REPOSITIONING ETHNICITY:
THE TRANSFORMATION OF VANCOUVER’S CHINATOWN
INTO A SITE FOR TOURISM, LEISURE AND CONSUMPTION

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the repositioning of Chinatown into a site for tourism, leisure and consumption. It seeks to identify the actors and processes driving the transformation with the ultimate goal to determine the optimal conditions under which expressions of culture can be transformed into a vehicle for socio-economic development to the advantage of both immigrants and the city at large.

I argue that the district’s current shape and form can be attributed to a changing configuration of actors and processes. At the centre of it all are Chinatown merchants, who took the first steps towards retrofitting Chinatown for popular consumption over seven decades ago. Seven decades later, the latter still actively shape the district. Also included are City of Vancouver planners, who have drastically altered their stance towards regulating Chinatown during the last four decades or so. Whereas the latter initially focused on preserving and enhancing the district’s landscape, more recent interventions have involved local stakeholders and have had the goal to build a complete community. I conclude that such a holistic approach is more likely to result in development to the benefit of all actors involved.
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Constructions of Chinatown

As one of North America’s largest and oldest Chinese settlement, Vancouver’s Chinatown has attracted its fair share of academic attention. Perhaps the most widely known study of the district is Kay Anderson’s (1991) *Vancouver’s Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980*. In the book, Anderson takes a critical view at Chinatown and shows how the district emerged as a result of racist practices by European-origin Canadians towards Chinese migrants. In the process, she emphasizes the role of powerful Canadian institutions in marginalizing Chinese-Canadian Vancouverites throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By tracing the impact of racist practices on the social and material development of Vancouver’s Chinatown, her book presents a break with the school of thought that sees Chinatown as a colony of East in the West¹. As she suggests, “the premise of a uniquely Chinese race and place has shaped and justified practices that have inscribed it [i.e. Chinatown] further in European society and space” (ibid: 9). Or as she also put it, “Chinatown belongs as much to the society with the power to define and shape it as it does to its residents” (ibid: 10).

Anderson begins her account by suggesting that early Chinese immigration to British Columbia was met with disapproval by European-origin settlers. Supported by the three-levels of government, these settlers made life difficult for Chinese workers by severely restricting their employment and residential opportunities. In this context of blocked mobility, Chinatown emerged as a residential and commercial enclave providing shelter and work opportunities to the City’s growing marginalized Chinese population.

¹ For an example of this kind of writing, see David Lai’s “Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities”.

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In the decades following its establishment, Chinatown acquired a bad reputation in the minds of European-origin Vancouverites. “For Europeans, Chinatown embodied all those features that seemed to set the Chinese apart” (ibid: 104). As a result, during the 1900s and throughout the 1940s, municipal authorities devised a number of special policies to deal with the district. In the 1960s, plans were even drafted to raze parts of the district through urban renewal and to build a freeway. Largely as a result of widespread mobilization by local residents, these plans were foiled and Chinatown was designated a historic area in 1971. That same year, the federal government announced the policy of multiculturalism. As Anderson suggests, however, the institution of multiculturalism perpetuated old conceptions of race. “The new rhetoric of “ethnic diversity” was based on assumptions carried over from the time when particular (unflattering) qualities were considered inherent to a national type and part of the hereditary process” (ibid: 212). Under multiculturalism, Chinatown was to be celebrated as a local expression of difference. The government continued to design the district to be different.

In emphasizing the role of outsiders in constructing Chinatown, Anderson largely underplays the agency of the Chinatown community in shaping the district. As Ng (1999: 6) suggests, she portrays “Chinese people ... as no more than hapless victims of racial prejudice and discrimination, and [she treats] Chinese identity ... as a matter of external imposition”. In large part as a response to her book, Ng published *The Chinese in Vancouver, 1945-80*. Drawing on the Vancouver Chinese media as well as on archival records from large Chinatown organizations, Ng explores the identity formation process of Vancouver’s Chinese community. In his book, the author traces the emergence and
development of Chinatown voluntary organizations all the while emphasizing the internal complexity of the community. As Ng (ibid: 7) suggests:

The many youth societies established by the new immigrants in the 1950s and the various organizations emerging in the same period to represent the interests of Canadian-born Chinese ... clashed over their different cultural orientations and respective propositions for the future of the ethnic group as a whole. Simultaneously, since the cultural claims of these two groups defied and challenged the once dominant position of the old-timers, the elderly settlers resorted to their own traditional organizations in Chinatown, especially the clan and native place associations, to reassert their leadership and influence.

Whereas Ng’s study sheds light on community dynamics in Chinatown after World War II and up to 1990, it underplays the role of certain Chinatown actors in shaping the district. More precisely, his project is to examine the politics of identity formation in Vancouver’s Chinese community. As such, he largely ignores the ways in which certain factions of the Chinatown community transformed the neighbourhood in order to achieve economic gains. In contrast, Anderson’s account highlights the fact that Chinatown merchants have shaped the façade of the district in an attempt to attract outsiders. However, in emphasizing the power of European hegemony in structuring relations between the Chinese and members of mainstream society, she largely underplays the significance of such actions. This thesis aims to fill this gap in the literature.

1.2. Thesis Statement and Research Questions

This thesis examines the commodification of ethnicity in Vancouver’s Chinatown. More specifically, it examines the transformation of Chinatown from an ethnic neighbourhood into a site for tourism, leisure and consumption. With the thesis, I seek to
answer the following questions. How did areas associated with excluded populations come to be seen as candidates for preservation and as drivers for economic development? What are the processes driving the transformation of ethnic precincts into sites for tourism, leisure and consumption and how do they work out on the ground? Who are the main actors involved and how do they collaborate together in the process? What are the optimal conditions under which expressions of culture can be transformed into a vehicle for socio-economic development to the advantage of both immigrants and the city at large?

1.3 Methodology

In order to answer these complex questions, I draw on a number of different methods and data sources. To begin, the thesis is based on an extensive review of the existing literature on Vancouver’s Chinatown, particularly on the scholarship of Anderson (1987, 1991), Ng (1999), Roy (1989, 2003) and Lai (1988).

More than a literature review, however, the document presents the results of original research conducted between 2006 and 2008. Chapter 3 is based on extensive archival research conducted at the City of Vancouver Archives and Public Library. Primary documents consulted include newspaper clippings from both the mainstream and ethnic media, tourism guidebooks, magazines as well as historical photograph collections. In turn, chapter 4 is based on an analysis of municipal-level policy documents. These include the minutes of meetings of the Chinatown Historic Area Planning Committee (CHAPC) as well as a host of policy papers and reports prepared by the City of Vancouver Planning Department.
In order to gain additional insights into the development of the district, I interviewed a number of people who had been involved, either directly or indirectly, in repositioning Chinatown. Included are district merchants, City of Vancouver Planners as well as representatives from large Chinatown associations and the tourism industry. Appendix A summarizes the characteristics of interviewees, whose identities have been concealed.

Given the exploratory nature of this research project, a semi-structured interview format was adopted. Although the questions varied depending on the affiliation of the interviewees, an interview guide (Appendix B) was developed and used. The semi-structured interview format proved to be ideal given that it allowed for leads and perspectives to be explored in great depth.

In setting up the meetings, I initiated contact with over 20 groups, associations and individuals who could be linked to development projects in the district. In the end, however, I managed to secure only 10 interviews. Although there may be other reasons, I suspect that the low rates of participation can be traced to my status as an outsider of both the district and the City’s Chinese community, broadly defined. While the interviews were never meant to form the backbone of my thesis, the low rates of response (around 50 percent) represent one of the limits of this study.

1.4. Definitions

Commodification of ethnicity

In its broadest sense, ‘commodification’ refers to the process whereby economic value is assigned to something not previously considered in economic terms. In this
present case, and following a number of scholars (e.g. Collins 2004; Pang and Rath 2007), I use the expression to label the range of processes associated with the transformation of one ethnic district - Vancouver’s Chinatown - into a site for tourism, leisure and consumption.

As chapter 3 will make clear, a combination of economic (e.g. labour market segmentation), social (e.g. discrimination) and political (e.g. institutional racism) factors can be attributed to the emergence of a Chinese enclave in Vancouver. At some point during the 1930s, the particular character of Chinatown came to be used as a means of attracting outsiders to the area. That is, although the neighbourhood was long labeled as “Chinese” by European-origin Vancouverites, initially, this recognition exerted a negative impact on the development of the area. As mainstream society became more tolerant of ethnic diversity, Chinatown’s difference (as manifested in its landscape) was re-evaluated as an asset, as a means of attracting consumers to the area’s shops and restaurants. In an interesting turn of events, the cultural cues and symbols that once set the Chinese apart were emphasized and enhanced as the neighbourhood’s main selling point.

The commodification process can exert positive impacts on the material, social and economic vitality of minority neighbourhoods. To begin, the process usually brings about physical improvements. The “need to make commodities as attractive as possible, so that they will sell in large quantities … leads to the practice of commodity aesthetics. Commodities are fashioned that will, as near as possible, mirror consumers’ desires” (Thrift 2000). Although such transformations may only be skin deep, beautification schemes can attract investment dollars. If successful, they can also translate into
economic opportunities for local merchants. Finally, local residents can benefit from infrastructure improvements (e.g. improved sidewalks and street lighting, cultural centres, parks and gardens, etc) justified on the basis of their contribution to the attractiveness of ethnic areas.

Notwithstanding these advantages, the commodification process does not necessarily yield positive results. If taken too far, landscape improvement schemes can cause significant friction between area residents, merchants and municipal authorities, to name a few of the actors involved in the process. Finally, although the relationship between the commodification of ethnicity and gentrification is complex, beautification schemes have been known to increase the cost of local properties (Hackworth and Rekers, 2005). Although property owners may benefit from such developments, others (i.e. renters) may be priced out.

Landscape

Although ‘landscape’ has many definitions, it can be used to refer to a “portion of land which the eye can comprehend at a glance” (Jackson, 1984: 3). In the case of urban neighbourhoods, I use the term to refer to the combination of elements that can be taken in simultaneously from a viewer’s perspective: these include topographical features (hills, water bodies, etc), physical structures (buildings, lamp posts, etc) but also more ephemeral elements (signs, etc) of streetscapes.

As the previous section suggests, the look and feel of ethnic areas represent an important aspect of the place product, to use the expression popular in the tourism literature. Whereas it is not the only element (other important components include ethnic
commercial establishments and co-ethnic passersby, for example), the landscapes of 
ethnic districts serve to demarcate them vis-à-vis the broader urban environment within 
which they are embedded. This is because ethnic districts, like ethnic groups, are defined 
in opposition to the dominant, mainstream culture within which they are embedded.

As Urry (1990) notes, tourists seek to immerse themselves in unfamiliar 
landscapes and to experience the heritage, architecture and culture that make up the 
 essence of a place. Given that they stand out in relation to the broader urban environment 
within which they are embedded, ethnic districts offer city residents the possibility to feel 
out of place without traveling very far.

Although people encounter the city through their five senses, “there is a 
fascination with the sense of sight as the apparent mirror of the world” (ibid). In the case 
of tourism, the fact that experiencing places is most commonly referred to as 
‘sightseeing’ is very telling. The implication for areas seeking to attract outsiders is clear: 
emphasize difference and culture through the landscape. Whereas some of the raw 
material essential to building the tourist experience may emerge organically as a 
neighbourhood develops, desired characteristics can be reinforced and other ones added 
through a process of branding (Wernick, 1991). A brand contains both tangible and 
intangible components: the ‘brand image’, which consists of the information and 
expectations associated with a product or service, and the ‘brand experience’, which 
consists of the sum of all points of contact between the consumer and the brand or 
product. The process of branding neighbourhoods involves the manipulation of the two 
components of the brand: creating and disseminating images and ideas of the place-
product (i.e. selling a place through promotional brochures) but also enhancing the place-
product itself (i.e. beautifying a neighbourhood through landscape improvement schemes).

As stated earlier, the branding process can yield significant benefits. However, it can also cause significant dispute between those involved in the process. This said, to ignore the agency of less powerful actors in branding neighbourhoods would result in an incomplete picture. As Ley (quoted in Chang 2000: 344) put it, the City’s “changing spatial form is the negotiated outcome between diverse groups with assymetrical access to power”. Or to use Crang’s (2004) words:

Tourism is an active agent in the creative destruction of places in what can be a violent, contested, unequal, but sometimes welcomed, transformative and productive process. The process is one of co-construction where the destination is fashioned between different actors. This does not necessarily mean in an equal or harmonious fashion, but it is important not to start by denying locals or tourists any agency in the process, since that leads not only to negative views of tourism, but a pessimism about the possibilities for people to shape it.

Vancouver’s Chinatown

The boundaries of Vancouver’s Chinatown have shifted often times throughout history. Originally centered on Dupont (now Pender) Street, Chinatown expanded eastward into Strathcona (one of East Vancouver’s first neighbourhoods) as Vancouver’s Chinese population grew. Today, the latter neighbourhood still comprises a sizeable Chinese-origin population who shop and socialize in Chinatown’s commercial, social and cultural establishments. In that sense, Strathcona (especially the neighbourhood’s northwest portion) is very much part of Chinatown.

