HALF WAY HOUSE:
THE DOMINION ROAD ETHNIC PRECINCT

Prepared for the Auckland Council by
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INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS PROGRAMME
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A mixture of Chinese and English script.
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As fans of the Mutton Birds will know, the title of the report comes from their song, ‘Dominion Road’, the ‘half way house, half way down Dominion Road’. This use acknowledges the well-known song about one of the more distinctive roads in Auckland but it also operates as a metaphor for immigrant businesses as their owners establish themselves in Auckland while remaining connected with their birth country.
Shop signage along Dominion Road.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The arrival of Asian immigrants in the last two decades has significantly changed aspects of Auckland’s economy. This report examines one example, the ethnic precinct that reflects the co-location of Asian, especially Chinese, business owners along Dominion Road.

1. Ethnic Precincts

Ethnic precincts are defined by the co-location of businesses that are owned by members of the same ethnic/immigrant group. The significant number of Asian, particularly Chinese businesses along Dominion Road represents an important ethnic precinct in Auckland.

2. Chinese Immigrants and Auckland

By 2006, there were almost 100,000 Chinese resident in Auckland with the largest group (53,694) having been born in China, followed by those born in New Zealand (17,682). Half of those born in China had arrived since 2001.

3. Dominion Road Ethnic Precinct

The two sections of Dominion Road surveyed showed that in one precinct, 41 percent are owned by Asians although 68 percent of food retailers are Asian. In the other, 78 percent of all business owners are Asian and 73 percent of food businesses are Asian-owned.

4. Consumers

Consumers, both Chinese and non-Chinese, visit and shop at the road frequently, with one in five of Chinese ethnicity (42% for those born in China) visiting the road to eat, compared to 8 percent non-Chinese. Eighty-five percent shopped on the road because it was convenient to home and work. For the Chinese, the road provided familiar foods and goods, language and the opportunity to meet co-ethnics.

5. Language

Familiar languages and signage provide a landscape that is familiar to China-born residents and consumers, that reinforces a sense of community and of ‘home and belonging’.

6. Overseas/Ethnic Precincts

Ethnic precincts in Australia and Canada are considerably older than the Dominion Road ethnic precinct but they are also more likely to be branded as an "ethnic precinct" or Chinatowns.

7. Policy Implications

The presence of an Asian/Chinese ethnic precinct in Dominion Road raises some challenges for the Auckland Council in terms of how best to engage with these business owners and how to utilise their skills/connections for wider economic development.
Shops along Dominion Road.
INTRODUCTION

Dominion Road is one of the emblematic roads in Auckland. It has been immortalised in song and literature and it represents an identifiable landmark. It does not have the cachet or affluence of other shopping destinations, but it has long represented a certain solidity, both in terms of architecture and what is sold. It runs for seven kilometres from Eden Terrace to Waikowhai – almost the length of the Auckland isthmus (McClure, 2009). It is a strip development with a mix of retail and residential activities, along with a number of community facilities such as churches. This report looks at the transformation of the retail activities along Dominion Road in the last two decades. Specifically, it has become one of the ethnic precincts that are dominated by Asian businesses, Chinese in this case, that can now be found in a number of parts of Auckland. This report describes the mix of activities and ethnicities which now characterise Dominion Road, how consumers access and see the road (or at least its retail activities) and the feel that those businesses impart to the road. It reflects an aspect of Auckland which has come into its own in the first decade of the 21st century.

When we talk about ethnic precincts in a New Zealand context, we mean the clustering of non-mainstream/non-Pākehā businesses, typically retail but not necessarily, owned by co-ethnics – people from the same ethnic group as each other. To qualify as a precinct, there needs to be a number of co-located businesses. In the case of the larger precincts, this might mean anything upwards of twenty businesses, all located in close proximity and owned by the same immigrant/ethnic group, although the number of twenty is arbitrary. In a number of Auckland's ethnic precincts, it is common to find that two-thirds of businesses in an ethnic precinct are owned or operated by members of a single ethnic group. There are a number of precincts involving a range of ethnic/immigrant groups but the development of ethnic precincts has been dominated by Chinese ownership and retail activities. The ethnic precincts that represent other ethnic and immigrant groups in Auckland – Indian, Korean – are typically smaller in size and are less dominated by members of one ethnic group. The result is that when we talk about ethnic precincts in twenty-first century Auckland, they are most likely to involve Chinese. This is true of Dominion Road.

Given the historical homogeneity of immigration to New Zealand from 1840 through to the 1960s, and the very small size of non-British (and non-Irish) immigrant communities, (minority) ethnic precincts have not featured in the past development of Auckland. There were some Chinese businesses to be found in close proximity to Greys Avenue and again in Otahuhu. However, they were small by comparison with what has developed in the last two decades or with Chinese ethnic precincts in other countries. For example, they did not equate with the Chinatowns that could be seen from the late 1800s in places like San Francisco or even the more recent concentrations of Chinese business activity in Sydney or Vancouver. The development of such ethnic precincts in Auckland did not occur until the immigration policy changes of 1986/87 after which non-European immigrant communities grew in size and influence. Initially, immigrants came from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Korea. But after 2000, dominant British immigration flows were supplemented by immigrants from China and India. The size of these communities now provides an important base for the development of commercial activities in Auckland.
More than 100,000 Chinese are now resident in Auckland, although they are made up of New Zealand-born, including those descendants of the Chinese who arrived from the 1860s onwards, as well as Chinese immigrants from a range of countries (see Table 1). The co-location of Asian businesses has become much more apparent since 2000, both in terms of purpose-built precincts such as Meadowlands and Sommerville and conversions, such as Northcote. Dominion Road, as we shall see, provides another example of this co-location but it is unique to the extent that it is a strip development, not a clustered precinct that is more typical of other precincts in Auckland.

This report is based on work that has been done as part of the Integration of Immigrants Programme (IIP) which is funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation. The primary focus of the research is on the settlement outcomes for both immigrant business owners and job seekers in Auckland and Hamilton. The five immigrant groups that have been the focus of the research are Chinese, Indian, Korean, British and South African. As the research has progressed (since 2007), other settlement outcomes have grown in importance, including business co-location or ethnic precincts. These precincts are a new development for Auckland and they have been largely overlooked both in relation to the governance of Auckland and their significance in terms of economic development. Recent historical reviews of urban development have not mentioned ethnic economic activity or the development of precincts. The Royal Commission on the governance of Auckland acknowledged the diversity of its inhabitants and proclaimed such diversity to be a positive feature but then neglected to explore what this might mean in terms of existing economic activities or future possibilities. However, the new Auckland Council has recognised the impact and significance of these clusters and this report is a modest contribution to exploring this emerging facet of Auckland urban life.

