

Andrew B ([00:00](#)):

Good morning, everyone. And welcome. My name is Andrew B I'm from geography within Flinders University. It's my great pleasure this morning to be your chair and introduce our speaker professor Ruth Fincher. Ruth will be speaking for approximately 30 minutes today, and then we'll have 15 minutes for discussion questions and other comments. So it's my great pleasure to now pass over to our speaker professor Ruth Fincher of the Department of Geography, University of Melbourne.

Speaker 2 ([00:38](#)):

[Inaudible]

Ruth Fincher ([00:38](#)):

Thank you, Andrew. And it's a great pleasure to be, to be here. So lovely to see some rain and good to have a fellow geographer chairing the session. As I start my presentation on this topic I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land where we are now, the count of people and pay respects to their elders past and present. So diversity in the city. What are our limits? Diversity is a slippery idea. I'm someone who studies, how a range of social groups in the city experience their lives, however, unequally, and use their built environments. As part of that experience in, in the work I've done, I've emphasized the need for any planning or policy that encourages our acceptance of diversity to recognize that not all diversity is just and equally desirable. For example, we could say that income inequality is an expression of diversity in the population.

Ruth Fincher ([01:39](#)):

And so the greater distance between the incomes of rich and poor, the more diversity we have, but many of us of course, would claim that we should not make that particular interpretation of diversity. And we shouldn't have policy settings that facilitate ever widening differences in income that that would offend our notions of fairness. Also not all notions of diversity or not all diversity's rather appreciated equally by everybody. If this isn't very obvious point. So if you imagine shop owners on busy city streets, they don't always see that the loitering of young people in their vicinity or their activities like skateboarding are as acceptable as the well-behaved consumption practices of cafe sitters, who are also loiterers when you come to think of it and, and shoppers. So I guess I'm just asking you to notice, I start this talk that diversity is a slippery idea.

Ruth Fincher ([02:34](#)):

As I say it, it sounds very positive, but when you look into it, it's obvious that you need to ask further questions and to specify it further today, I'll be mentioning a number of different kinds of diversity of social diversity and asking the general question, what are our limits in allowing them their expression in the city, I'll be drawing on some of my own recent work and on the work of lots colleagues to make the arguments that though we in Australia are well-schooled in the discourses of things like multiculturalism, that value and acknowledged diversity. There is some evidence in our cities that we, some of us are not very good in fact at accommodating or encouraging and sometimes even tolerating some differences and that sometimes visible difference has become tied up with fear notions of risk or disorder. And you'll hear me saying as, as a general point through my talk that I see interaction between social groups as a good thing.

Ruth Fincher ([03:37](#)):

I think in fact that it is the essence of urbanity, and I think it should be a social norm for us in designing our urban policies and practices. So I'm going to start with a story from my own recent research, which is about a university students in central Melbourne now, central Melbourne as I'm sure most of you know, is the site of two major universities are MIT and the university of Melbourne, and each of them has about 45,000 students. And for each of those universities, about 30% of their student body comes from overseas, usually from the countries of Southeast Asia, south Asia, and also from the people's Republic of China in the central city municipality of Melbourne, there are 81,000 people in the resident population. And about 40,000 of those are students, the universities and the city of Melbourne are really interested in the question of cross-cultural interaction between these students from overseas and local students and people in the resident population, both in order to foster cosmopolitanism, the broad awareness of difference in the student body and on the part of the city.

Ruth Fincher ([04:50](#)):

Also, there's an interest in encouraging these students to come back later on in their lives for the possible economic benefits that that might give rise to. So in a big project over the last four years, I've been involved with a team of researchers from architecture and urban planning, asking where the students from overseas, living in the area around the universities feel they belong there. This area is, is one to which students are channeled by universities themselves when they recommend where students should find housing. And it's an area that, that is recommended often by overseas agents that the students consult before they leave. And the students often end up in high-rise housing around the universities, built by developers over the last decade in the light of this new market of students that's particularly been growing. And you'll see on the slide, a photograph of some of this housing in Swanson street.

