A CULTURAL FOOTPRINT
IN AUCKLAND’S PUBLIC SPACE

By
Grit Fichter

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of the degree of
MASTER OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Unitec,
Auckland, New Zealand,
April 2013
Abstract

This thesis presents an interdisciplinary and exploratory study that seeks to identify transformations of the public space in Auckland’s Northcote Town Centre produced by the Northeast Asian cultural group, particularly its Chinese community. It makes an attempt to integrate the two fields of intercultural communication and urban planning that have been little explored together in the past.

In order to identify changes in the public space, this research investigates experiences, perceptions, events, activities and representations within the relationship between the Northeast Asian cultural group and the public space in the Northcote Town Centre, with an emphasis on cultural identity and belonging.

The overall phenomenological research design with particular focus on non-participant observations along with semi-structured interviews, archival research and photography provides effective measures to collect and analyse the data required to achieve the research aim.

Findings of this study indicate that the cultural transformation of the public space is significantly experienced through the changing uses of the public space. In this sense, this research reveals cultural and social leisure activities, such as Tai Chi, Chinese chess, Chinese dance exercises, reading, meeting and networking which are important to the Northeast Asian cultural group and especially its elderly members. Further, signs and manifestations are revealed through which this specific culture manifests itself in the context of New Zealand’s public urban space and its ‘immigrant gateway city’ - Auckland. This includes, for example, smells, sounds, activities, costumes, colours, and language signboards which also communicate cultural identity to the outside.

The results of this research indicate that a transformation of the public space has taken place. This change started in the late 1990s, when Northeast Asian owned business entrepreneurs settled into the neglected and rundown European-based town centre and turned the area into a colourful, food oriented ethnic precinct.
This study contributes to an interdisciplinary research field with a particular emphasis on Auckland’s future urban planning issues. It provides some recommendations for urban planners and policy makers to deepen the understanding of cultural groups as space-users and their aspirations, needs, priorities and demands to create responsive and successful public spaces in Auckland’s future public environment.
Declaration

Name of candidate: Grit Fichter

This Thesis entitled ‘A cultural footprint in Auckland’s public space’ is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of Master of International Communication.

CANDIDATE’S DECLARATION

I confirm that:

• This Thesis represents my own work;
• The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
• Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.
• Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: 2011-1228

Candidate Signature: …………………………………….Date: 08 April 2013

Student number: 1378653
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my wonderful family who believed in me and my ability and encouraged me to be the best that I could be.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank several special people for their phenomenal support during my often arduous master’s journey:

First and foremost, I wish to acknowledge the guidance and support provided by my primary supervisor, Dr Evangelia Papoutsaki. I have to thank her for many insightful conversations during the development of the ideas in this thesis and for her continuous support during the last year. Her constructive feedback encouraged me when I could not see the trees, let alone the forest.

I would also like to thank my associate supervisor Dr Elena Kolesova, who has always been there with her valuable comments and excitement throughout my whole research journey. In addition, I want to thank my third supervisor Paul Woodruffe for his expertise and input at the crucial take off stage of this thesis.

Especially, I like to thank Linda and David. They provided me with a generous amount of exiting ideas. Furthermore, I want to express my gratitude to Dean Wilson. He generously shared his enormous knowledge with me and lent me his tremendous support by introducing me to many of Northcote’s business owners and tenants. Also, I wish to thank the friendly and efficient staff members at the Takapuna Library, who patiently helped me source some of my data from the New Zealand Collection.

It is essential for me to also pay special thanks to my children, Elisabeth, Oskar and Ingrid, who would have loved to spend more time with me. I am especially grateful to my partner, Frank, who provided the safe environment for me to accomplish this work. His optimistic attitude has giving me the strength to finish this thesis. Love and thanks to my parents, Petra and Ulrich, who have been a continual source of support.

Last and most importantly, I wish to say thanks to friends and neighbours for the many meals they cooked for me and invaluable babysitting services.

To all of you and many others, thank you for the help and support I have received throughout the research process and the preparation of this document.
Table of contents

ABSTRACT ..................................................................................................................................................... I
DECLARATION .................................................................................................................................................. III
DEDICATION ..................................................................................................................................................... IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................................................................. V
TABLE OF CONTENTS ...................................................................................................................................... VI
LIST OF FIGURES .............................................................................................................................................. IX
LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................................................ X

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................................... 1
  RESEARCHER’S MOTIVATION AND BACKGROUND .................................................................................. 2
  RATIONALE AND PURPOSE ........................................................................................................................ 2
  RESEARCH QUESTION ................................................................................................................................. 3
  OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS ....................................................................................................................... 4
    Culture ......................................................................................................................................................... 4
    Northeast Asia and Northeast Asian culture ............................................................................................. 4
    Identity and cultural identity ..................................................................................................................... 5
    Public space ............................................................................................................................................... 5
  RESEARCH LOCATION ................................................................................................................................. 5
    Local and socio-cultural context ............................................................................................................. 6
    Historical and cultural context ................................................................................................................. 7
    Business and community facilitations ..................................................................................................... 10
  THESIS STRUCTURE ................................................................................................................................... 11

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................................................................. 12
  INTRODUCTION - PUBLIC SPACE AND COMMUNICATION .................................................................. 12
  PUBLIC SPACE .............................................................................................................................................. 14
    Definitions and characteristics of public space ....................................................................................... 15
  PLACE ATTACHMENT ................................................................................................................................. 16
    Symbolic meanings of place ..................................................................................................................... 17
    Cultural meanings of place ..................................................................................................................... 18
    Sense of place and place identity ............................................................................................................. 20
  INCLUSION, EXCLUSION AND ACCESS ...................................................................................................... 21
  INTERACTIONS IN PUBLIC SPACE ............................................................................................................. 22
  USE AND USERS OF PUBLIC SPACE .......................................................................................................... 25
    Concepts of cultures ................................................................................................................................... 28
    China’s culture .......................................................................................................................................... 30
    Cultural aspects ......................................................................................................................................... 31
    Change of public space and the ethnic precinct ...................................................................................... 32
    Use and users of public space in Northeast Asia and in ethnic precincts ........................................................................... 38

A cultural footprint in Auckland’s public space
IDENTITY APPROACHES .................................................................................................................. 44
URBAN PLANNING ............................................................................................................................... 46
GAPS IN THE LITERATURE AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS ...................................................... 48

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN ................................................................. 50
RESEARCH DESIGN ............................................................................................................................ 50
METHODOLOGY ................................................................................................................................. 51
The phenomenological approach ....................................................................................................... 52
DATA COLLECTION METHODS, DATA SOURCES AND SAMPLING ........................................... 54
Non-participant site observation ...................................................................................................... 54
Location ............................................................................................................................................ 56
Preparation ....................................................................................................................................... 57
Time and duration ............................................................................................................................. 57
Conducting non-participant observations ....................................................................................... 58
Semi-structured interviews .............................................................................................................. 58
Selecting, recruiting und sampling participants ............................................................................. 59
Preparation ....................................................................................................................................... 61
Length, time and venue ...................................................................................................................... 62
Interview procedure ......................................................................................................................... 62
Recording of interviews and transcription ...................................................................................... 64
Coding and background information of interviewees ........................................................................ 64
Photography ..................................................................................................................................... 66
Researcher-created visual data ......................................................................................................... 67
Archival data/historical documents and photography ..................................................................... 68
Found images .................................................................................................................................... 69
DATA ANALYSIS ............................................................................................................................... 69
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS ........................................................................................................... 72
PRELIMINARY LIMITATIONS ........................................................................................................... 74
CREDIBILITY ...................................................................................................................................... 75
SUMMARY OF RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY .................................................... 76

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS ..................................................................................................................... 79
THEME 1 - USES AND USERS OF THE PUBLIC SPACE ............................................................... 79
Exercise and play ............................................................................................................................... 79
Events and festivals ............................................................................................................................ 85
Reading and education ...................................................................................................................... 91
Meeting and networking ................................................................................................................... 92
Key findings – Theme 1 ..................................................................................................................... 94
THEME 2 - VISUAL SIGNS AND MANIFESTATIONS ................................................................... 95
Signage and advertisements ............................................................................................................ 95
Festivals ............................................................................................................................................ 99
Permanent installations and leisure activities .................................................................................. 101
Sound and smell ............................................................................................................................... 101
Key findings – Theme 2 .................................................................................................................... 102
THEME 3 - EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE ETHNIC SPACE .... 103

A cultural footprint in Auckland’s public space
Inclusion and exclusion.............................................................. 103
Experiences of change.............................................................. 107
Descriptions of cultural blending and acceptance ...................... 112
Experiences of the ethnic public space........................................... 115
Understanding of the Northeast Asian culture ................................ 118
Key findings – Theme 3............................................................... 122

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS ......................................123
THEME 1 - USES AND USERS OF THE PUBLIC SPACE ......................123
Exercise and play......................................................................... 123
Events and festivals.................................................................... 126
Reading and education................................................................. 127
Meeting and networking............................................................... 129
Answering the first sub-question............................................... 130
THEME 2 - VISUAL SIGNS AND MANIFESTATIONS .......................131
Signage and advertisements......................................................... 131
Festivals...................................................................................... 134
Permanent installations and leisure activities............................... 135
Sound and smell......................................................................... 136
Answering the second sub-question............................................. 137
THEME 3 - EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE ETHNIC SPACE .... 138
Inclusion, exclusion and access..................................................... 138
Experiences of change................................................................. 141
Descriptions of cultural blending and acceptance ...................... 144
Experiences of the ethnic public space.......................................... 146
Understanding of the Northeast Asian culture............................ 148
Answering the third sub-question............................................... 150

CONCLUSION............................................................................ 151

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS .............................................156
SUMMARY.................................................................................. 156
RECOMMENDATIONS................................................................... 158
STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS.................................................... 159
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.................................... 160
PERSONAL REFLECTIONS............................................................ 161
REFERENCES............................................................................ 163
APPENDICES............................................................................... 182
Appendix A – Information sheet (key informants)........................... 182
Appendix B – Information sheet (business owners/managers)........... 184
Appendix C – Participant consent form......................................... 186
Appendix D – Interview schedule (key informants)......................... 187
Appendix E – Interview schedule (shop owners / managers)............ 190
Appendix F – Observation schedule............................................. 195
Appendix G – Observation sheet example..................................... 196
List of figures

Figure 1-1: Aerial photograph of Northcote Town Centre and wider region ........................................... 6
Figure 1-2: Early years of development ........................................................................................................ 8
Figure 1-3: Northeast Asian ethnic precinct, 2011 ..................................................................................... 9
Figure 1-4: Sign at the entry of the town centre, 2011 ............................................................................. 10
Figure 2-1: Meanings of place spontaneously attributed by the respondents ............................................ 18
Figure 2-2: Shop fronts and Building facades in Hong Kong, 2006 ................................................................ 36
Figure 2-3: Signboards and advertisements in Shilong, China, 2006 ....................................................... 36
Figure 2-4: Signboards in Dalian, China, June 6-10, 2004 ....................................................................... 37
Figure 2-5: Chinese man practicing taijiquan in a Shanghai park. (Corel) ............................................... 40
Figure 2-6: Morning exercise in Shanghai, China. (Coral) ................................................................. 41
Figure 2-7: Elderly people enjoying a game of majiang [mah-jong] at Tongfo si .............................. 42
Figure 2-8: Chinese Chess in Columbus Park, Manhattan New York City, USA .............................. 43
Figure 3-1: Research/observation site ....................................................................................................... 56
Figure 4-1: Elderly people practising Tai Chi, 2012 .................................................................................. 80
Figure 4-2: Elderly men playing Chinese chess under the elm tree, 2011 ............................................... 81
Figure 4-3: Elderly exercising to music, 2012 ........................................................................................... 83
Figure 4-4: Playground area and basketball courts, 2011 ....................................................................... 84
Figure 4-5: Young children playing in Norman King Square and Pern Place, 2011 .............................. 84
Figure 4-6: Posters of different cultural events, 2011, 2012 ............................................................... 85
Figure 4-7: Dragon to Dragon Photography Exhibition at NorthART, 2012 ............................................ 86
Figure 4-8: Asian cuisine and entertainment at the Moon Festival, 2011 .............................................. 87
Figure 4-9: Performances at the Chinese & Korean New Year Festival, 2012 ...................................... 88
Figure 4-10: Beijing Olympics festival with mascots and the big screen, 2008 ..................................... 89
Figure 4-11: North Shore Concert band & North Shore Youth Symphonic Wind Band ...................... 90
Figure 4-12: Elderly people socialising and networking, 2012 ............................................................ 93
Figure 4-13: Language signboards on roofs, 2011 ............................................................................... 96
Figure 4-14: Signage on parapets and the edge of the canopies, 2011 ................................................. 96
Figure 4-15: Overhead signage on the underside of the canopies, 2011 ............................................. 97
Figure 4-16: Signage and advertisements in shop and restaurant windows, 2011 ............................ 98
Figure 4-17: Portable signage on footpaths and pedestrian space, 2011 .......................................... 99
Figure 4-18: Performances at the Chinese & Korean New Year Festival, 2012 ................................. 100
Figure 4-19: Elderly spectators at the Moon Festival, 2011 ............................................................... 101
Figure 4-20: Cultural leisure activities, 2012 ....................................................................................... 102
Figure 4-21: Pearn Crescent shops, 1957 / Santa Parade, 1959 ......................................................... 107
Figure 4-22: Pearn Place and Pearn Crescent, 1988 ........................................................................... 108
Figure 4-23: Ethnic businesses, 2011 .................................................................................................... 110
Figure 4-24: Northcote Town Centre ‘tidy up’ on Sunday, 21 August 2011 ........................................ 113
Figure 4-25: Permanent Chinese chess tables, 2011 ......................................................................... 119
Figure 4-26: Outdoor table tennis table, 2012 ..................................................................................... 120
Figure 5-1: Influences of the Northeast Asian culture on the public space ............................... 155
List of tables

Table 3-1: Group K - list of transcribed interviews.................................................. 65
Table 3-2: Group B – list of transcribed interviews................................................... 65
Table 3-3: Coding of the data ....................................................................................... 71
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The interdisciplinary\(^1\) field of communication studies and urban planning has emerged only recently and its contribution to a developing debate of growing interest is giving attention to the phenomena of economic globalisation, international migration and rapid urbanisation (Wood & Landry, 2008; Young, 2008). The proposed research project aims to contribute to the debate by analysing occurring relationships between an immigrant community and its communal public space. Carr et al., (1992) stress the existence of a universal ‘deep structure’ between people and public space, which shifts with culture.

In 1987, New Zealand radically changed its immigration policy and started marketing the strategy of a ‘New Zealand in Asia’ in the early 1990s (Trlin, Spoonley, & Watts, 2005) by politically and economically aligning the country with the Asian region. These political changes led to a “rapid diversification of migration into New Zealand, with the most visible new migrants being from Asia” (Collins & Friesen, 2011, p. 5). Considering the increased number of immigrants from Northeast Asian countries, like Japan, China, South Korea and Taiwan into New Zealand and in particular Auckland over the last two decades, this study investigates the impact of the Northeast Asian culture on Auckland’s public space.

\(^1\) Clarification of the term, interdisciplinary:

-Interdisciplinary research integrates information, techniques, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines to advance fundamental understanding or to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline. This interaction may forge a new research field or discipline (National academy of Sciences, 2004; Weingart & Stehr, 2000).
RESEARCHER’S MOTIVATION AND BACKGROUND

There have been several motivations for undertaking this research project. However, the strongest incitement stems from my personal interests in the fields of urban planning and intercultural communication. My interest in urban planning has accompanied me throughout my professional years as an architect. The second interest descended from a newly discovered enthusiasm for the realm of communications studies. After an attempt to overlap both fields of interest, questions about the relationship between cultural diversity and public space emerged. Moreover, it served as the point of origin that led me to formulate the topic of this study and excited me to take on this journey of writing this thesis.

What exactly made me think about conducting a research within this interdisciplinary overlap of my academic interest and expertise? As an architect I have been involved in urban planning projects in Germany and New Zealand, especially in the early stages of the planning process. These stages are particularly concerned with gathering and analysing information to provide important fundamentals to an architectural or urban planning project. The experience I gained while working on such projects made me understand that cultural aspects are important and influential factors which need to be identified, understood, and considered at the start of any planning process. Consequently, this study is about cultural aspects influencing public space, it is about searching for the ‘cultural footprint’ in public space.

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE

The initial entry into this topic is based on the composition of Auckland’s rapidly expanding cultural landscape. This consists of a great variety of ethnic groups, with a forecast of an even richer multi-cultural society emerging in the future as a result of increased migration and globalisation over a relatively short period of time.

The review of the relevant literature in this regard indicates a need for research that exposes emerging transformations in Auckland’s public spaces which might be traced back to the use of the space by cultural groups.
On these grounds this research sets out to explore the possible impact this increased population diversity might have on Auckland’s public space by studying its ‘cultural footprint’. This study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of influential cultural aspects that might be accountable for a transformation of public space.

This research focuses solely on the public space in Auckland’s Northcote Town Centre as it is predominantly used by a Northeast Asian community. Its aim is to identify and describe how members of that particular cultural group use the public space in the Northcote Town Centre to create meaning and context in their daily life. Furthermore, visual and non-visual manifestations of the presence of the Northeast Asian culture within the public space are investigated and people’s experiences and perceptions about the public space are analysed.

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

As indicated above, this research is informed by the study fields of intercultural communication and urban planning. An overlap of both fields constitutes an interdisciplinary study area from which this research’s specific topic and title emerged:

‘A cultural footprint of Auckland’s public space’.

This broad topic was narrowed down to a particular cultural group and a specific public space in Auckland, which led to the proposition of the following research question:

What is the impact of the Northeast Asian culture on the public space of Northcote’s Town Centre?

“While research questions inform what data we generate, that data in turn informs the questions we ask” (Emmel & Clark, 2011). Therefore, to identify the ‘cultural footprint’ and the cultural impact on the public space the researcher needs to gather data on the uses of the space, cultural manifestations in the space, and experiences and perceptions about the space. Thus the following sub-questions emerged:
How is the public space used by members of the Northeast Asian community?

What visual signs and other manifestations represent the Northeast Asian culture within the public space of Northcote’s Town Centre?

How is the public space of Northcote’s Town Centre perceived?

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

The key concepts in this study include terms that have varying meanings in different contexts and disciplines. To clarify the use of these terms and to avoid misinterpretations, the salient terms are defined in this section, subsequent to a brief discussion on the prevailing definitions of each term.

Culture

Although there is no standard definition of culture, this research has borrowed the following definition that sees culture as a “system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artefacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning” (Bates & Plog, 1990, p. 7).

Northeast Asia and Northeast Asian culture

The literature offers many ways of defining and describing Northeast Asia. The geographical and cultural region of Northeast Asia includes the People’s Republic of China, Japan, South Korea (Republic of Korea), North Korea (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea), Taiwan, Mongolia, Hong Kong (special administrative region) and Macau (special administrative region) as listed by Bedford and Ho (2008). According to Holcombe (2010), countries in this region are historically and culturally linked. They share a Confucian heritage, some common approaches to Buddhism and a writing system that is deeply imbued with ideas and meaning.

This study focuses on the Northeast Asian cultural group which includes people identifying with this previously described region. However, most of the people in the public space of the Northcote Town Centre are Chinese or of Chinese descent. Therefore, this research has a particular emphasis on the Chinese culture.
Identity and cultural identity

Identity is an abstract and multifaceted concept that plays a significant role in all communication interactions. In the context of this study the following definition was employed: “Identity basically refers to our reflective views of ourselves and other perceptions of our self-images ... our self-concept, who we think we are as a person or a group” (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2009, p. 154).

Cultural identity is “the emotional significance that we attach to our sense of belonging or affiliation with the larger culture” (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 214).

Public space

Definitions about public space can accentuate many different perspectives. This research used an urban planning perspective. Public spaces as defined by Madanipour (1999) are areas within towns, cities and the countryside which are physically accessible to everyone and where strangers and citizens can enter with few restrictions. Public spaces have the capacity to become “participatory landscapes”, core elements in urban life that reflect our culture, beliefs and values (Francis, 1989, p. 148).

RESEARCH LOCATION

This research focused entirely on the public space of the Northcote Town Centre, which functioned as the unit of analysis. “The Northcote Town Centre is located in the ‘heart’ of Northcote on Auckland’s North Shore” (Northcote Mainstreet, 2011). It includes Kilham Avenue, Pearn Crescent, Pearn Place, Norman King Square, Ernie Mays Street, parking areas, rear access to the shops, College Road, Lake Road and the Cadness Reserve [Figure 1-1].

According to Spoonley and Meares (2010), the Northcote Town Centre is an Asian-style ethnic precinct that adds to the city’s cultural diversity and is a very important focus and manifestation of the immigrant community. During the research process I discovered the Northcote Town Centre as a vibrant, colourful place with a distinctive community feel. I hope this aspect has been accurately depicted in this study.
Local and socio-cultural context

As pointed out by Spoonley and Meares (2010), the Northcote Town Centre is located within a lower socio-economic area on Auckland’s North Shore. The neighbouring suburbs Glenfield and Northcote both have a large Asian population. Nearly one third (28%) of the people living in these suburbs are of Asian ethnicity, compared with the Auckland Region (18%) and New Zealand (9%) (Auckland Council, 2010).
This is also reflected in the languages spoken in these areas. Close to 10% of people living in these communities do not use English as their first language. The most frequently used first languages other than English are Mandarin (Northern dialects), Sinitic (Chinese languages) and Korean. About 7,000 residents who live in these communities use these languages as their first language (Auckland Council, 2010).

**Historical and cultural context**

The Northcote Town Centre was developed by the Northcote Borough Council in 1958. The Council acquired the land from the Crown in June 1957 for 8,000 pounds (Northcote Mainstreeet, 2011). The shopping precinct was established in the late 1950s and early 1960s [Figure 1-2] to provide a commercial centre for the growing region and focal point for the community.

The site purchased by the Borough Council was subdivided to provide individual titles available on separate perpetually renewable leases. An overall centre plan specified lot sizes and basic building design (ibid.). The centre was officially opened in 1959 as one of the earliest pedestrian malls in New Zealand (Spoonley & Meares, 2010).

According to Spoonley and Meares (2010), the Northcote Town Centre was very much in decline during the 1990s due to the departure of various major tenants, such as Levenes, Mitre10 and Foodtown as well as the closures of two banks (ANZ/Postbank, and BNZ) in the Northcote Town Centre (Northcote Mainstreeet, 2011). As a result about 15% of the shops in the centre were deserted during that period, which led moderate rents by North Shore standards (Spoonley & Meares, 2010, p. 50).

These circumstances provided an opportunity for newly immigrated Northeast Asian business owners. The number of Northeast Asian-owned shops increased during the late 1990 and began to accelerate after 2000, when more China-born immigrants arrived on the North Shore (ibid.) [Figure 1-3].
A cultural footprint in Auckland’s public space

A survey conducted in 2007 showed that 75% of the businesses were Northeast Asian-owned, with a majority of China-born ownership. The survey also showed that half or more of the customers in these shops were Asian (Spoonley & Meares, 2010). Another survey that was carried out in 2010 uncovered a proportion of 89% Northeast Asian-owned businesses.

Figure 1-2: **Early years of development**
In its business plan Northcote Mainstreet (2011) lists the amount of work which has been done in cooperation with the Auckland Council to revive the area. Besides a major upgrade in 1997-98 which involved paving, lighting and planting, a strategy was developed for a multi-cultural niche through hosting multi-cultural events and recruitment of Asian businesses, such as supermarkets and souvenir stores. A very well-established community event is the Chinese and Korean New Year Celebration (ibid.).

The Northcote Town Centre promotes on its website the title of ‘Auckland’s Centre of Culture’ (Northcote Town Centre, n.d.), which also greets visitors of the town centre from a large sign at the entry of the Centre [Figure 1-4]. The North Shore City visitor’s guide (2011) advertises the precinct as the multi-cultural heart of North Shore City, where each morning groups practice Tai Chi.
while in the afternoons regular games of Chinese chess around the elm tree take place. The North Shore Times (2002, August 6, p. 9) also reports on those events and how Chinese Northcote residents change the face of Northcote with their games of chess out on the park benches under the following headline “Chinese make move to Northcote”.

![Northcote Town Centre entrance](image)

**Figure 1-4:** Sign at the entry of the town centre, 2011
(Source: Author, 2011)

**Business and community facilitations**

The Northcote Town Centre accommodates 89 businesses as well as medical practices, community organisations and public facilities (Northcote Mainstreet, 2011). Businesses established in the centre can be grouped into: 23 restaurants/cafes, 15 retail businesses, 15 personal services, 14 food businesses, 14 other services, 5 offices and 3 entertainment businesses (ibid.). The area has attracted many Northeast Asian owned businesses and provides a niche as a place for food and produce and Asian goods which serves co-ethnic customers as well as a new group of customers.

Some key tenants in the centre are Countdown, ASB Bank, Northcote Care Chemist, Tai Ping Trading Company (Asian Supermarket), Dahua Supermarket, The Tofu Shop, Royal Save Mart (Korean Supermarket) (Northcote Mainstreet, 2011). Several community facilities are represented, such as Northcote Library, NorthART Community Arts Centre, Northcote Citizens Centre, Plunket, and the
Citizens Advice Bureau is located in the centre. Auckland Regional Migrant Services, ESOL and Chinese New Settlers are users of the community facilities (ibid.).

**THESIS STRUCTURE**

This thesis is organised into six chapters.

Chapter 1 - provides an overview of the research project. It outlines the motivation for this study and the researcher's personal interest in the subject. It describes the background information, the focus of this research, the aim, the purpose, the scope and the location.

Chapter 2 - presents a review of the literature which provides the thesis with a theoretical and practical foundation. It outlines recent theoretical debates and the relevant literature on the relationship between public space and cultural identity, while it highlights the complexity of this research due to the inclusion of perspectives from more than one discipline. Finally, gaps within the reviewed literature are identified which indicate the need for further research.

Chapter 3 - discusses the methodological considerations which led to the choice of a phenomenological approach and the research design which is concerned with the selected data collection methods and the analysis of the data. It includes sections on preliminary limitations, ethical considerations and credibility of this research.

Chapter 4 - is structured into themes that emerged from the data and also support answering the research's sub-questions. This chapter presents the findings of this study and shows visual evidence. Key findings are highlighted and summarised in preparation for the subsequent discussion.

Chapter 5 - commences with a discussion and interpretation of the key findings of this research in relation to the relevant literature. Eventually, after a summary of the discussed themes the research question will be answered.

Chapter 6 - concludes by providing a summary of the thesis, recommendations, limitations of this study and suggestions for future research. The researcher's personal reflections are included in this chapter and will bring the thesis to an end.
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the cumulative thoughts of authors whose work is relevant to the primary topics central to the research question: What is the impact of the Northeast Asian culture on the public space of Northcote’s Town Centre? In addition this literature review identifies existing gaps in the literature. The review of the literature has constituted the theoretical framework and the position of the research project as well as concepts concerned with experiences of public space, the issue of inclusion and exclusion in public space, and cultural identity through the use of public space.

In consideration of the volume and diverse range of materials explored, this interdisciplinary literature review does not aim for a complete review of all literature available on the central topics. Also, boundaries of the literature review are not definable since in some areas of research the amount of literature available is ample while in others it is rather insufficient.

INTRODUCTION - PUBLIC SPACE AND COMMUNICATION

The reviewed literature which addresses the concept of public space has mainly been published in spatial sciences and in social sciences, such as geography, sociology and communication. Social theorists, such as Castells, Giddens and Lefebvre have identified substantial relationships between space and communications (Shin, 2009). Shin (2009) stresses the term ‘urban communication’ which is concerned with communication patterns in the urban environment and underlines liaisons between communication scholars, urban planners and policy-makers in a contemporary society (Gumpert & Drucker, 2008). The literature of the leading communication scholars provides a variety of interconnected views on the physical and social dynamics of intercultural communication in public space, which in the late 1990s developed into a debate of growing interest (Lahiri, 2010; Wood & Landry, 2008; Drzewiecka & Nakayama, 1998; Young, 2008).

Globalisation and international migration are held accountable for the current challenges within the existing political, economic, environmental, social

These new arrangements of cities have been differently categorised and conceptualised. For example: cities, attracting large numbers of immigrants have been conceptualised as ‘immigrant gateway cities’ (van Velden & Reeves, 2010), which have similar economic, social and cultural characteristics, as well as an ethnically diverse population, issues of identity, and the growing commonness of contested spaces (Brewer, 2005; Bridge & Watson, 2002; Keith, 2005; Peters, 2011). Based on that statement, van Velden and Reeves (2010) as well as Spoonley and Meares (2011) define Auckland as an ‘immigrant gateway city’. Another concept in the literature is the ‘cosmopolitan city’ (Lahiri, 2010), “in which there is genuine acceptance of, connection with, and respect and space for the cultural other, and the possibility of a togetherness in difference” (Sandercock, 2003, p. 2). The term ‘postmodern city’ describes a fragmented modernist city image, which is radically changed by a new urban geography based on specific cultural identities (Usher, 2002; Conzen, 1990; Drzewiecka & Nakayama, 1998; Gumpert & Drucker, 2008; van Velden & Reeves, 2010). The concept of the ‘intercultural city’ values diversity as a source of dynamism, innovation, creativity and economic growth (Wood & Landry, 2008). Friedmann (1986) developed a ‘world city’ hypothesis and observed that world cities are sites where large numbers of diverse people settle, interact and transform urban space. The relevant literature tends to categorise and conceptualise the new arrangements of cities and points out that any increased permanent or temporary immigration rate (Castles & Miller, 2003) implies that “immigrant minorities are reshaping the built environment of urban neighbourhoods and streetscapes of the cities in their host society where they settle” (Collins & Kunz, 2009, p. 39). On the basis of this statement, this research aims to investigate the transforming influence of the Northeast Asian community on the public space in Auckland’s Northcote Town Centre, which led to the proposition of the following research question: What is the impact of the Northeast Asian culture on the public space of Northcote’s Town Centre?
PUBLIC SPACE

Public space is widely considered as the study target of urban planning and urban design. As a topic, public space has been extensively discussed in the literature and includes, mainly the idea of democracy and the effects of global capitalism in connection with privatisation of space, consumerism, and cultural identity (Harvey, 1989; Low, 2000; Madanipour, 2010; Sennett, 2000; Sorkin, 1992; Zukin, 1995). The trend indicates that contemporary societies are not relying on town squares and plazas anymore. However, the existence of a successful public space is important for the social and psychological well-being of a community (Marcus & Francis, 1998). Sennett (1971) highlights this issue in a wider frame by stating that public space is a fragment of the public realm. Therefore, it carries a significant responsibility in maintaining the public realm which has been described by leading philosophers as a central pillar for democracy (Arendt, 1998; Habermas, 1989; Lefebvre, 1996). In this regard the reviewed literature identifies two significant themes in the contemporary academic discourse on public space. The pessimistic theme refers to the evident reduction of public space, due to the privatisation (Sennett, 1974, 1989; Madanipour, 2010) or thematisation (Bryman, 2004; Sorkin, 1992) of publicly owned space, such as enclosed shopping malls and theme parks, more and more surveillance in public space and tight regulations on access (Madanipour, 2010). Consequently, the public space transforms into a place that serves retail and business interests and may lead to exclusion of people who cannot afford to be in the place (Bryman, 2004; Sennett, 1974; Sorkin, 1992).

The second theme is concerned with public space that enables people from diverse groups to come together and to display their identities in public (Clark, Holland, Katz & Peace, 2009). The latter theme presents a paradox as it characterises public spaces as sites where on the one hand differences are eliminated and on the other hand differences can be celebrated (Mitchell, 2003; Sennett, 1974; Young, 1990; Zukin, 1995). By asking how the public space is used and perceived by members of the Northeast Asian community, this research aims to examine whether cultural differences may have been removed from the public space and whether others may get celebrated.
Definitions and characteristics of public space

Thus, since this study uses both concepts of place(s) and space(s), it is important to differentiate between place and space. Rantanen (2005, p. 54) articulates this important distinction: “In contrast to place, space is a much more abstract term; but at the same time it is related to place. ... [S]pace is a lived place; thus, through (inter)action and communication, places are transformed into spaces and become spaces of communication.”

In this study, the term space is used to refer to the public location and site researched. However, when referring to the social constructions or representations of the space, the term place will also be used. This is based on Tuan (1977, p. 35) who argues: “place is space infused with human meaning”.

The reviewed literature indicates a great variety of perspectives that assist our understanding of people’s perception of place (Manzo, 2005; Gustafson, 2001; Canter, 1997; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996; Agnew, 1987). Place, according to Canter (1977), is the result of the relationship between actions, conceptions, and physical attributes. His “facet theory” suggests four interrelated facets of place: functional differentiation, place objectives, scale of interaction, and aspects of design. Tuan (1977) suggests that experiences of places embrace perception, cognition, and affection whereas Relph (1976) highlights three elements of place, such as the physical setting, the actual activities, and the associated meanings. Both scholars indicate that place cannot be described as being the location of one object in relation to others. Only the integration of location and its meaning in the context of human action characterises the concept of place (Tuan, 1977; Relph, 1976).

