

## Theme II overview

### Key insights and findings



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## Primary hypothesis

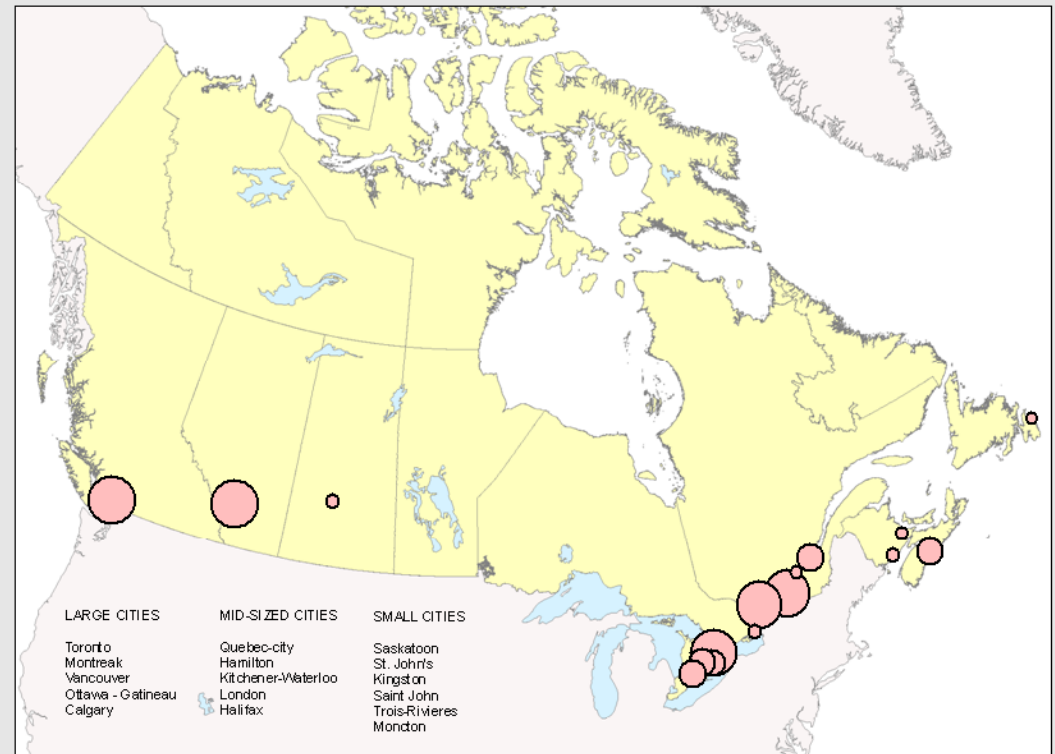
- The economic competitiveness and prosperity of city regions depends on quality of place characteristics: cultural dynamism, social diversity, openness/tolerance, social inclusion/cohesion

## Related questions

- What evidence is there that the hypothesized relationships between quality of place and economic performance **can also be found in mid-size and smaller urban regions?**
- Can city-regions pursue a talent-based strategy for economic development while simultaneously ensuring **socially inclusive outcomes** (if so, what are the critical enabling factors)?

## Research design and output

- more than 600 interviews across 16 case studies
  - workers, employers, intermediary organizations
  - themes: employment opportunities and experiences, quality of place, community characteristics
- outputs: integrative papers, presentations at annual meetings, publications



## Emerging themes from case studies of Canadian cities

### Drivers

Labour market conditions

Quality of place

University

### Place variables & historical contingencies

- size
- relative location
- industry mix
- path dependency

### People variables

- occupation: cultural / scientific / other
- life cycle: personal and professional

### Outcomes

- Attract and retain talent
- Compete in cognitive-cultural and science-based economy
- Socially-inclusive economic growth?

