

Mobile Chinatowns: the future of community in a global space of flows

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In recent urban studies literature, it has been recognised that ethnic settlements in cities have undergone significant transformations, largely as a result of the 'globalisation' process. The term *ethnoburb*, for example, has begun to be used recently in reference to new suburban Chinese settlements in North American cities (particularly Los Angeles). These settlements have proved to be quantitatively different from traditional 'Chinatowns' in a number of ways. While accepting this new model of the Chinese *ethnoburb* (Li 1998), this paper goes on to ask how these changes, resulting largely from globalisation, and the rise of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism, impact on the experience of this new space of immigration. That is, how is living and being in an ethnoburb different from living in a Chinatown?

Through the use of in-depth interview data of Chinese-Canadian residents and users of the Richmond, British Columbia Chinese ethnoburb, I argue in this paper that the fundamental experiential characteristic of the Chinese ethnoburb is one of *mobility* (Urry 2000), which results in a fundamentally different ethnic social space, characterised by the experience of movement and the ability to be 'elsewhere'. In this sense, Richmond can be seen as a 'space of flows' rather than an 'ethnic enclave'. This is illustrated through an examination of the mobilities of bodies, objects, and imaginations within the 'space' of the Richmond ethnoburb.

Introduction

In 1990, Fairchild Developments Ltd. opened Aberdeen Centre, a fifty shop Asian mall (named after Hong Kong's Aberdeen tourist district) in Richmond, a newly expanding suburban city of Greater Vancouver. At the time, it was the largest enclosed Asian retail centre in North America, but within six years another four Asian malls (President's Plaza, Parker Place, Centennial Plaza, and Yaohan Centre), larger than Aberdeen Centre, were built within sight of the original. The development of these malls crystallised the development of Richmond as a 'New Chinatown' (Kwong 1996), a Chinese enclave developed in a suburban area by (comparatively) wealthy immigrants.

This contrasts the old Chinatown of inner-city Vancouver, a historical site which was, for all intents and purposes, a legally enforced ghetto until the end of the Second World War. Vancouver's Chinatown has over a century of history behind it, and, up until recently, was the cultural, commercial, and community heart of the Chinese-Canadian community of Vancouver.

The growth of Richmond as a Chinese community has its roots in the late 1960's and early 1970's, when the Federal Government of Canada changed, over a period of five years, from a policy of biculturalism and bilingualism to multiculturalism. This began in 1967 with the introduction of a 'points' system of immigration, replacing a system that favoured Britain and France as source countries. The major step was in 1971, when the Multiculturalism Act of Canada was passed [\[1\]](#). The result of this was that Canada was to develop one of the most liberal programs of multiculturalism in the world. The last block in place was the introduction of the Business Immigration Program in 1984, which led to a large influx of Chinese ethnic migrants into Canada from Hong Kong [\[2\]](#), Taiwan, and Mainland China.

In this paper, I will make the point that not only is the development of the Richmond 'new Chinatown' a new type of Chinese immigrant community development, but that ultimately, this development is a harbinger of a fundamentally new type of social space, one in which it, and its inhabitants, are less defined in terms of concrete corporeal places, and more defined by both local and global movement and mobility. And here, I intend to demonstrate what living in such a 'space of flows' (Harvey 1989, Castells 1996) is like.

Globalisation, Transnationalism and Cosmopolitanism

The last decade has seen a flurry of academic debate on the effects of 'globalisation' on ethnic migrations, identities, and spaces. Cohen (1997) for example lists five relevant aspects of globalisation to the ethnic diaspora:

1. A world economy with quicker, denser transactions.
2. Altered flows in international migration (more contractual relationships, family visits, sojourning, as opposed to permanent settlement).
3. The development of 'global cities' that reside more in global than national roles.
4. The creation of cosmopolitan and local cultures.
5. A deterritorialisation of social identity, challenging the hegemonising nation state's claim to make an exclusive citizenship, and an increase in multiple forms of identification.

