

Internationalisation and the shaping of student lives in the city

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The lives and the learning of students are shaped by circumstances outside the classroom as much as they are by the arrangements of formal learning environments. The built form of the city in which students reside and interact is important here, as well as the social settings and institutional contexts in which students find themselves. If we seek urban and social environments in which interactions between students, across difference, are facilitated rather than hindered, awareness of the effects of urban processes and characteristics on students' sociality is important. Drawing on a study of 'international' and 'local' students attending two major universities in central Melbourne, and their social activities in the public and private spaces of the city, this paper suggests that the housing allocation practices of universities in this central city location over the past decade have had the unintended consequence of separating 'international' from 'local' students socially, and heightening the meaning of those administrative labels for students. The practices of some organisations with which students are involved, particularly churches, seem also to have contributed to the social separation of these administratively-identified groups. There are, however, examples of public spaces and inclusive activities in the city in which students and others interact across difference. The paper concludes with some examples of urban spaces that facilitate interaction, and a commentary about the need for institutional processes to be designed so as to maximise everyday encounters in the city.