Educational Markets as Urban Development Generators: Intersections of Governance, International students and Local Communities in Adelaide, South Australia

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Abstract

Australian universities have long recognised the importance of international education markets. In the face of reduced Commonwealth funding, international students have been perceived as one means to generate much needed capital. However, international students must be seen as more than ‘cash cows’. International students assist in the creation of transnational partnerships tying Australian universities with international institutions. Recently, an awareness of the benefits derived from international student markets has entered the policy considerations and planning agendas of local government bodies. Increasingly, local government perceive international students equally as international linkage facilitators and local development generators. In recognition of this trend, Adelaide City Council has identified students as a key strategic resource in the revitalisation of the inner city area. The aggressive pursuit of international students through local government policy has been employed to stimulate significant economic investment in the city, particularly through the building of large-scale student residential complexes. Such policies are initiating significant changes within the physical form and social character of the City. We refer to such policy directions as educational entrepreneurialism. The changes initiated by educational entrepreneurialism have been met by the local community in vastly different ways. This paper investigates educational entrepreneurialism and reports on competing community perspectives derived from large-scale questionnaire sampling of 31% of households within the City of Adelaide. The significance of this paper rests not only in critically examining local community perceptions of and responses to educational entrepreneurialism policies, but equally in theorising more socially equitable and sustainable strategic planning pathways.

Introduction

Cities are increasingly locked in competition. While this is not a new concept, the increasingly fluid nature of the global economy demands that cities seek new ways of distinguishing themselves from their urban competitors in order to attract investment in its various guises. In effect, new and increasingly entrepreneurial forms of governance are required to remain competitive in the global economy. This new reality that faces various tiers of government generally and the planning profession specifically is exemplified by the emergence of the global city and networks that these cities form. However, global cities are not isolated in their place-specific geographies. Rather, they are spaces or nodes (see Sassen 1991, 1994, 2002) positioned within a complex network of flows that link places across territorial boundaries. This is not to suggest that the constraints of geography have been completely eliminated, as some authors have suggested (see for example Waters 1995). Geography still matters (see Rofe 2003) and the fortunes of cities are still influenced by their relative global geography. For cities that are considered peripheral to the flows and interactions of the global city network, either spatially or economically, the burning question facing policy makers and urban professionals alike is how to enhance the competitiveness of and better integrate the city with these flows? However, beyond this question are a range of other, arguably more significant questions that centre upon the appropriateness of entrepreneurial governance strategies, the policy directions they spawn and their impacts upon local communities.

This paper investigates the policies pursued by the City of Adelaide in order to enhance both its national and international competitiveness. It offers a critical examination of the Adelaide City Council’s Student Growth Plan, the pursuit of international educational markets as central to this plan and local community perceptions of and attitudes towards this policy direction. Specifically, this project was designed to evaluate the hypothesis that a high level of engagement between resident students and other residents is of mutual benefit and adds life and vitality to a community. Accordingly, a substantial questionnaire was administered to 31% of residences within the City seeking views on the impact of student residents and the responses to student residents by the rest of the population. This questionnaire sought to elicit both quantitative and qualitative data. The project was initiated by Adelaide City Council and conducted with the assistance of the University of South Australia and the University of Adelaide. It must be stressed that while this paper reports on a commissioned research project the authors retained complete...
control over the research process and the reporting of results. Being thus removed from the political processes of the Council, this work is not biased and/or influenced in its findings, nor discussion thereof.

**Adelaide as ‘Australia’s Learning City’**

Striving to position itself better to take advantage of the opportunities offered by global integration, Adelaide has embarked upon an aggressive place making program promoting the city as ‘Australia’s Learning City’. As depicted in Figure 1, Adelaide is promoted as a city with a deeply ingrained love for learning within an environment of high amenity quality and lifestyle opportunities. Such promotion reflects the entrepreneurial intersection of public and private actors. Adelaide’s Learning City campaign is shaped by political emphasis at both State and Local Government levels, orchestrated by the marketing organisation Education Adelaide and facilitated by the city’s three universities (University of South Australia, University of Adelaide and Flinders University). These undertakings have been extremely successful, with Adelaide hosting approximately 20,000 international students in 2007 (Education Adelaide [http://www.studyadelaide.com](http://www.studyadelaide.com)). The capital investment benefits of this market are considerable, with international students generating an estimated A$553 million for South Australia during the 2005/2006 financial year (The Honourable Paul Cacia Minister for Employment, Training and Higher Education 2006 [http://www.ministers.sa.gov.au/news.php?id=962](http://www.ministers.sa.gov.au/news.php?id=962)). Capital investment is not the sole claimed benefit of international student markets, as community development and enhanced international linkages also being reported on positively.

