How Do We Belong Here?
The Evolution and Expression of Incidental Spaces of Belonging for Toronto's Chinese Diaspora

by
Aurora Xiaozhu Chi

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

The Chinese diaspora of immigrant cities have historically created spaces of enclosed cultural spheres for collective survival and adaptation and this thesis examines those of Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area. Such spaces are often called "ethnic enclaves", characterized by their homogenized demographic and corresponding services, spaces, and activities specific to those backgrounds. The subject of this thesis is an exploration of *incidental spaces of belonging* in these enclaves that were not explicitly built or programmed for building a sense of belonging but exist as such nonetheless because of what they contain. In a method of analysis analogous to the approaches taken by Interboro in *The Arsenal of Exclusion and Inclusion*[1] and by Huda Tayob in her work in critical drawing,[2] I examine the role of spaces, such as Chinese malls and plazas, private establishments, and streets of Chinatowns, and uncover how *scales of belonging* are developed through architecture, spatial planning, sign and language, and networks.

As transmigration and transnational economies proliferate due to globalization, the character of these cultural spaces of belonging have shifted since the first diaspora in the nineteenth century – strengthening the sense of belonging in some ways and eroding it in others. This has led to the rise of *impermeable spaces*, which import Chinese culture, alongside *permeable spaces* that export culture. As Sara Ahmed has argued, "it is the uncommon estrangement of migration itself that allows migrant subjects to remake what it is they might yet have in common"[3]. This thesis explores these incidental spaces of belonging for Toronto's Chinese diaspora and examines how physical, social, and temporal factors affect their permeability through field research, critical drawing, photography, and written analysis.

1 Tobias Armborst et al., *The Arsenal of Exclusion & Inclusion*, Arsenal of Exclusion and Inclusion (New York] ; Actar Publishers, 2017), https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/Waterloo/detail.action?docID=6652772.

2 Huda Tayob, 'Subaltern Architectures: Can Drawing "Tell" a Different Story?', *Architecture and Culture* 6, no. 1 (2 January 2018): 203–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2017.1417071.

3 Sara Ahmed, 'Home and Away: Narratives of Migration and Estrangement', *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 2, no. 3 (1999): 329–47, https://doi.org/10.1177/136787799900200303.

Land Acknowledgement

I would like to recognize that the lands that the Greater Toronto Area is situated on are the traditional territory of diverse First Nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, and Chippewa peoples. I have conducted my research at the University of Waterloo and its School of Architecture in Cambridge, that is situated on the land of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee people – land that is part of the Haldimand Tract which by treaty was six miles to both sides of the Grand River for the Six Nations and "their posterity are to enjoy for ever". Whether by treaty or by appropriation, these territories have been unjustly occupied by people who migrated to Canada. The topic of this thesis is of placemaking in the GTA by its Chinese diaspora, and I want to recognize that while the Chinese diaspora have not been the driving force behind Indigenous displacement, it is through the overtaking of Indigenous place that Chinese-Canadian place is made on colonized land.

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Firstly I would like to thank my panel and educators.

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Dedication

To my parents, Chi Yan Bing and Zhang Qiu Ping, and my late Princess, with whom I always belong.

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1. Introduction

Growing up, I lived among diverse immigrants, attended public schools, and sought community and education from local Chinese groups. All the while, I asked myself and those around me, "How do I belong here?". I asked it when I went to Chinese choir. I asked it when I went to community centre dance classes. I asked it when I went to Chinese traditional medicine practices. But whenever I asked my mom, she would tell me that I already belonged there, because I'm Chinese – because she's Chinese and a first-generation immigrant from the mainland, and I'm her daughter – and I was raised to go with her to these places. But I knew that it wasn't that simple. I belonged there enough, just barely, because I was with her. Without her, I didn't understand how to navigate these spaces, these people, these rules, because I couldn't read Chinese and had no discernable regional accent. I was, in a word, foreign.

I was born in mainland China into a large, loving family and community, but I immigrated with my parents to Canada only four years later. I have very little memory of this time in my life, but more from the half year that I returned and lived with my extended family when I was seven years old. My parents were part of a relatively recent wave of mainland Chinese skilled labourers who immigrated before immigration became more restricted again in the new millennium, and I grew up mostly in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) outside of Toronto proper. My early childhood had me quite involved in activities in the Chinese community in Toronto through extracurriculars, church, and community gatherings that my parents took me to, but as we moved away from the city, much of that fell away. My second-generation immigrant experience is a common one and was not precipitated by much turmoil in my homeland or defined by difficulty in my new home. However, I always felt out of place, unable to really belong in either Chinese spaces or "Canadian" spaces as naturally as it seemed to for my peers and I found myself deeply interested in what belonging in a cultural space entails at all.

This thesis began when I was relaying a story to a friend about being in a semi-public space with Canadian peers who had European roots and families with multiple generations in Canada. I offhandedly said, "I don't know how to belong here". I began to realize that my confusion in not knowing how to belong extended past Anglo-Saxon Canadian space into spaces inhabited by the Chinese community here. In fact, it was similar to how I felt when I briefly lived in China. That made me curious about what may actually create a sense of belonging, and how that belonging is determined partially by the insularity of a place or community.

With the proliferation of transmigration and transnational economies, questions of what it means to belong to a place and how places are made for people to belong in become more pertinent than ever. People are more mobile than they have ever been at a global scale which means more and more people have multiple homes, homelands, and places to belong. With new global systems and spaces that are linked to each other through both material and immaterial networks, it becomes increasingly difficult to define spaces independently. In turn,

there is a growing interest in creating stronger local connections and creating belonging in places since the global COVID-19 pandemic that forced people to stay at home and broke many interpersonal connections and removed public gathering spaces where they could belong.

My thesis asks what a sense of belonging in place entails, and how spaces manifest various physical, social, and temporal factors to allow for the development of a sense of belonging. This thesis is focused on Chinese spaces in the GTA.

I chose Toronto and the GTA as my area of study because not only does it have the largest population of Chinese-Canadians in Canada, but it is considered to be one of the most multicultural cities in the world.[1] With such a push for cultural diversity and social capital in exploring spaces of different cultures, Toronto is an opportune place to examine how spaces of belonging are influenced by different demographic and economic interests.

The past few decades have seen Chinese economists and anthropologists addressing the phenomenon of Chinese migration and their complex economies through a focus on the drive for upward class mobility driven by relationship-based business and this thesis broadly follows that understanding.[2] In this thesis, I examine the changes and differences between spaces of belonging for the Chinese diaspora. The Chinese diaspora is incredibly diverse, with varying opinions within the communities about the economic, social, and cultural expression of space. That diversity within the diaspora is acknowledged and analyzed in this thesis, with an understanding that these can all be spaces of belonging for different people within the Chinese diaspora of Toronto.

I argue that spatial practice affects how "belonging" is cultivated within the diaspora, across generations, and, sometimes, despite them. This is demonstrated through examining spaces that vary in intended program and publicness including mahjong parlours, Chinese mall atriums, street stands, and more.

1 Arlene. Chan, *The Chinese in Toronto from 1878 : From Outside to inside the Circle* (Toronto ; Dundurn, 2011), 197.

2 Peter S. Li, 'Chinese Investment and Business in Canada: Ethnic Entrepreneurship Reconsidered', *Pacific Affairs* 66, no. 2 (1993): 219–43, https://doi.org/10.2307/2759368.

Research Methodology

The methodology of this thesis consists primarily of writing and photography as ethnographic research which is informed by drawing in situ. These methods are inspired by the work of Huda Tayob's "Subaltern Architectures", Interboro's *Arsenal of Exclusion and Inclusion*, Nishat Awan's *Diasporic Agencies*, and Atelier Bow Wow's *Pet Architecture* and *Behaviorology* whose research collectively documents and argues for the revaluation of unseen and interstitial spaces and how their spatial and non-spatial (social, cultural, temporal) factors interface with human activity.

Tayob examines refugee markets in Cape Town through a process of drawing and re-drawing that she calls "critical drawing" and explains as "the potential of mimicry to "tell" the narratives of populations and their spaces".[3] She converses with inhabitants, sketches, and takes notes on-site which she later reflects upon and redraws.[4] Interboro puts together a collection of spatial and non-spatial "weapons" that are used to exclude and/or include people in space in America. Each weapon is explained through text accompanied by photographs, collages, and line drawings as well as a large pictographic illustration, all informed by personal and second-hand sensory experiences.[5] Awan investigates Turkish *kahve* in London through mapping processes that include orthographic drawing, photography, and layering maps at an urban scale. She speaks with inhabitants and owners and focusses on their physical and social networks and how they are both rooted in place and transcend space, stating that "diasporic experience is at times incredibly dependent on a material culture, whilst at other times it is completely dematerialised".[6] Yoshiharu Tsukamoto of Atelier Bow Wow defines "pet architecture" as buildings that are small and bring joy to people despite being largely undeliberate; as "pets" are separate from humans but are given space to live, so too is "pet architecture" in the world of buildings.[7] Atelier Bow Wow catalogues this "pet architecture" in Tokyo and through photography and axonometric drawing, represent textures, signage, and other additions that give them "pet"-like qualities.[8] For Atelier Bow Wow, *behaviorology* is the concept that all things – humans, natural elements, buildings – have *behaviours* that can be analyzed through their shared qualities.[9] They argue that

3 Huda Tayob, 'Subaltern Architectures: Can Drawing "Tell" a Different Story?', *Architecture and Culture* 6, no. 1 (2 January 2018): 203–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2017.1417071.

4 Tayob.

5 Tobias Armborst et al., *The Arsenal of Exclusion & Inclusion*, Arsenal of Exclusion and Inclusion (New York] ; Actar Publishers, 2017), https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/Waterloo/detail.action?docID=6652772.

6 Nishat Awan, *Diasporic Agencies : Mapping the City Otherwise* (Farnham Surrey, England ; Ashgate Publishing Company, 2016), 43.

7 Atorie Wan and Tsukamoto Kenkyūshitsu, *Petto Ākitekuchā Gaidobukku = Pet Architecture Guide Book*, Living Spheres ; 2 (Tōkyō: Wārudo Foto Puresu, 2001).

8 Wan and Kenkyūshitsu.

9 Atorie Wan, *Behaviorology* (New York: Rizzoli, 2010).

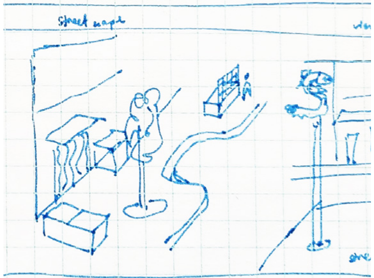
behaviour is situated between form and use, manifesting as customs for humans, climate conditions for natural elements, and typology for buildings, and can be analyzed as such.[10]

10 Atelier Bow-Wow, 'Architectural Behaviorology', R / D, accessed 12 October 2023, https://www.readingdesign.org/architectural-behaviorology.

All of these research endeavours document spaces differently but have similar goals of recognizing and emphasizing the importance of unseen spaces through their spatial and non-spatial factors. In this thesis, I aim to similarly document, recognize, and emphasize the importance of spaces of belonging for the Chinese diaspora in Toronto.

My method consists of written analysis and photography to document my research findings, which I began through drawing in situ and redrawing afterwards. Like Tayob, my on-site drawing produced rough sketches with notes based on temporal and social observations which I reflected upon later and redrew, analyzing the particular spatial and symbolic elements that my observation notes focused on (Fig. 1.1, Fig. 1.2, Fig. 1.3). Through this, I could organize my sketches and photographs into a theory of *scales of belonging* that address physical, temporal, and social factors, and their constituent parts that affect belonging, analogous to Interboro's *weapons* that affect inclusion. I explain this theory through cataloguing my photographs by the *scales of belonging* and their internal typologies in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, I then apply the *scales of belonging* to different types of spaces of belonging for the Chinese diaspora, which are categorized based on their programs, their roles in a community, and how people use them. These are represented through photography and accompanying descriptive narrative writing in italics that explores the internal experience of belonging in each space discussed through the *scales* established earlier.

Similar to Tayob's analysis of Cape Town's informal markets and Awan's analysis of London's *kahve*, the spaces of belonging for the Chinese diaspora in Toronto are important to their inhabitants and to the city due to their proliferation and necessity, but are simultaneously incredibly distinct as well as universal. I sought to understand this apparent disparity through my sketching process, and the written analysis in the following chapters seek to explain it and affirm its necessity.



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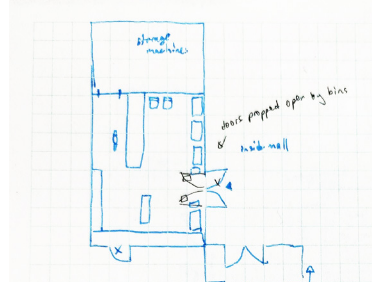


Fig. 1.2 Sketch of impermeable grocery store plan.

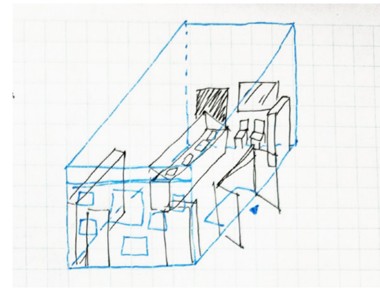


Fig. 1.3 Sketch of impermeable grocery store axonometric.

Thesis Structure

The structure of this thesis is divided into four main sections.

Chapter 2 addresses the theoretical context from which I approach the idea of "belonging" and how that is tied to "place" and "home". This chapter discusses theories from many fields including geographers, poets, psychologists, and ethnographers. I conclude with a summary and statement of how the concept of belonging will be used to analyze spaces – namely through memory, body, and agency.

Chapter 3 is an overview of the idea of diaspora and the history of the Chinese diaspora in Toronto. This forms the cultural and historical context of this thesis, where I explore the specificities of Chinese diaspora, their urban movements, and evolving relationship with public perception and Torontonian culture at large. I explain the context of what Chinese spaces are in Toronto, the places where they occur, and how this has created both insularity and externality.

Chapter 4 introduces my definition of incidental spaces of belonging, categorizing them as impermeable and permeable spaces, and the *scales of belonging* that I use to analyze them. This is the main contribution of this thesis: the assertion that we can analyze the particularities of spaces made by and for the Chinese diaspora in a way that speaks to how they create spaces to belong in, and that they are important and distinct. The chapter begins with an explanation of the research methodology that I use in Chapters 4 and 5 to understand these spaces. I argue that impermeable and permeable spaces are different in demographic and usage, and that the scales of belonging are the physical, temporal, and social factors that coincide to make an incidental space of belonging.

Chapter 5 categorizes incidental spaces into different types based on program, publicness, and demographics, and then sorts them as either wholly impermeable and necessary to sustain a community (*Services of Belonging*) or capable of being either impermeable or permeable as they are rooted in importing and exporting culture and bolster a community (*Culture of Belonging*). I examine each of these types through a piece of narrative writing around a typical space or specific case study, using the scales of belonging introduced in the chapter before. I also discuss general trends and why they are important as spaces of belonging.

2. Belonging: Place, Home, and Commons

Introduction

The longing to belong is a yearning that has followed me all my life, accompanied by a confusion about what that means at all. What was this emotion that I sought to reconcile with my soul? There were times and places where I felt momentarily at peace with this longing, but transient as things are when we are young, that peace left me swiftly.

The desire to belong is one that I believe is inherent in everyone. The term encapsulates many implications and dimensions that fulfill essential parts of our humanity as it ties together identity, memory, family, home, and place, which is why it is so nebulous and difficult to define.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the verb "to belong" as "to be suitable, appropriate, or advantageous – to be in a proper situation", "to be the property of a person or thing – attached or bound by birth, allegiance, or dependency – a member of a club, organization or set", "to be properly classified", and "to be an attribute, part, adjunct, or function of a person or thing".[1] The Oxford Advanced American Dictionary adds to this stating that it is "to feel comfortable and happy in a particular situation or with a particular group of people" and using it in the specific sentence of *"I don't feel as if I belong here"*.[2] With these two definitions, the consensus appears to be that "belonging" includes dimensions of possession and identity, and has emotional implications when associated differently with both.

These definitions suggest broadly that for a person to belong, one must have a self and an identity – one that is defined by any number traits and associations including age, birth, heritage, race, political affiliation, etc. – and something to belong to – be it a place, a time, a community, a country, etc. This means that belonging is relational. Moreover, each factor of a person's identity or actions affect their status towards the place or community that they would belong to. These factors are uncertain, changeable, and contentious depending on who is considering if that person belongs.

In terms of belonging, I will be discussing the "sense of belonging" that each person feels within themselves. In this way, it is the person who would belong that feels that they belong or not, and while that may be influenced by the perception and judgement of others, those others' perceptions are not of concern in this work.

1 'Definition of BELONG', Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 15 January 2024, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/belong.

2 'Belong Verb - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced American Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.Com', Oxford Learner's Dictionary, accessed 25 January 2024, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american_english/belong.

In this chapter, I hope to outline some perspectives and concepts that form a context in which we can understand how people might feel like they belong in a place. I will first discuss several critical accounts of belonging, then proceed to dimensions and extensions of belonging through home, place, and commons. Finally, I will discuss the conceptual framework that is my position on belonging as it carries through this thesis.

Belonging

Belonging: A Culture of Place by bell hooks, a black feminist theorist, is a collection of essays she writes about belonging, focusing on her own sense of belonging, what land, place, and the Earth means for everyone's belonging, how racial and gendered tensions of place affect belonging, and how belonging stems from memory. She begins the preface by quoting Tracey Chapman's song *I'm Ready*, saying, "I wanna wake up and know where I'm going" as an expression of the yearning to be part of a place and therefore make lives that "we feel are worth living".[3] She roots her understanding of belonging in how her Baba (her grandmother) moved in the world. By focusing on the act of walking, or "walkers", she argues that these people cultivate a sense of belonging because they "always walk known terrains… known reality" and have "the will to remain rooted to familiar ground and the certainty of knowing one's place".[4] Yearning to understand these walkers, "to have a sense of homecoming", she made a list of different cities where she imagined spending her life, none of which included her native one. This idea of personal and intimate knowing of a place and its relationships is foundational to her sense of belonging, which stems from memory. Although she fears the memory of repetition, it is also necessary: "[repetition] reminds me of how my elders tell me the same stories over and over again. Hearing the same story makes it impossible to forget."[5] Repetition creates and reinforces memory, as it is with walkers who know the place they walk because of their repetition. In the end, hooks returns to Kentucky, her home state, and states that, "We are born and have our being in a place of memory… We know ourselves through the art and act of remembering."[6]

Her anecdotes are rooted in familiarity and memory, but they expand to encompass her life's exploration through the specific essay topics. In chapter 6 "To Be Whole and Holy" she discusses how leaving Kentucky allowed her to reexamine her relationship to her home and taking with her what she loved

3 Bell Hooks, *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203888018.

4 Hooks, 2.

5 Hooks, 4.

6 Hooks, 5.

and setting aside what she didn't, but not forgetting. She quotes Scott Russell Sanders's essay "Local Matters" to explain how belonging does not only entail familiarity and memory but investment: "The challenge, these days, is to be somewhere as opposed to nowhere, actually to belong to some particular place, invest oneself in it, draw strength and courage from it, to dwell not simply in a career or a bank account but in a community … Once you commit yourself to a place, you begin to share responsibility for what happens there."[7] With this understanding of belonging, she says that returning home to Kentucky "was also returning to a place that I felt needed me and my resources, a place where I as a citizen could be in community with other folk seeking to revive and renew our local environment, seeking to have fidelity to a place."[8]

7 Scott Russell Sanders, 'Local Matters', in *Secrets of the Universe: Scenes from the Journey Home* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 96–120. Quoted in Hooks, *Belonging*, 67-68.

8 Hooks, *Belonging*, 65.

In his book *At Home in the World*, Jungian psychoanalyst John Hill describes "home" with a great number of anecdotes and different personal meanings, and at first it seems almost interchangeable with "belonging". Crucially, "home" in his writing is defined through these narratives and possibilities as *that to which one belongs* and so will be discussed here. He says that he has had many homes that he has belonged to. He felt that "part of [him] belongs to nature forever" having been educated outdoors as a child. He felt that he belonged within his family structure as he gained knowledge of his ancestry and cultural lineage and experiencing with his family the loss of his father. He felt belonging with his family's housekeeper rather than his family because she acknowledged and tried to understand his interior world. And he felt at home when he made his own home and family, which he later left but returned to in a different capacity.[9] On his sense of belonging in a different place from his homeland, he says "I must see, hear, or smell my home even when I am not physically in it", citing French philosopher Merleau-Ponty: "the body was not an object among objects, but our way of belonging to the world."[10] Hill directly links the physical, spatial, and emotional memory of his past homes to his current feelings of embodied belonging in a different home.

9 John Hill, *At Home in the World : Sounds and Symmetries of Belonging*, Zurich Lecture Series in Analytical Psychology (New Orleans, Louisiana: Spring Journal Books, 2010).

10 Hill, 29.

He says that "Home is a work of art that takes a lifetime to create" and that he feels more at home than ever in his late life. I do not believe it is a coincidence that many of these ruminations on belonging come from these thinkers later in life, in that only then do they feel at home enough and equipped to speak about their journeys of discovering how and where to belong. I feel that this is because of how much a sense of belonging is nourished by memory, identity, and place – all of which may require a lifetime or more to establish and understand.

Place

Place is often inextricably discussed alongside space, because like squares and rectangles, a place is part of space but not all space are places. Place is necessary to a conversation about belonging because a place is often what people feel that they may/should belong to, and such places are the subject of this thesis. As both place and space have multitudinous definitions across dictionaries and all disciplines of thinkers even only in their capacities as nouns, I have focussed on a few definitions that I will consider throughout.

