response of Oklahoma City when spurned by United Airlines: path dependence, in short, does not mean stasis, and it is possible to get "shocked" onto a new and more productive path.

The role of such shocks can be critical—and while one might think that the trigger would need to be an acute crisis rather than chronic underperformance, recall how Raleigh's leaders realized that a new set of industrial drivers was needed for the long-term future of the region, how Salt Lake's planners worried that population pressures would further threaten a slowly eroding quality of life, and how civic forces in Seattle are now trying to figure out how to marry a high-tech economic tiger with the imperatives of an egalitarian social ethos. You do not need to wait till your region is on fire to get started with clearing the brush of conflict and old thinking. You do not need to wait till your economy and society are sick to launch a program aimed at widespread health.

In any case, the key point here is that a diverse epistemic community is a competitive, not a natural comparative advantage; that is, it can be built, not just inherited as a factor endowment of the region. Learning more about how leaders build diverse epistemic communities through visioning exercises, leadership programs, and the like; how metro regions can facilitate it through annexation policies, reducing municipal fragmentation, and the like; and how the federal government could encourage it by shifting funds to encourage collaboration, inclusive workforce development, and the like, is a key part of a research and policy agenda for the future.

LESSONS FOR THE NEXT AMERICA

This book has explored the evolution of regional knowledge communities, the linkage between those communities and concrete economic and social outcomes, and the specific ways in which such communities are created and sustained (or eroded) over time. Partly because we are breaking relatively new ground, we have tried to deploy the most thorough and varied techniques possible: an econometric investigation of the link between social distance and sustained growth; a case-study

selection process that involved theoretical sampling and quantitative criteria; a systematic approach to identifying interviewees and garnering data from the cases; and an attempt to offer some reflections on the theoretical microfoundations that are consistent with our findings.

While the results are tentative and suggestive, they do offer a platform for further research. We found, for example, that measures like inequality, residential segregation, and jurisdictional fragmentation are associated with shorter spells of employment growth—and we suggest that such measures are probably associated with epistemic distance as well. That sets up one of our core arguments: that building community at a regional level—particularly collaboratives and conversations that incorporate multiple sectors and can adjust to changing times even as they create a sense of place and stewardship—can create the conditions for more favorable outcomes.

We also realized—more along the qualitative-research way than through carefully specified hypotheses—that such regional communities are really collections of institutions rather than any particular and well-defined venue where decisions get made; that they tend to be more about new mechanisms for governance than new forms of government; and that they are rooted in underlying social norms and a deep sense of place, as well as a commitment to repeated interactions. We also learned that the overall direction of epistemic communities can come from planners, business, or civic leaders; that key leaders are frequently made and not just born; and that there may be particularly important lessons for the American future in those places where the new knowledge communities are meeting (or missing) the new knowledge economy.

Just as important, we realized what diverse epistemic communities are not. They are not simply regional collaboratives in which everyone just gets along. Indeed, one of the most important characteristics of effective diverse and dynamic epistemic communities is that skirmishes and conflict do not necessarily shred trust but can be part of building relationships. Finally, such communities are also not static things—while there is an element of path dependence in that success can indeed beget success (and often the confidence to tackle new issues), the most striking finding in the cases was that sometimes external and internal shocks can trigger an epistemic community into being.

Indeed, this is what we mean by *dynamic*: the ability to respond to circumstances and then go on to shape them, to be resilient in the face of economic uncertainty. Such dynamism is necessarily tied to diversity—by which we mean not so much ethnic diversity (although that is a part

of the picture) as the ability to bridge multiple sectors, constituencies, and perspectives. For, in contrast to traditional epistemic communities, knowledge networks at the regional level need unlike-minded professionals and others if they are to truly be able to sort out the various tensions between actors that are an inevitable part of regional governance. So while the film *Casablanca* ends with a French detective telling his minions to "round up the usual suspects," dynamic and diverse epistemic communities are about bringing together unusual (and unsuspecting) allies.

All of this, we know, opens up as many questions as it answers (which could provide full employment for an army of grad students). Future research needs to include more case studies, adopt more of the in-depth analysis undertaken by Safford (2009), and develop more direct and indirect econometric evidence. Future theorizing should more formally model how preferences form, identity sticks, and trust develops. And future policy—not so much with regard to growth and equity but with regard to generating knowledge communities—should look at the potential role of formal leadership programs and strategic interventions like the Sustainable Communities Initiative.

But while replication across regions is of interest, perhaps one of the most compelling needs is for the lessons here to make their way to the national stage. The idea of scaling up metropolitan insights and practices, including those involved in building epistemic communities, has gained some ground. This is certainly the strategy of the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program. The leaders and researchers there insist that metro America is the beating heart of the US economy and that the collaborative arrangements being crafted in regions might point the way for the nation as a whole. This sort of scaling is also reflected in the work of PolicyLink—while it once worked to organize conferences focused on Regional Equity, it now boasts of Equity Conferences (no region!) and promotes a central message, based in part on the sort of work we review in chapter 2, that "equity is the superior growth model."

All this effort to go national with regional wisdom is happening not a moment too soon. For while it would be nice to simply wait for the lessons from America's metros to bubble up to the federal level, we may need to more quickly bottle the magic elixir that leads some regions to find common ground and create the capacity to outperform others on equity and growth—and stir some of that magic into the national discourse. If we don't, we may continue to walk off multiple fiscal cliffs. If we don't, we will never get to an American Compact as rational about

immigration policy as the Utah Compact is about immigrant integration. If we don't, we may not develop a long-term strategy to address the underlying issues of social disconnection and unequal life chances that hold back the entire nation from its full economic and social potential.

For this is what the next America demands. The nation is slated to become majority-minority by 2043, with the youth population likely to cross that threshold by the end of this decade. Meanwhile, the drivers of inequality, particularly globalization, technology, and shifting premiums for education, are likely to persist, meaning that this emerging population will face a less promising economic future. In the face of this simmering crisis, the country seems to be reacting to the challenge by fragmenting by political party, economic class, and geographic location. It's a recipe for the nation to become Fresno, not San Antonio; Greensboro, not Raleigh; Detroit, not Salt Lake City; Silicon Valley, not Seattle.

If ever there were a need to form a more coherent national community—to marshal identity to persuade Americans that we are in this together, to develop a shared fact base to make inequality, climate change, and other challenges undisputable, to create a set of repeated interactions in which trust is built, not eroded—that time is now. Our hope is that this book will add to the national conversation in a way that can help America move toward what has always been its promise: the achievement of individual success, to be sure, but also, and most profoundly, a more perfect union.