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# *Strategy and Tactics: Chinese Immigrants and Diasporic Spaces in Johannesburg, South Africa**

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*Migration studies in South Africa have partially taken the spatial turn, giving some attention to questions of territoriality and spatial relationships. Recent literature has drawn on de Certeau's distinction between the strategies of the powerful and the tactics of the subordinate, revealing for example how migrants occupy hidden spaces to evade control and social hostility. Within the broad aegis of de Certeau's work, we engage the historical and contemporary spaces of the Chinese diaspora in Johannesburg. We describe a highly differentiated grouping of migrants that has deployed, and continues to deploy, varying tactics over time and across space. There are, for example, processes of clustering and processes of dispersal. There is also the use of visibility and cultural marking as a spatial tactic, as well as of invisibility and hidden spaces. We also reveal that the spatial practices of the Chinese migrants do not only relate to the strategies of the powerful but are also a response to the competition and threats posed by other subordinate individuals and groupings in society, including other Chinese migrants.*

## Introduction

Crush and McDonald opened a debate on new migrant spaces in South Africa arguing that migrant studies should not only pay attention to questions of identity and citizenship in a sociological sense but also to 'contests over the more concrete (and often mundane) daily requirements of life, and the territoriality and space that accompanies them'.[1] Over the past decade, a handful of writers have followed Crush and McDonald in spatialising migrant studies – Simone, for example, added spatial texture to his account of associational networks amongst migrants.[2] Landau used spatial metaphors in discussing migrant

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1 J. Crush and D. McDonald, 'Introduction', *Canadian Journal of African Studies, Special Issue: Transnationalism, African Immigration, and New Migrant Spaces in South Africa*, 34, 1 (2000), p. 18.

2 A. Simone, 'People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg', *Public Culture*, 16, 3 (2004), pp. 407–429.

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belonging and identity while Kihato wrote of migrants occupying a 'liminal space' within the city.[3]

The South African literature has also followed international thinking on migration by emphasising processes of 'transnationalism', in which space is not territorially bounded but is constituted through cross-border flows of people, capital and goods. Vidal, for example, explored the lives of Mozambican residents who live transnationally between Johannesburg and Maputo.[4] Recently, however, South African migration studies have taken a new turn by drawing on the work of Michel de Certeau, and especially on the theoretical distinction he made in his *Practice of Everyday Life* between the *strategies* of the powerful and the *tactics* of the subordinate.[5] While the state and capital impose spatial strategies to organise cities, the subordinate manipulate space, sometimes unconsciously, to subvert established orders to their own advantage. In the words of de Certeau, the city is left prey to contradictory movements that counterbalance and combine themselves outside the reach of panoptic power. He argues that: 'Beneath the discourses that ideologise the city, the ruses and combinations of powers that have no readable identity proliferate, without points where one can take hold of them, without rational transparency, they are impossible to administer'.[6]

Vearey drew on de Certeau in describing how some groups of rural migrants in Johannesburg occupy 'hidden spaces', and employ tactics of evasion and escape, to avoid the attention of local authorities.[7] Landau and Freemantle used the term 'cosmopolitan tactics' to describe the 'heterogeneous set of practices that has emerged from a form of constant, if not always conscious struggle against the harshness of city streets and hostile attitudes'.[8] For Landau transnational movement is a spatial tactic used by migrants who may be threatened in both their home country and host society.[9]

In this article, we use the case of Chinese migrants in the metropolitan city of Johannesburg to further the discussion on strategy and tactics and to contribute to an emergent understanding of how migrants navigate their lives in relation to the power of the state and of other powerful agents. The article reveals both the usefulness of a strategy-tactics framework and the difficulties of relating this framework to a group as differentiated as Chinese migrants in Johannesburg. Johannesburg, with its large numbers of vulnerable Chinese migrants, does illustrate the type of tactics noted by Vearey. However, there are Chinese migrants in Johannesburg who are in positions of economic power and are also well connected politically. They exercise strategy, rather than tactic, in relation to business and state in South Africa. The study also suggests that the tactics of Chinese migrants cannot only be framed in relation to the powerful but must also be understood as responses to the pressures and attitudes of other groups that may have an equally subservient position in society, including other Chinese migrants.

This study points towards a partial critique of a strategy-tactics framework in which strategy belongs exclusively to the host society, and migrants are relegated to the realm of

3 L. Landau, 'Migration, Urbanisation and Sustainable Livelihoods in South Africa Migration', *Southern African Migration Project*, Policy Brief No. 15 (2005); L. Landau, 'Transplants and Transients: Idioms of Belonging and Dislocation in Inner-City Johannesburg', *African Studies Review*, 49, 2 (September 2006), pp. 125–45; C. Kihato, 'Migration, Gender and Urbanisation in Johannesburg' (PhD thesis, University of South Africa, 2009).

4 D. Vidal, 'Living in, Out of, and Between Two Cities: Migrants from Maputo in Johannesburg', *Urban Forum*, 21, 1 (2010), pp. 55–68.

5 M. de Certeau, *The Practise of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984).

6 *Ibid*., p. 95.

7 J. Vearey, 'Hidden Spaces and Urban Health: Exploring the Tactics of Rural Migrants Navigating the City of Gold', *Urban Forum*, 21, 1 (2010), pp. 37–53.

8 L. Landau and I. Freemantle, 'Tactical Cosmopolitanism and Idioms of Belonging: Insertion and Self-Exclusion in Johannesburg', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36, 3 (2010), p. 386.

9 *Ibid*., pp. 375–390.

tactics. There is a complex intersection between migrants and the host society, with power exercised in both directions, and interplay of strategy and tactics amongst migrants themselves. The article concludes with the suggestion that a framework of strategy and tactics could usefully be situated within a broader conception that places domination and resistance to domination within an evolving field of relationships that cannot be contained within a distinction between migrants and host communities.[10] In exploring the value and limitations of the framework, this article focuses specifically on the spatial dimensions, showing how the intersections between strategy and framework are represented in space.

The study utilised a series of formal and informal interviews as well as informal discussions (conducted in Chinese) with individuals of Chinese origin living in Johannesburg.[11] We also drew data from: the four Chinese-language media in Johannesburg,[12] internet blogs written by Chinese residents of Johannesburg,[13] the database of the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC), as well as our own observations of spatial change in Johannesburg.[14]

There are particular challenges in relation to migration research that require sensitive handling. An internet blog written in Chinese tells new arrivals from China of the tensions in Chinese society in Johannesburg, and advises them to be very careful of the questions they ask fellow Chinese: for example, 'Don't ask Chinese in Johannesburg where they live, where their family is, and what their landline number is'.[15] Our experience was positive but interviewees did frequently refer to intra-Chinese tension and in nearly all cases politely avoided any discussion of places of residence.

## International Literatures on the Spaces of the Chinese Diaspora

The reference point for literature on the spaces of the Chinese diaspora is "Chinatown". Originally, the Chinatowns of North America and Europe were stigmatised as places of crime, disease and blight but from around the 1960s they were exoticised as spaces of ethnic entrepreneurialism, tourism and entertainment.[16]

Academic writers were to point out that the idea of a "Chinatown" belongs to a white European cultural tradition and is a way of inscribing racial definitions in space, and of

10 This, potentially, could draw on Bourdieu's notion of *Habitus*. See P. Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital' (1986), in J.G. Richardson, *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Capital* (New York, Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 241–58. See also, P. Raghuram, L. Henry and J. Bornat, 'Difference and Distinction?: Non-migrant and Migrant Networks', *Sociology*, 44, 4 (August 2010), pp. 623–41.

11 During the course of the research we held interviews with Mr Chen (Deputy Director or Cyrildene Chinatown Community Association, CCCA), Mr Pon (long-standing business leader in Commissioner Street), Mr Diao (a well-known restaurant owner), Mr Chang (an industrialist), as well as with businessmen and women in the China Mall, China Mart, China Shopping Centre, Ormonde China Mall, Oriental City Mall, Dragon City, Afrifocus Centre, China Plaza, as well as in shops and restaurants in Cyrildene, Rivonia, Fourways, Randburg, Rosebank, Hyde Park and Sandton. Most interviews were conducted between February and June 2011, but follow-up interviews were held in April 2012 which included discussions with women migrants and with a councillor in the City of Johannesburg.

12 These are *China Chronicles* (1994) available at: www.sa-cnet.com; *African Times* (2005) available at: www.africantimes.info; *China News S.A.* (1998) available at: www.chinanews-sa.com

13 See Africa's Blog (http://blog.sina.com.cn/u/1238063795); Chenchen's Blog (http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/articlelist_1264647484_0_2.html).

14 http://www.cipc.co.za/

15 Chenchen, November 12, 2007. Available at: http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b60fd3c01000bmk.html

16 I. Light, 'From Vice District to Tourist Attraction: The Moral Career of American Chinatowns, 1880–1940', *Pacific Historical Review*, 43, 3 (August 1974), pp. 367–94; I. Light and C.C. Wong, 'Protest or Work: Dilemmas of the Tourist Industry in American Chinatowns', *American Journal of Sociology*, 80, 6 (May 1975), pp. 1,342–368.

justifying a set of practices towards the Chinese.[17] By the 1990s, however, writers had reframed the Chinatown discussion more positively, drawing on the notion of 'social capital'. They argued that Chinatowns were no longer isolated or ghettoised spaces but had become places of ethnic identity and solidarity that gave the Chinese diaspora a critical advantage in a competitive business environment.[18] Chinatowns therefore represented globally connected nodes playing a dynamic role within the wider capitalist economy.[19]

This new literature connected with ideas of migrant transnationalism. Nonini and Ong wrote interestingly of Chinese transnationality as an 'alternative modernity'.[20] There was a hint of de Certeau in their work as they explained how the complex tactical practices of Chinese transnationalism subvert national regimes of truth and elude the constraints of specific localities.[21]

Importantly, the literature on the spaces of the Chinese diaspora moved beyond the traditional Chinatown. In 1997, Wei Li coined the term 'ethnoburb' to refer to new forms of Chinese clustering in the San Gabriel Valley suburbs of southern California.[22] These ethnoburbs had a significantly but not overwhelmingly dominant Chinese population (around 30 per cent of the total population). The residents of the ethnoburbs generally possessed higher-than-average incomes, occupational status and education (in contrast to the traditional Chinatowns which remained predominantly working class or petty entrepreneurial) and were well placed to take advantage of transnational markets and capital flows.[23] Wei's work provoked a flurry of new writing on Chinese space, with Chinese (and other Asian) ethnoburbs being identified across North America.[24] The rise of the 'ethnoburb' did not however mean the end of the Chinatown. Li wrote, for example, of the cultural and economic revalorisation of central-city ethnic spaces by ethnic merchants and place entrepreneurs.[25]

The literature has begun to recognise the growing complexity of Chinese migration dynamics and spatial practices, for example, Zhou explained that 'today's Chinese American community has become more diverse but less geographically bounded and less cohesive'.[26] Luk went even further than the 'ethnoburb', referring to 'invisiburbs' where there is a Chinese presence but not necessarily in distinct physical forms.[27]

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17 K.J. Anderson, 'The Idea of Chinatown: The Power of Place and Institutional Practice in the Making of a Racial Category', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 77, 4 (1987), pp. 580–98.