Geographer David Harvey discusses the question of "place" from several angles in his chapter "From Space to Place and Back Again". He first begins by writing, "the elaboration of place-bound identities has become more rather than less important in a world of diminishing spatial barriers to exchange, movement and communication."[11] He talks about the diminishment of places through a Marxist lens, looking at global development and capitalist competition between places as drivers of uniformity and decreasing authenticity. He references Boyer in the assertion that "The result is that places that seek to differentiate themselves end up creating a kind of serial replication of homogeneity"[12] and that local labour tends to ascribe to capitalist notions of growth because they believe it is necessary for the maintenance and/or growth of their communities. Harvey then moves on to Heidegger and his idea of "dwelling" in place. He begins with the quote "All distances in time and space are shrinking.... Yet the frantic abolition of all distances brings no nearness; for nearness does not consist in shortness of distance"[13] which strongly separates the idea of immediacy from belonging. Here, Harvey explains that Heidegger's idea of dwelling is "the capacity to achieve a spiritual unity between humans and things" and that it is possible to not dwell and experience "homelessness" and "rootlessness" even if one has a place to stay.[14] He says that

11 David Harvey, 'From Space to Place and Back Again', in *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 1993), 3.

12 M. Christine Boyer, 'The Return of Aesthetics to City Planning', *Society* 25, no. 4 (1 May 1988): 49–56, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02695725. Quoted in Harvey, 'From Space to Place and Back Again'.

13 Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought. Translations and Introd. by Albert Hofstadter.*, [1st ed.]., His Works (New York, Harper & Row, 1971). Quoted in Harvey, 'From Space to Place and Back Again'.

14 Harvey, 'From Space to Place and Back Again'.

Heidegger's "ontological excavations" focus on how places "are constructed in our memories and affections through repeated encounters and complex associations" and that "place experiences are necessarily time-deepened and memory-qualified".[15] Harvey consolidates these two views through mutual criticism with the Marxist view being too easily co-opted into further "corporate bureaucratic and state capitalist views of the world" and Heidegger's rhetoric alienating opportunities for change, isolates cultures and identities, and excludes difference in a way that can lean to fascist insularity.[16] The solution, he says, is to think of these views as "oppositions that contain the other" and that "we live in a world of universal tension between sensuous and interpersonal contact in place… and another dimension of awareness in which we more or less recognize the obligation and material connection that exists between us and the millions of other people."[17] Ultimately, this perspective is that of acknowledging both the material realities of place and placemaking while earnestly considering the spiritual and interpersonal nature of rootedness in place.

Place and experience are intricately tied in ethnographer Yi-Fu Tuan's *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience.* In this book, he explains space and place as conceptually distinct, where "space" is unobjectified, hazy, and allowing for movement, while "place" is objectified and fixed. Space, as he explains it, is everything else and experienced through its relation to everything else, saying that "space can be variously experienced as the relative location of objects or places, as the distances and expanses that link places, and – more abstractly – as the area defined by a network of places."[18] On the other hand, place is "a special kind of object … in which one can dwell."[19] He uses the example of moving to a new neighbourhood: when one first moves there, it is "blurred space" that they are not yet part of. Once the new resident explores it, learns its intricacies, landmarks, people, and how to navigate it, the neighbourhood becomes defined "place". Through this, he suggests that a "place achieves concrete reality when our experience of it is total" which includes every sense in through which one might gain knowledge of the place.[20] As well, Tuan argues that "being rooted" in a place is fundamentally a different experience from "having and cultivating a sense of place" writing, "A truly rooted community may have shrines and monuments, but it is unlikely to have museums and societies for the preservation of the past."[21] What he is expressing is that while a sense of place may be cultivated

15 Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought. Translations and Introd. by Albert Hofstadter.* Quoted in Harvey, 'From Space to Place and Back Again'.

16 Harvey, 'From Space to Place and Back Again', 13.

17 Harvey, 14.

18 Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place : The Perspective of Experience*, *Space and Place : The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 12.

19 Tuan, 12.

20 Tuan, 17–18.

21 Tuan, 198.

through time and consideration of the past, to be rooted in a place is to experience it actively and presently as it is. In many ways, the idea of "a sense of place" can be and has been both authentically developed and also commercialized through efforts to preserve "heritage culture", but that does not necessitate a feeling of rootedness in place.

From another perspective, geographer Edward Relph considers the disparity between a sense of place and the lack of it in *Place and Placelessness.* He defines place with "meaningful experience, a sense of belonging, human scale, fit with local physical and cultural contexts, and local significance" while placelessness is associated with "efficiency, mass culture, and anonymous, exchangeable environments".[22] Here, place is varied and defined through variation, while placelessness critically has no tether or locality but instead a bland sameness that can be inserted anywhere. When discussing place, he emphasizes the "special quality of insideness and the experience of being inside that sets places apart in space." He writes about different levels of "insideness" to spaces where the deepest level is an unconscious feeling of home and belonging in it to which one orients themselves, then the communal rather than individual feelings of belonging through symbols, then shallower is the self-conscious thoughts that attempt to understand and appreciate a place without truly knowing it as an outsider, and finally superficially by simply being in a place without being sensitive to its significant qualities.[23] This idea of "insideness" in place will be further explored in Chapters 4 and 5, where being inside is significant to the spaces I will be examining. As well, the idea of "placelessness" will be explained in more detail and critically discussed with regard to hybrid spaces in Chapter 5.

In this thesis, "place" will be used to refer to specific places that exist concretely and have significance to their locality, while "space" will be used to refer to transient spaces that are not necessarily defined by set physical boundaries but are still perceived nonetheless. The usage of "space" in *incidental spaces of belonging* (defined in Chapter 4) is due to the lack of definitive locality and/or boundaries to all of the spaces, and that some of them do not have a "rootedness" that is so integral to "place".

22 E. C. Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, Research in Planning and Design 1 (London: Pion, 1976).

23 Relph.

Home

When one considers "belonging" one of the first associations is of the idea of "home". Many songs and stories relate the two, and it is easy to see why. One should feel like they belong at home, and home should be the place, community, and/or family where one belongs. bell hooks writes, "[a]ll my life I have searched for a place of belonging, a place that would become home. Home was the place where the me of me mattered. Home was the place I longed for; it was not where I lived."[24]

24 Hooks, *Belonging*, 215.

"Home" is defined as "one's place of residence: domicile", "the social unit formed by a family living together", "a familiar or usual setting: congenial environment", and "a place of origin".[25] It is also defined as "the town, district, country etc. that you come from, or where you are living and that you feel you belong to" and "the place where somebody/something can be found".[26] These definitions paint a picture of a place defined by one's familiar or original relationship with it, with typically positive connotations.

25 'Definition of HOME', 26 January 2024, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/home.

26 'Home_1 Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.Com', accessed 29 January 2024, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/home_1?q=home.

As diverse as these are, Shelley Mallett's "Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature" compiles a breadth of interdisciplinary ideas about home. She asks "whether or not home is (a) place(s), (a) space(s), feeling(s), practices, and/or an active state of state of being in the world?"[27] She discusses the tension between the real and the ideal, or the actual and remembered home through philosopher and historian Aviezer Tucker's writing that "most people spend their lives in search of home, at the gap between the natural home and the particular ideal home where they would be fully fulfilled" and that "[o]ne's 'actual home tends to be our best approximation of our ideal home, under a given set of constraining circumstances."[28] Mallett quotes Doreen Massey who argues that there is "no single simple "authenticity" – no single unique eternal truth of an (actual or imagined/remembered) place or home – to be used as a reference either now or in the past" however "remembering, even memories of the traditional can be important for they 'illuminate and transform the present'".[29] She references Tucker again, stating that home can be an expression of "a person's subjectivity in the world" or simply a space where people "feel at ease and are able to express and fulfill their unique selves or identities".[30] Mallett quotes the philosopher Kuang-Ming Wu, ""I" is relational to the an-other which can become my hell and my home. 'I am at

27 Shelley Mallett, 'Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature', *The Sociological Review (Keele)* 52, no. 1 (2004): 62–89, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2004.00442.x.

28 Aviezer Tucker, 'In Search of Home', *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 11, no. 2 (1994): 181–87. Quoted in Mallett, 'Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature'.

29 Doreen Massey, 'A Place Called Home?', *New Formations* 17 (1992). Quoted in Mallett, 'Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature'.

30 Tucker, 'In Search of Home'. Quoted in Mallett, 'Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature'.

home in you (singular plural)'. When you accept me as I am, and I accept you accepting me then I am at home."[31]

For Iris Marion Young, home is tied to gender, identity, and domesticity. She discusses how those who build structures, those who occupy them, and those who preserve them dwell in the world very differently – that the agency of the builder (historically men) is much greater and a right that should also be afforded. On the other hand, the continuity and preservation of homes is typically construed as feminine.[32]

On preservation of the home, Young says that "The work of preservation entails not only keeping the physical objects of particular people intact, but renewing their meaning in their lives" and provides people with "a context for their lives, individuates their histories, gives them items to use in making new projects, and makes them comfortable."[33] She states that "[h]ome as the materialization of identity does not fix identity, but anchors it in physical being that makes a continuity between past and present. Without such anchoring of ourselves in things, we are, literally, lost."[34] In contrast to a nostalgic fantasy of a lost home, the home and the preservation of it "entails remembrance" and that "[r]emembrance is the affirmation of what brought us here", reinforcing the idea that belonging is rooted in complex memory structures which can be productive in re-envisioning home.[35]

However, as I argue in this thesis, the idea of home persists even when one is away from it, whether by choice or not. As Sara Ahmed as argued, home is something that is conceptualized through loss and can also be discovered anew. She says that having too many homes makes it difficult to secure roots in any particular place, but also that home itself becomes the knowing of having a destination at all – "the journey between homes provides the subject with the contours of a space of belonging".[36] For migrants, the "real home" that one considers themselves to originate from is the most unfamiliar because it "becomes Home through the very *failure* of memory"[37] and that it is compensated for through collective memory wherein the subject can fit themselves into a forgotten past. Here, home and identity are strongly correlated through memory, with the memory of home being key to one's identity.

31 Kuang-Ming Wu, 'The Other Is My Hell; The Other Is My Home', *Human Studies* 16, no. 1/2 (1993): 193–202, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01318579. Quoted in Mallett, 'Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature'.

32 Iris Marion Young, 'House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme', in *Motherhood and Space : Configurations of the Maternal through Politics, Home, and the Body*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 115–46.

33 Young, 134.

34 Young, 132.

35 Young, 135.

36 Ahmed, 'Home and Away: Narratives of Migration and Estrangement'.

37 Ahmed, 330.

Ahmed problematizes the idea of the free transmigratory subject, the "global nomad", one that chooses to not have a home and is rather fully "at home in the world" because it can become an oversimplification of the experience of migration, exile, and nomadism. She argues that the assumption that leaving home suspends identity to allow for a universal migrant experience and community "conceals the complex and contingent social relationships of antagonism which grant some subjects the ability to move freely at the expense of others."[38]

38 Ahmed, 338.

"Home" is also defined as a place of rest and respite and where there is "being but not longing"[39] and this idea of home is "*sentimentalized* as a space of belonging" that is addressed by "*how one feels or how one might fail to feel.*"[40] If home is "a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination", then it is a place that one cannot return to. However, home is also "being-at-home" which is "the lived experience of locality" and the way that a body inhabits a space that it is present in.[41] Ahmed continues to relate these two ideas of home through explaining that migration entails generational storytelling about migration and dislocation, which themselves help to relocate one in the place they come to live in. While she says that "memory is a collective act which produces its object (the 'we'), rather than reflects on it", she also suggests that the experience of migration is the "failure of memory to fully make sense of the place one comes to inhabit" and it is that same failure of memory that brings discomfort when "returning home" to a place of origin as it is likewise unfamiliarly inhabited.[42]

39 Nalini Persram, 'In My Father's House Are Many Mansions: The Nation and Post-Colonial Desire', in *Black British Feminism*, ed. Heidi Mirza (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 205–15. Quoted in Ahmed, 'Home and Away: Narratives of Migration and Estrangement', 339.

40 Ahmed, 'Home and Away: Narratives of Migration and Estrangement', 341.

41 Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, 1st ed. (London ; Routledge, 1996).

42 Ahmed, 'Home and Away: Narratives of Migration and Estrangement', 343.

Ahmed ends her piece by presenting a vision of how migrants might reimagine home in a new place. She says that "the gap between memory and place in the very dislocation of migration allows communities to be formed" with gestures of friendship to bridge connections with other migrants who are also themselves "unknown" to the new place – "the community comes to life through the collective act of remembering in the absence of a common terrain" and "it is the uncommon estrangement of migration itself that allows migrant subjects to remake what it is *they might yet have in common.*"[43]

43 Ahmed, 345.

A common theme in these examinations of "home" and the narratives around them is the idea that "home" persists when one is away from it – that the longing for home is in many ways more poignant than the existence of a tangible, accessible, physical home. In this thesis, home is relevant in how

there are homelands from which the Chinese diaspora come from and in many cases are still very connected to through both memory and active communication, and how that connection shapes the space of new "home" in Toronto. Home in this sense is in keeping with the internal idea of belonging at home explored above rather than a physical abode.

Commons

The commons embodies what a society and/or what a community shares amongst each other and is critically tied to themes of familiarity, community, and agency. The commons is both physical place and conceptual space wherein people can share and enact their own agency.

In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt defines the Common as that which is shared between the private and the public realm. Arendt states that "the common world is what we enter when we are born and what we leave behind when we die" and what is shared to the commons becomes immortal.[44] She says that the "public realm validates the private into existence through expression" (Fig. 2.1) and that only the relevant is expressed into existence, with the irrelevant receding, but that the "irrelevant" is still "generally relevant, like love." Here, Arendt is suggesting a level of performance to the commons, which may exclude very important, personal, and private things that go on to not be remembered, like love. Similarly, a personal sense of belonging is not relevant to the commons but is important and can be conveyed within it nonetheless.

44 Hannah. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. / introduction by Margaret Canovan. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

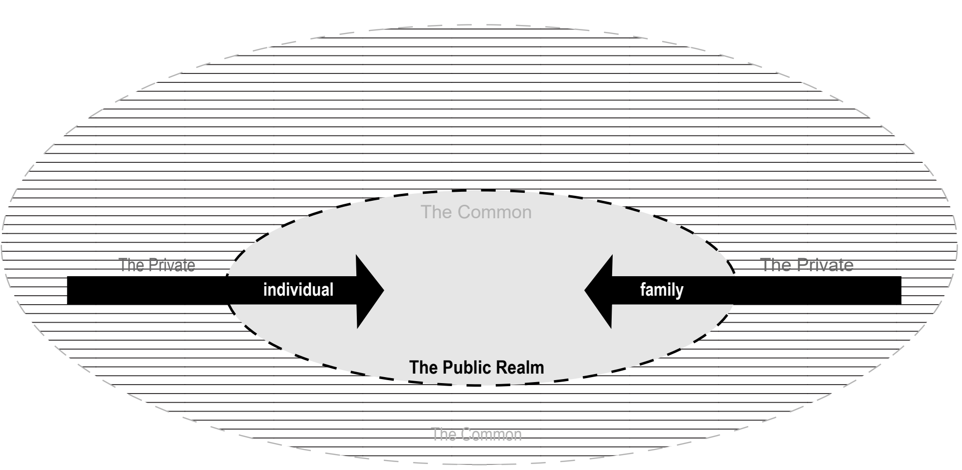


Fig. 2.1 Diagram showing how the private becomes the common by entering the public realm.

In *The Right to the City* from 1968, Henri Lefebvre discusses many branching topics that stem from the commons, particularly the changes in cities as industry and automation proliferate. He talks about how the city is now characterized by production in comparison to the past when they were more essentially political and social in nature. And so, a key distinction from this focus on production and value, is *la fête* which is "a celebration which consumes unproductively". In this tension, he describes how power is enacted upon a city and must balance "between mobilization of wealth and unproductive investment in the city". The commons is at the heart of this "unproductive investment in the city" which has an inherent need for "information, symbolism, the imaginary and play".[45] He says that this need can only be freely expressed in "qualified places, places of simultaneity and encounters" and that there needs to be "a time for these encounters, these exchanges." In this thesis, I will examine how the incidental spaces of belonging of Toronto's Chinese diaspora become such places of simultaneity and encounters, with an openness of program and timelessness that gives space for these encounters.

45 Henri Lefebvre, *The Right to the City*, 1968, https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/henri-lefebvre-right-to-the-city.

Lefebvre also suggests that "struggles between factions, groups and classes strengthen the feeling of belonging," a view which David Harvey endorses in his own journal article "The Right to the City". Harvey states that "the city is the historical site of creative destruction" and it is also resilient as a social form. He agrees with Lefebvre in that "we individually and collectively make the city through our … engagements. But, in return, the city makes us."[46] Harvey argues that for all that cities shape us through what is enacted by those in power, we still retain the right to the city, the commons, where we can declare and enact change for our own inalienable rights, and this is a call to take agency.

46 David Harvey, 'The Right to the City', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no. 4 (2003): 939–41, https://doi.org/10.1111/j..2003.00492.x.

This call for agency is expanded upon by Silvia Federici in *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*. She defines commons as social relations that form autonomous spaces of shared property which cannot exist without a community.[47] The essentials pieces of this are "social relations", "shared property", "autonomous spaces", and "community". The commons are social relations and not places or things where the act of sharing itself is the commons. Shared property is in the form of natural or social wealth that can be used by anyone and are not for sale. Autonomous spaces means that they are spaces that have agency to change, develop, maintain, and facilitate. Community is the people who share with each

47 Silvia Federici, *Re-Enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons / Silvia Federici.* (Oakland: PM Press, 2018).

other, and agree to share in their agency and has defined limitations (unlike "global commons").

Through these discussions, we can understand that the idea of belonging is closely tied to the social relations of commons within a community. The commons' notion of shared agency and what is made common through the public realm is central to my examinations of belonging in the spaces of Toronto's Chinese diaspora.

My Position

To me, belonging means to feel that I know how to and can exist in a place. It is a feeling of both security and freedom, where I know that I am safe and accepted. It is because of that knowledge that I can be free to act and express myself authentically – to be the "me of me" as bell hooks so aptly names it. To have those feelings of security and freedom, I must be within the place and community to which I belong.

And to belong, there should be a place to belong to. Place is both a physical experience and spiritual understanding; to belong to one, there should necessarily be a feeling of rootedness when one is there. That rootedness comes from an intimate understanding of the place through senses and memory as well as being "inside" the place. That place itself is defined by the way that people are rooted in it. A large part of what defines social spaces are inherent ways-of-being in place that is shared knowledge within communities but imperceptible or incomprehensible to those outside of it. Such places are tied to belonging through a feeling of "home".

To be at home, one must be familiar with a place through memory and that familiarity creates comfort and a sense of belonging. Memory is a way of knowing and this familiarity is knowledge; both of the place and space, and of the implicit ways-of-being that come with being in it. Home is a place in which one can belong or not belong, and it is at times an ideal memory or dream and at times an imperfect reality mediated by memory and relationships with others within it.

And for one to be at home, there should be a freedom to be oneself completely and authentically, and to be able to enact their agency upon it. The commons is not the same as home, but can be an extension of it outside of the private realm. There, a community can collectively create place and change, perhaps through struggles within themselves or with others.

For the purposes of this thesis, I will be discussing belonging from the perspective that there are many factors that might signal to someone that they may belong there. As demonstrated by bell hooks, John Hill, and the others mentioned in this chapter, finding belonging in a place, space, community, or identity is incredibly personal and cannot be coerced or demanded. While a confluence of numerous factors, many of which are deeply personal, can contribute to a sense of belonging that a person feels, it is not truly possible to delineate a set method to create that sense of belonging. However, knowing what we do now of the relationships between belonging, place, and home and of how memory, body, agency, and their absence affects them, we can establish some ways of analyzing how spaces may allow for a sense of belonging to a community. This is the lens through which the spatial and symbolic character of spaces (that may also be places) of the Chinese diaspora of the GTA will be examined.

3. The Chinese Diaspora in Toronto

3.1. Diaspora and Ethnic Enclaves

Diaspora

Diaspora is a term that has been gaining usage for several decades now and its meaning has shifted substantially from its original context. The term comes from the Greek word *diaspeirein* which means "to scatter, spread about" and was historically used to discuss Jewish people living outside of Palestine and modern Israel.[1] Today, it means people who live away from their ancestral homelands as well as the movement/migration of these people itself. There is an implication that diasporas are not assimilated into the new place because there is a desire and will to return to their homeland, reminiscent of the Chinese idiom *luoye guigen* meaning "fallen leaves return to their roots".[2] There are negative connotations of being driven out of a homeland because of oppression and of not having a connection to the new place while more positive connotations of diasporas in discussions "such as supermobility and flexible identities on the part of transmigrants as well as multiculturalism and transnational flows of capital have been elevated."[3] It is understood now that both negative and positive connotations exist within diaspora and they are experienced quite differently by different groups within diasporas.

A criticism often levied at the usage of "diaspora" is that it flattens migrant and settler communities and implies homogeneity, despite diasporas often being incredibly diverse.[4] Sharing a homeland or home country does not mean that every migrant comes from the same place, community, class, or any other such identifiers (although many migrants from the same place of origin still prefer to migrate to a common destination due to existing relationships). I will be referring to "the Chinese diaspora of Toronto" and "culturally impermeable/permeable spaces" (defined in Chapter 4), though I acknowledge these terms are often porous and acknowledge the diversity of peoples and experiences within them.

In our current global climate, it has become increasingly common to be a part of a diaspora through transmigration as economies become increasingly enmeshed and travel becomes less restricted. This process of transmigration raises many questions about identity, community, and loyalty as well as how they relate to place. Geographer Laurence Ma argues that

1 'Definition of DIASPORA', 27 January 2024, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diaspora.

2 Ronald Skeldon, 'The Chinese Diaspora or the Migration of Chinese Peoples?', in *The Chinese Diaspora : Space, Place, Mobility, and Identity*, The Why of Where. (Lanham, Md. ; Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 51–66.

