Canada is a country whose demographic evolution has depended upon immigration. In 2006 19.6 percent of its total population, or 6.2 million people, had been born outside Canada, and 3.8 million had settled in Canada after 1980. These new migration flows were part of a broader immigration boom in Canada, reflecting important changes in the country’s immigration policies. First, in 1967 the policy of giving Europeans preferential access to Canada was abandoned. Second, the official objectives of immigration policy were broadened beyond responding to Canada’s needs for workers to include reuniting families and respecting the humanitarian tradition of admitting refugees. In addition, since the end of the 1970s the provincial governments have been responsible for policy-making and management with respect to the selection and integration of immigrants. Against this changing backdrop, the average number of immigrants increased annually throughout the 1980s and 1990s. While 102,000 people migrated to Canada between 1981 and 1985, 823,925 settled in the country between 1991 and 1995, and then 1,109,980 came between 2001 and 2006.

This movement of recent immigrants is also characterized by a profound change in the source countries of immigration: Europe is no longer the main source of immigrants, having been replaced by the Asia-Pacific region. In 2008, forty-six percent of immigrants in Canada came from this region, including those from mainland China, India, the Philippines, Pakistan, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Hong Kong. The highest proportion of Asian immigrants was from the world’s two most populated
countries, China and India. For instance, between 1999 and 2008 393,941 Chinese settled in Canada, 87.3 per cent of them being from mainland China and the rest from Hong Kong, Macau or Taiwan (see Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2009).

From a quantitative perspective the evolution of Chinese nationals’ migration to Canada is particularly interesting. Mainland China has become the country with the largest proportion of citizens migrating to Canada since the mid-1990s (see Shi 2004). The specific motivations of Chinese migrants to Canada have also evolved considerably over time. While those who arrived around the beginning of the 20th century left their country of origin in the hope of escaping poverty and political instability, recent migration flows have been more selective, mostly consisting of students, entrepreneurs and investors (see Lai 2003).

**Chinese Immigration to Canada: A Historical Overview**

Chinese immigration to Canada started in the middle of the nineteenth century (see Lai 1988, Li 1998 and Wickberg 1984). These flows were essentially composed of single men, and were part of a broader wave of immigration to Canada that had started through the colonial empires in Southeast Asia. Migrants from mainland China sought to escape misery in a country where the population had nearly doubled from 200 to 250 million in 1750 to 410 million in 1850, while access to agricultural land remained limited (see Li 1998). Military defeat, political instability, famines and natural disasters, including floods, were also crucial motivations for migrating to North America.

Migratory procedures were of two kinds. The first was by means of a work contract, which was the procedure through which the labourers known as coolies migrated to Canada. Coolies, who were at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder, were hired on contract to work in the country of destination for a certain period of time, and had to reimburse the person involved in paying for and facilitating their migration to the relevant country. Once the contract was over, coolies could find themselves jobs on their own (see Wickberg 1984). The second procedure was migration in stages, meaning that migrants would, first, work in the country of destination until they had enough money to return to their country of origin; then they would usually get married there; and later they would return to their host countries, taking sons, nephews or other male relatives along with them. A migratory
network slowly emerged out of such flows. Depending on their financial circumstances and the opportunities available in the host country, migrants also brought their spouse along and rebuilt their households in the host country.

The first Chinese immigrants were mostly coolies hired in groups to work on construction projects or in mining, but after 1900 migration in stages became the more common procedure (see Wickberg 1984). The first wave of Chinese immigrants came from British colonies, including those in what is now Eastern Canada, as well as from California, and settled in British Columbia, especially on Vancouver Island, in response to the Fraser River Gold Rush of 1858–1860 (see Lai 1988). The second wave of Chinese migration into the province started during the construction of the transcontinental railway at the end of the 1870s. Around 1,500 Chinese arrived in Canada from the United States to work on the construction of the line between 1880 and 1881, and they were joined by more than 16,000 other Chinese immigrants, including 10,000 who came directly from China (see Lai 1988 and Wickberg 1984).