These policy directions, their surrounding activities and demonstrated successes are indicative of the power of knowledge based economies. As Benneworth and Hospers (2007, p.109) astutely observe, educational ‘...networks... provide access to, and help attract more external... capital to peripheral regions’. Certainly Adelaide, despite being a State capital, can be considered as a peripheral region in light of the dominance of Australia’s east coast cities, most notably Sydney, in the global economy. Consequently, education can serve as development ‘animatuer’s’ strengthening international linkages and building local economies. Yet the success of peripheral cities seeking to reposition themselves as educating cities is dependant upon their ability to integrate themselves within the global knowledge system. To this end, the International Association of Educating Cities was formed in 1990. It is worth noting that Adelaide is Australia’s only member city of IAEC. Through this organisation, the city of Adelaide is able to promote itself internationally and create a unique niche both nationally and internationally.

The Charter of the IAEC clearly establishes that the role and responsibilities of educating cities are to promote international linkages through educational markets and networks, while maintaining and promoting the wellbeing of local communities:

> The educating city is a city with its own personality, forming an integral part of its nation. Therefore, its identity is interdependent with that of the country it belongs to. The educating city is not self-contained; it has an active relationship with its environment, with the other urban centres in the nation and with cities in other countries. The goal of this relationship is to learn, exchange and share experiences and thus enrich the lives of the inhabitants ([IAEC](http://www.bcn.es/edcities/aice/estatiques/angles/sec_charter.html)).

Of particular import here is the assertion that educating cities are distinct from their national counterparts as they are strategically aligned in a global sense, while recognising their relationship with their national urban counterparts. Further, the emphasis placed upon the civic responsibilities for educating cities to
forge global linkages while enhancing local opportunities represents an explicit governance position that arguably refutes the pitfalls associated with entrepreneurial governance strategies. Hence, the educating city network represents an alternate pathway from the well-trod winner take all model of aggressive global economic development. Regardless, the reality of the educating city calls into question these assertions.

Embracing the opportunities presented by international educational markets specifically and those of knowledge based economies more generally, the Adelaide City Council has identified growth in City student numbers and City student residents as key targets. Specifically it has identified the role that students play in contributing to “the vibrancy of Adelaide as a place of interaction and ideas”. To this end the Council has, among other targets, a goal of increasing “South Australia’s share of overseas students within 10 years”. The Council aims to have 66,000 [tertiary] students in institutional learning by 2010 and have Adelaide recognized “as an excellent place for study with a strong character and identity as a ‘University City’ especially around North Terrace” attracting local students as well as those from regional SA, interstate and overseas (Adelaide City Council, Student Growth Plan 2005-2010).

Data contained in the Strategic Management Plan 2004–2007 indicate that there has been a considerable growth in numbers in recent years. Overall student numbers are up (just under 63,000 students were enrolled in South Australian universities in 2005 – already exceeding the 2006 target) and the number of international students in South Australia increased by 16.96% in the 12 months to November 2005. South Australia’s share of international students has also increased (from 4.8% in 2004 to 5.6% in 2007). Significantly, the value of education as an export has grown and was valued at at $553m in 2005-06. Education is now South Australia’s fourth largest export. At the same time, the concentration of students living in the City has also grown (Adelaide City Council Strategic Indicators. Progress Report March 2007). The Adelaide City Council continues to have ambitious targets. The Lord Mayor has declared that the new target for students in the City is 75,000 (Harbison 2007).

