

## PREFACE

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More than a decade ago, the distinguished journalist James Fallows, who grew up in Redlands, California, in the 1950s, wrote a book entitled *More Like Us*.<sup>1</sup> Fallows's evocative book captured an idea about America, about California, and, we would argue, about communities like San Diego, that has shaped our thinking about the story of this place. Reflecting on literary treatments of the West, his book calls up images from the 1950s of women in shiny new convertibles, dressed to the nines with bouffant hairdos and high heels, arriving to do their family shopping at the local Safeway. With parents who were likely dirt-poor farmers from the Midwest who had migrated to California in the 1930s with the last few dollars they had, driving cross-country in an old jalopy, they still believed in and hoped for another chance, a new life, a better life—and they achieved it. Fallows argues that at the core of American culture is this belief in the possibility that no matter who we are or where we came from, we can reinvent ourselves. Those women in the Safeway parking lots no longer were the daughters of poor farmers from the Midwest; they were no longer “Okies,” but rather prosperous, well-dressed middle-class housewives, shopping for their families in the California sunshine. This idea, so effectively presented by Fallows, resonates with our experience. However, as we will argue in the pages that follow, in America, not only do individuals reinvent themselves, but whole communities and economies do. The story of places like San Diego that shift and adapt over time is very much a story of reinvention.

The two of us came together around the writing of this book based on our shared history as Californians. We had engaged in earlier collaborative activities at UCSD as part of a Pew Charitable Trusts grant to launch a short-lived but meaningful UCSD Civic Collaborative; the book project grew out of our mutual interest

in the interplay among civic culture, regional economic outcomes, and the natural advantages of specific places. Walshok is a sociologist, long interested in the ways that broader social dynamics shape individual opportunities and outcomes. Shragge is a historian who has investigated the specific ways that individuals and social organizations at the local level create opportunities that shape the character of their communities, especially their key economic activities.

We also share an abiding curiosity about the relatively unknown history of the community in which we have lived and worked for multiple decades: San Diego, California. What is available is not terribly helpful to understanding the nature of the place, particularly its urban development and its fascinating economic transformations over time. San Diego, like most communities, is rich in its early history—stories of individual families, photographs and archives about distinctive groups and neighborhoods, but little has been written about the evolution of the region over time. Walshok's lifelong interest in the social dynamics of innovative communities, in particular, what it is that communities do to develop new economic opportunities that result in new businesses and new jobs, strongly motivated her interest in doing a book about San Diego. Shragge's research in the historical evolution of the San Diego region, especially the city's unique relationship with the federal government, in particular the military, has helped elucidate the character of the contemporary civic culture; that was the inspiration for his involvement in this project.

The collaboration between an industrial sociologist and a social historian began to make a great deal of sense the more we talked about what we each wanted to do. Shragge's detailed work on the history of San Diego, while fascinating, could not take on its full meaning and implications without connecting it to the compelling contemporary social and economic dynamics of San Diego, which have captured the attention of civic leadership across the country and around the world, as communities grapple with how to turn their economies around. Walshok's ongoing interest in the contemporary dynamics of San Diego's innovation economy could not be fully elucidated without understanding the details of the full history of the place—who came here, what the early industries were, how a civic culture developed that enabled the growth of R&D in the region and gave rise to such an inclusive and opportunistic business community. It became clear that to understand the interplay of civic culture and the shifting economic and social outcomes that have characterized the San Diego region for more than 150 years, a great deal of attention to historical detail was required as well as a great deal of familiarity with contemporary stories that had yet to be written to document this evolution. Our partnership, we believe, has allowed us to do this.

We also share a healthy skepticism about this place we love so much. San Diego's history and contemporary character present sharp contradictions that we hope will be better understood because of the work we have done. We think of them as the "paradoxes of place." In the case of our place, San Diego, an overriding paradox that shapes all of its history and continues to frame economic growth issues moving forward is the desire of citizens in the region to build a world-class city with only minimal investments and/or costs in terms of taxes, environmental stewardship, labor conflicts, or infrastructure development. The history reveals to us that San Diegans have always wanted to have their cake and eat it, too. They want a great world city, but they don't want to spend; they don't want to invest; they don't want to be taxed. They want to avoid labor conflicts at all costs. Always, they want to preserve the beauty of the place, its pristine environment.

We will demonstrate other dramatic paradoxes throughout this book. One is the paradox of an essentially conservative political culture that has for more than a hundred years based its economy on feeding at the federal trough. San Diegans have sought the federal government as a funder and a customer more aggressively than possibly any city in the United States, and yet, until very recently, its core political culture has been, albeit an environmentally conscious one, conservative and Republican. Rather than build a truly sustainable political economy, the city has dealt with its growth in recent generations by borrowing from pension funds and short-changing many public institutions and infrastructure projects in the desire to avoid new taxes. No one seems to see the city's foundational paradox: Its prosperity comes from living off the federal taxation system, which pays for national defense, R&D, and many of the federally funded infrastructure projects from which the region has benefited over time. That simply does not match the community's antigovernment, antitax political culture.

An additional paradox of the place is the opportunism and boosterism as well as occasional corruption that has characterized its business culture over time. San Diego has a tendency to oversell itself, but, ironically, sometimes it actually works . . . it actually pays off. We talk at great length in the pages that follow about the importance of the 1915 Exposition, the post-World War II efforts to build R&D institutions in the region, the audacious strategies used by all the research institutions, and in particular UC San Diego, as they began to grow their R&D infrastructure throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, we present the continuing efforts among San Diegans to be a world leader in biotech, renewable energy, and stem cell research. In so doing, San Diego has swum repeatedly against the tide of more mature and well-resourced regions, reaching far beyond its grasp but in fact generating real success now and then, even spectacularly at times.

We hope as well that this book will help illuminate some contemporary paradoxes about the region. One is the belief among many that nothing important happened in San Diego until the UC San Diego campus was founded in 1960. We suggest that the region's civic culture always included a deep respect for science, technology, and higher education, including an understanding of their value to economic growth. The clusters of science and technology companies whose development has accelerated significantly since the 1980s clearly benefited from the parallel growth of the research institutions, most prominently UC San Diego, on what is known as the Torrey Pines Mesa. However, our research and data make clear that, as early as 1902, local citizens were investing in research enterprises; the federal government, particularly the military, was locating some of its most important technology development activities in the region by the 1910s, such as the largest radio tower in the United States being located on Chollas Heights, and that city boosters, in particular the Chamber of Commerce, since the 1920s actively promoted through marketing materials, advertising, and lobbying, the importance of San Diego to the nation's technological future.

A final paradox that we seek to illuminate is the unexpected growth in entrepreneurial high-tech business development from the 1980s onward in what was otherwise a defense contracting town. This transformation of the business culture is not well understood as a foundation for the region's economic success over the last few decades. Many other cities and regions across the United States and the world look to San Diego because of its impressive gains with few of the early advantages possessed by more robust centers of technology and entrepreneurship such as Boston and the San Francisco Bay area. The critical role played by an opportunistic and adaptable business culture in this transformation is an important part of this story.

In sum, as two individuals who were born and raised in California since the 1940s, we have witnessed the transformation of the entire state, but especially the community of San Diego, over a fifty-year period. It is a fascinating tale of invention and reinvention and one that we are delighted to place in the light of day in this volume you are about to read.