



**WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY**



Institute for Culture
and Society

Sydney's Chinatown in the Asian Century: From ethnic enclave to global hub

A RESEARCH REPORT

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Abbreviations

4A	Asian Australian Artists' Association
AALDEF	Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABR	Australian Business Register
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACCA	Australian Chinese Community Association
AEI	Australia Education International
ASIC	Australian Securities and Investments Commission
CASS	Chinese Australian Services Society
CBD	Central Business District
DIBP	Department of Immigration and Border Protection
DNSW	Destination New South Wales
FES	Floorspace and Employment Survey
FIRB	Foreign Investment Review Board
FSR	Floorspace Ratio
JLL	Jones Lang LaSalle
LEP	Local Environmental Plan
LGA	Local Government Area
NSW BOCSAR	New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
PRC	People's Republic of China
RMS	Road and Maritime Services
RSA	Responsible Service of Alcohol
SHFA	Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority
SSRC	Social Science Research Council
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
UNSW	University of New South Wales
UTS	University Technology Sydney
WSR	Work-Space Ratio
WSU	Western Sydney University



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PREAMBLE

Sydney's Chinatown is currently in transition. Asia-led globalisation in the past few decades has intensified flows of people, commodities and financial resources across the Asia-Pacific region, and this has brought significant challenges and opportunities to Chinatown. Given the major developments at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), on Broadway and at Darling Harbour, Sydney's Chinatown is a rapidly changing part of Sydney. What will happen to Sydney's Chinatown in the next five, ten or 20 years? Moreover, it is widely reported that many traditional Chinatowns, such as those in London, New York and San Francisco, are under threat due to gentrification and urban development. With commercial rents rising and government supporting more high-value land use in Sydney's central business district (CBD), what will be the future of Chinatown? Has the idea of Chinatown become obsolete in the face of the rapid pace of globalisation and modernisation? In the future, will Chinatowns disappear completely from major cities?

This report is intended to focus thinking about the future of Sydney's Chinatown. It describes the historical context within which Sydney's Chinatown has emerged and evolved, as well as the global forces driving the current re-configuration of Sydney's Chinatown—including the so-called Asian Century, and the intensification of Australia-Asia relations within a trans-national field we are calling 'inter-Asian urbanism'. It seeks to answer a number of important questions:

- What is Chinatown now? What is the demographic profile and business composition of Chinatown?
- What are the boundaries of Chinatown: where does it begin and end?
- What is the functional role of Chinatown? How far has Chinatown, over the past decade, become a 'bridge to Asia' for both Sydney and Asia?
- Should Chinatown continue to be given a distinctly 'Chinese' or 'Asian' flavour in terms of public art and urban design, or should it be treated in the same way as the rest of the CBD?

The researchers invite Chinatown stakeholders to consider our findings, to imagine what the future of Chinatown could be, and to provide feedback to this report. This report can be downloaded from the Chinatown project page on the Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University website (westernsydney.edu.au/ics/research/projects/sydneys_chinatown_in_the_asian_century).

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

1. Chinatown has evolved from an ethnic enclave to a distinctive hub for Asia-Australia connection and exchange.

Sydney's Chinatown has evolved through different historical stages; from its beginnings as a 'ghetto' for early Chinese immigrants, to an 'exotic' tourist precinct in the 1980s, to what is now branded as an 'urban village' characterised by distinctive Asian culture within a globalising city. It is no longer a self-contained ethnic enclave, but a 'nodal meeting place' for different kinds of transnational human, economic and cultural flows between Australia and Asia. This re-conceptualisation of Chinatown has underpinned our study of Chinatown in the Asian Century.

2. Chinatown's population has grown rapidly, coinciding with increased Asian migration and resulting in a more diversely Asian demographic.

The population in Sydney's Chinatown (Haymarket) has grown significantly: the total number of residents has increased over eight times in the past 20 years. Chinatown is no longer an exclusively Chinese area, but has become more multicultural due to the rapid increase in Asian migration since 2000. The Haymarket precinct (of which Chinatown is a part) now has the highest density (64%) of Asia-born population of all suburbs in greater Sydney; whilst suburban Chinatowns have been developed in suburbs such as Hurstville and Burwood.

3. Chinese migration and transnational capital have transcended the traditional spatial boundary of Chinatown.

Chinatown continues to be an important residential area, although its original immigrant households have long since been replaced by residents in high-rise apartment buildings. Chinatown and City South are undergoing massive urban transformation, and many new property developments have been underpinned by Chinese transnational capital on both the supply and demand sides. This has turned Chinatown into a more 'open' relational space, no longer defined by its traditional geographic boundaries.



4. Chinatown has recorded significant growth in businesses and employment, while its small business character remains intact.

The City of Sydney's Floor Space and Employment Survey (FES) showed that the economy of the core Chinatown precinct is growing, with the number of businesses and employment increasing by 10% and 30%, respectively, between 2007 and 2012. The prevalence of micro-firms in the area suggests Chinatown's small business character is still a distinctive feature. Retail and 'food and drink' continued to be the major drivers of economic growth in the area, whilst a growing professional sector is also emerging. However, a decline in many other business sectors (notably in ICT, creative industries and manufacturing) implied a homogenisation/increasing specialisation of Chinatown's economy.

5. A cultural economy driven by an increasingly experimental and diversified Asian ethnic culinary sector has developed in Chinatown.

A local economy based on an Asian culinary cluster is emerging in Chinatown. Asian restaurateurs achieved market success by leveraging their co-ethnic/cultural supplier, labour and customer networks. Their competitive-cooperative relationships have driven them to keep innovating in order to gain competitive edge over others. The diversity of restaurants is complementary, creating synergies through geographical clustering and collective branding. However, Asian restaurants in Chinatown are still facing a number of challenges, including competition from suburban Chinatowns, high operating costs and negative stereotyping (e.g. as dirty or cheap).

6. New Asian customers are emerging in Chinatown expressing different interests and relationships to the area.

In the 1980s, Chinatown was perceived as an 'ethnic' place for experiencing 'exotic' Chinese culture in the city. A new Asian customer segment has emerged since the 2000s, related to a rapid increase in Asian immigration and Asian international students. A survey of 362 tertiary students with Asian background revealed that the majority of them saw Chinatown as a 'natural' place in the city for food and drink and entertainment. Rather than seeking an experience of 'otherness', Asian students look for 'a sense of home' and psychological comfort by establishing imagined connections between their home country and Chinatown. Their idea of Chinatown has moved away from the stereotypical 'ethnic ghetto' image.

7. Chinatown's social structure is changing, resulting in both connection and alienation amid an overall convergence of cultures.

Continual waves of migration have not only changed the social fabric of Chinatown but have also disrupted the old solidarity of Chinatown based on homogeneity; such that some older-generation Chinatown residents now feel a sense of alienation. Further, controversy over the naming of the Chinese New Year Festival reflected the cultural politics of different ethnic groups in the city—but this issue goes deeper than simple explanations in terms of ethnicity or generational divide. Despite the separate development of Koreatown and Thaitown, independent of Chinatown, the major trend of cultural relations in Chinatown is convergence of different Asian cultures through hybridity.

8. Symbolic and material expressions of Chinatown are changing, sometimes resulting in controversy.

Comparison of the Chinese Garden of Friendship and the New Century Garden (by artist Lindy Lee) revealed changing symbolic and material expressions of 'Chineseness' in Chinatown, from 'orientalist' renderings of 'essential Chineseness' to a more avant-garde representation of Chinese culture. Rather than aiming to contrast and disconnect from the surrounding city, as for the Chinese Garden of Friendship, the New Century Garden was designed to embrace and establish connections with buildings and integrate with the fine-grain streetscape. However, this change in the symbolic and aesthetic representation of Chinatown can at times be contested, as reflected in controversy over the use of 'untraditional' palette—specifically, the blue colour in another new public art work in the area, *In Between Two Worlds* (by artist Jason Wing).

9. Changing demographics and redevelopment are contributing to an Asia-inflected character in Chinatown's vicinity.

High-rise, high-density living akin to that of many Asian cities has emerged in the Sydney CBD, generating pressures and incongruities with the low-rise character of the core of Chinatown. The City Council maintains the current height restrictions in order to keep Chinatown from being homogenised along with the rest of the city. We note the 'Asian' (re-)orientation of major shopping malls around Chinatown as they adapt their architectural design, layout and tenancy mix to match changing demographics and consumption patterns. City living also drives the demand for more vibrant night life. Chinatown has the potential to develop a distinctive night-time economy based on food and entertainment (e.g. karaoke) rather than alcohol consumption.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. CHINATOWN IN THE ASIAN CENTURY

'Chinatowns' can be found in almost all major cities in the world. Restaurants, red lanterns, pagodas and lion gates are the typical images of a Chinatown. Historical Chinatowns are usually connected to the Chinese immigrant experience in the West. A century ago, Chinatowns were ethnic enclaves for Chinese migrants who sought refuge from racial discrimination in their host countries. By the 1980s, Chinatowns were no longer ethnic ghettos, but popular destinations for local and international tourists. Yet, whilst governments were using Chinatowns to demonstrate their multicultural policies, Chinatowns were still largely regarded as an 'other' exotic space in the city (Anderson, 1990).

In the 21st century, rapid globalisation and intensified economic, political, social and cultural links between Australia and the Asia-Pacific have further disrupted conventional understandings of Chinatowns as static, self-contained ethnic enclaves. Within urban and cultural research, this enclave paradigm is being interrogated by various modes of 'transnational' or 'mobile' urbanism (Smith, 2001; McCann and Ward, 2011; Roy and Ong, 2011), underpinned by a growing understanding that places are constituted through their relations with other places (Massey, 1994).

Employing both relational and territorial perspectives (McCann and Ward, 2011), our project aims to understand the various forces and factors at play in the processes re-shaping Sydney's Chinatown in the 21st century. We hope that our research helps provide new insights for cultural and urban policy; feeding into the City of Sydney's *Sustainable Sydney 2030* strategy (City of Sydney, 2008) and contributing to its long-term vision of developing Sydney as Australia's leading global city.

1.2. BACKGROUND

Before we discuss the transformation of Sydney's Chinatown in modern times, it is useful to look back to its origin and path of development, to identify the key stages in its long-term evolutionary process.

ORIGINS AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

According to Fitzgerald (2007), Sydney's Chinatown, in Haymarket's Dixon Street, was originally a timber storage yard. Chinese people began to move into Haymarket in the 1920s, after the relocation of the large wholesale fruit and vegetable market to Hay Street and the slum clearance in Surry Hills. During that time, under the White Australia Policy, Chinese people were excluded from most professions and had to find work in the market or open shops to cater to the Chinese community. As our interviewee #12, who is a Chinatown community leader, said, 'right up to the 1950s, there was a lot of resentment to Chinese and Chinese businesses [from the White Australians]'. Proximity to the wholesale market also attracted many Chinese people to set up cook shops and lodging houses along Dixon Street, to cater for the suburban Chinese market gardeners who came to the city to sell their produce. Gradually, more restaurants, grocery stores, butchers and fruit and vegetable shops were opened to meet the needs of the Chinese population concentrated in the city area, and clan shops were developed to provide services to fellow clansmen; turning Chinatown into the centre of the Chinese community in Sydney.

INSTITUTIONALISATION OF SYDNEY'S CHINATOWN

In the early 1970s, Chinatown experienced a decline following the relocation of the wholesale market to Flemington in 1968, and increasing relocation of residents from Chinatown to the suburbs (Choi, 1975). In an attempt to revitalise Chinatown and promote the adoption of multicultural policies within Sydney, the City of Sydney Council worked with the Dixon Street Chinese Committee to attract visitors by developing Chinatown into a tourist precinct. In the 1980s, Dixon Street was turned into a pedestrian mall to give the atmosphere of an 'authentic' Chinatown (Anderson, 1990). Traditional Chinese-style arched gates were established at both ends of Dixon Street; traditional symbols such as stone lions, lanterns and a Chinese-style pagoda were used to redecorate Chinatown, and properties along Dixon Street were converted to Chinese restaurants, supermarkets and gift shops. Although the precinct was still widely perceived as an exotic space, the revitalisation of Chinatown in the 1990s proved successful. By 1997, Chinatown had the ninth-highest visitation rate in Sydney, attracting a wide range of local and international visitors (Mak, 2003).

The revitalisation of Chinatown coincided with the growing number of Asian migrants to Sydney since the 1980s. In particular, the number of immigrants from Hong Kong increased dramatically during the 1990s due to political uncertainties regarding the transfer of Hong Kong's sovereignty in 1997. Many of these middle-class Hong Kong business migrants brought their financial resources and business managerial experience to Australia, and set up different Cantonese-style Chinese restaurants and businesses in Chinatown. Other urban development projects funded by Asian capital—such as construction of the Sussex Centre and the refurbishment of Market City and Capitol Square—also contributed to a booming retail sector in the area. The completion of the 46-storey high-rise Peak Apartments building above Market City, in 1996, brought a rapid increase of population in Haymarket.

NORMALISATION OF SYDNEY'S CHINATOWN

In the 21st century, an influx of immigrants from different parts of Asia has brought new life and further transformation of Sydney's Chinatown. Census data show that the number of immigrants from Asia arriving in the City of Sydney between 2001 and 2010 increased 245%, compared to the decade between 1991 and 2000 (ABS, 2011a). Hugo (2008) and Robertson (2013) attribute the phenomenal growth of Asian population in Sydney to the change in Australia's immigration policy to favour skilled migrants, and the consequent development of an education-migration nexus since the mid-1990s. Many of these students have obtained permanent residency through the skilled migration program after finishing their studies and have brought their families from overseas. The pattern of geographical agglomeration of Asian population in Haymarket is particularly obvious, as recent Asian arrival (2001–2010) in the area has grown over 519% since 1991–2000 (ABS, 2011a). The critical mass of Asian population living in the city has attracted diasporic immigration from different Asian countries to start restaurants and other businesses catering for their demand. Chinatown has gradually transformed from an ethnic enclave to a vibrant and cosmopolitan hub with strong and dynamic connections with Asia.

In 2008, the City of Sydney published its long-term strategic plan entitled *Sustainable Sydney 2030: Green/Global/Connected*, in which a range of goals were set to make Sydney into a 'global city' (McNeill, Dowling and Fagan, 2005; Baker and Ruming, 2015). Recognising the importance of cultural diversity to a city's development and competitiveness—and, in particular, influenced by the ideas of scholars such as Florida (2003) which emphasise the necessity of cosmopolitan environments rich in cultural capital for attracting the 'creative class' or knowledge workers—the City of Sydney included Chinatown in this strategic plan as one of its ten key 'villages'.² These villages are earmarked by their distinctive characteristics and local economies to 'make a significant contribution to the city's liveability...increasingly underpinning its global competitiveness' (City of Sydney, 2013a, p. 3). In other words, Sydney's Chinatown is no longer viewed by city planners and government as having a 'separate Chinese race and culture' (Anderson, 1990, p. 151), as reflected in Chinatown's re-development scheme of the 1980s, but is being embraced as an integral part of the city and recognised as a vital cultural space, supporting the City of Sydney's global Sydney vision through its economic contribution, distinctive culture and diversity. Chinatown has been further prioritised in the City of Sydney's latest urban development agenda: a number of initiatives, such as the Chinatown Public Domain Plan (City of Sydney, 2010a) and the Chinatown Public Art Plan (Seeto, 2010) were launched with an aim to improve the quality and attractiveness of the precinct. Marketing campaigns were carried out to promote Chinatown as a character precinct for Asian cuisine and cultural experience (e.g., for lunar new year celebrations) in the city.

1. All the statistical figures, tables and maps in this report are compiled by using the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Table Builder (Basic) software based on the 2011 Census of Population and Housing, unless stated otherwise.

2. The ten villages identified by the City of Sydney are: Redfern Street; Macleay Street and Woolloomooloo; Harris Street; Crown and Baptist Streets; Glebe Point Road; Green Square and City South; King Street; Oxford Street; CBD and Harbour; Chinatown and CBD South (City of Sydney, 2013a, p.15).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 AIMS

The key aim of this research project has been to document Sydney Chinatown's shifting place identity in the context of rapid globalisation and growing Chinese and Asian influence. In this way the project illuminates the strategic role of the management of urban space in Australia's evolving regional integration with Asia.

The project aimed to:

- identify the economic and cultural place-shaping dynamics of the precinct in the early 21st century, exploring the imbrications of commercial activities in the area with changing Chinese and Asian investment and business ventures
- specify how Sydney's Chinatown as a place is shaped by transnational flows, networks and processes of mobility—of people (migrants, students, tourists), investments, services and goods (import/export)
- determine how essentialist conceptions of Chinese heritage and traditional community interests are being juxtaposed with the visioning and governance of Sydney Chinatown's future as a globalised, hybrid, 'Asian' precinct in Australia
- evaluate the potential role of Sydney's Chinatown as a bridge to support economic and cultural links between Australia and Asia, and the activities undertaken by the City of Sydney to enhance those links.

2.2 APPROACH AND DATA COLLECTION

In terms of data gathering, the project has adopted a multi-method approach to develop a richly layered and multidimensional data set, which included:

- analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS's) Census of Population and Housing and other official statistical data, such as the City of Sydney Floor Space and Employment Survey data (FES), tourism data from Destination NSW (DNSW), immigration data from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) and international student data from Australia Education International (AEI)
- a survey questionnaire completed by 362 international and local students of Asian background
- two student focus groups comprising 11 international and local students of Asian background
- semi-structured interviews with 80 key informants (see Table 1)
- participant observation at different Chinatown events, functions and venues, including Sydney Chinese New Year Festival, networking events and seminars organised by Haymarket Chamber of Commerce, a public consultation event organised by the City of Sydney, and internal meetings of Chinese community organisations
- a field trip to Chinatown and the Chinese Garden of Friendship, led by key informants
- media analysis, including content from mainstream newspapers, Chinese ethnic newspapers and Chinese social media such as Weibo.



TABLE 1. Summary of Interview Respondents

CATEGORIES	NO. OF INTERVIEWS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS
Community leaders and organisations (Chinese)		
Community leaders (individual)	3	3
Business organisations	3	4
Community organisations	1	1
Community leaders and organisations (Korean, Thai, Vietnamese)		
Community leaders (individual)	2	2
Community organisations	1	4
Businesses		
Real estate agents	4	6
Migration agents	2	4
Restaurant owners/managers	15	16
Hotel managers	3	3
Retail (shopping mall managers and individual owners)	4	8
Bank managers	1	1
Government organisations		
City of Sydney	8	12
Destination NSW	1	1
Artists and urban/cultural projects		
Art galleries	1	1
Artists (individual)	2	2
Landscape architects/architects	2	4
Urban development		
Government development agencies	2	(written responses)
International students		
Leaders of ethnic student clubs	8	8
Total	63	80

3. PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON CHINATOWNS

'Chinatowns' have been objects of inquiry for academics across disciplines including history, sociology, anthropology, economics and urban studies. This section aims to trace the theoretical development of Chinatown studies by reviewing some of the important literature. Most previous research on Chinatowns has been mainly based on ethnic and local/urban perspectives, and can be broadly divided into six main themes.

3.1 ORIGINS AND EARLY CHINATOWNS AS ETHNIC ENCLAVES

Chinatowns have long been perceived as 'ethnic enclaves'. The emergence of Chinatowns in many countries was related to the Chinese migration experience in the West. Historian Shirley Fitzgerald's (2007) study of early Chinese immigrants in Sydney revealed that they were subject to racist legislation in employment and housing and were congregated in depressed areas such as Haymarket. Rose Hum Lee (1949) examined a number of early Chinatowns in the USA and concluded that they were 'too small and specialised to maintain all the usual community functions', but were dependent on their larger economic, political and social base in the state (p. 423). She argues that changes to the symbiotic relationship between Chinatowns and the Chinese community (such as loss of population, or shrinking boundaries as the broader community encroached) were major reasons leading to the decline of early Chinatowns in the USA.

3.2 'CHINATOWN' AS A RACIALISED SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

Whilst most studies have perceived Chinatowns as colonies of the 'East' in the 'West', Kay Anderson's (1991) seminal study challenges this conventional conceptualisation. This study traces the evolution of Vancouver's Chinatown over 100 years, from its beginnings as a marginalised ethnic ghetto to the 1970s, when it was recognised as an ethnic asset for tourism and promotion of the government's multicultural ideology. She concludes that 'Chinatown' was a spatial manifestation of the European construct of 'Chineseness', and that Chinatown's identity was defined and managed by those with power to define the racialisation process.

Anderson's follow-up study on the revitalisation of Sydney and Melbourne's Chinatowns in the 1990s showed that both areas were 'self-orientalised' with 'architectural motifs and symbols of ancient China' (1990, p. 150), confirming that both Chinatowns have been refurbished in the image of 'Western conceptions of the East' (p. 151). However, she also notes that this was not the result of a simple process of cultural imposition by the government, but that Chinatown's businesses were aware of the benefits of this type of 'Oriental' representation in attracting customers.

3.3 CHINATOWN AS A COMMODIFIED ETHNIC PRECINCT

In the 1990s, Chinatown studies began to turn their attention to the impact of globalisation and urban development on Chinatowns and how to conserve Chinatowns through the development of ethnic tourism.

Jan Lin (1998a) studied how the impacts of global forces—such as the investment of transnational Asian capital in the banking and real estate sectors—transformed New York's Chinatown with the addition of new high-rise developments and accelerated the sub-urbanisation of the Chinese community. However, he also notes the negative impact of global capital and urban development on the lower class of Chinatown's immigrant workers (1995). In another work, Lin (1998b) examines the transformation of a number of ethnic locations in the USA's immigration gateway cities, including Miami, New York, Houston and Los Angeles, and suggests that a coalition formed by place entrepreneurs (rentier capitalists), public officials and artists can create 'urban growth machines' that help rejuvenate ethnic neighbourhoods and transform them into urban tourism 'honeypots' for ethnic heritage and the cultural/symbolic economy.

In a different geographical context, Jock Collins and Kirilly Jordan (2009) studied a number of ethnic precincts in Australia and concluded that local and international visitors were attracted by the 'authentic' ethnic experience provided by ethnic businesses in these precincts, constituted by the presence of ethnic restaurants, co-ethnic workers and ethnic decorative symbols, as well as cultural festivals taking place in the area. However, Collins and Patrick Kunz (2009) warn that marketing of an ethnic precinct with an outdated ethnic stereotype and iconography may be rejected by the local ethnic community due to its unauthenticity, despite the fact that it may appeal to Western visitors.

In his more recent book, Lin (2011) further investigates the revitalisation strategies of a number of ethnic locations in the USA's gateway cities through cultural heritage preservation (e.g., establishment of ethnic history museums, restoration of historical buildings, creation of monuments and walking tours). He concludes that a new inflow of immigration, utilisation of the global market, transnational linkages, and art and culture have contributed to their successes. However, Lin also cautions that gentrification and the commodification of ethnic enclaves may threaten their unique flavour and authenticity, turning them into 'ethnic theme parks' for homogenous touristic experience and mass consumption.

3.4 THE RISE OF SUBURBAN CHINATOWNS

From the 1960s, Chinese populations began to decentralise from downtown Chinatowns to the suburbs. Wei Li (1998) coined the term 'ethnoburb' as a model for this new type of ethnic settlement. 'Ethnoburbs' are multiethnic communities in suburban areas, where one ethnic group has a significant concentration, but does not constitute the majority. Li attributes the emergence of ethnoburbs in Los Angeles to the combined effect of the upward mobility of Chinese people who moved out from the city's traditional Chinatown, and the impact of globalisation and immigration, resulting in concentration of new ethnic communities in suburban areas. Li also notes that whilst ethnoburbs coexist with traditional Chinatowns, they are fundamentally different from each other.

Sharing Li's view, David Ip (2005) also points out that Chinese 'ethnoburbia' emerged on the south side of Brisbane in the 1980s due to the settlement of new middle-class Chinese immigrants. These people applied their ideas, skills and capital to the place-making process without employing clichéd oriental symbols and detached themselves from Western stereotypes of 'Chineseness'. Michel Laguerre (2005) adds that 'ethnoburbs' are characterised by the coexistence of multiple ethnicities—a 'panethnopolis'—as a result of globalisation and the transnational networks of the inhabitants; reversing the typical understanding of an ethnic place that is homogenous and inward-looking.

3.5 PRECARIOUS CHINATOWNS

The precarious nature of Chinatowns has been a recurrent theme of more recent studies of Chinatowns. Since the 1970s, Chinatowns in downtown areas have been subject to the impacts of different urban development projects, ranging from the construction of expressways, shopping malls and stadiums to gentrification and the development of luxury apartments. On many occasions, governments have favoured urban development at the expense of the interests of Chinatown communities, threatening the survival of many traditional downtown Chinatowns.

For example, Kathryn Wilson's (2015) historical study documents the campaign of a group of community activists to save Philadelphia's Chinatown in the 1970s. The campaign, known as the 'Save Chinatown' movement, protested against the construction of an expressway that cut through the Chinatown neighbourhood and eventually resulted in the scaling-back of the project. However, in Houston, many ethnic neighbourhoods, including its Old Chinatown in the city centre, disappeared due to urban gentrification initiatives. In particular, local ethnic entrepreneurs from Chinatown were no match for private development elites—who were supported by government subsidies—and were slowly being squeezed out of the downtown area (Knapp and Vojnovic, 2013).

A land-use study of Chinatowns in Boston, New York and Philadelphia by the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) in 2013 also confirms the impact of gentrification on these three Chinatowns. In particular, high-end luxury apartments developed with the support of local government, have replaced traditional affordable housing in these neighbourhoods. A sharp rise in property values and rents have led to the decline of the manufacturing sector and the displacement of working-class Chinese immigrant households in the area (AALDEF, 2013). Similar displacement of Asian households due to gentrification has been noted in San Francisco's greater Chinatown neighbourhood, but its core has been preserved due to activism by community organisations and government planning restrictions (Zuk and Chapple, 2015).

On the other side of the Atlantic, London's Chinatown is facing a similar fate. A recent article in *The Guardian* revealed that traditional ethnic businesses in Chinatown were moving out due to the rapid increase of commercial rents, and were being replaced by non-Chinese businesses such as steak houses, KFC, new hotels and betting shops (Boffey, 2015). The disappearance of Chinese shops not only affects the character and authenticity of London's Chinatown, but also poses potential threats to the livelihoods of many low-skilled or undocumented recent Chinese migrants, who mainly work at these ethnic Chinese businesses (Lam et al., 2009), affecting the future capability of London's Chinatown as the first entry point to receive and accommodate new Chinese migrants.

3.6 REVIVAL OF THE CHINATOWN CONCEPT

In spite of the precarious situation of many historic Chinatowns in Western countries, the idea of Chinatown also seems to be gaining new life against the backdrop of the rise of China, in many countries at the same time. In particular, many 'new' Chinatowns are planned or emerging in countries where there were previously no Chinatowns. Unlike the traditional Chinatowns, which were related to early Chinese migrant history, these new Chinatowns have largely emerged under the neoliberal logic, and mainly focus on capitalising linkages with China, for example, in order to attract Chinese tourism and investment. Further, these new Chinatowns also feature diverse modalities of Chinatown-making processes. For example, T. Tu Huynh's (2015) study discusses the emergence of new 'China Town malls' for Chinese-themed retailing in South Africa. Sujin Eom (forthcoming) traces the histories of Japan's and South Korea's Chinatowns, which were developed in the post-WWII period in the 1950s and after the Asian Financial Crisis in the 2000s, respectively. The former was developed through referencing the successful Chinatown in San Francisco, whilst the latter was modelled after modern suburban Chinatowns in Los Angeles and Vancouver. Other countries such as Costa Rica also launched a top-down, city-led Chinatown revitalisation project in San Jose, aiming for commercial gentrification; however, the project failed to achieve its intended objectives due to the departure of traditional Chinese businesses from the area (Dehart, 2015).