Agnew (1987) investigates the relation between place and human behaviour and concludes that places are constructed by economic, institutional, and socio-cultural processes. He too identifies three basic components of place: the location which describes the role a place plays economically, the locale which constitutes the institutional setting of a place and the sense of place which involves the identities fabricated and the meanings of places (ibid.). Therefore, meaningful places arise in conjunction with society and as a product of social relations. They are geographically rooted and have a relationship with their social, economic, and cultural environment. Such places offer people a sense of place, a “subjective territorial identity” (ibid.).
According to Hester (1993), public places are referred to as a ‘sacred structure’ in local people’s life as they attach meaning to them. Hence, public places where people can meet and observe daily life are a significant component in people’s lives (Low, 2000).

Patterson and Williams (2005) note that the literature remains without systematic theory of place and frameworks and perspectives vary substantially. The relevant literature on the subject of place experience in relation to space focuses mainly on associated concepts, such as sense of place (Shamai, 1991; Hay, 1998) and place attachment (Altman & Low, 1992; Milligan, 1998), which are further explained in the following part of this section.

**PLACE ATTACHMENT**

In general place attachment has been described in the literature as a deep emotional bond or association developed by people towards a specific place or places over a period of time by means of positive interactions (Altman & Low, 1992; Giuliani, 2003; Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001; Milligan, 1998). Definitions of place attachment provided by the relevant literature highlight two different mergers within the concept: first, the emotional linkage of an individual to a specific environment which highlights the physical component and second, the social component which consist of social interactions that occur within a particular setting (Altman & Low, 1992; Hunter, 1978). Both aspects are respected in Milligan’s (1998) definition of place attachment. She incorporates the built and the social environments within a place by stating that “physical sites become stages for social interaction, stages that are both physically and socially constructed...place attachment is the emotional link formed by an individual to a physical site that has been given meaning through interaction” (ibid.; p. 2). For the purposes of this study the above definition of place attachment given by Milligan (1998) will be used, as it raises both the physical and the social components of place attachment.

The literature provides a great variety of terminologies and concepts of place attachment (Amin, 2002; Giuliani & Feldman, 1993; Gustafson, 2001; Jabareen, 2009; Manzo, 2003, 2005; Seamon, 1996), which is due to differing focal points on specific aspects of place attachment by various sciences. The relevant
literature indicates scholars often divide the concept of place attachment into two interrelated dimensions: place dependence or functional attachment (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981), and place identity or emotional attachment (Proshansky, Falian, & Kaminoff, 1983; Hunter, 1978; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). To summarise, attachment refers to affect while the word place refers to the “environmental settings to which people are emotionally and culturally attached” (Low & Altman, 1992, p. 5).

**Symbolic meanings of place**

Studies in social sciences, for instance, concentrate on symbolic meanings of places and aim to investigate the impact on people’s interactions (Altman & Low 1992; Cuba & Hummon, 1993; Greider & Garkovich, 1994; Gustafson, 2001). The social aspect as addressed in the literature, embraces place attachment in terms of social relationships, networks, and meanings. For example, Mench and Manor (1998) indicate that attachment is related to positive social interactions, whereas Gerson, Steuve and Fischer (1977, pp. 139, 140) state that “attachment to place refers to individual’s commitments to their neighbourhoods and neighbours” and the “rooting” of social networks. In this sense, place attachment is also believed to be beneficial for neighbourhoods as it may indicate future involvement and participation (Manzo & Perkins, 2006).

In his study on what makes places meaningful Gustafson (2001) asked interviewees to specify places they considered important and describe what these places meant to them. His analysis indicates that these meanings attributed to places by the interviewees can be traced within the triangle of self, others, and the environment [Figure 2-1]. This has been used as a framework for mapping the meanings of specific places and for comparing what meanings a place has for different social and cultural groups (Gustafson, 2001; Sixsmith, 1986).
Studies by Manzo (2005) and Gustafson (2001) highlight multiple dimensions that define place meaning. Dimensions, such as identity and interpersonal social relations are qualitatively oriented, whereas dimensions which are materially oriented relate to the physical environment and their characters, such as location and design (Jabareen, 2009). In her research Manzo (2005, as cited in Jabareen, 2009) concludes that places which are meaningful to people are not extraordinary and exceptional in themselves. Instead, such places are ordinary places that are “routine, experienced in everyday life” (Riley, 1992, p. 13, as cited in Jabareen, 2009, p. 93).

Cultural meanings of place

The literature on place meaning mainly focuses on the individual attachment to place, whereas shared meaning of place for ethnic, religious and other social groups, such as ethnic minorities has been significantly less
researched. Hetherington (1997, as cited in Jabareen, 2009), for instance, states that no place means the same thing for one group as it does for another. As highlighted by Kohn (2003, p. 25, as cited in Jabareen, 2009, p.94) “certain places are highly implicated in the process of forming identity and establishing solidarity”. The reviewed literature points out that some places have special meanings for specific ethnic groups.

This aspect of cultural meanings of places in everyday life is mainly explored in ethnographical and anthropological studies (de Certeau, 1984; Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). A significant amount of research investigating the cultural orientated concepts of place attachment has been done by the anthropologist Setha Low. In her work she highlights that individual affections are “embedded in a cultural milieu” that makes place attachment “more than an emotional and cognitive experience, and includes cultural beliefs and practices that link people to place” (Low, 1992, p. 165). According to Low (1992), place attachment is a symbolic relationship generated when shared cultural meanings are implemented into places. For example, Zukin (1995, as cited in Madanipour, Hull, & Healey, 2001) states:

[P]lace has been used as a signifier to establish new identities, in a culture which strives towards appreciating the multiplicity of identities and of tolerably accommodating difference. ...One of vehicles of constructing, or coming to terms with, a diversified society has been the qualities of places, where different groups have colonized different parts of the city. To these groups, the qualities of these places are closely related to their sense of group and individual identity. (p. 156)

Hence, place is an important component in the construction of social and cultural identities. Knox and Tayler (1995, as cited in Madanipour et al., 2001) state that spaces are socially constructed multi-layered places through to different meanings applied by different social and cultural groups. However, the attention given in the literature to how social and cultural groups create public space and use it as an agent “to encourage, facilitate, and organise themselves toward common understandings and collective action” is very marginal (Rios, 2009, p. 92). In this
regard, the question of how the Northeast Asian cultural group uses the public space in the Northcote Town Centre as an agent for collective actions is central to this research.

*Sense of place and place identity*

The literature on sense of place and place identity indicates a noticeable growing interest in the concepts of place attachment and place identity in the fields of applied social sciences, such as community development (Perkins & Long, 2002; Rowles, 1990), and urban planning (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Studies in the field of human geography and urban planning focus especially on the concept of sense of place (Amin, 2002; Manzo, 2005; Hay, 1998; Shamai, 1991; van Velden & Reeves, 2010) or the local “structure of feeling” (Agnew, 1987, p. 28), which is often referred to as the notion of emotional place attachment (Brown & Perkins, 1992; Altman & Low, 1992) and place identity (Proshansky et al., 1983). Proshansky et al. (1983, p. 60) define place identity as a subset of place attachment which they describe as a “pot pourri of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas and related feelings about specific physical settings”. This definition is supported by Hayden (1995) who describes place identity as intimately connected to individual and social or group memory. The dimension of sense of place and place identity includes notions, such as rootedness and insideness which are types of place attachment that take place over a considerable period of time and require intimate association with a particular place (Tuan, 1977, 1980; Rowles, 1980). Tuan (1980) indicates the existence of rootedness as a status in which the human personality fuses with a place. He points out that generating a sense of belonging and attachment has to be the main function of place (Carr et al., 1992). Relph (1976) supports this view by arguing that people wanting to be inside a place have to belong and identify with it. Gieryn (2000, p. 472) concludes that it is probably out of pragmatic utility that “people identify as places those spots that they go to for some particular purpose or function”. This research focuses especially on the use of the public space in the Northcote Town Centre and aims to identify for what purposes and functions the space is used by the Northeast Asian community.
INCLUSION, EXCLUSION AND ACCESS

Public space is described as socially produced (Arefi & Meyers, 2003; Castells, 1983; Lefebvre, 1991; Low, 1999) and seen as a force and expression of inequality, in terms of who is welcome in the space (Amin, 2002; Rios, 2009). The literature describing the concept of inclusion and exclusion in public space are identifying how space and the envisioned uses that determine certain planning practices can include or marginalise specific groups (Németh, 2008; Thompson-Fawcett & Bond, 2003). Inclusion and exclusion in public space can be regarded as recurring themes in the academic literature (Madanipour, 2010). When groups, organisations or individuals make or withdraw claims over space they are contesting the claim of others and encouraging a process of inclusion and exclusion (Madanipour, 2010; Holland, Clark, Katz & Peace, 2007).

However, claiming space and being seen in public becomes a way for different social groups to justify their right to be part of society (Holland et al., 2007).

Burman (2006) emphasises that in some cases intensive use of space by some groups may exclude others, causing the colonisation of space by dominant groups (Noussia & Lyons, 2009). For example, the dominant group may foster alliances, or may regard the other’s using the space as polluting the space (Popke & Ballard, 2004; Walzer, 1986). The sense of exclusion may turn public space into a site of fragmentation (Madanipour, 2004). For example, Peters (2011, p. 73) explains the concept of inclusion and exclusion on “leisure spaces” in Western societies which are described as “gendered, sexualised and racialised arenas”. These spaces are dominated by mainly white men while groups like women or ethnic minorities have little access and consider such spaces as risky (Green & Singleton, 2006, as cited in Peters, 2011). Such minority groups have to negotiate (Amin, 2002) their access which makes these spaces contested social arenas (Brewer, 2005; Bridge & Watson, 2002; Keith, 2005; Peters, 2011). In contrast public spaces are often regarded as places where differences can be removed or where differences are celebrated (Mitchell, 2003; Sennett, 1974; Zukin, 1995).

The literature relevant to the research topic highlights the importance to investigate exclusion and inclusion of different groups of people in relation of the
public space. Cattell, Dines, Gesler, and Curtis (2008, p. 547) summarise the tenor of the literature by stating that public spaces are “sites of division as well as cohesion, of negative as well as positive engagement, and of unequal power relations” (Brewer, 2005; Bridge & Watson, 2002; Keith, 2005). Tiesdell and Oc (1998) explain that public spaces, by nature, are first and foremost socially inclusive and pluralist. The inclusive public space possesses mutually supportive qualities of access (Benn & Gaus, 1983, as cited in Madanipour, 2010).

There are three kinds of access into public space: the physical, the visual and the symbolic (Carr et al., 1992). The physical access refers to everybody’s entitlement to access and to be physically in the public space. A physically well accessible space should be connected to paths of circulation and not feature barriers, such as gates, fences or walls. The visual access or visibility is important for people to feel free to enter a space or to identify possible threats within the space. The social access includes evidence or indications in any form that lead to suggestions about who is and is not welcome in the space. The latter quality is also called symbolic access which relates to the image of the space in the eyes of the intended users (ibid.). For example, the design quality of public spaces, installations or venues could keep some possible users away from entering the public space (Madanipour, 1998).

Tiesdell and Oc (1998, p. 648) state: “Environments, individuals and/or groups perceived either as threatening, or comforting or inviting may affect entry into a public space”. Madanipour (2010, p. 23) therefore, highlights the importance to “improve the environmental image and ambience of a public space to make it more welcoming and/or less intimidating to a wider range of social groups”.

**INTERACTIONS IN PUBLIC SPACE**

Neuliep (2009) investigates the concept of interaction and states that most scholars believe that interaction between people is a fundamental factor of communication. In this regard he highlights the significant role of the physical environment which includes geography, architecture, landscape design, and the climate of a particular culture in human behaviour and social interaction (Neuliep, 2009; Shin, 2009). From a different perspective Madanipour (1996) describes how
A cultural footprint in Auckland’s public space

public space is affected by the interaction between people and their physical environment (Yen & Syme, 1999). Based on this statement this research aims to discover interactions between members of the Northeast Asian community as well as between the Northeast Asian community and other cultural communities in a specific public space. This study intends to identify in what ways these interactions affect the public space in Auckland’s Northcote Town Centre.

The relevant literature discusses in various ways the relationship between human interaction and the spatial environment (Amin, 2008; Car et al. 1992; Madanipour, 1996; Memarovic, 2011; Neuliep, 2009; Shin, 2009). It is concerned with a wide variety of interactions, which can include family relationships (Peters, 2010) cultural groupings, local social connections and groups meeting through common interest (Holland et al., 2007).

Cattell et al. (2008) investigate aspects of interaction in public space which may contribute to creating, maintaining or forming social networks (Appadurai, 1996; Bernstein & Norwood, 2008; Spoonley & Meares, 2010) as key to a general sense of well-being. In their qualitative study Cattell et al. (2008, p. 556) concluded that “social interactions in public spaces, can provide relief from daily routines, sustenance for people’s sense of community, opportunities for sustaining bonding ties or making bridges, and can have a direct influence on well-being by raising people’s spirits” (Bernstein & Norwood, 2008; Holland et al., 2007; Memarovic, 2011). This view is supported by Fadda, Cortés, Olivi, and Tovar (2010) as they outline the importance of creating social networks and a sense of community by elderly people in reference to their urban environment. Especially associated with the public life of their villages, towns and cities are older people, and people who do not work or attend school (Holland et al., 2007). As proposed by Holland et al. (2007) public space provides people with an ostensibly neutral ground to interact with one another in the context of the whole community whether it is planned or unplanned (Carr et al., 1992; Lofland, 1998).

As Cattell et al. (2008) argue some people may appreciate being in a public space for reflection, while others develop a sense of belonging and gain satisfaction from perceptions of place attachment though interactions. Significant requirements for social interaction in public spaces are identified by Dines and Cattell (2006) which include regular use, familiarity (Blokland, 2003) with the
space, and the presence of provisions. Those provide a purpose to the space and encourage the social vitality in the space (Dines & Cattell, 2006).

Familiarity with the public space coupled with a sense of security and belonging is an important aspect in the literature on public space. For example: to get familiar with a public space Blokland (2003) and Peters (2010) both distinguish the significance of seeing and meeting other people in the space (Carr et al., 1992; Lofland, 1998). They emphasises that only by using spaces through involvement or participation people get familiar with the public space, which generates a sense of ease and may lead to social cohesion (Fischer, 1982, as cited in Peters, 2010). Cattell et al. (2008) support this view by referring to Georg Simmel who pointed at the sociological significance of embracing routines and practices since they generate a sense of security, well-being, belonging or feeling content (Saunders, 1986). For people to achieve a sense of inclusion and a feeling of community it is important to have opportunities for informal interaction enabled through the existence of local features, such as street markets, town squares, sitting out areas, or the walk to a school and workplace (Cattell & Evans, 1999; Cattell & Herring, 2002; Cattell et al., 2008).

The relevant literature raises the subject of space negotiation which is closely related to social and intercultural interactions often leading to tensions but not necessarily. Dines and Cattell (2006, as cited in Peters, 2010) maintain that various types of behaviour involving social interactions in a public space indicate how people negotiate the space. Lobo (2010) discusses stories of interethnic understanding and belonging in suburban Melbourne and emphasises that minor, less obvious forms of social interaction (Lechner, 1991; Featherstone, 1991) may create interethnic tensions, indifference and insecurity; however it may also generate curiosity, surprise, joy and laughter. For example: according to Putnam (2000), migrants can benefit from interactions with non-migrants because this can create feelings of acceptance. Dines and Cattell (2006) concluded from their research in East London that public spaces play a role in fostering interethnic understanding by providing opportunities for people to meet (Amin, 2002; Cattell et al., 2008). In addition public spaces can provide a place to socialise, relax, and learn something new (Carr et al., 1992).
The general tenor of the reviewed literature is that public space and the concepts of separation, social interaction and relationships within and between groups are very complex. Also it can be said that the way in which public space is negotiated and the forms and dimensions of interactions will continue to shape urban life (Hudson, Phillips, Ray, & Barnes, 2007).

Holland et al. (2007) state that differences between groups can result in self-segregation in the use of specific spaces (Amin, 2002). Hence, different communities or groups may share one public space, but due to perceived differences, prejudices, and behaviours they do not interact with each other (Holland et al., 2007).

**USE AND USERS OF PUBLIC SPACE**

Every public space has its unique interval or rhythm that is created by the use and users which frequently change on a daily or seasonal basis (Amin, 2008; Clark et al., 2009; Holland et al., 2007; Moles, 2008; Whyte, 1980). In their study Holland et al. (2007, p. 20) conclude that: “[S]easonality, time of day and the prevailing weather and light conditions” had considerable impacted on how a public space was used. For example, Whyte (1980) states in his classic study of New York’s plazas that seasons and especially sun or shade have an influence whether or not public spaces are successful (Carr et al., 1992). He concludes that people’s level of comfort would let them prefer to either sit in the sun or the shade at different times of the day (Whyte, 1980). Discussing the success of a public space Francis (2003, p. 15) highlights the significance of the use of space by different age groups “together and at different times of the day” as well as “a range of varied activities” that occur simultaneously in the space. This statement is supported by Montgomery (1998) who reasons that various activities and diverse uses, such as cultural, social and economic uses are crucial to a successful urban space (Garcia-Ramon, Ortiz & Prats, 2004; Francis, 2003).

Noussia and Lyon (2009) refer to public space as a location where group identity and urban social fragmentation and integration are expressed through the way in which the space is used (Young, 2008; Holland et al., 2007). Jakubowicz and Moustafine (2010) propose that cultural transformations of public space are
experienced through the changing uses of the public space. Ideally public spaces are “designed for a variety of uses, including unforeseen and unforeseeable uses, and uses by citizens who do different things and are prepared to tolerate, even take an interest in, things they don’t do” (Walzer, 1986, p. 470).

Lefebvre (1991) draws a clear distinction between the formal status of space - the “representation of space” and the ability of different groups to use space - “representational space”. He compares representations of space specifically to street signs which are guiding and commanding. They “serve to distinguish, but not isolate, particular spaces, and in general to describe a social space. They correspond to a specific use of that space and hence to a spatial practice that they express and constitute” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 16). As pointed out by Madanipour et al. (2001, p. 165): “A place can have multiple representations, each constructed by a person or a group, each with a different meaning, each with a different claim or direction. “Representational space” revolves around the images and symbols of our daily life which means it is a product of the space users (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33).

The reviewed literature allocates various different uses and practises to public space. Important for the usability of public space are distinctive physical features in public spaces which invite people to use them for their own activities (Franck & Stevens, 2006). According to Arefi and Meyers (2003), public space includes aspects, such as the suitability for gatherings, the possibility for free assembly, cultural exhibit and celebration and the development of individual and group identity (Bernstein & Norwood, 2008; Noussia & Lyons, 2009; Usher, 2002; Shin, 2009). In that respect the use of public space conveys deeply rooted shared values expressed in “public festivals, parades, cultural events, and political demonstrations” (Arefi & Meyers, 2003, p. 332).

Public space has been described as the focal point of different needs, demands and desires (Cattell et al., 2008). Overall public space is discussed in the literature for its suitability for gatherings and chance encounters, its political role in enabling free assembly in a democracy, its use for cultural displays and celebrations (Mitchell, 1996), its role as an arena in which individual and group identities are developed (Cattell et al., 2008), and its capacity as an place in which access is contested (Berman, 1986; Mitchell, 1995, 1996).
Arefi and Meyers (2003) consider that social and cultural differences in the forming and use of public spaces become apparent in two essential ways. Firstly, they may be expressed in a predominance of certain building types. Secondly, cultural differences can manifest themselves in the different use of outdoor spaces. In their study Cattell et al. (2008) analyse six public spaces in the East London suburb of Newham by first observing social and other uses in the public space and later identifying social and cultural variation in use and determining to which extent they were inclusive and shared spaces. An Australian study conducted by Giles-Corti, Broomhall, Knuiman, Collins, Douglas, Lange, and Donovan (2005) concludes that the use of public open space is positively influenced by accessibility (Francis, 2003).

Drawing on their previous research Carr at al. (1992, p. 91) list five different reasons for people to be in public space: “Comfort, relaxation, passive engagement with the environment, active engagement with the environment, and discovery”. For example, they identify the passive engagement which involves looking and observing with people-watching as a popular activity (ibid.). Physical activity in public space has been studied in several research projects (Huston, Evenson, Bors, & Gizlice, 2003; King, Brach, Belle, Killingsworth, Fenton, & Kriska, 2003; Cohen, McKenzie, Sehgal, Williamson, Golinelli, & Lurie, 2007). Those studies identify activities, such as walking, running and playing of team sports. Lee and Moudon (2004, p. 154) mention walking as “a preferred form of physical activity across different gender, age, and income groups. Cohen et al. (2007) argue that parents attending their children to a playground in a public space could be motivated to do physical activity through to the provision of adult-oriented exercise equipment (Baum & Palmer, 2002). Cohen et al. (2007) identify another aspect of physical activity in public space by reporting that organised events generate higher public participation rates in physical activity.

According to Tiesdell and Oc (1998), there is a close relation between leisure activities in public spaces and public safety. They explain that public space needs to be used in order to be perceived as safe and vice versa (ibid.).

Kumar and Matsusaka (2004, as cited in Noussia & Lyon, 2009) draw attention to migrants living in cities and the importance of public space in establishing social connections between migrants or migrants and institutions.
A cultural footprint in Auckland’s public space

(Castells, 1996). For instance, Stodolska and Yi (2003, as cited in Peters, 2010) emphasise that migrants can benefit from leisure activities as they help to loosen the initially felt discomfort in their new societies. However, Peters (2010, p. 421) states in that regard: “[S]ome basic skills must be present before leisure activities can contribute to a person’s well-being. For example, a common language is needed to use leisure as a way to interact”. Noussia and Lyon (2009) point out that public space is used by migrants as a place for trade, chores, leisure and networking. The literature clearly acknowledges the fact that the use of public space is vital to immigrant’s relation to their host society. Public space is used as a stage by migrants to display social and economic ‘exchanges’, construction of group identity as well as a ground to establish relations between immigrants themselves and between them and the host society (Castells, 1996; Madanipour, 2004).

In summary the literature values the importance of examining the needs people have on public space, “not only because they explain the use of places but also because use is important to success. Places that do not meet people's needs or that serve no important functions for people will be under used and unsuccessful” (Carr et al., 1992, p. 92). Hence, the overwhelming amount of literature reviewed focuses on investigating public spaces that have positive effects on people and accommodate an inclusive mixture of people and activities (Madanipour, 1999).

**Concepts of cultures**

In the context of public space and intercultural communication this study uses models and concepts of culture to discuss and explain research findings. Culture is described as a concept that is subconscious most of the time, and represents a set of shared values that manifest themselves in the behaviour and artefacts of a given group (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hall, 1983; Hofstede, 1991). In this sense culture enables us to make sense of our surroundings (Porter & Samovar, 1997), because people from one cultural group share the same cultural values, norms, and beliefs. Culture is also ‘programmed’ or learned (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hall, 1983; Hofstede, 1991). Hofstede (1984, p. 13) defines culture as “collective programming of the mind”. According to Hofstede (1994)
common features of a culture are manifested in a number of ways. He created the ‘onion’ model which helps to understand manifestations of culture in different layers of depth. The first layer is symbols which are words, pictures, objects that are specific to people sharing the same culture. The second layer is heroes. Heroes can be real as well as fictive people. The third layer is Rituals. They are habits, traditions, ceremonies and other forms of collective activities that within a certain culture are considered essential. The three above-mentioned layers are all part of the term practices. A practice for example is advertisement which manifests culture at different levels. (De Mooij, 2005). At the core of the model are values, or in Hofstede's words: “broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others” (Hofstede, 1991, p. 8).

Preferred communication styles have been conceptualised at the group level based on values (Hofstede, 1984; Schwartz 1994) and norms (Hall, 1977) to describe a cultural group. Such communication styles and their differences can be explained on the basis of various cultural concepts. Hall’s (1977) concept differentiates between high-context (HC) and low-context (LC) communication cultures. High- and low-context cultures differ in their approaches to power hierarchies, social relationships, work ethics, business practices and time management (Hall, 1977). Hall’s second concept is based on how people perceive time. He categorises cultures either as polychronic or monochronic (1959).

Hofstede (1984) assigns countries/societies to five cultural dimensions: 'power distance', 'individualism /collectivism', 'masculinity/femininity', 'uncertainty avoidance' and long-term orientation. Power distance is defined as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 1994, p. 28). Individualism/Collectivism highlights the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. Masculinity/femininity is a dimension to which individuals feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations” (ibid., p. 113). Long-term orientation was introduced in his later work. This dimension is linked with the work of Confucius Hofstede (1991). It is characterised by persistence, ordering relationships by status and observing this order, thrift, and having a sense of shame, whereas short-term orientation is
characterised by personal steadiness and stability, protecting your “face” (Hofstede, 1991).

Similarly to Hofstede, Trompenaars, & Hampden-Turner (1997) also consider values such as collectivism and individualism to characterise ethnic groups. Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997) developed the ‘seven dimensions of culture’ to show how to manage complexity in a heterogeneous environment. They state that all cultures confront similar problems and dilemmas, but all cultures differ in the solutions they find to solve these problems and reconcile the dilemmas. As it is the culture that determines how we act and what we value (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997, p. 27). A different approach to identifying cultural value differences is taken by Schwartz (1992, 1994). He distinguishes between value types and value dimensions. Many more concepts and models have been developed by various scholars but they are applied in this study.

China’s culture

China’s culture was greatly influenced by teachings of Confucius. His values describe the moral and non-religious ethic that favours ideal or virtuous behaviour of a man such as: “benevolence, righteousness, justice, propriety, trust, and sincerity” (Benoliel, 2009, p. 3). In traditional Confucian culture education maintains a high social value (Lett, 1998). Hofstede (2001) categorises China’s culture as collectivistic and Graham and Lam (2003) view China as an agrarian culture. Amongst others, valuing social networks is associated with collectivism (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002; Yeung & Tung, 1996). According to Hofsted (2006), China, has a traditionally collective, interdependent and high-contextual (HC) (Hall, 1977) culture as opposed to individual, independent, and low-contextual (LC) cultures, such as New Zealand. Chinese people are considered to have a polychronic perception of Time (Hall, 1959). In collectivistic cultures, people want to maintain one’s face as an appropriate member of a group and save the faces of the significant others in a similar manner (Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998).
Cultural aspects

The debate that focuses on cultural aspects relating to public space is particularly relevant to this research as it focuses on the cultural elements of immigrant communities they bring to the public space. Carr et al. (1992) stress the existence of a universal ‘deep structure’ between people and public space, which shifts with culture. Various research projects have indicated that public space is a mirror image of the cultural values and practices of ethnic groups and social classes (Arefi & Meyers, 2003). According to Rios (2009), space is locked-in different cultural values and associations enabling diverse groups to come together to display their identities in the public arena (Gieryn, 2000; Mitchell, 1996; Peters 2010; Zukin, 1995). In that regard Rios (2009) explains that cultural actions and activities in public space can be assessed through cultural identity structures, such as relationships between different groups or institutions. He also states in his study of Latinos and public space that culture has a constructive power to initiate a change in the use and fabrication of public space. This phenomenon involves “a self-awareness of group identity through attachment to spatial environments that can lead to empowerment” (ibid, p. 94.).

The literature indicates that scholars tend to interlink ethnic identity and communication (Jung & Hecht, 2004; Drzewiecka & Nakayama, 1998) as theoretical framework for intercultural communication in public space (Durovic, 2008; Baraldi, 2006).

The literature especially accentuates marginalised ethnic communities as the users of urban space and specifies their economic, cultural and political well-being. Rios (2009) discusses diaspora communities (Appadurai & Breckenridge, 1988, p. 95) and the importance of public space as it facilitates a sense of territorial identity for people who identify with, “either through birth, ancestry, or social imagination, a homeland other than the one they currently inhabit”. However the vast literature published on diasporas also cautions against the idealisations of ‘homeland public space’ (Appadurai, 1996; Cohen, 1997).

An important aspect discussed in the literature is highlighted by Arefi and Meyers (2003) as they expose the existence of spatial and distance discrepancies among different cultures based on their perceptions, experiences and understandings of public space and the use of it (Canter, 1997; Noussia & Lyon,
Jabareen (2009) indicates that some types of places are especially significant for specific ethnic groups. Therefore, they allow people to manifest thoughts and feelings and to cultivate their identity (Manzo, 2005; Gustafson, 2001; Canter, 1997; Shin 2009). There is a clear consensus in the literature that cultural values and norms play a significant role in how and why space is accepted, used and perceived differently. Ward Thompson (2002), for example, emphasises that different cultural groups have different perceptions of what is acceptable or safe behaviour in a public space. Young (1995, p. 268) states: “Because by definition a public space is a place accessible to anyone in entering the public one always risks encountering those who are different, those who identify with different groups and have different opinions of different forms of life”.

The appropriate literature by authors, such as Carr et al. (1992), Arefi & Meyers, (2003), Jabareen (2009), Manzo, (2005), Gustafson, (2001) highlights globalisation and international migration as catalysts in the transformation of public space because of groups with different cultural backgrounds occupying the city’s public spaces. As Amin (2002) points out, this also leads to opportunities of cultural destabilisation where people may adapt to a different culture through learning and break out of fixed relations (Hall, Coffey, & Williamson, 1999).

**Change of public space and the ethnic precinct**

Carr et al. (1992, p. xi) state: “As public life evolves with the culture, new types of spaces may be needed and old ones discarded or revived”. This phenomenon is discussed by van Melik (2008) who argues that changing public spaces reflect changes in society. The reviewed literature points out that change and evolution arising in different ways including public actions constitute an important quality of good public spaces (Carr et al., 1992).

Public spaces are very different according to their meanings given by different groups and their social, cultural, economic, and symbolic functions. Forms and meanings of public spaces are socially as well as physically constructed. Therefore, they cannot be seen as fixed (Semsroth, 2000). Consequently, public spaces are referred to as places that change due to changing dynamics of society (Burgers, 2000; Lees, 1998; Semsroth, 2000). Concerning this matter Tajbakhsh
A cultural footprint in Auckland’s public space

(2000) argues that public space is in a constant state of flux while it is becoming rather than being (Lefebvre, 1996; Massey, 1994).

In regard to ownership and disposition of public space Carr et al. (1992, p. 177) contemplate: “the right of disposition represents a form of ultimate control, encompassing and transcending the rights inherent in access, action, claim and change”. Grand (1999), for example, emphasises the emergence, creation and transformation of places due to groups, meeting and communities coming together in a public space. According to Noussia and Lyons (2009), only recent studies investigate the way in which migrants have transformed and shaped public space either as a shared space in which to spend leisure or “as homeless people, traders and peddlers, through the creation of informal labour exchanges” (Valenzuela, 2002, as cited in Noussia & Lyons, 2009, p. 602).

There is a strong consensus in the literature that immigrant entrepreneurship has shaped urban landscapes and changed them into ethnosapes (Appadurai, 1990), ethnic enclaves (Lin, 2010) or ethnic precincts (Collins, 2007) of leisure and consumption (Rath, 2007; Taylor, 2000). The term ethnic precinct is frequently used in the relevant literature and will be used for the purpose of this study. However, Gibson and Freestone (2002) also use related terms, such as ethnic districts and ethnic quarters in their analysis of cultural spaces in Sydney. Li (1998) has coined the term ‘Ethnoburb’. Ethnoburbs are described as suburban ethnic clusters of residential areas and business districts in large city regions. They are multi-ethnic communities in which one ethnic minority group has a significant concentration, but not necessarily the majority (ibid.).

Spoonley and Meares (2011) regard the development of ethnic precincts in Auckland as a manifestation of globalisation and migration which leads to the transformation of our cities. This perspective is shared by Rath (2007) describing ethnic precincts as a spatial format of the commodification of ethnically diverse cities. Collins and Kunz (2009) refer to ethnic precincts as fascinating spaces in which the relationship between ethnic diversity and public space in cities can be best investigated. Their research paper explores ways in which ethnicity shapes public spaces by investigating four ethnic precincts in Sydney. They conclude that immigrant entrepreneurs (Kloosterman & Rath, 2003, as cited in Collins & Kunz, 2009) play an essential role in the development of an ethnic economy (Light &
Gold, 2000, as cited in Collins & Kunz, 2009) and especially in the emergence of ethnic precincts (Rath, 2007) in particular in the metropolitan city. The literature points out that an ethnic precinct might evolve from clusters of immigrant entrepreneurs in a street, a suburb or another area (Collins, Gibson, Alcorso, Tait, & Castles, 1995; Light & Gold, 2000; Kloosterman & Rath, 2003; Rath, 2000; Waldinger, Aldrich, Ward, & Associates, 1990).

