

BrookesBUDS: impacting student learning and the development of international professional skills with a real-life urban design experience in Brazil.

This paper examines the impacts that live projects in international contexts can have in the learning experience of students in urban design. It also reflects on possible barriers and challenges posed by cross-cultural experiences.

The project being examined is BrookesBUDS (Brazil Urban Design Study) which took place over three weeks in May 2013 and again in April 2015 as a 'real-life' professional experience for students interested in urban design. It involved students from Oxford Brookes University and three universities and local communities in Brazil working collaboratively to develop urban design principles and guidelines to address issues related to fast urban housing development.

The preparation stage focused on the development of several academic and professional skills including students learning how to bid for research grants (awarded by Santander Scholarship), how to prepare and deliver lectures for an international audience, how to write research reports for online publication and how to socially and professionally interact with vulnerable local communities in Brazil.

The evaluation of the project is based on critical reflections from participants in the UK and in Brazil and shows that such experiences positively contribute to students developing greater awareness of professional practice in different cultural, social, political and economic contexts. It also shows that live international experiences can have positive impacts on the learning experience of those students and staff at the hosting universities. Local communities involved in the project have also manifested positive outcomes by having international students raising awareness over their issues. However, despite the positive outcomes participants highlighted a series of difficulties to overcome if they are to focus on an international careers in urban design. The conclusions of the paper highlight those and focus on recommendations for increasing the impact of similar projects both on academic and professional practice. More details can be found in the project's website <http://lnova1.wix.com/buds-website>.