Ruth Fincher ([05:43](#)):

So we're interested to see if students from overseas are interacting to the degree. They wish with local students who are also living away from home and therefore likely to be socializing in the same sort of inner, suburban and central areas. We were in the role that students use of public spaces played as they establish themselves as part of the or community or in social groups. We were influenced by the results of questionnaires, administered to students as they leave the universities in which students from overseas often say they regret not making Australian friends. And they save things very often. Like I've never seen the inside of an Australian house. So what we found in this study was a tale of two separate social worlds. One of students from overseas, and one of so-called local students, they have separate friendship groups, which in particular, the women's students from overseas are disappointed and anxious about.

Ruth Fincher ([06:39](#)):

They live in different types of housing and in different inner city locations. And they use different public spaces for socializing in, they belong to separate and ethnically identified student clubs, the private and public spaces students use contribute to their separation from other parts of their local communities. And to a lack of cross cultural belonging, even if they make friends and feel they belong in their own separate places and friendships and, and sort of groups of familiars that there's no evidence or very little evidence of cross-cultural interaction. Most, most students enjoy the interactions in their groups of familiars, but some also want to make new connections beyond those. So here's the story or a quote, not really the full story, but a quote from one student from overseas and what she told us she had to do

in order to make local friends. And I read it to you because you can see what very hard work it was on her part.

Ruth Fincher ([07:34](#)):

She had a strategy. She wanted to make local friends. And she had thought about being an, and she went about making local friends, quite systematically. This young woman was age 20. Now, once she got to Melbourne, she joined lots. And I mean, lots of university clubs. She joined a local city church, which focuses on international people in its congregation at the university. She joined debating African drumming, the choir, amnesty international group fitness and swimming because she said, I've always found that's the best way not to look like you're bored or that you've got nothing to do. And you said, in addition, she volunteered for the city of Melbourne at its information desk at Federation square. So she's consciously set out to participate in a lot of activities to take risks and put herself in social situations with a range of people. She says of the fact that she now has friends from overseas and from Australia quote, I would definitely think that in my case, it's because of the clubs I've joined.

Ruth Fincher ([08:33](#)):

I haven't always been fluent in English and it's the people you meet the activities. That's had a big effect on the way I react to things. I can't be shy anymore. And in clubs, I would still have that little sense of lack of fit, but then I'd think there's a reason why I'm here. And if I have this interest and this person has this interest, then there must be something common to us. And we have to bond on quote. Now there are a number of things that could be done to improve. The likelihood that students from overseas in this context could meet up with students from Australia and indeed to make it more likely that students from Australia could have interactions with those from a set of Asian countries. The set from which our overseas students generally come, not all of the students from overseas who come here will have the strategies and the personal capacity to do what the young woman who I've just described to you has set out to do.

Ruth Fincher ([09:25](#)):

We could put in place more integrated housing arrangements and classroom activities as part of our efforts to facilitate a better interaction cross culturally. But one of the most difficult things to alter we found will be the attitudes of local students to their counterparts from overseas and predominantly from Asia, an attitude that was described to us by overseas students as neutral. That is one of disinterest. So here the account of one 18 year old young woman from overseas, she said to us in conversation without interviewing, I think maybe they local students think it's their country, so they don't have to interact. They don't need anyone else to get into their group. First. I thought like, I really want to make some local friends. It's nice to have friends within the same country because they have more experience in the country better than any of us. Right.

Ruth Fincher ([10:13](#)):

But I haven't got that chance yet. And the interviewer said, why do you think that is? And the student said, I don't know exactly. I think maybe they local students think like we're Asians and we have our separate culture. And the interviewer said, so you're saying they're not being negative, but they're not being positive either. They're just neutral. And the student said, yes, they're just neutral. So what this tells us is it will, it could be very hard to create cosmopolitan cross-cultural interaction from just throwing together in classrooms or indeed in an overall part of the city, like the inner suburbs, different groups of students, if one's ambition that is that they'll get along and get to know each other a bit, as

well as get a so-called education in the classroom as if that was separate from the outside world. This also suggests to us that how we react to visible difference, visibly express diversity in some settings is, is not perhaps what we might think we do for local students are telling us that they see concentrated difference here too much diversity for them.