Ethnic precincts play several roles for migrants who have left their established networks behind and have moved from familiar places to a new city where they often lack skills, such as a local language (Spoonley & Meares, 2011). Sales, Hatziprokopiou, Christiansen, D’Angelo, Liang, Lin, and Montagna (2008, as cited in Spoonley & Meares, 2011, p. 6) emphasise that they “serve both newly arrived people and older people” by functioning as a “first access point and a source of support”. Because ethnic precincts provide migrants with an opportunity to talk in a first language, to purchase their cultural food as well as to access medical, financial, travel and real estate services (Spoonley & Meares, 2011). In their study of cultural districts in Sydney Gibson and Freestone (2002) conclude that ethnic districts, besides being areas of ethnic entrepreneurship, are also sites embodying cultural values and symbolic meanings of place.

The relevant literature identifies two significant phenomena in relation to ethnic precincts. First, ethnic minority groups and poor migrants occupy space that has been abandoned and deserted by locals (Smith & Williams, 1986; van Weesep & Musterd, 1991, as cited in Noussia & Lyons, 2009). And second, ethnic precincts are mainly based on their key features, such as the provision of ethnic food and ethnic restaurants (Rath, 2007; Warde, 1997; Warde & Martens, 1998, as cited in Collins & Kunz, 2009). Ethnic precincts carry often the label of ‘lived’ spaces of migrant communities (Dunn, 1998) and are respected as social centres for members of a community, as places for “meeting, shopping and eating” (Sales et al., 2008, p.6, as cited in Spoonley & Meares, 2011). Especially, eating is often what brings members of a community together (Collins & Jordan 2009). Ethnic precincts serve co-ethnic customers who like to go shopping within their co-ethnic community but they can also serve the non-ethnic market in which mainstream businesses are not interested (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Evans, 1989).
According to Zukin (1995), ethnic precincts are combinations of private and public spaces. Private spaces are owned by ethnic and other entrepreneurs; the spaces may be restaurants, cafes, shops and other businesses that are the main attractor of people to the ethnic precinct. By contrast streets, footpaths, malls, squares, are public spaces in the ethnic precinct (ibid.).

Conzen (1990) argues that despite the absence of major changes to the existing structure, form, and material, a distinct ethnic identity can transform an urban landscape through expression of occupancy, specific spatial use patterns, ornamentals, aesthetics and the attached meanings to such changes (Buzzelli, 2001). Ethnic precincts often feature ethnic symbols, design and iconography, which mirror the cultural orientation of the precinct (Collins & Kunz, 2009). Signage, motifs, ethnic symbols as well as the visible ethnic businesses at street level are the actual manifestations of the ethnic character in the space (ibid.).

Fernando (2007) uses the term Signscape in her research about New York’s Chinatown, a study with significant relevance to this research. She identifies several different levels of signboards on building facades:

- Over entry doorways, on and over awnings of retail stores and restaurants, on walls and so on. Sometimes small signboards for offices and other business on upper floors are clustered together by the entry of the stairway. … Moveable signboards are placed on the sidewalk. (p. 163)

In addition she observed that some signboards have large Chinese letters and small English lettering, while others are mostly in Chinese (ibid). These language signs are very important, since “many new immigrants as well as some older generations do not speak or read English. … They communicate a non-verbal message of ‘Chineseness’ of the neighbourhood” Fernando (2007, p. 171).

Fernando (2007) also suggests that such language signs tell anyone else that they are in Chinatown. Therefore, these signs are not only advertisement signs, but also manifestations of identity.

Dennis Witmer travelled as a photographer though China and observed public spaces and streets. He captured the colourful shop windows and street facades of Hong Kong, Dalian, and Shilong [Figures 2-2; 2-3; 2-4].
Figure 2-2: Shop fronts and Building facades in Hong Kong, 2006

Figure 2-3: Signboards and advertisements in Shilong, China, 2006
The use of colours, such as red, gold, blue and green is an important aspect as they have specific symbolic meanings in the Chinese culture (Fernando, 2007). For example: “[R]ed represents good luck and happiness; gold represents opulence, royalty, and power; green represents longevity; and blue symbolises the heaven” (Fernando, 2007, p. 147).

As much as visual features, non-visual features play an important role in characterising urban places. When public places are used in a cultural context, such non-visual features might be very prominent (Fernando, 2007). Fernando (2002, p. 181) explains that “[t]wo other most noticeable sensory modes present in the streets of Chinatown are smell and sound”. According to Edensor (1998, as cited in Fernando, 2007), sensory characteristics, such as sound and smell can be important to define the cultural identity of a public space. These sounds and smells in Chinatown represent the Chinese culture as they are products of cultural-specific activities and ethnic foods (Fernando, 2007).

Fernando (2007) identified different smells in New York's Chinatown. She lists: Chinese food, Chinese cakes, seafood and fish, fruits, incense and flowers and many more. In addition, she observed traditional Chinese music that reflects the cultural identity of the public place. “While contemporary teahouses and restaurants play Western music, other stores, restaurants, and fish markets play Chinese music. ... Sounds of traditional drumming from dance schools can be heard on Mulberry Street and Mott Street.” Fernando (2002, p. 191).
Ethnic precincts are also spaces in which ethnic festivals are staged and often ethnic community organisations are based (Collins, 2006; Collins and Kunz, 2009). For example, Fernando (2007) mentions annual cultural events, such as the Chinatown Summer Festival, the Autumn Festival, Lantern Festival, and the celebration of Chinese Lunar New Year as the most prominent and well-known annual event in New York’s Chinatown. These festivals are considered to mirror the cultural character of the ethnic precinct (ibid.). Overall, Fernando (2002) states that cultural activities, cultural festivals and events, ethnic sounds and smells as well as cultural visual features become important representations of the Chinese culture in Chinatown.

The reviewed academic literature concludes that ethnic adoption of public space and the subsequent changes administer a revitalisation of urban space. However, in his study on Toronto’s ethnic landscape Buzzelli (2001, p. 573) cautions that such succession may “involve both pride and tension”.

The literature also voices opinions, such as MacCannell’s (1999) who goes as far as calling ethnic precincts a reconstructed ethnicity and a staged authenticity through to the exploitation of signs, symbols, festivals and spectacles. Therefore, Collins (2007) points to fundamental problems of the credibility and authenticity of the ethnic precincts.

*Use and users of public space in Northeast Asia and in ethnic precincts*

In regard of the purpose of this research there is very little literature or research available that discusses the use of public space in Northeast Asian countries, such as Japan, South Korea (Republic of Korea), North Korea (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea), Taiwan and Mongolia. However, since this research focuses on identifying the use of the Northcote Town Centre’s public space by a growing Northeast Asian community and the subsequent transformation of the space, some literature investigating activities and uses in public spaces focusing on Hong Kong, the People’s Republic of China, Japan and New York’s Chinatown will be discussed in this section.

While explaining the phenomenon of Japan’s privately owned public spaces, Dimmer (2012) argues that the concept of public space originated in the
A cultural footprint in Auckland's public space

West and is closely related with the topics, such as civil society, democracy and publicness, which are new topics to the Northeast Asian region (Dimmer, 2012; Gaubatz, 2008; Latham, 2007; Miao, 2001). According to Hidaka and Tanaka (2001), the concept of public space relies on the differentiation between the Western concepts of "public" and "private" which did not exist in Japanese culture until the late last century. In this regard, Miao (2001, p. 16) argues that "Asian urbanites and their governments tend to show less attention toward the modern Western concept of a clear separation between public and private space" by pointing at the common phenomena of constant invasion of public space by private users. For example, he describes how “[s]hop owners extend the display of their merchandise into the sidewalks near their storefronts, while restaurants and workshops use the alleys outside of their back doors for work and storage purpose" (ibid.). This might be due to the high population density and tight private living spaces in Asian cities as well as less-defined property ownerships and more subtle law enforcement (ibid.).

Just as Dimmer (2012), who states that in Japan the umbrella term ‘public space’ was not popularly used before the mid-1980s, Latham (2007) and Gaubatz (2008, p. 73) also highlight the 1980s as the time of the rise of a new “cultural public space” in regard to China. Hassenpflug (2004, as cited in Gaubatz, 2008, p. 73) stresses that “the idea of civil public space is something very new in China”. Based on that statement and her observations, Gaubatz (2008) indicates that only in recent years such spaces become open to a variety of spontaneous and unplanned activities. Huang (1993, as cited in Gaubatz, 2008, p. 73) describes the new cultural public space as "a space intermediate between state and society in which both participated". In this regard Gaubatz (2008, p. 72) points out what effects China’s “post-reform modernisation and hyper-urbanisation” has on public space and its uses. She specifically examines the development of a growing public sphere in Beijing, Shanghai, and Xining and indicates in her study that “[r]ecreation, entertainment, and play of all sorts have become popular in urban China” (Gaubatz, 2008, p. 81).

The reviewed literature focusing on China draws attention to gardens and parks which were previously imperial gardens and accessible only by China’s elite. These spaces became open to the general public after the Chinese Revolution but
did not see much pleasure and entertainment before the 1980s (Latham, 2007; Gaubatz, 2008). Gaubatz (2008) emphasises that:

During the reform era, the gardens have become centres for an increasing diversity of recreational activities. Although these parks have been used for traditional recreational activities, such as Tai Chi for decades, it is only recently that they have attracted a wide range of activities – from traditional pursuits such as Tai Chi and bird-cage walking to new pursuits such as harmonica playing, matchmaking clubs, and ballroom dancing. (p. 73)

This view is supported by Miao (2001) and Latham (2007) who underline today’s intense use of public urban parks in China’s cities. As pointed out by Miao (2001) those spaces are used by qigong [Tai Chi] groups or as arena for exhibitions and festivals. Latham (2007) explores the daily life of modern China and affirms the importance of China’s public parks for people to go there and exercise. He describes that especially “early in the morning, across the country it is also common to see groups of people – often relatively elderly – practicing tai chi ... or other calisthenic exercises, with or without musical accompaniment” (Latham, 2007, p. 282) [Figure 2-5].

Figure 2-5: Chinese man practicing taijiquan in a Shanghai park. (Corel) (Source: Latham, 2007, p. 283)
However, Chen (1995, p. 353) mentions that especially the activity of qigong [Tai Chi] is not limited to parks since “[i]ndividual or group performances can be found in numerous public venues – markets, work-units, train stations, even streets” [Figure 2-6].

![Morning exercise in Shanghai, China. (Coral)](Source: Latham, 2007, p. 283)

According to Chen (1995, p. 351), when entering an urban park in one of China’s cities, “one immediately senses the relative tranquillity and slower pace of activity”. She refers to grandparents pushing along their grandchildren, old men gathering to smoke or chat, and people exercising or dancing in groups” (ibid.). Especially dancing is considered to be a very popular form of exercise by older people (Chen, 1995; Feuchtwang, 2012; Gaubatz, 2008; Latham, 2007; Liu, 2004). These people are friends or acquaintances which form an exercise group, “find a convenient location in a park – under a pavilion, for instance, if the weather may be bad – and spend half an hour or more going through various exercises or dances” Latham (2007, p. 282). Lu and Lu (2008, as cited in Gaubatz, 2008, p. 81) state that popular hobbies such as dancing “have grown in recent years beyond more traditional venues such as public parks”. For example, at least 500 non-commercial ballroom dancing sites have been reported in Beijing in 2007. These places include “sidewalks, after-hours parking lots, and urban plazas ... after the daytime traffic
A cultural footprint in Auckland’s public space

dies down” (Gaubatz, 2008, p. 81). An interesting point is recognised by Gaubatz (2008) when she explained:

All of these new activities have a very public nature – they are meant to be performed. In this context the spectators themselves, whether casual passers-by or regulars, participate in a new form of public activity as they witness the countless performances around them. In the larger parks, activities such as ground calligraphy or opera singing can draw crowds in the hundreds. (p. 81)

The literature investigating public spaces in China’s cities especially reveals the frequent use of public space for leisure activities such as mah-jong [Figure 2-7] and Tai Chi [Figures 2-5; 2-6] (Feuchtwang, 2012; Gaubatz, 2008; Latham, 2007; Liu, 2004;Rolandsen, 2011; Wang, 1995).

Wang (1995) explains the revival of mah-jong in the early 1980 in China’s public spaces. In 1949 the Chinese government considered playing mah-jong as gambling and discouraged its citizens from playing it. The study on leisure activities of older people in Taiwan indicates that particularly leisure activities in public places differ significantly from country to country which is partly due to
“[F]requent activities for Chinese older adults included listening to radio tapes, doing exercise such as Tai Chi, Yoga, and jogging” (Hawkins, May & Rogers, 1996, as cited in Wang 2008). Also, “[r]eading has continued to be an important form of leisure” Wang (1995).

Figure 2-8: *Chinese Chess in Columbus Park, Manhattan New York City, USA*
(Source: www.geolocation.ws/v/W/File%3AXiangqi%20in%20Columbus%20Park.jpg/-/en)

A case study that focuses on culture and identity of New York’s Chinatown by Fernando (2007) reveals some of the most distinct social activities of Chinese immigrants in public spaces that are in line with such activities highlighted above. She describes a section of Columbus Park that features built-in concrete tables, seats and benches under shady trees [Figure 2-8]. “Especially elderly members of Chinatown” take part in activities which are mainly of informal and social nature on a regular basis (Fernando, 2007, p. 112). As Fernando (2007) describes:

[S]everal men sit at the concrete table and play mah-jong, a traditional Chinese board game. While only two or four men play the game, other men gather around to watch the players. Each table is thus surrounded with a small crowd of men. In traditional neighbourhoods (in China), it is a
A cultural footprint in Auckland’s public space

common pastime for men to get together in public spaces to play mahjong. (p. 112, 113)

She also highlights the “gendered activities” which are rooted in a “highly gendered traditional Chinese society” (Fernando, 2007, p. 113). This is visible as women do not participate in any game at the tables. Instead they sit at the edge of the park and socialise with each other or other men. Socialising includes relaxing, reading Chinese newspapers, talking and meeting with friends. She underlines that this is a very common image for urban public parks in China (ibid.).

In contrast to the cultural importance of bright colours, it is very common in China’s public spaces, that many elderly people still wear their old and conservative black, grey or brown Mao jackets (Harper & Eimer, 2007).

As the literature on Chinese immigrants in New York and people in China’s cities indicates, activities in public space are important reflections of their Chinese culture and community. As highlighted in the literature this includes especially playing board games, socialising, Tai Chi and dance (Fernando, 2007; Feuchtwang, 2012; Gaubatz, 2008; Latham, 2007; Liu, 2004; Wang, 1995). The literature also highlights the aspect of gender specific activities in public spaces (Fernando, 2007).

IDENTITY APPROACHES

The review of the literature on identity and cultural identity has a particular relevance for this research since it lies within the field of intercultural communication and investigates cultural identity and its manifestations in the public space of the Northcote Town Centre. Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) propose to apply “principles of identity” for a conclusive understanding of the multi-layered dynamics between place and identity, especially in which ways self-esteem, self-efficacy, distinctiveness, and continuity influence people’s interactions with the environment. Identity has been defined in the literature in various different ways. It is an abstract and multifaceted concept that plays a significant role in all communication interactions. In the context of the research project the following definition will be employed: "Identity basically refers to our reflective
views of ourselves and other perceptions of our self-images ... our self-concept, who we think we are as a person or a group” (Samovar et al., 2009, p. 154).

The communication theory of identity, for example, refers to four frames of identity and their interpretation: personal, relational, enacted, and communal identities (Hecht, 1993; Jung & Hecht, 2004). A personal identity is an individual’s self-concept. Enacted identity describes an individual’s performed or expressed identity. Relational identity can be sub-classified into four levels. First, an individual develops and shapes personal identity by internalising how the individual is viewed by others. The second level describes an individual’s self-identification through relationships with others. Third, identities exist in relationship to other identities. Fourth, a relationship, itself, can be an entity of identity. The final frame is called communal identity and deals with how groups define their identities (Jung & Hecht, 2004). The latter frame also might be referred to as cultural identity: "the emotional significance that we attach to our sense of belonging or affiliation with the larger culture" (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 214).

A recent trend in approaching identity proposes a framework, where communication is a continuous event of constructing identity and ethnicity meaning both are dynamic, flexible and can never be fully completed (Drzewiecka & Nakayama, 1998; Jung & Hecht, 2004). Recent research projects within the framework of intercultural communication are mainly focused on investigating and analysing issues of perceptions, identities and meanings in the urban environment (Durovic, 2008; Jabareen, 2009; Noussia & Lyons, 2009; Arefi & Meyers, 2003; Manzo, 2005; Gustafson, 2001).

The review of the relevant literature reflects a particular focus on leisure activities in public space. Many identities are especially expressed in leisure behaviour in public places (Aitchison, 2001; Urry, 2002, as cited in Peters, 2010). Leisure activities are regarded as opportunities for people to display their lifestyle choice and hence state their cultural and social position (Soenen, 2006, as cited in Peters, 2010). This perspective has been investigated in the contexts of social and ethnic identity in relation to sport and leisure (Hollands, 2004, as cited in Peters, 2010; Johnson, 2008). According to Stedman (2006, as cited in Peters, 2010), identities are shaped during daily leisure practices and emerge in spatial settings.
URBAN PLANNING

Urban planning can be described as the “means for artificially differentiating urban space” (Shin, 2009, p. 423). While urban planning is fundamentally related to communications, it has been barely discussed in the communication field (Shin, 2009). Only recently have scholars recognised that finding satisfying urban planning solutions requires an understanding of how individuals and groups think, what they value, what motivates them, how they communicate, and why and how they behave in a certain way.

The literature highlights the growing need for policies and events that regulate, facilitate and encourage social inclusion and equity as well as reinforce participation in the urban planning process (CityScope Consultants & Trotman, 2006; Wood & Landry, 2008). According to Shin (2009), the central question within the newly developed collaboration of both fields is, how communication researchers can investigate urban space from a communication point of view and in what ways can the subject of communication improve the urban environment. He points out that communications research within the urban environment can be categorised into three domains: Firstly, communication by the urban environment refers to a person’s perception of place. Secondly, communication about the urban environment stands for media’s construction of place. And thirdly, communication in the urban environment negotiates human interaction in place (ibid.).

Van Velden and Reeves (2010) argue that symbols in public urban space as means of communication can convey a powerful message about cultural identity and representation. Planners can employ two forms of symbols, temporary and permanently, to communicate different cultural identities and provide for representation. Temporary symbols can be flora or installations, while permanent symbols, such as sculptures, paving patterns and place naming can be effective to give meaning to a space and to communicate cultural values (ibid.). According to Whyte (1980), public places can attract more people by providing comfortable places to sit, movable chairs, water and street food. In relation to the use of public space in China’s cities, Bauerfiend and Fokdal (2011) importantly state:
As a concept for public spaces in traditional Chinese cities has never existed, all approaches nowadays need to be regarded as experiments to import foreign spatial concepts. In order to make it easier for the local population to comprehend this unfamiliar spatial language, it is imperatively necessary to implement elements of functions that the respective urban population understands and can use. Taking the Chinese example, these elements could be game tables for Majiang (mah-jong) or cards. Areas for public dancing or Taijiquan (Tai Chi) or sports facilities, just to mention some examples. (p. 67)

In summary, there is little evidence of recommendations for urban planners in the research literature mainly due to the relatively young domain of enquiry and the complexity of the research field. However, the literature highlights the need for policies and events that regulate, facilitate, and encourage social inclusion and equity as well as reinforcing participation in the urban planning process (CityScope Consultants & Trotman, 2006; Wood & Landry, 2008). Bollens (2002), for example, points out that when planners have to face different public interests on issues of ethnicity or race, they seem to use professional coping skills that separate them from the main issues. He argues that “the role of urban planning and policy in ethnically polarised cities is problematic” (Bollens, 1996, p. 122) and indicates that planners and policy makers have to consider unique demands and necessities of daily urban life by different cultural groups (Bollens, 1998). Carr et al. (1992) make a point by cautioning that designers often do not understand user’s needs and design spaces to satisfy their own or the developer’s aims. Often the physical attributes of a space receive too much importance and the way the space is used is often overlooked and underestimated (ibid.).

According to Bernstein and Norwood (2008), every planning process that involves a diversity of cultural identities demands cultural sensitivity, as differences can lead to conflicts. One of the biggest challenges in planning urban space is the poor attendance in public meetings by minority ethnic groups (ibid.) and newcomers. Newcomers to cities are often perceived as strangers and regarded as a threat to old ways of thinking (Friedmann, 2002; Sandercock, 1998). This phenomenon is not absent in Auckland (CityScope Consultants & Trotman,
According to Lang (2005), once people's basic needs are fulfilled they look for affiliation with groups for affection, support and identity. Therefore, public space design should facilitate the fulfilment of people's needs. He argues that besides the need to belong to a group, people also want to belong to a place (ibid.). This thought is shared by Carr et al. (1992, p. i) by stating that: “three critical human dimensions should guide the process of design and management of public space: the users’ essential needs, their spatial rights, and the meanings they seek”. Therefore, the review of the literature strongly indicates that: “A deeper understanding of needs ... can aid designers and managers in creating most successful public open spaces” (Francis, 2003).

**GAPS IN THE LITERATURE AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS**

The review of the issue-related literature recognises the complexity of the various linked aspects and concepts relevant to this study and the research question. It illustrates ethnic identity is bound by and constructed through space. Furthermore, traditional social scientific approaches are not sufficient anymore to capture the complex dynamics of ethnicity and public space. Therefore, this study takes an interdisciplinary research approach which aims to capture the complexity and multi-dimensionality of concepts involved, such as public space, place attachment, cultural identity, and issues of inclusion and exclusion.

Literature specifically referring to the fields of urban planning and intercultural communication (Bernstein & Norwood, 2008; Wood & Landry, 2008) is scarce, mainly due to the relatively young domain of enquiry and the complexity of the research field. Research that has been undertaken within the last decade suggests a growing recognition. However, because of a number of critical gaps in the literature, some recommendations regarding further research have emerged within this interdisciplinary literature review.

Shin (2009), for example, emphasises that communication scholars have tended to overlook the effects of spatial arrangement on human interactions. That highlights a significant knowledge gap. He argues that despite different approaches and issues on urban space, the central question is how communication researchers can investigate urban space from a communication point of view and in what ways
can the subject of communication improve the urban environment (ibid.). According to Noussia and Lyon (2009), researchers have given little attention to the potential for a diversity of spatial relationships with hosts or relationships between migrant groups. They demand further research that investigates the possibility of multiple uses of public space by migrants (ibid.). In general, the literature exposes the need for future research that provides more insights in how public spaces function and the user groups they attract and facilitate (van Melik, 2008).

The trans-disciplinary review of the literature also reveals insufficient research of the spatial dimensions of ethnic precincts (Kaplan, 1998a, 1998b). As pointed out by Buzzelli (2001) there have been extensive studies, especially on the influence of financial resources in constructing the identity of public space. Other important influences such as ethnicity and urban ethnic landscapes are not considered serious subjects of study and are often downplayed (ibid.).

Research examining the relationship of cultural diversity and public space only marginally highlights the apparent link to the field of urban planning. There is little evidence of recommendations for urban planners in the research literature. On these grounds Lahiri (2010) and Ellsworth (2005) emphasise the need for further research which investigates the notion of belonging and to what extent places contribute to a sense of belonging.

Though in recent studies the physical environment has received more attention in the analysis of the relationship between ethnicity and public space, there is still a lack of clarity and understanding regarding the use of public space by cultural groups in contemporary cities and their possible impacts on the public space. What seems to be missing in the current debate is an inquiry into the transformation of public space due to different cultural values, norms and behaviours. This research seeks to fill this void in the literature by observing and investigating the use of public space by a specific cultural group and identifying particular cultural manifestations of a transformed public space based on cultural activities and practises. Thus, the goal of this study is to fill a gap in knowledge, to gain a clearer understanding of the relationship between public space and ethnicity.
CHAPTER 3   RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

Creswell (2007) accounts the importance of illustrating the research approach as an effective plan to enhance the credibility of the research. The first part of this chapter presents and justifies the chosen research design and its phenomenological approach. The subsequent part explains and illustrates the selected data collection methods such as semi-structured interviews, site observations, archival research and photography. This includes specifying sources as well as the purposive sampling strategy used to recruit interviewees. Moreover, processes and techniques of filtering and coding by identifying categories and themes to analyse the data are described. Finally, limitations of this research, ethical considerations and this study’s credibility are outlined.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The term research design is describes as “the overall structure and orientation of an investigation” (Bryman, 1989, p. 28). The aim of the research design is to seek a “holistic overview” of the context being researched (Miles & Hubermann, 1994, p. 6). As pointed out by Merriam (1991), the research design articulates the plan for gathering data and integrating information resulting in specific findings. Creswell (2005) states that when planning a research project three framework elements have to be considered: philosophical assumptions, strategies of inquiry and the procedures of data collection, analysis and writing. These elements justify the identification of a specific research strategy. There are many different ways of designing a research, depending on the perspective it takes. Contemporary scholars categorise two main research approaches: quantitative, also referred to as positivistic paradigm and qualitative, also known as phenomenological paradigm (Creswell, 2005; Bryman, 2008; Collis & Hussey, 2009). “The choice of which approach to use is based on the research problem, personal experiences, and the audiences for whom one seeks to write” (Creswell, 2003, p. 23).

The following sections describe and explain the methodology chosen for this research.
METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this research is based on van Maanen (1983, as cited in Collis & Hussey, 2009, p. 57) who advocates adopting a range of procedures that “seek to describe, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning ... in the social world”. A phenomenological methodology has been identified as the best approach to answer the overarching and central research question: What is the impact of the Northeast Asian culture on the public space of Northcote’s Town Centre? According to Bentz and Shapiro (1998, p. 104), “doing phenomenology” means capturing “rich descriptions of phenomena and their settings”, and that researchers must allow the data to emerge.

Drawing on Groenewald (2004) who states that ‘phenomena’ is derived from the Greek word phenomenon and means ‘appearance’ this research focuses on appearing actions, interactions and manifestations in the public space of the Northcote Town Centre. Furthermore, this study focuses on the interviewee’s experiences and perceptions in relation to the use of the public space.

Phenomenology as described by Seamon (2012, p. 20) is a philosophical approach that examines and describes phenomena, such as “things and experiences as human beings experience those things or experiences”. Accordingly, the research aims to describe and interpret human experience. Phenomenology as the overarching strategy in this research was chosen because of its focus on lived experience, the “life-world,” and the “foundations of meanings, things, and experiences” (Seamon, 1982, p. 119). The phenomenological methodology chosen allowed the use of a variety of data sources and data collection tools. The principle part of information was collected via semi-structured interviews and non-participant site observations, which were strengthened by data gathered through archival research and photography.

I determined these methods by asking myself what data needs to be gathered to answer the following questions: What is the phenomenon? What is causing the phenomenon? And how is that phenomenon manifested?
The phenomenological approach

Even though the roots of phenomenology can be traced back to Kant and Hegel, Vandenberg (1997, p. 11) credits Husserl as “the fountainhead of phenomenology in the twentieth century”. Husserl’s theory rejects beliefs that objects exist independently. In his view one can be certain about the appearance of things or how objects present themselves (Fouche, 1993). To attain certainty, everything beyond immediate experience needs to be ignored. Thus the external world is reduced to the matters of personal consciousness. Therefore, the only absolute information from where to start arrives from realities, which are treated as pure ‘phenomena’. Husserl named his philosophical method ‘phenomenology’, the science of pure ‘phenomena’ (Eagleton, 2008, p. 48). The simple concept of Husserl’s phenomenology is captured by his well-known phrase that we must return “to the things themselves” (ibid., p. 48).

Husserl (1970) emphasises that pure phenomenological research strives for descriptions rather than explanations. For Giorgi (1985, as cited in Stones, 1988), the word ‘describe’ operates a phenomenological research project. Hence, it is the aim of this research project to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon studied. Welman and Kruger (1999, p. 189) argue that “the phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved”. In this sense, this study takes the phenomenological approach by being concerned with the lived experiences of the people involved, or who were involved, with the issue that is being researched (Greene, 1997; Kruger, 1988; Kvale, 1996). In most instances the proposition of the phenomenological approach in this research project is to highlight the specific and to discover phenomena of experience and perception.

Spiegelberg (1982) frames the goal of phenomenological research as to enlarge and deepen understanding of the range of immediate experiences. Generally that converts into gathering ‘deep’ information and perceptions through qualitative data collection methods. To collect data on experiences and perceptions in relation to the public space semi-structured interviews were conducted. The phenomenological data collection method such as interviews are “particularly effective at bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives” (Lester, 1999, p. 1)
As part of the phenomenological paradigm, tools such as observations and the visual method of photography were chosen to gather data on actions, interactions and manifestations within the public space. As suggested by Harper (2003), the visual data was used to confirm and support the data collected during observations.

To enable accurate description and analysis of the data collected through semi-structured interviews and observations, the method of archival research was also adopted to support the data gathered via semi-structured interviews and observations. The need to conduct archival research arose from the need for historical data for the purpose of comparison. Comparing visual historical data with images taken during observations assisted in identifying the impact of the Northeast Asian culture on the public space.

The decision to choose a constellation of those four methods was based on Mason (2006), who suggests that creatively mixing methods can encourage thinking ‘outside the box’, generating new ways of interrogating and understanding the phenomenon.

Phenomenological approaches are based in a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity, and emphasise the importance of personal perspective and interpretation which includes the researcher as well (Lester, 1999). The phenomenological research paradigm acknowledges the involvement of relationships between the researcher and the researched. By being physically in the space while observing I was part of the reality I have studied - neutrality was impossible (Geertz, 1973). In this context, Silverman (2004) highlights the researcher’s expertise as an important factor. I have been aware that my own experiences with people in the public space, my attitudes towards them and my opinions about them and their activities influenced the design of this study, the methodology, the research question, the choice of data collection methods and the interpretation of interview data as well as the way in which findings are presented.

The methodology recognises the importance of a credible outcome. Therefore, this research project did not rely solely on one data collection method. It allowed for data triangulation between the utilised methods of observations, interviews, photography and archival research. Patton (2002) advocates the use of triangulation by stating: “triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods”
Whereas Creswell (2003) argues that triangulation means using different data sources of information to build a coherent justification for themes. The following sub-section provides further detailed information on the data collection methods used in this research project.

**DATA COLLECTION METHODS, DATA SOURCES AND SAMPLING**

To answer the research question, the research design respects the phenomenological explorative nature of this research. It involves a descriptive approach to examine experiences, perceptions and actions in regard to one cultural group associated with the public space in Northcote Shopping Precinct. Drawing on Carr et al. (1992), the use of the following data collection methods has been identified as an appropriate way to gather information, which later has been analysed to understand and examine the meanings that people construct and use to make sense of their experiences within a phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Justified by the phenomenological approach, non-participant observations and semi-structured interviews were chosen as the means to collect valuable data which assisted in answering the main research question.

Both methods allowed me to investigate qualitatively oriented dimensions, such as experiences, perceptions and activities rooted in cultural identity and cultural belonging. To enable an elaborate interpretation/analysis of the data collected through site observations and semi-structured interviews, the methods of archival research and photography were also adopted to support the data gathered via the methods of the former (Madanipour, 2010) in a supplementary way.

*Non-participant site observation*

Observation has become an established method in the field of social sciences (Angrosino, 2005; Wallace, 2005). It has been used in research exploring the actions of individuals in public spaces (Carr et al., 1992; Kellaher, 2007; Low, 2000; Southwell, 2007). The decision to carry out site observation was driven by the phenomenological methodology chosen for this research, which strives to get closer to ‘what really happens’ in the public space as an expansion on the collected
A cultural footprint in Auckland's public space

data via semi-structured interviews which focus on aspects of what people think happens, or what people say happens (Robson, 2002).

The term observation generally implies the act of seeing or watching something happen. Hence, it can be argued that observation is the oldest method of data collection known. However, as a means of gathering data in research, observation is much more than noticing or watching the display of a phenomenon. Marshall and Rossman (1989, p. 79) describe observation as: "the systematic description of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for study". Therefore, observation allows the researcher to portray an existing situation using the five senses, producing a written image of the situation under study (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993; Bailey 1996).

Scholars in social science who describe observation as a data collection tool tend to sub-categorise the method (Cooper & Schindler, 2001; Flick, 2006). For example, observational methods are classified by Flick (2006, as cited in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007) along five dimensions: Covert/overt, participant/non-participant, systematic/unsystematic, natural/unnatural situation and, self-observation/observation of others.

Observations within this research project were carried out to record basic data about the characteristics, location and activities of groups and individuals within the observation site. The type of observation used in this research project is most comparable with the distinction of a non-participant observation made by Crano and Brewer (2002). Non-participant observation implies to observe and to record without being involved (Collis & Hussey, 2009). In retrospect, it was difficult to carry out non-participant observation, even if I tried to isolate myself from the events. My presence within the space included me in the parameters of the social event, since I was not hiding under an invisibility cloak. Due to the length of the observation phase, I inevitably was recognised in some instances. However, I decided to use the term 'non-participant observation' as a comprehensive term in my research, since I did not get involved in any observed activities and interactions.

Non-participant observations were carried out to discover the following aspects: The spectrum of the public space uses (business, leisure, events);
characteristics of the users; actions and interactions of the space users; and cultural manifestations and representations within the public space.