In 1971, Chinatown was designated a historic site. In the process, official boundaries were imposed on the district. Figure 1 delineates the official boundaries of the
Chinatown district in relation to other areas in the downtown Eastside. Note that Chinatown comprises two separate zones: the HA-1 zone, which comprises the majority of the neighbourhood’s historic structures, as well as the HA-1A planning zone, which comprises the bulk of the district’s commercial establishments. The former zone is centered on Pender Street while the latter zone is centered on Main Street. While I acknowledge the linkages between Chinatown and other adjoining sites, I adopt the same definition of the district.

1.5. Structure

My starting point is that the repositioning of Chinatown cannot be construed as a simple by-product of urban development trends. Rather, I argue that it can be attributed to a changing configuration of processes and actors, particularly Chinatown entrepreneurs. Chapter two thus begins by presenting a conceptualization of immigrant
entrepreneurship. Then, the chapter discusses some of the macro-level transformations impacting the development of contemporary neighbourhoods before honing in on the growing body of literature on the commodification of ethnicity in Western cities. As we will see, the processes influencing the development of Vancouver’s Chinatown shape ethnic areas in other parts of the world. Likewise, the findings of this study are bound to be relevant for other places.

Chapter three reconstructs the historical development of Chinatown, emphasizing the role of Chinatown merchants in shaping the precinct. As the chapter demonstrates, the latter took concrete actions to brand the district as early as the 1930s. Initially, their ability to reposition Chinatown as a site for tourism, leisure and consumption was limited by the institutional context. As mainstream society became more tolerant of diversity, the practices of different levels of government towards Chinatown shifted.

Chapter four scrutinizes the changing involvement of the City in shaping Chinatown, focusing on the period between 1971 and today. By comparing three interventions of the City of Vancouver in Chinatown, I demonstrate that there has been a shift in how Vancouver planners deal with difference ever since the institution of multiculturalism. Whereas early attempts to shape Chinatown focused on enhancing desired elements of the neighbourhood’s landscape, more recent interventions by the City in Chinatown have had the goal to build a complete community. The chapter highlights the benefits of adopting a holistic approach to repositioning ethnic districts while at the same time offering a constructive critique of the City’s approach to coordinating developments in the district.
Chapter five summarizes the key findings of the study before offering concluding remarks about the future of Chinatown.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

As Collins (2004) and others (e.g. Pang and Rath 2007; Shaw, Bagwell and Karmowska 2004) have argued, immigrant entrepreneurs play a central role in the emergence and in the subsequent development of ethnic commercial precincts. By setting up shops to serve co-ethnics, these entrepreneurs form the nucleus of ethnic concentrations, which may bloom into full-blown commercial districts given the right economic and political conditions. Thus, when trying to make sense of the commodification of ethnicity in Vancouver’s Chinatown, the literature on ethnic and immigrant entrepreneurship is a good place to start.

The first section of this chapter briefly surveys the literature on ethnic and immigrant entrepreneurship. Drawing on Hiebert (2001), I present a conceptual model of immigrant entrepreneurship, which emphasizes the economic and institutional embeddedness of immigrant entrepreneurs. Recognizing that entrepreneurs operate within changing urban environments, the second section of the chapter surveys the literature on economic restructuring, urban change and tourism, focusing on tracing the impact of economic, social and cultural changes on the opportunity structure of Chinatown entrepreneurs. Finally, the last section of the chapter considers the growing body of literature on the commodification of ethnicity in North American, European, and Australian cities and discusses the implications for this present study.

2.2. Conceptualizing Immigrant Entrepreneurship

During the 1970s and 1980s, scholars in North America and elsewhere paid a great deal of attention to issues of ethnic entrepreneurship, focusing on explaining the
proclivity of certain immigrant and ethnic groups toward entrepreneurship and on examining their paths to success. These scholars “developed several theoretical approaches ranging from those emphasizing the cultural endowments of immigrants ... to others that highlight racist exclusion and blocked mobility in the regular labour market” (Pang and Rath 2007: 5).

In 1990, Waldinger and his colleagues brought together the various strands of these debates and put forward the ‘interactive theory’ of immigrant entrepreneurship. In a nutshell, the theory emphasizes the characteristics of immigrant groups (i.e. ethnic resources and group characteristics) and the opportunity structure of receiving societies (i.e. the market for ethnic goods and services as well as the existence of underserved or abandoned markets) in explaining the development of immigrant businesses.

Although the theory was well received, scholars were quick to point out its shortcomings. Collins and his colleagues (1995), for example, highlighted the model’s lack of attention to issues of class and gender, as well as its insufficient emphasis on processes of racialization of immigrants. In addition, European researchers (e.g. Kloosterman and Rath 2002) argued that the interactive theory downplayed the role of the state and of the regulatory environment in shaping the business opportunities of immigrants. Building on the interactive theory, these researchers (ibid) put forward the mixed embeddedness approach, which stresses “first that entrepreneurs operate in markets (economic embeddedness) and second that their activities occur within particular regulatory settings (institutional embeddedness)” (Hiebert 2001: 5).

Drawing on the mixed embeddedness approach, Hiebert (2001) presents a conceptualization of immigrant entrepreneurship in the restaurant sector. Whereas the
scope of this thesis extends beyond Chinatown's restaurant industry, his insights are useful in understanding the context within which all Chinatown entrepreneurs operate. Thus, drawing on examples from Vancouver's Chinatown, I outline the workings of Hiebert's conceptualization of immigrant entrepreneurship, an adapted version of which I have appended to this document (Appendix C).

At the centre of this conceptualization are immigrant entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs have specific needs, such as labour, capital and knowledge of the rules and regulations of the host society to set up their businesses. Of course, different immigrant groups have different characteristics; that is, every group has a unique ratio of men and women, a unique set of labour market skills, etc. It has been argued (Waldinger 1990) that individuals from certain immigrant groups have specific characteristics that help explain their proclivity toward entrepreneurship; these include thick social networks, which facilitate the mobilization of human and financial resources, for example.

It goes without saying that entrepreneurs operate in markets (economic embeddedness). As the figure suggests, these markets are defined by the spending habits of consumers, which are in turn influenced by these individuals' disposable income. These markets are also shaped by the characteristics of consumers who comprise them. The profitability of an ethnic niche market may change over time as immigrants disperse from their original settlement locale into other areas of cities. This is the situation facing Chinatown entrepreneurs today, although it is more complicated than that. In fact, the residential dispersal of Chinese immigrants in Vancouver was accompanied by a dispersal of Chinese commercial establishments in the City (Ley 2004). In other words, the changing settlement pattern of Chinese migrants in Vancouver exerted an impact on
the opportunity structure of ethnic entrepreneurs from that same group. As a demand for Chinese products and services came to be felt in other parts of the City, Chinese entrepreneurs moved in to fill the gap. It should be noted that the growing appreciation for ethnic foods and cultures by 'mainstream' society starting in the 1940s was behind the initial dispersal of Chinese restaurants from Chinatown into other parts of the metropolitan area. This scenario, which is typically referred to as "breaking out" in the literature on ethnic and immigrant entrepreneurship, has been documented in other cities across the Western world (e.g. Collins 2004).

As Chinese migrants left Chinatown for other parts of the City, Chinatown entrepreneurs lost a part of their clientele. However, the latter are embedded in other markets as well. Indeed, every year, thousands of Vancouverites come to Chinatown to take in the neighbourhood's many sights or to shop for exotic goods. Similarly, a large proportion of Canadian and international tourists to Vancouver include Chinatown on their itinerary. Whereas some of these individuals visit the neighbourhood with no intention of buying anything, a number of them end up spending money in the district. Some shops, such as curio stores that sell Chinese souvenirs and other knick-knacks, have emerged as a direct result of an increase in tourist traffic to Vancouver's Chinatown during the 1940s (Anderson 1991). In other words, although Chinatown merchants still rely on the purchasing power of co-ethnics, they have managed to break out of the ethnic niche market without physically leaving the district.

As the figure suggests, entrepreneurship also occurs within a specific regulatory environment (institutional embeddedness). In Canada, different levels of the state define the context within which entrepreneurs operate. For example, the federal government is
responsible for setting yearly immigration quotas and for defining the entry requirements of foreigners into the country. As Hiebert (ibid: 6) notes, “most immigrant entrepreneurs hire workers from their own ethnic groups – often from within their family”. At the present time, Canada has a policy of family reunification, which allows migrants to join their relatives who are already in the country. Obviously, this policy facilitates the recruitment of workers for entrepreneurs. However, most other countries do not have such a policy, and there is no guarantee that Canada will continue with the program forever (although there is no indication that they will change the policy either). In turn, provincial governments are responsible for setting the minimum wage within their territorial boundaries. By raising the minimum wage, the provincial government effectively restricts the ability of entrepreneurs to hire labour (although the latter may decide to hire undocumented workers). However, by lowering it, the government reduces the earnings of newly arrived migrants who have been shown to be overrepresented in bottom-end positions of the service industry (e.g. Hamnett 2003). On a more local level, municipalities use zoning bylaws and other planning tools to influence the shape and form of development in city neighbourhoods. In the case of Chinatown, the City of Vancouver has developed and implemented a broad set of policies aimed at protecting Chinatown’s built environment. Whereas these measures were received as important steps in securing the district’s visual identity, district merchants have complained that they are too restrictive, and that they have contributed to the demise of the area.

In his conceptualization, Hiebert suggests that a number of intermediaries operate between entrepreneurs and the markets, as well as between entrepreneurs and the regulatory environment within which they are embedded. In regards to economic
embeddedness, and drawing on the work of Zukin (1991), the latter points to the existence of the critical infrastructure, who consist of a loosely defined group of journalists, food critics and business associations who use the media to talk about food, culture and places. By telling people to try certain things, or by recounting their personal experience of places, these intermediaries identify relevant cultural products, thereby shaping the markets for ethnic products and services. In the case of Vancouver’s Chinatown, the district is included in most guidebooks to the City. These books entice readers to visit the district, to take in its exotic sights and attractions and to sample the wide variety of Chinese products that are available for purchase in the area. Many parts of the City are seldom included in tourism guidebooks, and thus, they tend to fall off of the tourist radar. Even worse, neighbourhoods such as parts of Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside get bad press from tourism guidebooks. As a result, these areas are usually avoided by tourists. The figure suggests that another set of intermediaries operate between entrepreneurs and the regulatory environment within which they are embedded. These include “lawyers and accountants [who] interpret rules and work with entrepreneurs when they experience problems related to regulation” (Hiebert 2001: 6). Also included are ethnic and business associations who advocate for changes in state policy, such as immigration laws, for example.

Finally, “all of the various processes and relationships described here are in a constant state of redefinition” (ibid: 7). Given that the activities of immigrant entrepreneurs occur within a changing social, economic, and political context, external factors exert an impact on their opportunity structure. A number of these developments are scrutinized in the next section.
2.3. Economic Restructuring and the Rise of Urban Tourism

As Zukin (1998; 826) notes, Western "cities are no longer seen as landscapes of production, but as landscapes of consumption". This shift is our conception of the primary function of urban places is, in large part, attributable to the economic restructuring of Western economies since the 1970s. Massive deindustrialization, or the "sustained decline in industrial (especially manufacturing) activity and capacity ... linked to the declining competitiveness of industrial production" (Lee 2000; 158), stripped a number of localities of their primary livelihoods. As factories shut their doors and relocated to where cheaper labour and production costs could be had, cities in North America, Europe and elsewhere were forced to rethink their economic development plans. In a nutshell, they shifted their emphasis from hard (manufacturing, resource extraction) to soft (services, knowledge) industries and replaced production strategies by consumption strategies. As Ley (1996: 9) argues, these (consumption) strategies "neatly offset some of the damage exacted by deindustrialization ... [and] laid the base for a new round of economic development predicated upon leisure and tourism".

Under this new economic regime, cultural diversity as manifested in the urban fabric became an asset for cities. Or as Harvey (1989) put it, in the process of "global differentiation", localities increasingly started to treat culture as a resource in an attempt to secure their share of spatially mobile capital. On a more micro-scale, and "in the case of cities in particular, authorities ranging from local governments to marketing consortia have been striving to present localities as attractive to potential investors, employers, inhabitants and tourists" (Selby 2004: 45). In order to achieve such aims, the latter have
favoured cultural strategies ranging from the creation of museums and theme parks to the preservation and redevelopment of historic buildings and districts (Zukin 1995). Paradoxically, the widespread adoption of cultural strategies (aimed at attracting tourists and residents) has had the adverse effect of standardizing the sites of urban tourism. As Fainstein and Judd (1999: 13) pointed out, “even Bohemian milieus seem imitative of one another – the Left Bank in Paris, New York’s East Village, London’s Camden Locks – all boast similar cafes, galleries, and street vendors”. Similarly, there is a striking resemblance between Chinatowns all over North America.

