

Place-Making in Ethnoburbs: The Production and Governance of Cultural Diversity in Sydney's Hurstville

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Statement of Originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work.

This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

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Abstract

Immigration and the global movement of people have continued to shape city form and urban life, engendering social and spatial transformations to the local context. There is a growing tendency for contemporary immigrants to settle in suburban areas, where ‘ethnoburbs’ are created under the influence of socio-demographic differences, changing national policies, and transnational flows of commerce and capital. Migrant groups actively adapt and remake long-established suburbs through commercial and cultural activity, and local governments must respond to sometimes dramatic changes in neighbourhood character. This thesis illustrates the various ways in which this has occurred in Sydney’s Hurstville, a suburb that is now well-known for having the largest concentration of ethnic Chinese in Australia.

This thesis focusses on the place-making practices that have influenced the spatial formation of Chinese residents in Hurstville, which is beyond the conventional notion of Chinatown. It provides new understanding and insights into how migrant groups inhabit, (re)shape and even territorialise spaces that are specific to the ethnoburb condition. It has four core empirical chapters. First, it traces how Hurstville has been transformed by the influx of immigrants and their establishment of ethnic businesses over several decades, using archival research to trace how narratives of change were expressed in local media. Second, it explores how ethnic entrepreneurs inhabited and transformed the commercial spaces of the ‘local street’ by a close study of architectural façades, signage, and layouts. Third, it analyses the suburb’s ‘foodscape’, and how a range of consumers, restaurant owners, and bloggers have interpreted Hurstville through its culinary identity. Fourth, it examines how local government has responded to the presence of a very concentrated, even homogeneous, set of migrant ethnic identities.

This research uses a mixture of official, archival, and ethnographic data to interpret a social and cultural reading of how urban change is experienced, and how diversity is represented and governed in the local neighbourhood. It applies architectural analysis to uncover the socio-spatial complexity of ethnic spaces, as well as to understand how suburban spaces are reconfigured by immigrants. In doing so, the research reveals the ‘fine grain’ of how local space in the ethnoburb is produced at the intersection of immigrants’ everyday spatial practices, (re)presentations of material culture, and regimes of urban governance. It shows the importance

of architectural elements from both the exterior and interior of the local street in acting as a platform to express the imaginations of certain ethnicities and identities.

The research contributes to the broad field of urban studies in three ways. The empirical case study of urban change in Hurstville contributes to the wider literature on Chinese diasporic settlements, developing the ongoing debate about cities 'after Chinatown'. There is also a particular focus on the shops and the main commercial street in Hurstville, including a detailed materialist analysis of how the architecture and signage of businesses inscribe a particular set of business norms, providing a new understanding of the complexities of ethnic spaces, the urban impacts of immigration, and migrant business studies. Finally, its study of how this is embedded within the historical fabric of Australian suburbia, and how the local government approaches the urban governance of cultural diversity, producing meaningful insights for future multicultural policy-making.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	IV
Table of Contents.....	V
List of Figures.....	VIII
List of Tables	XI
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Research Background	1
1.2 Research Aims and Questions	3
1.3 Theoretical positioning	5
1.4 Hurstville as a Research Site and its Significance.....	7
1.5 Outline of the Thesis.....	10
Chapter 2 Literature Review	15
2.1 Introduction	15
2.2 The Concept of Place-Making in Understanding Migrant Spaces	16
2.3 Evolution of Immigrant Community	19
2.3.1 Theoretical Foundation	19
2.3.2 From Ghetto to Ethnic Enclave	21
2.3.3 The Rise of the Ethnoburb.....	23
2.4 Ethnic Economy, Ethnic Business, and Ethnic Entrepreneurs.....	25
2.4.1 Spatiality of Ethnic Economy and Ethnic Business.....	25
2.4.2 Influence of Ethnic Activity on the Built Environment	27
2.4.3 Ethnic Entrepreneurs as Place-makers	29
2.5 Urban Governance in Multicultural Suburbs	31
2.5.1 The role of urban governance in immigrant communities	32
2.5.2 Modes of urban governance	33
2.5.3 Challenges in governing cultural and ethnic diversity	35
2.6 Conclusion.....	37
Chapter 3 Research Design	39
3.1 Introduction	39
3.2 Selecting Issues and Sites.....	40

3.3 Research Methodology: Spatial Ethnography	41
3.4 Research questions and selecting research methods	45
3.5 Research Method	49
3.5.1 Secondary data research	49
3.5.2 Observation	50
3.5.3 Visual methods	52
3.5.4 Shop-by-shop survey	53
3.5.5 Interviews	55
3.6 Data Analysis	63
3.7 Methodological Challenges	65
3.7.1 Reflection and limitations	65
3.7.2 The ‘migrant’ label and the question of ethnicity	66
3.7.3 The influence of the COVID-19 pandemic	67
3.8 Conclusion	68
Chapter 4 How did Hurstville become a Chinese Ethnoburb?	70
4.1 Introduction	70
4.2 Setting the Context: Australian Immigration and Sydney's Suburbanization	71
4.2.1 Australian Immigration	71
4.2.2 Sydney’s Suburbanization	72
4.3 The Transformation of Hurstville	74
4.3.1 Demographic transformation	76
4.3.2 Built environment transformation	81
4.4 Hurstville as a Chinese Ethnoburb	87
4.4.1 Why do people choose Hurstville?	87
4.4.2 Hurstville versus Haymarket Chinatown	91
4.5 Conclusion	96
Chapter 5 Forest Road as a ‘global street’: Commercial Culture and architectural adaptation	98
5.1 Introduction	98
5.2 The Retail Landscape of Forest Road and the Street Economy	99
5.2.1 Diverse uses	101
5.2.2 Ethnicity of business proprietors.	105

5.2.3 Business composition.....	106
5.3 Building Fabric, Commercial Vernacular, and Hybrid Urbanity	113
5.4 Social-Spatial change: Adaptive Reuse of Building Elements by Immigrants	125
5.5 Conclusion.....	136
Chapter 6 Spatial Practices and Cultural Symbolism in Ethnic Food Spaces	138
6.1 Introduction	138
6.2 Foodways and Migration: The Changing Culinary Landscape of Hurstville	140
6.3 Innovation in Hurstville’s Culinary Economy	145
6.3.1 Global chain stores.....	145
6.3.2 Social media and migrant restaurants.	151
6.4 Trans-Local Production of the Spatial Domains	156
6.5 Conclusion.....	166
Chapter 7 Governing Forest Road: Ethnic Diversity in Planning and Managing Place	168
7.1 Introduction	168
7.2 Multiculturalism in Australia and Urban Planning.....	169
7.3 Planning for Diversity: Insights from Hurstville.....	173
7.3.1 Economic development strategy.....	175
7.3.2 Urban design strategy.....	178
7.3.3 Hurstville City Council’s multicultural strategy.....	185
7.3.4 Forest Road: a key stage for the Lunar New Year Festival.....	188
7.3.5 Hurstville Museum & Gallery	191
7.4 Conclusion.....	196
Chapter 8 Conclusion	199
8.1 Overview of Research Project and Key Findings.....	199
8.2 Discussion 1: Chinatown, the Ethnic Enclave, and the Ethnoburb	205
8.3 Discussion 2: The Spatial Practices of Migrants	207
8.4 Discussion 3: Migrant Urbanism: Governance with Urban Diversity.....	209
References	211
Appendix: Shop survey data in 2019	229

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Links between key concepts.....	7
Figure 1.2 Geographical location of Hurstville in Sydney	8
Figure 3.1. Observation guide as applied to the fieldwork undertaken in Hurstville.....	52
Figure 3.2. Shop-by-shop survey route along Forest Road in Hurstville	54
Figure 3.3. Categories of data collected from fieldwork	64
Figure 4.1. Research area.....	75
Figure 4.2 Change of Hurstville’s population by percentage share of people’s ancestry	78
Figure 4.3. Hurstville’s population by language speaking, change over time	81
Figure 4.4 The transformation of landscape in Hurstville	84
Figure 4.5. Change of dwelling structure in Hurstville	85
Figure 4.6. Chinese migration settlement pattern in Sydney	89
Figure 5.1. Hurstville industry sectors of employment data in 2013	103
Figure 5.2. Data of existing retail activity along Forest Road in 2019.....	103
Figure 5.3. Spatial distribution of different shop types of Forest Road in 2019.....	104
Figure 5.4. Diagram of the interior spaces of the building at 273 Forest Road.....	109

Figure 5.5. Signage of diverse education centres in Hurstville.....	110
Figure 5.6. The Xinhua bookstore in Hurstville.....	112
Figure 5.7. Distribution of the diverse built fabric along Forest Road.....	115
Figure 5.8. Old commercial fabric of Hurstville.....	116
Figure 5.9. Strata titled commercial building directory sign on Forest Road.....	120
Figure 5.10 Hurstville urban design plan.....	122
Figure 5.11. The hybrid urbanity of Hurstville.....	124
Figure 5.12. Evolution of Streetscapes: A comparative analysis of historical and current images.	126
Figure 5.13. Spatial analysis of building 372 Forest Road, Hurstville.....	129
Figure 5.14. Spatial analysis of building 173a Forest Road, Hurstville.....	131
Figure 5.15. Spatial analysis of building 207 Forest Road, Hurstville.....	132
Figure 5.16. The diverse forms of shop signs along Forest Road.....	135
Figure 6.1. Opening day of machi machi on Forest Road, Hurstville.....	147
Figure 6.2. Interior design of machi machi.....	148
Figure 6.3. Machi machi's profile page on Instagram.....	149
Figure 6.4 Restaurant of Sun Ming exterior (left) and interior (right)	153

Figure 6.5. The entrance of Nimto	158
Figure 6.6. Nimto interior shop window area	159
Figure 6.7. Shop interior with two- and four-seater tables	160
Figure 6.8 Interior ornaments with traditional wine bottles, cups, and utensils	160
Figure 6.9. Decorations from Nepal	161
Figure 6.10. Restaurant of Dawan Malatong exterior (left) and interior (right).....	164
Figure 7.1. Location of Hurstville in Georges River Council area	175
Figure 7.2. Relationship between regional, district and local plans.....	176
Figure 7.3. Proposed division of character areas in Hurstville.	180
Figure 7.4. Public Protest Flyer in 2019	184
Figure 7.5. Celebration of Lunar New Year along Forest Road in 2020.....	191
Figure 7.6. Hurstville Museum & Gallery in MacMahon Street	192
Figure 7.7. Artwork ‘Georges River’ created by Guan Wei.....	195

List of Tables

Table 3.1. Research question and methods.....	48
Table 3.2. Interview design and process.....	57
Table 3.3. The composition of interview participants.....	59
Table 3.4. Interview guide	62
Table 4.1 Hurstville’s population by people born overseas, change over time	77
Table 4.2. The complexity of Chinese migration history in Sydney.....	79
Table 4.3. Market trends of housing prices in Hurstville	86
Table 4.4. Demographic characteristics: Hurstville versus Chinatown.....	93
Table 5.1 Ethnicity of business owners compiled from survey	106
Table 6.1. Profile of interviewees from twelve ethnic restaurants in Hurstville.....	141
Table 7.1. Planning system and policy context of Hurstville at different governance scales	174
Table 7.2 Summary of key planning interventions	196

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Ethnic and cultural diversity is one of the most powerful forces shaping the socio-spatial characteristics of the built environment in the cosmopolis (Sandercock, 1998). Due to intensified migration flows between global cities, the aggregation of various ethnicities and cultures in a specific context result in the restructuring, reconfiguration, and regeneration of urban spaces (Hatziprokopiou et al., 2016; Li, 2008; McNeill, 2016; Sassen, 2001; Schiller & Çağlar, 2009). Among contemporary migrant studies, extensive research on cultural diversity and urbanism has shown that migrants play an important role in shaping the social and physical landscapes of the host society. David (2010) points out the tangible impacts on urban fabric, such as the built of ethnic housing, cultural centers, places of worship, and even public buildings catering to specific ethnic communities. Lung-Amam (2017) expanded on this notion, and emphasized how an influx of migrants leads to the creation of suburban Asian malls, which serve as spaces of convergence for multicultural hubs and shape immigrants' sense of belonging. Zhuang's (2019) work further detailed the socio-economic dynamics, suggesting that these migrant-led urban transformations are not just cultural, but also have significant economic implications, leading to the growth of new business hubs and employment opportunities in host cities.

However, although these studies have shed light on the impact of migrants on the urban landscape, there remains a lack of insight into the material and symbolic processes through which urban spaces are produced or altered. As scholars such as Upton (2008) and Aboutorabi (2018) have noted, the influence of the built environment as an important factor in determining cultural and ethnic identity has been inadequately addressed in existing research. For instance, while we know that a migrant influx might lead to the rise of new ethnic businesses, we lack a comprehensive understanding of how the architecture (buildings, stylish features, facades), the layout, or the interiors of these spaces evolves to represent these new cultural and social nuances. The built environment is more than just buildings and roads; it serves as a physical record of societal evolution, offers insights into patterns of cultural assimilation or resistance,

and can even influence future urban planning and policy-making decisions. In this regard, there is a need for further study to be done on the ground that can capture the complex interactions and alterity produced by migrant groups in urban spaces.

In the Australian context, the 2021 Census data shows that about 1.4 million people identify with Chinese ancestry, making up 5.5% of the nation's population. It also highlights that among Australia's top five ancestries, only the group of Australians with Chinese ancestry has shown substantial growth since the previous census in 2016 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022). This growth is indicative of the enduring presence of the Chinese community in Australia, with roots tracing back to the nineteenth-century gold rush. Importantly, a significant portion of the Chinese immigrants refer to 'new Chinese' (Li, 2017a), representing those who arrived after 2000s and originated from mainland China with an urban professional background. This recent wave of new Chinese, as observed by Robertson et al. (2022) "have intensified the ongoing decentralisation of Sydney's Chinese population from Chinatown to suburban settlement, creating suburban localities where China-born residents now make up a high proportion of the population" (p3). In their new location, these settlements have become contemporary ethnic suburbs, often referred to as "ethnoburbs" (Li, 1998a).

Since the emergence of ethnoburbs, there has been significant attention in the fields of urban and migration studies, setting the stage for in-depth explorations into the evolving patterns of immigrant settlement. Ethnoburbs represent a departure from the traditional enclaves or ghettos, often situated in inner-city areas, as they are typically found in suburban locales and characterized by a blend of residential and commercial developments. These suburban ethnic communities do not exhibit a homogeneous ethnic makeup; instead, they feature a notable concentration of a particular minority group amidst a diverse population. Li (1998) defined the concept of ethnoburb as "a contemporary urban ethnic community in which one ethnic minority group has a significant concentration but does not necessarily constitute a majority" (p. 1).

It is in this background of shifting space types of immigrant community, dominated by a capture of the interaction between migration and urban spaces, that I started my research. There are several motivating reasons for this study. First of all, the research draws on the concept of 'ethnoburb' (Li, 1998) and focusing on the Sydney Chinese ethnoburb in Australia context.

This contributes to the burgeoning field of ethnoburb studies, providing valuable insights into the manifestation of this phenomenon outside of the North American context where it was first identified. This contextualization within the Australian milieu is pivotal, as it allows for a nuanced understanding of how global migration trends, local urban policies, and community dynamics converge to shape the suburban landscapes of immigrant communities.

Secondly, although Li highlights the character of a vibrant ethnic economy for ethnoburbs, there has been limited research focusing on the relationship between migrant economies and the symbolic transformation of neighbourhoods. This gap has been identified as a crucial area for future research by scholars studying migrant businesses. For example, Parzer and Huber (2015) have called for a research agenda to explore the complex interactions between migrant entrepreneurship, urban space, and the social and cultural changes that can result. In bridging this gap, this study also addresses an overlooked research facet within urban studies: the social-spatial effects of migration on the architectural and built fabric of ethnoburbs — with a particular focus on the articulation of material culture and ethnic identity to a new territory. This thesis aims to fill these gaps by analysing the ways in which symbols, signs, and meanings are produced, displayed, and distributed by migrant businesses at the local level.

Finally, the growing migration has led to a challenge in urban planning and governance practices on managing ethnic spaces and acknowledging the rights of ethnic minorities in the urban places of host countries (e.g. Fincher (2003), Fincher and Iveson (2008), Zhuang (2013, 2019, 2020, 2021). There is a need for further research to examine how planning strategies, design guidelines, policies, as well as other planning interventions can work effectively to respond to and be compatible to the needs of immigrants.

1.2 Research Aims and Questions

It is in this context that this thesis focuses on the place-making practices found in ethnoburbs. This perspective highlights the importance of interpreting spaces and places that have been inhabited, reshaped, or even territorialised by the agency of immigrants. More specifically, it involves a deep analysis of the crucial role of material urban spaces —from building shops to

architecture interior—in articulating and showcasing cultural identity, heritage, and a sense of belonging.

The research aims to explore the evolution and transformation of ethnoburb to understand the impact of global migration on the spatial practices of ethnic communities and their place-making outcomes embedded in the built environment. It further challenges how cultural identity is constructed and represented in the suburban landscape and how diversity is managed and governed at the local level. The empirical focus was a Chinese ethnoburb located in Sydney named Hurstville. In detail, the thesis is structured around four research question:

- 1) How has Hurstville become a Chinese ethnoburb? How do the changes in the spatial fabric of Hurstville relate to the wider canvas of changes in Australian urbanism and society?
- 2) How do the changes of the ‘local street’ relate to concepts such as globalisation, migration, and complex flows of identity? How do ethnic entrepreneurs inhabit and transform the commercial street to accommodate their cultural practices and complex set of commercial uses?
- 3) How are immigrant entrepreneurs’ spatial practices related to the expression of cultural identity in everyday consumption landscapes? How does this express itself through the design, food offering, and culture of eating that is often associated with the ethnic economy?
- 4) How do local governments respond to the presence of a very concentrated, even homogeneous, set of migrant ethnic identities? How are policies, strategies, organisations, events, arts and media ‘institutionally embedded’ (or not) within the urban governance framework?

1.3 Theoretical positioning

In asking these series of research questions, this study is situated at the intersection of urban studies, migration studies, as well as the closely related fields of urban geography and urban sociology. This theoretical positioning section seeks to link the key concepts across ethnoburbs, place-making, ethnic economy, and urban governance, thus establishing a cohesive theoretical foundation for the research.

Ethnoburbs, emerging as a contemporary spatial type of immigrant community, are not merely physical spaces but also socio-cultural entities where diverse ethnicities interact, negotiate, and assert their identities. Current research on ethnoburbs has predominantly focused on their demographic characteristics (Li, 1998b; Zhou et al., 2008), socio-economic impacts (Kye, 2018; Marks, 2019), and patterns of settlement (Harun & Filion, 2021; Lin & Robinson, 2005). However, there is a noticeable gap in understanding ethnoburbs from the perspective of place-making. The concept of place-making refers to the multifaceted process through which communities and individuals shape their environment to reflect their cultural, social, and identity-based needs and values, turning generic spaces into meaningful places (Friedmann, 2010). Zhuang (2019) in her research on the role of ethnic entrepreneurs in suburban placemaking pointed out, “placemaking is a social, economic, cultural, political, and physical construct that involves continuous involvement of people and communities. With increasing immigrant settlement in suburbs, the suburban ethnic placemaking phenomenon needs to be explored” (p 3). This insight highlights the importance of a place-making perspective in understanding ethnoburbs.

As such, my research aims to use the concept of place-making to analysis a Chinese ethnoburb in Sydney and contributes a deeper understanding into the urban migrant studies through which spaces evolve into places with distinct meanings, representations and identities. In this vein, the integration and representation of cultural identity within these suburban landscapes is a critical aspect of this research. Material cultural scholars, like J.B Jackson, have stated that physical elements like buildings, objects, and landscapes can act as clues to interpreting cultural meanings behind everyday practices (Jackson, 1984). Others have examined housing (Aslankan, 2017; Mai & Shamsuddin, 2008), green gardens (Yazdani & Lozanovska, 2016),

religious buildings (David, 2010), and home interiors (Olesen, 2010) as material spaces to represent cultural identity. However, the bustling commercial street with diverse ethnic businesses, serves as a significant site for cultural representation and place-making, has not been adequately examined in the context of Australia ethnoburbs.

In order to speak to the gap of commercial street in shaping the ethnoburb and representing ethnic diversity, it is necessary to link the current research with ethnic economy literature which highlights the role of ethnic businesses, such as restaurants, grocery stores, and kitchens serve as “important sites where ethnicity is practiced and reproduced on a daily basis” (Sen, 2012, p. 198). These places foster a strong sense of co-ethnic solidarity and contribute to a robust ethnic economy (Kaplan & Li, 2006; Light, 2005). However, less is known about the spatiality of ethnic economy, especially how ethnic entrepreneurs actively (re)produce and (re)shape ethnic spaces in terms of architectural and material elements. This is where the perspective of place-making becomes crucial, as it offers a lens through which we can scrutinize the complex interplay between space, culture, and economy.

Further, with the diverse types of ethnic business and economic activities proliferating on the street, the street has become an important node where “migrants enact and thereby contribute to the cultural representation of the city and become engaged as facilitators of neoliberal governance.” (Glick-Schiller & Çağlar, 2009, p. 189). This offers a tangible manifestation of urban planning’s potential to foster inclusivity and manage diversity, necessitating the capacity for careful and considered city design and policy-making. Such planning creates environments that welcome a wide range of people and cultures while also effectively handling and celebrating the variety of identities and experiences present in a diverse urban landscape. Thus, the research deepens its analysis of ‘place-making in ethnoburbs’, linking it theoretically to concepts of urban governance. Building upon the works of planners and theorists such as Zhuang and Fincher in understanding multiculturalism planning, the research then unpacks the complexities of managing diversity in ethnoburb, highlighting the role of local authorities in governing city spaces with respond to the presence of cultural identity.

In summary, this thesis establishes a comprehensive theoretical framework that intertwines ethnoburbs, place-making, ethnic economy, and urban governance (see Figure 1.1). This

framework offers a basis for empirically exploring the place-making of a Chinese ethnoburb in Sydney, examining how cultural diversity is produced and governed and has the potential to contribute to the wider literature on Chinese diasporic settlements, ethnic economies, and immigrants' spatial practices within an ethnoburb context.

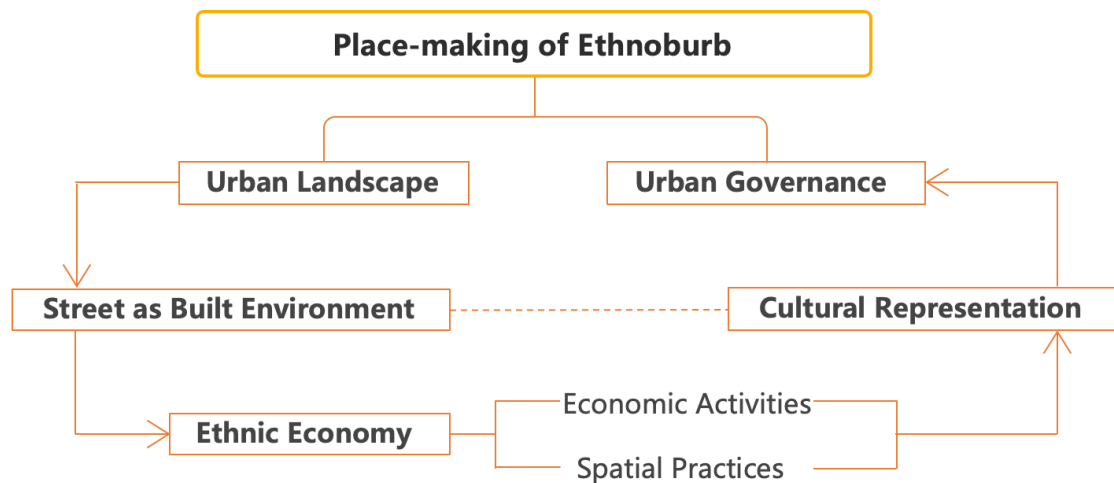


Figure 1.1 Links between key concepts

(Source: by the author)

1.4 Hurstville as a Research Site and its Significance

The empirical research site is the suburb of Hurstville, which is located approximately 15kms south-west of the Sydney CBD in the Georges River local government area (see Figure 1.2). Since the 1990s, the influx of Chinese immigrants has transformed this formerly White-dominated suburb in terms of businesses, socio-spatial character, and political structures. This transformation has, to a great degree, critically challenged the place identity of this local space in public rhetoric and is often framed in the wider Sydney media as the most intense cluster of ‘new Chinese’ migration. For example, Hurstville was claimed to be “Sydney’s real Chinatown” (Walters, 2015), “a Chinese ethnoburb” (Marks, 2019), and “Sydney’s biggest Chinese ethnoburb” (Anderson et al., 2019, p. 64).



Figure 1.2 Geographical location of Hurstville in Sydney

(Source: by the author)

Notably, its central commercial street Forest Road, which runs for 1.5 km on either side of the train station epitomizes an area in which migrant businesses and cultures are embedded within the urban fabric. The street serves as a prime example of how migrants have shaped and transformed the urban landscape to reflect their agency and presence. As Marks (2019) stated, “Hurstville mirrors, on a magnified scale, a swag of Sydney suburbs: increasingly multicultural, more than half the population in this Sydney suburb now has Chinese heritage” (Para 6). Despite its significant Chinese demographics, the complex practices of the different ethnic individuals living, shopping, and place-making in this suburb have yet to be fully investigated.

This focus on Hurstville as the empirical case study is significant in three ways. Firstly, the study contrasts with previous academic research in Australian migration studies that focussed on identifiable ‘ethnic enclaves’ (Anderson et al., 2019; Collins & Kunz, 2010) or areas deemed problematic within historical migrant groups (Dunn, 1998), as opposed to their contribution to

the spatial formation of ethnic Chinese in a suburb of Sydney. This thesis provides an academic study of Hurstville in the context of a migrant place, where it has been perceived by public media as the most intense cluster of new Chinese migration in the wider Australian context.

Secondly, strategies for representing cultural identity in urban spaces vary across the suburbs of Sydney, and Hurstville captures the concentrated diversity of the city in its own unique way. For example, in 1989, Cabramatta, a suburb with a high concentration of Indo-Chinese residents, built The Pai Lau Gateway, a ceremonial gate typical of many 'Chinatowns' internationally. The Gateway project was entirely funded by local businesses and community organisations, and it was approved by the local council in terms of enforcing an Asian theme for the suburb (Dunn, 1998; Kevin & Suzannah, 2006). In 2021, Burwood Council approved a development application for the renovation of an old pub into a late-night food precinct, which was named the Burwood Chinatown Precinct Project (Burwood Council, 2021). This venture aimed to bring together the communities in the Burwood Local Government Area (LGA) through dining and leisure activities.

In contrast, it is noticeable that Hurstville has no visible signs of adopting a similar approach, despite having a high ethnic Chinese concentration. This provides a striking paradox, as it is home to the highest Chinese population in Sydney, yet from the standpoint of local governments and local businesses, there is no apparent desire to celebrate its ethnicity in the physical architectural form of the suburb. Despite the significant Chinese demographic in the census data, the local government does not publicly promote the suburb as a "Chinese community" or "Chinatown" in its urban design and strategic planning. Local businesses, understanding this stance, are not pushing for a themed-food precinct similar to Chinatown or Burwood. Thus, it is very important to consider why the representation of "Chineseness" in Hurstville is performed in a subdued and nuanced way in the urban landscape, forming its own aesthetic of places as ethnoburbs.

Thirdly, Hurstville's main commercial street, Forest Road, is an economic hub for most Chinese immigrants due to the concentration of ethnic restaurants and shops. What can be seen when walking along this street is a bustling marketplace, featured a diverse array of visual representation, including unique ethnic characters and symbols that differ from those found on

typical Australian streets, such as red lanterns, Chinese knots, 'Fu' character decorations, traditional Chinese medicine shops, etc. Interestingly, many of these businesses have come to inhabit the vernacular commercial architecture heritage of British colonial suburbia. These symbols reflect the area's multicultural character and are representative of the significant cultural impact of globalisation. Furthermore, the diverse surfaces and shopfronts of Forest Road are representative of the significant cultural impact of globalisation in relation to urban development and commercialization. It matches the idea of a 'local shopping street' that is shaped by "global toolkits of representation" (Zukin et al., 2015, p. 26). Thus, this research sees this street not just as a site of business, but also as a symbolic cultural landscape.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis has eight chapters in total, which applies urban analysis at different levels across the four major research questions outlined above. Furthermore, this research also delves into the myriad sociocultural and economic relationships impacting the agency of migrants, spatial practices and place-making of ethnic entrepreneurs, as well as well as making connections across the local and global structures of urban political power.

Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical framework to critically analyze the intricate interactions among ethnoburbs, place-making, the ethnic economy, and urban governance. It starts by exploring the concept of place-making in understanding migrant spaces, and underscores the importance of investigating the suburban ethnic place-making phenomenon as more immigrants settle in suburbs. The chapter then reviews the evolution of immigrant settlement patterns, transitioning from ghettos to ethnic enclaves, and culminating in the emergence of contemporary ethnoburbs (Li, 1998a). Drawing on Li's (2008) characterization of ethnoburbs as 'global economic outposts' (p.100), existing research often emphasizes the landscape of the ethnic economy (Kaplan & Li, 2006; Light, 2005) and the role of ethnic entrepreneurs in creating ethnic commercial landscapes. However, current literature lacks a spatial perspective in analyzing the formation of ethnic businesses and the spatial practices of ethnic entrepreneurs as place-makers who shape the space and transform the built environment. This gap is further emphasized by examining the mixed embeddedness theory proposed by Kloosterman et al.

(1999), which aids in understanding the place-making practices of ethnic entrepreneurs and their connection with urban governance in a multicultural society.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methods used for the study, which is itself informed by the theoretical review of previous studies in Chapter 2. This thesis takes its methodological cue from three key related works, including research by Kay Anderson et al. (2019) on the urban transformation of Sydney's Chinatown; Zukin et al.'s (2015) edited collection regarding global cities and local street projects; and Suzanne Hall's (2012) street ethnography work on the examination of the super-diverse street. Drawing on their research methods as an important guide, the ethnographic methods in this thesis include a shop-by-shop survey along Forest Road, semi-structured interviews with five different groups, on-site observation, as well as a review of secondary data. In addition, architectural drawing techniques of the building façades and photographs were used as visual cues to uncover socio-spatial configurations of ethnic spaces. All these methods are collated under the umbrella of 'spatial ethnography' (Sen, 2011), which uses both textual and visual tools to provide a greater interpretive means of understanding the complexity of ethnoburbs, gaining insights into what spatial behaviours were occurring in certain commercial places and, more importantly, the meaning behind these actions. Chapter 3 also reflects on the methodological challenges of the fieldwork research.

The following chapters each develop an empirical element of the research. Chapter 4 traces how Hurstville has been transformed by the influx of immigrants and their establishment of ethnic businesses over several decades, using archival research to trace how narratives of change were expressed in local media. The chapter begins by situating Hurstville's local change within the broader context of Sydney's suburbanization and Australia's immigration patterns. This helps to understand how social and economic dynamics at the broader city and national level influenced the immigration pattern at the local level. It continues with an examination of how the suburb experienced an influx of new Chinese immigrant settlers, mainly Mandarin speakers from mainland China, since the 2000s, who comprise a high proportion of the local population and have intensified the transformation of Hurstville into a Chinese ethnoburb. Lastly, it maps the reasons why Chinese immigrants chose Hurstville as the gateway suburb and examine the difference between Hurstville and Chinatown with respect to the demographic character, business activity, and ways of representing ethnicity in the built

environment. The chapter highlights the emergence of clusters of Chinese restaurants and shops along the local street that have contributed to the streetscape transformation of Forest Road with Chinese-language characters and iconography.

Chapter 5 develops this transformative theme in greater depth by exploring how ethnic entrepreneurs have inhabited and altered the commercial spaces of the ‘local street’ by a close study of architectural façades, signage, and layout. Here, Forest Road is framed as “vernacular spaces supporting a unique urban cultural ecosystem” (Zukin, 2012, p. 281), which offers a useful lens with which to view the suburb’s commercial culture. In order to capture the symbolic and representational practices in the built environment, it is crucial to establish a relationship between the suburb’s economic activities with their presence in the urban fabric. Thus, the analysis in this chapter includes two key components. Firstly, it documents the economic environment of Forest Road to show the usage of the spaces, drawing on the review of commercial census data and the author’s own shop-by-shop survey data. The recognising of the diverse street economies echoed what Kaplan and Li (2006) have called ‘landscapes of the ethnic economy’ and indicated that the street is a spatial, economic, and social configuration of global and local interplays. Secondly, this chapter examines the building morphology and commercial fabric of the street to detail how the built environment has changed to reflect the commercial culture and ethnic identity of the suburb. Specifically, reviewing the ways in which individual buildings—mostly mid-20th century architectural façades of the inter-war development era—have been inhabited, designed, restructured, and presented by immigrants producing what some theorists have called ‘landscapes of commercial vernacular’ (Jackson, 1984). The findings note that multiple forms of spatial behaviours are formatted on the local street, including signage, décor, text, colour, and merchandise, representing commercial culture and ethnic identity in the physical settings.

Chapter 6 continues the commercial culture analysis, moving the analysis to the suburb’s ‘foodscape’ and turning to a particular ethnic space: the individual ethnic restaurant. Differing from the street space as a public realm to reflect the localised everyday mobility, restaurants are intimate spaces where ethnic entrepreneurs have the power to customise and adapt the interior, and also where social interactions between various individuals happen. The chapter examines how a range of consumers, restaurant owners, and bloggers have both generated and

interpreted a particular culinary identity in Hurstville. It documents four case studies of contrasting food and beverage businesses to examine the different circumstances of ethnic places' formation, both materially and symbolically. There are two key findings in this chapter: first of all, by undertaking fine-grained restaurant ethnographies, it demonstrates that the production of interior architecture and composition are imbued with meanings, memories and imaginations as a symbolic way to represent commercial culture and ethnic identity. Moreover, this place-making practice indicates a local-global connection through interior furnishing, layout, food offering, and marketing strategies with entrepreneurs as spatial agencies. In this regard, the local spaces of Hurstville are produced and constructed with spatial reference to other places and spaces globally, as well as to real and imagined territories. Secondly, this chapter also finds that the diverse culinary scene in Hurstville has created an innovative ethnic economy. This is manifested by the arrival of global franchises on Forest Road and the creative interaction between social media and migrant restaurants in promoting food culture. Chapter 6 enriches both immigrant business and ethnic economy literature by providing new insights into the understanding of ethnic businesses and points out how they symbolically transform urban space and contribute to the local neighbourhood's economy.

While the previous chapters aim to demonstrate how migrant groups actively adapt and remake long-established suburbs through commercial and cultural activity, Chapter 7 shifts the perspective to urban governance, examining how local government and other local associations, such as Chambers of Commerce, have responded to sometimes dramatic changes in neighbourhood character. It emphasises the multiple ways that urban governance actors respond to a very concentrated, even homogeneous, set of migrant ethnic identities in terms of policy and strategy making, embedded institutions, and public event organizations. Three key areas are discussed in this chapter: firstly, how Australia's multicultural policy at the national and state level shapes the local government area's actions in terms of urban governance; secondly, it reviews how the municipality of George River Council governs the diversity of Hurstville suburb socially, culturally, economically, politically and physically. Lastly, the chapter identifies some major challenges and issues in the current planning framework and offers recommendations for future urban governance in an ethnoburb. This analysis is used to expand the understanding of the ethnoburb by highlighting how urban development strategies have shaped localized places.

Chapter 8 provides a summary of the findings in this study. The research makes several key contributions. The first is a set of contributions to ethnoburb literature. It provides a new understanding of how migrant groups inhabit, shape, reshape, and even territorialise spaces that are specific to the ethnoburb condition. This kind of analysis expands the concept of ethnoburb by highlighting its spatiality and gaining insight into the local urban impacts of Chinese migration in place-making and spatial practices. Furthermore, the interpretation of the different formations of ethnic restaurants extends the understanding of ethnic business in terms of how ethnic entrepreneurs shape the local spaces, why they do so, and how they contribute to the ethnic economy. The second is a set of contributions to the urban studies literature. First, the empirical case study of urban change in Hurstville contributes to the wider literature on Chinese diasporic settlements, developing the ongoing debate about cities 'after Chinatown'. Secondly, the particular focus on the shops and the local street, including a detailed materialist analysis of how the architecture and signage of businesses inscribe a particular set of business norms, provides a new understanding of the complexities of ethnic spaces, the urban impacts of immigration, and migrant business studies. Finally, the study of how this is embedded within the historical fabric of Australian suburbia and how the local government approaches the urban governance of cultural diversity, produces meaningful insights for future multicultural policy-making.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter establishes the theoretical framework essential for analyzing the complex interplay among place-making, ethnoburbs, the ethnic economy, and urban governance. It provides an overview of some of the key concepts and scholarly literature which relate to how Chinese migration's place-making practices in the context of Sydney ethnoburb, and relates it with the broader theory discussion on migration, diversity and urban spaces.

Central to this exploration is the concept of place-making, a crucial framework for understanding the dynamics within migrant spaces. Thus, this chapter starts with a review on how the concept of place-making be applied in understanding migrant spaces. After that, Section 2.3 traces the evolution of immigrant communities, presenting a historical perspective from early ghettos to the development of ethnic enclaves and ethnoburbs. This transition is not only spatial but also reflects significant shifts in the societal and economic roles of these communities, underscoring the need to examine suburban ethnic place-making in the context of increasing suburban immigrant settlements.

Further, the review delves into the intricate relationship between ethnic economy, ethnic business, and ethnic entrepreneurs in understanding the formation of ethnic spaces. It examines how the spatial dynamics of ethnic economies and the practices of ethnic entrepreneurs contribute to place-making, thus shaping the built environment. This section portrays ethnic entrepreneurs as pivotal agents in the ethnic place-making process, fostering change and innovation. It also introduces the mixed embeddedness model (Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Kloosterman, 2010), which offers insights into the interplay between ethnic entrepreneurship, institutional and political contexts, and urban governance.

Thus, review on urban governance in multicultural suburbs presents a critical examination of how cities manage the complexities brought about by cultural and ethnic diversity. This section

explores the roles, modes, and challenges of urban governance in fostering inclusive and harmonious multicultural communities.

Finally, through this literature review, it aims to build a comprehensive understanding of the linkage between the key concepts and identify the research gaps in existing literature, which provide a theoretical foundation for the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

2.2 The Concept of Place-Making in Understanding Migrant Spaces

The ongoing phenomenon of global migration profoundly influences urban experience and the form of cities, underscoring the intricate relationship between place, diversity, and migration. Scholars like Sassen captures this dynamic, stating that migration “as a set of processes whereby global elements are localized, international labour markets are constituted, and culture from all over the world are de- and re-territorialised” (Sassen, 2000, p. 82). This complex interaction leads to the transformation of places by migration movements, which in turn shape the manifestation of global flows within the daily urban spaces of cities. It is this background set the stage to highlight ‘place-making’ as a vital concept in comprehending the multifaceted nature of migrant spaces, offering a lens through which the effects of globalization on urban environments can be observed and understood.

The concept of place-making, first introduced in the 1970s, was initially defined as "the process of creating quality places where people want to live, work, play, and learn" (Wyckoff, 2014, p. 2). Over the years, this term has widely been used among architects, urban planners, and urban designers as a community development, economic development and infrastructure development tool. With time, the understanding of place-making expanded beyond its early conceptions. As described by Project for Public Spaces,

placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities

that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.
(<https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>)

This demonstrates that place-making is a participatory and dynamic process. It involves analyzing how various stakeholders, including residents, business owners, and policymakers, can co-create spaces that not only fulfil functional requirements but also resonate with the cultural and social identity of the community. This approach supposes that urban inhabitants actively participate in the construction of place, contributing to a sense of belonging among diverse groups. In this vein, Lefebvre's theoretical framework on the production of space offers a valuable lens through which to view the interactive layers of place-making. Lefebvre (1991) contends that space is a social product, or a complex social construction (based on values, and the social production of meanings) that affects spatial practices and perceptions. According to Lefebvre, the space allows us to understand the relationships between physical forms, social interactions, and the urban rhythms which characterize the place. By integrating Lefebvre's insights, the understanding of place-making can be deepened beyond physical design to encompass the processes by which spaces are shaped and reshaped by those who inhabit and use them. This aligns with the expanded view of place-making not just as the design of physical spaces, but as the creation of environments that reflect and sustain the communal and individual activities that define them (Davison, 2013; Friedmann, 2010).

From this theoretical perspective, place-making is understood as a dual process that involves the physical transformation of spaces as well as the intangible crafting of identity and belonging within them. In this exploration, I hope to link the concept of place-making to the study of migrant spaces, where place-making emerges as a key clue to understand how immigrant communities interpret, interact with, and transform their urban environments. I argued that in this framework of understanding migrant spaces, place-making process reflect a dual endeavour: they physically shape their surroundings to meet cultural and social needs while also embedding their unique meaning and identities within the urban fabric. This is particularly evident in how migrant spaces evolve into places imbued with specific meanings, representations, and identities that resonate with the experiences of their inhabitants.

Empirical research in this realm has focused on various aspects of the built environment, from the intimate scale of individual dwellings to city scale of urban landscape, revealing the layers

of meaning that contribute to a sense of belonging and place. For example, scholars like J.B. Jackson have pointed to the narrative power of the physical landscape in revealing the cultural layers and community values (Jackson, 1984). Groth and Wilson (2003) build on top of Jackson's theory to further explore the everyday cultural landscape as they state "human groups and their activities embody, reflect, and reveal American culture" (P.5). In line with this, recent studies have delved into the specific spaces or places. David (2010) examine how religious buildings, such as mosques and temples, are not merely places of worship but landmarks of identity for migrant communities in contemporary Southeast Asian cities. These structures often incorporate traditional design elements from the migrants' countries of origin, serving as a bridge between the past and present, and a sanctuary of cultural continuity amidst a new urban landscape. Olesen (2010) highlights how interior designs and decorations are tailored by immigrants to reflect their cultural identity, turning private dwellings into repositories of cultural heritage. Similarly, Yazdani and Lozanovska (2016) delve into the significance of gardens and green spaces within immigrant households, which are often designed to recreate a sense of 'home', fostering both personal well-being and community ties. Furthermore, from a broader community perspective, Davison's (2013) research on Fruitvale's urban redevelopment underscores the critical impact of place-making on community identity, illustrating that local perceptions of 'Latino character' both informed design choices and sparked debates on essentialism and social inclusivity within the neighborhood's evolving social fabric. Ip's (2005) research on Brisbane's 'ethnoburbia' highlights place-making through the lens of Chinese migrants' settlement patterns, contesting traditional notions of 'Chineseness' and challenging the conventional image of ethnic enclaves by demonstrating a dynamic, integrated approach to urban ethnic identity.

Building on these scholarly insights, my research applies the concept of place-making to explore the phenomenon of ethnoburbs—a distinctive settlement pattern among contemporary immigrant communities. The ethnoburb provides a rich analytic context where the process of place-making is both intensified and highly visible. Zhuang (2019) in her research on the role of ethnic entrepreneurs in suburban placemaking highlight that, "placemaking is a social, economic, cultural, political, and physical construct that involves continuous involvement of people and communities. With increasing immigrant settlement in suburbs, the suburban ethnic placemaking phenomenon needs to be explored" (p 3). This insight pointed out the importance

of place-making perspective in understanding ethnoburbs. In filling this gap, my study aims to extend the dialogue on place-making by exploring how the Chinese ethnoburb in Sydney is not just a physical locality but a dynamic canvas where cultural identity, community bonds, and a sense of belonging are actively constructed and reified. Such an analysis contributed to deepen our comprehension of how migrants has transformed an ordinary locality into a vibrant cultural landscape through their place-making practices.

Central to this exploration is the role of ethnic commercial streets, which are crucibles of cultural expression and identity maintenance within these communities. The presence of diverse ethnic businesses and the interaction between vendors and customers create a dynamic street life that is reflective of the community's cultural mosaic. Research on the commercial activities within migrant-dominated suburbs has shown that these spaces act as significant sites for cultural representation and place-making (Hall, 2012; Zukin et al., 2015), yet the complexities of these interactions require further exploration within the Australian context.

2.3 Evolution of Immigrant Community

2.3.1 Theoretical Foundation

Since the early twentieth century, with the accelerating human mobility and the fast-growing number of global immigrants, immigrant research has emerged as a critical area within the social sciences. The investigation into immigrant communities and their sociological underpinnings began with the Chicago School of Sociology. The assimilation theory, proposed by theorist Robert Park, was a foundational concept. The theory is structured around the idea that immigrant communities undergo a transformative process through which they gradually ‘melting into’ the prevailing culture of the host society. Park’s theoretical framework outlines a sequential social process involving “competition, conflict, accommodation, and ultimately, assimilation”(Park & Burgess, 1921). They stated that assimilation “is a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups, and, by sharing their experiences and history, are incorporated with them in a common culture” (Park and Burgess 1921, p. 735).

Spatial assimilation was a tangible manifestation of this theory, with the assumption being that successful integration into the socio-economic fabric would lead immigrants to seek residence in more affluent and mainstream areas, leaving behind their ethnic neighborhoods. (Massey & Denton, 1985). Yet, the reality was more complex; immigrants often maintained strong ties to their communities, which provided social and cultural support, contrary to the assumptions that economic success would lead to spatial dispersion and cultural assimilation.

Challenging assimilationist perspectives, pluralism emerged after World War II as scholars observed that cultural differences persisted across generations, suggesting a multi-faceted, differentiated form of integration. Scholars like Rubin (1975) highlight the coexistence of multiple cultures, emphasizing the idea that the social fabric is composed of a mosaic of cultural patterns rather than a singular, assimilated entity. This observation led to the concept of ethnic cultural pluralism, acknowledging that immigrant integration was not a path to cultural erasure but a process where original ethnic identities could be maintained and even strengthened (White, 1978). Spatially, this was reflected in the diversity of immigrant enclaves, such as back ghettos in America (Massey & Denton, 1993), Chinatown in New York (Zhou & Logan, 1991), and a Cuban enclave in Miami (Portes, 1987). These enclaves challenge the notion of a homogenous national culture by underscoring the persistence and value of diverse cultural identities within the urban landscape.

As the scholarly focus has shifted with the development of globalization, transnationalism has emerged as a crucial perspective for rethinking the dynamics of migration process and the spaces of immigrant settlement. Scholars such as Portes et al. (1999) have observed the formation of transnational communities, within which migrants maintain active participation in economic, political, and socio-cultural realms across national boundaries. Vertovec (2003, 2004) has further elaborated on the concept, describing how migrants establish and sustain multifaceted social relations that span their countries of origin and settlement, and highlighting the influence of global economic dynamics and immigration policies in shaping these transnational connections. These individuals often lead a mobile lifestyle, anchored in a network of diverse and flexible social ties. This body of work collectively underscores a shift from traditional assimilationist views to recognizing the multidirectional flows of culture, identity, and capital that define the contemporary migrant experience. As Castles (2002) has

suggested, "It is possible that transnational affiliations and consciousness will become the predominant form of migrant belonging in the future. This would have far-reaching consequences."(P.1158).

2.3.2 From Ghetto to Ethnic Enclave

In terms of spatial configuration, there has been a notable evolution in immigrant settlements, marking a shift from the isolation typical of ghettos to the dynamic autonomy of ethnic enclaves. This transformation of immigrant spaces not only mirrors scholarly discourse but also underscores a deepened appreciation for the adaptability and self-determination of immigrant communities. Historically, 'ghetto' has been a term laden with implications of segregation, economic disenfranchisement, and social exclusion (Ward, 1968). Yet, research reveals a distinct type of immigrant community, which diverges from the concept of the ghetto. In his seminal work, Portes (1981) laid the foundation for understanding ethnic enclaves, conceptualizing ethnic enclaves as spatial concentrations where immigrant groups not only reside but also create robust economic networks. He stated that 'immigrant groups which concentrate in a distinct spatial location and organize a variety of enterprises serving their own ethnic market and/or the general population' (p. 291). This definition paved the way for recognizing the positive attributes of ethnic concentration, such as mutual support networks, preservation of culture, and economic opportunities.