These aspects can be illustrated using the example of Chinese immigrants, whose circumstance has certainly changed over the past few decades, much of this change having to do with the globalisation of capital flows. Wong (1997) notes that for countries such as the USA, Canada, and those in Western Europe, the need to import labour through an immigration and guest-worker policy has greatly diminished, as capital now moves around the world to those countries where low cost labour exists. The result is that immigration policy has shifted towards an economic emphasis. This can be seen for example in the development in 1984 of the Business Immigration Program (BIP) of Canada in which potential immigrants, with substantial sums of money to invest in Canadian businesses (or start-up capital for a new business), are able to 'jump' the queues formed by those waiting on the merit or 'point' system. Thus, immigration has changed from being a phenomenon of the working class to those who are often highly skilled businesspersons or professionals.

The overall gist of globalisation debates has been that the nation-state in terms of political and economic regulation and control, as well as social identification and identity construction, has become less relevant:

As more processes show less regard for state boundaries - people shop internationally, work internationally, love internationally, marry internationally, research internationally, grow up and are educated internationally (that is, multi-lingually), live and think transnationally, that is, combine multiple loyalties and identities in their lives - the paradigm of societies organised with the framework of the nation-state inevitably loses contact with reality. (Beck 2000, p.80)

Alongside these claims of the increasing lack of centrality of the nation-state, there has been an intense discussion about the death of 'assimilation' theories of immigration and settlement, and the rise of 'transnationalism' and transnational identities (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992, Portez 1995, Faist 2000 for examples). These emphasise the emergence of a social process in which migrants establish social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders:

Immigrants are understood to be transmigrants when they develop and maintain multiple relations - familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political - that span borders (Glick Schiller et al. 1992: ix.)

Transnationals are thus those who are able (using modern communications and transport systems) to effectively 'exist' in two or more countries at the same time: their country of origin, their host country of emigration, and perhaps even the diasporic culture to which they belong. Mike Davis (2000) wrote of such an outlook in what he called the transnational Latino suburbs in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Miami. Here, immigrant workers kept in intimate contact with their home villages in Latin America, often voting on village policies, or even beauty contests, using communication technology and increased international mobility. This leads to a novel form of immigrant lifeworld:

While previous generations of immigrants from Ireland or Italy may have had similar goals, the fact that they could not go home for the weekend or negotiate with their counterparts in the village via speaker

phone as do the Ticuanense today, makes the quality and quantity of relations on the macro level quite different."(Davis 2000, p. 83).

One step further from transnationalism is the notion of 'cosmopolitanism' (Beck 2000, Hannerz 1996, Urry 2000b) or being a 'citizen of the world'. Cosmopolitans are described as 'transcending any locality' (Sassen 2000) and are characterised as mobile (in all senses of the term), aware of, and open to, other cultures, and sophisticated and savvy with regard to their own and other cultures (Urry 2000b, Beck 2000). It would seem as though there are specific groups of mobile elites (usually based in large 'world' cities) who have in many ways gone beyond the nation-state and national cultural identities.

Of course, all of these terms and concepts are hotly debated, not only in terms of definition, but also in regards to the extent to which these processes actually have developed in the 'real world', or to the extent to which these are indeed 'new' phenomena (see Ray 2002 and Kivisto 2000). Nonetheless, few deny that there have been changes, and that these changes, however sweeping they may be, have had an effect on how immigrant communities have become articulated in cities of the West. The spatial impact of immigration changes has been seen for example in the development of substantial ethnic Chinese residential concentrations in suburban areas such as Monterey Park, California (Fong 1994), New York (Lin 1998) and Richmond, British Columbia (Kay, Halseth & Johnson 1997). These 'new Chinatowns' undermine the traditional invasion-succession thesis of urban structure, and the notion of the North American city with an 'ethnic' centre and 'white' suburbs.

Spatial Articulations of Transnationalism

Certainly in regards to 'new Chinatowns', the most interesting work in recent years has been the work of Wei Li (1998), who argues that the new residential concentrations of Chinese ethnic migrants in suburban areas are not 'new Chinatowns' at all, but a fundamentally different form of ethnic cluster. Her study of the LA suburb of Monterey Park California quantitatively illustrated how this new suburban Chinese development was markedly different from Chinatowns or other classic urban ethnic concentrations. She dubbed this new form an 'ethnoburb'. The key differences between Chinatowns and ethnoburbs are illustrated in table 1 below.

Li defined an ethnoburb as: 'suburban ethnic clusters of residential areas and business districts in large metropolitan areas'. They are multi-ethnic communities in which one ethnic group has a significant concentration.