3 Laurence J.C. Ma, 'Space, Place, and Transnationalism in the Chinese Diaspora', in *The Chinese Diaspora : Space, Place, Mobility, and Identity*, The Why of Where. (Lanham, Md. ; Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 6.

4 Skeldon, 'The Chinese Diaspora or the Migration of Chinese Peoples?'

"a contemporary transnational migrant often suffers from the syndrome of spatial uncertainty" and that "**feelings of belonging to and longing for a place do not always coincide**, which can greatly torture him as he struggles with the questions of national and local cultural identity and with issues of nationalism, citizenship, nationality, patriotism, ethnicity, loyalty, cultural assimilation and social and spatial integration [emphasis added]."[5]

5 Ma, 'Space, Place, and Transnationalism in the Chinese Diaspora', 11.

The stated difference between feelings of "belonging to" and "longing for" a place is significant. Ma asserts that while one might long for a place of origin, a homeland, or a home, that is not the same as belonging to it. For one thing, the migrant has a new diasporic place in which they reside and have become part of multiple new economic and social systems in that new place far apart from their original ones. As well, that place of origin that is longed for may have (and likely will have) greatly changed in the time since they have left. The questions of identity and belonging are continuously complicated and challenged as homelands and new places change, as diasporas evolve, and as migrants perhaps continue to move to new diasporic places.

Architect Nishat Awan proposes that "the diasporic subject, always in-between, always becoming and heterogeneous, requires an approach to the city based in difference."[6] This is because migrants have multiple belongings across multiple spaces. She also makes clear the difference between being "included" and "belonging", where she references Van den Hemel's interpretation of Badiou's idea of an "empty set" within an inclusive set where he argues that "what is included, philosophically, equals all that is possible in the world, whereas what belongs equals all that can be presented in a given worldview."[7] What this means is that a diasporic subject might have established themselves in a host country and be included by way of living in and working there, but do not belong for lack of social and political agency. This can be similarly applied to diasporic spaces of agency made by and for a diaspora in a host city that includes those outside of the community but does not invite them to belong there.

6 Nishat Awan, *Diasporic Agencies : Mapping the City Otherwise* (Farnham Surrey, England ; Ashgate Publishing Company, 2016), 2.

7 Ernst Van Den Hemel, 'Included But Not Belonging: Badiou and Rancière on Human Rights', *Krisis: Journal for Contemporary Philosophy* 3 (2008): 16–30. Quoted in Awan, *Diasporic Agencies : Mapping the City Otherwise*, 23.

Chinese Diaspora

As argued by cultural geographer Kay J. Anderson, "ethnic groups are created socially by internal rules of exclusion and inclusion around idioms of actual or perceived common descent such as language and religion."[8] Following this understanding, the "Chinese diaspora" as discussed in this thesis is defined not by blood relations or other Western racial concepts, but rather the social understanding of "Chinese" as an ethnicity where its diaspora can be linked by solidarity and common languages, histories, homelands, and values. This definition acknowledges the diversity of experience and identity within the Chinese diaspora but groups them together to discuss how they manifest collectively.

8 Kay J. Anderson, 'The Idea of Chinatown: The Power of Place and Institutional Practice in the Making of a Racial Category', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 77, no. 4 (1987): 584, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.1987.tb00182.x.

The Chinese diaspora is characterized as being trade-based and highly relational, emphasizing economic growth across networks based in geographic factors *(diyuan)* and familial ties (*xueyuan*).[9] As discussed by various scholars examining the economic processes of the Chinese diaspora, modern Chinese transnationalism allows for the creation of "functionally diasporic ethnopolises with an active binational or multinational business orientation"[10] where business ties are strengthened through traditional characteristics of Chinese economy including the use of social networks.[11]

9 Ma, 'Space, Place, and Transnationalism in the Chinese Diaspora', 8.

10 Ma, 24.

11 Constance. Lever-Tracy, David Fu-Keung. Ip, and Noel. Tracy, *The Chinese Diaspora and Mainland China : An Emerging Economic Synergy* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1996); Li, 'Chinese Investment and Business in Canada'.

Because of these social and business relationships as well as national ties, the "loyalty" of the Chinese diaspora is a consistent question.[12] As will be explained in the section on Toronto's history, much of the Chinese diaspora consists of fragmented families with either "astronaut" (*taikongren*) parents who work in the host nation to provide for their family in China or "parachute children" who live in the host nation with grandparents while their parents work in China.[13] This fragmenting of families also contributes to a dissonance between generations. The blurring of boundaries and ease of movement have caused some such as Ronald Skeldon to argue that linkages within the migrant group across nations, origin and destination(s) are seen as more meaningful than those between migrants and the host society or with the originating society.[14] He argues that "[t]ransnational systems of circulation of migrants have created "ungrounded empires" for the Chinese that extend far beyond the territory of any single state" and eroding the idea of the nation-state.[15] Because of this, there is a common perception that those within the Chinese diaspora are uncommitted to settling in a place, unlike past European settlers, and

12 L. Ling-chi Wang, 'Roots and Changing Identity of the Chinese in the United States', *Daedalus* 120, no. 2 (1991): 181–206.

13 Ma, 'Space, Place, and Transnationalism in the Chinese Diaspora', 32.

14 Skeldon, 'The Chinese Diaspora or the Migration of Chinese Peoples?', 52.

15 Aihwa Ong and Donald Macon Nonini, eds., *Ungrounded Empires : The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1997), https://doi-org.proxy.lib.uwaterloo.ca/10.4324/9780203426661. Quoted in Skeldon, 'The Chinese Diaspora or the Migration of Chinese Peoples?', 52.

are likely to leave a host nation and return to their country of origin which Skeldon then disproves with comparative statistics of return.[16] This context is important for understanding the internal relationships within the Chinese diaspora with generational and socio-economic divides, and how it is placed within the concept of diaspora.

16 Sucheng Chan, 'European and Asian Immigration into the United States in Comparative Perspective, 1820s to 1920s', in *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology, and Politics*, ed. Virginia Yans-McLaughlin (Oxford University Press, 1991). The amount of European settlers in North America in the 20th century who returned to their homelands is comparable to the Chinese migrants in North America returning now, with rates between 20%-50% and 47% respectively

Chinatown(s)

Chinatown as a concept has been expounded upon by many scholars over the last century, with its definition and social implications evolving as they themselves change through evolving public sentiment and policies. Commonly understood as "a Chinese quarter of any city outside China"[17], the term "Chinatown" (*tangren jie* or Chinese street) is used to refer to old city areas occupied by Chinese migrants as well as new city areas, despite large spatial and social differences.

17 David Chuenyan Lai, *Chinatowns: Towns within Cities in Canada* (Vancouver [B.C.]: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), 3.

At its inception, the concept of Chinatown was deeply racialized through the lens of colonization, and was understood as an Eastern colony in the West despite the fact that both Chinese migrants and European migrants of various countries brought their own traditions and place-making practices to North America.[18] As argued by Kay J. Anderson, the idea of Chinatown was racial ideology "materially embedded in space… and it is through "place" that it has been given a local referent, become a social fact, and aided its own reproduction."[19] It was a racial othering through the use of space that Chinese migrants inhabited and it was successful in legitimizing the idea of Chinatown as outsider Chinese space through discriminatory city policy and planning. Alongside the examination of 19th century and early 20th century rhetoric and policy that conceptualized and condemned Chinatowns, Anderson mentions how the Chinese living in Chinatowns had in fact taken on community agency within them to refute discrimination and improve their material conditions through acts such as communal street cleaning efforts.[20]

18 Anderson, 'The Idea of Chinatown: The Power of Place and Institutional Practice in the Making of a Racial Category'.

19 Anderson, 584.

20 Anderson, 587.

By the 1970s and 1980s Chinatown came to be understood as an ethnic enclave, or "basically an idiosyncratic oriental community amidst an occidental urban environment."[21] This view of Chinatown was of a typologically distinct and essentially Chinese part of a city that could operate fully within itself and sustain its own distinct "enclave economy". This was supported by observations by those such as David C. Lai who analyzed Chinatown through a "stage-development model"

21 David Lai, 'Socio-Economic Structures and the Viability of Chinatown', *Residential and Neighbourhood Studies, Western Geographical Series*, no. 5 (1973): 101. Quoted in Kay J. Anderson, 'Chinatown Unbound', in *Trans-Pacific Mobilities : The Chinese and Canada*, ed. Lloyd L. (Lloyd Lee) Wong (Vancouver ; UBC Press, 2017), 316.

where Chinatowns are established through budding and blooming phases that solidify Chinese presence in Chinatown and its place in the city, followed by a withering stage precipitated by the period of exclusionary immigration policy pre-WW2, and finally either disappearing or being revitalized through an influx of new immigrants and city funding.[22] The revival stage of Chinatown involves urban funding and urban renewal projects – which aligns with the period of the 1950s-1950s when immigration was selectively reopened – and gentrification that in many cases also displaced and relocated old Chinatowns.[23] During that time, many Chinatowns underwent "strategic self-orientalization" as a way of adopting palatable and recognizable signs of Chineseness for both tourism and recognition.[24] As Lai writes, "[t]he image of Chinatown then varies, as it is simultaneously considered a tourist attraction, a vibrant inner-city neighbourhood, a historic district, an emblem of Chinese heritage, and/or the root of Chinese Canadians in the multi-ethnic society of Canada",[25] an image that still informs public understanding of Chinatown and urban planning that concerns it.

Today, the idea of Chinatown is much freer and more multifaceted, with an understanding that Chinatowns have internal diversity and continue to evolve with its changing populations. It contains various ethnicities, homelands, languages, and socio-economic class, as well as generational shifts with different eras of immigration and exchange alongside second- and third-generation children of immigrants. As demonstrated by Anderson through the comparison of two Chinese gardens in Sydney, Australia, the 2015 garden spatializes Chinatown's "porosity" and is "attuned to precisely the flux of identities and imaginings that characterize Sydney's Chinatown today".[26] *Reimagining ChinaTOwn* is an example of current sentiments of "Chinatown as an act of resistance through communal rememory" through speculative fiction about present and future Chinatown.[27] Showcasing differing perspectives on Chineseness and place and how they are tied to Chinatown's history and future, the anthology shows how Chinatown has become less conceptually uniform.

The openness of new definitions and the embracing of internal diversity allows us to imagine new futures for Chinatown as a concept. Chinatowns are likewise changing as transnational economies and movement proliferate and erode the idea of an insular and "complete" "ethnic enclave". As reflected upon by Anderson thirty years after her 1987 article on

22 Lai, *Chinatowns: Towns within Cities in Canada*, 5–8.

23 Lai, 8.

24 Greg ("Fritz") Umbach and Dan Wishnoff, 'Strategic Self-Orientalism: Urban Planning Policies and the Shaping of New York City's Chinatown, 1950-2005', *Journal of Planning History* 7, no. 3 (1 August 2008): 214–38, https://doi.org/10.1177/1538513207313915.

25 Lai, *Chinatowns: Towns within Cities in Canada*, 8.

26 Anderson, 'Chinatown Unbound', 324–26.

27 Linda Zhang, *Reimagining Chinatown : An Anthology of Speculative Fiction* (Toronto: Mawenzi House, 2023).

Vancouver's Chinatown, today's Chinatown "defies the containment and isolation called up by the very term "enclave"" because "it exceeds all sense of enclosure"[28] with blurred edges and the expansion and intensification of Chinese presence across cities.

Chinatowns as a typology are currently inner-city areas consisting of an ethnically Chinese majority occupied at a high-density. They continue to be landing points for new immigrants but with more cultural diversity than in the past, the larger incentive being their centrality and availability of job opportunities that require less initial capital and education.[29] Because of their histories, Chinatowns tend to be traditional – desiring to protect and maintain existing cultural infrastructure and street character, and older Chinese associations have more sway than individuals in local politics.[30] They conveniently cater to the daily needs of local residents in addition to serving as tourist areas due to their centrality and density in inner-cities

Ethnic Enclaves

Diaspora is often discussed spatially in terms of the clustering of "ethnic enclaves" in cities with large immigrant populations, though this is an increasingly problematic term because of the implied insularity and completeness. Ethnic enclaves are defined by urban planners Mohammad Qadeer, Sandeep Agrawal, and geographer Alexander Lovell as a "spatial and institutional phenomenon" that "usually refers to neighbourhoods dominated by a particular ethnic group and marked by institutions reflecting its cultural values and symbols."[31] They assert that the degree of "institutional completeness" of a neighbourhood, or the development of the interior ethnic network (including public institutions and retail spaces), is what cements it as an ethnic enclave.[32] They draw a clear distinction between ethnic enclaves and the idea of a "ghetto" with ethnic enclaves being the result of voluntary clustering and freedom of movement while ghettos are the result of discriminatory policies and lack of agency.

Qadeer, Agrawal, and Lovell examine trends of ethnic enclaves in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area, comparing older white ethnic enclaves such as Jewish and Italian enclaves with newer visible minority enclaves such as Chinese and South Asian enclaves, and in doing so interpret how ethnic enclaves develop and sustain themselves. They observe that

28 Anderson, 'Chinatown Unbound', 318.

29 Wei Li, 'Ethnoburb versus Chinatown : Two Types of Urban Ethnic Communities in Los Angeles Conceptual Framework : Ethnoburb', *Cybergeo*, 10 December 1998, https://doi.org/10.4000/cybergeo.1018.

30 Li.

31 Mohammad Qadeer, Sandeep K. Agrawal, and Alexander Lovell, 'Evolution of Ethnic Enclaves in the Toronto Metropolitan Area, 2001–2006', *Journal of International Migration and Integration / Revue de l'integration et de La Migration Internationale* 11, no. 3 (1 August 2010): 315–39, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-010-0142-8.

32 Raymond Breton, 'Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants', *American Journal of Sociology* 70, no. 2 (1964): 193–205. Quoted in Qadeer, Agrawal, and Lovell, 'Evolution of Ethnic Enclaves in the Toronto Metropolitan Area, 2001–2006', 318.

almost all Toronto ethnic enclaves are made up of a dominant minority population rather than ethnic segregation, and that older ethnic enclaves retreat into institutional cores as residents disperse and new immigrants of the same ethnicity do not replace them.[33] This suggests that "enclaves do not dissipate, even with social integration"[34] and that voluntary ethnic communities continue to be self-sustaining and value their collective culture even as they become more diluted and integrated into Toronto.

Residential ethnic segregation "continues to thrive in cities, as well as suburbs, but now it is largely driven by market forces, household choices, and preferences, particularly among recent immigrants and ethnic minorities drawn to their (sub) cultures".[35] Ethnic enclave economies attract capital investment and tourists and contributes to the image of a "global" and "multicultural" city in contrast to discriminatory views of ethnic neighbourhoods previously. He calls "old multiculturalism" "a private affair" which forms "communities reminiscent of their homelands, all in their private domains" while "new multiculturalism" is defined by the increased value of "diversity of lifestyles" and a "socially-sanctioned and sustained ethnic diversity".[37]

Ethnoburbs

The term "ethnoburb" was coined in 1997 by scholar Wei Li in her PhD dissertation, which examined the changing ethnic landscape of Los Angeles and problematizing both ideas of the ethnic enclave and of Chinatown. Li argues that the term "Chinatown" was not descriptive of the ethnic Chinese neighbourhoods emerging in suburban areas.[38] She defines ethnoburbs as "suburban ethnic clusters of residential areas and business districts in large metropolitan areas" that consist of "multiethnic communities, in which one ethnic minority group has a significant concentration, but does not necessarily include a majority".[39] Li has observed the evolution of ethnoburbs and argues that they "have replaced or are replacing traditional downtown enclaves, as more important new "ports of entry" for immigrants".[40] For her, the ethnoburb "challenges the dominant view that assimilation is inevitable" and that through maintaining their diverse identities and cultures, "ethnoburban populations can nonetheless integrate into the

33 Qadeer, Agrawal, and Lovell, 'Evolution of Ethnic Enclaves in the Toronto Metropolitan Area, 2001–2006', 330–34.

34 Qadeer, Agrawal, and Lovell, 336.

35 Mohammad A. Qadeer, *Ethnic Segregation in a Multicultural City: The Case of Toronto, Canada*, Working Paper Series (Toronto, Ont: CERIS: The Ontario Metropolis Centre, 2003).

36

37 Qadeer, 7–8. Ethnic enclaves take on many forms with pre-existing inner-city areas and the advent of ethnoburbs.

38 Wei Li, 'Spatial Transformation of an Urban Ethnic Community from Chinatown to Chinese Ethnoburb in Los Angeles' (Los Angeles, California, University of Southern California, 1997).

39 Wei Li, *Ethnoburb : The New Ethnic Community in Urban America* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 1.

40 Li, 'Ethnoburb versus Chinatown', 3.

mainstream society through economic activities, political involvement, and community life."[41] Through this description, Chinese ethnoburbs differ from traditional inner-city Chinatowns in part due to their recency with changing sentiments around multiculturalism and their increased monetary contribution, and are therefore less stigmatized.

41 Li, *Ethnoburb : The New Ethnic Community in Urban America*, 4.

As a typology, Chinese ethnoburbs are fundamentally suburban and characterized by their medium-density sprawl with commercial and industrial axes and pockets. Some argue that they have become more authentic than Chinatowns with the greater influx of new immigrants and the insularity of their businesses since the new immigrants and business owners are often of a higher socio-economic class and their businesses serve wider catchment areas.[42] Since they are difficult to navigate to without a vehicle and are less dense, ethnoburban public and semi-public spaces are more insular and less attractive to tourism. Additionally, with the influx of new immigrants with investment capital and higher education, Chinese ethnoburbs adopt more transnational Chinese economic models than local enclave economies in Chinatowns and have more individual political involvement.

42 Li, 'Ethnoburb versus Chinatown'.

Terminology: Diasporic Diversity and Spaces of Belonging

In this thesis, many different Chinese spaces of belonging will be discussed, and they manifest both in areas defined as Chinatowns and ethnoburbs and outside of them. The concepts of enclaves, Chinatowns, and ethnoburbs gives context to the conceptualization of Chinese places in North American cities. With their differing timelines and evolution, we see how Chinatowns and ethnoburbs can create different conditions for spaces of belonging within them. For example, a long-running grocery store in a dense and highly frequented part of a historical Chinatown creates a very different sense of place from a medium-sized transnational chain grocer in a developing ethnoburb, which in turn is very different from a delivery and tech-based Asian grocer in a central, non-enclave inner-city area. These are all run by a diverse range of people within the Chinese diaspora, and cater to their differing locational and economic needs, however they are included within the bounds of this thesis.

3.2. History of Toronto's Chinese Diaspora

With over a million Chinese residents, the GTA today is home to the largest Chinese population in Canada. The history of Chinese migrants making a home in Toronto is important for understanding the urban development of Chinese communities and of Torontonian Chinese culture and experiences. Fig. 3.3 depicts a general timeline of Toronto's Chinese diaspora showing major policy changes, waves of migration, relocation, community spaces, and relationship with mainstream society. Fig. 3.4 shows where the Chinese populations have settled over this time.

Limited Migration and Insularity – 1885-1966

The first documented Chinese person in Toronto was Sam Ching in 1878, who opened a hand laundry and is speculated to have migrated from the United States since he established himself years before the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway.[43] Once the railway was completed, Chinese workers began to migrate east of British Columbia, settling in Toronto in 1885 through the early 1900s, with only a dozen early on and expanding to the hundreds. Early migrants occupied the cheapest districts due to discriminatory housing practices and despite several deliberate redevelopment plans that forced Chinese migrants to relocate, by 1915 Chinese residences and businesses had centralized around Elizabeth Street and expanded through the area known as The Ward bordered by Yonge Street, University Avenue, College Street, and Queen Street.[44]

43 Chan, *The Chinese in Toronto from 1878 : From Outside to inside the Circle*, 41.

44 Chan, 35.

In the Ward, most Chinese people worked in hand laundries alongside several merchants and restaurants. Chinese businesses and associations began using multiple storeys of walk-up buildings for labour and inhabitation, making them the earliest semi-public typologies of Chinese spaces. An article in the Toronto Star from 1905 notes a building with a barber shop on its ground floor, a meeting room on its second floor, and a Chinese shrine on its third floor.[45] Building types, as such, can be seen in Fig. 3.1, a photo taken on the Ward's Elizabeth Street in 1937.

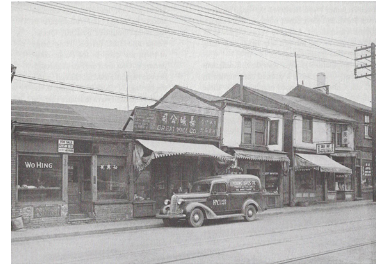
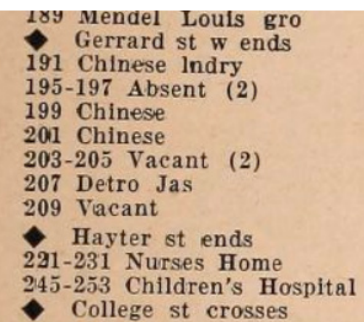


Fig. 3.1 1937, photo of 60-70 Elizabeth Street (City of Toronto Archives)

45 Maureen Murray, 'Success Follows Hardship but Mother Paid the Price', *Toronto Star*, 26 December 1999.



189 Mendel Louis gro
◆ Gerrard st w ends
191 Chinese lndry
195-197 Absent (2)
199 Chinese
201 Chinese
203-205 Vacant (2)
207 Detro Jas
209 Vacant
◆ Hayter st ends
221-231 Nurses Home
245-253 Children's Hospital
◆ College st crosses

Fig. 3.2 1928 city directory of Elizabeth Street. "Chinese" and "Chinese lndry" listed without names. (City of Toronto Archives)

Early fire maps and directories from the city frequently listed Chinese residences and businesses as "Chinese" rather than by name to identify them separately (Fig. 3.2). Chinese people experienced discrimination involving racist rhetoric around hygiene, gambling, opium, and white women's safety, with the government going as far as to pass a law to prevent Chinese men from employing white women in 1914.[46] Despite persistent police and mob raids on Chinatown in addition to racist media that aimed to disperse the community, "the Chinese showed more determination in staying closer to one another for mutual protection and support."[47] This mutual protection and support manifested in clan, regional, and political associations in addition to community organizations that acted as credit unions and communication networks to homes in China.[48]

The majority of the migrants from this time were men from the *Si Yi* (Four Counties) or *San Yi* (Three Counties) in the southwest of Guangdong province, most of which spoke either Taishanese or Cantonese – this was the "most homogeneous of all the waves of Chinese immigration".[49] Some men were able to pay to sponsor their wives and children to join them, and that began the very modest first population of Canadian-born Chinese.