Ruth Fincher ([11:14](#)):

And so they form their friendship groups outside it. One 20 year old, 22 year old woman from Melbourne said, quote, I'm not against having international friends. Maybe they stick to themselves, they've got their own international groups worked out. I feel really racist and judgemental saying stuff like maybe they tend to come over here and then stick to people they know who speak their language because they feel safe doing that. And that's sort of the, in their comfort zone. I think the majority of people don't want to step outside their comfort zone. I'm quite so there's not real fear being expressed here by local young people, just disinterest. I know that I'm not talking from this study about hate crimes or violently expressed racism, but rather about neutrality and the exclusion that attends it. One might see this as fairly inconsequential in an otherwise accepting urban society. But I think what it signals is that in some circumstances we do resist diversity and its implications in our spaces of work and friendship, even on thinking leap, it's outside our comfort zone, we can't be bothered, engaging with it. Let me now go on to talk about some contexts in which we might see some reactions against different sense cities drawing here on the worker colleagues.

Ruth Fincher ([12:31](#)):

Here we go. So the next one comments then about gentrification master planning and the housing habits of the middle class. So if post-World war two in major Australian cities was about the spread of the suburbs and the growth in availability of the car. Then perhaps in the last couple of decades, the spread of the suburbs, which is certainly going on a pace in those cities with major population growth. This is perhaps this has been accompanied by the appearance of some new middle-class housing preferences, gentrification, the revamping of old inner city housing, so that it's higher quality housing than it ever was associated with the replacement of lower income tenants and owners with higher income ones is still a subject of debate and excited the interest amongst researchers in urban studies, even though it's been a topic, exciting their interest since the 1980s, more recently in the Australian context research, especially about Sydney has been revealing the rapid growth of master-planned and sometimes gated communities for the middle class within the suburbs, but closed off from the suburbs and especially their lower income occupants.

Ruth Fincher ([13:39](#)):

In addition, a third trend, there is the move across our country to have public housing estates revitalized with many of them. Now on the way to including privately owned housing units alongside publicly owned housing units, which are occupied by tenants of the state, each of these phenomena associated with housing and with the juxtaposition of richer and poorer people in the city more closely or less closely can be the subject of interesting commentary about the way diversity is being approached in practice. So let me just consider each of them very briefly in turn gentrification is the reinvestment of money and middle-class lifestyles into inner city housing in areas that previously were much poor in quality and in different approaches to revitalizing the inner city that are taken in different places around the world. For example, in some places there's a restoration of heritage buildings, other places they're all cleared and new buildings are built and so on, in different approaches to revitalizing the inner city and to drawing in more wealthy consumers as residents and visitors.

Ruth Fincher ([14:41](#)):

One important issue is who wins and who loses who's excluded. And who's included in the new forms of development and whether the activities and presence of lower income people can be preserved in situ that rarely happens with gentrification. And very often now the most accessible parts of the metropolitan area become the homes of people with resources, whilst people without resources are pushed outwards to the relatively unserved urban periphery. The issue I want to raise here and, and maybe we'll return to later is that of mix and scale. There's no argument from me that things should be kept exactly the same as they were in some, you know, revered past, but, but rather an argument for diversity to be considered as something that should occur within a neighborhood or even a street. And as I've mentioned earlier, that it should be a social norm. When we think about planning at that scale, I'm arguing that diversity should not only be seen at the scale of a metropolitan area overall as a whole, in which you might have some rich and some poor neighborhoods, rather it should mean that in their daily lives, there's some likelihood of people have different lives and prospects interacting much as occurs for many of us in our workplaces and makes them interesting places in neighborhoods and streets having this kind of possible interaction will often require a serious governmental commitment to affordable housing being preserved amongst the gentrifying housing stock, to which otherwise only the wealthy have access.

Ruth Fincher ([16:13](#)):

So this raises an interesting question then about the revitalization of low-income housing estates. Thanks often public housing estates the Australian urbanist, Kathy artisan, a long time resident academic in Adelaide has written at length on this issue critiquing the fact that the introduction of privately owned and higher cost housing units to where he is previously occupied uniformly by public housing means that overall there'll be fewer publicly owned and affordable housing units at a time. Of course, as we see in the media just today, when public housing is in great demand and waiting lists and lists of the homeless ever longer. Now, if we are to argue that gentrification should be punctuated by the presence of affordable housing, then is it not right also to argue that public housing estates, those large blocks of low-income state-owned housing should be punctuated equally with higher income housing units or higher cost housing units.

