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The Changing Immigrant Cartography of
Auckland, New Zealand: An Asian Ethnic
Precinct

Max Planck Institute for the Study of
Religious and Ethnic Diversity

Max-Planck-Institut zur Erforschung multireligiöser
und multiethnischer Gesellschaften



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Abstract

New Zealand's post-1987 business and skill-focussed immigrant recruitment policies have had several consequences for Auckland, including the transformation of numerous public spaces. One manifestation of this process of change has been the co-location of immigrant-dominated retailing in ethnic business precincts, which provides both economic and social network spaces for immigrant interaction with co-ethnics, and a zone of contact between immigrants and others. This paper describes the example of Dominion Road, an 'Asian' ethnic precinct in Auckland. Maps of business ownership and business types provide a snapshot of the emerging economic cartography of the precinct, and an examination of host and migrant engagements and interactions within the precinct indicate some of the parameters of the new cartographies of diversity that are evident in Auckland.

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Introduction

For most of the twentieth century, immigration policy in New Zealand was determined by the colonial project of building a ‘Britain in the South Seas’, combined with an explicit racialised privileging of certain source groups and the exclusion of others (Spoonley & Bedford 2012). Increased migration from the Pacific in the 1960s represented the first break with a ‘white’ immigration policy but this was not confirmed in terms of a policy framework until 1986-87, when New Zealand adopted the carefully managed skilled/capital recruitment approach of Canada and Australia. The number of non-British (or European) immigrants increased significantly, especially after 2000. It is this newer, more multi-ethnic, multilingual, multicultural migration that has resulted in more visible (and sometimes unanticipated) impacts on the character of Auckland as New Zealand’s major immigrant destination. As researchers, we are interested in finding ways to articulate the new cartographies of diversity and what they might mean, especially in public spaces that provide for intercultural encounters. We begin with an overview of some of the dimensions of Auckland migration post-1996, and then focus on three aspects of ethnic precinct scholarship that seek to explain emerging patterns in the settlement and concentration of migrants: neoliberalism, migration flows, and relational networks and embeddedness within migrant communities. We then shift the focus to more specifically describe Dominion Road’s precinct-like characteristics and its potential emergence as a contact zone between new migrants and non-Asian New Zealanders.

The emphasis on skilled and business visa categories after 1986, and notably after 2000 when a number of policy adjustments were made that led to a number of significant changes. From the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 (between a colonising power, Great Britain, and a significant number of Māori chiefs) until the mid-twentieth century, the predominant immigration pattern was for the majority of colonial settlers to come from Britain and Ireland, with very modest flows from elsewhere in Europe while Asian arrivals were racialised by a series of legislative acts from the late 1880s through to 1920. The result was that settlement was almost completely dominated by British and Irish settlers and their descendants (‘traditional’ source countries) until the arrival of labour migrants from the Pacific (Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Tokelau and Niue) in the 1960s. The whiteness of cities, such as Auckland, was only changed by the arrival of Māori from a rural hinterland after 1945 and from the Polynesian Pacific after the 1960s. Concentrations of Asian, minority ethnic and immigrant communities in ethnic precincts (Collins &

Kunz 2007) and ethnoburbs (Li 1997) which might be found in gateway cities in other countries were largely absent until the arrival of migrants from the Pacific. However, with the change of policy in 1986/87, the origin and composition of immigration flows changed dramatically. The arrival of migrants from 'non-traditional' source countries, especially Asia, soon outnumbered traditional European migrants and the mix of immigrant educational qualifications, skills and experience provided a sharp contrast to earlier immigration flows. Ethno-burbs that had emerged in the 1960s and 1970s Auckland were particular areas that became associated with concentrations of migrants from the Pacific Islands such as Māngere, Papatoetoe, Manurewa, and working in the manufacturing centres of Ōtāhuhu, Onehunga, Penrose and East Tāmaki (see Johnston et al. 2008). New ethnoburbs emerged from the 1990s with the arrival of significant numbers of migrants from Asia.

Ethnic precincts also emerged. We use the Collins and Kunz (2007, p. 207) definition of ethnic precinct to mean '...urban or suburban agglomerations of ethnic enterprises, clustered together in a space, which formally or informally adopt the symbolism, style and iconography of that ethnic group in public spaces'. Ethnic precincts are characterised by the clustering of co-ethnic businesses and a particular set of relationships between business '...owners and workers and, to a lesser extent, between patrons and clients' (Zhou & Cho 2010, p. 86). The focus on self-employment that characterises the more recent phase of recruitment has led to the development of such specific concentrations of co-ethnic businesses (i.e. clusters of businesses owned or run by members of the same ethnic or immigrant community) or ethnic precincts (Collins & Kunz 2007) alongside the on-going development of residential ethnoburbs.

The 'inclination' of these newer migrants to self-employment, particularly but not only in retailing, reflects significant labour market barriers and often a forced choice in terms of economic engagement (Spoonley & Bedford 2012: Chapter 7). One outcome was the emergence of differently visible, predominantly Asian ethnic precincts from the mid-1990s. We would argue that these ethnic precincts are the result of several factors, including the neo-liberal inclinations of post-1986 immigration policy, the composition of immigration flows (skills mix and source origins) and the strength of the relational embeddedness of these immigrants.