Subsequent research has expanded upon and refined Portes' foundational framework. Portes and Manning (1986) further detailed the complex nature of ethnic enclaves, highlighting their comprehensive role as ecosystems for immigrants. They critiqued that:

Physical concentration of enclaves underlies their final characteristic. Once an enclave economy has fully developed, it is possible for a newcomer to live his life entirely within the confines of the community. Work, education, and access to health care, recreation, and a variety of other services can be found without leaving the bounds of the ethnic economy. (Portes and Manning, 1986, p.64-65)

This reflects a more dynamic understanding of how ethnic enclaves can become self-contained units, fostering environments where immigrants are able to sustain their livelihoods while

preserving cultural distinctiveness. However, these enclaves are not isolated from the broader societal fabric; instead, they are engaged in a reciprocal relationship with it, facilitating economic integration through entrepreneurial ventures and labor markets, as McDaniel and Drever (2009) have described. Acting as cultural bridges, they enrich the social tapestry of host countries with a diversity of traditions and practices—a phenomenon that Lin (2011) note as enhancing societal multiculturalism. This dual role of ethnic enclaves has reshaped our understanding of immigrant settlements, moving beyond the stigmatization associated with ghettos to a recognition of the resilience and adaptability of immigrant communities.

Among the empirical research of ethnic enclaves, the concept of Chinatown was for many years the most typical and ubiquitous form of the ethnic enclave, which attracted significant attention for immigrant community research. A considerable number of studies have examined the experience of the Chinese diaspora in western countries and the complexity of Chinatown as the traditional mode of Chinese immigrants' spatial clustering (Anderson, 1991; Lai, 1988; Zhou, 1992). In particular, Kay Anderson's (1991) classic work on Vancouver's Chinatown was an illuminating study that provided a stronger account of social agency, where it was the new local inhabitants who shaped and formed their space, rather than being defined by the physical attributes of their environment.

In recent decades, scholars have argued ethnic enclaves in many cities are in transition and reconfiguration. For example, Luk and Phan's (2005) research on how ethnic Vietnamese business people transitioned from mainland China and Hong Kong to Toronto's Chinatown. They argue that the conventional enclave concept based on a singular ethnic group population has to be re-evaluated due to the rising occurrence of ethnic transition, particularly in the globalising era. This highlights the dynamic change of Chinatown with the shift in demographic composition. Furthermore, Li (2017a) acknowledges the 'new Chinese' are "those who were born in mainland China after 1949 and who grew up in the People's Republic of China (PRC) — the new China" (p. 22). The new Chinese immigrants were differentiated from previous generations both in regard to financial capital and know-how.

Considering Sydney's context for example, Chinese immigrants during the early phases of migration to Australia (e.g., during the gold rush in the 1850s) were Cantonese speakers from

southern China. Most of these earlier Chinese immigrants worked at the levels of the produce industry from market gardeners to retailers and wholesalers while later waves of migration shifted to Mandarin speakers from northern or central China. As Anderson et al. (2019) describe in detail the changing waves of Chinese immigrants in Sydney:

Prior to the 1980s, the China-born population of greater Sydney was very small. In the early twentieth century, the White Australia policy had halted immigration to Australia overall, and this, together with significant return migration, had resulted in a decline of the China-born resident population (Anderson et al. 2019, p. 66).

However, as they point out, in the 1980s and 1990s migration from China to Australia intensified due to many political reasons. The shift in the Chinese migration population has significant implications for the study of Chinatowns and the way they are perceived, leading to an ongoing debate about cities ‘after Chinatown’, creating a “suburban concentration of ethnic Chinese”(Gao-Miles, 2017, p. 83).

2.3.3 The Rise of the Ethnoburb

In search of a different theory to explain how the settlement patterns of Chinese immigrants have changed spatially into suburbs, American geographer Wei Li coined the term ‘ethnoburb’ to theorize the concentration of Chinese immigrants and businesses in the suburbs of Los Angeles. In Li’s study of the conceptual framework, she defined ethnoburb as:

Ethnoburbs are suburban ethnic clusters of residential areas and business districts in large metropolitan areas. They are multiethnic communities, in which one ethnic minority group has a significant concentration, but does not necessarily comprise a majority (Li, 1998a, p. 479).

She also points out the difference between ethnoburb and Chinatown as two different ethnic settlement types in terms of demographic characteristics, economic structure and dynamics of formation. Subsequent research has expanded on Li's foundational work, exploring the transformation of ethnic segregation models into affluent suburban clusters, delving into the complexities of middle-class Asian migrant communities in these socio-spatial trends. (Harun

& Fillion, 2021; Ip, 2005; Kye, 2018; Li, 2017b; Lin & Robinson, 2005; Liu et al., 2022; Marks, 2019; Zhou et al., 2008).

In the Australian context, scholarship has also drawn on the ethnoburb concept examining multiple aspects including social integration, cultural encounters, and built environment form. For example, Ip (2005) explores the transformation of Brisbane's Chinatown, examining how the dynamics of place-making of new Chinese led the emergence of new 'ethnoburbia' in the Southside in Brisbane. Gao-Mile's (2017) ethnographic study of Melbourne's Box Hill illustrate how the suburb represents 'a spatial reconfiguration of ethnic Chinese' (p. 83) through a mix of local and transnational connections.

With a focus on exploring the ethnoburb diversity in Sydney, Wise (2010) uses the notion of 'sensuous multiculturalism' to investigate the socio-cultural practices of and relationships between immigrant ethnic groups and the existing population in the Ashfield, a suburb in the Inner West Council area and located approximately 8 kms from the Sydney CBD. Williamson (2016) investigated how different scales of belonging and mobility came together in the context of migrants' incorporation processes in Campsie, a multicultural suburb within the City of Canterbury-Bankstown, located some 11kms from the Sydney CBD. More recently, Robertson et al. (2022, p. 3426) have argued for the need to specify the hybridity of Sydney's Chinese population, as they argued:

We coin the term Sinoburb to describe Sydney's evolving Chinese ethnoburbs because it implies shared but multiple threads of Chinese cultural heritage and foregrounds cultural formations that can encompass the apparent hybridity and multiplicity of Chinese identities in the spaces in question

The above researches on the ethnoburb diversity are the critical starting point of my research. However, I aimed to go further by developing a deeper analysis on the spatial formation with the ethnoburb. The reason for this aim stems from Li's significant findings about ethnoburbs, which importantly positions them as open entities functioning as 'outposts of the global economy', rather than just isolated ethnic communities. Building on this understanding, it becomes crucial to examine the impact of ethnic business activities and the transnational networks and spatial practices of ethnic entrepreneurs in shaping suburban spaces. This

research direction aligns with Zhuang's (2019) call: "the development of ethnic entrepreneurship and ethnic economies and their spatial and physical influence on spaces (and vice versa) remain unexplored, especially in suburban contexts" (p. 520).

In conclusion, while existing literature provides a robust understanding of ethnoburbs in terms of socio-cultural and economic aspects, a deeper exploration into their spatial dynamics remains essential. This research addresses this gap by critically examining the place-making practices that define ethnoburbs. It seeks to understand how migrant groups not only inhabit these spaces but actively shape and territorialize them, with a particular focus on the role of ethnic commercial spaces.

2.4 Ethnic Economy, Ethnic Business, and Ethnic Entrepreneurs

This section delves into the intricate relationship between ethnic economy, ethnic businesses and ethnic entrepreneurs. It specifically aims to identify and explore three critical gaps in the existing literature: 1) the spatiality of ethnic business 2) the spatial practices of ethnic entrepreneurs, and 3) the influence of ethnic activities on the built environment. While existing studies have touched upon these aspects, a comprehensive understanding that integrates these dimensions with the broader concept of ethnic economy is still lacking. This review seeks to bridge this gap, providing a foundation for further empirical investigation.

2.4.1 Spatiality of Ethnic Economy and Ethnic Business

Bonacich and Modell (1980) defined the concept of the 'ethnic economy', by which they referred to the self-employed and their co-ethnic employees. Light et al. (1994) extended the definition to include "an immigrant or minority business and employment sector that coexists with the general economy" (p. 65). Although researchers constantly perfect and improve the definition of the ethnic economy, this term is widely used to describe the spatial concentration of ethnic businesses in ethnic residential areas.

This concentration has played a significant role in transforming urban landscapes, turning once-deprived areas into vibrant, sometimes gentrified, or even tourist spots. In Wood's (1997)

research on Vietnamese American retail activities in the place-making practices in Northern Virginia, the author argued that “although never the center of a Vietnamese American residential neighborhood, the assorted retail shops gave Clarendon a singularly Asian feel for about a decade, simultaneously bringing economic vitality to it” (p. 65), thereby encouraging and solidifying Clarendon as a hotspot for Vietnamese Americans. Rath et al. (2018) mirror this in their examination of Amsterdam’s Chinatown, showcasing how the commodification of ethnic culture can transform neighborhoods into tourist attractions.

However, the spatial dynamics of ethnic businesses are not static and are evolving with broader socio-economic trends. In traditional views, as noted by Allen and Busse (2016), ethnic businesses were spatially concentrated and located in the inner city (such as the Chinatowns and Koreatowns, etc) and had little impact on mainstream society as these businesses were only offered culturally-specific goods and services to co-ethnic consumers to meet their basic needs of daily life. This scenario is evolving with global suburbanism and the emergence of ‘ethnoburbs’. As Li pointed out ethnoburbs businesses are more active participants in the local and global economy (Li, 2017b). Spatially, a prime example of this evolution is the presence of ethnic malls. Unlike traditional small-scale ethnic businesses, these malls are larger, more organized, and integrated commercial spaces. They offer a diverse array of services and products, not only catering to specific ethnic groups but also attracting a broader spectrum of consumers. Zhuang’s (2013) study on the Pacific Mall in Markham, Ontario and Lung-Amam’s (2017) research on Asian malls in Silicon Valley illustrate this trend. These malls are not only local shopping destinations but also function as transnational nodes, reflecting the global connections and identities of the ethnoburbs. They symbolize a shift from isolated ethnic marketplaces to integrated commercial centers, playing a pivotal role in the cultural and economic life of these communities.

In addition, the role of food in immigrant cultures further underscores the importance of ethnic businesses in daily cultural practices. As Gabaccia (1998) and Bonus (2000) observe, restaurants and grocery stores are not just commercial spaces but also cultural hubs where ethnicity is actively maintained and expressed. These sites, beyond their economic function, foster in-group solidarity and support a robust ethnic economy ((Bonacich & Modell, 1980; Light et al., 1994)). Yet, as Kaplan and Li (2006) assert, understanding ethnic businesses and

places requires an appreciation of the multiple spatial behaviors that shape these environments. This suggests that the production of ethnic spaces is not only an economic or social process but also a physical and material one (Mankekar, 2002; Sen, 2012). In this vein, I argue that in order to understand ethnic business and ethnic places we need to understand the multiple forms of spatial practices that produce the space and frame the experience of these sites.

2.4.2 Influence of Ethnic Activity on the Built Environment

When discussing immigrant economic activity, studies of global cities have mainly centred on the accelerating financial markets and growing international trade under economic globalisation through a macro lens. However, the relationship between the changing urban built environment and immigrant workers has not been fully explored in existing literature. It is important to address this question because immigrants who work in the self-employment sector and run their own small businesses are regarded as place-makers who create unique “flows of connections, knowledge and information” whilst “engaging in various forms of transnational production and consumption” (Anderson et al., 2019, p. 116).

Statistics that track Australia’s migrant labour also shows the rate of self-employment growth and diversification since 2000, underscoring the important role ethnic minorities are playing in the small business sector. National census data reveals that in 2006, 29% of all small business operators were born overseas (ABS 2006). What the format of these statistical measures cannot address are the questions of how social production of new ethnic business and economic activities influence the local spatial acts of reuse, reconfiguration, and modification of urban commercial spaces.

For ethnic minority groups, commercial streets, which appear following the settlement patterns of immigrants to meet their needs, have additional significance as a symbolic public terrain in the built environment. Zukin (2012) suggests that:

The apparent obsolescence of local shopping streets neglects their important role in reproducing cultural identity and belonging: as a public space of civil society; as a component of an environmentally sustainable, walkable city; as both a visual image and an enactment of an historic community. Though

different actors play roles in this enactment over time, they all may sustain feelings of identity and belonging. (p. 283)

Commercial streets thus demonstrate a form of urban adaptation that respond to particular daily life patterns and practices, while concurrently representing a series of cultural diversities. The question of how the presence of migrant businesses has symbolically transformed the local neighbourhood has been examined by scholars from different fields. Research has often focused on aspects related to ethnic consumption patterns, relating to ethnic shopping behaviours in grocery and supermarkets, as well as the social and ethnic distinction of immigrants (Lo & Wang, 2006; Wang, 2004). Some researchers in urban sociology have examined the way of consuming ethnicity by branding the place as an ethnic tourist destination and contributing to the neighbourhood's urban gentrification (Parzer & Kwok, 2013; Rath, 2007). Other studies have also noted the importance of commercial culture in shaping the identity of urban minority neighbourhoods. For example, Anderson et al. (2019) noted urban planning interventions, which have ranged from the installation of street furniture that echoes Chinese or Asian themes, to the stylised linguistic symbols that are present across public spaces including shop windows, street signs, and lamp posts. These motifs have been further generated, replicated and reproduced by the shops and businesses of the area, culminating in a "strong commercial vernacular" (Anderson et al., 2019, p. 59).

This suggests that migrants' economic activities, as well as their desire to show their cultural and diasporic identity, influences the way of using existing buildings and the adaptation of current built form more than formal local government intervention. The array of different elements on the street, including signage, decoration, names, colour, music, products and so on, make up a unique entity as a result of not only the process of place-making but also meaning-making. The street represents a mix of local and global influences, resulting in a hybrid urbanism or diasporic urbanism that responds to cultural needs and way of life. This creates what Hall and Datta (2010) claimed was a sense of contiguous home which is "physically distanced but symbolically proximate" (p. 69). In this sense, research on the spatial format of commercial areas can provide valuable insights into the cultural, social, and economic dynamics of these spaces, and how they differ from other city environments. Understanding the symbolic meaning of these areas can also help to inform policies and planning decisions that impact ethnic communities. Additionally, research in this area can also

contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which ethnic identities are shaped and expressed in urban settings.

2.4.3 Ethnic Entrepreneurs as Place-makers

Existing studies on the topic of ethnic entrepreneurs, have primarily focused on their contribution to economic growth and employment opportunities, as evidenced by the works of authors such as Kloosterman & Rath, (2001); Selvarajah & Masli, (2011); and Stiles & Galbraith, (2004). However, the role of ethnic entrepreneurs in shaping urban spaces goes beyond mere business operations; they engage in various spatial practices that contribute to place-making. Liu et al. (2014, p. 566) argued for the expansion of research about ethnic entrepreneurship to include ‘the overall social-spatial processes of ethnic entrepreneurship’ including placemaking and community building.

Ethnic entrepreneurs are key players in the ethnic placemaking process. Their spatial practices encompass a range of activities, from the physical design and layout of business spaces to the creation of culturally resonant environments that cater to specific ethnic communities. Zhuang (2019) offers a pivotal examination of the spatial experiences of ethnic entrepreneurs, particularly in the context of suburban retail spaces in Toronto. Zhuang’s work reveals how these businesses contribute to creating institutionally complete communities, illustrating how these businesses help form institutionally complete communities, where ethnic-oriented services are a significant part of the local enterprise landscape. Hall’s studies (2011, 2013) delve into the transformation of commercial streets in London. These streets, characterized by ethnic signage and motifs, showcase the cultural imprint of ethnic businesses in urban landscapes. Hall et al. (2017) delve deeper into this phenomenon, viewing migrant streets as dynamic urban spaces that reflect complex historical and geopolitical narratives. This approach marks a significant step in understanding the multi-layered impact of ethnic entrepreneurship on urban spaces.

Building on these existing literatures, I argued that the significance of the space produced by ethnic entrepreneurs is profound. In detail, their businesses convey a sophisticated ‘cultural

message' to immigrant consumers through ethnically coded products, signs, and symbols, creating spaces with a unique 'look and feel' that caters to the 'desire for diversity' among certain consumer groups. Furthermore, the produced space also refers to the various social relations that are superimposed on the spatial order, these relationships being "shaped by the interaction of producers (ethnic entrepreneurs), consumers and the critical infrastructure (regulators, community leaders, critics, place marketers)" (Collins & Kunz, 2010, p. 40).

These multifaceted social-spatial interactions and relationships underscore the necessity of viewing ethnic entrepreneurship within a more comprehensive framework and highlight the mixed embeddedness theory proposed by Kloosterman et al. (1999) in understanding the place-making practices of ethnic entrepreneurs. This theory posits that the success and strategies of ethnic entrepreneurs are significantly influenced by their embeddedness in a mixture of socio-economic, political, and institutional contexts (Kloosterman et al., 1999). Kloosterman and Rath (2001) further elaborate on this theory, emphasizing that the entrepreneurial activities of ethnic groups are not only shaped by their personal ambitions and cultural backgrounds but also by the broader market dynamics, regulatory frameworks, and community networks they operate within.

In the context of place-making, this theory helps explain how ethnic entrepreneurs contribute to the shaping of urban spaces. Their businesses are not merely commercial ventures but are deeply interwoven with the socio-cultural fabric of the neighborhoods they inhabit. For instance, the choice of location, the design of the business space, and marketing strategies are often reflections of both the entrepreneur's cultural heritage and a response to market needs and opportunities. Furthermore, the regulatory frameworks and policies in a given area play a role in shaping the entrepreneurial landscape. Licensing laws, zoning regulations, and immigration policies can either facilitate or hinder the establishment and growth of ethnic businesses.

Despite the robustness of the mixed embeddedness theory in explaining these dynamics, Parzer and Huber (2015) addressed a gap in current research is the interplay between ethnic entrepreneurs and different key players in placemaking processes. As they stated:

Processes of symbolic transformation are shaped by policies at the local, national and international level. It is a constellation of very different players–

–policymakers, city-marketing and branding institutions, consumers and the media—who obviously play a crucial role in these processes...By examining the different ways in which migrant businesses are referred to by these policies and players, along with their particular motivations, the different developments and outcomes of symbolic urban transformation are expected to be explained. (p. 1275)

This perspective reinforces the importance of institutional and political contexts as well as the broader scope of urban governance in understanding ethnic entrepreneurship and ethnic business in the place-making process. This linkage forms an essential foundation for the next section of the review, which delves into the dynamics of urban governance in multicultural suburbs, further unraveling the multifaceted nature of urban placemaking and transformation.

2.5 Urban Governance in Multicultural Suburbs

Urban governance refers to the systems, processes, and institutions that are responsible for making decisions for and managing the affairs of cities. It involves a wide range of activities and responsibilities that are essential for delivering public services. Policy development is an important part of urban governance, as it involves the creation of policies related to land use, transportation, housing, urban planning and built environment design, economic development, and environmental management, among other areas. Service delivery is another crucial aspect of urban governance, as it involves the provision of essential public services, such as police and fire protection, healthcare, education, in addition to other fundamental infrastructures. Moreover, in the planning and decision-making process, urban governance requires the participation of a wide range of actors, including government agencies, civil society organisations, private sector organisations, and individual citizens, who work together to decide the direction and development of cities.

The success of urban governance is dependent on the effective coordination and collaboration between different actors and the ability of the governance system to respond to the changing needs and priorities of city residents. Effective urban governance also requires transparency,

accountability, and participation, which is essential for building trust with the local population across all demographics.

Multicultural suburbs, in particular, pose unique challenges for urban governance as they often have a diverse population with different cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. This section will explore how urban governance practices and policies affect immigrant communities, discuss the different models of urban governance and their implications for ethnic minorities, as well as the challenges faced by cities in addressing the needs of diverse populations.

2.5.1 The role of urban governance in immigrant communities

The issue of urban governance and its impact on immigrant communities is a complex and multifaceted one, with a range of factors to consider, including political, economic, and social issues. Previous research on urban governance has focussed on the impact of urban planning on promoting diversity and difference in multicultural cities (Fincher, 2003; Sandercock, 2003; Thompson et al., 1998). For example, Fincher (2003) explored the role of urban planning in promoting diversity and inclusion in cities, particularly in regard to immigrant communities. She argues as follows,

There are three conceptual frames, or ways of looking, at this profoundly social interpretation of planning for cities, that need simultaneously to be deployed. First, there is planning for the diverse range of people who live and use the city – this is planning for diversity; second, there is planning our institutional settings so that we encourage equality of access across places – this is planning to reduce difference; and third there is planning to encourage interaction and contact – this is planning for encounter. (Fincher, 2003, p. 55)

Continuing on the theme of urban planning and its role in promoting diversity in cities, Fincher and Iveson (2008) proposed a framework for planning in a multicultural city that takes into account issues of redistribution, recognition, and encounter in order to foster social cohesion in diverse urban environments. They argued that planning should aim to “redistribute resources and opportunities fairly, recognise the diversity of cultural and social differences, and encourage encounters between different groups” (Fincher & Iveson, 2008, p. 1). Furthermore,

Fincher et al. (2014) conducted a comparative study of the role of government in promoting cultural integration in different cities around the world and found that the most effective policies were those that emphasised inclusiveness and encouraged active engagement between different cultural groups.

Despite the implementation of multicultural policies aimed at promoting integration and reducing inequality, the effectiveness of these policies is often limited in immigrant communities due to the immigrants' marginalisation and exclusion from decision-making processes and their lack of meaningful participation in governance processes, resulting in negative outcomes such as poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion. (Thompson et al., 1998; Williamson et al., 2004)

In light of these challenges faced by immigrant communities, there is an increasing need to gain a thorough understanding of the experiences and processes of immigrant settlements and integration at the local level. For example, Zhuang (2020) underscored the significance of local political institutions and organisations in promoting integration, with an emphasis on municipal governance, policies, infrastructure, and service provisions. She argued that essentially, new migrants have an ongoing and ever-evolving relationship with other residents, shared public spaces, and local infrastructure in addition to personal basic needs such as access to employment, education, transportation and so forth. Inasmuch as existing residents require the same support of these areas from their local governments, there is also a responsibility for these political bodies to provide services that specifically assist immigrant settlement to engage and involve in the place-making practices.

2.5.2 Modes of urban governance

Burayidi (2000) classified urban planning practices into three phases: assimilation, integration, and multiculturalism. These phases can be considered as three models of urban governance with respect to accommodating ethnic and cultural diversity. These phases reflect the changes in the dominant ideologies and attitudes towards ethnicity and race, and how these attitudes have influenced urban governance and planning practices.

The assimilation model, which is the first phase, reflects a belief that minority groups and immigrants should be assimilated into the dominant cultural and political norms. This model emphasises the role of the central government in promoting cultural assimilation and integration and is characterised by policies and programs aimed at encouraging minority groups to adopt the values and norms of the dominant culture. The assimilation model is rooted in the belief that minority groups and immigrants are inherently inferior and that their cultural differences should be suppressed in order to promote cultural unity and stability, in addition to individual success within the host culture (Rumbaut, 1997). Under the assimilation model, the government often enforces strict policies aimed at promoting cultural assimilation, such as language and cultural tests. As described by Wrench and Solomos (1993), “language and cultural tests, for instance, were seen as a means of ensuring that immigrants had assimilated into the dominant culture, and were therefore ready to take their place as full members of society” (p. 23). The emphasis on conformity and homogeneity under the assimilation model is reflected in the lack of recognition of cultural diversity. As Gordon (1964) pointed out, the assimilation model fails to recognise the rich diversity of cultural backgrounds and experiences that immigrant groups bring to the host society. It also fails to acknowledge the rights of immigrant groups to maintain their cultural heritage and identities.

The integration model, which is the second phase, reflects a shift away from the emphasis on cultural assimilation and towards the promotion of integration and inter-cultural exchange. This model places greater emphasis on the importance of cultural diversity and the preservation of cultural identity. Under this model, the government recognises the importance of cultural diversity and is more open to cultural exchange and integration. Research conducted by Hiebert (2000) showed that inter-cultural exchange and integration in urban areas can be promoted through the creation of inter-cultural exchange programs and initiatives that bring together people from different cultural backgrounds. Their research is demonstrated example of the importance of creating opportunities for inter-cultural exchange and understanding in promoting integration and reducing tensions between minority groups and the dominant culture.

The multiculturalism model, which is the third phase, reflects a more comprehensive approach to accommodating ethnic and cultural diversity in urban governance. This model emphasises the importance of cultural pluralism and recognises the unique cultural identities and values of

minority groups. It is characterised by policies and programs aimed at promoting cultural diversity and ensuring equal treatment for all cultural groups in urban governance and planning practices. Under this model, the government recognises the importance of cultural diversity and is committed to promoting cultural pluralism and ensuring equal treatment for all cultural groups. For example, research conducted by (Fincher, 2003; Fincher & Iveson, 2008; Fincher et al., 2014) showed that the implementation of multicultural policies and programs can lead to the creation of more inclusive and equitable urban environments. This research demonstrated the importance of recognising cultural diversity in the urban governance framework.

All in all, the three models of urban governance with respect to accommodating ethnic and cultural diversity – assimilation, integration, and multiculturalism – reflect the changing attitudes and approaches towards ethnic and cultural diversity in urban areas over time. Each model has its strengths and weaknesses and reflects a different approach to accommodating cultural diversity in urban governance and planning practices. Research has shown that the integration and multiculturalism models are more effective in promoting cultural pluralism and ensuring equal treatment for all cultural groups, and these models provide a framework for understanding the evolution of urban governance and planning practices with respect to ethnic and cultural diversity in cities.

2.5.3 Challenges in governing cultural and ethnic diversity

The challenges faced by municipal governments in addressing the needs of diverse populations are many and complex. One challenge is to ensure that immigrant communities have equal access to services and opportunities, regardless of their ethnicity or background. A study by Collins (1995) found that immigrant communities often faced barriers to accessing services and opportunities, such as language barriers, lack of information, and discrimination. Addressing these challenges requires cities to engage immigrant communities in meaningful ways and to provide resources and support to help them navigate complex systems. To address these barriers, it is very important for local municipalities to implement a number of strategies to provide immigrant minorities with the resources and support they need. One effective approach is to create community-based organisations that serve as a liaison between immigrant communities and the local government. These organisations can provide information and

resources in a language that immigrant communities understand, and they can help immigrants navigate complex systems, such as the healthcare system or the legal system. Another strategy is to provide language assistance services to immigrants, such as interpreters and translations. This can help address the language barrier to ensure that immigrants who do not speak the dominant culture's national language have access to the information and services they need.

Another challenge is to ensure that cultural and ethnic diversity is recognised and valued in city planning and decision-making processes. This can involve gathering data and information about the needs and perspectives of diverse communities. A possible method to consider is the use of community surveys and focus group interviews, which can help to gather information about the experiences and challenges faced by immigrant communities. This data can then be used to inform policy decisions and design programs and initiatives that are specific for immigrants. In addition to gathering data, local governments can also create advisory committees or institutions to involve diverse groups in decision-making processes. For example, local governments can create a diverse representation of immigrant communities on political committees, such as the planning commission or the parks and recreation board, to ensure that their perspectives are included in policy decisions. Additionally, local governments could hold community meetings to collect feedback and input from diverse communities on key issues and decisions. Research has shown that involving immigrant communities in decision-making processes can lead to more inclusive and effective policies. For example, a study Min (2011) found that community outreach programs in New York City helped to increase immigrant participation in city government and led to more inclusive policies and services that responded to the needs of diverse communities. Another study by Zhuang (2020) found that community-based participatory research helped to increase immigrant involvement in decision-making processes and to improve health outcomes for immigrant communities.

Furthermore, it is also helpful for local government to organise cultural events, such as festivals and parades, to celebrate the cultural heritage of diverse communities and to promote understanding and acceptance. Additionally, local government can also curate or organise public art exhibitions and installations that reflect the cultural diversity of the community to promote understanding and appreciation of different cultures.

The above challenges have been taken into consideration in this research when examining the urban governance framework in suburbs with cultural and ethnic diversity. This thesis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how local governments respond to and effectively address the influx of diverse populations and the concentration of ethnic identities in local suburbs, as well as highlighting the crucial importance of adapting urban planning and design systems to accommodate ethnocultural diversity in urban areas. Through a place-based examination, this study seeks to provide valuable recommendations for the improvement of governance systems that accommodate ethnocultural diversity.

2.6 Conclusion

This literature review has systematically explored the multifaceted relationship between place-making, immigrant communities, and urban governance, with a specific focus on ethnoburbs and the ethnic economy. The review highlighted how place-making serves as a critical lens for understanding the transformation of urban spaces by immigrant communities, emphasizing the dual process of physical space alteration and the crafting of cultural identity and belonging. Key concepts, such as the evolution from ethnic enclaves to ethnoburbs and the role of ethnic entrepreneurs in shaping urban landscapes, were thoroughly examined, revealing the complex interplay between cultural identity, economic activity, and urban development.

The shift from traditional assimilationist views to more nuanced understandings of immigrant integration, as evidenced through the lens of multicultural urban governance, underscores the dynamic and evolving nature of urban spaces in the context of globalization and cultural diversity. Studies focusing on cities like Sydney have illuminated how these processes manifest in specific local contexts, offering valuable insights into the patterns of migration, settlement, and community building among immigrant groups. Despite the extensive research conducted in this field, a number of research gaps are identified below.

Firstly, the emerging trend of immigrant settlement in suburban areas necessitates a focused examination of suburban ethnic place-making in contemporary ethnoburbs. This exploration must go beyond surface-level observations to interrogate the deeper socio-cultural and economic forces that drive the creation and evolution of these spaces. An in-depth analysis is

needed to understand how these suburban landscapes are not just passive recipients of cultural imprinting but active participants in the shaping of immigrant identities and experiences.

Secondly, the acknowledged influence of ethnic entrepreneurs in urban landscapes opens a significant avenue for research, specifically in their spatial practices and the production of ethnic spaces. Current understanding is limited in capturing the full spectrum of their impact. There is a need to delve into a more detailed spatial analysis to examine how these entrepreneurs not only transform local neighborhoods but also how they contribute to broader global economic and cultural exchanges. This examination should extend to understanding the dynamics between local initiatives and global networks, offering a more holistic view of the production of ethnic spaces.

Thirdly, a research gap exists in effectively integrating the dynamics of place-making and immigrant community into actionable urban planning and governance strategies. The current literature often stops short of translating theoretical insights into practical applications. There is a critical need for rigorous analysis focused on how urban governance can proactively adapt and respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by immigrant-led transformations, especially in multicultural urban environments. This involves a strategic rethinking of urban policies and planning methodologies to ensure they are not only responsive but also anticipatory of the evolving needs and contributions of immigrant communities.

Chapter 3 Research Design

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the research design of the thesis, including how I defined and entered the research site, and the ways in which data for this thesis have been generated and analysed. In order to gain insight into the relationship between the changing of urban spaces and immigration, it was necessary to understand what was happening in certain urban spaces, and more importantly, the meaning of these actions. Therefore, a qualitative research design suited this research. In detail, I conduct a place-based investigation into the place-making practices of Hurstville, a dynamic Chinese ethnoburb in Sydney. The thesis aims to explore the evolution and transformation of Hurstville to understand the impact of global migration on the spatial practices of ethnic communities and their place-making outcomes embedded in the built environment. It further challenges how cultural identity is constructed and represented in the suburban landscape (especially the commercial street) and how diversity is managed and governed at the local level.

To achieve the research aim, the study adopts ‘spatial ethnography’ as the main approach, following Arjit Sen’s (2011) method designed to unpack the socio-spatial configurations that characterize urban spaces. As Sen explained: “rather than merely documenting the various building types and institutions in the region as is common in architectural heritage documentations, our intention was to identify cultural networks and relationships between the buildings and lived spaces in the neighborhood” (2011, p. 35).

Following Sen's approach in examining how the built environment had the capacity to accommodate cultural meanings under the methodology of spatial ethnography, this research extends these techniques to examine Hurstville. Specially, it includes the below research methods:

- Secondary data research, including historical records, public media, and policy and planning documents, which provides a contextual backbone for the study.

- Ethnographic observation, offering a qualitative lens through which to view the daily rhythms and interactions in Hurstville.
- Visual methods, including photographic documentation to capture the aesthetic and functional changes in the urban landscape.
- Architectural analysis, including architectural technique drawing of floor plan with interior layouts, façade drawing within shop windows, signs, advertisements, and cultural ornaments to show how urban spaces are used by immigrants to address their specific needs.
- A detailed shop-by-shop survey, providing business composition and ethnic business contents.
- Semi-structured interviews, eliciting personal narratives and insights that enrich the qualitative data.

This mix of methods is designed to facilitate a holistic understanding of Hurstville's transformation. Furthermore, the integration of visual and narrative elements through spatial ethnography allows this thesis to not just describe but to interpret the complex interrelations between migration, cultural identity, and urban change, offering a nuanced portrait of place-making in an ethnoburb context.

This chapter begins with a justification for selecting both the research sites and issues. The next section describes how an appropriate research approach was chosen that built on relevant previous studies and explains how these were adapted into this study. This section also identifies the required data for answering each research question and outlines the sources used to collect data. It is followed by a section outlining the research methods which were employed in the study and how the data was analysed. Finally, the methodological challenges arising during the fieldwork are addressed.

3.2 Selecting Issues and Sites

The research design initiated the study with a defined geographical area, then studied the forms of migrant's spatiality that existed within it, mapping all the of the connectivity between space and people and complex place-making practices inside it. In other words, the research design

goal was to understand the social and spatial interactions of migrants within a defined location and how they are mapped onto and continually produce local space.

The selection of Hurstville as the case study was based on criteria originating from the essence of the research topic. The main criterion focussed on a place with high levels of ethnic and cultural diversity located in the suburbs of Sydney. The demographic statistics of Hurstville indicated extreme diversity in its local population because of the flows of migration and its accommodation of many different ethnic groups over time. In addition, demographic statistics showed that Hurstville is home to the largest percentage of Chinese immigrants compared to the other suburbs of Sydney.

One of the major methodological challenges was defining the ‘boundary’ of the research site. The research began by focussing on the administrative boundaries of the suburb defined as Hurstville as according to the local government area. This was a useful method for delineating the field of investigation and provided the foundation for sourcing demographic statistics, tracing urban changes and history, as well as examining the flow of social networks and practices. The administrative boundaries thus functioned as an initial sketch of what is considered ‘local’ and mapping the patterns of daily life in Hurstville.

As my fieldwork continued to unfold and I gradually came to understand Hurstville through my own lived experience as a resident in the area, the local shopping street, Forest Road, gained prominence as an important space for this research. As Zukin et al. (2015) have argued, in spite of its apparent simplicity, the local commercial district is fundamentally a dynamic space that constantly evolves through the complex interactions social practices. As the armature of the suburb, the shopping street provided a fertile analytical site to explore the multiple layers of place making practices in relation to everyday life, urban management, and representations of local identity.

3.3 Research Methodology: Spatial Ethnography

This section lays the foundation for the methodological framework of the study. In order to gain insight into the dynamic social-spatial interaction between migrants and urban spaces, it

is important to examine not just the physical dimension of the built environment, but also the deeper meanings that inform these transformations. With this focus, a qualitative research design was selected as the most appropriate method. In particular, Arijit Sen's methodological framework of 'spatial ethnography' offers a comprehensive lens for understanding the complexities of urban landscapes.

Spatial ethnography, as Sen (2011) defined, combines "architectural analysis together with observational and ethnographic techniques to document intertwined landscapes" (p.36). This method is particularly adept at revealing the socio-spatial configurations that define urban spaces, aiming not just to document architectural forms and institutions, but to "identify cultural networks and relationships between the buildings and lived spaces in the neighborhood" (Sen, 2011, p.36). Further expanding on this approach, Sen (2012) applies spatial ethnography to examine ethnic restaurants and grocery stores in the City of Berkeley, as he states "this is a method of analysis that puts the material and symbolic process of producing place as the primary analytic focus" (p. 196). By tracing the evolution of a restaurant's interior over fifteen years, he argues the spatiality of the ethnic business "is akin to an ever-changing stage that accommodates everyday events, shifting practices, and changing identities and political negotiations between various social constituencies" (p. 215).

In line with this, Hall (2015a) used street drawings to explore the everyday inhabitation of Bristol's Stapleton Road in relation to the geographies of migration across time and space in the UK. In their research, the authors suggested that "drawing is an exploratory and critical visual practice, providing us tools to see socio-spatial relationships in temporal and scalar dimensions" (Hall et al. 2015, p. 59). In this vein, their study connected the techniques of drawings with an exploration of a super-diverse street. In detail, the research began with a face-to-face survey with proprietors along the stretch of the street to gain information about their country of birth, migration journeys and retail activity, which followed a similar format to the 'walking census' method adopted in the work of Zukin et al. (2015). Through the empirical data they gathered, Hall et al. (2015) created their first drawing named 'World to Street', which included a world map imposed over the building layout of Stapleton Road. These two layouts were linked by coloured lines representing countries of birth to the units of each surveyed respondent to highlight "the highly global nature of this high street" (Hall, 2015a, p. 63). In the

second drawing, multiple migratory journeys of proprietors were charted before they reached Stapleton Road, where lines were drawn from city to city and finally to the street level, revealing the complex routes undertaken by respective proprietors. The third drawing shifted the scale of focus to the street level to explore how long the proprietors have had their respective shop units on Stapleton Road, as well as mapping the core area of retail or service they were engaged in. The last drawing close to the material dimensions of a single shop. The shop was drawn in plan, revealing how the space was composed of five distinct but related social zones.

Bringing together Sen's methodological approach of spatial ethnography with Hall's method of street drawing offers valuable insights for the present study, particularly in understanding the spatial and planning values of streets within the context of global migration and ethnic diversity. Drawing from the methods of their work, I use architectural drawing techniques to analyze the façades and interior floor plans of buildings in Hurstville to examine the place-making practices and understanding the spatial configurations within the suburb, reflecting the complex interplay between architecture and community life.

While spatial ethnography forms the foundational basis for this study's architectural and spatial analysis, it's also important to recognize the importance of traditional ethnography methods. Crucial techniques such as ethnographic observation, shop surveys, and semi-structured interviews are also part of this research's methodology framework. These techniques are not randomly chosen but are informed similar ethnographic studies that provide insights into the nuances of social interactions and cultural dynamics in urban settings.

In this vein, this study draws inspiration from the strategy developed by Zukin et al. (2015) in their work, *Global Cities and Local Streets*, which aimed to understand the effect and impact of globalisation on the transformation of the local street. By using an ethnographic approach to understand everyday life, they divided their exploration of the local street in four main parts.

Firstly, they examined changes in local businesses over time by collecting historical data from either business directories or local government agencies and carried out a 'walking census' of the stores in person to update the historical data. Through this investigation, they were able to

map out the continuity, longevity and composition of the businesses that comprised these local commercial sectors, which in turn reflected the wider social and economic shifts of the city. Secondly, Zukin et al. (2015) sought to measure wider social changes in their chosen streets by recording data from the individual shops in the research site, including types of products sold and stock presentation, interior and exterior aesthetics, lighting, and soundscape. Thirdly, they explored the community's ethnic, religious, and lifestyle identities through semi-structured interviews with business owners, shoppers, and local officials of government agencies. They questioned interviewees in relation to the history of their business, choice of location, observations regarding the evolution of street composition over time, interactions with neighbouring businesses, associations and the local government. Finally, they reflected on the positionality of the researchers in terms of understanding sites, undertaking ethnographic observations across their chosen locations at different times to gather data on the social and economic processes within the urban spaces. These processes included the interpersonal interactions between customers and owners of businesses, as well as everyday behavioural activities of the locals such as buying groceries, dining habits and using services. This information was gathered in-person by the researchers to gain direct insights into what it meant to live as a 'local' in their research site.

The above methods of conducting street ethnography have proved to be useful for gaining familiarity with the city and local life, as well as describing the research field – particularly for 'newcomers' to the area. Except to these methods, any attempts to examine urban design and development issues also demands "the adoption of a wider spatial perspective than a more limited architectural approach could provide" (Anderson et al., 2019, p. 41). Examples of this wider perspective have been demonstrated in the research by Anderson et al. (2019) and Anastasia (2002); the former conducting a fine-grained spatial analysis of urban form in Sydney's Chinatown, focusing on the area's urban morphology, urban governance, architectural and development features. Loukaitou-Sideris (2002) examined three commercial strips in Los Angeles in her study, using extensive fieldwork including archival research, observation, surveys, photographic documentation and a spatial analysis of building typologies and architectural imagery to show how ethnic groups reterritorialized space to address their specific needs. The methods from both of these studies were key in shaping the approach of

this thesis in terms of interpreting the urban fabric to show how the spatial format of the cities are shaped by the immigrants.

3.4 Research questions and selecting research methods

This section will illustrate in detail how the appropriate research methods were selected for each research question (see *Table 3.1*). The research aimed, as stated above, to explore the evolution and transformation of Hurstville to understand the impact of global migration on the spatial practices of ethnic communities and their place-making outcomes embedded in the built environment. It further challenged how cultural identity is constructed and represented in the suburban landscape (especially the commercial street) and how diversity is managed and governed at the local level.

Four sub-questions were designed to address the overarching aim of understanding Hurstville as an ethnoburb and the role of migration in shaping the urban fabric of cities through a multilayered investigation. To address these research questions required a wide range of data to be collected, and the means of sourcing and collating this data followed methods from previous research as outlined above.

The first sub-question, **‘How has Hurstville become a Chinese ethnoburb? How do the changes in the spatial fabric of Hurstville relate to the wider canvas of changes in Australian urbanism and society?’**, required data that showed how the Sydney suburb changed over time. In order provide a more nuanced picture of Hurstville, several methods were used to unpack both the suburb’s social diversity and its physical fabric. Historical research was based primarily on archival materials available at Trove and Factiva, including local newspapers, journal articles and local advertisements, and the public debates in news media regarding the study area. This data was supplemented by official council reports, documents, and historical photos available from Hurstville Local Library, as well as the data analysis conducted by the ABS Census of Population and Housing. Furthermore, narratives of people directly involved with the case study including local residents, business owners, real estate agents, and government officials provided another source of data for interpretation.

Participant site observation through photography was also utilised for addressing this research question.

The second research sub-question, **‘How do the changes of the ‘local street’ relate to concepts such as globalisation, migration, and complex flows of identity? How do ethnic entrepreneurs inhabit and transform the commercial street to accommodate their cultural practices and complex set of commercial uses?’**, required a series of multi-dimensional data. Data sources included a shop-by-shop survey along the street to show the diverse use the commercial centre and changes in local business over time, as well as a series of visual analyses – façade drawings with spatial elements of shop windows, signs and advertisements, and other cultural ornaments to demonstrate how the spaces are reused, reconfigured, and modified by immigrant entrepreneurship to represent their cultural identity and attract customers. The narratives of the local built form and architectural style were another aspect of the data which was obtained through on-site observations and reviews of related documents to demonstrate the hybrid urbanity of the research site.

To address the third sub-question, **‘How are immigrant entrepreneurs’ spatial practices related to the expression of cultural identity in everyday consumption landscapes? How does this express itself through the design, food offering and culture of eating that is often associated with the ethnic economy?’**, it is necessary to understand the place-making processes of individual ethnic shops. To do so, narratives from ethnic owners, reflecting their feelings, experiences, and perspectives, were required. These were collected via semi-structured interviews with owners of different types of ethnic restaurants. Plan drawing was also used to demonstrate the interior layout of the shops. Perspectives from food bloggers regarding the culinary landscape in Hurstville and shopping experiences from customers were also collected through face-to-face interviews, contributing to the required data set. The analysis of online reviews, comments and food blog posts on the ethnic restaurants in Hurstville was also beneficial when examining this question.

To answer the fourth sub-question, **‘How do local governments respond to the presence of a very concentrated, even homogeneous, set of migrant ethnic identities? How are policies, strategies, organisations, events, arts and media ‘institutionally embedded’ (or not)**

within the urban governance framework?’, a systematic policy review and analysis of related government policy and strategy documents was undertaken. This included a description of the role of urban planning and design in constructing the identity of Hurstville and connecting it to the suburb’s residents. One aspect of the required data was accessible by analysing the content of the government’s planning policies and community strategies. The narratives of the members of local government, who implement the contents of those policies in the suburb, and residents of the local communities were also collected through interviews to provide this data. Participant observation at local events and activities, as well as direct interviews with business owners to ask for their suggestions on future policies were also helpful to provide a wider scope of data relating to the impact of government policies and initiatives in the research area.

Table 3.1. Research question and methods

Research questions	Research methods	Data sources
1. How has Hurstville become a Chinese ethnoburb? How do the changes in the spatial fabric of Hurstville relate to the wider canvas of changes in Australian urbanism and society?	- Historical archive review - In-depth interviews - Secondary data analysis	-Review historical data from online database (Trove and Factiva) and local library -Interviews with local residents/business owners/real estate agents -Data analysis of population and housing census from ABS
2. How do the changes of the ‘local street’ relate to concepts such as globalisation, migration, and complex flows of identity? How do ethnic entrepreneurs inhabit and transform the commercial street to accommodate their cultural practices and complex set of commercial uses?	- Shop survey - Ethnography observation - Drawing and photography - In-depth interview - Secondary data analysis	-Walking census: shop-by-shop survey of each business along the street -Façade drawing of key spatial elements -Interview with business owners -Data analysis of local commercial census from ABS and government documents
3. How are immigrant entrepreneurs’ spatial practices related to the expression of cultural identity in everyday consumption landscapes? How does this express itself through the design, food offering, and culture of eating that is often associated with the ethnic economy?	- In-depth interviews - Ethnography observation - Drawing and photography - Secondary data analysis	-Interview with business owners, food bloggers and customers -Plan drawing of interior layout of restaurants -Data analysis of online comments, travel and food bloggers
4. How do local governments respond to the presence of a very concentrated, even homogeneous, set of migrant ethnic identities? How are policies, strategies, organisations, events, arts and media ‘institutionally embedded’ (or not) within the urban governance framework?	- Policy analysis - In-depth interviews - Ethnography observation	-Policy analysis of local government policy and strategies, urban design and planning documents -Interview with government officials -Observation on ethnic festival events and activities

(Source: by the author)

3.5 Research Method

This thesis examined the suburb of Hurstville and used a mix of methods that included:

- Secondary data research (historical, public media, policy and planning documents)
- Ethnography observation
- Visual methods and analysis (Photographic documentation and drawing)
- A shop-by-shop survey
- Semi-structured interviews

3.5.1 Secondary data research

This thesis drew on local level statistical data that was gathered from the Australia Bureau of Statistics, in particular the *Hurstville City Community Profile* (including population and housing data on 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2016). This quantitative data provided a demographic snapshot of the local area, illustrated changes in migration flows, and the composition of ethnicity of the overseas population. The data also enabled a wider comparison to other LGAs in Sydney and offered an overview of the local waves of migration in the study area.

Secondly, a review was undertaken of sources documenting the urban history of Hurstville and the Georges River area to compile a historic record of development and provide contextual information about the study area. This included a structured search of archival materials available at Trove.com.au and Factiva.com, including local newspapers, journal articles and local advertisements. Hurstville Local Library also provided access to official council reports, documents, and historic photos. Insights on this topic were also obtained from narratives of long-term residents, council staff and other relevant informants, collected by semi-structured interviews.

An additional review was conducted of printed news media to enable a systematic and comprehensive overview of how Hurstville has been represented to the broader public over time. Newspaper data was collected primarily from two main metropolitan newspapers published in Sydney: the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Daily Telegraph*. This data was

supplemented by online reviews of Hurstville from Homely.com.au to gain general information about the local Q&A, suburb history and residents' living experience.

Policy and planning documents from the local government authority were another source of secondary data. This was particularly important for the research conducted on architectural heritage and the governance of multiculturalism (Chapter 5 and Chapter 7). These documents included: *Hurstville City Centre Concept Master Plan* (2004 & 2007), *Review of Heritage Items within Commercial Centres of Hurstville Council* (2007), *Hurstville City Centre Urban Form Study* (2007), *Hurstville City Centre Public Domain Plan* (2007), *Hurstville City Centre Transport Management and Accessibility Plan* (2013), *The Hurstville City Council Multicultural Strategy* (2015), *Hurstville Community Strategic Plan* (2015), *Hurstville City Centre Urban Design Strategy* (2017), *Georges River Council Events Strategy* (2018), *Hurstville Place Strategy* (2019), *Georges River Council Community Engagement Strategy* (2019), *Create Georges River: Cultural Strategy* (2019), *Georges River Council Commercial Centres Strategy* (2020), *Hurstville Heart of the City Place Strategy* (2020), *George River Council Economic Development Strategy* (2021), *Georges River Local Environmental Plan* (GRLEP) (2021), and *the Georges River Development Control Plan* (GRDCP) (2021).