As Selby (2004) argues, place marketing plays an increasingly important role in urban development programs. A multimillion-dollar industry worldwide, place marketing entails more than place promotion. In fact, a significant component is “the development of the place product to meet the needs [and desires] of target market segments” (ibid: 15). But more than infrastructure development, this includes shaping the image of the city to make it attractive to potential consumers. As Judd and Fainstein (1999: 5) put it, “to appeal to tourists, cities must be consciously moulded to create a physical landscape that tourists wish to inhabit”. This is because place consumption, or the experience of places by individuals, is to a large extent a visual experience (Urry 1990) and place images, or the ideas held individually or collectively of a place, play an important role in informing consumer decision-making processes (Selby 2004). These place images are shaped by tourism brochures and other media representations but also by first-hand experience of places. It goes without saying that places that are deemed unattractive are unlikely to draw visitors, and thus, to generate tourism revenues.
Tourists seek distraction from the ordinary experiences of everyday life. They seek to immerse themselves in unfamiliar landscapes, and to experience “the heritage, architecture, and culture that make up a city’s essence” (Fainstein and Judd 1999: 7). In the case of multicultural countries of immigration such as Canada and Australia, the ethnic character of urban areas is often marketed to visitors as those places’ essential experience. Tourists to Toronto, for example, are told to expect “the World in a City”. This claim is supported by statistics on the ethnic diversity of the City’s population: in 2001, forty-nine percent of the City’s population was born outside of the country (Statistics Canada 2001). It is also reinforced by the City’s landscape, which acts as a microcosm of world cultures. In more concrete terms, visitors to the City can experience the diversity of Toronto by visiting its different minority ethnic neighbourhoods including Little Italy, Little India (Gerrard India Bazaar) and the City’s many Chinatowns (Lo and Wang 1997). Similarly, it has been argued that gentrifiers value the diversity of inner city areas, which they see as an exciting alternative to overly homogenous suburban landscapes (e.g. Caulfield 1994). Although the literature emphasizes artist (or bohemian) communities as anchors for gentrification, Canadian scholars (Hackworth and Rekers 2005) have shown that ethnic landscapes may work in similar ways.

2.4. Commodification of Ethnicity in Western Cities

There exists a growing interdisciplinary body of literature on the commodification of ethnicity in North American, European and Australian urban areas. Collins and Kunz (2005) explore the relationship between tourism and the commodification of ethnic diversity in four ethnic precincts in Sydney, Australia. Their interviews with producers
(ethnic entrepreneurs), consumers (passersby in the districts including co-ethnic, co-cultural and non-co-ethnic customers and visitors) and members of the regulatory environment confirm the key function of entrepreneurs in attracting consumers to the districts. This said, the two scholars highlight the lack of collective action between producers in Sydney’s many ethnic districts. As the latter note, given that entrepreneurs compete for consumers, they are unlikely to collaborate with one another to reposition their districts. Notwithstanding this fact, the two scholars highlight that local merchants are generally critical of revitalization efforts undertaken by local councils.

Collins and Kunz (ibid) also examine views and attitudes towards the façade of ethnic districts between different user groups. According to the latter scholars, co-ethnics do not care for the particular façade of the precincts, which they describe as kitschy and sometimes even offensive. However, the ethnic look of the precincts is a key factor in attracting other (non-co-ethnic) consumers to the districts. To use the authors’ own words, non-co-ethnic consumers “repeatedly … (re)stated their desire to further develop the highly visible culturally-specific feel of the precinct: The more, the better” (ibid: 13).

In a separate study, Collins (forthcoming) highlights that one of the contradictions associated with ethnic commercial precincts is caused by competing conceptions of authenticity between precinct users. When it comes to tourism, authenticity is subjective and “what constitutes an ‘authentic’ ethnic or cultural eating or tourist experience could vary according to the different standpoint of those who participate in the daily life of the ethnic precinct” (ibid: 10). Or as the authors (ibid: 11) also put it, whereas “critics of theming often disapprove of the use of symbols of nostalgia for thematic cues”, others will be satisfied by such sanitized representations.
Pang and Rath (2007) examine the role of municipal authorities in shaping Washington D.C.'s Chinatown throughout the last few decades. The scholars argue that Washington planners have instituted policies to protect the shell of Chinatown (its landscape) while they have ignored calls from certain segments of the community to preserve historic land uses. As a result, the district has been transformed by the arrival of multinational commercial establishments. Whereas these establishments have been forced to incorporate (some) Chinese motifs into their design plans, a McDonald's or a "Starbucks with Chinese signage...does not launch us into the Chinese realm" (ibid: 13). The two scholars (ibid: 4) conclude that "the precinct continues to exist, albeit in a more symbolic way, first and foremost because of governmental regulations".

In a similar vein, other scholars scrutinize government policies aimed at enhancing and protecting the landscape of ethnic districts, ranging from the official recognition of ethnic areas to heritage bylaws aiming at the preservation of their sense of place. Chang (2000) summarizes the impact of municipal preservation guidelines on Singapore's Little India district:

"While [the guidelines have] ... meant the physical preservation of these areas in the face of massive property development, by prescribing themes to places, planners inadvertently freeze their identities and stultify their potential to evolve organically, effacing their myriad histories on the one hand while confining their future to a pre-ordained narrative on the other".

While little is known about the overall impact of such measures on the development of ethnic precincts, there is growing evidence that they cause friction between immigrant entrepreneurs and local authorities in a number of localities (e.g. Shaw et al 2004) including Vancouver (Anderson 1991; Ley 2004).
In Europe, Shaw and his colleagues (2004) look at “reimaging strategies that trade upon features of the place-product that include ethnic cuisine, street markets and festivals, set against the backdrop of an exoticised urban landscape”. Their research suggests that the outcomes of such regeneration strategies are difficult to predict, and that the economic advantages that are associated with them can be outweighed by social costs. Take London UK’s Brick Lane district (Banglatown), for example. As the authors show, marketing and revitalization initiatives aimed at establishing the neighbourhood as one of the City’s prime tourist sites have resulted in an increase in tourist visits to the area, as well as in an increase in revenues for Brick Lane entrepreneurs, especially restaurant-owners. However, these initiatives have also caused adverse effects. Ever since their institution, commercial rents in the area have gone up. There is evidence that smaller establishments (such as grocers and corner shops) are experiencing problems affording them. Further, the heightened presence of young men in the district has caused older Bengali women to feel socially excluded from Brick Lane’s main thoroughfare.

On a similar note, the relationship between gentrification and ethnic packaging strategies is closely examined by Hackworth and Rekers (2005). Their research on four ethnically defined business improvement districts in Toronto suggests that “ethnic packaging ... is functioning, whether intended or not, in a way that is analogous to the artistic community’s influence on gentrification” (ibid: 232), that is, “as a way to anchor bohemian culture for an outside community looking for something unlike the suburbs” (ibid). However, the two scholars caution that the relationship between ethnic commodification strategies and the real estate market is often ambiguous. That is, they note that although ethnic packaging strategies have caused rents to rise in some Toronto
neighbourhoods (such as in Toronto's Little Italy, for example), similar initiatives have had little to no impacts on real estate values in other areas of the City.

2.5. Discussion

Having reviewed the literature, I emphasize three important points. To begin, a number of actors are involved in the establishment and subsequent development of ethnic commercial precincts. By setting up shops, usually to serve their co-ethnics, ethnic entrepreneurs form the nucleus of ethnic neighbourhoods which may evolve into full-blown commercial precincts given the right social, economic and political conditions. Given the increasingly important place of culture in economic development schemes, city governments also play a key role in shaping ethnic commercial precincts through urban planning policies and programs including heritage preservation and economic development schemes. Further, although they may seem somewhat removed from the local context, members of the critical infrastructure play an important role in making or breaking destinations by shaping the market for ethnic goods and services.

Secondly, as the principal medium for communicating a theme or identity to precinct users, the landscape represents a crucial aspect of the tourism place-product. Given their ability to influence the shape and form of physical development through zoning bylaws, among other tools, city governments are particularly well-suited to this task. Given the fact that authenticity is subjective and that different users have different attachment to place, however, the landscape definition process can be highly contentious.

Finally, although ethnic development schemes can have positive impacts on local economies, they can also have adverse effects. As emphasized in the literature, the
associated increase in outsider traffic can lead to groups feeling socially excluded from their place of residence. Further, ethnic packaging initiatives can exert an impact on the price of local property. Whereas owners and merchants may benefit from such a consequence, others (i.e. renters, smaller commercial establishments such as grocers, etc) may be priced out.
3. THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHINATOWN

3.1. Introduction

This chapter traces the historical development of Vancouver’s Chinatown from its establishment as a marginalized community over 140 years ago to its current status as a neighbourhood of historic, symbolic and economic significance. It examines changes in the evaluation of Chinatown and related transformations in the area’s physical, economic, and social landscape.

My starting point is that the transformation of Chinatown did not happen by accident, as a by-product of wider urban development trends. Rather, in this chapter, I emphasize that a specific set of actors were involved in constructing Chinatown “in bricks and mortar, in concrete and glass, but also in the imagination... of different publics” (Ley 2004: 1). These include Chinatown entrepreneurs who took the first step towards attracting outsiders to the district in the 1940s, and who still toil to enhance the tourist potential of the area. Whereas the latter have played a key role in repositioning Vancouver’s Chinatown as a place for leisure, tourism and consumption, their practices have been underplayed in the literature. This chapter emphasizes their actions in shaping the precinct.

Also included, however, are actors working from outside the district. After all, as Massey (1999: 154) reminds us, places “are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself”. These include municipal, provincial and federal government officials whose attitudes and practices towards the Chinese and their quarters changed drastically throughout history (institutional embeddedness) as well as members of the critical infrastructure, who played a key role in
demystifying Chinese food and culture – and by extension, Chinatown – in the minds of ‘mainstream’ Vancouverites (economic embeddedness).

3.2. Four Periods in the Evolution of Chinatown

At least 4 overlapping periods can be identified in the development of Vancouver’s Chinatown. The first began with the arrival of Chinese-origin migrants to the Lower Mainland in the 1860s and ended with the advent of the twentieth century. During this period, a Chinese residential and commercial enclave was established on Burrard Inlet, in large part as a reaction to the hostile reception of Chinese immigrants by European-origin settlers. During the second period, which spanned from 1900 to 1935, Chinatown’s bad reputation was secured in the minds of European-origin Vancouverites while the district expanded in the context of sustained Chinese immigration to the City. The third period, which began in 1936 and ended in 1971, marked the beginning of Chinatown’s reorientation as a site for tourism, leisure, and consumption. During this period, Chinese merchants promoted the district and modified its image in an effort to attract non-Chinese Vancouverites to the area. Shortly thereafter, the local media started to portray Chinatown in a more positive light. However, the image of Chinatown as a slum lingered in the minds of local authorities, who devised a series of plans in the 1960s to raze parts of the neighbourhood, to accommodate Vancouver’s economic and demographic growth. These plans were met with opposition from a coalition of Chinese and non-Chinese City residents, and after extended protest, were eventually foiled. In a surprising turn of events, in 1971, Chinatown was designated a historic site, of symbolic significance to all Canadians. This marked the beginning of the last period in the
reorientation of the district. During this period, merchants continued to shape the precinct while the City began to play a more active role in planning the district.

3.2.1. Early Chinese immigration to Vancouver and the formation of a Chinese Residential and Commercial Enclave

Chinese immigration to British Columbia started over 140 years ago with the arrival of a small number of Chinese migrants who came to partake in the Fraser River gold rush (Ng 1999). These migrants were soon followed by others who, responding to economic opportunities, formed residential pockets “in most frontier settlements on Vancouver island and along [and even beyond] the Fraser River” (ibid: 10), including on Vancouver’s Burrard inlet, where the City’s Chinatown is today located.

What started as a relatively small settlement was to grow into one of the biggest Chinese concentrations on the continent. In 1884, the Chinese population on Burrard Inlet was 114 (Anderson 1987). “Most were men employed in unskilled jobs at the Hastings and Moodyville sawmills, but a minority opened stores to service the mill employees” (ibid: 582). A number of Chinese migrants, however, settled elsewhere in the lower mainland including in New Westminster, in Stanley Park as well as in downtown Vancouver’s West End. The years following the completion of the trans-continental railroad (which employed thousands of Chinese labourers) saw an increasing urbanization of Chinese settlers who sought jobs. This group was deemed an economic threat to the European-dominated population. The presumed cultural distinctiveness of the Chinese facilitated the development of negative stereotypes. Vocal anti-Chinese
movements arose in the 1880s, which included persistent calls for the prohibition of Chinese immigration.

