Attracting ‘Creative’ Drive: Key Influences on the Calgary Innovation System

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ISRN 10th Annual Conference 2008
Hôtel Omni Mont-Royal
Montreal, Quebec
April 30 – May 2

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Introduction

- Hypotheses about attraction of Creatives
- Calgary Context
  - Cross-Country Quantitative Comparison
  - Calgary’s Unique Characteristics
- Calgary’s Creatives’ Perspective
  - Testing the HOs
- Results/Discussion
Hypothesizing factors that embed ‘Creatives’

- H1: A socio-cultural environment rich in diversity attracts (retains) ‘creative’ people
- H2: Economic opportunity is a key attractor and growth drives growth
- H3: Specific environmental factors are critical
- H4: Professional networks (w. strong links) are critical
- H5: Personal networks (w. strong links) are critical
The Calgary Context

- Leads (pre-boom) CMAs in rates of increase* of knowledge intensive workers...
  - Business and finance professionals / Chefs and cooks / Construction trades / Natural and applied science professionals
- Population growth
  - 1996-2001 > 10%
  - 2001-2006 = 16%
- 9 statistically# “clustered” sectors
  - 38% of people employed in clusters

*Spencer and Vinodrai, 2007  #Spencer and Vinodrai, 2006
Boom... impacts

CED Business Survey
  - Analyzed across 6 factors (and several sub-factors):
    ♦ Business Infrastructure, Quality of Life, Communications and Education, Markets and Capital, Strategic Intelligence and Labour Resources

Shift in perceptions... (2004-2007) (negative changes)
  - Access to skilled labour
  - Transportation and infrastructure
  - Balance growth & environment
  - (2007) Affordable housing

Quality of life issues become business issues!
Interviews - Progress to Date (n=69)

Other: independents (artists, freelance, etc), architecture, government, retail, construction, media, public relations, data storage/management
Which specific features “Attract” creatives to Calgary’s innovation system?

- 19 specific features identified:
  - Based upon the responses of creative interviewees in ISRN Theme II Questionnaire

- Test the “Key Attractors” (H1-H5)
  - Perception that a specific feature is positive or negative in terms of its attractiveness to Calgary creatives
Methodology

- Sample set of creatives: n = 34
- Attractor Index
  - count mentions and identify ‘tone’ of 5 key attractors (HOs) across coded responses from 34 interviews
  - counts (total mentions, and net-sum of positive, neutral and negative)
  - Aggregate counts / hits = importance of attractor (HO) to creatives
- Qualitative analysis
Sample set of Creatives (n = 34)
Attractors (or Detractors) of the Calgary CMA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Hits</th>
<th>Aggregated Attractor Index</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H3 critical environmental factors</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>6.62</td>
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<tr>
<td>H2 economic opportunities</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4 professional networks</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5 personal networks</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1 socio-cultural diversity</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detractors**</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>-1.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supporting features: (H3) entrepreneurial spirit, social problems, buzz, large/growing city, local customers, density, govt support, political environment, commuting times, (H2) spinoff from O&G, talent pool, economic diversity, local customers, available work niche, (H4) local customers, informal relationships, (H5) personal learning, volunteerism/civic activity, (H1) openness to new ideas, social problems, youth.

**Detractor features: spin off from oil and industry, political environment, social problems
Qualitative signals…

- H3 Specific environmental factors are critical
  - “…there’s an entrepreneurial spirit in the city … an open-for-business attitude amongst the provincial government…”
  - “I’m here because it’s 2 hours to my cottage … and the mountains are only an hour away.”

- H2 Economic opportunity is a key attractor and growth is auto-catalytic
  - “…it’s simply because many of the companies…have head offices here or substantial [talent pool] here.”
  - “…[opportunities] to launch new creative businesses.”
Qualitative signals…

- **H4** Professional networks (w./strong links) are critical
  - “Calgary has to be the most close knit geo-scientific group in the world - It's, I think, because the city is compact…”
  - “The oil and gas industry… we are all linked. There is a network that exists, that is tangible… you experience it when you walk into the Plus 15.”
  - “The science behind the technology is more open and talked about… I love that about Calgary…”

- **H5** Personal networks (w./strong links) are critical
  - “…I have a really close network of friends… we travel together… we commute together…”
Qualitative signals...

- H1 A socio-cultural environment rich in diversity attracts ‘creative’ people
  - “…Calgary is more conducive because of the cross-culturalization, the different ways of thinking, …”
  - “…Calgary is one of the few places where [youth is not a negative factor], other places want to see a few more grey hairs…”
National and local data both point to unique and, perhaps changing, characteristics of Calgary for creatives.

Diversity is mentioned less (lower priority?) compared to other attractors measured.

There is no doubt we need to track the combination of critical environment factors, economics, and professional networks.

We will continue toward a larger ‘n’.

The ‘Willy Sutton’ factor.
Questions? / Comments?

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