The report has five sections. The first two brief sections describe, on the one hand, a history of the development of Dominion Road from the colonial period through to the present and, on the other hand, a brief outline of the arrival and settlement of Chinese immigrants to Auckland. The three substantive sections that follow deal with three quite different aspects of the Dominion Road ethnic precinct. Each is drawn from larger studies being undertaken by the Integration of Immigrants Programme. The first looks at the contemporary Dominion Road ethnic precinct through a mapping of the retail activities and ethnicities across two distinct sub-precincts: King Edward Street to Valley Road and Balmoral Road to Tennyson Street/Kensington Avenue. These maps reveal patterns of clustering, ethnic diversity in ownership and the scope of retail provision. The second study derives from a survey of consumers undertaken in 2010. This explored the characteristics of the Dominion Road shoppers: their consumption practices, the reasons for shopping there, the shops visited and the appeal of Dominion Road. The third and final study, focuses on the linguistic landscapes of Dominion Road and the way in which the physical landscape of the street may be seen to encourage a sense of security, familiarity and community amongst the new immigrant communities.
HISTORY

In the mid 19th century, Ngati Whatua rangatira Apihai Te Kawau gifted 11,000 acres of land in the Auckland region to the Crown, land which was subsequently surveyed and sold at auction. The properties on either side of Dominion Road (as far as Mt. Albert Road) were sold off in 20 acre parcels in allotments which formed a regular grid pattern. For many years, this area was farmed, producing a variety of crops (Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd. in association with Truttman, McConnell, Skidmore, & Associates, 2006). However, from the 1860s onwards, the farms which comprised Mt Eden, Balmoral and Sandringham were subdivided and developed into residential suburbs as the population of Auckland increased and the middle class shifted from the crowded inner city. By the beginning of the twentieth century, these farms had been almost completely replaced by housing (Boffa Miskell, Skidmore, Matthews and Matthews Architects, & Salmond Reed Architects, 2004; Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd. in association with et al., 2006).

Horse drawn buses were the first form of regular transport along Dominion Road, connecting it to the city from the late 1870s. Early in the 20th century, trams began running between the suburbs of Mt Eden, Balmoral, Kingsland, Mt Albert and the city (Boffa Miskell, et al., 2004). Access to transport and the growth of residential suburbs along Dominion Road occurred in conjunction with commercial development. Shopping centres formed at intersections with other main roads, such as Valley Road, each with a distinctive character (Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd. in association with Truttman, 2006). Other than these larger shopping precincts, Dominion Road also has smaller groups or isolated commercial buildings as well as residential development.

A trip along Dominion Road in 2011 will convey much of this history. It provides a commercial architecture that often dates from the early twentieth century with complete blocks that have retained shop facades and buildings that are the best part of 100 years old alongside more recent commercial developments and some conversions which provide a contemporary feel. The blocks that are the focus of this report reflect this early twentieth century history. This historic architecture has been given a very different feel from its original use by the arrival of ethnic and immigrant groups from Asia. There had been some Asian food businesses located in Dominion Road in the 1970s but these Asian businesses were still easily outnumbered by non-Asian owned businesses that offered a mix of traditional business activities. This began to change in the 1990s and especially after 2000. The cost of rental or purchase of retail space was at a level that was attractive to new immigrants who were keen to set up their own retail business while the passing traffic and the growth of adjacent co-ethnic communities encouraged the clustering of Asian businesses along the road. By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, these Asian businesses were now a dominant feature of those parts of the road that involved retailing. This is apparent in the following section which maps the ethnicities and business activities of Dominion Road. It is a little ironic then that recent debates about the
removal of on-street parking and the construction of a four-lane road have led to arguments about the special nature of Dominion Road, especially its accessibility and character:

Dominion Road is much more than a transport route. It is home to vibrant villages that other cities internationally would envy (Press Release: “Save Dominion Road”, 17 August 2010).

What do these vibrant villages look like at the beginning of the second decade of this century? What sort of businesses do we find along this iconic road and who owns them? Why do shoppers come to this road? And what are the predominant images and signs? It is hard to imagine what someone who had known the road and its shops/communities in the early and mid-twentieth century would make of the road in 2011.
IMMIGRATION: A BRIEF COMMENT

The Integration of Immigrant Programme is particularly interested in the arrival and establishment of Chinese-owned businesses in Dominion Road. The change in immigration policy and the arrival of significant numbers of Chinese immigrants is worth a brief comment.

Historically, there have been no Asian ethnic precincts in Auckland, although there were limited concentrations of Chinese businesses around some parts of the inner city in the first half of the twentieth century (Ip, 2003). However, these were modest, involved only a few businesses and were to be found in Hobson Street and Greys Avenue. This changed dramatically with the arrival of Asian immigrants after 1987. A first wave arrived in the early and mid-1990s and comprised immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Korea. There was a lull during the Asian economic crisis of the late 1990s but this was followed, post-2000, by much larger arrival flows from China and India. Table 1 shows the numbers of ethnic Chinese resident in the Auckland area at the last five censuses, according to their place of birth. The most common birthplace at the 2006 census was the People's Republic of China (53,694), a figure which has more than doubled since the previous census in 2001.

Table 1 Auckland’s resident ethnic Chinese population by birthplace 1986-2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Hong Kong</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
<th>NZ</th>
<th>Others*</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1,668</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>5,250</td>
<td>2,433</td>
<td>10,548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>4,110</td>
<td>2,850</td>
<td>2,838</td>
<td>3,681</td>
<td>6,306</td>
<td>3,891</td>
<td>23,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>12,054</td>
<td>8,868</td>
<td>7,965</td>
<td>4,596</td>
<td>10,293</td>
<td>5,928</td>
<td>49,704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>26,547</td>
<td>8,406</td>
<td>8,562</td>
<td>4,953</td>
<td>13,203</td>
<td>6,459</td>
<td>68,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>53,694</td>
<td>5,280</td>
<td>7,323</td>
<td>6,003</td>
<td>17,682</td>
<td>7,443</td>
<td>97,425</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Other refers here to Asians who were not included in the previous categories.


By the time of the census in 2006, Auckland had a range of Asian communities of significant size, which included residents of Auckland as well as tourists, students (up to 70,000 per year nationally), and increasing numbers of immigrants on temporary work or business visas. The annual arrival of the latter, those on temporary visas, now significantly outnumbered (two to three times larger) those arriving as permanent residents. Moreover, an increasing proportion of permanent residents were drawn from those who had been in New Zealand on temporary
visas. These recent and now quite substantial communities provided a demographic base for the development of distinct residential concentrations\(^1\) (see map below) and the co-location of ethnic businesses. They first emerged during the late 1990s and, by 2010, there were a number of different types of Asian ethnic precinct in Auckland. We will focus here on those that involve Chinese-owned and operated businesses.

Map 1: Distribution of the China-born population in Auckland by number

Source: Integration of Immigrants Programme, 2011.

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\(^1\) Or, as Li (2009) calls them, ‘ethnoburbs’.
THE CONTEMPORARY DOMINION ROAD ETHNIC PRECINCT

MAPPING RETAIL ACTIVITIES AND ETHNICITIES

Dominion Road contains a series of often quite distinct shopping clusters, punctuated at times by residential and non-retail activities. Retailing is spread over some kilometres, beginning with the end of the road nearest the CBD and extending towards Sandringham. At its beginning, retailing is dispersed and while there are Asian businesses located there, it does not represent an ethnic precinct in terms of the numbers of co-located co-ethnic businesses. This changes however after Bellevue Terrace. For the purposes of this report, and in accordance with our definition of what constitutes an ethnic precinct, we have focused on two distinct Asian (in both these cases, predominantly Chinese) clusters: the first is Dominion Road between Valley Road and King Edward Street and the second between Balmoral Road and Tennyson Street/Kensington Avenue. These represent two of the important retailing sections of the road but also those which illustrate the nature of Asian/Chinese-dominated retailing.

The next section provides an indication of retail activity and ethnic ownership using Geographical Information System (GIS) software. We also describe how these maps have been generated.