All this is consistent with the idea of promoting Adelaide as an ‘Education City’ and might be thought of as a form of ‘Educational entrepreneurialism’. Until recently, the responsibility for urban planning and implementation has often been seen as the sole preserve of government agencies. However, recent changes in strategic planning directions have initiated a shift in the local political landscape and urban governance practices are becoming increasingly commercialised or entrepreneurial (see McGuirk 2000, 2001; Newman and Thornley 1997). There is evidence of greater reliance on highly flexible, strategic alliances with private sector organisations and/or other public sector agencies. Typically, these alliances are specifically project focused; for example the redevelopment of former industrial land for residential purposes (see Paddison 1993; Rofe 2004). This change represents a significant challenge for local governments charged with the responsibility of pursuing equitable management policies that are sustainable over the long term. Given this, there has been surprisingly little research done on the consequences of the direct involvement of educational institutions and of targeted education related accommodation on initiating urban change. Those studies that have been conducted stress that further detailed assessment of the Australian context is required (Macintyre 2003). In other words there is an assumption embedded within such policy directions, often based upon anecdotal evidence, that greater interaction between long-term residents and resident students promotes a more active and vibrant City culture – but, as yet, there is little hard evidence to support this claim.

The growth of student numbers, particularly international students, within the City of Adelaide is having a profound impact upon the City’s socio-economic composition and built form. These changes hold striking similarities with the process of gentrification. Gentrification is here broadly defined as ‘...an improvement of the inner city environment, facilitated by a change in residential structure as high-income professional households displace traditional inner city residents’ (Rofe 2000, p.56). Economically, gentrification brings capital reinvestment into the inner city through the purchase and refurbishment of dwellings and corresponding small business reinvestment resulting in the development of cosmopolitan consumption-scapes. Yet gentrification is a complex and contested process involving a tension between creation and destruction (after Zukin 1995) as newer replace existing residents thereby alerting existing community structures. Research by Blair Badcock (1991, 1992) reveals that gentrification has been occurring within Adelaide City initiating significant changes within the City’s residential profile and sense of place over the past twenty years. Gentrification typically occurs as successive waves of gentrifiers colonise the inner city. This is referred to as the stage model of gentrification, where each stage is characterised by increasingly affluent gentrifiers as the ‘gentrification commodity’ (see Mills 1993) matures. Within this schema, students are considered as ‘bridge’ or ‘pioneer’ gentrifiers as they prime the inner city for profitable reinvestment. Students and other groups such as artists and musicians, lend...
a bohemian feel to the inner city, thereby raising the perceived lifestyle qualities and social capital of a
given area. The paradox here is that bridge gentrifiers may ultimately become the victims of the
gentrification process as housing costs escalate. The aggressive student policy directions pursued
within Adelaide hold significant potential to accelerate this pioneering process. However, this is not to
assert that student initiated gentrification will ultimately result in inner Adelaide becoming highly affluent
and lacking in residential diversity. This may be attributed to important changes in student residential
styles within the inner city. The residential form of student residences within the city has shifted away
from more traditional private shared-accommodation arrangements towards an institutionally funded
model of large-scale student accommodation developments. These purpose built developments reflect
changing perceptions of the role of universities as holistic service providers and not simply education
providers. In particular this development trend has been associated with the growth in the international
student markets. In Adelaide this style of development is epitomized by the University of Adelaide’s
*University Village* and *CITI Townhouses* and the University of South Australia’s *East West Apartments*
and *Tower Apartments*. These developments alone can accommodate some 800 students. The impact
of these developments is threefold; first they concentrate large numbers of students in specific areas of
the city. Second, they ensure that as pioneer gentrifiers, students will not become priced out of the inner
city residential market. Third, such development effectively ‘block-bust’ large areas of the inner city
rapidly accelerating the gentrification process and significantly altering the physical form, residential
composition and sense of place within the inner city. Consequently, the changes heralded by the
significant growth in student numbers within inner Adelaide, combined with the development of student
housing precincts, may well be considered as a new form of gentrification within inner city areas.