The neo-liberal components are reflected in the internationalised selection and recruitment processes and the way in which these immigrants are constructed as '...competitive, responsibilised and entrepreneurial selves' (Lewis et al. 2009, p. 167) who are encouraged to act as agents in their own interests in an 'open' market. This

reflects a policy framework that stresses the importance of the 'economic' migrant who will meet the labour market, finance and globalised interests of capital and an agenda of market-dominant economic development. Further, this neo-liberalism emphasises the development of service and small business functions as evidence of entrepreneurial selves and market sovereignty (see Lewis et al. 2009). This has led to a significant increase in immigrant participation in self-employment and retailing as well as the spatial concentration of ethnic clusters involving such activities.

Market sovereignty and entrepreneurial activity are also connected to the idea of the social or relational embeddedness of particular immigrant communities. Individual migrants 'act' and make economic decisions in response to socially situated 'networks of personal relationships' (Vertovec 2009, p. 37) within which they are embedded (see also Spoonley & Meares 2011). Ethnic precincts such as Dominion Road reflect the decisions and investments of immigrant business owners, ethnicised labour markets, distinct supply chains and co-ethnic consumer demand. According to Portes (see Vertovec 2009, p. 37), both relational and structural embeddedness can be seen to be operating: not only are the precincts places for meeting and eating, they are also an important access point for employment, goods and services. For those looking to establish a business, they provide opportunities to obtain information, supplies, labour and capital relatively easily (see Meares et al. 2010, for information about these networks in Auckland). Ethnic precincts operate as centres 'catering for the requirements of ethnic minorities, as well as social and economic hubs for dispersed members of expatriate communities' (Shaw et al. 2004, p. 1996). They provide the familiar in terms of the language spoken and/or the food eaten, as well as a meeting place for those from a particular homeland (Sales et al. 2009). They represent ethnicised sites of labour engagement and recruitment, thereby circumventing mainstream labour market barriers such as employer prejudice and discrimination, the lack of local experience and qualifications, or competition with 'native' workers (see Zhou & Cho 2010, p. 85). Because it is possible to 'map' the business and recreational activities associated with these emerging precincts, we suggest that this represents a new (immigrant-influenced) cartography. But this new cartography also reflects the emergence of contact zones (Wessendorf 2010) for inter-ethnic, intercultural connection between host and migrant communities.

Ethnic precincts represent spaces that provide 'micropublic[s] of everyday social contact and encounter' (Amin cited in Ho 2011, p. 605). As this paper will discuss later, ethnic precincts provide an opportunity to engage in shopping, eating and socialising on an everyday basis. There are opportunities to interact with co-ethnics

or culturally different others, although many of these encounters are fleeting and should not be constructed as anything more than superficial. The point here is that ethnic precincts offer a new set of contact experiences that did not previously exist in this form in Auckland prior to the 1990s.

The political and populist reaction to these zones, especially where they concern visible immigrants concentrated in one area, has often been one of concern that they represent parallel communities (Phillips 2006) and a failure of integration (see Spoonley & Tolley 2012). While it is important to engage with these debates, we also want to explore the nature of those who encounter diversity as an ‘...alternative way of framing the relationship between migrants and urban space [which is] beyond critiques of self-segregating migrant enclaves’ (Williamson 2012, p. 1). It could be argued that precincts provide opportunities for what Noble (2009) has called ‘unpanicked multiculturalism’. That is, the precinct offers spaces in which ‘a set of relatively stable relations and ways of intercultural being ... emerge out of sustained practices of accommodation and negotiation’ (Noble 2009, p. 52). Such patterns of everyday accommodation are in direct contrast to a reaction that problematises diversity and the practices/presence of the visible ‘Other’. In the second part of this paper we discuss and describe Dominion Road as one example of what we call ‘retail cosmopolitanism’ in contemporary Auckland: a place of retail engagement characterised by ethnically diverse business owners, sellers and consumers whose quotidian interactions initiate and sustain practices of accommodation and negotiation. This does not imply that such a contact zone is inevitably a ‘natural servant of multicultural engagement’ (Amin cited in Ho 2011, p. 605) or that such engagement is unproblematic.

We begin with a brief, descriptive overview of Dominion Road by way of context and then focus on two segments of the road that meet the Collins and Kunz (2007) definition of an ethnic precinct. We then present maps of business ownership and business types that provide a snapshot of the emerging economic cartography of the precinct, and describe the patterns of shop ownership and business type. The final section of the paper reports on the results of a modest survey that explored the impressions, responses and activities of people moving through these sections of Dominion Road. We identify some of the host and migrant engagements and interactions that produce ‘retail cosmopolitanism’ and which signal some of the parameters of the new cartographies of diversity evident in Auckland.