The maps combine partial data (base maps with land parcels and address numbers provided by the Auckland City Council) with information that was gathered via a survey of businesses. Bilingual researchers went door-to-door along the two areas of the precinct and asked the ethnicity of the owner and confirmed the nature of the business. The results were colour-coded and are provided in the four maps that are contained in this report.
The Dominion Road shops between King Edward Street and the four blocks to Valley Road (Map 2) contain a wide range of retail shops, with a mix of food, financial and insurance services and trade. As Map 3 indicates, a mix of retail trade, from shops selling a range of budget items through to hardware and photographic equipment, dominate with 46 (44%) out of the 105 shops in this section of Dominion Road. The category ‘accommodation and food retailers’ is the second most prevalent and is dominated by either restaurants or businesses selling fresh and other produce. They comprise 28 (27%) of the shops. There are a range of other retailing and service functions located in these blocks, including healthcare, real estate firms and professionals such as lawyers although the numbers in the last two categories are small (3% and 4% respectively). Overall, there is a mix of traditional, local retailing alongside those businesses that have emerged as immigrants have arrived.

The latter is reflected in the ethnic mix of shop owners (Map 3). The largest group are Pākehā at 40 percent followed by Chinese at 28.5 percent, although if the Asian business owners are aggregated, then they comprise 47.6 percent of business owners in these blocks of Dominion Road. Indian (7.6%) and Korean (4.7%) businesses are also located in this section of the road. If the material from maps 2 and 3 are combined, then this Asian presence is most apparent in the food retailers with 68 percent of the 28 shops being owned by Asians, and 50 percent owned by Chinese business owners, compared to the 35.7 percent (8 shops) owned by Pākehā. The latter are a mix of takeaway shops and local dairy-style food suppliers.

The immigrant presence is immediately apparent especially in terms of signage and the type of activity - the mix of retailing and ethnicities are not as dominated by immigrant and minority ethnic business activity and ownership as the next section of Dominion Road, which is discussed below. Food retailing is important but not as dominant; minority ethnicities, specifically Asian, comprise just under half of the business owners. These blocks retain some long established businesses, an important Pākehā presence and a wide mix of activities. It is unclear whether the trend is towards increasing immigrant/minority ethnic ownership and activities. Is there a tipping point which encourages the development of further immigrant co-location to the point where ownership by a particular ethnicity becomes more dominant? This state of particular retailing (food) and immigrant dominance is more apparent in the next section of Dominion Road.
Map 2: Classification of Business Types along Dominion Rd - Precinct A.

Source: Integration of Immigrants Programme, 2011
Map 3: Classification of businesses by ethnicity of owners along Dominion Rd - Precinct A.

Source: Integration of Immigrants Programme, 2011
This section describes the activities and ownership of the blocks between Balmoral Road and Tennyson Street on the west side and Kensington Avenue on the eastern side (Map 4). There are 92 shops of which a third are involved in food retailing, compared with 27 percent in Precinct A just described. Retail trade, which was very dominant in the King Edward blocks, is now exceeded by food (32.6% versus 26% of retail trade). However, what is also significant is the ownership of businesses. As Map 5 makes clear, Pākehā, at 14 percent of business owners, are significantly surpassed by Chinese (51%) and Indian (16%) business owners. Asians now comprise 78 percent of all business owners compared with the 15 percent of shops owned by Pākehā. This is reinforced by the ownership of food retailing if the material in maps 4 and 5 are combined. Of the 30 food businesses, 22 (73%) are Chinese-owned while if Asian ownership is aggregated, then 27 (90%) of the businesses are owned by Asians, with Chinese dominating. Pākehā own two percent of the food businesses.

In this part of Dominion Road, there are whole sections that are dominated by Chinese owners (Map 5). From Balmoral Road for a block and a half, there are literally only Chinese-owned businesses, with 28 in a row on one side of the road. There are five businesses which are owned by Indians (3), “Other Asians” (1) and Pākehā (1), but they are surrounded by Chinese businesses – and they only appear towards the end of this continuous section of Chinese-owned businesses. It is the density of this co-location and the overall dominance of Chinese owners and activities which gives this part of Dominion Road a very distinctive character. There is a strong presence of Chinese restaurants, with many reflecting the Hong Kong and PRC2 origins of their owners and clientele. Menus are written in Chinese and English, although in most, Chinese script dominates. There is a strong presence of Chinese customers, an almost complete dominance of Chinese employees and Mandarin or Cantonese are spoken routinely. Here the tipping point has been reached in terms of immigrant (Chinese) ownership and the nature of the retail activities, which fulfils the definitional threshold in terms of what constitutes an ethnic precinct. The anchor retailing associated with food – fresh produce shops alongside restaurants – is accompanied by a range of other retailing and service functions that serve the Chinese community – traditional Chinese medicines, acupuncture and massages, the occasional Chinese lawyer or dentist (although this is not a typical area for such professional services), video shops specialising in Chinese films, beauty and photographic processing shops which feature Chinese models and signage, and travel shops specialising in travel to Chinese homelands.

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2 Peoples Republic of China
Map 4: Classification of business types along Dominion Rd - Precinct B.

Source: Integration of Immigrants Programme, 2011
Map 5: Classification of businesses by ethnicity of owners along Dominion Rd - Precinct B.

Source: Integration of Immigrants Programme, 2011
Produce for sale on Dominion Road.
CONSUMER SURVEY

In 2010, a consumer survey was designed to complement work on ethnic precincts being undertaken in the Integration of Immigrants Programme. The aims of the survey were to establish demographic profiles of those who shop in the ethnic precincts, and generate an understanding of consumer practices and views among those who shop in such precincts. The three site locations for the survey were Northcote, Meadowlands/Somerville, and Dominion Road. The survey schedules included both a range of closed questions such as age, place of birth, and place of residence, and an open question that encouraged participants to include more detailed comments about their experience of shopping in the precinct.

In Dominion Road, the three to ten minute surveys were undertaken in April and May of 2010 by a native English speaker and a native Chinese speaker. Working together on two different days, and at different times of the day, they each approached people at a number of locations along the road and attempted to select age and gender differentiated participants. The native English speaker approached participants who appeared to be Pākehā while the Chinese speaker approached those who looked as if Chinese was their native language. Despite some inevitable errors of judgement this subjective approach worked well.

The researchers greeted potential participants in the following way:

Hello, my name is ... and I am conducting research on behalf of Massey University. This research seeks to understand people’s experiences of Dominion Road. The survey is anonymous and you will not be identified in any way. I would like to ask you about your experiences of Dominion Road. Can I have a few minutes of your time to complete this survey? You can pass on any questions you do not wish to answer.

The information generated from the consumer surveys was analysed using SPSS. Although the sample is not representative of all shoppers in Dominion Road, the information gathered in these interviews nonetheless provides an interesting snapshot of the shopping practices of those who were interviewed.

Dominion Road proved to be a difficult site to recruit participants, despite researchers visiting the shops at different times of the day. A number of reasons were suggested by the interviewers. First, there were few people in the vicinity. Second, the people who were shopping were often too busy. Finally, inclement weather might have dissuaded people from stopping and taking the time to complete a survey. However, from the 44 people who agreed to be interviewed, characteristics of these consumers and their motivations have been compiled.

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3 Available on request from T.Cain@massey.ac.nz
4 SPSS is a computer program used for survey data analysis.
KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF CONSUMERS

The survey attracted a fairly broad range of participants. Of the 44 people who participated, 54.5 percent were female while 45.5 percent were male. Given the gendered nature of shopping and the expectation that everyday shopping is primarily carried out by women (Gregson, Crewe, & Brooks, 2002), it was not unexpected that more women than men were available to participate in the survey. Participants ranged from under 20, to over 70 years of age. Over three quarters were between the ages of 20 and 59 (20.5% were aged between 20 and 29, 25% were between 30 and 39, 13.6% were between 40 and 49, and 18.2% were between 50 and 59). Two participants were aged under 20, and the remaining participants were 60 or older (9.1% were between 60 and 69, and 6.8% were 70 or older).