Now really, as Li points out, ethnoburbs undermine all of the assumptions of traditional invasion-succession models, and fundamental to this is that, unlike traditional inner-city enclaves, these concentrations are the results of their creator's economic strength, not of economic and social marginalisation.

	Ethnoburb	Chinatown
Location	Suburbs -Fuzzy, arbitrary boundaries	Inner city -Strictly defined, even legally reinforced
Stratification	Quite polarized	Not polarized
Economic Structure	White collar	Blue collar
Socio-economic status	Higher	Lower
Age	Younger	Older
Immigration	Recent (new generation)	Older (old generation)
Ethnicity	Multi-ethnic	Relatively homogenous
Function	'Ports of entry'	Generational Invasion/succession
Economic Links	Global -Banking -Multi-nationals	Local -Self sustaining enclave

	-Consumer goods -Diasporic	
Spatialization	Mobile -Car dominated	Self contained -Walking -Public transport

Table 1: Ethnoburbs compared to Chinatowns (Based on Li, 1998)

More importantly, I would like to draw attention to the differences I have hi-lighted in bold, namely location, ethnicity, spatialisation, and global linkages, as I think that these can be considered more fully in a qualitative manner.

But first, I would like to add some figures:

As of 1996, 35% of Richmond's population was considered 'Chinese as a visible minority'.

The same year, Over 50 000 'single ethnic origin' Chinese lived in Richmond, from an almost negligible amount before 1980. This is a massive movement of people which does not even account for Asian immigration to the rest of the Vancouver area, which between 1993 and 2000 apparently amounted to over 230 000.

Between 1991 and 1996, 58% of Richmond's population as a whole moved house (35% of those from another country) [\[3\]](#).

Given what Table 1 above suggests: fuzzy, arbitrary boundaries, multi-ethnicity, global links, and car dominated mobility, and statistics which suggest massive movements of people not only from outside Canada into Richmond, but within Richmond itself, it is hard to envision Richmond as an 'ethnic enclave' in any traditional sense of the term. My point here is that this shift to suburban ethnoburbs is more than just merely shifting an ethnic enclave from one area of the city to another. What has developed is a fundamentally new kind of ethnic space, a scape of flows more than an actual place in geography, whose defining characteristic is its *mobility*.

What do I mean by mobility?

Globalisation pushes people, goods information and images further distances, more frequently and at higher volumes than ever before. We might locate modernism as an epoch which tended to locate identities, people, and activities within particular spaces and boundaries, emphasising concepts of fixed and stable identities, such as the idea of exclusive national citizenship (and even the planning ideals of separation of land uses). We can perhaps see in the post-modern a preoccupation with a kind of subject mobility, hybridized identities, transnationalism, and nomadic subjects (Cresswell 2001; Urry 2000a, 2000b).

It is the combination of corporeal and cognitive mobility ('both being here and there at the same time' Urry 2000b, p.186) which increasingly characterises our existence. The act of moving is prevalent whether commuting by car or air, taking holidays, or exposure to elsewhere in media consumption; for many of us, our lives have become inseparable from the experience of travel.

Yet it would seem that in academic study, moving is often still seen as the 'dead time' between leaving point a and arriving at point b. However, the act of moving, as both Cresswell and Urry note, is itself a socially significant and meaning-filled exercise. Thus, Urry (2000a; 2000b) goes so far as to argue for an end to the concept of 'the social as society' in favour of the 'social as mobility', a sociology:

Concerned with the diverse mobilities of peoples, objects, images, information and wastes; and of the complex interdependencies between, and social consequences of, these mobilities. (Urry 2000b, p.185).

It is within this assertion that mobility in many forms is becoming the realm of everyday life and the experience of space that I would like to examine the ethnoburb of Richmond. I will thereby partly describe how such abstract theory is manifested on the ground and in the lives of 'real' people. For this, I am relying on a series of in-depth interviews (and some supplementary media analysis) of Chinese Canadians (all under 40) conducted in late 1999 in the Vancouver area.

Richmond: Life in a space of flows

Here, I will illustrate how the ethnoburb is a landscape of mobility using John Urry's (2000a) distinctions of corporeal travel, mobilities of objects, and imaginative mobilities. But first I would like to start with a few introductions:

Simon: Because there are actually many reasons why people may start off in Richmond and maybe move on to other cities. For example in our case, my dad has always liked this area, the Shaugnessey area, and initially we moved to Richmond because a friend of his told him that Richmond would be a good place to start, because it's really convenient, you know, for Chinese, it's really convenient. As you have already seen, many Chinese stores and there's already many Chinese people in Richmond so it's easier to meet your friends or whatever right. So we start there but my dad has always pretty much liked this area. After we'd pretty much settled in we made a move.