Dominion Road

The immigration reforms of the late 1980s provided a key turning point in the nature of immigration to New Zealand and prompted the relatively rapid development of ethnic (Asian) precincts in Auckland as the result of a neo-liberal regulatory and policy environment, the skill sets and inclinations of immigrants and the growing co-ethnic demand for products and services. This was in sharp contrast to previous periods of Asian migration, which were characterised by transience in the 1880s-1930s and a period of modest family reunion and settlement from 1940-1986 (see Ho & Bedford 2006). From the 1890s to the 1960s, there were only small concentrations of Asian businesses. In particular, an area around Grey Street in central Auckland was loosely designated as a Chinatown and in parts of Newmarket, Mt Eden, Mt Wellington, Onehunga and Māngere there were scattered market gardens, fruit shops and laundries (Ng 2005). Since the late 1990s, co-location in ethnic precincts has become a more obvious spatial expression of 'immigrant concrete embeddedness in social networks' (Rath 2006, p. 5) and resulted in the conversion of existing suburban retail centres to ethnic precincts (such as Northcote - a pre-existing suburban shopping centre on Auckland's North Shore) or purpose-built precincts (such as Meadowlands/Somerville in South Auckland; see Spoonley & Meares 2011). The Dominion Road example is more unusual in that it involves the conversion of linear retailing on an arterial road.

Dominion Road is one of the emblematic roads of Auckland and one of the longest, running for seven kilometres from Eden Terrace near the Central Business District to Waikowhai in the southern suburbs (McClure 2009). It is a strip development involving a mix of retail and residential activities at the end closest to the CBD, interspersed at particular points with community facilities such as churches and some housing. What is noticeable is that businesses, whatever their type, are now dominated by Asian owners and activities, particularly Chinese. Dominion Road represents a spatially elongated example of an ethnic precinct that is recent in its appearance (post-1990s).

The co-located minority ethnic and immigrant spaces along Dominion Road were mapped for this research. The maps were derived from base maps (provided by the then Auckland Regional Council), which indicated land parcels and address numbers and this was combined with information from a survey of business owners. Bilingual researchers went door-to-door along the two areas of the precinct in 2010 and asked the ethnicity of the owner and confirmed the nature of the business. Maps 1 to 4 are

the product of this mapping and provide a visual description of the two distinct sections of the road that represent significant ethnic clustering and concentration.

(i) King Edward Street to Valley Road

The first section identified is the four blocks of Dominion Road between King Edward Street and Valley Road (Map 1). This area contains a wide range of retail activity and includes a mix of food, financial and insurance services, and trade. Map 1 illustrates the predominance of retail trade, involving 46 (44 per cent) out of 105 shops, and these include everything from shops selling a range of budget items through to hardware and photographic equipment. The category 'accommodation and food retailers' is the second most prevalent (27 per cent) and includes mostly restaurants or businesses selling fresh and other produce. There is a range of service functions located in these blocks, including healthcare, real estate firms and professionals such as lawyers although the numbers in the last two categories are small.

The next map indicates the ethnicity of shop owners/operators (Map 2). The largest group are Pākehā¹ at 40 per cent followed by Chinese at 28.5 per cent, although if the Asian business owners/operators are aggregated, then they comprise 47.6 per cent of business owners/operators in these blocks of Dominion Road. If the data from maps 1 and 2 are combined, then this Asian presence is most apparent amongst food retailers, with 68 per cent of the 28 shops owned/operated by Asians, and 50 per cent owned/operated by Chinese business owners/operators, compared to the 35.7 per cent (8 shops) owned/operated by Pākehā. The latter are a mix of takeaway shops and local dairy-style food suppliers.

The immigrant presence is physically apparent, especially in terms of signage. These blocks retain some long established businesses, an important Pākehā presence and a wide mix of activities. It is unclear whether the trend is towards increasing immigrant/minority ethnic ownership and activities in this section of Dominion Road. Is there a critical mass that encourages the development of further immigrant co-location so that ownership by a particular ethnicity becomes even more dominant?

1 Pākehā is a label derived from Te Reo Māori (Māori language) that is used to identify the majority ethnic group, or those of European descent who share certain cultural values or practices. The term is contested but it is nonetheless widely used and represents a new sensitivity to majority-indigenous relations.



Map 1: Classification of business types along Dominion Rd
 Source: Integration of Immigrants Programme, 2011



Map 2: Classification of businesses by ethnicity of owners/operators along Dominion Rd
 Source: Integration of Immigrants Programme, 2011