The birthplace of the participants was varied. By far the largest group were those who were China-born (43.2%), followed by those who identified as being born in New Zealand (29.5%). Although these two groups represent the majority of the participants, other birthplaces were also identified: 6.8 percent were born in India, 4.5 percent were born in the United Kingdom while 15.9 percent identified as Other. 5

Place of birth and ethnic group identification questions provided different information. Nearly half of all the participants identified as being of Asian descent with 45.5 percent of participants identifying their ethnicity as Chinese and 2.3 percent identifying as Indian. A range of responses were employed by those participants of European descent. A number responded as simply New Zealander (4.5%), 'Kiwi' (9.1), or 'Kiwi' hybrid (2.3%), while NZ European (11.4%), European (2.3%), and Pākehā (6.8%) were also claimed as ethnic groups. These responses point to the increasing complexity (and difficulty) of capturing a sense of ethnicity, and how to label such ethnicity - important matters given the impact immigration can have on one's sense of ethnic belonging (see Clark, 2009; Yoon, Lee, Koo, & Yoo, 2010)

Although our survey was not exhaustive, these characteristics indicate that the ethnic make-up of those who shop in Dominion Road is notably different from other ethnic precincts, in some respects, throughout the world. In particular, ethnic precincts in both Australia and Canada report large numbers of tourists shopping in the ethnic precincts (Collins & Jordan, 2009; Rath, 2007b). Although the Australian and Canadian precincts are discussed later in this report, for now it is interesting to note that there were no tourists among our sample. All of the participants resided in Auckland and the majority of the participants were China-born.

5 ‘Other’ places of birth include Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia, Turkey, and Fiji.
CONSUMPTION PRACTICES

We were interested in how often, and on what days, the participants visited Dominion Road. Of the 44 participants, three-quarters shopped in the ethnic precinct at least several times a week. Indeed, 31.8 percent shopped there every day, while a further 43.2 percent shopped several times per week. An additional 4.5 percent of respondents shopped weekly. For others, visits to the ethnic precincts were less frequent (fortnightly 2.3%; monthly 6.8%; and annually 4.5%). This means that for close to 80 percent of the participants, visits to the area were part of their regular, routinised shopping, occurring at least once per week.

We were also interested in when the participants visited Dominion Road because this could potentially provide insights into their patterns of consumption. We found that over half (53%) of the participants visited the ethnic precincts on both weekdays and weekends while 26 percent and seven percent visited on weekdays and weekends respectively. Only 14 percent of the participants visited Dominion Road infrequently (12% did not visit regularly and 2% were visiting for the first time). The high frequency of these visits, and the clear indication that consumers extend their visits across the week, indicates that consumers treat the area as an everyday aspect of their consumption practices. Moreover, the extension of shopping across the week, could suggest that ethnic precincts are potentially a source of recreation and leisure, as well as a shopping destination. This point is reinforced by the reasons participants gave for choosing to shop there.

REASONS FOR SHOPPING

Participants mentioned a variety of reasons for shopping at the precinct on the day of the interview. Nearly half (47.7%) were shopping for material goods, 18.2 percent of the participants worked in the area and 13.6 percent visited the ethnic precinct to eat. A further 27 percent also cited 'other' activities they were engaged in. These included: posting a letter; visiting family or friends; collecting a Chinese newspaper; banking; attending a job interview; visiting an internet café; and going to the hairdresser. Only 2.3 percent of the participants were on their way somewhere else which suggests that the precinct itself was the destination for most of the participants.
Table 2: Reasons for shopping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All (%)</th>
<th>China-born (%)</th>
<th>Non-China-born (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business engagement</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in Dominion Road</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going elsewhere</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special event</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses of the participants indicated that ethnicity played some role in determining shopping practices in an ethnic precinct. To tease out this finding further, the responses of China-born and non-China-born participants were examined in more detail.

More than twice as many China-born participants work in the area. Those born in China represent 26.3 percent of the participants, while those born outside of China represent just 12 percent. In addition, China-born participants were far more likely than those born outside of China to report going to the precinct to eat (21.1% and 8% respectively). It seems for those born in China, the precinct is closely intertwined with practices associated with daily life, including working and eating. As noted previously, the majority of eateries in the area serve Chinese cuisine. Eating provides an important focal point for ‘doing’ culture. It provides an opportunity to get together with family and friends and also allows those born in China to continue everyday social practices in their own cultural/linguistic community. These findings reflect similar trends from other ethnic precincts dominated by one ethnic/immigrant group around the world (see Jordan, 2010, for a discussion of Sydney's Chinatown).

Shopping for goods was identified as the prime activity of more than 50 percent of the non-China-born and 36.8 percent of the China-born. Given the array of Chinese shops and the range of Chinese goods and services, it could be expected that over a third of those born in China were shopping on the day of the interview. However, the larger number of non-China-born participants supports Collins and Jordan’s (2009) claim that consumers in ethnic precincts, who may not be part of the dominant ethnic group in that precinct, purchase consumables but also participate in a cultural environment that is different to their own. A closer analysis of the specific shops visited, as well as the comments some participants made about their experience, helps bear out this claim.
**Specific Shops Visited**

Clearly, people visited the ethnic precinct for a variety of reasons. A minority of the participants visited to go to the hairdresser (4.5%), use the internet at a cafe (6.8%), or complete their banking requirements (6.8%). However, the majority of the shops the participants visited were related to the purchase of food for either consumption on the premises or preparation later at home. In total, nearly two-thirds (63.7%) of all participants were visiting supermarkets (either 'Kiwi' supermarkets\(^6\) in 18.25% of cases or 'Asian' supermarkets - 20.5%), restaurants (22.7%) or foodhalls (2.3%).

**Table 3: Shops visited**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All (%)</th>
<th>China born (%)</th>
<th>Non China born (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visit foodhall</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit restaurants</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit 'Kiwi' supermarket</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit Asian supermarket</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit hairdresser / beauty salon</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit bank</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit internet cafe</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For those born in China, 42.1 percent were visiting Dominion Road to eat out at a restaurant. Eating out provides the opportunity to consume Chinese food, including particular delicacies, which are on offer in Dominion Road. In particular, consumers are able to eat familiar Chinese food, made by co-ethnics, using Chinese cooking methods. A further 31.6 percent were going to supermarkets, most (23.3%) visiting an Asian supermarket compared with 5.3 percent visiting a 'Kiwi' supermarket. A large proportion of Chinese-born participants cited other activities not specifically included in the survey. These included visits to the post office, the chemist, print shops and New Zealand or Kiwi-style product or gift shops.

The non-China-born were less engaged in eating in the precinct. Four percent said they ate at the foodhall and eight percent ate at a restaurant. Those not born in China also tended to visit the non-Asian supermarkets (28%) more than the Asian supermarkets (16%). It would seem for those born outside of China, the Dominion Road precinct has a functional capacity, providing

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\(^6\) By 'kiwi' supermarket, we mean a supermarket that stocks primarily western style products and where English language is the dominant language.
opportunities to secure supplies at places like supermarkets. Additional comments from these participants indicate price and the quality of produce were an important factor.

*It’s cheaper than other areas and you can find every kind of shop here.*

*The fruit is good.*

Other shops visited by those not born in China, included the post office, $2 shops, The Warehouse, fruit shops and bakeries, hardware stores and shoe repair shops, the dairy and chemists, and bars. These responses were more varied than those given by the China-born.

The differences may suggest that ethnic precincts have distinct meanings for different ethnic groups. In particular, for those born in China, the precinct appears to represent an important link to everyday Chinese life and a daily or regular place to visit or inhabit. Many of the China-born participants worked in the area and used the ethnic precinct for activities centred on basic provisions such as eating, including eating out, or purchasing food from a supermarket to prepare at home. These findings are congruent with overseas research on ethnic precincts. For example, London’s Chinatown provides a central place of belonging and engagement for China-born residents (Sales, et al., 2009). In contrast, the consumption practices of those who were not born in China centred on purchasing goods rather than socialising or eating out.