Simon is (or was) a 22 year old university business student, born in Hong Kong and living in Canada since he was about 13. His father, perhaps not an astronaut, but does fly to Hong Kong seemingly on a weekly basis. Simon himself spends every summer in Hong Kong, lives in Shaugnessey (an exclusive suburb of inner Vancouver) and drives almost every afternoon to the Asian malls of Richmond to hang out with his friends. He is looking to perhaps move to Hong Kong after completing his degree.

David: The new Chinese community - and I'm referring to that within the last 7 years - they directly went in Richmond without stopping over to Chinatown. They shop in Richmond; they do everything in Richmond. So there's two communities sort of - the one that has gone through this traditionally and the one with a lot of money, with the 'Benz and the Mercedes that have gone directly to Richmond. So there's these two communities.

To contrast Simon we have David, who, born in China, is also a 22 year old university student (of geography), yet is considered an 'old generation' immigrant because he came to Canada when he was about five, first living in a clan association building in old Chinatown. He now lives on the outskirts of old Chinatown Vancouver and as the quote suggests, he never goes to Richmond. Although very much interested in preserving his Chinese identity and heritage (he speaks Chinese at home), he has only been to China once, spending several months in Taiwan, and visiting the village in which he was born in China. David has no car. After his degree, he is thinking about studying for an MA in Toronto.

I introduce these figures partly because they will be heard from a lot in the rest of this paper, and also because their lives and stories in many ways illustrate the archetypal opposites of the 'mobile subject' versus the 'traditional' immigrant, thereby personifying the differences between old Chinatown and the new Chinese ethnoburb.

Corporeal travel

Perhaps nothing better illustrates corporeal global flows better than the 'astronauts' and 'satellite kids' of Richmond. The 'astronauts' are those 'hypermobility' Chinese businessmen who establish their families and citizenship in North America (typically Vancouver, Los Angeles, Toronto or New York) to take advantage of educational opportunities for their children and/or as a haven against political instability, and maintain either businesses or employment back in the East, because of more economic opportunity (Waters 2001a, Faist 2000). The 'satellite kids' are the children of immigrant families who have been despatched to the Vancouver area while both parents have chosen to continue with their careers or

professional life in the East, while regularly dispatching money across the pacific to their unsupervised children (Waters 2001b).

Certainly, air travel and air links to Asia, are a big part of the ebb and flow of bodies in and out of Richmond, and the fact that the large Vancouver International Airport is located within the borders of Richmond has not likely hurt its development as a source of immigration from China. But there are more corporeal mobilities to Richmond than air travel. Certainly both quotes above illustrated not only the use of Richmond as a 'staging area', but indeed how mobile many newer immigrants are in this new space, moving right into the suburban Richmond, settling briefly, then often moving on to other areas throughout metropolitan Vancouver.

Our notion of ethnic enclaves as seen through television, books and University lectures is generally of a pedestrian environment: the inner-city, crowded streets, busy streets, both in terms of the sidewalks in which ethnic faces stream by, and in terms of the roads on which cars (containing commuters more often than not) steadily roll towards the suburbs. This image suits old Chinatown in inner-city Vancouver (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Old Chinatown, Vancouver

Old Chinatown is more oriented towards the sort of people who are less oriented to the car: the 'old generation', and the elderly in general, as Sally notes:

Sally: I think older people tend to go to the old Chinatown more because....maybe because of transportation, because it seems to me that it's more accessible, the old Chinatown. It seems to be more accessible because it is close to downtown so there are quite a number of buses going there and also senior people may not drive a lot compared to young people. Like people who live in Richmond are mostly new immigrants because Richmond is kind of a new residential area. I think people who live there tend to be newcomers, and so they are still at the working age, or teenagers or young students. So they usually drive to different malls because it is kind of hard to walk there. And also there isn't a lot of buses. My aunt lives in Richmond so... they

drive too. I think they are 65. They drive. If it's pretty close, it's OK for them to drive, but I don't think they would drive to Burnaby. I doubt they would drive all the way up to Vancouver or Burnaby. They drive just around Richmond

Conversely, those with cars generally do not go near Chinatown given the choice between the two enclaves. Consequently, as David suggested of the new generation: 'their use of space is very different in terms of the car'.