18 A. Portes, L.E. Guarnizo, W.J. Haller, 'Transnational Entrepreneurs: An Alternative Form of Immigrant Economic Adaptation', *American Sociological Review*, 67, 2 (April 2002), pp. 278–98; M. Zhou, *Chinatown: the Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1992); J.R. Logan, W. Zhang and R.D. Alba, 'Immigrant Enclaves and Ethnic Communities in New York and Los Angeles', *American Sociological Review*, 67, 2 (April 2002), pp. 299–322; L.J.C. Ma, 'Space, Place, and Transnationalism in the Chinese Diaspora', in L.J.C. Ma and C. L. Cartier (eds), *The Chinese Diaspora: Space, Place, Mobility, and Identity* (Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2003); K. Park and R. Leong, 'How do Asian Americans Create Places? From Background to Foreground', *Amerasia Journal*, 34, 3 (2008), pp. v–xiv.

19 *Ibid.*

20 D.M. Nonini and A. Ong, 'Chinese Transnationalism as an Alternative Modernity', in H. Liu (ed.), *The Chinese Overseas*, Volume 1 (New York, Routledge, 2005).

21 *Ibid.*, p. 365.

22 W. Li, 'Anatomy of a New Ethnic Settlement: The Chinese Ethnoburb in Los Angeles', *Urban Studies*, 35, 3 (March 1998), pp. 479–501.

23 Li, 'Anatomy of a New Ethnic Settlement: The Chinese Ethnoburb in Los Angeles'.

24 M. Laguerre, 'The Globalization of a Panethnopolis: Richmond District as the New Chinatown in San Francisco', *GeoJournal*, 64, 1 (2005), pp. 41–49; W. Li, 'Beyond Chinatown, Beyond Enclave: Reconceptualising Contemporary Chinese Settlements in the United States', *GeoJournal*, 64, 1 (2005), pp. 31–40; M. Zhou, Y. Tseng and R.Y. Kim, 'Rethinking Residential Assimilation: The Case of a Chinese Ethnoburb in the San Gabriel Valley, California', *Amerasia Journal*, 34, 3 (2008), pp. 55–83.

25 Li, 'Anatomy of a New Ethnic Settlement: The Chinese Ethnoburb in Los Angeles'.

26 M. Zhou, *Contemporary Chinese America: Immigration, Ethnicity, and Community Transformation* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2009), p. 52.

27 C. Luk, 'Contextualizing the Emergence of New Chinatowns: An Introduction', *GeoJournal*, 64, 1 (2005), pp. 1–6.

There is an emergent literature on Chinese space in Africa that reveals a strong link between the entrepreneurial tactics of the Chinese and the production of space. The literature points to entrepreneurial clusters but also to the dispersal of Chinese traders to take advantage of the ready-made market for cheap Chinese goods in Africa.[28] Finally, and importantly, there is an emergent literature dealing with the spaces produced by China's Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Africa.[29]

## The Chinese Presence in South Africa: A Local Literature

There is a growing and vibrant local literature on the Chinese presence in South Africa, and specifically in Johannesburg.[30] The literature provides essential background for an understanding of the differentiated and complex nature of Chinese spaces. As Park and Chen put it, 'various waves of migration from China to South Africa have resulted in the creation of diverse, multi-generational and multi-lingual communities of Chinese'.[31]

The first two waves overlapped in the early years of the twentieth century. More than 60,000 contract labourers were brought to the Witwatersrand from northern China between 1904 and 1907 to work on the gold mines but they were almost all repatriated by 1910.[32] A more enduring presence was the two or three thousand independent migrants who began arriving in South Africa from the 1870s from Guangdong, a province of south China that had been ravaged by a set of political and natural disasters. These migrants, mainly from peasant and artisan families, came in two sub-groups – Cantonese and Hakka – from two different parts of the province. In South Africa, they were spatially differentiated with the Cantonese settling in and around Johannesburg, and the Hakka mainly in the coastal cities of the Cape Province.[33] Most studies of these Chinese communities – academic dissertations as well as a novel and a childhood memoir – have explored the intricate and fluid processes of identity formation, and the complex and ambivalent position of these communities under apartheid rule.[34]

The next wave of migrants – referred to as 'settler-industrialists' – came from Taiwan from the early 1980s to establish factories in the homeland areas.[35] They were lured to South Africa by generous incentives and by the cheap labour in the peripheral margins of the country.

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28 H.Ø. Haugen and J. Carling, 'On the Edge of The Chinese Diaspora: The Surge of Baihuo Business in an African City', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28, 4 (2005), pp. 639–662; R. Laribee, 'The China Shop Phenomenon: Trade Supply within the Chinese Diaspora in South Africa', *Africa Spectrum*, 43, 3 (2008), pp. 353–70.

29 See, for example, D. Bräutigam and T. Xiaoyang, 'African Shenzhen: China's Special Economic Zones in Africa', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 49, 1 (2011), pp. 27–54.

30 See, for example: M. Yap and D.L. Man, *Colour, Confusion and Concessions: The History of the Chinese in South Africa* (Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 1996); D. Accone, *All Under Heaven: The Story of a Chinese Family in South Africa* (Claremont, David Philip Publishers, 2004); J. Wilhelm, 'Chinese Communities in South Africa', in S. Buhlungu, J. Daniel, R. Southall and J. Lutchman (eds), *State of the Nation: South Africa 2005–2006* (Cape Town, Human Sciences Research Council Press, 2006); Y.J. Park, *A Matter of Honour: Being Chinese in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Jacana Media, 2008); K.L. Harris, 'Confusion, Heaven and Honour: Being Chinese in South Africa', *African Historical Review*, 41, 2 (2009), pp. 116–28; T. Huynh, Y.J. Park, A.Y. Chen, 'Faces of China: New Chinese Migrants in South Africa, 1980s to Present', *African and Asian Studies*, 9, 3 (2010), pp. 286–306; D.L. Liss, 'Black, White, and the Limbo In Between: The Precarious Position of the South African Chinese Under Apartheid, 1948–1994' (Bachelor of Arts Honours thesis, Harvard University, 2011).

31 Y.J. Park and A.Y. Chen, 'Recent Chinese Migrants in Small Towns of Post-Apartheid South Africa', *Revue européenne des migrations internationales*, 25, 1 (2009), p. 25.

32 G. Kynoch, '"Your Petitioners are in Mortal Terror": The Violent World of Chinese Mineworkers in South Africa, 1904–1910', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 31, 3 (2005), pp. 531–46.

33 Yap and Man, *Colour, Confusion and Concessions: The History of the Chinese in South Africa*.

34 See, for example: Accone, *All Under Heaven: The Story of a Chinese Family in South Africa*; Park, *A Matter of Honour: Being Chinese in South Africa*; U. Ho, *Paper Sons and Daughters: Growing Up Chinese in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Pan Macmillan South Africa, 2011).

35 Huynh, Park and Chen, 'Faces of China'.

In the early 1990s there were around 30,000 Taiwanese in South Africa but the numbers declined sharply when the industrial incentives were removed and when South Africa switched diplomatic ties from Taiwan to the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1998. Today many of the remaining 6,000 or so Taiwanese in South Africa resides in Johannesburg.[36]

By far the largest wave of Chinese immigration began in the early 1990s, coming from many different parts of mainland China. In the early 1990s, Chinese filtered into South Africa from Hong Kong, where there was great political uncertainty prior to the handover to the PRC, and from the eastern seaboard of mainland China via countries like Mauritius and Lesotho. In the late 1990s, a well-educated entrepreneurial class arrived from cities in the PRC with a trading tradition, such as Shanghai, Wenzhou and Nantong, to set up wholesale and retail business. Processes of chain migration developed as Chinese generally brought a handful of family members to work in their business, and contract staff, some of whom remained to set up their own firms.[37]

After 2000, patterns of migration shifted once more. Increasingly, South Africa attracted small traders and previous peasants from economically distressed parts of Fujian province where there are extreme levels of competition for resources and jobs and long traditions of migration.[38] Many of these migrants arrived illegally in a process that Ma referred to as 'the clandestine diaspora'.[39] They generally had lower levels of education, fewer business networks, and fewer resources than previous migrants from China. The rate and scale of migration was considerable and around two-thirds of Chinese in South Africa may now be Fujianese with a slightly lower proportion in Johannesburg where migrant origins are more diverse than nationally.[40]

In 2008, Park used information from the PRC embassy and other sources to estimate that there were between 200,000 and 300,000 Chinese in South Africa. It is a figure impossible to verify given the large numbers of non-registered migrants but it is indicative of a very substantial Chinese presence in the country.[41]

Despite the growing literature on Chinese in South Africa, there is little detailed knowledge of the social profile and attitudes of recent migrants. However, a recent doctoral thesis by F. Chen, a student from Xiamen University in Fujian province, reports on a survey of 500 households in Chinese enclaves in Johannesburg.[42] It reveals the importance of family networks in the migration chain and in the operation of business in South Africa. Although Chinese men often arrive in South Africa alone, they generally bring out their spouses once they have established a business, followed by their children and other family member.[43] With businesses structured around the family, Chinese migrants largely avoid dependence on the labour and skills of the host society.[44]

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36 Park, *A Matter of Honour: Being Chinese in South Africa*; Huynh, Park and Chen, 'Faces of China'.

37 Huynh, Park and Chen, 'Faces of China'; Author's own interviews.

38 Historically, migrant flows from Fujian province were to Japan, the United States, Europe and Australia. The switch in destination to South Africa – and also to countries such as Russia and Argentina – happened as immigration controls in traditional destinations were strengthened, and as the cost of immigrating to these places increased. Chen (2011) reports that the cost of relocating to the USA is around $60,000 compared with $6,000 for South Africa.

