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MEDIA RELEASE

AAAS-SFU research: Vancouver, unique space for innovation

February 14, 2012

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According to a new study co-authored by SFU communication professor [Adam Holbrook](#), national, provincial and local economic development policy makers need to pay closer attention to Vancouver's uniqueness as a space for economic innovation.

Holbrook and [Brian Wixted](#), another study co-author, say: "Vancouver must build on its economic, social and natural advantages. Otherwise, Vancouver could lose its global edge as an innovator in the development of knowledge-based high tech industries."

Holbrook is an adjunct professor and associate director at SFU's [Centre for Policy Research on Science and Technology](#) (CPROST). Wixted is a CPROST research associate.

Holbrook will elaborate on his [findings](#) in the yet-to-be-published study in his talk *Vancouver: Globalizing Technology-Intensive Knowledge Clusters* during a symposium called *Searching for the Right Space for Innovation*. The presentation — part of the 2012 American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) conference — takes place on Friday, Feb. 17, 1:30-4:30 p.m., Room 121, West Building at the Vancouver Convention Centre.

As part of a 10-year study, several members of the [Innovation Systems Research Network](#) (ISRN), including Holbrook, analysed how competing theories of economic development, innovation and growth have shaped the rise of Canadian cities as high tech industry innovators in a pan-continental Canadian context.

Holbrook and his colleagues note that vastly different factors drive economic innovation, development and growth in much of Canada, eastern North America and Western Europe compared to in Pacific Rim cities such as Vancouver.

While highly developed manufacturing capabilities and rapid pollination of ideas between cities close together are drivers in the former regions, highly sought-after intellectual property and a stable talented labour force are drivers in the latter.

"In Pacific Rim cities such as Vancouver, we are at the end of very long transportation systems, mainly railways that were built in the late 19th century," explains Holbrook. "There is very little movement of ideas, for example, from Vancouver to Seattle or Pusan to Shanghai, but a much longer distance exchange of ideas across the Pacific. We are also much more globalized in our innovation than other regions nationally and internationally."

Holbrook's AAAS presentation will draw on innovations in the film industry as an example of how Vancouver's knowledge-intensive and technical intellectual property has made it a unique space for economic innovation.

Holbrook undertook an earlier related study, *The Innovation Systems Research Network (SRN): A Canadian Experiment in Knowledge Management*, see [report 04-02](#), (published in *Science and Public Policy*, Vol. 32, #2, 2005).

Holbrook is among seven well known SFU researchers speaking or moderating seminars at this year's [AAAS conference](#) at the Vancouver Convention Centre.

The international gathering of world media, researchers, academics and members of the public, Feb. 16-20, is taking place for only the second time since its inception in 1848 outside of the United States. The first time was in Toronto in 1981.

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