Singapore's Chinatown renewal project began in the 1980s, as part of the government's agenda for national identity building and heritage conservation (Henderson, 2000). Traditional Chinese residential buildings were restored, Chinese-themed shops were installed and cultural events were launched with deliberate top-down planning and management. Despite the project's success in increasing visitors, many former Chinatown residents made the criticism that the government's commodification approach in rejuvenating Chinatown has created a sanitised, artificial 'ethno space of consumption' and that Chinatown has lost its authenticity (Yeoh and Kong, 2012).

In Australia, a new Chinatown was created in the Gold Coast in 2014, to 'encourage Chinese and Asian visitors and foster relationships that will attract investment and business to the Gold Coast' (City of Gold Coast, 2013, p. 7). Three archways were designed by the Gold Coast's sister cities, Zhuhai and Beihai in China and Taipei in Taiwan; a shopping mall has been refurbished for Asian-themed dining and retailing; and streetscape projects were launched to improve public domains, lighting and street furniture in the new Chinatown precinct. In spite of these efforts, it remains questionable whether the symbolic and material success of the 'Chinatown brand' can be transferred to this new project.



(Photo by Paul Patterson, City of Sydney)

4. SYDNEY'S CHINATOWN IN THE ASIAN CENTURY

In the 21st century, intensified globalisation and the rise of Asia have further destabilised many assumptions about Chinatown. The parallel forces that have shaped the transformation of Sydney's Chinatown today are outlined below.

4.1 CHINATOWN UNBOUND: NEW MOBILITY, GLOBAL CITIES, TRANSNATIONAL URBANISM

Intensified globalisation and enhanced mobility of people, capital and information under the 'new mobility paradigm' (Sheller and Urry, 2006) have disrupted the conventional understanding of Chinatowns as locally fixed urban spaces. Movement of a wide range of human and non-human agents has increased in volume and speed, whilst the development of modern transportation and communication technologies has created networks that extend beyond traditional boundaries. As a result, such 'places' have become part of the distanced economy (Amin and Thrift, 2002), which is increasingly affected by the flow of people, capital and information beyond its geographical borders.

However, this 'new mobility' of international immigration and investment tends to be spatially uneven, and concentrated in global cities (Sassen, 2001) or gateway cities (Ley and Murphy, 2001). A 'global city' is emblematic of a globalised economy, with centres for international finance, tourism, trading and transportation. In particular, neoliberalisation of the economy (Harvey, 2007) has led to greater demand for international investment and knowledge workers in global cities. In turn, the economic and sociocultural landscapes of these cities are constantly shaped by immigrants and their connections with their countries of origin.

Nowadays, migrants tend to maintain interactions with multiple places within a 'transnational social field' (Glick-Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton, 1992). This transnational social space is created by diasporas through 'time and space compression' (Castells, 1996). Nina Glick-Schiller and Ayşe Çağlar (2009) have highlighted the active role of migrants as place-makers and showed how cities shape and are shaped by migrants' local and transnational incorporative processes. Similarly, Michael Peter Smith (2001; 2005) has suggested a bottom-up approach to study the global-local nexus of transnational social processes. This approach highlights the fact that actors can act upon economic and social structures via their transnational practices in order to shape locality characteristics; whilst a place, embedded within its historical and geographical context, has the power to mediate the global forces in the process of neoliberal restructuring.

The insights from these theories of 'new mobilities', 'global cities' and 'transnational urbanism' help us to re-conceptualise the study of Chinatowns. No longer seen as a self-contained enclave, Sydney's Chinatown, situated within the gateway global city of Sydney, can be understood as 'unbound' (Anderson, in press); a 'node' within a transnational space, characterised by a high concentration of migrants and strong transnational connections; a site for the convergence of diverse global processes (McDonogh and Peterson, 2012). Ash Amin (2004) adds that one of the consequences of these relational and distanced networks across nodes which 'gather flows and juxtapose diversity' is the 'formation and continuously changing composition, character and reach' of a place (p. 34).

4.2 TOWARDS INTER-ASIAN³ URBANISM: ASIA-LED GLOBALISATION, WORLDING CITIES, MOBILE URBANISM

The compositional transformation of Sydney's Chinatown is also associated with the forces of the Asia-led globalisation process of the 21st century (known as the 'Asian Century'). The phenomenal economic growth of Asia, particularly China and India in the past two decades, has led to an intensified transnational flow of ideas, information, knowledge, capital, people and cultural influences from Asia through trading, investment, migration and tourism to Australia; and has resulted in a higher level of interdependence and integration between Australia and Asia.

With Sydney being Australia's leading global city (City of Sydney, 2015a), significant transnational flow between Sydney and Asia has been evidenced in a number of areas: Sydney has recorded the most rapid growth in Asian migrants since the 1970s, and the 2011 census showed that over 634,000 Asia-born migrants are living in greater Sydney, accounting for 16.6% of Sydney's total population (ABS, 2011a). New South Wales hosts 165,716 international students from Asia, accounting for 75.3% of the total number of international students in the state (Australian Education International (AEI, 2014⁴); and 1.3 million Asian tourists visited the state in 2014, accounting for 42.5% of international visitors to NSW (DNSW, 2014).

Closely related to growing Asia-Sydney connections are the 'worlding practices' of Asian cities, or their 'ongoing art of being global' (Roy and Ong, 2011). The concept of 'worlding' challenges the conventional view that Asian cities are 'imitators' of Western cities, arguing that successful Asian cities such as Shanghai and Singapore themselves represent new models of urban development. The efforts of Asian cities to raise the global ranking of their urban achievements—replicating the urban development models of successful Asian cities through inter-referencing, modelling and new solidarities—have led to the mobility of 'Asian' spatial practices and urban forms within the Asia-Pacific region (Ong, 2011; McCann and Ward, 2011).

The extension of Asian 'worlding practices' to Sydney can be seen reflected in the City of Sydney's *Global Sydney Strategy* (City of Sydney, 2008; 2013a), which draws on the experiences of successful Asian global cities such as Singapore and Hong Kong. These 'worlding practices' of Asian cities from above, interacting with various forms of migrant incorporation and place-making processes (Glick-Schiller and Çağlar, 2009; Smith, 2001) from below, have contributed to the re-territorialisation of these distinctive mobile Asian urban forms, ideas and practices in Sydney's urban space. This emergence of an 'inter-Asian urbanism' is manifested in transnational Asian capital accumulation; expression of Asian culture, symbols and aesthetics; and the materialities of Asian built forms in Sydney's urban centres. The impacts of this inter-Asian urbanism are particularly condensed in Sydney's Chinatown, due to its location in the urban centre as a 'nodal place of flows' (Massey, 1994).

Aihwa Ong (2011) adds that 'worlding' is not a single unified process, but a variety of spatialising practices that mix and match with different components into the building of an emerging system. These heterogeneous 'worlding' practices may change during the course of their travel over different geographical contexts, and their impacts on different places and their people can be varied and contested (Eom, forthcoming). In this sense, Sydney's Chinatown becomes a platform and an experimental terrain for different modalities of place-making processes to occur, and for diverse institutions and actors to re-imagine, re-design and re-negotiate Chinatown's urban characteristics and identity in the 21st century (Ong, 2011).

3. The Social Science Research Council defines 'inter-Asia' as a 'dynamic and interconnected formation' underpinned by 'connections' and 'continuums' which transcend the traditional borders of Asia in the context of globalisation. The themes of 'inter-Asia' studies move beyond territorially fixed areas, focussing on various 'Asia making' forms such as urban transformations, knowledge networks and migration, as well as the re-regionalisation of Asia (Social Science Research Council [SSRC], 2015).

4. The figure is calculated by using AEI's Basic Pivot Table based on its online international student database.

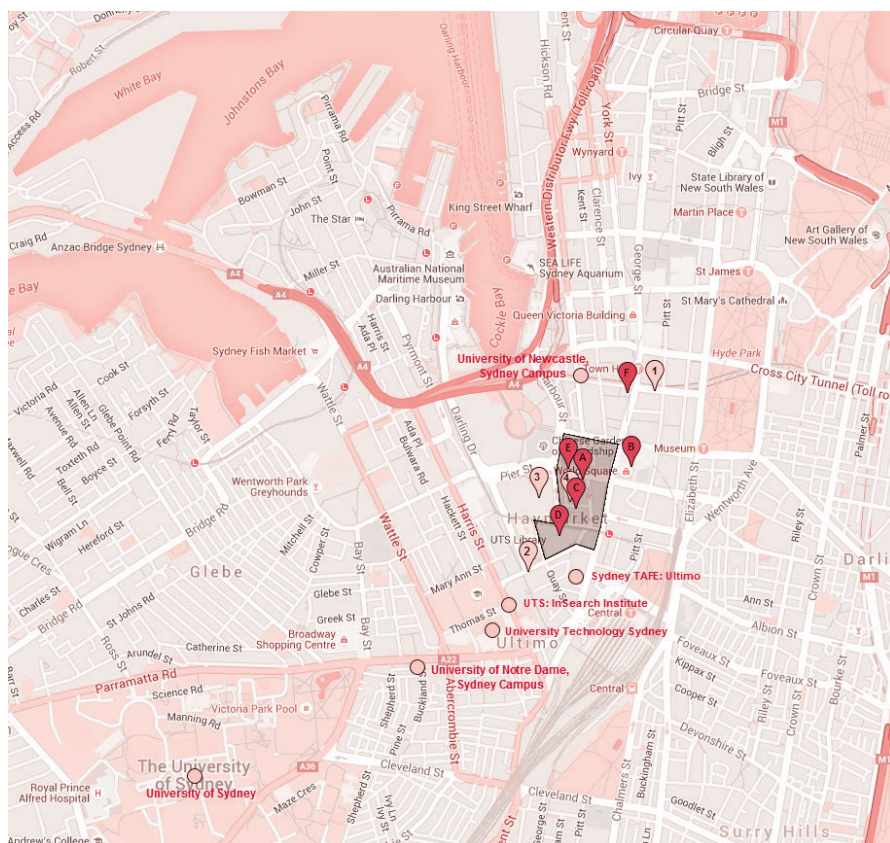
5. DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN SYDNEY'S CHINATOWN

5.1 THE STUDY AREA

Sydney's Chinatown is located in the Haymarket precinct. It is usually referred to as the area bounded by Liverpool Street in the north, Quay Street in the South, George Street in the east and Harbour Street in the west. As Figure 1 shows, Chinatown lies in close proximity to the Town Hall and central CBD, the major business and commercial hub of Sydney to the north, and Darling Harbour—a world-famous tourist precinct—to the west. It is also well-connected with various inner-city and suburban areas through the railway at Central Station in the south. Chinatown is surrounded by a number of universities, technical colleges and language schools, and this has attracted a large number of international students to the area.

FIGURE 1. Location of Chinatown in the CBD

(Source: Google Maps⁵)



Major shopping malls near Chinatown

- A. Sussex Centre
- B. World Square
- C. Dixon House
- D. Market City
- E. Number 1 Dixon Shopping Centre
- F. Regent Place

Apartment buildings popular among Chinese buyers near Chinatown

- 1. Greenland Centre Sydney
- 2. The Quay Apartments
- 3. Darling Square
- 4. Hing Loong Apartments

5. Map created using Google MyMaps software.

5.2 CHINESE 'ETHNOBURBS' IN GREATER SYDNEY

Sydney's Chinese population has long been decentralised from the city centre and settled in various 'ethnoburbs' (Li, 1998) across greater Sydney; with Hurstville now the biggest Chinese 'ethnoburb' in Sydney. Table 2 and Figure 2 show the Sydney suburbs with the highest density of China-born population.

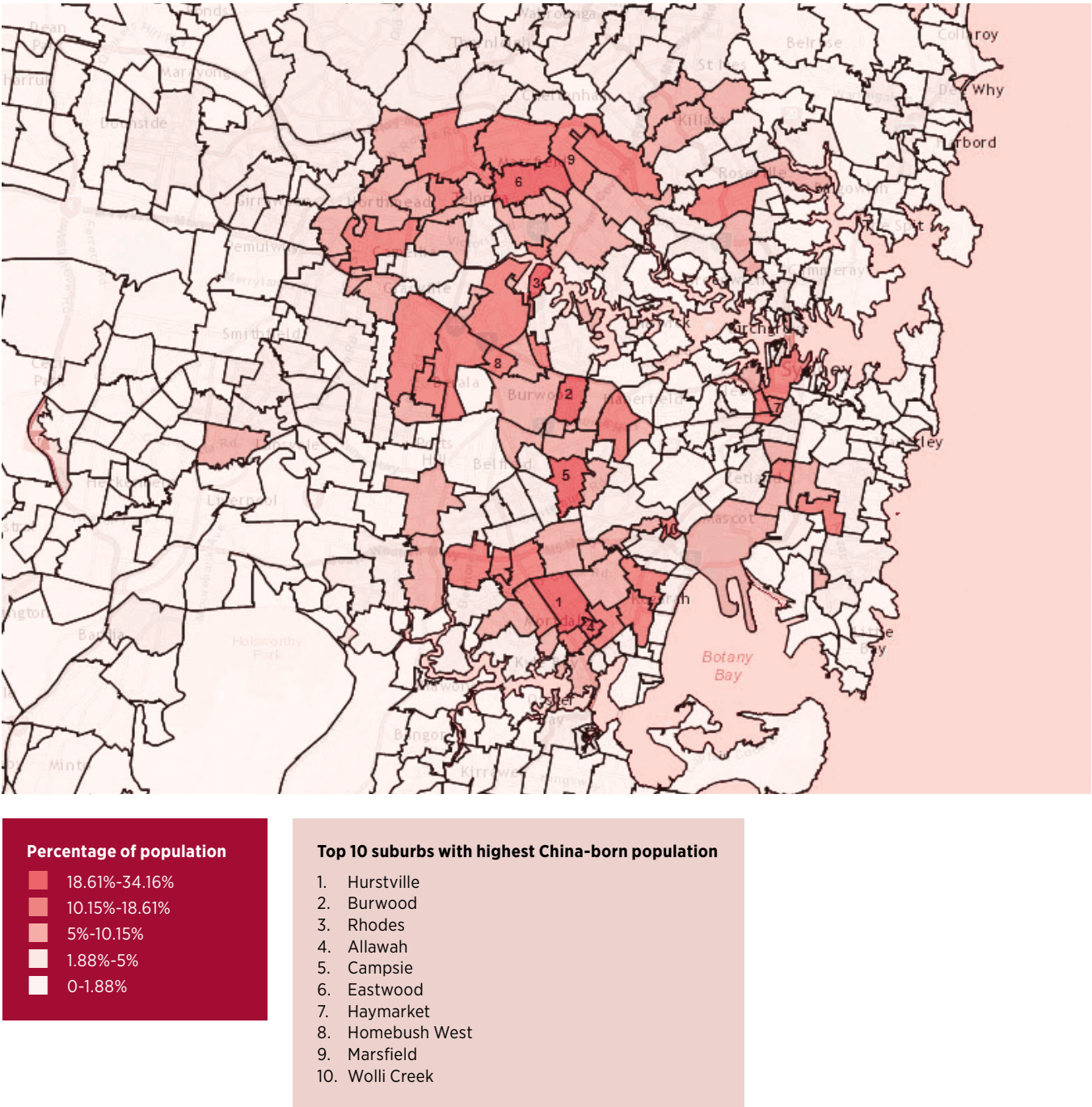
TABLE 2. Sydney's top ten suburbs by highest density of China-born population

(Source: ABS, 2011a)

RANK	SUBURB	NO. OF CHINA-BORN POPULATION	TOTAL POPULATION	% OF POPULATION BORN IN CHINA
1	Hurstville	8,896	26,039	34.16%
2	Burwood	3,310	12,469	26.55%
3	Rhodes	1,444	5,678	25.43%
4	Allawah	1,209	5,366	22.53%
5	Campsie	4,625	21,218	21.80%
6	Eastwood	3,016	16,193	18.63%
7	Haymarket	981	5,376	18.25%
8	Homebush West	1,049	5,783	18.14%
9	Marsfield	2,234	12,347	18.09%
10	Wolli Creek	501	2,828	17.72%



FIGURE 2. Density of China-born population in greater Sydney by suburb
(Source: ABS, 2011a)





5.3 RISE OF SYDNEY 'ASIATOWN'

On the other hand, census data showed that as regards Chinatown, only 18.3% of the total population of 5,376 people residing in Haymarket were born in China, while 32.7% of them had Chinese ancestry (ABS, 2011b). However, the decrease in density of Chinese population in Haymarket does not mean that Chinatown is in decline. On the contrary, during the past two decades, Chinatown has attracted a large and diverse number of Asian immigrants to reside in the area. The 2011 census data showed that Haymarket has the highest percentage of Asia-born population in greater Sydney, accounting for 64.1% of the total population in the area (ABS, 2011a).

The top ten overseas countries of birth for residents of Haymarket between 2001 and 2011 are shown in Figure 3. In 2011, population born in China, Thailand, Indonesia, South Korea and Hong Kong accounted for 18.3%, 14.7%, 10.8%, 7.0% and 2.3% of the total population of Haymarket, respectively (ABS, 2011b). The increased number of Asian migrants in the area has transformed Chinatown into a distinctive 'Asian precinct' in the city, as reflected in the growing number of Asian ethnic restaurants and Asian-style shops (such as Korean fashion boutiques and gift shops). In addition, a variety of Asian-language-speaking businesses and professional and personal services, ranging from Chinese doctors and lawyers to Korean beauty parlours and Thai massage businesses, can be found in Haymarket. The concentration of permanent and temporary migrants (such as holiday workers and international students) from South Korea and Thailand in Haymarket has also led to the development of a 'Koreatown' in Pitt Street and a 'Thaitown' in Campbell Street, in the immediate vicinity of Chinatown, within the larger Haymarket precinct. These changes in demographic composition show that Sydney's Chinatown has been transformed from a homogenous Chinese enclave to a hybrid, multicultural and multiethnic precinct of 'Asianness'.

TABLE 3. Sydney's top ten suburbs by highest density of Asia-born population

(Source: ABS, 2011a)

RANK	SUBURB	NO. OF ASIA-BORN POPULATION	TOTAL POPULATION	% OF POPULATION BORN IN ASIA
1	Haymarket	3,444	5,376	64.06%
2	Homebush West	3,377	5,783	58.40%
3	Harris Park	2,858	5,070	56.37%
4	Rhodes	3,043	5,678	53.59%
5	Cabramatta	11,014	20,779	53.01%
6	Westmead	7,274	14,171	51.33%
7	Hurstville	13,294	26,039	51.05%
8	Burwood	6,237	12,469	50.02%
9	Parramatta	9,691	19,743	49.09%
10	Campsie	10,412	21,218	49.07%

FIGURE 3. Top ten overseas countries of birth for residents of Haymarket, 2001-11

(Source: ABS, 2001; 2006; 2011b)

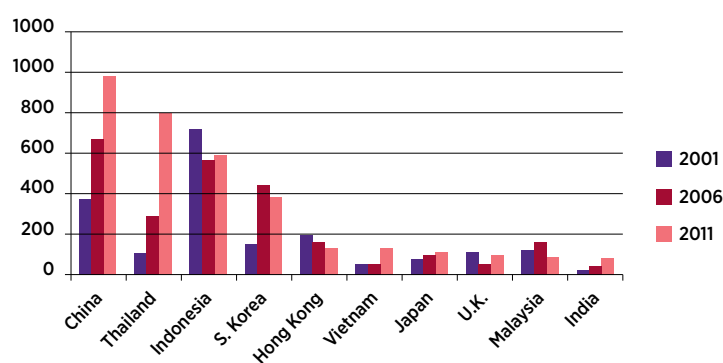
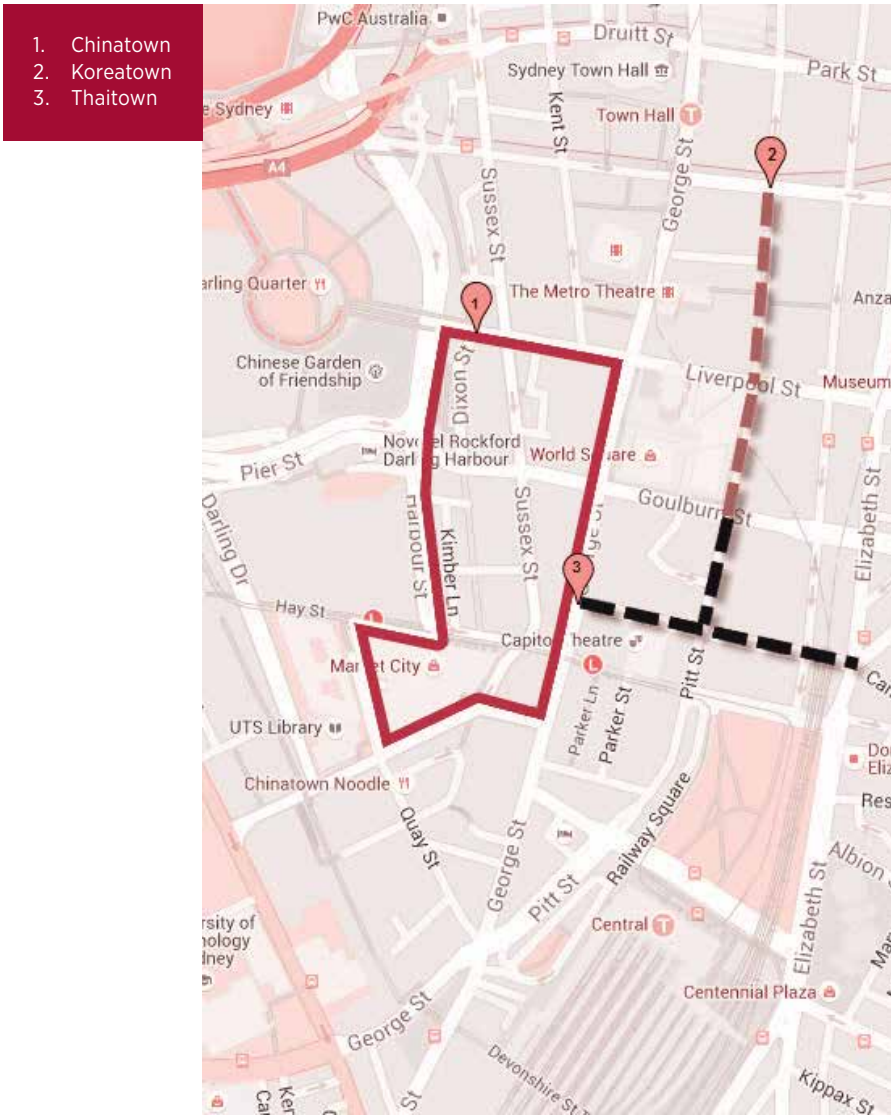


FIGURE 4. Location of Chinatown (core precinct), Koreatown and Thaitown
(Source: Google Maps)



5.4 COMPARISON OF NEW YORK AND SYDNEY CHINATOWNS

Table 4 shows the differences in demographic composition between New York's Chinatown and Sydney's Chinatown in 2011. New York's Chinatown not only has a much larger population, but also a higher concentration of China-born population. Although both cities have recorded a rapid increase in Chinese migrants in the past decade—resulting in the China-born populations jumping 34% and 81%, respectively in New York City and greater Sydney—statistics showed that the China-born population in New York's Chinatown has dropped 23%, a sharp contrast to Sydney's Chinatown, where the China-born population has surged by 169% over a decade (Table 5).

Further, New York's Chinatown has a higher percentage of local-born population than Sydney's Chinatown. In the past decade, the population in New York's Chinatown that the census described as 'non-Hispanic White' has reportedly increased nearly 20%, due to gentrification of the area and construction of luxury high-rise apartments (AALDEF, 2013, p. 29). Although Sydney's Chinatown also recorded an increase of population born in Australia and other western countries—growing by roughly 5% between 2001 and 2011 (ABS, 2001; 2011b)—it seems Sydney's Chinatown's Asian-born population has a much faster growth rate. Indeed it has increased as much as 105% in the past decade (ABS, 2001; 2011b), compared to New York Chinatown's Asian population which recorded a decrease of 11% between 2000 and 2010 (AALDEF, 2013, p.29).

TABLE 4. Demographic comparison of New York's (Manhattan) and Sydney's Chinatowns

(Source: New York City, 2013; ABS, 2011b)

	NEW YORK CHINATOWN (LOWER MANHATTAN)		SYDNEY CHINATOWN (HAYMARKET)	
	Number of people	% of total Chinatown population	Number of people	% of total Chinatown population
Total Population (2011)	47803		5376	
Total overseas born (2011)	26808	56.1%	3991	74.2%
Total no of China-born population	20907	43.7%	981	18.3%
Top 5 overseas country of birth	China (20907)	43.7%	China (981)	18.3%
	Dominican Republic (1068)	2.2%	Thailand (794)	14.8%
	Malaysia (478)	0.9%	Indonesia (582)	10.8%
	Korea (318)	0.6%	Korea (374)	7.0%
	United Kingdom (293)	0.6%	Hong Kong (126)	2.3%

TABLE 5. Comparison of China-born population in New York City and Greater Sydney

(Source: New York City, 2000, 2013; ABS, 2001, 2011b)

	NEW YORK CITY			GREATER SYDNEY		
	2011	2000	Change %	2011	2001	Change %
Total population	8244910	8008278	3.0%	4391673	3997321	9.9%
Total China-born population	350231	261551	33.9%	148556	82029	81.1%
China-born population in original Chinatown	20907	27151	-23.0%	981	365	168.8%
Top 5 neighbourhoods for China-born population (2011)	Bensonhurst, Brooklyn (31658)			Hurstville (8896)		
	Flushing, Queens (31571)			Campsie (4625)		
	Sunset Park, Brooklyn (27657)			Auburn (4408)		
	Chinatown, Manhattan (20907)			Burwood (3310)		
	Elmhurst, Queens (17247)			Ashfield (3296)		

6. CHINATOWN BEYOND THE ETHNIC ENCLAVE

‘Australia is located in the right place at the right time—in the Asian region in the Asian Century.’

Australia in the Asian Century White Paper (Australian Government, 2012, p. 1)

The rise of China and the shift of global economic power from the West to Asia in the so-called ‘Asian Century’ have impacted significantly on Australia’s economic, social, cultural and urban development. Australia’s trade with China has grown rapidly, and consequently political and cultural linkages have also expanded and deepened. Two notable urban transformations as a result of closer Australia–China relations—namely, the influx of wealthy and educated Chinese, and the significant increase of Chinese investment in Chinatown and in the city—are illustrated below.

6.1 PEOPLE AND KNOWLEDGE MIGRATION

The history of Chinese immigration to Australia can be traced back to the gold rush of the 1850s. Most early Chinese settlers in Sydney were uneducated, low-skilled males working as market gardeners, café owners, grocers or shopkeepers (Choi, 1975). These early migrants originated mostly from the southern provinces of China, especially Guangdong. A rapid increase and diversification of the China-born population, now coming from a far wider range of Chinese regions, took place in the 1990s. This can be attributed to the change in Australia’s immigration rules in favour of skilled migrants, and the existence of a migration pathway for international students in Australia since the mid-1990s (Hugo, 2008; Robertson, 2013). Largely motivated by the availability of this migration pathway, the number of Chinese international students in Australia has risen from 5,673 in 1994 to 150,116 in 2013 (AEI, 2000; 2013). Many of these students have applied for migration through the skilled scheme and obtained permanent residency in Australia. By 2011, there were 318,969 China-born people in Australia, an increase of 123% from 142,780 people in 2001, accounting for 1.5% of Australia’s total population (ABS, 2001; 2011b).

