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<http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2012/apr/15/tp-mapping-a-regions-genomes-as-business-goes/?print&page=all>

MAPPING A REGION'S GENOMES AS BUSINESS GOES GLOBAL

Is it possible to sequence the genome of a region?

What makes San Diego more of an entrepreneurial city than, say, ... ?

Greg Horowitz — hard-traveling head of UCSD's Global Connect, co-founder of T2 Venture Capital, consultant to ministers of finance and industry from Brazil and Colombia to Libya and Saudi Arabia ("lot of work in the Middle East, lately") and co-author of an excellent new book, "The Rainforest: The Secret to Building the Next Silicon Valley" — professes to have some answers.

"In ... ," says Horowitz, "you're not considered to be a real company unless you have a loading dock out back."

The problem with ...'s "genome" is that corporations there lack the culture of the modern knowledge-based company, which in our digital world might lack not only a loading dock but everything else, too. What used to be housed in the same office building is now distributed worldwide. The R&D might be in Sorrento Valley, manufacturing in Asia, while the original intellectual capital, that "Aha Moment," could have sprung from the cerebrum of a scientist back in St. Louis, with the marketing to be done in Manhattan.

....

The secret is this: It takes a rainforest.

"Innovation comes not from the basic ingredients of economic production, but from the way that people interrelate with one another to combine and share ideas. A community that facilitates such relationships is a biological system we call a rainforest," Horowitz says.

Horowitz, who is from Long Beach, laughs and gestures a lot, and likes to talk (and write) in engaging, rapid-fire, business-school vocabulary, using plenty of biological metaphors. So why is San Diego's "innovation ecosystem" more of a rainforest while ...'s is more of a typical row-cropped farm system?

What's our genome?

First, most San Diegans aren't from here, and that's a good thing. People are comfortable reaching outside, not so wedded to ethnic neighborhoods and family ties as they would be

in Chicago/Cleveland/New York. San Diego fosters a culture of necessary collaboration, of mutual risk-taking. There's a willingness to try new things, and therefore to launch new ideas. Leaders have vision. Multiple Connects, BioCons, EvoNexi and Ansirs overlap the forest floor. It's OK to have money. Distances are close. Opportunity costs are low.

But in a city with a culture of "physical dependence" (think those loading docks again) these things aren't so cool, and cool people who think cool new thoughts are "weeds," to be pulled out at an early age or fired later on, Horowitz says.

In the rainforest model, weeds are good. Tall poppies are not to be cut down. New makes money. Think Mark Zuckerberg, Steve Jobs or the irrepressible billionaire Sara Blakely of Spanx. Or consider from recent Intellectual Capital columns: Gary Pace of ResMed, Rob Wilder of WilderShares, Fernando Aguerre of Reef or George Sugihara (applying chaos theory to the stock market).

All successful here, but would they have seemed a little odd, a little big for their britches in more provincial genomes?

Horowitz is done with lunch. Off to the airport: Palo Alto, then Kenya. Traveling light.

He's got traveling light down to a science: iPad 3, third-party keyboard, iCloud with MoZ backup, Jump desktop. Never a checked bag.

No moss grows in his rainforest.