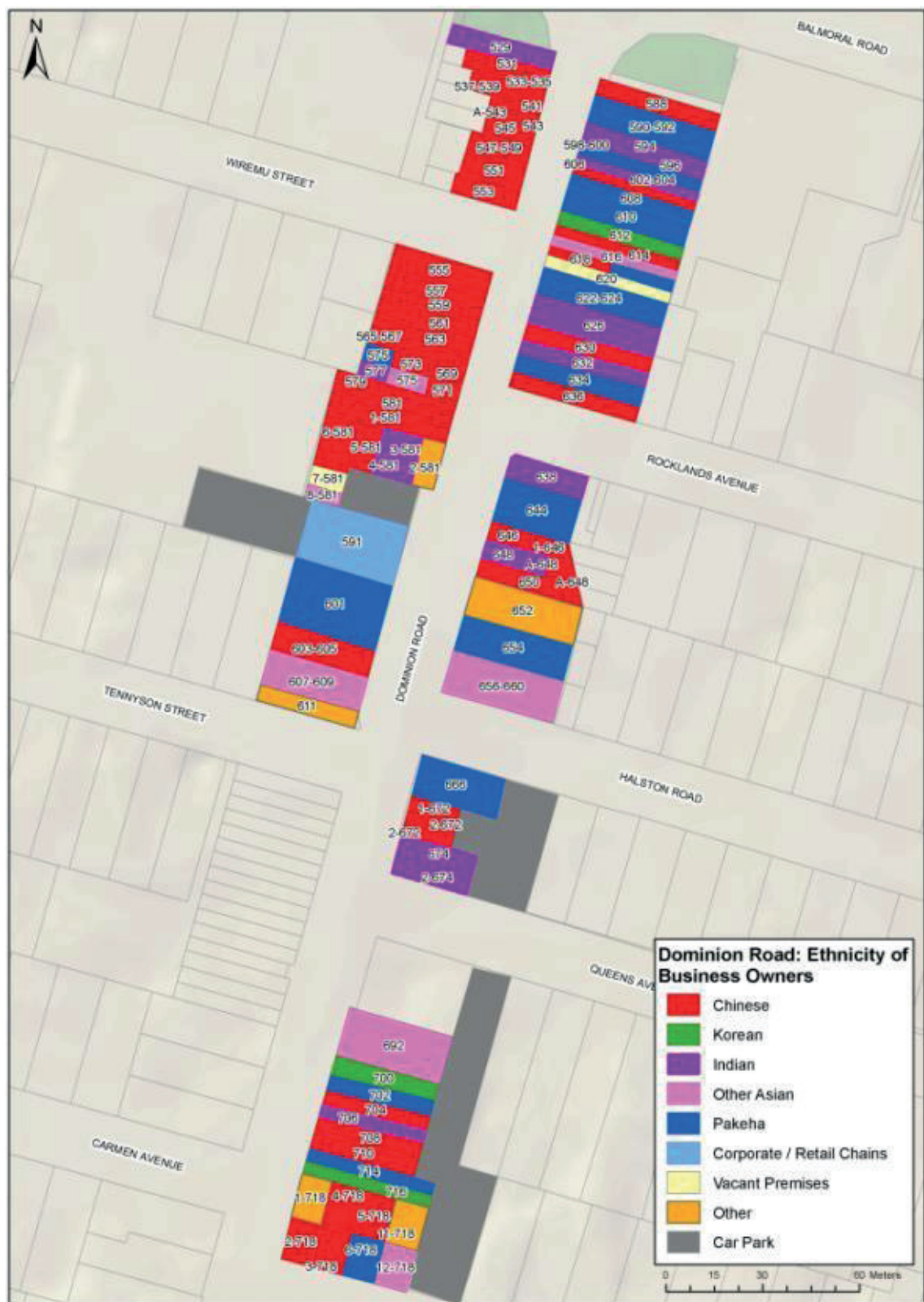
(ii) Balmoral Road to Tennyson Street/Kensington Ave

This section describes the activities and ownership of the shops located between Balmoral Road and Tennyson Street on the west side and Kensington Avenue on the eastern side of Dominion Road (Map 3). There are 92 shops in this area, of which a third are involved in food (either for sale to take away or consumption on site). Non-consumable retail trade, which was very dominant in the King Edward blocks, is now exceeded by food. However, what is also significant is the ownership of businesses. As Map 4 makes clear, the proportion of Pākehā business owners and operators (14 per cent) is much smaller than the percentage of Chinese (51 per cent) and Indian (16 per cent) business owners/operators. Overall, Asians now comprise 78 per cent of all business owners/operators in this section of Dominion Road, compared with the 14 per cent of shops owned/operated by Pākehā. This is particularly pronounced when we look at the ownership and/or operation of food premises: 22 (73 per cent) of the 30 food related businesses are Chinese-owned/operated while if Asian ownership is aggregated, 27 (90 per cent) are owned/operated by Asians.