Figure 2: The Landscape of Richmond:

I guess the traffic is easier in Richmond. It's not that easy any more, but compared with Chinatown, because Chinatown is more pedestrian, walking around. The streets are narrow and the parking is more difficult in Chinatown. In Richmond they have a big mall and a big parking lot on the side. - Jane.

Richmond is indeed suburban, and the consequences of this suburban landscape and development are that the car dominates the spatial practice of those who use it (Figure 3). As Sally suggests above, even those who live in Richmond still drive to go anywhere. For example, since he first got a car and was legal to drive at 16, Simon has been frequenting the Richmond malls with his friends. The shopping malls themselves are close together, and this makes it easy to get a group together, drive to Richmond, park, and wander from one mall to the next, deciding where to go and what to do. Illustrated by Sally and Simon here:

Sally: So when I usually go there, I usually go with my friend who drives and usually we go out in the evening just for anything rather than like doing shopping, it's kind of different...

Usually we just... we know there are lots of karaoke in Richmond. We take karaoke for example and we know that we are going to Richmond for karaoke for sure because we like being there, and once we are there we just watch...go around and search for one. Sometimes we phone the karaoke bar and just book the room before we go. Sometimes we just go there directly and just like drop in.

Simon:and so you know we would just wander around from one mall to another, and then when we would ask each other where to go next... and you know, we would just voice out any ideas and you know, after shooting each other's ideas down we

would finally decide on one place and we would go, and it would usually be another mall or a snooker place.

Within this car-dominated culture, another major function is the vast number of restaurants, a major social space in the community, as families from all over the metropolitan area get together in Richmond restaurants for banquets, special occasions, and Dim Sum on the weekends:

*JJ: Well, you must know. Eating is probably the major thing in Chinese daily living. We can have tons of excuse of have dinner party, or have a big dinner and have everyone in the family together around - from Surrey or from Delta...
...Well, if you've got friends, or family or relatives from Taiwan, the first thing you will do is show them the nice restaurant in Richmond.*

Simon: I think it would be a good idea to take a look at some of the more traditional restaurants, because what I've missed again is that on weekends we would usually go with our parents to those traditional Chinese restaurants for lunch, dim sum [on] weekends.

Unlike old Chinatown, the experience of Chinese space in Richmond is mobile (Urry 2000). Drive there, do ('Chinese') things, and drive back to the other side of town. This behaviour mimics the 'astronauts', so-called because of the amount of time they spend in the air between Hong Kong and Vancouver. Similarly, many users of Richmond's 'new Chinatown' spend much of their time in transit on the commute from other suburbs to the Richmond malls. One can speak of the Asian malls as part of a transnational diaspora of Hong Kong and the far-East, yet they also spawn their own diaspora into the surrounding Caucasian cityscape.

And of those who live in Richmond, in a suburban landscape where 58% of the population moves house in five years, people do not know their neighbours. Their experience of friends and community occurs either in their homes, or in the Richmond malls and restaurants, after a commute in a car.

Richmond as an enclave embodies the idea of an auto-mobile civil society (Urry 2000a, p.190). Indeed Richmond would not be possible without the car, as the social interaction that occurs through restaurants, karaoke and the like all are enabled through the movement of people through their cars. This is an example of the effect of auto-mobility on community and space. The experience of Chinese space in the new enclave and among new immigrants is intensely personalised and occurring at specific points and times from home to Richmond, with no points of contact in between.

At home in such movement, the mobile ethnoburb dweller transcends distances to complete a set of activities, be it commuting in a car to Richmond, or a jet to Hong Kong, within highly fragmented moments in time. Thus travelling, and the experience of the car becomes a fundamental part of what the ethnoburb has become.

Thus, where Chinatown was about publicness, public transportation, public streets and places, apartments and population density, experienced in a more rooted situatedness of generational invasion/succession, Richmond's mobile experience is arguably more privatised, more capsulated. From homes spread throughout the metropolis, through the capsules of private automobiles, to specific places: other homes, restaurants, kareoke bars, or what have you, to encounter friends and family.

Mobilities of Objects

The same vehicles of mobility that channel people back and forth across the Pacific also bring the exchange of consumer goods from the east, into Richmond, and into the homes of its users.