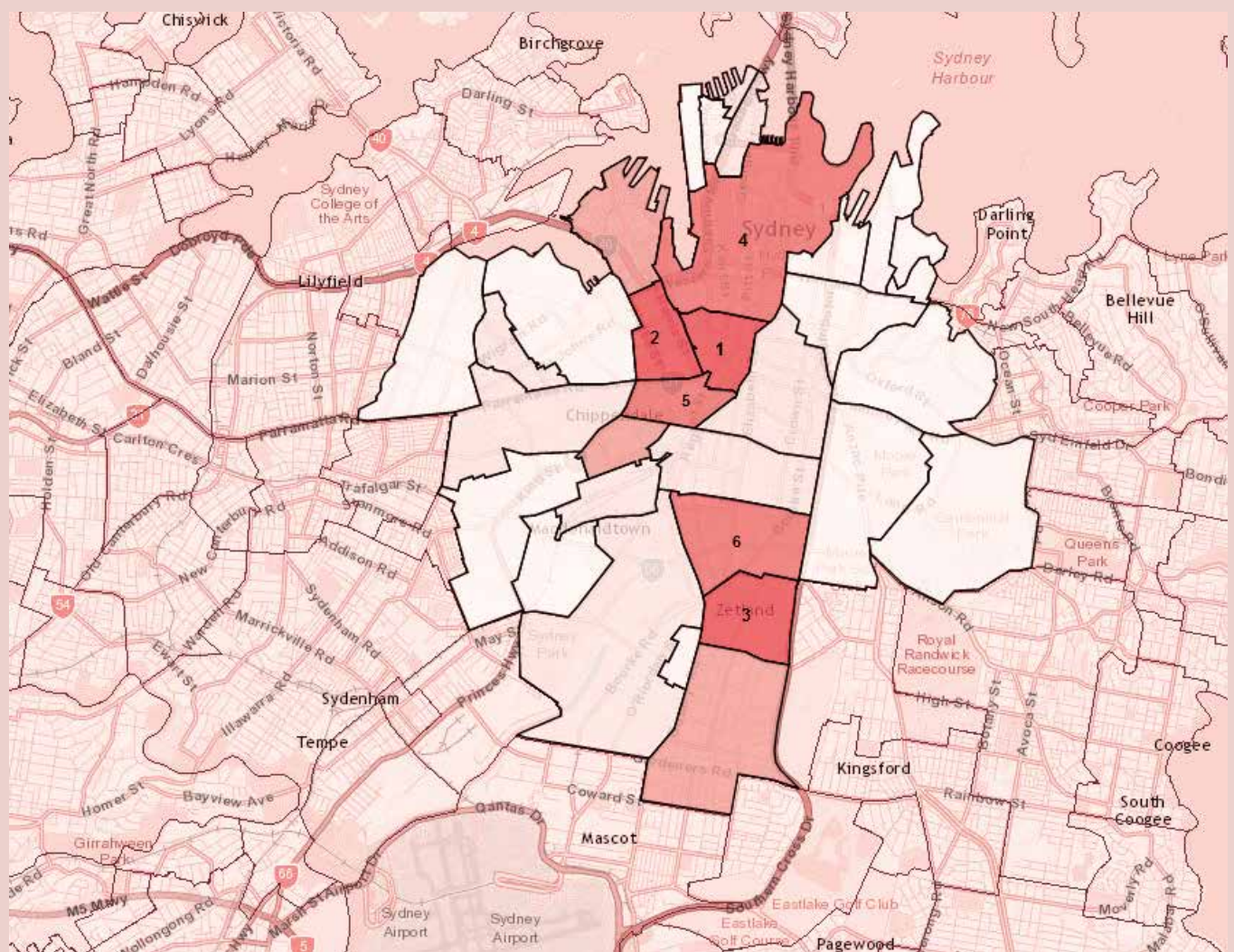
Sydney is the most popular place for settlers from mainland China in Australia, with the 2011 census showing that 46.2% of China-born migrants were residing in greater Sydney (ABS, 2011a). As Australia’s global city, Sydney is a popular centre for international finance, business, migrants, students and tourists, with 40% of Australia’s top 500 corporations having headquarters in Sydney (City of Sydney, 2015a). The concentration of knowledge-based industries in Sydney—such as finance, creative and business services—has attracted a high proportion of knowledge workers from mainland China. As the 2011 census showed, Sydney’s China-born population was relatively young and well-educated, with a median age of 40 years, and 35.8% of them having a degree or higher qualification.

Over 60% were fluent in English and 13.1% were employed in professional occupations (ABS, 2011a), implying that they faced fewer obstacles in the local labour market. Whilst many new Chinese migrants choose to settle in Chinese-dominated ‘ethnoburbs’ (Li, 1998) such as Hurstville, Campsie and Auburn, statistics suggested that more and more Chinese migrants, especially younger professional workers, prefer to live in the city. The China-born population in the Sydney Local Government Area (LGA) increased 64% between 2006 and 2011, making this the fastest growing ethnic group in the city (ABS, 2011a). Figure 5 shows the density of China-born population in the City of Sydney.

Apart from the migration of professional knowledge workers from China, Sydney has also received an increasing number of wealthy migrants from China since the late 2000s, through the government’s business migration program. Under the current Business Investor scheme, applicants who have net assets of \$2.25m and make a designated investment of \$1.5m in Australia are eligible to apply for residency in Australia. Moreover, two new streams called the ‘Significant Investor’ and ‘Premium Investor’ streams were introduced in November 2012 and July 2015, respectively, which allow applicants who invest \$5m and \$15m, respectively, in complying investments in Australia, to gain residency without any age limit or English requirement (DIBP, 2015a). Data from the DIBP showed that in 2013–14, 6,160 business visas were granted (DIBP, 2015b), of which 4,614 (75%) were granted to applicants from China (DIBP, 2015c). These wealthy Chinese migrants are likely to make greater impact on the economy of Sydney with their ample business experience and substantial assets. Further, it is expected that many aspiring Chinese immigrant investors will turn to Australia after Canada terminated its investor immigration program in February 2014 (Young, 2014).

FIGURE 5. Density of China-born population in the City of Sydney

(Source: ABS, 2011a)

**Density (%)**

- 12.19%-18.23%
- 8.2%-12.19%
- 4.37%-8.2%
- 2.05%-4.37%
- 0-2.05%

Density of China-born population in Sydney LGA

1. Haymarket (18.23%)
2. Ultimo (17.59%)
3. Zetland (12.19%)
4. CBD & Harbour (11.72%)
5. Chippendale (10.65%)
6. Waterloo (8.2%)

6.2 TRANSNATIONAL INVESTMENT AND PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT

The growing capital linkages between Australia and China are also evidenced in the real estate sector. In 2009–10 China overtook Singapore as the largest Asian foreign investor in Australia's real estate sector, with total investment approval valued at over \$2.4 billion (Foreign Investment Review Board [FIRB], 2010, p.53). In 2013–14 the amount has risen dramatically to \$12.4 billion, representing 416% growth in five years (FIRB, 2014, p.31). According to an interview by Bloomberg with Andrew Taylor, co-founder of juwai.com, a popular online platform for mainland Chinese to purchase overseas properties, Australia is ranked second in the top five markets (also including the US, the UK, Canada and Singapore) for Chinese property buyers in 2014 (Bloomberg, 2014), and Sydney is one of the most searched cities on its website⁶.

THE 'PUSH-AND-PULL' FACTORS IN CHINESE PROPERTY INVESTMENT

Large-scale Asian foreign investment in Sydney's housing market, particularly from mainland Chinese, started about five years ago. This can be attributed to a number of 'push-and-pull' factors in Australia and China. In terms of the 'pull' factors, the changes to Australia's foreign investment policy in 2008, which allow developers to sell up to 100% of their products to overseas buyers and to obtain foreign investment pre-approval for non-residents, facilitated overseas property purchases. In regard to the 'push' factors, the growing wealth of Chinese people and the lack of investment channels in China, caused by the government's tightening control over China's property market and instability in China's stock markets, have pushed wealthy Chinese people to look for opportunities overseas (Knight Frank, 2015).

CHINATOWN AS A 'NODE' FOR DIASPORIC TRANSNATIONAL REAL ESTATE NETWORKS

Our research suggests that Sydney's Chinatown is a very popular place for mainland Chinese to purchase properties in Sydney. These property buyers can be divided into three main types: potential migrants, parents buying for children to study in Sydney, and pure investors who have no desire to migrate but are interested in rental income and capital gains. In the past few years, Sydney's Chinatown has also become a real estate hub for local and overseas Chinese buyers and developers; property showrooms have opened in Dixon and Sussex Streets. A growing number of Chinese migrants have set up real estate agencies and professional firms in Chinatown to provide a wide range of real-estate-related information and services to co-ethnic customers. Statistics from the City of Sydney showed that there were over 160 professional and property service companies aggregated in the core Chinatown precinct, an increase of 22% between 2007 and 2012 (City of Sydney, 2012). These services include property conveyancing, migration and education advice, accounting and financial planning. Moreover, nine major banks, including international banks such as the Bank of China and HSBC, have opened branches in Chinatown. Home loan services are available at these banks for both local and overseas property buyers. Our interviewee #77, a senior lending manager in a Chinatown bank, said that non-resident loans have been 'creeping up to 60% or 70%' of his branch's mortgage business in the past few years.

More recently, Chinese migrants have begun to leverage their transnational ethnic networks to organise large-scale property expos in Sydney for Chinese customers. For instance, in 2012 and 2013, two property expos entitled 'Chinese Sydney Property Expo' were held in Dixon Street in Chinatown and Lower Town Hall in Sydney's CBD. Organised by Window to China, a property service company founded by Chinese migrants based in Chinatown, each event attracted over 20 exhibitors and 3,000 customers. At the two property expos, a large number of relatively new Chinese developers, such as Longton, Springfield and War Hing, and Chinese real estate agents, such as Property Investors Alliance and BE100, were exhibiting their property projects; alongside major national property developers and real estate agents who saw the expo as an opportunity for them to penetrate into the Asian market. Most of the properties exhibited at the Expo were off-the-plan apartment buildings located in places with high concentrations of Chinese population, such as Sydney South (Haymarket), the inner city (Surry Hills, Zetland, Rosebery), Hurstville, Chatswood and Parramatta. In 2013, with the support of China Eastern Airlines—one of the expos' sponsors—150,000 invitations were sent to members of the airline's frequent flyer program, and a business-class discount was offered to those who attended the expo after flying from China.

CHINESE CAPITAL AND CHINATOWN'S TRANSNATIONAL REAL ESTATE

In the past few years, Chinatown and its surrounding areas have undergone rapid urban transformation. Data shows that Chinatown and CBD South had one of the largest housing stocks in the Sydney LGA in 2012–13, with 804 units completed, and over 4,000 units at the stages of development, approval and construction (City of Sydney, 2013b). Many of these residential developments in Chinatown were supported by transnational capital from China. Table 6 listed the examples of apartment buildings which were developed and funded by Chinese companies in Chinatown and CBD South.

6. The ranking is based on the search count on Juwai.com's website. Whilst it may represent the broad trend of the industry, it cannot be generalised to all real estate companies.

TABLE 6. Examples of residential buildings funded or developed by Chinese companies in Chinatown and CBD South

(Source: City of Sydney, 2013-2015)

ADDRESS	BUILDING NAME	DEVELOPER	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	NO OF UNIT	LAND COST* (MILLION)	CONSTRUCTION COST** (MILLION)
Building status: completed						
61-79 Quay Street, Haymarket	The Quay	Ausbao	China	286	\$38	\$105
Building status: commenced						
115-119 Bathurst Street, Sydney	Greenland Centre	Greenland Group	China	490	\$110	\$355
141-149 Bathurst Street, Sydney	The Castlereagh	Lenland Property	China	66	\$20	\$16
49-53 Dixon Street, Haymarket	Hing Loong	War Hing	Local Chinese company	47	unknown	\$20
Building status: development application lodged						
130-134 Elizabeth Street, Sydney		Aoyuan & Ecove	China & Australia joint venture	148	\$121	\$106
9-25 Commonwealth Street, Sydney		Private Chinese developer	Local Chinese company	52	\$45	\$67

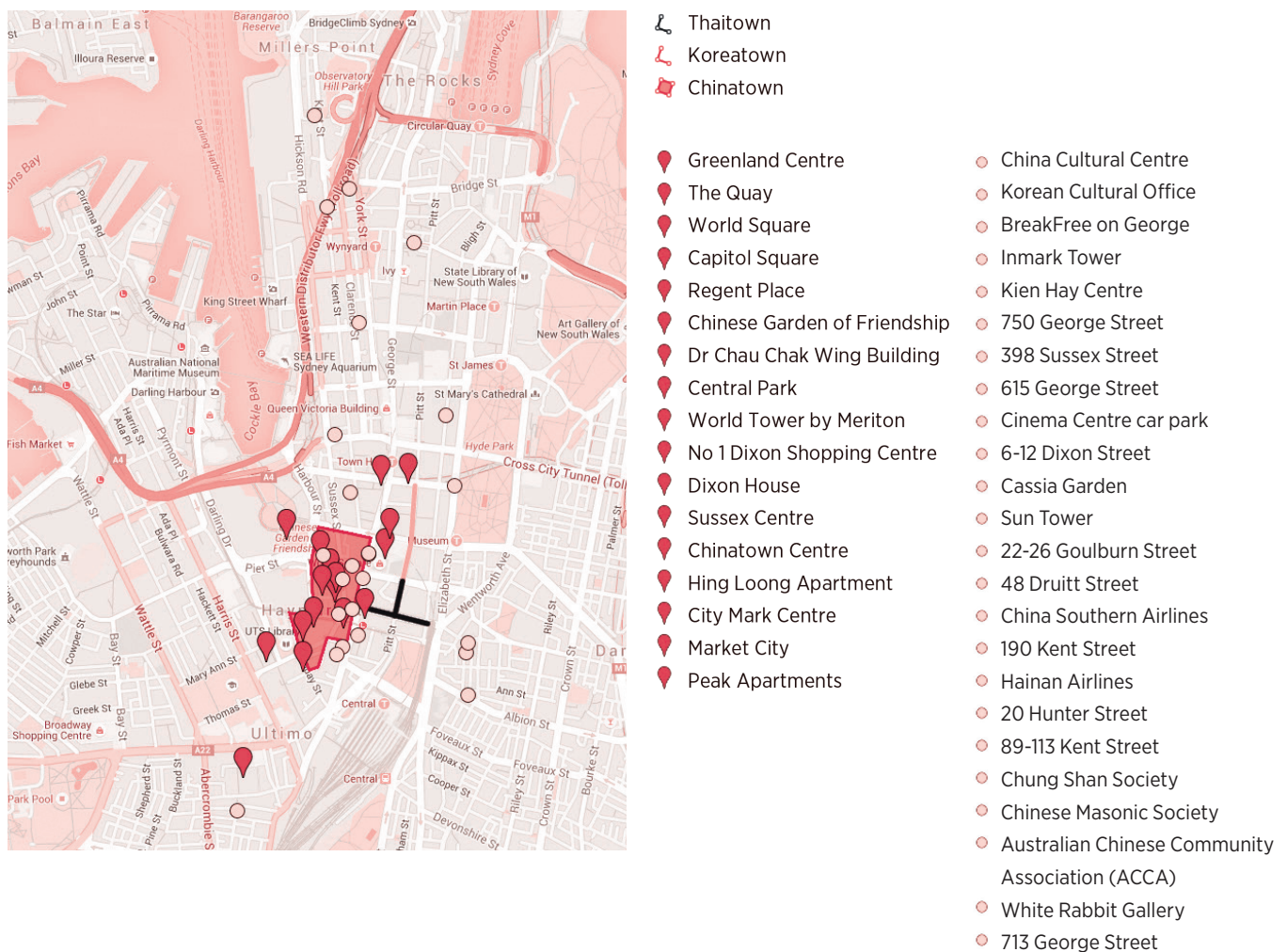
*Data compiled from various newspaper and property websites such as *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Telegraph*, my-property-report.com

**Data compiled from City of Sydney development approval application documents on estimated construction cost only

Figure 6 provides a rough mapping of properties with Chinese and other Asian interests in the Sydney CBD. This map is not intended to be quantitatively exact. It is, rather, a graphical interpretation based on qualitative data gathered from our semi-structured interviews. It shows that the impact of transnational capital investment in properties from Asia has transcended the traditional physical borders of Chinatown and extended to other parts of the city. This is also confirmed by a recent report from real estate agent, Knight Frank, that Chinese outward investment in commercial real estate has spread throughout the city centre and north Sydney (Knight Frank, 2015).

FIGURE 6. Mapping of freehold properties with Chinese and Asian interests in the Sydney CBD

(Source: interview data, Google Maps)



BOX 1. The Quay Apartments

The Quay Apartments is one of the recent high-profile residential developments in Chinatown. This development is located at 61–79 Quay Street. The site was the former poultry section of Paddy's Market and had been vacant for 20 years before it was sold to Ausbao Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of China's fourth-largest property developer, Beijing Capital Development. The Quay has a total of 270 units, with selling prices ranging from AUD\$390,000 to over AUD\$1.7m each (Wilmot and Thistleton, 2012). Chinese buyers showed great interest in the launch of the off-the-plan units in April 2012. Buying activities were reportedly 'frenzied', with 'about 35 apartments sold each hour'. During the launch weekend, 200 out of 270 apartments were sold; the rest of the stock was marketed to overseas buyers in Hong Kong (Knowlton, 2012). The construction of this development was completed in 2014 and a recent news report revealed that buyers have already achieved 20% capital gains from their properties in January 2015 (Anderson, 2015).

BOX 2. Greenland Centre Sydney

Greenland Centre Sydney will be the tallest residential tower in Sydney. It is located at 115–119 Bathurst Street, near Chinatown, and was developed by China's state-owned developer, Greenland Group, a company currently ranked 359th in the global Fortune 500 list. This development includes a 66-storey residential tower with over 400 units and a five-star hotel converted from the former Sydney Water Board building. The first-stage launch of the Greenland Centre's off-the-plan apartments, in December 2013, received a very good response from Chinese buyers. In addition to Australia, the apartments also went on sale simultaneously in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore. News reports revealed that 214 out of the 250 apartments were sold on the first morning of the first-stage launch. Of these, 95% went to Chinese buyers, half of whom were from overseas (Macken, 2013). Construction work for this development began in 2014 and is expected to be completed in 2016.

(Photo by Newtown graffiti, flickr.com, creative commons license 2.0)



7. THE CHINATOWN ECONOMY

The data analysis in this section is based on the Floor Space and Employment Surveys (FESs), conducted by the City of Sydney in 2012 and 2007 with the aim of providing an overview of the changes of economic activities and floor space usages in Sydney's Chinatown. The analysis focuses on the core Chinatown precinct, which is identified as the area bounded by Liverpool Street in the north, Quay Street in the south, George Street in the east and Harbour Street in the west. The precinct was divided into nine sub-areas, which were analysed individually for their own characteristics and changes across the two surveys.

BOX 3. Summary of key FES figures for the core Chinatown precinct

(Source: City of Sydney, 2012)

KEY FIGURES AT A GLANCE

In 2012, within the 9 blocks identified as the core Chinatown precinct, we identified the following economic statistics, including percentage change compared to 2007:

- 998 businesses, up 10.6%
- 7,748 workers, up 29.2%
- 212,841 m² internal floor space for business, up 10.3%
- 327,522 m² other floor space, up 2.6%
- Growing sectors were retail and personal services, food and drink, professional and business services
- Declining sectors were information and communication technology (ICT), creative industries, manufacturing
- 99% small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); average business size, 7.8 people; average work-space ratio (WSR), 27.33 m² per worker

7.1 CHANGES TO THE BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURE OF CHINATOWN

Between 2007 and 2012, the core Chinatown precinct recorded stable growth in spite of the economic slowdown after the global financial crisis of 2008. In 2012, the core Chinatown precinct accounted for 4.6% of the total 21,644 business count, 1.8% of the total 437,727 employment count and 1.3% of the total 16,534,635 m² of business internal floor area in the City of Sydney LGA. Despite these small percentages, the economic significance of Chinatown should not be overlooked. In fact, the core Chinatown precinct has recorded a higher growth rate than the City of Sydney LGA in terms of business and employment count. Between the two surveys, growth figures for business and employment in the City of Sydney LGA were 10.5% and 13.6%, respectively, compared to growth of 10.6% and 29.2%, respectively, in the core Chinatown precinct. In addition, Chinatown recorded a greater percentage increase in total business floor area between 2007 and 2012 than the City of Sydney LGA: 10.3%, compared to 3.5% in the City of Sydney LGA.

The core Chinatown precinct was largely dominated by three sectors, namely retail and personal services, food and drink, and professional and business services. These three sectors combined accounted for 62.8% of the total businesses and 72.1% of the total employment in Chinatown. Business and employment growth in the Chinatown area between 2007 and 2012 was mainly underpinned by these three sectors. On the other hand, most sectors other than these three were experiencing marginal growth or a moderate decline. In particular, newer industries, such as ICT and the creative industries sectors showed decreasing numbers of businesses and employment in the area. This showed that Chinatown not only has a less diverse industry mix than five years ago, but is also still largely focused on traditional service industries (retail and food and drink), whilst technology-based industries (such as ICT, life science or creative industries) are less likely to succeed in the area.

TABLE 7. Changes in business count by city-based industry sector in core Chinatown precinct, 2007/2012

(Source: City of Sydney, 2012)

CITY-BASED INDUSTRY	2012	% OF 2012 BUSINESSES	2007	% OF 2007 BUSINESSES	CHANGE 2007-2012	% CHANGE 2007-2012
Community	1	0.10%	1	0.11%	0	0.00%
Creative industries	15	1.50%	20	2.22%	-5	-25.00%
Finance and financial services	57	5.71%	58	6.43%	-1	-1.72%
Food and drink	204	20.44%	182	20.18%	22	12.09%
Government	1	0.10%	0	0.00%	1	NA
Health	68	6.81%	64	7.10%	4	6.25%
Higher education and research	47	4.71%	49	5.43%	-2	-4.08%
ICT	22	2.20%	28	3.10%	-6	-21.43%
Life science (bio-tech)	17	1.70%	15	1.66%	2	13.33%
Manufacturing	4	0.40%	7	0.78%	-3	-42.86%
Motor vehicles	1	0.10%	1	0.11%	0	0.00%
Other*	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	NA
Professional and business services	129	12.93%	105	11.64%	24	22.86%
Property development and operation	29	2.91%	30	3.33%	-1	-3.33%
Retail and personal services	293	29.36%	233	25.83%	60	25.75%
Social capital	29	2.91%	30	3.33%	-1	-3.33%
Tourist, cultural and leisure	70	7.01%	67	7.43%	3	4.48%
Transport and logistics	11	1.10%	11	1.22%	0	0.00%
Utilities	0	0.00%	1	0.11%	-1	-100.00%
Total	998	99.99%**	902	100.01%**	96	10.64%

*'Other' industry sector may include non-private households that employ staff, such as student accommodation and aged-care facilities; and workers counted in common areas of multi-tenanted buildings that have no direct link to a business establishment.

**Total may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 8. Changes in employment count by city-based industry sector in core Chinatown precinct, 2007/2012

(Source: City of Sydney, 2012)

CITY-BASED INDUSTRY	2012	% OF 2012 EMPLOYMENT	2007	% OF 2007 EMPLOYMENT	CHANGE 2007-2012	% CHANGE 2007-2012
Community	2	0.03%	3	0.05%	-1	-33.33%
Creative industries	64	0.82%	122	2.02%	-58	-47.54%
Finance and financial services	365	4.69%	357	5.92%	8	2.24%
Food and drink	1,917	24.62%	1,587	26.33%	330	20.79%
Government	35	0.45%	0	0.00%	35	NA
Health	316	4.06%	254	4.21%	62	24.41%
Higher education and research	242	3.11%	196	3.25%	46	23.47%
ICT	105	1.35%	141	2.34%	-36	-25.53%
Life science (bio-tech)	74	0.95%	55	0.91%	19	34.55%
Manufacturing	10	0.13%	16	0.27%	-6	-37.50%
Motor vehicles	5	0.06%	1	0.02%	4	400.00%
Other*	44	0.57%	15	0.25%	29	193.33%
Professional and business services	836	10.74%	423	7.02%	413	97.64%
Property development and operation	171	2.20%	175	2.90%	-4	-2.29%
Retail and personal services	2,857	36.69%	1,926	31.95%	931	48.34%
Social capital	256	3.29%	296	4.91%	-40	-13.51%
Tourist, cultural and leisure	453	5.82%	436	7.23%	17	3.90%
Transport and logistics	35	0.45%	25	0.41%	10	40.00%
Utilities	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	NA
Total	7,787	100.03%**	6,028	99.99%**	1,759	29.18%

*'Other' industry sector may include non-private households that employ staff, such as student accommodation and aged-care facilities; and workers counted in common areas of multi-tenanted buildings that have no direct link to a business establishment.

**Total may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Although the domination of retail and personal services and food and drink sectors matches with the conventional understanding of Chinatown as a tourist precinct for consumption and leisure (i.e., mainly for dining and shopping), the rapid growth of the professional and business services sector in the area deserves attention, as the fastest growing sector of significance in terms of employment (up 98%) in the Chinatown precinct. This was in line with the general trend across the City of Sydney LGA, where professional and business services is the fastest growing sector by business count, among all city-based industry sectors.

Historically, Chinatown is also a centre for community services, due to the location of (Chinese) clan associations and community organisations in the area. However, the FES showed that the community and social capital sectors have experienced a decline in employment (down 33%) as some of these community groups in Chinatown have reduced their capacity. This suggests that the role of Chinatown as a community centre for Chinese people is diminishing.

In terms of industry structure, companies in Chinatown are predominantly SMEs, with about 63.5% of businesses having less than 4 workers. In 2012, the average number of workers per business across all sectors in Chinatown was 7.8 people, compared to 20.22 workers in the City of Sydney LGA (City of Sydney, 2012). The small size of businesses in Chinatown implies that companies may be constrained, by limited finance and human resources, to invest in innovation or business development.

In 2012, the average floor space for a business in Chinatown was 213.3 m² for all sectors, which is much smaller than the average of 763.9 m² in the overall City of Sydney LGA. The work space per worker in Chinatown was 27.3 m², compared to a work space of 37.8 m² in the City of Sydney LGA (City of Sydney, 2012). This confirms that Chinatown has a higher density of business operations than the City of Sydney LGA as a whole. Smaller work space is also in line with most Asian cities, which have a high density usage of commercial space.

A 6.5% decrease in vacant space in Chinatown in 2012 (City of Sydney, 2012) also suggests that the business environment has improved in the core Chinatown area between the two surveys. The domination of small and micro companies in the area also showed that Sydney's Chinatown still retains its small business character; with no sign of being under threat by big corporations as is the case for their business counterparts in New York's and London's Chinatowns.

7.2 SPATIAL AND ECONOMIC DIVISIONS IN THE CORE CHINATOWN PRECINCT

For the purpose of analysing the internal structure and dynamics of Chinatown, the core Chinatown precinct has been sub-divided into nine blocks as shown in Figure 7. This analysis of different sub-areas of the core Chinatown precinct shows that Chinatown has a diverse mix of business activities and that each sub-area has a different commercial focus and rate of economic growth. The characteristics of each block are summarised in Table 9 and the changes in the number of business and employment count of each block between 2007 and 2012 is shown in Table 10.