Ruth Fincher ([17:05](#)):

And I suppose that it is except one would want to emphasize as Kathy artisan does that this should not result in an overall loss of public housing units in accessible locations. Furthermore, one would want, I think, to unsettle the view that often seems to surround very fuzzily the introduction of middle income housing to low-income estates that it's for the good of low income people to be exposed to middle income people who are clearly more successful members of society and should be emulated. And those of you who know mark peels extraordinary work of a decade or so ago about the development in south Australia of Elizabeth will have seen his wonderful discussion of that philosophy. So I think rather one would want to take the view that it's in everyone's interests to know how people of different circumstances live. Now, there is of course no guarantee at all, and possibly not even a likelihood that people who are very different who find themselves living close by will become friends and anything more than casual nodding acquaintances.

Ruth Fincher ([18:03](#)):

This is the finding of much research already. It belies the expectation for example, of some recent British policies for cities over there. That what, what has been called a multicultural intimacy should result from

people of different cultural backgrounds, being neighbors, and it supports the view of others. We searching urban encounter that purposeful activity in groups with common interests is the thing that forms friendships across difference in what could be regarded as the good city marches that successfully strategizing 20 year old overseas student, who was remarking now a relatively new form of exclusionary clustering of the wealthy more disdainful of living closely with diversity than is gentrification is the master plan estate. And sometimes this is even a gated community. Geographers in Sydney have documented the emergence of this phenomenon over the past decade, particularly in the Western suburbs of Sydney. And there are interesting analyses appearing of whether or not local councils give the residents of these communities, reduced council rates for extra levies on residents that pays for community facilities and roads and infrastructure.

Ruth Fincher ([19:14](#)):

In these places. There are claims from researchers that the reason people opt to live in these closed places, a fear of disorder and a desire to control their environment, which they see governments and other authorities as failing to do. Now, those like me who regard cross difference interaction, as, as I've said, the essence of urbanity will oppose the increase in numbers of such as states. Seeing them as the ultimate in cross class segregation of a kind we've not seen much before in Australian cities important urban writers, such as Brendan Gleason also criticize them for closing off resources from the public realm. Of course, some local councils, especially those who don't give rebates to residents on local council rates find these estates attractive because of the council expenditure they save. So the residential preferences of the Australian middle class aided and abetted by developers of course make for interesting thinking about diversity in the city and the limits to our tolerance of it.

Ruth Fincher ([20:17](#)):

Gentrification has excluded lower income residents in countless cities around the world. Urban policy analysts express concerns that the so-called revitalization of public housing estates will exclude public housing tenants from the locations. Often the accessible locations, they've long called home master plans for the wealth master plan to states for the wealthy turn, their backs utterly on those of lesser resources. These turns can limit the possibilities of diversity in the city being known by residents in their daily lives. And certainly the appearance of master plan to states demonstrates clearly the anxieties of some, about different ways of living amongst their neighbors live distant neighbors, Rowan Atkinson, the British urban analyst now in Tasmania has proposed in his work on British cities that a culture of fear there is driving the middle-class and wealthy into residential practices of segregation that actively disadvantaged the poor, the middle class and wealthy.

Ruth Fincher ([21:18](#)):

He he's found see homogeneity as safe and thus actively avoid the diversity of cross difference interaction, which has long been part of city life. And developers. Atkinson is found pander to this fear at Tencent actually observes in British cities, the growing in visibility of rich and poor to each other because they live increasingly in separate enclaves. And he worries that policymakers there find this situation relatively easy to maintain. And so a social blend at the neighborhood scale will not now be possible to diversity in public space. Now public space is supposed to be where anything goes, the place of cosmopolitan expression in the city. It's where diversity should be most valued. One would think, and in the big events of a city's life, people do come together from all over the city to congregate and celebrate in the presence of security guards. It's true, but even so they are together.

Ruth Fincher ([22:19](#)):

There are indications from some evidence about cities. However, that public space is becoming increasingly stressed at times, especially in those central cities, which have implemented the 24 hour city policy. And in which late night, alcohol consumption is a growing civic problem. One could think that this problem and the need to reduce it is in fact, a product of allowing too much diversity to flourish in the entertainment market. But in fact, the opposite could be true. That too little effort has been put in to ensuring that the central city streets and entertainment premises are of appropriate scale and mix such that a variety of groups are attracted to them and their surrounds urban public spaces and increasingly blurred notion. In any case for it's often actually private space, that's accessible to the pain public rather than freely available public space. Think about shopping malls, which groups of young men or anyone trying to take a photograph will often find out readily enough are under close surveillance by security guards, order and security are priorities in these commercial premises.

