HIGH-TECH

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

AN EXAMINATION OF THE LOCATIONAL PREFERENCES OF
HIGH TECHNOLOGY FIRMS IN THE ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. **Title Page**
2. **Table of Contents**
3. **List of Tables**
4. **List of Figures**
5. **Abstract**
6. **Declaration**
7. **Acknowledgments**

## 1. Introduction

## 2. What is High Technology?

### 2.1 Introduction

### 2.2 Varying Approaches to Defining High Technology

#### 2.2.1 'Newness'

#### 2.2.2 'Industry Structure'

#### 2.2.3 'Product or Process'

#### 2.2.4 'Research and Development Intensity'

#### 2.2.5 'Technical Workers'

#### 2.2.6 'Other Definitions'

### 2.3 Conclusion

## 3. The Role of Technology in Cycles of Capitalist Accumulation

### 3.1 Introduction

### 3.2 High Technology Industries - The Fifth Kondratieff Wave?

### 3.3 The Rise of Flexible Production and High Technology Industries

### 3.4 High Technology Industries and the Product Cycle

### 3.5 Conclusion

## 4. The Location of High Technology Industries

### 4.1 Introduction

### 4.2 Spatial Patterns of High Technology Activity

### 4.3 Factors Influencing the Location of High Technology Industry

#### 4.3.1 Labour

#### 4.3.2 Locational Implications of the Product Cycle

#### 4.3.3 Premises and Site

#### 4.3.4 Structure of the Firm

#### 4.3.5 Academic - High Technology Ties

#### 4.3.6 Linkages, External Economies and Agglomeration Economies

#### 4.3.6.1 Industrial Linkages and their Influence on High Technology Firm Location

### 4.3.7 Government Influences

#### 4.3.7.1 Influence of Government Policies

#### 4.3.7.2 Government Defence Expenditure

#### 4.3.7.3 Role of Technology Parks

### 4.4 Conclusion
9. **FORWARD LINKAGES AND HIGH TECHNOLOGY FIRMS**

9.1 Introduction

9.2 Firms which Sell only to Final Demand
   9.2.1 Nature of Products sold to Customers
   9.2.2 Location of Markets
   9.2.3 The Marketing of Products

9.3 Firms which Sell only to Other Manufacturers
   9.3.1 Nature of Products Sold to Customers
   9.3.2 Location of Markets and the Types of Firms Which Purchase Intermediate Products
   9.3.3 The Marketing of Products

9.4 Firms which Sell to Other Manufacturers and Final Demand
   9.4.1 Nature of Products Sold to Customers
   9.4.2 Location of Markets
   9.4.3 The Marketing of Products

9.5 Product Development

9.6 Difficulties Experienced in Maintaining Forward Linkages

9.7 Conclusion

10. **THE LOCATIONAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE ADELAIDE REGION AS A HIGH TECHNOLOGY CLUSTER**

10.1 Introduction

10.2 The Attributes of Adelaide
   10.2.1 Adelaide's Advantages
   10.2.2 Adelaide's Disadvantages
   10.2.3 Possibility of an Interstate Location
   10.2.4 Government's Role in Making Adelaide More Attractive to High Technology Establishments

10.3 The Locational Pattern of High - Tech Establishments within the Metropolitan Area
   10.3.1 Establishments Located Outside Technology Park
      10.3.1.1 Advantages of the Present Location
      10.3.1.2 Disadvantages of the Present Location
      10.3.1.3 Prospects of Moving to Another Location
      10.3.1.4 Perceived Advantages of Being Located at Technology Park
      10.3.1.5 Perceived Disadvantages of Being Located at Technology Park
   10.3.2 Establishments Located at Technology Park
      10.3.2.1 Advantages of Being Located at Technology Park
      10.3.2.2 Disadvantages of Being Located at Technology Park