**Research Design**

The data presented in this paper was generated through a large-scale questionnaire survey. Questionnaire
surveying is highly developed and effective sampling technique within the social sciences
(see for example Fowler 1993; Babbie 1995; de Vaus 1995). Questionnaires provide a time and cost
efficient means of gathering both quantitative and qualitative data from, this case, a geographically
targeted population. However, as with all research methods, questionnaire surveying is not without its
limitations. Foremost amongst these are appropriate questionnaire design, effective distribution as to
avoid selection bias, reliability of results and the maximising of response rates. Taking these factors into
account, the questionnaire was designed heeding Fowler’s (1993) recommendation to restrict question
format to avoid confusion. Consequently the questionnaire was restricted to a maximum of six pages and
divided into four sections addressing Attitudes Towards Living in Inner Adelaide, Attitudes Towards
Residential Diversity within Inner Adelaide, Resident Information and Household Information. Each
section was prefaced with a statement of intent to provide an unambiguous frame of reference for
respondents. Each of these sections included a range of questions designed to explore the respondent’s
attributes, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour (de Vaus 1995 p.82; see also Dillman 1978). Those questions
addressing respondent attributes and behaviour were closed-response questions, enabling quantitative
coding and statistical analysis to occur. These questions reflected established social science techniques
seeking to construct an overall demographic and socio-economic profile of the sample. Questions of this
nature concerned issues of gender, age, education and occupation. Attitude and belief questions, while
also being quantifiable, offered respondents the opportunity to express more qualifiable opinions. This
was achieved by providing a range of Likert scale and open ended questions. Both of these question
forms offered respondents the opportunity to indicate their opinion to specific statements and/or
assertions on a rating scale (a five-stage rating scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree) and, if so
desired, provide longer and more detailed sentence form responses. These question forms enable the
respondent to express themselves more fully than close ended questions, thereby offering greater
insights into the social process under study. Robinson (1998, pp.380-381) stresses the need for
questionnaires to be clearly written, avoiding abstract concepts and technical jargon. To ensure clarity of
language and concepts several drafts were workshoped with members of the target population and
planners at Adelaide City Council before the final version was completed.

In total, 2000 questionnaires were distributed using a custom household mailing list generated from
Adelaide City Council’s Rates database. As at the 2001 Census of Population and Housing, this sample
represented 31% sample of the City’s residential housing stock (n= 6428). To ensure an effective
response rate the Dilman Total Design Method (Dilman 1978) was employed. Following this technique,
each questionnaire was coded and identifying details were deleted from the database as each
questionnaire was returned. All residences not replying after 2 weeks were sent a reminder note. A total
of 463 questionnaires were returned representing a response rate of 23.2% (7.2% of all households as at
2001 Census).
Reflecting reported trends on questionnaire respondent profiles, the average age of the total sample was 46 years. Females accounted for 51.4% and Males 48.2% of the total sample (0.4% NR). Regarding employment status, 48.6% were employed full time, 17.3% employed part time, 6% were engaged in looking for work or home duties; while not surprisingly 18.4% were retired. Interestingly only 18.1% of the total sample were students. Of these 15.5% were international, 13.1% interstate and 71.4% local students.

The following discussion reports on both quantitative and qualitative findings from the resident survey. This discussion details resident perceptions of living in inner Adelaide, with specific reference to the changes occurring in their immediate residential area and student residents as agents of these transitions. Following the discussion of quantitatively derived data, a discussion on qualitative, open-ended questions expanding upon attitudes to student residents is undertaken. In the interpretation of this data, three discourses about the role of student residents in inner city transition were identified. These characterised student residents as agents of decline, agents of renewal and strategic pawns.

**Adelaide: a City Transforming**

Overall, questionnaire results indicate that residents view living in inner Adelaide positively. As detailed in Table 1, inner Adelaide is perceived to be a safe residential area (67% Strongly/Slightly Agree), that is cosmopolitan in nature (77% Strongly/Slightly Agree) and where people feel they belong (67% Strongly/Slightly Agree). Most striking is that the vast majority of respondents affirmed that they are happy residing within Adelaide (89% Strongly/Slightly Agree). Concerning the social composition of Adelaide, 73% Strongly/Slightly Agree that Adelaide is a diverse area. Yet it must be stated that the extent to which respondents embrace social diversity is quite difficult to tease out and understand through statistical data. However, 55% of respondents Strongly/Slightly Agree that they liked hearing languages other than English spoken in their residential area. While 72% Strongly/Slightly Agree that they enjoy interactions with people from diverse backgrounds.

