

EVAN CLEAVE

Julian M. Szeicz Award for Early Career Achievement

Evan currently serves as an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Toronto Metropolitan University; however, he is still an emerging scholar as his PhD was awarded by the University of Western Ontario in 2019. In his early career, Evan has been an extremely productive researcher, with 39 publications and 82 conference presentations. His work has appeared in top tier journals such as *Annals*, *Cities*, *Urban Affairs*, *Urban Geography* among others. His H-index is high for an early-career scholar and stands at 16. Likewise, his 900+ citations are an indication that Dr.



Cleave is a strong publisher and that his work is read and cited by others. His work has also been consistently viewed as important by funding agencies –throughout his graduate studies he was SSHRC doctoral grant (Joseph-Armand Bombardier CGS Doctoral Scholarship) and then a (extremely short) SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship. Since joining TMU, Evan has participated in grants that have received approximately \$2.7 million in external funding as Principal, co-Investigator, or co-Applicant. This includes a SSRHC Insight Development Grant in 2020 which was the top ranked application amongst Geography and Planning submissions for that year. All of this is to say that he is extremely productive, and his work is widely received and respected.

Evan's largest research contributions have come in the areas of place branding and local economic development in Canada. Since he started his MA at Western in 2012, Evan has essentially been the only Canadian-based researcher in this field. Beyond that, most place branding researchers are non-geographers, so Evan has advanced the field through the integration of human and urban geography perspectives. In particular, his integration of place and sense-of-place gave insights into how businesses and individuals perceive spaces, and how this affects decision-making. His continuing work on effectiveness of place branding remains cutting-edge. Beyond this, framing place branding through a lens of urban politics and governance has provided insights into who has decision-making power in place branding processes – and what the implications are for communities and their residents.

As noted, Evan's other primary contributions have been in local economic development. Within this context, he has investigated the impact of global changes by critically examining how municipalities in the Province of Ontario, Canada responded to them. His work has been particularly concerned with several important questions, including the following: "How is global economic restructuring affecting economic development efforts of Ontario cities?", and "What factors and conditions differentiate cities and help explain their variable success?" Broadly, his core research objectives centre on: economic transitions and impacts on communities; community response, and policy effectiveness. Through the mobilization of empirical and secondary datasets, Evan has comprehensively and analytically detailed economic practices of cities in Ontario. In doing so, he explained why cities implement certain strategies, how beneficial these strategies are in the short and long term, and suggested areas that need to change. His

method of investigation has been rigorous, employing quantitative and qualitative methods along with key geographical information system analytical methods.

Evan's work also makes a real-world impact. Substantive findings from both his place branding and local economic development research have been passed to practitioners who affect local policies, and to public/private organizations who have cited and utilized his findings as a basis for policy formulation (e.g. Ontario Chamber of Commerce's 2019 Report on "The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies"). Additionally, Evan has collaborated with several practitioner organizations to undertake key projects. For instance, through a SSHRC Partnership Engaged Grant, Evan and Economic Development Council of Ontario (EDCO) have examined the impacts of COVID-19 on local economies and policy responses in the Province of Ontario. This culminated in a report for EDCO and a presentation at EDCO's 2024 conference, allowing Evan to mobilize key findings. Without doubt, Evan has emerged as an economic development expert in Ontario. He is a go to person on issues relating to economic development in Ontario and a valued academic.

Beyond these two main research areas, Evan has also done considerable work in immigration and business geography. I would like to stress that his work primarily focuses on the Canadian context and advances Canadian scholarship. From a career development perspective, his emerging work in immigration, which focuses on sanctuary cities and non-status migrants, has the potential for strong practical and scholastic contributions. This is a pressing contemporary issue. Similarly, his research on retail and business explores the impacts on communities and the lives and livelihoods of their residents. All of this is to say that Evan has an expansive research portfolio that has already made significant contributions, and he is poised to make more substantial ones in the future.

Although this award primarily focuses on the research achievement of the nominee, I believe that it is vital to highlight the work Evan has done to support others in their research endeavours. Quite frankly, Evan has engaged in an astonishing amount of research mentorship and training with undergraduate and graduate students. He has mentored, train and supervised over three dozen students to completion within a relatively short period of time. Additionally, he informally supports many students. Speaking for Emmanuel and Jesse, I know Evan has been a vital source of support in their research and professional development. And from personal experience, I have often called upon him to provide specific software and methodological training to my students. This speaks to a scholar who is interested not only in undertaking research about which he is passionate, but in passing on that passion to the next generation of scholars.

Service is an often-overlooked component of academic performance. And for an early career scholar, Evan's track record is again impressive. Evan cares about the state of Canadian geography, and has selflessly served the disciplinary associations in various capacities. At the provincial level, Evan is the President of the Canadian Association of Geographers Ontario Division (CAGONT), having previously served in Vice President capacity (2021-2023). Additionally, he has also served as the Treasurer (2016-2021), Secretary (2014-2016), and a student representative (2013-2014) for CAGONT. At the national level, Evan is a member of the Canadian Association of Geographers (CAG) National Executive Committee (2023 to date) and a past member of CAG Nominations committee (2019 - 2021). He is also the Chair of the Urban Geography Study Group (2016 - present). Under his leadership, the Urban Geography Study

Group has organized at least 18 special sessions at both CAGONT and CAG conferences. He has also been the primary organizer for two CAGONT conferences (2023 and 2024) and one national CAG conference (2022) – creating platforms for all members of the Canadian geography community to meet and share research. This is an incredible amount of service to the Canadian geography, and his eagerness to lend his labour to the course of the Canadian geography is unparalleled.

- Godwin Arku, Professor