39 L.J.C. Ma, *Space, Place and Transnationalism in the Chinese Diaspora* (Hong Kong, Centre for China Urban and Regional Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University, 2002), p. 23.

40 Huynh, Park and Chen, 'Faces of China'.

41 Park, *A Matter of Honour: Being Chinese in South Africa*.

42 See F. Chen, 'Ethnic Cluster Economies and Differentiated Social Adaptability of Migrants: New Chinese Migrants in South Africa', *Open Times*, 5 [translated title] (hereafter referred to as 2011a); F. Chen, 'Chinatown in Johannesburg – A Social Survey', *The China Monitor*, April 2011 (hereafter referred to as 2011b), pp. 4–7.

43 Chen (2011a) reports that only 19 per cent of migrants were in Johannesburg alone, with 26 per cent having at least one other family member, and 55 per cent having two or more.

44 There are, however, important exceptions. Chen reports an interesting pattern of mutual dependency between Chinese migrants and African migrants from countries such as Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe where English is

The study does however reveal considerable diversity amongst Chinese migrants. Many migrants from Fujian province, for example, arrive in South Africa with high levels of debt, as they have had to pay the costs of translocation. They work as labourers in Chinese-owned firms until they have resources for their own business start-up, and for bringing their family out from China. Migrants from the Xhejiang and Jiangsu provinces, however, are almost all business owners on arrival. They have capital in hand and are in South Africa to expand the market for their family-owned enterprises in China.

Chen's survey also points to the different strategies of adaptability employed by the migrants. The majority operate within an ethnic cluster economy that is strongly linked back to the Chinese homeland (the source of labour and cheap imports) and relatively insulated from the host economy. There are, however, a minority of migrants – mainly those who intend to settle permanently in South Africa – who deliberately make connections with, and adapt to, the host society even though retain strong cultural and business links with China and local Chinese communities.

Space has not been ignored in the growing literature on the Chinese presence in South Africa but it has generally not been fore grounded or theorised, and Chinese spaces have been referred to almost exclusively in terms of ethnic enclaves (only one part of a complex story). The initial focus was on Johannesburg's 'first Chinatown' along Commissioner Street in the inner city but more recent writers identified Cyrildene as a 'second Chinatown' and have also pointed to the emergence of Chinese wholesale-retail space mainly along the old mining belt.[45]

In the account below, we give the literature on the Chinese presence in Johannesburg an explicitly spatial content, illustrating how the interplay of strategy and tactics has contributed to the production of space in Johannesburg. We refer to historical processes but primarily to the period after 1990s when the numbers of Chinese in the city increased exponentially.

## A Historical Perspective (Pre-1990)

### *Strategy and Tactics*

The contract workers from north China were housed in mining compounds in near prison-like conditions. The spatial strategy of the colonial authorities and mining companies was designed to ensure tight labour control and contain the near hysteria that the large Chinese presence had provoked amongst white residents in Johannesburg.[46] The Chinese deployed a variety of tactics in response to these oppressive controls and despite the limitations placed on the Chinese 'they still succeeded in creating a world of their own within the alien confines of the controlled environment of the compound'.[47]

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*Footnote 44 continued*
spoken. African migrants are employed by the Chinese to assist them in navigating the English-speaking business environment of Johannesburg.

45 Y.J. Park, 'Chinese Migration in Africa', *South African Institute of International Affairs China in Africa Project*, Occasional paper No. 24 (2009); R. Dittgen, 'From China to Johannesburg', IFAS (March 2011), available at http://www.ifas.org.za/culture Extra: The Essential Supplement of the French Institute of South Africa /docs/extra7_2011-03.pdf

46 J. Crush, 'Scripting the Compound: Power and Space in the South African Mining Industry', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 12, 3 (1994), pp. 301–24.

47 C.R. Ember, M. Ember and I.A. Skoggard, *Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World* (New York, Springer, 2005), p. 745. Available online at http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=sih&jid=1C35&site=ehost-live

The story of the immigrants from Guangdong is more complex and ambiguous. They operated within a social and political environment that was largely hostile, and their primary survival tactic was to avoid open conflict with authorities, and develop a profile as a 'quiet, separate and law abiding community'.[48] Spatially, the Chinese developed a small cultural hub along Commissioner Street in Ferreirastown on the edge of the inner city, but their businesses were dispersed across mainly black-occupied parts of the city to remain close to their client base.

The Commissioner Street precinct, known locally as Malaikem (an apparent corruption of the name 'Malay Camp') provided a degree of cultural security as it included a small school, a Chinese-language press and the offices of social clubs, which played a critical role in lives of Chinese migrants. There were, however, only a few Chinese shops, and the numbers of Chinese living in the precinct has barely exceeded 200 (less than 10 per cent of the total number of Chinese in Johannesburg).

More important, economically speaking was the dispersal of Chinese shops and residence into areas of the city with low-income black African consumers such as Kliptown, Alexandra, Doornfontein, Sophiatown and Western Native Township (now Newclare). In Sophiatown, for example, there was a Chinese shop on almost every corner, there was some evidence, at least, of cultural hybridisation, and Chinese mingled with African, Indian and coloured communities.[49] In 1950, the number of Chinese in Sophiatown and adjoining Western Native Township was around 1,000, out of a population of 60,000.[50]

As government destroyed racially mixed slums, the spatial options available to Chinese narrowed. With the Sophiatown removals at the end of the 1950s, a number of Chinese found a temporary home with the mainly Indian and Malay communities of Fietas (Pageview). By 1962, there were around 860 Chinese in Fietas out of a population of 5,500.[51]

The apartheid government threatened to create a separate Group Area for the Chinese, which would have been economically disastrous. The Chinese, despite their generally low-key response to authorities, were vigorous in opposing forced clustering. In 1954, the Central Chinese Association of South Africa (CCSA) petitioned Prime Minister D.F. Malan, advising him that the small community of around 4,000 Chinese, mainly shopkeepers, would not survive if they were forced to a single location where they would have to sell only to each other.[52]

The government had, in fact, no clear plan for the Chinese. Although it would have preferred a Chinese Group Area, there was also the real consideration of the costs to provide this small community with new housing, and with separate educational, health and recreational facilities. In addition, from the 1960s, the increasingly beleaguered apartheid government was turning to the east, to Japan and Taiwan, for trade and political support, and had to treat local Japanese and Chinese communities with some consideration.[53]

In 1971, the government formally gave up on the idea of a Chinese Group Area and introduced a permit system that allowed Chinese to reside in any Group Area provided they had the consent of neighbours.[54] There was a final attempt in the early 1970s to create an 'informal Group Area' for Chinese along Commissioner Street but this was abandoned when it met with stiff resistance from the local Chinese community. The CCSA stated that 'the

48 Y. Park, *A Matter of Honour: Being Chinese in South Africa*, p. 27.
49 G. Ansell, *Soweto Blues: Jazz, Popular Music and Politics in South Africa* (New York, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005).
50 See, http://v1.sahistory.org.za/pages/places/villages/gauteng/sophiatown.htm
51 See, http://v1.sahistory.org.za/pages/places/villages/gauteng/fietas.htm
52 Liss, 'Black, White, and the Limbo In Between'.
53 *Ibid.*
54 Yap and Man, *Colour, Confusion and Concessions: The History of the Chinese in South Africa.*

community has fought long and hard over the previous decades against problems associated with the discriminatory provisions of the Group Areas Act and cannot therefore tolerate any exclusive grouping, whether this be voluntary or enforced'.[55]

By the 1970s, the dominant spatial process was dispersal into white suburbs, rather than any form of ethnic clustering. As most local Chinese had migrated into the middle class, and into professional occupations, they were no longer dependent on proximity to black African communities. With their low profile, diplomatic approach, and emphasis on achieving social respectability, Chinese were now generally accepted within white neighbourhoods and an estimated 90 per cent of Chinese in Johannesburg eventually lived in white areas.[56]

There is a lot more texture to the historical spatial practices of the Chinese in Johannesburg and to get a sense of this we must turn from the academic literature to autobiographical material including Ufrieda Ho's *Paper Sons and Daughters.*[57] Ho reveals that the first filtering of Chinese into the suburbs was into the less desirable white working class areas around the inner city and in the eastern parts of Johannesburg.[58] In her memoir we also learn of an extended family with members scattered between a smallholding outside Pretoria; gritty white working class suburbs like Judith's Paarl, Bertrams and Lorentzville; the Chinese Old Age Home in Malvern; and the Chinese School in Bramley (near Alexandra). We also learn of the spatial practices of the Chinese *Fahfee* men who do the rounds in African townships struggling to eke out a living from a traditional game of communal gambling.[59]

## Contemporary Processes (post-1990)

### *Strategy and Tactics*

The post-1990 story of Chinese residence in Johannesburg is highly revealing of the tangled terrain of strategy and tactics. Spatial practices in Johannesburg are a consequence of the strategies of the South African state, and the behaviour and attitudes of the host community, but also of the tactics of Chinese in response to each other, and of the strategies of the Chinese state. These are explored below.

The relationship between the South African state and the various groupings of Chinese in South Africa is a complex matter, and is characterised by contradiction and ambiguity. On the one hand, the South African government is actively courting Chinese investment and political favour, and so action against Chinese migrants is constrained. On the other hand, the Chinese present a substantial competitive threat for South African business at all levels – including for emergent black-owned enterprise supported by the State's programme of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) – and as a consequence anti-Chinese sentiment is expressed on occasion within government and from within the South African business community.[60] However, these outbursts have become increasingly infrequent as the South

55 *Ibid*., p. 423.
56 Park, *A Matter of Honour: Being Chinese in South Africa.*
57 Ho, *Paper Sons and Daughters: Growing Up Chinese in South Africa.*
58 *Ibid.*
59 For an ethnographical account of Fahfee in South African townships see D. Krige, '"We are running for a living": Work, Leisure and Speculative Accumulation in an Underground Numbers Lottery in Johannesburg', *African Studies*, 70, 1 (2011), pp. 3–24.
60 In 2008, South Africa's Minister of Labour strongly opposed to an attempt to grant South-African-born Chinese in terms of the Employment Equity Act, 1998, and there was also heated opposition from the National African Federated Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NAFCOC). After the courts judged in favour of the Chinese, the Minister was alleged to have made anti-Chinese statements (*Mail & Guardian*, June 25, 2008).

African government – the Zuma administration in particular – has leaned ever more closely towards China, and as a web of business ties have developed between South Africa and China. This plays out at local level with direct South African state support for Chinese investment.