While trade in itself is nothing new or earth shattering, what is different is the speed and impact of this mobility of goods, and the everyday availability of these goods among ethnoburb dwellers. Take Simon and Jane again as an example:

Simon: In reference to the tea bar, it, I think it caught on in Hong Kong in about maybe four or five years ago, instead of three or four over here. So what happened is that it caught on in Hong Kong and so some people would open up stores like that over here. And some of us, who have chosen to follow the trends in Hong Kong, or chosen to pay attention to Hong Kong, would be curious and try it out and, you know, if it works for us then we'll like it. But then again, from what I know, there are a number of Chinese immigrants who have chosen to stay away from the Hong Kong style [oh yea?] yea.

I: You mentioned that you tend to get Chinese newspapers. How about CDs, do you get those?

Jane: Yeah

I: Where do you buy them?

Jane: In Richmond. In Vancouver there are these ethnic malls, they have a lot of music stores, CD stores. It used to be harder comparing to 8 years ago, but now...

Simon is very much interwoven within this mobility of objects. His family gets Chinese magazines and newspapers delivered to his house every day (no doubt partially because his father travels to Hong Kong frequently). More importantly, he and his friends keep up with the Hong Kong trends through those magazines, which are normally no more than a day old when they reach him. This is supplemented by his consumption of other media, for example Chinese translated Japanese comic books that are also purchased in Richmond. Similarly, Jane is interwoven with a series of transplanted objects: newspapers, CD's, not to mention food and other brand names exported from the East.

But, this mobility in fact can even occur to the detriment of the Asian malls themselves, who, it would seem, often act as window-shopping areas for purchases to be made on the next visit to Hong Kong:

Jane (about Asian malls): There are a lot of them but people just go in there and walk around. They don't really shop, they don't really buy that much stuff. I don't know why. I guess they figure 'Oh, I can buy the same stuff from Hong Kong at a way lower price'...

Imaginative mobilities

This mobility of consumer objects, music, news and the like leads into what Urry (2000) calls 'imaginative mobilities' - the ability to be both here and someplace else:

The consequences of such diverse mobilities is to produce what Beck terms the growth of 'inner mobility' from which coming and going; being both here and there at the same time, has become much more globally normal (Urry 1999, p.75-76)

Many argue that this is the essence of transnationalism - having one foot in two different places. An example to illustrate this:

The last issue of the *Chinese Times*, a Vancouver-based and Vancouver Chinatown-oriented newspaper was printed in October 1992. Its demise after almost eight decades of publication, community representation and community activism can be seen as representative of larger changes occurring around it. Its readership, the 'old generation' Chinese-Canadians were slowly leaving the Chinatown area and participating in mainstream Vancouver society. One can also see the shift in power from Old Chinatown and the old generation to Richmond (the new Chinatown) and a generation of wealthier, more mobile immigrants. Lastly, it shows the effects of a more globalised media environment in which Chinese language information and media is readily available, and where migrants in diasporic communities are no longer as isolated from homelands as they once were.

The successor of the *Chinese Times*, and now the largest Chinese-language newspaper in Vancouver, the *Ming Pau Daily News* has taken over the responsibility of reporting events relevant to the Chinese community of Vancouver. *Ming Pau* is a seven year-old Hong Kong-based Newspaper chain with a global reach, and has a satellite office in Richmond. Along with *Singtao Daily*, *Ming Pau* has become one of the two large international Hong Kong-based newspaper chains in competition that have such

satellite offices throughout the Chinese diaspora. While *Ming Pau* has an advantage in the Vancouver area, for example, *Singtao* has tended to corner markets in Europe and Toronto.

The *Chinese Times* was a small, unassuming paper that reported on local, national, and some international events of interest to the Chinese community of Vancouver. Its focus was primarily local, dealing with Chinatown and Vancouver's East end in particular. By contrast, *Ming Pau* is a large, professional newspaper reporting on both local and global events (much like any other paper) with a focus on Hong Kong, as well as financial and real estate issues. Stories based on Vancouver's Chinese community are generally confined to the 'community' pages of *Ming Pau*, usually two to four pages in the first section of the paper (and the occasional English-language editorial). As a result, the vast majority of the paper is actually Hong-Kong-based material. The majority of the readership of *Ming Pau* is seen to be new migrants, particularly from Hong Kong. Similar papers exist for other nationalities, such as *World Journal* for the Taiwanese.