From 1885 through to 1923, a head tax of $50 was levied on any Chinese person who landed in Canada, which at the time was enough capital to purchase two houses in Vancouver. It quickly rose to $500, becoming an exclusionary measure to prevent the entry of Chinese immigrants and their families. For this reason, a "bachelor society" began to develop in Chinatown that consisted of and catered only to men.[50] This was further exacerbated from 1923 to 1947 with the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act that denied entry to all Chinese migrants, with Chinese people being "the only people [that] Canada ever excluded explicitly on the basis of race".[51]

46 Paul Yee, *Chinatown* (Toronto [Ont.]: James Lorimer & Co, 2005), 78.

47 Chan, *The Chinese in Toronto from 1878 : From Outside to inside the Circle*, 39.

48 Richard H. Thompson, *Toronto's Chinatown : The Changing Social Organization of an Ethnic Community*, Immigrant Communities & Ethnic Minorities in the United States & Canada, No. 29 (New York: AMS Press, 1989), 64.

49 Chan, *The Chinese in Toronto from 1878 : From Outside to inside the Circle*, 52.

50 Chan, 67.

51 Chan, 67.

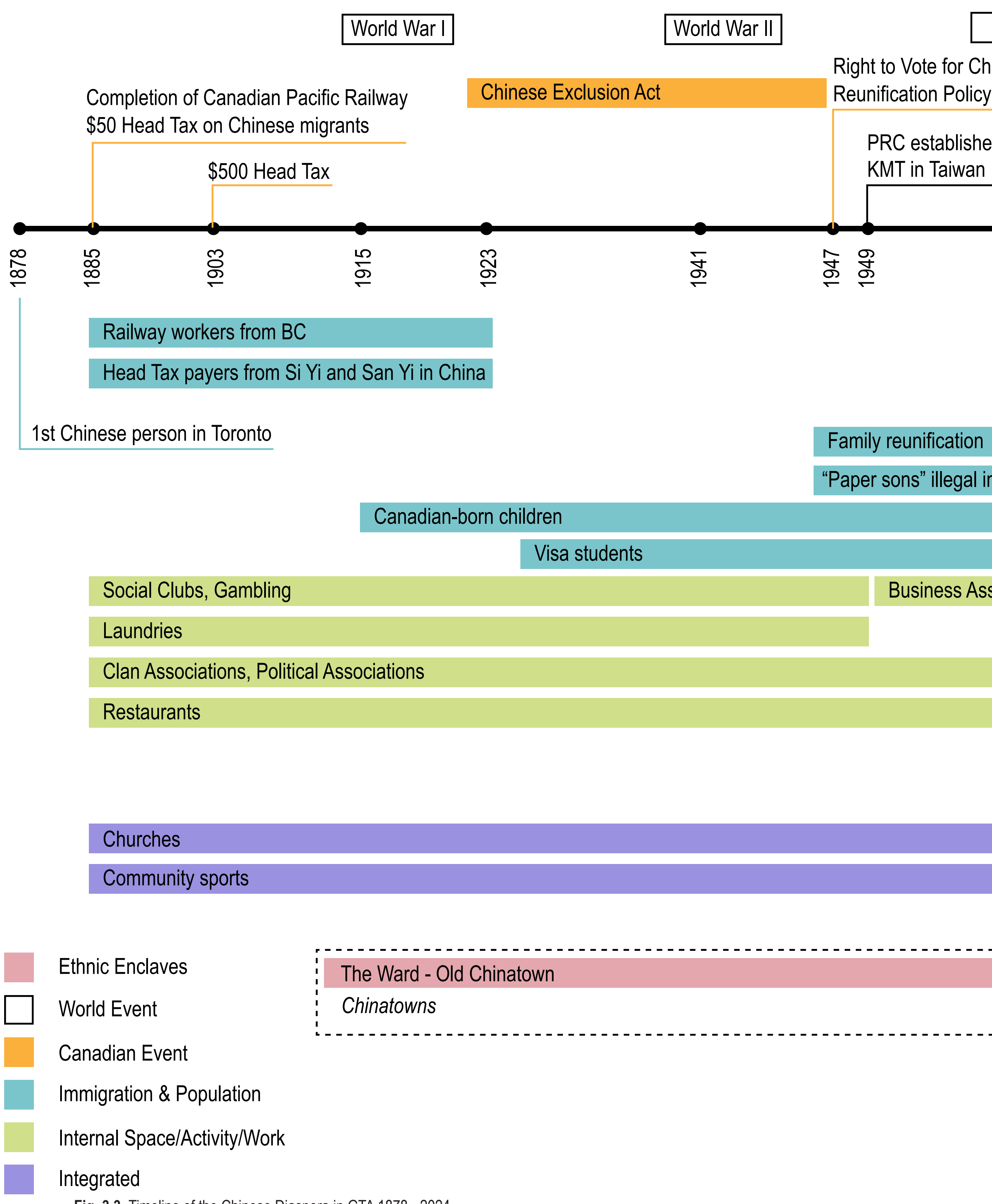
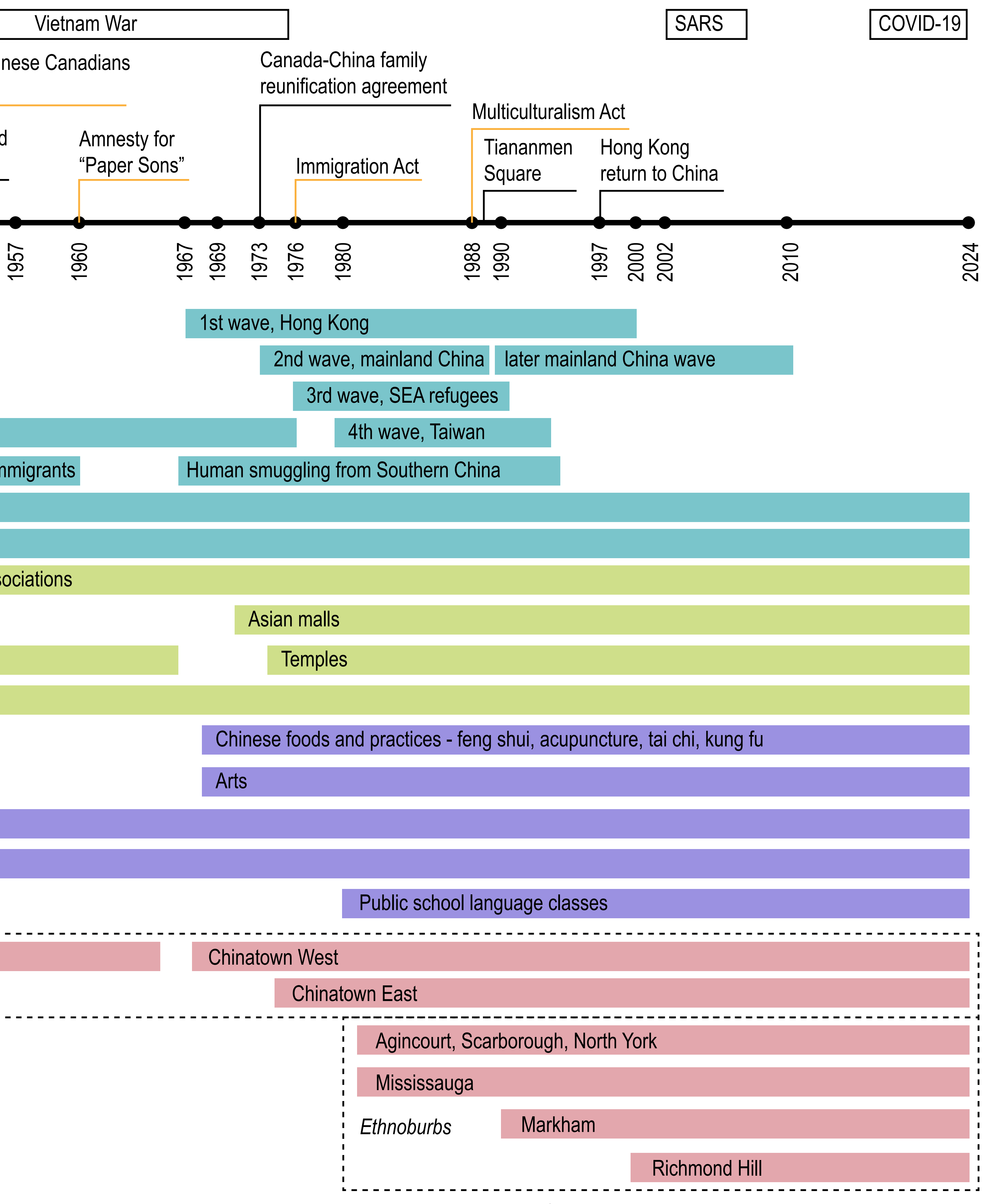


Fig. 3.3 Timeline of the Chinese Diaspora in GTA 1878 - 2024



Vietnam War
nese Canadians
d
Amnesty for
“Paper Sons”
Canada-China family
reunification agreement
Immigration Act
Multiculturalism Act
Tiananmen
Square
Hong Kong
return to China
SARS
COVID-19
1957
1960
1967
1969
1973
1976
1980
1988
1990
1997
2000
2002
2010
2024
1st wave, Hong Kong
2nd wave, mainland China
later mainland China wave
3rd wave, SEA refugees
4th wave, Taiwan
mmigrants
Human smuggling from Southern China
sociations
Asian malls
Temples
Chinese foods and practices - feng shui, acupuncture, tai chi, kung fu
Arts
Public school language classes
Chinatown West
Chinatown East
Agincourt, Scarborough, North York
Mississauga
Ethnoburbs
Markham
Richmond Hill

Fig. 3.4 Map of the settlement of the Chinese Diaspora in GTA 1878 - 2024

Markham
ond Hill
Agincourt
Scarborough
th York
Chinatown
East
Old
Chinatown
1878 - 1950s
old Chinatown
1950s - 1970s
new Chinatowns
1970s - 1990s
early ethnoburbs
1990s - 2020s
late ethnoburbs

Sentiments began to change in the Canadian public after the events at Pearl Harbour and Canada declared war with Japan, giving Chinese-Canadians a way to fight for both countries and work towards voting rights.[52] With this new solidarity, the Exclusion Act was finally repealed in 1947 and Chinese-Canadians were given the right to vote through activism from both within and outside of the community. This prompted efforts towards the reunification of families and many were able to bring their wives and children to Canada. The reunification policy also created a method for illegal immigration from home villages with the forgery of parentage, and these young men were called “paper sons”.[53]

52 Chan, 84–85.

53 Chan, 98.

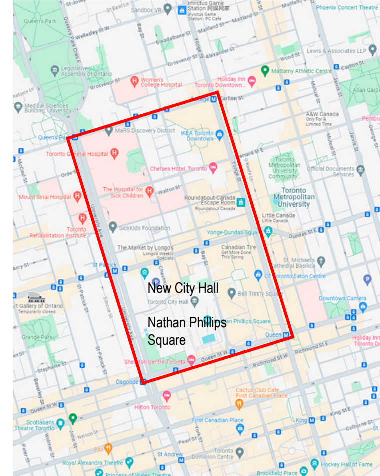


Fig. 3.5 Location of The Ward on 2024 map.

With the lack of new immigrants and low numbers of families during the exclusionary period, Old Chinatown went into decline and was considered a blighted slum. It was only beginning to be revitalized by the reunification efforts when The Ward was slated for urban renewal. This ultimately culminated in the destruction of two-thirds of Old Chinatown by 1965 with the completion of new City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square.[54] The Ward’s old borders are depicted in Fig. 3.5.

54 Yee, *Chinatown*, 81–82.

Open Migration and New Permeability – 1967-1980s

In 1967, sweeping changes to Canada’s immigration policy became the basis of today’s points and immigrant class system, with the evaluation process no longer involving skin colour and national origin. This was solidified in the 1976 Immigration Act where 4 classes of immigrants (refugees, families, assisted relatives, independent immigrants) were established with a quota system for various categories that was adjusted annually.[55] With this, Chinese immigrants were as eligible as any other immigrants, and this led to several waves of immigration.

55 Chan, *The Chinese in Toronto from 1878 : From Outside to inside the Circle*, 125.

The first wave came from Hong Kong and started in 1967, with successful, educated professionals and businesspeople accustomed to British cultural norms and fluent in English. The second wave came from mainland China after Canada recognized the People’s Republic of China and negotiated a family reunification agreement in 1973, furthered after Mao Zedong’s death in 1976 and his successor Deng Xiaoping’s capitalist stance. The third wave came from Southeast Asia after the Vietnam war with ethnic Chinese populations fleeing from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos and entering as refugees. The

fourth wave came from Taiwan after the US broke off diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 1979 and recognized the PRC, with many fearing political instability and war. While these waves were ongoing, there were also visa students mostly from middle-income and wealthy families in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia that sought education in Canada, many of whom stayed. Caribbean Chinese immigrants, mostly of Hakka people, also immigrated to Canada in the 1970s. Finally, there were the Canadian-born Chinese with struggles with identity in Canadian society and mutual tension with new immigrants due to language and cultural barriers.[56]

56 Chan, 126–31. In addition, the 1960s policy allowing for amnesty for "paper son" illegal immigrants was established.

What resulted was a diverse Chinese diaspora in Toronto, in homeland, language, culture, socio-economic class, and politics. With this and the destruction of most of Old Chinatown, many Chinese immigrants settled westward along Dundas Street to Spadina Avenue which had high commercial rent but low residential prices; between 1971-1978, the area became 90% populated by Chinese people after the Jewish population moved away.[57] This area became known as Chinatown West, characterized by its split-level and walk-up building typologies adjacent to single-family houses on side streets, with new multi-storey developments headed by entrepreneurs from Hong Kong investing in building.

57 Thompson, *Toronto's Chinatown : The Changing Social Organization of an Ethnic Community*, 195.

Around the same time, a Chinese community was developing around Broadview and Gerrard across the Don River in a working-class district with plentiful public amenities and lower rent. The establishment of this Chinatown East was led by community members such as real estate broker, Edward Hou, "who envisioned this neighbourhood for the Chinese".[58]

58 Chan, *The Chinese in Toronto from 1878 : From Outside to inside the Circle*, 142.

After 1967, Chinese culture became much more accepted, particularly after 1972 when US President Nixon visited Beijing and was treated to a sumptuous nine-course dinner. Restaurants became the primary Chinese cultural business, but other Chinese goods and practices such as *feng shui*, acupuncture, and *kung fu* began to garner wide interest outside of the Chinese community. Canada's 1971 national policy on multiculturalism reflects these changes. Within the community, community centers, political groups, professional and business organizations, and voluntary care organizations proliferated alongside greater pushes for cultural education and community activism.

Increasing Diversity and Integration – 1980s-2024

In the 1980s, ethnoburbs began to form in the Greater Toronto Area, starting in the East in Agincourt, Scarborough that extended upwards into North York and simultaneously in the West in Mississauga. This was followed swiftly by the development of the Markham and Richmond Hill ethnoburbs. These areas were predominantly populated by Chinese immigrants who had accumulated wealth since arrival and by new immigrants of higher socio-economic class who could afford more expensive housing and had professional and tech jobs that allowed them to work outside of the city. At the same time, with the imminent return of Hong Kong to China in 1997, business immigrants from Hong Kong injected investment money into the community and began the development of large malls, businesses, and care facilities.

Fig. 3.6 1980 photo of China Court entrance. Self-orientalization is evident.

Ethnoburbs had more land and less density, allowing for the large-scale development of Chinese-oriented malls, plazas, and other buildings. Built in this manner were landmark malls Agincourt's Dragon Centre, Chinatown West's China Court (and Chinatown Centre that replaced it, see Fig. 3.6 and Fig. 3.7), and Markham's Market Village and Pacific Mall. These Asian malls were contentious because of their high density which caused traffic congestion and parking issues in their vicinity, and became targets of anti-Asian hate.[59]

Fig. 3.7 2024 photo of Chinatown Centre Mall. Glass walls and modern style.

59 Chan, 156–58.

The new and existing Chinese ethnic enclaves developed distinctive settlement patterns: Chinatown West had people from Southern mainland China, Chinatown East from Vietnam, Agincourt from Hong Kong, and North York, Markham, and Richmond Hill from Taiwan and mainland China.[60] This is largely attributed to socio-economic class and language, cultural, and political differences, but many lines are blurred. In the 2010s, immigration has slowed down with much longer waiting lists, and the most significant influx are of Visa students who primarily settle in Chinese areas and whose presence has been very lucrative for the Canadian economy.

60 Lucia Lo and Shuguang Wang, 'Settlement Patterns of Toronto's Chinese Immigrants: Convergence or Divergence?', *Canadian Journal of Regional Science* 20, no. 1–2 (Spring-Summer 1997).

Over the course of the last few decades, Chinese-Canadian culture has rapidly expanded with some products and practices becoming recognized in mainstream society such as Chinese cooking ingredients, herbal medicine, and *tai chi*. Artists of many disciplines both immigrant and Canadian-born have become successful and acclaimed, and multiple visual artists have contributed to public art for Chinatowns and ethnoburbs. By no means is anti-Chinese racism is gone, as was proven by the aggression towards Chinese people during the mass panic concerning SARS and COVID-19. However, with the repeal of discriminatory policies in Canada and increased visibility and agency of the Chinese diaspora in Canada, the idea of Chinese belonging in Toronto has become more positive and filled with possibility than before.

4. Spaces and Scales of Belonging

4.1 Incidental Spaces of Belonging

Music from your childhood drones in the background, scents of spices often used by your grandmother waft toward your nose, exclamations and greetings that you used to hear everyday surround you, conversations of strangers in familiar tongues pass you by. Vendors and how they organize their wares are easy to navigate and you know where to find just what you need and that it will be there. There are advertisements and signs for the activities you used to participate in with friends and the types of shops and restaurants that you visited in your homeland. You can walk anywhere, read anything, ask anyone questions in your own language, and find what you need without leaving this sphere. You don't need to uproot everything you know, learn a new language, or adjust to fully new customs to be able to live here. This place isn't home, but it reminds you of it. The people here aren't your family – they might not be from your village, your province, your ethnic group, or your nation – but this place reminds them of home too.

For early Chinese migrants to Toronto, and indeed many migrants anywhere, there was a need to form spaces and community with people of similar cultural backgrounds and who speak a shared language. In the absence of familiar land, landscape, and people, those that come often recreate their own familiarity in a way that can be shared with others of similar background, reminiscent of a place where they all belonged. As explained in Chapter 3, the Chinese diaspora in Toronto has historically coalesced into ethnic enclaves in Chinatowns due to both the need for mutual support and the racial hostility of the majority population of Toronto. Faced with open hostility towards early migrants and negative but slowly changing sentiments throughout the 20th century, various waves of Chinese migrants of increasingly diverse heritage, homeland, political leaning, and economic status built both the physical and social infrastructure for spaces of belonging in which newcomers and existing residents have come to find familiarity and security. While there certainly were and are spaces and organizations created for the main purpose of mutual support, the sense of shared identity and community investment is also clear in spaces that were not created for that purpose.

In *Place and Placelessness*, Edward Relph says that "incidental insideness" or "uncommitted insideness is the basis for placelessness."[1] I argue that this is not necessarily true, as while "insideness" can occur incidentally, that does not mean that the spaces are uncommitted to. In fact, it is incidental *because* there is a need for place – consciously or unconsciously – to which people commit, thus creating place.

1 Relph, *Place and Placelessness.*

I define incidental spaces of belonging as spaces that were created or used for purposes other than explicitly supporting the Chinese community or retaining culture. This means spaces that primarily have alternate goals such as economic gain or leisure – therefore most of the spaces explored in this thesis are businesses, public amenities, and spaces of leisure. These spatial conditions fulfill daily needs, connections to homeland, occupation, investment, community activity, and ritual, precisely because intergenerational memory offers familiarity, kinship, and knowledge that creates a sense of belonging. As illustrated in Fig. 4.1, these spaces occur incidentally due to needs and are nurtured by memory and usage. For these spaces, the basis of their spatial quality of belonging does not

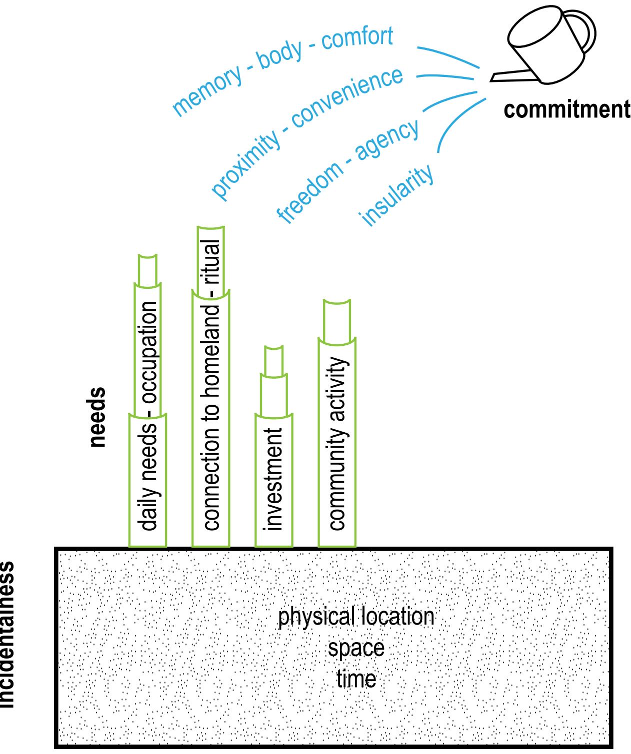


Fig. 4.1 Diagram showing how commitment solidifies space of belonging that appear through need in incidental space.

begin with the purpose of creating that sense of belonging, but through how they are enlivened by lived experience and relational actions dependent on who owns them, how they physically manifest, what they do, and who they serve. And as these various diasporic spaces establish themselves, their "insideness" is committed to and strengthened through operation and use that ultimately forms a place of collective belonging.