This part of Dominion Road is characterised by the predominance of Chinese owners/operators (Map 4). From Balmoral Road, for a block and a half, there are literally only Chinese-owned/operated businesses, with 28 in a row on one side of the road. There are five businesses owned and/or operated by Indians (3), “Other Asians” (1) and Pākehā (1) in this section but they are surrounded by Chinese businesses – and they only appear towards the end of this section of the road. It is the density of this co-location and the overall dominance of Chinese owners/operators and activities which give this section of Dominion Road a very distinctive character. There is a strong presence of Chinese restaurants, with many reflecting the Hong Kong and PRC² origins of their owners and clientele. Menus are typically written in both Chinese and English, although, Chinese script dominates in most. There is a strong presence of Chinese customers, Mandarin or Cantonese are spoken routinely and, it would seem, an almost complete dominance of Chinese employees. Here the tipping point has been reached in terms of immigrant (Chinese) ownership/operators and the definitional threshold in terms of what constitutes an ethnic precinct is easily met. The anchor retailing is associated with food – fresh produce shops alongside restaurants – and is accompanied by a range of other retailing and service functions that serve the Chinese community – traditional Chinese medicines, acupuncture and massages, the occasional Chinese lawyer or dentist (although this is not a typical area

2 Peoples Republic of China.





Map 4: Classification of businesses by ethnicity of owners/operators along Dominion Rd
 Source: Integration of Immigrants Programme, 2011

for such professional services), video shops specialising in Chinese films, beauty and photographic processing shops that feature Chinese models and signage, and travel shops specialising in travel to Chinese homelands.

Dominion Road generally is an important reception area for new Asian/Chinese immigrant businesses but this particular section provides a much denser level of activity, to the point of almost total domination. Furthermore, the dominance of food retailing emphasises the importance of the meeting, shopping and eating functions of an ethnic precinct for new migrants (Sales et al 2008, p. 6) as well as the re-creation of homeland products/services, language and cultural practices. The number and density of Asian/Chinese owned/operated businesses, and their visibility, confirms the presence of an Asian (Chinese-dominated) ethnic precinct.

Dominion Road as a Contact Zone

Dominion Road represents one of many 'new contact zones' that are part of globalised gateway cities (see Yeoh cited in Hannigan 2010, p. 81). These zones are important for immigrants and co-ethnics as they provide the familiar in terms of language, products and services; they provide a space in which it is possible for co-ethnics to enact 'cultural repertoires' (Yeoh & Huang 2012) and experience a familiar and culturally known environment. However, they also provide opportunities for other communities to consume 'difference', at least in the banal sense of purchasing goods and services from an ethnic/ethnicised 'Other', as well as being places of intercultural encounters. We were interested in why people came to Dominion Road, what they did when they got there and some of their impressions of the area. The survey results are modest in terms of the information gathered and much more could be gained by ethnographic accounts of the 'grounded everyday dimensions of urban encounters of difference' (Williamson 2012, p. 1).

Face-to-face surveys, of three to ten minutes, were undertaken in April and May of 2010 in Dominion Road by a native English speaker and a native Chinese (Mandarin) speaker. Working independently, they approached people at a number of locations along Dominion Road on several different days and at different times of the day. The native English speaker approached participants who appeared to be Pākehā (and other European-descent immigrants) while the Chinese speaker approached those who looked as if Chinese was their native language. Despite some inevitable errors of judgement, this subjective approach worked well.

Of the 44 people who participated, 54.5 per cent were female and 45.5 per cent were male. Given the gendered nature of shopping and the expectation that everyday shopping is primarily carried out by women (Gregson et al. 2002), it was not unexpected that more women than men were available to participate in the survey. Participants ranged from under 20 to over 70 years of age. Over three-quarters were between the ages of 20 and 59.

Place of birth and ethnic group identification questions provided different information. With regard to birthplace, half of the participants were born in Asia (19 in China and 3 in India), 13 participants were born in New Zealand and two interviewees were born in the United Kingdom. Seven participants cited 'Other' places of birth. With regard to ethnicity, nearly half of those interviewed identified broadly Asian ethnicities. Twenty of the 44 participants (45 per cent) identified as Chinese and one identified as Indian. A range of responses were employed by those interviewees of broadly European descent. Participants responded as 'New Zealander' (2), 'Kiwi' (4) or 'Kiwi' hybrid (1), while 'New Zealand European' (5), 'European' (1) and 'Pākehā' (3) were also claimed as ethnic groups. These responses point to the increasing complexity (and difficulty) of capturing a sense of ethnicity and how to label such ethnicity – important matters given the impact immigration can have on one's sense of ethnic belonging (see Clark 2009; Yoon et al. 2010). All of the participants resided in Auckland.

We were interested in how often, and on what days, interviewees visited Dominion Road. Of the 41 participants who answered this question, 33 (over 80 per cent) shopped in the ethnic precinct at least several times a week, if not every day (14 interviewees shopped there daily). Two respondents shopped weekly while others visited less frequently (one participant visited fortnightly, three visited monthly and two visited annually). Overall, for over 35 participants (85 per cent), visits to the area were part of their regular shopping practices, occurring at least once per week. We were also interested in **when** the participants visited Dominion Road. Overall, 34 (77 per cent) reported visiting the area on weekdays while 27 (61 per cent) visited Dominion Road on the weekend. None of the participants indicated that they visited for a special occasion. Of the 19 participants who were born in China, 14 (73 per cent) visited Dominion Road on weekdays while 8 (42 per cent) visited on the weekend. Of the 25 participants who were not born in China, 20 (80 per cent) visited on weekdays while 19 (76 per cent) visited on weekends. The high frequency of these visits, and the clear indication that consumers extend their visits across the week, indicates that consumers treat the area as an everyday part of their consumption practices.