Ruth Fincher ([23:25](#)):

The consumer actively purchasing things is the desired visitor. Other forms of use are not preferred. And some of the students we interviewed in the study I talked about at the beginning, indeed found these spaces very safe and reassuring in these spaces. As with the master plan communities audit is sought. Fear is the enemy of urban diversity. The visible presence of the other or the different is seem to be risky. And so the middle income consumer becomes the best recognized citizen. In this context, my colleague Kurt Iverson has written of a famous case in Perth in the 1990s in which urban public spaces in the central city were felt by the city council to be compromised by the influx of young people from the Northern suburbs on a new train light, which in fact had been built to link those very Northern suburbs to the city.

Ruth Fincher ([24:19](#)):

As he describes it, refurbishment of the central city's public spaces was undertaken in the early 1990s by local and state governments. But despite planners claiming a rich and diverse environment resulting from this remaking, some groups of young people, particularly as I say from the Northern suburbs were unwelcome. So I quote Kurt Iverson for you. He said, quote, under pressure from politicians, counselors and retailers, police use their powers under child welfare legislation to remove young people, not accompanied by their families from the central area, the JAG team, which stood for juvenile aid group mounted operations in 1994 under code names, such as operations sweep and operation family values and militaristic language there in their attempt to make the streets of the city quote safe for families. Also during operation family values, young women were detained for being in areas where Aborigines were thought to congregate. Diversity for planners was El Al fresco dining shoppers and workers and tourists into mingling, jazz bands and farmer's markets planners.

Ruth Fincher ([25:28](#)):

Soy has predictable controllable and quiet. So those planning for diversity could design it. Imagine what it looked like in their own minds said Kurt Iverson. But when groups of people came using the public spaces in their own ways that did not comply with the planning vision, this was not appreciated. So is there then sometimes in our planning and design of urban public spaces, a relatively narrow aesthetic and ethic, and a narrow expectation of who the public is that fails sometimes to capture the differences of groups within them population and what they might want of their built environment, to my final comments on the institutionalization of people with mental illnesses or an intellectual disability who

then live in that community. And I've just got a quote here of a statement from the Victorian premier about a year ago, about the final redevelopment of the site of one, a huge institution in Cuba.

Ruth Fincher ([26:27](#)):

So thinking about people whose days include spending time, just being there in urban public spaces can bring us to the group of people we might've thought of in the past couple of decades, as deinstitutionalized people released from custodial institutions were often, they were placed because of intellectual disability or mental illness. These days, most large scale institutions have closed to be replaced by state run day programs and community residential housing in selected areas of cities. They will often still, however, be concentrations of community, residential units or facilities for people requiring support services. People using these services may become visible. Outsiders are in a suburban residential area or a shopping center. Those public spaces, a decade ago, a PhD student of mine, Melissa permissible examined the extent to which local neighborhood houses in queue in Melbourne site of this institution, the premiers talking about we're able to integrate in their activities, a range of groups, of people with different characteristics. Some of those people were recent immigrants to the area from different countries. Some were lawns long-standing immigrants to the area. Some were people undertaking retraining in hopes of improving their job readiness. Some were people with intellectual disabilities who lived in local residential care on the site of this former institution for those with intellectual disability. And what she found this student of mine was the cross different social interaction occurred more readily between all groups than it did between any group and the people with intellectual disability.

Ruth Fincher ([28:04](#)):

Okay, thanks Andrew. In the same way, established Melbourne suburb of queue, where once stood a very large custodial institution and we're now expensive. Housing is being developed on the past grounds of that very institution. There are now emerging the occasional complaints from new residents about the loitering of people with intellectual disabilities around the new residential area. For, as I've said, a series of community residential units have been retained in the new suburban housing development. As you'll see there in the Premier's comments on the slide and some ex residents of the institutional living, they're still now in the last couple of decades, some of those residents of the institution at that time did indeed walk around the local streets and shots in the daytime. And they're continuing to do that now that they're residents of the new units in the past, they were known about by shop owners and local residents and the institution from which they came, which was really very prominent in the suburb was understood as a very large presence there.