I refer to them collectively as "spaces" and not "places" because not all of them are necessarily grounded enough to be places. Such incidental spaces that are businesses and organizations discussed in this thesis exemplify, in some ways, the concept of "ethnic retail" as is discussed by urban planner Zhixi Cecilia Zhuang and geographer Tony Hernández. They argue that ethnic retail comprises "urban markets developed to cater to ethno-cultural needs" that "can serve as ports of entry for new immigrants, neighbourhood centres providing for daily ethnic needs, regional ethnic centres or tourist attractions."[2] Zhuang and Hernández discuss how the character of different ethnic retail areas and the communities that own and patronize them are changing through trends of "ethnic consumption".[3] Additionally, ethnic retail models differ from the inner city and ethnoburbs due to their differing catchment areas, demographics, and accessibility.

An example of an incidental spaces of belonging that can be commonly encountered are extensions of retail space onto Chinatown sidewalks. These extensions are made up of various physical elements such as canopies, produce displays, and shipping boxes, which collectively create a space in front of the retail interior that is visible and accessible on the street but is distinct from it. The general intention behind these extensions is to use the sidewalk to maximize space, both retail and storage. However, because the space is distinct from the street and understood to be space for the Chinese community, often people who are not patrons of the store but friends with their owners or patrons may stop by to chat and spend time together, thereby making them incidentally spaces of belonging.

A more insular example of an incidental space of belonging is a Chinese shipping provider storefront. These are usually isolated and unobtrusive storefronts, in industrial areas or hidden away in a mall or side street because they serve a niche customer base in contrast to retail consumables and entertainment. These spaces provide a shipping service in Chinese that is familiar with various shipping venues to China and

2 Zhixi Cecilia Zhuang and Tony Hernández, *The Changing Character of Ethnic Retail: Case Studies within the GTA*, Research Report / Centre for the Study of Commerical Activity ; 2009-09 (Toronto: Ryerson University, Centre for the Study of Commercial Activity, 2009), 7.

3 Zhuang and Hernández, 6.

surrounding countries, and that is a specific ethno-cultural need. Since these spaces are catered entirely to the Chinese diaspora because of their direct connection to homelands and operate mainly in Chinese dialects, they are very insular and anyone who patronizes them can recognize values in common with each other. As such, these spaces become part of a sphere of belonging.

An example of spaces that support “ethnic consumption” and are incidentally spaces of belonging are the ever-growing number of bubble tea shops. Generally, the growth of these tea shops is caused by the increasing commercialization of East Asian goods and increasing interest in street food and East Asian aesthetics. This means that while bubble tea shops may have previously been completely operated and patronized by the Chinese diaspora, they have now become spaces that provide ethnic goods and services to everyone, including those outside of the original ethnic community. By integrating both the Chinese diaspora and those interested in Chinese goods and services in a space that specifically uses Chinese imagery, these spaces can incidentally define belonging in a new diasporic way.

A more extensive example of incidental spaces are atriums inside Chinese malls. These malls centralize ethnic retail and services as well as have low barriers of start-up for small Chinese businesses. However, they also have shared space in the atrium that are funded collectively, and often these atriums are used to host events and temporary stalls or buskers. Being in the middle of a Chinese mall, these spaces are often rather inaccessible for those outside of the Chinese diaspora, and the events and decor are all catered to Chinese diaspora. This creates familiarity for those who have memories of similar malls in their homelands or diasporic malls here which makes them incidental spaces of belonging.

The complexities of ethnic retail informs how I understand and discuss diasporic incidental spaces, including the way that these spaces have developed differently from one another, and how they are uniquely influenced by differing business development models based on location and economic capacity. I will focus specifically on Chinese spaces in the GTA, including more typical examples of ethnic retail and other types of space that have been appropriated within the public realm.

Fig. 4.2 and Fig. 4.3 diagram how specific architectural typologies and business specialties have developed in the GTA. As will be discussed further in this chapter and in Chapter 5, top-down business models have quickly developed in recent decades, having flourished greatly in suburban areas and influenced inner city areas as they are gentrified. Some examples of top-down businesses are global bubble tea chain stores, luxury jewelry flagship stores, and transnational grocery franchises. These have been more easily established in suburban areas because of their extensive catchment areas of customers in contrast to local patronage in the inner-city and the larger initial capital of these ventures allows for them to start with large spaces, stock, and staff. The top-down investment also drives the building of Chinese malls, which have been easier to establish in suburban areas as well.

Culturally Impermeable Spaces

I define culturally impermeable spaces as those that have been built by Chinese immigrants to fulfill a specific purpose; these are spaces that were either designed to be or have been appropriated as culturally familiar, understandable, and navigable for people with shared cultural background. As seen in Chapter 3, ethnic enclaves are both considered to be landing points or arrival cities for new immigrants that serve as connection to homelands, and to be the regional diaspora. Culturally impermeable spaces build a sphere of belonging in which one can find any service needed with the cultural means accessible to them, such as language, cultural norms, technology, communication networks, and payment methods.

Key to these impermeable Chinese spaces is that they do not integrate into greater Toronto culture and society and, as such, are typically opaque to those external to the Chinese community. While it is true that most signs and businesses in Toronto Chinatowns have supplemental English text as is required and there is no refusal of service to those who do not speak any Chinese dialect or have Chinese lineage, the cultural signifiers and direct connections to China and other homelands are constant presences that disallow “outsiders” the same cultural access to place. To maintain the sphere of belonging, these spaces operate in Chinese as exclusively as they can and are organized in ways that are reminiscent of Chinese modes of operation, by hosting activities with cultural roots brought over from China that are at times out of context or completely recontextualized in Toronto. For instance, there are many

Fig. 4.2 *Diagram of the location and development of different architectural typologies.*

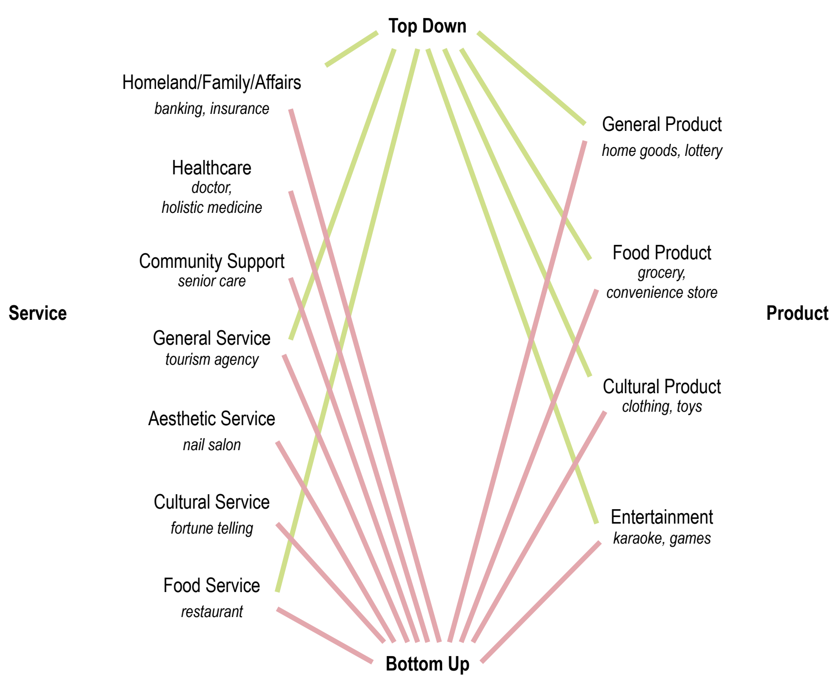


Fig. 4.3 *Diagram of the development of different programs of incidental spaces.*

holidays that have strong ties to Chinese heritage such as Mid-Autumnal Festival that have decorations, festivities, and shared cooking and dining practices. In their displacement from their homelands, these practices are either out of context in Toronto or recontextualized within the impermeable spaces of the Chinese diaspora, such as hosting shared festivities in Chinese malls. In this way, culture is *imported* from homelands to express collective needs and desires in a new place.

Of course, such spaces are not openly hostile towards those external to the Chinese community, but they have little to no interest in opening service to outsiders. These are spaces like Chinese banks, clan associations, travel agencies, and such which operate only in Chinese dialects and for Chinese clientele. This opacity is partially what maintains these spaces as everyone who uses them recognizes each other as those who want to communicate through Chinese language and Chinese with values. This insulates them and allows them to maintain a shared identity and interests, with the community operating within the sphere of belonging without penetrating its boundaries. It is this very insularity that gives the opportunity for authentic expression and autonomy within a cultural context that is familiar to Chinese inhabitants and ties together the need for freedom and agency in space to belong.

Most of these spaces have been formed bottom-up over time. Buildings, streets, and parks have been reappropriated into spaces of belonging in pockets within the city and in Chinatowns. This was a gradual process through the accumulation of individual acquisitions, and many spaces are still maintained at a smaller scale today as was discussed in Chapter 3. However, there are also impermeable spaces informed by large outside investment who saw an opportunity in the market that did not require permeability, and this will be expanded upon in Chapter 5.

As Toronto evolves and immigrant populations evolve with it, the question emerges as to why these culturally impermeable spaces persist to our current day. It is because people need a place that reminds them of home, connects them with home, and is shared with those who also have memories of the same or similar homes. As Sara Ahmed has argued, “the gap between memory and place in the very dislocation of migration allows communities to be formed” and the “community comes to life through the collective act of remembering in the

absence of a common terrain"[4], which is what allows for the disparate peoples within the Chinese diaspora to collectively create impermeable spaces despite their internal differences.

4 Ahmed, 'Home and Away: Narratives of Migration and Estrangement', 344.

Since the Chinese population is so large and can self-sustain, as long as there are people who continue to need or want services that cater specifically to their needs as members of an in-group, these impermeable spaces will continue to thrive. With both the familiarity of people and spaces and the security of knowing that it is not easily accessible to others, it becomes easier to establish a sense of belonging.

Culturally Permeable Spaces

Culturally permeable spaces are less clearly defined than impermeable spaces, although they are characterised by their lack of insularity; this means that the ways they position themselves within the greater context of Chinese cultural presentation and exporting of ethnic consumption differ greatly case by case. Culturally permeable spaces began to form as anti-Chinese sentiments waned in Toronto in the late 1960s when interest in Chinese goods and culture started to arise and permeable spaces in Chinese ethnic enclaves became more established within the city. As Chinese enclaves grew more complex over the late twentieth century, and with the growth of second-generation immigrants in families and new immigrants of varying socio-economic class, they stabilized further. Examples of permeable diasporic spaces are internet gaming cafés, Chinese grocery stores, and Chinese fast food chain restaurants. These are all spaces that are mostly operated by members of the Chinese diaspora and provide Chinese goods and services, but are open to the wider public.

While impermeable spaces import culture, permeable spaces export culture. Permeable spaces are culturally inflected by both the homeland and the arrival city. Chinese street festivals, for instance, welcome everyone and ground themselves in their established place in Toronto, and in doing so create a joint sense of belonging. Permeable spaces have both been developed bottom-up and top-down. Many small, older businesses that developed bottom-up have opted to present themselves differently to export their cultural products as can be seen in many of the storefronts in Chinatown. At the same time, many new businesses and architectural developments with large local and foreign investment identify exporting as a primary goal and so build themselves to be permeable.

An exaggerated example of permeable space can be found in Weeney Lin's thesis *Chinatown as Heterotopia*, which argues that many Chinatowns have become "theme park heterotopias". She examines how the image of Chinatown, and Toronto's Chinatown in particular, was historically vilified and then exoticized, causing many Chinatowns to perform "strategic self-orientalism" exoticizing themselves and their culture for broader market appeal and to create a theme park image of Chinatown.[5] This idea of "strategic self-orientalism" is discussed at length by Greg "Fritz" Umbach and Dan Wishnoff as a strategy that allowed for Chinatowns to strongly establish themselves within a city and profit from tourism and orientalist interests for themselves, but in the meantime has diluted their own Chinese cultural practices in the service of a "Western" image of Chineseness.[6] Lin argues, however, that Toronto's Chinatowns in particular have not become as self-orientalised as many other Chinatowns across North America in part due to the recentness of Old Chinatown's displacement in the late 1960s in comparison to other Chinatowns: that fracturing has caused the new Chinatowns to form more organically and informally, therefore lacking the cohesion and accumulated capital needed to self-orientalise like other Chinatowns.[7]

5 Weeney Lin, 'Chinatown as Heterotopia: Culture and the Crisis of Commodification in Toronto's Chinatown(s)' (Master Thesis, University of Waterloo, 2023), https://uwspace.uwaterloo.ca/handle/10012/19041.

6 Umbach and Wishnoff, 'Strategic Self-Orientalism'.

7 Lin, 'Chinatown as Heterotopia', 108–11.

Although Toronto's Chinatowns have not self-orientalised aesthetically as much as many other Chinatowns have through the overuse of pagodas and reductive Chinese imagery, Chinese symbols are still used to denote Chineseness with murals and street decorations among others. The usage of "Chinese aesthetics" continues to be a prominent way for permeable spaces to market themselves to those exterior to the community. As an example, Toronto's East Chinatown business association pooled money to construct a self-orientalising Chinese archway (*paifang*) in 1998 directly across from the local public library branch and major bridge to proclaim its Chinese presence. Smaller examples are the use of bamboo and panda motifs as well as Chinese characters and lucky cats in retail spaces that are operated mainly in English but maintain a connection to Chinese diaspora and use their Chineseness to differentiate themselves.

Commonalities and Differences

While the categorization of impermeable and permeable is useful for understanding how spaces of belonging address the Chinese diaspora and those outside of it, is complicated by many factors including internal group differences such as homeland, generation, socioeconomic class, and political and financial interests.

Both impermeable and permeable spaces cater to the Chinese diaspora, either wholly or in part, impermeable spaces by importing Chinese culture for comfort, convenience, and familiarity in Toronto and in for permeable spaces, by exporting Chinese culture for discovery, enjoyment, and recreation. Most are owned by or operated by those within the Chinese diaspora, which is where their knowledge of and ability to disseminate Chinese culture largely comes from. In turn, those who occupy these spaces are either part of the diaspora themselves or have an interest in Chinese culture.

Interestingly, while the differences between the top-down and bottom-up businesses are heavily influenced by their available capital, it is not capital but instead the nature of what the business produces and serves and the intention of the owners that determines whether they are more likely to be impermeable or permeable.

There are also generational and class differences which manifest in both impermeable and permeable spaces. It can be seen clearly in the differing development in the various Chinatowns in Toronto and the ethnoburb plazas in the GTA. What I call impermeable spaces that should be accessible to the Chinese diaspora may very well also be impermeable to 2nd or 3rd generation Chinese and mixed-Chinese people due to language and class differences. As well, they are less likely to need impermeable services. In turn, impermeable spaces in ethnoburbs are difficult to access for those who are part of the Chinese diaspora but do not have the economic means to commute there or access expensive services and amenities even if they have the cultural memory and knowledge to navigate them.

The largest difference between impermeable spaces and permeable spaces stems from whether they afford a sense of belonging that is exclusive (impermeable) or inclusive (permeable), or if the factors that provide a sense of belonging have become so diffuse that they erode it. These cannot

necessarily be identified but the following subsection on *scales of belonging* illuminates factors which influence how spaces may afford belonging.

It is critical here to note that while I am discussing the categorization of impermeable and permeable spaces, it is a spectrum rather than a binary. Many impermeable spaces become more permeable over time due to changes in business models, changes mandated by governing bodies such as policies requiring English language signage, and changes in the demographic of the place they are in, among other factors. The next section explains the *scales of belonging* whose modulation creates the sense of impermeability or permeability of a space. Because every space consists of a mixture of the different *scales* that serve to make a space more or less permeable, there is necessarily a spectrum of impermeable to permeable.

Despite the porosity and complexity that I have outlined above, the categorization of spaces as impermeable and permeable is valuable in understanding how a sense of belonging is established for the spaces as they exist now. Ultimately, what defines impermeable and permeable spaces is how inclusive of a sense of belonging they create, with impermeable spaces including the Chinese diaspora despite internal differences, and permeable spaces both including more groups and possibly creating a different Canadian sense of belonging in the process.

4.2 Scales of Belonging

I interpret this thesis through *scales of belonging* that are comprised of the physical, social, and temporal dimensions of space.

These *scales* are analogous to the "weapons" indexed in *The Arsenal of Exclusion and Inclusion* where the American city is broken into constitutive parts that they call "weapons" – tools that serve to include and/or exclude people: physical elements such as elevators, curb cuts, and signs, and non-physical elements such as policies.[8] These "weapons" are analyzed through individual experience cases, comprehensive histories of usage, and drawings.

8 Armborst et al., *The Arsenal of Exclusion & Inclusion*.

I conceive of the *scales of belonging* as the tools and methods through which belonging is established in space, in that they can either cause a space to be accessible or inaccessible or to trigger cultural memory or not. For example, a space within a suburban mall is much less accessible than a space on the side of a walkable street in the city, and the layout of the suburban mall may recall similar malls in a homeland to someone who recognizes it. Another instance is the usage of language in a space – are the signs and services in English or solely in Chinese? This determines how accessible and navigable the space is for the Chinese diaspora. In addition, there are unseen networks of communication and temporary activities facilitated by those networks – how exclusive are these networks and how does one gain access to the spatial activities they facilitate? These factors all work together to create a sense of belonging (or not) through memory and agency, and it is the modulation of these *scales* that differentiates impermeable and permeable spaces. In *Diasporic Agencies*, Nishat Awan argues that "[i]ntimate relations transcend the boundaries of sequential scale so that connections across distances often 'jump' scales through relations based on a shared culture, language, ideas etc." and that re-examining scale in this way is not "scalelessness" but reconceptualizing the folding and nesting of scales.[9]

9 Awan, *Diasporic Agencies : Mapping the City Otherwise*, 21.

The *scales of belonging* that I propose address this folding and nesting, where it is the *scales* with social dimensions that most affect belonging. Fig. 4.4 represents what dimensions of space each scale involves. The architectural *scale* is physical as it only concerns the built environment and location. The spatial planning *scale* is both physical and temporal because it involves the physical layout of spaces but it is smaller and less permanent than the architectural scale. The sign and language *scale* is physical, temporal, and social because it manifests physically through signage and décor but are frequently changed and are very socially significant. The networks scale is social and temporal because it does not have a perceptible physical dimension, but impacts spaces through influencing how people use the space according to their networks.

A sense of belonging is inherently tied to memory and thus to the perception of authenticity and cultural agency. Therefore, the *scales* of architecture, spatial planning, symbols and language, and networks and activities are subjects of my analysis. This next section will explore each of these *scales* in how they manifest in spaces and affect permeability through analytical drawing and examples.

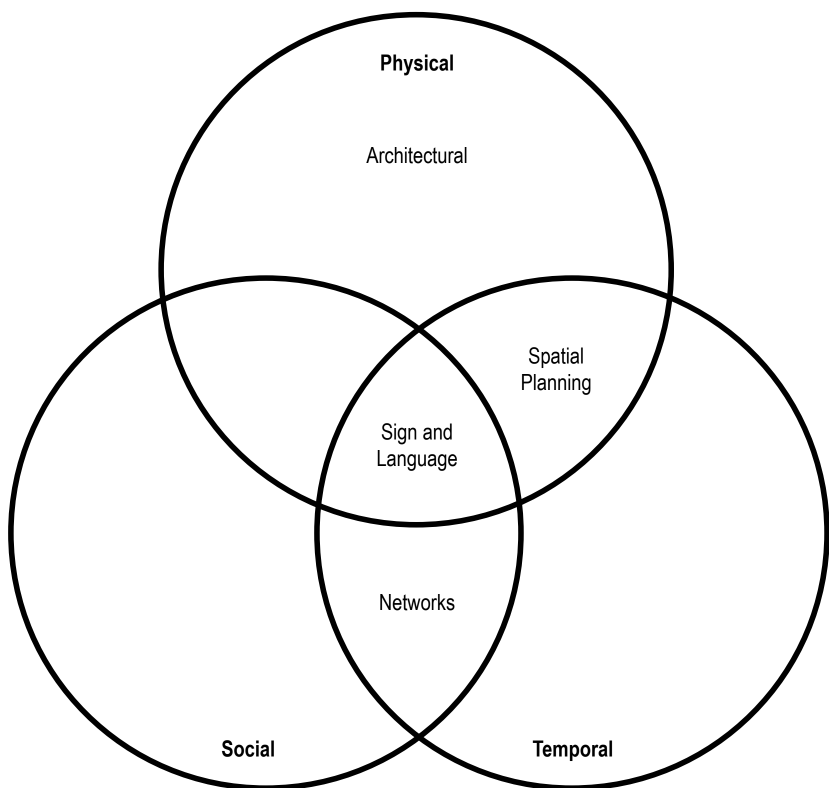


Fig. 4.4 Venn diagram showing how some spaces are exclusively impermeable and some can be impermeable or permeable.