## Labour market conditions: 3 key dimensions

- i. Volume of work opportunities within a sector (Marshallian dynamics)
  - For workers:
    - potential for learning
    - cutting edge work
  - For firms and workers: critical mass mediates risk
    - e.g. **Saskatoon biotech, Toronto architecture**
  
- ii. Volume of work opportunities across sectors (Jacobs dynamics)
  - Breadth of mix: also attractive to workers, freelancers
    - **Toronto fashion**: Many fashion designers **also** work in film, art, dance, theatre, costume design

## Labour market conditions: 3 dimensions

- iii. Opportunities for upward career mobility (temporal dynamics)
- anticipated opportunities, succession of jobs
  - importance of local critical mass, depth
  - missing in many small and medium sized cities

### e.g. London:

- “London’s economic base was hit hard by continental restructuring in the 1990s...The head office flights took a toll on the city...signalling to younger professionals that the local labour market would no longer offer the same opportunities for either senior management or career mobility” (Bradford 2009b)
- “There is an innate suspicion of anyone who is successful in London. The attitude is ‘if you’re so good, why aren’t you in Toronto?’” (Bradford and Ward 2009)

## Quality of place: personal and professional

### QoP matters for personal reasons

- Dimensions include more than just cultural amenities (music, arts, food)
  - Also includes 'livability' dimensions such as environmental quality, commuting experience, affordability
- Mix, relative importance varies by city size, occupation, industry
  - e.g. 'Ordinary cities' (Bradford)
  - Lifestyle and family-oriented preferences
    - e.g. community feel, ease of travel, proximity to nature, affordability, public education system, safety



## Quality of place: personal and professional

QoP matters for professional reasons: 4 dimensions

- i. Importance of interacting with other workers, in similar and different sectors
- ii. Small labour markets as career incubators
- iii. Regional culture shapes professional culture
- iv. Ethnic and cultural diversity provides valued source of ideas and skills

## Quality of place: personal and professional

QoP matters for professional reasons: 4 dimensions

- i. Importance of interacting with other workers within community, in similar and different sectors (scenes, milieux, networks)
  - Physical and social conditions foster/encourage this
  - “**Montreal**’s urban form...the compact and mixed-use neighbourhoods (e.g. Mile End and the Plateau), contributes to a strong quality of life (short commutes, pedestrianism) and to social interaction and a sense of community... The arts and cultural scene... is appreciated... for its role in fostering impromptu encounters, social networking and exchange.” (Rantisi and Leslie, 2008)

## Quality of place: personal and professional

- ii. Smaller labour markets serve as career incubators
  - **Moncton's** shallow labour market for specialized professional workers offers opportunities to develop wider competencies:
    - “Small town law firms make you practice every kind of law there is, while big city law firms can require hyper specialization in a particular field” (Bourgeois 2009)
  - **St. John's:** a ‘launching pad’ to prepare for opportunities in larger centres with greater diversity and demand for specialized skills

## Quality of place: personal and professional

- iii. Regional culture can shape professional culture to be supportive and collaborative
  - “**Saskatoon**’s environment of informal connections based on social norms may facilitate a greater level of knowledge transfer and willingness to assist other firms and individuals...There is a perceived tradition that farmers come together to do work that each of them would be unable to do on their own – the classic example being a barn-raising” (Phillips et al 2009b)
  - “There is that maverick culture that exists here of ‘let’s just do it’ that is unique to **Calgary**” “People are pretty open and honest here, trust is important, it creates a foundation for ‘deals get done with a handshake’” (Langford et al 2008)

## Quality of place: personal and professional

- iv. In some sectors, ethnic and cultural diversity provides a valuable source of ideas and skills for one's work (not just play)
- **Toronto fashion:** Cultural diversity exerts an indirect attractive effect on design talent. It is also an important source of skills for the fashion industry in terms of specialized talent e.g. patternmakers.
  - **Montreal cultural industries:** "Quality of life attributes... are valued for their role in influencing creative production as well as in terms of consumption. For example, for workers... social factors such as bilingualism and cultural diversity are not only appreciated in terms of the cultural institutions and establishments to which they give rise, but also in terms of how they motivate and inspire." (Rantisi and Leslie, 2009)