It is worth noting that none of the blocks within the core Chinatown precinct recorded a decrease in employment count, despite both Block 6 (Thomas Street) and Block 9 (north section of Sussex Street) experiencing small decreases in business numbers. The analysis also shows that the major economic activities in Chinatown are still concentrated along Dixon Street, while the fringe areas of Chinatown have experienced slower growth. This implies that the surrounding areas of Chinatown have not yet fully captured the economic benefits caused by the spill-out effect from Dixon Street.

FIGURE 7. Sub-division of nine blocks comprising the core Chinatown precinct

(Source: Google Maps)

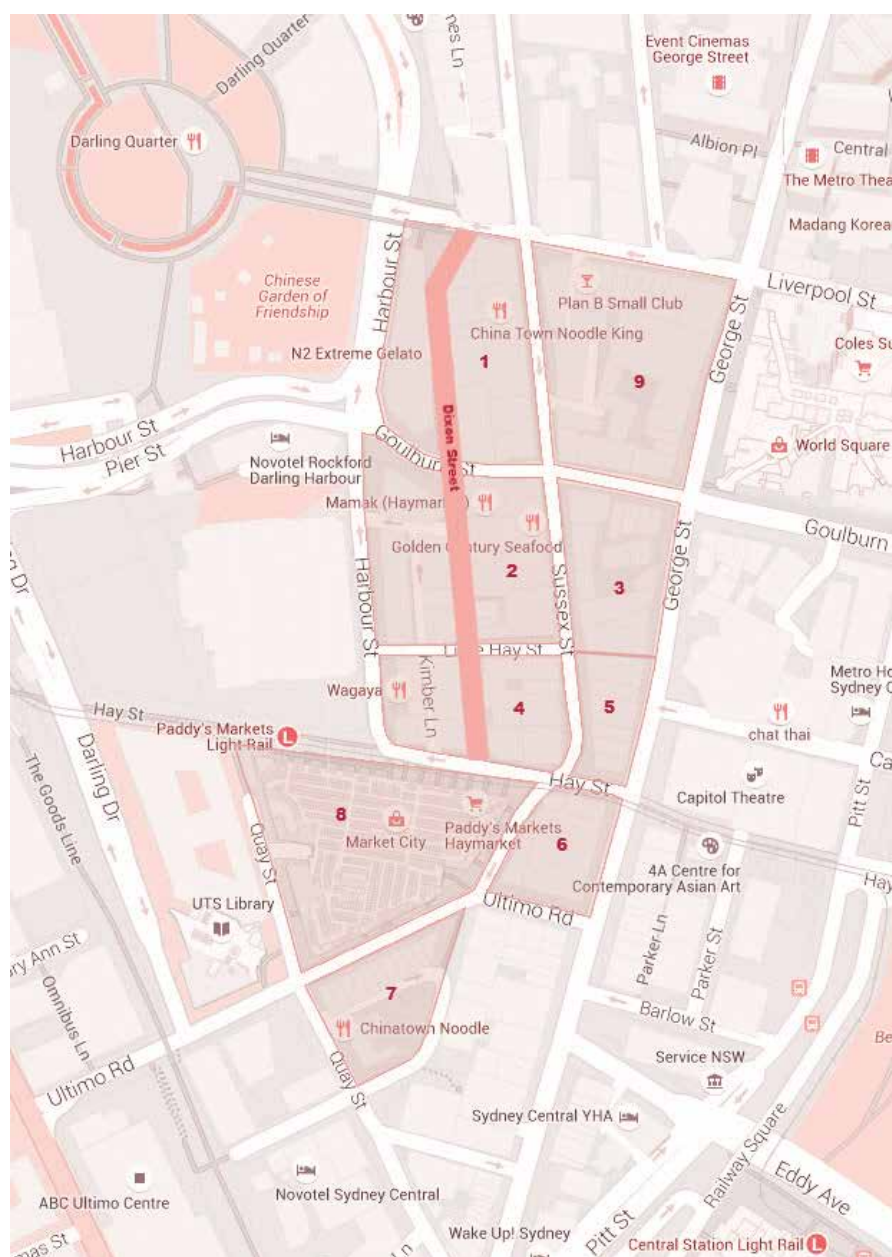


TABLE 9. Overview of the nine sub-divisions comprising the core Chinatown precinct

BLOCK 1: North Dixon Street	This block was the highest growth area by business count (up 52%) among all blocks in Chinatown, driven by the retail and personal services and food and drink sectors.
BLOCK 2: Middle section of Dixon Street	This block had the biggest percentage increase in employment (up 73%) among all blocks in Chinatown, due to employment growth in the professional and business services and food and drink sectors.
BLOCK 3: Middle section of Sussex Street	This block experienced rapid growth in employment (up 48%), underpinned by the tourist, cultural and leisure sector.
BLOCK 4: South section of Dixon street	This block showed stable growth in its top three sectors (food and drink, retail and personal services and professional and business services), but other sectors recorded either no growth or decline.
BLOCK 5: South section of Sussex Street	This block had the largest workforce from the finance sector, and was stable between the two surveys.
BLOCK 6: Thomas Street	This block was the only block in Chinatown that recorded a significant decrease in business count (down 5%), but its employment count remained stable.
BLOCK 7: Ultimo Road	This block had the largest workforce from the health sector; this block remained stable, with a fast-growing higher education and research sector.
BLOCK 8: Market City	This block employed the largest number of workers (672 people) among all blocks in Chinatown; this block has been largely dominated by the retail and personal services sector, which has grown rapidly in the past five years.
BLOCK 9: North section of Sussex Street	This block had a diverse mix of industry sectors; this block recorded a negligible decline in business count but a small increase in employment count (up 6%).

TABLE 10. Changes in the number of businesses and employment count by block in the core Chinatown precinct, 2007/2012

(Source: City of Sydney, 2012)

BLOCK	NO. OF BUSINESSES		CHANGE 2007-2012	% CHANGE 2007-2012	NO. OF EMPLOYEES		CHANGE 2007-2012	% CHANGE 2007-2012
	2012	2007			2012	2007		
1	138	91	47	51.65%	919	625	294	47.04%
2	169	150	19	12.67%	1,311	756	555	73.41%
3	56	47	9	19.15%	241	163	78	47.85%
4	150	144	6	4.17%	613	552	61	11.05%
5	57	52	5	9.62%	289	280	9	3.21%
6	39	41	-2	-4.88%	306	300	6	2.00%
7	60	58	2	3.45%	353	325	28	8.62%
8	142	131	11	8.40%	2,760	2,088	672	32.18%
9	187	188	-1	-0.53%	995	939	56	5.96%
Total	998	902	96	10.64%	7,787	6,028	1,759	29.18%

8. CHINATOWN'S CULINARY ECONOMY

It has long been established that the Asian culinary sector is the major drive of visitation to Chinatown. Its food and drink industry particularly flourished in the 1980s to 1990s (Yencken, 1997) due the opening of Cantonese style restaurants by Hong Kong immigrants. Followed the new wave of Asian and mainland Chinese migrations in the 2000s, new types of Asian restaurants have been started in Chinatown, including Japanese, Thai, Korean, Vietnamese, regional Chinese (Shanghai, Szechuan, Xinjiang, Yunnan, etc.), Indonesian, Malaysian, Filipino, to name a few. As it is increasingly commonplace that cities use food and meals to brand their places (Berg and Sevón, 2014), Chinatown is now promoted as a major 'Asian food hub' in Destination NSW's tourist guide.

The following section examines the development of the cultural economy in Sydney's Chinatown, particularly through its culinary industry. Data for the analysis is based on 15 semi-structured interviews with owners of restaurants. This section will first, reveal the production system of Asian restaurants and how they constitute the distinctive symbolic/cultural economy of Chinatown; second, to identify the difficulties and challenges facing by these restaurants.

8.1 ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF CHINATOWN'S ASIAN CULINARY INDUSTRY

As mentioned in the Section 7, food and drink was the second largest business sector in the core Chinatown Precinct in 2012, accounting for about one fifth (20.4%) of the total number of businesses in the area. The business count in the sector has increased from 182 in 2007 to 204 in 2012, representing an increase of 12.1%. Food and drink was also the second largest sector for employment in Chinatown. The sector employed 1,917 people in 2012, accounting for 24.6% of the total workforce in the core Chinatown. The sector had an addition of 330 workers since 2007, representing an increase of 20.8% in employment. However, the operation of the food and drink businesses in Chinatown was quite small, with an average size of 9.4 workers per business (City of Sydney, 2012).

Table 11 summarised the profile of the 15 restaurant owners/managers that we interviewed between May and November 2014. These restaurants provide cuisines from a wide range of origins; operate in different modes, have a different length of operation and capacity, and are in different forms of ownership. The rationale for choosing these restaurants is to reveal the diversity of Asian restaurants operating in Haymarket.

TABLE 11. Profile of interviewees from 15 Asian restaurants in Chinatown

NO	CUISINE OF RESTAURANT	INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND	INTERVIEWEE ETHNICITY	OWNERSHIP
1	Regional Chinese	International student	PRC Chinese	Locally owned
2	Thai	Former working visa	Thai	Locally owned
3	Thai	Former international student	Thai	Locally owned
4	Korean BBQ	2nd generation migrant	Korean	Locally owned
5	Korean-style cafe	Former international student	Korean	Locally owned
6	Cantonese, seafood	Business migrant	HK Chinese	Locally owned
7	Cantonese, seafood	2nd generation migrant	HK Chinese	Local partnership
8	Cantonese, seafood	2nd generation migrant	Australia-born Chinese	Locally owned
9	Modern Hong Kong/Asian	Business migrant	HK Chinese	Locally owned
10	Modern Cantonese	2nd generation migrant	HK Chinese	Local partnership
11	Vietnamese	Former refugee	Vietnamese	Locally owned
12	Indonesian	Former international student	Indonesian	Foreign -owned
13	Regional Chinese	2nd generation migrant	Australia-born Chinese	Locally owned
14	Japanese, Karaoke	2nd generation migrant	Chinese/HK	Local partnership
15	Modern Chinese/Asian	2nd generation migrant	Chinese	Foreign-owned

8.2 CHINATOWN'S ASIAN CULINARY CLUSTER

RESTAURANT OWNERS AND ETHNIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Defying the traditional view that 'ethnic' restaurants are mainly set up by migrants as a way to overcome 'blocked mobility' in the host country (Waldinger et al., 1990; Collins et al., 1995), contemporary Asian restaurants in Sydney's Chinatown tend to be the result of 'rational' decisions made by restaurant owners. Among this study's 15 interviewees, three were business migrants from Hong Kong who opened restaurants in order to fulfil Australia's immigration policy requirement; three were current or former international students who decided to stay in Australia and set up a restaurant; two had other professional careers or qualifications, but engaged in the restaurant business because they saw the 'market opportunity'; three were second-generation migrants who looked after the family restaurant; two were appointed by overseas parent companies in Asia to manage a restaurant in Sydney; one was locally born with Chinese migrant parents who had a passion for Asian food; and one was a former refugee who opened a restaurant after losing his previous job in a factory. In general, most interviewees were well-educated (almost all had diploma or degree qualifications) or from a middle-class background.

The main reason for the interviewees choosing to locate their businesses in Haymarket/Chinatown was the high concentration of Chinese/Asian population in the area, as they are their main target customers. Many interviewees described Chinatown as 'the centre for Chinese people', 'the most Chinese-populated area' or 'the natural place to do business with Chinese'. In interviewee #71's words:

'We like Chinatown because it's busy. It's buzzy and that's why our businesses are around Chinatown and because...a lot of our clients would be Asian or Chinese. Chinatown doesn't just draw Chinese, it draws people from other Asian countries and it draws tourists' (interviewee #71, Japanese restaurant owner).

CULTURAL CAPITAL AND CO-ETHNIC NETWORKS

The interviews also confirmed the close relationship between the Asian culinary industry and immigration, as all of the interviewees had a migrant background—either they were migrants themselves or were direct descendants of migrants. Their cultural knowledge about Asian culinary trends gave them crucial cultural capital that helped them spot a trend or market opportunity for their business. As interviewees #70 and #63 put it, respectively:

'We just found in Hong Kong this special type of cuisine, the Yunnan cuisine, it was a very big hit in Hong Kong. So then we had a look in Sydney, and then that was when we started to create the brand and the type of cuisine' (interviewee #70, regional Chinese restaurant owner).

'The restaurant business in Hong Kong is far more sophisticated and advanced than in Australia, so I decided to bring some of the concepts from Hong Kong to modernise our Chinese restaurant in Sydney' (interviewee #63, modern Chinese restaurant owner).

Further crucial cultural capital for Chinatown restaurant owners derives from their ethnic-based networks. Many studies of ethnic business have highlighted the importance of co-ethnic networks, which are exemplified in the form of suppliers, labour and client relationships (Waldinger et al., 1990; Collins et al., 1995). This still holds true to a certain degree for Chinatown's restaurants. In terms of supplier relations, all the restaurant owners/managers interviewed stated that suppliers were selected based on their price and quality, whilst co-ethnic suppliers were only used for specialised products such as special 'herbs or spices' or live seafood.

A number of studies have pointed out that the accent and appearance of ethnic waiters in a restaurant can help project an image about the 'authenticity' of an ethnic restaurant (Zukin, 1995; Beriss and Sutton, 2007). In the case of Asian restaurants in Chinatown, most interviewees admitted that they preferred to employ workers from 'Asian countries', mainly for practical reasons, such as easier communication between staff and customers, and better knowledge about Asian cuisines in terms of their flavour and ingredients. However, many interviewees added that the ethnicities of their workers did not necessarily align with the origin of the cuisine they serve at the restaurant. Therefore, it was not unusual for a Korean restaurant to employ Chinese or Japanese waiters, or for a Thai restaurant to employ workers from Malaysia or Indonesia, or for Indonesian workers to work at a Chinese restaurant.

All the interviewees admitted that they used a mix of permanent and contract labour in the restaurant. The most common preference was to use permanent labour for positions that require specialised knowledge and skills, such as chef and senior management, and casual workers for unskilled positions, such as waiters or kitchen hands. Employing flexible contract workers allowed restaurant owners to adjust their labour force according to their level of business on different days or during different months, which can help lower operating costs and maintain their profit margin.

Much ethnic business literature has stressed the importance of a co-ethnic market base in the initial phase of business development, but to be successful in the long run, ethnic businesses must transcend the boundaries of an 'ethnic enclave' market (Waldinger et al., 1990). Our study confirmed that while a co-ethnic market is still highly important, it is no longer the case that Asian restaurants merely target co-ethnic customers. In fact, a lot of the restaurants studied, especially those that had a longer history or were more established, tend to have a higher percentage of non-Asian customers (over 50%).

INNOVATIVE MILIEU, 'INSTITUTIONAL THICKNESS'⁷ AND SYNERGIES OF CO-LOCATION

Chinatown has a high concentration of Asian food businesses. Needless to say, all interviewees agreed that competition within the restaurant business is fierce. However, none considered competition to be a bad thing: rather, they thought of it as a positive force to make them more innovative or to prompt improvement of their quality and service in order to differentiate themselves from their competitors. The innovative milieu (Camagni, 1991) of Chinatown was reflected in a wide range of elements in these restaurants, including unique interior design, new concepts and dishes, new technology and equipment, new ways of service, new marketing strategies, and so on. As interviewees #71 and #72 explained, respectively:

'Yeah, [competition] is getting more fierce, so every time we do something, we try to make sure it's slightly different to the market. We have different venues. Each venue we try to do it slightly different to [the others]...we just try to be, where possible, innovative in the industry' (interviewee #71, Japanese restaurant owner).

'Our menu is slightly different...with all the technical support from overseas like Hong Kong and Singapore, we have innovated the flavour...the competition...is not noticeable...our clients come here for the interior design...and...that type of deluxe service' (interviewee #72, fine-dining Chinese restaurant marketing manager).

Despite intense competition between Chinatown's restaurants, restaurant owners seemed to maintain friendly personal relationships with each other. Some locally based networking organisations, such as the Haymarket Chamber of Commerce or the Thaitown Business Association, provide platforms for their members to get to know each other and contributed to the 'institutional thickness' (Amin and Thrift, 1996) of the area. The following quotations from interviewees #53 and #71, respectively, reflect this:

'We are [in] competition at work, but we are friends. Like I just had a meeting—every time I call a meeting in Thaitown with the people, I can call them all, that's good' (interviewee #53, Thai restaurant owner).

'I got introduced to [Haymarket Chamber of Commerce], I went to a few functions and I thought it gave me a network to a lot of professional people, but not necessarily business opportunities sometimes...in that environment, it's not just about business, it's about meeting people for common interests...' (interviewee #71, Japanese restaurant owner).

Many interviewees attributed the success of Chinatown's culinary industry to the 'clustering effect' (Porter, 1990). First, the geographic concentration of ethnic restaurants in Haymarket/Chinatown can successfully attract a large number of visitors who come there for an 'Asian dining experience'. Second, the diversity of the culinary industry in Haymarket—every restaurant has its own character and is targeting a niche market—means that businesses can complement each other and provide a lot of choices for customers. As interviewees #63 and #57 put it, respectively:

'Australia is a multicultural country...I think it is a good thing to have different ethnic restaurants... If people want Korean food, they can go to a Korean restaurant, if they want Thai food they can go to a Thai restaurant. These restaurants are different, they are not competing but complementing each other, it will make the market more prosperous' (interviewee #63, modern Chinese restaurant owner).

'People like to have many choices: one day they want seafood, the other day they want steak. But it doesn't matter, we have our own speciality and just do our best. If they want seafood, they will come to us because they have confidence in our food. The most important thing is to keep having the people coming to this area, then every restaurant will get a share of the business' (interviewee #57, traditional Chinese restaurant owner).

The agglomeration of Asian restaurants has attracted more people to Haymarket/Chinatown. In turn, more restaurant owners are drawn to Haymarket to open their businesses, due to the high flow of people. This has generated an effect of 'increasing returns' or a 'virtuous cycle' of economic development, further attracting people to the area.

TRANSNATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF CHINATOWN'S CULINARY ECONOMY

Although the above analysis shows that local factors are highly important for the Asian culinary industry in Chinatown, it is worth noting that the transnational dimension (Glick-Schiller, 2011) of the industry should not be neglected. The importance of the transnational network was mentioned by a number of restaurant owners: for example, two interviewees' restaurants were set up with foreign capital from Asia. Apart from transnational capital flow, all interviewees also used transnational labour, such as employing chefs from overseas through the 457 visa scheme, or taking on international students or working holiday makers as waiting staff. Some restaurants also imported specialised ingredients or sauces for their ethno-specific dishes, directly from their places of origin. Last but not least, international tourists and students were major sources of customers for a lot of Chinatown's restaurants, and a few of the restaurateurs interviewed even worked with overseas tourist operators to bring tourists directly to their restaurants.

Boxes 4–7 show a few examples of 'new' restaurants in Chinatown.

7. 'Institutional thickness' refers to the presence of different institutions in a local area which have high levels of interaction among each other and share common goals or interests (Amin and Thrift, 1996).

BOX 4. Szechuan restaurant —the young entrepreneur

‘Our food is more spicy than other restaurants because I want to offer the authentic taste of Szechuan food to our customers’ (interviewee #52, Szechuan restaurant owner).

This Szechuan restaurant was started in 2014 by a third-year university student from China. He opened his restaurant in Chinatown with money from his family in China. The interior design of the premises is colourful, hip and fun. Interviewee #52 said his friend helped him with the interior design to make it fit the taste of his customers, the majority of whom were young people. He said it was difficult to operate a Szechuan restaurant in Chinatown, as there were already a few competitors. He admitted that his business turnover was still not very stable, but he planned to do more promotion on Chinese social media such as Weibo.

BOX 6. Thai restaurant —novelty, changing perceptions of Asian food

‘I start to build the front kitchen for dessert in my restaurant, with the main kitchen at the back. That’s a hard job because I don’t know whether people like it or not, but I like to present [Thai desserts]’ (interviewee #53 Thai restaurant owner).

Interviewee #53 is the owner of five very popular Thai restaurants. She came from Thailand 30 years ago and has been very entrepreneurial in business ventures, always bringing new ideas to her restaurants. The concept of her restaurant is ‘Thai street food’, and she has introduced different Thai desserts to her restaurant in Haymarket/Chinatown. To make Thai dessert a highlight of her restaurant, she deliberately installed a kitchen at the front of the restaurant and let the chefs demonstrate how to make these desserts in front of customers. This business strategy has proved to be very successful, as a lot of people come to her restaurant to buy Thai desserts.

BOX 5. Korean BBQ restaurant —Korean food and Western management

‘Being down in a driveway in the back has a bit more Korean feel, because in Korea there is a lot of alley-ways and things like that’ (interviewee #55, Korean restaurant manager).

Interviewee #55 migrated from Korea with her family when she was two. Now she manages her family’s Korean BBQ restaurant with other family members. Having grown up in Australia, she admitted that she tended to manage her restaurant in a ‘Western way’. However, she was very concerned about the ‘authentic’ tastes of her food, so she bought most of the ingredients from Korean suppliers. Her restaurant is located at the back of a main street, but many customers like it because it gives a more ‘authentic’ Korean feel. Although her business has been very good, she said she was not eager to expand but preferred to keep it as a family-run business.

BOX 7: Up-market Chinese restaurant —sophistication and pan-Asian

‘In terms of food, we do have support from Singapore and Hong Kong. In terms of design, we do have this décor which is very Chinese oriented, but in a way you can tell they are not very typical Chinese decorations. So I believe we reflect a way of very sophisticated mixture of Asia flavour’ (interviewee #72, marketing manager of a luxury fine-dining Chinese restaurant).

Interviewee #72 is the marketing manager of a fine-dining Chinese restaurant in Chinatown, with joint investment coming from Singapore and China and technical support from Hong Kong. The restaurant has spent \$10m in renovation and its decoration has an ‘oriental’ feel. The restaurant includes 14 private dining rooms upstairs, which are particularly popular with Asian corporate clients. The original concept of the restaurant was ‘East meets West’: a fusion of Western and Chinese cuisine. However, in view of feedback from customers, the restaurant has repositioned itself as a restaurant for sophisticated ‘pan-Asian’ cuisine. In addition to traditional and modern Chinese dishes, the restaurant also serves Singaporean and Malaysian food.

8.3 THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Many interviewees pointed out that competition from suburban Chinatowns, such as those of Hurstville, Eastwood and Cabramatta, has caused restaurants in Chinatown to lose a lot of customers. A few restaurateurs interviewed mentioned that 'Chinatown is much quieter than ten years ago'. Unlike in the past, when Chinese people from the suburbs had to travel all the way to Chinatown for Chinese food and groceries, now they can stay in these 'ethnoburbs' and dine at suburban Chinese restaurants that are close to their place of living, with ease of parking (parking has long been an issue in Chinatown) and usually cheaper in price. That said, this does not mean that Chinatown's restaurants have been out-competed by their suburban counterparts. The restaurants in Sydney's Chinatown benefit from its central location in the city, and are still a preferred choice for family reunions and celebrations, business meetings and corporate functions, and for international tourists. The growing Asian population in the city also compensates for the loss of Chinese customers from the suburbs.

Many restaurant owners lamented that the high operational cost of running a restaurant in Sydney had squeezed their profit margin and threatened their business survival. These costs include the rapid increase in electricity, gas and water prices, superannuation and insurance for staff, corporate tax rates, penalty rates, and so on. Early in 2015, there was news of the closure of a popular Vietnamese restaurant chain, MissChu, which had been reportedly 'crippled by its fixed costs', resulting in debt of over \$4m (Thomsen, 2015). This case revealed the pressures faced by many restaurants.

In the past two years, two high-end fine-dining Chinese restaurants were opened in Chinatown (Waitan and China Republic), with the hope of capturing the growing market of affluent Chinese/Asian people. China Republic was closed after operating for about one year, whilst Waitan has had to re-adjust its business positioning and pricing strategy. These less successful attempts to operate fine-dining Chinese restaurants in Chinatown may have suffered from the problem of stereotypical perceptions about Chinatown, as most people tend to view Chinatown as a place for 'cheap eats' and 'cheap labour', and more affluent income groups are inclined to have fine-dining experiences at more established restaurants in the CBD.

As mentioned in the previous section, innovation and creativity have been important factors determining the success of restaurants in Chinatown. However, a few interviewees warned that there is a gradual move away from innovation towards imitation in the sector. Some new restaurants tend to copy successful concepts and directly compete with each other. For example, at least five hot pot restaurants can be found in one small strip in Dixon Street north. Also, the proliferation of franchised food and drink outlets in Chinatown may imply that entrepreneurs prefer to choose an easy way to start businesses, rather than experimenting with novel ideas.

(Photo by Winam, flickr.com, creative commons license 2.0)



9. THE NEW ASIAN CONSUMER

While much research about Chinatown has been conducted with non-Asian tourists who visit Chinatown (e.g., Collins and Kunz 2007; Collins 2007; Collins and Jordan, 2009). Interviews with Destination NSW revealed that interest in visiting Chinatown is growing amongst Asian visitors to NSW, especially visitors from China.

This section reports the findings of a survey of students with Asian background⁸ in Sydney, to look at the consumption pattern of new Asian customers in Chinatown. Due partly to the proximity of Haymarket/Chinatown to a number of universities, technical colleges and language schools, a large number of local and international students, in particular those with Asian background, tend to go to Chinatown on a regular basis.

The 2015 Haymarket Precinct Intercept Study commissioned by the City of Sydney also confirmed that a relatively large proportion (45% daytime, 55% evening) of Chinatown users are below 30 years old (Woolcott Research, 2015). Despite recognition by a number of studies of the importance of youth communities in the cultural economy (Ley, 2003; Russo and Sans, 2007), this specific group of users has not been studied by most Chinatown researchers.

8. 'Asian background' is defined as international students who come directly from an Asian country, or local students who have Asian ancestry. A dominant majority of the students surveyed could speak at least one Asian language, and only 2.8% of the respondents could not speak any Asian language. Indian students, despite their large number in Sydney, were excluded from this survey. This decision was made after pilot testing of the questionnaire with some Indian students, who admitted that they are not heavy users of Chinatown due to 'lack of good Indian restaurants' there.

9.1 THE CHINATOWN USAGE STUDY SURVEY

Students with Asian background are one of the important consumer segments of Chinatown, and can be viewed as 'sophisticated customers' (Porter, 1990) for ethnic restaurants due to their deeper understanding and higher demand for authentic Asian food. Yet, the perceptions and usage patterns of these students are quite different from those of international and national tourists or occasional visitors who come to Chinatown for a short-term, selective 'tourist gaze' (Urry, 2002). Instead, their more frequent and regular usage of Chinatown restaurants can shed light on the everyday practices of 'transcultural place-making' (Hou, 2013).

Due to the subjective nature of consumer preferences and behaviour, a two-step method was carried out. First, a survey was conducted with Asian students across Sydney from October to December 2013, with a view to understand their general usage patterns of Chinatown. Second, two student focus groups were convened in August 2014 with 11 university students, with the aim of obtaining more in-depth qualitative data about their perception and interpretation of Chinatown's culture and identity. The students surveyed were from five major universities in Sydney, including the University of Sydney, the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), the University of New South Wales (UNSW), Macquarie University and Western Sydney University (WSU); Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Ultimo Institute, a technical college; and UTS: INSEARCH, an institute with courses for pre-university students. A total of 362 completed questionnaires were collected, with the top three ethnicities of respondents being mainland Chinese (39%); locally born with Asian ancestry (23%); and Vietnamese (12%). Eighty-eight per cent of respondents were below 25 years old and 41% had been in Australia for less than three years.