**The appeal of Dominion Road**

In order to establish why these cultural differences in shopping practices exist, we also asked what people appreciated most about shopping along Dominion Road. Placing birthplace to one side, over one-quarter (26.5%) reported that the area was convenient. Perhaps related to the notion of convenience, nearly three-quarters (73.5%) claimed the area was close to home and a further 11.8 percent claimed it was close to work.
### Table 4: Like most about shopping in Dominion Road

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All (%)</th>
<th>China born (%)</th>
<th>Non China born (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convenient</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good for meeting Chinese people</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can do lots of chores in one place</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can eat Chinese food</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to home</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to work</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, it is interesting to consider these findings in terms of those born in China compared with those who were not. For the China-born participants, 31.3 percent liked the convenience Dominion Road offered. Over two-thirds also liked that Dominion Road was close to home (56.3%) or work (12.5%).

*It’s convenient because I live nearby.*

*It is very close to my home.*

For China-born participants, the area offered a connection to Chinese restaurants, shops and other Chinese speaking people. Importantly, 12.5 percent stated that Dominion Road was good for meeting co-ethnics, some also noted that the language environment was familiar and there were few language difficulties. Again, patterns of everyday activity support and reinforce ongoing connections with other Chinese people and lifestyles.

*There are many Chinese restaurants and shops.*

*There are many Chinese shops, it’s close to the city, the transport is easy and there are fewer language difficulties.*

*There are a lot of Chinese, a lot of choice and it’s very convenient.*

For those not born in China, 22.2 percent appreciated the convenience of Dominion Road. However, all of those born outside of China liked the fact that the Dominion Road ethnic precincts were either near where they lived or worked (88.9% and 11.1% respectively).
It’s two blocks from home.

It’s handy, I live just up the road.

It’s close to home and I can walk here.

I work in the area and live down the road.

For those not born in China, the area appears to offer a convenient and functional place to shop close to home or work; these shoppers have little connection to Dominion Road as a specific ethnic location. Rather, their attachment rests with its accessibility. When asked what they liked about Dominion Road, the reaction was sometimes off-hand or dismissive. There was one exception; one respondent enjoyed the diversity of shops on offer and emphasised the diversity of the area.

Not much.

Nothing at all.

Love Dominion Road. It’s so diverse and exciting. Neat little area.

Other unsolicited comments from some of the non-China-born participants also made it clear that the area was not attractive. Many of the comments centred on the appearance of the area and their perception that it was ‘dirty’ or ‘grubby’.

Dirty, untidy, don’t like it here. Not many everyday shops.

Grubbiest shopping area in Auckland.

Bit grim. Could do with a tidy up.

Others also articulated their regret that the area had changed and they drew attention to their concerns about crime in the area.

Used to have more facilities ... it’s turned into an Asian Centre ... it’s changed.

Quite a lot of petty crime.
CONCLUSION

Dominion Road meets quite different retailing needs for an ethnically diverse clientele. As has been found in overseas studies (Sales, et al., 2009), our research demonstrates that for those born in China, ethnic precincts offer much more than simply a place to shop. These areas help new migrants maintain their cultural identities by speaking a native language, eating familiar foods and meeting with others born in their homeland. In relation to the Chinese community in Auckland, Dominion Road is one site that helps provide the familiar, in a linguistic and cultural sense, as well as in terms of products, services and food.

For those not born in China, the region offers convenience (the location itself) but seemingly little else. Many shopped there because it was near to where they lived or worked but there was little enthusiasm for other factors, and some negative perception of the look of the area and shops.

Precincts appear to represent a point of interaction between immigrant and local resident communities. While there is a sense of sometimes reluctant engagement on the part of the older and more established ‘local’ community, the area nevertheless provides a place for contact with the new migrant community that has also made a place for itself in the locality. In this sense, the precinct is a site of everyday multiculturalism in the Auckland of the twenty-first century. What is yet to be investigated in more detail, however, is whether, and to what extent, shared consumer destinations for immigrants and non-immigrants contribute to the development of community cohesion (Jordan, 2010).
Shop signage along Dominion Road.
Linguistic Landscapes

Written language is visible in the public domain in many different sites and in different forms. Sometimes words form part of the advertising on shop windows, commercial signs and posters (bottom up signs); elsewhere, they appear in official notices, traffic signs and as engraved messages on public monuments (top down signs). One way researchers describe this presence of language (and other elements of visual design) is as a ‘linguistic landscape’: a landscape that is meaningful, in a range of important ways, to local inhabitants – consumers, retailers, people passing through – who use language to communicate.

In the city of Auckland, there is emerging evidence that languages other than English are being used in public spaces, and this change to the linguistic landscape provides an opportunity to consider and assess multilingual language use in public space, and its relationship to the integration of immigrant groups. The extent of these changes is not well understood in New Zealand and, furthermore, the study of linguistic landscapes itself is relatively new (Backhaus, 2006; Gorter, 2006; Gorter & Cenoz, 2007). There are a number of ways researchers explore the meaning and impact of multilingual signage in urban spaces and one approach that has been used by researchers in the Integration of Immigrants Programme (IIP) has been to examine the linguistic landscape for evidence of ‘home’ and ‘belonging’.

Dominion Road is a typical example of a streetscape that has the characteristics associated with bottom up signs - shop signs and informal signs in a range of languages, including many in Chinese script. Sometimes these signs are translated into English, or have English language explanations of the goods and services alongside the Chinese; sometimes the sign is only in Chinese. Our approach has been to investigate the forms of language use in ‘ethnic precincts’ for evidence of a coherent linguistic landscape in which it is possible to recognise group identity, shared interests, inequalities of power and autonomy. To initiate this study, we first commissioned a Massey University photography student, Richard Shepherd, to produce a corpus of 500 photographs from five ethnic precinct areas in Auckland. These photographs have been our starting point.

Once we had the photographs, and had read and analysed the body of literature that tracks the development of the idea of linguistic landscapes, we developed our own conceptual framework. We suggest, as do other linguistic landscape scholars, that these landscapes perform distinct informational and politically symbolic functions. In terms of the Chinese language signs in Auckland, for example, we see the signs performing four possible functions:
1. They reflect group identity: people who read Chinese recognise these signs as belonging to ‘their’ world.

2. They reflect and enable shared interests: local Chinese may participate in economic and social activity regardless of their English language capacity.

3. They speak to inequalities in power: the existence of the signs ‘depends’ on local legislation and regulation, which may or may not be permissive in allowing or encouraging such signs to exist.

4. They may enhance autonomy: or the ability of migrant groups to exercise control over/within public spaces they routinely inhabit by, among other things, mediating the barriers created for non-English or limited English speaking migrants.

Second, we suggest that linguistic landscapes create a form of ‘gestalt’: that is, that although each sign is independently conceived and effectively ‘stands alone’, it also forms part of the whole economic, social and cultural landscape in which it is embedded and its meaning is amplified, reduced, or changed in many ways by the context in which it stands. There are organised and discernable patterns made up from the different linguistic objects in the landscape.

Third, because this landscape is a gestalt, we suggest that it produces a particular ‘decorum’ in public space – there are certain ways in which the people who inhabit or pass through these landscapes behave because of what, overall, is signified and symbolically represented by the character of the landscape immediately surrounding them.