Ruth Fincher ([29:01](#)):

So once the Mises is now happening is that new residents, occupations, occupants, and purchases of the expensive new housing are surprised at the presence of occupants of the community, residential units in the public spaces of the suburb, presumably developers of the new housing did not advertise this fact to them in some countries in the wake of public disquiet over the deinstitutionalization of those with intellectual disabilities or mental illnesses and their more visible public presence in cities. Grant policy statements have been made proposing confinement as a viable option. Again, this time to preserve public safety. So back the institution for some people gray, a moon, a British geographer has written compellingly on this question in that national context, observing through the 1990s, that mental health policy in the UK was reflect reflecting public concern about possible violent offenses by people with

mental illnesses. He argued that confinement of people was being presented in you as a policy option a and a strategic response so-called to the so-called failure of community care policy strategies.

Ruth Fincher ([30:11](#)):

And he opens one of his papers, this British geographer with the following quote from the UK department of health in 1998, quote care in the community has failed because while it improved the treatment of many people who were mentally ill, it left far too many walking the streets often at risk to themselves and a nuisance to others unquote. So this view of the UK department of health of course raises the question of on whom it is that the risks of community care policy, that policy of community, residential living and treatment in day programs for people who in previous times would have been in, in custodial institutions on whom it isn't that the risk of these programs falls, is that the recipients of those forms of care, or is it the members of the public who have to be aware of that form of care occurring by having people, having its recipients, walking the streets or in the public spaces of the city?

Ruth Fincher ([31:04](#)):

So I think the interesting feature of this British policy discussion of a decade ago is the attention. It pays to the concerns of the public who see mental illness in their public spaces has never before and find it discomfoting. So in conclusion, I've, I've touched on a few forms of diversity that are expressed amongst the population in our cities. I've touched on differences of ethnicity, cultural background, and immigrant status, differences of income as expressed in housing choices and attitudes to the design of public spaces and differences of intellectual ability and mental health. There are of course, many other forms of diversity in cities that we could draw out, for example, the distinctions between higher and lower density suburbs and the debates between their proponents. So what then do we conclude from this review and commentary of mine? Not that I have not presented our view, that there are more forms of diversity now than there were in the past, or that we're less willing to embrace diversity in our daily lives now than we were in the past.

Ruth Fincher ([32:08](#)):

But I have tried to claim that analysts are starting to think a bit more about these questions of diversity than in the past. What I do think it is important to note, as we think about our limits in accepting diversity in the city is the way these limits do seem sometimes to be associated with anxiety, fear, and perceptions of risk increasing with the presence of the unfamiliar, which is paradoxical because we are mostly the service in our cities here wealthier than we've ever been more familiar with in all its manifestations because of our knowledge of the rest of the world and the way that that knowledge is beamed into our lives, through the media, with great efficiency, we are full participants in globalization, and yet there is fear and anxiety present in some of our reactions to the presence of diversity in the city. Perhaps we can only conclude that the limit to our living with diversity better in the city is our fear of it. But then there's the case of the local students that I discussed at the start of my remarks for whom neutrality towards students from different backgrounds is more characteristic than fear. Many just aren't interested in engaging. So normalizing diversity so that it seems more and more natural to engage with it. And it is not feared will be a long-term societal project, but very much worth pursuing. Thank you.

Speaker 2 ([33:41](#)):

[Inaudible]

Andrew B ([33:41](#)):

Now it's my pleasure to open up the floor for questions or comments to Ruth perfectly questions. I would think he's a little bit dark, so might actually hand up a long way for me to see. So who would like to start off the questions gentlemen over there and the gentlemen [inaudible]?

Ruth Fincher ([34:14](#)):

Well, I mean, that's a big, a big question and an interesting one. I think there's probably two ways I'd want to respond to that. One is that I, I think it's really important in our planning and community development policies, our social planning policies that, that, you know, that are the sort of the ways in which we approach changing cities, that we do look at questions of the nature of the population, not to see the population as, as a number, you know, not, not just look at the growth of the city, as you know, I figure, I forget what the number was in your new plan. That's just been released on Monday some 500,000 new people in Adelaide or something by in 50 years or some such w I think it's really important that we think about the characteristics of the population that live in different parts of the city.