9.2 SURVEY FINDINGS

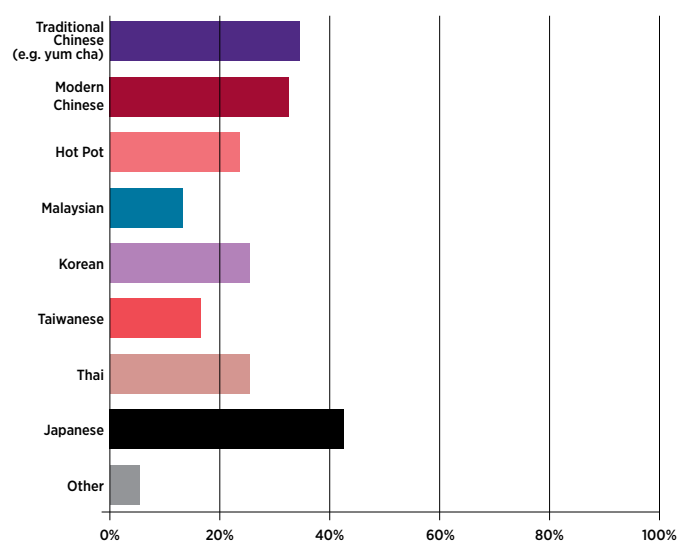
USAGE OF CHINATOWN

Among all the survey respondents, 91.7% stated that they had been to Chinatown and only 8.2% stated that they had never been to Chinatown. Most students visiting Chinatown are repeat users: 73% of them go to Chinatown at least once a month. The most popular activities for students in Chinatown were 'dining or drinking' (82%) followed by 'shopping' (45%) and 'meeting friends' (43%). Whilst Chinatown is generally perceived as a cultural tourist precinct, only about 12% of the respondents went to Chinatown for sightseeing. Respondents from the focus groups also confirmed that students like gathering in Chinatown due to its central location and easy accessibility; the large variety of Asian cuisines of high quality and reasonable price; and the availability of some culturally specific entertainment or activities, such as karaoke with Asian songs, and Friday night market.

There is a popular belief that people go to Chinatown mainly for Chinese cuisine, due to its 'authenticity' in taste. However, the survey showed that Chinatown's most popular ethnic cuisine among the student respondents was actually Japanese (43%), while traditional Chinese (yum cha) and modern Chinese cuisine only ranked second (35%) and third (32%), respectively, in terms of popularity among the diversity of ethnic cuisines available in Haymarket/Chinatown. Interviewee #71, who operates a few Japanese restaurants in Haymarket/Chinatown, explained this:

'Asian people love Japanese food, it's just in trend. It's healthy, it's maybe different to things that they have every day, so they want to have something different' (interviewee #71, Japanese restaurant owner).

The popularity of Japanese cuisine among students may also reflect the widespread consumption of Japanese popular culture (including TV, music, manga, fashion, computer games, etc.) in many Asian countries since late 1970s, particularly among Asia's urban youth population (Iwabuchi, 2002).

FIGURE 8. Food Asian students usually eat in Chinatown

THE CHINATOWN EXPERIENCE

Regarding the experience of going to Chinatown, 90% of the survey respondents answered that they enjoyed going to Chinatown. As expected, 'Asian food' was the top reason for students going to Chinatown, with the terms 'food' and 'restaurants' mentioned 121 times among 243 responses. Most respondents described the cuisine in Chinatown as 'good food', meaning that food that is delicious and high quality. Some also praised the great variety of different Asian cuisines available in Chinatown and described their prices as reasonable.

A second common response concerned 'Asian culture' in Chinatown. Thirty-nine respondents described the culture in Chinatown as being similar to their home towns. They were pleased to see the presence of a large number of Asian/Chinese people in the area and they could speak in their mother tongue with the waiting staff at the restaurants. Below are some of the replies from the questionnaires:

'...because it has the same culture with my home town, so I love to come there'

'a sense of belonging, like going back to China'

'many Asian people makes me feel at home'

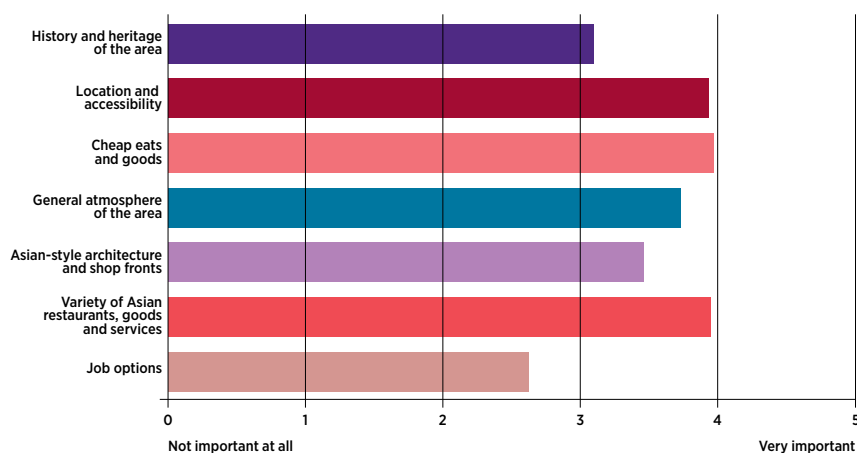
'I'm Chinese, so it's a bit like my home away from home. I'm not there to experience the culture, I'm there, to a certain extent, to just be myself.'

Interviewee #67, a Vietnamese community leader, explained why 'familiarity of culture' is important to these students. He saw it as a way to cope with 'culture shock':

'It's a sense that you're going outside of your area, but you're going somewhere that's a bit familiar, it's not completely different...because you feel different already in Australia...already you got so many things you have to worry about. It would be nice to go somewhere where you...only have to worry about half the things rather than 100% of things' (interviewee #67, Vietnamese community leader).

The third most mentioned reason that students gave for enjoying Chinatown was its 'vibe and atmosphere', which was mentioned 23 times among the 243 responses. Many respondents used the term 'different' to describe the vibe in Chinatown, which is vibrant, busy, exciting, congested with people, noisy and fun—and is similar to the atmosphere in many Asian cities. Some respondents thought this vibe actually marks the difference between Chinatown and the rest of the CBD, and makes Chinatown more attractive. As student #9 put it during the focus group:

'[My] opinion is Chinatown should keep... their own culture...because if you don't like Chinatown [being] noisy, you can go to Darling Harbour or somewhere—this is a major different from the CBD, not like all the quiet places, they don't have any characters' (student #9, Chinese international student).

FIGURE 9. Rating of important features in Chinatown

The findings shown in Figure 9 categorise respondents' opinions regarding what they felt were the most important features of Chinatown. Again, the competitiveness of Chinatown's culinary industry is evidenced in these students' responses: the most important feature of Chinatown was 'cheap eats and goods', which recorded an average rating of 3.96 on a 5-point scale. However, it seems that most students cared less about 'Asian-style architecture and shop fronts' and 'history and heritage of the area', as these two options scored average ratings of only 3.45 and 3.08 points, respectively, and were seen as two of the least important features of Chinatown by the students. This is very different from the general perception that most people go to ethnic neighbourhoods to appreciate the ethnic character expressed in architecture, building forms, shop fronts and local heritage (Collins and Jordan, 2009). Furthermore, it seems that respondents did not appreciate the ancient 'Chinese-style' architecture in Chinatown as they did not perceive it is a true representation of Chinese culture. As student #2 said during the focus group:

'I do find Chinatown very Western-oriented. It's like anything oriental, anything Asian, is kind of lump[ed] together as a category...but it's very tokenistic. Like it's not [how] China actually is. China is very diverse, you can't lump it together, you can't generalise it, but it's there because that is what the Western perception of China and Chinese culture is' (student #2, local student with Chinese ancestry).

WAYS TO IMPROVE CHINATOWN

When asked whether there was anything they did not like about Chinatown, the most frequent response is 'No' (88 out of total 230 responses), showing that most respondents were quite content with Chinatown the way it is. The most common complaint about Chinatown was its 'crowdedness'. These respondents described Chinatown as 'too small', 'too crowded' or 'too noisy' (53 out of 230 responses). The next most common criticism about Chinatown was related to its 'cleanliness', with 46 out of 230 responses describing Chinatown as 'dirty', 'smelly or bad odours' with 'rubbish on the ground'. Similar results were gathered in the Haymarket Precinct Intercept Study (Woolcott Research, 2015).

Although these issues mainly reflect problems in management and control of Chinatown by the local government, the responses also imply that the classic 'enclave/ghetto appeal' of Chinatown—once believed to be a major attraction of Chinatown for tourists (Mayer, 2011)—does not seem to apply to the new generation of Asian students.

Regarding ways to improve Chinatown's attractiveness, the top response from the students was 'make it cleaner', which was mentioned 55 times out of 206 responses. This reflected the seriousness of the issue, which may generate negative impact on the image of Chinatown among these student consumers. The second most frequent response (36 out of 206 responses) was related to 'food' again, including suggestions to increase the number and variety of food restaurants, to improve the quality of the food or services, to lower the prices, and so on.

The third most frequent response was regarding 'extension of Chinatown and better management', which was mentioned 24 times in the survey. This is related to a general perception that only the area of Dixon Street within the two ceremonial gates is considered as 'Chinatown' proper. These respondents felt that the area was too small or too crowded, especially during the night markets on Friday. This increasing demand for space in Chinatown is evidenced by the emergence of Dixon Street north (between Goulburn and Liverpool Streets) as the 'new Chinatown', where the number of restaurants increased from 10 to 23 (up 130%) between 2007 and 2012 (City of Sydney, 2012).

Furthermore, some students also found Chinatown a bit 'old' and 'run-down' and stated they would like to see some effort put in to improve and beautify the area. In addition, some students also stated that they would like to see the 'cultural elements' of Chinatown enhanced (20 out of 206 responses). Many respondents expressed the opinion that Chinatown is 'too commercialised' at the moment, and that it would be nice to enhance the cultural aspect of Chinatown, such as by having more cultural performances or special cultural festivals.



10. CHINATOWN'S HERITAGE AND CULTURE

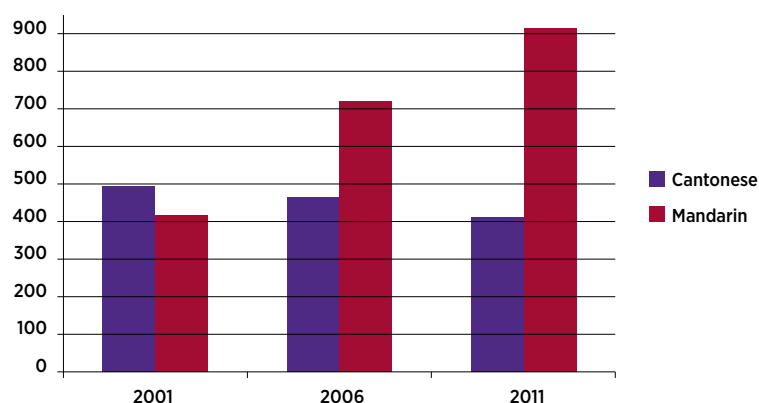
10.1 OLD AND NEW SOLIDARITIES

Before the 1960s, Sydney's China-born population originated predominantly in southern China, the majority belonging to clans from Chung Shan, Ko Yiu, Dong Guan, Sze Yup, He Shan and Zeng Cheng (Williams, 1999). C. Y. Choi (1975) attributed this to the legal sponsorship system through which a new migrant from China was normally sponsored by fellow countrymen to enter Australia. The majority of Chinese in Sydney belonged to the Cantonese-speaking group.

Contemporary China-born migrants no longer originate mainly in the southern provinces, but come from all over China, in particular from large cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. Their migration to Sydney has also changed the social fabric of Sydney's Chinatown, which was once dominated by Cantonese-speaking Chinese community. Data from the 2011 census showed that Mandarin speakers now greatly outnumber Cantonese speakers in Haymarket (Figure 10). This change in the language and culture of Chinatown makes some of the older generation of Chinatown residents feel that they are losing their 'sense of home' and are being compelled to adapt (Ang, 2015).

FIGURE 10. The changing number of Cantonese and Mandarin speakers in Haymarket

(Source: ABS, 2001; 2006; 2011b)



TRADITIONAL CHINESE SOCIETIES

The solidarity of Chinese communities in Chinatown, building on the bonds of migrants' townships of origin through traditional clan societies, also seems to be fading away. Historically, Chinatown was the headquarters for many of these clan societies, founded over 100 years ago. Many traditional clan societies functioned as contemporary community organisations to facilitate integration of new migrants from their own villages into the host country; through means such as providing assistance in finding work and housing, remittance of money, translation, and so on. The clan shops that were opened in Chinatown provided social spaces where early Chinese migrants residing in the city could meet and socialise with each other. These clan societies also owned various buildings in Chinatown.

However, our interviewee #12, a long-time Chinatown community leader, pointed out that these clan societies have long been in decline due to 'generational change' in interests and pastimes, and the social activities organised by these societies were unable to attract young people to participate. Besides, according to interviewee #30, another Chinese community leader, a number of governance issues within these organisations—such as improper financial management, politics within the organisations, inability to secure successors, etc.—have hindered their continuing development.

The declining role of traditional clan societies also implies a loss of 'bonding capital' and 'relationships of trust and reciprocity' (Putnam, 2000, p.22) in Chinatown.

The diminishing role of Chinatown as the centre for Chinese culture and society in Sydney is evidenced in the City of Sydney's Floor Space and Employment Survey (2012), which showed that Chinatown only retains a relatively small community and social capital sectors, accounting for 3.0% and 3.3% of the total business and employment count, respectively (City of Sydney, 2012). Table 12 shows the current addresses of the major historical Chinese societies and the more recently established clan societies in Sydney. The decentralisation trend of Chinese community organisations from Chinatown means that Chinese people no longer go to Chinatown exclusively to attend social events hosted by these organisations, as the early Chinese migrants did. This also affected the possibility of 'public familiarity'—one of the conditions to develop social capital and initiate social networks—among the Chinese themselves (Li and Blokland, 2014). As our interviewee #12, a long-standing Chinatown leader said, the community is not so tight-knit now, or in his words 'it's fractional...with different nationalities coming in'.

TABLE 12. Current addresses of major historical and newer Chinese societies

HISTORICAL CHINESE SOCIETIES	ADDRESS
Goong Yee Tong (for Dong Guan people) (founded 1850s)	50 Dixon Street, Haymarket, NSW 2000
Luen Fook Tong (for Zeng Cheng people) (founded 1850s)	52 Dixon Street, Haymarket, NSW 2000
Chinese Masonic Society (founded 1850s)	18 Mary Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010
Yiu Ming Hung Fook Tong (for Ko Yiu people) (founded 1880)	417 Sussex Street, Haymarket, NSW 2000
Sze Yup Society (founded 1898)	2 Edward Street, Glebe, NSW 2037
Chinese Youth League (founded 1939)	10 Dixon Street, Haymarket, NSW 2000

EXAMPLES OF MORE RECENTLY ESTABLISHED CLAN SOCIETIES (DATE OF INCORPORATION*)	ADDRESS**
Hainanese Association NSW (founded 1957, incorporated 1991)	409 Forest Rd, Bexley, NSW 2207
Australian Hokkien Huay Kuan Association (founded 1982, incorporated 1994)	9 Church Street Cabramatta, NSW 2166
Chung Shan Society of Australia (founded 1983, incorporated 1990)	50 Albion Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010
Shunde Association of Australia (incorporated 1993)	Sydney, NSW 2000
NSW Chinese Hakka Friendship Association (incorporated 1993)	203 Commonwealth Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010
Australian Chinese Teo Chew Association (incorporated 1994)	15 Park Road, Cabramatta, NSW 2166
Australia Guangzhou Association Inc. (incorporated 1994)	Roselands, NSW 2196
Australia Foshan Association (incorporated 2010)	Redfern, NSW 2016
Australian Fellowship of China Guangdong Association (incorporated 2013)	Sydney, NSW 2000
Australian Fujian Association (incorporate 2015)	12 McGill Street, Lewisham, NSW 2049

*Registration on Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) as of April 2016 (ASIC, 2016)

**Business address registered on Australian Business Register (ABR) as of April 2016 (ABR, 2016)

In fact, similar to the Chinese societies, Chinese Australians themselves have moved away from Chinatown and settled in the suburbs, at least since the 1960s (Choi, 1975). Different from the situation in New York's Chinatown in Manhattan, where large numbers of long-time Chinese families are still living in rent-controlled apartments in Chinatown (Tabor, 2015), current residents of Sydney's Chinatown are mostly made up of newly arrived migrants from Asia and a more 'transient' population such as international students, business people, or workers on short-term visas who are living in the recently built high rise apartments nearby. As student #11, who is a resident of the Peak Apartments, said during the focus group:

'I really think there is a lack of kind of community...because in the building that I live—I've lived there for five years and I don't think I see most people. Like most people here are new, they come and go every half a year or a year and so for me, ...I envy people that feel like they have a community' (student #11, local student with Chinese ancestry).

NEW CHINESE COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

With the increased Chinese migrant population in Australia, a large number of newer Chinese community organisations have emerged. Interviewee #50, a Chinatown community leader estimated that there are over 300 Chinese community organisations dispersed widely across greater Sydney. The affiliations within these organisations are no longer based on township of origin, but also on geography, ethnicity, gender, business sector, profession, political stand, religion, hobbies, art and culture, and other interests. These new community organisations have not only taken on some of the roles formerly played by the clan societies, such as services for new immigrants (e.g., information on employment opportunities, housing, etc.), but also complement mainstream public social welfare services by focusing on the special needs of a particular ethnic group (e.g., Chinese-speaking child care, elderly care, medical and legal services).

The Australian Chinese Community Association (ACCA) and Chinese Australian Services Society (CASS) are now the two biggest Chinese community organisations in Sydney.

In contrast to the nature of traditional clan societies, which aimed to achieve in-group solidarity, contemporary Chinese community organisations also 'reach out' to build networks within mainstream society. As our interviewee #30, leader of several Chinese community groups, explained:

'There used to be lots of negative aspect[s] in the past, the way that the Chinese used to be portrayed... I'm trying to build bridges between the Chinese community and the mainstream... I try to promote and show some positive things' (interviewee #30, Chinese community leader).

Although these Chinese community organisations may have achieved a 'bridging effect' (Putman, 2000, p.22) and developed networks within mainstream society, it seems that solidarity between the large number of Chinese community organisations is harder to come by. Our interviewee #25, a City of Sydney community development manager, said, 'I don't see there is much collaboration, they just see them as individuals...there is lots of competition [for funding] between these different groups.' In order to foster better collaboration between different Chinese community organisations, the Sydney Chinese Services Interagency (SydCSI), a networking group, was set up in 2009 to provide a platform for community organisations within the City of Sydney LGA to get together, through attending its bi-monthly meetings and organising joint events.

Furthermore, the operation of these Chinese community organisations has relied heavily on funding support from government, and recent funding cuts by the Liberal government has also led to questions about the sustainability of such a large number of community organisations. The City of Sydney council, for example, has applied a different strategy to support these organisations. Instead of providing funding for individual events organised by these organisations, Council now aims to support capacity-building and strengthen organisations' governance skills, so that they can explore alternative financial sources, such as fundraising, or learn to use their resources more effectively.

10.2 SYDNEY CHINESE NEW YEAR FESTIVAL

Originating in Chinatown, the Sydney Chinese New Year Festival is one of the biggest cultural festivals in Sydney. Over the years, the Festival has grown from a small community event in its early days to what is now claimed to be the biggest of its kind outside China. The transformation of the Festival is symptomatic of cultural changes in Chinatown.

Sydney's Chinese New Year Festival was founded by the local Chinese community, based in Chinatown, in 1996. With limited resources, but with great community spirit, the community put together a Chinese New Year market on Dixon Street and a small parade, watched by a small audience of 100. Later, the City of Sydney got involved, taking over the organisation of the Festival in 1999. Since then, with the management of a professional team from the city council, the Festival has grown to a much bigger scale. Today there are over 70 associated events—including different kinds of performances, exhibitions, street festivals and tours—held as part of the Festival, which lasts over three weeks. The Festival has also grown in popularity, attracting hundreds of thousands of local and international visitors each year.

The Twilight Parade has been the major highlight of the Festival, starting on the last night of the Festival at 8pm, travelling through George Street, Sussex Street and Hay Street, and ending with a fireworks display at 10pm at Darling Harbour. Although a large number of grassroots community organisations have participated in the parade, it is more than a community event; as our interviewee #64, a City of Sydney senior program manager, explained. He said, 'The parade is very directed, there's community involvement, but there's a framework around that.'

For example, the 2014 parade was made up of 56 colourful, illuminated floats inspired by 'Horse'—the animal zodiac symbol for that year. Marching with the floats were over 3,000 performers, some dressed up in traditional costume. These performers came mostly from a great variety of organisations in Sydney, including Chinese clan groups and community organisations, local and Chinese community schools, Asian dance troupes, dragon and lion dance groups, martial arts groups, marching bands, hip-hop dance groups, pop bands, and so on. Over 100,000 people—locals and international visitors, Asians and Westerners alike—lined both sides of the road to watch the parade. Our interviewee #64 explained:

'We create a big tourism-driving vehicle that the community can be involved in... And we try and make sure that we're making them look as good as they possibly can. So, to be community content, but not look like a community event, but like a really professional, high-end event' (interviewee #64, city council senior program manager).

Nowadays, festivals are usually used strategically for urban regeneration, city branding and attracting tourists; and as engines for social cohesion (Kong and Yeoh, 1997; Richards and Palmer, 2010). This is also the case with the Sydney Chinese New Year Festival. For example, the participation of non-Chinese ethnic groups such as Korean, Vietnamese and Thai groups in the Twilight Parade has helped present Sydney's image as a 'multicultural global city'. In addition, during the parade, traditional Chinese cultural symbols are juxtaposed with Western-style theatrical displays and cultural symbols with other Asian origins. This implies that the Festival has moved away from displaying 'essential' Chinese culture, towards hybrid Asian cultures.

FIGURE 11. Cultural symbols used in the Twilight Parade

(Photo by Bradjward, flickr.com, creative common license 2.0)



Chinese cultural symbol (dragon)

(Photo by Ashley Ringrose, flickr.com, creative common license 2.0)



Western cultural symbol (carousel horse)

(Photo by Liminophor, flickr.com, creative common license 2.0)



Korean cultural symbol (hanbok dress)

The 'Chineseness' of the Festival has also been instrumental to the development of cultural and economic diplomacy between Australia and China. With the support of the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC), since 2006, hundreds of delegations from different Chinese provinces have been sent to Sydney to take part in the Festival; and business forums have been held involving both business delegations from China and members of the local business community. It was reported that cultural exchange between Hebei and Sydney since delegates from Hebei attended the 2010 Festival has opened doors for deeper economic cooperation; and a new friendship agreement has recently been signed between Sydney and Wuhan, the capital city of Hebei (Wade, 2015). In this sense, the Festival not only helps strengthen cultural links between Australia and China, but can also leverage the intangible asset of 'Chineseness' to create tangible economic benefits for the wider community.

From 2016 the Sydney Chinese New Year Festival is undergoing a major redesign due to the closure of George Street for the construction of light rail, and the redevelopment of Darling Harbour.

10.3 CULTURAL POLITICS: CHINATOWN OR ASIATOWN?

CONTROVERSY OVER THE NAMING OF THE SYDNEY CHINESE NEW YEAR FESTIVAL

In the past few years, the naming of the Sydney Chinese New Year Festival has become a contentious issue among different Asian ethnic groups that also celebrate Lunar New Year. In particular, there have been petitions from the Korean and Vietnamese communities requesting that City of Sydney change the name to the Lunar New Year Festival. Our interviewee #67, a key advocate of the petition explained: 'To say "Chinese", I think is very exclusive and excludes the Vietnamese and the Korean community in Sydney.' Interviewee #2, a Korean community leader and champion of Koreatown, added:

'For two or three years, I had a problem to persuade the Korean people to participate in this night because they are "Chinese" here, Chinese Twilight Parade, Chinese Lunar New Year Festival.'

However, the proposed name change has met with strong objections from the Chinese community: many interpret it as losing 'their' festival to other cultures, and feel it is unfair to the Chinese community. Our interviewee #50, the original initiator of the Chinese New Year Festival said, 'the Chinese in Chinatown [were] the people that laid the foundation ... we started off the Chinese New Year Festival.' Interviewee #27, former director of the Asian art gallery in Chinatown, explained that from an artistic point of view, changing the Chinese New Year Festival to the Lunar New Year Festival may pervert its unique character, saying, 'I would probably say that making it generic and turning it into a Lunar festival is just not smart; it will actually put offside a whole bunch of people'.

That said, our interviews also showed that controversy over the naming issue cannot be simply generalised in terms of 'cultural politics' among different ethnicities: even within the Chinese community, there are diverse views regarding the naming of the Festival. Neither can these contested views be interpreted as generational differences, as we found that some older Chinatown community leaders have quite open attitudes towards the change of name, whilst some Chinese university students groups have organised petitions against the name change.

Nevertheless, given all the considerations, including the dominance of the Chinese community's participation in the Festival and parade and the involvement of the Chinese government, the City of Sydney has decided to retain the name as 'Chinese New Year Festival', as a tribute to its historical context. As Mayor Clover Moore said, 'This festival is something that's continued on over the last 19 years... [It] started as the Chinese New Year Festival, and now it continues as the Chinese New Year Festival' (Burgess, 2015). In an effort to resolve this dilemma, Council sometimes uses both names at the same time: for example, with wordings such as 'Welcome to the Chinese New Year Festival, celebrating the Lunar New Year'; or referring to the Festival as the 'Chinese Lunar New Year Festival'. Council has also allowed other ethnic groups to organise their own lunar new year celebrations. For example, in 2015, a street festival called 'Lunar Street' was held in Chinatown, Koreatown and Thaitown to allow the city's Korean and Thai communities to showcase their different cuisines and cultural performances to visitors.

COEXISTENCE OR CONVERGENCE OF ASIAN CULTURES?

Although Chinatown is a place to bring together different Asian cultures, the cultural politics among different ethnic groups, as reflected in the naming of the Chinese New Year Festival, shows Chinatown's different Asian cultures remain distinct, and are far from merging into a 'pan-Asian' culture.

Nevertheless, our interviews with different champions and stakeholders from Chinatown, Thaitown and Koreatown showed that cultural interaction among different ethnic groups is more common at a personal level. For example, many Thai people have Chinese friends or business partners, a lot of Chinese go to Koreatown for Korean food, and sub-contract agreements are formulated between Thai and Korean education agencies. However, at the more institutional level, it seems that the Chinese, Thai and Korean communities seldom interact with each other. In addition to the language barrier, interviewee #6, a champion for Thaitown, said, 'There is no formal kind of forum [where] they sit down at the same table and talk.'

Our interviewees in general support the branding of different ethnic locations by the local council—which will be good for marketing purposes—and indeed, they insist that each place should retain a separate identity. A Chinatown community leader said:

'If you do not put efforts into identifying Chinatown, [then] you lose identity... You can have...Chinatown here, you can have Thaitown here and you can have Koreatown here, that is OK, but make it identifiable ...[W]hen people or visitors come... there should be a bit more sort of identity'(interviewee #50, Chinese community leader).

The business organisations managing the development of Koreatown and Thaitown also intend to develop independently from Chinatown. As organisation members stated:

'There is a distinct nature which much be realised: that Korea is not China and this is not Asia-town' (interviewee #3, champion of Koreatown).

'Thaitown is quite new...we started to do it step by step. The first step is that we have to register as an association...then we will join the Thai people together in a community...Then the next step is to go and see our next door neighbour's community' (interviewee #53, a champion of Thaitown).