3.5.2 Observation

Participant observation and site analysis of Hurstville was a key research step in conducting fieldwork. This provided a unique position to act as both a passive observer (to observe other people's behaviour, everyday activities and cultural expressions in the built environment) and an active participant (by living in Hurstville during the fieldwork to experience the daily life of the community). As Crang and Cook (2007) pointed out, this enables researchers fully immerse themselves "into the everyday rhythms and routines of the community, a development of relationships with people who can show and tell the researcher what is 'going on' there" (p. 21). Moreover, attending local events involved observation, especially during cultural festivals like Christmas Day or Chinese New Year, as consumption activities may have differed from usual everyday practices.

Before entering the field to start observation, a guide was prepared to provide a designed structure for observation and ensure the outcome was purposeful. Elements regarding what to observe onsite were based on the research questions and a methodological review of previous studies on ethnic communities' everyday practices and influences on the built environment.

Observation guided two main dimensions: physical and social (see Figure 3.1). The physical dimension of the research site includes four categories, namely: 1) the architectural style, including the forms of buildings, elements of façades façade and building material (Anderson et al., 2019; Chung, 2001); 2) the shop signs, including the use of cultural symbols to express the individual's culture or imagination to be unique from other shops (Hall and Datta (2010); Wise (2011); 3) adaptation for use, which refers to the changes in the built environment applied to adapt the setting to the individual's desires and needs. This takes place by adding to or removing from the original building structure to initiate new opportunities for use of the spaces; and 4) street furniture.

The other aspect of observation related to the social dimension of the research site. This includes observing how people used the space during their everyday practices, both formal and informal. In addition to the observation of everyday spatial practices, several local events were attended during special celebrations and festivals, such as the Moon Festival, the Chinese New Year festival and local annual food festival. Particular attention was also paid to the sociocultural interactions between social groups during the observation period.

Observations were undertaken mainly in the commercial centre of Hurstville. The site observation data at was recorded using field notes, together with hand-drawn sketches and diagrams. Photography was also used as a method of recording consumer gestures, the usage of these spaces, as well as an effective means of recording activities moments.

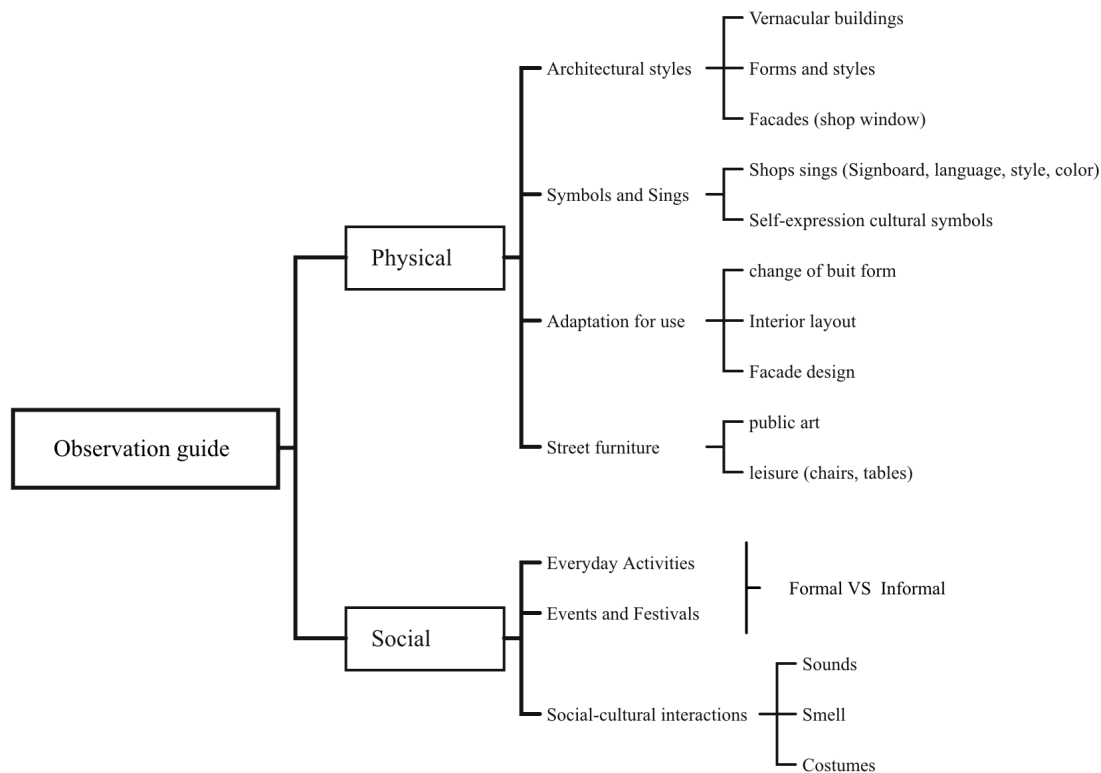


Figure 3.1. Observation guide as applied to the fieldwork undertaken in Hurstville

(Source: by the author)

3.5.3 Visual methods

The use of photographs was an important visual method for this research. Prosser (1998) argued:

Over the last three decades qualitative researchers have given serious thought to using images with words to enhance understanding of the human condition. They encompass a wide range of forms including films, photographers, drawings, cartoons, graffiti, maps, diagrams, signs and symbols. Taken cumulatively images are signifiers of a culture; taken individually they are artefacts that provide us with very particular information about our existence...more importantly, an alternative to the way we have perceived data in the past. (1998, p. 1)

Using photos that were taken during the fieldwork to compare with the historic photograph archives provided insightful records showcasing how differing constructions of space and spatial practices by new immigrants had transformed the landscape of the suburb.

3.5.4 Shop-by-shop survey

A shop-by-shop street survey was conducted along Forest Road within eleven blocks to record the variability of commerce, diversity of products and services along the street, as well as the spatial layouts of these consumption spaces (see Figure 3.2). The survey provided a broad overview of the key agents involved in the place-making process across the spectrum of the street.

The initial design for the survey was a questionnaire to ask respondents for personal information including country of birth, migratory journey, type of visa, education degree, previous employment prior to running their business, size of their shop, whether their shop was owned or rented, and number of staffs employed. However, when I commenced the shop survey within the first block, the response rate for the initial survey phase in May 2019 was low, with only five responses received. On reflection, there were four reasons behind it. Firstly, most of the business owners were always not present in their stores, with the day-to-day management being seen to by a manager. Secondly, it was challenging for respondents to have enough time to complete the five-minute survey, especially for restaurants, where if I entered during peak hours, staff were too busy to respond. Thirdly, some respondents were reluctant to speak to someone relatively unknown to them and were suspicious of my motives for asking questions, particularly regarding personal information like country of birth, visa type and migratory journey. Lastly, the language barrier presented another challenge for the first-generation immigrants who could only speak Cantonese and minimal English (Note: I can only speak Mandarin and English).

After the initial round of surveying, the plan was revised to reduce the number of questions asked. For the revised survey process, the business owner of each shop was sought out and were asked three short questions: 1) “What’s your ethnicity?”; 2) “How long has this shop been on Forest Road?”; and 3) “Would you like to participate in a face-to-face interview?”. After the two-week survey period in September 2019, I had collected basic information on the 106 buildings on Forest Road, which included 208 businesses and their respective shop spaces (see Appendix shop survey data for detail).

From these, I strategically approached 40 businesses to ensure a representative sample reflective of the diversity present on Forest Road. This selection was guided by several key criteria: 1) the type of business was considered to capture a wide array of commercial activities, such as retail, food service, bookshops, and more, to encompass the range of operations found in the area. 2) the location of these businesses along Forest Road was also a crucial factor. I aimed to represent different segments of the street, thereby ensuring a geographically diverse sample. 3) The size of the businesses varied, with both small and larger businesses included. 4) the ownership background of the businesses was a significant consideration. I sought to include a diverse background, highlighting the multicultural fabric of the area. And most importantly, it depended on the willingness of the business owners to participate in the study. Finally, 19 business owners agreed to engage in face-to-face interviews (see Table 3.3 and Section 3.5.5 for further details on the interviews). Moreover, the shop survey also helped to identify the restaurants which I would use as case studies for the detailed ethnographic investigation as discussed in Chapter 6.

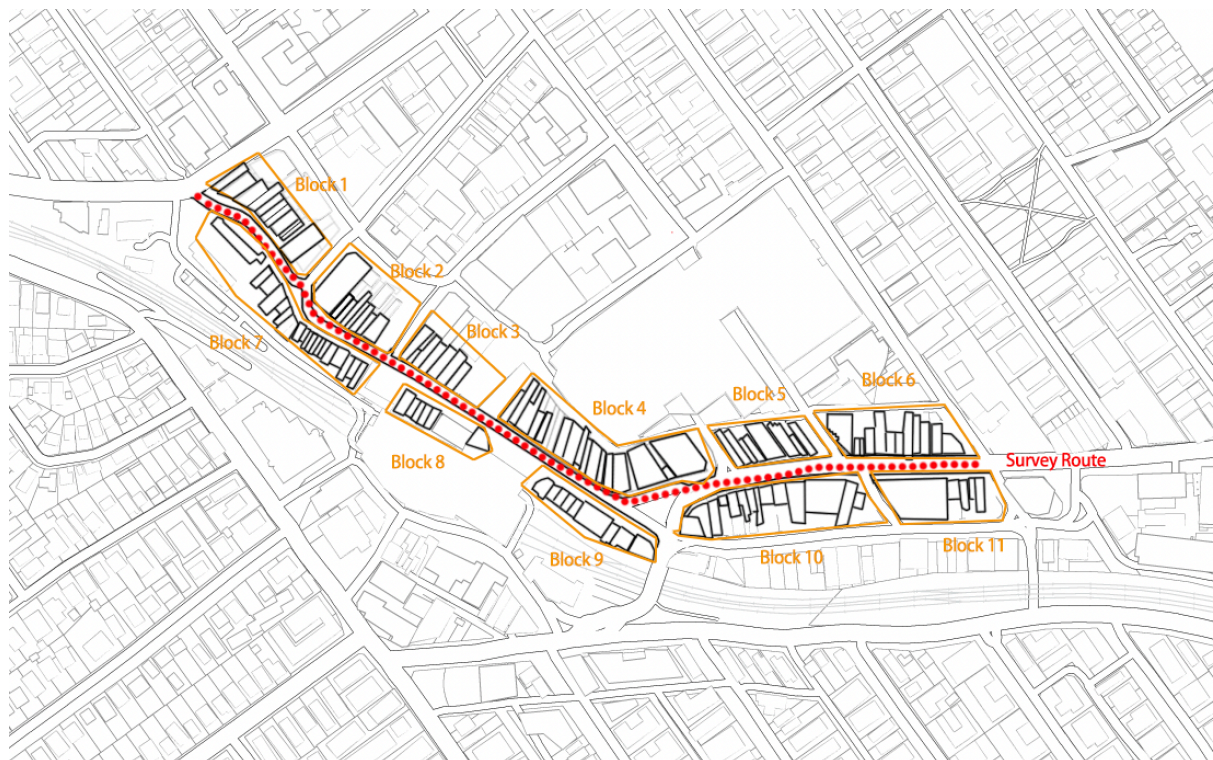


Figure 3.2. Shop-by-shop survey route along Forest Road in Hurstville

(Source: by the author)

3.5.5 Interviews

Interviewing was the most important data-gathering method used in this research. Semi-structured interviews were selected because it provides a general framework for questioning, ensuring that topics important to the study area are addressed while allowing the informant flexibility in their responses (Dunn, 2010). The interviews were intended to obtain information involving the perception, experience, practices and strategies of the participants who were involved in the urban transformation process of Hurstville. A total of 40 interviews were conducted with five groups of participants.

The first group of interviewees were three local government officers. These consisted of a Strategic Planner, a Project Officer, and an Economic Development Officer. These interviews provided supplementary data for the first sub-question on the urban history of the Hurstville and the second sub-question on the government's perception of the changes.

The second group consisted of nineteen business owners of different ethnicities who ran different types of businesses along Forest Road. Interview data for this group mainly aimed to explore how the business owners designed and produced their spaces with a representation of their cultural identity, which is one of the core topics investigated in this research.

The third group comprised twelve residents living in Hurstville within a range of settlement periods, as well as visitors who came to Hurstville to shop or dine. Interview data from this group provided information relating to sub-question 1 on how the suburb has changed over time and their perceptions on why Hurstville is an attractive place for consumers and their spatial and consumption experience in the suburb.

The fourth group were three real estate agents who were familiar with both the residential and commercial market of Hurstville, their views providing supplementary data to better understand the local space and market trends. As they possess a deep understanding of local market trends, including fluctuations in property values, rental rates, and consumer demand patterns. Moreover, they were particularly knowledgeable about the demographic shifts

occurring in Hurstville, including the social status of buyers and renters. Such insights are crucial as they illuminate the broader impacts of migration and urban development.

The final group of respondents were three food bloggers. The inclusion of this group was driven by their influential role in the public perception of Hurstville's culinary landscape. These individuals, through their dining experiences and subsequent online reviews, offer a unique outsider perspective on the local food culture, a significant aspect of the suburb's identity.

Table 3.2 summarises how the interviews were designed and conducted during the fieldwork.

Table 3.2. Interview design and process

Survey Phase	Group	How to contact	Interview aim	Number of Participants
Step 1: Interview recruitment	1. Government officials	Email	Sub-question 1 and 4	3
	2. Business owners	Shop-survey	Sub-question 2 and 3	19
	3. Residents/Visitors	Recruitment Posters	Sub-question 1 and 3	3
		Personal contact		5
		Street and Inside Restaurant Intercept interview		4
	4. Real estate agents	Posters	Sub-question 1 and 2	1
		Email		2
	5. Food bloggers	Instagram direct messages	Sub-question 3	3
Step 2: Conduct interview	• Type: Face-to-face, online Zoom meetings • Venue: office, shops, cafes • Time: 20-40 minutes • Voice recording and written notes			
Step 3: Data analysis	Transcripts, recordings, data coding and analysis			

(Source: by the author)

Step 1: Interview recruitment

The recruitment of the research participants began in August 2019. With the clear interview aim, I identified some potential informants and contacted them via email. This method was most effective for Groups 1 Government officials, Group 4 Real estate agents and Group 5 food bloggers, as they had an online presence with contact information that was publicly accessible. In the initial contact email, I introduced myself, my research topic, how I obtained their email address, why I would like to conduct an interview with them, the approximate length of the interview, as well as provided my contact information. The recruitment process for Group 2 Business owners and Group 3 Residents were different. The shop survey confirmed which respondents were interested in individual interviews and the site observations collected during the fieldwork facilitated opportunities to connect with the consumers through random contact. Furthermore, my own living experience in Hurstville at the time of research (2018-2022) provided me with connections to local residents to find informants through personal contact.

A summary of the respondents from the five groups is provided in *Table 3.3*. (Note: the ethics protocol [Project No.: 2019/198, granted by the The University of Sydney of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee] allowed the business owners to be identified via their business)

Table 3.3. The composition of interview participants

Group		Approached	Agreed for Interview	Response Rate	Interview Details			
					Individual		Date	Duration (minutes)
1	Government officials	3	3	100%	Strategic planner		24-Jun-2019	45
					Senior project Officer		16-Jul-2019	(email)
					Economic development officer		23-Aug-2019	60
2	Business owners	40	19	47%	Toy shop	Chinese	07-Jul-2019	40
					Noodle shop (面婆婆)	Chinese	09-Jul-2019	20
					Malatang (麻辣烫)	Chinese	09-Jul-2019	30
					BBQ restaurant(聚火烧烤)	Chinese	10-Jul-2019	30
					Milk tea (言茶)	Chinese	08-Aug-2019	20
					Xinhua Bookshop (新华书店)	Chinese	09-Aug-2019	20
					Music Shop	Australia	09-Aug-2019	20
					Qian Restaurant (黔味)	Chinese	10-Aug-2019	20
					Korean supermarket	Korean	04-Sep-2019	15
					Hardware bargain shop	Chinese	04-Sep-2019	20
					Nimto The Invitation restaurant	Nepalese	09-Sep-2019	45
					Like Noodle (面馆)	Chinese	12-Sep-2019	30
					Sunming Restaurant	Chinese	01-Sep-2021	40
					GUO’S noodle house(东街口)	Chinese	04-Sep-2021	20

					Dumpling king (饺子王)	Chinese	07-Sep-2021	20
					Machi machi milk tea	Chinese	12-Feb-2021	15
					Fabric shop	Vietnamese	25-Sep-2021	30
					YUYI kitchen (渔一小厨)	Chinese	18-Sep-2021	20
					Dougies Grill	Australian	18-Sep-2021	15
3	Residents	15	12	80%	Local Australian resident #1	Australian	15-May-2019	20
					Local Australian resident #2	Australian	15-May-2019	20
					Long-term migrant #1	Malaysian	23-May-2019	20
					Long-term migrant #2	Chinese	29-Jun-2019	20
					International student #1	Chinese	20-May-2019	20
					International student #2	Chinese	20-May-2019	20
					Restaurant customer #1 (lives in Kogarah)	Chinese	11-Jul-2019	10
					Restaurant customer #2 (HK Noodle)	Chinese	11-Jul-2019	10
					Restaurant customer #3 (Nimto)	Nepalese	09-Sep-2019	10
					Restaurant customer #4 (Nimto)	Nepalese	09-Sep-2019	10
					Hurstville Home buyer	Chinese	10-May-2019	20
					Hurstville ANZ Bank staff	Chinese	15-Jun-2019	10
4	Real estate agents	5	3	60%	H&T Real estate		26-May-2019	20

					Leading capital	02-May-2021	20
					RMA Group	20-Jul-2021	20
5	Food bloggers	7	3	42%	Food blogger #1	15-Sep-2021	20
					Food blogger #2	11-Sep-2021	40
					Food blogger #3	2-Sep-2021	25
Total		70	40	57%			

(Source: by the author)

Step 2: The interview process

Before conducting the interviews, several supporting documents were prepared in advance. These included the research information sheet, interview guide, and interview consent form. The interview guide was specifically tailored for each of the five participant groups involved in the study (as can be seen in Table 3.4).

Table 3.4. Interview guide

Group 1 Interview Guide: Government officials	Section 1: Retail development process
	Section 2: Attitudes towards ethnic retail outlets
	Section 3: Physical expression of ethnicity
	Section 4: Policy and vision statement
Group 2 Interview Guide: Business owners	Section 1: Stories and histories of the business
	Section 2: Perception of the street and the suburb
	Section 3: How the shop was designed (both exterior façade and interior décor)
	Section 4: Flow of an average business day
	Section 5: Relationship with customers
	Section 6: Interviewee's food/products/service and their culture, how do they perform cultural 'authenticity'
	Section 7: Suggestions for the local council on future developments
Group 3 Interview Guide: Residents	Section 1: Basic social profile (employment, immigration and settlement history, etc.)
	Section 2: Perception of the street and the suburb
	Section 3: Consumption experience
Group 4 Interview Guide: Real estate agents	Section 1: The socio-demographic change in the residential population
	Section 2: The changes in the housing markets
	Section 3: Why do people choose Hurstville and the shifting reasons for these decisions over time
Group 5 Interview Guide: Food bloggers	Section 1: The process for creating a food blog post
	Section 2: Perception of Hurstville (compared to other suburbs in Sydney)
	Section 3: Eating experiences in Hurstville restaurants

(Source: by the author)

The interviews started with an 'ice-breaker' chat to build an initial rapport and trust with the interviewee, discussing the general issues being covered in the research topic, as well as my own personal experience of living in Sydney. It was also imperative to explain the ethical terms of the research before asking the formal interview questions, in particular the rules regarding anonymity to reassure informants that their personal privacy would be respected and questions would not relate to sensitive business data, such as annual sales or profits.

The perception, explanatory and descriptive information obtained from interviews provided new insights for analysis and the structure of the thesis design. Interview data has been utilised throughout this thesis in the form of direct quotes to support the research aims, and pseudonyms have been used to protect the privacy and anonymity of all participants.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data collected from fieldwork (see *Figure 3.3*) were collated and processed for analysis through three key steps.

The first step in the analysis process was to transcribe all empirical data, including the interview data and field notes. The transcribed data was then organized and coded into thematic files, such as "participant demographics," "interview responses," and "observation notes." These thematic files were used to categorize and analyze the data.

Once the empirical data was transcribed, the next step was to conduct a thematic analysis. The data was grouped together into datasets based on the core topics of the research projects, which were identified as policy and planning context, space-making practices, expression of culture, and perception of place. This allowed for a more in-depth exploration of each of these topics, and for patterns and themes to emerge within each dataset.

After the thematic analysis was completed, the empirical data from the thematic files were integrated with supplementary data from secondary sources. This included historic photographs and those taken onsite during the fieldwork, analysis diagrams, and narrative

works. These supplementary sources provided additional context and depth to the analysis and allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the research topics.

The integration of the empirical data and supplementary sources allowed for a rich and nuanced analysis of the research data. It also provided insights into the relationships between different themes and topics and helped to contextualize the findings within a broader framework. Overall, this approach allowed for a thorough and rigorous analysis of the research data and resulted in a comprehensive and insightful finding outcome.

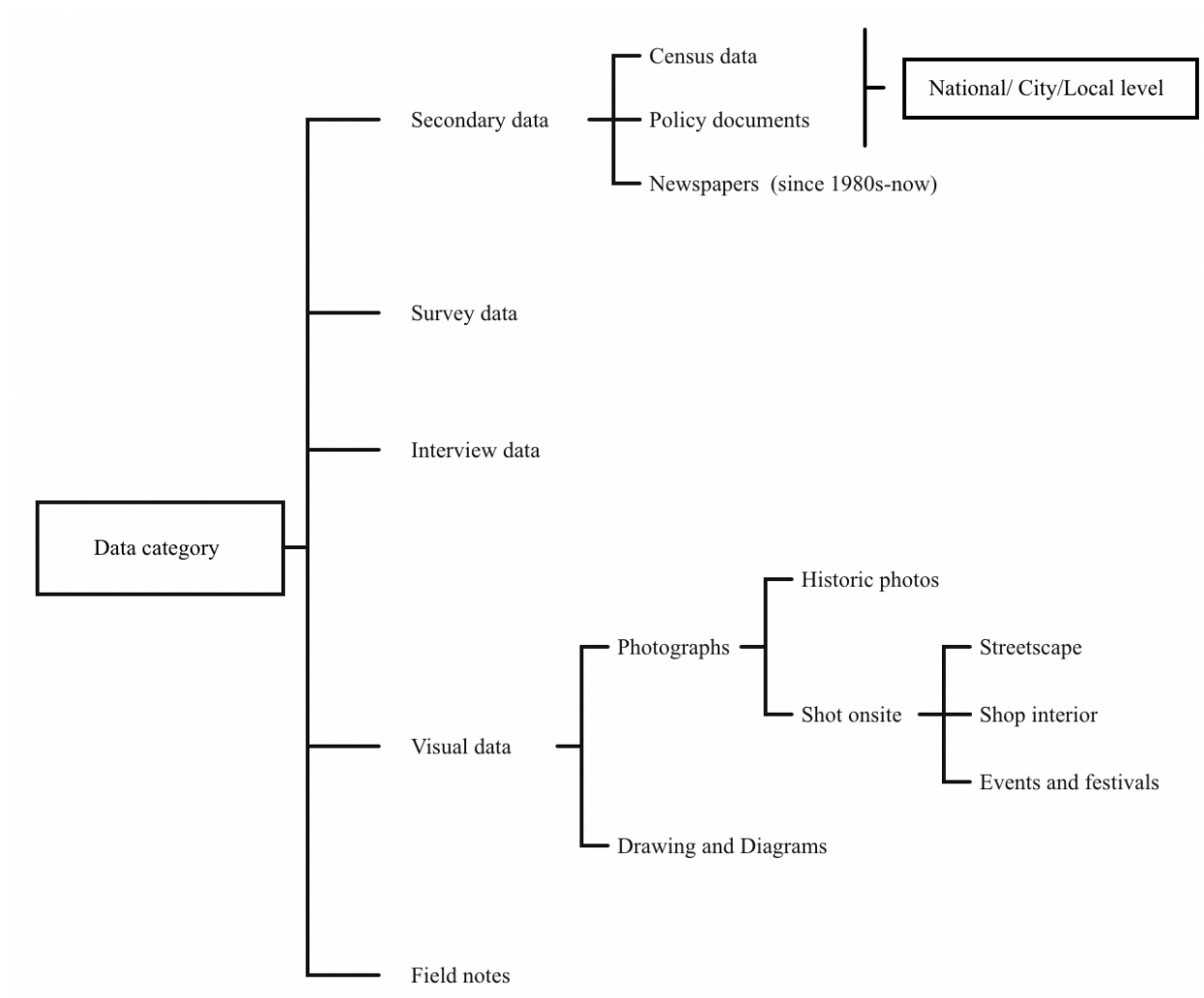


Figure 3.3. Categories of data collected from fieldwork

(Source: by the author)

3.7 Methodological Challenges

The research approach in this thesis emphasised interpretations and nuances to achieve a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973), which was necessary to provide an accurate representation of the research topic. A thick description involves the multilayered process of semiotic interpretation, social discourse analysis, interpretations of local perceptions from primary sources, and investigating local behaviours through a lens that recognises the specific context as a microcosm of wider sociocultural practices. Thus, this thesis employed various data gathering methods including interviews, texts, images and observations, which were all reviewed with an intensive focus to accurately capture a thorough analysis of process and meaning.

Several methodological dilemmas arose during the study that have been briefly examined here to clarify the barriers and limitations in the process of the research, and some of these limitations are also reflective of the pitfalls faced regarding urban diversity and immigration studies in general.

3.7.1 Reflection and limitations

One of the most important aspects of ethnographic research is the building of trust between interviewer and interviewees so that the latter is more open to sharing their personal thoughts and experiences. As a resident of Hurstville for four years, I was able to leverage this position to develop ongoing relationships with local business owners and fellow residents in my daily life through shopping and dining at local establishments. This bond of trust impacted the interviewing process, where respondents were more willing to answer questions relating to their perceptions, experiences, and business.

To ensure the quality and validity of the information gathered, the triangulation method (Patton, 1999) was used for this thesis, which involves the use of multiple methods of data collection such as various groups of informants, primary and secondary data collection, and qualitative and quantitative data analysis to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena. Thus, it was important to reasonably plan the fieldwork step by step.

Contacting the council was the first step in the fieldwork. The council staff were approachable and provided invaluable direction and information to support research relating to Hurstville. For example, one of the staff members at George River Council advised of an exhibition, “The Transformation of the Streetscape” was being held at Hurstville library, which provided useful information on architectural and economic shifts in local history. With a referral from the council staff, the library administration was able to provide historical photos that were an important secondary data source for Chapter 4. Thus, for multi-method research, it is useful for researchers to plan prior to undertaking fieldwork to maximise efficiency and access to data.

3.7.2 The ‘migrant’ label and the question of ethnicity

Throughout the thesis, the concept of ‘migrant’ and ‘ethnicity’ is used to describe the social status of the research objects, however, as with any social labelling, identifying a particular group of residents as ‘migrants’ risks misrepresenting people’s experience, identity, or mode of belonging. It was therefore necessary to approach these concepts critically when this research was underway.

In terms of myself, I had travelled from China to study in Australia without considering this process as ‘migrating’, but rather as simply studying in Australia, and this perception did not change even as I continued living in Australia. This raised the question of the meaning and interpretation of migration to different individuals, whether it was defined as having legal citizenship or a subjective definition of movement between places. Some participants were interviewed in this research did not use the concept of migration; instead they said, “I am living in Sydney”. In a somewhat different way, a few respondents even blurred the ‘national borders’ and considered themselves as a cosmopolitan or “a citizen of the world”.

But the challenge in this research was that a word was needed in order to refer to the group of people who are not born in Australia, and thus the concept of ‘ethnicity’ was used to distinguish the diversity of this group. The Cambridge dictionary defines ethnicity as “a group of people with a shared culture, tradition, language, history, etc.”(Cambridge University Press, n.d.). This led to another challenge: how do individuals define their ethnicity? For example, a participant

in this research was born in China and moved to Australia with his parents when he was four years old; he grew up in Sydney and holds an Australian passport. In this case, should he be regarded as a migrant of Chinese ethnicity? More to the point, the demographic data of Hurstville revealed the current dominant ethnic background of the residential population is Chinese. However, the ethnicity of inter-Chinese people varies between mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwanese, Malaysian Chinese and Indonesian Chinese, and beyond that are variations across inter-Asian ethnicities between Chinese, Korean, Japanese and more.

In an effort to avoid these ambiguities, this study made two explicit decisions regarding definitions of ethnicity: 1) the country of birth has been used to define the ethnicity of the participants; and 2) despite the diverse ethnicities of Asian residents, this research discusses a broad ‘Asian-identity’, focussing more on the place itself in relation to transformation, production, space-making, as opposed to one particular group.

Finally, as an ethnographic study conducted at a multi-cultural site, there are various types of daily practices, such as cultural cuisine, products, clothing, language, spatial needs, and religious events which demands understanding and respect for the cultural differences to any researcher.

3.7.3 The influence of the COVID-19 pandemic

The research design evolved over the course of the study in response to the complexities and multiplicities of life. As the data analysis progressed, new ideas were developed and another round of interviews were conducted during 2021, which faced an unprecedented challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The online interviews held in 2021 focussed on two groups – business owners and food bloggers – and were conducted via Zoom.

Recruiting participants during the pandemic lockdown period in 2021 was focussed on food bloggers, as their online social media accounts were accessible over various platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, or Youtube, where direct messages could be sent to establish contact; others had their own websites with a contact email address.

The recruitment of additional business owners during this period was sourced through the network of existing participants, as well as those of my personal contacts who were business owners themselves. According to Elizabeth (2008), the most significant contradiction of conducting online interviews is the absence of physical presence. This is because the essence of qualitative inquiry lies in face-to-face interactions with people, which adds a unique level of validity to the work. As she further stated: “We qualitative researchers are very present in our research, in the thick of things, talking with and observing our participants. Qualitative inquiry is not distant; it’s live and in person; it happens right now” (Elizabeth, 2008, p. 321).

During the online interview process, it took longer to build trust and a rapport with the interviewee. In addition, online interviews cannot convey the subtleties of eye contact or body language, which limits a more multi-faceted and nuanced understanding of the interviewees’ words. These barriers were more noticeable when the internet connection was unstable or the interviewee chose to turn off the camera.

3.8 Conclusion

The research design for this thesis applied a range of methodological cues from the understanding of key works reviewed (Anastasia, 2002; Anderson et al., 2019; Hall, 2015a; Sen, 2012; Zukin et al., 2015), as well as other migration and urban studies that explored space-making and representation of culture and identity in places of settlement (Anderson, 1991; Collins & Kunz, 2010; Dunn, 1998; Hall, 2012, 2015b; Krase, 2012; Wise & Velayutham, 2009; Zukin, 1995). Following the progression of previous research in related topics and drawing on their methods, this research proposed an approach which combined urban street ethnographic methodology with architectural and urban design spatial analysis methods, referred to as in this thesis as “spatial ethnography”.

Specifically, ethnographic methods included a shop-by-shop survey conducted along the selected commercial street, semi-structured interviews with five different groups of key participants, and onsite ethnographic observation. These ethnographic methods were used to explore how the social impacts of urban change were experienced and how diversity was manifested in the life of a local place. In terms of the exploration of the research site’s spatial

peculiarities as an urban built environment, this was addressed through the method of drawing – specifically, spatialising the range and layout of retail activities and practices; drawing the façade to show shop window displays; drawing signs and advertisements to demonstrate how the spaces support and are altered by the migrants; and drawing in-plan to show the interior layout of selected restaurants. These drawings were supplemented with verbal narratives and interpretations of the architectural materiality of the urban form. Moreover, the research also incorporated secondary data sources from archival research including planning documents, reports, policies and newspaper articles that detailed the evolution and transformation of the suburb.

This approach of collecting a multi-dimensional dataset was suitable for the gradual unpacking of the development and transformation processes of an urban locality. It helped to reveal the complexity of social-spatial interaction, providing a vivid description of everyday urban life and place-making practices, as well as a comprehensive understanding of how urban space is produced and shaped by migrants and immigrants.

The following chapters have been structured in accordance with the sub-questions. First, Chapter 4 investigates the transformation of Hurstville suburb into a Chinese ethnoburb. Chapter 5 examines the street exterior (streetscape) to illustrate the spatial formation of commercial culture in the area. Chapter 6 explores the street interior (independent shops) to demonstrate the various spatial formations with symbolic production of the local culinary economy. Chapter 7 focusses on the urban governance of the street to elucidate how the urban planning framework has responded to the cultural diversity of Hurstville.

Chapter 4 How did Hurstville become a Chinese Ethnoburb?

4.1 Introduction

This chapter chronologically traces the historical evolution of Hurstville, highlighting its transformation from a formerly white-dominated suburb to a culturally diverse Chinese community. This shift is articulated in academic literature, with Robertson et al. (2022) notably identifying Hurstville as Sydney's Chinese ethnoburb. The transformation of Hurstville is not merely a local change but represents a shift deeply intertwined with the broader contexts of Australian immigration and the suburbanization of Sydney.

The chapter begins by setting the stage with an overview of Australia's immigration landscape. It delves into the history and evolution of national immigration policies, which have played a pivotal role in shaping the country's demographic fabric. Following this, it explores the suburbanization of Sydney, examining the factors driving the city's suburban growth and the settlement patterns emerging from different immigration waves. After this, the narrative focuses on the demographic and built environment transformation of Hurstville, detailing the specific changes and developments that have marked its transition. The subsequent section illustrates the reasons behind the Chinese community's preference for choosing Hurstville, drawing comparisons with Sydney's Chinatown. This comparison sheds light on the unique characteristics of Hurstville that distinguish it from other ethnic enclaves, providing insights into the dynamics of cultural and community formation in urban Australian settings.

4.2 Setting the Context: Australian Immigration and Sydney's Suburbanization

4.2.1 Australian Immigration

The story of Hurstville's transformation is inextricably linked to the broader narrative of Australian immigration. Immigration has long been a key factor in shaping Australia's population structure, promoting economic development, and dynamically transforming its social and cultural landscape (Burnley, 2001; Jayasuriya, 1997; Jordan et al., 2011).

The demographic transformation and the increase in the percentage of the overseas population were closely linked to Australia's immigration policy. Initially, with the establishment of the Immigration Restriction Act in 1901, Australia's policy was heavily influenced by the White Australia Policy, favouring immigrants from Britain and Europe, shaping a predominantly Anglo-centric society (Murphy, 1993; Stromback & Stromback, 1994). This policy reflected broader attitudes towards race and ethnicity prevalent during the early 20th century.

The conclusion of World War II marked a significant turning point in Australia's immigration narrative. Faced with a dire need for skilled labor to aid post-war reconstruction and economic development, the Australian government, led by figures like Prime Minister Ben Chifley, began to relax its restrictive immigration policies (Price, 1998). This era saw an influx of immigrants from a wider range of European countries, such as Italy, Greece, and Yugoslavia, gradually diversifying the Australian population (Burnley, 1972; Healey, 2005). The policy of "Populate or Perish" not only addressed the labor shortage but also began to reshape the social fabric of the nation.

By the 1960s and 1970s, further changes were afoot as the White Australia Policy was progressively dismantled, culminating in the Racial Discrimination Act of 1975. This pivotal change opened doors to immigrants from non-European countries, particularly from Asian nations like China, Vietnam, and the Philippines. This shift marked Asian communities began adding to the multicultural mosaic of the country (Burnley, 2001; Murphy, 1993). Starting from early 1990s, the introduction and expansion of the Points-Based Immigration System, focusing on skills and qualifications, have attracted a significant number of skilled workers from various

parts of the world. This shift has contributed to the growth of a highly skilled workforce, impacting the economic and professional sectors, and contributing significantly to its economic growth and the enrichment of its social fabric (Burnley, 2001; Crock & Berg, 2015).

As of 2016, Australia, with a population of 23,401,892 according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, has become a major destination for migrants from around the globe. The 2016 Census revealed that approximately 33% of Australia's total population was born overseas, highlighting the country's significant international demographic composition.

Overall, the history of Australian immigration is a narrative of transformation, reflecting the nation's journey from a restrictive, mono-ethnic society to a vibrant, multicultural one. The socio-economic impacts of these immigration waves have been profound, influencing the labor market, housing, and urban planning, thereby reshaping the Australian urban landscape (Burnley, 2001; Jayasuriya, 1997; Jordan et al., 2011). Cities like Sydney transformed into melting pots of cultures, leading to the emergence of vibrant, multicultural communities.

4.2.2 Sydney's Suburbanization

Parallel to the story of Australian immigration, Hurstville's transformation into a Chinese ethnoburb is a microcosmic reflection of broader trends in Sydney's suburbanization. Connell (2000) described Sydney's suburbanization as follows:

In 1851 Sydney had a population of about 54,000 people, boasted some macadamized roads and paved footpaths had its principal streets and major public and commercial buildings lit by gas and had piped water to most streets...as the city's population grew, densities in districts as well as inner-suburban housing conditions led to the accelerating suburbanization that so characterizes modern Sydney...The growth of Sydney's suburbs, and changes in the importance and characteristics of individual suburbs, can be related to broad social and economic change, as well as to developing transport technologies... while residences had been pushed further out to the east, south, and west in the beginnings of suburbanization. (Connell, 2000, p. 67)

This quote shows that Sydney's suburbanization is an urban evolution process shaped by many factors. First of all, Sydney's suburbs are closely tied to the evolving transportation methods.

For example, the development of railway networks in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was pivotal in facilitating suburban growth, as observed by Spearritt (1999). The spread of residential areas to the east, south, and west of the city center was a direct result of improved connectivity (Connell, 2000; Spearritt (1999)

Moreover, migration has also significantly influenced Sydney's suburban character. Scholars like Latham (2003) describes Sydney's spatial structure as consisting of three arcs. The 'global arc' represents a cosmopolitan and internationally competitive area, extending from North Ryde through the eastern suburbs to Sydney Airport. The 'middle arc' encompasses older Western and Southern suburbs, characterized by a mix of demographics and socio-economic challenges. Finally, the 'outer arc' includes areas like the Central Coast and North-West Corridor, home to a more economically mobile population living in suburban fringes.

Due to the distribution of migrant populations and their settlement patterns, ethnic precincts have formed in different suburbs of Sydney (Burnley, 2000; Randolph & Holloway, 2005). This is exemplified by the emergence of ethnic precincts like 'Vietnamatta' in Cabramatta, 'Little Italy' in Leichhardt, the Turkish in Auburn, and the Lebanese in Lakemba. These precincts, which have become integral parts of Sydney's suburban identity, illustrate how migrant communities have shaped local architecture, social spaces, and cultural practices (Burnley, 1998, 2000; Searle, 1996)

Furthermore, the role of government policies, particularly in housing and urban planning, plays a significant role in shaping the trajectory of these suburbs (Gurran, 2011). The interaction of these policies with global economic trends and local demographic shifts will undoubtedly influence the continuing evolution of Sydney's suburbs.

In conclusion, Sydney's suburbanization is a complex process influenced by increasing urban density, socio-economic transformations, technological advancements in transportation, and significant migration patterns. As highlighted by scholars (Burnley, 1998, 2000; Randolph & Holloway, 2005; Searle, 1996), these factors have collectively contributed to the development of Sydney from a modest urban center to a diverse, sprawling metropolis. The distinct identities

and socio-economic contours of various suburbs, evolving over time, reflect the dynamic nature of urban development and its multifaceted impacts.

4.3 The Transformation of Hurstville

Hurstville sits in southwest Sydney, approximately 15 km from central Sydney, and is governed by the Georges River LGA. It is close to the city's main airport, Kingsford Smith, and has a train station on the T4 line. Its central commercial street is Forest Road, which runs for 1.5 km on either side of the train station (see Figure 4.1).

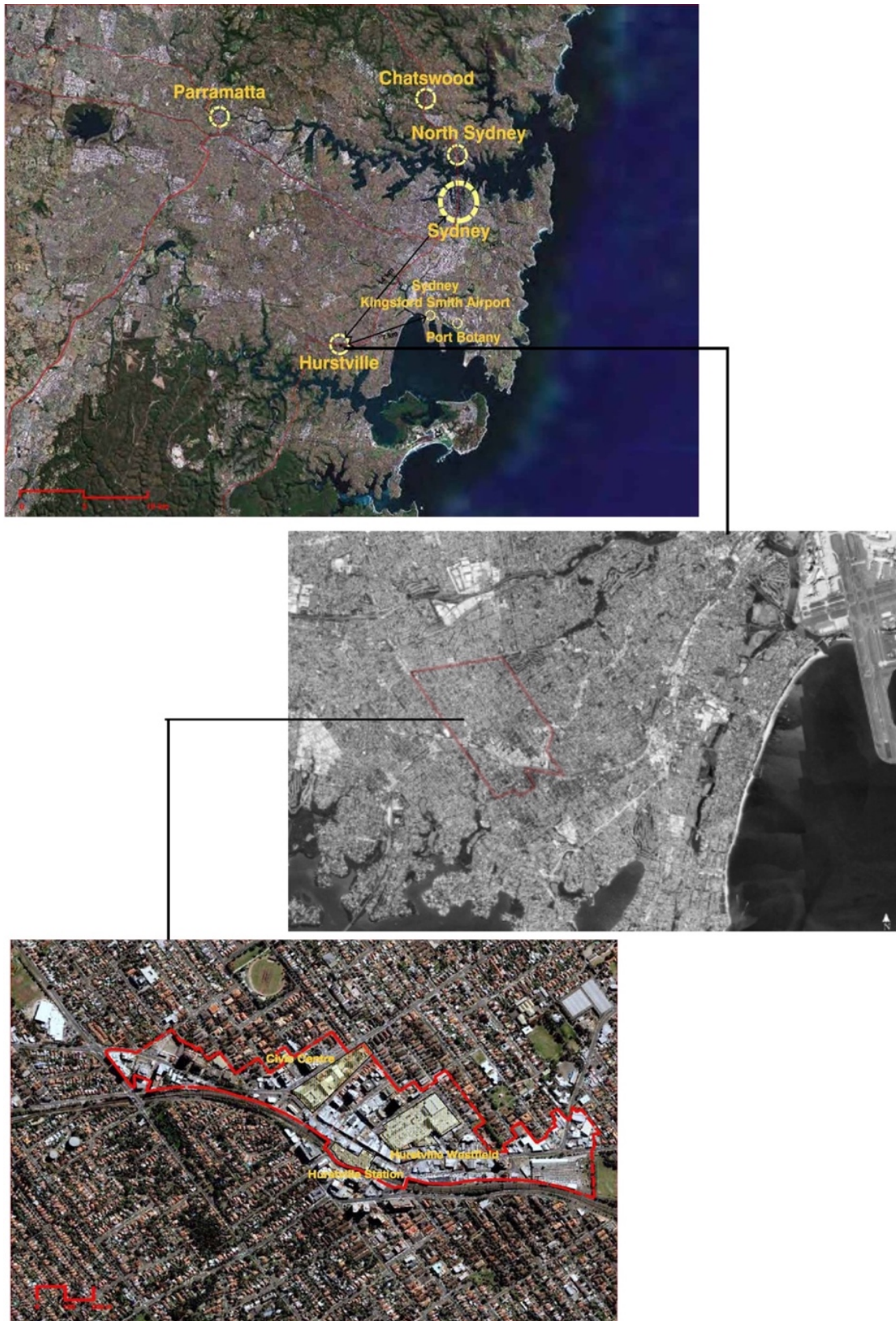


Figure 4.1. Research area

(Source: drawn by the author. Images adapted from Google in 2019)

4.3.1 Demographic transformation

Hurstville's journey from a modest settlement to a bustling suburb of Sydney began well before the infrastructural developments of the early 19th century. Initially, the land characterized a heavily timbered forest, which attracted timber getters, wood gatherers, bark collectors, and charcoal burners to settle (Stevens, 1976). The 1870s marked a pivotal point in Hurstville's development. The establishment of key infrastructure such as schools, hotels, a post office, theatres, and stores laid the foundation for a growing community. The construction of the Illawarra railway line in 1884 catalysed this growth, as noted by the Georges River Council, turning Hurstville into a focal point of urban development and increasing land values significantly (Georges River Council N.A). The area's evolution continued through the early 20th century, with residential and commercial development accelerating. The advent of World War I and II saw Hurstville playing its part in the national efforts, with the community contributing both in terms of manpower and resources. The post-war era brought about a shift in the demographic landscape, with European migrants, particularly from the United Kingdom and Greece, settling in the area, adding to its cultural diversity.

Hurstville's character as a suburban center was firmly established by the mid-20th century, with a well-developed commercial district and increasing residential areas. The arrival population of the 1980s marked a significant phase of demographic transformation, as can be seen from Table 4.1 which illustrating changes of the overseas-born population. From the data, there was a notable demographic shift starting in the 1980s when the population of overseas-born residents began to rise sharply, with the number more than tripling from 777 in the 1971-1980 period to 2,109 in the 1981-1990 bracket. This trend continued to escalate, with the period from 2011 to 2015 accounting for 14.2% of new arrivals, and a significant surge evident from 2016 to 2021, where 31.8% of the population were born overseas. This latter period marks the most dramatic demographic shift, suggesting a period of rapid growth and diversification in Hurstville's population. This influx has likely contributed to reshaping the suburb's identity, fostering a dynamic and multicultural community that reflects the changing face of modern Australia.

Table 4.1 Hurstville's population by people born overseas, change over time

Year of arrival in Australia	Number	%
Arrived in 1960 or earlier	211	1.0
1961 to 1970	607	2.9
1971 to 1980	777	3.7
1981 to 1990	2,109	9.9
1991 to 2000	2,787	13.1
2001 to 2010	4,397	20.7
2011 to 2015	3,007	14.2
2016 to Aug 2021	6,753	31.8

(Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1960- 2016)

In further exploring the demographic transformation of Hurstville, the analysis now turns its focus to the ancestry of the suburb's overseas-born population. Figure 4.2 reflects the changes in Hurstville's population by percentage share of people's ancestry. It clearly shows that individuals of Chinese ancestry have become a dominant demographic group, with their proportion dramatically increasing from under 20% in 2001 to over 55% by 2016. This suggests a significant influx of Chinese immigrants settling in the suburb of Hurstville. Meanwhile, other ancestries such as English, Nepalese, Australian, Greek, Lebanese, and Indian, while present, exhibit relatively stable and modest percentages of the Hurstville population over the same period. By 2016, both the English and Nepalese ancestries account for 7.3% each, followed by Australian (5.7%), Greek (3.2%), Lebanese (2.4%), and Indian (2.2%). This data indicates that while Hurstville has maintained its multicultural character, the rapid increase in the population with Chinese ancestry has significantly shifted the suburb's demographic balance.

The significant presence of the Chinese population in Hurstville mirrors the broader patterns of Asia's rising influence in Australia, especially within the Asia-Pacific region. This trend is highlighted by Anderson et al. (2019), who note: "Today Australia's reality is to a much greater extent determined by its actual entanglement with Asia and China: economically, but also, as we shall see, demographically" (p. 20). Hurstville's growth and transformation into a Chinese ethnoburb exemplify this deeper integration between Australia and Asia, demonstrating how global migration trends significantly impact local communities.