Leading Chinese entrepreneurs in Johannesburg secure their position by engaging closely with South Africa's political élite and by acting as an intermediary between the PRC and South Africa.[61] Key strategies of Chinese enterprise in response to BEE requirements are to establish joint ventures with local companies or to acquire an equity stake in these companies. An example of the former is the Huawei-Telkom partnership and of the latter is the 20 per cent stake that the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) has in the Standard Bank of South Africa. The spatial consequence of this mesh of interests is that large-scale Chinese enterprise in South Africa tends to locate in spatial proximity with South African business rather than in the Chinese business enclaves that are common in other countries of Africa.

The strategies of the Chinese state also play out spatially in Johannesburg. The large Chinese companies in Johannesburg are state-owned and operate in terms of the overarching strategy of China's State Council that has to do with geopolitical positioning, securing natural resources into the long term, circumventing protectionism against Chinese products, and establishing new markets.[62] While much state-directed Chinese investment elsewhere in Africa is drawn to areas with mineral and energy resources, in South Africa it is drawn towards existing urban economies which provide Chinese SOEs with the final and other business infrastructure they need for expansion in Africa.[63]

While state-owned and other large Chinese investment positions its strategies mainly in relation to the South African state at a national level, and major South African corporations, small scale Chinese entrepreneurs operate in the realm of tactics responding to the practices of police, immigration and local government officials.

The small entrepreneurs are in a tricky position as they are an easy object of persecution or extortion by corrupt police and Home Affairs officials but they respond, more or less successfully, with diverse tactics to evade prosecution or deportation. The poor relationship between Chinese migrants and the South African Police Services was a recurring theme in our interviews with respondents complaining that they are used as a source of personal income by police officers, and one respondent spoke of regular raids by officials from the Department of Home Affairs. The same respondent alluded to tactics when he added that 'illegal migrants are held only very briefly as bribes are paid'.[64]

Local government has taken time to acknowledge the Chinese presence in the city. In the Cyrildene area, for example, where large numbers of Chinese have lived since the 1990s, the relationship between the local ward councillor and the Chinese community has been fractious, and mainly centred around Chinese transgression of local by-laws. When the Cyrildene Chinese Community Association (CCCA) applied to the Johannesburg Property Company for permission to erect a traditional Chinese arch at the entrance to the Chinese

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*Footnote 60 continued*
The controversial president of the ANC Youth League, Julius Malema, reflected elements of popular sentiment when he accused China of using South Africa to extract Africa's mineral resources without offering anything in return (*The Sunday Independent*, April 11, 2011).

61 An example is Mr Robin Xu, the developer and owner of China Mall and China Plaza in Johannesburg and China Mall in Durban. He is a prominent member of the African National Congress's Progressive Business Forum (PBF) and a regular donor to Bongi Ngema-Zuma Foundation run by President Zuma's spouse. See www.pbf.org.za and www.bnzfoundation.org.za.

62 M.Y. Wang, 'The Motivations behind China's Government-Initiated Industrial Investments Overseas', *Pacific Affairs*, 75, 2 (Summer 2002), pp. 187–206.

63 For an account of patterns of Chinese investment elsewhere in Africa see Bräutigam and Xiaoyang, 'African Shenzhen: China's Special Economic Zones in Africa'.

64 *Anonymous*, interviewed on 18 April 2012.

precinct along Derrick Avenue, there was a six-year delay in granting permission, ostensibly because there was no precedent for such an application.[65]

Gradually, however, connections have been established. The Mayor of Johannesburg, Amos Masondo, finally visited the Chinese enclave in Cyrildene in October 2009 in an act of symbolic recognition but he also used the opportunity to lecture the Chinese on the need to abide by South African law and respect city by-laws.[66] By 2010, the ward councillor had established a constructive relationship with the Chinese community, working with the CCCA to develop a Precinct Plan and City Improvement District for Cyrildene, and hosting monthly liaison meetings.[67] The Chairperson of the City Council's Economic Development Committee is among the local politicians who are working actively to strengthen ties with the local Chinese community,[68] while the Chinese community has been specifically mentioned in the Mayor's State of the City addresses in 2011 and 2012.[69]

The initially slow progression in the relationship between the Chinese community and the City Council reflected the complexities of host society attitudes to the Chinese presence. Low-income consumers generally welcome the cheap goods supplied by Chinese entrepreneurs, and Chinese communities have mainly not been the target of xenophobic attacks but there have been allegations of racism towards black Africans by local Chinese while the local media often portrays the Chinese community in negative and stereotypical ways.[70]

There has been local resistance from (mainly white) communities in places like Cyrildene and Bruma as the Chinese have moved into established residential areas. While many residents have taken advantage of the rising property prices that Chinese demand has occasioned, others have expressed strong disapproval at the Chinese presence. The first application in Cyrildene by a Chinese resident to have a property rezoned from residential to business use was lodged in 2002 and took three-and-a-half years to be processed because of fierce objections from non-Chinese residents. This pattern of objections has continued with the Deputy Chairperson of the CCCA reporting that it was only in 2011 that rezoning processes became easier.[71] There were also strong local objections to the proposed Chinese Arch with one resident even threatening to bomb the structure.[72]

The local Chinese express their concerns with the host society mainly in terms of the fear of crime. This concern was expressed on all the interviews we conducted. Chen reports that fifty Chinese migrants were killed in crime-related incidents between 2007 and 2010, and cites one migrant who stated that 'South Africa is heaven, except for crime'.[73] The other frequently cited concern was the unreliability of local labour.

The focus on the difficulties between the Chinese and host society, however, obscures the myriads of positive interactions that happen on a daily basis, and the extent to which relationships are improving. Language remains a major divide, but as the English-language abilities of migrants improve, the relationship between migrants and the host society

65 Chen, interview.
66 M. Pabale, 'Mayor and his Team Visit Alex', City of Jo'burg (23 October 2009), available at http://www.joburg.org.za/index2.php?option=com_content&task=emailform&id=4458&itemid=266
67 Chen, interview.
68 Interview with Councillor W. Van der Skyf.
69 http://www.joburg.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7865&catid=96&Itemid=114
70 See, for example, T. Thakali, 'Terror Stalks Cyrildene Streets', iol news (7 August 2010), available at http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/terror-stalks-cyrildene-streets-1.672255
71 Chen, interview.
72 Interview with Chen.
73 Chen, 2011b.

expands.[74] Importantly, the local Chinese communities have not established a Chinese-language school in Johannesburg but have sent children to (mainly private) English-language schools in the suburbs. Interviewees referred to a rapid assimilation of second generation migrants into white English-speaking communities in Johannesburg.[75] Some of the poorer and more recent migrants, however, cannot afford to bring their children from China or remove their children from the schooling system early to work in family business. This differential pattern is increasing the sharp inequalities amongst Chinese migrants that has emerged post-2000.

Chinese immigrants are not only responding tactically to relationships with the host state and society, as well as to the challenges of intra-Chinese relationships. Here there is a complex mix of conflict, competition and collaboration. Mutual support through tight networks, based on family and village or area of origin, is critical as an adaptive tactic for many migrants, and especially those who are not supported by formal business networks. There are said to be more than 120 different Chinese associations in South Africa with most active in the Johannesburg area.[76] Migrants from Fujian province, in particular, are tied into close associations that are linked to specific villages in China.

The Chinese in Johannesburg, however, do not exist as a cohesive community and there are varying degrees of tension and suspicion between polyglots of sub-communities. The more overarching associations such as the CCCA, for example, struggle to mediate complex diverse interests and generally have a limited role focusing mainly on joint concerns such as security.

Many of our informants referred to the high levels of mutual suspicion among Chinese in Johannesburg. The internet blog written in Chinese by a business entrepreneur in Johannesburg advising new arrivals in South Africa on what they might expect is instructive:

Among Chinese in South Africa, there are six questions not to ask:

1. Don't ask people if they have a residential permit;
2. Don't ask what kind of business they are doing and where they are doing it;
3. Don't ask where they live, where their family is, and what their landline number is (you can ask for the mobile number);
4. Don't ask where their warehouse is, and when their container will arrive from China;
5. Don't ask when they will leave South Africa and return to China.
6. Don't ask who that man or woman is beside you.[77]

The first source of this suspicion is business competition. The Chinese presence in Johannesburg is strongly entrepreneurial so competition is a critical factor in spatial practice.[78] The large and growing numbers of Chinese in the wholesale and retail business is driving prices to extremely low levels, threatening the sustainability of a business model that is based on the import of cheap goods for a low income consumer market.

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74 This is explained by Chen (2011a) whose survey revealed that there is a minority of Chinese entrepreneurs in South Africa who are deliberately moving out from the enclave economy to establish a 'bridge' across to the host society.

75 A common pattern amongst Chinese immigrants is for children to remain in China for their primary- and middle-school education but to come to South Africa for their high school years.

76 Y.J. Park and P. Rugunanan, 'Visible and Vulnerable: Asian Migrant Communities in South Africa', available at: http.co.za/downloads/2010/xenophobia/case_studies/13_Visible_and_Vulnerable.pdf

77 ChenChen (2007). The blogger also referred to a colleague who said, 'I have lived in South Africa for thirteen years but I have not had more than thirteen business or name cards from Chinese, and I have not visited more than three Chinese couples'.

78 Referred to, for example, in interviews with Mr Chen and Mr Pon and also evident in many of our informal discussions.

Apart from the business competition there is also evidence of tensions locally that have their roots in inter-regional prejudices and tensions within China. The division between mainland China and Taiwan is felt in Johannesburg but more significant are the tensions generated by the recent influx of migrants from the rural areas and small towns of Fujian province. Huynh *et al.,* referred to the growing fissures within the Chinese community: 'the more established Chinese (including, now, Taiwanese and some of the mainland Chinese as well as the Chinese South Africans) look down on the lower class 'peasants' from Fujian, who are alleged to be involved in criminal activities'.[79]

Almost all our interview respondents from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the large cities of mainland China spoke negatively of the Fujianese, expressing high degrees of fear and mistrust. The immigrants from Fujian province, on the other hand, complained of a lack of acceptance locally. One Fujian respondent in a local Chinese mall said to us that he had no friends among his fellow entrepreneurs while another observed that 'I find it easier to make friends with black and white South Africans than with my fellow Chinese'.

The voice of the Fujianese is conspicuously absent in most accounts of Chinese migrant presence and we, too, faced reticence by Fujianese to talk about their lives in South Africa.

