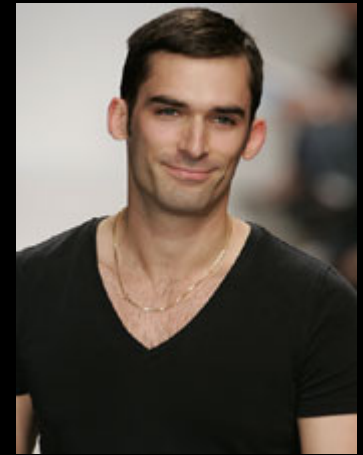


the role of quality of place in attracting and retaining fashion design talent



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outline

- introduction
- attracting talent to a second tier fashion centre
- retaining fashion talent in toronto
 - cultural diversity
 - tolerance
 - economic diversity and cultural dynamism
 - toronto's livability
- institutions, policies and practices
- conclusions



introduction

- Glaeser et. al. (2001), Florida (2002): talented workers are mobile and make decisions about where to live based on quality of life characteristics of city
- attracted to cities that are tolerant and open
- over time, the diversity of creative energies fosters innovation, further enhancing attractiveness of city

- others question causality (Storper and Manville, 2006, Scott, 2007)
- people move to cities that maximize access to a variety of employment opportunities
- once rooted in place, amenities play a role in retaining individuals

- “tolerance and diversity feed a virtuous circle once it begins, but are outgrowths of economic development rather than its initiating causes” (Storper and Manville, 2006).
- economic dynamism of city regions evolves as complex web of specialized production activities, employment opportunities, markets, institutions *and* amenities

- fashion long been viewed as a “global city” phenomena
- concentration of world’s top designers, retailers, magazines, consumers in New York, Paris, Milan, Tokyo, London
- ‘second-tier’ fashion centers such as Toronto, Stockholm, Auckland heightened visibility (Larner et.al, 2007)

2. attracting talent to a second tier fashion centre

- toronto does not serve as a magnet for international flows of design talent
- immigrant designers come to Canada for other reasons



“If they do come here [from other countries], it’s because they’ve left the design world and are trying to go into something else. I can’t see Parisians or Italians or Japanese moving here to start up a Canadian fashion business. Although we do have much more liberal social policies like health care. I don’t think that’s attractive enough to draw them here. The people who are here, they appreciate that, and that’s why they stay here. Because those who have families, I don’t know how they would ever run their business and maintain the family lifestyle they have here in Canada.” (Interview, fashion designer)



- toronto does attract talent from other parts of Canada
- however, it is the presence of an industry, as well as educational institutes and a market that attracts them

“I don’t think [diversity is] what attracts talent. Design talent is attracted by other design talent. They want to be where the action is and this is it, this is the media center and this is where you want to be. If you’re a designer, I mean first of all there are so few cities that have a huge manufacturing base.” (Interview, fashion designer)

3. retaining design talent: the role of quality of place



cultural diversity

- toronto one of the most diverse cities in the world

diversity a source of inspiration

“In my country all Polish people look Polish. Here I can walk down the street and see all different nations. [It] lets me think about the possibilities and how everything looks different, not necessarily monochromatic. A different point of view, different angles, colours, different shapes, everything can be different. Everybody speaks different languages. I am amazed by the place. There is no other place like this.”
(Interview, fashion designer)

“Certainly Toronto attracts non-white talent and there are a number of Indian designers and people who incorporate Indian style into their design...The fact that we’re multicultural means that somebody who is not Caucasian is able to be appreciated in a different way. I don’t know if this multiculturalness brought any greater appreciation for my own line but it just means that we’re more open to things...We’re not closed minded.” (Interview, fashion designer)

- cultural diversity of consumer base
- diversity- and spectacle of it- attracts more sophisticated clientele which challenges designers to innovate
- cultural diversity “influences the design-because even though you’re designing for a specific market- you want to be as available to as many people as possible” (interview, fashion designer).

cultural diversity as skill

“It’s a bit of a UNESCO, my studio, Russian, Chinese, Korean. That’s the beauty of living in Toronto. You really get this whole diversity of people immigrating, bringing their skills. I just hired a pattern maker from Russia. So far he has been really great. I have another pattern maker who is from Toronto- Italian background- graduated from Ryerson. I have another who is from China. It is a lot more international than if you were to live in a city where it is just white”.
(Interview, fashion designer).