This ‘decorum’ relates to ‘who belongs’ in this space. Which ethnic individual and group identities are incorporated or rejected in this area and what are the acceptable or unacceptable ways of ‘being’ within this public space. So, for example, part of the ‘acceptable’ decorum of public spaces that are strongly marked by the use of Chinese language signs is that people passing through those spaces may speak in Cantonese, Mandarin or other Chinese languages and dialects with less fear of overt disapproval.

In terms of linguistic landscapes, ‘gestalt’ and ‘decorum’ together constitute a useful frame for examining and presenting the politics of presence of the immigrant community. It gives researchers some capacity to at least see and consider the options that immigrant or non-dominant groups have to exercise some control over and within the public and geographical spaces they routinely inhabit. The frame may also alert us, as researchers and policy makers, to the constraints that operate to curtail or diminish the proliferation of linguistic landscapes and the effect they may have on the ‘sense of belonging’ of non-dominant groups. The argument that is emerging from our research is that ‘exercising control over’ space is also synonymous with citizenship and belonging and ‘putting down roots’. From the perspective of the dominant
culture, a vibrant and visible ‘politics of presence’ should signal a ‘model of belonging appropriate for a plural and open society’ (Eurozine, n.d. p 1-2).

Our thinking on the linkages between linguistic landscapes and being at home or belonging is influenced by the work of Ghassan Hage (1997, p. 102), an Australian anthropologist. Hage suggests that a definition of 'homebuilding' is 'the building of the feeling of being 'at home''. He describes 'home' as an 'affective edifice' constituted out of feelings of 'security, familiarity, community and a sense of possibility' (Hage, 1997, p. 100). In looking at the photographs of the linguistic landscape of Dominion Road, we have looked for evidence of these concepts of 'security', 'familiarity', 'community' and a 'sense of possibility'.

**SECURITY**

In the photograph below, the window above the green grocer's shop has been tagged with the word: 'Douglas' over some pre-existing graffiti art. While some effort has been made to remove the graffiti, what seems visible is that the graffiti is not racially or ethnically inflected; it is not 'anti-Asian'.

Perversely, it seems possible that new immigrants’ premises are subject to the same ‘random’ graffiti as any other commercial building – the building's owner has been subject to the same ‘aggravating’ urban behaviour as any other retailer. It could be argued that there is some potential security in being ‘just like everyone else’. What we do not know is whether the building's owners have easy access to insurance. Nor do we know what level of community policing is available in this community that may have made for a greater sense of security.
**FAMILIARITY**

These two photographs are opaque to anyone who cannot read the scripts. To those who can read the scripts, however, these messages about travel and food are familiar – they make sense to the 'native reader' whether they are in China, New Zealand or somewhere else entirely.

The hand written menu on the right advertises a range of food that anyone wanting to feel 'at home' would understand. In both of these photographs, familiarity of language and familiarity of the advertised products conduce to 'feeling at home'.

**COMMUNITY**

In the following two photographs, two different aspects of the concept of 'community' are displayed. In the left hand photograph, local Chinese 'go shopping' with other Chinese: buying fresh fruit and vegetables in a store where products are labeled in both Chinese and English. The medical centre, Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) registered, suggests that Chinese medicine has been accepted by the host society and is available, as of right, to the local Chinese (and English) community.
SENSE OF POSSIBILITY

Hage’s notion of a ‘sense of possibility’ is more difficult to pin down in photographs. We have chosen two that reflect a place for ‘more than food’ in the new landscapes. The ‘China Books’ and the ‘Chinese School New Century Education Centre’ both suggest that culture and education are surviving at least enough to reach out to Chinese residents.

SITES OF ‘HOME AND BELONGING’

Linguistically differentiated elements in urban landscapes reflect group identity, shared interests, and inequalities of power. They also point to ways in which autonomy can be enhanced. There are benefits for the host society as well as for the immigrants themselves in reframing ethnic precincts as linguistic landscapes that facilitate a different process of belonging. There is space here for policymaking to respond to these affective dimensions in a range of ways: by facilitating the use of non-English language signs more widely (not just in areas recognised as precincts, but perhaps more widely); and by encouraging more proactive language learning for host communities (not just immigrants) so more of ‘us’ can feel at home with ‘them’.
Sandwich board on Dominion Road.
ETHNIC PRECINCTS IN AUSTRALIA AND CANADA

Migration patterns greatly influence the socio-cultural landscape of destination countries and also give rise to new economic opportunities (Jordan, 2010). New Zealand cities, Auckland in particular, have yet to actively explore the possibilities that areas of immigrant business concentration might provide for new forms of consumption and economic activity. There is a considerable literature on the ways in which overseas cities such as Sydney (Collins & Jordan, 2009), Vancouver, San Francisco, London (Sales, et al., 2008) and Washington (Pang & Rath, 2007) have moved to recognise immigrant business concentrations as a site of importance for the city economy and, increasingly, as a destination for tourists and local consumers. The development of ethnic precincts in Canada and Australia is especially pertinent given that these immigrant destinations share with New Zealand similar immigration histories and policy settings (Meares, Ho, Peace, & Spoonley, 2010).

Throughout the 1970s, Australia’s immigration policy shifted from a ‘white Australia policy’ toward a non-discriminatory immigration policy (Jordan & Collins, n.d.). Since this time, Australia has experienced a substantial rise in immigration numbers, particularly in larger cities such as Sydney (Collins & Jordan, 2009, p. 79). Canada’s immigration policies followed a similar pattern to Australia as immigrants were sought in accordance with education levels and skill sets rather than birthplace, with an increased emphasis on economic concerns (Fong & Chan, 2008). In recent years, immigrants to Canada arrive mostly from Asia, in particular from China, Hong Kong, and India (Fong & Chan, 2008). The increasing ethnic diversity in both Australia and Canada has given rise to ethnic precincts in the major cities so that the co-location of immigrant/ethnic businesses from a ‘visible ethnic minority’ (Jordan & Collins, unpublished, p. 10) is readily apparent. In such precincts, particular immigrant and ethnic concentrations provide economic opportunities for ethnic entrepreneurs as well as increasing the opportunities for local consumers, and acting as tourist destinations for visitors from overseas.

The success of ethnic precincts, such as those found in Australia and Canada, depend on the ongoing interactions between consumers and immigrant entrepreneurs as well as host institutions such as local authorities (Jordan & Collins, n.d.). The recognition by these authorities has led to the ‘ethnic theming’ of some areas and significant support for ethnic and immigrant business development. Cities often compete in terms of the ethnic and immigrant-related experiences they can offer and ethnic diversity has itself become a commodity and a point of brand difference (Jordan 2010, p. 65). Ethnic precincts in such places are often constructed as marketable spaces designed to appeal to a broad and diverse customer base. Jordan’s (2010) PhD examining Northbridge’s Chinatown in Perth, Australia, is a case in point. Although Northbridge is situated within an area which is dominated by Chinese-owned businesses, it was important to brand the area (or ‘theme it’, as local business plans described) to increase the

7 More than half of the population of Australia’s largest cities are first- or second-generation immigrants (Collins & Jordan, 2009, p. 79) as they are in Auckland. Using the 2006 census, 37 percent of Auckland’s residents were born in another country but if their children are added to the mix, 57 percent of the city’s residents are immigrants.
limited customer pool available to local businesses. As such, ethnic diversity served as a commodity which could be capitalised on in order to extend economic productivity. The introduction of ethnic markers, such as Chinese gates and lanterns, reinforced the perceived authenticity of the precinct. The attraction of the area was that it provided an ‘ethnic’ experience over and above the products sold (Jordan, 2010).