## Quality of place: variations in preferences

- Composition of 'QoP' varies by sector/occupation and affects intra-urban preferences
  - Talent in cultural industries tends to blur personal and professional QoP concerns (in part because employer/worker roles are also blurred)
    - e.g. **Toronto, Montreal fashion, Vancouver design**
  - Talent in science-based occupations favours professional QoP considerations (and value different personal QoP elements)
    - e.g. **Toronto biomedical, Saskatoon biotech**
  - However, cluster and firm reputation may outweigh personal QoP for shaping location preferences
    - e.g. **ICT in Kitchener-Waterloo, biotech (vs software) in Saskatoon**

## Quality of place: variations in preferences

- Weighting of QoP factors varies along career-path
  - **Halifax:** some health researchers and musicians felt the need to leave to ‘make it’, “working in other parts of Canada conferred credibility and authority” (Grant and Kronstal 2009)
- ...and life cycle
  - **Kitchener-Waterloo:** “if we marry them to a job first, they will then marry a local girl and have kids, then they will end up being married to the region” (Bathelt et al., 2009)

## Universities (QIS)

- Importance of local universities for attracting, training and retaining talent: potential opportunities and limitations – 4 dimensions
  - i. University-industry interactions
  - ii. Educating the local labour force
  - iii. Attracting new students and research talent to the region
  - iv. Contributing to vibrant and tolerant communities



## Universities (QIS)

- i. **University-industry interactions**
  - University acts as a centre of knowledge attracting employers that seek to benefit from knowledge spill-over
    - e.g. **Saskatoon** for **plant biotech**, **Toronto** for **biomedical research**
  - Universities may also fail to support local industries
    - **London**: UWO tends to “ask too much” in return for formal partnerships
    - **Kingston**: despite high quality research at Queen’s, local knowledge commercialization opportunities are still limited
    - **Trois-Rivières**: HE research and technology fields have not evolved to match local emerging sectors (lock-in)

## Universities (QIS)

- ii. **Educating the local labour force**
  - Universities produce new streams of talent: primary source of recruitment for local firms
    - **Kitchener-Waterloo:** “Both UW and WLU have been key suppliers of talent to local firms... This connection is reinforced through the cooperative education programs that have been viewed as pillars of the UW success story” (Bathelt et al., 2009)
    - Role for public and private institutions, e.g. **Vancouver’s** UBC, SFU, BCIT, Emily Carr UA&D, and the Vancouver Film School

## Universities (QIS)

### iii. Attracting talent to the region

- Well-regarded institutions attract students and researchers, nationally and internationally, to the region
  - e.g. **Halifax, Kitchener-Waterloo**
- Funded opportunities for graduate study are important in drawing international talent
  - “I came to **Ottawa** to do a PhD... There was an issue of financial support because as an international student it is very difficult to pay tuition fees on your own...” Interview, software engineer (Andrew et al., 2009)
- BUT: not all regions succeed in retaining students after graduation
  - e.g. **Kingston** and **London**: “the UWO President described the university – and the city – as a ‘pass through’ with 85% of students not from London leaving upon graduation”

## Universities (QIS)

### iv. Vibrant, tolerant communities

- University community creates a vibrant environment for the city-region at large
  - **Halifax health research** workers: “having students in our environment makes it a much more vibrant, creative place to be”
  - **Kitchener-Waterloo**: the university is important in land development initiatives and anchors new downtown developments (i.e. an active agent in urban development)
- Important role in creating inclusive and safe spaces for foreign talent, and contributing to a more open and tolerant wider community
  - “The local universities attract immigrants and [are] critical in assisting in their subsequent integration into the community by creating spaces that [are] perceived as being safe and free from discrimination.” (Bathelt et al., 2009)

