



Tackling Urban Decline through Innovation Activities

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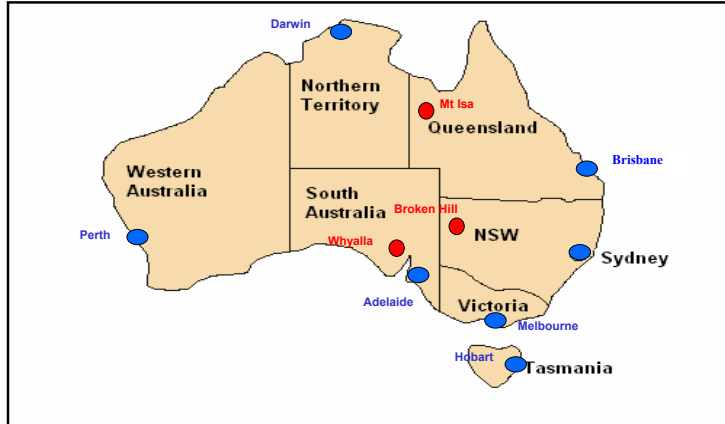


Innovation & Competitiveness of Cities

- The 'war for talent': retaining and attracting skills & investment;
- Economic aspects: education, industry innovation, networks & clusters;
- Physical Dimensions: attractiveness, infrastructure, natural capital;
- Social dimensions: social cohesion, labour market integration, renewal of distressed urban areas, tolerance, governance;
- Knowledge workers and knowledge infrastructure concentrates in cities and in particular suburbs of cities;
- Disparity of conditions in OECD regions: 10% regions create 56% of new jobs (1996-2001) while 10% regions suffered 70% of job losses;
- Intangible factors: knowledge institutions, connectivity, knowledge transfer;
- Mining/Industrial sites are 'innovation-intensive-skills-hubs'.



Case Studies: preliminary results



3



3 Case Studies

Shrinking Cities Population changes (1976-2001)

| City | Pop 76 | Pop 2001 | % 1976-2001 |
|-------------|--------|----------|-------------|
| Whyalla | 33426 | 21271 | -36.36% |
| Mount Isa | 25377 | 20525 | -19.11% |
| Broken Hill | 27647 | 19834 | -28.25% |

Source: ABS, Census Data (1976-2001)

- Consisting declining of mining industry (25% or more), Mt Isa piking up.

4



Mt Isa: Knowledge Infrastructure



- Shrinking cycles – mining companies
- Technological & Innovation development: Mt Isa Smelter, MTS, Xstrata;
- More services for residents;
- State Government Investment in Education and Health
- Local Government investment in recovering assets for tourism: public-private partnerships
- Regional knowledge transfer: regional centre for regional services
- Industry clusters
- Flying-in / flying-out communities
- Gambling culture, pollution & health

5



Whyalla: Tolerance



- City founded in 1901: migrants from Malta, Italy and Germany;
- 1960 – 60 ethnic groups;
- Steel production and resources processing (BHP);
- Multicultural Communities Centre;
- University of SA regional campus;
- Strategies to attract immigrants;
- 2002: 'Whyalla Rural Australian for Refugees Group': community & university staff. Lobby government for changes in refugees laws;
- Broken perception of rural areas as intolerant & backwards thinking.

6



Broken Hill: Art & Mining Culture



- Historic mining city in outback NSW;
- Industrial hub - BHP
- Significant mining-union hub;
- 6500 miners reduced to 500;
- Preserving mining architecture;
- Investing in art: art galleries, 'Living Desert Sculptures', mining painters;
- More than 50 artists;
- Film industry in the desert: Mad Max, Dirty Deeds, Priscilla-the Queen of the Desert;
- Aboriginal communities and the 'Indigenous Divide'.

7



Keeping People Strategies

- By offering more & better services, liveability, openness, life style;

"There is plenty of work, wages are relatively high, and opportunities to purchase land at a reasonable price and set your own business are abundant. Given these and a multiple of other advantages, why then is it difficult to attract and retain staff? I put it down to two things, perceptions and connection".

"The first is the perception of people that has never been here but think they know what is like. In most cases they are totally wrong. There is also the internal perception of Mount Isa residents that everywhere else is better. So many of our people desperately want to live elsewhere but when they arrive at the new destination realise their mistake. The lucky ones come back poorer, but wiser."

Source: ISA Focus, Mayor Ron McCullough, April 2005:1

8



Conclusions

- Difficult to generalise: innovative solutions are linked to the history of the place;
- Management of shrinking cities requires innovative skills & strategies for 'keeping people';
- Assets need to be re-thought and transformed in new uses;
- Connectivity and networking might be harder than in growing places – negative impact on Regional Innovation System;
- Public-private partnerships have a role in innovation & renewal of these cities;
- 'Knowledge-drain': transfer of knowledge & innovation processes from the main industry to other businesses/organisations.