With regard to the changing residential nature of Adelaide, 55% of respondents Strongly/Slightly Agree that community change is a good thing. However, Table 1 also reveals that only 42% of respondents Strongly/Slightly Agree that the community in their residential area was changing for the better. It is important to note that only 9% Slightly/Strongly Disagreed with this assertion. Some 41% of respondents responded as being neutral to this statement. It is plausible that this neutrality reflects a 'wait and see' stance by many respondents. In summary, Table 1 indicates a high level of resident satisfaction, both with regard to social characteristics of area of residence and changes occurring therein.

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The area where I live is a safe place</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community change is a good thing</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel a sense of belonging here</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is a socially diverse area</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel happy living in this area</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The community in this area is changing for the better</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy interactions with people who are different to me</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like hearing languages other than English spoken in my area</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a strong sense of community here</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100%
Section B of the questionnaire investigated respondent attitudes towards residential diversity within Adelaide. Reference was made to student residents in general and international student residents specifically. The main body of findings from Section B are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2 reveals that the majority of respondents view student residents positively. Indicative of this, 78% of respondents Strongly/Slightly Agreed that student residents add to the vibrancy of the city. This perception was confirmed by responses for the range of statements concerning the contribution of students to the city, not only socially but also economically. As detailed in Table 2, 79% of respondents Strongly/Slightly Agreed that student resident’s contribution to community diversity and economic development was positive respectively. This trend was repeated for international specific statements. 73% and 75% of respondents Strongly/Slightly Agreed that international students influence the mix of businesses and community diversity in a positive way respectively.

Providing objective balance within the questionnaire, a number of statements included in Question B1 were negatively framed. Most notable amongst these were statements concerning the contribution of student residents to the character of the City, their impact upon housing costs and their interactions with longer term neighbours. As detailed in Table 2, only 29% of respondents Strongly/Slightly Agreed that student residents add little to the enduring character of the City. While the majority of respondents (44%) Strongly/Slightly Disagreed with this statement, it is important to note that 23% of respondents responded as being Neutral. Conversely, the statement *I believe students erode my area’s sense of community* was rejected by the majority of respondents (64% Strongly/Slightly Disagreed).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students living in the city add to the diversity of the community</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students living in the city have a positive economic impact on the city</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As short-term residents, students add value to the enduring character of the city</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students act to inflate the rental costs of city accommodation</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International students influence the mix of local shops and businesses</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International students influence the mix of local shops and businesses</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International students influence the mix of local shops and businesses</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are too many students living in my local area</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe students erode my area’s sense of community</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concerning student resident impact upon housing costs, 23% of respondents Strongly/Slightly Agreed that students inflate rental costs. Once again, those responding Neutral accounted for the majority of respondents (41%), with the remaining 30% of responses Strongly/Slightly Disagreeing with this statement.

Respondent attitudes towards interactions with student households and the spatial distribution of student accommodation throughout Adelaide were also examined. Concerning neighbourly interactions with student households, Table 2 reveals that 48% of respondents respectively Strongly/Slightly Agreed that student residents generally were considerate of other residents and that international students specifically make good neighbours. Issues of student residential concentration revealed some interesting trends. While 10% of respondents believed that too many students lived in their immediate residential area, the majority of respondents (56%) Slightly/Strongly Disagreed with this statement, with...
the remaining 31% responding as being neutral in their opinion. Despite these sentiments almost 30% of respondents Strongly/Slightly Agreed that student accommodation is best concentrated in a specific area of the city.

In summary, Table 2 indicates a high degree of acceptance of student residents within Adelaide generally and international students specifically. The overwhelming majority of respondents affirmed the view that student residents enhance the diversity of the local community and contribute positively to Adelaide’s economic base. Student residents were not perceived as eroding local community structures. Respondents did not report significant concerns that student residents over-inflate the housing market, specifically with regard to rental accommodation. Further, the majority of respondents do not feel there are too many student residents in their immediate residential area. Indeed, over 40% of respondents indicate they would be happy for more students to live in their residential area and that they desire greater interaction between longer term residents and shorter term student residents.