Fig. 4.5 Photo of street strip in Chinatown West.

Fig. 4.6 Photo of walk- up in Chinatown West.

Architecture

The architectural *scale* refers to the large-scale built forms within which spaces of belonging occur. It encompasses the exterior, the relationship to the street, and the overall architectural structure. Three typologies central to Toronto's Chinese diaspora are the split-level and walk-up on the street strip, the plaza, and the condominium mall. Examples of these buildings can be seen in Fig. 4.5, Fig. 4.8, and Fig. 4.11. How spaces within these buildings allow for specific types of experiences and interfaces is the subject of this analysis, particularly whether or not they are accessible to Chinese diaspora and those external to it.

The Street Strip

Firstly, the oldest typology in our analysis is the street strip in Toronto Chinatowns, which first emerged as a type in The Ward at the earliest advent of Toronto's Chinatowns in the early 1900s as discussed in Chapter 3. The dominant building types of the street strip are the split level and the two-storey walk-up qualities. Both of these typologies have access to the street and share usage of the sidewalk space in front of them as seen in Fig. 4.7. The two-storey walk-up was converted from a building type with a lower storefront and upper residence to a type where both levels are operated as retail spaces, which means that the second storey space has much less access to the street and is often indicated with signage as seen in Fig. 4.6. By the nature of the street strip being in the inner city with immediate access to transit and wide sidewalks, the spaces that occupy them are easily accessible and therefore can become permeable more easily. However, because the spaces are so accessible, they are also more prone to housing daily and general needs for local populations, which include more impermeable spaces as observed in *The Changing Character of Ethnic Retail.*[10]

10 Zhuang and Hernández, *The Changing Character of Ethnic Retail: Case Studies within the GTA*.

Fig. 4.7 Photo of split-level in Chinatown West

The Plaza

The plaza is more commonly seen in suburban areas. Plazas typically enclose a parking lot and partially face towards a street, with units side-by-side and connected by sidewalks as demonstrated by the Times Square plaza in Richmond Hill seen in Fig. 4.8. The street-facing sides of these plazas are sometimes directly accessible by sidewalks. These plaza units are typically one-storey and have ample space to display what they wish to, although because they often share an exterior corridor or shading device, the storefront may be split up between the actual exterior wall and the signage above the shading device as seen in Fig. 4.9 and Fig. 4.10. As well, plazas have pylon signs which denote the businesses housed in the plaza, although that does not prevent the plaza themselves from being difficult to access. Their suburban character and abundant parking lots often require vehicular access, which is why they service wider catchment areas. While this inaccessibility decreases the permeability of the spaces in the plaza in comparison to the street strip, the wider catchment area of its businesses may increase the likelihood of the spaces being permeable.

Fig. 4.8 View down sidewalk of Times Square plaza..

Fig. 4.9 View down of exterior corridor of suburban plaza.

Fig. 4.10 Front view of exterior corridor of suburban plaza.

Condominium Mall

The condominium mall typology is one that was established in East Asia and has seen rapid adoption in the GTA after the building and success of Pacific Mall.[11] This mall typology has also been described as "strata-titled" where the shop units are individually sold to investors or business owners.[12] The actual architectural character of the malls are variable but they are typically Modernist with clear glass and rectilinear forms (Fig. 4.11), which fits well with the small, modular, and multitudinous interior units. These malls are usually characterized by having multiple stories with a central atrium containing a stage that easily converts to a banquet hall for festivities such as in Fig. 4.12 – something typically seen in similar condo-style market malls in mainland China. The floors are typically rather short at around 2.4m height and while some are taller, the units all have lowered ceilings. For example, Pacific Mall in Markham has a very tall roof with exposed open web steel joists crisscrossing the ceiling but the units are all self-contained with lowered ceilings and internal roofs (Fig. 4.13). Generally, the malls are laid out with several main hallways all bracketed by small units framed by

11 Ho Hon Leung and Raymond Lau, 'Making of the Pacific Mall: Chinese Identity and Architecture in Toronto', in *Imagining Globalization : Language, Identities, and Boundaries*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

12 David Chuenyan Lai, 'From Downtown Slums to Suburban Malls: Chinese Migration and Settlement in Canada', in *The Chinese Diaspora : Space, Place, Mobility, and Identity*, The Why of Where. (Lanham, Md. ; Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 311–36.

glass walls and separated from each other by thin partition walls. The units themselves range from very compact sizes at around 3m x 6m to typical 6m x 6m spaces with some larger amalgamated units since the partition walls are easy to add and remove. The storefronts of these units can be seen in Fig. 4.14. Because these malls are so condensed and insular, it is difficult for someone not looking for a particular product or service to know what is inside and the lack of connection to the street makes the spaces inside difficult to access. This lack of access decreases permeability; however, these malls are similar to plazas in that they also have larger catchment areas and sometimes become landmarks of their own which attract those exterior to the Chinese diaspora.

Spatial Planning

Spatial planning as a *scale* of belonging refers to the aspects of spatial design and orientation that are smaller, such as internal spatial layouts of food courts and extensions of retail space onto sidewalks. Spaces are often occupied, divided, and guided by smaller interfaces such as furniture and displays, among other strategies. For instance, the interior of a Chinese medicine store is lined with and divided by rows of boxes and barrels full of dried herbal medicine and also oriented towards an often long counter – this layout is optimized for storage but is also difficult to navigate without prior knowledge of how to interact with the products or vendor. At this scale, it becomes clearer as to when the use of space benefits from an existing cultural knowledge of how to navigate them and when they cater to modern consumer trends. Since much of the permeability of spatial planning relies heavily on other factors, this *scale* mainly gives context to the other two *scales* following this section. What will be analyzed here are primarily the different spatial planning situations, and not typologies as with the architectural *scale*. In this case, I analyze the dining and gathering spaces, vending and service spaces, and stalls and other extensions of space, both interior and exterior.

Fig. 4.11 Photo of Pacific Mall, a condominium mall in Markham.

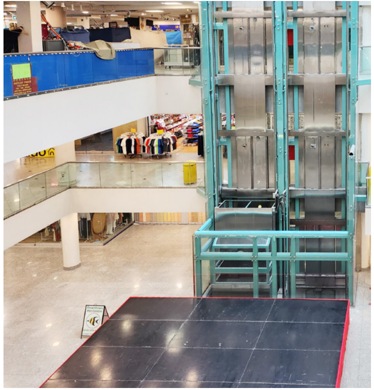


Fig. 4.12 Interior of a mall atrium with a stage.

Fig. 4.13 Photo of interior of Pacific Mall.

Fig. 4.14 Interior storefronts of a mall.

Dining and gathering spaces

Dining and gathering spaces common to Chinese diasporic spaces include banquet halls, food courts, bakeries, and exterior-window-only services. The banquet hall typology, with its embedded history of shared dining, is a typical Chinese space. Like banquet halls, many Chinese food courts also have a stage setup adjoining them. Fig. 4.15 shows a food court oriented towards a stage and large open area in front of it for performance and display. Other cases of food spaces navigable with cultural memory are Chinese bakeries along with roast and preserves vendors. These spaces are often oriented with self-serve areas and dining areas – with payment either at the back or in the front – and operate similarly to food courts. Other gathering spaces include the appropriation of streets and parks for activities such as festivals and physical hobbies, and they are organized through temporary furniture and implied spatial hierarchy through the placement of small items. All of these spaces can be difficult to navigate without knowing the social rules beforehand if signage is sparse, making the spaces more impermeable.

Fig. 4.15 Dining area of First Markham Place, converts to a stage.

Vending and service spaces

Vending and service spaces are similarly more and less penetrable due to cultural knowledge, with specific spaces being analyzed in more detail in Chapter 5. Oftentimes, Chinese grocery stores and Chinese medicine stores assume their customers have a base knowledge of products and how to either access the products themselves or how to ask the vendors to acquire them. In Fig. 4.16, the Chinese medicine is both accessible in large boxes and barrels close to table-level and is stored in large overhead shelves including those behind a service counter. The aisles are narrow and contain shelves with more product. Someone with existing knowledge of the space knows that they may take a plastic bag and scoop some product from the barrels if there are bags provided and otherwise to give a list of products to the vendor for them to acquire. This need for an existing understanding causes the space to be more impermeable. As well, there are other interior spatial factors that may add to a sense of belonging such as using partitions and mirrors to redirect energy and sightlines as is typical with *feng shui* or providing comfortable seating in waiting areas of service interiors.

Fig. 4.16 Chinese medicine store in a mall.

Fig. 4.17 Clothing rack outside of store, inside a condo mall.

Fig. 4.18 Exterior produce of a grocery on a street strip.

Stalls and extended spaces

Stalls and extended spaces are small-scale spatial interventions that are not necessarily tied to an interior space and they affect the character of streetscapes and mall interiors significantly. Stalls can be set up in mall atriums and hallways as seen in Fig. 4.17 as well as on exterior streets. These break up larger spaces and use the circulation space for their business while still mostly bypassing most walking traffic. The stalls themselves are very accessible and commonly seen all over the city, not only in Chinese spaces, and are formalized as kiosks in standard malls. This means that the way the stalls are used, rather than their presence by itself, is what affects permeability. As well, extended spaces include the spill-out of businesses and decorations onto circulation space with shipping boxes, produce, and other wares displayed in front of a space both to attract customers and to maximize space. This can be seen in Fig. 4.18 where produce is displayed on top of and near closed boxes and are used to both store extra product and to allow customers access to handle products. Since this is common practice in China, it is a familiar way of interacting with extensions into space and may contribute to one's sense of belonging.

Sign and Language

I consider the use of sign and language a *scale of belonging* that composes much of the aesthetics of Chinese spaces and in turn reflect what people recognize and do not recognize to belong. Sign in this case means signifiers of Chinese culture through décor, iconography, and ambiance, while language very directly means how Chinese and English language are used in signage and other communication. I argue that out of all the *scales*, this one is the most critical as to whether a space is impermeable or permeable because of the clear visual and sensory recognition of symbols and the barrier of language differences. What will be discussed here are large-scale symbols, small-scale symbols, and language.

Fig. 4.19 Paifang in Chinatown East.

Large-scale signs

Large-scale symbols and signs are those that often require large community investment and can be self-orientalising or cultural preservation projects. These include murals, self-orientalising building additions, and newly built structures. These are especially prevalent in the inner-city Chinatowns where they are used to both assert identity and attract tourism.[13] This can be seen in East Chinatown with the building of the Chinatown East Archway and the addition of parking lot murals as seen in Fig. 4.19 and Fig. 4.20. In this way, large-scale symbols tend to create more permeability because they are largely made for the purpose of attracting those exterior to the Chinese diaspora and proclaiming cultural identity, as those within it would know the spaces to be Chinese even without them because of small-scale symbols, signs, and language.

Fig. 4.20 Mural on street in Chinatown West.

13 Umbach and Wishnoff, 'Strategic Self-Orientalism'.

Small-scale signs

Small-scale signification on the other hand can be implemented individually or through smaller interventions. These include small desktop décor, corridor-spanning decorations, interior planters, incense, and ambient music among others. As seen in Fig. 4.21, the symbols can be obvious and used to create a festive atmosphere while in Fig. 4.22, the symbols are used to denote the presence of Chinese community without fully committing to an overall decoration scheme. Other non-visual symbols such incense and Chinese music also help to create an ambiance that recalls similar spaces in China. As referenced off-hand by Arlene Chan to indicate Chinese religious

Fig. 4.21 Restaurant decorations for Chinese New Year.

practices continuing, semi-public spaces such as restaurants and grocery stores "dedicate shelf space for shrines" with "incense and paper money."[14] While some of these symbols individually can be seen in spaces outside of Chinese spaces of belonging such as potted bamboo plants or lucky cats, it is their combined influence that causes a space to feel more immersed in Chinese culture and possibly more impermeable depending on whether these cultural symbols are used as décor or marketing.

14 Chan, *The Chinese in Toronto from 1878 : From Outside to inside the Circle*, 188.

Fig. 4.22 Small paper decorations on elevator wall.

Language

As for language, it manifests predominantly in signage and verbal communication. The types of signage differ very greatly with hand-written signs, LED displays, mono-lingual product labels, and dual-lingual management signs. Fig. 4.23 shows a store with signs using only Chinese text, much of which is handwritten, while Fig. 4.24 shows a parking sign that has mandatory English signage as traffic management and smaller Chinese text explaining the English above. With language barriers, mono-lingual spaces identified by both signage and the sole use of Chinese dialects in verbal communication are necessarily impermeable since those without knowledge of Chinese cannot communicate with those in the spaces meaningfully. In turn, dual-lingual spaces are more permeable and adhere to laws around access to information and anti-discriminatory policies. In fact, sometimes the presence of Chinese language in dominantly English spaces is used to reference Chineseness for the identity of the space rather than the actual usage of Chinese such as at fast-food Chinese franchises where the staff mostly do not speak Chinese. Such places are very permeable but often dilute authenticity due to mainly using Chinese as an aesthetic veneer.

Fig. 4.23 Chinese signage in a store in Chinatown West.

Fig. 4.24 Parking sign for plaza in Richmond Hill.

Networks and Activities

Networks and activities are a non-visual *scale of belonging* that is sometimes represented by signage or other signifiers. The networks of Toronto's Chinese diaspora consist of real but non-physical things such as communication networks, community payment systems, and internal commerce, logistics, and delivery systems. Networks are sometimes shown to exist through signs and icons but are both local and vast, while activities are local but may have wide-reaching participation. For example, people with access to Chinese communication networks such as social media and local newsletters are more informed about local festivities or hobbyist groups that host events. In this section, I will discuss payment and delivery systems, communication networks, and communal activities.

Fig. 4.25 Payment systems available in store door. Includes Chinese payment systems.

Payment and delivery

Payment and delivery systems are internal to the Chinese diaspora as they require access to networks based in China or in Chinese currency. Such systems are shown in Fig. 4.25 where the signs indicating the accepted payment methods are plastered on its front doors. Delivery signs Fig. 4.26 indicate the delivery apps a restaurant uses. Older systems also exist with the usage of Chinese currency, though today many payment networks such as WeChat Pay require a Chinese bank account and mobile number. For the most part, these payment and delivery networks don't necessarily create impermeability because it is mandatory that businesses accept Canadian currency and along with the Chinese networks, and they also use Visa and other credit card networks. However, they do allow for those who don't want to leave the impermeable sphere of belonging to easily access everything they need within an enclosed Chinese system that is inaccessible to those outside of it. This is even more true when there are special offers such as discounts or specialty items that are only available on these networks.

Fig. 4.26 Food delivery networks available from restaurant door. Four different apps are listed.

Fig. 4.27 Chinese newspaper stands in grocery store entrance.

Fig. 4.28 Stage setup for Chinese New Year banquet.

Communication

Communication networks are the internal networks that those within the Chinese diaspora are able to access but that are largely unknown and inaccessible to those outside of it. These include WeChat groups, QQ groups, and other Chinese social media, along with older forms of communication such as local Chinese newspapers (Fig. 4.27), newsletters, email lists, and online forums. This allows for exclusive internal communication and semi-legal business transactions where home kitchens and home distribution networks proliferate as Chinese-exclusive networks, which are not unlike widespread informal networks of Instagram message-facilitated purchasing or Facebook Marketplace. The difference here is that Chinese communication networks like WeChat require a mobile number and personal reference from people who have WeChat, creating a closed system and impermeability in spaces that rely on word-of-mouth via these communication networks.

Activities

Activities as discussed here are those organized by and for members of the Chinese diaspora, both for large cultural events and for small informal gatherings that involve only a subsect of the community. These include parades and street festivals, as well as internal business events and park activities like square-dancing as will be discussed in Chapter 5. In Fig. 4.28, a stage in the atrium of Pacific Mall is set up for Chinese New Year and while not pictured, there are various stalls surrounding it that sell New Year's goods and traditional clothing. This set up was for a banquet event for Chinese New Year just as is done in many other Chinese malls and was announced to be happening through the previously discussed communication networks. However, since these are public, many large cultural events are widely accessible and permeable to the greater Toronto population. In contrast, there are smaller regular events such as mahjong games, tai chi, and square-dancing in parks, where the spaces are overtaken briefly and on a regular basis. These events may take place in public but the schedule can only be found through the Chinese communication networks and so when the events are on-going, the appropriated spaces are largely impermeable.

5. Impermeable and Permeable Spaces

5.1 Categories of Spaces

This chapter is an overview of different types of spaces based on usage and catalogues how they use the *scales of belonging*. These spaces are either fully impermeable (forming the *Services of Belonging*), or either impermeable or permeable (forming the *Culture of Belonging*) and are also tallied in associated tables from Pacific Mall, Times Square Plaza, Dragon City Mall, Chinatown Centre, the Chinatown BIA, and the North York BIA.[1]

Fig. 5.1 shows how I have categorized different products/services where incidental spaces of belonging appear. Those in the *Services of Belonging* are fully impermeable. Those in the *Culture of Belonging* can be either permeable or impermeable with the shifting of factors from Chapter 4's *scales of belonging*.

What make up the *Services of Belonging* have direct ties to homelands, those that exclusively connect Chinese members of the community to each other, and those that expressly cater to a local Chinese community's daily needs. These spaces are not permeable to the society at large because there is little reason people outside of the Chinese diaspora to seek them

1 Only units with "cultural/ethnic" Chinese content are included. Impermeable refers to businesses with dominant Chinese text and names, while permeable refers to businesses with dominant English text and names. Data is based on physical and online directories of the business areas as of January 2024, however many directories are incomplete and not up-to-date as some businesses do not register for the directories and there is a high turn-over rate of businesses. Same information applies for Tables 5.1 - 5.7.

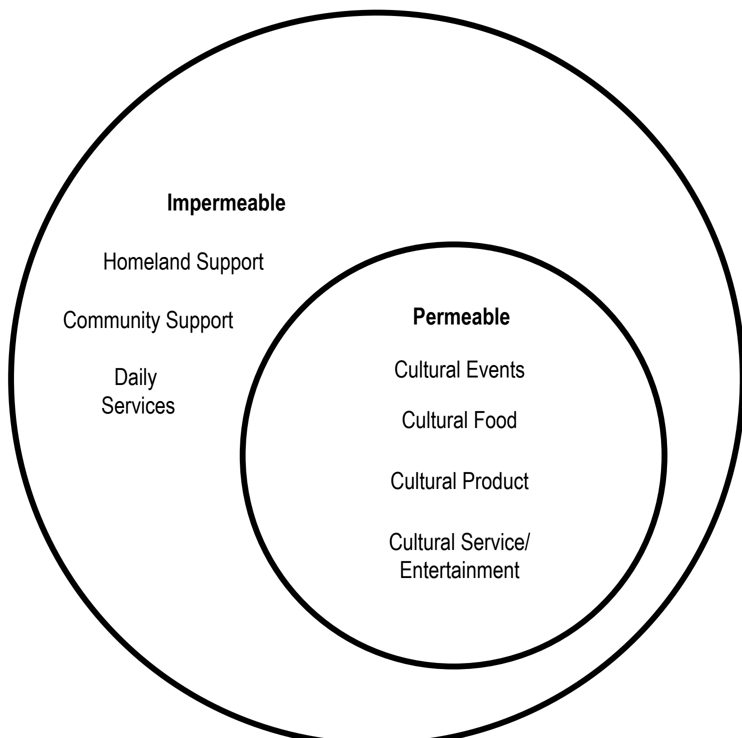


Fig. 5.1 Venn diagram showing how some spaces are exclusively impermeable and some can be impermeable or permeable.

out: there is no need to connect directly to Chinese homelands, there is more access to wider social groups and activities that primarily speak English, and there are more convenient and accessible options for daily needs.

Meanwhile, the *Culture of Belonging* includes everything outside of the strictly impermeable spaces because they can also be permeable. Table 5.1 shows a current percentage breakdown of impermeable and permeable spaces across several different malls and business areas, and we can see that these distributions are variable depending on where they are located – for example, Pacific Mall and Times Square Plaza have similar breakdowns as suburban entities, but Dragon City Mall and Chinatown Centre Mall have vastly different percentages of impermeable and permeable spaces due to their differing size, access, and reputation. Table 5.2 breaks down the percentage of impermeable and permeable spaces within this category, and there is a general trend towards becoming more permeable for many reasons, not the least of which is increasing business opportunity.

These trends have also been observed by Zhuang and Hernández with their data across 2000 - 2009 denoting the increase in businesses that have no "ethnic content", meaning businesses that have no outward ethnic markers in their names and product, and can considered here as permeable spaces.[2] In a separate paper, Zhuang discusses how ethnic entrepreneurs "create and promote the social identity of the retail strips through a variety of business activities and cultural events"[3] similar to how impermeable and permeable spaces interact with each other in close proximity. There is further basis for ethnic retail within the ideas of "ethnic economy" based around middlemen businesses and "ethnic enclave economy" based around segmented labour, which are facilitated by the concentration of ethnic residence and ethnic business.[4]

2 Zhuang and Hernández, *The Changing Character of Ethnic Retail: Case Studies within the GTA*, 35.

3 Zhixi Cecilia Zhuang, 'The Intersection of Place and Ethnic Entrepreneurship: The Role of Ethnic Entrepreneurs in the Making of Three Toronto Neighborhoods', *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 34, no. 1 (2017): 15.

4 Ivan Light et al., 'Beyond the Ethnic Enclave Economy', *Social Problems*, Special Issue on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in America, 41, no. 1 (February 1994): 65–80.

Impermeable and Im/Permeable Breakdown					
Business Area	Impermeable		Im/Permeable		Total
	Units	%	Units	%	
Dragon City Mall	4	17	19	83	23
Chinatown Centre Mall	45	34	87	66	132
Pacific Mall	97	37	167	63	264
Times Square Plaza	43	41	63	59	106
dt Chinatown BIA	73	28	190	72	263
Total Average	262	33	526	67	788

Table 5.1 Impermeable units and im/permeable units total breakdown, according to the venn diagram.