The doctoral student, Fenglan Chen, however, is from Fujian province and offers an empathetic account of the Fujianese presence in the country. She refers to the everyday struggles of these migrants: 'they struggle to make money, necessary to repay the loans they took out to immigrate; they struggle to communicate in the local languages; and they struggle with the loneliness of life in remote places'.[80] They remain in South Africa because, 'potential short-and medium-term financial gains appear to outweigh very real dangers and difficulties'.[81]

A specific dimension of fear among Chinese migrants is the presence in Johannesburg of triad or mafia-type gang activity.[82] An anonymous informant estimates there are six to ten of these gangs operating in the eastern parts of Johannesburg, with links back to syndicates based in Taiwan, Hong Kong and mainland China. These gangs are mainly involved in human trafficking and the smuggling of drugs and abalone, provoking fear among the local Chinese through their use of kidnapping as a means to raise capital.[83]

There are other dimensions to intra-Chinese diversity that may take less dramatic forms but are central to tactical manoeuvres in everyday life. Gender-differentiated roles and experiences are important but cannot be generalised. Most Chinese-owned businesses in Johannesburg are established in Johannesburg and it is mainly males who arrive first in South Africa, with spouses arriving later. Spouses work in the male-owned shops or remain at home caring for children. There are, however, notable exceptions, with a small but reportedly growing proportion of female-owned shops, or shops that are jointly owned and managed by married couples. One female respondent suggested that it is generally easier for female Chinese to find jobs in Johannesburg than males, as they are more likely to be employed in the growing service sector.

The status of women in Chinese migrant communities varies enormously. Respondents reported that amongst migrants from large cities in China gender relations are far more equitable than amongst migrants from more traditional communities in rural areas and small towns. Female respondents reported that their major challenges are crime, the lack of

79 Huynh, Park and Chen, 'Faces of China', p. 301.
80 Chen 2011b, p. 10.
81 *Ibid*., p. 11.
82 This was referred to previously in P. Gastrow, 'Triad Societies and Chinese Organised Crime in South Africa', *Crime & Justice International*, 19, 76 (2003).
83 According to our informant the gangs do not currently demand protection fees from local business, and the level of inter-gang violence is limited as the gangs are territorially divided.

mobility (as public transport is poor in Johannesburg), the lack of local language skills, and difficulties in securing proper documentation for immigrants. Women migrants respond to these challenges in different ways. Some respondents, for example, reported staying at home, as a means to escape crime while others spoke of travelling across the city together with other Chinese.

## The Spatial Dimension

Strategies and tactics have many dimensions, some not explicitly spatial and others partly or wholly spatial. Spatial dimensions are diverse, sometimes contradictory, reflecting the differentiated nature of the Chinese community in Johannesburg. For example, there is a complex mix of clustering and dispersal, and of cultural marking and social invisibility. Clustering clearly provides a level of security and of cultural comfort and is especially important for new immigrants who lack English-language ability and have little knowledge of the South African business and social context. The most apparent forms of clustering are the Chinatown enclaves and China Malls but there is smaller-scale clustering such as Chinese workers and management living together on factory floors.

However, there is also decentring and dispersal that reflects, in part, the extreme levels of business competition and the social tensions within Chinese enclaves, but also attempts to adapt to the new society by establishing strong linkages. Within Johannesburg, the indications are that many Chinese migrants leave the ethnic enclaves for the (mainly) white middle-class suburbs once they have adequate language proficiency.[84]

There is also a combination of hybrid spatial strategies that respond to particular contexts. For example, there is often an open display of Chinese culture in the business environment as the Chinese brand is important for low income consumers especially, but residential space is often hidden, reflecting high levels of fear amongst Chinese locally.

As many Chinese do 'live under the radar' it is difficult to assess the actual scale of clustering *vis-à-vis* dispersal, but there are *indicators* of spatial patterning. We use the distribution of firms registered on the CIPC database with the terms 'China' or 'Chinese' in their names as an (imperfect) measure of clustering and dispersal (Figure 1).[85]

Interestingly Johannesburg (including the East Rand) accounted for a little less than one-half of the 329 firms in the database. There were lesser clusters in Pretoria (15% of the total), Cape Town (12%) and Durban (7%), and scattering of firms elsewhere in the country (18%). This reinforced the contention that Johannesburg is the gateway city for Chinese in South Africa but also indicates a degree of dispersal nationally.

The table below (Table 1) indicates the spread of the 172 firms in this database *within* Johannesburg, revealing a relatively high degree of dispersal but also significant clusters around Edenvale, Bedfordview and Kensington, and in adjoining Cyrildene, with possible emergent clusters in other localities. The table must however be interpreted carefully as it represents only a fraction of Chinese firms in Johannesburg as many are not formally registered, do not have the words 'China' or 'Chinese' in their names, or only have a Chinese-language name. It also under-represents the scale of clustering in certain areas: In Crown Mines/ Fordsburg, for example, there are a number of large Chinese malls but the majority of the small enterprises within these malls are not CIPC registered. In Sandton, the number of Chinese firms may not be great but the firms that are there are very large and have a significant economic and spatial impact.

84 Interviews with Mr Chen, Mr Pon and Mr Diao.
85 See, http://www.cipc.co.za/

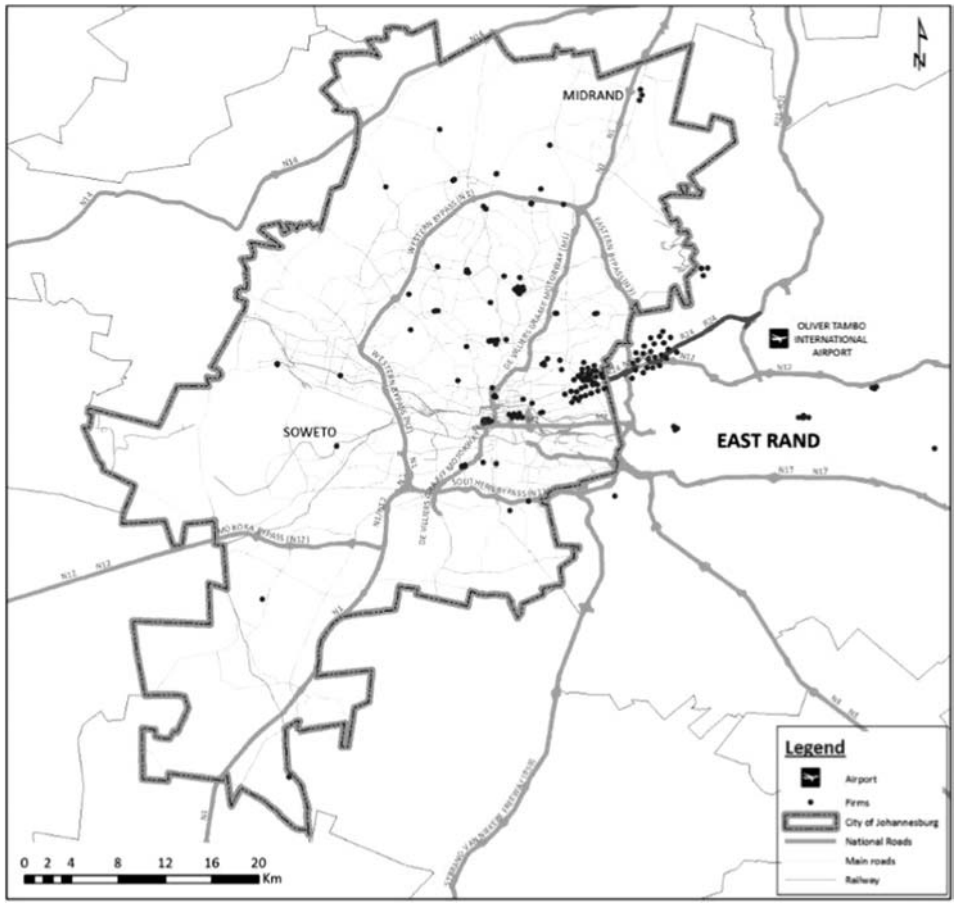



**Figure 1.** Distribution of firms registered on the CIPC Database including the words 'China' or 'Chinese' in their titles.

**Table 1.** Distribution of firms in Johannesburg (including the East Rand) with the words 'China' and 'Chinese' in their officially registered names.

| Location | Number of firms | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Edenvale/Bedfordview/Kensington | 34 | 21.5 |
| Cyrildene | 23 | 14.5 |
| Inner City Jo'burg | 11 | 7.0 |
| Crown Mines/Fordsburg | 10 | 6.3 |
| Sandton | 8 | 5.1 |
| Fourways/Rivonia | 8 | 5.1 |
| Cresta/Northcliff | 7 | 4.4 |
| Rosebank/ Parktown North | 5 | 3.2 |
| Other Johannesburg | 38 | 24.0 |
| Other East Rand | 14 | 8.9 |
| **TOTAL** | **158** | **100.0** |

It is far more difficult to get an impression of the distribution of Chinese residential activity than of business activity. The results of South Africa's National Population Census, conducted in 2011, have yet to be published, and it is not certain whether the Census data will be of much assistance. The property advertisements in the Chinese-language media in South Africa provide an indication, at least, of the spatial distribution of Chinese households. In the *China Chronicles*, dated April 21, 2012, for example, 24 of the 30 advertisements were for property in the eastern parts of Johannesburg, with 7 of these in Cyrildene, and the remaining 17 in the adjoining areas of Bruma, Bedfordview and Edenvale. The balance of properties were scattered across other parts of Johannesburg such as Fourways, Randburg and Northcliff.[86] Other newspapers reveal a similar pattern indicating the broad residential clustering in the eastern suburbs.

We have identified five significant clusters of Chinese business activity and residential presence in Johannesburg that have been produced at the intersection of diverse strategies and tactics. These include the inner city (mainly for historical and symbolic reasons); Edendale/Bedfordview/Observatory/Kensington; Cyrildene/Bruma; Crown Mines/ Fordsburg; and Sandton (Figure 2). Each cluster has very different characteristics and plays a different role within the transnational social and economic networks of the Chinese diaspora. Also important and often neglected, however, are the de-centred spaces across the city.

## The Inner City Cluster: Symbolic Space

Only a handful of businesses remain in Commissioner Street although the precinct is still popularly known as a Chinatown.[87] In 2009, the city-owned Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) upgraded Chinatown in a modest makeover that involved replacing paving, erecting bollards, planting trees, and placing cultural markers, while Chinese New Year festivities have been re-instated. The precinct remains, however, economically marginal to Chinese business activity in Johannesburg although it is a site of nostalgia for the dwindling numbers of South African-born Chinese.