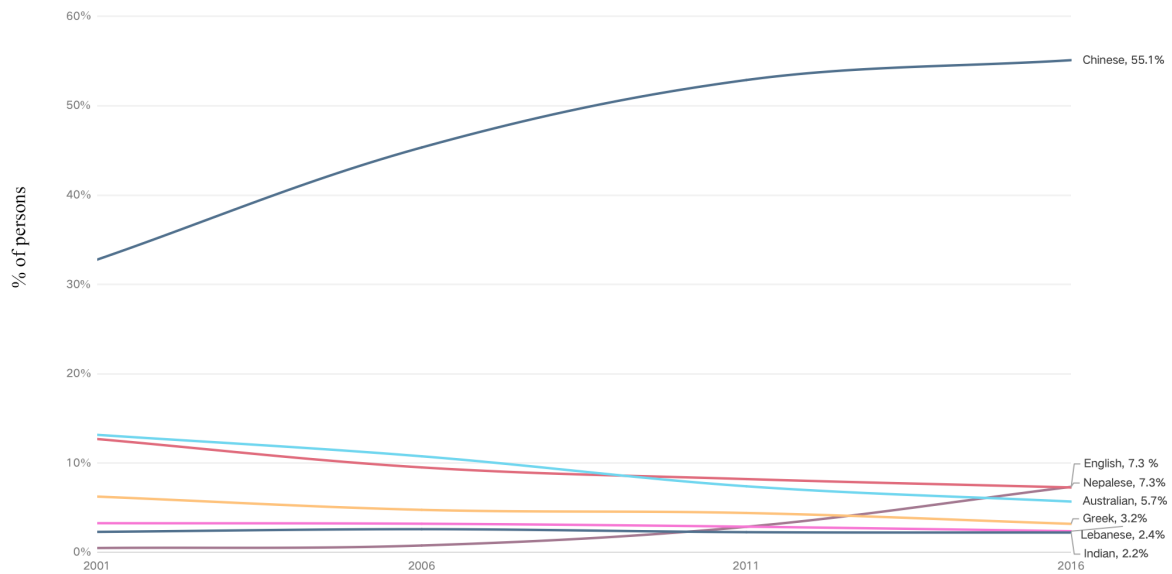


Figure 4.2 Change of Hurstville's population by percentage share of people's ancestry
 (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996-2016)

Moreover, following the previous analysis of the substantial influx of Chinese migrants settling in the suburbs, I delve further into the dynamics of these populations, which is essential for a deeper understanding of their impact. It is crucial to acknowledge that, despite sharing a common Chinese ethnicity, these immigrants originate from diverse regional backgrounds with varying socio-economic profiles and migration motives. The intra-ethnic diversities among Chinese Malaysians, Mainland Chinese, and Hong Kong Chinese are particularly notable. They differ not only in regional origin but also in reasons for immigration, visa statuses, and settlement patterns in Sydney. Table 4.2 provides an insightful summary of how global shifts have influenced waves of Chinese immigration, helping to dissect the complexities of these movements at both the city and suburb levels.

Table 4.2. The complexity of Chinese migration history in Sydney.

WHO ARE THEY				WHY THEY MIGRATED	WHERE THEY SETTLED	
Period	Push Factors	Visa Type	Region of Origin		Location	Suburbs
1970s	Oppression and marginalisation	Humanitarian and family migration	Indonesian Chinese	Indonesian invasion of East Timor led to thousands of Chinese refugees fleeing to Australia	Lower income areas in Western Sydney	Fairfield, Bankstown, Auburn, Parramatta, and Canterbury
			Vietnamese Chinese	The collapse of the South Vietnamese government in 1975 and the Sino-Vietnamese border war led to Chinese refugees seeking residency in Australia		
1980s	Seeking higher education opportunities	Skilled migration/ From sojourners to permanent residents	Malaysian-born Chinese	Encouraging more Malaysian students to have greater opportunities in higher education, while there were only limited places for students of Chinese ethnicity. This gave rise to Chinese professionals migrating to Australia to guarantee a place for their children in higher education, also leading to an increase in temporary stays of Chinese students from Malaysia	Higher-income areas in Northern Sydney	Ku-ring-gai SLA (Wahroonga and Pymble) and Hornsby SLA (Epping and Eastwood)
1980s	Political and economic uncertainty	Skilled migration/ Business migration	Hong Kong Chinese	High migration numbers/Strong/Significant migration took place from Hong Kong during the late 1980s due to the pending transfer of the nation's sovereignty from Britain to The People's Republic of China. Entrepreneurs established businesses in Sydney and migrated with their families. Some maintained businesses Hong Kong and returned there for part of the year; others remained permanently in Hong Kong while leaving their wives and children in Australia as Australian citizens.	Middle-income southern suburbs Higher-income suburbs	Randwick, Canterbury, Rockdale, and Hurstville Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby
1989	Political issue	Special amnesty	Students from mainland China	In 1989, 20,000 Chinese students studying in Australia were allowed to stay, eventually permanently, through amnesty granted by the Australian Government as a result of the Tiananmen Square protests. Once they obtained permanent resident status, they could sponsor immediate family to migrate under the Preferential Family Category.	Lower cost southern and western suburbs	Marrickville, Hurstville, Canterbury, Ashfield, and Strathfield
2000s to present	Education/ Investment	Skilled migration/ Business migration	Mainland China	International students remaining after completing tertiary education in Australia. These migrants were educated professionals, often from more affluent backgrounds	Diverse	Not limited by Chinese community

(Source: by the author, adapted information from (Burnley, 2002; Chan & Koh, 2018).

Zooming in on Hurstville, the language spoken serves as a proxy to understand the shifts in Chinese migration within time (see Figure 4.3.). Generally speaking, the growth of Chinese migrants in Hurstville can be summarized in three distinct waves, each leaving a unique imprint on the suburb's identity.

The first wave, precipitated by the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, saw former Prime Minister Bob Hawke offer residency to Chinese students, many of whom found Hurstville's affordability and transport links conducive to their needs. The figure indicates a moderate presence of Mandarin speakers during this period, which could correlate with these students. As the handover of Hong Kong approached in 1997, the second wave of migration commenced, bringing a significant number of Cantonese-speaking immigrants to Hurstville. This group's arrival is reflected in the steady increase of Cantonese speakers between the 1990s and the early 2000s. They established businesses and contributed to Hurstville's reputation as 'Little Hong Kong', as reported in 1997 by The St George and Sutherland Shire Leader (1997). The third wave, starting in 2000, brought a new influx of mainland Chinese immigrants, predominantly Mandarin speakers, as evidenced by the sharp uptick in the figure. This wave's significance lies not only in their numbers but in their socioeconomic status, with many being middle-class professionals, often referred to as the 'new Chinese' (Li, 2017a). This relates to Australia's immigration policy reforms in the late 1990s and early 2000s, which included a shift toward a skilled migration program and a push for international student enrollment, likely served as catalysts for this influx. Each wave has contributed to the evolving identity of Hurstville, reflected in Hurstville's built environment transformation.

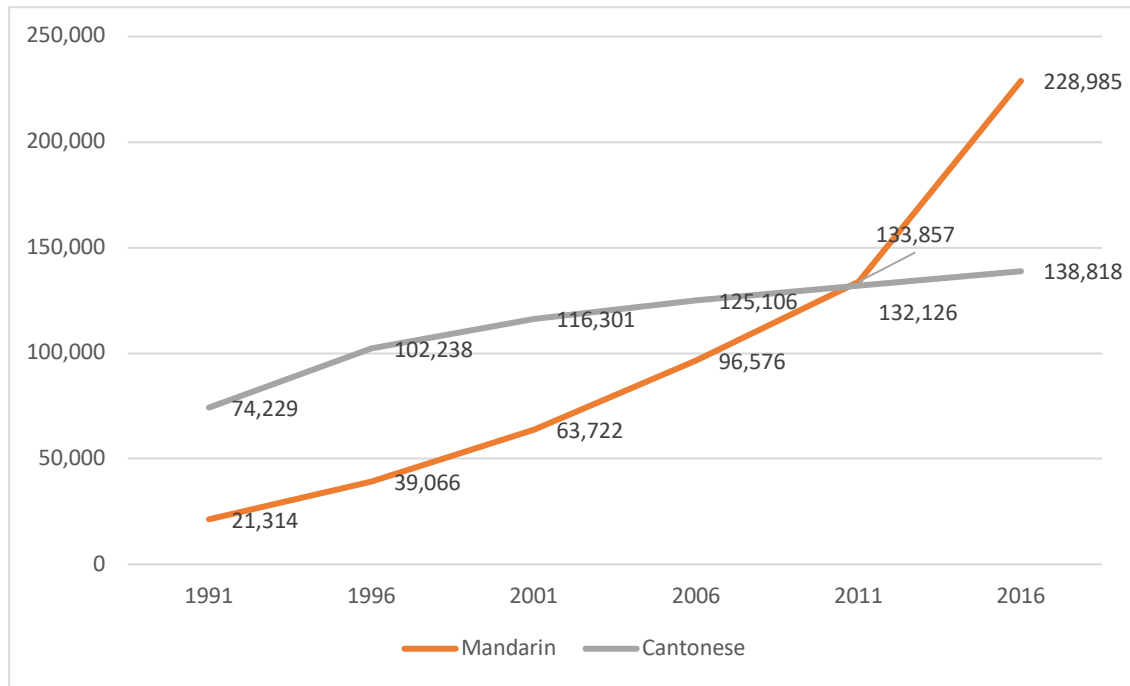


Figure 4.3. Hurstville's population by language speaking, change over time

(Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 1991-2016)

4.3.2 Built environment transformation

Researchers in social and cultural studies have emphasised the power of humans to modify the visible features of the material world and, in the process, create cultural landscapes. According to Abrahamson, “a built environment can attain very high salience in people’s identities because physical settings become associated with the bonding of people” (Abrahamson, 2005, p. 19). In the same vein, Chinese immigrants have made an indelible impression on Hurstville. In this section, I delve into the transformative process of Hurstville's built environment, capturing its evolution through three pivotal lenses: the changing landscape of commercial streets, the dynamics of residential markets, and the evolving sense of belonging among its inhabitants.

First of all, Hurstville's commercial streetscape has experienced a dynamic transformation, shaped by the interplay of socio-economic factors and demographic shifts. The advent of the Westfield shopping centre in 1977 initiated a significant change in the local retail environment. As this modern retail space drew consumers away from the traditional shopfronts, businesses along Forest Road were faced with declining foot traffic and revenues, resulting in numerous closures and a consequent economic slump for the area. The extent of this transformation was encapsulated in a local newspaper commentary, which observed, "In the 1980s, Forest Road in Hurstville was like a ghost town. The Chinese community has transformed it into the vibrant strip it is today, rejuvenating the local economy" (The St George and Sutherland shire Leader, 2016).

This downward trend was invigorated in the mid-1990s by the arrival of Asian migrants, predominantly from Hong Kong. Their entrepreneurial ventures and property investments at reasonable prices led to an economic revival of Hurstville, ultimately establishing the suburb as a prominent Chinese settlement community. Their impact on the local economy was profound, as they filled the void left by departing retailers, thus transforming the economic landscape of Forest Road.

An example of this shift is the story of Barters, a once-dominant department store that had been at the heart of Hurstville's retail scene since 1921. Its closure in 1985 symbolized the broader trend of local business downturn on Forest Road. This was reflected in a news article entitled 'Good Times, Bad Times' published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper, where the writer states:

While the Chinese have also settled in other Sydney suburbs and municipalities, it is in Hurstville that their effect on the community's life has been most profound. The change they have wrought is best symbolised in the shopping centre that runs part of the way along Hurstville's spine, Forest Road. It was once so prosperous locals called it "the golden mile", but many businesses started to go backwards after Westfield opened a giant shopping mall in 1978. Shops along Forest Road started closing but the Chinese opened new businesses there and stopped the rot. Now the road looks in full bloom. Clothing shops, groceries, \$2 variety stores, takeaway food and lottery sellers jostle for attention. Cheap restaurants stay open late, ensuring bright lights and movement into the night: a blue swimmer crab dish that costs \$48 a kilogram in Chinatown sells in Forest Road for just over \$10. (Murphy, 2002)

The transformation over the years is visually chronicled through **Error! Reference source not found.** below which presents a series of visual snapshots demonstrating how the retail landscape of Forest Road in Hurstville has transformed over approximately 56 years (1951-2017). A profound retail landscape transformation was witnessed that encapsulates the broader socio-economic and cultural shifts of the area. The 1951 image presents a tableau of post-war Australia, where a vibrant community thrives within a framework of local businesses, as evidenced by the busy pedestrian traffic. By 1980, the emergence of signage in Chinese on one of the storefronts heralds the advent of a nascent multicultural dimension, possibly signifying the inception of ethnic diversity in local commerce, and hinting at the early stages of an immigrant influence that would come to characterize the district. Fast forward to 2017, and the street presents a cosmopolitan tapestry, bustling with activity, where local establishments stand alongside businesses that flaunt bilingual signage, such as "Hung Tak" butchery (鸿达新鲜肉铺), Happy Daily Supermarket (日欣超市), evidencing a matured multicultural identity. This last image, dense with visual information, speaks volumes of the commercial and ethnic amalgamation that has come to define Forest Road, showcasing a transformation from a modest commercial lane to a vibrant, diverse shopping thoroughfare. This transformation is reflective of wider trends in urban development, immigration, and globalization, marking Forest Road as a microcosmic representation of changing urban Australian landscapes. The transformation of the streetscape proofed the imprint of immigrants in creating the cultural landscape in material world, In particular, it resonates with Zukin's observations about how local spaces are increasingly shaped by global economic and cultural forces, thereby reinforcing her perspective on the commodification of culture and the socio-spatial implications of urban change.



Forest Road Hurstville 1951



Forest Road Hurstville 1980



Forest Road Hurstville 2017

Figure 4.4 The transformation of landscape in Hurstville

(Source: Photo in 1951 and 1980 from Hurstville Museum, Photo in 2017 took by the author)

Moreover, immigrants' influence extends not only to the commercial landscape of the area but also the residential market. Beginning in the year 2000, there was a steady increase in residential development. Prior to the influx of immigrants during the 1970s, Hurstville was a low-density housing community that saw a rapid transformation when immigrants arrived. Following the year 2000, there was a surge in the construction of new high-rise residential apartments in order to accommodate these newly arrived immigrants. Figure 4.5 shows the change in dwelling structures from 2001 to 2016 in the Hurstville suburb. Since 2001, the percentage of apartments has increased rapidly, while the percentage of separate houses has decreased.

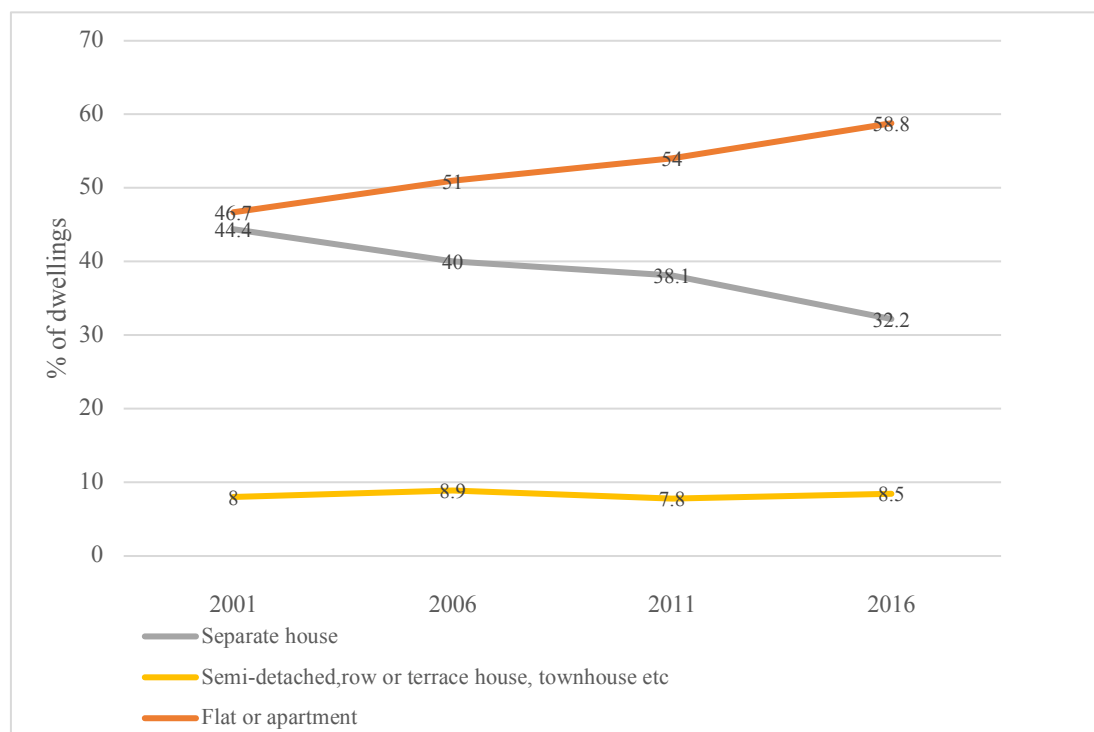


Figure 4.5. Change of dwelling structure in Hurstville

(Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001-2016)

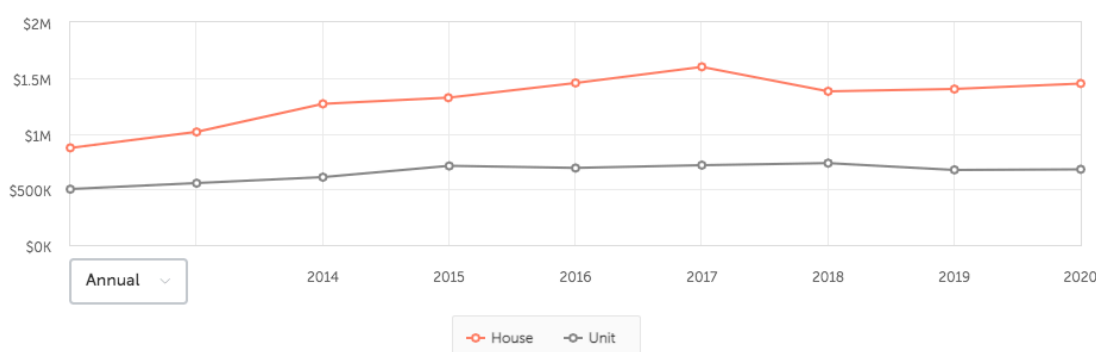
According to one local interviewee, many real estate agents and auctioneers in Hurstville are Chinese, and many builders and labourers are also Chinese. Since they speak the same language and have similar cultural backgrounds, the interviewee suggested that this was the reason that Chinese immigrants found it easier to settle in (Interview, 2 May 2019). According to interview with real estate agents, many of the property buyers in Hurstville since 2010 are Chinese families or young Chinese couples who are planning to start a family. It could be seen in the

experience of a Chinese interviewee who purchased a two-bedroom unit in a new apartment block called ‘Grand H’ in Hurstville:

When I first arrived in Sydney four years ago, Hurstville was my first stop. My English was not good enough at the time, and I was nervous about starting a new life in Sydney as a young man. Living in Hurstville gives me a sense of security because there are so many countrymen here. After two years, when I had grown accustomed to Sydney, I decided to relocate to other suburbs. However, the living experience was not good enough and I decided to return to Hurstville-purchase my own home and settled down. Considering I am now applying for a visa for my parents and planning for them to live together with me in Sydney, they don’t speak English and Hurstville is my best choice for my long-term family plan (Interview, 10 May 2019)

Property prices in Hurstville skyrocketed in the mid-2010s (see *Table 4.3*). This was further attested by Marks (2019), who noted that property prices were “turbocharged by overseas investors buying off the plan” and despite the recent restrictions on lending and capital leaving China successfully reduced continued rapid inflation, the “demand from newcomers remains solid” (para 6). The rising property prices are a clear indication of the impact immigrants have made to urban renewal and gentrification in Hurstville.

Table 4.3. Market trends of housing prices in Hurstville



(Source: *domain.com.au*)

Finally, the socio-cultural transformation of Hurstville and the consequent alteration in population composition have significantly impacted the sense of belonging among long-term local residents. This shift has sometimes led to feelings of dislocation as the suburb's identity has evolved. An Australian resident who had lived in Hurstville for over thirty years expressed their dissatisfaction with shopping locally, stating "...it is becoming increasingly difficult to know what each little shop is actually selling" (Interview, 15 May 2019), citing storefront signage not being written in English as a primary inhibiting factor. Another interviewee, also a long-term resident, who sold his house in Hurstville and moved to nearby Allawah had stated, "I feel not accepted in Hurstville now, so I had to choose surrounding suburbs" (Interview, 15 May 2019). These sentiments are reflective of broader patterns observed in areas experiencing rapid demographic shifts. Wise's (2011) ethnographic study in Ashfield revealed that non-English shop signage significantly affected the established residents' sense of place and community engagement.

These socio-cultural shifts are also reflected in the adaptation of local services to cater to the changing demographic. For instance, banks like Commonwealth and ANZ in Hurstville have adjusted their hiring practices to include more bilingual staff. An employee of Chinese descent at the ANZ branch in Hurstville highlighted the advantage of being bilingual in Mandarin and Cantonese for serving the local community, an attribute that led to his transfer to the Hurstville branch in 2004 (Interview, 20 April 2019). The changing face of Hurstville, underscored by these narratives, highlights the multifaceted nature of urban transformation where the economic revitalization and cultural diversification have both enriched and challenged the existing sense of belonging within the community.

4.4 Hurstville as a Chinese Ethnoburb

4.4.1 Why do people choose Hurstville?

The results of the 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics census revealed that 55% of Hurstville's population claimed Chinese ancestry (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016a); compared to the 34% in Haymarket's traditional Chinatown (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016b). At the suburb level, the 2016 Census shows that Hurstville has the largest concentration of Chinese

population for the whole state of NSW. As Pearlman (2017) commented, Hurstville “is set to become the first in Australia where the majority of the population are of Chinese origin”. This demographic transformation has, to a great degree, critically challenged the place identity of this local space in public rhetoric and is often framed in the wider Sydney media or research as the most intense cluster of ‘new Chinese’ migration; for example, Hurstville was claimed to be “Sydney’s real Chinatown” (Walters, 2015), “a Chinese ethnoburb” (Marks, 2019), and “Sydney’s biggest Chinese ethnoburb” (Anderson et al., 2019, p. 64).

In terms of its spatial formation, Hurstville shares some of the common trajectories discussed in previous research on the formation of contemporary suburban Chinese communities. For example, Choi (1975) in his research on Chinese migration and settlement in Australia, pointed out that new Chinese migrants always choose to live in suburbs that already have their countrymen present. In this sense, Chinese migrant suburbanisation was characterised by residential dispersal and a high concentration in specific suburbs. Visually, the spatial concentration of Chinese migration in Sydney is shown in Figure 4.6 and a basemap visualises the ‘language spoken at home’ (LANP) data from the 2016 census. It can be observed that geographically, Chinese migrants prefer to settle in suburbs closer to the inner city and in the middle ring of the metropolitan area.

TOP 20 SUBURBS OF SYDNEY CHINESE HEAT MAP

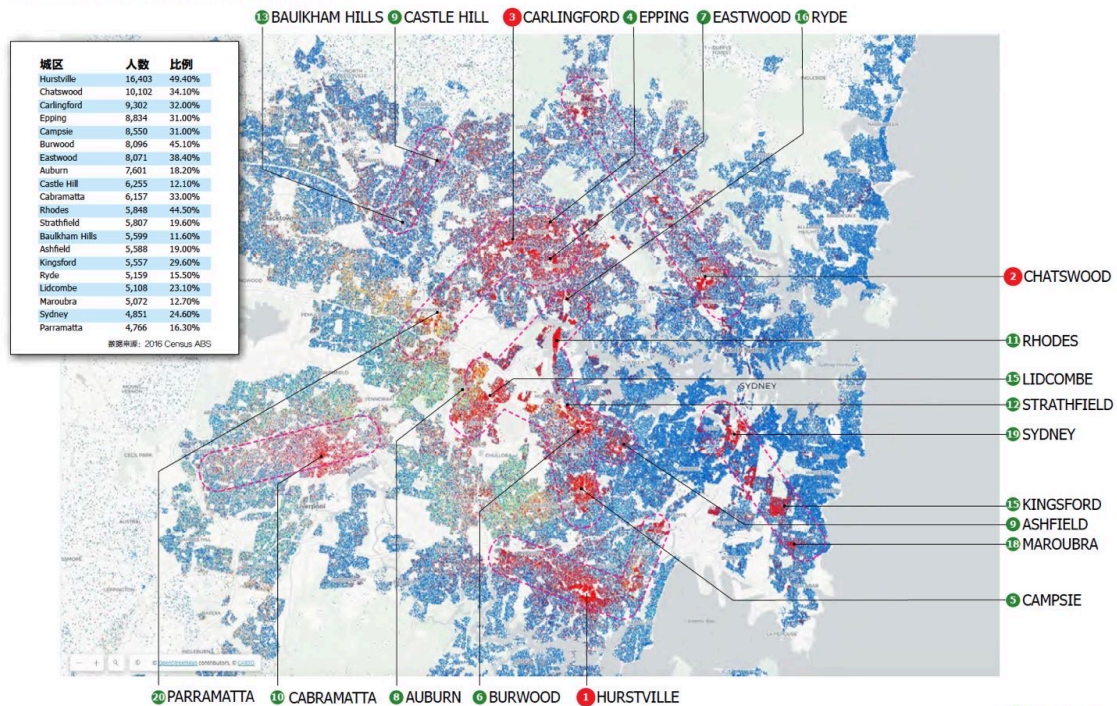


Figure 4.6. Chinese migration settlement pattern in Sydney

(Source: From “The Languages We Speak in Sydney & Melbourne”, by J. Zhao, September 2017, *Small Multiples*, (<https://smallmultiples.com.au/articles/the-languages-we-speak-in-sydney--melbourne/>) Copyright Small Multiples Pty Ltd.)

After conducting an in-depth analysis of Hurstville, this study has identified four main reasons that contribute to its appeal as a desirable living destination for Chinese immigrants. These include: well-established connectivity to public transportation, affordable rental prices, overall convenience in daily life, and access to quality educational opportunities.

The first reason is Hurstville's convenient connectivity to public transportation, including railway and bus services. The railway connects Hurstville Train Station to the nearby suburbs of Waterfall and Cronulla, as well as the South Coast from Port Kembla, Bondi Junction and the Sydney CBD. Bus routes connect Hurstville to surrounding suburbs including Rockdale and Kogarah, as well as Strathfield in Sydney's inner west (George River Council, 2019).

It is the high-quality transport system of Hurstville, in particular with its easy access to Sydney's CBD, Redfern Station (which is the stop for the University of Sydney) and

Wollongong Station (which is the stop for the University of Wollongong) that attracts international students and daily commuters to live in Hurstville. This was also reflected in the passenger profile analysis conducted by the Hurstville Transport Management Plan in 2013. It revealed that Hurstville Train station acted as a significant commuter hub for those employed in the Illawarra area and Sydney CBD. Inbound commuter traffic patterns showed higher frequency during inter-peak periods, reflecting Hurstville's role as a central shopping destination for the St George area (Hurstville City Council, 2013).

It is also worth noting that, in addition to a convenient public transportation system, Hurstville has a reasonable rental price, increasing its appeal for new migrants to choose Hurstville as a 'gateway suburb' or 'arrival node' in Sydney. A Chinese student studying Finance at the University of Sydney commented:

The rent in Hurstville is more reasonable than in others. Take a two-bedroom apartment for example, rents in Hurstville are around \$550pw, while in Chatswood it will be \$680pw. The transport here is very convenient, the T4 train line can take me to Uni, to Town Hall for shopping, and Bondi Junction directly. (Interview, 2 May 2018)

The third reason settling in Hurstville is attractive is that it is convenient for everyday life practices, including shopping and community interactions. This stems from its status as an ethnoburb, which Li (1998) notes is characterised by offering familiar language practices, accessibility to imported commercial goods, and cuisines that makes the new immigrant "feel at home" (p. 483). This is also the reason Hurstville attracts more and more Chinese immigrants to settle there permanently. It has an ethnic economic structure that fulfills the daily needs of its demographic, including a variety of restaurants, grocery stores, laundries, beauty salons, bookstores, barber shops, travel agencies and so forth. It is also home to professional businesses such as medical services, financial and accounting services, legal offices and real estate agencies. Two Chinese banks, Bank of China and HSBC, have also established their branches in Hurstville, further demonstrating the considerable customer base of Chinese people. As two interviewees commented on their living experience in Hurstville, respectively:

When I shop at the Chinese mall, I look at something [and] I know exactly what it is. If I need help, I know how to ask for help and feel comfortable with that. I think it just gives me (as an outsider), specifically, comfort and

familiarity. Since I don't speak English, it's better for me to live here. (Interview, 29 June 2018)

When I first arrived in Hurstville (2000), most people spoke Cantonese; now it's about fifty-fifty with Mandarin. You get authentic food from different regions of China: Cantonese, Shanghainese, Sichuan, Taiwan...I love living here, there's always plenty of combinations and variety. (Interview, 29 June 2018)

The fourth reason new Chinese migrant residents choose Hurstville is the opportunity it presents for education. An interesting phenomenon during Hurstville's development since the 1980s was the dramatic increase of tutoring schools and private educational services in the area. This is in line with the research of Robertson et al. (2022), who found that the abundance of schools, childcare centres and in particular, private tutoring centres, were attractive attributes for Chinese families. This signifies that Hurstville has become a cultural centre for Chinese families and it is critical to understand the clustering of Chinese immigrants in Hurstville as "an urbanising hub for Chinese families" (Robertson et al., 2022, p. 7). The popularity of Hurstville can partially be explained by the educational success of Asian migrant children. For Asian immigrant families, education is a significant motivating factor in their decision to move. Thus, they often locate to suburbs with high-ranking public schools and a positive education environment.

4.4.2 Hurstville versus Haymarket Chinatown

As in many other cities, Sydney's Chinese immigrants historically settled in the downtown Chinatown, in the area known as Haymarket, before shifting and expanding their locales to other suburbs. Since the 1960s, there has been a spatial transformation of the Chinese community in Sydney. While Haymarket Chinatown persisted as a Chinese neighbourhood with ethnic businesses and as a tourist attraction, suburbs like Hurstville have emerged with higher concentrations of Chinese residents. Anderson et al. (2019) compared Hurstville with Sydney's Haymarket Chinatown as follows:

[Hurstville as the most 'Chinese' suburb in Sydney]...this casts some doubt on Chinatown's status as the cultural center of Chineseness in Sydney today, although its historical significance- and its continued branding and marketing as Chinatown- assures its symbolic centrality (2019, p. 64).

It is apparent therefore that both Chinatown and Hurstville operate as urban Chinese communities, sharing the same complexity of Chinese migration in Sydney and the same social changes in the broader national context. However, Hurstville cannot be simply considered as a ‘Chinatown’ that is located in suburbs. Theoretically framed as an ethnoburb (Li, 1998), Hurstville is the contextual model of new suburban ethnic settlements in Sydney and differs from Haymarket Chinatown in many aspects.

Firstly, the residents of these two communities are distinctly different with respect to their ages, languages spoken, and socio-economic class (see *Table 4.4*). In Chinatown, 31.9% of residents were immigrants of Chinese ancestry, with the next largest proportion being Thai (18.3%), Indonesian (5.6%) and Korean (4.8%). As Anderson et al., (2019) have noted, “the demographic underpins the precinct’s current characterisation not just as Chinese, but, more broadly, as ‘Asian’ or ‘multi-Asia’” (p.65). Moreover, Chinatown’s immigrants have been in Australia much longer; many of whom had arrived during the gold rush era and continuing with their descendants or following the end of the Vietnam War. In contrast, 44.3% of the residents in Hurstville traced their ancestry as Chinese, followed by those of English (6.6%), Nepalese (6.6%), Australian (5.1%), and Greek (2.9%) decent. These patterns reflect a diversified country of origin and are a manifestation of the shifts in Australia’s immigration policy and national geopolitical changes over the decades. There are also notable differences in spoken languages for residents of Chinese ancestry, where most (17.9%) of the Chinese residents in Hurstville speak Cantonese in comparison to only 5.1% in Chinatown. This relates to the influx of Hong Kong immigration to Hurstville in 1990s, as previously discussed in section 4.2.

Furthermore, the median age profile of Chinatown was 27, which was five years younger than Hurstville. The distinct gap in demographics was also evident in the data for couples with children: in Hurstville, the number of families with children was 44.3%, almost double that of Haymarket (21.5%). This data is likely a reflection of Chinatown’s central location to Sydney’s CBD and proximity to both the University of Sydney and the University of Technology.

Table 4.4. Demographic characteristics: Hurstville versus Chinatown

Demographic characteristics 2016 Census	Haymarket	Hurstville
Total population	7,353	29,822
Median age	27	32
Median weekly household income	\$1,505	\$1,382
Median weekly rent (b)	\$750	\$475
% Couple family without children	60.4	36.9
% Couple family with children	21.5	44.3
% Bachelor's degree level and above	33.4%	35.4%
% Chinese Ancestry	31.9	49.4
% speaking Mandarin	20.3	32.3
% speaking Cantonese	5.1	17.9

(Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016)

These suburbs also differ in terms of business activities. As Li (1999) mentions in her research, the ethnoburb is a more attractive site for commercial and professional businesses in comparison to a designated 'Chinatown' district. This is due to the accessibility to a range of demographics, where residents of a suburb - typically more family-centric - often require access to wider scope of amenities to provide for their everyday needs. This enables the success of numerous types of businesses, which can be seen in Hurstville's rich tapestry of eateries, medical centres, financial institutions, tutoring centres and legal offices. Comparatively, the commercial district in Chinatown predominantly caters to dining and commercial outlets.

Thirdly, and most importantly, these locations differ in the ways they manifest their cultural demographic and history in the physical form of the built environment. Historically, Chinatowns were designed to emphasize their 'otherness' in a direct contrast to the dominant ethnic culture. This performative othering had its roots in both existing cultural practices and as a marketing tool. The distinctive material construction of ethnic enclaves across their built environment - from its architecture, shop displays, decorations and signage - shaped the representative image of that culture to the wider public. For example, as Sen (1998) comment on the San Francisco's Chinatown:

In the early decades of the twentieth century, tourist brochures and guide books promised that to enter the borders of San Francisco's Chinatown was to enter 'another world' to shops full of 'strange jewellery' and produce markets displaying preserved foods in 'fantastic forms' In these descriptions, the distinctive material culture of the ethnic ghettos- architecture, dress, store window decoration, and signs- begins to symbolize the ethnic community. (Sen, 1998, p. 132)

Even though Hurstville is not a territorially-defined ethnic enclave, immigrant residents continue to apply their distinct material culture and practices to make urban spaces legible and visually distinct from the urban context in which they are located. Signage using Chinese characters and store window decorations are commonly visible present in both Haymarket and Hurstville. However, in terms of architecture, the morphology of the built environment differs between these locations.

Previous research has demonstrated that the representation of ethnicity through various dimensions of the built environment is a negotiation of transnational belonging, as well as local attachments in people's daily practice (Ehrkamp, 2005). This resonates with the aesthetics and physical attributes that reify Sydney's Haymarket as a Chinatown. That is, the monumental gate in Dixon Street plus other material expressions such as "Chinese-style decorative lanterns, a steel-structured portico of Chinese design, and the supply of litter bins with Chinese motifs" (Anderson et al., 2019, p. 26) act as signifiers of the area's distinctive Chinese character. This approach of inscribed ethnicity and culture in the built environment can also be seen in other suburbs in Sydney, for example: The Pau Lai Gateway built in Cabramatta, a Sydney suburb with a high concentration of Indo-Chinese to reinforce an Asian theme for the suburb; the Italian Forum built in Sydney's Leichhardt, famed as Little Italy, using the stereotypical architecture designs to strengthen the image of the local ethnicity. All these spatial practices reflect the role of architecture and built environment in representing ethnicity and culture.

Interestingly, interviews with various actors - residents, business owners and local government - from Hurstville suggested that there was little interest in using architectural interventions in order to 'brand' the suburb as a distinctive ethnic suburb. A field trip to Hurstville revealed that the area has shown no interest in building ethnic architecture or other physical artefacts to express a distinct ethnicity, despite having a high ethnic Chinese concentration – both from the

standpoint of local governments and local businesses. According to the owner of a restaurant in Hurstville:

I don't believe we need to build anything akin to Chinatown. There is only one Chinatown in Sydney, and that is sufficient. Hurstville is known as the Chinese community, and many Chinese ancestry migrants, as well as many other ethnic residents and immigrants, live here. We don't need to construct something like that to demonstrate our existence. We are the same as everyone else. (Interview, May 2019)

The lack of conspicuously ethnic-styled architecture demonstrates that recent immigrants in Hurstville prefer a more subdued expression of ethnicity in the built environment. Residents and local businesses have chosen not to incorporate traditional Chinese architectural elements, (such as the entry archway,) into their neighbourhood as there has been no demand or perceived benefit to doing so. An interview with a local councillor revealed that:

We appreciate the presence of Chinese migrants, whose economic activities have saved Forest Road and added vitality to Hurstville's business environment, but I don't believe we need to frame Hurstville as a 'Chinatown', you know, like a place brand, focussing on one ethnic group while ignoring others who exist... It's a multi-cultural place... Furthermore, I believe that the physical structures, such as the gateway, will reinforce stereotypes of 'orientalists', leading to further marginalisation of Hurstville in comparison to other suburbs, as well as Chinese immigrants of other ethnicities. (Interview, 23 August 2019)

This resistance to altering the built environment could be explained as an example of immigrants practicing assimilation into the dominant society. Since the immigrants living in Hurstville had at first arrived in an established suburb with pre-existing architectural norms and patterns, they were not in a position to radically transform their landscape. In contrast with Haymarket Chinatown, as there is no visible ethnic architecture, sculpture, and other physical structures promoted or supported by the local government at the political level, Hurstville reflects a process where "...undervalued spaces recede into the vernacular landscapes of the powerless" and [were] replaced by a new landscape of power" (Zukin, 1991, p. 49). In this regard, immigrants residing in Hurstville represented their ethnicity and culture in another spatial spheres – specifically, the commercial landscape.

In the book *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, it was argued that the commercial street represented "...a new and valid form of what can be called commercial vernacular - which included motels, fast-food franchises, garages, and strip malls. These commonplace aspects can teach us about ourselves and how we relate to the world around us" (Jackson, 1984, p. 246). Thus, the 'commercial vernacular' has become the most symbolic way to represent ethnicity in the built environment and the most obvious identifier to demonstrate the ethnic presence of residents in Hurstville. This the important role of the commercial sector plays in the suburb echoed what Ang stated "[ethnic] community life became entangled with ethnic commodification" (Ang, 2016, p. 261),

This led to another approach for consideration in relation to the relationship between ethnicity and the built environment, which frames the ethnic neighbourhood as a spatial form of the commodification of ethnicity – a place where ethnic businesses assemble, creating a symbolic ethnic economy and cosmopolitan lifestyle for its residents. However, this representation of ethnicity is not necessarily authentic to the immigrant culture, but instead is a commodification – that is, a strategy designed to attract increasing numbers of customers and tourists and obtain financial benefits. This approach is key to understanding the case of Hurstville's commercial area.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has identified the production processes of Hurstville as a Chinese ethnoburb. Changing the fabric of Hurstville from a working-class, manufacturing local suburb to a 'gateway suburb' where migrants continue to arrive and settle presents a unique case study for understanding the relationship between migration and urban spaces. Specifically, the chapter examined the Chinese population in Hurstville, highlighting how the migration patterns have changed over time, as well as the differences between waves and generations of Chinese migrants in terms of their regional background and reasons for migration. For example, in the 1990s, the majority of Chinese in Hurstville were from the southern part of China, spoke Cantonese, and in the 2000s, most were from mainland China, spoke Mandarin, and were international students and illustrate the reasons why these migrants chose to settle in Hurstville. One of the reasons for this is supported by Robertson et al. (2022), who argue that,

while new Chinese migrants are, like previous generations of migrants, likely to be attracted to these suburbs because of the presence of co-ethnic networks, they are also potentially attracted by the same 'lifestyle' factors that drive other middle-class families – good schools, green space, leisure options, cultural venues and good transport links. (2022, p. 3437)

Furthermore, the chapter compared Hurstville to Chinatown in terms of demographic characteristics and cultural landscape, highlighting the main differences in their commercial sites and ways of ethnic expression. Immigrant desires and needs may motivate them to use, manage, and appear in the built environment to represent their ethnicity, culture, and identity. During the place-making process, various social stakeholders interact and meet, where ethnic worlds intersect mainstream landscapes and global culture is articulated in local forms. As a result, it was necessary to conduct a thorough investigation into the various ways in which ethnicity is mobilised in the space-making process.

The chapter has attempted to situate Hurstville's transformation within the larger context of Sydney's social, cultural, economic, and political dynamics. While these forces intersect with local migration histories over time, their imprint on the urban landscape forms the current fabric. Hurstville is a microcosm of the changing suburbs in Sydney and this transformation process is the result of a collision of global forces and local effects, and it addresses the relationship between place, global restructuring processes, and migration processes.

Chapter 5 Forest Road as a ‘global street’: Commercial Culture and architectural adaptation

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I delve into the intricate relationship between local adaptations and global changes as they manifest in the spatial format of commercial culture within an ethnoburb. My exploration is centred around Forest Road, a vibrant commercial street in the heart of Hurstville that serves as a microcosm of broader societal shifts. My goal is to unravel how these shifts are mirrored in the physical and cultural landscape of this unique urban setting.

This chapter proceeds as follows. It begins with a detailed examination of the economic landscape of Forest Road. By analyzing commercial census data and scrutinizing the evolution in the composition of businesses, it is aimed to shed light on the transformative economic trends impacting this area. This analysis will not only provide a snapshot of the current economic climate but also foreshadow the changes in how the street is utilized and the increasing visibility of ethnic and cultural diversity within its commercial fabric.

The analysis then transitions to exploring of the diverse architectural styles that define the Hurstville city centre. This section aims to narrate the story of this urban heritage vernacular site through its buildings. Each architectural style, belonging to different periods, collectively narrates the historical and cultural story of the area. These structures are more than mere physical entities; they symbolically embody the evolving commercial fabric, spatial types, and the overall urban form of the ethnoburb.

The final section of this chapter focuses on a detailed spatial analysis. Here, I examine the adaptation of commercial terraces in the context of social exchanges and economic dynamics. By analyzing building elements such as shop windows, façades, and floor plans, I seek to understand how commercial spaces are being continuously reused, reshaped, and reconfigured. This analysis goes beyond the physical alterations, delving into the intentions and cultural

expressions of migrant entrepreneurs who use these spaces as canvases to showcase their identity and heritage.

This chapter, through its multi-layered exploration, aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of how global changes influence local adaptations, particularly in the spatial and commercial realms of an ethnoburb like Hurstville.

5.2 The Retail Landscape of Forest Road and the Street Economy

Walking along Forest Road from east to west, which is approximately a kilometre long, offers a stimulating experience with a multitude of sensory inputs that immerses one in a new culture. Descending the escalator to Forest Road from Hurstville train station, the cultural diversity of the area becomes immediately evident. The street is lined with a variety of Asian-owned and operated shops, restaurants, and other businesses. To the right is a Hong Kong-style BBQ restaurant, a little further along is the Funhouse Malatang, a popular Chinese restaurant among young people, a COCO milk tea shop, and a Vietnamese nail beauty salon. A mix of Mandarin and Cantonese can be heard being spoken by passers-by, as well as many accented versions of English. The area is a melting pot of different cultures, with a high concentration of Chinese people, but also with noticeable admixtures of Indian, Nepalese and Lebanese.

Forest Road echoes what Zukin et al. (2015) reported in their studies of local streets:

These local streets are fast becoming a global urban habitat, where differences of language and culture are seen, heard, smelled, felt, and certainly tasted. Here is where globalization is embedded in local communities, where immigrants from different regions of the world work alongside the native-born, and the national dishes of foreign cuisines, from pizza to pupusas, become local attractions. (Zukin et al., 2015, p. 1)

As such, they become destinations on alternative tourist circuits, often driven by bloggers. For example, Joanne Karcz (2018) describes her first impression of Forest Road in her travel blog post:

Expecting a sleepy little station, I'm surprised when the train pulls up at a busy, modern platform leading to the bustling food court and shops of

Hurstville Central. Immediately the multicultural character of this suburb is obvious. Men glance through their Chinese language newspapers. Red lanterns hang from the ceiling, a labourer of Islander origin chats to his mate and people of diverse heritage order take away coffees. (Karcz, 2018)

The research site is a specific section of Forest Road, which is a long thoroughfare that runs across Hurstville and connects several suburbs. The research focusses on an 11-block section of the street, running from Queen Road on the west, to the Avenue on the east. This section was chosen as the research site because it is a representative sample of the ethnic commercial area that offers a diverse range of shops, restaurants, and other businesses that reflect the commercial culture. This section of Forest Road is unique and worthy of study as it provides an opportunity to understand the significance and impact of these spaces on urban environments and ethnic identities. (see Figure 3.2).

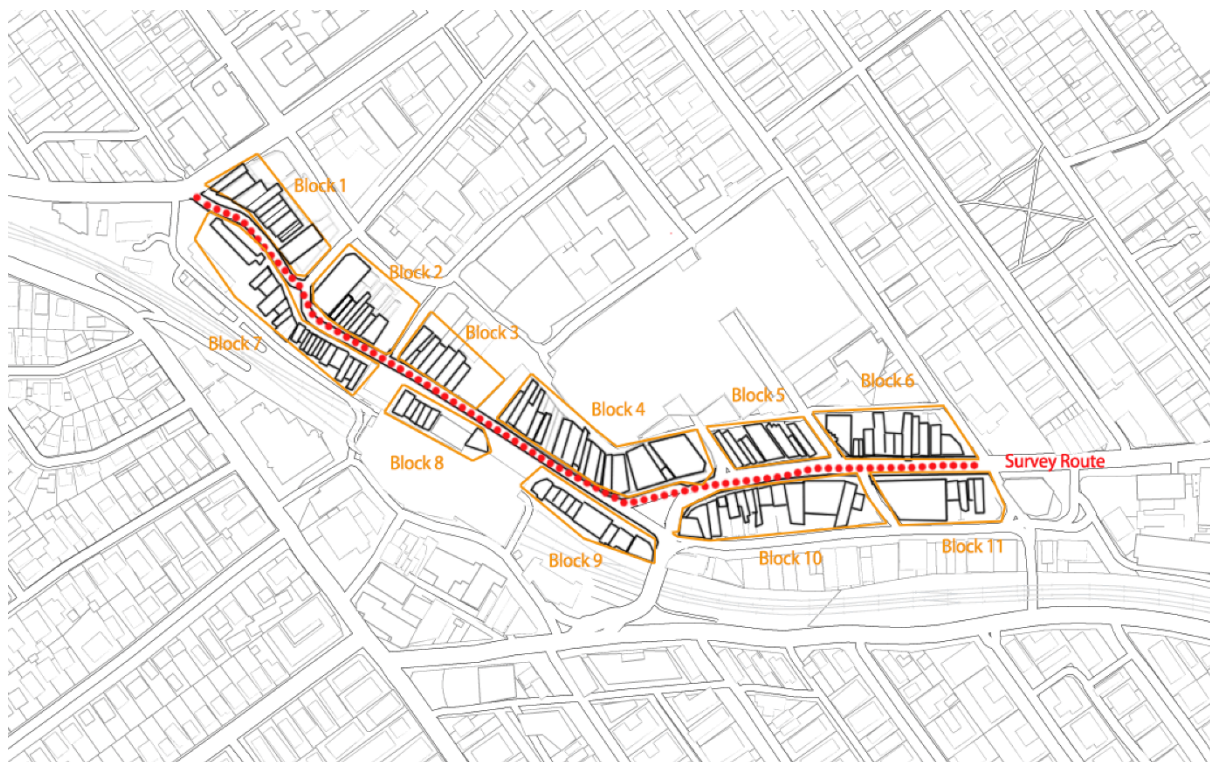


Figure 3.2. Scope of the research area in Hurstville.

(Source: by the author)

The research area has undergone significant changes over the years, particularly in terms of its ethnic and racial makeup (see detailed discussion in Chapter 4). In the past, the area had a mix of Anglo, Italian and Greek businesses, but today, more than half of the shops along Forest

Road are Chinese-owned small businesses. This change in the retail landscape is not just a simple business turnover, but also represents a wider cultural transformation. This transition can be seen as a sign of change in the neighbourhood, specifically, a shift in how the local spaces are being used as a cultural consumption site by the subsequent waves of immigrants. The presence of these Chinese businesses reflects the culture and history of the ethnic group that primarily occupies and uses the space, and it is important to understand how these changes have occurred and what impact they have on the community and urban environment.

Nowadays, the street shops along Forest Road offer a diverse range of goods and services that cater to the daily needs of the immigrant population residing in the area. The businesses found along the street include a variety of types such as grocers, bakers, butchers, hardware stores, supermarkets, restaurants, and various service providers such as Chinese medicine and healthcare providers, furniture and entertainment businesses, hair and nail salons, financial and insurance services, real estate and property services, educational coaching providers, legal services, and migration services. Additionally, there are branches of the Bank of China and HSBC, a clear indicator of the large number of Chinese residents who live here.