Why shop in an ethnic precinct?

Participants mentioned a variety of reasons for shopping at the precinct on the day of the interview. Nearly half (21 of 44 participants) were shopping for material goods, 8 (18 per cent) worked in the area and 6 (13 per cent) visited the ethnic precinct to eat. Just over one-quarter of participants (27 of 44) also cited ‘other’ activities they were engaged in. These included: posting a letter, visiting family or friends, collecting a Chinese newspaper, banking, attending a job interview, visiting an internet café, and going to the hairdresser. Only one participant was on their way somewhere else which suggests that the precinct itself was the destination for most of the participants.

Table 1: Reasons for shopping

	All	China-born	Non-China-born
Business engagement	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Work in Dominion Road	8 (18%)	5 (26%)	3 (12%)
Shopping	21 (47%)	7 (36%)	14 (56%)
Eating	6 (13%)	4 (21%)	2 (8%)
Relaxation	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Going elsewhere	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Special event	2 (4%)	0 (0%)	2 (8%)

Participants’ responses indicate that ethnicity played some role in determining shopping practices. More than twice as many China-born participants work in the area (26 per cent versus 12 per cent). In addition, China-born participants were far more likely than those born outside of China to report going to the precinct to eat (21 per cent and 8 per cent respectively). It seems for those born in China, the precinct is closely intertwined with practices associated with daily life, including working and eating. Eating provides an important focal point for ‘doing’ culture. It offers an opportunity to get together with family and friends and also allows those born in China to continue everyday social practices in their own cultural/linguistic community. These findings reflect similar trends from other ethnic precincts dominated

by one ethnic/immigrant group around the world (see Jordan 2010, for a discussion of Sydney's Chinatown).

Shopping for goods was identified as the prime activity of more than half (56 per cent) of those participants not born in China and over one-third (36 per cent) of those born in China. The larger number of non-China-born participants supports Collins and Jordan's (2009) claim that consumers in ethnic precincts, who may not be part of the dominant ethnic group in that precinct, purchase consumables but also participate in a cultural environment that is different to their own. In this sense, Dominion Road was a site of commonplace diversity and encounter.

Specific shops visited

Clearly, people visited the ethnic precinct for a variety of reasons. A minority of the participants visited to go to the hairdresser (2), use the internet at a café (3) or complete their banking requirements (3). However, the majority of the shops the participants visited were related to the purchase of food for either consumption on the premises or preparation later at home. Of all participants, two-thirds (28) were visiting such places. In particular, 17 were visiting a supermarket (8 visiting a 'kiwi' supermarket while a further 9 were visiting an Asian supermarket), 10 were visiting a restaurant, and one participant was going to a foodhall.

Table 2: Shops visited

	All	China born	Non China born
Visit foodhall	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Visit restaurants	10 (22%)	8 (42%)	2 (8%)
Visit 'Kiwi' supermarket	8 (18%)	1 (5%)	7 (28%)
Visit Asian supermarket	9 (20%)	5 (26%)	4 (16%)
Visit hairdresser / beauty salon	2 (4%)	0 (0%)	2 (8%)
Visit bank	3 (6%)	0 (0%)	3 (12%)

Visit internet café	3 (6%)	2 (10%)	1 (4%)
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Of the 19 respondents born in China, 8 (42 per cent) were visiting Dominion Road to eat out at a restaurant. A further 6 (31 per cent) were going to supermarkets, most (26 per cent) visiting an Asian supermarket with just one visiting a 'Kiwi' supermarket. A large proportion of China-born participants cited other activities not specifically included in the survey. These included visits to the post office, a chemist, print shops and New Zealand or Kiwi-style product or gift shops.

Those not born in China were less likely to eat in a Dominion Road locale; just one respondent was planning to eat at the local foodhall and two were visiting a local restaurant. Those not born in China also tended to visit non-Asian supermarkets (7 participants; 28 per cent) more than Asian supermarkets (4 participants; 16 per cent). It would seem for those born outside of China that the Dominion Road precinct has a functional capacity, providing opportunities to secure supplies at places like supermarkets. Additional comments from these participants indicate that price and the quality of produce were important factors.

*It's cheaper than other areas and you can find every kind of shop here.
The fruit is good.*

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

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

The appeal of Dominion Road

We also asked what people appreciated most about shopping along Dominion Road. Placing birthplace to one side, 9 participants reported that the area was convenient. Perhaps related to the notion of convenience, nearly three-quarters of participants (73 per cent) claimed the area was close to home and a further four (11 per cent) that it was close to work. Proximity and locality are important factors for those shopping in Dominion Road.