In the early 1990s, there was another cluster in the inner city (that no longer exists) but that played a crucial incubator role for new Chinese business in Johannesburg. In 1991 a number of Chinese (mainly) from Shanghai found their way to Johannesburg after fleeing industrial and xenophobic violence in Lesotho.[88] In the city, they made their living as street hawkers selling cheap consumer goods in the inner city and lived together in several apartment blocks in Hillbrow, including a building that was known locally as Shanghai Mansions.[89]

With their access to cheap Chinese-produced goods, this group was entrepreneurially successful and went on to establish small formal shops along a number of streets in the inner city. Their success was reported in the media in Shanghai and this prompted a further influx of mainland Chinese, many of whom entered South Africa through clandestine 'snakehead smuggling' rings.[90] Meanwhile Shanghai Mansions was transformed from residential to part-business premises as a number of Chinese

86 Mr Chen, Deputy-Chairman of the CCCA estimates that 60% of residents in the Cyrildene/Bruma/Observatory area are Chinese compared with around 20% in Edenvale, 10% in Bedfordview and 3% in Kensington.

87 By the early 2000s 'Chinatown' was left with three small grocers, four restaurants, and a number of vacant and shattered buildings.

88 R. Tangri, 'Foreign Business and Political Unrest in Lesotho', *African Affairs*, 92, 367 (April 1993), pp. 223–38.

89 Wilhelm, 'Chinese Communities in South Africa'.

90 A 'snakehead' is someone who charges a large fee to take an individual or family from China to a new destination.

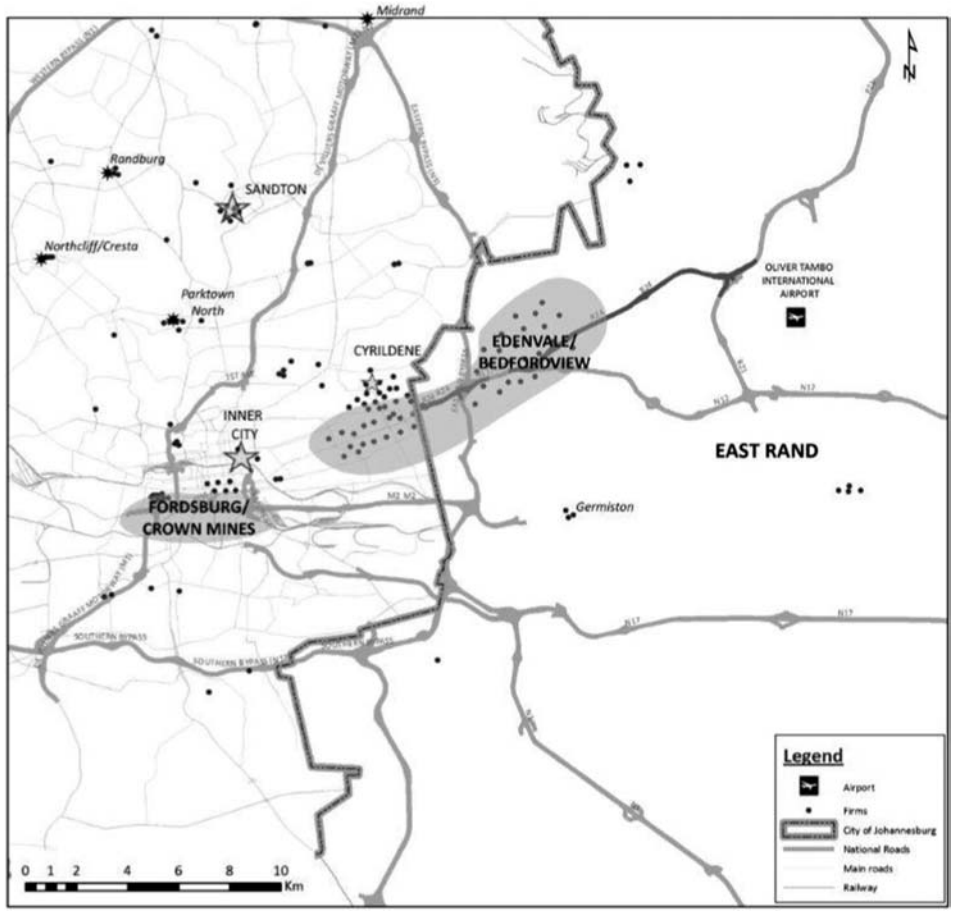



**Figure 2.** Chinese clusters in Johannesburg (extending to the East Rand).

conducted wholesale activities from their flats on a 24-hour basis, supporting an expanding network of Chinese retail merchants.[91]

Around 1994 however there was a spike in inner city crime, and Chinese entrepreneurs left the inner city *en masse* for a new business cluster in Ellis Park to the south-east of the CBD and for suburbs in the east of Johannesburg. Today, there is limited re-clustering of Chinese business activity in the inner city, associated with the current wave of Chinese FDI. China Auto Manufacturers (CAM), a large and growing vehicle import and distribution firm, for example, has established its South Africa headquarters in Braamfontein.

## The Eastern Ethnoburb

The suburbs of Edenvale, Bedfordview, Observatory and Kensington, which extend across the Johannesburg/ Ekurhuleni boundary, and surround the Cyrildene Chinatown and Bruma Lake cluster, to be discussed below, may represent the first case of a Chinese 'ethnoburb' in South Africa. The cluster is not featured in academic writing but is referred to

91 Chenchen, 'Shanghai Mansion of Hillbrow' (18 January 2007) available at: http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b60fd3c0100078k.html




**Figure 3.** Old Chinatown at Commissioner Street in the inner city.

by local Chinese as *Dong Qu* (meaning 'the east') and the local Chinese media estimates that there are around 60,000 Chinese living in this part of the city.[92] Although the area has a large Chinese presence, clustering is not visibly evident and shows traits suggestive of an existing or emergent ethnoburb. The Chinese-owned businesses are generally not in traditional 'Chinatown' activities like restaurants and grocery stores but rather in sectors such as travel, media and investment, which have links to transnational business flows.

The Chinese presence in the area is mainly hidden and difficult to map. However, as evident in our analysis of the CIPC database, there are a large number of Chinese businesses, mainly in business parks, and offices linked to shopping malls. Most Chinese try to remain invisible in their home life, and many live in gated communities, reflecting a general anxiety around crime. The erection of security watchtowers, however, betrays this desire for invisibility, as they are a nearly ubiquitous feature in Chinese spaces across Johannesburg. A Chinese resident of the area spoke to us of his experience in a gated townhouse complex. He indicated that these townhouse complexes are mixed Chinese and non-Chinese, with the Chinese generally in the minority. He recalled no incident of tension between these groups who share a similar class position and a desire for personal security.[93]

The clustering in the east is an outgrowth of a historical patterning of Chinese residence. As revealed in Ho's childhood memoir, there was a concentration of Chinese residents in the east of Johannesburg by the 1970s, as suburbs such as Bezuidenhout Valley, Malvern and Kensington were affordable to Chinese who were then beginning to move into white areas. As the Chinese became more affluent they moved further east into places like Observatory, Bedfordview and Edenvale, and their presence attracted the new Chinese migrants who arrived from the 1990s. In the mid-1990s, some of the earliest firms from mainland China set

92 Africa, 'Chinese in South Africa' (13 June 2006), available at: http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_49cb5ab30100045k.html; Q.K. Wang, 'Closer to South Africa, Looking into the Chinese Society (part 1)', (April 2007), available at: www.hmyzg.com

93 Interview with Mr Chen.

up in Bedfordview.[94] In 1996, the first of the current Chinese-language newspapers in South Africa, *China Times*, registered in Bedfordview, and a year later, before South Africa established diplomatic relations with the PRC, a China Foreign Liaison Service opened in the same suburb.

The eastern suburbs have a number of advantages for Chinese migrants including the proximity to O.R. Tambo International Airport (important for a transnational community); access to well-regarded English-language schools, the large Eastgate Shopping Mall, the closely situated Chinese retail clusters in Cyrildene and Bruma, and relatively affordable properties in an area of generally good physical amenity.[95]

## The Cyrildene 'Chinatown' and the Emergent Cluster in Bruma

Cyrildene is now frequently touted as Johannesburg's 'second Chinatown' while a highly visible Chinese presence is also emerging in the adjacent suburb of Bruma, around one of the earliest of the Chinese-owned retail malls.[96] Cyrildene, with its origins in the 1990s, is however, not the archetypical Chinatown – which would generally have a long history going back to the waves of Chinese emigration from the late nineteenth century – and has a suburban, rather than an inner city location. It is also not an 'ethnoburb' as it is a space of petty entrepreneurialism that is overwhelmingly and very visibly Chinese, although it is embedded within the broader and more diffuse cluster of Chinese activity in the eastern part of Johannesburg – the more-than-160 Chinese-owned businesses around Cyrildene, clustered along and around Derrick Avenue.[97] These firms are mainly involved in customary Chinese activities such as food and traditional medicine, while the precinct is visibly marked with Chinese symbols.

The Chinese presence is both business and residential. As a business cluster, it targets mainly a Chinese market and serves the wider Chinese community in the eastern parts of Johannesburg, and beyond. As a residential cluster, it now functions as South Africa's premier gateway for new Chinese arrivals. Migrants from Fujian province are almost certainly in the majority but there are a sprinkling of individuals from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and almost every province of mainland China. Recently, Johannesburg's small Thai community has also established a visible presence in Cyrildene.[98] Many of the new arrivals are tenants in Chinese-owned homes in the suburb, and as the numbers of migrants have grown, so overcrowding became a concern in the area, with many non-authorised developments such as backyard accommodation.