By the beginning of the 20th century an average of 2,000 Chinese immigrants were settling in Canada each year. The vast majority of them were in British Columbia, although starting in 1880 a minority went all the way to Eastern Canada. As their professions diversified, Chinese enterprises moved beyond making, importing and/or selling goods exclusive to the needs of the Chinese immigrant community, as in the case of laundry businesses that dispatched Chinese pioneers across Canada. Some Chinese also opened western-style restaurants, especially in Manitoba and those parts of the Prairies that are now Alberta and Saskatchewan. Starting in the 1890s, however, the Chinese faced an increasingly limited job market, due to pressures from trade unions and politicians, and British Columbia’s Legislative Assembly passed a law prohibiting the use of Asian labour, which its supporters justified as a response to an explosion at a coalmine in Nanaimo for which Chinese workers were apparently responsible, and which killed 200 people (see Wickberg 1984). Next, succumbing to pressures from groups in British Columbia and elsewhere, the federal Parliament also legislated to restrict Chinese immigration, with effect from January 1, 1902. (It is worth noting that during this period Asian immigrants were facing similar forms of exclusion elsewhere in North America: the U.S. Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1882 and became permanent in 1902.) Laws deterring Chinese immigration had already been in effect since the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885, including a $50 head tax. The Canadian legislation of 1902 stated that a ship could transport only one
Chinese migrant for every fifty tons of merchandise and increased the head tax, effectively an entry fee for Chinese migrants, to CA$ 100. In 1903, Parliament increased it to 500 dollars, but exempted those in six special categories from having to pay it: established tradesmen (a rather vague term that led to many abuses), diplomats, religious ministers, tourists, students and scholars (see Wickberg 1984). The head tax was the subject of a public apology by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in 2006 (see Office of the Prime Minister 2006).

The restrictions on Chinese immigration did not have significant effects, and the Chinese population of Canada, which had been 4,383 in 1881 and 9,129 in 1891, rose to 17,312 in 1901 and to 27,831 in 1911 (see Li 1998). The number of Chinese immigrants into British Columbia in particular also continued to increase, although many of them left the province by train to settle in the East. This diffusion, however, fuelled the rise of powerful anti-Chinese movements throughout the country and led the federal Parliament to legislate a total ban on Chinese immigration into Canada in 1923. During the period of exclusion, which lasted from 1924 to 1947, only a few Chinese were able to enter Canada (see Lai 1988), and the Chinese population of Canada declined by around twenty-five percent between 1931 and 1941.

From 1945 onward the Chinese communities in Canada pressured the Canadian government on two issues: the repeal of the ban on further immigration and the right of Chinese citizens in British Columbia to vote, which only the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation had supported until then (see Wickberg 1984). The repeal of the immigration ban in May 1947 constituted a significant moral victory for the Chinese Canadian population, and the introduction of Canadian citizenship the same year gave the right to vote to all citizens. Nevertheless, institutional restrictions on Chinese immigration continued until 1962, illustrating the racial prejudices that still underlay Canadian immigration policy in relation to non-white populations. In particular, the only category of immigration available to Chinese was that of relatives sponsored by Chinese Canadians. During the 1950s, many Chinese immigrants were women and children who had been separated from their husbands or fathers during the long period of exclusion.

In 1962, the government of Canada changed immigration policy by creating four categories of admission (see Li 1998). The first two allowed independent migration by educated individuals entering the liberal professions, while the third was for immigrants who had privileged relationships with Canadian citizens or permanent residents, and in all three of these categories, immigrants’ racial background or country of origin no
longer constituted a criterion for admission into Canada. The fourth category, however, enabled Canadian citizens or permanent residents to sponsor only Europeans or US citizens seeking admission. The new policy of 1962 enabled the Chinese without family ties in Canada to enter the country as independent immigrants for the first time since 1923.