In terms of spatial-function distribution, the shops on the street level primarily serve food-related industries, such as restaurants, grocery stores, and butcher shops. The upper floors are dedicated to service-oriented businesses such as accounting or travel agencies.

In order to understand the diverse retail landscape and the unique commercial forms of Forest Road, this chapter will examine the street in relation to three aspects: 1) the diverse uses of the street; 2) the multicultural and immigrant-prominent nature of the local entrepreneurship; and 3) the unique business forms found within the immigrant community.

5.2.1 Diverse uses

In the research project *Global cities, local streets*, Zukin et al. (2015) framed the local street as a “globalized habitus”, where they explained that:

We can think of local shopping streets as a habitus in two senses, as both a “conceptual” space, embodying, reproducing, and symbolizing the collective

tastes of a social group, and a “lived” space, which is physical, functional, and experiential (2015, p. 6).

This statement suggests that an immigrant’s habitus or cultural background can influence the types of businesses they establish and patronise, as well as the overall commercial landscape of the street where they live. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of immigrant populations on the economic activity within the Hurstville neighbourhood. This research will utilise data obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ Census of Population and Housing 2016 to specifically examine the industry sector of employment within Hurstville. Moreover, comparing the data in Hurstville with Greater Sydney provides greater insight into the distinctive economic environment of Forest Road and the impact of immigrants have had on it.

As Figure 5.1 shows, there are two main business types that are prominent in Hurstville: Retail Trade (12.9%) and Accommodation and Food Services (15.1%). These percentages are higher than those in Greater Sydney (9.3% and 6.7% respectively). This suggests that Hurstville is a hub for retail and food service industries, which is consistent with the consumption and leisure habits of immigrant communities as Aytar and Rath (2012) have argued that, “recent years have witnessed the rise of ethnic neighbourhoods— notably their shopping areas— as sites for tourism, leisure and consumption in cities around the world” (p. 1).



Figure 5.1. Hurstville industry sectors of employment data in 2013

(Source: “Georges River Council | community profile” by profile.id. Retrieved from <https://profile.id.com.au/georgesriver/industries?WebID=160&BMID=20&EndYear=2016&DataType=UR>.)

To further support this claim, a shop-by-shop survey was conducted on the selected research area of Forest Road in Hurstville. The empirical work was completed along the research area over a three-week period in 2019, and the data aimed to provide a detailed analysis of the existing retail activity. The data found that there were 106 buildings with a total of 204 business units clustered on the selected section of Forest Road. This concentration of commercial activities, characterised by a high density of businesses, has led to the emergence of a ‘golden mile’ commercial landscape. The survey data was further analysed by dividing all 204 businesses into nine categories: entertainment, education, grocery, clothing and fashion, technology, service, food and drink, beauty, and mixed. As illustrated in *Figure 5.2*, the findings indicated that service, food and drink, grocery, and beauty businesses constituted a significant proportion of the businesses in the retail core of Forest Road. This indicates that these types of businesses are economically successful in the area and identifies the preferences and needs of the customers.

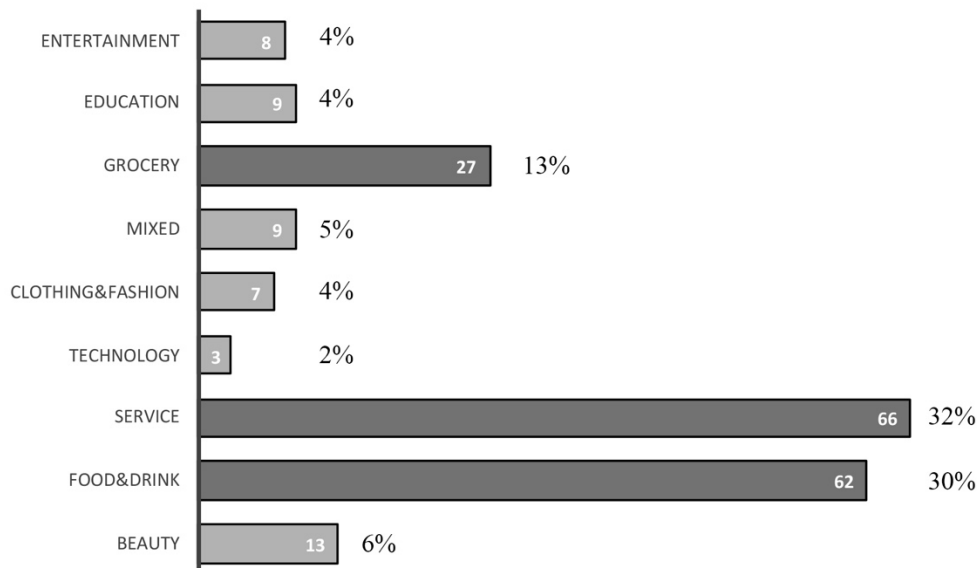


Figure 5.2. Data of existing retail activity along Forest Road in 2019

(Source: by the author, compiled from shop-by-shop survey)

Additionally, the survey data also revealed the economic and spatial morphologies of the street. This can be observed through the mapping of the location of different types of shops along the street (see Figure 5.3). The drawing showed that most of the restaurants and service shops were centred near the train station in the centre section of the street. The western bookend of Forest Road included a significant number of restaurants due to the proximity of a high density of residential apartments in the surrounding area. The presence of these apartments generates a substantial demand for dining options, which has resulted in a concentration of food and drink outlets in this section of Forest Road. Conversely, the eastern part of the street had a different retail character. The businesses in this area were primarily Chinese-owned personal services such as law firms, accountants, real estate services, tutoring centres, art and piano education schools, hair salons, optometrists, dental clinics, and Chinese medicine centres. These types of businesses cater to the specific needs of the community and reflected the diverse range of services and cultures present in the area. Moreover, the area also featured several business centres, which is a type of building that contains multiple small businesses with shared strata and is designed to promote accessibility and convenience.

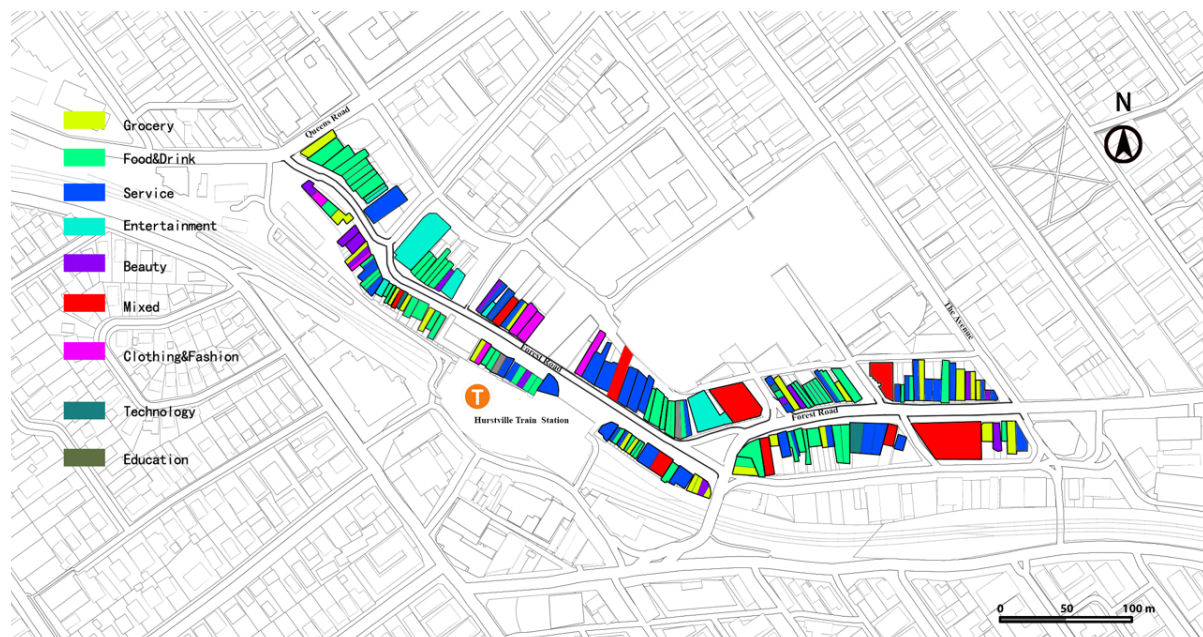


Figure 5.3. Spatial distribution of different shop types of Forest Road in 2019

(Source: by the author, compiled from shop-by-shop survey)

Notably, the street survey indicated that a significant proportion of the small businesses on Forest Road are independently owned and operated by proprietors with immigrant backgrounds. This pattern suggests that Forest Road serves as a pivotal entry point for self-employed migrants seeking to establish their own businesses. This observation aligns with Collins's (1995) argument that entrepreneurship can present a viable pathway for new immigrants, particularly those with limited capital or educational credentials, to integrate into the mainstream economy. The reason behind was further further enriched by my interview data with local business owners. As one interviewee pointed out:

Hurstville experiences a notable turnover rate in its local businesses. This is because managing a business is employed as a strategy to secure a visa. Because running a business is a strategy for secure a visa. Once permanent residency is attained, they tend to sell their businesses as they move on to other opportunities. (Interview,

5.2.2 Ethnicity of business proprietors.

The diversity of Forest Road is not only reflected in the variety of business types present, but also in the presence and visibility of ethnic minority proprietors. From the survey with 204 proprietors, it emerged that there were eleven different countries of origin amongst them (see Table 5.1). There were 171 business from China (84 %) standing out as the predominant country, representing China's influential cultural and economic footprint in this locality. Notably, Australian proprietors, making up 6% of the total, reflect the local demographic, serving as a bridge between the global and local business spheres. The presence of proprietors from Vietnam, Japan, India, and other countries further enriches this diversity, though numerically smaller, introducing a variety of cultural goods and practices. This blend of the global and local, as highlighted by Zukin et al. (2015), is not just a statistic but a living tableau of cultural exchange and economic interdependence. This analysis reveals that Forest Road is a predominantly Chinese business area but also a melting pot of various cultures. This diversity enriches the cultural and economic fabric of the area, making it a unique and potentially attractive location for both consumers and new businesses.

Table 5.1 Ethnicity of business owners compiled from survey

Country of Birth	Number	Percentage
China	171	84%
Korea	3	1%
Malaysia	1	0%
Nepal	2	1%
Australia	12	6%
Vietnam	6	3%
Japan	3	1%
India	2	1%
Thailand	2	1%
Greece	1	0%
Lebanon	1	0%

(Source: by the author, compiled from shop-by-shop survey)

5.2.3 Business composition.

Over the course of this research on the transformation of retail landscape in Hurstville, I found similar patterns. While some businesses demonstrated continuity and longevity, there were also types of businesses that disappeared from the street as a result of various social, cultural, and economic changes. To further illustrate the changes in the business composition of Forest Road, two specific examples have been selected from the archival research that was conducted in Hurstville. The first example is the local story of Roma Restaurant, which illustrates how the commercial environment, once occupied by European settlers serving white suburbanites, has been regenerated by the influx of Chinese businesses. The Roma restaurant in Hurstville was a family-owned business that was established as a coffee shop in 1958 by Tony Portelli. The business was passed down through various family members until Frank and Lena Russo became the owners in 1964. The restaurant played a significant role in introducing locals to Italian cuisine by becoming the first in the neighbourhood to serve cappuccinos and pizzas in 1972. The atmosphere of the restaurant was enhanced by the decor of chianti bottles and candles, creating a unique ambience. However, in November 1996, the Roma closed its doors to be replaced by a Chinese restaurant, as the Russos decided to retire upon receiving an offer from a Chinese restaurateur.

The second example is a family business named Brice's Book Exchange, located at 178 Forest Road, which had a rich history dating back to its opening in 1961. However, in 1995, the shop closed, marking the end of an era for three generations of the Brice family. The owner, reflected on the closure saying, "Closing the shop is just another change and you have to accept change. When you've grown up in Hurstville, you grow with the changes. It's people who come back after years away who see the big difference" (cited from historical newspaper collection in the local library of Hurstville). This sentiment was echoed in a local newspaper report, which stated, "In less than two years, about 50 businesses in Forest Road have closed their doors and those that remain are struggling to keep going".

These examples depict the evolution of local businesses in Hurstville, where traditional, family-owned establishments such as shops and restaurants that were originally run by European settlers have been replaced by new immigrant-run businesses, particularly immigrants from China. The above examples highlight how these new immigrants have been able to adapt to and thrive within the local neighbourhood. Furthermore, these examples illustrate the impact of these changes, including the closing of many businesses along Forest Road and the effect it has had on the suburb's social and cultural transformation.

The development of Forest Road's Chinese community has introduced not only traditional businesses like restaurants and groceries but also immigrant-specific enterprises such as *daigou* shops and tutoring centres. These new business models, predominantly found in Chinese ethnic areas, reflect a unique adaptation to the needs of the immigrant community. Their proliferation is a notable example of how demographic shifts can influence the retail environment, leading to a diversified commercial landscape. This evolution in business types plays a role in attracting more residents to these communities, showcasing a dynamic relationship between population changes, retail trends, and the growth of ethnic neighborhoods. This observation aligns with the perspectives of Robertson et al. (2022), who emphasize the importance of local infrastructure and amenities in influencing settlement patterns.

To further explore this point, it would be relevant to delve into the specific characteristics of *daigou* shops and tutoring centres in the context of Hurstville. A *daigou* specialty store is a type of retail store that specialises in purchasing and shipping products, typically luxury goods

and baby formula, from one country to another on behalf of consumers who are unable to buy them locally. The name “*daigou*” comes from the Mandarin term for “personal shopper”. These types of shops are particularly popular in countries such as China, where there is a high demand for foreign luxury brands but products have limited availability or high prices. *Daigou* shops allow consumers to purchase these products at lower prices, often by taking advantage of differences in currency exchange rates and taxes (Chan, 2018; Xiao & Mantesso, 2019).

As reported by an interviewee, who works as a *daigou*, the process of fulfilling an order begins with the receipt of a request via Chinese social media platforms such as WeChat or Taobao. The request typically involves the purchase of specific goods, such as vitamins from the brand ‘Swiss’. The personal shopper would then visit the local Chemist Warehouse chain store to purchase the requested items and transfers them over to a *daigou* specialty shop for processing and posting. These specialty shops, which are scattered throughout Forest Road, serve as hubs for day-to-day orders and often partner with logistics firms to ship the packages from Sydney to China. This detailed operation is not merely a simple commercial venture for self-employed migrants, it acts as a bridge linking social and cultural elements between countries. It not only enables Chinese consumers to access Australian products not available locally but also fosters a unique transnational social connection.

It is worth noting that field observations made during the fieldwork revealed a symbiotic relationship between *daigou* shops and travel agencies, as they are often located near one another. An example of this relationship can be observed in the building located at 273 Forest Road, where a *daigou* gift shop and a travel services company were subletting. The physical space of the building has been utilised in such a way that both businesses are able to coexist while maintaining their distinct functions. Specifically, the interior spaces were divided into different zones, with the shared storefront, entrance, and washroom, and each business had its own functional space, as seen in Figure 5.4.

Furthermore, it was established that these two types of businesses mutually benefit from one another's services. The travel agency, for instance, is able to provide tourists with a convenient shopping destination, while the *daigou* shop is able to attract customers through the agency's promotion and planning. This was exemplified through the observation of a tour group of

Chinese tourists visiting a *daigou* shop as their final destination in Sydney. Upon inquiring with the owners of the *daigou* shop, it was revealed that the store owner's sister operates a travel agency next door, and often arranges for tourists to visit the *daigou* shop as a stop on their itinerary following visits to Wollongong and meals at Chinese restaurants in Hurstville.

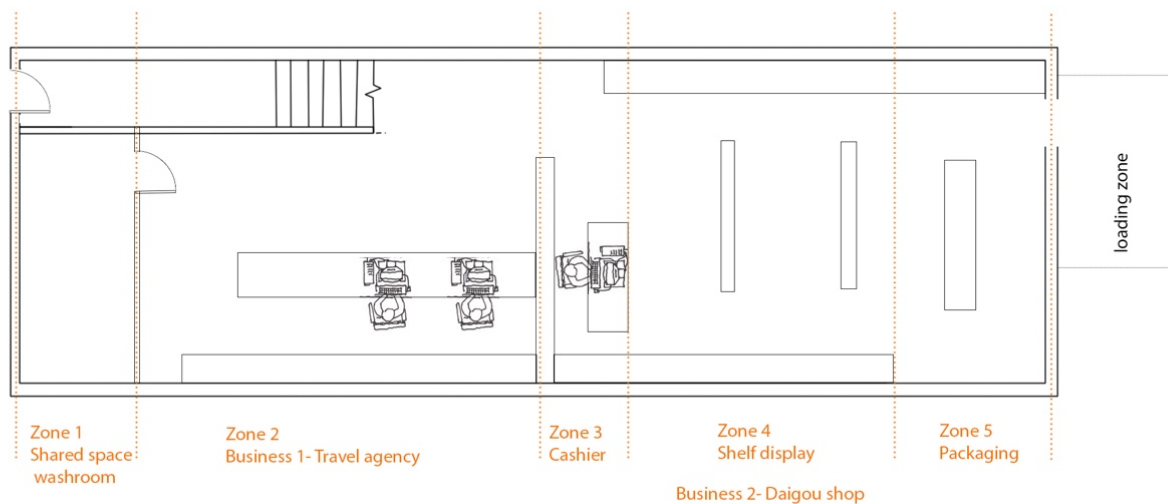


Figure 5.4. Diagram of the interior spaces of the building at 273 Forest Road.

(Source: by the author)

Another defining feature of Hurstville's business landscape is the prevalence of tutoring centres or private education schools. This refers to a specialised school or institution that provides additional education to students in order to help them improve their academic performance. Furthermore, some education schools also provide a wide range of classes for various interests such as piano, creative arts, and dance. These types of businesses, which provide additional academic instruction and extracurricular activities for students outside of regular school hours, have become a cultural norm among many Chinese families. The high concentration of private education businesses is a unique commercial feature in Hurstville (see Figure 5.5).



Figure 5.5. Signage of diverse education centres in Hurstville.

(Source: photo taken by the author in 2019)

It is worth noting that the prevalence of tutoring centres and private education schools in Hurstville has greatly impacted the community and influenced its cultural landscape. The

presence of these businesses has led to an increase in the number of families with school-age children in the area, making it a popular choice for families seeking a suburb to settle in. This was further proven in Robertson et al.(2022) 's research on the Chinese ethnoburbs in Sydney, where they had observed that the presence of these businesses has led to an increase in the number of families with school-age children in the area, making it a popular choice for families seeking a suburb to settle in.

Additionally, the presence of these businesses has also contributed to the local economy through the opening of other related businesses in the area. For example, Xinhua bookstore in Hurstville specialises in providing books that help children learn about Chinese culture, such as Chinese language books, guqin musical instruments, calligraphy supplies, and Chinese language DVDs (see Figure 5.6). These types of businesses not only provide resources and support for families with school-age children in the area, but they also boost the local economy and create job opportunities.



Figure 5.6. The Xinhua bookstore in Hurstville.

(Source: photo taken by the author in 2019)

Furthermore, the presence of these businesses also reinforces the cultural identity of Hurstville. During the fieldwork, I observed how businesses were using traditional Chinese culture as a marketing strategy to attract customers. For instance, a dance school in Hurstville advertised itself as a way to carry on traditional Chinese cultural heritage, training the next generation within multi-culturalism. This advertising slogan showcases how these businesses are not only providing services but also actively promoting and preserving traditional Chinese culture within the community. This contributes to the unique cultural landscape of Hurstville, making it an important destination for those looking to experience and learn about Chinese culture.

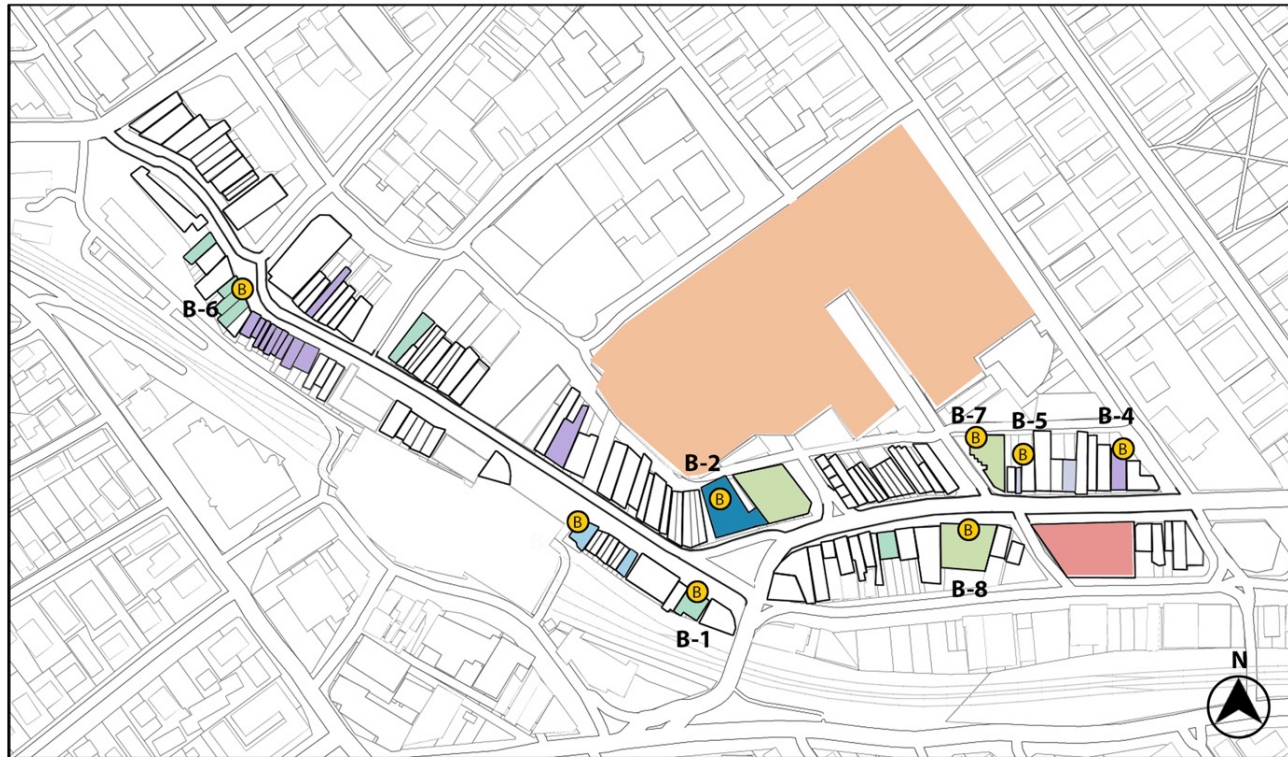
In conclusion, the survey of Forest Road in Hurstville has revealed that the local high street is not only a collection of mixed uses and mixed users, but also a reflection of the diverse and dynamic entrepreneurial practices of its proprietors. The presence of ethnic restaurants, grocery shops, as well as other service businesses that cater to the daily needs of local Chinese residents in Hurstville, in addition to immigrant-specific businesses such as *daigou* shops, tutoring centres, and private education schools, has greatly impacted the community and influenced its cultural landscape. Through the process of being embedded in a local commercial street, these businesses have adapted their practices to respond to the needs of a diverse clientele, ultimately leading to the enhancement of the street's reputation as a destination for Asian cultural consumption. Furthermore, it has played a significant role in shaping the community, its cultural identity and its economy. In the next section, I will explore how these commercial cultural diversities, as well as the transnational economic activities, influenced the use of material buildings and urban spaces.

5.3 Building Fabric, Commercial Vernacular, and Hybrid Urbanity

In the previous section, I examined the diverse range of businesses and commercial activities that comprise the local economy. Building upon that analysis, this section aims to further examine the built environment of the area, specifically focusing on analysing the diverse building typology along Forest Road and interpreting the commercial fabric of Hurstville city centre as an urban vernacular site. Here, Hurstville is analysed “as a phenomenon of architecture communication” which Venturi et al. (1972) prompted in their study of the commercial architecture of Las Vegas. Based on this idea, the buildings along Forest Road are

used as indicators to trace its commercial evolution. The primary reference used for this analysis is the *Review of Heritage Items within Commercial Centres of Hurstville Council* (2007) report prepared by Rappoport Pty Ltd for the Hurstville City Council in 2007. This report provides an inventory of the heritage buildings in the area and is useful for understanding the historical building fabric of Hurstville.

The physical environment of Forest Road comprises a diverse collection of both historic and modern buildings with different architectural styles (see Figure 5.7). Three main building typologies are commonly encountered on the strip: independent retail shops with diverse architecture styles, strata-titled commercial buildings, and shopping centres.



- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
|  Victorain Terrace |  Functionalist Style |  Art Deco Style |  Shopping Centre |
|  Federation Free Style |  Georgian Revival Style |  Strata-titled Business Centre |  High-Rise Commercial and Residential Complex |



B-1



B-2



B-3



B-4



B-5



B-6



B-7



B-8

Figure 5.7. Distribution of the diverse built fabric along Forest Road

(Source: by the author)

Firstly, Hurstville offers a unique and fascinating landscape of heritage commercial terraces, with a diverse range of architectural styles spanning over a century. The town's development began in 1850 with the construction of the Blue Post Hotel, a low weatherboard structure that served as Hurstville's first shop. Until the mid-1880s, the town's development was centred around this original pub. An old photograph from 1895 depicts Hurstville's built environment at the time (see Figure 5.8) featuring shops such as a chemist, telegraph and money order office, general store, and haberdashery business. The main commercial streets were lined with two-storey buildings, resulting in a nearly continuous frontage. Terrace housing was also introduced and rapidly expanded during this period.



Figure 5.8. Old commercial fabric of Hurstville

(Source: Hurstville City Library Museum & Gallery).

The establishment of the Illawarra Railway and the opening of Hurstville Station in 1884 served as the catalyst for the development of the area, with all of the buildings in the current town centre dating from this period. The railway's arrival led to a new pattern of settlement, with new subdivisions in small residential lots encouraging suburban-style development. By 1888, purpose-built shops with residences on the first floor were constructed in the town centre. This type of 'shop-house' style Victorian terrace was the earliest archetype of commercial buildings in Hurstville. Initially, these buildings were designed as mixed-use, with commercial use on the ground floor and residential use on the upper floors, providing a unique typology defined by their narrow shopfront façades, deep lots, and rear service lanes, which reflected the historical land subdivision patterns of the area. However, as a result of land re-zoning in recent years, these buildings have been primarily used for commercial purposes now, resulting in the loss of the mixed-use character of these historically significant structures.

There was a local commercial terrace boom in the Federation Free Style (1890-1915), which was a popular architectural style during that period. During the inter-war period (1915-1940), Hurstville experienced its greatest urban growth, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s. The electrification of the railway line in 1926 led to a population rise and the release of new land, resulting in a building boom in the suburb. Each year brought noticeable changes, with new buildings showcasing distinct patterns of growth marked by examples of varied early twentieth-century architectural styles. These styles include Art Deco, Georgian Revival style, Functionalist style, and Federation Free Style buildings (as seen in Figure 5.7: B-1, B-2, B-3, B-4 respectively) that were added to the built environment. These diverse styles provide an interesting vernacular site to examine the evolution of the architecture of Hurstville over time and how it reflects the changing urban and commercial development of the area.

To further illustrate the diverse commercial buildings along Forest Road, I will examine two buildings as examples to provide a deeper insight into the architectural features and historical significance of these buildings to the urban fabric. I draw on the Hurstville Heritage Inventory (Hurstville City Council, 2007) for the descriptions. The first example is located at 178 Forest Road, Hurstville (see Figure 5.7: B-5). This modest two-storey building, constructed in 1889 by the Sydney and Providential Building Society, exemplifies the architectural style of the Victorian period with its symmetrical façade, simplistic style without much ornamentation, a

character of relatively narrow and deep lots, shared party walls with its neighbours, and it opens fully on the ground floor to the fronting street. Furthermore, the building is a masonry construction with featured architectural elements, including a parapet that sits on top of the main roof. This parapet serves to conceal the roof and add a decorative touch to the structure. The building also features moulded details, such as stringcourse and dentil detailing, which serve as decorative elements that enhance the visual interest of the building. Additionally, the building is adorned with a semi-circular pediment that surmounts the entablature.

As an archetype of a “shop-house”, it features a five-room residence on the upper floor and a ground floor shop. Despite some modifications and renovations, the building has been able to retain its original form and some of its original details. The first-floor balcony, for example, has been enclosed but the awning has been protected to maintain its original appearance. The building’s façade has also undergone some renovations, including the repainting of the walls to a yellow colour and the addition of large windows to increase natural light. The shopfront has been entirely renovated and is now being used as a Hong Kong BBQ restaurant. The signboard has been painted in red and inscribed in golden-coloured Chinese characters, reflecting the current use of the space within its ethnic expressions. The *Review of Heritage Items within Commercial Centres of Hurstville Council* (2007) highlights the importance of this building to the suburb’s built fabric, stating that “it is the only Victorian terrace style building in Hurstville town centre to retain its original balcony and is a key element in the historic streetscape” (p. 96).

The second example are the buildings located at 277-291 Forest Road, which are a group of Art Deco shops with well-detailed composition that contributes to the aesthetics of the streetscape (see Figure 5.7: B-6). This cluster of Art Deco commercial buildings include Belbern House at 277-279 Forest Road, Willeth House at 281-287 Forest Road, and Ritchie House at 289-291 Forest Road, featuring a symmetrically stepped façade that extends across the group with consistent parapet detailing mirrored around the gable at the centre of the group (Willeth House). Although the shopfront had been replaced, this group of buildings has survived with some rare elements such as the leadlight glazing. The window to the upper façades are narrowly proportioned and do not read as domestic, providing evidence of the transition of the patterns of retail development in the early 20th century from a residence above

a shop to an adaptable space (e.g. office, commercial, service retail, residence or meeting rooms all being found in Hurstville's later inter-war developments) above the retail space. The buildings are representative of the local retail development through its form, fabric, and detailing.

Another common building typology along Forest Road is the strata-titled commercial building. This type of building is a multi-level structure that is divided into several suites for commercial and office use. The suites are strata-titled, meaning that each unit is individually owned but shares common areas and facilities with the other units in the building. This allows for a mix of different businesses within the same building and provides more flexible ownership options for business owners. The strata-titled commercial building becoming increasingly popular in Hurstville since the 1990s, coinciding with the influx of Hong Kong immigrants arriving in the suburb. It is also possible that Hong Kong business owners were particularly drawn to this type of building due to its strata-titled ownership structure, which would have allowed them to own individual units within the building rather than the entire building. This can provide a greater level of flexibility and control over their investments, and may be more appealing to investors from Hong Kong, where a similar system of property ownership is in place. In terms of architectural styles, these buildings often feature clean lines, minimal ornamentation, and a focus on functionality. Their construction material may favour featuring glass and steel and have a contemporary appearance (see Figure 5.7: B-7). The strata-titled commercial buildings in Hurstville are primarily occupied by professional services such as law firms and accounting firms, as well as specialty medical clinics like dental clinics (see *Figure 5.9*). This indicates that these buildings are catering to a specific market segment, composed of businesses providing professional services.

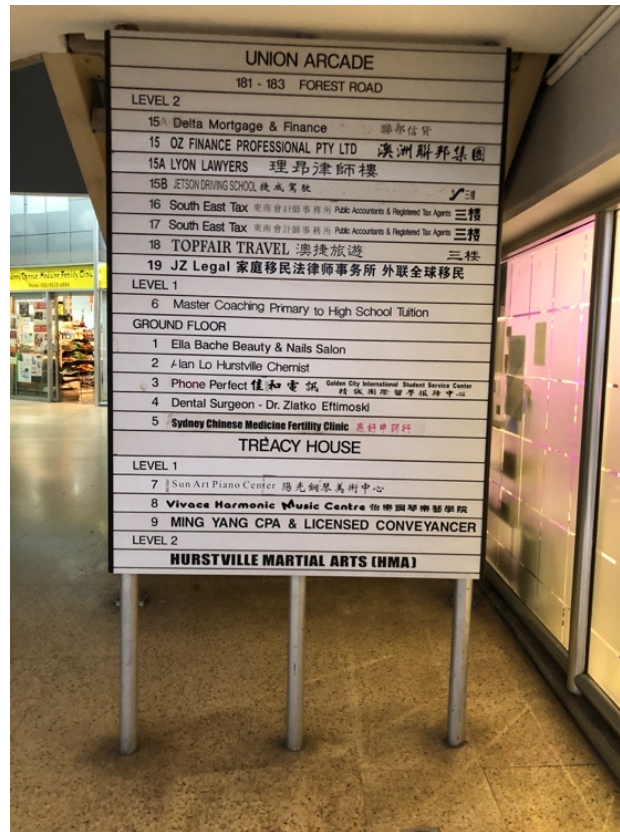


Figure 5.9. Strata titled commercial building directory sign on Forest Road.

(Source: photo taken by the author in 2019)

Following the commercial development during the 1990s, the desire and need for more impressive and durable structures arose, leading to a wave of new modern buildings being constructed. This formed the third commercial building typology – the shopping centres. Importantly, this stage of commercial development was subject to two formal council interventions: the *City Centre Concept Masterplan* (2004) and the *Hurstville City Centre Urban Design Strategy* (2017), which have significantly influenced the urban fabric and the development of built environment.

The 2017 design strategy encompassed a series of recommendations for the public domain and open spaces, built form, and activity. The key event was the project of Hurstville Central Plaza. The current retail offerings along Forest Road features predominantly two-storey historical buildings with narrow shopfronts serving fresh produce, bakeries, and other groceries. The design strategy highlighted that “there are no predominant areas along the street with a conglomeration of restaurants or cafes within the area, which may be reflective of the success of current businesses, and hence the lack of turnover for new types of retail, as well as a difference in cultural attitudes towards outdoor dining” (Georges River Council, 2017a). Construction of the Hurstville Central Plaza building was completed in 2022. In architectural terms, this commercial office represents a new spatial type: high-rise and neo-modernist with a glass façade (see Figure 5.10).

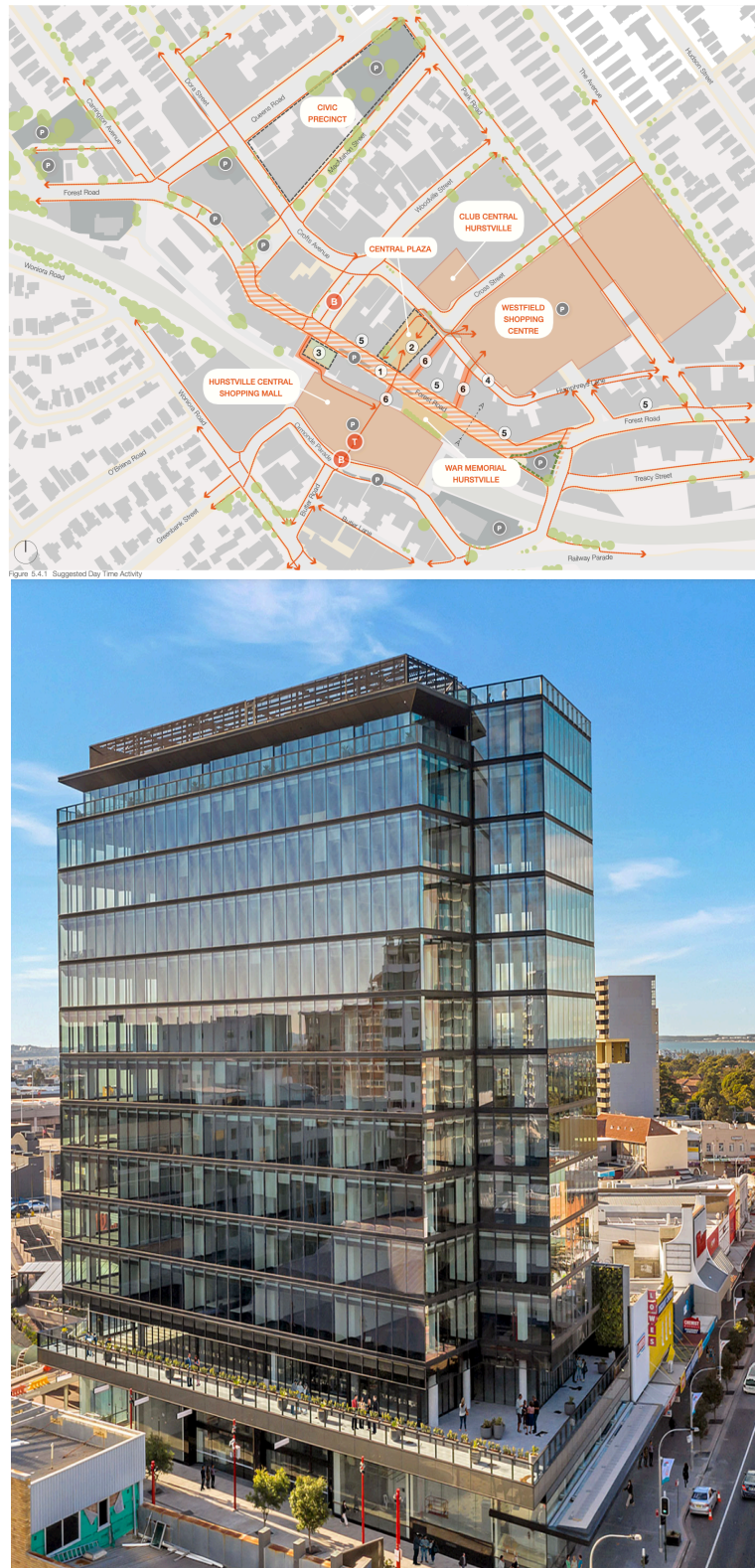


Figure 5.10 Hurstville urban design plan

(Source: *Hurstville City Centre Urban Design Strategy*, p. 32)

From an urban perspective, the commercial fabric of Hurstville along Forest Road exemplifies a hybrid urbanity. The term ‘hybrid’, as described by the Oxford English Dictionary, signifies something “derived from heterogeneous sources, or composed of different or incongruous parts.” In this context, I borrow the concept of hybrid to refer to the dynamic amalgamation of diverse architectural styles, functions, and cultural practices within the urban setting of Hurstville. For example, a neo-modernist office building sits alongside a Chinese restaurant located within a Victorian terrace, while a Chinese Dental Surgery and Japanese Restaurant operate within the same Victorian Regency Style building (as illustrated in Figure 5.11). Such an interweaving of architectural and functional styles shapes the diversity of ethnic commercial activities within Hurstville's heritage urban fabric.

Scholars like Anderson et al. (2019) have argued in their research that “the changing spatial look and feel is the dynamic and evolving result of the confluence of various forces of economic development and entrepreneurship” (p. 39). In Hurstville, these forces are palpable; they bring life to the heritage structures, allowing them to serve as a canvas for modern commercial narratives. The continuous adaptation of these historical buildings for contemporary use underscores an urban transformation that is not merely physical but also social and economic in nature. This dialogue between past and present, structure and function, underlines the complex process of urban transformation—the evolving spatial character of cities as a result of the interplay between economic forces and entrepreneurial spirit.



Figure 5.11. The hybrid urbanity of Hurstville

(Source: Drawn by the author)

5.4 Social-Spatial change: Adaptive Reuse of Building Elements by Immigrants

New store owners are economic entrepreneurs because they want to make a profit from their business. But they are also cultural entrepreneurs because they want to provide a specific product for their own taste community. Moreover, they are social entrepreneurs if they aim to make a place where local residents like themselves will feel at home. In all three ways, new businesses re-create the local shopping street, and this fuels a process of change in the residential neighborhood which may have already begun for other reasons. (Zukin et al., 2015, p. 17)

This statement highlights the influx of immigrant-owned businesses that not only brings economic and cultural changes to the commercial area, but also contributes to the ongoing process of the social and spatial evolution within the neighbourhood. In light of this, the analysis in this section investigates the socio-spatial changes that have occurred as a result of the influx of immigrants on the commercial buildings along Forest Road, with a particular focus on the adaptive reuse of building elements in relation to ethnic and cultural expression. To approach this analysis, some specific examples will be examined to show how the emergence of new cultural and economic activities has led to a change in the use of space in certain buildings.

It is noteworthy that many of the buildings along Forest Road existed prior to the influx of immigrants. As new users of the space, immigrants have made minimal changes to the architectural layout, preserving the original structural components. However, they have adapted the use of building spaces to align with their cultural and aesthetic preferences. For example, new signage may have been added to the façades, exteriors painted for renovation, shopfronts decorated with cultural symbols, or changes made to the interior layout to accommodate business practices, such as an enclosed kitchen design for Chinese restaurants. This is visually evident in Figure 5.12, which provides a series of photographic comparisons to demonstrate the changes in the streetscape and appearance of the buildings. These changes, although subtle, are meaningful in shaping the character of the neighbourhood and the cultural expression of the immigrant community within it. This echoed what Wise (2011) has argued, where,

...streetscapes have been transformed by shopfronts featuring signage in the language and script of 'immigrant entrepreneurs' (Rath & Kloosterman 2000). This is one sign of a healthy, inclusive sense of diversity, where migrant homebuilding practices (Hage 1997) of groups residing in a neighbourhood are allowed to flourish in the public domain (p. 140).



Figure 5.12. Evolution of Streetscapes: A comparative analysis of historical and current images.

(Source: Left images reprinted from Hurstville Local Library Collection. Right images: own work, 2019)

To understand the ways in which immigrant users have transformed urban spaces and buildings, I will conduct a detailed analysis of the various practices used to modify old buildings to meet cultural needs and express ethnic identity. The data for this analysis was collected through fieldwork conducted in 2019, and it should be noted that since then, some shops may have closed, moved, or changed ownership, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. By combining observations and interviews, I aim to gain insight into how ethnic business owners have adapted the buildings to their needs and desires, with a particular focus on the modifications to the shopfronts, which refer to the physical front of a store, including the façade design of the exterior walls, shop windows, material used, overall aesthetics, the design of shop signs, shop names, as well as the use of colour and decorations.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the modifications to the shopfronts, three examples will be used to demonstrate an examination through a spatial analysis that visually depicts any changes made to the buildings as a result of new ethnic retail practices and cultural presentations.

The first example is the building located at 372 Forest Road in Sydney. This is a two-storey, rendered masonry structure that was constructed in 1899 during the late Victorian era. The date is displayed on the pediment. The building was originally built as a mixed-use structure, with a ground floor shopfront and awning (Hurstville City Council, 2007). However, it has undergone several modifications over the years (see Figure 5.13). One of the most notable changes is the replacement of the original shopfront and awning, as well as the first-floor façade windows. Despite these changes, the building has retained its original form and building structure detailing and this is a clear example to show how Anglo-Australian buildings have been infilled with Chinese-Australian façades and signage.

The building is currently used as a Chinese restaurant, providing Sichuan cuisine. The shopfront has been renovated and the new shopfront material is wooden boards. The restaurant's signboard is bronze coloured with traditional Chinese characters written on it. These changes are clear indications of the influence of Chinese culture and theming on the building's design and appearance. Furthermore, by comparing a historical photo taken in 1999, it can be observed that both the building's visual appearance and business type has undergone

a significant transformation. As indicated from the *Review of Heritage Items within Commercial Centres of Hurstville Council* (2007), the building was Belmontes pizza shop at that time. This exemplifies how the building's design and intended use have been shaped by the cultural and demographic changes in the surrounding community over the years.

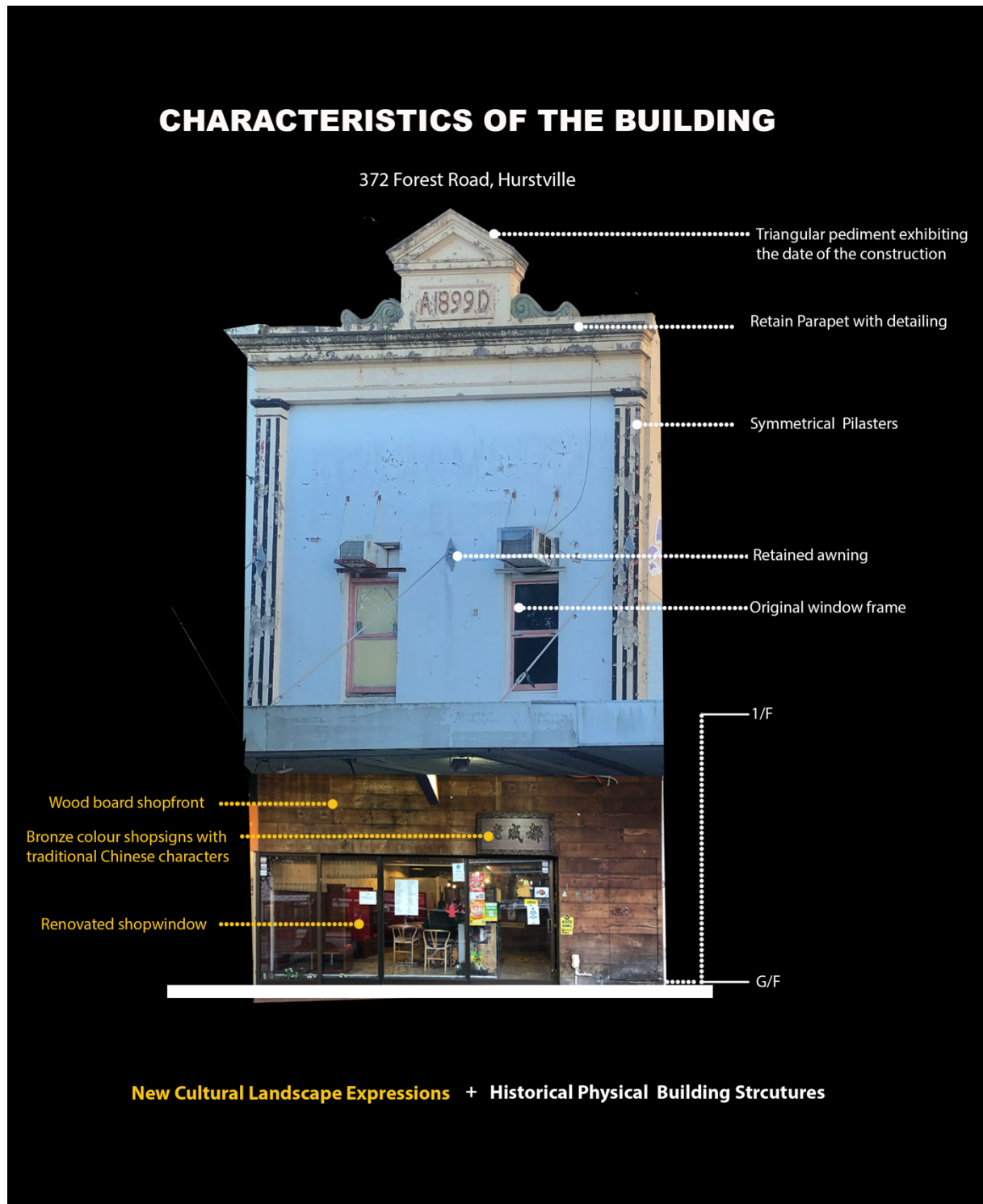


Figure 5.13. Spatial analysis of building 372 Forest Road, Hurstville.

(Source: created by the author)

Similarly, the second example, the John Fretus Building, also demonstrates how immigrant users have adapted and incorporated elements of their cultural identity into the built environment, while also preserving some aspects of the original architectural features of the

building. The John Fretus Building is a two-storey brick rendered commercial building located at 173a Forest Road. Through a detailed architectural façade spatial analysis, as illustrated in the accompanying Figure 5.14, various original structure features are observed, such as a triangular pediment inscribed with the date ‘1921’ indicating the year of its construction, a parapet, and symmetrical face brick pilasters have been preserved and retained. Additionally, new elements added by the immigrant users were also identified. These include the incorporation of the restaurant’s name, written in bilingual lettering, painted on the exterior wall and the redesign of the shopfront windows to feature a full-glass modern style. Notably, the shop window features as a platform for information exchange with signage of the restaurant’s menu, food photos, recruitment information, and poster signs advertising for other co-ethnic shops; it is easily visible and an effective way to attract potential customers.