This intentional separation of different ethnic 'towns' is in fact contrary to the mixed nature of these areas, each of which consists of a diverse range of businesses and shops. However, the desire for separateness noted above may imply a degree of wariness between different Asian ethnic groups, for historical reasons and/or the foreign policy stances of individual Asian countries. Therefore, instead of forging an integration of different Asian cultures, the major trend will likely be multiple flows of Asian cultures converging in Chinatown: a hybridity of Asian cultures co-existing and interacting in Haymarket, as envisioned by interviewee #3, a champion of Koreatown:

'I think that one of the great aspects of Australia is that we get an emerging culture like Korea showing itself for its own strength, alongside other cultures. Neither culture is seeking to possess each other' (interviewee #3, a champion of Koreatown).

(Photo by L, flickr.com, creative commons license 2.0)



BOX 8. History of Sydney's Koreatown

The official location of Sydney's Koreatown is in Pitt Street. It emerged in the late 1990s after the signing of a working holiday agreement between Australia and South Korea in 1995. Since then, over 20,000 Koreans have come to Australia on a working holiday visa each year, reaching a peak in 2008-09 when nearly 40,000 Korean working holiday makers came to Australia (DIBP, 2011). These young people who came to Sydney were used to city culture and stayed in apartment buildings in the area. Soon, Korean businesses including restaurants, grocery shops and health and beauty stores were opened along Pitt Street to cater for these young people. Other Korean professional businesses, such as education agencies, accounting and legal firms and colleges established by Korean migrants were opened in nearby office buildings. In 2011, Sydney's Korean Business Association proposed to the City of Sydney that a Koreatown be established; and in 2012 a directional sign for 'Koreatown' was erected at the corner of Pitt and Liverpool Streets, as formal recognition of the Korean community in the area. The first Koreatown Lunar New Year Festival was held in 2012, and other proposals for Koreatown include the development of a Korean-style street food market in the laneways of Central and Wilmot Streets.

BOX 9. History of Sydney's Thaitown

Sydney's Thaitown is located in Campbell Street, continuing up from Pitt Street to Goulburn Street. It emerged in the early 2000s when the number of Thai international students in NSW grew rapidly from around 3,500 in 2000 to over 16,500 in 2014 (AEI, 2000; 2014). A few former Thai international students started Thai restaurants in Campbell Street. Later, a variety of Thai businesses opened in the area, including video and mobile phone shops, currency exchange outlets, clothes shops, massage and beauty parlours, and so on; attracting more and more international Thai students who felt comfortable living in this area. In 2012, following the visit of the Thai Prime Minister to Sydney, the Thai Consulate in Sydney represented the Thai community to discuss the establishment of a Thaitown with the City of Sydney. In 2013, three directional signs for 'Thaitown' were erected, on the corner of Campbell and Pitt Streets, the corner of Campbell and George Streets and the corner of Pitt and Goulburn Streets. Thaitown in Haymarket is the second Thaitown to be officially recognised in the world (the other one is in Los Angeles). The first Thaitown Lunar Street Festival was held in 2015 and Thai Town Business and Thai Community Association was incorporated in 2016 (ASIC, 2016).

11. SYMBOLIC AND MATERIAL EXPRESSIONS OF CHINATOWN

Anderson (1990), describing the ‘self-orientalisation’ of the Chinatown refurbishment in the 1980s, comments that ‘making the area more “Chinese” seemed to mean making the area appear more consistent with the architectural motifs and symbols of ancient China’ (1990, p. 50). This section examines how traditional and modern Chinese cultures are manifested through the material expressions of a number of art forms in Chinatown: namely through the Chinese Garden of Friendship in Darling Harbour, a classical Chinese garden; the New Century Garden, a new urban public space in Thomas Street; and the laneway project, *In Between Two Worlds*.

11.1 THE CHINESE GARDEN OF FRIENDSHIP

The Chinese Garden of Friendship, in Darling Harbour, is in fact a relatively new garden, with only 25 years of history. The Garden was officially opened in 1988 to mark the sister-city relationship between Sydney and Guangzhou, at the bicentenary of Australia.

The Garden was designed by a government institute from Guangdong, modelled on the traditional southern Chinese private garden. The landscape and architectural design of the garden is based on the Taoist philosophy of balancing two oppositional forces—Yin and Yang—to achieve harmony; and Feng Shui principles were applied (e.g., to decide the direction of the entrance). The Garden also has all the key structures and elements of a typical Chinese garden. It is divided into five distinctive areas, including the main entrance, water pavilion, mountain area, pine and rock forest, and teahouse; and each is marked by different traditional Chinese-style buildings, gates and bridges, and even plants from China (e.g., lychee tree) (Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority [SHFA], 2013). Further, traditional Chinese symbols are used in the Garden. For example, at the Hall of Longevity near the main entrance, there is a ‘dragon wall’ featuring two dragons of different colours with a pearl in the middle. The two dragons represent Guangdong and New South Wales, whilst the pearl symbolises their bonding (see Figure 12).

In short, the Chinese garden represents the ‘essential’, ancient Chinese culture and aesthetic, similar to the aesthetic that was applied to Chinatown’s refurbishment in the 1980s. This self-contained Chinese garden in ancient architectural style is at odds with the modern buildings and convention centre that surround it; but is viewed as a drawcard for visitors—a ‘secret garden’ (SHFA, 2015a) in the urban jungle. Its ‘oriental style’ seems to be the garden’s biggest appeal, particularly to Westerners: the Garden has attracted over 193,000 visitors in 2014-15 (SHFA, 2015b, p.7) and the ‘majority of them are European and Western tourists’ (interviewee #73, senior landscape architect of the Garden). Visitors have had very positive experiences, claiming the Garden is ‘sensational’. Inside the Garden, there is a dress-up shop where visitors can dress up in Chinese imperial costume and take photos in the Garden. Interviewee #73 added, ‘it’s so popular with the Western visitors’.

(Photo by OZinOH, flickr.com, creative commons license 2.0)



BOX 10. History of the Chinese Garden of Friendship

The idea for a Chinese garden was first put forward by a Chinese community leader and Deputy Mayor of Sydney, Henry Tsang, in the late 1970s; he proposed to then-Premier Neville Wran to build a garden to celebrate Sydney's Chinese history. However, the project did not come through until the early 1980s, after Tsang and the local Chinese community had facilitated a relationship between the New South Wales and Guangdong governments. This period coincided with the development of the Darling Harbour master plan; and 1 hectare of land at its current site in Darling Harbour was allocated to the Chinese Garden of Friendship, due to its proximity to Chinatown. The original design came from the Guangdong Landscape Garden Planning and Design Institute, a government organisation in China, but construction work was undertaken by Leighton and local landscape architects and the garden was funded by the NSW government. China supplied materials such as roof and tiles, the dragon wall, bridges, and special materials that were unavailable in Australia; and sent craftsmen, carpenters and roof tilers to Sydney to work with the local builders. The construction work began in 1986 and was completed in 1988. The Garden is under the management of the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority.

FIGURE 12. The 'dragon wall' in the Chinese Garden of Friendship

(Photo by A. Wong)



11.2 IN BETWEEN TWO WORLDS—RECONCILING TRADITION AND MODERNITY

Whilst the Chinese Garden of Friendship represents the 'essential' ancient Chinese aesthetic, in the past few years new artworks have appeared in Chinatown, applying different symbols, colours and materials. These depart from the 'essentialist' oriental representational mode employed in the 1980s, and have resulted in multiple and less traditionalist symbolic and material expressions of Chinatown in the 21st century. These public art works also show how Chinese tradition can be reconciled with modernity.

In Between Two Worlds is a public art installation located in Kimber Lane. The project originated in response to the remit of the City of Sydney's laneway revitalisation program in 2008, and was also run as an early-start project of the Chinatown Public Domain Plan (2010). The artist selected to create this art work was Jason Wing, a street artist with both Chinese and Aboriginal heritage.

Kimber Lane was originally a service lane, mainly used for garbage collection and as a loading area for nearby businesses. The Kimber Lane project had two objectives: first, to create an art work which could have interest and intrigue of its own; and second, to create an alternative route to Dixon Street. One of the specialties of this project, as described by the artist Jason Wing, was to 'respond to the environment'. Our interview with the artist revealed that he sat at the site for a week, until he finally understood 'how it was used, how it wasn't used, what the challenges were', considering 'how do we move people, how do we direct people through this laneway, how do we change the traffic flow?' (interviewee #51, public artist). This approach was in contrast with the design of the Chinese Garden of Friendship, which was undertaken in China without considering the coherence of the design with the surrounding environment.

The symbols and colours used in Wing's art work are very different from the classical Chinese style used in the Chinatown refurbishment of the late 1980s. The artwork is comprised of three elements: a wall mural, floor murals, and suspended 'spirit' figures. The image of 'auspicious clouds' is used in the floor and wall murals, and symbolises heaven and good luck in Chinese culture. According to the artist, he got the inspiration from his experience of standing at the very top of the sacred mountains in Shaanxi Province in China, where he saw the cloud surround his body and felt a spiritual presence. He wanted to bring that feeling back to Sydney, to make Kimber Lane a happy and spiritual place. In addition, 20 suspended 'spirit' figures hang over the lane: these figures are silver in the daytime and glow blue with LED light at night. According to the artist, the 'spirit' figures reference both Chinese and Aboriginal culture.

Traditionally, red and gold symbolise prosperity and luck in Chinese culture, but Wing deliberately chose a different colour—blue—to make his art work stand out, as 'due to over-saturation, [red and gold in Chinatown] actually becomes visually invisible' (interviewee #51, public artist). However, as Meethan (2001) points out, symbols can carry different and even contradictory meanings, and therefore 'they often act as the focus for contestation' (2001, p. 27). Wing's colour choice has led to some controversy within the Chinese community, in particular from older generation Chinese, as the colour blue is normally associated with death in traditional Chinese culture.

Explaining his rationale for the choice of this untraditional palette, Wing said:

'There's enough elements to pay respect to the traditional Chinese elders...but also the artwork is not 100% for them. It is also for the next generation, also for the international audience, it's for local international students' (interviewee #51, public artist).

He added:

'We are trying to reach a new demographic, a future demographic. So whilst I'm using traditional imagery, the colour is a symbol for... not-traditional Chinese culture' (interviewee #51, public artist).

Whilst stating that his art work aims to celebrate Chinese culture in Chinatown, the Chinese culture he refers to is not the essentialised, Orientalist Chinese culture, but a more fluid, less determined or pre-defined Chinese culture, which has merged with many other cultures, such as local Aboriginal culture and international cultures. He refers to it as a mixed 'Asian culture'. In his opinion, a modern Chinatown in Sydney is defined by a growing influx of international students, middle-class business people and international tourists. As these people are 'a transient sort of touristy community', he adopted an approach that was 'more open and a bit more flexible and a bit more abstract...to try and cater for all these huge influences' (interviewee #51, public artist).

Wing's art work in Kimber Lane has proved to be very successful: not only has it been featured in numerous travel and art websites and magazines, it has also won awards, as ASPECT studio, the lead consultant for the installation of the art work, won the 2013 Australia Award for Urban Design from the Planning Institute of Australia. The City of Sydney has decided to make Jason's work a permanent installation, due to its popularity (City of Sydney, 2015b).

FIGURE 13. *In Between Two Worlds*, by Jason Wing

(Photo by Paul Patterson, City of Sydney)



11.3 NEGOTIATING SPACE IN THE NEW CENTURY GARDEN

Another public art project that will potentially symbolise Chinatown's transformation in the modern era is the New Century Garden, which is currently under construction in Thomas Street. The project originated in the context of public consultation regarding the City of Sydney's Chinatown Public Domain Study (2009), which revealed that Chinatown was in need of more pedestrian space and better connection between Thomas Street and the heart of Chinatown in Dixon Street (City of Sydney, 2009). A new public space was an essential part of the Chinatown Public Art Strategy (2010) developed by the former Asian Australian Artists' Association [4A] Centre for Contemporary Asian Art (4A Gallery)'s director, Aaron Seeto, and commissioned by the City of Sydney. In this strategy document, major curatorial principles for Chinatown were outlined, including that artists should be able to shape public domain plans, rather than their work simply being given a decorative role, and that the new public domain work should pay respect to Chinatown's unique cultural history, whilst being in tune with contemporary Asian culture. In Seeto's words, 'contemporary Asian culture around the world is constantly evolving and this outwardly representational mode of Asian culture and future should embrace this dynamic' (Seeto, 2010, p.1).

To gather ideas for this new public space, a public forum was held in 2011 at 4A Gallery. Following a tender process, Brisbane-born Chinese-Australian artist Lindy Lee was selected to design the new public space. Expressing her vision, she emphasised that 'the way I put my project, is there needs to be a porosity between an exchange'. Her idea of the New Century Garden is not that of an enclosed garden, but an open space that can draw different people and bring dynamism. She notes that one of the biggest distinctions between other Chinatowns internationally and Sydney's Chinatown is that the latter is exceptionally dynamic and always changing. As she explained:

'You've got that ...student population, [and] student populations are always ever-changing and dynamic and require different things. Then you've got Central Station, which of course means there is always a flood of people to-ing and fro-ing, so that's fantastic. Then you've got the traffic that comes in from...just up the road where Town Hall is. So ... Chinatown ... is really at the intersection of so many places' (interviewee #46, public artist).

Apart from Chinatown's physical flow in terms of people and traffic, in Lee's eye, the most distinctive characteristic of Chinatown is the inflow of different Asian cultures:

'Chinatown is very dynamic because... this membrane is porous ...we have a bit of Koreatown, we've got a bit of Thaitown...so that makes it even more exciting to me, so not to preserve it as just this yum cha place, but this place where lots of Asian cultures hang about' (interviewee #46, public artist).

Lee also made it very clear that her work does not aim to gentrify Chinatown, but to preserve its 'grunge with grace':

'What we all love about Chinatowns is the fact that they are a bit grungy because there's life, there's market life, there are the not-so-fancy restaurants...so this is not about gentrifying... this is what it's always been like, this is why we love it...with grunge, with grace' (interviewee #46, public artist).

Lee's vision for the New Century Garden is also in line with the City of Sydney's objectives regarding the preservation of Chinatown. As our interviewee #47, Council's design manager for the New Century Garden, said:

'It's definitely not being gentrified, and in terms of this project and making this space work, we're very conscious about not gentrifying, we are very conscious of not making it a mall, we want these businesses to stay' (interviewee #47, city council design manager).

Lee's New Century Garden borrows a number of elements from the design of traditional Chinese gardens. However, unlike the Chinese Garden of Friendship, which employs essentialist, ancient Chinese aesthetic principles, the New Century Garden adopts an avant-garde approach in the interpretation of these cultural elements. As interviewee #78, the landscape architect of this project, explained, 'cultures move on...we actually try to draw on what we feel are the essence of those cultures and to interpret them in a contemporary way'. For instance, a moon gate is a typical architectural structure of Chinese gardens, which functions as a pedestrian entrance to the garden. In the New Century Garden, the moon gate is not a circular garden wall opening: instead, splashes of molten bronze inlaid into the paving form a giant circular pattern of seven metres diameter, to represent a moon gate. These splashes of molten bronze have been created by Lee using the 'flung ink' method, a meditation/calligraphy practice based on Taoist principles.

FIGURE 14. Illustration of the Moon gate for the New Century Garden

(Source: City of Sydney, 2014)



FIGURE 16. Illustration of the suspended catenary discs

(Source: City of Sydney, 2014)

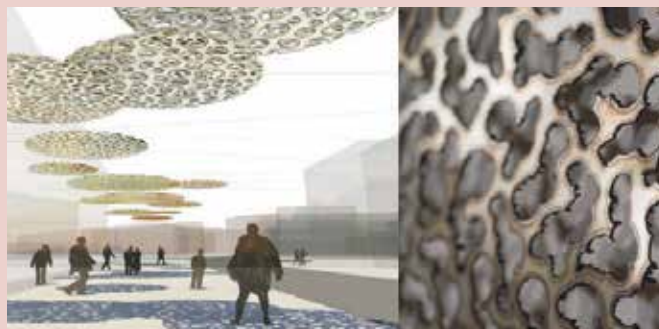


FIGURE 15. Concentric circle paving and boulder seatings

(Photo by A. Wong)



FIGURE 17. Scholar rock sculptures

(Photo by A. Wong)



Similar to traditional Chinese gardens, Taoist and Buddhist philosophies are employed in Lee's design, providing her with 'something to relate to in terms of trying to find my own sense of ancestry and belonging' (interviewee #46, public artist); and Taoist and Buddhist icons and motifs are inscribed in the materialities of the New Century Garden. For example, a pattern of concentric circles, a symbol of 'connection' in Taoist and Buddhist principles, is translated into the special paving used in the site. The elements of fire and water—two important symbols in Chinese mythology—are incorporated in different material elements in the New Century Garden. As the artist explained, 'fire and water are very important elements within Taoism, but they are also the predominant weather experience of Australia' (interviewee #46, public artist).

In terms of fire, Lee's design includes several large suspended catenary discs as a means to provide shade from the sun. These circular metal screens feature holes made by burning. Lee described the effect of these discs on the site as 'feeling the rhythm of fire'. In addition, several rock sculptures have been installed at the site, representing scholars' rocks in traditional Chinese gardens. These rock sculptures were also made by burning the metal at very high temperature, and symbolise that 'things are transformed by fire' (interviewee #46, public artist).

As for the water element, Lee originally designed a water feature, 'the cup floating stream', which made reference to the ancient Chinese garden drinking game. However, due mainly to the practical difficulties of implementing a water feature, including building and ongoing maintenance costs as well as concerns over safety compliance and health risk minimisation, this idea was replaced with a metaphorical representation of a serpent-like 'stream' in the paving. Interviewee #47, council design manager of the New Century Garden, explained how the paving pattern is used to create 'a sense of movement':

'We are playing with our larger granite pavers and sets, so you see it as a pattern, and then there will be a slight depression, so when it rains you might see the water move across' (interviewee #47, city council design manager).

The construction of the New Century Garden also highlights the importance of negotiating space and responding to the Chinatown site. The original plan for the Garden entailed a full closure of Thomas Street; however, negotiation with Road and Maritime Services (RMS) based on traffic volume modelling has resulted in traffic being retained in the section between Hay Street and Ultimo Road, and a shared zone with timed road closure in the section between Ultimo Road and Thomas Lane. Nevertheless, a widened footpath on the western side of Thomas Street and the plaza created in the shared zone will still give pedestrians primacy in Thomas Street and improve connection to the core of Chinatown. Both Lee and the landscape architect we interviewed showed their preferences for this option over a full closure of the road. As they said, respectively:

'It's not a quiet space and it's not meant to be...people are coming and going. But that's got a kind of energy, so we don't want to get rid of that by closing the street' (interviewee #46, public artist).

'We were always reluctant to close this off completely because part of the life of this street here is really about people stopping and unloading and doing this and that and the other. We didn't want to be in a situation where we were forcing this place to change. We didn't want to go down the path of gentrifying it. We wanted to be able to keep that really gritty working nature of this street, rather than turning them all into just tourist places' (interviewee #78, landscape architect).

Another example of negotiating space is the installation of the suspended catenary discs at the site. Instead of hanging the discs from nearby buildings, the heritage listing of the Market City building and the importance of protecting its facades from any blockage has prompted the artist to seek an alternative solution from the engineers and architects, to design specially made poles and wires to hang the discs. The consequence of this is that the installation of these catenary discs will be delayed, as they require a separate development approval from Council, due to the different structural elements involved. Our latest update from Council's design manager stated that installation of the catenary discs has been given a green light from Council and that the tender process for fabrication and installation of the artwork is currently underway. Rather than seeing all these negotiations as challenges to the project, Council's design manager noted, 'The compromises have actually consolidated our design and the elements' (interviewee #47, city council design manager).

The creation of the New Century Garden demonstrates how 'tradition' can reconcile with 'modernity'. The concepts behind this new public space not only revisit oriental elements characteristic of a traditional Chinese garden; in addition, the artist and landscape architects have taken further steps to contemporise these elements by inscribing them into various creative material forms whilst responding to the Australian context and spatial dimension of the site. In this way, the New Century Garden exemplifies the 'connectivity' between tradition and contemporary life. In Lee's own words, in the promotional video for the New Century Garden:

'In the design of this garden, what is important to remember is, tradition and contemporary are not in opposition. What's really important is [that] they are part of the continuum, and that continuum allows the future to unfold with vitality' (Lee in City of Sydney, 2015c).

12. INTER-ASIAN URBANISM AND THE RE-CONFIGURATION OF CHINATOWN

12.1 CHINATOWN AND THE RESURGENCE OF SYDNEY'S CBD

The modernisation of Sydney's CBD started in the 1960s (O'Neill and McGuirk, 2003). During that period, glass-walled high-rise buildings, used as corporate headquarters for local and international corporations such as Lend Lease and IBM and various government departments, began to appear. This trend, by and large, has continued from the 1980s to the present, regardless of various economic cycles of property boom or bust. As the economic restructuring of Sydney based on neoliberalisation and financialisation processes has continued, the function of Sydney's CBD to host corporate headquarters and global financial and producer services has been further strengthened. According to the latest data from the City of Sydney, over 21,500 businesses are located in the city, including a large number of Australia's top 500 companies. Among the 437,000 people working in the city, 22% were employed in finance and financial services and nearly 18% were employed in professional and business services (City of Sydney, 2015d).

The resurgence of Sydney's CBD has also reversed the post-War suburbanisation trend of cities. As McNeill (2011) noted, a number of important processes are involved, including renewed interest in density and tall buildings, and the return of residential living to city centres (McNeill, 2011, p. 161). According to the City of Sydney's 2012 Floor Space and Employment Survey, the total internal floor space in the city amounted to over 35 million m². Whilst 47% of this space was devoted to businesses, particularly the finance sectors, professional and business services and tourism, over a quarter (26.6%) was used for residential purposes (City of Sydney, 2015d).

Associated with the trend towards high-density city living is a process called the 'Manhattanisation'⁹ of cities, in which older buildings are converted to new apartments, and new international shops, restaurants, cinemas, laneway bars and cafes, late-night eateries and 24-hour supermarkets are opened; leading to a drastic change not only in the physical fabric but also the social dynamics and cultures of the city (Commins, 2015). This trend also resembles the living style of many big cities in Asia. Sydney is following this 'Manhattan/Asian trend'. As a report published by Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) Australia in 2014 noted, 'support drivers are historically low residential mortgage rates; a long term under-supply of dwellings in the Sydney metropolitan area; rising office market vacancy and declining effective rents, particularly secondary grade buildings; and rising levels of off-shore interest in the Sydney residential market on both supply side (as developers) and the demand side (as investors)' (JLL, 2014, p.1). According to the report, in the Sydney CBD, 19 office buildings across the city have been earmarked for conversion into residential buildings, serviced apartments or hotels—five by Asian developers from China and Singapore—and these conversions are concentrated in the mid-town precinct in central Sydney (JLL, 2014, p.2).

In the midst of the intensification of skyscraper development in Sydney, driven by both commercial interests (landlords and developers) and a shortage of development sites in the city, the City of Sydney has initiated a series of policy initiatives through its *Sustainable Sydney 2030* strategy (2008), which aims to achieve a balance between developing a vibrant, multi-use city centre with high-rise development and preserving fine-grain urbanism, including the city's heritage and urban fabric (McNeill, 2011). This is supported in part by the 'City of Villages' policy, which aims at promoting the specific character of different 'villages' in the city by supporting small shops and services; as well as Council's Laneway Revitalisation Strategy (2008), which aims at reinvigorating under-utilised laneways through encouraging the development of public art and small bars (Six Degree Architects, 2008).

Demographic consulting firm .id has forecast that the population in the City of Sydney LGA will reach 280,964 people in 2036, an increase of 36.8% from 205,339 people in 2015 (forecast.id, 2015). Increasing demand for city living and the recent trend to convert older properties into high-rise apartments has revived the debate about preserving Sydney's Chinatown, a distinctive low-rise precinct in the city. Located in central Sydney and within walking distance to Sydney's commercial centre and Town Hall, Chinatown has also attracted interest as a site for high-rise property development in the city in the past decade.

The following sections discuss the potential impacts of different forms of urban development on Chinatown, including high-rise residential development, changing retail consumption patterns, and the growing significance of the night-time economy.

9. The Oxford Dictionary defines 'Manhattanise' as 'to make similar in character or appearance to Manhattan or its inhabitants; specifically to fill (a city or skyline) with tall buildings so that it resembles Manhattan Island' (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016).

12.2 CONTRADICTIONARY DEVELOPMENT AND POTENTIAL HOMOGENISATION: TENSION BETWEEN HIGH-RISE AND LOW-RISE DEVELOPMENT

Sydney's Chinatown has long been subject to urban transformation. In contrast to stereotypical images of what a Chinatown should look like, Sydney's Chinatown is characterised by a hybrid mix of tall buildings and the fine grain of low-rise commercial space. The first wave of urban development in Chinatown took place between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s, and included the construction of several multi-storey shopping malls, such as Dixon House (1983), Harbour Plaza (1984) and the Sussex Centre (1992). These buildings were within the regulatory height limit of 35 metres, and between six and eight storeys high.

In 1996, the City of Sydney announced new planning controls for the city centre, including Chinatown. Under the new Central Sydney Local Environmental Plan (LEP), the floor space ratio (FSR)¹⁰ in Chinatown was increased from a range of between 4:1 and 6:1 to between 6:1 and 9:1 (Yencken, 1997). The LEP also abolished the Conservation Area provision for Chinatown and introduced a height restriction of 50 metres, equal to approximately 15 to 17 storeys. However, the new FSR and height restriction drew some complaints from a group of property owners in Chinatown known as the 'Haymarket Property Owners Association'; because the new plan allowed the city centre to build residential development up to a FSR of 15.5:1, but the maximum FSR in Chinatown was only 9:1. Furthermore, although the plan increased the general FSR in Chinatown, in some areas, such as east of Sussex Street and George Street, the FSR was actually decreased from a maximum of 12.5:1 to 9:1.

The property owner group in Haymarket argued that the new plan would disadvantage Chinatown, causing loss of land value (which was partly linked to building heights) and hampering the area's future development potential. The group even considered legal action under the Race Discrimination Act, as they believed Chinatown should be treated the same as anywhere else in the city. As one of the representatives of the group said:

'To depress [sic] floor/space ratios and building heights showed the council to have a concept of Chinatown as "cute old fashioned"...as quaint, which is a subjective view of how the area should evolve or look... the only reason for that is because they want to see Chinatown remain as it is, isolated because of ethnicity, because it is a Chinatown' (Susskind, 1996).

The City's Lord Mayor during that time, Frank Sartor, refuted the criticism on the grounds of racial discrimination, and insisted that the new planning controls were meant to curb over-development in the urban fringe and preserve Chinatown's unique character. Besides, this kind of control principle was regarded as a 'normal form' (Yencken, 1997) by urban planners, as it was a typical city control strategy based on gradient, in which the central core had the highest FSR and the city fringe had the lowest FSR. It was also in line with the city's policy to conserve different 'special areas' by imposing height restrictions, which equally applied to other areas of the city—such as Martin Place, Millers Point and Macquarie Street—on the grounds of their special character, heritage value or relationship to parks and waterfronts.

A second wave of high-rise development in Chinatown began during the late 1990s and early 2000s. During this period, high-rise residential developments were constructed in addition to modern multi-storey retail spaces. Examples are Market City and the Peak Apartments (1996); Harbour Garden Towers and Number One Dixon Shopping Centre (2000), as well as World Square, a mixed-use complex that includes the Meriton World Tower and the Ernst & Young Tower (2004). Whilst the Harbour Garden Tower is within the 50-metre height limit, other developments outside 'Chinatown proper', such as the Peak Apartments at 2 Quay Street and World Tower at 91 Liverpool Street, are very tall skyscrapers. The former is 168 metres high with 46 floors, and the latter is 230 metres high, with 75 floors. Both also set records as the tallest residential building in Sydney at the time of their construction.

