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This is a pre-copy-editing, author-produced PDF of a book review for publication in *Economic Geography*.

**The Rise of the Rest: How Entrepreneurs in Surprising Places Are Building the New American Dream By Steve Case New York: Simon & Schuster, 2022.**

**Robert Huggins**

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The spatial unevenness of rates of entrepreneurship and innovation are an enduring theme within the field of economic geography. More recently, a lack of entrepreneurial and innovative capacity and capability have been identified as a cause for many cities and regions becoming what are considered by some as left behind places both economically and socially. Although this is rightly the case, the field is still seeking to grapple with establishing plausible and realistic solutions to tackling the long-term problems these cities and regions face. An emerging and potentially powerful stream of research has started to emerge indicating that some so-called left behind places have begun a journey of new path creation based on entrepreneurial endeavor, which has led to the development of new innovative firms in growing industries.

Nevertheless, much of the literature takes a relatively downbeat approach, suggesting that a small band of winning cities and regions will continue to develop and advance at the expense of the laggards. *The Rise of the Rest* represents an engaging and enlightening account as to how this zero-sum theory does not necessarily need to be the case and provides a somewhat different philosophical counterweight to some streams of scholarly work. Indeed, *The Rise of the Rest* is not written by an academic, but rather by Steve Case, the founder of America Online (AOL) and now a leading venture capitalist. The book tells his story as to how he initiated a major venture finance program—also called the Rise of the Rest—that has sought to trigger new entrepreneurship and innovation in cities and regions in the US outside the traditional hotspots on the nation’s east and west coasts.

The book is partly autobiographical and presents a series of stories whereby the Rise of the Rest initiative is shown to have inspired and supported entrepreneurs in places, including Madison and Green Bay, Wisconsin; Phoenix, Arizona; Cincinnati and Columbus Ohio; Chattanooga and Nashville, Tennessee; and Tulsa, Oklahoma. Rather than viewing these places as being left behind, Case sees them as being places of possibility and opportunity. Case is an entrepreneur and financier, and it is clear that his program is not based on altruism but to capitalize on the hidden and latent entrepreneurial and innovative talent in these places. The narratives concerning individuals located in cities such as those mentioned above and who have founded their own companies, often against considerable odds, are useful in terms of providing some evidence of successful entrepreneurial agency in these places. However, the real strength and power of the book is Case’s own analysis of these examples. He clearly has the eye of an economic geographer with the first part of the book, titled “Place Matters,” while one chapter has the title “The Geography of Opportunity.”

At one point in the book, Case argues that many new technology-based firms and entrepreneurs would be better off locating in places other than Silicon Valley, and he states that “regions and cities with specialized institutional knowledge are being enabled to generate start-ups to take advantage of domain expertise—meaning they’re the best places to support particular industries” (p. 65). This is a statement that would not look out of place in a

scholarly journal. Case's analysis indicates that he does not see urban and regional development as an us and them situation whereby it is Silicon Valley, Boston, New York, and the like working against the places he is seeking to champion. Instead, he is at pains to point out the power of collaboration and network-building across cities and regions, which he considers can provide a rising tide that lifts all boats. From the evidence he provides, it appears that part of his own interventions has expanded the geographic distance a number of venture capitalists in Silicon Valley and other hotspots are searching across for viable entrepreneurial opportunities.

Some of the arguments and analyses contained within the book resonate with current discussions in economic geography concerning the establishment of place-based entrepreneurial ecosystems. Case pinpoints what he terms the seven spokes of an ecosystem wheel that are *connected and in motion*: (1) start-ups, (2) investors, (3) universities, (4) government, (5) corporations, (6) start-up support organizations, and (7) local media. All of these usually figure as part of academic studies on urban and regional entrepreneurial ecosystems, so they will come as no surprise to scholars. However, the book does provide some important thinking on the relationships between these various agents. In particular, Case argues that government, at least in the US, is beginning to learn how to collaborate more effectively with the private sector and to take start-up generation as a serious mode of urban and regional development. This is crucial with regard to stimulating economic development through an entrepreneurial ecosystem approach in lagging urban and regional contexts, since local government will necessarily need to be an effective and accessible agent of change.

As well as the increased and more effective engagement of government, Case argues that there are a number of other trends that give cause for optimism. First, he argues that new high-tech centers are emerging around particular areas of industrial expertise, with such specialism facilitating new opportunities for smaller cities and regions. Second, Case believes that the start-up arena is accelerating toward a period of scaling-up whereby significantly more new jobs are created. Finally, and like some other commentators, he sees the upward innovation trend stemming from the COVID pandemic and post-pandemic periods as something that is likely to be sustained. Of course, the long-term outcomes of the pandemic remain to be played out, but it does seem to be the case that opportunities to innovate outside the traditional urban cores are appearing.

To be clear, *The Rise of the Rest* is a trade, rather than academic, book aimed for general readership. Therefore, it does at times have a rather evangelistic tone, but nevertheless it is advocating an entrepreneurial and innovation-driven approach to economic development that concurs with much contemporary urban and regional economic development theory. To its credit, the book acknowledges that major technological paradigm changes are still likely to emerge from leading centers. However, the argument is that satellite hubs can connect with these centers and create their own specialist ecosystems. Upon reading the book, I was left with the feeling that there is a research opportunity to undertake further work to examine the extent to which this could become a reality. Finally, it should be acknowledged that the book is very much embedded in the spirit of American entrepreneurship. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore how much of Case's theories and approaches are applicable to other contexts such as those cities and regions in Europe that are often used as examples of left behind places.

Robert Huggins  
Cardiff University