Changes in the composition and characteristics of the Chinese Canadian population were becoming obvious by the mid-1960s, but the last remnants of racial discrimination against the Chinese were not abandoned until 1967, the same year in which the Cultural Revolution directly affected Guangdong and made some impact on Hong Kong too (see Wickberg 1984). Direct migration from mainland China remained restricted because of the “closed door” imposed by Mao Zedong’s regime since 1949, so most Chinese migrating to Canada came from Hong Kong, Taiwan and diaspora communities in Southeast Asia, Southern Africa, Latin America (especially Peru) and the West Indies. It was only starting in 1974, under the family reunification programme initiated during Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s visit to China in 1973, that immigration from mainland China became a significant factor (see Liu 1997). Between 1974 and 1988 most of the mainland Chinese who migrated to Canada did so with the help of their already established families or through social networks. Additionally, as a result of Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms and “open door” policy, introduced from December 1978, around 50,000 mainland Chinese students studied in western democratic countries between 1978 and 1987, 40,000 of whom were funded by the Chinese government, the other 10,000 being self-supporting (see Gittings 1989). Starting in the 1990s, the level of education of immigrants from mainland China to Canada was higher than that of other immigrants settling in the country (see Liu 1997). It is worth noting that, as a result of a change in Ottawa’s immigration policy following the Tiananmen incident in 1989, many mainland Chinese immigrants during this period were admitted as independent immigrants.

The specific motivations of Chinese migrating to Canada have changed considerably over the past 150 years. While the need to escape poverty and misery constituted the primary motivation for the first wave of Chinese immigrants, by the 1960s, and especially in the 1980s and 1990s, migration became much more targeted, involving students, qualified professionals, and entrepreneurs and business owners looking for an economic environment favourable to investment and private sector employment (see Lai 2003). Nevertheless, the general theme of pursuing economic opportunity has remained dominant through the decades.
Chinese Immigrants on Canadian Territory

Chinese immigration to Canada took on a different dimension starting in the 1980s, following the historical developments outlined above, and the spatial diffusion that had occurred around the beginning of the 20th century became more obvious as the century ended. In particular, Vancouver used to be the main gateway through which Chinese immigrants entered Canada, but in recent years other migratory trends have developed. First, immigration from mainland China increased rapidly from the 1970s onward. Second, Chinese immigrants are now most likely to live in the largest and most dynamic urban areas of Canada, and around ninety-five per cent of them are located in just fourteen of Canada’s thirty-three Census metropolitan areas, or CMAs (see Table 16.1).

Until the mid-1990s Chinese immigrants gave priority to just two urban centres in Canada: Toronto and Vancouver (see Table 16.2). Their geographical concentration became more and more obvious from one Census to another: less than sixty-one percent of Chinese Canadians lived in one or the other of these two cities in 1961, but by 2006 more than seventy percent of them did. From the beginning of 1970s, Vancouver gradually lost its status as first-choice Canadian host city for Chinese immigrants.

Table 16.1 Numbers and Main Destinations of Immigrants from Mainland China to Canada, in Successive Periods from Before 1961 to 2001–2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>14 CMAs</th>
<th>Proportion in the 14 CMAs (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 1961</td>
<td>13,865</td>
<td>12,325</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961–1970</td>
<td>17,745</td>
<td>16,435</td>
<td>92.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971–1980</td>
<td>39,355</td>
<td>37,405</td>
<td>95.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981–1990</td>
<td>62,940</td>
<td>60,395</td>
<td>96.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991–2000</td>
<td>177,925</td>
<td>169,645</td>
<td>95.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991–1995</td>
<td>69,640</td>
<td>66,800</td>
<td>95.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996–2000</td>
<td>108,290</td>
<td>102,845</td>
<td>95.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001–2006</td>
<td>155,105</td>
<td>146,690</td>
<td>94.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>191,120</td>
<td>3,280</td>
<td>5,535</td>
<td>14,945</td>
<td>26,860</td>
<td>29,065</td>
<td>47,575</td>
<td>63,855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>137,245</td>
<td>4,895</td>
<td>5,950</td>
<td>13,230</td>
<td>19,505</td>
<td>23,525</td>
<td>30,350</td>
<td>39,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>34,475</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>1,005</td>
<td>1,825</td>
<td>3,465</td>
<td>4,085</td>
<td>6,970</td>
<td>16,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calgary</td>
<td>24,710</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>1,070</td>
<td>2,615</td>
<td>3,420</td>
<td>3,300</td>
<td>3,830</td>
<td>9,510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton</td>
<td>14,630</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>895</td>
<td>2,105</td>
<td>2,960</td>
<td>1,810</td>
<td>2,255</td>
<td>3,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa–Gatineau</td>
<td>14,055</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>815</td>
<td>1,225</td>
<td>2,220</td>
<td>4,980</td>
<td>3,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>4,900</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>1,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>4,355</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>835</td>
<td>835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
<td>4,060</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>1,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchener</td>
<td>4,015</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>1,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor</td>
<td>3,780</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>1,255</td>
<td>1,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>2,525</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>1,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatoon</td>
<td>1,575</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Catharines–Niagara</td>
<td>1,470</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>615</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1961, it was home to thirty-five percent of the Chinese immigrant population of Canada, but by 2006 it was home to only twenty-nine percent. However, this proportionate decline does not imply a numerical decrease in the Chinese population of the city: while there were 23,255 newly arrived Chinese immigrants in Vancouver in the period 1991–1995, there were 39,790 of them in the period 2001–2006. Since the 1980s, the Greater Toronto Area has been the most popular destination, accommodating forty-one percent of newly arrived Chinese immigrants, or 63,855 people, during the period 2001–2006.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the other twelve CMAs, particularly Montreal, Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa–Gatineau, have had significantly increasing numbers of Chinese immigrants (see Figure 16.1). The Census of 2006 showed that, for the first time, the total number of newly arrived Chinese immigrants in these twelve CMAs exceeded the number in Vancouver, and that the rate of increase in that total number between 2001 and 2006 was almost the same as in Toronto between 1996 and 2000.