More recently, there has been a third wave of high-rise development in Chinatown. As mentioned earlier, this wave of high-rise development is mainly fuelled by local and offshore Chinese capital. Examples are The Quay Apartments, developed by Ausbao Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of Beijing Capital Development Group, at 61-79 Quay Street, with two towers of 16 and 17 floors; and Greenland Centre Sydney, developed by Chinese state-owned enterprise, Greenland Group, at the corner of Bathurst and Pitt Streets. At 235 metres high and 82 storeys, the Greenland Centre will be the tallest residential building in Sydney. Other urban projects within the Chinatown neighbourhood include Urbanest, a 52-metre high, 16-storey student accommodation building at the corner of Thomas and Quay Streets, completed in 2010; the renovation of the Chinatown Centre at 411 Sussex Street, 36 metres high and also completed in 2010; and two proposed commercial developments, on the site of the Commonwealth Bank at 691 George Street (52 metres high), and on the site of the City South Substation at 29-31 Ultimo Road (53 metres high).

10. Floor space ratio is the ratio of a building's total floor area to the size of the land upon which the building is built (site area), expressed as a factor of 1. The FSR control provides a guide to how much floor area can be built on a particular site. For example, 4:1 means the total floor area of all floors in all buildings constructed on the parcel of land must be no more than 4 times of the total area of the land.

In addition to the developments mentioned above are the high-rise Hing Loong Apartments, at 49–53 Dixon Street in the heart of Chinatown, being built by Chinese developer War Hing. The building, currently under construction, has 15 floors, pushing towards the maximum height limit of 50 metres in the area. This is similar to recent high-rise developments in the heart of Vancouver's Chinatown, since the local government there relaxed height restrictions in 2008 (Mickleburgh, 2013; Klassen, 2015). Unlike Vancouver, where the development has met with resistance from the local Chinatown community, our informants in Sydney did not seem concerned that this tall building would overwhelm the traditional look of Chinatown—which is characterised by historical warehouse buildings of two to three floors in height—but saw it in a more positive light. As our interviewee #33, the former president of the local business chamber said,

'I'm a firm believer of progress, I think things can't stay the same because the world around us and the people around us don't stay the same, they change. And so I'm very supportive of Chinatown growing, Chinatown changing, improving and looking at opportunities' (interviewee #33, former president of the local business chamber).

In particular, the designer of the Hing Loong Apartments building has taken into account the aesthetics of the area and incorporated Chinese cultural characteristics into the building's exterior. Designed by Allen Jack+Cottier Architects, an architectural firm that has been involved in various residential and commercial projects in Australia and China, one of the special design elements of the building is an exterior featuring large open screens with a 'cracked' effect, referencing traditional Chinese window design (Figures 19 and 20).

Apart from the 'look and feel' of Chinatown, another more imminent concern over high-rise development in Chinatown is the impact of gentrification on the local neighbourhood. As cases in North America have demonstrated (such as in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Vancouver), as well as in London, the proliferation of luxury residential developments in Chinatowns has led to rapid

surges in property value and rents, causing many traditional small businesses, which cannot afford high rents, to move out. These businesses are then replaced by more high-end, non-Chinese businesses or retail chains, resulting in the destruction of the distinctive characteristics and dynamics of the place (Agence France-Presse, 2013; Klassen, 2015; Boffey, 2015).

As most of these Sydney high-rise developments are recently completed or still under construction, their impact on Sydney's Chinatown is largely unknown. Nearby, Lend Lease's redevelopment of Darling Harbour, adjacent to Chinatown, is currently underway. Among many concerns regarding this development is the height of the residential complex known as Darling Square, being developed on the site of the former Sydney Entertainment Centre, which will be up to 40 storeys high and will house over 5,000 residents. It is expected that once these residential towers in Darling Harbour are completed, the complex will generate more pressure for Chinatown, given that the sense/experience of 'scale' is likely to shift in city south, and Chinatown's height restrictions will seem more and more incongruous and difficult to justify to property developers wanting to build upwards. At present, Chinatown's height restriction of 50 metres is still in place, but the City of Sydney is currently reviewing height and density limits across the CBD, whilst development proposals in Chinatown will be assessed on a building-by-building basis.

Our interviews indicated that business owners in the area seemed to welcome the high-rise, high-density development in Darling Harbour. As interviewee #57, owner of a Chinese restaurant in Chinatown, said:

'If the population increases in the city, first their spending in the city will increase, second, more people will come to the city to visit their friends and families. If they have visitors, they may go out to have a meal and this will be good for our restaurant, too. It's because they won't go to the restaurant beneath their apartment all the time, they may come to Chinatown, so I think the re-development of Darling Harbour will bring positive impact to us' (interviewee #57, Chinese restaurant owner).

Interviewee #77, a senior lending manager of a local bank in Chinatown, remarked that since many of the property buyers of the residential towers in Darling Harbour are actually 'Asians and Chinese', he foresaw that Chinatown would not experience a drastic change in upcoming years, as demand for Asian food and products would continue and many businesses in Chinatown either own their premises or have signed very long leases. However, since residents in Darling Square are likely to be a more affluent group, they will probably demand more high-end products and services:

'The old Chinatown will probably not change over the next five or ten years. You'll find all these restaurants, small ones—once the Darling Harbour development comes in, it will change. The restaurants will be more up-market' (interviewee #77, local bank senior lending manager).

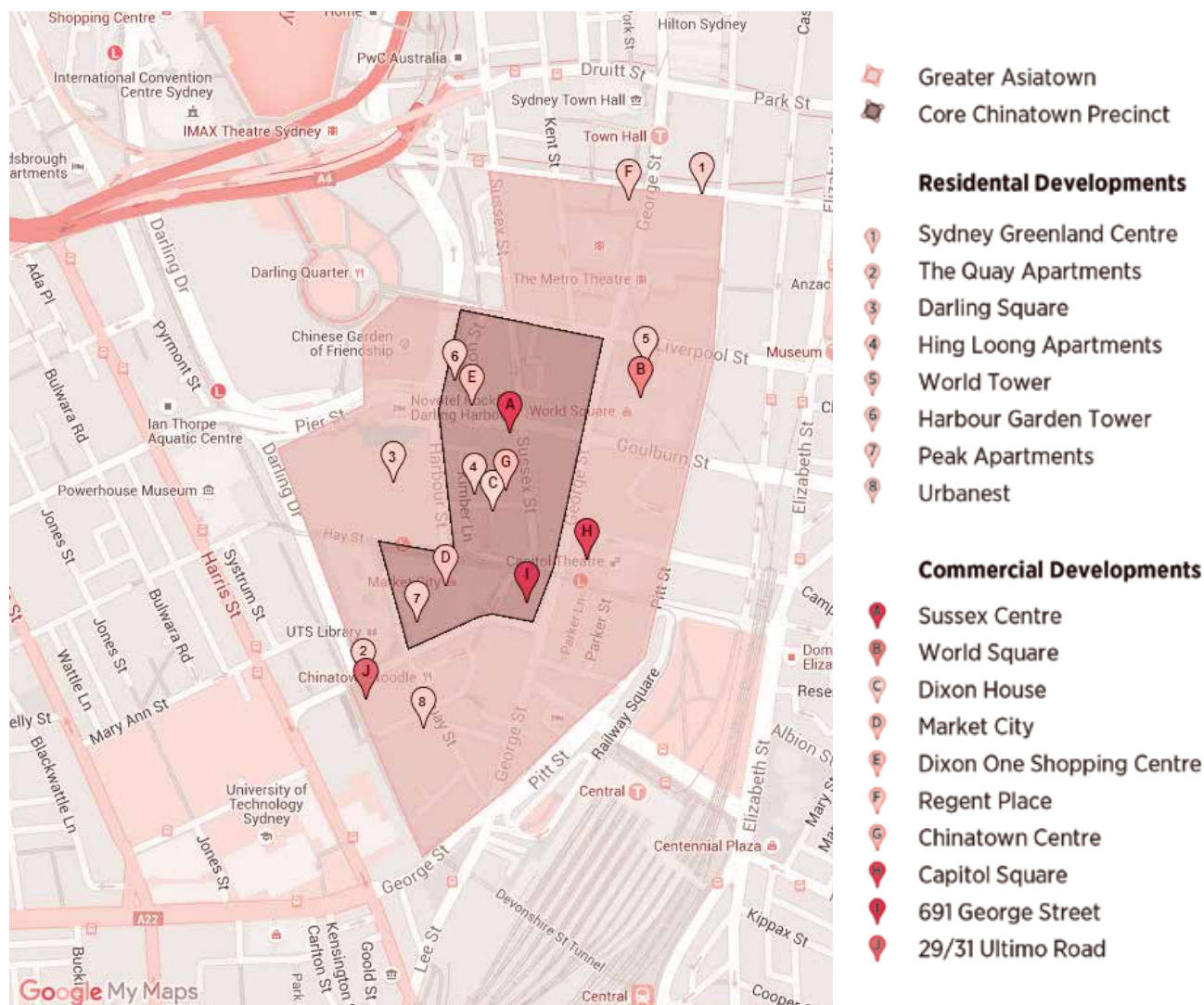
A written response to our inquiries by the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (SHFA)—the government agency managing the area—has summed up the potential effects of the Darling Harbour redevelopment project on Chinatown:

'The re-development of Darling Harbour through the International Convention Centre Sydney (ICC) and other activities that it catalysed is likely to increase the number of people movements through the precinct. The mixed use commercial and residential developments at Darling Square will increase the local population of workers and residents. This is likely to drive increased retail and food and beverage purchases. Paddy's market should be ideally placed for grocery and retail shopping. With improved connections between Chinatown and Darling Harbour, as part of the overall precinct design, it is likely that people will move freely between the two precincts. It would be reasonable to anticipate that Chinatown records an increase in visitation'¹¹.

11. Written response to the research team from Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority received on 28 May 2015.

FIGURE 18. High-rise residential and commercial developments in greater Chinatown/Asiatown

(Source: Google Maps)

**FIGURE 19. Exterior of Hing Loong Apartments**

(Photo by A. Wong)

**FIGURE 20. Traditional Chinese window at Suzhou Museum, China**

(Photo by Bryan Liu, flickr.com, creative commons license 2.0)



12.3 MAINSTREAMING OF 'ASIANNES'

Literature on the rise of the 'cultural economy' has emphasised the broad relationships between place and consumption (Gibson and Kong, 2005), whilst 'creative city' literature notes the important role of consumption in driving gentrification and local restructuring (Florida, 2003). The retail sector, both in terms of objects sold and the design of shop fronts/shopping centres, exhibits characteristic cultural signs and symbols (Zukin, 1995). Retailing is the most important sector in Chinatown. According to the City of Sydney's 2012 Floor Space and Employment Survey, the retail and personal services sector was the largest sector by both number of businesses (29%) and workforce (37%) in the core Chinatown precinct, and recorded rapid growth in the five years to 2012 (City of Sydney, 2012). This section discusses the retail sector in Chinatown, including the proliferation and mainstreaming of Asian-themed shopping malls in the city.

TRADITIONAL RETAILING IN CHINATOWN

The retail space at the core of Chinatown consists of a hybrid of shops at street level, 'vertical' retail space at high-rise shopping malls such as Dixon House and the Sussex Centre, and interior retail space inside narrow arcades. The most visible cultural character of Chinatown's retail precinct is the use of Chinese character signage or bilingual signage on the shop fronts along Dixon Street. However, apart from this, most frontages along Dixon Street are quite generic and bland. Some interviewees complained about the growing homogeneity of the shops there. Many traditional shops, such as Chinese/Asian grocery stores and Chinese delicatessens have disappeared, as people no longer have to travel to Chinatown for these products. Instead, there has been an increase in numbers of tourist souvenir shops, speciality eateries for regional Chinese/Asian cuisines, and Asian dessert outlets. In addition, several ground-level shops have been used as offices for real estate agencies or as property showrooms. As renowned Australian architect, Philip Cox, once commented, the retail space in Chinatown is 'losing vibrancy':

*'I think Haymarket has got a lot to do to rejuvenate itself. I think it's losing its character in the development around it and it's looking very, very tired in my opinion. About 20 years ago I think there was a much more vibrant interesting Chinese feel about Haymarket. I think it's been dumbed down by some of the retail even here, some of the smaller shops that cater for food and all the interesting Chinese food and delicatessens and things like that have vanished.'*¹²

Inside the air-conditioned shopping centres in Dixon Street, including both older shopping malls such as Dixon House and the Sussex Centre and newer developments such as Number One Dixon Shopping Centre, are a large number of small shops. For instance, the average business space in Dixon House is only about 27 m² (City of Sydney, 2006). The major tenants of these shopping malls are fashion boutiques selling low- to medium-priced fashion and apparel imported from China/Asia, or professional or personal service companies such as Chinese doctors, beauty parlours, Chinese-speaking accounting firms, legal firms, migration agents and Chinese tutoring or coaching colleges; as well as small food outlets in the shared-space food courts. The majority are targeting an Asian/Chinese clientele.

Li (2014) outlines the different design concepts of Chinese cities in his book, *Understanding the Chinese City*, among which is the principle of 'maximum quantities' based on the philosophy of 'abundance' (Li, 2014; McNeill, 2014). Citing the example of Hong Kong, Li explains that the rationale behind this principle is to 'do more with less, create more floor with less land' (2014, p. 28) and that this design principle aims to maximise retail space for functional and utilitarian purposes without much consideration of visual impact or aesthetic quality. No wonder that some student consumers we interviewed have commented that the layouts of these shopping malls are 'confused' and too 'cluttered'. Interviewee #50, a Chinatown community leader also revealed that many businesses in these shopping malls 'are not doing that well'.

12. Philip Cox spoke at the Haymarket Chamber of Commerce's Asia Business Panel on 18 September 2014.

Some of these shopping malls are facing problems with (lack of) management: for example, a few students in our focus groups voiced their concerns over the hygiene of the food courts in Harbour City Plaza, whilst one of the tenants of the Number One Dixon Shopping Centre complained about direct competition between similar shops and restaurants, due to the strata ownership of the shopping centre.

In addition to shopping malls and street shops, another distinctive feature of Chinatown is its interior retailing, within arcades such as Sussex Arcade and East Ocean Arcade. However, this retail form does not seem to work very well, as most of these arcades had large amounts of vacant space, probably due to low pedestrian traffic and relatively little frontage. In order to rectify this situation, Sussex Arcade has recently converted several ground-level retail shops into a restaurant, with a more inviting street-level entrance and proper signage.

Despite the restrictions on retail space mentioned above, a few shopping malls within the greater Chinatown area have achieved a higher level of success, including Market City and the World Square Shopping Centre. These shopping centres have departed from the 'maximum quantities' principle found in traditional shopping malls in Chinatown, instead following newer conceptualisations of retailing based on meeting customers' demands and enhancing customers' retail experiences (Meyer-Ohle, 2010; Rees, 2008), as a response to changing customer behaviour and consumption practices in the city. Whilst these two shopping centres each feature a pan-Asian theme, different strategies are applied in order to differentiate each of them from competitors.

ASIANISATION OF SHOPPING MALLS: LOCALISATION AND ADAPTATION

Market City

Market City has been owned and managed by Jen Retail Properties, a company based in Queensland, since 2000. The shopping centre sits above Paddy's Market; it has a monthly traffic of about one million people and an annual turnover of \$109 m. Located in a heritage-listed building at 9–13 Hay Street, Market City has a total floor space of 15,000 m². Unlike the above-mentioned shopping malls, which mainly target Asian/Chinese customers, the majority of Market City's customers, according to a customer exit survey conducted by centre management in 2009, were English speakers (approximately 80%) and predominantly female (over 60%). Chinese speakers only accounted for around 20% of total customers (Market City, 2009).

The design and layout of Market City is quite different from traditional shopping malls on Dixon Street. Our interview with the centre manager revealed that he was aware of major trends in shopping mall design in Asia, and deliberately brought some of the concepts to the renovation of the shopping mall. The centre is 'bright and airy'; it has a glass ceiling to capture natural light, and white is used as the main colour of the interior. This resonates with another design principle of Chinese cities known as 'antiseptis', based on the philosophy of 'prudence', in which white colour is used in public space in modern Chinese cities such as Hong Kong to imply a high standard of urban hygiene and cleanliness (Li, 2014, p. 125). As well, the size of the centre is quite large, evidenced by stores such as the Thai Kee IGA Supermarket—a very large Asian and Western grocery store on level 1 and the anchor tenant of the mall since its inception—and at the factory outlet retail space on level 2. In terms of tenant mix, retail shops have been carefully chosen with a view to broadening the customer base. For example, level 1 features youth fashion and apparel and has a 'hip' feel. Level 2 is mainly tenanted by factory outlets for major local and international brands; whilst level 3 has a food court and a very large Chinese restaurant, and an entertainment centre including laser tag arena and bumper cars, which target male and family customers.

According to our interviewee #32, the centre manager, Market City is focusing on providing a unique shopping experience for its customers so as to encourage repeat visitation and higher spending. Rather than following the 'Westfield model', the shopping centre wants to portray a 'pan-Asian', multicultural image, and create an 'Asian' feel for its customers by leveraging its location in Chinatown. For example, Market City's logo has been redesigned to incorporate a 'carp circle', which represents 'wealth' in Chinese symbolism; a water feature has been installed at the entrance of the mall; and the newly opened Commonwealth Bank has been designed according to Feng Shui principles.

The centre management has also sought to promote the shopping centre through cultural festival and events. For example, during moon festival, the shopping centre has displayed different types of moon cakes at its centre court and handed out free moon cake to visitors. The centre also worked with the Chinese Youth League to organise lion and dragon dances at the shopping centre during Lunar New Year. As a result of these efforts, the centre has recorded steady growth in revenue despite the general decline in Australia's retail market in the past few years.

FIGURE 21. Decoration of Market City during Lunar New Year

(Photo by aa440, flickr.com, creative commons license 2.0)



World Square Shopping Centre

World Square has been managed by Brookfield Office Properties since 2009. The shopping centre is part of a mixed-use complex development including residential towers (World Tower and Hordern Tower), office spaces (Ernst & Young Tower and the ATO Centre) and a hotel. Located in the block bounded by Goulburn, George, Liverpool and Pitt Streets, the complex includes 795 apartments, over 91,000 m² of office space, and 800 hotel rooms and serviced apartments. The shopping centre began operating in 2005 and occupies the lower ground level, upper ground level and level 1 of the complex.

According to the centre profile and performance report produced by Urbis in 2011, World Square Shopping Centre has a total floor space of 15,975 m², and an annual turnover of \$202.9m, of which \$197.9m was accounted for by retail shopping. The most outstanding retail performers were Coles Supermarket, JB Hi-Fi (electronics) and Priceline Pharmacy (2011, p.14). In terms of customer profile, the shopping centre has a relatively high proportion of young (under 30) and Asian customers, broadly reflective of the demographic characteristics of city south. Of the annual traffic of 25 million people, one third were local residents, one third were local workers and the remaining one third were students and international visitors (Urbis, 2011, p.18). According to a customer survey conducted in 2009, 68% of customers were native English speakers whilst 22% spoke an Asian language at home (Environmetrics, 2009). World Square has been named the number one shopping centre in Australia based on turnover per square metre per annum. Its Coles supermarket also has the largest per-square-metre turnover in the country (Commins, 2015).

FIGURE 23. Suzann Victor's public art work, *Skin to Skin*, at World Square

(Photo by Clement, flickr.com, creative commons license 2.0)



The success of World Square also demonstrates the mainstreaming of Asian retail culture in Australia, despite the design of the centre being hugely different from the traditional Asian shopping malls, which are characterised by small shop space and high density. For example, the overall design of World Square has a contemporary feel and the layout features a lot of open space, which is freely accessible by visitors and can be used for alfresco dining. Although World Square has an 'Asian' orientation, rather than using traditional Chinese/oriental symbolism, the centre adopted a more subtle approach to express its 'Asian' theme. For example, in 2005, it commissioned a large-scale public sculpture from Suzann Victor, an artist from Singapore. The public sculpture, *Skin to Skin*, is made from a large number of light-responsive stainless steel plates, resembling the image and form of a Chinese dragon.

The Asian orientation of World Square can also be observed from its tenancy mix. In addition to its highly successful Coles Supermarket, there is a large Miracle Asian supermarket with an Asian bakery at the lower ground level. In addition, the centre's management has been active in introducing novel Asian food trends into the shopping centre, such as the very popular Taiwanese Din Tai Fung Restaurant on level 1. The signature design of the restaurant chain is an open kitchen behind a glass wall, where kitchen workers wearing white masks in white uniforms prepare the food. Again, this is an expression of the hygiene described in Li's (2014) book on Chinese cities (McNeill, 2014). Other eateries in World Square also serve a wider variety of authentic Chinese, Japanese and Korean cuisines. According to our interview with centre management, these Asian-oriented businesses 'tend to outperform the benchmark' (interviewee #9 World Square centre management). A more recent attempt by the shopping centre to introduce a new Asian food trend is the replacement of the 1,000-square-metre World Square Pub with an up-market contemporary fine-dining Chinese restaurant, China Republic, on its upper level in 2014; as a means to attract affluent Asian customers. Interviewee #9, a member of World Square management, spoke of the rationale behind this arrangement:

'We want the discerning Asian consumer and we want the Asian emerging, immigrating and visiting business person to be able to dine in this precinct. So the investors of the future come into the country; when they are in Sydney, there is where we want them to come' (interviewee #9, World Square centre management).

Unfortunately, China Republic failed to achieve the outcome that centre management expected, as the restaurant was closed after about one year of operation, despite the owners spending nearly \$7m on the lavish renovation of the premises. Interviewee #60, who is a director of a Chinese restaurant, explained that the restaurant focused on a narrow market segment, but the customer volume was not high enough to sustain its operation. Further, there had been a mismatch between the high-end restaurant and the consumption patterns and spending power of the demographic in the area. As interviewee #60 explained:

'As you can imagine, the disposable income of people in the city north is different from the people in the city south. Casual dining is mainly in city south, you can get a meal as cheap as \$8 to \$10. But if you charge a meal for \$80 per person, will the people come to city south for a meal like that? This is a challenge' (interviewee #60, director of a Chinese restaurant).

In spite of this, centre management had been relatively successful in bringing in Asian brands and lifestyle services to the shopping centre for the younger generation. Examples are Blush Cosmetics, a company focusing on Japanese and Korean skin care and cosmetic products; Kagui, a footwear store originally from Hong Kong, targeting the young female market; as well as a number of nail and beauty parlours and massage shops influenced by Asian 'indulgent' culture. As centre management summed up, regarding the Asian-style female focus of the centre:

'We look at girls...they are 18 today and they are going to be 23 in five years, they are going to start to earn the decent money, they are going to be influential decision makers...this market is indulgent, high-earning-capacity, highly mobile, very very bright, and they will require a certain standard' (interviewee #9, World Square centre management).

12.4 CHINATOWN'S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

Associated with the resurgence of city living in Sydney is the growing demand for more vibrant night life. However, a study by world-famous Danish architect, Jan Gehl, in 2007 showed that Sydney's night-time economy was relatively under-developed in comparison to other major cosmopolitan global cities, as most parts of the city were very quiet in the evening. The only exception was city south, where night-time activities and entertainment can be found, especially in the area around Chinatown (Gehl Architects, 2007). The study's recommendation to improve Sydney's night life by creating lively streets at night and promote mixed-use areas based on late opening of restaurants, shops and street markets, inspired the *Sustainable Sydney 2030* strategy (2008), which included the night-time economy as one of the strategies employed to reach the objective of developing a 'diverse Sydney'.

Subsequently, the City of Sydney has published a strategy paper entitled *Open Sydney* in 2011. In this paper, the economic contribution of the night-time economy—which had generated an overall annual turnover of \$15.1 billion and an annual tax revenue of \$457m to the local council in 2009—was acknowledged. Major setbacks for developing an active and vibrant night life in the city were outlined as follows:

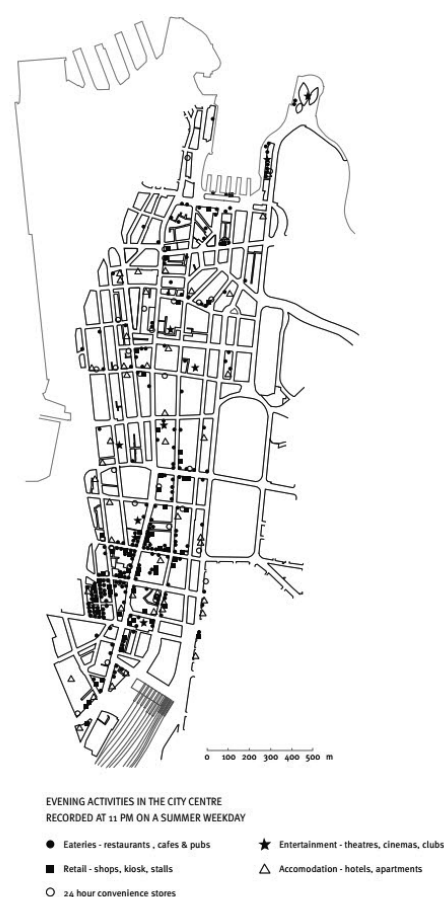
'In Sydney, options beyond bars, clubs and pubs after 6 pm are limited. Opportunities for shopping are especially sparse and this is reflected in transport data, with only 9.7% of all weekday trips from 6 pm to 6 am for shopping' (City of Sydney, 2011, p. 12).

The strategy proposed in the paper was summed up by our interviewee #35, Council's manager of night-time economy:

'If we make the city more attractive, more inviting, more accessible to people at night, if we give them more options, then we will have a wider demographic of people accessing the night time economy' (interviewee #35, city council night time economy manager).

FIGURE 24. Distribution of night-time activity in Sydney CBD

(Source: Gehl Architects, 2007, p. 36)



The strategy paper also outlined a very detailed action plan including over 250 actions to develop the city's night-time economy. In this policy context, Chinatown is identified as one of the potential areas to develop the night-time economy, based on the area's mix of retailing, food and drink, entertainment (such as karaoke) and night markets with a more family focus. This model resembles the night life found in many Asian global cities, which is largely different from Western night life based on pubs and night clubs. As interviewee #35, said:

'The growing Asian demographic expects the city to open at night. People in Singapore, Hong Kong, they go to shops at night to have great food and their shops won't close until 10 or 11 pm' (interviewee #35, city council night time economy manager).

DIVERSE MODALITIES OF THE NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

Food and drink are the biggest attractions of Chinatown's night-time economy, in particular between 6pm and 10pm. Most restaurants in the area (except the food court) close around 11pm. Some Chinese restaurants are open much later, such as East Ocean and Golden Century, which open until 2am and 4am, respectively. According to our interviewees, their late-night customers are mainly workers from the hospitality and restaurant sectors, as well as students and tourists (interviewee #60 and #57, owners of Chinese restaurants). The performance of their late-night businesses varies from time to time, due mainly to relatively light traffic in the area after midnight.

With regard to retailing, major shopping malls in the Chinatown precinct, such as Market City and World Square, have longer opening hours than the rest of the city. For example, Market City closes at 8pm, whilst some retailers at World Square open till 7pm. Although there is no legislation to restrict retail shops' opening hours in New South Wales, our interviewee #32, manager of Market City, said that he did not see much demand for night shopping, and that the concept of night shopping did not seem to work very well in Australia as 'this is not in our culture'. Also, due to lack of promotion, many people are unaware of the longer operating hours in these centres. Within the greater Chinatown precinct, there are also a number of karaoke bars operating till 2am. The karaoke bar concept is originally from Japan. Singing equipment, a light meal such as Japanese izakaya (Japanese tapas) and soft drinks and alcoholic are provided, and it is a very popular entertainment among young people and families. Although karaoke bars were only introduced into Sydney in the early 2000s, it is getting more and more popular among both Asian and Western populations in the city.