Ruth Fincher ([35:04](#)):

So in, in the, so that's the first thing. So for example, in the study I talked about in, in the city of Melbourne, it was really news to a lot of policymakers that half the population of the city of Melbourne, the central municipalities students, half the population. So really then in thinking about planning for the population, cities are about people. That's what they are by definition. Really. We should be thinking about the nature of the population we have there and, and maybe designing some of our, our work to accommodate and welcome them without out others. Of course. So that's the first thing. I think there's a need to think about the actual nature of the population we deal with, which does vary in some ways in different parts of the city. And I think the second thing I would say, and this will be a really obvious point is that national discourses, like multiculturalism are really important, even if there's a massive critique of them, which there always is.

Ruth Fincher ([36:01](#)):

They are really important as national statements of intention. It's been a very sad thing in my view that over the last decade, there's been a lot of cynicism expressed federally about multiculturalism as a, you know, as a statement of national intention for this country. And I'm waiting to see the new federal government beef that up again, that's been a bit solid so far, but so I guess that's the other thing I would say, I think there is to normalize our acceptance and welcoming of good forms of diversity. I think those national policy statements are really very important.

Speaker 4 ([36:46](#)):

[Inaudible] Question is in that context. So they experienced moving into what is segregated parts of cities in South Africa. And I wonder if in similar fields inside Africa commented on the success of [inaudible] and how that compares [inaudible] in South Africa told us lack of

Speaker 5 ([37:51](#)):

Work.

Ruth Fincher ([37:54](#)):

There, there is indeed work being done by, by geographers there and urban planners and so on. I don't think I'm going to be able to give you a summary of that. I mean, it's, it's the most extraordinary shift as you say, and whether we could really compare it with our own situation here or indeed in the UK, I'm not sure because in a sense, if it was, it was a racist, a legally racist society and spaces were things that were used very much to separate people. So we've never, we've never had that situation in Australia or in, in British cities or most other cities. So it is a, it is a shift out of a different path than, than legal past in cities that, than one that we've experienced here. But I, as far as I'm aware, there certainly is work going on about that in South Africa, there are some extraordinary revelations, there are some critiques of the way in which administration of local government is, is having still some reference to, you know, ways of proceeding in the past. But overall, I think you, you, right, that it is an extraordinary story on an evolving one. So I probably can't comment at all on it, but that's probably what I'd say to your question. It's the most interesting case. Yeah.

Speaker 4 ([39:18](#)):

Do you have any examples you can describe really good Catholics in Casper experiences and the second part what's called the third space, potential libraries, museums, galleries.

Ruth Fincher ([39:33](#)):

I should refer you to my book in the program. And also to the website of the study about students that I've just referred to, which I should have put on my slides, but I didn't. Yeah. In, in the study about students, which is the most recent one I've, I've been involved in empirically the examples we found about where, as you say with libraries about spaces, cause we're looking at public spaces and private spaces and the forms of those that help to give rise to cross-cultural or cross difference interaction. And so the, what we found, despite a lot of mechanisms of separating, like the way that students were allocated into separate high-rise housing areas, the things that were really brought them together were, I guess, two, one were arts organizations. So of all organizations, I mean, I mentioned in passing the student clubs, we had things at my university like the Indonesian students club and the students club for studies of Indonesia and in the first with students of Indonesian citizenship and in the second where Australian students who were studying Indonesian, I mean, you would think that, that they would actually have something in common, but, but in arts organizations, in the choir, in the theater groups, there were re there was real evidence of coming together and it's really hard slog.

Ruth Fincher ([40:54](#)):

So in the theater group, for example, there'll be things like, you know, they had a bit of money still, even though there isn't much money for student activities in universities anymore, they had a bit of money. So they would say to the, the Chinese theater group, okay, we're going to give you money for your next production. If you go and watch how the, you know, there's something else theater group is doing their production because they have really good ideas about directing this kind of dance or this kind of music, or, and you might learn from that. So there's a real effort. And in things like the choir, choir's there, doesn't people come together in music and that's it. So, you know, arts organizations, they are the good examples. The other, you mentioned third spaces in public spaces for students. One of the things we found in the city was that certain, relatively temporary spaces, temporary uses were very attractive to students and they were, they were cheap.

