

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Skills and Employment Development in Shrinking Cities

Associate Professor Cristina Martinez-Fernandez from the Urban Research Centre is investigating the occurrence of “shrinking cities” across Australia and the world. This research is funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery Project grant.

‘The shrinking of cities – in population and, therefore, human activity - is not a new phenomenon and can be observed on every continent’, says Dr Martinez-Fernandez. In Australia, the phenomenon has not been analysed to the same degree as in other places and so we will explore the reasons and effects of this process in Australia which will also enable us to do a comparative analysis with other shrinking cities around the world. To date, we know very little about the effects of different planning strategies and policy initiatives on shrinking cities. This research will analyse different policy measures (their rationale and their effects) and the extent of their investment in shrinking cities’.

Census data will be collect from the 1960s until the present on several Australian cities to compile a database, showing the demographic picture and the trajectory of city’s. The team will use this data to classify these cities and compare and contrast them with other worldwide cities, putting Australian cities on the world map of shrinking cities. Case study investigations will be used to analyse the impact of declining population, economy or/and employment on skills, employment and innovation via surveys and in-depth interviews which will provide information on skills dynamics at the local level and how local firms, specially SMEs, are responding to the challenges of losing talent.



The study will develop a conceptual framework and typology for shrinking cities in Australia, enabling a much better understanding of the trajectories of these cities and what can be done about them. The research will also contribute to policy initiatives governments can take in order to maintain employment, skills and sustain innovation in these cities, enabling community regeneration strategies in declining areas in Australia.

Project Title: Achieving urban vitality: skills & employment development in shrinking cities.

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