Location

Creswell (2005) emphasizes the importance of understanding the central phenomenon when selecting the site where observations will take place. The research site [Figure 3-1] in which the non-participant site observations were carried out is known as the Northcote Town Centre or the Northcote Shopping Precinct and has been explicitly described in the research location section of Chapter 1.

Figure 3-1: Research/observation site
Preparation

As advocated by Creswell (2005), familiarising myself with the research site and seeking permission to carry out observations were important aspects of this project. Accordingly, permission was sought and received by the centre manager and time was spent on site in order to get a general sense of how the space was used and by whom.

I developed an observation sheet [Appendix G] that comprised a schedule (Cooper & Schindler, 2001) on which I recorded characteristics of people using the site, activities, and interactions between them (Creswell, 2005; Hall, 2008).

Time and duration

Wolcott (1988) advises researchers to observe long enough to see at least a full cycle of activity. He argues that a set of events usually happens in the course of a calendar year. However, because of the given time frame of this research, non-participant observations were limited to a period of six months from September 2011 to February 2012. This period was chosen deliberately for the reason to observe the public space particularly in the spring and summer months in which most of the outdoor activities and festivals take place. A total of 24 non-participant site observations were conducted to trace everyday actions, interactions and manifestations related to the people in the space. It was important to observe the space at various times on different days of the week and in all weathers to capture the change of the use and the users under such circumstances.

Most of the non-participant site observations were carried out between 9am and 4pm and lasted 30 to 45 minutes. Also a few non-participant site observations were conducted over a period of 3 to 4 hours while special festivals, such as the Moon Festival on September the 10th 2011 and the Chinese–Korean New Year Festival on January the 27th / 28th 2012 were celebrated in the public space of the Northcote Town Centre [Appendix F]. Festivals were included into the non-participant observations to capture the use of the public space and the special ethnic flair on those events days.
Conducting non-participant observations

Notes recorded on the observation sheet [Appendix G] included the age group, gender, group size, activities, interactions of people, also sounds, noises and smells as well as date, time, temperature and weather. Supportive notes included observations about the use of the public space. At each non-participant observation I walked along the same pathway through the public space. Photographs were taken of observed situations or cultural manifestations, which is also recognised as a supplementary data collection method within this research project and will be discussed later on in this chapter. All non-participant site observations have been carried out by me while walking through the site. When I was approached with regard to my observations, I always explained the purpose of my research to ensure that the nature and reason of my observation was understood (Collis & Hussey, 2009).

The phenomenological approach of this research project recognises the use of non-participant site observation as a data collection method, in relation to the issue of whose experience will be verbalised and analysed (Savage, 2000). In this research I observed other people’s activities, actions and events. Therefore, I have collected data of my own experiences. According to Grey (2004), observation notes include the researcher’s personal thoughts and interpretations.

The non-participant observations have provided data, which allowed me to identify recurring patterns of people’s actions and interactions in the public space. However, it needs to be acknowledged that what was observed is not claimed to be a complete or always entirely ‘natural’ representation of activities by groups and individuals.

Semi-structured interviews

Well-grounded in the phenomenological approach of this research, semi-structured interviews were identified as the best means to allow the interviewee to present their unique and personal experiences and explanations, while concentrating on the relevant themes of the overall research aim. The use of semi-structured interviews as data collection method enables the interviewer to seek both clarification and elaboration on answers given (Patton, 2002). This technique
allows for flexibility, creating a dialogue while the interviewees are allowed to answer on their own terms (ibid.).

Kvale (1996, as cited in Groenewald, 2004, p. 1-2) emphasises that in a phenomenological research approach an interview “is literally an inter-view, an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest,” where the researcher tries to “understand the world from the subject’s point of view, to unfold meaning of people’s experiences”. Bentz and Shapiro (1998, p. 96) highlight the central idea of conducting interviews in a phenomenological research by stating: “The intent is to understand the phenomena in their own terms - to provide a description of human experience as it is experienced by the person herself”. According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Lowe (1991, as cited in Collis & Hussey, 2009), semi-structured interviews are appropriate when the research project requires an understanding of a participant’s world view. The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they provide rich and detailed information. They allow for ideas to emerge that have not been predetermined by the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Selecting, recruiting und sampling participants

To reach saturation, Boyd (2001, as cited in Groenewald, 2004) considers two to ten participants as sufficient. This consideration is confirmed by Creswell (1998, p. 65 & 113), who suggests “long interviews with up to ten people” within a phenomenological research. In order to investigate the main themes of this research, which are primarily concerned with the experiences, perception, activities as well as cultural identity and its manifestations within the public space of the Northcote Town Centre two different groups of participants were recruited. These different types of research participants were grouped into Group K with eight interviewees and Group B with nine interviewees. Group K stands for key informants and Group B represents business owners and managers.

Hycner (1999, as cited in Groenewald, 2004, p. 8) emphasises that “the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice-versa) including even the type of participants” Based on Kruger’s (1988, as cited in Groenewald, 2004, p. 8) considerations purposive sampling has been chosen for this research project to identify the most significant participants. According to Denscombe (2007),
purposive sampling means ‘hand picking’ a sample for a specific research. He argues that the researcher already knows some parameter about people or events and selects participants on purpose because they are the most suitable to produce valuable data.

- **Group K:**

  The first group of participants comprised local experts or key actors, who are involved in the community and in the planning, design, and management processes of the public space provision. Seven participants were selected as key informants because of their role or key position. These experts provided information about the population, the use of the public spaces, and specific characteristics of the Northeast-Asian community.

  The method of purposive sampling was used, considered by Kerlinger (1986) as the most important kind of non-probability sampling, to identify key informants (Neuman, 2003; Sarantakos, 2005). According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 229), a good informant is “one who has the knowledge and experience the researcher requires, has the ability to reflect, and is willing to participate”. Key informants were selected because of their particular knowledge, experience or position. Sampling was purely based on my judgement and the purpose of this research (Schwandt, 1997), looking for those who “have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched” (Kruger, 1988, p. 150). It is important to select a sample purposely, focusing on the study target (Esterberg, 2002). A carefully chosen sample allows researchers to explore different experiences among various individuals (ibid.). I made contact with eight potential interviewees by e-mailing my request and giving them some information about my project. Seven people agreed immediately to be interviewed by me.

- **Group B:**

  A further nine interviews were conducted with people, who were grouped under the category ‘business owners/managers’. Two interviews out of this group were not transcribed due to poor quality of the recording and some language issues. However, they still contribute to the overall project as some information from those interviews was still considered along with the others.
The information given to me by one key informant helped me to recruit the most appropriate interviewees for Group B. Because I was interested in a cross-section of perspectives based on experiences and perceptions, purposeful sampling was used. The purposive sampling method ensured the sample was ‘hand-picked’ for this research. The selected participants in Group B included shop owners and managers as representatives of the users of the public space. The sample selection was based on my judgement and the purpose of this research (Schwandt, 1997). Phenomenological sampling strategy is concerned with depth and richness of experience which points to choosing those participants who can provide this information (Kuzel, 1992). It requires the inclusion of those best suited to provide the experience under investigation (Munhall & Oiler Boyd, 1999). The decision to recruit shop owners or managers instead of the ‘people on the street’ was based on the argument that they are familiar with the public space and the best observer of the daily interactions within the space.

Initial contact with the potential participants was made through a face to face conversation. I introduced myself, explained the terms of confidentiality, the format of the interview and the purpose of the interview in association with my request of recruitment (Denscombe, 2007). In addition I also contacted business owners via e-mail. However, both recruitment methods were particularly arduous. Quickly it became obvious to me that my open and straightforward approach to make contact rather frightened members of the Northeast Asian community. Many declined my request by letting me know that language would be an issue.

Preparation

The interviews were conducted after most site observations in the public space of the Northcote Town Centre were accomplished. Drawing on my observation notes and preliminary research sub-questions, two different semi-structured interview schedules [Appendices D & E] with open-ended questions (Sarantakos, 2005) for each of both interview groups (Group K & Group B) were developed. These schedules were used as interview guides during the interview sessions. The guides identified topic areas and each of the topic areas had a series of questions listed related to the broad topic. Yet, the questions following aligned to each topic were not meant to be asked as narrowly defined enquiries.
A cultural footprint in Auckland’s public space (Sarantakos, 2005; Neuman, 2003). I used these questions as reminders to prompt rather than direct questions and only when found necessary. The interview schedules provided me with a framework for a wide-ranging conversation incorporating the use of prompting or probing (Neuman, 2003) to stimulate answers.

Based on Bailey (1996) a participant consent form [Appendix C] to gain informed consent from the interviewee and two different information sheets [Appendices A & B] were developed and approved by Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC).

One pre-interview with a particular key informant was conducted prior to the observational data collection phase, since this person holds general information about the space identified as important for this research.

Length, time and venue

The length of each interview varied between 10 and 40 minutes and was carried out in English. All participants were asked to determine the best time and place acceptable to their work practices (Denscombe, 2007). Interviews were carried out by me in locations of the participant’s choice (Groenewald, 2004) which were either the interviewee’s place of work or a public venue. However, the location chosen by the interviewee did not always support the ideal concept of an interview setting free from background noise and interruptions.

Interview procedure

Interviews were conducted in an informal and relaxed atmosphere to make the participants feel at ease and create a relationship between the researcher and the participant. The probing techniques of non-directive probing highlighted by Sarantakos (2005) assisted the interview process by drawing upon the participants own feelings.

At the beginning of each interview the information sheet, which outlined the aims and objectives of this research along with the role and rights of any participants was handed out [Appendices A & B]. In addition participants also received a consent form [Appendix C] that was required to be signed prior to their involvement in this research. The interviewee was asked to give consent and
permission to allow me to audio-record the interview (Collis & Hussey, 2009) and use its content for the purpose of this study.

The use of open-ended questions allowed to pursue in-depth information around the research topic (McNamara, 1999) and provided the opportunity to follow up questions or to rephrase questions (Denzin, 1970, as cited in Silverman, 2004).

Each research participant was interviewed only once, although I had the opportunity to communicate and talk with some of the interviewees on a number of occasions preceding the interview and I conducted a pre-interview with one of the key informants, which was not recorded.

Seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight key informants (Madanipour, 2010) to gain an insight into the general situation involving the public space of the Northcote Town Centre. Six out of these seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with one participant. However, in one interview a second potential key informant was present who wanted to join the interview and was also recorded.

During the interviews questions concerning the aspects of work experiences in regard to the public space, the level of understanding of the Northeast Asian community (i.e. activities, needs, demands) and future goals (improvements, suggestions) were asked.

It was aimed not to exceed the time limit of 30 minutes for each of these interviews, as transcribing and analysing of the collected data was considered as time-intensive (Collis & Hussey, 2009). However, the execution of the semi-structured interviews with ‘key informants’ proved to be eminently challenging especially in respect of the time limit I allocated to this interviews. Open-ended questions and the way the interviews were set up gave the freedom essential for the research participant to tell their stories about the public space; however some interviewees had an agenda that directed the interview away from the main themes. As this research is of an exploratory nature it was not always easy to judge if the interviewee is drifting away from the main research focus.

Interview questions of Group B were focused on issues of use, identity, experience, perceptions and interactions in public space. The interviews with Group B participant were designed not to exceed 15 minutes.
Recording of interviews and transcription

Each interview was recorded onto a digital audio recording device and saved into separate folders, which were later transferred onto my computer, transcribed and analysed. Recordings were only conducted with the permission of the research participant (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Bailey, 1996). In order to guarantee confidentiality, each interviewee was assigned a code.

In addition to the voice recording interview notes were also taken by hand during the interviews by me. These notes provided me the opportunity to highlight specific issues raised by the interviewee as well as to record ‘visual clues’ such as facial expressions and body languages which are significant for understanding the participant’s thoughts (Denscombe, 2007).

The digitally recorded interviews were transcribed subsequent to the interview as soon as possible. This was particularly work and time intensive due to the participant’s different and distinctive accents involved. At the transcription stage all personal information that could potentially lead to exposing an individual’s identity was removed. To ensure confidentiality transcribed interviews are not included as appendices. However they are accessible by my supervisor and me.

Coding and background information of interviewees

This sub-section illustrates some background information such as interviewee codes, gender, fields of expertise and date of the interview.

- Group K:

  In order to keep the participant’s names confidential, interviewees were coded with a K for key informant and the numbers 1 to 8 standing for the particular person [Table 3-1].

  Two interviewees were involved in previous urban planning and design projects related to the public space of the Northcote Town Centre. Further interviews were conducted with managers and community coordinators.
A cultural footprint in Auckland’s public space

Interviewee code | Culture | Gender | Date       
---|---|---|---
K1 | Pakeha\(^2\) | male | 03-02-12  
K2 | Pakeha | male | 13-02-12  
K3 | Maori\(^3\) | female | 14-02-12  
K4 | Northeast Asian\(^4\) | female | 16-02-12  
K5 | Pacific Island/Pakeha | male | 17-02-12  
K6; K7 | Maori | female/male | 17-02-12  
K8 | Maori | female | 21-02-12  

*Table 3-1: Group K - list of transcribed interviews*

- **Group B:**

  In addition, nine semi-structured interviews with business owners/managers were undertaken in February 2012. As explained previously, seven interviews were transcribed. The same principle of coding interviewees was used to keep participant’s names confidential. Participants were coded with a B for business owners/managers and the numbers 1 to 7 signify the participants [Table 3-2].

Interviewee code | Position | Gender | Date       
---|---|---|---
B/1 | Chinese-born | male | 08-02-12  
B/2 | Japanese-born | male | 13-02-12  
B/3 | New Zealand-born. Third generation Cantonese-Chinese. | male | 21-02-12  
B/4 | Chinese-born | female | 21-02-12  
B/5 | Malaysia-born Cantonese | female | 24-02-12  
B/6 | Chinese-born | female | 24-02-12  
B/7 | Chinese-born | female | 24-02-12  

*Table 3-2: Group B – list of transcribed interviews*

---

\(^2\) King (1985, p. 12) defines Pakeha as "denoting non-Maori New Zealanders. Maori – English Dictionary (Briggs, 1990) defines Pakeha as "white (person)" as opposed to 'Maori'.

\(^3\) ‘Maori’ as a derivative defined by King (1985, p. 12) means “ordinary people” referring to the "descendants of the country’s first Polynesian immigrants”. He states that the term 'Maori' relates closely to “tangata whenua”: people of the land with connotations of ‘those who were here first’ and ‘host people” (King, 1985, p. 109).

\(^4\) Northeast Asian – people identifying with a Northeast Asian culture as defined in operational definitions.
**Photography**

While most literature on phenomenological research relies on language as the favoured medium for the creation and communication of knowledge, this research project also recognises that daily experiences are made of a multiplicity of dimensions, which involve a visual component. In this study visual research was used as a beneficial instrument that complements existing methods. Based on Gold’s (2004) investigation, images were used in conjunction with other methods such as observation, in-depth interviews and the inspection of archived documents and pictures (ibid.).

Eisner (2008) accentuates the worthiness of investigating the visual dimension, which cannot always be easily expressed in words, because not all knowledge is reducible to language (Gauntlett, 2007). According to Emmison and Smith (2000, p. 4), visual data collection is concerned with “any object, person, place, event or happening which is observable to the human eye”. Images may allow access to different levels of consciousness, communicating more holistically and through metaphors (Prosser & Loxley, 2008).

The beginning of modern visual research in social science was marked with the birth of photography in 1839 (Prosser & Loxley, 2008). Between 1900 and the mid-1960s both, still and moving photography became the predominant type of documentation, representation and focus of analysis in visual sociology and visual anthropology (ibid.). During this period the ideas of what constitutes real life were established through photography, whether or not the images generated were a correct and unbiased representation (ibid.). However, parallel to the evolution of visual research there was also a developing understanding about the importance of how researchers ‘make’ an image and the technologies involved, as fundamental components to the interpretations of the phenomena they are intended to display (ibid.). The phenomenological approach of this research acknowledges that descriptions and interpretations of visual data carry the bias of a researcher’s frame of reference, personal background, descriptions, purpose, and theoretical and conceptual framework (Pink, 2004).

Prosser and Loxley (2008) identify four different types of visual data: Found images, researcher-created images, participant-created images and
representations. This research project relies on two types of image based data: found images and researcher-created images.

Researcher-created visual data

Researcher-created visual data were collected by me through the means of photography during almost each of my observational walks within the public space of Northcote Town Centre by using a digital camera. This images were generated by me specifically for the purposes of the investigation – hence ‘researcher-created images’ (Denscombe, 2007). The researcher-created visual images, which are records of events, people’s actions, and cultural manifestations, are primary data sources for this research (ibid.). These images allowed identifying and recording present cultural manifestations and representations as well as people’s activities and interactions. Further, these photographs were used to identify the impact of the Northeast Asian culture on the public space by comparing them with historic photographs (found images). Rieger (1996, as cited in Prosser & Loxley, 2008) offers a thoughtful concept of ‘real-life’ scientific practice while documenting social change by using a systematic visual assessment of researcher-created images. He employs three main approaches: repeat photographs of the same site over time, repeat photographs of participants in the change process and the re-photographing of activities and processes. All three main approaches were adopted to gather valuable visual data in this research. Rieger (1996, p. 5) notes that "visual change and social change are generally related, and we can often draw useful insights about what is happening within the social structure from a careful analysis of visual evidence". This method is commonly employed in architecture and urban design research and is a useful component in this investigation. Drawing on Rieger (1996) the key driver of collecting visual data within this research project was to find the indicators and the manifestations of change. Prosser and Loxley (2008) highlight the efficiency of photography when studying social change since it enables the researcher to document a site with far greater speed and completeness in comparison to observing a site and taking field notes. In their view it might be virtually impossible to document visual changes without using photography as a means, as these changes can be very subliminal or multi-layered (ibid.).
Gold (2004) points out that photographs keep records about what an environment looks like, how it provides a context in which groups interact and who is present at events. He suggests that photography can be effectively integrated with other forms of data collection, even if analysing the visual data is not the focal point. “In such cases, photos are treated not solely as sources of data, but also as tools that facilitate the process of research more generally” (Gold, 2004, p. 1552). They have been reviewed many times to assist in coding and analysis of observation notes (Collier, 1967; Suchar, 1997).

Archival data/historical documents and photography

A review of documents is often used in historical research, which involves the study and analysis of data about past events or ‘phenomena’ (Letts, Wilkins, Law, Stewart, Bosch, & Westmorland, 2007). Doing historical research or gathering and analysing historical evidence is also known as historiography (Kreuger & Neuman 2006), which is often a research methodology on its own. However, in this study, data of historical evidence was used in a supplementary way. The decision to conduct historical/archival research emerged from the need for information about the historical period of the public space within the Northcote Town Centre to highlight the change and the transformation of the public space. The historical data collected helped in shedding some light on the issue of space transformation, since transformation or manifestations of change needed to be investigated through comparison between a ‘before’ and ‘after’, because “[t]hinking without comparisons is unthinkable” (Swanson, 1971, p. 145).

Four types of historical evidence are listed by Kreuger and Neuman (2006): primary sources, secondary sources, running records, and recollections. Primary sources are also called archival data, since they are archived in museums, archives, libraries, or private collections (ibid.). The archives of the New Zealand Collection at Takapuna Library presented primary historical materials relevant to my study. Archives are accumulations of documentary materials (papers, photos, letters, etc.) (ibid.). The archival research provided many articles of activities published in the local papers, news items on projects and social events as well as local business advertisements. However, I relied largely upon the search for
historic photographs from sources available at the New Zealand Collection. Achterberg (2008) reasons, that photographic images contain a wealth of information which can be used effectively in historical research. He highlights the opportunity to use visual images as evidence, for comparison and contrast, and for analytical purposes (ibid.). Collier and Collier (1986) take this idea one step further by stating that besides the use of photography as illustration or evidence there is also the concept of comparison of linking images of to gain historical insights. However, Posser (1992, as cited in Achterberg, 2008) cautions that photographs often are limited in their value as evidence because they usually are not accompanied by enough information to establish context. For this reason sufficient information was included to place a found image into its adequate context.

Found images

This research also uses some found images which are predominantly employed to identify change through comparison. These found images are archival evidence in the form of historic photographs and supportive newspaper clippings (Emmison & Smith, 2000). They constitute an important element of the research project as these found images hold information about former cultural manifestations and representation in the public space of the Northcote Shopping Centre.

All archival evidence in the form of images was sourced from the New Zealand Collection at Takapuna Library, either as photocopies or as digital data via the internet.

DATA ANALYSIS

This section outlines the way in which the data was analysed in the phenomenological orientation to sustain consistency by accounting ethical considerations and obtaining credibility. Hycner (1999, as cited in Greonewald, 2004) avoids the term ‘data analysis’ and cautions that ‘analysis’ has dangerous connotations for phenomenology. The “term [analysis] usually means a ‘breaking into parts’ and therefore often means a loss of the whole phenomenon,... [whereas
‘explicitation’ implies an investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole” (Hycner, 1999, p. 161). This study however uses the term analysis as it is an established term in the world of researchers.

Gray (2004) argues that phenomenology as a theoretical view is concerned with relatively unstructured methods of data collection. He highlights that data collection within a phenomenological approach is more likely to pick up factors that were not part of the original research focus (ibid.). That leads most likely to ‘rich data’ of people’s experiences or perspectives within their natural settings (Bryman, 2008).

Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p. 9) regard analysis as the “systematic procedures to identify essential features and relationships”. It is a way of transforming the data through interpretation. The analysis of such ‘rich data’ is the process of transforming a mass of raw data and arriving at a point of making sense of the data (Denscombe, 2007). Therefore, at that point it is important to understand how to convert words and sentences into meaningful data that contribute to knowledge (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1990).

In order to make sense of the raw data which has been collected through observations, interviews, photography and archival research, the data was reduced, organised, and themes and concepts were identified and clustered (Bryman, 2008; Collis & Hussey, 2009). This procedure started as soon as the process of data collection began and continued throughout the entire research processes, which supported the concept of continually refining and reorganising the research process. For example, Morgan (1997, as cited in Groenewald, 2004, p. 16) remarks that observation notes are already “a step toward data analysis”, because they involve interpretation. Therefore they are “part of the analysis rather than the data collection”. Early data analysis during the observation stage revealed emerging themes and concepts which were later redefined and reorganised many times over.

As pointed out by Collis and Hussey (2009) the amount of data had to be reduced, structured and detextualised in such a way that ‘final’ conclusions can be drawn. According to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 10), the first of their three elements of qualitative data analysis is described as data reduction. “Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and
transforming the data that appear in written up field notes or transcriptions”. They state that data need to be condensed to be handled efficiently. The bulk of collected data within this research project was condensed, filtered and coded by identifying themes, concepts and categories, which helped to sort, discard and reorganise data as outlined in the following table [Table 3-3].

The terms concept, category and theme are used in the literature in an interconvertible way. This research uses the term ‘category’ for the descriptive level of coding and ‘concept’ for a more abstract level of coded data (Bazeley, 2007). The term ‘theme’ is used to describe an integrating, relational idea (Richards, 2005) which emerged during the data collection process and confirms “the assumption that there is some sort of order in the data” (Marshall, 1981, p. 395).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses and users of the public space</td>
<td>Uses (activities and interactions) in the public space</td>
<td>Meeting and networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Utilisation of the public space (why, how and by whom?)</td>
<td>Exercise and play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading and education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Events and festivals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Use and Users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences, perception of the ethnic public space</td>
<td>Experiences of place meaning, change of public space</td>
<td>Description of cultural blending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusion and exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Characterising the ethnic space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Experiences of change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding of the Northeast Asian culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual signs, cultural manifestations, representations</td>
<td>Cultural identity and place attachment</td>
<td>Signage and advertisement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Festivals,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Activities,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sound and smell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-3: Coding of the data

Determining concepts, categories and themes has been extremely important throughout this research and analysis process which involved extensive reading and re-reading of texts, transcripts as well as the academic literature to
allow the data to be analysed in order to make sense (Bryman, 2008; Collis & Hussey, 2009).

This research especially followed Boyatzis’s (1998) recommendation that the review of the literature provides insights into the possible development of categories, concepts and themes, which are presented as findings in the following Chapter 4. A comprehensive analysis of the presented findings which discusses and validates them in relation to the relevant literature is demonstrated in the adjacent Chapter 5.

**ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical considerations have been involved in setting the boundaries of this research project and underpinned the decisions made about the research design. The methodology chosen acknowledged the necessity to facilitate ethical considerations, which apply to all phases of the research design. Key ethical concerns were focused on participation, confidentiality, consent, safeguarding personal information (Bryman, 2008; Wiles, Prosser, Bagnoli, Clark, Davies, Holland, & Renold, 2008) and giving something back to those who have participated in this study (Sarantakos, 2005).

Silverman (2005) highlights the values of the researcher as a form of contamination that exists to some extent in all research. Babbie (1995, p. 447) notes that “the problem in social research - and probably in life - is that ethical considerations are not always apparent to us”.

This research was designed to avoid deception or subterfuge in order to gather information. Further, the collected data has been used only for the purpose of this research project (Denscombe, 2007). Bailey (1996) points out that deception might preclude the researcher from collecting valuable insights. Instead honesty and confidentiality lessen suspicion and benefit a genuine outcome. Therefore, informed and voluntary consent is essential to any ethical research (Wiles et al., 2008). As outlined in the section Data collection methods, data sources and sampling, consent was obtained prior to conducting any of the semi-structured interviews. A fundamental element of informed consent is the quality of information that is provided to potential participants. The information sheets
[Appendices A & B], which were approved by the UREC as part of the ethics application was sent to participants via e-mail or handed out prior to any data collection. The information sheets provided the participants with the necessary key information to understand what is involved in this research in order for them to make a decision whether or not to take part. Further, participants were informed that they would be able to pull out of this study within two weeks of the interview process.

An important issue in this study was gaining permission of being in the public space of the Northcote Town Centre and observing the people using the space for a considerable amount of time. I informed the centre manager about my research and asked for consent to conduct observations within the public space, which was given to me.

Drawing on Denscombe (2007) the data collected via semi-structured interviews is anonymous and cannot be traced to any particular individual. Information on the participant’s names and places of employment were coded and accessible only by the researcher.

Ensuring privacy was a challenge when conducting the interviews. Therefore, when participants agreed to be interviewed, they could decide where they wanted to be interviewed.

Also, data was kept safe and secured through the use of a password on my computer at all times, to prevent unauthorized access to the data.

The discourse on visual data collection is fuelled mainly by questions of ethics, and moral conduct (Harper, 2003; Pink, 2004). There is limited agreement among ethics committees and visual researchers on ethical guidelines and practices in the fields of visual research and photography (Prosser & Loxley, 2008). However, most scholars agree on a general code of conduct that includes ethics and moral responsibilities: “[I]nformed consent, opposition to deception, privacy and confidentiality, and accuracy” (Edgar, 2004, p. 101). Since research has been designed to acknowledge ethical considerations I have not taken any close up pictures of people without consent (Prosser & Loxley, 2008).
PRELIMINARY LIMITATIONS

Any research project has unavoidably some limitations. Schulze (2003) alludes that no single research methodology is necessarily ideal and that by choosing one the research unavoidably incorporates loss as well as gain. The interdisciplinary approach taken in this research has been acknowledged as a possible limitation since the difficulty lies in determining what type of knowledge from what disciplines informs this research. However, this study has been designed to aim for the benefits which might outweigh any limitations based on this study's interdisciplinary approach.

The fact that a limited number of participants provided interview data does not threaten credibility because phenomenological research accepts small sample numbers Collis and Hussey (2009). Yet, the low numbers limit the adequacy of the participants’ experiences, meaning that more participants would have increased adequacy. However, that does not vitiate the findings, since in phenomenological research it cannot be concluded that experiences are typical. Therefore, this research does not produce generalizable data.

Furthermore, this research recognises the possibility that participants may have been not able to articulate and express their experience in the way they wanted to (Mason, 2002) which might be to consider as a possible limitation.

One particular limitation in this research is that I have been the sole researcher, who undertook the data collection and analysis. However, the phenomenological research acknowledges that all “analyses are limited and filtered through the lens of the researcher” (Hutchinson & Samdahl, 2000, p. 245). Hence, this study recognises that my own knowledge, experience and cultural background influenced this research project, which is a common occurrence in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This was taken into consideration during all stages and every effort was made to comply with ethical standards of academic research. This consideration led to the inclusion of multiple methods of data gathering, which enabled me to amalgamate perspectives from different sources and to enhance credibility through triangulation. However, Denzin (1978) cautions that triangulation within one methodological approach limits credibility because essentially only one paradigm is being used.
Wolcott (1988) advises researchers to observe long enough to see at least a full cycle of activity. He argues that a set of events usually happens in the course of a calendar year. However, that would have been beyond the timeframe of this study. Therefore, the observation period of this research was limited to six months focusing on the seasons of spring and summer. This highlights a significant limitation. Despite this limitation, the observations provided some important data for this study. Nonetheless, this research recognises the limitation of the timeframe. Therefore, it does not rely on observations only as a single source of data.

Posser (1992, as cited in Achterberg 2008) cautions that photographs often are limited in their value as evidence because they usually are not accompanied by enough information to establish context. For this reason graphics and pictures are attended by sufficient commentarial text.

**CREDIBILITY**

Guba and Lincoln (1989) maintain the fundamental relevance of the ideas of ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’, but at the same time highlight the demand for a different expression articulated to be congruent with qualitative research. They recommend the concept of credibility or ‘truthfulness’ (Robson, 2002), which in their view means recognisable and faithful descriptions of human experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Credibility or plausibility is a significant purpose of this study since it relates to whether what is read can be believed or is worthy of belief.

This study achieves credibility in a number of different ways. For one, the research question is aimed at a real phenomenon and the application of an appropriate methodology to the phenomenon provides this research with credibility (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, credibility will be gained by identifying and describing the research process accordingly. Therefore, the research process will be explained entirely and attention will be given to clarify that findings arrived from the collected data (ibid.).

Credibility is also achieved by applying multiple data collection methods such as in-depth interviews, observations, visual data and archival data (ibid.). Including as many aspects as possible of a phenomenon increases the plausibility
of descriptions and arguments. Since this research combines a variety of different data collection methods it allows for data triangulation (Denzin, 1970; Shenton, 2004) which subsequently emphasise the credibility of this research project (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rowan & Huston, 1997). According to O’Donoghue and Punch (2003, p. 78), triangulation is a “method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities in the research data”.

It is also believed that the sampling strategy used provides a basis for credibility, since each participant has experience of the phenomenon. Especially, ethical considerations in the data collection stage helped to ensure honesty in informants (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, the honest disclosure of the study’s limitations supports its truthfulness. Therefore it enhances the credibility. Boyce and Neale (2006) emphasise that by providing quotes from respondents, credibility is added to the information. Hence, the data analysis of this research makes use of as many quotes as necessary to achieve credibility.

Since this research applies an unconventional interdisciplinary approach I was mentored by three supervisors from two different departments which added credibility to my study (Cresswell, 2007). Many debriefing discussions helped me to widen my understanding of the research as my supervisors provided their expertise (Shenton, 2004).

**SUMMARY OF RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY**

A phenomenological methodology was identified as the best means to answer the research question: *What is the impact of the Northeast Asian culture on the public space of Northcote’s Town Centre?* Phenomenology as the overarching strategy in this research was chosen because of its focus on lived experiences. Accordingly, this study aims to describe and interpret human experience which generally converts into gathering ‘deep’ information and perceptions through qualitative data collection methods.

Justified by the phenomenological approach, non-participant observations and semi-structured interviews were chosen as the means to collect valuable data which assisted in answering the research question.
Non-participant observations were carried out to discover the following aspects: The spectrum of the public space uses (business, leisure, events); characteristics of the users; actions and interactions of the space users; and cultural manifestations and representations within the public space. The research site [Figure 3-1] in which the non-participant observations were carried out is located on Auckland’s North Shore and known as the Northcote Town Centre or the Northcote Shopping Precinct. A total of 24 non-participant site observations were conducted within a period of six months from September 2012 to February 2012.

Semi-structured interviews were identified as the best means that enabled the participants to present their unique and personal experiences, explanations, and perceptions in relation to the use of the public space. Open ended questions allowed for flexibility, creating a dialogue while the interviewees are allowed to answer on their own terms. Two different groups of interview participants were recruited. Group K comprised local experts or key actors, who are involved in the community and in the planning, design, and management processes of the public space provision. Further semi-structured interviews were conducted with people, who were merged into Group B under the category ‘business owners/managers’. Participants of both groups were selected because of their particular knowledge, experience or position. Therefore, the method of purposive sampling was used as the most important kind of non-probability sampling.