Ruth Fincher ([41:47](#)):

So there were bars in the city, you know, Melbourne's a great city of bars. And there were there's this bar called section eight, which is a sort of on an empty block of land with containers and lamps and stuff. And that was packed all the time with people from every different background you could think of. So there's there were numerous of those sorts of sites where I guess they appeal to young people of certain predilections, those kinds of temporary spaces. And they were very much capable of drawing together. So we, we drew from our study, not just of that example and the arts example. I mentioned that we did draw the view that certain kinds of, of interests tended to draw people together across cultures. Now, the broader question and that that's out of the study in the book of mine that came out last year, which is in your mentioned in your program.

Ruth Fincher ([42:35](#)):

I think the thing that we've argued there is that three, three norms need to characterize planning activity for diversity in cities, once redistribution, once recognition of difference, and one is encounter and in, in the work on encounter, you'll see very great discussion of places like public libraries, which I just think are the signal, you know, wonderful spaces of our cities all sorts of work on temporary spaces in cities and the ways they can be used by children. And so-and-so. So there are, we do know about this. I mean, we know, know about ways of bringing together people in encounter and often those public lobby spaces, those third spaces are the ways to go. We have to plan them in and not get rid of them. It's a kind of really a hands-off planning sort of letting them be, but nevertheless, making sure they're there. Yep.

Speaker 4 ([43:25](#)):

Yeah. [inaudible] Places, schools in in context of what you're talking about and perhaps the way schools separated on the license and social class and the whole Brian from that assistant, he is nice to kids contact with public system or Catholic system. Yeah.

Ruth Fincher ([43:49](#)):

Yeah. It's an, it's an interesting one, isn't it? And you know, there is a, there is a big discourse discourse about parental choice and that, and that exists as well as our knowledge about encounter and my view of encounter, which would be that it, that it should occur across class differences. There are forms of encounter that occur across a number of differences. And I guess one would have to say that cross class encounter or cross income group encounter. Isn't the only one. I mean, there's, there's, there's encountered, you know, across gender groups and religious groups and ethnic groups. And so on that. So I don't, I don't think, I mean, I've, of course I would, I support the notion of, of publicly funded schooling that, that can bring people together across as many of those diversity's as we can manage. And especially the notion of universal service provision, which I think is a very seventies notion and we don't have it in war, but of, of, of having public schools of such excellence that everyone will want to go there. But I guess the argument could be made that diversity exists in many facets. And so schools of any kind will, you know, provide diversity of some kind or other, however, we might see it as limited, but certainly I would in my own normative thinking prefer the, the earlier version. Okay.

Speaker 4 ([45:14](#)):

I just wanted to ask you about your experience with living books

Ruth Fincher ([45:22](#)):

Now tell, I don't know what living books is. So you explained that we can go in and take out

Speaker 4 ([45:38](#)):

Different cultures, different countries, and you can take it. And because it's the two of you, and you can

Ruth Fincher ([45:55](#)):

Ask those questions, how interesting it wouldn't have problems with being overdue, would you

Speaker 5 ([46:09](#)):

[Inaudible]?

Ruth Fincher ([46:23](#)):

Well, I mean, I mean, many overseas students get permanent resident status and stay here. And I, I don't have at the top of my head, the, the figures on what proportion that is and within which national groups and from which country studies and so on. But I mean, that is a, that is a reality. I don't think there is. I don't think we have knowledge yet of the lifelong visiting and circularity of, of, of interest in, in our country, from people who studied here. Certainly you will have seen earlier in perhaps last week, it was quite a lot of discussion about how Australia needs to investigate in a Colombo plan style of, of engagement with overseas countries. And th and that has been seen. And we see that in university, through our alumni, what an extraordinary successful intervention that was in the fifties and sixties that created tremendous Goodwill for this country and a tremendous interest amongst the professional leaders in, in many of the countries in our region about Australia. So whether, whether we'll see that same outcome with, with the current group students, I don't know. I mean, the, yeah, well through alumni associations, we do keep in contact, but yeah, I don't think there's a systematic database it's a bit soon yet. Okay.

Andrew B ([47:40](#)):

Thank you very much. I would just mention that reflows book is called diversity in the city redistribution recognition and encounter, and I'm sure [inaudible].