Accone refers to the relocation of a popular Chinese noodle bar from Rockey Street, Yeoville to Derrick Avenue in the early 1990s as the initial catalyst for the development of this enclave.[99] The cluster process, however, must be placed in the context of the crime wave that drove Chinese business and residence out of the inner city in the mid-1990s, a period in which Chinese immigration was growing rapidly. The departure of the Jewish community from relatively secure and well-established suburb of Cyrildene – as part of large-scale

94 Ho, *Paper Sons and Daughters: Growing Up Chinese in South Africa*.
95 These advantages are spelt out in the advertising by a Chinese-only estate agency operating in the eastern suburbs – www.alice-hu-properties.co.za
96 See, for example, Park, *A Matter of Honour: Being Chinese in South Africa*; Gauteng Tourism Authority, 'Cyrildene – New Chinatown' (undated), available at http://www.gauteng.net/attractions/entry/cyrildene_new_chinatown/, retrieved on 16 June 2011.
97 This is the number of businesses provided by the CCCA.
98 Interviews with Mr Chen and Mr Diao.
99 D. Accone, 'Chinese Communities in South Africa', *The China Monitor*, 21 (August 2007), pp. 6–9.

emigration from Johannesburg in the mid-1990s – allowed Chinese entrepreneurs to purchase solid, face-brick houses on 1,000 $m^2$ stands at low prices. The cluster development must also be understood in the context of the pre-existing Chinese community in the eastern parts of Johannesburg that provided a ready market for Chinese business in the area.

By the end of the 1990s, the shops were mainly owned by Taiwanese, but today most of the shops are owned by mainland Chinese. The total number of the shops was around 40 in 2004 and it was 167 by mid-2011. The property prices have been increasing due to more Chinese nationals arriving and buying properties in Cyrildene.[100]

The arrival of established Chinese wholesalers in the suburb in the 1990s also attracted a growing cluster of retail outlets. The wholesalers were mainly from Taiwan and Shanghai - the latter having moved from the Hillbrow flats to the houses of Cyrildene after 1994 (Chenchen 2007).[101] Unlike in the inner city, much of the trade was with other Chinese and was fuelled by the growing number of immigrants. Goods were imported directly from China, with fresh produce being accessed from Chinese-owned farms on the outskirts of Johannesburg. Cyrildene soon emerged as a hub within a Southern African retail network with traders coming from afar to purchase wares from local supermarkets and wholesalers (although the wholesale functions were to shift to the large Chinese malls mainly in the Crown Mines area of mining belt in the 2000s).

The arrival of large numbers of Fujianese from around 2000 added another dimension to the Cyrildene cluster.[102] The numbers of small enterprises grew quickly but social and business tensions developed in the enclave.

The formation of the cluster had no guiding hand and Derrick Avenue emerged as a rather chaotic strip of grocery shops, restaurants, electronic outlets, teashops, cultural centres and massage parlours. Crime levels rose and the media ran sensational stories indicating links to rival triad or mafia syndicates and unusual crimes such as kidnapping and extortion.[103] In addition, much of the new business and building development was illegal in terms of zoning laws and building regulations.

By the mid-2000s, however, a gradual process of regularisation and community formation was underway. In 2003, a local business association was established to deal with safety and security concerns and this was formalised in 2005 as the Cyrildene Chinatown Community Association (CCCA). The CCCA established a Joint Police Office with the South African Police Services (SAPS) and one of our interviewees assisted business with the rezoning of around 60 sites along Derrick Avenue between 2005 and 2011.[104] The CCCA focused mainly on security issues, but since 2005, it has sponsored annual Chinese New Year festivities, which remains the only joint cultural activity in the precinct. The links between the many sub-communities represented in Cyrildene are fragile and high levels of distrust constrain the development of a community consciousness but the common vulnerability to crime sustains cross-associational linkages.[105] There is also now a more conscious attempt by the CCCA to develop a clear identity for the cluster, and in this regards the initiative to construct the traditional arch – supposedly the largest of its kind outside of China – to demarcate

100 Fujian Overseas Chinese, 'No. 1 Chinatown of Africa: Chinese Pedestrian Street in Cyrildene, Johannesburg, South Africa' (January 2010) available at www.fjqw.gov.cn; Interview with Mr Chen, executive director of CCCA.

101 Chenchen, 'Shanghai Mansion of Hillbrow' (18 January 2007), available at http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b60fd3c0100078m.html

102 According to X.P. Wang, 2/3 of mainland Chinese migrants after 1997 are from Fujian Province. See X.P. Wang, 'An Investigation of Lives of Chinese in South Africa', *Southern People Weekly* (2 August 2008).

103 P. Gastrow, 'Triad Societies and Chinese Organised Crime in South Africa', *Crime & Justice International*, 19, 76 (September 2003), pp. 12–18.

104 Interview with Mr Chen.

105 This sentiment was expressed in all the interviews we conducted.

Chinatown is a significant development.[106] The emergent Chinese cluster in Bruma, however, is institutionally separated from Cyrildene, and has not been subsumed within the demarcated Chinatown. Rather than having a number of loosely collaborating independent businesses, Bruma is dominated by a single Chinese developer who leases space to small-scale entrepreneurs. The Bruma story is told in more detail below in relation to the development of China Malls.

## New Wholesale-Retail Clusters (mainly around Crown Mines and Fordsburg)

Since the mid-1990s, Johannesburg has experienced a remarkably rapid growth in the number of wholesale, retail and distribution centres owned and managed by Chinese people. In mid-2011, we identified eighteen Chinese malls in Johannesburg, accommodating around 4,000 Chinese businesses (Table 2). Dittgen was the first academic observer to give serious attention to this phenomenon[107] but the rapid development and fluidity of this business landscape means that even his very recent work under-represents the scale of Chinese wholesale-retail space in Johannesburg.

The malls are linked into a chain of import, export and trading networks. Goods are sourced directly from China, with some of the malls having container facilities, and are then sold to retailers from across Southern Africa, but also directly to the public in retail outlets. The 'China brand' is openly used as a business strategy, with most malls having the word 'China' – or another culturally specific term such as 'Dragon' – in their name.

The malls are spatially concentrated in a band along Main Reef Road, which passes east-west along the old mining belt. There is a large cluster of malls in the Crown Mines/Fordsburg area near a major interchange on the M2 motorway, and between concentrations of low income consumers in Soweto and the Inner City. There are also malls further west in Ormonde and Maraisburg, and in the east at Bruma.

The story of Johannesburg's Chinese malls began in 1995 when a large group of Chinese entrepreneurs who had worked in the crime-ridden Inner City moved to Ellis Park, adjacent the international sports precinct, where a Chinese entrepreneur had purchased and refurbished an old Spar supermarket. A second Chinese mall was established in 1998, when a Chinese entrepreneur bought property alongside Bruma Lake, a declining waterfront development near Cyrildene, and established Oriental City. The third followed a year later when the owner of the Ellis Park mall hiked rentals, and more than one hundred aggrieved Chinese tenants left and collectively purchased a 44,000 $m^2$ warehouse in Crown City, a newly established industrial township on previously derelict mining land, which became known as China Mart (in Chinese it is called, *Baijia*, meaning 'one hundred families'). The next major development was Dragon City in 2000 in Fordsburg, which provided tough competition for Indian traders in the Oriental Plaza. In 2006, a Chinese entrepreneur well connected to ANC officials, purchased the fire-damaged buildings of a large Makro store further along Main Reef Road, and established the highly successful China Mall.[108]

Not all malls succeeded. Chinese entrepreneurs arrived in 1999 from the cities of Nantong and Yiwu, and opened large but short-lived malls. They battled immigration controls, and out-competed each other, driving prices down to unsustainable levels. Traders from

106 Interview with Mr Chen; *African Times*, 'China Gate will be Built in Cyrildene' (15 September 2011), available at: http://www.africantimes.info/newshow.asp?id=9432

107 Dittgen, 'From China to Johannesburg'.

108 Interview with Mr Chen, Mr Pon and Mr Diao.

**Table 2.** List of Chinese Wholesale Malls in Johannesburg (mid-2011)

| No. | Chinese Malls in Johannesburg | Year of Establishment |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | China City (Ellis Park) | 1995 |
| 2 | Oriental City (Bruma) | 1998 |
| 3 | China Mart (Crown Mines) | 1999 |
| 4 | Dragon City (Fordsburg) | 2000 |
| 5 | Wenzhou City (Fordsburg) | 2003 |
| 6 | Ormonde China Mall (Ormonde) | 2004 |
| 7 | China Mall (Main Reef Road) | 2006 |
| 8 | China Shopping Centre (Crown Mines) | 2006 |
| 9 | Goldreef Wholesale (Crown Mines) | 2009 |
| 10 | Afrifocus Centre (Crown Mines) | 2010 |
| 11 | China Plaza (Highgate, Main Reef Road) | 2010 |
| 12 | China Shopping Centre II – Yiwu (Crown Mines) | 2010 |
| 13 | China Mart II (Crown Mines) | 2010 |
| 14 | China City Mall (Westgate) | 2010 |
| 15 | Bruma Market (Bruma) | 2011 |
| 16 | Stellar Wholesale Mall (Crown Mines) | 2011 |
| 17 | Dragon City VI (Fordsburg) | 2011 |
| 18 | China Goldcrown Mall (Crown Mines) | 2011 |

(*Source*: Own observations and the local Chinese media: i.e. *China News S.A.*; *African Times*; *China Chronicles*)

Wenzhou, a city famed for entrepreneurialism, established the China Gate Mall near Kempton Park but it too closed down after a short period, but some traders remained and opened Wenzhou City in Fordsburg in 2002 which has successfully specialised in shoes and women's fashion.[109]

From around 2006, a wholesale-retail cluster began developing in the Crown Mines area. The great leap in mall construction happened however in 2010 and 2011, supported by a strong South African currency which allowed Chinese goods to be imported at low cost. Of the eighteen Chinese malls (and large mall extensions) we identified in mid-2011, nine had opened within the previous year-and-a-half. Most of these were in Crown City, but there was also the refurbishment of the ailing Highgate Shopping Centre as China Plaza (by the owner of China Mall) and redevelopment of the Bruma Flea Market as a space for semi-formal Chinese enterprise (by the owner of Oriental City).

The most recent developments suggest new patterns of Chinese space in Johannesburg. Although Chinese entrepreneurs and workers have long lived within or close to their business premises, this activity has largely been hidden from view. In 2010, however, a six-storey residential block for contract workers from China was built on the China Mall property. The Afrifocus development in Crown City was also opened in 2010 as a large mixed-use precinct incorporating warehousing, retailing, residential and recreational facilities. Afrifocus is set to double in size with a Phase II development, suggesting, as an emerging pattern, the development of a 'third Chinatown' in Johannesburg on old mining land.

The mall owners come mainly from a handful of cities along China's east coast and are linked into transnational circuits of business that are largely defined by city of origin. The tenants in the malls come mainly (but not entirely) from Fujian province.[110] Initially, there were too few tenants for the malls, but with the flood of Fujian immigrants from the early 2000s, the malls quickly filled.