Furthermore, the most notable alteration to the shopfront is the installation of a Hong Kong-style neon light signboard. According to the owner of the restaurant during our interview, neon signs have been a prominent feature in Hong Kong’s night-time landscape for decades. He explained that in the 1950s, as Hong Kong’s economy started to grow and consumerism increased, neon lights became a popular form of advertising. The owner continued by stating that:

For a long time, neon was the light of the Hong Kong – you couldn’t avoid the neon signs. Through the neon, you saw Hong Kong, and because of the neon, you knew Hong Kong, it’s Hong Kong’s visual culture. Hong Kong people’s memories. When I set this shop up and designed the shop signage, I put special emphasis on using this spatial element. (Interview, 1-Sep-2019)

This statement highlights how the incorporation of neon lights in the shopfront renovation is not only aesthetically pleasing, but it also holds cultural significance for Hong Kong immigrants. Moreover, shopfronts, as an urban spatial element between public and private spaces, act as a platform for owners to express their intention. Simultaneously, the shopfronts take on a role expressing the shop’s culture and identity, as the first instance of communication between proprietors and customers. These shopfronts are deliberately at odds with the street, showing ‘who’ is living and operating the space. As Hall and Datta (2010) stated that the role of storefronts serve as key urban surfaces and spaces, where “the shopfront acts as the first

platform of communication, and in attempting to capture diverse customers, visual signscapes provide an important mode of legibility in both a mobile and multicultural context” (p. 73).

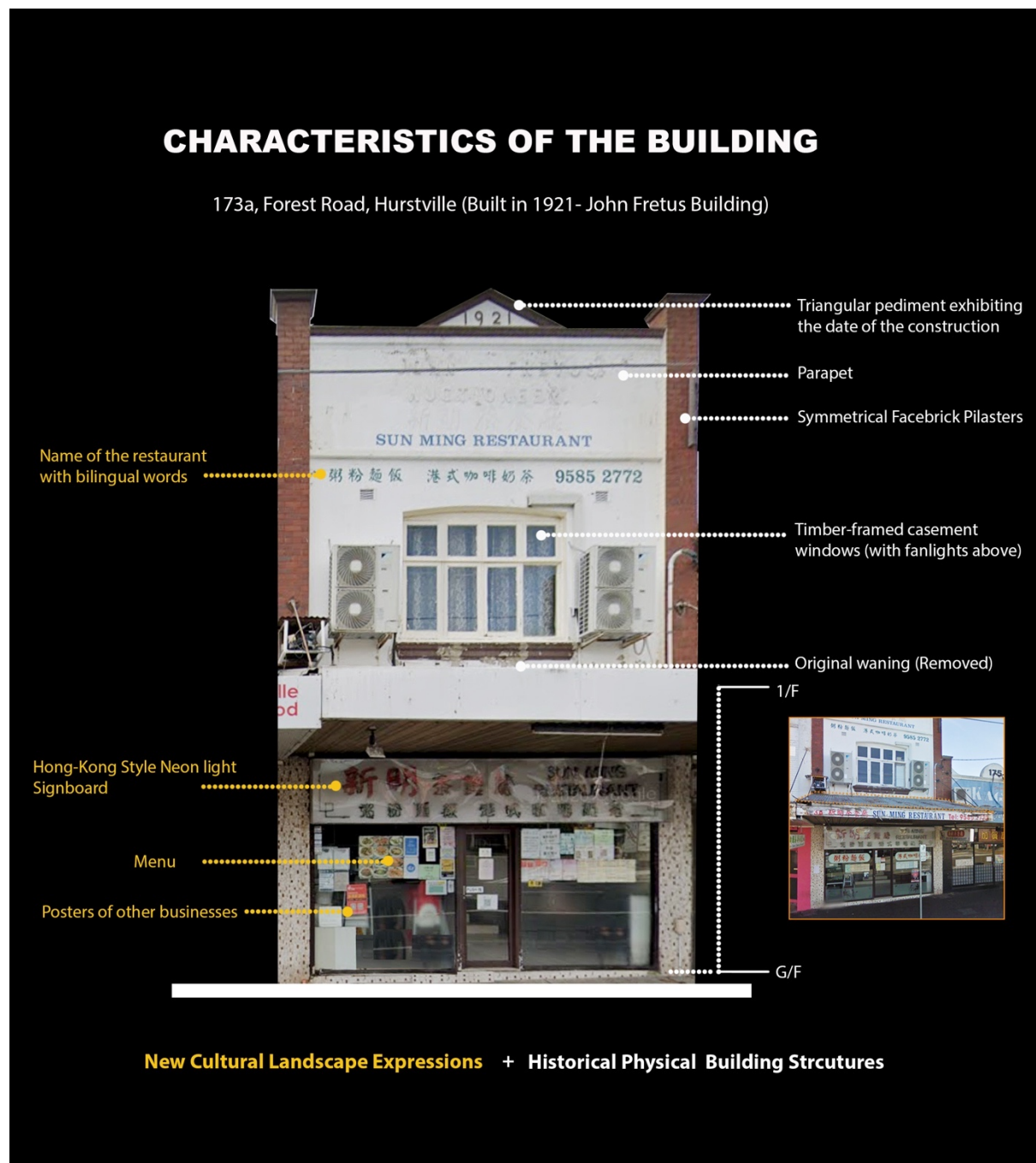


Figure 5.14. Spatial analysis of building 173a Forest Road, Hurstville.

(Source: created by the author)

Hall and Datta's (2010) argument emphasised the significance of shop signs, which are often made of “cultural materials” such as names, images, decorations, signs, and colours, to create

a visual cultural landscape. This concept can be further illustrated in the third example of 207 Forest Road (as seen in Figure 5.15). It is a duplex commercial building that features two separate units, each with its own entrance. The building has face brick construction and a symmetrical design, with a detailed parapet that conceals the roof.

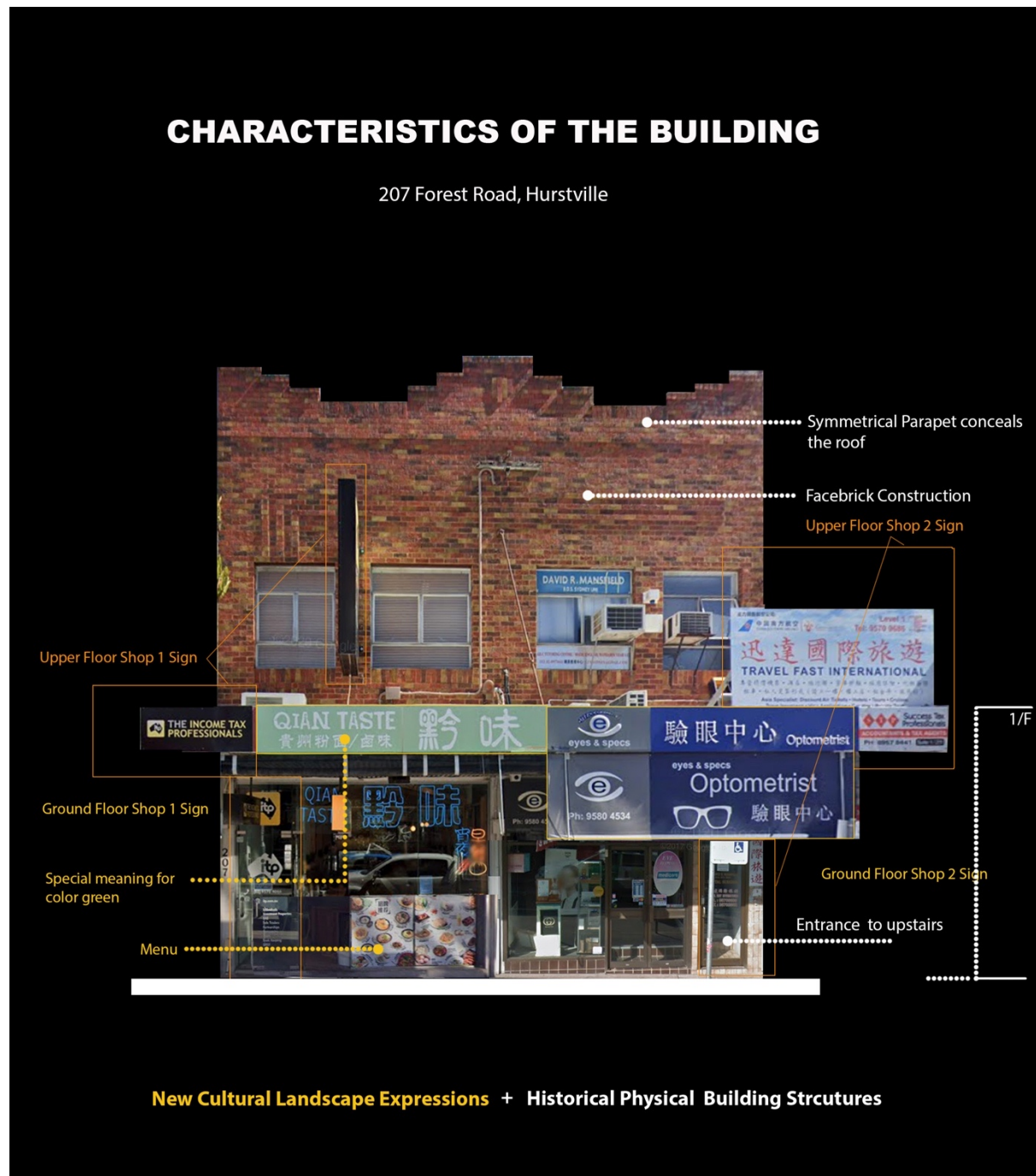


Figure 5.15. Spatial analysis of building 207 Forest Road, Hurstville

(Source: created by the author)

The façade of this building features an array of four commercial signs, each with distinct forms and styles. These include banners, vertical signs mounted on the exterior walls, and suspended signs. They are characterised by their diverse colour schemes and serve to inform customers of the business' name, products, or services.

In particular, the utilisation of store names in the signage is worth analysing in more detail as it serves as an important spatial element that reflects cultural meanings. I interviewed the owner of one of the stores, Qian Taste, who explained that the name was chosen to evoke memories of the owner's home province of Guizhou and its unique culinary traditions. She explained that:

Qian (黔), in Chinese, means the province of Guizhou, where I was born, studied and lived for almost 40 years. You know, in China, each province has its own symbolic culinary and food. When I migrated to Sydney, I wanted to bring authentic Guizhou food to Hurstville, providing fellow townsman the taste of home, letting co-ethnic Chinese migrants try Guizhou food and more importantly, give foreign people a chance to 'taste' China – that's my intention for the name. Moreover, Guizhou is a province with a lot of mountains. The landscape of Guizhou belongs to the highland and mountainous areas of southwest China. Thus, I used the colour green for the shopfronts, which refer[s] to mountains and trees. (Interview, 10-Aug-2019)

It indicates the role store names play as evocative markers of ethnicity. Store owners use naming strategies that customers can easily identify with and also, as in the example of Qian Taste, represent a desire to recall a memory of a specific location in their home country, invoking a nostalgic experience. Some restaurants use place names such as Guizhou, Lanzhou, Hong Kong, or Shanghai to indicate their style of cuisine. Other store owners may use words that have positive symbolic meanings in Chinese culture, such as “兴” and “富强” which symbolise prosperity. Furthermore, it was found that this strategy of using store names to express cultural identity was not limited to the case building studied but could also be observed in other similar businesses. For example, in the case of Hurstville Homeware Hardware Centre, the proprietor was from Guangzhou province and sells a wide variety of imported products at low prices. The shop's street frontage uses signage in both Chinese and English, with different colours and names for each language in order to attract and include a wide customer base. The shop owner shared their design intentions during our interview:

I have designed my shop's bilingual signage with different designs for Chinese and English. The Chinese signage is in red, symbolising China, and is named “好市圆居家百货五金中心”. The English signage is in blue, matching the colour of the Australian flag, and is named “Jacks Hardware Bargain Shop” with “Jack” being my English name. This reflects my desire to connect with both Chinese and English-speaking customers and to reflect the cultural and linguistic differences. (Interview, 4-Sep-2019)

The process of analysis reflects how shop signs including names, language, and colour are utilised as an integral part of the street's infrastructure. This also provides insight into the overall diversity of visual signscape along Forest Road and reflects the trend of using culturally-designed shop signage in the immigrant community, as seen in Figure 5.16, which displays various examples of shop signs ranging from more traditional and conservative to more modern and eclectic. These signs not only serve as a visual representation of the cultural and ethnic diversity that represents the community, but more significantly, it creates a bridge between the familiar places of the immigrants' home countries and their new neighbourhoods. The signs are a visual dialogue about place-making and community-building in the face of cultural hybridity. They serve as a powerful reminder of the ethnoburb's ability to adapt and thrive, all while weaving together the threads of diverse cultural narratives into a vibrant and unique place to live and shop.

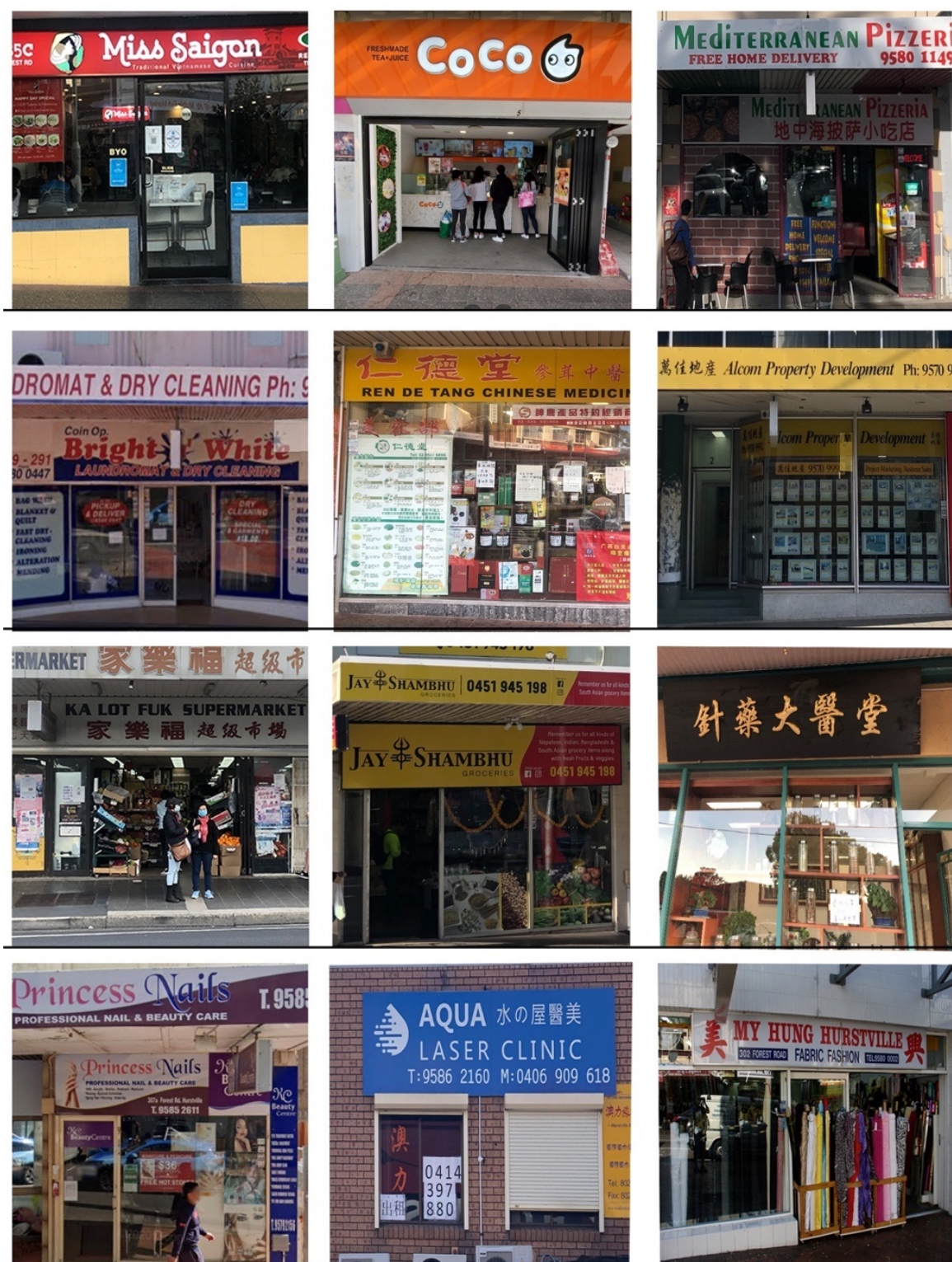


Figure 5.16. The diverse forms of shop signs along Forest Road

(Source: photos taken by the author in 2019)

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, Forest Road emerges not merely as a commercial strip but as a stage where global assemblages are performed daily, shedding light on commodified practices that are distinctly visible along the strip. This street, with its blend of diverse uses, storefronts and signage, offers a fertile analytic territory for decoding the representations of ethnicity as they are projected in the urban streetscape.

Delve into the commercial aspect, my ethnographic analysis reveal that Forest Road epitomizes diversity in its commercial fabric, characterized by an ethnically varied composition of businesses. These establishments range from daily conveniences to the culturally specific establishments, like *daigou* shops and educational schools, representing the immigrant culture's negotiation within broader society. This also emphasized the role Forest Road act as a nexus where global influences and local dynamics intersect.

Moreover, the streetscape of Forest Road is a narrative in itself, articulated through the bilingual languages signages, the blinking allure of LED displays, and architectural homages to traditional Chinese shop-houses. These are not mere aesthetic choices but a visual language articulating identity, heritage, and adaptability. Furthermore, the evolution from traditional retail spaces to current commercial and residential developments marks a new phase of urban regeneration. This shift suggests a continual redefinition of space that transcends ethnic boundaries, highlighting the street's role in the broader urban narrative.

Most importantly, ethnic businesses within Forest Road are redefining traditional academic perceptions of immigrant neighborhoods. Conventionally, such a concentration of ethnic businesses would be considered as urban mosaics with invisible social boundaries separating them from mainstream society and labelled with racial stereotypes. However, the diversity of Forest Road's patrons, including both local residents and visitors from nearby suburbs, illustrates a melting pot of cultures, signalling a departure from the usual insular ethnic enclaves. This blend fosters a unique ambiance that is more reflective of an integrated society than a segregated one. Forest Road thus stands as a testament to an evolving societal fabric, one that embraces multiculturalism beyond superficial labels.

In conclusion, Forest Road is not just a street but a complex story of economic and social dynamics. It stands as a vivid example of how urban spaces can evolve and adapt, reflecting the diversity and resilience of its community. In this regard, Forest Road highlights the connection between economics and society on the street, showcasing everyday challenges and factors shaping typical social and spatial structures. This intricate interaction is tangibly expressed through the street's culinary landscape, a topic that will be further explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 6 Spatial Practices and Cultural Symbolism in Ethnic Food Spaces

6.1 Introduction

The Asian foodscape began to flourish in Hurstville since the 1980s with the opening of Cantonese-style restaurants by the first wave of Hong Kong immigrants. These establishments were followed by a new wave of Chinese migrants from mainland China and other Asian immigrants, opening various types of Asian restaurants along Forest Road. As described in chapters 4 and 5, the characteristics of the diversifying businesses that changed the commercial streetscape is a clear indicator of the culinary industry being a key economic sector of Hurstville. According to the *Hurstville Place Strategy 2019*, there is an intention for Hurstville to be branded as the hub for “authentic Asian cuisine” (Georges River Council, 2019c, p. 7), suggesting that Asian cookery is transforming the urban image and experience of the ethnoburb and is consistent with the wider trend of cities using food, meals and gastronomy to brand places (Berg & Sevón, 2014).

With this background, this chapter focuses on the multiple spatialities of ethnic restaurants in Hurstville. My aim is to illustrate how these spaces not only serve food but also become symbolic landscapes of ethnic expression. More specifically, this chapter examines immigrant-owned restaurants along Forest Road as ethnic spaces where cultural symbolism is expressed through the interior design, food offering and the culture of eating that is associated with transnational networks and globalisation in ethnoburb literature.

This chapter begins by presenting migrant agency in foodscape production with multiple generations and transnational networks that facilitates the diversifying cuisine types and business modalities in the local context of Hurstville. This is followed by a discussion of Hurstville’s symbolic culinary landscape in two main ways:

Firstly, the innovative transformation of the culinary economy is explored, particularly with the advent of global franchise businesses along Forest Road. This aspect is further enriched by exploring the transformative impact of digital platforms in elevating ethnic culinary ventures in urban settings.

Secondly, to understand the spatial dynamics and place-making practices of ethnic restaurants, this analysis builds upon the concept of ‘translocal geographies’ as proposed by Brickell & Datta (2011). They suggest that immigrant spaces need to be analyzed in terms of both their local presence and their connections to various other locales. This perspective is crucial for understanding how these establishments not only offer culinary delights but also serve as cultural bridges, connecting diverse communities while simultaneously fostering a unique sense of place.

Case studies of four contrasting food and beverage businesses are used to detail examine the different circumstances of ethnic place formation, both materially and symbolically. The first case is ‘Machi machi’, a milk tea brand founded in Taiwan that owns numerous franchises throughout the world and launched a branch in Hurstville in 2020. This case provides an example of a design based on a replicable format with recognisable cultural symbols, presented through various screen technologies.

The second example is a restaurant called “Sun Ming”, established by two brothers from Hong Kong in 1996, and has continued under the ownership a member of the next generation of the family. The restaurant is a Hong Kong style café specialising in Cha Chaan Teng (茶餐厅), and clearly illustrates the involvement of multi-generational Chinese residents in place-making and how the revitalisation of businesses is achieved through social media, food bloggers, and television shows to promote the business as well as the cuisine culture.

The third example is a Nepalese restaurant, Nimto the Invitation, established in 2007, which demonstrates a strongly individualised set of design decisions to represent culture and identity. The transcultural production of the spatial domain provides a sense of familiarity with a unique look and feel, meeting the desire for nostalgia for the in-group customers while simultaneously creating a new spatial and consumption experience for other-group customers.

The fourth example is DaWan Malatang, founded by a Chinese international student who settled down in Sydney after finishing his studies. The owner previously owned and operated a restaurant in the suburb of Burwood and following on from his previous success, opened a new restaurant in Hurstville to offer the modern Chinese cuisine of Malatang. The interior of the restaurant was designed by a Chinese studio and all the indoor furniture was shipped from China. The chef had also studied in China for several months to learn the local cooking techniques. All these practices have been conducted with the intention to create an ‘authentic’ Chinese dining place

6.2 Foodways and Migration: The Changing Culinary Landscape of Hurstville

Food is frequently used as an illustration of how globalisation connects different cultures, peoples, and geographical areas (Hannerz 1996; Wilk 1999). The production system of the culinary industries has had a close relationship with both the immigration experience and transnational networks. In a book entitled *The Globalization of Chinese Food*, Cheung and Wu (2013) chronicle the spread of Chinese food with migration waves, stating:

The Cantonese influence in the global scene of Chinese cuisine came much later, since the nineteenth century, mainly in North America and Australia, where Chinese restaurants served Cantonese cuisine. They invented the 'chop suey' dishes, which dominated the food style served in the Chinese restaurants in North America until about the 1970s. In the 1960s to 1970s, the second wave of Chinese immigrants brought new cuisines of other Chinese regions, from central and north China. In the 1980s and later, there came the third wave of global spread of Hong Kong style Cantonese cuisine. (2013, p. 6-7)

It is clear from this portrait that Chinese immigrants, from the standpoints of multiple generations and geographies, have influenced the diversification of the culinary sector. Experiencing ethnic food has long been a key driver of visitation to ethnic communities. Many Chinatowns have shifted from offering a generic ‘Chinese’ cuisine to providing regionally or ethnically specific offerings. In the Greater Los Angeles Chinatown, for example, “one can now find Beijing tearooms, Teochiu and Hakka restaurants, Sino-Burmese fare, and several dozen different sorts of Sino-Vietnamese foods” (Anderson, 2003, p. 571). This is also consistent with observations in studies of Sydney’s Chinatown, where Anderson et al. (2019)

noted “various types of Asian restaurants opening in Chinatown, including Thai, Korean, Vietnamese, regional Chinese (Shanghai, Szechuan, Xinjiang, Yunnan, Uyghur, Fujian, Human, etc.)” (2019, p. 118).

However, within migration trajectories of Asian diasporic settling in suburbs, Chinatowns are no longer the only Asian food and grocery destination. With population and capital moving into the outer city, strong competitors are emerging in suburban areas to attract more customers. Hurstville is a local example that reflects what Cheung and Wu (2013) attest to as “ the global transformation of food culture, restaurant styles, the meaning of regional Chinese cuisines, and popular eating patterns” (p. 13).

The changing trends of Asian cuisine in Hurstville relate to the changing demographic characteristics of the suburb. Cantonese-style restaurants began to flourish in the 1990s with the influx of Hong Kong immigrants, as well as the regional cuisine from the Southern part of China. Following a new wave of other Asian (Japanese, Nepal, Korean, and so on) and mainland Chinese restaurants being established in the 2000s, a diversity of Chinese restaurants as well as Asian restaurants now exists in Hurstville. Even though it can be collectively referred to as Chinese cuisine, there are also diverse regional differences. In recent years, with more mainland immigrants residing in Hurstville, the cuisines of Shanghai, Szechuan, and Northern China have become popular in Hurstville’s culinary landscape. Table 6.1 summarises the business profile of twelve restaurant owners that were interviewed and restaurants where participant observations were conducted in 2022. It demonstrates the diversity of ethnic restaurants comprising Hurstville’s foodscape. The various cuisine types of restaurants provide a contextualised understanding of the shifts in cuisine offerings with corresponding waves of multiple generations of immigration.

Table 6.1. Profile of interviewees from twelve ethnic restaurants in Hurstville

No.	Restaurant Name	Cuisine Type	Description
1	Po Po Hurstville (面婆婆)	Reginal Chinese (Northeast)	Po Po is a small, authentic Northern Chinese restaurant located at 238 Forest Road. The owner migrated from Dalian in China to Sydney and opened this restaurant in 2010. It was Hurstville's first restaurant to serve regional North Chinese cuisine, specialising in hand-made Baozi, dumplings, and noodles.
2	Da Wan Malatang (麻辣烫)	Reginal Chinese (Northeast)	DaWan Malatang was founded by a Chinese international student who settled down in Sydney after finishing his studies. The owner previously owned and operated a restaurant in another suburb of Burwood. Following on from his previous success, he opened a new restaurant in Hurstville to offer the modern Chinese cuisine of Malatang, demonstrating the creativity of cuisine types in Hurstville within the owner's 'cultural capital.' The restaurant interior was designed by a studio located in China to create a modern, industrial-style dining space.
3	Ever BBQ Restaurant 聚火烧烤	Reginal Chinese (Northeast)	Ever BBQ, located at 257 Forest Road, serves traditional North Chinese BBQ. In order to provide authentic cooking methods for the cuisine, the owner spent a significant amount of money renovating the interior design to install a chimney above each table to provide ventilation for the individual charcoal grills.
4	Kungfu Ramen Bar (兰州拉面)	Reginal Chinese (Northwest)	The owner previously worked for a similar noodle business in Burwood, where she gained experience in the restaurant industry. With the opportunity provided by a reasonable rental rate, the owner decided to start her own business at 368 Forest Road. Despite Hurstville having several noodle bars already, this is the only one that serves LanZhou-regional Chinese ramen.
5	Sydney Dumpling King 饺子王	Reginal Chinese (North)	Sydney Dumpling King was first established in Burwood in 2013, providing traditional Northern Chinese food like dumplings, steamed buns, and noodles. The owner expanded her business and opened another store in Hurstville in 2019 because the convenience of Hurstville to her home address. This new branch serves as a 'central kitchen' to provide semi-finished products for others.

6	Like Noodle (哆来咪面馆)	Regional Chinese (Shanghai)	Like Noodle was opened in 2014 and serves Shanghainese cuisine in Hurstville. This restaurant offers authentic Shanghai style noodles at a reasonable price. The owner's family previously ran a similar type of restaurant in China and following her graduation from university, the owner decided to open one of her own. The business experienced an expansion with a new venue opening in the suburb of Wolli Creek.
7	GUO's Noodle house	Regional Chinese (FuJian)	The Guo's noodle located at 285 Forest Road which is a local-style building. Externally it seemed to avoid representing their Chinese identity, but interiorly, it represents a solid example of how Chinese restaurants with detailed cultural ornament in Hurstville. Everything here had been imported from China: Tables, lamps, decoratives, bowls and chopsticks.
8	Mr StoneBowl 石锅先生	Modern Chinese	Founded in Burwood in 2015, Mr Stonebowl has quickly become a landmark restaurant in Burwood as a top-quality Chinese dining destination with long queues waiting outside. Given its popularity, the shop expanded rapidly and opened a branch in Hurstville in 2017. The dining area of the Hurstville shop is more than double the size of the flagship restaurant, creating a more spacious and comfortable dining environment.
9	The good kitchen	Cantonese	The good kitchen has been running for almost 20 years at 171 Forest Road. It is one of the earliest Cantonese restaurants in Hurstville. The restaurant does not have an elaborate design but remains very popular amongst long-term Cantonese migrants living in Hurstville.
10	Sun Ming Restaurant	Hong Kong	Sun Ming was established by two brothers in 1995 and continued business under a member of the next generation of the family in 2011. The restaurant is a Hong Kong style café that specialises in Cha Chann Teng (茶餐厅). Renovations were undertaken after younger family members took over and is a good example of how traditional Chinese family businesses evolve over generations.
11	Machi machi milktea	Beverage-Global franchise	'Machi machi', a milk tea brand founded in Taiwan with numerous franchises internationally, launched branches in Hurstville in 2020. This milk tea chain provides an example of an architectural design based on a replicable format with recognisable cultural symbols, presented through various screen technologies.

12	Nimto The Invitation	Nepalese	“Nimto The Invitation” is a Nepalese restaurant that opened its doors in 2007. The restaurant has strong Nepal cultural representations in its interior design and demonstrates a strongly individualized set of design decisions.
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(Source: by the author)

In addition, new waves of entrepreneurs with different sociocultural backgrounds and economic capital have reinvented the business model in the local context. In recent years, there has been a growing presence of global brands and franchises in the food and beverage sector in Hurstville. The launch of these franchise businesses suggests that the local commercial and economic environment is experiencing gentrification with more affluent ethnic entrepreneurs.

The most popular franchise type in Hurstville is the bubble tea shop. Many of these are chains and follow a small business model with few workers. This format matches Hurstville’s old built fabric with its small, fine-grained lots. However, these small global franchise businesses that have emerged since the 2000s are very different from the traditional small-scale, family-run migrant stores in terms of both shop design and marketing strategy, which will be illustrated in detail in the next section.

Following the understanding of ethnic food spaces “as sites where global culture is consumed, commodified, and produced, and are arenas where changes due to globalization and the new economy are made manifest” (Sen, 2012, p. 199), this chapter uses four case studies to illustrate in detail how the changing culinary landscape in Hurstville is manifestly evident in the spatial domains among the diverse restaurant scenes along Forest Road.

6.3 Innovation in Hurstville's Culinary Economy

6.3.1 Global chain stores

Since the 1970s, the presence of upscale restaurants, cafes, and shops has become a highly conspicuous indicator of gentrification in cities around the world. In her research on the retail gentrification and neighbourhood changes of New York City, Zukin et al. (2009) argued that “the role of these new stores (“boutiques”) and services are agents of change” (p. 47) and this lead to “a notable increase in ‘corporate’ retail capital (chain stores), and a deep decline in old, ‘local’ retail stores” (p. 58).

Although it is in a different geographic location, Hurstville shows a remarkable similarity with Zukin's findings in terms of the types of businesses that are growing or declining. As a neighbourhood, Hurstville has been gentrified in recent years and serves as a suitable launchpad for new franchises, especially global beverage brands. The new franchise stores show innovative business modality, marketing strategies and design style that differs from the traditional ethnic small businesses.

Case Study 1: ‘machi machi’ Bubble Tea

It is noon on a sunny Friday in the middle of October 2020, and a bright sun is shining on the over 100 metres-long line of consumers who are waiting for the opening of *machi machi* shop on 227 Forest Road, Hurstville (see Figure 6.1). Machi machi is a famous milk tea brand founded in Taiwan with franchises throughout the world, attracting consumers who want to try the high quality and authentic taste of milk tea. The pronunciation of ‘machi’ is similar to ‘much’, and the slogan of the business is “I love you so machi”, which attracts a lot of young people who come here for a try.

Bubble tea has become almost a daily ritual for young people, who make a stop at their favourite bubble tea shop after work or school. Powell commented in a report on the Australian bubble tea market that its “...increasing popularity among non-Asian consumers has seen the drink enter a new phase of growth, reaching markets it had before considered unobtainable” (Powell, 2018).

Milk tea is not only a drink but also represents a culture. Thailand, Taiwan, and Hong Kong are all famed for their own styles of milk tea. Taiwanese milk tea, which is served with tapioca pearls, is undoubtedly Taiwan’s most famous pop culture export since its invention in the 1980s. In Sydney, Asian Australians have been fans of bubble tea since at least the late 1990s. The popularity of Taiwanese milk tea continues to grow with an explosion of franchises. For example, Chatime, a Taiwanese franchise that launched in Australia in 2009, had decided to establish its first Sydney location in Hurstville. With more than 150 stores and continuing plans for expansion, Chatime has established itself as a leader in the Australian bubble tea market. As Chatime explained their growth strategy to the reporter of SmartCompany:

When opening the first T-Brewery in Hurstville, Sydney, in 2009, Chatime Australia founders knew the franchise depended on consumers with an Asian background. This demographic was already familiar with the concept of bubble tea (or boba), and many already knew the Chatime brand from its Taiwanese origins. The growth strategy for the time was to simply capitalise on that market by selecting store locations that provided access to those consumers. (Lutze, 2022)

This was similarly true for machi machi's business development in its decision to select Hurstville for its store location but pursued an alternate business path to success. The success of machi machi was helped by their association with a famous Asian singer named Jay Chou. Machi machi appeared in the music video of Jay's song 'Won't Cry', which was released in September 2019. With the popularity of the song, the brand of machi machi started trending on social media, especially among young Asian people. According to the official website of machi machi Australia, it states:

machi machi landed Australia in 2019, the first store was opened on George Street at the heart of Sydney in October. The grand opening had attracted a [sic] incredible amount of guests which formed a long line of over 300 meters. machi fans and milk tea lovers all gather together [sic] to celebrate the grand opening as well as have a sip of their favorite milk tea even though the average waiting time is more than an hour, it was worth it." (Machi machi, 2020)



Figure 6.1. Opening day of machi machi on Forest Road, Hurstville.

(Source: photo taken by the author in 2020)

Following the success in downtown Sydney, machi machi expanded both the customer base and franchise market across Australia, including locations in Melbourne and Brisbane. There

are currently five stores in Sydney: George Street, Fishmarkets, Burwood, Central Park and Hurstville. All of these locations are places with a large number of Asian residents, tourists and young people.

The Hurstville store, located at 227 Forest Road, is approximately 75 sqm. Previously a nail beauty salon, machi machi assumed tenancy in 2020. The interior design of the shop features a minimalist and hand-painted style that is consistent with its other stores around the world. There are five primary interior architecture decisions featured here: (1) the use of screens, (2) a focus on a product at the start of the queue, (3) the use of advertising of different products to offer discounts, (4) drawing on the popularity of a famous Chinese singer, and (5) the use of the wall as a backdrop for customers to post themselves on social media (see Figure 6.2).

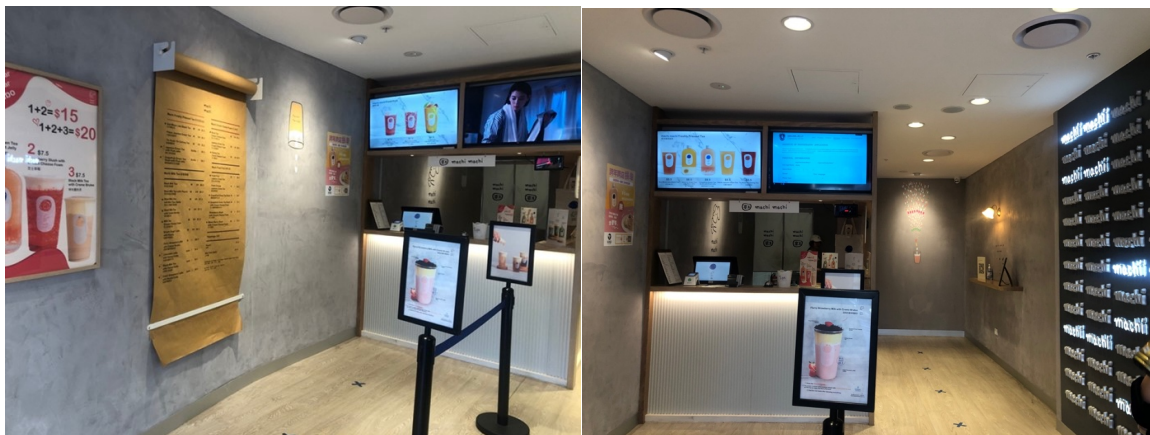


Figure 6.2. Interior design of machi machi.

(Source: photo taken by the author in 2019)

The website of the machi machi (<https://machimachi.com.au/about-us/>) includes an explanation of their stores' decorative style and concept design:

Machi machi uses Minimalism and Hand-painted Style. Our design combines elements of interior cement wall, white spray and wooden bar. The identical machi rainwall, the logo with the puppy holding the drink, the signboard, and the “more milk! more happy!” sign these are favourite spots that the customers could take photos and post on social media. Our guests love the drinks, they also love our arts. It's so clear that machi machi is a

new generation of beverage shop that believes in taste, comfort, and art. It's not just about a drink but it's also a way of life.

Interestingly, the wall has become the favourite spot for customers to take photos. When customers purchase their drinks, they will hold them up and use the wall as a background to take photos to then post on social media platforms, including Instagram and Weibo (see Figure 6.3). The store manager of machi machi Hurstville has appreciated the role of social media in their success. She said:

Thanks to public media, news [is] becoming faster. The main social platform we use is Instagram, Weibo and Facebook. Take machi machi-australia account on Instagram for example, we have 7,000 plus followers. We will post our new products, seasonal promotions and other messages online. Consumers can also tag us after they tried our products. Within the digital marketing and online communication, machi machi quickly become a 'trending place online'. Our consumers are not only Hurstville residents, but also others living in far-away suburbs just coming to Hurstville to try our milk tea. I personally think that the opening of our store has made Hurstville a place famous among bubble tea lovers. (Interview, 12 February 2021)

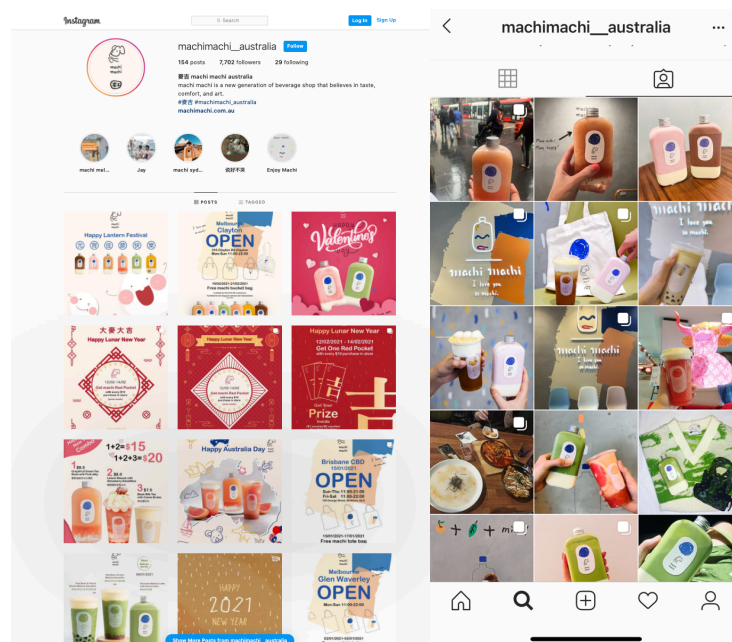


Figure 6.3. Machi machi's profile page on Instagram

(Source: Screenshot adapted from machi machi Instagram profile in 2021)

Two interviewees described their shopping experience in machi machi, respectively:

It is not just about drinking, it provides me with a way of lifestyle as [if] I were in Taiwan with same design, same taste, and same product! I feel like I have travelled back to Taiwan (Interview, 12 February 2021)

It is such a fascinating experience! I am a super fan of Jay Chou for almost 15 years. When I first saw the MV [music video] and listen [sic] to the songs, I was dreaming one day I could try machi machi. Obviously, I can't fly to Taiwan, but it is so lucky machi machi launched to Sydney and a new store opened in Hurstville where I lived. I can buy it easily. (Interview, 12 February 2021)

If there is anything that can evoke memories and homesickness in Taiwanese migrants, it would be milk tea. As Cheng (2021b) stated in his article *Milk tea: Uniting a Sea of Voices in Asia*, “Milk tea is important to people from these backgrounds, because it is an extension of their culture and something they can lay claim to. It is a sense of belonging” (p. 26). He further commented that milk tea culture in Asia is almost like coffee for Australia. It is part of the daily ritual, whether it is summer or winter, to order a cup of pearl milk tea, customising sweetness and flavour and when taking the first sip, enjoying the familiar taste – it is a moment of satisfaction and happiness. To provide the authentic taste, the Hurstville branch machi machi store manager explained:

Even though machi machi already has a certain popularity, opening a transnational chain store in Australia is not an easy thing. In the face of a multicultural customer base, the taste also needs to do to adapt to local conditions, just copy[ing] the Taiwan model sometimes [was] not working. We come here to adapt, to accept, to cooperate, but also to show our own unique values, to combine with different cultures. For example, like the pearl milk tea, consumers from western countries prefer iced tea, they will want to combine iced tea with pearls or other beverage ingredients to bring an unknown taste, and in this process, I see how Asian culture is being redefined and carried forward again. The way for making the pearl, for material for cooking the cream. (Interview, 12 February 2021)

Yet, in comparison to the other beverage shops along Forest Road, the presence of machi machi holds greater significance as the representation of the shifting commercial culture dynamics in Hurstville. Firstly, as a brand name and global chain store, its arrival on the local shopping street signified the neighbourhood's success in commercial gentrification, which links to the shifting Chineseness of the latest migration wave (see also Chapter 4). Secondly, its central location near the train station and the modern design of the store façade distinguished it from other retail stores. Specifically, compared to the more homogenous clients in coffee shops nearby, the majority of customers frequenting machi machi are young, students, and diverse in ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Finally, the economic and commercial capital exchange between the Australian market and its headquarters in Taiwan form and sustain an ethnic economy that echoed Li's understanding of ethnoburb, which is characterised by "both vibrant ethnic economies and strong ties to the globalizing economy – revealing immigrants' role as outposts in the emerging international economic system" (Li, 2017b, p. 89).

6.3.2 Social media and migrant restaurants.

In the matter of the innovation of business modality, the case of machi machi also demonstrates that social media reinforces the image of the trendy restaurants in the suburbs and contributes to its branding. This sheds light on another manifestation of the innovated culinary economy in Hurstville – the interaction between social media and migration restaurants.

With the diversity of food and beverages, as well as the increasing number of food lovers who enjoy capturing tastes and experiences, ethnic restaurants attract media attention and online blogs. In Sydney, there are a lot of food bloggers who are active on multiple social media platforms, sharing their reviews and recollections of dining experiences at various restaurants. One of the interviewees in this study specifically looks for Australia's iconic Chinese restaurants, posting his finding on his Instagram profile '@your_local_chinese_'. Discussing the perception of Chinese restaurants and how to choose restaurants for review, he said:

It is obvious that the country has a lot of Chinese restaurants. And you'll find when you go to a lot of remote locations, even some very remote parts of Australia and there's always a Chinese restaurant.

What I do is I get people to submit their favourite restaurants on Instagram page. And once I've had so many different people nominate a certain restaurant I go and try it for myself. And when I go and try it for myself I don't tell the restaurant I'm coming. And when I'm there I don't tell them who I am. And I order a few dishes that people recommend and then I take some photos. I ask if I can take a few photos around the restaurant and then I usually go home and I write my review. And my review it's not all down to the food in fact. It's about what the service is like, what the building is like, and I usually give them a bit of a description, a bit of a feel for how the building – or you know I try and walk them through it as if they were there with me. (Interview, 2 September 2021)

Similarly, a journalist who works for SBS Food spoke about his career in food writing and his inspiration for the migrant business:

So mostly, in terms of food writing and kind of I'm talking about writing stories, and also talking about food on Instagram too. A big inspiration of mine is talking to migrant-owned family businesses, so you know first generation and now the second generation...that's what interests me...I'm interested in their story, their cuisine and their culture. And I think it's important that we, as the media, should be covering more of these stories. Because, they really are the backbone of our suburbs throughout Sydney, throughout many communities, including Hurstville.

If a restaurant has been around for 30 years, there must be a reason why it has survived for long. The first reason is it's probably very good. The second reason is it already got a very loyal customer base. So, I think social media can propel these restaurants to the next level in terms of winning new audiences, new markets, new opportunities. (Interview, 15 September 2021)

The interview responses confirmed the interaction between social media and migration restaurants. That is, the agency of multi-generational entrepreneurs and food bloggers appears in a trajectory of social media communication and creative innovation that “escapes the figuration of the mutely marginal migrant” (Anderson et al., 2019, p. 124) and broadly diffuses them to reach a wider audience. It is interesting, in this regard, to compare the findings in previous studies of ethnic businesses in Australia that highlight the importance of co-ethnic networks in immigrants' economic success (Collins, 1995). In fact, Hurstville case found that while co-ethnic networks remain important for migrant businesses, it is no longer a challenge for them to attract other ethnic customers. This is particularly evident in second-generation Australians who took over the family restaurant set up by their migrant parents. The innovation

of the immigrant economy in this context will be examined through the case study of Sun Ming Restaurant.

Case Study 2: Sun Ming Restaurant

Sun Ming Restaurant was established by two brothers in 1995, which has been taken over by a member of the next generation of their family. The restaurant is a Hong Kong style café specialising in Cha Chann Teng (茶餐厅) and provides a clear example of how traditional Chinese family businesses evolve over generations with innovative marketing strategy.

Sun Ming Restaurant is located at 137 Forest Road in a historic building with 1950s brick and tile, situated in the hub of Hurstville and opposite the Westfield. The restaurant's interior design mimics the style of old Hong Kong in the 1990s, with exterior neon signage in green, blue and red, and with a beige interior, timber veneer tables and standard black post chairs with the reception in the back corner, collectively creating a functional and clean vibe (see Figure 6.4.)



Figure 6.4 Restaurant of Sun Ming exterior (left) and interior (right)

(Source: photo taken by the author in 2021)

The restaurant is now under the management of David Chan as the owner-chef. Having grown up in Australia, David learned about how to cook authentic Hong Kong cuisine from his grandmother and his father through his family's own recipes. As Chan was raised with his family business, he has witnessed the changes taking place in Hurstville and Forest Road. He recalled that:

Hurstville was not always predominantly Chinese people here – before this there was a lot of Italian people, a lot of Caucasian people. When my Dad first came into this restaurant, this restaurant was actually an Italian restaurant to begin with. The upstairs here was actually just carpet and a few rooms. And then we renovated it and changed it into what you see here today. When I was a kid I remember coming here (Forest Road), there was only like a few grocery stores, a few bakeries, but predominantly there was just fast food like McDonalds, Hungry Jacks...but as I have noticed now, Hurstville is very Chinese-orientated at the moment. (Interview, 1 September 2021)

As mentioned above, there have been waves of different types of cuisine in Hurstville's culinary landscape. Speaking to the waves of restaurants, Chan commented that:

We have been here for 25 years now. I think everyone here on the street has been -came after us. And I have seen waves of food types changing here.

Actually most of Australians are very familiar with Cantonese restaurants established by people who came from Hong Kong many decades ago (like my father's generation). And I feel like since I guess in the last 10 years with widespread Chinese migration, you've got kind of exciting restaurants or new styles of Chinese cuisine that Australians have never seen before, you know like Sichuan, Beijing-style food, Shanghai cuisine with dumplings...that type of thing – was very very big. And then, this strip had like four or five at the time. They just popped up and now they're all gone.