Racial prejudice and general hostility by ethnic Europeans towards the Chinese occasionally led to episodes of violence such as the anti-Chinese riots held in February of 1887, during which the camps of Chinese labourers (including the Dupont street settlement) were severely damaged, or even destroyed (Roy 1989). Following these riots, Chinese migrants “returned to Vancouver and re-established a highly concentrated pattern of residence. Most of those who had fled returned directly to the original Dupont street settlement, which also attracted many of the West End [Chinese] labourers after they had completed [their] contract” (Anderson 1987: 582).

The Canadian government participated in this widespread instance of racism, and introduced a $50 Head Tax on Chinese migrants in 1885, subsequently increasing the amount to $100 in 1900, and $500 in 1903 (Lai 1988). These were large amounts, given the economy of China at that time, or indeed that of Canada. The Head Tax was a highly gendered instrument, since male migrants were seen as capable of earning enough to pay for their passage, while females were not. This translated into a substantial gender imbalance in Vancouver’s Chinese community (of close to 50 males for each female). For obvious reasons, there were also few children in Chinatown at the time. Despite these effects, the Head Tax was not seen as a sufficient barrier to immigration, and the Canadian government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1923, which officially severed the flow of Chinese migrants to the City (Ng 1999). This “led to a drastic outflow of Chinese from the country back to China” (ibid: 16). Surprisingly, the City’s Chinese population kept growing for at least a decade as Chinese labourers from elsewhere in the
province were drawn to the area. This is reflected in data from the Canadian census, which suggests that in 1931, over 13,000 Chinese lived in Vancouver, a number that would decline to approximately 7,000 in the subsequent decade (Lai 1988).

3.2.2. Growth and Continued Exclusion

At the turn of the 20th century, Chinatown comprised over 2,100 Chinese-origin residents (Lai 1988). At the same point in time, 143 Chinese merchants lived and conducted business in the Dupont Street area: this group included 15 greengrocers, 3 rice millers, 8 manufacturing clothiers, as well as a number of tailors, lodging-house owners, general retailers, barbers, and other establishments (Anderson 1991: 74). The labour hired by the entrepreneurs was almost entirely Chinese, and so was their clientele. As Anderson (ibid: 78) notes, Chinatown merchants created a kind of sub-economy in Vancouver by providing “its inhabitants with a full range of services including restaurants, lodgings, employment contractors, barbers and clothing”. Or as Collins (2004: 1047) put it while describing the social organization of Sydney (Australia’s) Chinese community at the turn of the twentieth century, “responding to community prejudice and drawing on the attraction of co-ethnic provision of goods, services, language and company, the concentrated settlement patterns of Chinese immigrants and entrepreneurs reflected the blocked residential and labour market mobility the Chinese faced”.

As Vancouver’s Chinese community grew, so did Chinatown. Indeed, during the first decade of the 20th Century, over 90 new Chinese businesses were established in the
City (Anderson 1991: 74), the bulk of them located on Carrall Street, one of Chinatown’s principal thoroughfares. During the same period, a building boom happened in the settlement and rows of tenements were built to house Vancouver’s growing population of Chinese bachelors (Lai 1988). In addition, between 1900 and 1910, a number of Chinese merchants bought land and erected their own buildings. The buildings were made of brick, usually three storeys high and often with a ‘cheater floor’ between the main and the second floor. Tax assessments were based on the height of the building; hence, the cheater floor created an untaxed intermediate storey. Ground floors were usually rented to businesses and upper floors were reserved for institutional or residential use. Other architectural motifs included those that were influenced by the Southern Chinese architecture These included the deeply recessed balconies, wrought iron railings, narrow doorways and steep staircases leading upwards (Historic Study of the Society Buildings in Chinatown 2005: 4).

Figures 2 and 3 provide a glimpse of the evolution of Pender Street’s landscape between 1900 and 1929, respectively. The figures suggest that Chinatown’s built environment was consolidated during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Whereas the first figure presents a landscape reminiscent of a western frontier settlement comprised of wooden structures, unpaved streets and very little in the means of infrastructure, figure 3 presents a more mature urban landscape. Indeed, the latter figure shows that in 1930, Chinatown comprised a number of permanent structures (made of brick). This commercial and residential expansion was perceived as a threat by “white businessmen [from the surrounding area, who]...feared that if the Chinese continued to buy lots on the Southern side of Hastings Street, Chinatown might be expanded into their territory” (Lai 1988: 83). These businessmen complained to City officials, who condemned Chinatown and restricted its expansion by making use of municipal fire and sanitary regulations.
During the first few decades of the 20th century, Chinatown was perceived by European-origin Vancouverites as a place of vice and destitution. The following quote from a letter to the editor in 1893 represents a good example of the sentiments held by local residents towards the Chinese and their quarters at the time: “The degraded humanity from the Orient, more beastly than human, live in places that a hog would die in stench of.” (Quoted in Anderson 1991: 84) But more than a ‘dirty place’, the area was chastised for the ‘immoral’ activities that it hosted. These included prostitution, which the municipal government tolerated in certain ‘restricted areas’ including in Chinatown after city council evicted prostitutes from their former place of work, as well as opium smoking. Given the tiny number of Chinese women in Vancouver, they were little involved in prostitution, which was mainly conducted by women of European origin. The spatial juxtaposition of Chinese men and European-origin prostitutes created consternation and fed racialized stereotypes of deceitful Oriental men seducing innocent White women, and subsequently enslaving them. Accordingly, in 1924, the provincial government passed a law entitled the “Women’s and Girl’s Protection Act”, which prohibited any white woman or girl from living in, working in, or frequenting any restaurant, laundry, or place of business or amusement that was not “in the interest of the morals of such women and girls” (Women’s and Girl’s Protection Act: 1924).
Figure 2. 100 Block of Pender Street, 1900

(Source: Vancouver City Archives, CVA677-26)

Figure 3. 100 Block of Pender Street, 1929

(Source: Vancouver City Archives, CVA99-2463)
Repositioning Chinatown: The Role of Chinatown Entrepreneurs

The 1930s saw the first hints that mainstream perceptions of Chinatown could change. In 1936, the City of Vancouver organized a Jubilee to celebrate the coming of age of the City. Recognizing the potential behind such an opportunity, Chinatown merchants decided to put the area on display to City residents. Together, they amassed $40,000, which was to be put toward the “Chinese Village” project. The project had the dual aims of promoting Chinatown to outsiders of the district and re-fashioning the area to suit mainstream tastes and expectations. The promotion of the ‘village’ was done mainly through local newspapers, such as the News Herald (July 27th 1936), which published a series of insets inviting Vancouverites to come marvel at the “Chinese Carnival Village...with its beautiful treasures of the Orient, its master craftsmen and ingenious performers direct from China”. Vancouverites were told to expect “an ornate eighty-foot bamboo arch tower (...) and a nine-tier Chinese pagoda in all its Oriental grandeur” (Anderson 1991: 156), among other items of Chinese material culture. Figure 4 provides a glimpse of the “Chinese Village”, which drew a large number of outside visitors to the district. In fact, the initiative was so successful that City officials decided to extend the display for a number of weeks after the general celebrations were closed. The event highlighted the area’s tourism potential and informed its subsequent reorientation as a site for leisure, tourism and mainstream consumption.

The 1940s saw further movement in this process of reevaluating the nature of Chinatown. Some of the momentum for change was generated by the Chinese community while some emerged from external forces. In the 1940s, Chinatown merchants sparked an unofficial streetscape improvement project, with the aims of reinforcing the Chinese
identity of the area. According to Anderson (1991), the merchants embraced the exoticization that already characterized the area, and played to Orientalist stereotypes. Note that this same argument has been made about Chinatowns in other places, such as in Sydney, Australia (Collins 2004) as well as in New York City (Lin 1998: 173), where the "retrofitting of Chinatown for popular consumption" also involved the manipulation of its image.

**Figure 4. The Arch and Pagoda of Chinatown Merchant’s Chinese Village, 1936**

![Image](Source: Vancouver City Archives, 183-D-1)

The renovation of Chinatown led to a sharp increase in visits from European origin Vancouverites to the neighbourhood. As a result, "the restaurant industry on Pender Street blossomed, in turn encouraging [the] vertical expansion of grocery stores, butcher shops, and fish markets. Import outlets, bric-a-brac, and curio stores [also]
prospered along the principal thoroughfares in response to the increasing traffic of tourists” (Anderson 1991: 176). A new type of store, gift stores, also appeared in the district during this period. According to an article in the Vancouver (1980: 118) magazine, these shops sell “what tourists expect – teapots, chopsticks, slippers and inexpensive, jade-like jewellery”.

It is important to note the significance of the economic transformation under way at this time, particularly the rise of the service economy. As an article published in the Victoria Daily Times on September 28, 1954 suggests, there was a 244 percent increase in restaurant revenues in British Columbia during the decade that followed the war. In part, this increase in restaurant spending signified a cultural change: “Canadian tastes were becoming ‘more daring’ due largely to the influence of immigrants.” Accordingly, a Chinese-Canadian entrepreneur was elected President of the Canadian Restaurant Association, an unprecedented recognition of the growing importance of non-European cuisines. Mr. J. C. Sim, in an early statement following his election to the position noted that the soil and climate of BC were well suited to the production of Chinese greens, implying a quest for authenticity in the trade.

The extent of cultural transformation is evident in an article by Paul St. Pierre published in the Vancouver Sun on 3 March, 1960, titled “Chopsticks the theme song of $1 million industry”. St. Pierre commented on a number of trends in the Lower Mainland: the cost of renting property in Chinatown was rising as a result of growing sales and profits in the area; a small number of entrepreneurs had begun manufacturing pre-packaged, frozen Chinese food for sale; there were 11 Chinese drive-in restaurants in Greater Vancouver, indicating that Chinese food had become popular with the
automobile generation; the *Vancouver Sun* had begun to include Chinese recipes in the food section of the newspaper; some Chinese restaurants advertised the fact that they provided "authentic" food rather than Chinese food that was altered to suit "Canadian tastes"; and an entrepreneur had opened a Chinese cooking school in the city. St. Pierre quoted a restaurateur as saying: "A few years ago here in Chinatown our business was 80 per cent Chinese-Canadian and 20 per cent Occidental... Today I'd say the figure is 90 per cent Occidental and 10 per cent Oriental." St. Pierre went on to state that "Suddenly we find Canadians with the notably non-Oriental names of Smith, O'Grady, Levine and St. Pierre returning to their homes to find that dinner tonight is not roast beef, nor pork chops, nor fried sole. No, instead mother has whipped up some chicken fried rice and thousand year old eggs". With typical media hyperbole, he concluded that "The trend is now clear—the end of the beef and potato man is in sight in Vancouver. Chinese food is sweeping the city and soya sauce is becoming the lifeblood of our economy".

The 1970s saw a proliferation of Chinese restaurants across the entire metropolitan area. Alex MacGillivray, the most prominent food critic in the city, estimated that there were over 200 in 1978 and, the following year, began to educate readers on the regional variations in Chinese cuisine. Readers were provided with examples of well-regarded restaurants specializing in Cantonese, Szechwan, Shanghai and Mandarin, food, as well as Dim Sum (e.g. *Vancouver Sun*, 3 November 1979). Other publications, such as Anne Petrie's (1982: 53) "Ethnic Vancouver", provided those Vancouverites with little knowledge of Chinese culture and custom with an introduction to Chinese cuisine. Apart from recommending a number of restaurants in and around
Chinatown (and elsewhere in the City), the book included a glossary of popular Chinese dishes as well as a number of “tips for eating in a Chinese restaurant”.

Around the same period, in the 1960s and 1970s, tourism guidebooks and travel magazines continued to portray Chinatown as an exotic and exciting place, worthy of discovery. For example, in 1961, *Beautiful BC* published a photographic montage of Chinatown. The pictures displayed in the article, which focused on Chinese markers in the landscape (including neon lights, dragons, ‘chop suey’ style restaurants, and a Chinese parade), were accompanied by a few paragraphs aimed at dispelling the few remaining negative stereotypes of Chinatown. They suggested that “juvenile delinquency is non-existent in Chinatown” (ibid: 29) and that “when you visit Chinatown in search of a new environment, exotic food, or a bargain in silk, you will be mingling with a group of people who are among the finest of Canada’s citizens” (ibid: 33). These publications, and others like them, no doubt played a role in shaping the image of Chinatown in the minds of City residents and visitors alike.

While the last few paragraphs have focused on highlighting the influence of the critical infrastructure on mainstream conceptions of Chinatown, a number of other developments influenced the re-evaluation of the area. In 1947, the abolishment of the Chinese Immigration Act led to a replenishment of Chinatown’s dwindling population as “incoming relatives from China and Hong Kong gravitated to the area where their sponsors had made their lives, where their own language (if not all dialects) was the medium of exchange, where a familiar diet was catered for, and where there was easy access to a market for Chinese housing and employment” (Anderson 1991: 178). This
introduced new dynamism into the community, which was already profiting from an increase in tourism revenues.

