

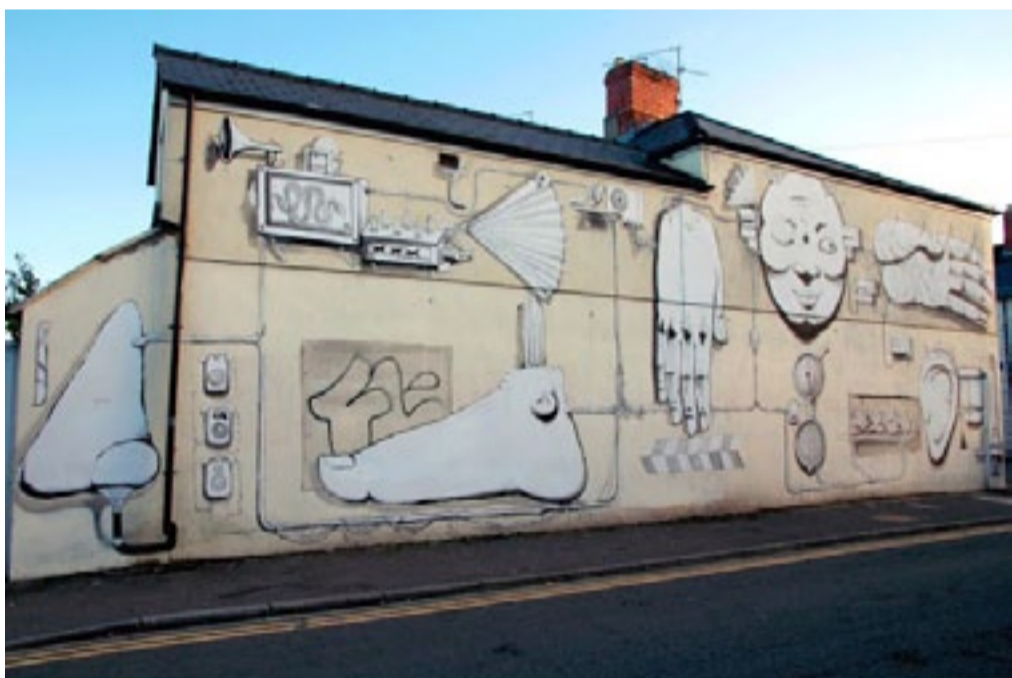
## Studentification

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### Introduction

Studentification is the process by which specific neighbourhoods become dominated by student residential occupation. This research sought to investigate the process of 'studentification'. The research asked: What areas become dominated by student houses, and why? What are the key consequences of studentification in terms of the social cohesion in a locality, cultural lifestyles, economic regeneration, and the physical fabric of buildings? In short, the research asks: is studentification a good thing, and if so, why?

The term 'studentification' was established by Smith (2002) to describe the growth of high concentrations of students within the localities of Higher Education Institutions. These students are often accommodated within Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs), but increasingly in purpose built student flats. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency, in 2011-12 there were 2,496,645 students in higher education, and 1,928,140 of these were undergraduates ([www.hesa.ac.uk](http://www.hesa.ac.uk)).



### Findings

The research found that there are four dimensions to the studentification process:

- **Social:** the replacement and/or displacement of established residents with a transient, generally young and single, social grouping.
- **Cultural:** the growth in number of young people with shared cultures, lifestyles, and consumption practices, which in turn results in the increase of certain types of retail and service infrastructure.
- **Economic:** the inflation of property prices and a change in the balance of the housing stock resulting in neighbourhoods becoming dominated by private rented accommodation and houses of multiple occupation, and decreasing levels of owner-occupation.

- **Physical:** the downgrading or upgrading of the physical environment, depending on the local context.

On the whole, the positive effects of 'studentification' are that students tend to increase the levels of spending in the local economy and improve the opportunities for spin-off companies, educational, cultural and other arts events, concerts and performances, sporting events and facilities and so on. However, the negative effects of 'studentification' are evident in several towns and cities across the UK. These are inter-connected and can be summarised in the following ways:

#### Social effects

In line with the geographic trend of the concentration of social groups in society, some common perceptions of change in student areas point to an increase in low level anti-social behaviour. This can sometimes include issues such as noise nuisance emanating from houses, streets or gardens, vandalism of vehicles, street furniture and private property, and vomiting and urination in the streets. Of course, such behaviour is not synonymous with students per se, but more widely linked to some youth cultures and increasing behaviour within wider society.

#### Cultural effects

Many of the challenges associated with 'studentification' are a result of different cultures clashing. Whilst social, economic and physical changes may be the key concerns of local community groups during the early phases of 'studentification', research has shown that when large communities of students become deeply embedded within a location, significant cultural change may occur. The expansion of HMOs in traditional owner-occupied, family areas can lead to a change in the nature of communities. Transient occupation engenders a lack of community integration and cohesion and less commitment to maintain the quality of the local environment and there develops a gradually self-reinforcing unpopularity of the area for families wishing to bring up children.

#### Physical effects

There can be physical disadvantages of having large concentrations of students in a neighbourhood. A general decline in the proportion of owner-occupiers can lead to physical changes including generally unkempt properties, squalor and dereliction. Such neighbourhoods can also suffer more permanent 'street blight', which may include estate agents' letting boards, neglected/concreted over front gardens and unsightly extensions. Large concentrations of young people living in households with a high density can contribute to physical mess and noise, increased pressure on public services (policing, cleansing, etc.) and traffic problems.

There are key geographies to studentification:



*In Cardiff, students tend to share three and four bedroomed terraced housing although in the popular Roath areas there are larger houses that can accommodate up to nine students... Lincoln's students tend to be in two and three bedroomed terraced housing... In Tower Hamlets, the properties tended to be a mix of terraced houses, flats and 1960s maisonettes... (Rugg et al., 2000, p. 19).*

In some areas the consequences of studentification have been reported to be nothing short of catastrophic:

*Undergraduates have moved into areas of Britain's big cities, ripping the heart out of communities and leaving devastation... As student numbers have grown, so parts of Leeds, Birmingham, Nottingham and Newcastle have been taken over by a transitory population of young people who aren't interested in tending the gardens or cutting the hedges. Moreover, they keep odd hours, throw late-night parties and spend much of their time elsewhere... Some streets resemble slums; the roads*

*are potholed and litter-strewn, the grass uncut and the fences broken (The Independent 2004, page 11).*

### Conclusions and further questions

- Studentification is a key process that transforms neighbourhoods within cities with Higher Education Institutions. Studentification brings economic opportunities for these areas, but also issues of social conflict with existing residents, as well as visual and noise pollution. Some areas of cities are becoming 'student ghettos', which are thriving during term time, but 'ghost towns' over the summer.
- The research raises the following questions: how can the negative consequences of studentification be managed? Should local authorities limit the number of HMOs and student flats in a particular area? Is it better to concentrate student housing in one area of a city in order to segregate students from the rest of society? What responsibilities do students and the rest of the community have to tolerate and integrate together?



### References

- Hodges, L 2004, 'Students no longer welcome', The Independent 20 October, p. 11
- Rugg, J., Rhodes, D. & Jones, A. (2000) The Nature and Impact of Student Demand on Housing Markets. (York: York Publishing Services for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation).
- Smith, DP 2002, Patterns and processes of studentification in Leeds, Regional Review, 12(1), pp.14-16.

### Further information

- Universities UK, 'Studentification': a guide to opportunities, challenges and practice: <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2006/StudentificationGuide.pdf>