

Leaving the city for the beach and bush: Counter-urban trends to regional Australia

A research workshop online

19th of February 2021

Chairs: Dr Caitlin Buckle (University of Sydney) and Dr Nick Osbaldiston (James Cook University)

Summary

There has been ongoing discussion in the news of people fleeing from the cities to set up lives in regional Australia, and a renewed interest given the impacts of COVID-19 on major cities.

Forecasts suggest that this counter-urban trend may be growing post-COVID, and during COVID-19 it was clear that people were leaving Melbourne in greater numbers than we have seen in recent times. In the past, counter-urban trends were well understood and studied often being described as 'seachange' and/or 'treechange' in Australia (Argent et al., 2011; Burnley and Murphy, 2004; Gurran et al., 2006; Ragusa, 2010). However little is known about current trends in this COVID-19 era and why people are going and what time period they are leaving for.

Often discussions in the media especially around people leaving for regional Australia tend to pull the regions into a homogenous grouping, failing to recognise the diversity of population growth and decline in various pockets of regional areas, the multiple ways that 'regional' can be defined, and the varied reasons why people from cities might move to these different locales.

In this workshop, we seek to bring together expertise from academia in this area of research from across Australia and from a range of disciplines to present findings from research conducted on counter-urban trends in Australia. Specifically we seek for researchers who have conducted work recently and/or in the earlier waves of counter-urbanisation/seachange research of the 1980, 90s and 2000s. In doing so, we hope to build up further evidence for what has happened, what is happening now and maybe understand further what might happen into the future. We are also interested to know what impacts counter-urban trends have had after almost twenty plus years of population turnaround in places like Northern NSW and SE Queensland.

We invite abstracts of no more than 500 words to address the following issues;

- Counter-urbanisation research and theory
- Evidence of internal migration into regional Australia and the implications for local townships both historically and in contemporary times
- Case studies of population turnaround in regional Australian towns and cities historically and in contemporary times
- Consideration of COVID-19 and its impact on regional Australian in and out-migration
- Impacts of second-homes or holiday homes on regional Australian places
- Retirement migration into regional Australia and what this will mean for local areas
- Political and policy-orientated research on growth in regional Australia

Abstracts can be sent to nick.osbaldiston@jcu.edu.au by the 20th of January, 2021.

Our aim is to collaborate with the authors thereafter to develop a special issue of a journal or edited book collection and a roundtable will be held with the authors on the day to understand this further.

We look forward to hearing from everyone soon!