This example demonstrates how the orientation for media consumption in newspapers has shifted from a focus of the 'Chinese in Canada', to the centre of the Chinese diaspora (China/Hong Kong/ Taiwan) with little reference to the spatial context of the Chinese in Vancouver.

The demise of the *Chinese Times*, and the rise of *Ming Pau* in Vancouver is a metaphor for the transition from 'Chinatown' to 'ethnoburb'. It reflects a shift in orientation within the new generation vs. the old generation, and it reflects how globalisation and imaginative mobilities serve to promote a transnational outlook among the ethnoburb population. Something seen here with Simon, as he sees a lack of this kind of outlook as a problem of the old generation:

Simon: And actually I guess there's sort of a prejudice against the older generation Chinese.

I: Oh really? In what way?

Simon: We would see them as out of touch with, you know, the trends in Hong Kong. And I guess, like personally I wouldn't really consider myself totally in touch, but a lot more in touch than they are. And since we're used to living that, the Hong Kong way because we haven't been here for too long so we still remember what it's like. We would tend to try to live in that certain way.

.... Also because since they've been here for such a long time. Way back then there wasn't much of a Chinese population. They like I see that they probably had to blend in with the main population and their mentalities changed a lot when they blended in. And in my eyes, they are basically the same as any Caucasians. I mean they may look Chinese and they may speak Chinese but the way their thinking...it's basically Caucasian to us.

Once again, we can contrast Simon's view to David's, who resents the 'new generation's perceived lack of assimilation into Canadian culture:

David: ...And then I also don't like to go [to Richmond] because I can understand why non-Chinese people find it a bit awkward to go there because of the signage. Everything is in Chinese. Burger King was in Chinese. I feel somewhat uncomfortable. Just because I'm Chinese, doesn't mean that I should feel at home there.

... A lot of my friends, which again that grew up that are very Canadian, that grew up here, they wouldn't go to Richmond.

I: So you really think there is a gap between...?

David: There is a gap. Like we always make, like I say, we always make fun of those people. Oh HG's, the Hongers, or whatever.

Here we have a clash of two different views of immigration, two different 'imaginative mobilities'. David, the more 'traditional' in the sense of being more a part of the multi-cultural assimilation process, and Simon, one who still maintains everyday ties with his country of origin, who still 'lives' the culture in a way David does not.

The question becomes, is Simon's imaginative mobility something that makes him transnational or cosmopolitan? Does he operate in two different spheres of both Canadian and Hong Kong social fields?

One Canadian in terms of school and work for example, and Chinese in his consumption and leisure time in Richmond, mobile media, and his summers in Hong Kong? Does he thereby keep one foot in Hong Kong?

Perhaps, because of his mobility, his engagements with both Vancouver and Hong Kong are of a different sort. Perhaps, speculatively, it doesn't really matter where he is. He is a nomadic subject in a way that David is not. Faist (2000) argues that this is more than just a question of having 'one foot in two places' (Kivisto 2000, p.568), but more of an involvement in a 'transnational circuit', part of the international mobility of capital, goods and labour. Simon sees his business degree, and his knowledge of English and Chinese, as cultural capital which can take him anywhere in the future: Canada, the United States, any part of Asia, and beyond. In that sense he is a mobile cosmopolitan subject of the sort Hannerz (1996) and Beck (2000) are writing about: a subject beyond the nation-state. Conversely, David, who would seem to be more rooted in Canada, sees these sorts of attitudes and mobilities as threatening to his more 'rooted' situation.

Conclusion

The above examples illustrate how this shift to the suburbs is more than just transplanting an ethnic enclave from one area of the city to another, but that this shift reflects a much larger process of increasing mobility of all kinds in the postmodern world.

Chinatown was a space of *ambivalence*, the way Bauman (1991) would characterise it: a space which is neither 'in' nor 'out' of the mainstream, and where 'getting out' of the enclave was a symbol of success. Richmond by contrast, demonstrates difference (and indifference), and the power of mobility among many who dwell within it. In this sense, Richmond could be seen as less a hybrid of 'East meets West' than a transplant of the 'East in the West'. This is truly a globalised space in which mobilities of people, commodities, and imaginations comprise the culture.

