



Parallel Societies and Coping with COVID

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Abstract

In this talk I discuss some of the key points my recent book *Parallel Societies of International Students in Australia: Connections, Disconnections and a Global Pandemic* (Routledge, 2022) and current research on international students living in a pandemic world raise regarding the challenges they face and the resilience they develop. Here I discuss how international students create parallel societies in their host nations with Australia as the case study. I explain how parallel societies provide not only a refuge for students coping with a country and society different from their own, but also a space to deal with failed expectations of the perceived international student experience - both before and during the pandemic. Drawing on a decade's worth of research into the social, cultural, real and digital spaces occupied by international students, I also reflect on the ways in which the pandemic has made us rethink the ways in which we research and conceptualise the international student and their experience.

Catherine Gomes is Associate Professor in the School of Media and Communication at RMIT University in Melbourne. Her recent edited books include *Digital Experiences of International Students: Challenging Assumptions and Rethinking Engagement* (Routledge, 2021) with Shanton Chang and Religion, *Hypermobility and Digital Media in Global Asia: Faith, Flows and Fellowship* (Amsterdam University Press, 2021) with Lily Kong and Orlando Woods.