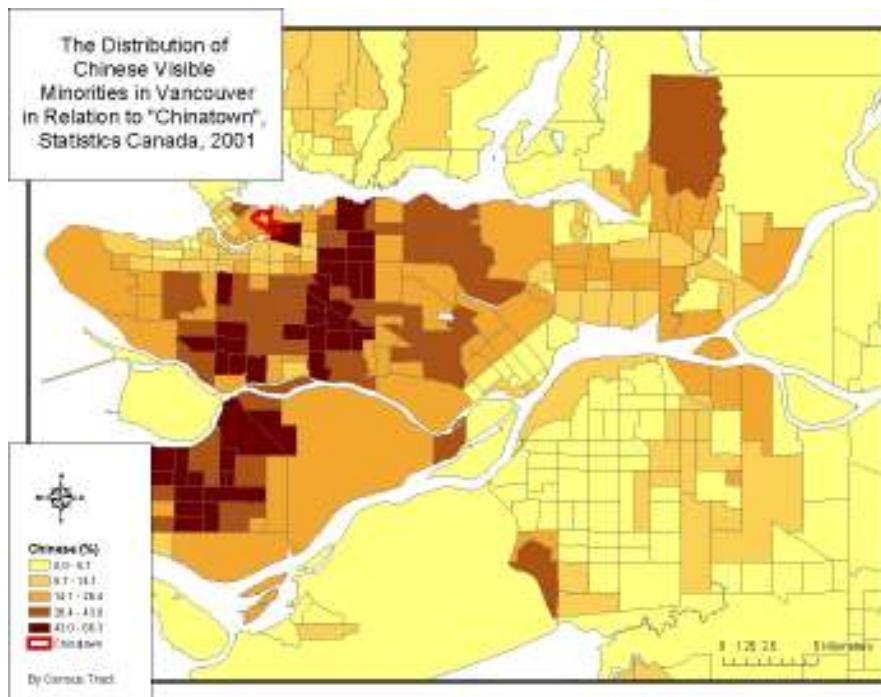


The Transformation of Vancouver's Chinatown as a Site for Tourism, Leisure and Consumption



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Methodology



- Primary research (directories, newspapers, landscapes, etc)
- Draw on the scholarship of Anderson (1991), Ng (1996), Ley (2006)
- Focus on the different actors involved in the process:
 - Producers (ethnic entrepreneurs, etc)
 - Consumers (tourists, extra-communal clientele, etc)
 - Members of Zukin's critical infrastructure (critics, commentators, etc)
 - Various levels of government (especially the municipal government)

1860-1900: The Emergence of an Ethnic Residential Enclave

- Early Chinese Immigration to BC
 - Linked to gold rush and to other economic opportunities (Canadian Pacific Railways);
 - Small settlement centered around Dupont Street.
 - Discrimination against Chinese migrants
 - Head tax, riots
 - Residential concentration
 - 1900: Area contained 2,100 Chinese migrants, and 143 commercial establishments, including 15 greengrocers, 3 rice millers, 8 manufacturing clothiers, as well as a number of tailors, lodging-house owners, general retailers, barbers, and others (Anderson, 1991)

1900-1935: Growth and Exclusion

- At the turn of the last Century, Chinatown was perceived as a place of vice and destitution
 - Prostitution, opium-smoking dens
 - 1924 - BC government passed the “Women’s and Girl’s Protection Act”, which prohibited any white women or girl from living in, working, or frequenting any restaurant, laundry, or place of business or amusement that was not “in the interest of the morals of such women and girls.”
 - Statement by a women in a BC court: “I wish to state that I know for certain that if I had not gone to work in a Chinatown café I would not be a prostitute now... The conditions in these cafes are such that if a girl wants to hold her job she can not be anything else but immoral.”
 - In 1911, there were 236 Chinese businesses in Chinatown, and in 1931, over 13,000 Chinese individuals lived in the area, a number that was to decline to 7,000 in the subsequent decade

announce its position as favoring any fair, unassisted immigration, but as being emphatically averse to proposed immigration in accordance with the contract entered into between the Salvation Army and the provincial Government; also

and... to work for the exclusion from Canada, its territories and possessions of all Asiatics by the enforcement of an act similar to the Natal Act, and for this purpose invite in this city and Province all people who believe in this prin-

a result of the influx of Government not to forget its great and trying hour essential to the welfare of effect.

Typical home of Vancouver white workingman



A warren on Carrall Street infested by 2000 Chinese



THE UNANSWERABLE ARGUMENT.

as opposed to the importation of strike-breakers and contract labor by companies, and as particularly opposed to the present influx of Japanese."

