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**Cityscapes of Diaspora: Images and Realities of London's Chinatown
End of Year Report for 2007**

Our research results for far suggest that Chinatown represents a unique case study of the relationship between diaspora and place and provides the basis for exploring critically the notion of diaspora. Its development is linked to broader social-economic/spatial developments in London's West End, to London-wide and national policies for management of ethnic relations as well as of processes of Chinese migrations and settlement. Key findings include:

- Chinatown remains important for Chinese people in London (and from outside) in both material and symbolic aspects of everyday life
- There is both conflict **and** complementarity between differing functions and representations of Chinatown, for example as an ethnic enclave/community space and its construction as a branded place. The 'branding' of Chinatown opens it to external pressures but has also secured Chinatown's location within London's West End.
- There are contradictions within the agendas of different stakeholders, for example between immigration policy and the politics of multiculturalism (as witnessed for example by the raids in November).
- Chinatown is now predominantly an economic enclave characterised by ethnic business serving both Chinese and general population. Most employ Chinese employees from mainland China and Hong Kong
- There are various overlapping layers of visibility and invisibility in the activities based in Chinatown.
- Chinatown represents both change, e.g. old Cantonese moving out, new migrations and diversification (language, food, 'culture', new needs), involvement of big businesses/property developers **and** continuity e.g. representations of 'traditional' notions of Chineseness, long-established organisations, continuing role as and gateway for new migrants
- Its transnational role has been reconfigured (possibly strengthened) through
 - new links with the PRC, growing investment from China and East Asia.
 - The promotion of Chinatown as a global 'brand'
 - shifting notions of belonging, changing representations of culture, reshaping notions of 'homeland'.

The project has progressed according to schedule. The research team meets regularly (generally a monthly meeting of the whole team, with more frequent meetings of smaller groups) and have developed good working relations. The research has benefited from the involvement of members of the team (including the project leader) in a parallel research project, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, on new Chinese migration. Preliminary findings from this project have helped inform the fieldwork and preliminary analysis. The main completed and on-going activities are:

LITERATURE REVIEW AND REVIEW OF EXISTING DATA

This is ongoing throughout the life of the project. All team members participate but Hatziprokopiou leads (English language) with Liang (Chinese language). A yahoo group has been established for the storage and sharing of literature and the Endnote bibliographical database is used to organise this. The main areas identified so far are:

- Chinese migration in London/Britain, Europe and beyond, past and present
- Chinese migrants/communities in Britain/London;
- Chinese quarters and Chinatowns in the UK, Europe, N. America and elsewhere;
- Migrant entrepreneurship, ethnic enclaves and ethnic economies;
- Theoretical debates on diaspora, transnationalism, identity, the relevance of place.

FIELDWORK

All members of the team have participated in fieldwork, with Liang carrying out the majority of individual interviews (in Chinese). Most of the fieldwork has been completed.

Interviews with key informants: 17 interviews have been carried out with key informants (policymakers, Chinese community organisations) mainly in English; approximately 5 more are to be completed. 10 fully transcribed, one partly transcribed.

Interviews with individuals: 50 interviews completed, majority in Chinese with a range of individuals differentiated by gender, age, migration status, length of time in UK and relation to Chinatown; the majority have been partly transcribed (specific themes); 7 fully transcribed.

Street survey: A detailed survey of two of the major streets in Chinatown has been completed. This examined changing patterns of land use and involved face-to-face interviews and observation. Survey was completed in August 2007 and a preliminary analysis of results has been completed. Response rate was high (over 50%).

Ethnographic observation: carried out by whole research team is ongoing and includes:

- systematic observation at particular locations and at various times/days, and casual interviews with Chinatown users.
- Attendance at key events e.g. Chinese New Year celebrations, events organised by community organisations

Preliminary data analysis

In-depth analysis of first individual and key informant transcripts has been carried out to identify preliminary themes, to refine interview schedule and to ensure accuracy of translation. Analysis of some key themes (e.g. Chinatown's role in 'belonging', conflicting uses of Chinatown) has been carried out to inform presentations/publications.

PUBLICITY AND DISSEMINATION

A bi-lingual information leaflet for informants is posted on Middlesex University website; a project poster has been produced through programme. It is too early in the life of the project for any publications directly relating to it to have appeared but several publications are in progress. Presentations on

preliminary findings have been given at conferences in London (Queen Mary College and Middlesex University), Sydney, Copenhagen, Birmingham and Brescia.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The development of the research design and the fieldwork has involved engagement with a range of stakeholders, primarily Chinese community organisations and other key stakeholders within the Chinese community, but also other groups and individuals including service providers (Westminster Council, the Mayor's Office).

The primary route for engaging with stakeholders has been through individual interviews which have explored participants' perceptions of the role of Chinatown within the community and their views of its future role and direction. These interviews have led to invitations to numerous events including: the VIP section at the London Chinatown Chinese New Year Celebration in 2007; Chinese New Year celebrations in Oriental City; meeting about *China in London 2008* organised by the Mayor's Office. In addition, numerous events such as Chinatown Stakeholder Forum, luncheon clubs in community organisations. These have led to on-going contact and access to further participants.

In the period of dissemination it is planned to hold a seminar in Chinatown to discuss preliminary results with key stakeholders (community organisations and policy makers including from Westminster Council and the Mayor's Office/London Assembly).

The research has benefited from the involvement of members of the team (including the project leader) in a parallel research project, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, on new Chinese migration. This has given us access to a wider range of community organisations.