The Friday night market can be regarded as one of the most popular night-time events in Chinatown. Operating every Friday from 4pm to 11pm, the night market draws a very big crowd of mostly young people to Chinatown. An intercept study by Woolcott Research showed that 71% of respondents surveyed in Chinatown on Friday night had visited or intended to visit the night market and over 60% of the respondents surveyed during the day indicated that they were aware of or had been to the night market (Woolcott Research, 2015). Whilst the students who participated in our Chinatown usage survey tended to express a positive view towards the night market—commenting that its atmosphere, which is busy and noisy, has an authentic Asian market feel—the Dixon Street business operators that we interviewed generally had mixed feelings towards the market. Some made the criticism that the market had blocked the entrances of their stores or competed directly with their businesses; others commented that the night-market stalls are disorganised and lack variety, as most of them sell Asian-style street food, small gifts or fashion jewellery imported from China/Asia.

This could also explain why the night market failed to attract frequent or regular visitors, as the intercept survey showed that 70% of respondents visited the night market less than once a month (Woolcott Research, 2015). Our interviewee #62, an Asian restaurant owner, suggested that the management of Sydney Chinatown's night market might borrow from Singapore's Chinatown market (see Yeoh and Kong, 2012 regarding planning of Singapore's market) to better plan and organise the market layout and carefully select stall operators to showcase the best food or products representing Sydney's Chinatown. That said, it has also been suggested that this approach to 'sanitise' Chinatown may risk turning Chinatown into a 'theme park' (Yeoh and Kong, 2012).

PERCEPTION OF SAFETY IN CHINATOWN

Safety has been regarded as a primary issue for developing a night-time economy (Rowe et. al., 2008). Although our interviews with business operators in the precinct have confirmed that Chinatown is a very safe area, especially after Council's installation of CCTV cameras on the street 15 years ago, we noticed that the perception of Chinatown as a dangerous place still prevails. For example, our interviewee #9, from World Square management, differentiated World Square from Chinatown as follows:

'The beauty of being here [World Square] as opposed to Chinatown in theory is that you've got all the safety and security of a shopping centre, without being vulnerable on the trip, so ... it's easier [for the tenants] to employ staff in an environment like this' (interviewee #9, World Square centre management).

According to our interviewee #35, manager of Council's night-time economy team, consultation of residents regarding their perception of safety revealed that Haymarket was one of the areas in the City of Sydney that had the highest percentage of people who said they felt unsafe. However, people's perception of safety is actually not in line with the reality, as data from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (NSW BOCSAR)¹³ showed that the crime figures in Haymarket were in fact relatively low comparing to the rest of the city.

For example, within the top five crime categories in Sydney LGA (non-domestic assault, steal from motor vehicle, steal from retail store, fraud and malicious damage to properties), there were 896 incidents reported in Haymarket between October 2014 to September 2015, accounting for only 5.4% of the total 16,507 incidents reported in these categories in Sydney LGA (NSW BOCSAR, 2015). Although the reasons contributing to the misperception about the level of safety in the area may vary, one of the possible explanations may be that the negative stereotypes of early Chinatowns associated with gambling, prostitutions and triad gangs portrayed in various Chinatown fictions and movies (Mayer, 2011) have been passed on and still affect the perceptions of people today.

The reality, as our interviewees confirmed, is that there is no casino or brothel located in Chinatown, whilst the triad gangs that were a problem 30 years ago have left Chinatown completely. Improvements to lighting in the Chinatown area since 2000, such as in Dixon Street north and near the entrance of the Entertainment Centre, have helped reduce petty crimes such as mugging in these places. In Sydney, the more serious problems related to the night-time economy are drinking-related violence and assaults. But although most of the restaurants and karaoke bars in the area have alcohol licenses, the restaurateurs and karaoke bar owners we interviewed all claimed that intoxicated people rarely caused trouble in the area, partly because most business owners have a series of procedures to prevent drinking-related incidents, such as to employ RSA (Responsible Service of Alcohol) qualified staff and security guards at night to maintain safety, and partly because most customers mainly come to Chinatown for food and entertainment, and they tend to go to elsewhere in the city (e.g. George Street) for alcohol consumption. As a result, drinking-related violence seems less a problem in Chinatown than in neighbouring George Street, as the crime figures showed that there were only 184 alcohol related assaults reported in Haymarket compared to 602 incidents reported in the Sydney CBD and Harbour area (NSW BOCSAR, 2015).

¹³ Crime statistics used in this report are compiled by using the crime mapping tool available on NSW BOCSAR's website <http://crimetool.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/bocsar/>



13. DISCUSSION AND CHINATOWN'S FUTURE

13.1 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This report sought to document the transformation of Sydney's Chinatown in recent decades and examine its changing meaning, spatiality, and role into the future. This section summarises some of the major findings that emerged from our research.

THE 'ASIAN CENTURY' AND RESURGENCE OF SYDNEY'S CHINATOWN

The shift in global economic power from the West to Asia and the rise of China in this so-called Asian century have profound implications for Australia's world regional orientation. Changing economic and cultural relations - as well as hierarchies - are 'condensed' at urban places like Sydney's Chinatown, where diversified flows of people, ideas, and capital are bringing significant opportunities as well as challenges.

Our comparative review of the current fate of global Chinatowns has, however, revealed uneven stories. A proliferation of spatial entities is borrowing the name 'Chinatown' (e.g. China Town Mall in South Africa and the newly fabricated Chinatown in Gold Coast), at the same time as some traditional Chinatowns, including those in New York, San Francisco and London, report a decline. Others, still, are strengthening in volume and vitality (such as Sydney and Singapore). This suggests no straightforward relation between the Asian Century and the rise of Chinatown. Indeed, the prospects for global Chinatowns, including Sydney's, cannot be simply predicted from a global geopolitics geared to China's rise (on the 'failure' of the recent Chinatown project in San Jose, Costa Rica, see Dehart, 2015). The Asian Century backdrop to the contemporary Sydney case thus needs careful specification of both its historical and local context.

CHINATOWN IN MULTI-SCALAR PERSPECTIVE

This report considers Chinatown in transnational perspective as shaped by multiply interacting global and local forces. The reconceptualisation of 'place' as a 'meeting place of flows' (Massey, 1994) or as a 'situated moment' in 'distanciated networks' (Amin, 2004) has been useful in disrupting old essentialist ideas of Chinatown as an enclavic space, and we take these geographic revisionings as our point of departure.

The conceptualisation of Chinatown as an 'unbounded' space highlights its importance both in terms of its urban centrality, and its constitution across scales from local to global. So while Sydney's Chinatown faces growing competition from suburban Chinatowns dotted across the space of the city (Walters, 2015), the increasingly strategic role of Sydney's original Chinatown at Haymarket cannot be underestimated. Sydney CBD (in particular its financial sector) continues to be a key driver of economic growth, not only for the city and the state of New South Wales as a whole, but also for Australia's national economy. And to the extent Chinatown is a node within an intensifying field of Asian investment in Sydney's CBD (Knight Frank 2015), this area of the southern CBD focuses attention well beyond its local boundaries.

Our research found that Sydney's Chinatown continues to serve as an 'entry point' for Chinese and Asian small businesses and migrants into Australia (even as the range of such entry points enlarges across the space of the city); that Chinatown continues to grow in popularity as a destination for the growing mainland Chinese tourist market; that its restaurants are meeting places for Chinese/Asian and Australian business transactions; and that it is a social gathering place for local and international students from many diverse Asian (and non-Asian) backgrounds.

Chinatown's strategic significance is also evident in the domain of cultural diplomacy. In the study, we witnessed the active participation of a number of Asian national governments in civic projects in Chinatown. Examples are the involvement of China's Ministry of Culture and Consulate, plus members of the Thai and Korean Consulates, in Sydney's 2016 Chinese New Year Festival, together with the initiative of the Thai Consulate in pursuing a Thai-town in the Campbell Street area bordering Chinatown.

Undeniably, place-making is a territorially targeted activity involving many actors and agencies. But we hope to have drawn attention throughout the study to the sense in which Sydney's Chinatown also inhabits a wider field of inter-Asian urbanism that far exceeds local imaginings and identifications.

THE EMERGENCE OF A HYBRID 'ASIAN' IDENTITY

Demographic census data for 2011 confirms that Haymarket's population is predominantly Asian (64%) and aged between 20-29 years old (51%). More than just 'Chinese', Haymarket is the most multi-Asian precinct in metropolitan Sydney. In contrast with other global Chinatowns such as New York and San Francisco, where a (dwindling) number of older Chinese residents still live in rent-controlled apartments, Sydney's Chinatown residents today are overwhelmingly young, Asian and transnationally mobile (notably international students).

Traditionally, the identity of Sydney's Chinatown was locked into a stereotypical image that associated it with a pre-determined culture and tradition. This was accentuated by top-down efforts of local governments during the late 1970s and 80s to reinforce the area's 'Chineseness' by using orientalist refurbishments (Anderson, 1990). Coinciding at that time with a federal government policy of 'multiculturalism', this Chinese-themed streetscape locked the public conception of Chinatown to a delineated space. It also fixed it to a narrow temporality of traditionalism that sits uneasily with the diversity and dynamic ambiance of its street life today.

By today, much more than 'Chinese', Chinatown's Asian character comprises a diversity of ethnicities and languages: Korean, Thai, Malaysian, Indonesian, Taiwanese, Singaporean, Hong Kongese, Vietnamese, Filipino, Japanese, and other migration cultures that are themselves striated by the adaptations of different generations to the Australian context. A new place identity is emerging, inflected with a hybridised, multi-Asian, urbanised and modern youth profile. This emergent culture has developed organically through a 'ground up' process, in part as a result of various Asian production and consumption activities in Chinatown restaurants, shops and entertainment venues.

This youth-based place identity - constitutively 'Asian' in bringing together in the Sydney setting a range of diasporic cultures not necessarily used to any sense of unity among themselves - is having implications for public artworks, business formations, tourism and more. For example, Jason Wing and Lindy Lee acknowledged an emergent Sydney-situated 'Asian' identity through their art works; former A4 Gallery director, Aaron Seeto, noted the role of more youthful entrepreneurs in establishing different types of businesses in Chinatown (Seeto, 2011); and the Haymarket Chamber of Commerce noted an increase of young members keen to do business with China.

These developments often involve Australian-born people of Asian backgrounds who are increasingly *setting the terms* for the transformation in Chinatown's public conception: from ethnic accessory to, in the words of the City's Lord Mayor, 'pivotal part of Sydney's role as a global city' (City of Sydney, 2010b).

FROM CHINATOWN TO CHINA'S TOWN?

A parallel development to this increasingly youthful and diversely 'Asian' profile is the extension of mainland China's influence in Sydney's Chinatown (and beyond). Traditionally, Chinatown was dominated by Cantonese speaking migrants from southern China and Hong Kong, and today there is still a significant, if residual, Cantonese tone to the area.

The influx of mainland Chinese migrants since the 1990s, however, is increasingly changing language use to Mandarin. This is having implications not only for signage and way-finding. It also impacts intercultural relations, with some interviewees (notably older ones) lamenting the growing fragmentation of the Chinatown 'community', and others, more optimistically, signalling Chinatown's role in bringing Asians into more intimate proximities than might otherwise be the case. Tension has been evident in the controversy surrounding the naming of the 'Chinese' New Year Festival (e.g. from Sydney-siders of Vietnamese background), while the development of separately themed Korea, Thai and J-towns, all within walking distance of each other, has given rise - as above - to divided attitudes and experiences.

Strongly evident already is the influence of mainland Chinese investment on the Sydney CBD property market (as developers and individual buyers). At Chinatown, we note that gentrification is being Asia- and especially China-led, much more so than is the case for the original Chinatown in Manhattan where gentrification pressures are increasingly driven by non-Asian residents and investors, with major implications for the area's demographic profile and character.

While 'core' Chinatown centred around Dixon Street has remained tightly held and relatively stable in ownership terms, a *Greater Chinatown* could be said to be emerging: minimally, from Central Park in the south, Darling Harbour to the west, World Square to the east, and Town Hall to the north (with arguably further extension along both sides of George Street to the Rocks).

High rise developments with mainland Chinese (offshore and local) buyers, developers and leaseholders, are changing the residential and commercial fabric of the southern CBD to a degree described by some as no less than 'phenomenal' (Commins, 2014). A local newspaper even saw fit to invoke the scenario of Sydney's CBD as 'China's town' (Keene, 2015) in a characteristically inflammatory headline. Less provocatively, it can confidently be stated that the CBD is having a 'gateway' or 'demonstration effect' for Asian investors and visitors (difficult as it is to demonstrate this 'flow' economy from statistical sources that 'fix' measurement units in time and place).

Increasing Chinese foreign investment in property markets is obviously a global trend, with similar levels and projections reported in the US and UK (Schreckinger, 2014; Warren, 2010), and, in Canada, prompting changes to migration and investment legislation. In Sydney, a recent online survey of 899 residents of greater Sydney by WSU found that 64% of respondents believed foreign investors (especially Chinese) were a major source of the city's increasingly prohibitive house prices (Rogers et. al., 2015).

CHINATOWN'S COMPLEX SPACE USE AND CHARACTER

Sydney's Chinatown possesses characteristics that align it with the urban fabric of Asian cities such as Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore. In particular, the high-density, mixed-use character of buildings (such as Dixon House), from underground to the upper floors, together with the inclusion of shared spaces (especially food courts), reflects modes of dividing and organising real estate that are commonly found in the likes of Tokyo, Hong Kong and Singapore. Future debates over FSRs, height limits, co-working spaces, and mixed-use buildings could usefully focus on adapting Chinatown's intricate built fabric for new uses. For example, public services - libraries, health centres, and business incubators - could be integrated into mixed-use property developments.

The City of Sydney's 2012 Floorspace Employment Survey and our study's own observational data confirm that key blocks in Chinatown, such as south of Dixon Street near Hay Street, have had a largely stable set of leases (to small businesses) in the past 5 or so years. Other blocks, such as North Dixon Street, have had far more churn and turnover in terms of business and employment increases. This makes it difficult to generalise about the shape and pace of neighbourhood change in Chinatown, and requires a deeper focus on property management trends at specific buildings and developments.

The character of businesses in Chinatown is also changing, with a growing professional and financial sector in addition to its traditional food, drink and retail functions. There is also an emerging health care and education sector near Ultimo Road at the southern fringe of core Chinatown. Following the opening of the Goods Line in 2015, there have been closer physical links between the Powerhouse Museum, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), UTS and TAFE, prompting discussion about an 'innovation district' in/near Chinatown using its high density, shared, or co-working space model for (as above) business incubation.

In the Haymarket area, as for other parts of the Sydney CBD, there has been an increase in land values and rents brought on by the property boom of the last decade. In turn, this has influenced the types of businesses the area can sustain. Notably, on Dixon and Sussex Streets, a few traditional Chinese groceries and bakeries have closed and been replaced by stores with a higher profit margin (such as jewellery stores and fashion boutiques). Gentrification in other global Chinatowns notably Soho in London and Manhattan in New York brought rent increases that have changed not only the residential, but also the retail profiles of such areas, with obvious implications for local character and culture.

In Sydney, the council's *Sustainable Sydney 2030* Strategy (2008) has set out a vision to protect the fine-grain texture of some parts of the CBD from excessive urban development. Its 'City of Villages' programme, which includes Haymarket, helps to promote the area's independent small business character and distinctive Asian identity. The Council's Laneway Revitalisation Strategy also seeks to re-activate (with art works) certain access routes within Chinatown's elaborate network of passageways. Whether such efforts will protect the area's fine grain characteristics from the forces of homogenisation attending the apartment and office tower boom transforming surrounding areas of the CBD, remains to be seen.

ASIAN FOOD FORMATS, RETAIL CONSUMPTION STYLES, AND THE NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

A distinctive, contemporary, Asian culinary cluster has emerged in Chinatown, often derived from imported Asian food and drink trends. There are now many different ways of consuming Asian food and drink among Chinatown's youthful demographic. Night markets, food courts, dessert cafes, bubble tea franchises are widespread, and there is a significant diversity of business models, culinary quality and price points. The competitiveness of the sector was frequently noted, with some owners pointing to competition from suburban Chinatowns. The drive for food-format novelty is increasingly intense, too, in the southern CBD, as property management companies such as Regent Place and World Square actively encourage experimental food concepts, as well as distinctively modern, Asian, interior-design templates.

Regarding retailing, another important commercial sector of Chinatown, a recurring finding from our interviews and surveys was the significance of young Asian female consumers (aged 16-30 years). Nail bars, fashion, cosmetics and perfume, and lifestyle formats (such as Korean stationary/craft/cafes, or café/boutiques) are emerging in many leasehold outlets. This could have implications for Council's retail action plans, in providing more opportunities for experiential retailing and a resistance to on-line shopping.

With Asian students becoming a dominant customer segment in Chinatown, their tastes, spending power, and consumption behaviour are increasingly defining Chinatown's retail character. Our student survey revealed that the area is an important site of socialisation for Sydney university students, including, but by no means restricted to, nearby UTS. This is a population that is enjoying freedom from family expectations around employment, relationships and cultural traditions. It is also a major supporter of Chinatown's night-time economy (including its night markets, dining and entertainment segments). And although there were some concerns expressed among respondents about the area's safety and cleanliness, the focus of Asian cultures on shopping and food – more so than alcohol – suggests an important alternative local model for the CBD's (currently controversial) after-dark management plans.

EVOLVING CHINATOWN: A CHANGING CAREER

Originally, Sydney's Chinatown was an ethnic enclave – a refuge for Chinese migrants from the excesses of discrimination during the long reign of the White Australia Policy. This defensive function still figures in the memories and experiences of a number of older Cantonese spokespeople (interviewees) for the area. It also shaped the early public conception of Sydney's Chinatown as a bounded enclave of 'otherness', physically and culturally segregated from the wider society. In the 1980s, the pursuit of 'multicultural' ideologies by Australian governments changed the district's public image. Chinatown became a 'contribution' to Australia's diversity, an exotic accessory to be refurbished in orientalist fashion for western tourism and consumption. The major attraction was deemed to be its 'difference' from a normatively conceived 'white mainstream' culture and city space.

The 21st century has introduced an order of complexity to the dualisms of West and East around which conventional accounts of Chinatowns have been framed. In the contemporary world of transnational movement and exchange, global West and global East increasingly converge and diverge in a dialectic that is transforming regions, cities and localities. The intensifying rise of China as a global economic force unsettles the power coordinates implied by the categories - and hierarchies - of West versus East, us versus them.

Set within this historical and geopolitical context, it is possible to conceive of Sydney's Chinatown today beyond its enclavic status as a porous node within transnational networks and flows. The district is overcoming its communal image to reflect an increasingly cosmopolitan, diasporically Asian and youthful tone as set within a metropolitan culture that is itself detaching from any essential relation to Europe. Rather than an anomalous space of 'otherness', Chinatown is becoming an integral part of Sydney's urban culture. For many student users, Chinatown is 'just there', a 'natural backdrop' for their everyday consumption and organically part of Australia's most Asian city.

CHINATOWN AS A (TRANS) NATIONAL ASSET

The sketch (above) of Chinatown's changing conception challenges us to consider its re-visioning into the future. Many of our student survey respondents commented that Sydney's Chinatown, especially 'Chinatown proper' along Dixon Street, looks tired, run-down, dirty and still locked in its 1980s orientalist image. This description sits uneasily with the dynamism of the surrounding areas of the southern CBD into which Chinatown increasingly spills, including several major economic districts: the innovation districts around Harris Street; the redesigned UTS campus; rapidly transforming Darling Harbour; and Central Station where redevelopment plans have been proposed.

Chinatown's historical form, small business character, and colonial and Cantonese vernacular was once set *against* the movement and modernity of these surrounding areas. By now, however, Chinatown invites more creative thinking and planning across the twin aesthetics of 'heritage' and 'modernity'. Our claim is that the new urban forms and affluent residents at nearby Darling Harbour, together with Chinatown's own youthful ethnic diversity, need not necessarily be opposed to the registers and traces of earlier generations of Cantonese settlers and migrants. Like all places, Chinatown is a sedimentation of multiple layers and traces. Indeed, arguably, it is precisely Chinatown's historical density that is its most strategic asset for future 'bridge-building' to Asia - a claim we think should be centre-stage of all future management for this place.

Around the world the concept of 'Chinatown' is taking on diverse modalities, ranging from Japan's Yokohama, where a Chinatown was built in the image of the traditional San Francisco model, South Korea's Songdo, which was developed as a 'modern' Chinatown, serving as a platform to foster business and technology networks between Korea and China (Eom, forthcoming) and beyond, to the city-led commercial gentrification model based on boutique retailing in Amsterdam (Rath et al., forthcoming). These (radically) diverse forms of Chinatown place-making (and more still) suggest there is no fixed model or generalisable strategy for the future planning of Sydney's Chinatown. The more 'open' milieu of the district today, together with the very uncertainty of its boundaries, clears space for precisely this creative place management into the 21st century.

13.2 CHINATOWN'S POLICY FUTURE

This report has identified key trends that have shaped Sydney's Chinatown in recent years. Chinatown is a contested space with many different stakeholders and a diverse set of opinions relating to such factors as: generational, socio-economic and ethnic differences, varying senses of place attachment, intricate patterns of property ownership and tenancy, and radically different place management strategies over time.

In concluding, we invite stakeholders to reflect on the following questions as they bear on the future of Chinatown:

- What is Chinatown's role within Sydney's aspiration to be a global city?
- How, specifically, can Chinatown's distinctive character be maintained alongside the many various developments in its surrounding areas?
- What will be the future of inter-Asian relations at Haymarket?
- Are collective and collaborative 'place-making' efforts by Haymarket's diversely Asian population feasible? Who will drive them?
- How far should different levels of government be involved in shaping Chinatown and its prospects?

We invite all parties interested in Chinatown's past, present and future - including our partners at the City of Sydney - to co-imagine Chinatown for the next 10 years and provide feedback on our report.

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(Photo by John Marmaras, City of Sydney)



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APPENDIX 1

List of Interviewees

INTERVIEWEE NO #	ROLES	DATE OF INTERVIEW
1	Chinatown community Leader	31/10/2012
2	Representative of Korean business association	02/11/2012
3	Representative of Korean business association	02/11/2012
4	Representative of Korean business association	02/11/2012
5	Representative of Korean business association	02/11/2012
6	Representative of Thai Consulate	05/11/2012
7	Management of World Square Shopping Centre	19/12/2012
8	Management of World Square Shopping Centre	19/12/2012
9	Management of World Square Shopping Centre	19/12/2012
10	Management of World Square Shopping Centre	19/12/2012
11	Director of real estate agent	18/01/2013
12	Chinatown community leader, real estate agent	30/01/2013
13	Representative of Chinatown business association, real estate agent	30/01/2013
14	Director of real estate agent	30/01/2013
15	Director of real estate agent	06/02/2013
16	Assoc. Director of real estate agent	06/02/2013
17	Migration agent	13/02/2013
18	Migration agent, education agent	13/02/2013
19	Migration agent	13/02/2013
20	Manager (Business Precinct), City of Sydney	27/02/2013
21	Officer (Business Precinct), City of Sydney	27/02/2013
22	Migration agent	27/02/2013
23	Councillor, City of Sydney	12/03/2013
24	Program Manager (Public Domain), City of Sydney	20/03/2013
25	Manager (Community Development), City of Sydney	08/04/2013
26	Representative of Chinatown business association	01/04/2013
27	Former Director of Chinatown art gallery	17/04/2013
28	Managing Director of real estate agent	03/05/2013
29	Managing Director of real estate agent	03/05/2013
30	Chinatown community leader, President of clan society	08/05/2013
31	Former Program Manager (Public Art), City of Sydney	15/05/2013
32	Management of Market City Shopping Centre	22/05/2013
33	Representative of Chinatown business association	31/05/2013
34	Representative from state tourist organisation	06/06/2013
35	Team leader (late night economy), City of Sydney	12/06/2013
36	Representative of Indonesian student organisation	25/07/2013
37	Representative of Chinese student organisation	06/08/2013
38	Representative of Chinese student organisation	06/08/2013
39	Representative of Malaysian student organisation	09/08/2013
40	Representative of Indonesian student organisation	13/08/2013
41	Representative of Thai student organisation	13/08/2013
42	Representative of Korean student organisation	21/08/2013
43	Representative of Hong Kong student organisation	21/08/2013
44	Management of Regent Place	13/12/2013
45	Management of Regent Place	13/12/2013
46	Artist	12/02/2014
47	Design Manager, City of Sydney	26/02/2014
48	Project Manager, City of Sydney	26/02/2014
49	President of Chinatown business association	07/03/2014
50	Chinatown community leader	12/03/2014
51	Artist	19/03/2014
52	Owner of regional Chinese restaurant	12/05/2014
53	Owner of Thai restaurant, Thai community leader	20/05/2014
54	Owner of Thai restaurant	26/05/2014
55	Owner/manager of Korean restaurant	28/05/2014
56	Owner of Asian style cafe	04/06/2014
57	Owner of traditional Chinese restaurant	09/07/2014
58	Owner of traditional Chinese restaurant	09/07/2014
59	Owner of souvenir store	16/07/2014
60	Owner of traditional Chinese restaurant	23/07/2014

61	General Manager of traditional Chinese restaurant	31/07/2014
62	Owner/manager of modern Asian restaurant	11/08/2014
63	Owner of modern Chinese restaurant	13/08/2014
64	Senior Program Manager (Events), City of Sydney	03/09/2014
65	Program Manager (Events), City of Sydney	03/09/2014
66	Officer (Events), City of Sydney	03/09/2014
67	Vietnamese community leader	05/09/2014
68	Owner of Vietnamese food store	22/09/2014
69	General Manager of Indonesian restaurant	24/09/2014
70	Owner of regional Chinese restaurant	24/09/2014
71	Owner of Japanese restaurant and Karaoke bar	25/09/2014
72	Marketing Manager of modern Chinese/Asian restaurant	18/11/2014
73	Senior Landscape Architect from the Chinese Garden of Friendship	17/12/2014
74	Sales Director of hotel group	20/03/2015
75	Director of hotel	24/03/2015
76	Area General Manager of hotel group	30/03/2015
77	Senior lending manager of local bank	29/04/2015
78	Landscape architect	27/07/2015
79	Landscape architect	27/07/2015
80	Architect	27/07/2015
81	Representative from government development agency	Written response 12/05/2015
82	Representative from government development agency	Written response 28/05/2015

APPENDIX 2

List of focus group participants

Group 1

STUDENT NO#	ROLE	ETHNIC BACKGROUND
1	Student from Sydney University	International student from Hong Kong
2	Student from UTS	Local student born in China but migrated to Australia long time ago
3	Student from UNSW	Local student born in Australia, parents from Japan and Hong Kong
4	Student from UTS	International student from China
5	Student from Macquarie University	Local student born in Australia, parent from Hong Kong

Group 2

STUDENT NO#	ROLE	ETHNIC BACKGROUND
6	Student from UTS	Local student born in Australia but lived in Hong Kong for five years
7	Student from Macquarie University	International student from Indonesia
8	Student from UTS	International student from China
9	Student from UTS	International student from China
10	Student from UTS	International student from China
11	Student from UTS	Local student, parent from Hong Kong







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