toronto as a tolerant city

Well I haven't married yet but I've been together with my boyfriend for fourteen years now. So in that respect you can express yourself which is so amazing so I definitely think it probably attracts creative people... And it's not only designers but stylists and hair people. I guess it does create a little den of creativity (Interview, designer).

economic diversity and cultural dynamism

- toronto not only a large fashion industry but a hub for other creative industries in Canada
- many designers work in film, art, dance and theatre doing costume design which is seen as “more creative”, less commercial.
- benefits accrue from crossing boundaries between sectors and from hiring talent with training in diverse creative sectors

toronto's livability

- interviewees spoke about
 - toronto's manageable size
 - relatively low rents compared to other fashion cities enables risk taking

toronto's manageable size

The size of Toronto was really advantageous to me. I don't know of any other place where in 10 years I could've skyrocketed from a girl who had no design experience to an avante garde fashion darling. So I was able to make a very large impact because the population was willing, open, hungry for new ideas, but not so hungry that they didn't get it. Versed enough to understand what was going on, which wouldn't be the case in a slightly smaller fish tank. But small enough to really take something and be able to make it popular without diluting it with all the others things that other people are trying to do...My store would have been less successful in New York because my rent would have been three times the price. I may have found a larger audience. However, getting in touch with them might have been more difficult because here, because Toronto's small. I have things like lots of articles about me which would then attract people to me. There's a lot less competition (Interview, fashion designer).

enables risk taking

“Because we’ve had the luxury, having such inexpensive space downtown , we’ve had the luxury to take more risks than we would have been able to if we had larger overheads. And the other thing that’s nice is it’s not cutthroat here, there’s not that same desperation to succeed. If we were in New York City I think people would just expect us to do things. And here in Toronto we don’t have to do anything we don’t want to do because we have the support of a number of people. It just gives us more freedom.”
(Interview, fashion design team).

4. institutions and practices

- positive impacts on economic competitiveness, innovativeness and success of city-regions
- clear role for non-industry specific policies

role for non-industry specific institutions and policies

- Interviewees derived support from federal and provincial

Immigration policies, EI policies and programs, universal health care, education system, family policies

benefitting from canada's immigration policy

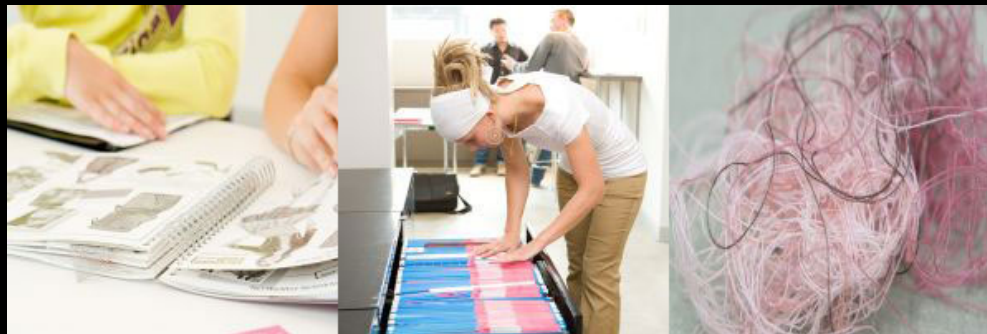
“I migrated with my husband and two children. The political situation is not that great- my husband was in a semi-government place with a lot of harassment and problems. It was mainly for him that we moved- Canada had open immigration so when applied and moved. So we both had applied collectively and then he ended up doing real estate through a number of other professions like he started in insurance and now is doing real estate. Whereas I was very focused because of my passion for textiles, and I wanted to find a niche market here in greater Toronto.”
(Interview, designer)

benefitting from universal health care

“I definitely did notice the difference moving home, feeling [more of] a sense of being cared for by the community than in New York where you don’t have health care... and that is reflected in maternity leave. It is three months in New York.” (Interview, fashion designer)

toronto fashion incubator

- tfi as talent promotion and industry promotion organization
- challenges regarding physical space and location have negatively impacted resident / incubator program
- perceived as highly supportive in terms of services to outreach members



tfi welcoming to newcomers

“The fashion incubator was a little bit different. It was more oriented for creativity and less business. This was absolutely a great place for newcomers who didn’t know the way or the path which they have to move around. It was possible to be part of the big events and fashion shows and to get some grants.”

(Interview, fashion designer)

5. conclusions

- social aspects and policies
 - *Do not* attract fashion talent to toronto
 - *Do* play critical role in retaining designers, particularly women and gay men
- industry networks and institutions
 - Support and welcome talent, but does not attract from far afield