Tourism also presents an economic opportunity for ethnic precincts and regional councils who are looking to capitalise on the growth of cultural or ethnic tourism. Ethnic tourism is defined by Collins and Jordan (2009, p. 79) as the ‘link between immigration, ethnic diversity, and tourism’. The increased demand by tourists for an ‘ethnic experience’ replete with tastes, sights, sounds and smells mean that ethnic precincts are an increasingly important tourist destination. Collins (in Jordan, 2010, p. 67) notes that ‘ethnic cultural tourism’ also involves visits to ethnic precincts from (in this case) Chinese tourists and there is some evidence in Auckland that Chinese tour groups are channelled towards Chinese ethnic precincts, sometimes to their dismay (Tan, 2008). Ethnic precincts have significant potential as part of a city’s branding and tourism strategy (see Collins & Jordan, 2009) and planning and economic development processes are often structured to specifically recognise and include immigrant communities.

In Australia, Sydney’s Chinatown and Perth’s Northbridge appeal to local consumers and tourists alike who are keen to experience ethnic products, foods and services (Collins & Jordan, 2009). Sydney’s Chinatown is a well established mono-ethnic precinct with origins in the late 19th century. The streetscape in Chinatown consists of traditional Chinese motifs including porticos and lanterns, and more recently, the Golden Water Mouth which was erected to attract visitors to the region during the Sydney 2000 Olympics. An estimated 89 percent of the businesses in Chinatown are owned by ethnic entrepreneurs, mostly but not exclusively Chinese, indicating the important role immigrants play in the construction and ongoing activities of ethnic precincts. Reportedly, 25 percent of shoppers in Chinatown identify as tourists and one of the most common reasons for visiting Chinatown is to eat out (45 percent of those surveyed; Collins and Jordan, 2009).

Despite the economic possibilities on offer through the development and promotion of ethnic precincts such as Chinatown in Sydney, support by local communities has not always been forthcoming. For example, in the 1970s when the Sydney Council and the Dixon Street Chinese Committee were discussing the potential development of the area as Chinatown, there was mixed reaction from local Chinese. Some felt the development would provide substantial economic possibilities while others were concerned it was contrived, and the ethnic theming that would accompany its development would be inappropriate. Interestingly, Kunz (2005) notes that Asian consumers describe Chinatown as fake, kitsch and inauthentic, compared with non-Asian consumers who consider Chinatown authentic.
Originally the site of Little Italy, Perth’s Northbridge is a more recent development and has a multicultural focus (see Collins & Jordan, 2009). It is known for its cultural diversity in terms of retailing activities, ethnic restaurants and general nightlife. Northbridge has undergone significant changes as immigration patterns have changed. For example, in recent years, the Greek and Italian communities have moved out to the suburbs and been replaced by more recent immigrant arrivals such as Chinese, South-East Asian and South-Asian (Collins & Jordan, 2009). Given the fluidity of its ethnic focus, the area lacks the usual cultural markers of ethnicity on the streetscape. However, it remains an important site of ethnic diversity and continues to be a significant destination for recent immigrants and the establishment of their businesses, as well as providing opportunities for cultural consumption by the local community.

Canadian cities such as Toronto and Vancouver are home to a number of ethnic precincts which reflect European (Italian, Portuguese) and Asian immigrant communities. As with Australia and New Zealand, immigrant flows have been dominated by arrivals from Asia in recent decades. However, there are long-standing ethnic Asian precincts such as Vancouver’s Chinatown. These precincts were attractive destinations for immigrant businesses because they provided a known environment in terms of existing cultural and social networks, familiar languages and support from co-ethnics. Barriers in local labour markets also contributed to the channelling of immigrants into retailing in ethnic precincts. Authors such as Phan and Luk (2008) argue that the rise of ethnic precincts in Canada was largely due to the inability of immigrants to gain employment. In response, recent immigrants pursued various forms of self-employment, including retailing in these precincts. However, the development of ethnic shopping spaces was also supported by local and regional councils. For example, Vancouver made a decision in 1989 to consider cultural diversity a core requirement in governance and economic development. As elsewhere, ethnic precincts were seen as an important brand difference in the city, as consumer and tourist destinations, and as an important contribution to economic development. As such, immigrant interests in these precincts were supported and encouraged by local authorities in terms of planning processes and the contribution to branding and advertising. As Pang and Rath (2007: 207) comment:

Urban cultural diversity is ... a vital resource for the prosperity of cities and a potential catalyst for socio-economic development, especially since business investors consider this diversity as one of the factors determining the location of businesses.

In both Australia and Canada, the development of ethnic precincts has breathed new life into formerly neglected areas, providing opportunities for both immigrant settlement and

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8 As demographic patterns and trends change over time, so too does the makeup of ethnic precincts. For example, in Toronto the recent arrival of Sino-Vietnamese (ethnic Chinese from Vietnam) has led to changes in the business make-up of Toronto’s Chinatown. Interestingly, as Sino-Vietnamese have established businesses in Chinatown, Hong Kong businesses have moved out (Phan & Luk, 2008).
entrepreneurship. However, this was not achieved by immigrant entrepreneurs alone. Rather, they were supported by both state and local government to develop the ethnic precincts so that they could capitalise on the economic opportunities presented (Jordan & Collins, unpublished). Urban cultural diversity has become a vital resource for the prosperity of cities and a potential catalyst for socio-economic development, particularly since business investors consider this diversity as one of the factors determining the location of their business. The result has been that the public policy framework of city planning, regeneration, place-marketing and other functions may enable or encourage expressions of ethnic difference in the built environment (Shaw, Bagwell, & Karmowska, 2004). Shaw et al. (2004, p. 1986) go on to note that more enlightened city governments shifted from a ‘crude civic boosterism’ in the 1990s to ‘strategic niche management and competitive niche thinking’, one key element of which was the promotion of spaces and activities that reflected one ethnic or immigrant community or another. However, the drive to promote and market ethnic precincts needs to proceed with caution as the process raises concerns about how ethnic minority groups are represented in urban planning and place making. In particular, stereotypical representations might be appealing to tourist groups but might be inappropriate for the immigrant/ethnic communities involved (Jordan & Collins, n.d.).

The ‘niche management’ and promotion of ethnic spaces/precincts has not happened in Auckland where there remains a reluctance to see ethnic precincts (amongst other ethnic/immigrant business activities) as a civic asset. The possibility of branding areas in Auckland as Chinatowns has been raised but then just as quickly dismissed. One of us (Paul Spoonley) noted in a radio interview in 2005 that Auckland, despite the size of its Chinese population and the fact that a number of areas in the city had significant densities of Chinese businesses, still lacked an official Chinatown. A blog entitled ‘A Chinatown State of Mind’ (Mok, 2005) was published in response to these comments, and this was followed by a public campaign (largely online plus some columns in the local print media) against the establishment of a Chinatown. Supporters of the ‘no Chinatown’ campaign, most of whom were younger members of the Chinese community in Auckland, felt that it usurped the Chinese community’s prerogative to claim its own space and future and that local government involvement in the project would simply confirm their minority status and ‘difference’.