Figure 16.1 Increase in Numbers of Chinese Immigrants in Toronto, Vancouver and Twelve Other CMAs, in Successive Periods from before 1961 to 2001–2006

It is clear, therefore, that recent Chinese immigrants have tended to spread further throughout Canada, particularly its urban centres.

Given the urban concentration of Chinese immigrants, the findings on their presence in these fourteen CMAs correlate with observable changes in their distribution across the provinces of Canada (see Figure 16.2 and Map 16.1). British Columbia was historically the main host area for the newly arrived Chinese population, but is now behind Ontario, where the numbers of new Chinese immigrants doubled between the period 1996–2001 and the period 2001–2006, accounting for more than fifty percent of all new Chinese immigrants in Canada in 2006. The flows of Chinese immigrants thus suggest an increasing tendency to favour Ontario, especially the Greater Toronto Area and neighbouring cities. For instance, Ottawa–Gatineau, Hamilton, Kitchener, Windsor and St. Catharines–Niagara all witnessed considerable rises in their Chinese populations from the 1990s onward. In Hamilton, the number of newly arrived Chinese immigrants went from 645 between 1981 and 1990 to 3,210 between 1996 and 2006, while the cities of Kitchener, Windsor and London received 3,095, 2,605 and 1,880 newly arrived Chinese immigrants, respectively, between 1996 and 2006, compared to fewer than 300 during the 1980s. The most significant increase was in the Ottawa–Gatineau area, with 8,885 new Chinese immigrants between 1996 and 2006, eight times as many as between 1981 and 1990. The Chinese population in Ontario has undeniably benefited these cities, particularly those located along the urban corridor stretching toward Montreal (see Map 16.1). The economic dynamism of the region, especially in the area of new technologies, was presumably a decisive factor in this choice of geographical location.

In contrast, Chinese immigration into the province of Quebec and the three Prairie provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba illustrates a more nuanced pattern, with stable flows until the 1990s, and then a significant increase in both the numbers and proportions of Chinese immigrants since the year 2000. This new increase largely comprises concentrations of Chinese immigrants in Montreal for Quebec, and in Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg and Saskatoon for the Prairies. The number of newly arrived Chinese immigrants in Montreal went from 3,465 in the 1980s to 23,150 in the period 1996–2006, a near-sevenfold increase. Similar tendencies were observed in Calgary and Edmonton: these two cities were host to 13,340 and 6,160 new Chinese immigrants, respectively, in the period 1996–2006, compared to only 3,420 and 2,960, respectively, during the 1980s. Montreal attracted a lot of Chinese immigrants mainly because the
city is part of the dynamic urban corridor stretching from London to Montreal, and is also bilingual. As for Calgary and Edmonton, the economic boom and rapid growth experienced in Alberta was no doubt the main factor attracting new Chinese immigrants.