And then more recently like Malatang, in the last five years or more, that's also really popular too. So Chinese restaurants are evolving and you are seeing more and more waves of new things coming. There's Thai, Viet and recently, Malaysian food was the new thing. For example, this one here, the Laura's kitchen (the restaurant next door to Sun Ming) is new opening doing Malaysian food but I've noticed like recently that their menu is shifting towards Cantonese food again but have Malaysian food still. You know you have to change, you can't always just be the same. (Interview, 1 September 2021)

Since David owns his restaurant, his work is not limited to cooking, but also in considering new creative marketing strategies for branding the restaurant. As the descendants of migrant business owners born in Australia, David does not face the same barriers and challenges that have been highlighted in previous literature regarding ethnic entrepreneurs such as language skills, cultural and social capital and regulations (Barrett et al., 1996; Collins, 1995; Waldinger et al., 1990). Instead, as a tech-savvy member of the younger generation, his ideas centre on using social media and digital marketing to promote his business.

In 2021, David has been involved in three media activities to promote Sun Ming Restaurant. The first was an interview with an SBS food journalist regarding the dish, Cantonese sticky rice (Cheng, 2021a). The second was a video shoot for a real estate developer to introduce Hurstville people and local businesses (Aoyuan International, 2021). The third was a cooking show in the kitchen to create dumplings, a Cantonese favourite, in *'The Cook Up with Adam Liaw'* Season 1, Episode 130 which aired on 15 October, 2021.

The media exposure helped Sun Ming Restaurant to expand the restaurant's influential image to a wider public, exceeding the word-of-mouth promotion by local and co-ethnic customers. David confirmed that the restaurant's account *@sun_ming_hurstville* on Instagram has attracted more followers, as he shared the experience:

I get a lot of people coming from out of the local suburbs. People keep messaging me from the social app and asking me "Can you send to Chatswood?" "North Shore?" "Homebush?" and I'm like- there are Chinese restaurants closer. I don't know why you want food delivered from our restaurant in Hurstville. It takes about half an hour to 45 minutes to get to Chatswood for example. (Interview 01-Sep-2021)

The case of Sun Ming Restaurant demonstrates that migrant restaurants owned by young generation entrepreneurs are innovative in business operation and marketing strategy. They tend to use public social media to brand their business to attract more customers. This is also a new pathway to transmit ethnic food culture to mainstream media and push towards the commercial gentrification of the local neighbourhood. This defies the traditional preconceptions that ethnic entrepreneurs are minority groups and ethnic restaurants are deemed as marginal businesses set up reactively and limited by 'blocked mobility'. As Collins (1995) stated, "racial discrimination in the labour market blocked immigrant mobility in the workforce, encouraging many immigrants to start up a small business" (p. 142). However, the empirical case study in Hurstville shows that the second-generation entrepreneurs, especially those born in Australia, are not blocked or limited by their ethnic background identity. They have more opportunities to choose their job based on their own career plan rather than being bound by racial discrimination.

6.4 Trans-Local Production of the Spatial Domains

An ethnic restaurant is not merely about the food, it is also a physical space with its own architecture and interior design. As stated by Li (2016), "a Chinese restaurant is a metaphor for an imaginary China, imagined by the West and as a place recreated by the Chinese in the West" (p. 34). In this spatial imagination, ethnic entrepreneurs are the place-making agents who connect multiple localities and cultural reference points that the individual restaurants refer to. To understand the spatial formation and place-making practices of ethnic restaurants, this concept is situated with the notion of 'translocal geographies' (Brickell & Datta, 2011), which argues that "these spaces and places need to be examined both through their situatedness and their connectedness to a variety of other locales" (Brickell & Datta, 2011, p.4).

Here, the concept of 'translocal' is used as a lens for looking at place and space, a means of illustrating how spaces are transformed by people as agents. As Brickell and Datta (2011) observe that:

For most migrants, a new physical environment implies new ways of interacting with people; it involves new kinds of behaviours in these places, new modes of movements, and new kinds of corporeal experiences. In all of

this, the symbolic and material qualities of places are transformed. ((Brickell & Datta, 2011), p. 6)

This section traces the spatial formation of two ethnic restaurants in Hurstville to detail explore the ‘translocal’ production. Following Brickell and Datta (2011), it is argued that the ethnic restaurant owner serves as the ‘spatial agency’ who connects space to diaspora, culture, and identity. The material production of shops is a ‘synthetic reality’ that consists of specific symbols, decorations, and artefacts to create an atmosphere, meet current needs, and achieve the image of a far-away location.

Case Study 3: Nimto The Invitation Nepalese Restaurant

This case study is a Nepalese restaurant called *Nimto The Invitation* (henceforth Nimto), located at 362 Forest Road in Hurstville. This is an interesting space to examine as the restaurant is a poly-sensory zone of Nepalese experience. It has managed to merge traditional and modern styling, offering an atmosphere strongly marked by the characteristic traits of its culture of origin. This section will detail the trans-local production of the spatial domain and how the owner represents his cultural background, religious beliefs, nostalgia for his homeland, as well as self-identity into the production of the shop spaces.

Zukin (2010) pointed out in her study of urban places in New York City that “retail store owners who belong to a neighbourhood’s new population and share their needs represent the interests of a cultural community that contrasts with that of long-time residents” (2010, p. 19). The case of Nimto attests to these remarks, as the owner explained the motivation for starting this restaurant after graduating as an international student in 2007.

There are so many Nepalese living in Australia as students or doing something else, as well as in this community (Hurstville). However, there are not many Nepalese restaurants here. I saw that need, so I decided to run this business. This was the only Nepalese restaurant in Hurstville (in 2007). My target is not only Nepalese. I want everything...because it’s multi-cultural here, there are Chinese, Koreans, or Indians, just like a multi-cultural thing, you know? I want to introduce the food to them. (Interview, 9 September 2019)

Nimto typifies a narrative space that meets the needs for those diasporic immigrants who are far away from their homeland and this has intensified the food experience. On the top of Nimto's menu, it is written:

Nimto: A modern Nepalese Café & Restaurant, Nepalese cuisine comprises a variety of cuisines based upon ethnicity, soil, and climate relating to Nepal's cultural diversity and geography. Nimto provides an authentic taste of Nepalese dishes with a mixture of various flavours, blended spices and organic herbs. We believe in providing the best customer service with our reasonably priced menu. (Fieldwork notes, 9 September 2019)

When entering the restaurant, there is a row of prayer wheels with Sanskrit carved on top that are displayed on the right-hand side. Behind these prayer wheels is an image of the German Temple in Lumbini, which is known around the world as the 'Birthplace of Lord Buddha' and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Nepal (see Figure 6.5).



Figure 6.5. The entrance of Nimto

(Source: photo taken by the author in 2019)

On the left-hand side is a shop window area. This is a mixed-function area with a cashier, café and drink maker (see Figure 6.6). The operating desk is cluttered with a coffee machine, sauces, cups, straws, wine bottles, tea bags, and a POS machine. Specially, the hookahs on the table are the things first catch your eye. The restaurant owner explained that the hookah is part of traditional Nepalese culture and a regular activity in daily life after dinner in Nepal.



Figure 6.6. Nimto interior shop window area

(Source: photo taken by the author in 2019)

The combination of these scenes elicits a sense of placement, situating the guest in Nepal and exudes an atmosphere of exotic culture. The interior design of Nimto has been intentionally designed to contain Nepalese elements in it. The owner explained:

I rented this shop; it used to be a massage parlour, and I put a lot of money into re-establishing the business in 2016. This shop took me about six months to build. I want to have Nepalese style, and I believe that authenticity is the most important thing to meet this cultural mission. Representing a Nepalese theme is more like giving an identity. It is also a way for me to present myself as an entrepreneur, but more importantly, as an immigrant in this country, in this neighbourhood. (Interview, 9 September 2019)

This 33 sqm shop features a narrow rectangle plan. Tables are arranged on both sides, with the corridor in the middle. There are four tables with two seats, four tables for four seats and one long table with couch seating. Tables are solid-framed timber with walnut colours, set with a tissue box. Chairs are the same solid timber, robust and comfortable. A large TV commands a prime position on the side wall, showing movies from Nepal (see Figure 6.7). A cabinet door divides the dining area within the kitchen area, with a window for takeaway meals. There are numerous ornaments of Nepalese traditional tableware displayed on the wall shelves, including traditional wine pots and wine cups (see Figure 6.8).



Figure 6.7. Shop interior with two- and four-seater tables

(Source: photo taken by the author in 2019)



Figure 6.8 Interior ornaments with traditional wine bottles, cups, and utensils

(Source: photo taken by the author in 2019)

The owner explained how he came up with the design ideas and decorated it:

I bought them (tableware) in Nepal myself...even some of the plates and brought them to here (Hurstville). Every time I went back to home for holidays, I'd like to bring some ornaments in Nepal Market [sic], put them in my luggage, brought them to Sydney and displayed them in my restaurant...each ornament has its own story and remind[s] my memory of the time spending in Nepal and I hope that when my customers see these ornaments, it will bring back memories of Nepal...

In terms of shop design... I'm hoping to learn about some Nepalese traditions. We have brick houses in Nepal and stone houses on the other side of the Himalayas. Because transportation is limited, they built everything out of stone. As a result, I hope to create a stone interior wall for the shop using traditional spatial elements. This is wallpaper; I can't get real stone because it's too expensive. Even those lamps, back in our country, when we don't have electronic[s] for a long long time, we used to rely on this type of lamp. Everything here represents tradition. Everything here has a meaning. I try to bring as much as I can to here (from Nepal to Australia). (Interview, 9 September 2019)



Figure 6.9. Decorations from Nepal

(Source: photo taken by the author in 2019)

Apart from these practices, religion is another representation applied in the built object to showcase culture and identity. Some religious ornaments are used to decorate the stores in line with religious beliefs, as the owner explained:

Our country is more Indian-mixed Buddhism. Gautama Buddha was born in Nepal. You might have seen these monsters in the Tibet China. So that's [what] Buddhism try [sic] to do. This is the God, because we have Hinduism as well. Mixed the Gods, there are so many gods in the Hinduism (referring to the pictures on the wall). (Interview, 9 September 2019)

The place that has been produced by the owner accentuates the sense of the 'far-away' – Nepal. The combination of traditional interior design elements in Nimto intentionally evokes an authentic sense of cultural placement and, combined with a relaxing atmosphere, provides customers with the experience of visiting a 'diasporic home' or exposure to a unique ethnic culture.

Case Study 4: DaWan Malatang Restaurant

Malatang, as a modern creative Chinese cuisine, has gained popularity around the world. According to Wikipedia (2022), “Malatang is a common type of Chinese street food. Malatang is named after its key ingredient, mala sauce, which is flavoured with a combination of Sichuan pepper and dried chilli pepper” (Wikipedia, accessed 2022). Differing from hot pot, Malatang is very fast and convenient as customers are recommended to get a bowl and choose their own ingredients, using a communal pot at their table to prepare their food.

During the mid-2010s, Malatang was very popular in China, especially for northern cities like Beijing and this popularity spread to the Australian market. For example, Frank Sweet (2019) pointed out the success of Malatang restaurants in Melbourne as “...one of the great modern innovations of Chinese fast casual dining, malatang, or ‘hot numbing soup’ has at last taken root in Melbourne’s increasingly detailed regional Chinese food scene.” The same can be seen in Sydney, with dedicated malatang restaurants opening successively across the city centre and appearing in the suburbs with a high concentration of Chinese residents.

DaWan is among one of the top malatang restaurants in Sydney. Opening its doors in 2018, DaWan was located at 163 Forest Road. The restaurant owner explained his ambition to run the Malatang restaurant in Hurstville:

I used to run businesses in China, so I am very familiar with running restaurants, cooking, and managing staff... when I got the PR and decided to stay in Australia, I hope[d] to establish a restaurant. Culinary types change very quickly in China, and there is a lot of competition in the market, so innovation is very important, and new things appear all the time to catch the attention of customers... Because of the large number of Chinese migrants and students in Sydney... I was thinking, oh, if something is very popular in China, why not transfer it to Australia and see if it works?

I noticed the Malatang trend when I returned to Beijing for holiday in 2017. It was extremely popular among young people. This type of cuisine, however, was not common in the Sydney market at that time. So I made up my mind to do this! I asked an interior designer in China to assist me in designing the space because I believe they can stay fashionable with Chinese

design trends, and young people – especially Chinese international students – in Sydney would love it. I even buy the furniture in China and ship it to Sydney.

I also asked the chef to spend nearly a month studying in China to learn [the] authentic cooking way [*sic*]. All of these efforts are geared towards catering to young Chinese customers. (Interview, 9 July 2019)

The interview confirmed the strong relationship between the ethnic restaurant and connectedness with networks of goods, food, design and people in China (see Figure 6.10). The shop was designed in a modern industrial style with colourful lights and a stylish interior wall design. Notably, there was a TV displayed in the shop window, showing how Malatang is cooked by video to introduce this new type of cuisine for customers. The screen also showed pictures of other dishes for customers who are not familiar with Chinese food. This digital screen helped customers to quickly understand what kind of food this restaurant served.



Figure 6.10. Restaurant of Dawan Malatang exterior (left) and interior (right)

(Source: taken by the author in 2019)

In Malatang restaurants, the ingredients are all stored in an open fridge to stay fresh. The fridge is designed like shelves with multiple choices of ingredients. Normally, dining in Malatang is self-serve in four easy steps. The first is to select the desired ingredients from the open fridge using the provided bowl. Then, customers take the basket to the counter and are charged by weight of their bowl, typically at a rate of around \$3 per 100 grams. The third step

is to select the preferred broth from a variety of options, such as a classic spicy broth, a fresh tomato broth, or a cloudy pork-bone broth. Finally, the kitchen will cook the ingredients selected in the broth chosen, calling customers to collect their dish when it is ready.

A customer shared his eating experience in DaWan restaurant in an interview:

A few years ago, before malatang spread like wildfire across Sydney, finding a good malatang for dinner would usually mean making a trip to Chinatown area. I remember waiting over 90 minutes for my bowl to be cooked at *Yang Guo Fu* (a famous Malatang restaurant near Chinatown) one time! We were walking around Hurstville one night though and stumbled across this (Dawan Malatang) with an attractive interior design. Dawan serves their Malatang in authentic flavour. There are a wide variety of food ingredients: clean, washed and kept freshly. They also have a great range of additional condiments to add in and make your own sauces too – such a bonus for the price point! (Interview, 9 July 2019)

These latter two case studies demonstrate that the entanglement of Hurstville's culinary landscape in trans-local geographies can be observed in several more specific senses. Both the business owners were international students in Sydney who started their own businesses by utilising the knowledge exchange between their home country and the host country to identify market gaps as an example of how "...the intersection of cultural differences and economic opportunities has shaped the development of its streetscape" (Lu & He, 2013, p. 101). Secondly, the spatial domains were carved out with connections to other localities – Nimto with Nepal, Da Wan with China – and were both grounded in translocality and spatial practices. They imported furniture, tableware, interior I and objects from their countries of origin; as well as some specialised ingredients or sauces, in an effort to create an authentic cultural dining experience. Furthermore, they created a multi-sensory spatial domain for customers that incorporated elements of their home countries, including using music and TV shows for ambient sound, speaking in the native tongue of their home countries, showcasing imported products and images, and using authentic flavours and aromas in their dishes. All of these spatial practices create a spatial domain that "involves a complex consumption and reproduction of home, homeland, memory, and identity." (Sen, 2012, p. 199).

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to illustrate the multiple spatial forms of ethnic restaurants that frame the culinary experiences and ethnic economy of the ethnoburb. An emphasis on the culinary sector, as well as the four case studies of ethnic restaurants, exemplifies a number of important developments on ethnic businesses.

First of all, ethnic businesses are “important nodes within a global network of circulating images, objects, and texts” (Sen, 2012, p. 198). This is manifest by the shifting business modality of Hurstville from small, independent operators to larger franchise operators – consistent with the theory that the ethnic economy has strong ties to the globalising economy. Furthermore, the presence of global franchise stores in the local context also indicates the commercial gentrification of the neighbourhoods with the involvement of new immigrants and their social, economic and cultural capital.

Interestingly, it has been observed that this is not a simple model of global diffusion. In a study of Manhattan’s Koreatown, Kim (2018) draws attention to how transnational chains, particularly franchises, establish themselves in very localised overseas markets. This is defined this as a ‘transclave’,

a commercialized ethnic space that exists exclusively for consumption, leisure, and entertainment; it is a space where transnational consumer culture from a sending country is embedded within a physical space in a receiving society, reflecting the landscape of the sending co’ntry’s consumer culture through the physical appearance of buildings and stores, and the inclusion of franchise brands from a sending society. (Kim, 2018, p. 276)

Secondly, it has been found that ethnic business in Hurstville also have a strong connection with other suburbs, drawing on the power of social media and the involvement of food bloggers in creating the innovative culinary economy. The interaction between social media and migration restaurants has exposed local ethnic restaurants to new audiences, new markets and new opportunities. Often, it is more broadly adopted by second-generation entrepreneurs as a creative business strategy, defying the traditional perception of ethnic businesses as marginal

and bounded by co-ethnic network limitations. Significantly, these exemplify the differences in operating a business between multi-generational entrepreneurs.

With the help of social media and food bloggers, many consumers also act as ‘prosumers’. As Zukin et al. (2017) points out in the context of Manhattan, the proliferation of customer-led review websites such as Yelp has had a significant impact on restaurant business practices, as now restaurants must concern themselves with reputation and public opinion. For example: machi machi built a feature wall into their designs to be a good backdrop for their drinks, which has encouraged customers to take photos of their purchases to share on social media, thereby increasing the reputation of the store. Essentially, its passive marketing for the business model.

Furthermore, the emphasis on placing-making practices demonstrates how global material culture is rearticulated within the local context. The study of the physical settings of ethnic restaurants elucidates that buildings are neither exceptional nor exotic, yet, spatial agencies of entrepreneurs use these spaces in a deeply symbolic and culturally inflected way, creating a translocal connection to provide an ‘in here but still there’ spatial experience. In this way, localities like Hurstville are constructed through the spatial reference to other places and spaces, as well as to real and imagined territories.

In this regard, ethnic restaurants are important sites of cultural landscape where immigrants present notions of belonging and identity, as well as cultural practices. This resonates with Parzer and Huber’s (2015) argument that “...shops and restaurants, labels and ethnically coded products, signs and symbols altogether act as imaginations of a certain ‘ethnicity’ and as representations of ‘cultural diversity’.” (p. 1270).

Chapter 7 Governing Forest Road: Ethnic Diversity in Planning and Managing Place

7.1 Introduction

Many urbanists, designers, and policymakers have noticed the impact of ethnocultural diversity in cities, as well as the potential challenge it poses to urban policy and planning. Multiculturalism (Burayidi, 2000) has been the dominant approach in contemporary planning practices and the concept of ‘planning for diversity’ in policy has received scholarly attention for many years (Fincher, 2003; Fincher & Iveson, 2008; Fincher et al., 2014; Zhuang, 2021). However, the level of engagement that municipal authorities have with multiculturalism and ethnocultural diversity in relation to policy-making is not as easily identified.

While examining the concept of diversity in planning theory and its practices in the immigrant community, academic scholars across various disciplines and policy networks have shown interest in urban planning towards ethnoculturally diverse societies. Recent attention has emphasised the obstacles faced in planning practices related to land use, built form, traffic and parking control, economic development, place-making, and community engagement across diverse national contexts. Examples of this research include Zhuang’s (2019) study on Toronto’s policymaking with ethnic retail spaces and Lung-Amam’s (2017) work on the changes in everyday life experiences and the political response to the shifting demographic inside Silicon Valley. While the planning discourses and practices towards diversity vary tremendously from one nation-state to another, more research is required in the examination of Australia’s context as a settler society.

Australia’s public policy has focused on multiculturalism since the late 1970s. This paradigm shapes both the local experience of ethnic cultural diversity and the local context of urban planning (Fincher & Iveson, 2008; Fincher et al., 2014). More importantly, this migrant-led urban development shows a need for a politically sensitive mode of urban governance. Thus, this chapter aims to examine how ethnoculturally diverse suburbs are governed, managed, and planned. Specifically, it asks: how do local governments respond to the presence of a very

concentrated, even homogenous, set of migrant ethnic identities? How are migrant businesses and cultures ‘institutionally embedded’ (or not) within urban governance?

The chapter begins with an outline of how Australia’s Multiculturalism Policy at the national level influenced the local governance of Sydney’s Chinatown in Haymarket. By discussing the practices of the City of Sydney, it provides a clear point of difference between traditional Chinatown (Haymarket) and contemporary Chinese ethnoburb (Hurstville) in terms of urban governance. The focus then shifts to the Hurstville context, including the previous and current municipalities of Hurstville City Council and Georges River Council respectively, outlining the impact of their strong presence in the suburb in a number of areas.

There are four main points of interest investigated in this chapter. The first is the role of Forest Road as an Asian shopping and dining destination, as highlighted in both *the George River Economic Development Strategy (2021)* and *the Hurstville Place Strategy (2019)*, which reflects the significant influence of the local ethnic economy. Secondly, the incongruity of the *Hurstville City Centre Urban Design Strategy (2017)* identifying Forest Road as the retail core of Hurstville without acknowledgement of the Asian identity of the street; a direct contrast to the City of Sydney’s urban design framework. Forest Road is also used as a key stage for Lunar New Year celebrations, which is one of the few occasions where an officially sanctioned, ethnically defined event takes place in Hurstville. Finally, the council operated a municipal museum and art gallery, the Hurstville Museum and Gallery, located at 319-21 Forest Road until 2004, which is now to be found on adjoining MacMahon Street.

7.2 Multiculturalism in Australia and Urban Planning

From the late 1970s onwards, practices of contemporary urban planning in Australia were informed by the policy framework of multiculturalism to “recognise that cultural diversity is one of our (Australia) greatest strengths; one that equips us to build a future where everyone belongs and has the chance to live a great life” (Australia Government, 2017, p. 4). In the research by Fincher et al. (2014) on planning in the multicultural city, they stated multiculturalism is simultaneously a nation-building philosophy, a policy framework, and a demographic reality, arguing that “at the urban level, multicultural policies touch many aspects

of governance and management, ranging from statements celebrating diversity as an economic advantage, to housing policies, economic development policies favouring ethnic precincts, and even supposedly inclusive procedure for public meetings” (p. 7). In this instance, it is essential to develop a clearer understanding of how planning discourses and practices regarding multiculturalism are implemented in the urban context.

It is noteworthy that in multicultural Australia, political philosophies at the national level directly shape and influence the planning practices and policies at the state, regional and local levels. Local governments are recognised as critical agents in developing and implementing urban policies and strategies proposed by more senior levels of government in achieving social order and harmony (Fincher & Iveson, 2008; Fincher et al., 2014). At this point, it is interesting to consider how the national policy of multiculturalism influenced the local planning of Sydney’s Chinatown. As Anderson et al. (2019) notes:

This spirit of multicultural thinking extended across a broad range of policy areas, including urban planning. It was in this context that old Chinese districts such as that of Haymarket, once deemed to be abject ghettos, were targeted by local and state governments for major revitalization schemes, not by erasing their cultural otherness, but by enhancing their ‘Chinese atmosphere’ (2019, p. 26)

It is clear the local government authorities shaped Chinatown, as it was designated to be a ‘cultural icon’ precinct, by introducing porticos, lanterns, and arches to make the area appear more aesthetically ‘Chinese’. It was also recognised as a delimited ethnic precinct, geographically defined by a spatial boundary and conceptually limited by racial perceptions. However, as Chinatown’s demography shifted as part of Australia’s large intake of new migrants scheme profound changes to its urban condition occurred.

Most of the early migrants living in Chinatown were from the southern provinces of China and spoke Cantonese. Starting from the 1980s, the migrants from China to Australia have changed radically in terms of geographic origin. The ‘new Chinese’ were mainly Mandarin speakers from central and northern China. The current demographic of Chinatown has morphed alongside the changes to Australia’s immigration policies, exhibiting a complex diversification of languages spoken and migration experience among residents. As Anderson et al. (2019)

illustrated in their findings that Chinatown's resident demographic spans a range of Asian ethnicities, which "underpins the precinct's current characterisation not just as 'Chinese' but more broadly, as Asian" (p. 65).

Crucially, the shifting demography and social complexity have inescapably permeated to the urban governance of Chinatown. This is reflected in the policy-making process by the City of Sydney Government. In 2007, *Sydney's City of Villages Strategy* (City of Sydney, 2007) was announced with an aim to divide the inner Sydney city's territory into ten distinct villages. Chinatown Haymarket was involved in this strategy and named 'Chinatown and CBD South village'. Thus, it can be seen that the planning of Chinatown has been actively integrated and considered within city planning as a whole, exceeding its stereotype as an 'exotic place' in history. Of particular significance is that this consideration softens the local political tensions regarding the ethical issue of race and discrimination, as "...it allowed the city council to avoid accusations that it was racializing the neighbourhood by its designation as a heritage district" (Anderson et al., 2019, p. 48). This regional development plan was followed by a local action named the *Chinatown Public Domain Plan* (City of Sydney, 2010). The fundamental aim of this plan was to provide a strategic urban framework for the improvement of Chinatown's public domain facilities, including footpaths, streets and public spaces. As the plan stated, the council's strategic objective for Chinatown is,

To respect, protect and build on the area's historic links with Chinese culture and the Chinese community, together with the growing influence of other Asian cultures and communities, while recognising the area's importance to contributing to the vitality and diversity of Sydney as a global city. (City of Sydney, 2010, p. 4).

Notably, the changing urban form of Chinatown was mediated by the City of Sydney's design and zoning code as outlined in the Local Environment Plans (LEPs), which sought to preserve the distinctiveness of the neighbourhood and reflect the overarching Urban Design Strategy of Chinatown. More importantly, the transformation of Chinatown's urban form has shifted the area into a commercial hub and influenced the employment market. This was proven by the increasing 'feminisation' of space in Chinatown with the increasing establishment of fashion outlets.

As the area's patronage has become increasingly dominated by a consumer base that is young, Asian and female. This is exemplified by the proliferation of Asian boutique-fashion retailers, cosmetics shops and hairdressers in the area's main streets and shopping arcades, which cater to this category of consumer. This has coincided with a period during which the Galleries Victoria shopping mall was seen to be stocking more and more Asian-oriented fashion brands, such as Incu. (Anderson et al., 2019, p. 59).

Furthermore, the employment structure of commercial service providers has also been influenced by the dramatic demographic shift. For example, Cantonese-style restaurants, previously ubiquitous throughout Chinatown, have begun to include northern Chinese dishes on their menus and have hired waiting staff who can speak Mandarin. In this regard, the City of Sydney considered the increasing commercial viability of Chinatown could also provide more job opportunities for the district. As it states in the *City Plan 2036: Local Strategic Planning Statement*: "Over half of the capacity that is expected to develop for non-residential purposes is located in Central Sydney (including the CBD and Harbour and Chinatown and CBD South village areas)" (City of Sydney, 2020, p. 50).

Taking the above examples into account, Haymarket Chinatown exemplifies the changes in planning policies and strategies that are occurring in response to cultural and demographic diversity. It also illustrates that Sydney's federal government system operates with a high degree of local autonomy. As Sydney's Chinese population grew and dispersed across the city in a suburbanisation pattern, these changes and dynamics did not just occur in Haymarket Chinatown but also in other suburban 'Chinatowns'. Thus, this raises the question as to how the governing and management of Hurstville's ethnocultural diversity as a Chinese ethnoburb has differed from the traditional model of Chinatown.

7.3 Planning for Diversity: Insights from Hurstville

Table 7.1 summarises the policy context of Hurstville at different scales of governance. This section will illustrate how these planning policies and strategies have been engaged in the urban governance practices of Hurstville.

Table 7.1. Planning system and policy context of Hurstville at different governance scales

Policy Level	Topic	Policy Document Name	
Federal Prepared by: Federal government	National character Multicultural Australia	The People of Australia – Australia's multicultural policy (2011)	
State Prepared by: NSW Government Approved by: NSW Government	State Planning Direction	Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000	
Regional Prepared by: Greater Sydney Commission Approved by: NSW Government	Regional Plan -Vision & direction -Objectives -Strategies & actions	GREATER SYDNEY REGION PLAN: A Metropolis of Three Cities (2018)	
District Prepared by: Greater Sydney Commission	District Plan Planning priorities & Actions	OUR GREATER SYDNEY 2056: South District Plan (2018)	
Local Prepared by: Local or NSW Government Approved by: Local or NSW Government	George River Council -Local strategic planning statements -Local strategies	Urban planning	Hurstville City Centre Urban Design Strategy (2017)
			Hurstville Place Strategy (2019)
		Social planning	Hurstville City Council Multicultural Strategy (2015)
			Community Engagement Strategy (2019)
		Cultural planning	Events Strategy (2018)
			Cultural Strategy (2019)
		Economic planning	George Rivers' Commercial Centres Strategy (2020)
			Economic Development Strategy (2021)

(Source: by the author)

7.3.1 Economic development strategy

The suburb of Hurstville was formerly governed by Hurstville City Council, until it was merged with Kogarah City Council to form the Georges River Local Government Area (LGA) in 2016. Currently, the Georges River Council consists of twenty-four suburbs and five election wards, comprising an area of 38.36 square kilometres with an overall population of 159,266 (Profile.id, 2021) (see Figure 7.1.)



Figure 7.1. Location of Hurstville in Georges River Council area

(Source: Profile. id, 2021)

After this amalgamation, the municipal of Hurstville's governance had to reconcile with the strategic planning of the Georges River LGA, in particular for planning priorities and actions. The planning for the future growth of centres in the Georges River LGA is guided by an overarching strategic framework established by the Greater Sydney Commission named *The Greater Sydney Region Plan – A Metropolis of Three Cities* (NSW Planning and Environment, 2018a). The Greater Sydney Region Plan seeks to transform Greater Sydney into a metropolis of three cities, where people can more easily access knowledge-intensive jobs, city-scale infrastructure and services, and entertainment and cultural facilities. The three cities are Eastern

Harbour City, Central River City, and Western Parkland City. The Georges River LGA is located in the Eastern Harbour City area.

The implementation of the region plan was supported by five District Plans. The *South District Plan* (NSW Planning and Environment, 2018b) covers the Canterbury-Bankstown, Georges River and Sutherland local government areas, with a corresponding set of local planning priorities that are consistent with the objectives of the *Greater Sydney Region Plan*. The *South District Plan* details the relationship between the regional, district and local plans, reflecting local values and aspirations in a way that balances both regional and local considerations (refer to Figure 7.2).



Figure 7.2. Relationship between regional, district and local plans.

(Source: adapt from “Our Greater Sydney 205: South District Plan, 2018, p.15)

In relation to the future planning of Hurstville, both the *Greater Sydney Region Plan* and the *South District Plan* were particularly significant. In the *Greater Sydney Region Plan*, Hurstville has been clearly defined as one of the ‘strategic centres’ for the Eastern Harbour City, wherein its role would be to increase business, investment and employment opportunities to nearby residents and remain accessible within a 30-minute travel radius via public transport (NSW Planning and Environment, 2018a, p. 119). Furthermore, the steps to implement this role were outlined in the NSW Department of Planning’s the *South District Plan*, which defines Hurstville as follows:

Hurstville is an important retail destination for the South District, with its high street and large shopping centres. It is a commercial precinct for residents and has a growing health services sector. Its cultural diversity presents tourism and night-time economy opportunities. These activities are supported by good access to the centre by rail and bus services. Improvements to Hurstville's public spaces and better integration of these with the shopping centres will help activate streets and attract visitors to the centre, creating opportunities for local employment and new economic activity. (NSW Planning and Environment, 2018b, p. 69)

Moreover, the *South District Plan* also nominates some detailed actions to strengthen Hurstville's development, including creating a strong sense of place by celebrating Hurstville's cultural diversity; encouraging new lifestyles and entertainment uses to activate streets and growing the night-time economy; and supporting the role of Forest Road as a movement corridor and as a dining destination (NSW Planning and Environment, 2018b).

The economic role of Hurstville as a retail destination with commercial and cultural diversity has been accentuated in both the regional and district plans. These ambitions are reflected in the endorsement of the local planning policy, where *Hurstville Place Strategy* stated:

Hurstville is a place on the go. It's a bustling and vibrant city known for its authentic Asian cuisine, and diverse shopping and cultural experiences. An exciting place with a mosaic of established, new and emerging cultures. (Georges River Council, 2020b, p. 7)

This statement also responded to local government authority's initiatives to promote and stimulate the area's economic development. In 2017, a deed of agreement was signed between Georges River Council and St George Business Chamber Incorporated. The mission of the chamber is to help businesses maximise their potential in the Georges River area and to act as the voice for small businesses. As part of a collaboration initiative, the Georges River Council provided a financial contribution of \$30,000 per year over a period of five years commencing in 2017 with the intention to assist in the development of programs that support the business community in the area (George River Council, 2017).

More recently in 2019, the Georges River Council commissioned a research team to undertake a review of the commercial centres across Georges River LGA, which would provide the foundation of the development of a formal *Commercial Centre Strategy* (Georges River

Council, 2020a). As the *Economic Study (2019)* notes, Hurstville is the largest commercial centre in the Georges River LGA, with Forest Road serving as the main commercial street. A high proportion of its shops are occupied by Chinese restaurants, grocery stores and non-food businesses (HillPDA Consulting, 2019).

This commercial character incorporating the ethnic economy was further reflected in the *Economic Development Strategy (2021)*, which describes Hurstville's economy as a lively hub of commercial, retail and dining activity that is characterised by an authentic Asian influence (Georges River Council, 2021, p. 43). Both the *Commercial Strategy* and the *Economic Strategy* indicate the significant presence of Chinese businesses in Hurstville's commercial landscape and the important role the ethnic economy played in shaping Hurstville's identity and distinguishing it from the rest of the LGA. However, policy review demonstrates that there are no statutory regulatory frameworks, particularly commercial planning policies and urban design guidelines, that give special consideration to the increasing establishment of migrant businesses with the exception of one initiative indicated in the *Economic Development Strategy* to "trial a social media platform to better engage with the Chinese business community" (Georges River Council, 2021, p. 35).

This finding supports Quadeer's (1997) conclusion regarding ethnic business enclaves in Canada which "...serve [as] metropolitan markets, creating a 'niche' in the regional economy. They have been created through private initiatives; they were not planned or even anticipated by planning authorities" (1997, p. 489). This is very different from Haymarket Chinatown, where the major actors behind promoting the ethnic character of the suburb were the local municipalities.

7.3.2 Urban design strategy.

In exploring the relationship between multiculturalism and the urban public realm, Fincher et al. (2014) argued that,

the public realm, which is both a material or physical space in which encounters across differences take place and a political forum through which claims concerning the nature and possibilities of that lived difference are

articulated, is of key significance for our discussion of planning in multicultural cities (2014, p. 35).

In this regard, it is important to consider the production of the urban landscape, the planning interventions relating to the built environment, as well as the disputes over the making of the urban public realm. At this point, the governance of Hurstville's built environment has been subject to a formal local council intervention named the *Hurstville City Centre Urban Design Strategy* (Georges River Council, 2017b).

As mentioned above, following the amalgamation of the Hurstville and Kogarah Councils, this strategy was engaged by the Georges River Council to review and enhance the existing urban design principles for the Hurstville City Centre, empowering it to reach its full potential. Numerous studies have previously been produced concerning the Hurstville City Centre by the previous council, including the *Hurstville City Centre Masterplan* (2004) and *Hurstville City Centre Public Domain Plan* (2007). *The Hurstville City Centre Urban Design Strategy* (2019) was built on top of these previous strategies by reviewing existing development standards to develop new urban design controls. This time, the strategy not only echoed a grand ambition of revitalising the precinct, but it was also to be aligned with the intentions outlined in the *South District Plan* and *Greater Sydney Region Plan* for Hurstville to become a strategic centre, as identified by the Greater Sydney Commission.

In the *Urban Design Strategy*, the proposed vision for Hurstville was to be “a dynamic and vibrant city centre that reflects the cultural diversity of its community” (Georges River Council, 2017b, p. 61) that would provide a wealth of social and economic activities for residents, as well as improved connectivity to neighbouring strategic centres. In reflecting this overall vision, the strategy identified the following objectives:

To reinforce the role of Hurstville as the gateway to southern Sydney; To strengthen the use of public and active transport to and within the centre; To enhance and strengthen the identity of the centre; To improve pedestrian connectivity and movement; [and] to provide block by block planning controls for the centre (p. 5).

To fulfil these objectives, the strategy divided the area into eight character precincts: Ormonde Parade Retail and Services, Forest Road High Street, City East Transition Area, Eastern Bookend, Retail Centre, Civic Centre, City West Transition Area, and Western Bookend (see Figure 7.3).



Figure 7.3. Proposed division of character areas in Hurstville.

(Source: from *Hurstville City Centre Urban Design Strategy*, 2019, p. 42.)

It is notable that cultural diversity and a revitalised identity have been interwoven in the design of built form and the public domain, particularly in terms of how the Georges River Council seeks to define Hurstville's identity. When viewed through this lens, the Hurstville Urban Design Strategy (2017) clearly demonstrated that the detailed considerations for public domain character and architectural character should refer to the previous *Hurstville City Centre Masterplan* (2004) (Georges River Council, 2017b, pp. 17-18). According to the *Hurstville City Centre Masterplan*:

- Public Domain Character: A special character needs to evolve for Hurstville's public domain. This could lead to a consistent paving

unit being used for arcades, street widening and public squares. The detail of signage, seating and landscape should also be consistent to give Hurstville a unified character. Care will need to be taken to ensure materials are robust and will be maintainable over a long length of time.

- Architectural Character: It is considered appropriate that the new buildings should be designed with reference to the cultural and environmental traditions of the area. The architectural treatment in the public zones should emphasize richness, interest and warmth through decoration, modulation and materials. The use of natural materials such as terracotta, stone and timber should be contrasted with more contemporary insertions of glass and metals. The arcades and colonnades should draw upon inspiration from classical proportions. (Hurstville City Council, 2004, p. 31)

It was interesting to note here that the planning schemes only provided city-wide standardised guidelines for the public domain and new buildings; no specific plans have been developed for the highly concentrated Chinese-themed Forest Road, such as in relation to façades, shop windows, signage, architectural or decoration. This was particularly unusual, considering that the *Urban Design Strategy* recognised in the demographic profile analysis section that “76% of the population in the city centre come from non-English speaking backgrounds and have predominantly Chinese (70%), English (5.5%) and Nepalese (3.9%) heritage” (Georges River Council, 2017b, p. 28). This demographic composition has made Hurstville unique at the suburban level because it has the highest number of Chinese residents among all suburbs in NSW (Walters, 2015). However, this significant Chinese population is not recognised in urban design considerations. This is a sign that the planning system faces a dilemma: it cannot plan or zone by the characteristics of persons.

This differed greatly from the *Chinatown Public Domain Plan (2010)*, where the City of Sydney Council inscribed the presence of Chinese residents directly into the built environment. Detailed actions included deploying bilingual street signage to accentuate the presence of

Chinese residents in public spaces; allowing pagoda-shaped, green-tiled upturned roofs to be installed on buildings as part of the beautification projects; the construction of two iconic ceremonial archways at Hay Street and Goulburn Street to feature the culture of the space; and inviting Australian artists of Chinese heritage to create public artwork that clearly focusses on interpreting Chineseness and visibly made Chinese culture be present in the public realm.

This was in stark contrast to the silence around the expression of Chinese culture in the built environment of Hurstville. The different degrees to which immigrants are involved in policy decisions reflect a tension between contemporary ethnoburbs and municipalities in the negotiation for space and rights, as well as the incompatibility between demographic indicators and the design of space. This dilemma has been echoed in previous research on making multicultural places, as Collins and Kunz (2010) pointed out,

Ethnic precincts are fundamentally contradictory sites. First, there is the problem of the credibility and authenticity of the ethnic precincts, which involves who is ‘authorized’ to claim authenticity, how that authenticity is symbolized and what employees and employers in ethnic enterprises have to do to generate that authenticity. Second, how legitimate can a precinct be in the eyes of the co-ethnic community, other locals and tourists if it has been developed by deliberate regulation, planning and government intervention?.
(p. 43)

This predicament can be addressed by approaching design and planning with an attitude of flexibility as suggested in the research of Anderson et al. (2019), where spaces are recognised as inherently open to different people and cultures. In an interview, a Georges River Council officer shared his thoughts on framing Hurstville as a “new Chinatown” and outlined the Council’s strategy for planning the suburb within the suburb’s changing demographics:

We won’t let this be a new Chinatown (at Council’s position). This has happened organically. It happened because, you know, a lot of people have seen opportunities here. They come here and Chinese communities revived Hurstville. But in the process of reviving Hurstville, it was created like a Chinatown, which means business here, many for the Chinese population. And that has then created conflicts with the non-Chinese part of the area. Because there are people in that area say, if you have been Oatley, Lugarno (other suburbs under George River Council). It is almost like a different world. Compared that, here to there. Even though it’s only a couple of miles away, It’s like a different country. A lot of people say about Hurstville is like it is a different country. A lot of people from non-Chinese backgrounds were

actually offended by all the Chinese arrival many years [*sic*]. A lot of people complain about the Chinese arrival. They don't see the cultural influence, they do not see the economic influence. So, we don't want to theme the space, even though Hurstville has a large number of Chinese people but there are also Nepalese, India, etc...we are multicultural here. (Interview, 23 August 2019)

Even though the strategy for urban design is neither to impose a cultural meaning nor theme the area to be a didactic space, there was still a land use conflict existing in the suburb. As Fincher et al. stated in their research on how to plan in the multicultural city:

In the course of everyday lives characterized by transnational ties, ethnic minority and migrant communities frequently 'insert their belonging' in urban neighbourhoods through place-making activities that contribute to change in urban landscapes. These changes to urban landscapes made by ethnic minorities and migrant communities often give rise to debate and conflict, precisely because landscapes help to constitute community values, playing a central role in the performance of place-based social identities and distinction. (2014, p. 35).

This statement has been evident in previous empirical cases where immigrants have attempted to establish themselves in new settlements, for example, by constructing places of worship, changing the commercial environment, creating recreational facilities and community centres to express their identity. This frequently resulted in conflicts between different ethnic groups over land and space use.

In December 2019, the Georges River Council received a development application for the construction of one of Southern Sydney's biggest Mosques in the Hurstville area. The mosque was proposed to be 2,000 square metres in size, with a maximum capacity of 120 people and 22 parking spaces, and operating hours of 5.30 am to 9.55 pm, Monday to Sunday. Since this development application was first presented to the public, it has drawn fierce opposition from residents. In order to protest this project going forward, more than 4,300 local residents submitted petition letters to the council to express their objections (Chung, 2021). Concurrently, local Muslim resident representative Leila Khaled claimed that Hurstville is a peaceful community catering to many cultures and should agree to the construction of the mosque and created a public petition on the website of Change.org (<https://www.change.org/p/kogarah-council-yes-to-south-hurstville-mosque>). Khaled cited the primary benefits for the construction

of the mosque, including allowing local Muslim residents the freedom to practice their religion at an accessible location, provide youth outreach to encourage greater understanding of the Islamic faith, and host open days to interact with the wider community to foster positive relationships.

However, opposing residents claimed that they were against its construction not for religious reasons but because of the proposed location. As emphasised in a protest flyer (see *Figure 7.4*), where traffic, parking, noise, and safety were listed as the main reasons they opposed the project.

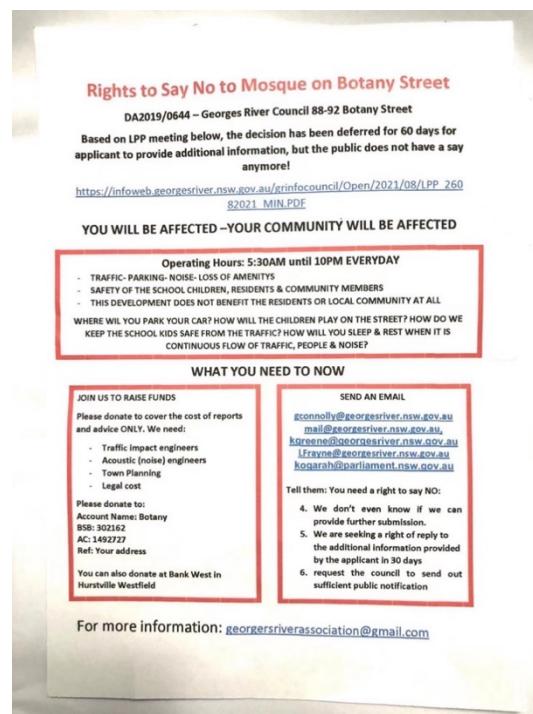


Figure 7.4. Public Protest Flyer in 2019

(Source: photo taken by the author in 2019)

The development application for the mosque was finally refused by the Georges River Local Planning Panel in 2022, who stated “...it has not been adequately demonstrated that the intensity of use can be appropriately managed in order to mitigate adverse amenity impacts” (Gainsford, 2022b). However, the development application exhibitions on the NSW Planning Portal (Amendment to development application DA-2019/0644, 2022 (<https://pp.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/daex/under-consideration/amendment-development->

[application-da-20190644](#)), showed that the developer has amended the development application and resubmitted it in April 2022. The application status is still under consideration and the conflict for the Mosque remains unresolved at the time of writing.

Such acrimonious conflicts over the use of spaces and the construction of ethnic architecture or public arts has exposed the tensions in the immigrant community over the negotiation of space and serve as “flashpoints in the urban politics of identity and ethnicity” (Fincher et al., 2014, p. 37). Overall, the example above suggests that the local municipalities had not proactively planned in their urban design strategies to adequately respond to the local cultural and social diversity. Even though Chinese immigrants account for a large proportion of the suburb, the Georges River Council has taken care to avoid interpreting the presence of Chinese in the public domain visibly and clearly within physical imprints on the urban landscape.

7.3.3 Hurstville City Council’s multicultural strategy.

Along with the importance of urban design and planning in multicultural cities, it is also important to recognise the importance of social planning and the realities of residents living together with differences at the local level. As Attili and Sandercock (2009) have noted in their book *Where strangers become neighbours: Integrating immigrants in Vancouver*:

Policies dealing with immigration and refugees are formulated at national level, but their most significant repercussions are at the local level, where they impact the whole intricate social fabric of urban life, in streets and neighbourhoods, housing estates, shops and schools, parks and places of worship. Immigration policies are motivated primarily by economic concerns, sometimes with an added dash of humanitarianism. But the national economic mindset typically does not take into account the challenges and complexities of strangers entering the urban fabric in significant numbers and the ways in which this can be perceived, rightly or wrongly, as undermining a particular way of life. (2009, p. 183)

In this regard, the municipal government is responsible for managing the community to ensure social order and harmony amongst ethnically and racially diverse residents. This section explores how urban planning has attempted to manage the diversity of demographic groups through interventions of social planning at the local level.

An important policy framework was the implementation of the *Hurstville City Council Multicultural Strategy* (Hurstville City Council, 2015) in the process of the community's social planning. Notably, the *Multicultural Strategy* does not operate in isolation from other government social policies and relevant provisions. It has been aligned with the Federal government policy, *The people of Australia – Australia's multicultural policy (2011)*, and the State government's *Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000*. It also shows how these two sets of principles of multiculturalism from national and state policies have been incorporated into the local community level.

The *Hurstville City Council Multicultural Strategy* provided a detailed framework that outlines the Council's commitment to promoting Hurstville as a multicultural suburb, known for its diversity of people and cultures, its unique historical settlement patterns, and its recognition of the valuable contribution that migrants have made. Moreover, this strategy specified how the Council and the community could work together to strengthen community harmony, create opportunities and improve community engagement. This included the establishment of the Multicultural Advisory Committee in 2000, which comprised members of the local community who monitor and review the effectiveness of strategies, review programmes, and advise the Council on multicultural issues. In addition to this, the council has several social facilities utilised by the local community to better improve social integration. These facilities include the Senior Citizen Centre, Hurstville Entertainment Centre and the Hurstville City Library, Museum & Gallery. The Council also has worked collaboratively with stakeholders to take on initiatives that promote the benefits and value of community engagement, such as the Employment Expo for newly arrived migrants, settlement forums, and Migrant Information Day. All of these actions were aimed at promoting the benefits of diversity to the local area and strengthening the social engagement of immigrants in the wider community.

Following the steps of the *Multicultural Strategy* was a subsequent social planning initiative named the *Community Engagement Strategy* (Georges River Council, 2019a). This strategy was prepared after the amalgamation of the former Kogarah and Hurstville Councils, so it was announced by the George River Council. This was a public policy that aimed to systematically organise all the suburbs under Georges River LGA, with the intent to establish guiding

principles to ensure community engagement is purposeful, timely, genuine, inclusive and transparent. As the strategy noted:

Community engagement is the act of informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering individuals and groups on relevant topics, issues or decisions that may affect their everyday lives. This might include issues specific to homes, businesses or neighbourhoods. This may involve sharing information using a variety of channels and seeking community feedback in person or online.