No fair-minded man can take exception to the opposition of the Council to the importation of strike-breakers and Japanese. In regard to contract laborers, that is illegal under

rights." The constitution has been made wide enough to admit to membership all men who hold that British Columbia should be a white man's country, irrespective of what their opinions on any other political subject may be. At a public meeting to be held in the Labor Hall next Monday evening a number of speakers will deliver addresses on the subject

The Montreal Herald the Ottawa job printing make up its mind what great effort it managed the following cross-eyed Trades and Labor Union white immigration, when

"The Saturday Sun" all Canada is lagged to is really an intelligent part of British Columbia that their fight for a 'white immigration is to drop of white labor of the kind that the Provincial then steps to solve the labor if the Union stepped in an Senator's idea is, of course of all over Canada, and white industrial immigrants Toronto or Montreal. If

I may say that the Union which was not the doubted the sincerity of it implied that I did. No arguments against the is other hand, I advised the of white labor under fair wages. This position Herald is wrong again in Toronto or Montreal and a matter which affected Columbia.

But to the Toronto daily press of all Canada, Columbia, putting even by the virility and intellect is doing more today for the rest of the Eastern provinces than of Vancouver.

In Vancouver the Provincial themselves in dig off some of its boiling and the Mail and Empire's but it, like the Montreal 'beast' from somewhere.

TO OUR READERS

THE artistic typography day Sunnet is not paper by both our that when we ask their improvement that it will

Although the Saturday the last farm goes to prove why that is done is that some in order to reach Saturday, and also to be for sale. As this sale is itself, it is an important source a good deal to our

The paper is printed one section going to press and Thursday. The first 7, 8, 9 and 10, the Tuesday Wednesday section of 3, 4, section of 1, 2, 13 and 26

1935-1970: Redirecting Chinatown (1)

- 1936: Jubilee Celebrations
 - Chinatown was to be put on display
 - Chinese merchants played a key role in the project
 - \$40,000 towards the ‘Chinese Carnival Village’ project - with the dual aims of promoting Chinatown to outsiders of the district, and re-fashioning the area to suit mainstream tastes and expectations
 - Local media: “Come marvel at the ‘Chinese Carnival Village’, with its beautiful treasures of the Orient, its master craftsmen and ingenious performers direct from China
 - Attractions: eighty-foot bamboo arch tower, and a nine-tier pagoda



1935-1970: Redirecting Chinatown (2)

- 1940s: Unofficial streetscape improvement project is sparked by Chinese merchants
 - Example: Neon lights
- At around the same time, City Hall imposed a bylaw that forced the separation between restaurants and drinking establishments
 - Newspaper accounts began to document a new clientele patronizing Chinatown restaurants
 - New image of Chinatown as ‘affordable’ and ‘hip’
- These developments, and other ones (including economic transformations - such as the rise of the service economy) caused a sharp increase in European origin Vancouverites in the neighbourhood
 - As a result: “The restaurant industry on Pender Street blossomed, in turn encouraging the vertical expansion of grocery stores, butcher shops, and fish markets. Import outlets, bric-a-brac, and curio stores [also] prospered along the principal thoroughfares” (Anderson 1991).

1935-1970: Redirecting Chinatown (3)

- 1947: Abolishment of the Chinese Immigration Act
 - Renewed Chinese immigration
- However, City Hall has other plans for Chinatown
 - Urban redevelopment scheme
 - Supported by funds from the federal government
 - 1967: Plans for a highway, which would have cut through the heart of Chinatown, were proposed
- Widespread mobilization by Chinese community members and by a number local actors
 - In their call for preservation, those opposed to the project highlighted the symbolic and economic value of Chinatown, as a differentiated and unique part of Vancouver
 - In the process, Chinatown became a civic asset

1970-2007: Official Recognition of Chinatown (1)

- 1971: Introduction of Canada's multiculturalism policy
- The same year, the province of BC, at the instigation of city planners in Vancouver, demarcated the Chinatown Historic Area
 - Aim: preserving and protecting the heritage and character of the Chinatown area, mostly by imposing strict regulations on changes in the streetscape
- 1994: Set up the Chinatown Historic Area Planning Committee (CHAPC) to advise the director of planning on matters relating to Chinatown
- As Ley (2004; 3) notes, “the deliberations of the CHAPC [in the years following its constitution] demonstrated a set of relations where City Hall invariably identified the priorities and the minutiae of historic designation...which may or may not have coincided with the desires of Chinatown merchants and property-owners.”
 - Example: the issue surrounding the creation of parking space

1970-2007: Official Recognition of Chinatown (2)

- Large-scale projects aiming at augmenting the tourist potential of Chinatown (through an exoticization of the area's landscape):
 - Dr. Sun Yat-Sen garden
 - Millenium gate
- Chinatown is firmly etched on the City's tourist trail
 - Chinatown is covered in most, if not all, guidebooks on Vancouver, and it is included in most comprehensive tours of the City
- However, Chinatown's retail and restaurant space have diminished during the last 20 years, and the bustling crowds on Pender Street have thinned out
 - Why?
 - Numerous explanations: Growth of Richmond; social problems in the Downtown Eastside; museumized version of Chinese culture (Ley 2004)

1970-2007: Official Recognition of Chinatown (3)



- Gentrification of Chinatown
 - Commercial
 - Residential
 - International Village (Concord Pacific)
 - Smaller scale developments (lofts, etc)
- Soon, there may be little China left in Chinatown...