Both methods allowed me to investigate qualitatively oriented dimensions, such as experiences, perceptions and activities rooted in cultural identity and cultural belonging. To enable an elaborate interpretation/analysis of the data collected through non-participant site observations and semi-structured interviews, the methods of archival research and photography were also adopted to support the data gathered via the non-participant site observations and semi-structured interviews in a supplementary way. The need to conduct archival research arose especially from the need for historical data for the purpose of comparison. Comparison of visual historical data with images taken during non-participant site observations assisted in identifying the impact of the Northeast Asian culture on the public space and the transformation of the public space.
Qualitative data analyses were conducted to interpret the raw data, convey its meanings, and provide logical explanations of the studied phenomenon. In order to make sense of the raw data it was reduced, organised, and themes and concepts were identified and clustered. Later on a comprehensive analysis of the findings was discussed and validated in relation to the relevant literature.

Ethical considerations have been involved in setting the boundaries of this research project and underpinned the decisions made about the research design. The Phenomenological methodology acknowledged the necessity to facilitate ethical considerations, which apply to all phases of the research design. Key ethical concerns were focused on participation, confidentiality, consent, and safeguarding personal information.

This study recognised a variety of limitations such as the interdisciplinary approach taken, small sample numbers, the limited observation period of six months, and triangulation within one methodological approach. One particular limitation in this research was that I have been the sole researcher, who undertook the data collection and analysis. However, this study has been designed to aim for the benefits which might outweigh any limitations. The phenomenological research approach especially recognises that my own knowledge, experience and cultural background influenced this research project, which is a common occurrence in qualitative research.

This study aimed for credibility in a number of different ways. This was achieved, in particular, by applying the appropriate phenomenological methodology, by describing the research process accordingly, by applying multiple data collection methods which allowed for data triangulation and interdisciplinary mentoring. Furthermore, the awareness of ethical considerations and this research’s limitations provided a basis for credibility.
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

In this chapter findings of this research are presented in a descriptive manner congruent with descriptive phenomenology. As explained under the section Data analysis, the bulk of the collected data was condensed, filtered and coded by identifying themes, concepts and categories, which helped to sort, discard and reorganise data. Three key themes emerged from the data: ‘Theme 1 – Uses and users of the public space’, ‘Theme 2 – Visual signs and manifestations’, and ‘Theme 3 – Experiences and perceptions of the ethnic space’. Within each of these themes, findings were arranged in concepts and further broken down into categories. Table 3-3 of this study presents this sequence of data analysis.

Each theme is explored by analysing the combined findings from data gathered via site observations, semi-structured interviews, photography and historical documents. Given the phenomenological nature of this study, themes overlap and are not mutually exclusive. The chapter provides also a summary of key findings which are subject of the discussion in the following Chapter 5.

THEME 1 - USES AND USERS OF THE PUBLIC SPACE

This section sets out to present findings which were found to be of value in answering the first sub-question in this research: How is the public space used by members of the Northeast Asian community? The following sub-headings: ‘Exercise and play’, ‘Events and festivals’, ‘Reading and education’ and ‘Meeting and networking’, are synonymous with identified categories as outlined in Chapter 3 under Data analysis. Categories within Theme 1 are aligned with findings describing the use and the user of the public space in the Northcote Town Centre as well as the reasons and motives behind the use of the public space.

Exercise and play

The example of Tai Chi groups [Figure 4-1] exercising in the public space was mentioned many times by different interviewees. One participant said: ‘They play Tai Chi; it’s also a space that I can see a lot of people do their morning
While he spoke passionately about the Tai Chi groups as something done by Chinese people only, key informant K4 mentioned: “Things like ... the Tai Chi groups that you see running downstairs ... it’s not just confined to the Northeast Asian group of people. You get local people which could be local Kiwis coming in to join in” (K4). She pointed to the opportunity where people with a different cultural background can learn and understand something new, something different. “Numbers may be small but it’s good to see the start and it’s really nice to see it especially in the morning around 7 [a.m.] and ... you see new faces trying to follow” (ibid.). Informant K1 describes how Tai Chi, which started in the Northcote Town Centre, has grown and progressed. “There’s Tai Chi taking place most mornings. The various groups set up here, some of them have progressed and they’re now doing their Tai Chi from halls etc.” (K1). Astonished, participant K2 said: “You know some Pakeha New Zealanders don’t really use public spaces like that ... no, not in that way” (K2). She commented in a very positive way on it when she expressed: “I think it’s wonderful to see” (ibid.). Participants of the Tai Chi activities witnessed by me were without exception elderly and non-European people. Tai Chi practitioners were observed in different places of the public space, for instance, in Pearn Place, Norman King Square, Ernie Mays Street and the basketball courts.

![Tai chi](image)

*Figure 4-1: Elderly people practising Tai Chi, 2012 (Source: Author, 2012)*
Apart from Tai Chi which came up almost during all interviews, participants described many more activities in the space. For example, interviewee B2 revealed: "I think lots of Chinese people kind of gather in the [public space]. I can see they're doing Tai Chi and playing some Chinese games" (B2). As observed on many of my walks through the centre at least one of the three purpose-built tables under the elm tree in Pearn Place was occupied by older people. The elm tree makes a great centre feature, creates a stage for the chess players as well as it provides cover and shade. I watched the Chinese chess players many times and it can be said that only elderly people participated. Moreover, without exception all game players were male [Figure 4-2].

![Chinese chess](image)

*Figure 4-2: Elderly men playing Chinese chess under the elm tree, 2011 (Source: Author, 2011)*

The tables were more often used when the weather was fine and in the morning hours between 9.30 a.m. and 11.30 a.m. Most of the time, I observed players arrive with their full shopping bags to sit down for one or two matches. Participant K7 referred to the game table as “Mah-jong tables” and appraises them as “ideal for the old people to sit around. [T]hey can have the spectators around them; they’ve got other people advising them, ‘Yah, you’ve all made the wrong move!’” (K7). The
activity described as “playing some Chinese games” has almost evolved into a ‘brand’ or a ‘synonym’ for the public space in the area. It is a topic which re-emerges in many contributions on the internet, interviews and newspaper articles like the North Shore Times article “Chinese make move to Northcote” (2002, August 6, p. 9) and the New Zealand Herald article “Super City: Kaipatiki bridges diverse cultures” (Thompson, 2010, September 14).

Besides the very well established Chinese chess games, some further activities have been observed by participants. For instance, K2 reported: “[They] do their performance, not Tai Chi, ... , a group comes every Saturday in front of the Gallery and the ladies come and do their exercises to music outside the Gallery every day of the week” (K2) [Figure 4-3]. She described this activity and shook her head in disbelief while emphasising the following:

So, I mean the Asian community certainly uses space in a different way; I mean no way would you get a bunch of Pakeha women out there doing exercises to music at 8 o’clock in the morning. I wouldn’t do it. You just don’t get that; you know they might ... go running or whatever but certainly not dancing to music. It’s wonderful. (K2)

During my observations, I very much enjoyed watching these ladies exercising in the early hours between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. A sense of tranquillity in the public space was observed while dance routines were practised to a slow Chinese music. Participants were without exception elderly people. The dance group chose Norman King Square as their place to meet and exercise. When the weather was fine they were dancing in front of the library. And on rainy days they moved under the sheltered space of the Norman King Building’s roof overhang.
K6 accentuated how the public space is shared and used for many different activities. “Every morning they do Tai Chi out here, but if others want to use the space they can. We’ve had other people doing things out there at the same time” (K7). Primarily she referred to the basketball courts and their use by different ethnic groups. However, during my observations I hardly found any evidence of activities on the basketball courts. It was only on three of my observational walks that I saw young people using these facilities. The area around the basketball courts felt isolated and deserted most of the time. The same can be said about the playground [Figure 4-4]. This area seemed not to be very popular. In contrast places like the lawn on Norman King Square and the lawn in Pearn Place were more frequently used by smaller children and their mothers as playground substitutes [Figure 4-5] between 9.30 a.m. and 11.30 a.m.. The children there were running around and also using the two installed ride-on toys in Norman King Square much more than the playground behind the library.
Basketball courts and playground

Figure 4-4: Playground area and basketball courts, 2011
(Source: Author, 2011)

Children playing

Figure 4-5: Young children playing in Norman King Square and Pern Place, 2011
(Source: Author, 2011)
During observation the space in front of the library and the Norman King building seemed to have less public appeal, due to its location at the far end of the pedestrian mall. It serves, however, as the entrance space to the library, a place for small events and activities such as Tai Chi and dance exercises.

To conclude, the public space is used for recreational purposes, especially by members of the Northeast Asian community. Cultural leisure activities and exercises such as Tai Chi, Chinese dance and Chinese board games are the main activities on a daily basis in the public space of the centre.

**Events and festivals**

Substantial data was gathered in regard to festivals and outdoor events celebrated in the public space [Figure 4-6]. “Well we have festivals every year; ... so the Chinese anchoring community [is] involved in that and that's quite a major part of this particular community” (K3). Another participant proudly articulated: “Like you have the Korean [and] Chinese New Year celebration that’s running for the twelfth year. Every year it’s happening here” (K4).

**Figure 4-6:** Posters of different cultural events, 2011, 2012
(Source: Author, 2011, 2012)
Archival research produced a list of articles published over the last twelve years in the New Zealand Herald, the local North Shore Times Advertiser and later North Shore Times relating to the Chinese and Korean New Year celebrations. The following list of headlines is an indication of the success of these events: “Dragon to dance in Northcote” (2000, January 28, p. 3); “Big crowd turns out for Chinese New Year” (2000, February 11, p. 9); “Ready for the celebrations” (2001, February 2, p. 8); “Festivities bring cultures together” (2001, February 9, p. 3); “Extravaganza marks Year of the Horse” (2002, February 14, p. 17); “Harnessing a lucky year” (2002, February 26, p. 9); “Monkey tricks in past for Northcote” (2004, February 2, A4); “Facing up to a new year“ (2004, January 22, p. 1); “Northcote greets a new year” (2004, February 5, pp. 18-19); “PM gives lion the eye” (2004, February 3, pp. 1-2); “Celebrations mark Chinese New Year” (2006, January 31, p. 12); “Festival welcomes in New Year” (2007, February 20, p. 14); “Groups honour the Year of the Rat” (Cadacio, 2008a); “Lunar fest set to be biggest” (Cadacio, 2008d); “Northcote celebrates the Lunar New Year” (Cadacio, 2009a); “Two day festival in Northcote for Chinese and Korean New Year” (2010, February 18, p. 12); “Rabbit year celebration” (Ackland, 2011); “Year of Rabbit welcomed” (Cadacio, 2011); “Festival ushers in Year of the Dragon” (Penman, 2012). Accompanied by colourful images these articles are detailed descriptions of the free community events with different cultural performances, children’s activities, and Asian cuisine.

Figure 4-7: Dragon to Dragon Photography Exhibition at NorthART, 2012
(Source: http://www.northcote.co.nz)
The Northcote Town Centre website reported on the ‘Dragon to Dragon’ Photography Exhibition which was successfully held at the NorthART Community Arts Centre in January 2012 [Figure 4-7]. The exhibition presented evidence from twelve years of Chinese and Korean New Year Festivals in Northcote by showing seventy colourful photographs (Northcote Town Centre website, n.d.).

A further colourful event celebrated in the public space is the Moon Festival, which became an annual attraction over the last years for many people. Archival material about the Moon Festival in 2010 such as the North Shore Times articles: “Moon Festival on at centre” (Cadacio, 2010a) and “First Moon Festival fills town centre” (Cadacio, 2010b) were found. These articles are evidence of the successful use of the public space for cultural events. In 2009 the North Shore Times advertised the celebration of the Moon Festival coupled with the celebration
of the People's Republic of China's 60th anniversary with the following headline: “Centre to host Chinese anniversary event” (Cadacio, 2009c). A description of the event and its stage performances from the Asia Pacific Culture Centre and from the North Shore Chinese Society was found in the article “China's big day celebrated” (Cadacio, 2009d). For the purpose of this study, I observed the Moon Festival in September 2011 [Figure 4-8] as well as the Chinese and Korean New Year Festival in January 2012 [Figure 4-9]. Both events have provided me with genuine taste and insight of the Northeast Asian culture. I watched a colourful and impressive range of Northeast Asian entertainments on stage, followed by an audience of all ages. Further, I observed people who enjoyed a Chinese massage, many activities to entertain children and people buying Northeast Asian snacks and food in the town centre.

![Figure 4-9: Performances at the Chinese & Korean New Year Festival, 2012](Source: Author, 2012)
During his interview informant K1 highlighted that: “A predominant thing has been festivals ... prior to, I guess 2000, being based around traditional shopping periods, Christmas, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day etc.”. The important point was that: “We found that that wasn’t really the niche that Northcote was developing or we were working on, so we’ve gone towards Chinese and Korean New Year Festivals, Moon Festivals, etc.” (K1).

The North Shore Times article "North Shore City Beijing Olympics live" (2008, August 7, p. 11) promoted the Beijing Olympics festival in the Northcote Town Centre with its opening ceremony, live band performances, cultural presentations, sporting demonstrations and lion dances. Under the opening headline “Olympic Games on our doorstep” (Cadacio, 2008c) the North Shore Times reported how successful the centre has been providing live pictures from the Beijing’s games for free during the 16-day sporting spectacle event on a 20-square-metre LED screen [Figure 4-10]. The event hosted in the public space "was a big
celebration ... with the big screen; it was the only one in New Zealand in 2008 when the Olympic Games were in Beijing, so we did a big outdoor screen” (K1).

Besides ethnic events and festivals the town centre has been used for live concert which address the non-Asian population in Northcote. The centre’s website and the local paper Local Live in its September/October/November 2011 issue announced live concerts of various bands [Figure 4-11] on every Saturday from 10.30a.m to 1.30p.m during the summer months. A positive comment was made by an interviewee regarding these live concerts: “Actually the fact that they have a band on Saturday; that’s very nice. I think people appreciate it when they come to the shopping centre, not just shopping but you know people can listen to the music; ... that’s quite nice” (B2).

To sum up, yearly ethnic events such as the Chinese and Korean New Year Festival and the Moon Festival have become much anticipated happenings in Northcote. They developed over a number of years, providing a taste of Asian culture and a wide range of Asian entertainment and activities. Such cultural
events and celebrations have contributed towards establishing an ethnic precinct feeling in the town centre.

Reading and education

The library is another place of the public space in the Northcote Town Centre where people engage in a variety of social and informational activities. As described by K8 the public library in Northcote has developed a strategy which targets the Northeast Asian community and especially Chinese citizens (K8). She noted that the library provides free internet access which “encourages lots of ... older Chinese people to come in with their laptops”. She also pointed to other aspects of the strategy such as running courses “for the senior citizens, and one of those senior citizens groups are solely Chinese and its delivered ... solely by us”. With a certain pride she stated: “We’re fortunate that we have Chinese staff”. Besides seeing many older Chinese people using the library, another visible group of users are young children. The activities that are offered for young children are “geared around literature. As they get older it really does change and it becomes a space that’s purely searched for the education”. She highlights the good feedback the library receives from the Northeast Asian community especially since "we now have a Chinese story time here on a Thursday and we have a bilingual one on a Saturday, and that’s mainly Chinese/English on a Saturday” (ibid.). The archived North Shore Times article “Speaking English” (Vickers, 2008) reported that Chinese and Korean immigrants, who are struggling with speaking English, can take part in a programme called ‘1,2,3 Repeat Aloud’ which is hosted by the Northcote Library. In 2004 the North Shore Times Advertiser told its readers under the headline “Mandarin stories for tots” (2004, January 20, p. 15) that the Northcote Library provides storytelling sessions for pre-schoolers in Mandarin.

On my observations I found that the Northcote Library was very much in demand by members of the Northeast Asian community. On some days the place was very crowded with children and their mothers who were attending the storytelling sessions provided by the Northcote Library. On other days groups of elderly people were sitting in groups while attending language classes. The Aucklander highlighted in its article “Northcote: a model for NZ” (2003, October 23,
The need for immigrants to adjust to a new way of life and to learn how to speak and read the language of the host country. The article reported that in the centre a range of courses were provided which especially helped new immigrants to adjust to the New Zealand life.

The Northcote Library also organised some events which were oriented to attract members of the Northeast Asian community as well as people who are interested to learn about that particular culture. For example, in January and February 2012, people were invited to celebrate the Year of the Dragon and the start of the Lunar New Year (North Shore Libraries, 2012b). Amongst many other interesting activities people could learn how to make a Chinese ‘Good Wish’ cake, watch Chinese dance and Tai Chi performance or listen to Chinese Music (ibid.).

An educational place within the public space of the town centre is the North Art Gallery. Under the title “Exhibition with a Chinese perspective” (2001, June 29, p. 2) the North Shore Times Advertiser published an article about a Chinese painting and craft show at the Northcote Art Gallery. The exhibition gave particularly non-Asian users of the space the chance to learn something new about another culture.

To conclude, my findings show a significant use of the Northcote Library by members of the Northeast Asian community. Especially children as well as elderly people were identified as the main users of the public library space. Moreover, the public library and the North Art Gallery hold opportunities for non-Northeast Asian members of society to learn from and about the Northeast Asian culture.

**Meeting and networking**

One of the informants who has a long-term relationship with the area pointed out that: “Town squares have always been an important part of town centre design as a place where communities can come together etc., for festivals or for cake stalls or just as a bit of a meeting point really” (K1). Another interviewee sees the town centre as “a public space where people meet together to say hello [and] to start some conversations” (B1). He explained that people get together in the public space “because they feel bored at home, so they [sometimes] want to do
... exercise”. **Further, he highlighted that** “it’s a place where they meet their friends ... meet some people that they [did not meet] for some time” (ibid.) **[Figure 4-12].**

When asked about her perception of the use and the users of the public space K2 **stated:** “Well I don’t know, I can’t really talk for the Asian community” (K2). However, she evaluated the space by pointing to the area under the elm tree: “Having the chest boards out there works extremely well and all those seats under the Elm [work] extremely well because [that is] where ... people can sit and talk” (ibid.).

**Socialising and networking**

![Socialising and networking](image)

**Figure 4-12:** *Elderly people socialising and networking, 2012*  
(Source: Author, 2012)

While talking about her role in helping newcomers and immigrants who arrived from overseas the interviewee K4 highlighted an important human need: “People want to connect, they want to establish friendship and network. The space
that is developing, evolving here, provides the opportunity for groups of people to connect” (K4). She explained that “[i]t may not be meeting and talking straight away”. First, people have to get familiar with one another over time, acceptance comes in and eventually someone reaches out and then the bonds of friendship start forming. This process was described by her as a “slow - but ... organic way of evolving communication connection within the community” (ibid.).

The Northcote Town Centre as observed and described is a vibrant space that commands a position as a centre of the community and of social life. However, participant B1 spoke about the separation of different cultural groups in the public space when it comes to meeting people. He reported that people want to meet other people with the same cultural background and interests to exchange news and knowledge. In his opinion that does not happen across cultures. For example, he explained that people from the Chinese community meet their own and do not mix with others. “[A]t this shopping centre ... we can see mostly the Chinese people gathering together” (B1). On many of my observations I have experienced a similar thought.

**Key findings – Theme 1**

Apart from being a space where people can park their cars and walk through to do their shopping the public space is primarily used for recreational purposes especially by members of the Northeast Asian community. Key findings highlight cultural leisure activities and physical exercises such as Tai Chi, Chinese dance and Chinese board games which are the main activities on a daily basis in the public space of the Northcote Town Centre. The public space is not only used on fine days but also when it is raining. Tai Chi and Chinese dance group participants can find shelter and protection under the existing canopies in the town centre. Furthermore, the horizontal branches of the elm tree provide shelter and shade for the users of the board game tables.

The public space is frequently used for cultural festivals and ethnic events to showcase ethnicity and cultural identity. Annual ethnic events such as the Chinese and Korean New Year Festival and the Moon Festival were identified as much anticipated festivals in Northcote.
Findings identify the use of the Northcote Library by members of the Northeast Asian community. Especially children and elderly people are the main users of the library space. The library and the North Art gallery as part of the public space provide the opportunity for non-Northeast Asian members of society to learn something new about the Northeast Asian culture. The public space allows people to meet friends within their own community and establish networks. In addition, findings reveal that the public space is predominantly used by Chinese people.

**THEME 2 - VISUAL SIGNS AND MANIFESTATIONS**

Findings presented in this section are beneficial for answering the second sub-question: *What visual signs and other manifestations represent the Northeast Asian culture within the public space of Northcote’s shopping precinct?* The categories within Theme 2 describe the main forms and types of manifestations of the Northeast Asian culture observed in the public space. Sub-headings in this section: ‘Signage and advertisements’, ‘Festivals’, ‘Permanent installations and leisure activities’, and ‘Sound and smell’ represent identified categories as outlined in Chapter 3 under Data analysis.

*Signage and advertisements*

Various forms of visual signboards in the town centre provide comprehensive evidence of the presence of the Northeast Asian culture. The street facades of ethnic food shops, hair salons, restaurants, health shops and travel offices are evidence of the Northeast Asian culture that has moved in to the town centre.

The most noticeable visual signs are language signs found in the form of business signboards on different parts and levels of retail buildings such as roofs [*Figure 4-13*], canopies [*Figures 4-14; 4-15*], and shop windows [*Figure 4-16*].
Figure 4-13: Language signboards on roofs, 2011
(Source: Author, 2011)

Figure 4-14: Signage on parapets and the edge of the canopies, 2011
(Source: Author, 2011)
Other modes of advertisement are portable signs which are placed on footpaths in the pedestrian space [Figure 4-17]. They were found especially in Pearn Place and Pearn Crescent.

The New Zealand Herald reported in its article “Signs of a struggle in ‘little Asia’” (2003, October 21, p. 8) that the changing face of the area is reflected in the town centre’s shopping fronts and windows since many shops have adopted and started to use Northeast Asian language signs. Participant B3 stated that he actually disapproves “of too much Asian signage. ... [S]ome shops are totally Asian. I feel that they should be English and Chinese” (B3).

It was observed that most signboards have English language explanations to go along with the Northeast Asian language signs. However, some signs are only
in Chinese or Korean languages. The majority of signs use Chinese languages which indicate that most people in the town centre speak either Cantonese or Mandarin.

In addition it can be said that almost all advertisement signboards use bright colours such as orange, red, blue, green and yellow. Furthermore, the sheer quantity of different sizes and locations of these language signboards creates a slightly chaotic appearance of the public space.

Figure 4-16:  *Signage and advertisements in shop and restaurant windows, 2011*  
(Source: Author, 2011)
Overall, findings show the installation of language signboards on various different parts of street facades and on sidewalks. The public space as strongly characterised by the use of Chinese language signs. Signboards use especially bright colours such as orange, red, blue, green and yellow on those language signs. Moreover, a slightly chaotic appearance of the public space was observed.

**Festivals**

Ethnic festivals held there are yet another type of observed manifestation that is evidence of the presence of the Northeast Asian culture within the public space. On festival days the whole space becomes a mass meeting and celebration place where especially members of the Northeast Asian community present their culture with pride. Traditional Northeast Asian songs, dances and Tai Chi exercises are performed. Without exception all performers on stage are dressed up in colourful and bright costumes [Figure 4-18].
In contrast to costumes and performances, elderly spectators of the Northeast Asian community are often dressed in shades of grey and brown [Figure 4-19].

Ethnic food smell escaping from various food stalls as well as sounds such as language use and ethnic music are non-visual manifestations as they convey important messages. These findings are given closer attention later on in this section.
A cultural footprint in Auckland's public space

Permanent installations and leisure activities

Cultural manifestations concerning the presence of the Northeast Asian culture within the public can also be allocated to cultural leisure activities. As already highlighted in Theme 1 of this Chapter, the main cultural leisure activities in the public space are Tai Chi, Chinese dance, Chinese chess games, meeting and reading [Figure 4-20]. These activities allow members of the Northeast Asian community and migrants to socialise, exchange news, speak their language and exercise together in the public space. By participating in especially traditional cultural leisure activities, such as Tai Chi or Chinese chess games, they keep their culture alive and manifest their culture in the public space.

Figure 4-19: Elderly spectators at the Moon Festival, 2011
(Source: Author, 2011)
Sound and smell

Asian music filtering in the space from the restaurants and the aromatic smell of the Northeast Asian cuisine lingering in the space mainly during the lunch hours are also manifestations of the Northeast Asian culture observed there. The spoken languages used in the space by members of the Northeast Asian community can also be regarded as cultural manifestations.

Key findings – Theme 2

Manifestations of the Northeast Asian culture in the public space are various different forms of advertisement and signage. Bright colours such as orange, red, blue, green and yellow are frequently used on these language signs boards. Furthermore, a slightly chaotic image of the public space was perceived. In
addition, ethnic festivals celebrated in the public space of the Northcote Town Centre expose the presence of the Northeast Asian culture. This is manifested in ethnic performances, in the use of colourful costumes during performances but also in the languages used, the smell coming from many ethnic food stalls, and ethnic music. Moreover, cultural leisure activities, like Tai Chi, Chinese dance and Chinese chess are identified as manifestations of the Northeast Asian culture since they reflect cultural values and traditions. An additional key finding refers to non-visual cultural manifestations, such as smells and sounds in the public space. They are evidence of the presence of the Northeast Asian culture in the Northcote Town Centre.

**THEME 3 - EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE ETHNIC SPACE**

This section presents findings which will assist in answering the third sub-question in this research: *How is the public space of Northcote’s Town centre perceived?* The following categories: ‘Inclusion and exclusion’, ‘Experiences of change’, ‘Descriptions of cultural blending and accepting’, ‘Experiences of the ethnic public space’, and ‘Understanding the Northeast Asian culture’ will be examined.

*Inclusion and exclusion*

At the beginning of this project, I did not anticipate how relevant the issues of inclusion and exclusion in the public space of the Northcote Town Centre were to so many of the interviewees. Key informants commented on the topic of inclusion and exclusion more from an on-looker’s perspective, whereas business owners and managers who were interviewed as the representatives of the users of the public space voiced their experiences on a very personal level. Participant B1 who identifies with the Chinese culture had plenty of experience to share:

I can also see [that] we have a public space that [is] quite welcome[d] by the Chinese people only because, in one of the areas in the shopping centre, where the Chinese people [meet] every morning, they come [...]

A cultural footprint in Auckland’s public space
For him, he emphasised, it is a negative experience to only see Chinese people in the space. He argued: “The only drawback I can see ... at this shopping centre is that we can see mostly the Chinese people gathering together” ... “But I didn’t see the Korean people ... meet [in] the space”. When asked why he thinks other cultures do not use the public space, he articulated his personal perception of the Chinese community who definitely demand and need the public space. He continued his thought by saying: “The others from other countries; [like] Korean[s], Japanese, whatever; maybe it’s culture that they don’t want to get ... together in a public area because it’s so exposed, but Chinese - they love to do it together” (ibid.).

In a much more reserved way, participant B2 explained: “I try to keep my Japanese culture probably more for myself or with my children. We try to keep the traditions at home” (B2). She reported seeing many Chinese citizens gathering in the public space because they are practising Tai Chi and meet to play Chinese chess together. “But it’s only Chinese, Chinese people I see”. She added that most Japanese people come to New Zealand with their core family, “we don’t have extended families; we don’t have cousins and the uncles and the grandparents”. She argued that, in contrast to Japanese families in New Zealand, Chinese families consist of many more relatives and they all want to meet with each other. Whereas “Japanese are more mixed towards the Kiwi people, or other [but not] Japanese people”. During the interview it became very clear that she does not use the public space and that she feels excluded by a dominant Chinese culture in the public space. For example, she referred to the public library in Northcote which in her view only caters for a certain group of people. Therefore, she prefers to visit the Takapuna Library, “there are lots of Japanese books there ... but here [are] only Chinese and Korean [books]” (ibid.).

The perceptions and experiences described by participants B1 (identifies as Chinese and was born in China) and B2 (identifies as Japanese and was born in Japan) are defined by their cultural identity. In their comments were many important forms of belonging, identity and alienation encoded. In this regard it is
very interesting what interviewee B3 (identifies first as New Zealander and second as third generation Cantonese-Chinese) said: “I appreciate how the public space is open for all cultures. Northcote is the centre of culture and there is no sort of prejudices I suppose, and ... Council backs that up as well” (B3). There were no negative emotional feelings in his comment that indicated any experience of exclusion in the public space.

Key informant K6 reported on a case in which she was consulted when plans were issued for a Korean garden in Northcote. “There was a lot of opposition to that because it was like favouring one ethnicity and so they now have been allocated an area [in] Takapuna” (K6). The comment made by her was summarised by interviewee K7: “Yeah [that] can alienate ....; if you had a special place for one group of people it can alienate others against them” (K7). Being concerned about the issue of exclusion, one key informant referred primarily to Tongan, Pacific Islanders and Maori since they have a presence in the area around the Northcote Town Centre, especially within the adjacent state housing complex (K3). He praised and highlighted the unique retail environment which has to compete with the large shopping malls and argued that in order to survive, the ethnic uniqueness, the space needs to be embraced and developed “but don’t make it so that we exclude other cultures” (ibid.).

Concerns of exclusion within the Northeast Asian community were addressed by key informant K1 when he talked about the development of the Northeast Asian niche market there. For example, there were suggestions to turn it into Auckland’s Chinatown. However, he explained that the strong Korean community had to be considered and that it felt not right to call the centre Chinatown. “In the Korean’s eyes ... that would alienate them and not make them feel so welcome” (K1). He recounted further:

We used to call our New Year Festival just a Chinese New Year Festival and I guess it’s [how] a lot of European people see it even though it’s celebrated by the Chinese and Korean community; they call it Chinese New Year. ... [I]t didn’t make the Korean community feel welcome. [W]e called it the Lunar New Year Festival which is what it is ... but that is not a well-
known term so the easiest term was to call it the Chinese and Korean New Year Festival - that being inclusive. (ibid.)

The issues of exclusion and inclusion in her daily work were described by key informant K2: “What I do on numerous occasions is integrate Chinese and Korean ... artists into an everyday programme” (K2). She explained that the artists can exhibit their works in general shows or they are invited into a show with other artists. “I’m not just saying: Okay, let’s have a Chinese show to target the Chinese community. I’m saying: Let’s have an exhibition to target everybody and we will include Chinese or ... Korean artists in that show” (ibid.). In this regard she clarified that the gallery has got far more Korean than Chinese members. Moreover, she gave her impression that a much greater number of Korean people visiting the gallery than perhaps Chinese. From her perspective the reason for that noticeable tendency of exclusion seems to be a wider affluence within the Korean community (ibid.).

Archived New Zealand Herald articles “Racial attacks stun old Chinese” (2003, October 20, A1) and “Signs of a struggle in "little Asia”” (2003, October 21, p. 8) indicated a different level of exclusion by reporting on a number of racist assaults on elderly Chinese residents in the area. The articles point at a total of 14 cases of abuse of elderly Chinese people and quote a number of people who were assaulted: “I do not feel safe here” (NZ Herald, 2003, October 21, p. 8). People believed they were intentional targeted. Some thought these attacks were race related while other said: “They think we have just come from overseas and have a lot of money” (NZ Herald, 2003, October 21, p. 8). Interviewees did not raise the issue of race at all and observations did not produce any evidence in that regard.

Findings presented in this category highlight the existence of issues around exclusion and inclusion. Participants experienced or witnessed both exclusion and inclusion there. Key findings outline a Chinese dominance in the public space which leads to feelings of exclusion by other Koreans and Japanese people. However, findings also indicate that in various decision-making processes other cultures were considered so as not to alienate them. Interestingly, the issue of racial attacks was raised in newspaper articles but was not observed by me or mentioned by any participant.
Experiences of change

Findings in this section are concerned with the transformation of an area that was built to meet the needs of a European-based clientele [Figures 4-21; 4-22]. After a period of neglect, a growing Northeast Asian community and its small businesses turned it into a vibrant and colourful ethnic enclave [Figure 4-23].

To support participants’ experiences of transformation, archived newspaper articles and images are used in a complementary way. The Sunday Star Times reported in 2004 in its article “Spiced up for Shore” (Parsons, 2004, September 12, p. 24) that “[o]riginally it was a fairly busy European-based...
community, but then it started to die. We had lots of empty shops in the mid ‘90s and most key businesses left town”.

Key informant K1 talked about the initial circumstances which led to the transformation of the Northcote Town Centre at great length. All started in the mid-1990s with “quite a few empty shops” which meant that about twelve per cent of the retail space in the centre was unoccupied (K1). It had many vacancies which were triggered by shops closing down because they could not compete with the big malls (K3). Places such as The Warehouse or Westfield destroyed small tradesmen like the jeweller’s shops in the Northcote Town Centre (K8). Interviewee K3 described:

[H]ardware shops moved out, motor mower shops moved out, and all dressmakers, shoe shops; they all disappeared and there was just a big vacuum there and so it was like the back end of nothing for a period of time. (K3)

Key informant K7 remembered: “[I]t was a fair bit of crime in the old days when you didn’t have enough foot traffic or people coming through to observe and report” (K7). Coleman, a Northcote citizen wrote in 1996 an open letter “Shopping centre neglected” to the editor of the North Shore Times Advertiser in which she
urgently addressed the council to maintain and improve the Northcote Town Centre. She reported that when it was finished it “really looked good, the centre was a pleasure to look at”. However, in 1996 she complained that the centre looked neglected with empty shops, holes in the pavement, shrubs growing across the footpath, and untidiness everywhere (Coleman, 1996, June 21, p. 6).