As East Asian products and aesthetics have become more marketable over the last two decades with the importing of media in particular, Chinese cultural products, services, and events have been promoted widely to the general public. The result is that spaces that make up the *Culture of Belonging* have become increasingly permeable to consumers outside the Chinese community. It is widely known that China has been responsible for a large part of the manufacturing of small, everyday goods globally, and while Chinese trading retail shops have existed for a long time, many cultural products have become viewed more favourably in recent years and businesses have adopted more contemporary and permeable marketing strategies in the meantime. Chinese food has also been a significant market for Toronto's population and some have similarly evolved into more permeable forms. Interestingly, because of the increasing affluence of new Chinese immigrants and general migration to the suburbs and interest in expensive inner city real estate, there has also been observable changes to impermeable spaces with the adoption of newer East Asian business practices and communication systems. Because of this, there has also been an increase in new impermeable spaces that require more contemporary Chinese cultural knowledge in this category.

Im/Permeable Breakdown					
Business Area	**Impermeable**		**Im/Permeable**		**Total**
	Units	%	Units	%	
Dragon City Mall	0	0	19	100	19
Chinatown Centre Mall	67	77	20	23	87
Pacific Mall	85	51	82	49	167
Times Square Plaza	34	54	29	46	63
dt Chinatown BIA	100	53	90	47	190
Total Average	286	54	240	46	526

Table 5.2 Impermeable units and permeable units total breakdown, within the Im/Permeable category.

5.2 Services of Belonging

I identify three types of programs that speak to the quality of impermeable spaces in the Chinese diaspora: Homeland Support, Community Support; and Daily Services. These are foundational to diasporic Chinese communities, and they are insular because they concerned with the continued functionality of the community. These are spaces that support the daily lives of the Chinese diaspora and import culture for that support. They use the four *scales of belonging*: architecture, spatial planning, sign and language, and networks and activities, which are present in the narrative writing pertaining to each case. Table 5.3 shows a tally of these spaces across several business areas. Overall, these categories of culturally impermeable spaces are relatively indistinct, difficult to access without prior knowledge, and thus easily ignorable if one is not seeking them out. They house an enclosed community that shares a sense of belonging through these smaller spaces with direct access to each other. These spaces are most important to those that require enclosure and those who have little to no English language ability because they allow for them to live autonomously and comfortably.

Impermeable							
Business Area	**Homeland**		**healthcare**		**general**		**Total**
	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%	
Dragon City Mall	2	50	2	50	0	0	4
Chinatown Centre Mall	12	27	8	18	25	56	45
Pacific Mall	10	10	34	35	53	55	97
Times Square Plaza	19	44	21	49	3	7	43
dt Chinatown BIA	30	41	11	15	32	44	73
Total Average	73	28	76	29	113	43	262

Table 5.3 Impermeable categories breakdown.

Homeland (family & affairs services)

This category pertains to spaces that have direct ties to homelands, meaning that a family or business, etc, using that space necessarily has familial or economic ties back home. These spaces may relate to immigrant services, currency exchanges, and other such affairs.

阳台 *Yang tai (The Porch)*

shipping shop in a mall - impermeable

A typical shipping service that includes both an office discussion area and a shipment and storage area. It is a small, disorganized, and informal area that connects an external place (the host nation) with an internal place (the homeland) through networks. Often it is people shipping vitamins and other Canadian goods to homelands.

I am carrying reusable bags full of vitamin bottles and clothing as I make my way through the halls of the mall. All the units are so small, it would be difficult to know where to go if I haven't been here so often. The shop is in front of me, with signs in Chinese and logos of the international shipping services I might be using - whichever is the cheapest and fastest. I greet the worker there and ask him how mainland customs delays have been. He tells me that it's become more difficult again. I lay out my items one by one, counting the number as he packs them into boxes. He directs me to the computer on the counter, telling me to inventory my items in the labeling program. It is in Simplified Chinese and there are instructions on sticky notes taped to the monitor. I finish inputting my items and hand him a card to put with the vitamins - it's from my daughter, she wants to send something to her grandparents too. I sit down at a table and glance out of the glass walls, listening to the 80s mainland Chinese pop music from my youth playing in the background. As the worker wraps up, I open my WeChat payment QR code and finish our transaction. I message my sister who lives with our parents in China that I will send her the tracking code once it is shipped and head back to my car.

Fig. 5.2 (Right) Shipping service exterior in Pacific Mall.

SF EXPRESS
順豐速運
授权业务合作伙伴
Authorized Business Partner
We Have: ups Service
FedEx Service
DHL Service
CANADA POST POSTES CANADA Service
SF EXPRESS
順豐速運
我们可以从加拿大寄往 全世界多个国家及地区
多条线路可选 多个承运商可选
We have UPS/DHL/FEDEX/
CANADA POST/delivery service.
微信咨询
邮寄包裹！邮寄文件！
邮寄行李！
Providing worldwide delivery service. All price up to 50 percent off ! !
电话咨询：647-877-1827
E66

Community Support

Community support spaces include seniors support, childcare, and others, and so they have significant lounge spaces as well as activity spaces and offices. Healthcare is one branch of community support that operates within the Ontario healthcare system, but with similar waiting and lounge areas as community support spaces.

火炉 *Huo lu (The Hearth)*

support space in a mall - impermeable

A community support space with a lounge, activity space, and offices. It is clean and organized but not sterile, it is a place where people can spend most of their day. There is no reception desk but rather couches and tables to sit together at. Most people know each other but there is always someone to greet newcomers.

I hum quietly to myself as I amble out of the elevator and into the bright third floor hallway – it's always pleasant when the sun's out and I can see out of the windows and over the walk-ups on the other side of the street. "Ah-yi!" I hear the volunteer call to me from within the seniors' centre. She's been working here for a while and is always here on Thursdays after I drop off my grandson at school, I think it's sweet that she calls me "aunty". She takes the pictures on our photo wall when we have events. She comes over and walks with me into the lounge space and I sit down next to my friend who arrived before me – both twenty years ago to this country with her children, and today to this centre. I pour her, the volunteer, and then myself a cup of tea from the pot that they have been brewing as we listen to television news from Beijing about some event or another. "The orchid is doing well, there's a new bud," I say in Cantonese, accent clearly showing that I am from Guangdong, and my friend responds in kind, her own accent clearly from Hong Kong. We sip our tea in pleasant company, waiting for more of our friends to arrive and for the calligraphy class to start in the back room.

Fig. 5.3 Exterior sign of Toronto East Neighbourhood Association.

Fig. 5.4 Sign for a Chinese pharmacy as part of a medical office complex.

Fig. 5.5 (Right) Exterior of a seniors' centre in a mall.

Mon Sheong Community & Volunteer Services Centre
孟嘗社區及義工服務中心
孟嘗會
中區華埠
孟嘗社區及義工
服務中心
Mon Sheong
Community & Volunteer
Services Centre (Downtown)
歡迎參觀
WELCOME
416-506-1520
EXIT

Daily products/service

The purpose of this category is to collect the general needs, goods, and services that are internal to Chinese communities simply because there is a need for them to be impermeable, but otherwise have no cultural significance. This includes convenience stores, electronic repair shops, real estate brokers, and many more. These services are the main contributor to creating an enclosed sphere of belonging because it is through them that people within that sphere can live and act autonomously within it. All these services are available outside of the Chinese community as English-language spaces, so the existence of Chinese-only daily and general services allows for those within the community stay within their sphere of belonging. The main spatial characteristics of these spaces are the usage of Chinese signifiers and networks as well as general usage of smaller spaces as these businesses work to maximize efficiency with their small customer pool.

Fig. 5.7 Real estate service in a plaza.

摊贩 *Tan fan (The Hawker)*

convenience store on street strip - impermeable

A typical Chinese convenience store with street frontage. This is a small and cluttered space, where most people enter and exit quickly except for the owner's friends. It is convenient and filled to the brim with a variety of goods that can be found anywhere but likely not as easily or cheaply – or using the language you speak.

It's getting late, I'm tired, and I need a cigarette. I spot the convenience store down the street, just three blocks in front of home. The lights from the signs blare out at me and I almost catch myself on one of the empty cardboard boxes next to the entrance as I head inside. The cashier nods at me – he's seen me often – and pulls out a pack of my favourite brand off the shelf behind him. As I grab a box of fish sausages from my home province, I catch a glimpse of the handwritten sign in sloppy characters that says the passport photographer will come this Saturday. Taking out some cash to pay him, I confirm with the cashier in Mandarin that the photographer's still coming. I should bring my parents, we need to renew our passports and Chinese visas. He hands me my two items and I'm off without a second glance, I'll be back soon enough.

Fig. 5.6 (Right) Exterior of a convenience store.

小恆彩色沖印中心
PHOTO FINISHING LAB
EASY LIVING DEPOT
TORONTO
加国易购
E Shop
--- Super $hop+Pro Services
1-Stop Shop+Household+Hardware+Electronics+Toner
Beauty+First Aid+Gifts&Watch+Gems+Grocery+Drinks
Books+Stationary+Office &Biz Supply+Direct Sale+LED
www.CAsaving.com
647-909-1678
WESTERN UNION 西联汇款 全球速汇
Home Services
热销中心
Toner Cartridges 打印机墨盒 超低价
Hot DEALS Centre
GIFTS
GEMS &Watch 手表
书籍 Books & Arts
居家服务
#1 HEATING 暖气机
COOLING 冷气机
LED BULB & MORE
FREE UPGRADE
免费更新热水器
退款 Water Heater Tank
郵票 車票 唱片合帶 文具
錄影帶出租 影印圖文傳真
Toner Cartridge
75% off! Yes, we wholesale
only $19.95
328
OPEN
ATM
PRINT COPY SCAN/FAX
WESTERN UNION
CUSTOM PHOTO FINISHING LAB
PASSPORT CITIZEN WEDDING PORTRAIT CUSTOMER ENLARGEMENT
TONER WHOLESALER
1800cartridge.com
Best Deals! Buy Now!
ALL PREMIUM TONER ON SALE NOW
SAVE UP TO 80%
打印机墨盒促销
批发零售 6479091678
ATM INSIDE
全球快速汇款
Money Transfer
HOT DEALS CENTRE
Jewelry & Gifts
(Gems/Silver/Antiques)
玉石/首饰/礼品/古玩
Toner Cartridges
Save up to 75% off !
(HP/CANON/BROTHER/SAMSUNG...)
Electronics/Accessories
Biz & Office Supplies...
IS ON SALE NOW !!!
Watch Batteries
特价更换手表电池
We Sell Glass Bongs...
ATM
PASSPORT CITIZENSHIP
PHOTOS AVAILABLE HERE
Pro Passport Photo
10 minutes
1-800-456-6132
LOTTO 649 $5 MILLION + UP TO
$46.0 MILLION
GOLD BALL
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5.3 Culture of Belonging

I identify four categories of programs that contribute to a *Culture of Belonging* for the Chinese diaspora: Cultural Events, Cultural Food, Cultural Product, and Cultural Services/ Entertainment. These can be either permeable or impermeable because they serve as spaces that retain and value Chinese culture.

Many spaces in this category benefit from becoming more permeable because they are then able to reach larger markets, and many cultural events benefit from permeability because they can acquire more funding and both display the value of and share the joy of Chinese culture. There is a question of whether these spaces become more diluted and less authentic with their increased permeability, and I wonder about the capacity of these spaces to provide a grounded sense of belonging. However, many of the people who run impermeable spaces are unable to make them more permeable and perhaps do not want to – limited by language, location, and funds. Even as the impermeable spaces are not necessities for living like in the previous section, they contribute to an impermeable sphere of belonging. Those that run and participate in older impermeable spaces are often limited in options while those in the new impermeable spaces have greater language abilities, education, and economic mobility, and I find myself wondering about the implications of their insularity. Is this another authentic expression of belonging as new immigrants of a new generation with a distinct understanding of Chinese-Canadian identity or is it a way of excluding themselves from engaging with *place* in the sense of understanding the place that the space stands on?

I believe that what determines whether or not these spaces that can be either impermeable or permeable, old and new, create an authentic sense of belonging is **the sense of place that they create**. If these spaces are grounded, deliberate, and continually invested in emotionally, physically, and monetarily by those who own and inhabit them, I believe that they are valuable spaces of belonging for the Chinese diaspora.

Cultural Events

Cultural events and activities often happen in a state of flux, with ephemeral spatial configurations generated to accommodate an event, that is returned to its original state afterwards. They happen at different frequencies and vary greatly depending on how large they are, who they are run by, and what they are associated with. They include holiday celebrations, square dancing, hobby events, and cultural festivals. Many of these events are tied to major Chinese holidays and they recall similar events in China such as Chinese New Years banquets. Other events like the Chinatown Festival have little basis in traditional practices and serve to assert place and create permeable space beyond the Chinese diaspora. Many activities, on the other hand, are transposed from smaller informal activities from China such as square-dancing, an activity that is incredibly prolific in China and across many diasporic Chinese communities today. Cultural events are larger and less frequent and include mall banquets, parades, and street festivals, while activities are smaller and more frequent and include Chinese square dancing, *tai chi*, flash mobs, and such. Spatially, these events and activities typically take place in public or semi-public spaces and they are mostly defined by their usage of the *scales* of signs and language and networks. We will take a look at an informal, impermeable cultural activity, a more formal, impermeable cultural event, as well as another more formal, permeable event.

Square-dancing is an activity that emerged in China over the last twenty years, gaining traction with the retirement of women born between 1950 – 1970.[5] This is an example of a cultural activity that was developed in specific cultural and physical circumstances and has been transposed to diasporic spaces with the migration of Chinese people. Chinese square dancing is an activity that recalls communist era "loyalty dance" and morning exercises on large, modernist, paved squares and created a "performative sense of ritual".[6] Over the next few decades, Chinese society became more individualistic, and the women who fondly remember the collective physical activity and bonding of those activities retired from their occupations and began to gather in similar paved squares to dance together, following a leader and music as they used to as a form of emotional expression.[7] Many of these women followed their children to other countries with Chinese diaspora such as Canada and the practice of square-dancing came with

5 Jun Yang and Tianli Qin, 'Chinese Square-Dancing: A Description of Group Cultural Life', *Sociological Research Online*, 9 June 2022, 8, https://doi.org/10.1177/13607804221096687.

6 Yang and Qin, 'Chinese Square-Dancing'.

7 Yang and Qin.

them, and they find similar paved spaces in parks, squares, and parking lots to dance. The activity of square-dancing itself comes from a nostalgic longing for collective identity and belonging, and it is very fitting that it has been so successful in its transposition to a space of Chinese diaspora. The music is typically either music known as *hong ge*, or "red songs" referring to communist era patriotic songs, or pop music from 1960 – 1980s China with some modern pop music mixed in depending on the audience.[8] The dancers often have colourful group t-shirts with Chinese characters on them to denote their group name, and occasionally dress in traditional costume to take videos. In "Chinese Square-Dancing", Yang and Qin quote a dancer saying, "They bought it [costume] themselves … Everyone wears it on Monday during dance teaching, so that all know that they belong to the same square"[9].

8 Yang and Qin.

9 Yang and Qin, 9.

广场 *Guang chang (The Public Square)*

chinese square dancing in a park - impermeable

The Chinese square-dancing activity in a park. Everybody knows each other and looks to the leader to begin the music and the routine. They move as one in their matching clothing, and the space is theirs until they collectively finish. Sometimes people watching will join in since the dances are simple and inclusive.

"Yi, er, san, si!" I step in time to the music and the calls from our leader in front of me. I haven't worked up a sweat yet but I'm glad for it since today's the day we started wearing our new group shirts – my granddaughter designed them for us! The song switches and I smile at the woman next to me, this routine is one of my favourites – our kids tell us they're sick of listening to these songs but they're from my youth and I know every word. As I spin around in a slow circle, in sync with the others in front of and behind me, I can see Canadians taking walks in the park and glancing our way. I grin at them, happy to show them our fun, and turn back to the front. The song ends and a couple of people fan off to leave and grab their jackets from behind the portable speakers where we keep them together in constant view. I wave them off with our leader, I'm staying a bit longer today.

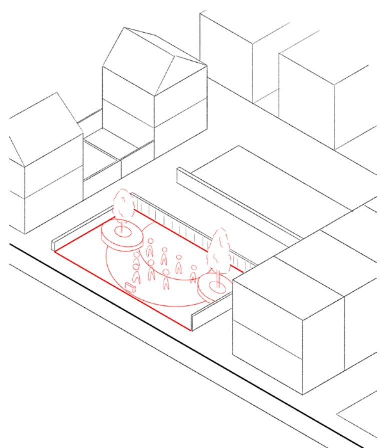

Fig. 5.8 (Above) Key axonometric of a park in Chinatown West where there is square dancing.

Fig. 5.9 (Right) Large square dance in China 2017.

化中心
CENTER

典礼 *Dian li (The Banquet)*

banquet at the mall stage - impermeable

A Chinese cultural holiday banquet in a mall. Often Chinese holidays, especially Chinese New Year, prompt holiday banquets in China that can be streamed online and many of the Chinese diaspora either watch these streams or attend similar events locally. Local Chinese cultural hobbyists and students often perform (*kung fu*, traditional dancing, singing, dragon dancing) and many join after they finish shopping.

The audience bustles around me as I'm sitting in the middle of a mall with the New Year's banquet video stream echoing off of the high ceiling from the enormous television screen on stage. My son is sitting next to me, fidgeting with the toy I bought him from the store a few meters away. It's a good day – we just called home to China earlier to wish everyone well at the big family dinner. I wish we could be there, but I also know why we're here. The speaker returns to the stage, closes the banquet stream, and introduces the first in-person performance. I cheer as the kung fu group steps on stage, my daughter looks so strong up there in her uniform with her classmates. They follow their instructor through the forms and I snap photos of them, catching the potted plum blossoms that signal New Year celebrations in frame. This is definitely going on my WeChat moments!

Fig. 5.10 (Right) Stage setup of a mall banquet in a mall atrium.

HAPPY YEAR
OF THE DRAGON
Celebrate Lunar
New Year for Less
瑞龍呈祥2024
太古賀歲慶新春
Pacific Mall's Lunar New Year Celebration 2024
恭贺新禧
龍年大吉
新年快樂
羊肉串
PACIFIC MALL HERITAGE TOWN

The Market

chinatown street festival - permeable

An annual Chinatown festival in a street, begun in the last two decades. The Toronto Chinatown BIA hosts a yearly Chinese New Year festival in the malls and a "Chinatown" festival without holiday affiliation on the street to attract people to the district.[10] Everyone in the city can join to experience vendors, performers, and speakers, with the street filled with excited strangers. It is walkable, with the streetcar and street closed for the festival.

10 '2023 Toronto Chinatown Festival', *Chinatown BIA* (blog), accessed 10 March 2024, https://chinatown-bia.com/eventsnews/tcf2023/.

"Whoa!" I startle as my friend laughs and pulls me through the throng of people on the street. I had no idea that this festival would be so packed! I told him that I have never eaten Chinese street food and he promised he'd show me the ropes today. We had walked here from the subway, along with a ton of other people, and I can see why: there's a man painting a scroll of ink calligraphy on the stage, and there's more food and trinket stalls than I can see. A huge ornate dragon head appears in front of us and dodges us smoothly, each segment dancing along down the street – that looks really fun, I wonder how much they have to practice. My friend is yelling over to someone grilling at a stand in what I think is Cantonese but I don't know Chinese well enough to tell the difference between dialects. The man at the grill tells me in fluent English that what he's handing me is "stinky tofu" and it sure does stink, but as I take a bite, the pungency bursts into savoury flavour in my mouth. My friend also takes a bite as we walk out of the jostling crowd and into the inactive streetcar median – we meet each others' eyes and laugh, "whoa!"

Fig. 5.11 Stage from audience at 2022 Toronto Chinatown Festival.

Fig. 5.12 Food stall at 2022 Chinatown Festival.

Fig. 5.13 (Right) Toronto Chinatown Festival. By Chinatown BIA.

龍
城
dcm

Cultural Food

Chinese restaurants have always been a large presence of Chinese culture wherever Chinese diaspora has arisen and that is very much the case in Toronto. As a key cultural export, many Chinese restaurants and food vendors create and occupy permeable spaces, often incorporating different service practices from China as they progressed. There are a few typologies that are analogous to Chinese food service spaces such as Chinese bakeries and roasts with self-serve and dine-in options, cafeterias reminiscent of workplace cafeterias or local breakfast cafeterias, dim sum restaurants and tea houses, and new window-service street-eat shops. Some of these are impermeable and some are permeable, and largely that permeability is determined by their locations and their use of sign and language and networks. In Table 5.4 we can see that there are slightly more permeable spaces than impermeable spaces. Even though Chinese food is very popular in Toronto outside of the Chinese diaspora, specific regional cuisines are still very sought after within the diaspora due to their variety so many restaurants can continue to be sustainable even if they are broadly impermeable. Meanwhile, other food services have become increasingly permeable and commercialized such as bubble tea shops and street-eats.

In this category, we will look at the three different typologies of food services: an old impermeable food court, a new permeable window-operated bubble tea shop, and an impermeable home-operated ghost kitchen.

Food Service					
Business Area	Impermeable		Permeable		Total
	Units	%	Units	%	
Dragon City Mall	0	0	7	100	7
Chinatown Centre Mall	8	89	1	11	9
Pacific Mall	14	50	14	50	28
Times Square Plaza	16	55	13	45	29
dt Chinatown BIA	27	39	42	61	69
Total Average	65	46	77	54	142

Table 5.4 Food Service breakdown. These are more permeable than impermeable generally but impermeable spaces are still maintained.