**Between Chinatown and the Suburbs: Plural Immigrant Communities**

As part of the institutional expression of significant racial discrimination, the concept of “Chinatown” was initially associated with the building of an enclave that culturally and geographically isolated Chinese immigrants from the rest of the Canadian population. It was also at the heart of the larger process of assimilation of Canadian-born Chinese and their adaptation to the host society. Then, as discussed above, new dimensions in Chinese immigration started to develop in the 1960s, and became more evident during the
1980s and 1990s. Accompanied by investment, they facilitated the revitalization of old Chinatowns, and contributed to the development of new ones (see Lai 2003), enabling the opening of Chinese or Asian shopping centres in suburbs, especially in the Greater Toronto Area and in Vancouver. These new development projects were made possible by transnational capital originating from China. Chinatown became a symbolic cultural and commercial centre
Suburbanization began in major urban centres in North America in the 1960s and had a considerable impact on new Chinese immigrants’ choice of residential area. In New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco the spatial mobility of Chinese immigrants stretches all the way to suburbs, which for a long time were considered ethnically and racially homogenous residential areas for the most socioeconomically privileged (see Fang and Brown 1999). Chinese Americans have increasingly left areas with high concentrations of ethnic groups, and chosen to settle in neighbourhoods where work opportunities are better. Chinese living in suburbs also seem to have a higher socioeconomic status than those who live in downtown Chinese neighbourhoods. Residents of Chinatowns are often older, have lower levels of education, and have lower incomes, and are distinct from the younger generation of Chinese who have benefited from greater geographical mobility, better education and better knowledge of English.

In Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal the number of “visible minority neighbourhoods”—defined as Census sectors where more than thirty percent of the population comprises members of visible minorities (Statistics Canada, 2004)—rose from six in 1981 to 254 in 2001, and slightly more than sixty percent of these neighbourhoods were Chinese (see Keung 2004). In Toronto, however, most Chinese have chosen to live in the suburbs and less than ten percent live downtown. Some Chinese have settled in certain suburbs of Toronto as a result of the development of high-technology industries and better job opportunities.

Comparisons between Chinese living in ethnic enclaves and those living outside them indicate that there are significant socioeconomic differences, which are particularly marked in Toronto (see Lo and Wang 1997). Suburban Chinese have benefited from higher levels of human capital, especially since the mid-1980s. At that time the majority of them came from Hong Kong and Taiwan, but since the 1990s more and more Chinese have migrated from mainland China as independent migrants, investors and/or business owners. In contrast, Chinese who live in downtown Toronto are predominantly from the southern parts of mainland China, Hong Kong or Vietnam and arrived before the 1960s. They are on average older, were either refugees or settled in Canada under the family reunification programme, and suffer from a higher unemployment rate.

A detailed look at the Chinese in one Canadian city will illustrate these broader developments. In Ottawa, one person out of five is now an immigrant for the Chinese communities in Canada, although it was not necessarily a residential area for new immigrants (see Li 2000).
and one person out of seven is a member of a visible minority, and it has been projected that these proportions will double over the next twenty years. The Chinese community in the city comprises more than 30,000 people and constitutes the largest visible minority (see O’Neill 2003). In the period 1991–2006 more than 11,105 new immigrants from mainland China settled in Ottawa, representing around thirty percent of the total Chinese population of the city. The first Chinese arrived in Ottawa near the end of the 19th century, following their involvement in railway construction (see Li 2000), but as recently as the early 1960s there were still only around 1,000 Chinese residents, of whom 315 were from mainland China. By 1981 an estimated 3,800 Chinese people lived in the city and by 1991 there were 7,600, settled in most of the neighbourhoods all over Ottawa, although there was already a clear tendency to concentrate in suburban neighbourhoods (see Map 16.2). Some Chinese still prefer to live around Chinatown, but suburbanization has become more and more prominent since the late 1990s.