Table 3: Like most about shopping in Dominion Road

	All	China born	Non China born
Convenient	9 (20%)	5 (26%)	4 (16%)
Good for meeting Chinese people	2 (4%)	2 (10%)	0 (0%)
Can do lots of chores in one place	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Can eat Chinese food	3 (6%)	3 (15%)	0 (0%)
Close to home	25 (73%)	9 (47%)	16 (64%)
Close to work	4 (11%)	2 (10%)	2 (8%)

Convenience was more likely to be cited as important for those participants born in China; five of the 19 China-born participants appreciated the convenience that Dominion Road offered. In particular, nearly half of those born in China liked that Dominion Road was close to home and a further two (10 per cent) participants appreciated Dominion Road's close proximity to their workplace.

It's convenient because I live nearby.

It is very close to my home.

In addition, the area offered a connection to Chinese restaurants, shops and other Chinese-speaking people. Somewhat surprisingly, just two of the 19 participants born in China stated that Dominion Road was good for meeting co-ethnics; however, some also noted that the language environment was familiar and there were few language difficulties. Again, patterns of everyday activity support and reinforce ongoing connections with other Chinese people and lifestyles.

There are many Chinese restaurants and shops.

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

Of the 25 participants who were not born in China, four (16 per cent) appreciated the convenience of Dominion Road. However, nearly all of those born outside of China liked the fact that Dominion Road was either near where they lived (16 non-China-born participants; 64 per cent) or worked (2; 8 per cent).

It's two blocks from home.

It's handy, I live just up the road.

For those not born in China, the area appears to offer a convenient and functional place to shop close to home or work; these shoppers appear to have little connection to Dominion Road as a specific ethnic location. When asked what they liked about Dominion Road, the responses received were sometimes off-hand or dismissive.

Nothing at all

Some non-Chinese participants' comments also suggested certain anxieties and a sense of disapproval about the area. Open-ended comments made it clear that some thought that the area was unattractive and sometimes respondents made reference to the perceived lack of cleanliness in the area.

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

Grubbiest shopping area in Auckland.

However, there were also exceptions as the following attests:

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

Overall, the results of the survey indicate that the proximity of the Dominion Road precinct to participants' homes or work was key to its appeal for all participants. Answers to the open-ended survey questions suggest that, for those born in China, the precinct fulfills the recognised purposes of ethnic precincts: a place to use a familiar language or eat familiar food, and purchase necessary consumer items. However, the open responses from the non-China-born participants suggest a divergence between those who appreciate the diversity offered by Dominion Road and those who 'put up with it', despite there being no 'normal' shops and it being a bit grubby.

Within this ambivalence toward Dominion Road, there are some potential insights. First, our surveys confirm the existence of a range of casual intercultural trading encounters; many of the reasons offered for shopping in Dominion Road were prosaic – proximity to work or home, cheapness, somewhere to eat – as well as the importance of the precinct as a source of ethnic-specific foods and cultural familiarity. Second, it would seem that Dominion Road can be characterised, in Amin's terms, as a 'micropublic' 'where engagement and negotiation across cultures is unavoidable' (Amin cited in Ho 2011, p. 605), especially given the density of both immigrant-owned businesses and the presence of significant proportions of immigrants as customers. Third, Dominion Road's precincts are also sites of 'people-mixing' (Noble 2009, p. 47). While it is hard to scale these observations up in the context of this modest study, there is perhaps enough here to suggest that Dominion Road does constitute a site of 'retail cosmopolitanism' where the simple act of purchasing goods or services provides an opportunity – however fleeting – to consume "differentness" and where place-based accommodations and negotiations (might) help facilitate intercultural encounters. What is not so clear, and what we allude to in the conclusion, is how to further amplify these insights to argue more persuasively for the merits of intercultural encounter in building a 'positive presence' (see Gonin 2010, p. 169) for both hosts and migrants in Auckland's ethnic precincts. This involves a more politically inspired aspect of the research in that we assume that cosmopolitanism – retail or otherwise – has positive outcomes in terms of cross-cultural understanding and empathy and contributes to social cohesion. We have explored these dimensions in more depth elsewhere (Spoonley & Peace 2012).

Ethnic Precincts: Is Dominion Road Any Different?

There is a considerable literature on ethnic precincts (see Zhou & Cho 2010; Sales et al 2008; 2009; Collins & Jordan 2009; Rath 2007b). The question here is whether Dominion Road as one ethnic precinct in Auckland is different to the ethnic precincts found in other immigrant destinations around the world. In relation to those found in settler societies (specifically Canada, the USA and Australia) or Europe, there appear to be few differences. When Sales et al. (2008) ask about the roles and images which characterise London's Chinese ethnic precincts, the answers differ little in terms of how Dominion Road might be described: the importance of "meeting,

shopping and eating”, providing “information, support and networks” and a place that provides an opportunity for “emotional attachment” (Sales et al 2008: 6-7). Both in terms of what is provided (products and services) and how it is represented, and given that the ethnic precincts discussed in both London and Auckland are dominated by Chinese businesses, the functions and descriptors apply to both. Moreover, as we argued at the outset, neo-liberal imperatives have privileged skilled migrants and market agency, so that ethnic precincts reflect the agency of immigrants – in part because of a strong imperative to seek self-employment but also as a function of labour market barriers for migrant labour (cf Rath 2006; 2007b). They reflect the cultural and social networks of a particular immigrant community – relational embeddedness – as well as blocked mobility in terms of the labour market. Again, many of the imperatives which contribute to the development of Asian/Chinese ethnic precincts in Washington, Vancouver or Sydney are the same for Auckland.