灶台 *Zao tai (The Kitchen Island)*

food court in a mall - impermeable

An older, impermeable food court which is similar to breakfast and work cafeterias in China. The furniture is stainless steel and haphazardly placed and mobile, but the disorder is friendly. Most people know the menus and each shop has a few specialty dishes everybody knows to order. The space is fast-paced but no one is rushed to finish.

Fig. 5.14 Impermeable food court in an inner-city mall basement

I don't have much time today so I decide to stop by the mall food court, but it looks like everyone else had the same idea. I make my way through the bunched-up queue in front of a counter and I don't even bother looking at the long and run-down Chinese and English menu on the wall behind the cashier. I hurriedly ask for the same pork chop fried rice that everyone else asked for as she reaches over the lucky cat on their counter to ring a bell and yell "ORDER 36!" over my shoulder. She hands me a hastily scribbled note with a number I can barely read, but it doesn't matter. I snatch a guava candy from the bowl that they keep on the counter and turn around to find an empty spot. Luckily, someone lifts their tray to leave so I slide onto the bench, under the bright umbrella that is as attached to the table as the bench. In a few minutes, I can go back to pick up my food so for now I rest and look past the umbrella and out of the skylight above.

Fig. 5.15 (Right) Impermeable food court in the middle of a suburban mall

The Tea Bar

bubble tea on main street - permeable

A new permeable bubble tea shop. Bubble tea shops have experienced exponential growth over the last decade, the majority of which have become permeable spaces. These are accessible on the street from the window, and acts much like a typical café from the interior. Most people come to grab their order and go. It is a neat and amicable space with some Chinese imagery.

I have a problem, and so do my friends: we drink too much bubble tea. We tell each other as much, standing in line once again, in another boba shop. One of them hates lining up and says she'll order from her phone instead and just grabs a seat at our usual booth, already putting through her payment with the app. I'm not sure when our habit started, but we would save our pennies to get tea at lunch break every week in high school, trying out as many stores as we could. I wait at the counter as the busy baristas call orders to each other in both English and Chinese. She hands me my drink and a smiling panda mascot winks at me from the plastic topper that seals my cup. Well-practiced, I deftly stab my straw straight through the single Chinese character in the logo that I can't read anyway and chew on my tapioca as my friends and I snap a photo for Instagram and chat our way over to our booth, settling in to hang out. We really do drink too much bubble tea. Oh well.

Fig. 5.16 Photo area of bubble tea shop.

Fig. 5.17 (Right) Permeable bubble tea shop on a street strip.

Cheese Cloud Series
Top 10
Presotea
SALE
SALE

小吃 *Xiao chi (The Street Food Stand)*

weChat home kitchen in a suburban garage - impermeable

A ghost kitchen operated through social media. These home kitchens have become increasingly prolific both in China and in the GTA and largely operate outside of the law and regulations. The chefs advertise their cooking through WeChat groups and are paid in cash on-site, often out of their own garages or designated parking lots in suburban areas. As the only communication is through WeChat and other social media, these ghost kitchens are completely impermeable.

I slowly press down on the brake as I drive down the street. The lady who sells cold noodles moved to a new house recently and while she gave me her new address, I haven't been to this suburb before and don't quite know where to go. I catch a glint of gold on red and I pull up closer to see a decoration with the character for fortune and red paper lanterns hanging from a garage overhang. It must be this one! I park on the side of the small street behind several other cars and walk into the open garage where the owner greets me. I flash her my WeChat username and she hands me my bag with her freshly cooked Xi'an cold noodles that I've been craving – I'm so glad my friend introduced me and added me to this group. I spot on her shelves another snack I haven't had in a while and ask her in Mandarin to add it to my tally. She counts the cash I give her and sends me off. Time to drive back home.

Fig. 5.18 Shelves of small items sold with the pre-made dishes.

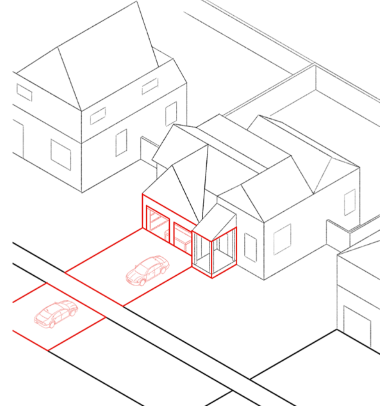

Fig. 5.19 (Above) Key axonometric of a ghost kitchen operating out of a suburban garage.

Fig. 5.20 (Right) Rows of refrigerated pre-made dishes from a home kitchen.

神仙果
OnFresh
12bag
ORANGE

Cultural Product

This category consists of spaces that vend various kinds of products that have relation to China or Chinese culture and unlike general products, cultural products may have broader appeal and market to people outside of the Chinese diaspora. Despite having products of varying worth and appeal, generally cultural product stores use the *scales of belonging* similarly. These spaces include Chinese grocers, home and yard decoration stores, jade stores, traditional and other imported clothing stores, skincare stores, hobby and toy stores, and many more. With East Asian food recipes, skincare, and aesthetics becoming more popular with the importing of East Asian media through games, social media, and television, there is increased interest in Chinese cultural products and with it, large entrepreneurial drives from Chinese businesses to capitalize on it. This means that older impermeable businesses may shift to predominantly using English and changing their store layout and decoration to be more appealing to non-Chinese people and new permeable businesses pop up in order to fulfill new niche markets using sleek, social media driven storefronts. However, as can be seen in Table 5.5, impermeable spaces for these cultural products continue to persist, particularly in the case of products like Chinese herbal medicine as they are difficult to integrate with Western medicine and concepts due to their nature and have not been popularized. As well, many stores continue to operate as impermeable spaces because the internal markets are large, as with home décor and traditional clothing stores, which is why the number of impermeable spaces continue to outnumber the permeable ones in the data table despite the data generally skewing towards permeable spaces.

In this category, we will look at the case of three different Chinese grocery stores: one small and fully impermeable, one large, new, and permeable, and one small and semi-permeable.

Cultural Product					
Business Area	Impermeable		Permeable		Total
	Units	%	Units	%	
Dragon City Mall	0	0	8	100	8
Chinatown Centre Mall	43	75	14	25	57
Pacific Mall	58	54	50	46	108
Times Square Plaza	7	64	4	36	11
dt Chinatown BIA	44	72	17	28	61
Total Average	152	62	93	38	245

Table 5.5 Cultural Product breakdown. These are slightly more impermeable than permeable generally.

窖藏 *Jiao cang (The Pantry)*

grocery store in a plaza - impermeable

An older, small, and impermeable grocery store. It is cluttered and filled to the brim with items. Produce boxes prop open the doors and all the signage is in Chinese. You can enter and have a chat with the owner behind the meat display anytime, and they serve the whole plaza. There is limited supply of everything but quite a variety of small Chinese goods.

I pop my head into the grocery store and see that my friend is sitting behind the meat display alone. "Ge ge!" I call and walk over. I grab a few snacks from the cramped shelves and the boxes on the ground, briefly stopping to look at the incense burning on his small informal altar in the corner. My friend rings me up and I hand him my cash. We both sit down in his fold-out chairs. We do this often – I stop by during my break, and we catch up for the day then it's back to my own shop in our plaza. I perk up, he's changed his playlist and I hear Beyond, one of my favourite bands and truly the height of Chinese rock. We chat about the song, and I tell him that I wish I saw their concert back when I lived in Hong Kong. I'm about to pull out our worn-out pack of poker cards when I see some customers come in. I guess that's my cue, so I fold up my chair, grab my half-finished snacks, and head out – no need to say "bye", he's busy and this is our routine.

Fig. 5.21 Impermeable grocery entrance, produce boxes prop open the doors.

Fig. 5.22 (Right) Impermeable grocery interior, printed and handwritten signage in Chinese.

EXIT
Summertime
...and the grilling is easy
山雞
山雞
紫菜
正宗
牛脷
免費代客起脷胎
Canada Angus Beef
CONCORD
恭喜發財
星島日報

The Grocer

supermarket in a plaza - permeable

A newer, permeable grocery store. This grocery store also serves as a general store, selling typical items like kitchenware and cleaning supplies as well as cultural products like East Asian skincare and hobbyist toys and figurines. The space is filled with strangers and is operated the same as any Canadian supermarket.

Fig. 5.23 Permeable grocery store, cosmetic section. Signage is primarily in English with modern indirect lighting.

Today's restock day so I've driven back to the Asian supermarket. The other supermarkets just don't have all the sauces and instant noodles I want, so I have to come here. It's alright with me, there's English everywhere and it's organized like the No Frills next door to where I live. The place is huge and I've already put everything I need into my cart when I spot the cosmetics aisle. I can't help myself – I've been really interested in Asian Beauty recently and I end up asking the saleswoman for some recommendations. As I approach the checkout counter and pull out my credit card, I spot some mooncakes on sale with leftover Chinese decorations because Mid-autumnal Festival has passed. Lucky me!

Fig. 5.24 (Right) Permeable grocery store aisle. Chinese New Year decorations, overall generic spatial organization.

福
FEATHERLITE
員工專用梯子
Ladders For Staff Only
FreshWay
手工花椒锅巴

The Vending Machine

delivery grocery store on main street - semi-permeable

Fig. 5.26 Exterior serving window on the street strip.

A new semi-permeable grocery store. This grocery is part of a franchise and uses a model that has become popular in China wherein a customer orders their groceries on an app or through a digital kiosk and the workers package and deliver the items. I consider this store semi-permeable because the interaction of the store is rather opaque despite using both Chinese and English text.

It's exactly 8:13 AM and I rush down the sidewalk towards my department building and the first class of my day. I weave past other students and commuters and find my way into the queue in front of the take-out grocery's delivery window. They have jian bing guo zi (breakfast crêpe) today – I pull out my phone and sign in to their delivery app to check – I miss it so much when I'm here overseas. 8:21 AM, I make it to the front of the line and the shop owner reaches out of the sliding window to scan my payment QR code on my phone. I wait a minute as I watch her team assemble my breakfast and feel my stomach rumble as I smell familiar chilli crisp being drizzled onto it. I thank the owner in Mandarin as she hands me my slightly off-kilter breakfast and I tell her I'll be back later today to pick up my groceries. She grins and replies that they've already started packing them in the back. The food is warm in my hands as I keep walking to my university building – the crunch of my first bite is just as good as it is back home.

Fig. 5.25 (Right) Semi-permeable delivery grocery interior. Kiosks for ordering, Chinese program with some English.

ORDER
HERE
duāng!
Drinks
Water
Feminine&Bath&Oral Care
First-Aid & Pain Relief
Rice Flour & Oil
Snack
Cereal
Honey, Syrups & Spreads
Spices & Cans
Soy Sauce,Vinegar, Cooking Wine
Condiments & Sauce Kit
Frozen Foods
Cosmetics Beauty & Skincare
Sexual Wellness
Tools & Accessories
Laundry Supplies
Disposable Tableware
Cleaning Tools & Supplies
Cheese And Butter
Bacon, Sausages, Ham & Hot Dogs
LIQUOR
eska

Cultural Service/Entertainment: Mahjong Parlours, Karaoke, Arcades, Beauty services, etc.

This category combines cultural service and entertainment because they can often inhabit similar spaces and are similarly commercialized. These spaces include services like fortune-telling and beauty salons and entertainment venues such as karaoke, arcades, and mahjong parlours. Like cultural product spaces, these spaces can easily become permeable because of rising interest in East Asian media globally, and these services and entertainment facilities provide Chinese aesthetic services and references to Chinese media. For example, beauty salons will provide hair, nail, and makeup services among others popularized on TikTok and East Asian dramas. As well, the rise of Chinese games like Genshin Impact and others have caused increased interest in Chinese music and games among those outside of the diaspora, and that has given rise to new permeable spaces that center around media, games, and toys. In Table 5.6, we can see that there are more permeable than impermeable spaces in this category. In general, older entertainment venues like existing mahjong parlours and small theatres as well as cultural services continue to exist in their own environment within the impermeable sphere of belonging, but many choose to convert their spaces to become more permeable with increased English language usage as they see market opportunity. As well, many new services and entertainment venues open as permeable spaces, often run by second generation immigrants or younger immigrants with investment capital.

In this category, we will look at three spaces with similar programs that facilitate mahjong playing: one is older and impermeable, one is new and permeable, and one is new and impermeable.

Cultural Service/Entertainment					
Business Area	Impermeable		Permeable		Total
	Units	%	Units	%	
Dragon City Mall	0	0	4	100	4
Chinatown Centre Mall	16	76	5	24	21
Pacific Mall	13	42	18	58	31
Times Square Plaza	11	48	12	52	23
dt Chinatown BIA	29	48	31	52	60
Total Average	69	50	70	50	139

Table 5.6 Cultural Service/Entertainment breakdown. These are more permeable than impermeable generally but impermeable spaces are still maintained.

起居室 *Qi ju shi (The Living Room)*

mahjong parlour in a mall - impermeable

An older establishment, run by a first-generation immigrant for over twenty years. It is frequented by older Chinese people in Chinatown, many of whom do not speak any English. It is a very informal space where everybody knows each other and gather to chat and play mahjong.

I hear the laughter and the clatter of mahjong tiles from down the hall before I even see the little shop buried in the back of the mall that it's coming from. Everybody speaks a little differently but I manage to understand. I can't help the smile on my face as I'm waved inside. I take a seat at the table next to the door and watch as the owner and 3 other people organize their tiles for a new game. Today's tab of twenty dollars has already been fulfilled by them, so I guess I'll be paying next time – the table's free for the whole day as long as twenty dollars came up at the start. I scoot my mismatched chair with equally mismatched cushions a bit closer and away from the clutter in the back. I don't know all the players that well yet, but I know through our WeChat group that some more friends are coming, maybe we can open up the second table when they get here.

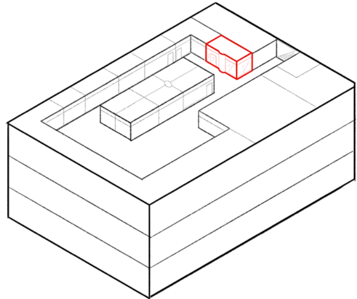

Fig. 5.27 (Above) Key axonometric of location of mahjong parlour on the third floor of a mall.

Fig. 5.28 (Right) Visible clutter and mismatched furniture gives homely impression.

六萬
七萬

The Arcade

board game and mahjong café on main street - permeable

A new establishment, run by a second-generation Chinese-Canadian owner. The players who come rent a table and can buy snacks at the shop or order food at the bar – they can also rent a mahjong room upstairs. The space is highly individuated, orderly, and modern, and the players are young and come from all backgrounds.

It's Friday night and that means board game night! My friends and I run up the stairs of the new board game café that opened near our campus and pay our table fee for the night. There's a couple of booths filled already but we all keep to ourselves. I let my friends argue about whether we should play Catan or something different, and head behind the shelves filled with games to the bar where I order us some Taiwanese popcorn chicken and bubble tea. I see one of the others had a similar idea and is grabbing us some Korean chips and Japanese desserts from the snack area. The worker at the bar places the food I ordered down and behind him I see a group heading upstairs to the mahjong rooms. I settle in and suggest that we play a game with Chinese ink art since we have all these Asian snacks anyway.

Fig. 5.29 (Above) Shelf of English board games with play area behind.

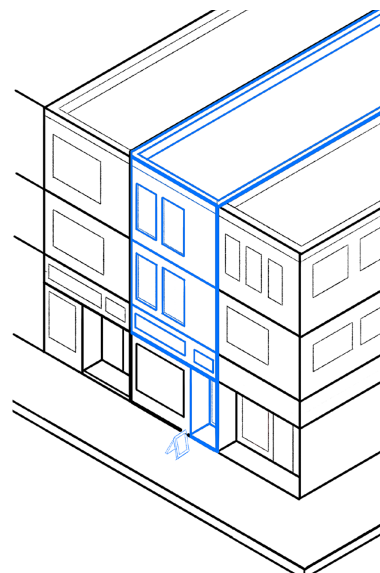

Fig. 5.30 (Above) Key axonometric of exterior of cafe.

Fig. 5.31 (Right) Snack shop area. Asian snacks and drinks, similar to a convenience store.

NET WEIGHT/
POIDS NET
15 x 37 g
(555 g)
Milka
Nutrition Facts
Nerds

堂会 *Tang hui (The Social Gathering)*

board game and mahjong café on main street – impermeable

A newer establishment, run by recent immigrated visa students. The players pay per person per session to use the communal table and Chinese board games and can rent the separate rooms. They can also order fresh dishes and drinks from the bar counter. The space is communal and hosts weekly play sessions for groups and competitions.

Ai ya, another loss. I pretend to glare over my cards as I concede defeat again in this round-robin board game tournament. Someone pats me on the back and it's the other international student I met on my way over today. I had no idea so many others from my school played Chinese board games, we should start a club. I stand up for the next group to take my place and jokingly join in the taunting towards the one that beat me. I head over to the counter to order a drink, and over the chatter of various regional accents of Mandarin in the open play area, the barista tells me I played a good game. I read their schedule on the wall – it's all in Simplified Chinese but we only play Chinese board games anyway – and I make a mental note to practice more before the next tournament in a week. I will definitely win next time – just like in my hometown, the players in Toronto will learn that I'm the best too!

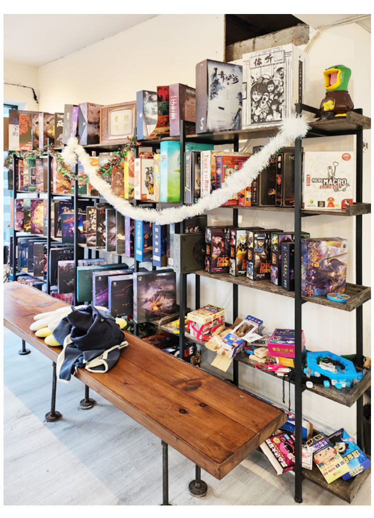

Fig. 5.32 (Above) Shelf full of Chinese board games next to open play area.

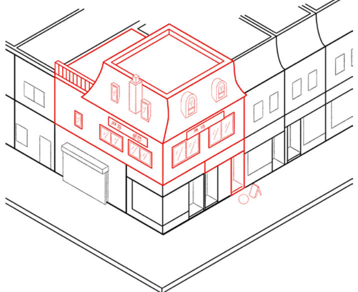

Fig. 5.33 (Above) Key axonometric of exterior of cafe.

Fig. 5.34 (Right) Sign board shows no English text, all dates and prices are listed in Simplified Chinese.

Hoopla
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桌游 剧本 麻将
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MON- SUN
3:00PM-03:00AM
THE HOOPLA
桌游
剧本
麻将
德扑
微信号:hoopla622
hoopla
HOOPLA
联系电话:
(416)928-6668
剧本(可换装)
麻将(VIP Room)
桌游(血染狼人等)
德扑(With Patio)
轰趴(独立房间空间)
营业时间:
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详情咨询店家，最终解释权归商家所有

6. Conclusion

I still don't truly understand belonging, and I don't feel that I belong here right now. I believe that this is something that will come with time as I invest myself in place, perhaps where I am now, but I feel that I have a journey of discovery ahead of me still. My mom has always told me, "Qing Qing, home is where your family is", and she means that I will always have home with them, and she always has home with my grandparents. However, her family was displaced as well moving to a big city in China, where they still call their village lao jia (old home). And now, that big city they moved to is "old home" for us. As spaces continue to change and their populations with them, and as I change and move, I feel that I will continue to create memory of places, and I hope that by committing to places in my lifetime just as so many have in the spaces discussed in this thesis, I will continue to learn how to belong.

Incidental spaces of belonging for the Chinese diaspora in Toronto are as diverse as the people that they are made by and for. They have evolved over the years, keeping some old places, moving to new places, and establishing new spaces. As globalization continues forward and transnational economies grow, the relationship that the Chinese diaspora has with overall Toronto culture and with the urban landscape of the GTA will change with it.

Analyzing these spaces of belonging through physical, temporal, and social scales has raised more questions about the identity of these spaces. How do these scales relate to the ideas of hospitality and welcome, and how does cultural exchange work when forming the identity of places? How does socio-economic class and differing perspectives on the development of Chinese neighbourhoods, including the growth of Asian chain businesses, affect the existing spaces of belonging? How do old models of insular spaces and new models of insular spaces interact within the Chinese diaspora, and are they overly enclosed? In contrast, what happens with spaces that have taken on Western aesthetics and modern building, is this a loss of authenticity or is it a different kind of authentic Chinese-Canadian expression? How much can people and spaces adapt Chinese signs and traditions authentically in a diasporic setting until they no longer provide belonging for people from their homelands? How does the mixing of ethnicities and cultural backgrounds affect these spaces with Canadian-born children – do they also form their own hybrid spaces of belonging with levels of insularity?

All of these are questions are unanswered here, but they can be explored in the future. I wonder also about the application of this understanding of belonging in space to other cultural diaspora in Toronto or other cities.

Through this thesis, I have emphasized the importance of incidental spaces of belonging to Toronto's Chinese diaspora, and explained how different scales of belonging affect their permeability as well as how people can recognize them as spaces to belong in. The practice of visiting, drawing, photographing, and writing descriptive narrative around these spaces with regard to temporal and social factors has illuminated the placemaking within these spaces.

In terms of architectural and urban planning practice, I refer to Mohammad Qadeer's conclusion that broadly what is needed in a city as multicultural as Toronto is "constructing a 'common ground' of institutions and services".[1] I believe that there will always be a place for impermeable spaces as long as there are distinct communities, even if what makes them impermeable changes. What designers can do is work with a community reciprocally and with respect to their permeability, and allowing room for the temporal and social factors that are not immediately present in traditional construction practice. Meanwhile, collectively belonging in a city does not mean dismantling or entering impermeable spaces, but rather building "common ground" for all to belong – places that share memory, engages bodies, and affords agency.

1 Qadeer, *Ethnic Segregation in a Multicultural City: The Case of Toronto, Canada*, 29.

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