Augmenting the statistically-oriented questions, as detailed above, a range of open-ended, more qualitative questions were included in the questionnaire. This enabled respondents to provide fuller responses to the issues under exploration. Framed in respondents own words, rather than constrained by the language of the questionnaire, these responses provide a rich source of information. According to Winchester (2000, p.18), qualitative open-ended questions are crucial in providing ‘…depth to [the] statistical generalisations’ generated through quantitative techniques. While methodological studies often report poor response rates to open-ended question, it is estimated that over 50% of respondents provided hand-written responses. These ranged from simple several word answers to expansive and highly considered responses. Thematic analysis has been conducted upon these responses. Through this technique, a range of ‘themes’ can be identified that characterise broad community views regarding student residents and the potential emergence of student housing precincts within Adelaide.

The following discussion represents a preliminary discussion of two prevalent themes within the overall questionnaire sample. We consider these themes to characterise student residents as either [1] agents of decline or [2] agents of renewal. A third, hybrid, theme is also discussed. This problematises themes 1 and 2, proposing that student residents could be mobilised by local and state government as [3] strategic pawns to achieve specific policy objectives. A range of questionnaire excerpts, although limited due to the constraints of the word limit, are provided to illustrate these themes. These excerpts have been selected for their succinct articulation and representative nature of the given theme under discussion.

**Students as Agents of Decline**

The agents of decline theme cast students as eroding local senses of community, physical amenities and even public safety. Commonly cited problems associated with student residents were noise complaints and the irregular hours/calendars that student households keep. A clear distinction here was drawn between permanent residents and students as transient residents. Encapsulating this sentiment, one respondent commented ‘…they are not part of the permanent community’ (Female 66 South East Corner). In a similar vein, a sense of detachment from their ‘host’ community, arguably stemming from their transient nature, was perceived to engender a lack of respect for the amenity of the physical nature of their surroundings:

Students do not care about the buildings they live in so they ‘trash’ them… my experiences are based purely on [deleted street address] where I used to live. FYI international [students] were the worst (Female 26 City West).

Concerns over the physical impacts of student residents were evident in comments about the emergence of high-density student residential developments. Such developments were cast as being squalid and unsuitable for long term residential occupation. One respondent argued that such developments created ‘slums’ (Female 60 Lower North Adelaide), while another stated they foreshadowed an urban future where inner Adelaide is characterised by ‘down-graded/rundown properties/increased crime/slum landlords’ (Female 46 South West Corner). This comment foreshadowed a disturbing number of references to ghettos, slums and ethnic enclaves. Indicative of these, one respondent stated that the pursuit of international student markets attracted ‘[p]eople coming in [to Adelaide] who are openly antagonistic to Western values’ resulting in ‘[g]hettoization’ (Male 69 Upper North Adelaide). At the core of such comments was an implicit and at times explicit, intersection between race and a perceived struggle over the future of the inner city. Here, large and highly visible international student groups were construed as being a negative force within the inner city.
In a seemingly more measured tone, one Upper North Adelaide resident stated:

The concentration of students in any one area could encourage the formation of ethnic groups that in the long run will almost surely change the character so Adelaide to the extent that it will be unrecognisable in the future; its charm will be lost as has happened in London and other cities in the world (Male 89 Upper North Adelaide).

Avoiding the rhetoric of alarm evident in a number of other questionnaires, this comment is nonetheless subtly mobilising the agents of decline theme. At its heart, this comment speaks of the preservation of an Anglo-centric identity structure within the city of Adelaide. Further, by drawing upon the exemplar of London as the core of the British Empire issues of race and struggles over the form and culture of the city are mobilised between the local and the global. Here, the question of legitimacy emerges; what is Adelaide; who belongs here and by implicit extension who does not?