More recently in 2008, the then mayor of Waitakere, Bob Harvey, argued that New Lynn ought to become a Chinatown. The area had the highest percentage of Chinese residents in Auckland (over 30% in 2006) as well as a cluster of Chinese businesses (Meares, et al., 2010). The mayor suggested that the town centre might be enhanced by explicitly identifying it as a Chinatown with symbols such as traditional Chinese gates. On this occasion too, the mayor was defeated by the opposition of some Chinese members of the community but also by concerns raised by local non-Chinese business owners and residents who did not welcome the idea that their centre might become even more Chinese than it already was (see Thompson, 2008). Both these responses were localised and while they gained some media publicity, their influence on the broader politics of Auckland was limited. Very few decision-makers or local government officials would be aware of either incident.
Ethnic precincts in Australia and Canada are very similar in many regards with those now found in Auckland. Sometimes, they represent the conversion of an existing shopping centre (Northcote, in Auckland’s case) or a totally new purpose-built shopping precinct (for example, Meadowlands). Dominion Road is a strip (rather than a cluster) development in which long-established shops have increasingly attracted Asian (typically immigrant) owners and businesses. However, there are two important differences. The first is that in cities such as Sydney or Vancouver, these have been Asian / Chinese ethnic precincts in much the same area that they now occupy since the early twentieth century. There are newer precincts but Dominion Road, like all other Asian precincts in Auckland, are less than two decades old. Secondly, and perhaps as a product of the first difference, these overseas precincts have been branded as ethnic precincts in a deliberate way by city authorities; they are recognisable ‘Chinatowns’. In Jock Collins’ terminology, these precincts have been commodified as important shopping and tourist destinations. Auckland has yet to see anything similar. The ethnic precincts are a product of immigrant business owner investments and decisions.
Typical architecture along Dominion Road.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This report indicates something of the ethnic and retail mix of two particular precincts on Dominion Road, and how those who shop there view the area. Asian, particularly Chinese, immigrant business owners are a major presence in these precincts, and the ethnic character is evident in shop signs, employment and visitors. What are the social and economic implications, for the local communities, local government (Auckland City) and what are the possibilities for future economic development of the Dominion Road area?

The evolution and growth of identifiable ethnic precincts on Dominion Road poses social and economic policy challenges both to the Auckland Council and central government. In this final section, we explore some policy-related implications of ethnic precinct development.

Some Australian, USA and Dutch literature e.g. Collins and Kunz’s (2007) edited collection on the promotion of ethnic precincts, Kaplan and Li’s (2006) edited USA collection on the ethnic economy, and Rath’s (2007a) edited collection on urban ethnic tourism, point to the need for policymakers to think about, and pay attention, to the economic activities undertaken by new immigrants – particularly when their economic engagement becomes intensified in specific locations. New Zealand has tended to adopt a laissez faire attitude to ethnic diversity (Spoonley and Meares, 2011) and thus has been reluctant to affirm or support the specific requirements of ethnic/immigrant entrepreneurial culture.

ENGAGING WITH IMMIGRANT BUSINESS COMMUNITIES

The research undertaken with the Chinese and Korean communities through the Integration of Immigrants Programme indicates that immigrant business owners do not feel that many of the host organisations which represent and engage with businesses understand their particular circumstances or needs. In relation to some of the difficulties that these businesses encounter, there are particular issues: English language ability (of the owners); obtaining appropriate advice; and feeling welcomed and encouraged to participate in business networking or other industry activities.

There has been a different response in, for example, Vancouver or Toronto, Canada, where decisions were made to ensure that immigrant communities were encouraged to participate in decision-making. In particular, it was decided that, at the local Council level:

- Information was to be provided in immigrant community languages;
• There was to be immigrant community representation on all planning and decision-making council processes; and
• There was to be explicit acknowledgement in council activities that immigrant communities in general, and immigrant business communities in particular, were critical to the identity and the economic development of the city.

**Recommendation:**

The Asian/Chinese retailers on Dominion Road (and elsewhere) could be invited, encouraged or facilitated to participate in Auckland Council processes. Strategies for ensuring representation; appropriate language communication and engagement with business organisations are all required. While there is a distinct role for the Auckland Council in developing initiatives in all of these areas, there is also a role for central government in encouraging and supporting the dynamism and entrepreneurial contribution of immigrant business activity to the economic development of the area.

**TRANSMATIONAL ADVANTAGES**

While there is some debate about the numbers of ethnic entrepreneurs who are engaged in active transnational linkages with their homeland (Portes, Guarnizo, & Haller, 2002), their value is increasingly recognised. Ethnic entrepreneurs in Dominion Road may ‘only’ be engaged in small scale homeland transactions related to importing foodstuffs and consumables but until these links are better understood, their contribution to the wider economy cannot be appreciated or developed. The pool of Chinese native speakers and international connections encapsulated in the precinct may offer opportunities to New Zealand entrepreneurs wishing to do business in China. The role of Auckland Council in facilitating intercultural business exchanges has yet to be explored.

**Recommendation:**

The Asian/Chinese retainers on Dominion Road represent (potentially) a resource in terms of international trade. We would note that little is known about their current transnational activities and connections, and therefore, what the possibilities might be. We would, firstly, recommend that this information gap be addressed. Secondly, there is the question of how the transnational connections of Chinese/Asian business owners/entrepreneurs might be utilised.
A CHINESE ETHNIC PRECINCT?

The first New Zealand Chinatown was opened on the 4th October 2010 in Ti Rakau Drive in Manukau (http://www.times.co.nz/cms/front_page_feature/2010/10/chinatown_opens.php), but there is no such proposal current for Dominion Road. Policy proposals to support ethnic businesses by endorsing the development of branded centres are complicated by a number of factors. First is the question of whether the Asian/Chinese retailers concerned want to operate in a branded precinct. Previous history in Auckland suggests some ambivalence toward ‘branded’ Chinatowns, although opposition in the past might reflect inappropriate approaches to Chinatown proposals. Second, is the reality that many ethnic areas in Auckland, including Dominion Road, comprise a mix of immigrant/ethnic businesses: branding would highlight one ethnic community at the expense of others. Third, the question that overseas constituencies have struggled with, is who benefits from such branded sites: is it the local entrepreneurs or is it rather the wider economy that takes advantage of tourism spending generated from ‘yet another destination’? In terms of supporting local ethnic business in Dominion Road, more careful consideration of the winners and losers might need to be undertaken. Research suggests that ethnic precincts act as the home base from which one and a half and second generation migrants take their place in the wider community. To destabilise the role of ethnic precincts as this home base – available to new migrants who struggle with adaptation to the cultural and economic demands of their new homeland – is a high price to pay for tourist glamour.

Recommendation:

It would be interesting to explore with the current business owners – and other key stakeholders – whether there would be support for a themed or branded precinct that might be labelled a “Chinatown” or, more likely, something more modest, such as decorations or signage which reflects the Asian/Chinese character of sections of Dominion Road.

CONCLUSION

There are two issues that we are keen to raise.

1. First is how the new Auckland Council might best engage with the Chinese business owners that now dominate sections of Dominion Road. The language and cultural characteristics of these business owners suggests that rather different strategies need to be employed to get effective engagement.

2. The second is whether there are aspects of these ethnic precincts that might be better understood and utilised for both the owners themselves, as well as in terms of the Auckland economy more generally. The first might involve the promotion of the ethnic precinct (as a themed or branded shopping destination) or in terms of better understanding and then utilising activities and connections of those operating in the precinct (trade connections with China).
Shop signage on Dominion Road.
CONCLUSION

The character of Dominion Road has been progressively changing in the last two decades. Chinese and other Asian businesses have been established so that, by 2011, they dominate major sections of retailing activity along the road. This development has happened organically; the previous Auckland City Council did little to facilitate or explicitly acknowledge what was happening, or to consider what the possibilities might be in relation to the economic development of the area. What is now reflected in the retailing and ethnic mix of the road, and the feel of this retailing, reflects the decisions and intentions of immigrants and minority ethnic communities. At this point, with the establishment of the new Auckland Council and a much greater appreciation of the contribution of immigrants to Auckland’s character and economic/cultural possibilities, it is timely to consider how best to engage with these business communities in the context of the ethnic precinct that is Dominion Road – or parts of it.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