Whereas Chinatown was thriving (Lai 1988), City Hall, supported by higher levels of government, had other plans for the area. In the post-War redevelopment boom of the 1950s, a scheme was devised to raze parts of the neighbourhood to accommodate Vancouver’s rapid demographic and economic growth. The City’s redevelopment plan for the area comprised two significant elements: the preservation of revenue-generating ‘tourist Chinatown’ and the redevelopment (i.e. demolition, and subsequent rebuilding) of a significant portion of the area’s housing stock, which was described as a “revenue sink” by local politicians. The following quote from a member of Vancouver’s technical planning board sums up the conception that City officials held of Chinatown during that period: “That part of Pender Street between Carrall Street and Main Street forms the most important part of Chinatown…This particular part of the whole Chinese quarter is the only one which can be said to be a tourist attraction. The remainder of the Chinese quarter to the east of Main Street is at present of significance only to the people who live there” (quoted in Anderson 1991: 188).

Members of the City’s Chinese community were quick to argue that ‘tourist Chinatown’ (i.e. the agglomeration of Chinese commercial establishments on Pender Street) could not be dissociated from the wider residential community. Nevertheless, the redevelopment plan was set in motion in the late 1960s, and soon thereafter, a number of residential blocks in Strathcona were demolished. In 1967, plans for an elevated freeway, which would have cut through the heart of the district, were even proposed. “The Chinese community protested angrily, complaining that the freeway would create a “Great Wall”
on the western side of Chinatown severing the district from the City's commercial centre” (Lai 1988: 130). In subsequent months, local merchants and property owners organized and formed the Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association (SPOTA). Along with a number of local allies, they petitioned the City to put a halt on redevelopment schemes in the area and argued for a more grassroots approach to physical improvements in Chinatown. At around the same time, a high-level study by the federal Task Force on Housing and Urban Development found that “urban renewal schemes produced adverse and disrupting conditions in Canadian communities” (ibid: 131). As a result, the Minister of Housing froze all federal funding for urban renewal projects. Shortly thereafter, the City formed the Strathcona Working Committee with the aims of involving SPOTA in planning the district. After a series of meetings, it was determined that “no large-scale acquisition and demolition of property would be undertaken in the Strathcona area and that the general goal for the area was rehabilitation: to retain, repair, and improve individual properties, public works, and community services” (ibid: 132). Note that this was an entirely different outcome than what had occurred some 15 years earlier in Toronto with the displacement of Chinatown for the construction of the New City Hall.

3.2.4. Repositioning Chinatown: The Continuing Role of Chinese Entrepreneurs and the Changing Attitudes and Practices of the City

In 1971, the federal government announced the policy of multiculturalism, which “recognized the need to maintain the cultural heritage of all groups within a multicultural population, and the right of members of ‘minority’ groups to equality with members of
the two ‘charter’ groups, of English and French ancestry” (Kobayashi 1993: 205). That same year, the province of British Columbia, at the instigation of City planners in Vancouver, demarcated the Chinatown Historic Area, with the general aim of preserving and protecting the heritage and character of the district. Under this act, which is still in place today, renovations to existing buildings as well as new developments in the area necessitate the approval of the City’s planning department, in consultation with the Chinatown Historic Area Planning Committee (CHAPC), which was established in 1974 to “advise the Director of planning on matters relating to [Chinatown, or to] the HA-1 and HA-1A Zones” (CHAPC website 2003).

After the historic designation of Chinatown, and under the policy of multiculturalism, funds from the federal and provincial governments became available for improvement projects in the area. However, there was a significant quarrel between urban planners and factions of the Chinese community over how to use these funds. Whereas City officials argued for the need to beautify Chinatown (through streetscape improvement schemes, for example), local merchants highlighted the need for local infrastructure improvement, such as the creation of more parking space to attract wealthy Chinese individuals from other parts of Vancouver to the neighbourhood. As one Chinatown entrepreneur argued, “because of our parking problems, we are witnessing the growth of other Chinatowns in other places. You can buy almost anything you want in Richmond along No. 3 Road, and restaurants are springing up along Fraser Street” (Vancouver Sun 24 December 1983: D1).

After extended disputes, City planners and Chinatown merchants came to an understanding, and in 1977, the two parties agreed on the details of a physical
improvement project for the area. The project, towards which the merchants contributed $300,000, included limited infrastructure improvements, such as new stone curbing, and improvements to Pender Street’s sidewalks. Its main focus, however, was the strengthening of the visual coherence of Chinatown’s ethnic identity. This was achieved through the planting of trees native to China as well as through the installation of sidewalk furniture and lantern-like street lighting on Chinatown’s main thoroughfares (ibid: 228). The reaction of the Chinatown community to the improvement project was mixed. Indeed, whereas some merchants felt that the City was imposing an archaic, ‘museumized’ version of Chinese culture on the neighbourhood, others were happy to ‘play the ethnic card’ in order to achieve commercial gains.

At around the same time, in 1967, the federal government department responsible for immigration introduced a point system, which uses a selection grid to assess (economic class) applicants according to their general levels of human capital. By abolishing geographic restrictions on the source region of immigrants, this new system was to remove the racial and ethnic bias of post-war immigration legislation, which was aimed at ensuring the country’s economic and demographic growth without altering its ethnic composition (Li 2003). This change in immigration policy had an immediate impact on the characteristics of immigrants to the country. Indeed, in the years following its institution, the proportion of immigrants coming to Canada from outside Europe (from Africa, the Caribbean, and especially from Asia) grew drastically. The proportion of highly skilled immigrants entering Canada was also greatly augmented.

According to Statistics Canada, during that same period, Vancouver’s Chinese population grew rapidly from approximately 30,000 in 1971, to over 60,000 in 1976. As a
result, competition for land in Chinatown increased and rent prices soared. According to an article from the Vancouver Sun (1980), in the 1980s, “if you look[ed] at price per buildable foot, Chinatown property [was] probably more expensive than that in downtown Vancouver”. This said, the majority of post-1967 Chinese migrants to the lower mainland settled outside of the Chinatown area. Indeed, by the mid-1980s, Chinatown and the surrounding area contained only one tenth of the City’s Chinese population (Ng 1999). As Hiebert shows (1998: 14), in 1986, the remaining ninety percent were dispersed in most parts of East Vancouver, in certain areas of Vancouver’s West Side as well as in the suburban municipalities of Burnaby and Richmond.

The decentralization of Vancouver’s Chinese population during the 1970s and 1980s was accompanied by major shifts in the City’s Chinese commercial landscape. As Chinese immigrants began to settle outside of Chinatown, commercial establishments sprung up outside the district in order to serve their needs. In areas of high Chinese concentration, complete shopping districts even emerged: examples include the area of East 41st Avenue and Victoria Drive, in East Vancouver, as well as Richmond’s “Golden Village”, which consists of an agglomeration of over 300 Asian-themed shops, mostly in purpose-built malls, centred on Number 3 Road. These districts are now in direct competition with Chinatown.

Today, Chinatown is firmly etched on Vancouver’s tourist map. The district is mentioned in all guidebooks to the City. Frommer’s Guidebook to Vancouver and Victoria (2007: 6), for example, includes Chinatown on its list of “Vancouver’s most unforgettable travel experiences” and piques potential visitors’ interest by commenting on the area’s “brightly coloured façades, street markets, and the buzz of modern-day
Cantonese commerce" (ibid: 147). Similarly, the Moon handbook to Vancouver (2002: 22) describes Chinatown as a historic, exciting, and architecturally rich Cantonese neighbourhood comprising “intriguing stores [that] sell a mind-boggling array of Chinese goods”. A visit to Chinatown is included in most comprehensive tours of the City and a number of companies offer bus and walking tours of the area.

We should, however, be wary of equating a successful promotional campaign with overall success. Indeed, as Ley notes (2004: 6), even in the context of sustained immigration from East Asia, Chinatown’s “retail and restaurant space have diminished in the past 20 years, [and] the bustling crowds on the Pender Street sidewalks have thinned out. There is talk about the predicament of Chinatown”. Whereas social problems in the adjoining downtown Eastside certainly play a role in explaining the recent economic downturn in the area, it has also been suggested that “the preserved and culturally themed heritage landscape [of Vancouver’s Chinatown] is not part of the urban imaginary of recent middle-class migrants from East Asia” (ibid: 7). This yearning for more modern landscapes by more recent Chinese migrants was highlighted over twenty years ago in an article entitled “Modern Immigrants Loosen Chinatown Ties” that was published in the Chinatown News (1981: 22):

The stereotyped uneducated labourer destined for a restaurant job and decades of loneliness and sacrifice – sending money home to a family never seen – has been replaced by ambitious professionals playing the Western game of profits and prestige ... As an increasing majority of the Chinese immigrant community moves to the affluent suburbs, Chinatown ... will die, becoming an oriental Disneyland of shops maintained for the tourist trade.

Alarmed by such prospects, members of the Vancouver Chinatown Merchant’s Association “began to search for an effective vehicle to fund and implement projects to revitalize the area” (VCBIA website) in the 1990s. They saw that other neighbourhoods
of the City had successfully formed Business Improvement Areas (BIA) consisting of “non-profit association[s] of commercial property owners and business tenants who join together to promote and improve the economic vitality of their business district” (ibid). After extended deliberation, they decided to form a BIA.

BIAs obtain funding through a special property tax dubbed a local improvement levy. Because the tax is collected from local business- and property-owners, establishing a BIA requires the approval of a minimum of area stakeholders. Throughout the late 1990s, a dedicated group of Chinatown merchants lobbied other merchants and property-owners in the area, educating them on the benefits of establishing a BIA. This proved to be a difficult task given the internal diversity of the Chinatown community. After several attempts, in 2000, the Vancouver Chinatown Business Improvement Area (VCBIA) was incorporated with the mandate to “improve Chinatown’s safety and cleanliness, expand and strengthen its promotions and events, and work with the media and external partners to improve Chinatown’s public realm, public perception and relations”.

Ever since its incorporation, the VCBIA has undertaken a large number of initiatives in Chinatown. A number of these initiatives were aimed at promoting the district. The VCBIA has coordinated the production of a map of “Historic Chinatown and Greater Vancouver”, which highlights the area’s many cultural attractions as well as the location of different commercial establishments throughout the neighbourhood. It has also produced a website for the district, which includes information about Chinatown’s history, as well as a list of upcoming cultural events. Members of the same association have also worked with organizations such as Tourism Vancouver and Tourism Richmond, as well as with the local media, to ensure that Chinatown is visible to
Vancouverites and incoming tourists alike.

The activities of the VCBIA have not been limited to the promotion of the district, however. The VCBIA has also undertaken initiatives aimed at beautifying the environment, improving (the perception of) safety in the neighbourhood, improving the business environment and attracting the crowds back to the district. Specific initiatives include hiring workers to clean up Chinatown alleys and to remove graffiti on the façade of buildings, hiring a private security patrol for the neighbourhood, training local merchants in customer service skills, setting up a workplace English training program, launching a bilingual signs campaign as well as planning and carrying out a number of cultural events such as the Annual Chinatown Festival and the Chinese New Year Parade. These events, which are generally very well attended, have helped Chinatown retain its status as the cultural epicenter of Vancouver’s Chinese community, even in the context of Chinese residential dispersion.

Within the Chinatown business community, the VCBIA has not been the only vehicle for redevelopment. S.U.C.C.E.S.S., one of Chinatown’s largest social service organizations, devised a project aimed at enhancing the neighbourhood’s capacity as a tourism destination in Vancouver. In collaboration with the VCMA and the VCBIA, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. put forward a business plan for a Chinatown Tourist Centre to be built on Pender Street in 2006. According to the plan (Humphreys and Tam 2006), the Chinatown Tourist Centre would work in three areas. First, the centre would provide tourist information services by serving “as an orientation facility to help tourists enjoy the attractions of Chinatown” (ibid: 13). Secondly, the centre would provide training and marketing support to local merchants with the goal to increase the area’s business
capacity. Finally, the centre would work on branding Chinatown as well as on promoting the neighbourhood in the local media. According to local stakeholders, the latter two areas of intervention are what Chinatown needs most: better connections to the broader context. Whereas some of these connections are physical and have to do with infrastructure and transportation, some relate to branding the district or to the dissemination of the idea of Chinatown. Hoping to secure funding for the project, the plan was presented to Council in 2006. After waiting two years, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. representatives are beginning to think that the project will never be realized.

A number of things can be said of these two interventions by the Chinese community. First, the two sets of initiatives represent conscious attempts by community associations to shape the district in a manner so as to better their economic situation. Secondly, there is an obvious overlap between the projects that have been realized by the VCBIA and the list of activities that were proposed for the Chinatown Tourist Centre. On the one hand, this suggests that there are close linkages between members of the two organizations. This assertion is confirmed by the fact that a number of VCBIA committee members also sit on the board of S.U.C.C.E.S.S. (and vice versa) but also by the fact that members of the latter organization were involved in drafting the plans for the Chinatown Tourist Centre. On the other hand, this overlap points to a lack of organization within the Chinatown community. More precisely, the ‘Chinatown community’ label masks the internal diversity of Chinatown stakeholders. It also implies that a certain degree of consensus exists among the latter, when in reality, the history of Vancouver’s Chinese-Canadian community has been pockmarked by struggles between different interest groups (Ng 1999).
In this context, the City established the Chinatown Revitalization Program (CRP) in 1999 with the goal "to bring together community members to address several key issues in the area, such as safety and economic growth through an extensive community engagement and building process" (CRP Website 2007). The details of this program are examined in more detail in the next chapter.