Examining how such mobilities of people, commodities and imaginations coalesce in the experience of Richmond as a place by those who use it, one can see how the Richmond ethnoburb is not a finite ethnic space limited to the borders of the city of Richmond. With 35% of Richmond considered 'Chinese as a visible minority', it is not so much an 'enclave' as it is a spatial articulation of transnational circuits, or a space of flows; flows of people and objects from the nucleus of the Chinese diaspora to Richmond; flows of those same people and objects from Richmond to its own diaspora in metropolitan Vancouver. It articulates what Faist (2000) argues is a shift 'from places and essences to spaces and ties' (Faist 2000, p.239). The ties that this mobility of bodies and objects creates (or maintains) an imaginative mobility in its inhabitants that gives them potentially an outlook beyond any one, or even two nations.

Epilogue

As a last point, it is easy to get caught up in this 'optimism' of globalisation, mobility, and people who are in some sense 'beyond' the nation-state, but it has to be remembered that the places which these 'spaces' occur are still embedded within nations. As the introduction suggested, Richmond as a space would not exist the way it does without the 'Business Immigration Program' initiated by the Government of Canada. In addition, Faist (2000) makes the point that the development of transnational spaces has been the result of the ambivalence of liberal democratic nations towards immigrants:

A unique brew of experienced discrimination and greater tolerance towards multiculturalism fuels cumulative border-crossing activities in the political and economic dimensions. (Faist 2000, p.240)

There is some evidence to suggest, for example, that the 'astronaut' phenomenon is one that was as much a result of discrimination of the Canadian labour market and of contradictory Canadian Federal Government policies, as it was of a desire for immigrants to keep Asian business contacts alive (Waters

2000a). In that sense, we can see how nations and their policies still play a very influential role in even the lives of the 'hypermobile'.

As a final illustration we can see this sentiment with another interviewee, Shin, whose comments suggest that transnational mobility is the result of more dominant 'static' interpretations of culture on the part of the host society:

Shin: One thing you have to remember. When they came here... I tell you in the first place they just want to get into the mainstream but afterwards they found it is very hard. There are two reasons. One is ourself: reason because the language or the culture... burden... block you to get into the mainstream. But another reason is they feel they are forced to go back to their own identity because they are always regarded as a foreigner in the new country. Two reasons for them to go back to their old identity.

One can see this disenchantment, this desire to 'go back to their old identity' in one survey conducted by a local Chinese-oriented online newspaper, which asked its readers: 'Will you walk away from Canada when you have become a citizen?' 62.7% of respondents stated that they will, or very likely will, leave Canada once becoming a citizen [\[4\]](#).

This reflects the classic 'modernist' problem of acceptance into a national culture as illustrated by Bauman (1991). Clearly, such problems do not necessarily disappear with greater mobility, and indeed may be heightened by it. David after all, resented Simon's lack of assimilation and his imaginative mobility, while Simon resented others for being 'out of touch'. This suggests that one further area of investigation may be to examine how mobility, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism conflict and/or co-exist within more 'modernist' notions of place, assimilation, and 'rootedness'.

Kivisto (2000) for example, places a certain amount of doubt that even in transnational social spaces, place will not ultimately take precedence over more distant homelands. Whether or not in the long run this does, or does not occur is still speculation at this point, but certainly for the time being, increased mobility has created a greater array of options, and the ability, at least for some, to dwell within a space of flows.

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[1] Including the opening statement: 'All members of Canadian society are free to pursue and share their cultural heritages: their cultures and ancestral languages should be protected and enhanced.'

[2] Many of which were fleeing the uncertainty of Chinese repossession of Hong Kong in 1999.

[3] City of Richmond 'Demographic hot facts', based on the 1996 federal census of Canada.

[4] This survey, is admittedly small, and statistically unrepresentative of the larger population. But even the fact that the survey was conducted evidences a more transnational outlook, where emigration is not seen the long-term choice that perhaps it once was. This survey was conducted by 'Chinese in Vancouver' (<http://civan.hypermart.net/ind-eng.htm>) starting on 30.6.2000. The exact wording of the question was 'Will you walk away from Canada when you have become a citizen?' Responses were: 'I will leave' 24.3%, 'Very Likely to leave' 38.4%, 'No ideas' 12.4%, 'Unlikely to leave' 10.3%, 'I will stay' 14.6%.