10.4 Conclusion

11. **SUPPLIERS TO HIGH TECHNOLOGY FIRMS IN ADELAIDE**

11.1 Introduction

11.2 Single-establishment Suppliers
   11.2.1 Profile of Founders and their Motivations

11.3 Multi-establishment Firms

11.4 The Labour Force

11.5 The Import and Marketing of Components
   11.5.1 Types of Material/Components Purchased and their Origins
   11.5.2 Marketing and Sales of Components
11.6 The Location of Electronics Suppliers 186
   11.6.1 Adelaide’s Locational Advantages and Disadvantages 186
   11.6.2 Components Suppliers and Technology Park 188
11.7 Conclusion 189
12. CONCLUSION 191
13. APPENDICES 208
   A. The Questionnaire for All High Technology Establishments 208
   B. The Questionnaire for Suppliers to High Technology Companies 213
   C. Products Made by High Technology Firms in Adelaide 217
   D. Motivations of the Founders of Single-establishment Firms 222
   E. Advantages of Adelaide as a Location for High Technology Firms 225
   F. Disadvantages of Adelaide as a Location for High Technology Firms 230
   G. Advantages of Firms’ Present Location in Adelaide 235
   H. Disadvantages of Firms’ Present Location in Adelaide 240
14. BIBLIOGRAPHY 243
**LIST OF TABLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Location of Other Australian Branches of Multi-establishment Firms</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Summary Table of Products Made by High Technology Firms in Adelaide</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Percentage of Establishments Employing People with Specific Skills/Qualifications</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Summary Table of the Types of Qualifications Held by Founders of Single-establishment Firms</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Summary Table of the Motivation of the Founders of Single-establishment Firms</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Types of Inputs Purchased by High Technology Establishments</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Services Purchased by High Technology Establishments</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Firms Which Sell only to Final Demand</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Firms Which Sell only to Other Manufacturers</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Firms Which Sell both Intermediate Products and also to Final Demand</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Firms Which Produce “one-off” Products</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Summary Table of the Advantages of Adelaide as a Location for High Technology Firms</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Summary Table of the Disadvantages of Adelaide as a Location for High Technology Firms</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Ways in which S.A. Government can make Adelaide more Attractive to High Technology Establishments</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Summary Table of the Advantage of Firms’ Present Location in Adelaide</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 16: Summary Table of the Disadvantages of Firms' Present Location in Adelaide

TABLE 17: The Origins of Components
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 1:</td>
<td>Location of High Technology Electronics Firms in Adelaide</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 2:</td>
<td>Number of Single-establishment Firms Founded per Year</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 3:</td>
<td>Size of High Technology Firms by Number of Employees</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 4:</td>
<td>Influence of Firm Size on Percentage of Employees Involved in High Tech Jobs</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 5:</td>
<td>Distribution of Low and High Tech Employees</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 6:</td>
<td>Network Pattern of Suppliers and Customers</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 7:</td>
<td>Possible Development Paths of New Industrial Districts</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

Using the electronics sector as a case study, this thesis is an attempt to measure the present, and assess the future, importance of high technology industry in South Australia, and to understand both the role it plays in the local economy and the extent to which the industrial environment in South Australia is conducive to the birth and in-migration of high technology firms.

Despite its peripheral location in the Australian space economy, Adelaide is the headquarters of a number of Australian-based high technology companies and is also the Australian headquarters for several multinational high technology firms. Adelaide boasts a quality of life which is the envy of other capitals and indeed it appears that many firm owners establish their businesses (or choose to remain) in Adelaide mainly for that reason, despite the fact that their main markets may be located elsewhere. Firms locating in Adelaide also have access to a skilled and relatively cheap labour force, and with some very specialised exceptions, Adelaide has a good service and technical support network for high technology establishments. There is also evidence that Adelaide is experiencing the beginning of high technology clustering, a process seen by many to be critical in the evolution of a high technology region.

There are however several problems. Adelaide is still relatively isolated from other Australian capitals because of poor air services, some specialised technical personnel need to be 'imported' from interstate or overseas, there is only a small local market, and the links between firms are still immature, with only small numbers
of firms sharing information and working with other firms in the cluster. Academic - 
high technology industry ties, although fairly common, are rather superficial, and 
once a project is completed, such ties are generally severed.

Over the years, successive State Governments have tried to address some 
of these issues. The establishment of Technology Park and later Science Park (both 
adjacent to universities), the ambitious Multi-Function Polis, the establishment of the 
Submarine Corporation and the approval for the building of the third runway at 
Adelaide Airport have all been steps in this direction. If these measures are 
embraced by industry with enthusiasm, then coupled with the attributes already 
present, Adelaide certainly seems to be the right place at the right time so far as the 
development of high technology industry is concerned.
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that none of the material contained in this thesis has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text of the thesis. I consent to this thesis being made available for photocopying and loan, if applicable, and if it is accepted for the award of the degree.

Mariusz A. Kurgan
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