3.3. Conclusion

As the Chinatown News stated in November 1953 (8), "Chinatown has not just grown. Its rapid growth and tempo of prosperity has not just happened willy-nilly. Rather it is a reflection of the planning and foresightedness of the community leaders and its businessmen". For at least seven decades now, Chinatown merchants and associations have devised and implemented measures to increase outsider visitations to the district, ranging from marketing campaigns and streetscape beautification schemes to more recent comprehensive plans to clean up and revitalize the area. As we have seen, however, Chinatown merchants are not the only ones to have shaped the precinct. Indeed, members of the critical infrastructure have also played a part, by influencing the tastes and desires of the ‘mainstream’ market. That is, by telling European-origin Vancouverites (as well as residents of other cities) to try Chinese food or to visit Chinatown’s diverse cultural attractions, the latter have effectively created a demand for Chinese products and services. This has allowed Chinese entrepreneurs to break out of the ethnic niche market without necessarily dispersing spatially.

Finally, the chapter has argued that various levels of the state have shaped the development of the district. Initially, federal, provincial, and municipal governments’
practices towards Chinatown were restrictive; that is, they focused on containing the precinct. More recent policies developed by different levels of government have allowed Chinatown to become fully realized: these include policies that were designed for other purposes but which exerted an impact on the district (such as immigration and multiculturalism policies, for example) as well as policies that were specifically designed to influence the shape and form of development in the area (such as Chinatown's historic designation, for example). In regards to the latter set of policies, the City of Vancouver has played an important role in shaping Chinatown. The City's changing involvement in the precinct is further scrutinized in the next chapter.

Before moving along, however, I want to emphasize that the boundaries between the different sets of actors presented in Hiebert's conceptualization of immigrant entrepreneurship are fluid. For example, in 1936, Chinatown merchants undertook a marketing campaign to attract European-origin Vancouverites to the neighbourhood. In doing so, the merchants effectively shaped the market for Chinese goods and services in a way virtually identical to members of the critical infrastructure. Similarly, whereas Chinese Canadians were excluded from most jobs in the public sector during the first decades of the twentieth century, they now hold positions in all levels of government. As such, Chinese Canadians now have the opportunity to shape the national, provincial, and municipal policies that affect them. At the municipal level, Chinese-origin planners (along with planners from other ethnic origins) now play a role in developing policies and regulations with implications for Chinatown and other City neighbourhoods.
4. THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE CITY OF VANCOUVER IN REGULATING CHINATOWN

4.1. Introduction

A number of scholars have been critical of municipal governments’ roles in shaping Chinatowns in North America and elsewhere. In many cases, this criticism has been well founded. Take Washington DC’s Chinatown, for example. As Pang and Rath (2007) have shown, municipal authorities there have focused on instituting policies that protect the shell of Chinatown, such as design guidelines aimed at securing the visual character of the district, in the midst of development and renovation. However, they have ignored calls from factions of the Chinese community to preserve historical land use patterns comprising smaller “mom-and-pop” stores. As a result, the neighbourhood has been transformed by the arrival of multinational establishments, including Starbucks, McDonalds and Hooters. As the two scholars (ibid: 13) put it, “a Starbucks with Chinese signage (but with Hispanic and other non-Chinese workers) does not launch us into the Chinese realm”. More than a loss of authenticity, however, in the process of regulating Chinatown, Washington DC planners have alienated local residents from the planning process. As Anderson (1991) has most forcefully argued, residents of Vancouver’s Chinatown have long suffered similar treatment. Has anything changed in the past few decades?

Focusing on three disparate interventions by the City of Vancouver in Chinatown, this chapter argues that there has been a dramatic shift in how local planners deal with difference during the last three decades or so. As in Washington DC, during the 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the City focused on protecting and enhancing Chinatown’s
visual character by controlling changes in the area's landscape. While these measures allowed for the preservation of the district's specific sense of place, the City's obsession with the neighbourhood's built form long led it to neglect the community's other needs (Anderson 1991; Ley 2004). In contrast, more recent interventions taken by the City under the guise of the CRP in Chinatown have focused on building a complete community. Although it may be too early to evaluate the impact of the latter program on the ongoing redevelopment of Chinatown, there is increasing evidence that it is exerting a positive influence in the district.

On a more abstract level, the chapter argues that the observed shift in City of Vancouver planners' attitudes and practices during the last three decades parallels a deeper transformation in the meaning of multiculturalism in Canadian society, which went from a symbolic recognition and celebration of minority cultures to a more meaningful policy aimed at ensuring the equality of all Canadians, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background. By shifting their emphasis from protecting the shell of Chinatown to engaging local actors in the planning process, Vancouver planners have moved from multiculturalism's celebratory beginnings "squarely into the territory of citizenship rights" (Ley 2005: 5).

4.2. Multiculturalism in Canada: From Demographic, to Symbolic, to Structural

According to Kobayashi (1993), multiculturalism in Canada has occurred in three broadly defined stages. The first stage, 'demographic multiculturalism', can be traced to the rapid increase in immigration from non-traditional source areas following World War
II. To use Kobayashi’s (ibid: 205) words, this stage is characterized by “ethno-cultural diversity towards which no coherent official policy exists”.

During the 1960s, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism was formed with the mandate to clarify the relationship between the two charter groups (French and English Canadians, who were seen to form the basis of Canadian society). The investigation process revealed a ‘third force’ within Canadian society, consisting of ‘other ethnic groups’. The commission’s final report to Parliament took into account the contribution of minority ethnic groups to Canadian society. In 1971, the federal government announced the policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework. The four major objectives of the policy were as follows: “to assist all Canadian cultural groups that have demonstrated a desire and effort to continue to develop a capacity to grow and contribute to Canada...to assist members of all cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society...to promote creative encounters and interchange among all Canadian cultural groups in the interest of national unity...[and] to continue to assist immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada's official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society” (ibid: 215).

As Kobayashi (ibid: 216) suggests, the policy document strictly avoids reference to “economic or political factors, to programmes that would bring about social change beyond the confines of designated groups”. Its initial implementation was limited to the recognition and celebration of Canada’s minority cultural groups. Under ‘symbolic multiculturalism’, financial support was provided to support ethnic festivals and parades, ethnic history projects and public improvement programs aimed at the preservation of ethnic districts.
In 1987, the Canada Standing Committee on Multiculturalism declared that “the Multiculturalism policy of 1971 is clearly insufficient and out of date” (ibid: 220), highlighting the policy’s shortcomings in redressing economic and political inequalities between members of the charter groups and ethnic and visible minorities. Shortly thereafter, a number of legal amendments (including amendments to the constitution) were passed. This includes the Multiculturalism Act (1988), which provides legal “underpinning to rights-based claims before the state and civil society in such domains as welfare, policing, immigration policy, and equal opportunity in employment” (Ley 2005: 5). In this last stage in the evolution of Canadian multiculturalism, which Kobayashi dubs ‘structural multiculturalism’, “systematic legal and bureaucratic mechanisms are in place to ensure the efficacy of the multiculturalism policy” (Kobayashi 1993: 219) in order to ensure ethnic minorities’ full participation in the national community.

On a local scale, the changing practices of City of Vancouver planners towards Chinatown parallel the shifting meaning of multiculturalism in Canadian society. Under symbolic multiculturalism, Chinatown was designated a historic site and measures were put in place to protect and enhance the neighbourhood’s landscape, which was to be celebrated as evidence of the country’s multicultural character. Starting in the 1970s, policies were developed with the goal to protect the neighbourhood’s sense of place while demands for other types of neighbourhood improvements, such as basic infrastructure investments for example, were put on the back burner.

As we will soon see, however, City of Vancouver planners have drastically shifted their approach to regulating Chinatown during the last decade or so. If municipal authorities neglected the community’s interests in the past, then recent interventions in
the district have aimed at building a complete community. And if past improvement programs for the district were conceived by outsiders with the goal to beautify the district for visitors, then recent initiatives have come from the community and have sought to strengthen the economic base and livability of the area.

4.3. Symbolic Multiculturalism: Recognizing and Celebrating Diversity Through Chinatown

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the City of Vancouver has played an active role in shaping Chinatown since its inception. Shortly after the institution of the Multiculturalism Policy in 1971, the district was designated a historic site. The historic designation act can be seen as a turning point in the neighbourhood’s history, which had until then been the target of repressive measures by the City. By establishing the HA-1 planning zone, municipal authorities officially recognized Chinatown as one of Vancouver’s founding neighbourhoods. At the same time, the latter put an end to plans to demolish parts of the district to make room for post-war infrastructure projects.

In order to preserve Chinatown for generations to come, the historic designation act was accompanied by policies aimed at protecting and enhancing the district’s landscape. Because of their impact on developments in the district, two of these policies deserve particular scrutiny: the Chinatown Sign Guidelines (1974) and the CHAPC (1975).
4.3.1. The Chinatown Sign Guidelines

The following excerpt from the introduction to the Chinatown Sign Guidelines (1974: 2) leaves little doubt over their intent:

Vancouver’s Chinatown has a unique ethnic and visual character. These guidelines are intended to ensure the preservation and encouragement of some of the environmental aspects which contribute to its present attractiveness and distinctiveness … Much of the character of Chinatown … is directly attributable to the multitude of complex, decorative signs [in the district] … All new signing in this area should incorporate Chinese motifs, symbols and forms rather than the stereotyped sign types which dominate other commercial areas.

According to the document, applications to erect or alter signs within the Chinatown Historic Area must be approved by the Director of Planning. To aid property owners in coming up with appropriate designs for signs in the area as well as to facilitate the director’s task in evaluating applications, the guidelines outline basic principles for signs in the district. According to the latter (ibid: 5-6):

Signs should be compatible with and in aesthetic harmony with the structure or environment in which they are located. They must also reflect the traditional motifs and ethnic character of the Chinatown area … Incentives should encourage the use of particular lighting methods and sign types which contribute to the special character of Chinatown. The use of neon tubing for illumination purposes, rather than standard back-lit fluorescent signs, is characteristic of many of the older signs in the area, and should be emphasized. Colours traditional to the Chinatown area should be considered [and] Chinese characters are preferred over Roman alphabet.

In an effort to avoid unnecessary ambiguity, the document specifies the restrictions and requirements for different types of signs including facia, projecting, free standing, canopy, under canopy as well as awning signs. For each sign type, there are allowable dimensional, material, and lighting requirements. Perhaps with the goal to inspire users to revert to traditional designs, historic photographs of Chinatown are
included in the document. A photograph of the wooden Chinatown Gate that was erected during Vancouver’s Jubilee in 1936 is included on the cover page of the guidelines. In addition, a picture showing a historic Chinatown streetscape including horse-drawn carts and wooden sidewalks can be found on page 9 of the document.

The guidelines generated widespread disapproval from the Chinatown community. As the editor of the Chinatown News (1974) put it over 30 years ago, “Does it mean that owners of structures with the highest historic and aesthetic significance will not be able to select the signs of their choice?” Over 30 years later, the guidelines stand virtually unchanged and merchants and property owners still think that they are too restrictive. As one of my interviewees put it: “it cost the Bank of Montreal over $800,000 just to keep the façade of the building they moved into. How can local merchants, who are struggling to make ends meet, cope with these strict requirements?” (Jenny). Although the City has provided grants to help property owners rehabilitate historic buildings in the district, the general view is that the associated paperwork is too cumbersome.

4.3.2. The Chinatown Historic Area Planning Committee

In 1975, the CHAPC was established to advise the planning department in preserving and protecting the character of Chinatown. The committee, which is still in place today, has the mandate to ensure that new developments as well as renovations to existing buildings are compatible with the neighbourhood’s desired sense of place. As of 2008, the CHAPC comprises thirteen members appointed by City Council; these include eight representatives from Chinatown organizations (Chinatown Merchants Association,
Chinatown Property Owners, Chinese Cultural Centre, Chinese Benevolent Association, Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Garden, S.U.C.C.E.S.S.) and five individuals from other organizations (Architectural Institute of British Columbia, Planning Institute of British Columbia, Heritage Vancouver).

It has been suggested by Ley (2004; 3), who sat on the Committee for several years, that the “deliberations of the Chinatown Historic Area Planning Committee … demonstrated a set of relations where City Hall invariably identified the priorities and the minutiae of historic designation within these borders, which may or may not have coincided with the desires of Chinatown merchants and property-owners”. In order to verify this claim, I have examined the minutes from CHAPC meetings for the period between November 1994 and February 2006\(^2\). On the one hand, the survey reveals a clash between aesthetic planning ambitions by outsiders of the district and a more pragmatic, needs-based approach to development by Chinatown insiders. On the other hand, as a forum to voice their concerns, the CHAPC allowed Chinatown insiders to influence the shape of development in the neighbourhood. In order to illustrate this assertion, I now outline a number of contentious discussions that took place during CHAPC meetings. In the process, I highlight the diverging views of Chinatown insiders and outsiders all the while emphasizing the power of dissent in shaping outcomes.