What does differ, at least with some of these international comparators, is the recency of Dominion Road. As Collins and Kunz (2007) point out, Sydney’s Chinatown was established in the 1860s – a very different trajectory to Dominion Road which has only emerged as an Asian/Chinese ethnic precinct in the last two decades. The effect is that nearly all of those involved in businesses along Dominion Road are recent immigrants (many have arrived since 2000). There is a New Zealand Chinese community that dates from the 1860s but this community is culturally and linguistically (the early community are Cantonese speakers – if they retain Chinese language competency at all – whereas recent arrivals are predominantly Mandarin speakers) very different to recent arrivals – and is not represented as far as we could ascertain in the businesses along Dominion Road.

This contributes to a second difference. In cities like Vancouver, Sydney or San Francisco, these long established ethnic precincts have been labelled as “Chinatowns” and have been commodified as ethnic tourist destinations (Collins & Jordan 2009; Rath 2007a; 2007b). This has resulted in a degree of ethnic theming (dragon statues, lantern symbolism, architecture), which has yet to occur on Dominion Road although the Auckland Council is beginning to play a role in “theming” parts of Dominion Road as Asian, specifically Chinese. But Dominion Road has yet to be incorporated into city branding as an “ethnic destination”.

In terms of the role of Dominion Road as an ethnic precinct both for co-ethnics and others, there is little to distinguish the nature of the businesses, the way in which the concentration of ethnic businesses operate as a place of familiarity and what they offer in terms of retail cosmopolitanism from similar ethnic precincts elsewhere in

the world. The point of difference with at least some of the better known Chinese ethnic precincts is the recency of Dominion Road as an ethnic precinct and the fact that it has yet to be branded as an ethnic tourist destination and as a “Chinatown”.

Conclusion

The material provided here describes one spatial outcome of a ‘multiculturally constituted’ space (Kesten et al. 2011, p.137) that forms part of the transformation of some of Auckland’s urban spaces consequent to changing immigration patterns post-1986. Dominion Road is typical of the ‘...gritty and characterful areas, usually on the fringe of city centres’ (Shaw et al. 2004, p. 1983), which are important reception areas for immigrant business establishment and consumption. The Dominion Road ethnic precinct is one manifestation of the intersection of neo-liberal immigration policy with the emphasis on skilled immigrants and their characterisation as entrepreneurial subjects who exercise market choice (see Lewis 2009; Spoonley & Meares 2011), alongside significant labour market barriers to employment engagement. The result is small business establishment, co-location and relational embeddedness within the largely Chinese and other Asian business owners. In addition, the presence of the ‘symbolism, style and iconography’ of their homelands and ethnicity (see Collins & Kunz 2007, p. 207) visibly marks these areas apart from other retailing centres in Auckland.

Such ethnic precincts are new in Auckland’s cityscapes and provide a zone of contact, a space where culturally diverse communities interact. The survey reported here indicated that there are several pragmatic reasons for shopping in Dominion Road, ranging from proximity to home or work, through to the low cost of goods and services, to more culturally specific reasons – familiarity for co-ethnic immigrants and a willingness to express some forms of cosmopolitanism on the part of non-Asian users. The resulting diversity of both business owners and customers creates a site for routine and casual encounters. A more detailed and grounded ethnographic study would make it possible to address more substantive questions about the role of such spaces in encouraging inclusiveness and cohesion (Spoonley & Tolley 2012). Does the cosmopolitanism of these precincts provide spaces of inclusion and ‘...facilitate the understanding and negotiation of cultural diversity, or, alternatively, reinforce [the] geographies of difference’ (Hannigan 2010, p. 84). Contact zones do not inevita-

bly or necessarily promote mutual understanding; they might just as easily reinforce the racialisation of the visible other, even though the products and services provided might be attractive (e.g. price competitiveness). Are *civitas* and *demos* (the ‘inculcations of community, civic responsibility and political judgment or participation sparked by meeting and mingling in public space’) (see Amin 2010, p. 22) inevitably an outcome of culturally diverse public spaces? As Amin (2010, p. 34) goes on to note, it might be that multiplicity is simply tolerated, especially as it is ‘structured around the tacit and unconscious negotiation of anonymous others, plural objects, assembled variety, emergent developments, and multiple time-space continuums’.

Identification and interaction might well be ‘conditioned by spatial configuration’, and there might be a ‘...double interplay between closeness and distance, strange and familiar...’ (Keith 2008, pp. 193-194) but more research needs to be conducted in order to ascertain whether ethnic precincts contribute to more substantive agendas such as inclusiveness and cohesion in the encounter zone that is Dominion Road. What is possible is that the existence of sites of retail cosmopolitanism creates the possibility for more substantive inter-cultural engagement.

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