A significant amount of the collected data via archival research reflected the discontent of many citizens at the time of neglect. The North Shore Times Advertiser published under the title “A Northcote shambles” (1996, June 7, pp. 8-9) business owners’ and citizens’ concerns about an acute deterioration of the area. At the same time the paper reported on plans proposed by the North Shore City Council to upgrade the centre. These plans of a $1.2m facelift included largely the landscaping of the public space “to strengthen the uniqueness of the centre by incorporating the village atmosphere and the multi-cultural community around it” (ibid.). Various North Shore Times Advertiser articles issued between 1995 and 1996 discussed the future and the future appearance of the area as a reaction to the many complaints made by citizens (“Asset sales”, 1995; “Bid for shopping centre”, 1995).

K1 recalled that at that point they had to look for the town centre’s assets; “some things that we could capitalise on to rejuvenate or revitalise the centre” and to resolve that issue of the empty shops (K1). One thing that was uncovered was that for some reasons Northcote attracted many people from the Northeast Asian community who started to settle down in that area: “[S]o we saw a possibility of working a lot more with that community to fill our empty space and I guess rejuvenate the centre” (ibid.).

As remembered by informant K3, first an Asian supermarket moved into the centre and subsequently created an impulse for other Northeast Asian businesses such as Asian financial services and so on (K3). That is the reason why so many shops are owned and operated by Northeast Asian people; “[W]ithout their influence there would be no Northcote Town Centre. [A]nd now … there aren’t any vacancies; there’s [a] waiting list to get in, so it’s a very vibrant place” (ibid.). Participant K1 stated in accordance with K3 that the “cultural niche from that Northeast Asian community has revitalised the centre to the point that we really don’t have any empty shops” (K1). The North Shore Times article “Full house
at shopping centre a positive move” (Cadacio, 2009b) reported on the fully occupied centre despite recession and the evidence it provides of the change that transformed the Northcote Town Centre.

K3 pointed out that the Asian influence has induced a new spirit and he referred to the many successful festivals held in the public space as well as to the Asian food niche that has developed over time (K3). And “[t]hat’s what saved the shopping centre” (K7). Interviewee K7 simply stated: “The shopping centre was dying a very quick death” and promoting it as a centre of ethnic food and concentrating on that marketing strategy helped the Northcote Town Centre survive. He described its lifecycle “from being popular ... to being almost a ghost town ... [to being] vibrant [and] alive” again (ibid.).
In a very emotional way, informant K8 acknowledged that without the number of Chinese and Korean owned restaurants which were opening in the Northcote Town Centre; “Northcote might have died as a community; ... we really have everything we have to owe to them” (K8). According to K1, out of all businesses there are now seventy five per cent or more enterprises in the town centre that are Northeast Asian owned (K1) [Figure 4-23]. The New Zealand Herald reported under the headline “Where there’s a will, there’s a shopping centre” (Stone, 2011) that “[t]he Northcote shopping centre has developed into a hub for Chinese business, with immigrants keen to take on small businesses with manageable risk and decent rewards”.

Key informant K3 pointed out that the change is also visible in the demographics and that there has been significant growth within the Korean and Chinese population around the area (K3). “[W]hat that says to us is that people have made a choice to shift here because of the Asian influence” (ibid.). A positive demographic change in the adjacent residential area because of a better placing strategy by Housing New Zealand which manages to place different ethnicities in the housing estate was acknowledged by interviewee K8. She also noted that “more Chinese people are looking to buy here in Northcote” (K8).

In 2002 The North Shore Times Advertiser reported with a positive tenor in its article “Chinese make move to Northcote” how Chinese Northcote residents have transformed the image of Northcote with their games of chess out on the park benches. Parsons (2004, September 12, p. 24), who at the time has lived in Northcote for 12 years, wrote in the Sunday Star Times article “Spiced up for Shore” about the dramatic changes she has witnessed during that period. “In the village square, graceful white-robed figures practice Tai Chi while Chinese chess players consider their next moves under a shady elm tree.”

The article “Migrant agency makes a move” (Cadacio, 2008b) published in the North Shore Times pointed out that very quickly the Northcote Town Centre became the multi-cultural capital of North Shore city, not only because of the Asian flair but also because of Settlement Support, a migrant agency that moved into the centre and attracted different cultural groups. In 2010 the North Shore Times issued the article “CAB extends hours for Asian migrants” (Cadacio, 2010c), reporting on the extended opening hours of the Northcote Citizens’ Advice in the
area due to the growing number of mostly Asian immigrants. K1 constituted the positive change of the Northcote Town Centre by emphasising the cultural niche which has been embraced in the town centre:

[T]hat niche; ... I think that town centres in Auckland, having a strong niche is very, very important in terms of their survival and growth and revitalisation. ... [W]e’ve seen such a major shift in town centres in terms of their uses. So we’re seeing more town centres that perhaps are geared towards the Pacific Island communities, some that now are geared toward Asian communities; and so just or some that are very much geared to leisure in terms of cafe districts. (K1)

In summary, important changes happened in and to the area over a period of sixty years, but especially during the last fifteen years the town centre has been significantly transformed. The town centre was busy and European-based in the 1950s. In the late-1980 the centre suffered a loss of retailers which led to a rundown and neglected space. Though, in the late-1990s, a growing Northeast Asian community and its small businesses finally turned the town centre into a vibrant and colourful ethnic enclave.

**Descriptions of cultural blending and acceptance**

In her interview key informant K4 gave an account of how she observed the cultural blending in the public space:

[Y]ou see people getting the hang of a bit of a Kiwi way of doing things, like you have your neighbourhood clean-up project or days. And ... the new faces; the new ethnic groups living here, coming to participate in cleaning up the town centre. ... [B]ut what’s also good is, it’s also, on the other side - the kind of flip side of a coin is; the local community that’s been living here for some time. (K4)

Moreover, she illustrated a cultural acceptance happening within the long established Northcote community. Initially the ‘white’ community regarded the
new faces from Northeast Asia as “these people” but there has been a shift to a welcoming: “Oh, so you girls will participate” (ibid.) [Figure 4-24].

Another informant characterised the changing cultural nature of the centre as becoming more and more multi-cultural and subsequently leading to a cultural exchange (K1). For instance, he argues that many more people nowadays have travelled and started to value and adapt certain habits and customs (ibid.). They might enjoy Asian food and have started cooking Asian food and slowly immersed themselves into a different culture. Further, he specified the cultural exchange from the perspective of the Northeast Asian community. “[T]he Northeast Asian community had been in New Zealand a long time so they [use] the Countdown Supermarket as much as they do Tai Ping Supermarket” as their children’s and their family’s food tastes have developed into a more western taste (ibid.).

A cultural change as understood by participant K8 has occurred in the adjacent residential areas and is carried into the town centre (K8). She indicated that more and more Chinese families have bought and are still buying houses in the

Figure 4-24: Northcote Town Centre ‘tidy up’ on Sunday, 21 August 2011
(Source: http://www.northcote.co.nz)
A cultural footprint in Auckland’s public space

An interesting and a very different form of cultural adaptation was observed and expressed by K2. In a very agitated way she told that: “[S]ome years ago ... some members of the Asian community were spitting [in the public space] and that was most unpleasant but that’s kind of stopped now” (K2). From her point of view there has been a major cultural shift in terms of behaviour within the Northeast Asian community towards the New Zealand culture and its norms and values. From the way she expressed herself, it became apparent that she disapproved of the spitting, something that is acceptable in China. She made it clear that she very much appreciated the transformation when she said:

Well I don’t see spitting any more ... [a]nd you don’t see children taking off their pants and weeing in public any more either, and that used to happen from time to time. Those people that were doing that realise[d] that it’s not something that we do. (ibid.)

K2 finished her thoughts by highlighting that the users of the public space have changed. Northeast Asians have adapted to a New Zealand way of life and Kiwis have taken on board certain Asian values. In her view this dynamic process “will continue to grow and the next generation will have ... a whole new attitude and we will lose some things and gain a lot through that. Yes, there is definitely and a lot more understanding” (K2).

The cultural blending and acceptance was described by many of the business owners/managers as they are confronted with cultural differences on a daily basis. Many described their preferred strategy to cope with cultural differences while at work.

Interviewee B3, for example, highlights that his customers are very mixed in terms of their ethnicity: “People assume that the majority are Asian but that is not the case” (B3). He explained that as New Zealand born, third generation Cantonese-Chinese, he does not speak a Chinese language. Therefore, he speaks English to his customers and staff. “[H]owever, I have staff who can speak Mandarin ... and Cantonese.” ...” So I use them where appropriate, but I do have a
lot of elderly European customers” (ibid.). In contrast B4 stated: “Oh, I think eighty per cent of my customers would be Chinese.”...” Yeah, [I speak] in Mandarin and English” (B4). Participant B7 and B6 shared similar experiences: “[M]ost [customers] are Chinese ... also some [are] Korean people, also some [are] local people here. Sometimes [they are] from England. [I speak] Mandarin most times” (B7). “Walk in customers ... seem to be more Chinese groups or Asian groups” (B6).

A more multi-cultural experience was described by B2 when she stated that she deals with customers who are “[m]aybe half Kiwi and the rest [are] Asians, Malaysian, Indonesians, Chinese, Koreans, and the Japanese too. I started to get more Japanese people. I have a few nice Indian customers” (B2). She explains that language is often a barrier and that she can write Chinese characters, which is very helpful when Chinese customers cannot speak English. From her experience about 20 per cent of her clientele do not speak English at all. “They always start [to] talk to me in Chinese and then I say: I don’t speak any Chinese. They just go away and walk away, I say: ‘Oh no English’, and then they just walk away” (ibid.).

To sum up, cultural blending and acceptance in the Northcote Town Centre and its public space has been described by participants mainly by referring to the Northeast Asian customers who come to shop in the town centre and subsequently occupy and use it. The Northeast Asian community and their members are getting involved in community activities and take responsibilities. It was found that Northeast Asians align themselves to a Kiwi way of life, but Pakeha are embracing the Northeast Asian culture by shopping and dining there.

**Experiences of the ethnic public space**

Several participants highlighted the Northeast Asian and especially Chinese influence but have strongly denied that it is Auckland’s ‘Chinatown’.

Key informant K4 described her perception of the space with the following statement: “It is not Chinatown but it’s unique” (K4). In her view all Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Indonesian and Korean influences are currently shaping the space. “[L]ike these festivals have become quite synonymous with [the] Northcote Town Centre” (ibid.). The Northcote Town Centre’s website states: “In
fact, the Northcote centre could aptly be described as ‘the centre of colour & culture’” (Northcote Town Centre, n.d.).

Participant B2 pointed out that the presence of the Asian grocery shops attracts so many Northeast Asian customers to “come here to buy Asian new ingredients” and “even some non-Asian people” come here too (B2). “Definitely the Asian groceries” are characterising the Northcote Town Centre and ‘I guess it’s easy to park here (ibid.). K8 viewed it as an inviting place where people can immerse themselves in ethnic food which is supported by the mixture of shops and the presence of Chinese and Korean supermarkets (K8). “I think it [is] becoming quite embracing” (ibid.).

In line with the perception of various participants the North Shore Times Advertiser painted it as a “food mecca” that emerged out of a neglected town centre in its article “Food mecca emerges from rundown centre” (1998). This perception was shared by key informant K1. “I think it’s got a strong niche [in] food and produce, but I guess more specifically, in Northeast Asian food and produce with the supermarkets and the restaurants” (K1). Participant K3 perceived the Northeast Asian-based niche as a cultural stimulus and hence as the strength of the area (K3).

Informant K1 indicated a general public perception when he stated that “people are now seeing it as a real positive” (K1). In his view there was an overwhelming public perception with a slight negative hint in the late 90s towards the growing Northeast Asian presence there. People were taken aback and had the feeling of losing the town centre, what he describes as “a bit of a take-over”. But nowadays as he emphasised, “they are ... welcoming that change”. The public perception has changed to a positive image since the cultural niche created through the Northeast Asian businesses and community has revitalised the centre and made it vibrant again. He added that it is vital to carry the positive perception of the town centre and the public space into the future (ibid.). A similar response was given by key informant K3 who said that people have accepted the change in contrast to the time when it all started, when the public acceptance was not there (K3). “[E]ventually that’s been shifted because people see you know, there [are] jobs available there; there’s vibrancy, there’s a lot of things happening. I think people’s mind-sets have shifted somewhat” (ibid.). He also thought that
experiences coupled with perceptions of the Northeast Asian culture there are mainly very positive. He argued that in his view “the shopping centre itself is very Asian in terms of its business owners, and make up”. From his perspective the opportunity for Northeast Asian people to practise their own culture, to meet with their ‘own’ people and the presence of Asian supermarkets, Asian pharmacies, Asian fruit shops and many other shops which sell “a whole lot of Asian things” lead to a very positive experience for Asian people. This is partly why during community consultation there has been mainly positive feedback from the Northeast Asian community (ibid.).

Another key informant’s perception of the area and its public space is connected with the smells coming out of the Chinese shops. He regarded the food and spice smells as a positive as well as negative experience (K7). While talking about his negative view of the place he agitatedly claimed:

[S]ome Chinese shops don’t know how to look after their meat or fish. They do but it’s shocking. I’ve had a go at them several times over it. I’ve even rung up the Health Department about it, to do something about it because it’s been unclean; you know it’s unsafe. I caught them selling undersized fish and I reported them. A snapper, like that. That’s no good - that upsets a lot of Kiwis. (ibid.)

Participant and business owner B3 spoke very highly about the public space in the town centre. He praised the space when he said: “The public space is used exceptionally well to cater for the mixed cultures” in the town centre (B3). Another positive comment was made by participant B7: “I think it’s nice. ... I feel comfortable here. The people, most [of] the people are kind. [I] like it very much” (B7).

In participant’s B1 view the centre is most visited by Asian people because they come daily to shop and buy fresh products (B1). Sometimes there can be too many Northeast Asian people in the public space which is reflected in the fully occupied public car park areas (ibid.). This conception was supported by interviewee B4 who identified as Chinese and who characterised the public space as very Chinese influenced. She stated: “[W]e’re normally [in] this area; most of the
Chinese here” (B4). She added that she does not have a particular opinion or perception about the use of the space and the town centre, since for her it is only the place where she comes to work (ibid.). Participant B2 also commented that she does not have a connection with the public space. Her perception would be different if there were a playground somewhere in its heart and not so far off behind the buildings, then it would be nice to watch the children play (B2).

Overall, the public space is primarily affected by a strong Northeast Asian influence generated by the presence of ethnic grocery shops and restaurants as well as the hosting of ethnic festivals. Participants as well as archival records describe the ethnic space as a centre of colour, culture and ethnic food. Findings extracted from observations support the participant’s comments.

Understanding of the Northeast Asian culture

Key informants were asked to assess their understanding of the Northeast Asian community which has become the main user of the public space there. Informant K3, for example, described how the Northeast Asian community was engaged in the consultation process of the “Town Centre Plan which identifies a 30+ year vision and ideas/options for how the town centre should change and improve in the future” (Auckland Council, 2012). K3 stated that the importance of their input was recognised very early on. He remembered meetings with the North Shore Chinese Association and an equivalent Korean Association as well as meeting members of a Korean church (K3). “[A]ll those different groups have different ways in which they see things because they have their own culture, they have their own family dynamics”. However, he argued that during the process of community consultation constructive feedback from the Northeast Asian community was “very rare - well they don’t bring negative things up in a public forum”. He pointing out that the concept of saving face is deeply rooted in the Northeast Asian culture. “[T]hey don’t want to lose face, lose respect” (ibid.).

Another cultural aspect was mentioned by K3 which he linked to the sparsely response during consultation (K3). He explained that authorities such as a council are not seen as friendly and nice in many countries overseas. Therefore, it is not recommended to disagree or object in a public forum (ibid.).
Key informant K1 who identifies as a New Zealander with an European cultural background stated that, given his role and the high percentage of Northeast Asian owned businesses in the area, he naturally needs to “understand their culture a little bit more and look at what we can do to make sure they feel welcome in the centre; and that we get more of that Northeast Asian customer base” (K1). He stressed that by developing the ethnic food niche there, in collaboration with the Northeast Asian community there is also a growing understanding of their needs and wants in the centre and the public space (ibid.). For instance, he emphasised the small project of the installation of permanent Chinese chess tables [Figure 4-25] which developed over the last few years.

![Chinese chess table](image)

**Figure 4-25**: Permanent Chinese chess tables, 2011  
(Source: Author, 2011)

This project was realised after observing many Northeast Asian people bringing their own board games into the public space and playing Chinese chess. “So we spoke to them and we said if we design some specific Chinese chess tables, would that be welcomed”? There was an overwhelming positive response from the Northeast Asian community which led to the commission of the three permanent
Chinese chess tables under the elm tree “and it’s been a great success in terms of them being used most days really; especially over the summer months” (ibid.).

Based on the success of the permanently installed Chinese chess tables the Northcote business association identified in its business plan the installation of an outdoor table tennis table for the year 2011 as it was told “outdoor table tennis tables were quite popular in China” (K1.). The outdoor concrete table tennis table was brought and installed in the public space to create a popular attraction for the Northeast Asian community [Figure 4-26] (ibid.). For him it is important “to make that Asian community feel appreciated and welcomed so that a traditional Kiwi-European town centre like Northcote, welcomes [and] accepts that new immigrant community; values them and celebrates what’s important of their culture” (ibid.).

![Outdoor table tennis table, 2012](Source: Author, 2012)

He also pointed out that along the way there were suggestions made to turn the area into Auckland’s ‘Chinatown’. In this regard, he explained his gained understanding of the Northeast Asian community and the public space in the
Northcote Town Centre and the reason why creating a ‘Chinatown’ would have not been the right approach. He emphasised that “the Korean community is very strong in Northcote” and developing a ‘Chinatown’ in the Northcote Town Centre “would alienate them and not make them feel so welcome” (K1).

A different but important aspect of the Northeast Asian culture was recognised by participant K8 who believed, that especially the Chinese culture is very much in favour of children’s education - “in a big way” (K8). She came to that conclusion by observing mums who “are always coming in to encourage their children to read a lot of literature and as a result they are also looking for methods and information to help with their school work”. She revealed that a reaction to understanding the needs of the Northeast Asian community was the introduction of the Chinese story time on Thursdays and a bilingual story time on Saturdays. In addition she explained how the library has changed after considering cultural needs and demands of the Northeast Asian community. “When I first got here we only had one bay of Chinese adult and half a bay of Chinese children [books]. ... [A] lot of the classes that we offer are offered specifically with our Chinese customer in mind” (ibid.).

To conclude, key informants stated various examples of their understanding of the Northeast Asian community and their culture. A vital research finding calls attention to the public consultation process of the Town Centre Plan and the way in which the Northeast Asian community participated. There is a general understanding of the concept of saving face the expectation to obey and respect authority, such as the council. Moreover, the installations of the permanent Chinese chess tables and the concrete table tennis table were mentioned as results of the growing understanding of the needs and wants of the Northeast Asian community.

An understanding of the presence of a strong Korean community in the public space was found. This understanding played a crucial role in abolishing plans to develop the area as Auckland’s Chinatown. Further, the importance of children’s education especially for Chinese people was identified by library staff and as a result of long-term observations a Chinese story time and a bilingual story time for children were introduced.
**Key findings – Theme 3**

The existence of issues around exclusion and inclusion in the public space based on cultural aspects was exposed. The predominant use of the public space by Chinese people was described as a negative experience by some participants who do not identify with the Chinese culture. However, experiences of inclusion were also mentioned by several interviewees and highlighted as an important aspect to be considered as no one should feel alienated.

The transformation of the area was described. From being a busy European-based centre the area changed into a rundown and neglected space. Finally it turned into a vibrant and colourful ethnic enclave thanks to a growing Northeast Asian community and its small businesses.

Further findings revealed experiences of cultural blending and acceptance in the town centre, which in particular refers to the Northeast Asian customers who come to shop in the centre and subsequently occupy and use the space. There is also evidence of Northeast Asians participating in community projects. It was found that Northeast Asians adapt to a Kiwi way of life, but Pakeha accept and embrace the Northeast Asian culture by shopping and dining in the town centre.

The town centre was characterised as a space that is mainly affected by a strong Northeast Asian influence induces through the presence of Asian-style grocery shops and restaurants as well as ethnic festivals.

The importance of engaging the Northeast Asian community in order to receive their input in the public consultation process of the Town Centre Plan was recognised. Participants had a good understanding of the Northeast Asian cultural group and their cultural values and norms like the concept ‘face’ and the expectation to obey and respect authority, such as the council. There is also a growing understanding of the Northeast Asian community’s needs and wants in the public space, which mainly results from observed situations over a long period of time. The installations of the permanent Chinese chess tables and the concrete table tennis table were outcomes of observed activities in the public space and actions to make the Northeast Asian community feel appreciated, accepted and welcomed. The importance of children’s education, especially for Chinese people, was identified by library staff. This led to the introduction of the Chinese story time and a bilingual story time for children.
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The chapter is divided into four sections following the emerged themes ('Theme 1 – Uses and users of the public space', 'Theme 2 – Visual signs and manifestations', and 'Theme 3 – Experiences and perceptions of the ethnic space'). This supports the aim of answering the sub-questions of this research and a fourth and final conclusion section.

Due to this study's phenomenological approach, that involves observations of cultural activities in public space as well as the research topic that deals with culture which is complex by its nature, themes are overlapping and are not mutually exclusive.

This chapter also provides indications for Auckland's urban planners and designers with regards to culturally used public spaces.

Eventually, conclusions are drawn which subsequently answer the main research question: What is the impact of the Northeast Asian culture on the public space of Northcote's Town Centre?

THEME 1 - USES AND USERS OF THE PUBLIC SPACE

Based on the key findings that emerged from the collated data under Theme 1 ('Exercise and play'; 'Events and festivals'; 'Reading and education'; and 'Meeting and networking'), this section discusses cultural and social uses of the public space in Northcote's Town Centre.

Furthermore, key findings on specific characteristics of the main users (Age and gender) and influential factors (time of the day, weather, provision of shade) on the use of the public space are discussed and analysed. A conclusive summary assists in giving a concise answer to the first sub-question of this research.

Exercise and play

As key findings indicate, the public space in the Northcote Town Centre is predominantly used for recreational activities by members of the Northeast Asian community. In this regard this study identifies daily leisure activities and exercises
such as Tai Chi, Chinese dance and Chinese board game playing. These three leisure activities were mentioned by a number of interviewees as the main uses of the space, which are held responsible for the creation of a cultural specific atmosphere. As a researcher and observer I immersed myself in this atmosphere, an atmosphere similar to the flair of Chinese public spaces described in the relevant literature (Gaubatz, 2008). On some of my observational walks I was experienced all of these activities at the same time. The space did not appear like a conventional European-based public space. I felt to be walking through an Asian, more specific Chinese public space, as public space in China and Asian-style ethnic precincts are mainly used by people to practise these types of activities (Gaubatz, 2008; Latham, 2007; Miao, 2001; Rolandsen, 2011). These activities can be seen as communal activities or even rituals, which are very common in ‘high context’ societies (Hall, 1983), such as China and other Northeast Asian countries. Hall’s communication model of high context versus low context coincides in many respects with Hofstede’s cultural dimension of ‘individualism/collectivism’. Thus it can be argued that such group activities indicate a collective use of space that is deeply rooted in a collectivistic culture (Hofstede, 1991; Hall, 1983) originating from the values of agrarian lifestyle (Graham & Lam, 2003).

I also had the feeling that participating in leisure activities like Tai Chi, Chinese dance exercises, and Chinese chess is an important part of life for the people I observed. The town centre seemed to play a fundamental role, as it provides the necessary space for people to go there and exercise and be connected with their own culture (Latham, 2007; Miao, 2001). That underlines that people from high context cultures view space as communal (Hall, 1977, 1983).

The most enjoyable part of my observations was watching people participating in Tai Chi and Chinese dance. It became evident after a few days of observation that arriving early was essential in capturing this experience, which seemed to be a normal daily routine. Similar observations have been made by other researchers (Fernando, 2007; Latham, 2007). These involve particularly elderly people engaging in calisthenic exercises including Tai Chi very early in the morning. It showed that cultural leisure activities such as Tai Chi and dance were performed especially in the early morning hours by elderly people...
of the Northeast Asian community. Why people use the space for their leisure activities early in the morning might be explained by Hofstede’s (1991) ‘masculinity/femininity’ dimension. China scores high on this dimension which indicates a masculine society where people are always trying to reach for success. Work has priority and comes before leisure time. It is suggested that when people exercise early they can allocate their whole day to their priorities.

While I observed people’s exercise routines, I experienced a sense of peace and calmness in the space. This sense of tranquillity has been described by other researchers. Chen (1995, p. 351) writes about Tai Chi exercises or dance groups in China’s public spaces: “one immediately senses the relative tranquillity and slower pace of activity”. This seems to be a unique attribute of urban Chinese public spaces, both in China and in countries with strong ethnic Chinese presence like the findings of this study have indicated. Tranquillity, peace and harmony are central themes in Confucianism (Hwang, 1999). Hofstede’s cultural dimension of ‘long-term orientation’ indicates high Confucian values for countries such as China, Korea and Japan (Hofstede & Bond, 1988).

Alongside Tai Chi and dance exercises, findings also disclose the activity of playing board games as a very popular one. This is confirmed by various authors emphasising the popularity of board games like Chinese chess in China’s public space and Asian-style precincts (Fernando, 2007; Rolandsen, 2011; Wang, 1995). On many of my walks I observed reoccurring constellations of people at the board game tables [Figure 4-2]. Two to four men played on each occupied table surrounded by a small crowd of men only. Similar images [Figure 2-4] of such situations have been observed in New York’s Chinatown and in traditional neighbourhoods in China, as it is common pastime for men to get together in public spaces and to play board games (Fernando, 2007; Rolandsen, 2011; Wang, 1995). The fact that there were no women might be an expression of the strong masculinity of Northeast Asian societies (Hofstede, 1991). In a masculine culture, social gender roles are clearly distinct.

The discussed findings with regard to exercise and play identify the importance of public space for the Northeast Asian culture. It allows a cultural group to practise their very own leisure activities. Since these leisure activities are
communal activities, urban designers may have to consider sheltered areas and layouts that allow people to come together and practise in groups.

**Events and festivals**

Public space is discussed in the literature for its suitability for gatherings and its usage for cultural displays and celebrations (Gieryn, 2000; Mitchell, 1996; Rios, 2009; Peters 2010; Zukin, 1995). My findings with regards to ethnic events and festivals held in the public space are consistent with this statement based on previous research.

In the course of my site-observations, I attended two colourful ethnic festivals, the Chinese and Korean New Year Festival as well as the Moon Festival, held in the public space of the town centre [Figures 4-6; 4-8; 4-9]. According to various newspaper articles, these events have been well received in the past and have become a yearly attraction for many Aucklanders. Besides these annual ethnic events, archival research revealed that the public space in the Northcote Town Centre has also been used to host Saturday concerts [Figure 4-11] and one-off celebrations in the past such as the Beijing Olympics and the 60th anniversary of the People’s Republic of China [Figure 4-10].

When I joined the festival crowds, I felt a strong cultural pride among the Northeast Asian community. I experienced that the space was used as a cultural display, as described by Mitchell (1996). That included a colourful and impressive range of mainly Chinese and Korean entertainments. People of all ages performed on stage in traditional and bright costumes and their ethnic cuisine was showcased in the public space.

These findings indicate cultural pride and respect for tradition. Hofstede and Bond (1988) assign such values to ‘short-term’ oriented societies and not to long-term oriented countries like China or Korea (Hofstede & Bond, 1988) which does not support my findings. However, Northeast Asian societies are considered to be collectivistic (Hofstede, 1991; Schwarz, 1999) and ‘high context’ cultures (Hall, 1977). Such cultures are expected to be past-oriented and to respect traditions. Other researchers have found that keeping traditions alive seems especially valued in migrant communities. Migrant communities are often seen as
outposts or keepers of traditions (Raj, 2003; Appadurai & Breckenridge, 1988). For example, Hannerz (1996, p. 28) states that for cultural diasporas “local tradition seems to be just for ever there, in limitless supply. The global is shallow, the local is deep”. This is expressed by Chinese and Koreans people in Northcote who continue to romanticise the local – their homeland.

Several authors have discussed the importance of cultural activities such as cultural exhibits and celebrations for the development of individual and group identity for migrant groups (Arefi & Meyers, 2003; Bernstein & Norwood, 2008; Noussia & Lyons, 2009; Usher, 2002; Shin, 2009). As an observer, I could not resist the temptation to try several Northeast Asian dishes at the events. The relevant literature suggests that food is an essential cultural component and therefore central to one’s sense of identity (Fischler, 1988). Overall, the appropriate use of public space can thus enable ethnic groups to come together and to display their identities in a public arena.

This study indicates the importance of public space for Chinese and Korean people to hold festivals and events. Consequently future urban planners and designers have to create places which need to be multifunctional in many ways in order to support such cultural displays. Seats and benches may be designed to be arranged for an audience and other street furniture may be used to create a temporary stage.

Reading and education

Gaubatz (2008, p. 80) writes about the popularity of reading in China when she describes an image of “so many people sitting on the floor and reading books” in the Dong An Laza. Similarly the findings of this study indicated the popular and frequent use of the community library at the Northcote Town Centre. Especially children and elderly people have been observed as the main users of the library space. They take part in programmes such as ‘reading out loud’ and community English classes. There is also the opportunity for young children to attend Chinese story time sessions and bilingual story reading.

This might be attributed to the traditional Confucian culture, in which education maintains a high social value (Lett, 1998). Hofstede’s (1991) cultural
dimension of long-term orientation (LTO) is linked with the work of Confucius. This dimension describes Chinese people and other Northeast Asians as highly long-term oriented. Persistence and perseverance are valued. Education is central to Chinese and Northeast Asian people. Chinese people believe that educational success leads to getting a good job or a great marriage, which means securing a high status in society (Hildebrand, Phenice, Gray, & Hines, 2008; Louie, 2004). That can be interpreted as who studies the most will be better off later in life. Or in other words, well and highly educated people will become leaders and contribute to society. It can be argued that the value of education influences the everyday life of Chinese and Northeast Asian people. Thus, this research suggests that the Northcote Library not only provides the space that is needed to learn the language of the host country, it also provides space that contributes to satisfying the cultural need of reading and education.

On several of my visits to the Northcote Library I encountered a large number of young children and their mothers occupying the space. This suggests the popularity of the story time and rhyme sessions organised by the library staff. I immediately sensed that these young children felt at home in the library space. The same can be said about the elderly members of the Northeast Asian community. They often gathered in groups of five or six to study and to learn the English language. The popularity of such group activities can be interpreted by employing China’s high score on Hofstede’s (1991) cultural dimension of individualism/collectivism. Chinese as well as other Northeast Asians come from a collectivistic culture which leads to the assumption that learning and reading in groups are culturally valued activities (similar to Tai Chi, Chinese Dance and Chinese Chess) (Gudykunst, 1998).

My findings also show that the library and the gallery are parts of the public space that provides the opportunity for non-Northeast Asian members of society to learn from and about the Northeast Asian culture. Apart from offering services to help immigrants, the library space has also been decorated to reflect the Northeast Asian culture during cultural festivals and to educate non-Northeast Asians. This point is raised by Amin (2002) and Hall et al. (1999) who state that when different cultural groups occupy the same public space, there are
opportunities for people to learn from and adapt to a different culture through learning.

To conclude, the use of the library space by members of the Northeast Asian community satisfies a cultural need for education. Further it provides opportunities for other members of society to learn about the Northeast Asian culture. This study points out that libraries are an essential part of public space in Northeast Asian communities. As members of that cultural group use the library in a collective way, planners might have to provide different space layouts that serve group activities.

Meeting and networking

The use of the public space for the social and psychological well-being of a community is extensively discussed in the literature (see Marcus & Francis, 1998). That includes uses and interactions in public space which may contribute to creating, maintaining or forming social networks as key to a general sense of well-being (Appadurai, 1996; Bernstein & Norwood, 2008; Cattell et al., 2008; Spoonley & Meares, 2010). With regard to this aspect, my research findings show that community and individual well-being was a constant returning observation by the researcher and it came across an important element of people’s interactions in Northcote’s Town Centre. This was confirmed by my interviewees. (e.g.: B1; K4). Figures 4-1, 4-2, 4-3 and 4-12, presented in the findings chapter, show that the use of the public space is dominated by elderly people.

In the course of my site-observations I watch elderly attend activities and exercises such as Tai Chi, Chinese dance and playing board games. What became clear was that people not only participate in such activities to maintain physical fitness levels, they also attend to satisfy their social need to meet people with the same interests and cultural background. First, I observed how they participated in leisure activities and later, after their exercises, I saw the same people meet and chat in groups of three to four. People used the few benches in the space to meet, but most of the time I saw them standing in groups. Interestingly, this activity of socialising seemed even more important to them than the preceding exercise. Most people were intensively engaged in their conversations. According to Hofstede
Northeast Asian cultures are characterized by collectivism. These cultures value long-term relationships between people, social networks and connections (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002, Yeung & Tung, 1996).