**Students as Agents of Renewal**

Opposing the agents of decline theme, a significant number of respondents cast student residents as the agents of renewal. Here a positive view of the contribution of student residents, more in keeping with the statistical data reported in Table 2, emerged. This view is well reflected in the opinion expressed that student residents ‘make Adelaide a vibrant city with a mix of cultures, languages [and] people’ (Female 34 City South). Directly refuting the concerns about community erosion and transience, one respondent cheekily commented that students add:

…vibrancy and youth to the population [which] prevents the city becoming a new age olds folk’s village (Male 19 South West Corner).

The notion of the emergence of a vibrant and socio-culturally diverse Adelaide was a recurring theme:

Students will encourage new views and future business to change and gear towards international flavours. Positive effects of globalization (Male 25 International Student Lower North Adelaide).

Rather than privileging a static Anglo-centric view of Adelaide’s identity, the agents of renewal discourse embraces change as an opportunity to further integrate Adelaide with other cultures and societies. Students themselves form the conduits through which these connections are established and maintained and students directly contribute to the welcome revitalisation of the city.

**Students as Strategic Pawns**

Straddling both of the aforementioned discourses were views of the strategic use of student residents and in particular large scale student residential complexes as a mechanism to revitalise depressed areas of Adelaide. Exemplifying this, one respondent stated:

If student housing is focused on the city and not North Adelaide it will help revitalise dead areas (Female 44 Lower North Adelaide).

Here, student residential developments are cast as the spearhead of urban regeneration. Thus, large-scale student residential developments were considered by some respondents as opportunities for government initiated revitalisation programs. This quote is also noteworthy as it creates a distinct geography for student housing. For others it is the lack of integration that itself becomes the concern:

‘I am worried that student housing will be too concentrated in certain areas [of the city] and won’t encourage interaction between students and other residents’ (Female 31 City West).

Another respondent had more explicit concern about the consequences of student accommodation in certain areas. The view was expressed that:

Student housing is not suitable for areas such as North Adelaide, nor other upmarket areas (Male 77 Upper North Adelaide).
In this discourse, affluent areas should be spared the encroachment of student residential developments as they would erode their social stability and architectural heritage. In all these comments, once again, legitimacy rests at the heart of the concerns of the residents.

Conclusion

The targeted growth in overseas student numbers in Adelaide in recent years has changed the character of the City and the composition of its residents. Further growth in these numbers is part of both the City’s and the Universities’ strategic plans. Inevitably, the social and cultural pattern of the City will experience further significant change in the immediate years to come. In considering its reaction to this and the policy developments to accommodate and reflect this change, the City of Adelaide has chosen to embrace the transformation and to position itself as an ‘Education City’. Working together with the Universities and the South Australia State Government, the City Council has used a growing student presence to facilitate new models of urban development.

These new models have seen significant changes in both the physical form of the city and in the social character of the City. They have also seen the City form new alliances with private providers and other government agencies to provide the specific infrastructure demanded by the changed patterns. Inevitably, these reforms have been met with mixed responses by the established residents, and as the Adelaide City Council pursues a policy of educational entrepreneurism, it needs to be sensitive to the views of its residents. This paper sought to answer a series of specific questions about the community’s reception of these changes. The questions were broadly concerned with whether or not residents felt positive about living in Adelaide and approved of the changing character of the City. Our research indicates that the majority of residents broadly agree that the changing characteristics of the City are a good thing and that the impact (economic, social and cultural) of international students has benefited Adelaide. However, it must be noted that some tensions exist, particularly over the potential negative impacts of highly concentrated student residential precincts. These tensions emerged in the form of struggles over the right to the city and may be considered as being related to a sense of legitimacy in the defining of the city’s character and to the shaping of its future. Communicating effectively with the community is essential in the receipt of such policies is essential to their ultimate success.

These findings suggest that the Adelaide City Council (and other similar cities) should be confident about locating student specific initiatives at the forefront of policy development. Indeed, as has been argued, a growing student presence can provide a strategic bridge to reinvestment and to the regeneration of City environs. The experience of Adelaide suggests that positioning cities as education markets not only attracts considerable financial returns for the community, but can act as a significant developer of urban regeneration.

REFERENCES

Adelaide City Council, Student Growth Plan 2005-2010