Effectively, the Chinese immigration boom started in the mid-1990s in Ottawa. Opportunities in high-technology industries were among the main motives for immigration. Many Chinese engineers from mainland China settled in Kanata, where information technology corporations such as Nortel had their headquarters. Nortel alone hired more than 10,000 Chinese immigrants between the mid-1990s and the beginning of 2000. There was a very important presence of Chinese immigrants in Kanata, and the community also opened Chinese food stores and small enterprises specializing in subcontracting. Kanata became one of the residential areas most preferred by the Chinese population in Ottawa. However, this changed suddenly with the downfall of Nortel and other high-tech companies around the beginning of the 21st century. Many of the Chinese workers who had migrated to Canada from the mid-1990s were left unemployed, many of them left, and some of them returned to China, indicating that they lacked roots in the city (see Rao 2001). However, in 2010 the Chinese multinational corporation Huawei Technologies announced a partnership and investment of CA$ 50 million in the Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation, bringing in 180 jobs in research and development alone (see CTV News 2010). The arrival of this Chinese firm may help to breathe new life into a struggling industry and give new opportunities to the pre-existing pool of skilled labour.

Compared to other Chinatowns in Canada, Ottawa’s Chinatown has had a short history, which started when 4,000 immigrants from Indochina settled in the city during the 20th century, opening restaurants, grocery
Changing Territorial Strategies


Source: Based on data from Statistics Canada, Census of 2006.

stores and laundromats downtown (see Li 2000). The first waves of Chinese immigrants in Ottawa came from areas of China other than the mainland, such as Hong Kong and Taiwan, which had been more influenced by the West. They were much more market-oriented, spoke Cantonese and English, and in many cases were Christians. Unlike these earlier cohorts, the recent waves of Chinese tend to be non-religious, are often highly qualified as doctors, engineers or professors, and come from mainland China. As most of them speak Mandarin, this has become the main language for communication among the Chinese in Ottawa.

As the example of Ottawa suggests, the immigrant communities in Canada that are aggregated under the term “Chinese” are in fact very diverse culturally and historically, in terms of their geographical origins, socio-economic status, lifestyles and residential locations. In the context of such a diverse population, individual motivations have become more central to
Chinese decisions to migrate to Canada. Consequently, in urban centres such as Ottawa–Gatineau where the Chinese population is highly diverse, they are more geographically dispersed than in other parts of Canada. Most of them are no longer geographically segregated and live outside Chinatown, although there are some new concentrations of Chinese in suburbs near to their workplaces. Suburbanization, which accelerated in the early 1990s, has thus facilitated integration into Canadian society and impeded the expansion of Chinatown.

**Concluding Discussion and Policy Implications**

The history of immigration to Canada was marked at the end of the 20th century by an increase in the scale of migration originating from Asian countries, and particularly mainland China. Since 1996, Chinese languages as a group have replaced Italian as the most commonly spoken non-official mother tongue in Canada, being the mother tongues of 3.3 percent of Canada’s population. In the Census of 2006, 1,034,085 people reported speaking these languages, including Cantonese and Mandarin. There has also been an increasing polarization of the Chinese population in Canada in favour of the most dynamic urban areas, primarily Toronto and Vancouver, but also increasingly other cities. However, Chinese immigrants’ choices of geographical location suggest that the causes of immigration to Canada have not changed over the decades: most Chinese immigrants are still primarily motivated by the quest for better living conditions and higher incomes, regardless of their qualifications and level of education, although it is noteworthy that around thirty-four percent of recent Chinese immigrants aged between twenty-five and forty-four had completed their academic studies, compared to nineteen percent of Canadian citizens in the same age category.