109 Chenchen, *Nantongnese, Yiwunese, Wenzhounese* (12 November 2007) available at: http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b60fd3c01000bmo.html

110 Visits to Chinese-owned malls and informal discussions with entrepreneurs (between February and June 2011).




**Figure 4.** New wholesale-retail malls.

Although retail and wholesale entrepreneurs, who are dependent on cheap imports for their competitive advantage, are benefitting from the relative strength of the South African currency, competition amongst Chinese in Johannesburg is becoming increasingly intense. Owners are responding by opening new malls in other South African cities – for example, the owner of China Mall and China Plaza, opened China City in Durban in 2010 – while many tenant entrepreneurs are moving to small towns. The consequence is that Johannesburg

is gradually changing its function from being the primary site of Chinese malls in Southern Africa to being the key hub in a distributed network of Chinese malls across Southern Africa.

## The Sandton Cluster: The Space of China's SOEs

In the 1980s, the strategies of the Taiwanese government to move low productivity industries offshore coincided with the South African government's attempts to attract industry to the homelands.[111] From the mid-1990s, however, it was the strategy of the People's Republic of China (PRC), which was central to the production of Chinese investment space in South Africa.[112]

Initially, PRC investment in South Africa came mainly from the Shanghai Industrial Investment Corporation (SIIC), which was mandated by the central Chinese government to co-ordinate investment links with South Africa. This investment was confined largely to light industry in KwaZulu-Natal, following a pattern similar to the Taiwanese firms of the 1980s.[113] From 2007, however the spatial destination of China's FDI in South Africa shifted to Johannesburg, and especially to Sandton, which is Johannesburg's financial hub. The catalyst was China's entry into South Africa's financial sector through a mega-deal in 2007 in which the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) purchased a 20 per cent equity stake in the Johannesburg-based Standard Bank of SA for $5.6 billion (R36.7 billion). Standard Bank was of strategic importance to the PRC as it had a footprint in eighteen African countries and had identified billions of dollars in potential infrastructural investments in Africa.[114] Through the ICBC-Standard Bank deal, a Sino-Africa financial corridor had been created with Johannesburg as a strategic hub.[115]

Johannesburg's role was strengthened with the creation of the China-Africa Development Fund (CADF) as an equity capital instrument to support Chinese business expansion in Africa.[116] In 2008, a year after it was formed, the CADF opened its Africa office in Sandton.

The CADF gave assistance to several large Chinese enterprises in establishing a presence in South Africa, and a number of these followed the CADF to Sandton. By 2011, almost all the major state-owned banks in China had offices in Sandton.

China's SOE presence is not only in the financial sector. There is a presence in the mineral sector. South Africa is a challenging environment for Chinese investors in this sector because of tough local competition and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) requirements but the Chinese do have a declared interest in South Africa's deposits of minerals including iron ore, manganese and chromium.

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111 J. Pickles and J. Woods, 'Taiwanese Investment in South Africa', *African Affairs*, 88, 353 (October 1989), pp. 507–28.

112 T. Guliwe and S. Mkhonta, 'Chinese Investments in South Africa', in A.Y. Baah and H. Jauch (eds), *Chinese Investments in Africa: A Labour Perspective* (Windhoek, African Labour Research Network, 2009), pp. 300–32.

113 M. Davies, 'South Africa and China After One Decade of Relations', *China Business Frontier*, 1, 1 (April 2008), pp. 1–3; Guliwe and Mkhonta, 'Chinese Investments in South Africa'.

114 R. Kaplinsky and M. Morris, 'Chinese FDI in Sub-Saharan Africa: Engaging with Large Dragons', *The European Journal of Development Research*, 21, 4 (September 2009), pp. 551–69.

115 Many of the funding arrangements for Chinese-supported infrastructural development in Africa have been worked out in South Africa, including, for example, the funding of Zambia's new Kariba North Bank Power Plant which receives 85 per cent of its support from China's Export and Import Bank and 15 per cent from the Midrand-based Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA); and Botswana's Morupule B Power Station which is jointly funded by South Africa's Standard Bank and the ICBC. See www.ide.go.jp

116 *Ibid.*; L. Corkin, C. Burke and M. Davies, 'China's Role in the Development of Africa's Infrastructure', *Working Papers in African Studies*, School of Advanced International Studies, The Johns Hopkins University (2008), pp. 1–20.




**Figure 5.** Space of Chinese FDI in Sandton.

In 2009, Sinosteel, a SOE among the World Top 500 companies, purchased a seventeen storey building in Sandton, immediately adjacent to the South African headquarters of the China Construction Bank, for R500 million.[117]

There is also a strong Chinese interest in infrastructure and property development in South Africa. The China Railroad Group, Asia's biggest construction company, entered South Africa in 2010 when it commenced talks with Standard Bank and the South African government on the construction of a $30-billion rapid rail-link between Durban and Johannesburg. It also formed a consortium with a local company to develop Sandton Skye, three luxury residential and business tower blocks in the centre of Sandton.

Within the very short period, Chinese FDI made a substantial impact on the physical form of Sandton. With this investment also, a discreet Chinese residential community developed in and around Sandton, comprising mainly high end professionals. Many of these residents live in gated townhouse complexes, although Chinese have been purchasing large single-plot dwellings.

The presence of Chinese SOE investment space however, does extend beyond Sandton. Chinese SOEs are present in South Africa as part of an Africa-wide telecommunications strategy. Both Huawei Technologies and the ZTE Corporation have logistics hubs in Johannesburg, which are central to their expansion programmes in Africa. They work in partnership with South African telecommunication companies, with Huawei providing a network platform for MTN and Cell C and ZTE for the Vodafone Group. The Chinese

117 'China Expands Investment in South Africa and the Whole Continent', *China Stakes* (September 2009), available at http://www.chinastakes.com/2009/9/china-expands-investment-in-south-africa-and-the-whole-continent.html

presence in this sector is found together with their South African counterparts in the telecommunications belt in the north of Johannesburg towards Pretoria, with Huawei, for example, occupying a large campus in the north at Woodmead.

## A Note on Dispersal

Clustering is not a 'natural' cultural preference for Chinese. As one interviewee in the Cyrildene enclave put it, 'if we find opportunities, we will move'. In writing about Brisbane, Australia, David Ip 'contested and challenged that still recurrent, metonymic Western image of the Chinese preferring life in 'ethnic' urban enclaves, fundamentally detached from the lives of other ethnic groups'.[118]

In Johannesburg, there was dispersal in the early years of Chinese settlement to ensure access to the mainly black African market and later, as the Chinese entered the ranks of the middle class, there was dispersal into white suburbs. Today dispersal happens in response to intra-Chinese conflict and to the extreme levels of business competition in the enclaves.

Of the 172 firms in Johannesburg on the CIPC database, with the names 'China' or 'Chinese' in their title, 79 (46%) are outside the clusters. The dispersal is however not evenly spread, with some suburbs and business nodes (e.g. Cresta/Blackheath, Rosebank/ Parktown North and Fourways/Rivonia) attracting more Chinese firms than others. We also used the local Chinese media and the Internet to identify as many of the traditional Chinese enterprises in Johannesburg as possible. There are at least 50 Chinese restaurants, 20 traditional medicine and wellness facilities, and 10 Chinese supermarkets outside the clusters, with some Chinese business presence in at least 28 suburbs, often in shopping malls.

Interestingly, there is relatively little dispersal into historically black African townships. *Fah Fee*, however, remains popular in the townships, with almost all sections of Johannesburg's townships serviced by at least one Chinese, locally known as the 'Chinaman'.

In the specific patterns of concentration and dispersal, there are important differences between the Chinese diasporic communities and those of other communities. The entrepreneurial nature of the Chinese diaspora is a differentiating factor, but there are other communities including Indian, Pakistani, Somali, Ethiopian and Nigerian which also have a strong entrepreneurial presence in Johannesburg. While the Chinese have established mainly in the (previously white group areas in the) eastern suburbs and along the mining belt, the Ethiopian and Nigerian communities are concentrated within and immediately around the inner city, while the Indian, Pakistani and Somali communities have gravitated towards existing Muslim communities (in Lenasia and Fordsburg/ Mayfair) but also have a business presence in the townships. These different patterns require further exploration as does the network of linkages that do exist between transnational communities.[119]

## Conclusion

The new directions in migrant literature on South Africa and, in particular, the spatialising of de Certeau's notions of strategies and tactics, offer promising trajectories for future work. This literature reveals how the more powerful and the less powerful together shape the production of space in an ongoing interaction with the other. However, the study also reveals

118 D. Ip, 'Contesting Chinatown: Place-making and the Emergence of Ethnoburbia in Brisbane, Australia', *GeoJournal*, 64, 1 (2005), p. 73.

119 Chinese wholesalers for example are both an important supplier of cheap imported goods for other groups of transnational entrepreneurs and a major source of business competition.

that it is not enough to look at Chinese migrants through a bi-focal lens that portrays them as being responsive to the strategies of powerful agencies in the host society. The framework does need to be adapted to the highly differentiated nature of diasporic groupings such as the Chinese in Johannesburg, and the complex intersections between these groupings and the host society. Chinese migrants in Johannesburg are not an undifferentiated mass but are segmented in multiple ways and act differently depending on characteristics such as length of stay in Johannesburg, English proficiency, educational background, gender, age cohort, strength of transnational connections, and even place of origin in China.

The Johannesburg case reveals that transnational migrants are not always in a position of weakness in relation to their host society. In the Chinese community in Johannesburg, there are economically strong and politically connected individuals who operate in the realm of strategy. In their engagements with the South African state and South African business, 'power speaks to power'. Some of these individuals own large wholesale and retail centres and exercise economic power over low-income South Africans.

This realm of strategy is complicated by the shifting and ambivalent nature of the South African government's approach to Chinese migrants, but it is also influenced by the presence of an actively strategising Chinese state in Johannesburg through the investments and activities of the SOEs.

The Johannesburg case also reveals however, that the tactics or spatial practices of the subordinate are not always positioned in relation to the strategies of the powerful but also in relation the real and perceived threats of other individuals in the same social category. Chinese migrants may, for example, be leaving ethnic clusters and dispersing geographically because of conflict and competition with other Chinese.

The study depicts a complex and evolving set of social, economic and spatial interactions in a highly differentiated transnational community and directs us beyond a binary framework of strategy and tactics – in which host governments and communities are associated with the former and migrant communities the latter – towards a more complex conception of migrant space in relation to continually shifting and multi-directional fields of interaction and power relations.

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