Community engagement is the foundation to good governance. It allows us to identify and address local ideas, concerns and opportunities by involving the public in relevant processes that affect them and their community (Georges River Council, 2019a, p. 7).

In this policy, the ambitious goal of responding to the needs of different individuals and groups, as well as their political views, were translated into an engagement framework of five levels, namely: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. Two main communication tools were launched to provide residents with relevant information about local issues. The first tool, *Your say*, is an online portal for residents to engage with important projects and provide feedback via surveys, polls, and guestbooks. The second tool is the Georges River Council app, a location-based app that is personalised to individual needs. Users can access waste information, pay rates, report an incident, share feedback via *Your Say*, catch up on community news and events, locate nearby attractions and much more. In summary, this policy's main priority is to respond to the desires and needs of all residents, rather than focussing specifically on immigrants. This also reflects the role of local governments in managing migrant integration with regards to the social dimension.

Additionally, the active involvement of immigrants in social planning is also apparent the high levels of Chinese participation in local politics. In *The Routledge Handbook of the Governance of Migration and Diversity in Cities* (Caponio et al., 2018), the authors argued that immigrants' political participation has two main intentions:

First, local political participation offers immigrants the opportunity to influence the outcomes of the local decision-making processes and thereby defend their particular interests, as immigrants in general or as members of a specific national group. Second, local participation in commonly binding

decisions recognized 188 “socialising” function in terms of enriching immigrants’ feelings of belonging in the city where they live, and of shared urban identity (2018, p. 75).

The Hurstville political structure exemplifies this point of view. The official website of the Georges River Council listed the fifteen newly elected councillors elected from five wards in 2021 and only Hurstville Ward has Chinese councillors, with two of the three ward councillors being Chinese immigrants. Such a high proportion of Chinese immigrants participating in the local political landscape reflects the demographic character of Hurstville suburb as the largest Chinese ethnoburb. More importantly, it proves that local politics is influenced by the presence of immigrants, both in policy making and political systems and is of crucial importance for democracies. As the population of Georges River continues to grow and evolve, the council has needed to adopt a series of social planning strategies to be responsive to changing demographic and community needs.

7.3.4 Forest Road: a key stage for the Lunar New Year Festival.

Previous studies have acknowledged that festivals and events play an active role in promoting community pride and cohesion, as well as positively impacting the quality of life of local residents. According to Lucas (2017), festivals serve the needs of the local community by providing a platform for socialisation and celebration in an atmosphere of spontaneity, unity, and festive spirit. It is common for local governments to deploy cultural festivals and event strategies to publicly recognise migrant groups and celebrate multiculturalism, particularly in immigrant communities with ethnic and cultural diversity. This was echoed in Cantle's (2005) research on community cohesion in race and diversity, where he noted:

Many towns and cities now have programmes to ‘celebrate diversity’, with civic backing for different religious and cultural festivals, awards for successful minority businesses, the use of multicultural images on websites and posters to promote the area and the development of specialist ethnic minority music and artistic events – all with the intent of creating a positive view of diversity and the contribution that it can make to the local area. (Cantle, 2005, p. 186)

Similarly, in the context of Hurstville, the local government announced the *Events Strategy* (Georges River Council) in 2018 with the aim to cultivate an “event-friendly destination, with a balanced calendar of events that attract visitors, bolsters our economy and celebrates our community and cultural identity” (2018, p. 4). This strategy delivers a framework for the strategic management of community events and defines three types of council-run events in the local LGA, namely: civic events, community and business events, and destination, cultural and tourism events (Georges River Council, 2018). The most prominent of these events is the Lunar New Year Festival. It began as little more than a neighbourhood event organised by local Chinese ethnic immigrants in a small park in 2004, and progressively evolved to become one of the largest festivals of its kind in the state outside of Chinatown in Haymarket (Gainsford, 2022a). The importance of the Lunar New Year Festival is obvious when reviewing the council’s *Event Strategy* (Georges River Council, 2018), which, alongside the Australia Day Festival and the Magic of Christmas Event, is identified as the major event in the Category 1 of the event hierarchy and boasts the largest budget allocation of nearly \$282,650. This is a clear demonstration of the importance that the Lunar New Year Festival holds as a mainstream event to celebrate and through which the ‘Chineseness’ of Hurstville has been amplified on a larger scale, both officially and municipally.

In the urban planning section above, it was highlighted that the large number of Chinese immigrants was being marginalised in the urban design strategy and lacked policy or design guidelines to consider the Chinese identity or represent Chinese culture visibly in the physical built environment. In contrast, the public celebration of the Lunar New Year is an effective action to demonstrate that municipal officials are concerned about the demographic composition of the community and the recognition of Chinese identity in the area. This was proven by the Georges River Mayor, Kevin Greene, in his interview with SBS News:

We have a vibrant Chinese community and we’re very proud of the Chinese culture that has been brought to the Hurstville and the Georges River community. It’s fantastic to be able to celebrate this significant event, this major international event right here in Hurstville. (Greene, 2018).

However, the naming of the Lunar New Year festival as the ‘Chinese New Year Festival’ led to public controversy (Roberts, 2015). The study by Anderson et al. (2019) noted the backlash

the City of Sydney Council received when they had named it the ‘Chinese New Year Festival’, causing discontent among Korean and Vietnamese residents, who felt it to be exclusionary. To avoid this dilemma, George River Council paid serious attention to naming the festival ‘Lunar New Year Festival’. Nonetheless, an essentialised Chinese character was saw multiple applications for the celebration every year, which also included traditional Chinese lion dances, zodiac animal dolls, classic red lanterns and lights, dumpling stalls, and other examples of Chinese culture.

Forest Road has become the main stage for celebrating the Lunar New Year Festival in Hurstville. For the 2020 Lunar Year Festival – Welcome the Year of the Rat (Gainsford, 2020), for example, the event started at 10 am within the Official Lunar New Year Parade of floats, consisting of spectacular performers dressed in traditional Chinese costumes. More than 50,000 people, including residents and visitors, lined both sides of Forest Road in anticipation of the parade. This was followed by a speech by the Georges River Council Mayor as the opening ceremony. After a demonstration by Harmonlodies Cantonese Opera and St George Community Wushu Centre, the stage was dedicated to finalists from the 'Live Sing China Australia Audition', also known as *The Voice of China Australia* for a live music performance. Not far from this central stage, stalls selling a variety of food, drinks, and goods were arranged along the Forest Road like street markets. There were also plenty of performances and excitement away from the main stage as well, with stilt walkers, jugglers, dragon dance and the zodiac animals roaming around (see

Figure 7.5).

In order to allow other Asian groups to get involved in the festival, the council arranged a Lunar New Year tasting tour. Through Hurstville's streets, visitors were exposed to festive goods and traditional treats such as dumplings, bubble tea and radish cakes from China, Malaysia, Vietnam and other parts of East Asia to showcase their cuisines and cultural performances. This act in particular promoted cultural communication and enhanced social engagement with the community. It also marked Forest Road's urban culture as a key stage for cultural exhibition.



Figure 7.5. Celebration of Lunar New Year along Forest Road in 2020

(Source: photo taken by the author in 2020)

7.3.5 Hurstville Museum & Gallery

Forest Road's urban role extends beyond a key stage for festivals, including its position as an important 'cultural corridor' where cultural infrastructure such as museums, galleries, performances and street art are located. In the *Cultural Infrastructure Plan 2025+ (2019)*, the NSW Government identified cultural infrastructure as buildings, indoor and outdoor spaces, digital and technological services, and public art which enabled or supported the proliferation, congregation and appreciation of culture by the wider community.

In order to strategically align with the state government's guide for the planning and delivery of cultural infrastructure, the George River Council devised a *Cultural Strategy (2019)*, which

provided insights on how the local council was to deliver its commitment to developing and supporting the arts and culture of the community. The policy also accentuated the role of the only regional museum and gallery in the St George district – the Hurstville Museum & Gallery.

The museum component of the existing Hurstville Museum & Gallery is highly valued by the community, and the combination of museum and gallery provides this institution with a diverse, innovative, and accessible offer for visitors. There is good reason to continue this combination and to expand its focus on the past and the present and on local and national creative production. (Georges River Council, 2019b, p. 105)

Hurstville Museum & Gallery was originally located at 319-21 Forest Road until 2004, when it was moved to 14 MacMahon Street into an old English-style house with heritage significance to the local area and is listed in the State Heritage Inventory database (see Figure 7.6). The Museum & Gallery is a vibrant hub of community activity with regular talks, programs, special events, and dynamic exhibitions. It owns a collection of approximately 6,000 objects and artworks from the local area. Maintained by Georges River Council, Hurstville Museum & Gallery is dedicated to preserving the unique history of the St George region, as well as working with local multicultural communities to develop exciting art and history exhibitions and public programs (Museums & Galleries of NSW).



Figure 7.6. Hurstville Museum & Gallery in MacMahon Street

(Source: Image from “Hurstville Museum & Gallery”, by Museums & Galleries of NSW, n.d. (<https://mgnsw.org.au/organisations/hurstville-museum-gallery/>)).

A recently-launched exhibition at Museum & Gallery in particular exemplifies how cultural infrastructure has been able to publicly showcase the contribution of immigrants. The exhibition, titled *Our Journeys | Our Stories* (30 April – 24 July 2022), was an official public exhibition to celebrate the significance of local Chinese migration from the 19th century through to the 2000s and the ongoing contribution of the Chinese community to the Georges River area (Georges River Council, 2022). In the words of Claire Baddeley, who is the acting coordinator for Cultural Services in the Georges River Council, in her interview with the SBS news:

The whole aim of the exhibition was to explore the history of Chinese migration to the Georges River area in the southeast of Sydney. Migrants from China have come not only from mainland China but from Taiwan and Hong Kong. So, the exhibition explores the many stories and experiences of Chinese migrants to the area. When the exhibition was being developed, we wanted to combine both historical material and the work of contemporary Chinese Australian artists. (Baddeley, 2022)

The exhibition showcased a collection of rare historical items that hold particular significance to Chinese migrants and their families. These included items such as a 1950s wedding collar, a 1970s Chinese opera headpiece, and traditional Chinese costumes for a Lion Dance performance. There were also a number of significant items and documents from private collections on display to share personal stories. For example, the exhibition showed documents relating to Susan Lee Moon Hing's migration to Australia from Hong Kong in the 1950s. Items including her passport, ship tickets, the granted visa letter, vaccination papers, and other documents for migration were displayed. The combination of these historical materials not only provided insight into the complex processes that were part of an individual's migration experience at that time, but also reflects the broader experience of many Chinese migrants to Australia at that time.

Finally, six internationally renowned Australian Chinese artists: Lindy Lee, Guan Wei, Cindy Yuen-Zhe Chen, Xiao Lu, Jason Phu and Guo Jian were invited to display their artworks, which were based on their personal interpretations of historical documents and imagery selected from local Chinese history (Georges River Council, 2022). A notable piece was Guan Wei's artwork named '*Georges River*' (see Figure 7.7). Guan Wei was born in 1957 in Beijing, China, and

migrated to Australia in 1990 after undertaking a residency at the Tasmanian School of Art in Hobart. With his personal experience of migration, Wei “has a distinctive style and personal language of symbols and metaphors that explore his Chinese cultural heritage and many influences of the West” (Museum of Contemporary Art Australia). The ‘*Georges River*’ project was inspired by the story of Chinese migrant Tiy Sing. From the documents provided by the Georges River Council from the earliest Chinese migrants living in the region, Wei was intent on a design that would credit Chinese history in the local area whilst simultaneously applying his own interpretation and emotional response to the materials. In his words, “I selected 12 images from the documents and created this Chinese-styled panel screen. The screen itself is a historical reflection on the change of time and space” (Georges River Council, 2022).

The ‘*Georges River*’ artwork made reference to many symbols, including: Dolls Point, where the Chinese migrants arrived in Australia by boat; the map shape representing ‘the southern land’ where the migrants started farming in the market gardens; depictions of two birds and First Nations people to represent the land of Australia; and finally, on the back of the folding screen, a sign of the farm extracted from historical images, with the name of the migrant Tiy Sing, whose documents were provided as part of the George River Council's initiative, printed on it. Here, the Chinese migrant’s experience has been interpreted through the language of art within a more meaningful expression.

I think the meaning behind this artwork is to understand history. Through this, now and in the future, we can show people how the Chinese community has evolved. Only through understanding history, you are able to progress into the future, shaping the path for future development. What I want to express here is the vision where people living here can be loving and tolerant with each other, and to collaboratively create a wonderful and harmonious society. This is the key idea of this artwork. (Wei, 2022)

Notable, too, are the diverse backgrounds of the exhibiting Australian Chinese artists. Lindy Lee's family, for example, was among the first generations of Chinese immigrants who arrived under the White Australia Policy, and Cindy Chen is a Malaysian Chinese immigrant who moved to Australia with her family when she was four years old. Through these artworks, the artists from various migration experiences interpret history, places, and people in their own way.



Figure 7.7. Artwork 'Georges River' created by Guan Wei

(Source: Photo from George River Council, 2021)

The exhibition highlighted a variety of Chinese migrant experiences and all of these different stories, both from local Chinese residents from the Georges River area and the artists involved, demonstrate how incredibly diverse, unique, and multifaceted each Chinese Australian's identity truly is. More importantly, it has officially and publicly given honour and a true sense of belonging to Chinese Australians, as well as convey a close communication between local Chinese immigrants, the George River Council, residents, and visitors. As Georges River Mayor Kevin Greene said, "while the local Chinese community has evolved significantly in the past two centuries, their contribution and significance in building the culture and reputation in Sydney's south remains constant" (The National Tribune, 2021).

The Hurstville Museum & Gallery has received two significant grants that have made this exhibition possible. Create NSW provided funding to commission contemporary Chinese-Australian artists to create works for inclusion in the exhibition. The National Foundation for Australia-China Relations had also provided a grant to support the exhibition's catalogue, bilingual translations and oral history online platforms. Both grants reflect the political perspective of recognising and involving Chinese history in the local community. Additionally, it also provided a demonstrative opportunity to strengthen understanding and promote connections between Australia and China.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of Hurstville's management of ethnic and racial diversity through local government policies, revealing critical insights into the complexities of urban planning in multicultural contexts. Here are the key findings from this analysis.

Firstly, immigration policies that are set at the national scale play a significant role in establishing multiculturalism as a demographic reality to which planning frameworks at the regional and local levels should respond. In Australia's federal system, this dynamic is particularly pronounced. Local governments, such as in Hurstville, find themselves navigating a delicate balance. On one hand, they are governed by the overarching narrative of national policies. On the other, they are driven by the immediate, diverse needs of their local populations. This indicates top-down influence necessitates a bottom-up response and calls for a paradigm shift in how we view urban planning – not as a linear process from policy to practice but as a cyclical dialogue between the global and the local, the general and the specific.

Secondly, the efforts of Georges River Council in Hurstville, spanning economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions, provide a template for what inclusivity in urban planning should entail (see Table 7.2).

Table 7.2 Summary of key planning interventions

Planning interventions	Details and Comments
Economic	The council cooperates with the Local Business Chamber and provides funding to support local businesses. However, there is no officialised consideration for the ethnic economy in the current policy frameworks.
Spatial	The Urban Design Strategy did not acknowledge the existing dominant ethnic cultures in its design. Current planning schemes provide city-wide

	design guidelines and no specific policies have been developed for the highly concentrated Chinese-themed commercial street.
Social	The council established a Multicultural Advisory Committee, as well as launching a series of social facilities for immigrants to get involved in the community. These have been identified as quite useful for social planning.
Cultural	The council assisted in the organisation of ethnic festivals to celebrate diversity and also operates a local museum and gallery to help residents learn about history through displays, historic artefacts, and the language of art. These initiatives are effective ways to recognise the presence of immigrants and assist with social integration.
Political	More councillors from ethnic backgrounds that mirror the dominant ethnic demographic are elected to be involved in the political structure.

(Source: by the author)

In terms of spatial planning, Hurstville's Urban Design Strategy lacks a departure from generic city-wide guidelines to genuinely embrace and reflect the unique cultural identities in its spatial planning. However, insights gathered from interviews with Council staff reveal a nuanced understanding of this issue. The integration of Chinese identity and culture into urban policy is not merely a matter of policy formulation by the Council. It critically depends on the depth and quality of community involvement in the policy-making process. While the Council acknowledges the presence and significance of these cultural identities, there seems to be a reluctance to address these cultural aspects publicly due to political sensitivities. This highlights a gap between recognizing cultural diversity and actively incorporating it into public policies and urban design strategies. A promising solution lies in the establishment of site-specific policies which would allow ethnic communities to work with city officials to incorporate cultural expressions in design and planning matters, particularly in areas with high levels of immigrant activity, like streetscapes, architectural façades, storefront decorations, sidewalk spaces, signage, street vendors, public arts, etc.

Social planning in Hurstville, exemplified by the establishment of the Multicultural Advisory Committee and social facilities for immigrants, points towards the efficacy of participatory approaches in urban planning. This highlights a multicultural design strategy should facilitate social integration, providing platforms for diverse groups to engage, interact, and contribute to the community fabric. Cultural initiatives like ethnic festivals and local museums play a vital role in fostering a sense of belonging and recognition among immigrant populations. These should be central to any urban planning strategy aimed at embracing multiculturalism, as they contribute significantly to social integration and community cohesion. Furthermore, the political representation of diverse ethnic groups in local governance not only enriches the decision-making process but also ensures that planning strategies are reflective of and responsive to the community's demographic composition.

In conclusion, the lessons drawn from Hurstville's approach to urban planning in a multicultural setting call for a paradigm shift towards more adaptive, inclusive, and participatory strategies. While there is no universal 'standard' for what constitutes a 'good' design strategy, the insights gained suggest a more effective approach would be one that is sensitive to the delicate balance between national directives and local realities, values community engagement, and prioritizes cultural recognition and integration.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

The concluding chapter of this thesis has two main objectives. Firstly, it provides a summary of the research project and highlights its key findings, answering the research questions that were posed at the beginning of the thesis. Secondly, the discussion sections aim to link the main findings to the broader theoretical framework and contextualise them within the larger field of study, thereby highlighting the contributions made by this research and offering suggestions for future research.

8.1 Overview of Research Project and Key Findings

The field of immigration and urban studies has demonstrated the substantial impact that the global movement of people has on urban form and city life. The increasing presence of immigrant populations in suburban areas has given rise to the formation of ethnoburbs, where migrant groups actively adapt and shape the local context (Ip, 2005; Li, 2017b; Robertson et al., 2022; Zhuang & Chen, 2017). Despite this trend, few studies have specifically explored the place-making practices that define the formation of ethnoburbs. This thesis aimed to address this gap by examining spatial practices of ethnic communities and their place-making outcomes embedded in the built environment. Utilizing a method referred to as ‘spatial ethnography’ (Arijit, 2011), this research combines a spatial analytical lens with ethnographic methods. The empirical studies are conducted in Hurstville, Sydney, a suburb noted for its significant concentration of ethnic Chinese in Australia.

The key research questions and corresponding findings were follows:

1) How has Hurstville become a Chinese ethnoburb? How do the changes in the spatial fabric of Hurstville relate to the wider canvas of changes in Australian urbanism and society?

To gain a clear and contextual understanding of how Hurstville evolved into a Chinese ethnoburb from the 1850s to the present day, and how accelerated migration impacted the

transformation of its urban spaces, a comprehensive analysis of Hurstville's demographic, social, cultural, and built environment shifts was conducted in Chapter 4.

This analysis situated Hurstville within the context of its geographic location in Sydney and linked its historical evolution to the broader changes in Australia's immigration policy and Sydney's social changes. It found that since the 1990s, Hurstville has experienced a significant influx of Chinese migrants, leading to the transformation of the suburb from a formerly White-dominated suburb to a thriving Chinese community. This shift was analysed through the use of demographic data (as shown in Figures 4.2 and 4.3) and was found to be exacerbated by a local economic crisis, specifically the establishment of the Westfield shopping centre. The Chinese migration wave took advantage of low rental prices along Forest Road, leading to the gradual transformation of the streetscape with the proliferation of ethnic Chinese businesses.

Moreover, the changing waves of Chinese migration in Hurstville, shifting from Cantonese-speaking migrants from Hong Kong and Southern China in the 1990s to the more affluent and higher educational background, Mandarin-speaking migrants from Northern China in the 2000s, represent not just a change in origin and language but a profound evolution in the cultural and socio-economic landscape of Hurstville. Further, the rationale behind Chinese migrants' preference for Hurstville was explored, reasons such as connectivity to public transportation, affordability, and educational opportunities – hint at a deeper, perhaps subconscious, affinity for spaces that offer both cultural familiarity and socioeconomic opportunities. This preference underscores the adaptive strategies of migrants in striking a balance between the comfort of ethnic enclaves and the broader Australian society.

The thesis then examined the transformation of Hurstville's urban landscape influenced by the influx of Chinese immigrants and juxtaposing Hurstville with Sydney's Haymarket Chinatown. It found that the absence of traditional ethnic architectural symbols in Hurstville – such as red lanterns or pagodas (commonly seen in Chinatown) – is not a mere architectural omission. Rather, it signifies a nuanced expression of ethnic identity, where recent immigrants have engaged in a subtler form of cultural expression within their new urban context. This phenomenon also speaks to the differing approaches of urban governance in promoting ethnic character, highlighting a dynamic interplay between cultural expression and urban policy.

These insights extend and enrich Li's (1998) concept of the ethnoburb, shedding light on the intricate relationship between the built environment and cultural identity. This research thus moves beyond a descriptive account of architectural differences, offering a profound understanding of how immigrants navigate and negotiate their cultural identity within new urban spaces. It underscores the evolving nature of ethnoburbs as sites of cultural expression and adaptation, offering a critical perspective on the interplay between migration, urban space, and cultural identity in contemporary Australia.

2) How do the changes of the 'local street' relate to concepts such as globalisation, migration, and complex flows of identity? How do ethnic entrepreneurs inhabit and transform the commercial street to accommodate their cultural practices and complex set of commercial uses?

Building upon previous research on the role commercial street in representing the neighbourhood's cultural diversity (Collins & Kunz, 2010; Hall, 2012, 2015b; Zukin et al., 2015), the research further explore Hurstville's Forest Road in stimulating the ethnic economy and forming the urban character of the local suburb. The results of a comprehensive survey of Forest Road businesses have provided valuable insights into the area's diverse retail landscape and the unique commercial forms it encompasses. The analysis found that, firstly, services, food and drink, grocery, and beauty businesses are a significant proportion of the street's businesses, indicating their economic success within the immigrant community. Secondly, by visualizing the spatial distribution of different business types, it uncovered that different parts of Forest Road are characterised by distinct types of businesses, revealing the evolution and growth pattern of the area's commercial fabric. Thirdly, it found that the majority of small businesses are owned and operated by independent immigrant proprietors, with China being the predominant country of origin. This highlights Forest Road's significance as a hub for immigrant entrepreneurship and raises the potential issue of cultural or language barriers within the community due to the high concentration of proprietors from a single country. This also indicates the necessity and importance of urban governance intervention in mitigating the challenges brought by the globalization and large influx of immigrants (which I detailed discussed in Chapter 7).

Further, a detailed examination of the business composition along Forest Road reveals the global impact on the dynamic nature of local businesses in Hurstville. While some businesses are able to sustain longevity, others face challenges that are influenced by shifting cultural, social and economic factors. This high turnover rate among businesses underscores the fluidity of the local commercial environment with the changing needs of the demographic. Additionally, the findings also highlight the emergence of two specific business forms, namely *daigou* shops and private education schools (see section 5.2.3), that have emerged to cater to the unique cultural and economic characteristics of the Chinese immigrant community. It reflects the capacity of ethnic retail to shape the local economy and its ability to interact with the broader society. It also foreshadows changes in the use of the street and the corresponding visibility of ethnic and cultural diversity in the commercial fabric.

The research delved deeper to investigate the spatiality of ethnic commercial culture and the complex set of commercial uses associated with immigrants' economic activities. To achieve this, a two-step analysis was undertaken. The first step involved an examination of the building fabric, architectural styles, and urban form of the street to gain an understanding of the area's urban morphology. Building on this foundation, it then conducted a fine-grained spatial analysis, visually illustrating any modifications or adaptations made to the existing buildings to reflect cultural and ethnic retail practices and identity. The examination resulted in several key findings on the impact of immigrant businesses on urban space and how they physically transform the suburb.

Firstly, it was found that the immigration and establishment of ethnic businesses have brought about significant changes to the overall character and spatial format of the suburb, resulting in a more diverse and culturally vibrant urban landscape. Through the examination of the interaction between business practices and building forms (as shown in Figure 5.12), it showcased a diverse array of commercial activity embedded within a range of different vernacular architectural styles, many of which were built during the inter-war development era. This dynamic interplay of diverse elements has created a hybrid urbanism that exemplifies the importance in recognising the role immigration and ethnic businesses have played in shaping the built environment, as these changes have had a profound impact on the community's sense of place and spatial identity.

Secondly, the spatial analysis that focussed on the forms of visual displays on the independent shops' exteriors highlighted the important role of shop signs in representing and negotiating cultural identity, promoting business communication, and creating a sense of familiarity and belonging for immigrants in their new neighbourhood. The site observation and interview data with business owners found that the elements of store name, colour, material, linguistic markings, as well as other visual signscapes have been utilised by the business owners to express their cultural identity and contribute to the complex negotiation of cultural representation within the built environment.

Thirdly, the analysis demonstrated that migrant businesses transform the suburb by generating new types of businesses and services to the benefit of economic development. For example, the establishment of global franchise stores, as noted in Chapter 6, has gentrified the commercial landscape of the area. These businesses offer unique business styles and consumption experiences, showcasing the cultural capital that immigrant entrepreneurs bring to the urban commercial environment. Through their social and economic contributions, immigrants play a vital role in transforming the urban commercial landscape and enhancing its cultural richness.

3) How are immigrant entrepreneurs' spatial practices related to the expression of cultural identity in everyday consumption landscapes? How does this express itself through the design, food offering, and culture of eating that is often associated with the ethnic economy?

To understand the relationship between immigrant entrepreneurs' spatial practices and the expression of ethnic and cultural identity in everyday consumption landscapes, it is important to note the role of architectural elements from both the exterior and interior of local streets as a platform for expressing the imaginations of certain ethnicities and identities. These practices include the way they design, decorate, and arrange their commercial spaces, the products and services they offer, and how they interact with customers.

Firstly, through the spatial analysis of the streetscape in Chapter 5, it was found that the increased visibility and representation of ethnic and cultural diversity in the commercial fabric

was achieved through the modification of building façades, as the façades of commercial buildings were often covered with Chinese decorative details (as shown in Figures 5.14, 5.15, and 5.16).

In Chapter 6, a thorough ethnographic examination of four ethnic restaurants located along Forest Road revealed that the selected shop interiors were not simply commercial establishments operated by immigrant entrepreneurs, but rather they were spatial domains that have been thoughtfully designed to represent cultural and ethnic identity and played a crucial role in shaping the cultural landscape. The interview data with business owners and in-store observations further solidified that the design of ethnic restaurants incorporated ethnic elements that reflected the culture of the immigrant community, such as through specific furniture, signage, or décor choices. The menus featured dishes and ingredients that are characteristic of the community's cuisine. Additionally, the cultural elements associated with dining, such as table manners, serving rituals, and social customs, also reflected the immigrant community's cultural identity and helped to establish a sense of familiar place that was far away from their motherland. These findings revealed the ways immigrants produced an ethnic space through spatial practices and material culture and highlighted the multi-sensory experience that was manifested with the creation of a unique and culturally significant atmosphere.

More significantly, the analysis of the spatial formation and cultural practices of Hurstville's ethnic restaurants demonstrates the active involvement of various stakeholders in shaping and interpreting the area's culinary identity. In particular, it emphasised the important role that food bloggers and social media play in contributing to the dissemination of Hurstville's ethnic commercial culture and promoting its acceptance by wider society.

4) How do local governments respond to the presence of a very concentrated, even homogeneous, set of migrant ethnic identities? How are policies, strategies, organisations, events, arts and media 'institutionally embedded' (or not) within the urban governance framework?

In answering this question, the research found that the response of local governments when grappling with ethnic and racial diversity was focussed on five aspects of planning

interventions, namely: economic, social, cultural, political, and spatial issues. It also indicated that local governments took steps to regulate and manage the changing demographic characteristics of the suburb, such as through zoning and land use policies, immigration and cultural diversity programs, or initiatives aimed at promoting cultural integration.

It was also found that the response of local governments to the presence of homogeneous ethnic communities depended on numerous complex and interrelated factors, including the nature of the community itself, the broader social, political, and economic context, larger-scale state and federal policies, and the views and attitudes of local residents and stakeholders.

The empirical examination of Hurstville local council's urban framework showed that policies, strategies, organisations, events, arts, and media were institutionally embedded within the urban governance framework through the creation of formal and informal regulations, norms, and procedures that governed their operation and defined their relationships with other urban entities. Urban planning policies and development strategies (for example: *Hurstville City Centre Urban Design Strategy*) in particular served as guiding principles for decision-making and helped sustain a consistent and deliberate direction for city development. Organisations played a vital role in executing these policies and strategies by coordinating stakeholders, resources, and services, and representing the diverse interests of the city. Events, arts, and media also brought members of the community together, creating opportunities for public engagement and interaction, and helped to shape the cultural identity of the suburb. In this way, the local council played a crucial role in building community and promoting a sense of place. All of these interacting elements worked together to shape the character of Hurstville and ensure that it is functioning effectively.

8.2 Discussion 1: Chinatown, the Ethnic Enclave, and the Ethnoburb

In this thesis, I have sought to explore the suburban ethnic place-making practices in the spatial formation of immigrant communities, particularly through the lens of Hurstville, a suburb that exemplifies the emerging phenomenon of the ethnoburb. Unlike the traditional Chinatown in Sydney, which has been widely studied on its transformation and changing landscape (Anderson et al., 2019; Ang, 2016; Burnley, 2002), Sydney's Chinese suburbs are yet to

undergo comprehensive scholarly analysis (Robertson et al., 2022). Hurstville is a unique case to represent ‘spatial reconfiguration of ethnic Chinese’ (Gao-Miles, 2017) in suburban context, as it contains the highest urban Chinese concentration in Australia.

Through the analysis of the suburb’s urban landscape transformation, a striking aspect of Hurstville, in contrast to the stereotypical Chinatown, is the absence of traditional Chinese architectural motifs such as pagodas or ceremonial arches. This observation led me to further explore the suburb through a spatial lens, in order to understand how immigrant settlers transform existing spaces, in this case, those reflecting Art Deco and Functionalist styles from the inter-war period, to reflect their cultural identities while maintaining the original architectural integrity.

This phenomenon raises intriguing questions about the interplay between cultural identity and architectural expression. Why, for instance, does Hurstville eschew the more obvious markers of ‘Chineseness’? Is this a conscious effort to assimilate or a new form of cultural expression that challenges our traditional notions of ethnic enclaves? Through a detailed spatial analysis of the built fabric, the research found that new immigrants have used these spaces in deeply culturally-inflected ways. They have transformed building exteriors and interiors through visual markings (signs, decorations, posters, etc.), layout, performances, and activities (see detailed analysis in Chapter 5 and 6). In this regard, the visual landscape of the suburb has changed with new cultural practices inscribed into the old physical setting.

Furthermore, the evolution of Hurstville into a Chinese ethnoburb tells a broader story about the changing patterns of immigration and suburbanization in Australia. This evolution is not merely a demographic shift but a complex interplay of global, national, and local influences, reflecting wider trends in migration, urban development, and cultural adaptation. In this way, this research extends the literature on ethnoburbs by offering a comprehensive, place-based study that illustrates the spatial formation of ethnic Chinese within the Australian context. The suburb’s transformation, marked by a blend of cultural preservation and adaptation within an existing urban fabric, represents a significant shift in how we understand immigrant settlement pattern beyond the traditional model of ethnic enclave.

Future research should build upon this study by using Hurstville as a reference point to compare and contrast with other ethnoburbs, both within Australia and internationally. Such comparative studies could uncover universal patterns or unique characteristics specific to different contexts, further enriching our understanding of the dynamics of suburban ethnic communities. Moreover, this research invites urban planners and policymakers to reconsider traditional approaches to cultural space and community development, acknowledging the evolving nature of ethnoburb in the context of global migration and urban change.

8.3 Discussion 2: The Spatial Practices of Migrants

In this thesis, I have endeavored to elucidate the complex interplay between migrants and the urban landscapes they inhabit, particularly within the ethnoburb phenomenon. This endeavor aims to fill a gap in ethnic business and ethnic economy literature by investigating the spatial practices of ethnic entrepreneurs and argued the importance of the spatiality of ethnic business in shaping ethnic spaces. This investigation, employing a dual lens examining both the public realm of the street and the private sphere of individual shops. This bifocal approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of spatial scale, capturing the intimate nuances of customized interiors and the broader, community-driven transformations of street spaces.

Here, spatial practices refers to the shop owners who have the power to appropriate the space – and their cultural networks and relationships with the buildings and lived spaces – as well as the customers, who are inhabitants of the city, and their embodied spatial experience within the affective space and its elicited sensations. It then reproduced two forms of spatial formation.

First, the diverse composition of ethnic businesses along the street demonstrated the ability of westernised spaces to accommodate certain habitus of immigrants to maintain their original lifestyle. Through this process, the commercial street has become recognisable and identifiable because of its visual and spatial difference. This is exemplified by the typography and calligraphy seen in Hurstville's Forest Road area – the signs, shop windows, colours, linguistic markings, and storefronts, all of which reflect the 'alterity' brought on and produced by migrant groups within the space of the city. It revealed how the representational practices undertaken are embedded in the static modalities of traditional architectural practices which "provided a

strong commercial vernacular that is generated by individual shops and businesses” (Anderson et al., 2019, p. 59).

Second, this research further elucidates the pivotal role of food spaces in urban ethnic landscapes, echoing scholarly assertions that ethnic cuisine and dining experiences can forge distinct ethnic spaces within cities (Duruz & Khoo, 2015; Warde, 1997; Warde & Martens, 2009). In this vein, this study considered ethnic entrepreneurs as place-makers in the production of individual shop spaces. It particularly focuses on how the amalgamation of material culture — represented by ornaments and objects — intertwines with sensory and bodily practices, such as music, gestures, and culinary aromas, to craft spaces that straddle the realms of the ‘here’ and ‘there’. This approach emphasized these spaces as microcosms of cultural and capital exchange, where the tangible (material culture) and the intangible (sensory experiences) blend to create a unique atmosphere that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. This argued the importance to view the ethnic spaces not merely as static, culturally homogenous zones, but as dynamic, fluid arenas where identity, tradition, and modernity coalesce to form a complex and multicultural site.

Moreover, this research also strength the impact of corporate retail capital on gentrification. It highlights the evolving commercial landscape where small, global franchise business models are increasingly prevalent, actively engaging in and promoting the use of advanced digital platforms and social media tools, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Uber Eats, as well as leveraging digital marketing strategies through collaborations with food bloggers. This trend marks a distinct shift from the traditional perspectives in ethnic business and economy theories, which often portray ethnic businesses as primarily dependent on a co-ethnic customer base (Parzer & Kwok, 2013).

In exploring these dynamics, the study contributes both the ethnic economy and ethnoburb literature. It extends the understanding of how ethnic business influence the transformation of neighbourhoods, offering insights into the motives and methods by which ethnic entrepreneurs shaping local spaces. Such insights are crucial for re-envisioning the interaction between migrants and urban spaces in the context of globalization. This thesis also underscores the

importance of recognizing and valuing the everyday food spaces that often go unnoticed yet play a pivotal role in the social and economic fabric of urban areas.

8.4 Discussion 3: Migrant Urbanism: Governance with Urban Diversity

Much of this thesis has been concerned with investigating the types of spaces produced by immigrants, narrating and mapping these spaces to understand the role those spatial practitioners may have in producing places that are more suited to these new populations. However, urbanism should not only be understood via buildings and spaces but should also integrate other key practices that are enacted within the city. Social networking, economic development, policy-making and organisation are all included in the practices that accommodate the material complexities of migrant lives. Therefore, another aspect of this research was to examine urban governance practices (as discussed in Chapter 6). By doing this, the thesis addressed how urban planning engages with ethnic and cultural diversity and how diversity is understood, operationalized and managed at different scales of policy frameworks.

To respond the presence of a very concentrated, even homogeneous, set of migrant ethnic identities, the local government of Hurstville has completed a series of planning interventions that pertain to aspects of economic, social, cultural, spatial and political planning. These interventions included ways of formulating policy, establishing committees and organisations, holding public events and festivals, electing immigrant background councillors, and curating exhibitions. More importantly, this site is under the control not only by the local council (the George River Council) but the state government, which aims to form an integrated planning system.

The urban governance of Hurstville reveals key differences between an ethnoburb and Chinatown in terms of the political influence on urban planning. In Chinatown, the City of Sydney has intentionally attempted to inscribe 'Chineseness' into the built environment form sites with historical symbolic meanings and attract tourists. In contrast, George River Council has sensitively considered 'Chineseness' in the urban design and cannot plan or zone the suburb by the characteristics of people. The findings also addressed the difficulties and challenges of

operating a place with cultural diversity, for example, conflicts with space use and informal use of public spaces with ethnic economic activity.

At a time when cities are experiencing swift movements of people migration and critical change across all areas, it is necessary to include migrants in the imagining of our future cities and to ensure our cities are adaptable and resilient enough for the not-quite-so-new populations. The empirical findings of Hurstville governance practices offer tools and strategies to manage cultural diversity and social harmony to bond people and place. It contributes to a more sensitive model of urban governance that promotes social sustainability by going beyond the 'deficit model' of immigrants.

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Appendix: Shop survey data in 2019

		Business number	Building Units		Shop name	Function(by Unit)
North Side	Block 1	1	1		LEGO Supermarket 乐购超市	Grocery
		2			YANCHA Milktea 言茶	Food&Drink
		3			Layangyang 辣洋洋麻辣烫	Food&Drink
		4			CHI KOKO Korean food	Food&Drink
		5	2		Spicy Chengdu 老成都	Food&Drink
		6	3		Kampong boy 南洋茶餐厅	Food&Drink
		7			姜记水饺馆	Food&Drink
		8	4		蜀香坊	Food&Drink
		9	5		Nimto the invitation	Food&Drink
		10			Music on the Move	Entertainment
		11	6		Postoffice	Service
	Block 2	12	7		Tab	Entertainment
		13	8		Hurstville bottle	Food&Drink
		14	9	底层	Rokko Japanese BBQ	Food&Drink
		15		上层	永昇会计师楼 Accounting	Service
		16	10	底层	Chajia Restaurant 茶家	Food&Drink
		17			Chelsea's Patisserie	Food&Drink
		18		上层	Money 3 Fast cash	Service
		19	11		川府宴	Food&Drink

		20	12		Hairdressing	Beauty
		21	13	底层	Golden Tiger Hotel	Entertainment
		22		上层	吉香阁阁饭店	Food&Drink
	Block3	23	14	底层	St geprge's barber	Beauty
		24			香港治疗按摩中心	Service
		24		上层	万老师数学补习	Education
		25	15		石锅先生	Food&Drink
		25	16		Anna Money & Loan	Service
		26			Forest pharmacy	Service
		26	17		综合体	Mixed
		27	18		Daily Telegraph	Service
		27			惠康超级市场	Grocery
		28	19	底层	My Hung Fabric fashion	Clothing&Fashion
		28		上层	网吧	Entertainment
		29	20		SWISS Concept 手表店	Clothing&Fashion
	Block4	29	21		Lowes	Clothing&Fashion
		30	22	地面层	Chemist warehouse	Service
		30		地下	澳卖客代购店	Grocery
		31			凯信国际旅行社	Service
		31	23	地面层	ANZ Bank	Service
		32		地下	Super Orange	Grocery
		32	24		Westfield	Mixed
		33	25		St george Bank	Service
		34	26		Nab Bank	Service
		35	27		Mr. Vitamins	Service
		36	28		益兴亚洲食品	Food&Drink
		37	29		85 度 C 面包店	Food&Drink

		38	30		黑丸嫩仙草	Food&Drink
		39			富强面包店	Food&Drink
		40			面婆婆餐馆	Food&Drink
		41	31		For leased	
		42	32		鱼市场	Food&Drink
		43			中医馆	Service
		44	33		Meridian Hotel	Entertainment
		45	34		Hurstville city centre (综合体)	Mixed
	Block5	46	35		恒基国际地产	Service
		47			Gloria 歌莉娅发廊	Beauty
		48			中发粥粉面之家	Food&Drink
		49			Computer 维修	Technology
		50			中药行	Service
		51	36		海龙超级市场	Grocery
		52	37	底层	J&K 发型屋	Beauty
		53		上层	澳邮天下旅行社	Service
		54			澳宝回国礼品店	Grocery
		55	38	底层	鸿达肉铺	Food&Drink
		56		上层	水屋医美	Beauty
		57			澳力旅行社	Service
		58	39		朝记烧腊	Food&Drink
		59	40		添加福烧腊	Food&Drink
		60			合兴海鲜店铺	Food&Drink
		61			双福烧腊	Food&Drink
		62			诚兴肉店	Food&Drink
		63	41	底层	眼镜中心	Service

		64			金屋饼店	Food&Drink
		65		上层	网鱼网咖	Entertainment
		66	42	底层	凤雅堂代购店	Grocery
		67		上层	吉祥国际旅游	Service
		68	43		华英小厨	Food&Drink
	Block 6	69	44		综合体 (LI Hooker 地产)	Mixed
		70	45		利丰地产 (LI&FUNG Properties)	Service
		71	46		家家好烧腊 Golden sun BBQ	Food&Drink
		72	47		牙医诊所	Service
		73			日料店 Japanese Food	Food&Drink
		74	48	底层	Hurstville chemist 健宁西药房	Service
		75		上层	澳特回国礼品店	Grocery
		76			补课班	Education
		77	49	底层	金牌回国礼品店	Grocery
		78			启明视力 Passion eyecare	Service
		79		上层	EC 会计师楼	Service
		80			万事易律师行	Service
		81	50		医院	Service
		82	51		刘一手火锅	Food&Drink
		83	52		张振凡牙科中心	Service
		84	53		好又多超级市场	Grocery
		85	54	底层	VC Salon 经典时尚美发	Beauty
		86			建康礼品	Grocery
		87		上层	怡乐方舟音乐美术学校	Education
		88	55	底层	洋驼澳品	Grocery
		89			南区中医诊所	Service

		90			标榜发廊	Beauty
		91			见闻国际旅行社	Service
		92		上层	牙医诊所	Service
Block7		93	56	底层	Hair	Beauty
		94			Second cloth	Clothing&Fashion
		95			满记甜品	Food&Drink
		96			Korean supermarket	Grocery
		97	上层		网吧	Entertainment
		98			Indian Restaurant	Food&Drink
		99			水族馆	Service
		100	57		princess nails	Beauty
		101			Japanese style massage	Beauty
		102	58	底层	Harvin spices	Grocery
		103			VC Salon 经典时尚美发	Beauty
		104			Kentson Jewellery	Clothing&Fashion
		105		上层	同舟瑜伽	Entertainment
		106	59	底层	新疆拉面馆	Food&Drink
		107			同仁堂	Service
		108		上层	爱购回国礼品	Grocery
		109			校服店	Clothing&Fashion
		110			花の娜美容店 Hannah's beauty	Beauty
		111			飞扬国际旅行社	Service
		112	60		干洗店	Service
		113	61		东街口	Food&Drink
		114			火锅店 准备开业	Food&Drink
		115	62		Wales medical centre	Service
		116	63		TAB	Entertainment

		117	64		Bakery café	Food&Drink
		118	65		霸道酸菜鱼	Food&Drink
		119	66		Fortuna Kitchenware	Grocery
		120	67		mix: Topin 拓品数码+新街口代淘馆	Mixed
		121			SMK Eyecare 验眼中心	Service
		122	68		Orange comupter: Mobile phone & Laptop repair	Technology
		123	69		好市围居家百货五金 Hurstville homeware Hardware Centre	Grocery
		124	70		聚火烧烤	Food&Drink
		125	71		斗味儿	Food&Drink
		126	72	底层	中华百货 A&T Trading PTY	Grocery
		127		上层	Accounting Taxation & Business Service	Service
		128	73	底层	多来面馆	Food&Drink
		129		上层	音乐美术学校 Step Studio	Education
		130		底层	Food court	Food&Drink
		131		Level 1	STC Lawyers 律师事务所	Service
		132		Level 2	STC 精英补习中心	Education
	Block 8	133	74		佳风代购店	Grocery
		134			The Smith's family store	Clothing&Fashion
		135	75	底层	Bakery king Cake Shop 面包店	Food&Drink
		136		上层	中医国药行 Chinese Herbaist	Service
		137	76	底层	Dougie's grill	Food&Drink
		138		上层	理疗馆	Service
		139	77		For leased	Service
		140	78		Pawn Broker Money lent	Service
		141			Cashstop	Service

		142	79	综合体底层	Medical centre	Service
		143			COCO 奶茶	Food&Drink
		144			美容	Beauty
		145			小欢喜麻辣烫	Food&Drink
		146			港式茶餐厅	Food&Drink
		147	80		Westpac	Service
	Block 9	148	81		中国银行	Service
		149	82	底层	验眼中心 Optometrist	Service
		150		上层	迅速国际旅游	Service
		151			Dental surgeon	Service
		152	83	底层	黔味	Food&Drink
		153		上层	The income tax professionals	Service
		154	83		数码冲印	Service
		155			佳风代购店	Grocery
		156	84		闽兴肉店	Food&Drink
		157			利成食品杂货	Grocery
		158	85		金贺小食	Food&Drink
		159			金贺面包	Food&Drink
		160	86		Commonwealth bank	Service
		161			Mix: 新华书店+ 万讯通讯	Mixed
		162	87		Miss Saigon Traditional Vietnamese restaurant	Food&Drink
		163	88		Hurstville city medical centre	Service
		164	88	底层	AU choice 奥优选代购店	Grocery
		165			红富超市 Superior supermarket	Grocery
		166			经典发廊	Beauty
		167			澳诺 UGG 代购店	Grocery

		168		上层	澳洲广大国际旅游公司	Service
		169			邵老师补课班	Education
	Block 10	170	89		诚品回国精品店	Grocery
		171			地中海披萨小吃店	Food&Drink
		172			Hurstville KEBAB house	Food&Drink
		173			综合体	Mixed
		174	91	底层	家乐福超市市场	Grocery
		175		上层	阳光钢琴艺术中心	Education
		176			物理治疗中心	Service
		177	92		明人视光 Viewpoint optical	Service
		178	93		上海天同小厨	Food&Drink
		179			CAGP 房屋中介	Service
		180	94		新明茶餐厅	Food&Drink
		181	95		饺子王 Sydney dumping king	Food&Drink
		182	96		渔一小厨 The good kitchen	Food&Drink
		183	97		新天地回国精品店	Grocery
		184			HT WILLS Real Estate	Service
		185	98	底层	川越阁 Lucky Yummy	Food&Drink
		186			大碗麻辣烫	Food&Drink
		187		上层		
		188			中医皮肤科门诊 Skin Centre	Service
		189	99	底层	新世界电讯	Technology
		190			万佳地产 Alcom Property Development	Service
		191			锐奇视光中心 EYEREACH eyecare	Service
		192		上层	陈锦标会计师楼	Service
		193			骨陈中医骨伤科诊所 Chinese Medicine clinic	Service

		194	100		综合体	Mixed
		195	101		Z&Y Lighting (For lease)	Service
	Block 11	196	102		综合体 Hurstville Times Plaza	Mixed
		197	10 3	底层	乐成超市	Grocery
		198			发缘地 YING Hair Salon	Beauty
		199	10 3	上层	雅艺儿童画室 Clement Art School	Education
		200			中港驾校	Service
		201			123 Education 补习学院	Education
		202				
		203	104		欢乐点心厂小食店 Delight Dim Sim	Food&Drink
		204	105		东方天然产品 代购店	Grocery
			106		Bridgesone select Tyre& Auto	Service