But why are these social interactions in the public space of the Northcote Town Centre particularly important for elderly members of the Northeast Asian community? An explanation why this is the case could be given by Dines and Catell (2006) who found out while analysing public space in London, that certain spaces play important roles in supporting ethnic networks among first-generation Asians. Second-or third generation Asians did not consider the same spaces to be important (ibid.).

This research indicates that the use of the public space satisfies the particular need to establish networks between elderly Northeast Asians, as it supports individual and communal well-being. The relevant literature suggests that meeting in public spaces for leisure and networking is particular important for those migrants who do not speak the local language as it enables them to share information that is easier understood in their own language and helps to loosen the initially felt discomfort in their new societies (Castells, 1996; Noussia & Lyon, 2009; Peters, 2010). The space provides them with a place in which they can meet friends and people with whom they share the same cultural background and interests, despite their lack of knowledge of the local language (K4; B1).

Concluding, this study identifies the importance of the public space in the town centre for establishing and maintaining social connections particularly between elderly migrants. It provides them with a place where they share memories and news in regard to their homeland with their peers.

This research outcome provides a significant indication for Auckland’s urban planners and designers, as the need for people to meet and network has to be considered. This means that public spaces should provide people with for instance sheltered areas and small groups of seating in order to support people’s needs to network in public.

Answering the first sub-question

How is the public space used by members of the Northeast Asian community?
In answering the first sub-question, this research suggests a strong resemblance between the use of public space in the Northcote Town Centre and public spaces in Northeast Asia, particularly China and Asian-style ethnic precincts. Key cultural leisure activities in the Northcote Town Centre include playing board games, Tai Chi and Chinese dance exercises. Further, the Northeast Asian community uses the public space to meet friends and establish networks. This highlights the use of the public space for communal and individual well-being. In addition, this research identifies the importance of using the public library, as reading was found to be a highly regarded leisure activity for children and older members of the Northeast Asian community. Furthermore, the public space is used to host ethnic festivals and events. Accordingly, the public space functions as an arena and a stage to display and showcase the Northeast Asian culture.

Overall the public space is used in a variety of meaningful ways by the Northeast Asian culture.

**THEME 2 - VISUAL SIGNS AND MANIFESTATIONS**

This section discusses findings which emerged from the data under Theme 2 (‘Signage and advertisements’; Festivals; Permanent installations and leisure activities’; and ‘Sound and smell’). Cultural representations and manifestations of the Northeast Asian culture with an emphasis on the Chinese culture within the Northcote Town Centre are identified and indications to Auckland’s future urban planning issues are made. Conclusions drawn in this section will assist to answer the second sub-question of this study.

*Signage and advertisements*

As the literature on public space in Northeast Asia and Asian-style ethnic precincts illustrates, features such as ethnic symbols, design and iconography are often manifestations of the cultural orientation of the space (Collins & Kunz, 2009). Findings of my study seem to reflect this view. During the course of my observations I encountered and documented various forms of highly noticeable, sometimes even chaotic appearing advertisements and signboards within the
public space of the Northcote Town Centre. According to De Mooij (2005, p. 36), “[a]ll manifestations of culture, at different levels, are reflected in advertising”.

I felt that these signs strongly communicate a Northeast Asian presence in the town centre. They were found almost everywhere in the space on footpaths, on building facades, in shop windows, above doorways, on and over awnings of retail stores and restaurants, and on walls. Smaller signboards for businesses on upper floors were clustered next to stairway entries. Fernando (2007) uses the term ‘signscape’ for the overall picture of these signboards. Figures 4-13, 4-14, 4-15, 4-16 and 4-17 present images of the ‘signscape’ in Northcote’s Town Centre. A comparison of these photographs with images of visual signage in China’s urban public space [Figures 2-2; 2-3; 2-4] establishes a similarity between the ‘signscapes’. A closer look at these images reveals a slightly ‘chaotic’ appearance of the overall ‘signscapes’ in Northcote as well as in China’s public spaces. It seems to create a visual image of familiarity for the Northeast Asian community (Fernando, 2007). This is not surprising. Northeast Asian societies have been described as ‘polychronic’ cultures (Hall, 1959). People’s activities tend to happen simultaneously, in a more ‘chaotic’ way. Similarly, the ‘chaotic’ appearance of the public space in terms of the arrangements of sign boards and advertisements seems to reflect the communication style of the Chinese and other Northeast Asian cultures. In this sense, it could be argued that the Northeast Asian businesses and especially Chinese ones use such language signs to emphasise their ethnic ownership and to advertise their ethnic products, services and goods to their co-ethnic customers who are able to deal with this arrangement of visual information.

Adding to this appearance is the use of bright colours such as orange, red, blue, green and yellow on almost all advertisement signboards within the area. An explanation as to why such bright colours have been used might be given by De Mooij (2005). Since Northeast Asian societies such as China, Korea and Japan are considered to be ‘high-context’ cultures, their information is embedded in the context surrounding the message (Hall, 1977). These cultures base their advertisement on “symbolism” or “indirect verbal expression” (De Mooij, 2005, p. 56). This makes these cultures more visually oriented, because information is in the “visuals, the symbols and the associations attached to them” (ibid., p. 136). The use of colours in messages requires an in depth understanding of that specific
culture. Messages through the use of colour are normally relatively simply but they have deep meaning. Especially colours such as red, gold, blue and green have specific symbolic meaning in the Chinese culture. For example: “[R]ed represents good luck and happiness; gold represents opulence, royalty, and power; green represents longevity; and blue symbolises the heaven” (Fernando, 2007, p. 147). Thus, it might be suggested that the colours used on signboards communicate the 'Chineseness' of the public space as well as hidden messages which can only be understood by people familiar with this culture.

In addition, signboards in the town centre have English language explanations to go along with Northeast Asian language signs. However, in some instances the sign is only in a Northeast Asian language. Thus, it can be suggested that these language signs are of particular importance for new immigrants and the older generation of Northeast Asians and Chinese people, as they often do not speak or read the English language (Fernando, 2007).

This research is in line with previous studies investigating Chinese ‘signscapes’ (Clark et al., 2009; Fernando, 2007). Overall, signboards clearly communicate a non-verbal message of ‘Chineseness’ of the neighbourhood through various channels, such as the use of language, use of colour and the slightly ‘chaotic’ overall ‘signscape’. Thus, these signs are manifestations of cultural identity. They communicate cultural values and reflect the identity of the Northeast Asian space-users who are able to read these language signs and identify them as something they are familiar with. Such signs also tell anyone else that they are in an Asian style ethnic public space. The clearly disclose the cultural orientation of the town centre. What does that mean for Auckland’s future appearance? New Zealand is considered to be a ‘monochronic’ culture (Sethi, 2010), which means people tend to take a rigid view of time and life is structured (Hall, 1959). This is reflected in the general ‘signscape’ of Auckland. However, a predicted fast growing Asian population is likely to change the present face of Auckland into a more colourful and multi-layered appearance.
**Festivals**

Ethnic festivals held in the Northcote Town Centre have been identified as key findings in regard to cultural manifestations of the Northeast Asian culture within the public space. As already discussed in Theme 1, findings reveal the Chinese and Korean New Year Festival and the Moon Festival as two well-established annual cultural events celebrated in the public space. Similarly, Fernando (2007) refers to the celebration of the Chinese Lunar New Year as the most prominent and well-known annual event in New York’s Chinatown. Such ethnic festivals can also be seen as rituals. The third layer of Hofstede's (2001) ‘onion’ model is called ‘rituals’. Rituals can be traditions, ceremonies, and other forms of collective activities that within a certain culture are considered essential. They describe a culture’s practices and thus are manifestations of this culture (ibid.). Consequently, it can be argued that ethnic events and festivals held in the public space of the Northcote Town Centre are manifestations of the Chinese and Korean culture.

As Figure 4-18 shows, I observed an impressive range of traditional colourful and bright costumes of performers on stage as well as traditional performances such as the Dragon dance and the Lion dance. Similar to the symbolic meaning of the use of bright colours, which has been already explained in the above section, animals, like the dragon and the lion, are mythical animals in the Chinese culture. Symbols are the outermost layer of Hofstede’s (2001) ‘onion’ model. They are specific to people sharing the same culture and specifically important to people coming from ‘high context’ societies like China and Korea (Hall, 1977). Symbols and icons are specifically used as communication elements embedded in the context. Thus, mythical animals such as the dragon and the lion have specific symbolic meaning for people identifying with the Chinese or Korean culture (Fernando, 2007). In this sense, my research seems to resonate with Van Velden and Reeves (2010) as they suggest that the use of such specific cultural symbols as means of communication conveys a powerful message about cultural identity and representation in public space.

A further finding that indicates cultural identity and representation in the public space is shown in Figure 4-19. Elderly Chinese spectators dressed in shades of grey and brown. This is a very common view in China’s public spaces, since
many older people still wear their conservative black, grey or brown Mao suits (Harper & Eimer, 2007). Clothing is one of many mediums though which a message can be sent. As China is a collectivistic society (Hofstede, 1991; Hall, 1983) and was probably even more so in the past, it can be argued that people dress in a similar way to identify with a group – similar to a uniform that reinforces the concept of collective. This type of clothing is also a symbol of the Chinese culture with specific meaning for its people. Hence, the way in which the elderly Chinese people at the festivals are dressed is a manifestation of their culture in the public space of Northcote.

This research thus proposed that cultural festivals not only showcase the Northeast Asian culture, they are also important cultural manifestations of this culture. They include the most iconic manifestations of the Chinese and Korean culture. It can be concluded that through the means of ethnic festivals the cultural group expresses and manifests itself in the public space – it creates an ethnic place. In this sense this study proposes the term ethnic place-making.

As indicated, cultural place-making can offer opportunities to create a particular sense of place (Amin, 2002; Manzo, 2005; Hay, 1998; Shamai, 1991; van Velden & Reeves, 2010) or atmosphere through ways of cultural manifestations. This might be achieved through the staging of cultural events, such as regular ethnic markets or perhaps ethnic music festivals which in turn allow cultural groups to manifest themselves.

*Permanent installations and leisure activities*

The public space in the Northcote Town Centre provides the grounds and opportunities for people to display their cultural identity through the means of cultural leisure activities such as Tai Chi, Chinese dance, board game playing, meeting, and reading [Figure 4-20]. Similar studies on Asian-style ethnic precincts and China’s public space are in agreement with these findings (Fernando, 2007; Feuchtwang, 2012; Gaubatz, 2008; Latham, 2007; Liu, 2004; Wang, 1995). Similar to festivals, these collective activities can be seen as rituals (Hofstede’s, 2001) as their practise seems to become essential for people of the Northeast Asian cultural group. This in turn makes these leisure activities to manifestations of this cultural
group. Thus, this research is in agreement with Peters (2010) who suggests that cultural identity is expressed in leisure behaviour and therefore people’s activities in public space are important reflections and representations of their culture and ethnic community. Since the practise of these rituals has a significant impact on the atmosphere and appearance of the public space, it can be proposed that culturally specific leisure activities such as Tai Chi, Chinese dance, board game playing, meeting, and reading are means for cultural place-making.

Likewise, the permanently installed board game tables and the table tennis table [Figure 4-25; 4-26] are installations and provisions serving the people’s cultural needs. They have become artefacts of their ethnic users. According to Hofstede (2001), artefacts are part of the symbol-layer of his ‘onion’ model through which a culture manifests itself. They also carry special meaning for the people of this culture. The research thus argues that the Chinese chess tables and the table tennis table are significant representations of the Chinese culture. They also influence the cultural flair in the town centre.

As a result of this it is suggested that urban public spaces may benefit from people’s cultural leisure activities in public in order to gain a specific place identity – an identity created though a specific cultural atmosphere and appearance that is enhanced by cultural artefacts (Hayden, 1995; Tuan, 1977, 1980; Rowles, 1980). This seems to be an important aspect to be considered in planning Auckland’s public spaces. Places that allow for people to practise their specific cultural activities may develop a unique place identity, which adds to a diverse urban public landscape that mirrors the city’s multicultural inhabitants.

**Sound and smell**

As an observer, I also experienced the smells and sounds in the public space. Sometimes, especially at lunch time, they made me feel like I was in an entirely different city, somewhere in Northeast Asia. In this regard key findings disclose the use of Northeast Asian languages by people occupying the public space as well as Asian-style music and the aromatic smell of the Northeast Asian-style cuisine escaping from the insides of ethnic restaurants into the public space.
Similar observations in Asian-style ethnic precincts have been made by other authors (Collins, & Kunz, 2009; Fernando, 2007).

Non-visual representations such as smell and sound seem to belong to the layer of symbols. They are products of cultural-specific activities and the preparation of ethnic food. In Hofstede’s onion model “[s]ymbols are words, pictures and objects that carry often complex meanings recognized as such only by those who share the culture” (Hofstede, 2001, p.10). Since sounds and smells can transmit a message just like words I consequently assigned them to the layer of symbols. That in turn emphasises their status as representations of the Northeast Asian cultural group in the public space.

These non-visual manifestations certainly influence perceptions of the public space in a powerful way. Further, they promote the production of a culturally specific atmosphere associated with the Northcote Town Centre. They may also contribute to the authenticity of the space. Thus, this research proposes that non-visual manifestations of the Northeast Asian culture in the town centre contribute to the ethnic place-making and influence the place-identity. Based on this argument, this study suggests that non-visual manifestations, such as sound and smell play an important role in characterising and shaping the ethnic public space.

Hence, genuine and authentic sounds and smells are an important part in the production of ethnic public space. This might be an indication that ethnic precincts, such as the Northcote Town Centre, cannot be created by others or outsiders. They may only be a product of forces from insight a cultural group and therefore have to emerge rather than being planned.

Answering the second sub-question

*What visual signs and other manifestations represent the Northeast Asian culture within the public space of Northcote’s Town Centre?*

The most prominent visual signs are various forms of advertisement and signboards mostly positioned on building facades and on sidewalks. Languages as well as the colours used on these signs are clear indications of the presence of the Northeast Asian culture, particularly the Chinese culture. Additional visual signs
and cultural manifestations of the Northeast Asian culture have been identified with regards to cultural festivals held in the public space. This includes traditional performances, traditional costumes in bright colours, and conservatively dressed elderly people as spectators. Such visual signs display people’s identity and are expressions of people’s cultural pride.

This research further suggests cultural leisure activities such as Tai Chi, Chinese dance, board game playing, meeting, and reading are manifestations of the Northeast Asian culture in the public space. In addition, permanently installed chess tables and the table tennis table are cultural artefacts in the space.

Non-visual signs such as Asian-style music and food smells within the public space were identified as representations of the Northeast Asian culture.

**THEME 3 - EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE ETHNIC SPACE**

This section discusses and analyses findings with reference to experiences and perceptions of the public space in the Northcote Town Centre (‘Inclusion and exclusion’; ‘Experiences of change’; ‘Descriptions of cultural blending and accepting’; ‘Experiences of the ethnic public space’; and ‘Understanding the Northeast Asian culture’). It especially highlights the ability of a culture to transform a public space. The subsequent conclusions drawn from the discussion in this section will contribute to the answer of the third sub-question in this research.

*Inclusion, exclusion and access*

Cattell et al. (2008, p. 547) summarise the tenor of the literature (Brewer, 2005; Bridge & Watson, 2002; Keith, 2005) on public space by stating that public spaces are "sites of division as well as cohesion, of negative as well as positive engagement, and of unequal power relations”.

Key findings in this study uncover the issue of exclusion in the public space based on cultural differences. Especially the predominant use of the public space by Chinese people was described as a negative experience by some participants. Concerning this issue, Holland et al. (2007) state that claiming space and being seen in public becomes a way for different cultural groups to justify their
right to be part of society which may be the explanation of an obvious presence of Chinese people in the public space. Based on this argument my research suggests that when public space is claimed by one cultural group the space needs to be contested by other groups. This seems to be in agreement with other authors who discuss public space as culturally contested space (Brewer, 2005; Bridge & Watson, 2002; Keith, 2005; Madanipour, 2010; Holland et al., 2007; Peters, 2011).

Interestingly, one participant who identifies as Chinese described the dominance of Chinese people in the space as negative (B1). He mentioned that he would like to see more Korean or Japanese people in the centre. Whereas the Japanese interviewee clearly stated that she feels excluded from the space by too much ‘Chineseness’ (B2). Concerning this matter, it might be argued that the issue of exclusion in the town centre is caused by the majority of Chinese people in the public space. As already explained previously Chinese people come from a collectivistic culture (Hofstede, 1991; Hall, 1983) and therefore use the space for collective leisure activities. That means they use the space in various different groups at the same time. This can produce an image of the town centre which might indicate too much ‘Chineseness’ to others which in turn holds them back from entering the public space. These findings seem to resonate with the literature which indicates that for example, the design quality of public spaces, installations or venues might keep some possible users away from entering the public space (Carr et al., 1992; Madanipour, 1998). Noussia and Lyons (2009) argue that by excluding other groups the dominant group will subsequently colonise the space. What this seems to suggest is that urban designers will have to carefully investigate what forms and types of cultural artefacts, provisions, features or installations may determine who is and is not welcome in a public space.

Specific concerns were mentioned by several interviewees, as they did not want other ethnic groups to be alienated by strengthening the presence of one particular ethnic group in the public space. For example, plans for a future Korean garden were proposed and later dismissed, as this specific type of garden would have been in favour of the Korean ethnic group. (K6, K7). Similarly, a proposal that suggested turning the area into Auckland’s Chinatown was abandoned based on concerns about a possible alienation of the Korean community (K1). Also on
grounds of possible exclusion, the New Year Festival which was at the beginning just called a Chinese New Year Festival was renamed into Chinese and Korean New Year Festival (ibid.). This hybridized outcome indicates that an intercultural negotiation has taken place and underlines my findings of a general public desire of inclusion that translates into a public space that welcomes different ethnic groups equally. When ask about their future vision of the town centre, participants wanted it to be a harmonious multicultural place. Ultimately, that leads to the assumption that the public space in the Northcote Town Centre has to possess mutually supportive qualities of access in order to support the concept of an inclusive public space. The idea of inclusive public space in a democratic society is supported by authors such as Madanipour (2010) and Carr et al. (1992). Madanipour (2010, p. 23) therefore highlights the importance to “improve the environmental image and ambience of a public space to make it more welcoming and/or less intimidating to a wider range of social groups”. This in turn could mean that in order to make the public space inclusive and more welcoming to different cultural groups, its image and atmosphere might have to be modified.

However, in the context of my research that focuses on an ethnic public space which therefore is culturally produced, I argue that a degree of exclusion is part of the nature of an ethnic public space. This seems unavoidable to me, otherwise it would not be an ethnic public space. In this sense, I propose that by aiming for an inclusive Northcote Town Centre its unique atmosphere and character would be wiped out. Again, this would be a major loss to a multicultural city like Auckland.

Interestingly, a number of racist assaults on elderly Chinese residents in the area were reported in 2003 (New Zealand Herald, 2003, October 20, A1; New Zealand Herald, 2003, October 21, p. 8). These articles clearly indicate a different level of attempted exclusion that was consciously made to let Chinese people not feel welcome. What this could mean is that former space-users, people who belong to the cultural group of European-New Zealanders, might have felt threatened and pushed out by the growing presents and success of the new occupants. This seems to be in line with Buzzelli (2001, p. 573) who argues that ethnic adoption of public space and its subsequent changes may “involve both pride and tension” between cultures. Hofstede’s (1991) cultural dimension of individualism/collectivism may
help to understand such tensions. With a high score of 79 New Zealand is suggested to be an individualistic society, whereas China and other Northeast Asian countries are considered to be collectivistic. The Northcote Town Centre was initially built by and for a white European-based community. People of this community felt a sense of achievement and were proud owners. Ownership in individualistic cultures is rarely shared. The idea of private ownership is promoted in such cultures. However, collectivistic cultures see space as something that belongs to everyone. Perhaps the European-based community felt that the Northeast Asian people who settled down in the town centre had intruded their space that they had regarded as a form of private space. This might have led to anger and hatred against the new occupants of the public space. Since this reported incidences happened in 2003 and interviewees did not raise the issue of race at all it might be concluded that the tensions have eased off. This in turn could be a sign that Auckland as a multicultural place has become more inclusive. People more and more accept a living in diversity.

Since especially Auckland’s Asian population is rapidly growing, city planners may have to deal significantly more with the issue of exclusion in public space. This raises a future research question. Can public space be inclusive but at the same time also specifically cultural oriented and therefore dominated by one cultural group - is that a contradiction in itself?

Experiences of change

In line with previous research (Jakubowicz & Moustafine, 2010) cultural transformation of the public space in the Northcote Town Centre was mainly experienced through the changing uses of the public space.

Findings that resulted from participant’s experiences as well as newspaper articles helped to document the changes in the Northcote Town Centre. As archival documents [Figures 4-21; 4-21] show, the area was built to serve a European-based clientele. It was successful from its creation in the late 1950s and early 1960s right through to the 1980s. However, in the mid-1990s the town centre started to loose retailers and had “quite a few empty shops” which led to a significant decline (K1), neglect (Coleman, 1996), and “a fair bit of crime” (K7). This decline was caused by
a change in peoples shopping habits due to the openings of Warehouse and Westfield shopping malls in the neighbouring suburbs (K3; K8). In line with Van Melik (2008), who argues that changing public spaces reflect changes in society, the decline and neglect of the town centre was caused by the changing commercial dynamics in the town centre. In fact, as public spaces are socially constructed and therefore cannot be seen as fixed, it is indicated that change lays in the nature of public space (Lefebvre, 1996; Massey, 1994; Semsroth, 2000; Tajbakhsh, 2000). This can be applied to the public space in the Northcote Town Centre, since significant findings not only identify the decline and neglect in the mid-1990s but also the revitalisation of the public space in the late 1990s.

Evidence concerned with the revitalisation of the area shows that Northcote attracted many people from the Northeast Asian cultures especially Chinese who started to settle down in that area. The existence of an Asian supermarket created the impulse for more Northeast Asian owned businesses to move into the then abandoned town centre. This led to a revitalisation of the centre. This research suggests that in the late 1990’s Northeast Asian people started to make the public space in the Northcote Town Centre their own place - ethnic place-making. Ethnic place-making happens when “the influx of a new ethnic group begins to alter an urban district’s demographic profile and cultural landscape, reflected visibly in the establishment of ethnically identified businesses, streetscapes, and social spaces” (Godfrey 2007, p. 333).

Participants described a transformation of the atmosphere and the image of the Northcote Town Centre, which was enhanced by promoting and marketing the ethnic food niche and attracting Northeast Asian owned businesses (K1; K3; K7; K8). For instance, informants K7 and K8 argue that without the number of Chinese and Korean owned restaurants which were opening in the centre; “Northcote might have died as a community; ... we really have everything we have to owe to them” (K8). In line with these findings the relevant literature indicates that especially migrants transform and shape public space by occupying space that has been abandoned by locals (Smith & Williams 1986; van Weesep & Musterd, 1991 as cited in Noussia & Lyons, 2009). This is reflected in the seventy five per cent or more Northeast Asian owned enterprises in the Northcote Town Centre (K1) [Figure 4-24].
From an urban planning perspective this could mean that ethnic migrant groups can be seen as active agents in the change process of a public space. In that regard Rios (2009) explains that culture has a constructive power to initiate a change in the use and fabrication of public space. This may apply especially to cultures which have been assigned a low uncertainty avoidance index by Hofstede (1991), meaning that people are open to change and have a propensity to take risks. Hence, it is proposed that people from societies with a low uncertainty avoidance index such as China, could have a positive impact in revitalising public space that has been neglected.

However, findings not only indicate the transformation from an abandoned space into an ethnic business space, they also emphasise how Chinese Northcote residents have transformed the image of Northcote with their games of chess out on the park benches (“Chinese make move to Northcote”, 2002) and their Tai Chi practise in the public space (“Spiced up for Shore”, 2004). Evidence clearly illustrates the change in ownership of the public space which seems to be in accordance with Carr et al. (1992, p. 177) who argue: “disposition represents a form of ultimate control, encompassing and transcending the rights inherent in access, action, claim and change”.

As already discussed, the use of the public space in the town centre is manifested through a variety of activities such as Tai Chi, Chinese dance, and Chinese chess games. Such activities had not been considered in the late 1950s and early 1960s when the Northcote Town Centre was designed and built for a predominantly European-based community. The public space today proves to be able to tolerate such unforeseen uses and allows members of the Northeast Asian community to use the space differently because of their different cultural background. This indicates a significant aspect to be considered in planning Auckland’s future space. Existing public spaces that are sufficiently flexible and allow for unforeseen uses might be more successful spaces when a change in ownership occurs. Similarly, Walzer (1986, p. 470) states that the ideal public space is “designed for a variety of uses, including unforeseen and unforeseeable uses, and uses by citizens who do different things”. Arefi and Meyers (2003) observed that cultural differences can manifest themselves in the different use of public space. This might explain why the existing basketball courts are areas which
are scarcely used by the Northeast Asian cultural group. Northeast Asians prefer to practise Tai Chi and Chinese dance instead of basketball, which certainly is more popular with the European-based population in New Zealand. But why are Tai Chi and Chinese dance popular by Chinese people? The answer may lay firstly in the Confucian values of the Chinese culture which are linked to Hofestede’s (1991) long-term dimension and secondly in the collectivistic society. Confucianism promotes harmony and collectivism is attributed with synchrony. Both, harmony and synchrony seem to be important elements of Tai Chi and Chinese dance. Whereas basketball is an aggressive and competitive sport that is preferred by people from individualistic cultures.

Hence, it can therefore be argued that the Northeast Asian community uses the public space differently to the European-based community in the late 1950s.

Descriptions of cultural blending and acceptance

Cultural blending and cultural acceptance within the public space of the Northcote Town Centre emerged as significant topics from participant’s experiences. For instance, members of the Northeast Asian community took part in the Northcote community life by getting involved in a neighbourhood clean-up project (K4) [Figure 4-25]. This can be interpreted in the way that the public space in the town centre plays an important role in fostering interethnic understanding by providing opportunities for people to meet (Amin, 2002; Cattell et al., 2008; Dines & Cattell, 2006). It also seems to suggest that by participating in such communal events migrants and members of the Northeast Asian community may benefit from interactions with non-migrants and people from other ethnic groups because it can create feelings of acceptance and may provide the opportunity to learn something new from each other (Putnam, 2000; Carr et al., 1992).

Indications for a growing acceptance of the Northeast Asian culture within the long established Northcote community have been found. Initially the ‘white’ European-based community regarded the new faces from Northeast Asia as “these people” but there has been a noticeable shift towards welcoming and appreciating the Northeast Asian community (K4). By engaging with anyone who has a
significantly different life experience, we engage in intercultural communication. It is a communication with the 'other', who we might regard as 'exotic' or 'strange' in comparison to our own culture. My findings show that people experienced challenges but have found ways to adjust to different cultural communication patterns after recognising intercultural barriers. It required making efforts to understand the “others” and making compromises. “One way to become more flexible and understanding of others is by expanding our frames of reference, the lenses we use to see the world” (Fisher-Yoshida, 2005). In this regard K1 emphasised that many more people nowadays have travelled and started to value and adapt to certain habits and customs. This is conveyed in the acceptance and enjoyment of Asian food restaurants in the town centre by other cultures (K1). It can thus be suggested that the public space of the Northcote Town Centre may be seen as an arena where different cultures develop a greater respect for each other’s culture, acceptance and tolerance.

An example of cultural adaptation in the public space was described by key informant K2. Over time she observed how members of the Northeast Asian community have changed certain behavioural habits, such as spitting in public, which were not accepted by the white Pakeha community and seen as “most unpleasant” (K2). This comment identifies the issue that different cultural groups have different perceptions of what is acceptable or safe behaviour in a public space (Ward Thompson, 2002). “Because by definition a public space is a place accessible to anyone in entering the public one always risks encountering those who are different, those who identify with different groups and have different opinions of different forms of life” (Young, 1995, p. 268).

This study argues that encountering those who are different in public space has led to exclusion and space negotiation, which has already been discussed under the section ‘Inclusion, exclusion and access’. However, social interactions between different cultural groups in public space have reduced intergroup prejudice and may assist in developing a cultural acceptance between different cultures in the space.

Overall, it can be argued that cultural barriers have been recognised by Northeast Asian people, as cultural shift has taking place in terms of behaviour and preferences within this ethnic community towards the New Zealand culture and its
norms and values. However, not only it is suggested that Northeast Asians have adapted to a Kiwi way of life, but also Pakeha have started to accept and value the Northeast Asian culture through ethnic shopping and dining. The use of the public space supports a cultural exchange and a change in people’s perceptions or as key informant K2 concluded: “[This exchange] will continue to grow and the next generation will have … a whole new attitude and we will lose some things and gain a lot through that” (K2).

What does that mean for Auckland and its future public spaces? As indicated the presence of groups with different cultural backgrounds in the same public space may lead to opportunities where people may accept a different culture or adapt to it. Nevertheless, based on my observations I argue that there are also limits in the ability of public space to foster cultural blending and acceptance. Observations have shown that the public space in the Northcote Town Centre serves as meeting places for people who already know each other, although familiarity with others may be built on special events such as the ‘tidy up’ project. In order to facilitate cultural blending and acceptance in Auckland’s multicultural society, public spaces may have to be designed to provide more opportunities for people from different cultures to meet with and learn from each other.

Experiences of the ethnic public space

Significant research findings display a change in the general public’s perception of the town centre. People in the late 90s had a slightly negative perception of the growing Northeast Asian presence in the area (K1; K3). That was based on the fear of losing the town centre. However, this has changed, “people’s mind-sets have shifted somewhat” (K3) and “people are now seeing it as a real positive”, since the cultural food niche created through the Northeast Asian businesses and community has revitalised the centre and made it vibrant again (K1). As New Zealand is categorized as being a short-term orientated society (Hofstede, 1991), people tend to value immediate results and outcomes more than the process of achieving a long-term goal. This may provide us with an explanation as to why people appreciate the transformation of the town centre into an ethnic space only after they have seen the result.
Also the development of the ethnic food niche in the Northcote Town Centre involved cultural pride that led to tensions between the former and the new occupants. For example K7 remembered that he could not agree with how and what fish was sold in some shops. He argued: “That’s no good - that upsets a lot of Kiwis” (K7). This statement tells a lot about cultural pride and the tensions felt between cultures based on different cultural and ethical norms. These norms reflect the different culture’s values. They determine the definition of ‘good’ and ‘bad’, or people’s aspirations about how things should be done (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997).

Moreover, previously discussed findings highlight strong Northeast Asian and especially Chinese influences on the public space. Such influences emanate particularly from Asian-style grocery shops, ethnic restaurants as well as cultural festivals (B2; K1; K4; K8). In accordance the relevant literature mentions that ethnic precincts are mainly experienced through their key features such as the provision of ethnic food and ethnic restaurants (Rath, 2007; Warde, 1997; Warde & Martens, 1998, as cited in Collins & Kunz, 2009; Zukin 1995). For example, participant B2 states that Northeast Asian customers “come here to buy Asian new ingredients” and “even some non-Asian people” come here too (B2). This comment demonstrates that the Northcote Town Centre serves co-ethnic customers who like to go shopping within their co-ethnic community but they can also serve the non-ethnic market in which mainstream businesses are not interested (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Evans, 1989). However, this research demonstrates that the Asian-style ethnic precinct first serves its own ethnic community but attracts other cultural groups as well. The town centre can therefore be described as a social centre for meeting and ethnic grocery shopping with a particular emphasis on eating.

With respect to Auckland’s cultural makeup it seems to be important for the city to have ethnic pockets, such as the Northcote Town Centre. They are expressions of a multicultural city. Ethnic businesses in such places offer people cultural specific goods and items, which they cannot buy anywhere else. They also offer people from other cultural groups a place where they can experience and taste a different cuisine. The opportunity to experience different cultures seems to be a significant aspect in a multicultural society. The development of such ethnic
places might also have a positive impact on future tourism to the city, which has to be investigated in a future study.

*Understanding of the Northeast Asian culture*

Key informants were asked to reflect on their understanding of the Northeast Asian community that has become the main user of the public space in the town centre. One significant finding that emerged in this area was the growing recognition of engaging the Northeast Asian community in order to receive their input in the public consultation process of the Town Centre Plan. This is one of the biggest challenges in planning urban space as public meetings have a poor attendance of minority ethnic groups and migrants (Bernstein & Norwood, 2008). Newcomers to cities are often perceived as strangers and regarded as a threat to old ways of thinking (Friedmann, 2002; Sandercock, 1998). This phenomenon is not absent in Auckland (CityScope Consultants & Trotman, 2006). K3 emphasises that the importance of the Northeast Asian community's input was recognised very early on. However, despite meetings with the North Shore Chinese Association, an equivalent Korean Association, and members of a Korean church during the consultation process feedback was “very rare - well they don’t bring negative things up in a public forum”. “[T]hey don't want to lose face⁵, lose respect” (K3). In this regard he states his understanding of the concept of saving face that is deeply rooted in the Northeast Asian culture. Moreover, K3 also realises that authorities such as a council are not seen as friendly and nice in many countries overseas. Therefore, it is not recommended to disagree or object in a public forum (ibid). This for instance indicates the importance of understanding the long-term oriented Chinese culture and its Confucian principles, such as respect for authority, ‘giving-face’ to others and preserving social harmony. This is especially essential, as New Zealanders come from a short-term oriented society which does not emphasize such principles.