In September 1995, CHAPC members reviewed the zoning and design guidelines for Chinatown that had been approved by City Council in 1994. In order to allow for the preservation of historic Chinatown but also for (contextualized) development to take place, the City established two separate zones in Chinatown:

\(^2\) Note that the period was defined according to the availability of minutes.
For buildings located on Pender Street, the zoning calls for slightly lower heights ... For the area south of Pender Street, the buildings can be higher. In general terms, the guidelines for the area south of Pender Street are pared down and ... permit more contemporary buildings, compared to the guidelines for Pender Street, which are more detailed and specific (CHAPC Minutes of Meetings, September 1995).

Ms Hlavach, a planner with the City, explained that the guidelines were aimed at “making life easier for builders and developers, because they now have a clear indication of what the Planning department would like to see”. However, representatives of the Chinatown community were quick to point out that the guidelines caused unnecessary hardship and that “its restrictions have contributed to the demise of the area”. As a result, a sub-committee was formed to “survey owners and tenants on their feelings about the designation of their building, perhaps with a view to looking at how the committee might be able to facilitate the relaxation of the restrictions that accompany the designation”.

Similarly, the need for more parking space was raised often during the meetings. In June 1997, for example, “a delegation of Chinatown businessmen and property owners ... [requested] CHAPC’s endorsement of additional public parking on block 17”. Members of the delegation argued that “additional public parking ... would revitalize the Chinatown area by attracting more people and generating greater activity, while rejection would only exacerbate the present economic climate”. Or as one member put it more bluntly, “Readily-available parking is an important factor in a commercial area and more parking would be beneficial to Chinatown, which has lost a lot of business to malls in Richmond where free parking is provided”. Taking the views of area businessmen and property owners seriously, it was resolved that the CHAPC endorse the desirability of additional public parking in Chinatown and favour the inclusion of a public parking component in block 17.
Finally, in June 2005, a City of Vancouver housing planner provided committee members with an overview of the draft housing plan for the Downtown Eastside (including Chinatown). Recognizing the area’s role as a low-income neighbourhood, the plan’s intent was to maintain the level of low-income housing in the area but to increase its quality over time. The presentation generated mixed reactions from committee members. On the one hand, heritage planners argued that while “the social goals of the plan are laudable, much less emphasis is given to heritage preservation”. According to the latter, “it must be recognized that this area contains the largest aggregation of the city’s historical buildings”. On the other hand, community representatives were “disappointed that too much emphasis was being given to the Single Room Occupancies rather than the overall goal of improving the area”. According to the latter, “housing for the middle income people should be strongly encouraged”. It was resolved that “the CHAPC supports the draft housing plan for the Downtown Eastside as presented, with the following recommendations: market housing should be given greater emphasis [and] heritage preservation should be an important part of the overall strategy”.

In sum, although the deliberations of the CHAPC reveal diverging priorities between insiders and outsiders of the district, the inclusion of community representatives on the committee allowed for the consideration of their views in shaping the district. In other words, dissent should not be seen as negative when the outcome is inclusive.

4.4. Structural Multiculturalism: Empowering Local Residents through Chinatown

As evidenced by Collins and Kunz (2005), one of the major selling points of ethnic precincts is their landscape. By restricting the look of signs in Chinatown as well
as by filtering development applications in the district, the Chinatown Sign Guidelines and the CHAPC have undoubtedly played an important role in preserving and enhancing Chinatown's sense of place. Notwithstanding these positive impacts, I argue that the policies should not be pursued (at least not as a stand-alone approach) when regeneration is the end goal. Let us take the CHAPC, for example. The Committee works on a reactive basis. During meetings, Committee members review renovation and development applications as well as city initiated infrastructure development plans for the district. As such, the CHAPC does not represent an effective platform for proactive planning. Put differently, the committee's ability to initiate projects in Chinatown is very limited. The limit of this approach is something that comes up often times during Committee meetings.

In contrast, the CRP has emerged as an effective platform for community planning in Chinatown. Established by the City of Vancouver in partnership with local stakeholders, the goal of the CRP is to assist in the development of a complete community. Whereas it includes initiatives aimed at enhancing the district's potential as a site for tourism, leisure and consumption, the Program has much broader developmental goals. The CRP is examined in more detail in the following section.

4.4.1. The Chinatown Revitalization Program

In 1997, the Downtown Eastside was declared a public health emergency as service agencies continued to find themselves unable to cope with problems including drug addiction, HIV infection, prostitution, and crime. After repeated calls by local activists, residents and associations for intervention, the need for a concerted effort was
recognized by City officials. The latter lobbied the provincial and federal governments for support. In February 1999, the federal National Crime Prevention Centre provided a five-year, $5 million grant to the City of Vancouver and its partner the Vancouver Coalition for Crime Prevention and Drug Treatment. The funds were allocated to help the City and the Coalition begin community mobilization efforts with the intent to improve safety in the Downtown Eastside. In addition, the Vancouver Agreement was signed in March 2000, committing provincial, federal and municipal "... government partners to work together, and with communities and business in Vancouver, on a coordinated strategy to promote and support sustainable economic, social and community development".

Out of these disparate initiatives and funding bases, the Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program emerged as the City of Vancouver’s multi-faceted, long-term approach to restoring the area to a healthy, safe and liveable neighbourhood for all residents. As one of the area’s distinct neighbourhoods (Figure 1), it was determined that specific strategies may be needed for Chinatown. In order to gauge local interest for the program, talks were initiated with individuals from the Chinatown community. According to Paul, a planner with the City of Vancouver, local stakeholders were suspicious of the City’s initial proposal for collaboration. Indeed, the latter feared that "the City would do bad things in Chinatown and create problems for area residents". These views were no doubt coloured by past experiences dealing with the City.

These initial fears quickly dissipated, however, as individuals from the community became familiar with the City’s program for the area. To use Paul’s own words, “as people got involved, they felt that the City had an intelligent plan for the
district, involving them in the revitalization process". Largely as a means to bring members of the community to work together, the Chinatown Revitalization Committee (CRC) was formed in 1999. In order to ensure proper representation, the committee was designed to include representatives from a number of Chinatown organizations including the Chinese Benevolent Association, the Chinese Community Policing Centre, the Chinese Cultural Centre, the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Garden, S.U.C.C.E.S.S., the Chinatown Merchants Association, the Chinatown Business Improvement Area Society, a number of youth groups, as well as other Chinatown community organizations. A number of subcommittees were also established to work on areas identified by the community as priorities. These included the ‘Chinatown vision’, the ‘marketing and promotion’, the ‘arts and culture’, the ‘sports organization’, the ‘parking’, the ‘housing’ and the ‘youth network’ subcommittees.

The Committee’s initial mandate comprised two main tasks, the first being to come up with short-term revitalization projects for the district. The second task was to develop a long-term vision for Chinatown. Given the internal diversity of the community (Ng 1999), the latter task would prove to be difficult. As we will see, however, this step was especially important in securing support for subsequent revitalization initiatives. In collaboration with members of the CRC, City staff undertook a number of studies aimed at understanding the challenges facing Chinatown; these included a study of land use changes in the district (from 1970 to 2000), a telephone survey with Chinese-Canadians living in the Lower Mainland, as well as a survey of revitalization initiatives in other Chinatowns across North America. According to a policy report to Council (2005: 2), “all research confirmed that Chinatown’s major strengths are its retail and cultural activities
and that a successful revitalization strategy should involve attracting more residents, young people and visitors to the area”.

In an attempt to achieve a better understanding of Vancouverites’ views on what the district should become, City staff and members of the CRC worked on a public outreach process. Between August 2001 and February 2002, twenty-five focus group discussions and one public opinion survey took place involving over 600 City residents. “Recognizing that Chinatown is a community not only for people who live and work there, but also for all Vancouverites” (ibid: 5), the invitation was extended to residents of other neighbourhoods. According to City of Vancouver planners, the process generated significant public interest and a number of long-lasting partnerships were developed during the consultations.

In February and April 2002, members of the CRC and interested focus group participants met and reviewed the findings of the consultation process. The outcome of the two meetings was the Chinatown Vision, which was later “endorsed by 38 Chinatown organizations and 7 other resident groups in the nearby neighbourhoods” (ibid: 6). The Chinatown Vision states that “the future of Chinatown should be a place that tells the area’s history with its physical environment, serves the needs of residents, youth and visitors and acts as a hub of commercial, social and cultural activities” (ibid). As a means of concretizing these views, the Vision specifies eleven ‘vision directions’, which are listed in table 1. As the table suggests, Chinatown’s physical environment is seen as an important element of the district: a number of directions (i.e. 1, 2, 3, 8 and 11) involve the preservation or modification of the area’s landscape. The table also suggests that security in Chinatown is a concern for Vancouverites, that better amenities and infrastructure are
needed in the area and that an effort should be made to connect the neighbourhood with other parts of the City.

Table 1. Chinatown Vision Directions

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<th>Vision Directions (As Stated in the Chinatown Vision)</th>
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<td>1. Heritage Building Preservation</td>
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<td>2. Commemoration of Chinese-Canadian and Chinatown History</td>
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<td>3. Public Realm Improvement</td>
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<td>4. Convenient Transportation and Pedestrian Comfort</td>
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<td>5. A Sense of Security</td>
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<td>6. Linkage to the Nearby Neighbourhoods and Downtown</td>
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<td>9. A Community with a Residential and Commercial Mixture</td>
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<td>10. Diversified Retail for Goods and Services</td>
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<td>11. A Hub of Social and Cultural Activities</td>
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With the National Crime Prevention Centre Project ending in March 2004, Vancouver City Council requested City staff to report on the steps necessary to develop a plan for further intervention in the area. Based largely on the Chinatown Vision and in collaboration with members of the CRC, the Chinatown Community Plan (2005) was designed to guide revitalization efforts during the second phase of the Program. As part of the City’s ongoing effort to implement the Chinatown Vision, the Plan calls for “an expansion of residential development including non-market housing, revitalization of the retail and business district of Chinatown, youth and senior involvement, and enhancement of Chinatown’s role as a regional social and cultural hub” (Policy Report to Council 2005: 4). In order to achieve these goals, the Plan identifies “five key areas of work and lists of actions to be undertaken by the City, recognizing there are many other community initiatives underway” (ibid: 4). These include community and social development, residential intensification and land use, public realm and transportation, cultural development and economic development. In carrying out the different projects,
the Plan emphasizes community engagement in the revitalization process, providing assistance and support to local businesses in furthering their development goals and developing long-term partnerships with Chinatown institutions. Council approved the three-year Plan in February 2005.

4.4.2. The Chinatown Revitalization Program: Success or Failure?

Since the program’s inception, a number of public improvement projects have been completed in the district. Take the Chinatown Memorial Square, for example. The square’s design, along with its place marker and name, was determined by means of public competition within the community. Similarly, the concept plan for the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Courtyard was developed “through a series of community meetings and a design workshop” (Progress Report 2006: 7). The community’s programming needs were included into the two areas’ design plans, recognizing that local residents would be the ones to use the spaces.

Commenting on development trends in Chinatown since the inception of the CRP, a Progress Report (2006: 12) suggests that:

Private sector and consumer confidence is growing in Chinatown. Between 2000 and 2005, three development projects were completed. Within the past year, one major residential development has been completed, five developments are under construction and five more projects have development permit applications in process. There has also been increased interest from Vancouverites to invest and move back into the area. The 250 condominium units at the Taylor building ... and East building ... were nearly sold out before they were completed. Decreasing storefront vacancy rate [from 14.2 percent in 2000 to 8.4 percent in 2006] on Pender Street also reflects that economic activities are increasing on the street level.

The Report concludes by stating that, “since the implementation of the program, there are indications that the community is revitalizing in terms of consumer and investor
confidence, development energy, local economy, community participation and media coverage" (ibid).

According to my interviews with local stakeholders, the CRP has exerted a positive impact on developments in the neighbourhood. From the City of Vancouver’s perspective, the program is lauded for its ability to get different groups of people to work together. According to Paul, the CRP’s single biggest achievement has been to mobilize different factions of the community around a common vision for the district. To use his own words, “in the beginning, people were fighting a lot and arguing about whether we should continue [with the Program] or not. At that time, we felt that developing a common vision for Chinatown was important”. Indeed, the development of the Chinatown vision had the dual effect of setting a development agenda for the district, and enhancing trust among key players, thereby securing the community’s support for subsequent development initiatives.