## Social Inclusiveness and Talent

- Place attributes may generate barriers to entry for newcomers
  - Lack of ethnic diversity considered QoP barrier to entry
    - accessing community life (e.g. “**London** consists of a whitebread homogenous culture”)
    - entering the local labour market (e.g. difficulty of living in Saskatoon without a strong working knowledge of English)
  - Failure to recognize foreign degrees/experience: a professional barrier to entry
    - **Hamilton**: delays in re-certification induce foreign trained engineers to enroll into technician/technologist training programs at community colleges as an alternative point of entry into the labour market

## Social Inclusiveness and Talent

- Evidence of local initiatives aiming to mitigate such barriers:
  - **London:** Immigration initiatives exhibit impressive networking across business, government and the community to facilitate labour market access by new immigrants
    - e.g. LEDC launched skills development and workplace outreach and mentoring initiatives.
  - **K-W:** Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN) – broad-based collaboration of employers, agencies, government, educators and foreign-trained professionals to address issues related to workforce development
    - e.g. qualification recognition, overcoming systematic barriers to immigrant employment.

## Social Inclusiveness: Sectors and Occupations

- Evidence of contingent and risky labour conditions in several cultural industry sectors
  - Disparity of workload and pay among workers
    - Not simply along 'elite/servile' divide
    - Differentiation within creative industries (low-paid creatives)
  - Lack of job security and difficulties burdened by the individual worker
    - e.g. **Vancouver e-games; Toronto architecture, music**
  - Evidence of strategies to mitigate precarious working conditions
    - **Toronto architecture:** "I've always tended to focus on firms downtown typically because I find they have the most work, for one. I believe ... that they're the most stable compared to firms that are outside of the GTA" (Gertler and Geddie 2008)

## Conclusions

Hypothesis: The economic competitiveness and prosperity of city regions depends on quality of place characteristics that attract and retain talent

- Findings support the hypothesis, but there is considerable variation in the QoP characteristics at play:
  - along personal and professional dimensions
  - by sector and occupation type
  - by career stage/life cycle
  - by city size, relative location, history
- Among people in all city-regions, employment concerns are of primary importance, but...
  - a more dynamic conception of “careers” is needed over “jobs”
  - a more nuanced understanding of how work opportunities and QoP characteristics **intersect** is required (‘both/and’, not ‘either/or’)



## Conclusions

What evidence is there that the hypothesized relationships between quality of place and economic performance can also be found in mid-size and smaller urban regions?

- **One size does not fit all:** Varying interactions between career development concerns and quality of place by city size
  - LARGE cities offer greater career opportunities (within and across sectors, and for upward mobility), certain cultural amenities and diversity (esp important in cultural professions), but also a range of possible 'lifestyle settings'
  - SMALL cities offer strong sense of 'community', encourage collaborative and supportive professional cultures
  - MEDIUM cities have some strengths of small (family friendly), and avoid the challenges of large cities (cost of living, commute) but they also lack the career opportunities and urban vibrancy of big cities.
    - Canada's "biggest small town"?- **Calgary, Saskatoon, Hamilton, Ottawa**

## Conclusions

Can city-regions pursue a talent-based strategy for economic development while simultaneously ensuring socially inclusive outcomes (if so, what are the critical enabling factors)?

- Problems of unequal labour conditions within successful creative industry clusters
- Many cities are developing or drawing on multi-scalar institutions to address problems of integrating new immigrants into their society and labour market; 'One Toronto'?

## Implications for Policy

- Case-studies illustrate different paths (and challenges) to participation in the cognitive-cultural economy
  - Important to **differentiate strategy** by particular (inherited) characteristics of places (size, location, economic composition, history)
- A longitudinal, career-based perspective on factors shaping talent mobility suggest there are opportunities – and possible policy responses – for smaller and medium sized city-regions
  - Important to **lead with one's strengths** rather than imitating inappropriate policy initiatives from elsewhere

## Thank you

- We are grateful for the valuable assistance from Matt Talsma, Deborah Huntley and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council
- For further information:
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