Based on these indications it can be argued that Auckland’s urban planners need to have specific knowledge about different cultures. Intercultural

---

⁵ Face saving is translated as reputation or honour and has to do with the social pressure to behave in accordance with one’s social status and what is expected of him or her. This often (but not always) requires sacrificing personal interests (Kim et al. 1998).
awareness seems to be an important skill in order to understand the various cultural aspects influencing a public planning process and to approach planning processes with appropriate cultural sensitivity (Bernstein & Norwood, 2008). However, with respect to the involvement of different cultures in urban planning processes, the literature also highlights the need for policies and events that regulate, facilitate, and encourage participation in the urban planning process (CityScope Consultants & Trotman, 2006; Wood & Landry, 2008). This is an important point that needs to be explored by city authorities in order to foster a democratic outcome.

The installations of the permanent Chinese chess tables under the elm tree and the concrete table tennis table embody the authority’s growing understanding of the Northeast Asian community’s needs and wants in the public space (Cattell et al., 2008). Especially Bollens (1998) explains that planners and policy makers have to consider demands and necessities of daily urban life by different cultural groups. These permanent features are outcomes of observed activities in the public space over a long period of time with the aim to make the Northeast Asian community feel appreciated, accepted and welcomed. This stresses the importance of observations in the context of a cultural specific planning project. Thus, this research emphasises the importance of examining people’s needs on public space because “[p]laces that do not meet people’s needs or that serve no important functions for people will be under used and unsuccessful” (Carr at al., 1992, p. 92).

A further important finding revealed that authorities have an understanding of a strong presence of Korean people in the public space which led to the rejection of plans to develop the area as Auckland’s Chinatown. This decision was based on the understanding that Korean people would feel alienated and excluded from the space which may turn the public space into a site of fragmentation (Madanipour, 2004, Peters, 2011). Turning it into a Chinatown would have led to suggestions about who is and is not welcome in the space; implying the denial of social access to the space for other cultural groups (Cattell et al., 2008; Madanipour, 1998). This argument leads to the suggestion that cultural sensitivity plays a significant part in making decisions for Auckland’s future.

In addition, the importance of children’s education, especially for Chinese people, has been recognised by library staff. As result of this understanding the
library introduced a Chinese story time and a bilingual story time for children. These reading sessions were introduced after considering that especially reading is an important form of leisure for Chinese and Northeast Asian people (Wang, 1995, p. 161). In this regard cultural understanding led to changes within the public library space. Hence, this research further argues that cultural understanding and sensitivity are essential skills for all people who deal with ethnic groups in the context of a multicultural city.

**Answering the third sub-question**

*How is the public space of Northcote’s Town Centre perceived?*

It is suggested that the public space in the Northcote Town Centre is a place of inclusion as well as exclusion. This perception of the public space is mainly based on statements which underline the predominant use of the space by Chinese people. However this study does not reveal a deliberate attempt of excluding other ethnical groups from the space over the last nine years. Furthermore, this research proposes a perceived transformation of the area that is attributed to a growing Northeast Asian community and especially its small businesses focusing on an ethnic food niche. The town centre has turned into a vibrant and colourful ethnic space.

It is also proposed that the Northeast Asian community has shown signs of adapting to a Kiwi way of life. Similarly, Pakeha have started to accept and value the Northeast Asian culture through ethnic shopping and dining. The ways in which the public space is used supports a cultural exchange and a change in people’s perceptions. The characterisation of the public space is mainly based on cultural festivals and the presence of ethnic grocery shops and restaurants.

This study also indicates the importance of understanding of the Northeast Asian community and its cultural needs and demands on the public space. It further exposes the need for policies that encourage participation and cultural sensitivity towards a more democratic outcome.
CONCLUSION

This qualitative study set out to explore the ‘cultural footprint’ within the public space in Auckland’s Northcote Town Centre. The ‘cultural footprint’ is an abstract term that describes what is brought into the space and/or left behind by its main user, the Northeast Asian cultural group. To achieve the aim of exploring this footprint, the investigation was guided by three sub-questions, which were answered in the previous sections of this discussion chapter by analysing uses and users, forms of visual and non-visual cultural manifestations, and experiences and perceptions with reference to the public space and the Northeast Asian culture. By concluding what was discussed in the previous chapter, this section seeks to answer the overarching research question:

*What is the impact of the Northeast Asian culture on the public space of Northcote’s Town Centre?*

The discussed findings within Theme 1 show a close analogy between the ways in which the Northcote Town Centre is used and traditional cultural uses of public space in Northeast Asia and Asian-style precincts. Subsequently, this study suggests that the use of the public space in the town centre seems to be a reflection of the Northeast Asian culture and community with emphasis on the Chinese culture.

This is based on the identified key uses which include collective leisure activities like reading, Chinese chess, Tai Chi and Chinese dance exercises and their disclosed daily pattern. Not less significantly, the space is frequently used by especially elderly members of the Northeast Asian community to network and meet friends and people with whom they share the same cultural background. Moreover, the public space is also regularly used to stage annual ethnic events like the Chinese and Korean New Year and the Moon Festival. Accordingly, this study proposes the importance of the public space in the town centre for the Northeast Asian cultural group, as the space functions as arena that supports their physical and social wellbeing as well as an arena to showcase its culture and exhibit and develop a group identity.
It is suggested that the outlined uses have a significant impact on the success of the public space. This is based on the ethnic nature of such uses which have been disclosed previously as particularly collective uses of the public space. It can be assumed that public space is a successful space because it meets needs and demands of the Northeast Asian community and accommodates a variety of different cultural uses. Carr et al. (1992, p. 92) support this conclusion by arguing: “[U]se is important to success. Places that do not meet people’s needs or that serve no important functions for people will be under used and unsuccessful”.

For instance, there is a close relation between leisure activities in public spaces and public safety (Tiesdell & Oc, 1998). In other words a public space needs to be used in order to be perceived as safe. Consequently, the identified uses and especially cultural leisure activities in the town centre have a positive impact on the public space, as they contribute to the perception of a safe space.

Key research findings discussed under Theme 2 highlight the most noticeable impact on the public space initiated by the Northeast Asian community. Visual signs in various different forms of advertisement and language signboards positioned on different building parts and on sidewalks evidently indicate a strong influence of the Northeast Asian culture in the area. The comparison of images of the physical environment in China's public spaces and photographs taken during my observational walks proposes a strong similarity of the 'signscapes'. This close resemblance may be interpreted as an expression of cultural belonging and a reflection of cultural identity in the public space of the Northcote Town Centre, based on the languages and colours used on these signboards and the overall slightly chaotic composition of these signboards. Permanently installed chess tables and the table tennis table are physical cultural manifestations in the space which have an impact on the appearance but also on the use of the space.

With respect to the research question, it can be suggested that advertisement, language signboards and other permanent installations such as the chess tables and the table tennis table not only are manifestation of the Northeast Asian culture in the space, they also dramatically impact the appearance of the public space. This in turn affects the overall atmosphere of the space, giving it a Northeast Asian ethnic flair.
This atmosphere can only be further enhanced by other identified cultural manifestations, such as annual ethnic festivals and cultural leisure activities. While an ethnic festival or a cultural leisure activity in itself can be seen as a cultural manifestation it might include traditional performances, traditional costumes in bright colours, and conservative dressed elderly people in Mao suits as manifestations of the Northeast Asian culture, which all on their own are cultural manifestations as well. In addition this research suggests non-visual cultural signs like Asian-style music and Asian food smells within the public space strengthen the impact of the Northeast Asian culture on the town centre.

Such cultural signs and manifestations convey deeply rooted shared values of the Northeast Asian culture. Therefore, they express a cultural identity. However, those cultural manifestations also give the place a meaning and are responsible for a cultural milieu. A person’s affections are “embedded in a cultural milieu” that makes place attachment “more than an emotional and cognitive experience, and includes cultural beliefs and practices that link people to place” (Low, 1992, p. 165). According to Low (1992), place attachment is a symbolic relationship generated when shared cultural meanings are implemented into places.

In contrast to the conclusions drawn under Theme 1 and Theme 2, which suggest a number of different impacts on the experience of the public space, this argument is concerned with the impacts on the perceptions of the public space in the Northcote Town Centre unleashed by the Northeast Asian cultural group.

As the preceding discussion under Theme 3 suggested, the public space is perceived as being both, inclusive as well as exclusive in relation to cultural groups. The perception of exclusion within the public space is mainly based on the predominant use of the space by Chinese people. This can be interpreted as an issue for other ethnic groups, since it suggests perceived inequality in relation to social access for all ethnic groups. Social access is also called symbolic access which relates to the image of the space in the eyes of the intended users. Consequently, this study may suggest, that the predominant group of Chinese people in the public space impacts the perception of the public space by others. Nonetheless, this study reveals considerable findings which underline a general effort to welcome every cultural group into the space.
This study has identified a change in the public opinion about the town centre’s public space from a negative towards a positive perception. This is mainly based on the positive experiences counted towards the revival of the centre. For instance, key informant K8 states that without the number of Chinese and Korean owned restaurants which were opening in the Northcote Town Centre; “Northcote might have died as a community; ... we really have everything we have to owe to them” (K8). This implies that the move of the Northeast Asian ethnic businesses into the Northcote Town Centre has transformed and affected the public perception of space. Hence, on the basis of participant’s experiences and perceptions this research proposes a perceived transformation of the Northcote Town Centre that is attributed to a growing Northeast Asian community and especially its small entrepreneurial businesses.

As a result of this the Northcote Town Centre is perceived as a small entrepreneurial ethnic business and leisure hub. Since many of these businesses are ethnic grocery shops and restaurants the public perception of the town centre seems to be particularly focused on ethnic food. That perception is clearly expressed in the characterisations of the Northcote Town Centre such as the term “food mecca”. To this effect, Rios (2009) explains that culture has a constructive power to initiate a change in the fabrication of public space.

On the whole, this study has explored the impact of the Northeast Asian culture on the public space within the Northcote Town Centre and its perception. Based on the preceding discussion, it can be concluded that the presence of the Northeast Asian culture seems to affect the appearance, the flair as well as the perceptions of the public space in several different ways as it is visually illustrated in the figure below [Figure 5-1].
A cultural footprint in Auckland's public space

Figure 5-1: Influences of the Northeast Asian culture on the public space
“As one’s village, village life, and its slow pace are remembered, so do cities and city life become psychic anchors. Streets and street life, the way public squares, parks, and gardens were used, the sights, sounds, and smells of the city, as well as social relationships therein are remembered” (Mazumdar, 2002)

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This phenomenological research has been an investigation into the experiences and perceptions of research participants as well as my own. The aim was to identify and raise awareness of the ‘cultural footprint’ in Auckland’s public space. This study sought to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between cultural space-users and public space, in order to enrich urban planning knowledge. This in turn may lead to an enhanced and more successful public environment in Auckland. To reach this aim, this study set out to explore the impact of the Northeast Asian culture on the public space of the Northcote Town Centre, its appearance and perceptions. In this last concluding chapter of this study a summary and key final thoughts are presented along with recommendations for future research in the interdisciplinary field of intercultural communication and urban planning. Finally, this thesis ends with a personal reflection on my research journey.

SUMMARY

This study explored the impact of the Northeast Asian cultural group on the public space of Auckland’s Northcote Town Centre. It aimed to grasp, what influential cultural factors have transformed this space from a neglected and rundown European-based town centre in the late 1990s to a thriving and unique ethnic precinct, as it presents itself today.

Cultural transformations of public space are experienced through the changing uses of the public space (Jakubowicz & Moustafine, 2010). This exposes a significant research discovery, which identifies cultural and social leisure activities practiced by elderly people and their daily patterns as a relevant impact on the
appearance, perceptions and atmosphere of the public space. The research findings identified several culturally related uses of this public space such as annual festivals, Tai Chi, Chinese chess, Chinese dance exercises and reading as well as social uses such as meeting and networking.

The overall phenomenological research design with particular emphasis on non-participant observations over an extensive period of time along with semi-structured interviews, archival research and photography provided effective measures to collect and analyse the data required to achieve the research aim.

Most importantly, this study clearly indicates that a transformation of the public space has taken place due to cultural influences induced by the Northeast Asian cultural group. It provides evidence that culture has a constructive power to initiate a change in the use and fabrication of public space. Therefore, this research has significant implications for Auckland’s urban planners. It comes to the conclusion that an ‘immigrant gateway city’, like Auckland with a forecast of a fast-growing multi-cultural society, has to investigate the impact cultural groups and communities have on public space. There is a need to deepen the understanding of cultural groups as space-users and their aspirations, needs, priorities and demands to create responsive and successful public spaces in Auckland’s future environment.

As the study confidently argues, the investigated public space is of great importance for the Northeast Asian community, as the space functions as arena that supports physical and social wellbeing as well as an arena to showcase its culture and exhibit and develop a group identity (Clark et al., 2009). In this sense, the public space facilitates a sense of territorial identity for people who identify with, “either through birth, ancestry, or social imagination, a homeland other than the one they currently inhabit” (Appadurai & Breckenridge, 1988, p. 95). Hence, it is the researcher’s ambition to raise awareness of the significance of public space for the well-being of Auckland’s ethnic groups. This study clearly points out that in order to develop a group identity and to also showcase their culture, ethnic groups want to occupy public space. Subsequently, their cultural uses and manifestations affect the appearance and perceptions of the space, which has to be considered in planning successful urban public spaces in a multi-cultural Auckland.
The public space in the Northcote Town Centre is a place where cultural activities, interaction and communication occur. It is a dynamic space that was, is and will be subjected to transformations of Auckland’s inhabitants. Hence, due to the changing dynamics of society, the public space has been transformed and revitalised. It is a culturally contested space that lost its old cultural attributes and identity but has gained fascinating new ones - reflecting thus the changing cultural makeup of Auckland’s multi-cultural urban landscape.

This study’s outcome makes interdisciplinary contributions to knowledge which can be applied to research in diverse fields including intercultural communication, community development or urban planning. Recommendations may be of interest for urban planners, policy makers, and town centre management.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Several recommendations have been developed as a result of this study. Relating to the findings, discussion and the research outcomes presented in this study, the following recommendations are suggested.

To adequately deal with public space in any urban planning process that involves culture, it is essential for Auckland’s authorities and planners to understand:

- The cultural space-users and their unique cultural activities, which shape the space and give it meaning.
- The aspirations, needs, priorities and demands of the public space-users, in order to create responsive and successful public spaces in Auckland.
- Different cultural space-milieus in Auckland and their dynamics such as age and gender of the users.
- How well Auckland’s public environment supports cultural functions and activities taking place in the public space.
- The possible positive impact of a cultural group in revitalising public space that has been abandoned and neglected.
- The possible limitations to physical planning and designing public space for a cultural group by others/outsiders.
The importance for cultural groups to participate and to be involved in public planning processes, in order to voice their needs.

The importance of insightful and culturally sensitive investigations and long-time observations in the forefront of any planning process.

The need to consider that urban design is not necessarily transferable between cultures and requires an understanding of the unique relationship between the space-users and the space.

**STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS**

Despite every effort to ensure the quality and credibility of this research, several limitations were encountered throughout the research stages of research design, data collection, and analysis. However, this research also benefitted from several strengths, such as its phenomenological approach and the researcher’s expertise in the field of urban planning.

Most importantly, it has to be said that the sample was a small group of people. Therefore, the study’s result cannot be generalised. Nevertheless, despite the small sample, the qualitative study generated rich data, enhanced by extensive site observations, archival research and photography. Findings were allowed to emerge.

As already acknowledged in the research design chapter, objectivity remains an issue due to the qualitative nature of this research. Firstly, the qualitative design of this project required subjective data to be collected which may have limited this study’s credibility. Also, the substantial amount of rich data needed to be filtered and reduced. This process as well as analysing the data towards the final conclusions was most likely affected by the researcher’s subjectivity. Inevitably, this study is strongly influenced by my personal cultural background, perspectives and interpretations. However, my professional background and understanding of urban planning aspects strengthened this research significantly. This knowledge enhanced the researcher’s skills in a primarily communication focused research.

With regard to the interviews, some influencing factors need to be considered as limitations to this research. All the interviews were conducted in the English language. However, a considerable number of interviewees as well as the
interviewer are non-native speakers of that language. Therefore, the research results might have been influenced through eventually misunderstandings. Through to the researcher’s best knowledge, no obvious or critical misunderstandings were detected while transcribing the interviews.

Also, the researcher would have liked to extend the available timeframe to carry out further observations. It would have been beneficial to this research to have at least a year of recorded observations. A more generous timeframe would have allowed the researcher to undertake a proper ethnographic study that requires a longer period of observation. However, despite time limitations the researcher believes to have carried out her observations throughout the most crucial months of the year. In that sense, this study can be seen as a per-cursor of a more extensive future study.

Despite the encountered limitations, this research identifies a clearly transformed urban public space due to the presence of the Northeast Asian cultural group in the space.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Throughout the research journey of this thesis, this study proved to be a melting pot of ideas for further research. As this research shows, understanding the relationship between culture and its public environment is an important aspect of planning Auckland’s future public spaces. Also, it is much more complex than it appears at first glance and involves study fields, such as intercultural communication and urban planning this interdisciplinary approach opens up multiple directions for future research.

As a result, of this study, the researcher calls for more research into the topic of cultural used public environments. In order to provide and create more supportive environments for Auckland’s multi-cultural society, more knowledge needs to be gained about the cultural needs and demands on public space.

Most importantly, the researcher sees this study as a point of departure for future investigations of the ‘cultural footprint’ in Auckland’s public space. While this study’s focus is solely on one of Auckland’s public spaces as well as on one very specific cultural group of citizens, the underlying concerns raised in this
research can be applied to many more of Auckland’s urban residential and commercial settings. Consequently, further inquiries into the topic of the ‘cultural footprint’ in Auckland’s public space are needed, since every public space and its relationship with a cultural group is unique.

Interestingly, this research highlighted the challenge of getting cultural groups to fully participate in a public consultation and planning processes.

This is a concerning discovery, considering the great variety of ethnic groups in Auckland and the forecast of an even richer multi-cultural society emerging in the future. Therefore, future research that contributes to strengthening the public participation of Auckland’s cultural groups is required to improve the city’s planning processes and their outcomes.

Also, a much more systematic and in-depth examination of visual cues and representations of specific cultural groups in Auckland’s public space might be a future research direction. That could similarly be applied to a more in-depth exploration of cultural leisure activities in public space. Perhaps, that could be an ideal ethnographic study conducted from a planning or even a recreational perspective.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Undertaking this study at first began as an exciting exploration into realms I feel very passionate about. However, little did I know about the amount of effort that would be needed to maintain this enthusiasm especially when life changes dramatically.

Phenomenology as a research approach was difficult at the beginning. Conducting interviews and observations was interesting despite my very limited experiences with these methods. Over time I became particularly committed to my observations for the reason of adequacy but I also noticed a growing feeling of familiarity. I was unsure at the beginning how to integrate historical material and images into this kind of study. Data analysis was also a challenge. How do I make sense of data that was collected via four different methods? I needed to be creative and remain truthful to my phenomenological approach.
Ultimately, I survived an interesting exercise and I believe I got there at the end. The whole research and especially the phenomenological approach took me on an exciting adventure. I have to admit that maintaining the discipline required for such an enterprise was sometimes a struggle, because being a researcher was also a very lonely endeavour. Despite empathic family and friends it was down to me in the end in keeping myself motivated and staying committed to my study.

I believe that regardless of what happens to the outcome of this research it was worth doing it.
References


A cultural footprint in Auckland’s public space


Focus on cultures. (2010, July 8). *North Shore Times*, p. 17.


Seamon (2012). Physical and Virtual Environments: Meaning of Place and Space, [first draft of an article to be published as chapter 18]. In Willard, & Spackman's (Eds.), (12th ed) *Occupational Therapy*. Philadelphia: Wippincott, Williams & Wilkens.


Appendices

Appendix A – Information sheet (key informants)

Information for participants - key informants

A CULTURAL FOOTPRINT IN AUCKLAND’S PUBLIC SPACE
EXPERIENCES, PERCEPTIONS AND USE OF THE PUBLIC SPACE IN THE
NORTHCOTE SHOPPING CENTRE

My name is Grit Fichter. I am currently enrolled in the Master of International Communication programme at Unitec New Zealand. In order to complete the programme I am conducting a research project in the form of a thesis. The research project is designed to answer the following research question: What is the impact of the Northeast Asian culture on the public space of Northcote’s shopping precinct?

The aim of my project:
The aim of my research project is to gain a better understanding of different demands on public space by one cultural group. The research project may provide recommendations or approaches, which can assist with developing ways in which we can engage with and improve urban environments.

I request your participation in the following way and would like to ask you to participate in a semi-structured interview and talk about:

- Your relationship and engagement with the Northeast Asian community
- Your understanding of the Northeast Asian community
- Your vision of the future Northcote Shopping Centre (improvements, suggestions)

The semi-structured interview will take about 30 minutes. I will, with your permission, audiotape the interview and transcribe them later. All features that could identify you will be removed and the tapes used will be erased once the transcription is done.
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You can still withdraw from the project once the interview took place. However, because of my schedule, any withdrawals must be done within two weeks after I have interviewed you.

Your name and information that may identify you will be kept completely confidential and anonymous. All information collected from you will be stored on a password protected computer at Unitec New Zealand for five years and can only be accessed by me and my supervisors.

Please contact me if you have any concerns about the project.
Email: grit.fichter@xtra.co.nz or phone: 021 0241 7660.
You may also contact my supervisors at Unitec New Zealand. My supervisors are:
Dr. Evangelia Papoutsaki,
email: epapoutsaki@unitec.ac.nz or phone: +64 9-815 4321 ext. 8746,
Dr. Elena Kolesova,
email: ekolesova@unitec.ac.nz or phone: +64 9-815 4321 ext. 8827 and
Paul Woodruffe,
email: pwoodruffe@unitec.ac.nz or phone: +64 9 815 4321 ext. 8670

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2011-1228
This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 31/10/2011 to 31/10/2012. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext. 6162. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix B – Information sheet (business owners/managers)

My name is Grit Fichter. I am currently enrolled in the Master of International Communication programme at Unitec New Zealand. In order to complete the programme I am conducting a research project in the form of a thesis. The research project is designed to answer the following research question: What is the impact of the Northeast Asian culture on the public space of Northcote’s shopping precinct?

The aim of my project:
The aim of my research project is to gain a better understanding of different demands on public space by one cultural group. The research project may provide recommendations or approaches, which can assist with developing ways in which we can engage with and improve urban environments.

I request your participation in the following way and I would like to ask you to participate in a semi-structured interview and talk about:

- Your cultural/ethnical background and identity
- Your experiences and perceptions in regard to the public space
- Your customer’s cultural/ethnical belonging/identities
- The semi-structured interview will take about 15 minutes

I will, with your permission, audiotape the interview and transcribe it later. All features that could identify you will be removed and the tapes used will be erased once the transcription is done.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You can still withdraw from the project once the interview took place. However, because of my schedule, any withdrawals must be done within two weeks after I have interviewed you.
Your name and information that may identify you will be kept completely confidential and anonymous. All information collected from you will be stored on a password protected computer at Unitec New Zealand for five years and can only be accessed by me and my supervisors.

Please contact me if you have any concerns about the project. Email: grit.fichter@xtra.co.nz or phone: 02102417660. You may also contact my supervisors at Unitec New Zealand. My supervisors are:
- Dr. Evangelia Papoutsaki, email epapoutsaki@unitec.ac.nz or phone +64-9-815 4321 ext. 8746
- Dr. Elena Kolesova, email ekolesova@unitec.ac.nz or phone +64-9-815 4321 ext. 8827 and
- Paul Woodruffe, email pwoodruffe@unitec.ac.nz or phone +64 9 8154321 ext. 8670

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2011-1228
This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 31/10/2011 to 31/10/2012. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext. 6162. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix C – Participant consent form

Participant Consent Form

A CULTURAL FOOTPRINT IN AUCKLAND’S PUBLIC SPACE
EXPERIENCES, PERCEPTIONS AND USE OF THE PUBLIC SPACE IN THE
NORTHCOTE SHOPPING CENTRE

I have had the research project explained to me and I have read and understand the information sheet given to me.

I understand that I don’t have to be part of this if I don’t want to and I can still withdraw from the project within two weeks after the interview took place.

I understand that everything I say is confidential and none of the information I give will identify me and that the only persons who will know what I have said will be the researchers and their supervisor. I also understand that all the information that I give will be stored securely on a computer at Unitec for a period of five years.

I understand that my discussion with the researcher will be taped and transcribed. I understand that I can see the finished research document. I have had time to consider everything and I give my consent to be a part of this project.

Participant Signature:............................Date:

Project Researcher:.................................Date:

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2011-1228
This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 31/10/2011 to 31/10/2012. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext. 6162. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Interview schedule – key informants

1. Opening

I very much appreciate your decision to participate in the interview.

I would like to ask you some general questions about your relationship and engagement with the Northeast Asian community, some work experiences you have had and the vision you may have in regard to the public space within the Northcote Shopping Centre.

The interview should take around 30 minutes.

2. Questions

---

**Position/Role**

**Date:**

**Name:**

**Phone:**
1.) General questions about work experience in regard to the public space

i.e. How would you describe your relationship and engagement with the Northeast Asian community?

i.e. Have you had any positive or negative work experience related to the public space?

2.) Understanding the Northeast Asian community (use, activities, needs, demands) in relation to their use of public space

i.e. Tell me about your understanding of the demands on the public space by the Northeast Asian community?

i.e. Can you describe what works well and what does not for the Northeast Asian community as users of the public space?
3.) Future goals (improvements, suggestions) for the public space

i.e. Tell me about your vision for the Northcote Shopping Centre?

i.e. Where do you see further potential in the public space? (catering a multi-cultural Auckland)

Notes:


3. Closing

I very much appreciate the time you took for this interview. Can I call you in case I have any further questions?
Thank you very much.
Appendix E – Interview schedule (shop owners / managers)

Interview schedule – business owners/managers

1. Opening

I very much appreciate your decision to participate in the interview.

I would like to ask you some general questions about your cultural background, some experiences you have had in regard to the public space within the Northcote Shopping Centre as well as some questions about your customer's cultural identities.

The interview should take around 15 minutes.

2. Questions

Date:

Name: Phone:
1) General questions about the cultural background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>i.e. How would you describe your personal cultural background?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.e. Tell me about where you come from (place of birth/country of origin)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.e. Tell me why you or your family came to live in New Zealand (first-, or second-generation migrant)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.e. Do you identify with more than one cultural group? (What languages do you speak?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.e. How important is your culture to you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 2.) Questions about experiences and perceptions in regard to the public space

- **i.e.** How would you describe the ways in which the public space is used?

- **i.e.** How would you describe your relationship with the public space?

- **i.e.** Can you tell me what you appreciate in relation to the public space?

- **i.e.** Could you describe what the public space is lacking in your opinion?
### 3.) Customers cultural/ethnical belonging (languages spoken, hybridity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>i.e. Could you describe your customer's ethnicities?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>i.e. Can you tell me about the languages mostly used by your customers?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>i.e. Do customers with different cultural background interact or do they keep separate?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>i.e. Describe what makes the Northcote Shopping Centre attractive for your customers?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
3. Closing

I very much appreciate the time you took for this interview. Can I call you in case I have any further questions?
Thank you very much.
### Appendix F – Observation schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Observation day</th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>End</th>
<th>Temperature / Weather</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Saturday 10/09/2011</td>
<td>Moon Festival (Event)</td>
<td>10.00 a.m.</td>
<td>3.00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tuesday 08/11/2011</td>
<td>9.30 a.m.</td>
<td>10.00 a.m.</td>
<td>18°C fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wednesday 09/11/2011</td>
<td>11.30 a.m.</td>
<td>12.10 p.m.</td>
<td>21°C fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tuesday 15/11/2011</td>
<td>9.30 a.m.</td>
<td>10.00 a.m.</td>
<td>21°C fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Thursday 17/11/2011</td>
<td>12.00 p.m.</td>
<td>12.35 p.m.</td>
<td>21°C fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Saturday 19/11/2011</td>
<td>1.00 p.m.</td>
<td>1.40 p.m.</td>
<td>20°C fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Wednesday 23/11/2011</td>
<td>14.10 p.m.</td>
<td>14.40 p.m.</td>
<td>20°C windy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Thursday 01/12/2011</td>
<td>11.00 a.m.</td>
<td>11.45 a.m.</td>
<td>20°C cloudy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Wednesday 07/12/2011</td>
<td>10.30 a.m.</td>
<td>11.00 a.m.</td>
<td>20°C fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Friday 09/12/2011</td>
<td>10.10 a.m.</td>
<td>10.50 a.m.</td>
<td>22°C fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Tuesday 13/12/2011</td>
<td>11.30 a.m.</td>
<td>12.05 a.m.</td>
<td>20°C showers, cloudy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Monday 19/12/2011</td>
<td>11.00 a.m.</td>
<td>11.30 a.m.</td>
<td>21°C sunny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Wednesday 21/12/2011</td>
<td>1.15 p.m.</td>
<td>1.35 p.m.</td>
<td>23°C sunny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Tuesday 27/12/2011</td>
<td>12.25 p.m.</td>
<td>1.00 p.m.</td>
<td>24°C warm, sunny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Wednesday 28/12/2011</td>
<td>1.45 p.m.</td>
<td>2.20 p.m.</td>
<td>22.5°C warm, sunny, windy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Sunday 01/01/2012</td>
<td>public holiday</td>
<td>2.00 p.m.</td>
<td>2.35 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Monday 02/01/2012</td>
<td>public holiday</td>
<td>11.10 a.m.</td>
<td>11.40 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Wednesday 04/01/2012</td>
<td>10.15 a.m.</td>
<td>11.50 a.m.</td>
<td>20°C rain, warm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Friday 06/01/2012</td>
<td>3.35 p.m.</td>
<td>4.10 p.m.</td>
<td>25°C warm, sunny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Monday 09/01/2012</td>
<td>11.20 a.m.</td>
<td>11.50 a.m.</td>
<td>20°C showers, warm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Thursday 12/01/2012</td>
<td>10.20 a.m.</td>
<td>11.00 a.m.</td>
<td>22°C warm, cloudy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Friday 13/01/2012</td>
<td>1.15 p.m.</td>
<td>1.45 p.m.</td>
<td>23.5°C warm, cloudy, windy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Friday 27/01/2012</td>
<td>Chinese &amp; Korean New Year Festival</td>
<td>5.30 p.m.</td>
<td>8.30 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Saturday 28/01/2012</td>
<td>Chinese &amp; Korean New Year Festival</td>
<td>10.00 a.m.</td>
<td>3.00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix G – Observation sheet example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Thursday 12 January 2012</th>
<th>Observer:</th>
<th>Grit Fichter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time:</td>
<td>10.20 a.m. - 11.00 a.m.</td>
<td>Temperature:</td>
<td>22°C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Weather:</td>
<td>warm, cloudy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Event / occurrence</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Course of actions / Notice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearn Place, pedestrian plaza</td>
<td>shops open</td>
<td>music coming from shops (mainly Asian sounding)</td>
<td>predominantly elderly people</td>
<td>mainly grocery shopping, most people strolling, mostly couples or groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>strong smell of Asian food</td>
<td></td>
<td>fast-paced, hectically, very busy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elm tree (Pearn Place)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 board game tables used</td>
<td>6 elderly men only</td>
<td>very calm and composed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>playing (socialising)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>all with shopping bags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>all dressed in black, grey, brown or dark blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sun shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>people waiting to meet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mums with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>people enjoying the weather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearn Crescent</td>
<td></td>
<td>fruit and vegetables displayed outside</td>
<td>predominantly elderly people</td>
<td>mainly grocery shopping, (big sacks of rice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>shops open</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Event / occurrence</td>
<td>Age group</td>
<td>Course of actions / Notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilham Avenue</td>
<td>fruit and vegetables displayed outside</td>
<td></td>
<td>predominantly elderly people</td>
<td>mainly grocery shopping, most people strolling, mostly couples or groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>shops open</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norman King square</td>
<td>some pedestrians</td>
<td>predominantly elderly people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernie Mays Street</td>
<td>some pedestrians</td>
<td>predominantly elderly people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collage Rd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Rd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main car park at Lake Rd</td>
<td>about 1/2</td>
<td>parking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car park at Collage Rd</td>
<td>almost full</td>
<td>parking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table tennis</td>
<td></td>
<td>not used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball field</td>
<td></td>
<td>not used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play ground</td>
<td></td>
<td>not used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service areas behind the shops</td>
<td>some traffic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>