According to Andrea, the CRP’s success lies in its ability to “facilitate community engagement while at the same time making linkages to bigger [funding] initiatives by the government and the private sector”. Take the Millenium Gate, for example. According to Andrea, the idea for the gate came from members of the Chinatown community who were seeking to build something to announce the entrance to the district. However, (financial) support for the project was provided by a number of different partners including the three levels of government (through the Vancouver Agreement) and Tourism Vancouver. “By facilitating dialogue between the community and the government, the committee helped government officials see how the project could move the Chinatown Vision forward. And by convincing Tourism Vancouver representatives
that a Chinatown gate would contribute back to their mandate, it managed to secure their support for the project” (ibid).

When asked to comment on the state of their relationship with individuals from the Chinatown community, the planners suggested that it was good. According to John, “the staff and financial support that is provided by the City to plan and fund development initiatives means a lot to the community since it allows them to realize different projects in the area”. Given that members of the Chinatown community are involved in the decision-making process, they develop a sense of ownership over developments in the area. Put differently, what the City has done with the CRP is to facilitate community-based development initiatives in the district. Or as John put it, “when you bring the community together, you have to provide a platform for them to work together. This is what the City has done for Chinatown”.

Commenting on changes in the district since the inception of the program, Andrea suggests that community dynamics had changed in Chinatown and that “the various stakeholder groups are more now more willing to work together”. She also stated that there was a renewed, stronger vision for Chinatown, which is shared by a wider group of people both within and outside of the community. According to the latter, the CRP has “repositioned the district from a cultural tourism destination to a complete community”. Her statement reflects both the positive impact of the CRP on conceptions of Chinatown as well as the City’s current understanding of the district.

Overall, the Chinatown merchants I interviewed were supportive of the CRP. According to Julie, “at present, there is a lot of energy in Chinatown. The three levels of government have recognized the need for intervention. This is a good thing for us
merchants”. Similarly, another district entrepreneur noted that community “consultation is important, and the City has done this very well”. Other Chinatown merchants also emphasized that their views had been included in development plans for the district and that the CRP complemented some of the work that was being undertaken by the Chinatown BIA.

This is not to say that consensus is achieved on every issue. As one entrepreneur notes, “the City has a lack of trust in the Chinatown community. They need to allocate more resources for revitalization projects in the area”. In the same vein, another merchant emphasizes the lack of investments in marketing type projects. To use Henry’s own words, “the City is not doing enough to improve the image of Chinatown and to market the neighbourhood. Should we, the merchants, be responsible for paying for this?” Similarly, one City of Vancouver planner mentioned that certain individuals from the Chinatown community “refuse to collaborate with the City, and disagree with almost every decision that is made by the [Chinatown Revitalization] Committee”. These grievances were dwarfed by praises of the program’s collaborative nature coming from both sides, however.

Although representatives of non-government organizations in the district are supportive of the CRP, they were quick to emphasize some of the Program’s shortcomings. According to a representative of S.U.C.C.E.S.S., one of the major problems with the CRP is its lack of emphasis on the issue of transportation. To use Jenny’s own words, “we need to attract the downtown crowd to Chinatown. During weekdays, we should try to attract the working crowd to the area for lunch”. According to the latter, a bus route should be developed that links Chinatown to the downtown core.
Whereas “convenient transportation and pedestrian comfort” and “linkages to the nearby neighbourhoods and downtown” are identified in the Chinatown Vision, they have not translated into meaningful actions.

Similarly, George noted that there was a lack of leadership in the district. “Whereas Chinatown merchants are well suited to redevelop the district, they cannot do it on their own. They need help from municipal government … for funding, but also to create linkages to other areas and projects. [Although they own a lot of the property in Chinatown,] clan associations are a spent force. When they go, no one will be there to take their place”. Although youth involvement is a priority for the CRP, there seems to be concern over the fate of Chinatown once its large population of elders passes. According to the same interviewee, “the future of Chinatown is in the hands of second generation merchants in the district. More recent Chinese immigrants are not interested in Chinatown and local youth have other things to do”.

To my surprise, when prompted to comment on the City’s recent interventions in the district, interviewees from the Chinatown community unanimously replied that they had been involved, or at least consulted, in devising and carrying out the different initiatives. Put differently, the separation that I foresaw between individuals from the Chinese community, on the one hand, and members of the regulatory environment, on the other, was not felt as deeply by individuals from the former group. Quite to the contrary, during the course of my engagement with local stakeholders, it became clear that although the CRP had been instigated by the City, Chinatown stakeholders play an important role in defining the shape and form of development in the area.
4.5. Lessons Learned from the City of Vancouver’s Changing Involvement in Chinatown

A number of lessons can be drawn from the City’s changing involvement in Chinatown. First, municipal authorities looking to foster the development of ethnic commercial precincts should strive to create complete neighbourhoods. While ethnic façades play an important role in attracting visitors to the districts, they are insufficient in and by themselves since tourists are unlikely to visit precincts lacking ethnic commercial establishments or to roam in places where their personal safety is at stake.

Secondly, whereas tourism can be used as a vehicle for economic development, it must be coupled with other initiatives if it is to be successful in the long run. As Daniel, a representative of Tourism Vancouver put it:

Tourism must work hand in hand with the quality of life of residents, as it’s not going to create a new economy all by itself. It’s going to be a part and parcel of a number of sectors that Chinatown needs to explore to rejuvenate itself ... It will always be important, but I don’t think that you are going to fill the shops strictly on the basis of being able to reposition Chinatown as something that is going to be appealing to visitors. I think is has to be appealing first and foremost to [its] residents. And, if you can do that in conjunction with the visitation, then I think the two will complement one another, and it’s on that basis that you get people making investment decisions to put in new shops and so on.

Thirdly, and related to my last point, municipal authorities must develop balanced development programs for ethnic precincts. According to Andrea, the main challenge facing the revitalization of Vancouver’s Chinatown resides in the fact that the district has “different layers of meaning and different functions. In this context, how do you come up with a regulatory framework that allows flexibility but also consistency?” Take the neighbourhood’s built environment, for example. By imposing too many restrictions on landscape change in the area, you restrain growth. However, by allowing extensive renovations and development to take place, you risk losing the area’s specific character,
which is one of its unique selling point. According to Andrea, “municipal authorities need to strike a fine balance between preservation and development, and between developing attractions for tourists and amenities for area residents. They need to come up with a comprehensive development plan for neighbourhoods and be flexible in carrying them out”. Andrea added that it may be necessary for planners to educate individuals from the community on the importance of flexibility. As she went on to explain, “sometimes, the community gets fixated on one issue, like parking for example. They forget that other things are important as well”.

Finally, this chapter has emphasized the importance of process in planning ethnic districts. Simply put, municipal authorities should strive to involve local stakeholders in the planning process. This is partly because, on a pragmatic level, local merchants and other residents play an essential part in shaping outsiders’ experience of ethnic precincts. In addition, as I have attempted to show, local residents already spend a great deal of their time and energy on enhancing the neighbourhood for all users.
5. CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined the commodification of ethnicity in Vancouver’s Chinatown. I have attempted to shed light on the processes, actors and factors shaping ethnic districts, focusing on regeneration strategies undertaken by entrepreneurs and municipal authorities with the ultimate goal to determine the optimal conditions under which expressions of culture can be transformed into a vehicle for socio-economic development to the advantage of both immigrants and the city at large.

As I have demonstrated, several actors were involved in shaping Chinatown. Chinese entrepreneurs were the first to make conscious attempts to reposition the district as a site for tourism, leisure and consumption in the 1940s. Over seven decades later, area merchants still devise and carry out measures to attract outside consumers to the area. Whereas the initial push to open up the district was motivated by the desire of merchants to broaden their consumer base, more recent efforts have been spurred by necessity. Indeed, the dispersal of Chinese-origin individuals outside of Chinatown, the related decline in the importance of the district as a Chinese commercial space as well as the serious problems plaguing the Downtown Eastside have translated into reduced economic opportunities for Chinatown entrepreneurs.

Municipal authorities have also played an important role in shaping Chinatown. The latter have drastically altered their stance towards regulating Chinatown throughout different periods of history. In 1971, Chinatown was designated a historic site and policies were devised shortly thereafter to enhance the area’s potential for tourism. More recently, the City recognized that a more holistic approach to development was needed in the district.
As part of the tourism place-product development, landscape preservation and improvement schemes represent an important element of the repositioning process. In order to have a positive impact on the development of districts, such initiatives need to be carefully managed, however. In the case of preservation guidelines, they should not be too restrictive as they will put an unnecessary burden on entrepreneurs and stifle development.

Of course, a number of other measures need to be considered by governments looking to foster the development of ethnic areas. As a holistic approach to community development, the CRP shows real potential. As I have attempted to demonstrate, the Program has resulted in an enhanced vision for Chinatown. In addition, through the CRP, the City has been able to connect grassroots development initiatives to government funding bases. This said, my investigations have also revealed some of the program’s shortcomings. As my interviews have confirmed, there are still disputes between local stakeholders and City planners over what needs to be done in the district. And although it was established a number of years ago, vacancy rates in Chinatown have yet to be brought down to the municipal average.

It must be noted that a number of Chinatown’s critical success factors are external to the district. For example, the impending gentrification of neighbourhoods adjoining the district (e.g. Gastown, Strathcona, etc) should bring more consumers to the area. Further, a recently announced return to institutionalized health care in the Lower Mainland will undoubtedly help to alleviate some of the pressures in the DTES.

Of course, it is not only about what you do but also about how you do it. In the past decade or so, City planners have recognized the work that is already being done by
the community. This is a positive development. Although development must come from within, the City brings significant influence and expertise to the table. In addition to mediating conflicts between local actors, the CRP example has shown that the City is able to help stakeholders leverage funding for development projects.

The coming decades will surely put the CRP to test as development pressures continue to increase the viability of developments in the area. Paradoxically, the CRP may contribute to the eventual disappearance of the district. By fostering residential intensification, street beautification and the development of cultural facilities, the Program may speed up commercial and residential gentrification in the district.
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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A. Interview Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Planner</td>
<td>City of Vancouver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>Planner</td>
<td>City of Vancouver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Planner</td>
<td>City of Vancouver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Tourism Vancouver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Chinatown Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Chinatown Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Chinatown Organization</td>
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</tbody>
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Appendix B. Interview Guide

Introduction:
My thesis examines the development of Chinatown over the last Century. More specifically, it focuses on understanding the district’s increasingly important role as a site for tourism, leisure and consumption. My position is that this reorientation (or repositioning) did not happen out of thin air, and that a number of local actors (including, possibly, the organization which you work for) have played a role in the process. Today, I want to ask you questions pertaining to the development of the district. I am interested in hearing the role that your organization has played in shaping the district, as well as your views on other developments in the area.

1. Contextual questions:

- What association/organization do you work for? What does your association/organization do? Describe your work, and discuss your involvement in Chinatown.

- Describe some of the changes that have occurred in the area during the course of your involvement. For example, consider changes in the built environment, changes in the type of businesses, changes in the residential makeup of the area, changes in the zoning of Chinatown, etc.

2. Making Chinatown: The actors

- Identify the major actors involved in the development of Chinatown. In your opinion, which of these actors have played more important roles? Why?
  
  - In your opinion, how involved have members of Vancouver’s Chinese community (broadly construed) been in shaping the area?

  - In your opinion, how involved have Chinese entrepreneurs (shop-owners, business associations, etc) been in influencing the development of Chinatown?

  - In your opinion, how involved has the municipal government been in shaping Chinatown (in terms of zoning practices, and the implementation of bylaws, for example)?

  - Have any other actors influenced the development of the district? Name them, and describe their involvement.

3. Making Chinatown: The actions

- Are you aware of any schemes (beautification schemes, for example) or programs, stemming from your association/organization or another, with the
specific aims of attracting outside visitors/new residents to Chinatown? Identify them, as well as their instigators and funding agencies.

- Has your association/organization been involved in shaping the landscape/image of Chinatown? If so, how? If not, are you aware of any other local actors who may have played a role in the process?

- Are you aware of any promotional materials/campaigns (websites, pamphlets, etc) aimed at attracting outside visitors/new residents to Chinatown?

- Are you aware of any bylaws or regulations that restrict changes in the façade/look of Chinatown? What is your opinion on such initiatives?

- Identify some of the barriers to the development of Chinatown (for example, the lack of coordination between the efforts of different actors, or conflicting definitions of the district).

4. Interpretative questions

- Are you happy with the look/image of Vancouver’s Chinatown? Why?

- In your opinion, what are the primary functions of Chinatown? (For example, is Chinatown a tourist attraction, or is it a Chinese community? Or is it both?) What are the district’s other functions? Do any of these functions conflict?

- What do you think about other people’s perceptions of Chinatown? In other words, in your opinion, what do tourists, visitors (local, or international), and members of Vancouver’s Chinese community think of Chinatown?

- In your opinion, how are these attitudes (towards Chinatown) shaped?
Appendix C. Conceptualizing Immigrant Entrepreneurship: The Mixed Embeddedness Approach

(Source: Adapted from Hiebert 2001)