The Chinese community in Canada today is highly diverse, socially, culturally and economically. The new generation has more post-secondary education and is better prepared for successful migration and economic integration in Canada. The Chinese community today is composed of individuals with very diverse geographical origins, and is also politically divided as a result of recent events in mainland China. There is a significant gap between the older generation of migrants, who tended to live in British Columbia and were originally from Hong Kong, and the newer generations of Chinese, who were educated in mainland China following the economic reforms launched
in the late 1970s. In the context of such a diverse Chinese population, “Chinatown” has acquired various meanings. Recent migrants have chosen not to live in these neighbourhoods, giving priority instead to a suburban lifestyle and Chinese grocery stores on the urban periphery. Chinatown nonetheless remains symbolic for those Chinese, and Asian immigrants more generally, who are less socioeconomically privileged, as well as for Chinese youth born in Canada, who use it as a site for cultural events and gatherings. The socio-economic, cultural and historical heterogeneity of the Chinese Canadian population is particularly notable in Ottawa, where the Chinese community has slowly disaggregated into various sub-communities as the choice of residential location has become the product of individual preferences.

As discussed above, increasing numbers of Chinese immigrants have decided not to settle in Toronto or Vancouver, and have dispersed to other cities across Canada. As more Chinese immigrants take on these new territorial strategies, residing in cities with less established Chinese communities while in search of employment, there will be an increasing demand for policy targeted at retaining their talents for a longer term. Economic factors are the primary motivators for the mobility of Chinese immigrants. The wealth maximization thesis in migration studies states that “migrants move to countries where economic returns to their human capital are higher than in their home country” (see Wang and Lo 2005). While this theory refers to international migration, it also holds true for intranational migration and illuminates, for example, Ottawa’s experiences following the decline of high-tech industries in the west end of the city. This raises the question of how cities with smaller and more recently expanded Chinese populations can retain the newer members of the community, given fluctuations in employment. Municipalities without large Chinese communities may find it beneficial to increase their efforts to include Chinese immigrants in community activities where possible, since creating connections with non-Chinese members of Canadian society is very important to a feeling of inclusion (see Wang and Lo 2005).

One obstacle to inclusion in the larger community is the language barrier, particularly for Chinese immigrants who have, on average, less ability in either of the two official languages of Canada than other immigrant groups (see Sakamoto, Ku and Wei 2009). Communication ability is directly correlated with increased income, and is therefore an issue for those Chinese immigrants in transition who have less language ability (see Wang and Lo 2005). This is particularly a problem in Ottawa: communication in the workplace may not be of primary importance for those working at
home using information technology, but it becomes an issue when seeking new employment or pursuing further involvement in the community.

At the more general level, smaller Canadian cities that are receiving more Chinese immigrants need to focus on creating an environment that will enhance inclusiveness and increase communication between Chinese and non-Chinese, by finding entry points to non-Chinese communities and networks, and targeting improvements in the language abilities of recent Chinese immigrants. Both sides of this line of policy are mutually reinforcing, and can have benefits in adding a non-economic dimension to the reasons for living in a particular city. A particularly viable contribution to helping with this issue is to create partnerships between Mandarin-speaking immigrants and local institutions that offer Mandarin-language programmes. Initiating sustained language and cultural exchanges, as well as opportunities for skills improvement, can go a long way toward helping mutual understanding and learning, and developing local friendships and networks.

While such social and cultural policies may assist in the development of connections, they do not directly address the problem of employment. In the case of Ottawa, for example, in the early 2000s the lack of suitable employment for skilled workers specialized in high technologies led many Chinese immigrants to move away to Canadian cities with better prospects, or back to mainland China, with its increasingly prosperous information technology sector. Policy measures are required to attract new employers at the local level, using the available body of labour that exists in each city. These, of course, would have benefits not only for recent Chinese immigrants, but for the community as a whole, although recent immigrants may be more prone to relocate as a result of unemployment.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Chinese firms have increasingly become global competitors and sources of local investment, which may be particularly attracted to areas with large pools of sector-specific labour. Chinese members of these labour pools may have linguistic, cultural and network advantages in attracting this sort of investment, and these skills should not go unnoticed. There may also be opportunities for Chinese immigrants in Canada, particularly more recent immigrants, to use networks in China to promote Canadian business in China. Further, when investment does occur, Chinese immigrants may have the same “bridge” advantages in helping Chinese companies to operate in the Canadian context, and vice versa. Nurturing the development of integrated communities in Canada with links to China will not only help
to retain skilled Chinese immigrants, but may also help to draw in the investment needed to create the jobs sought by Chinese immigrants. It is now up to policy-makers, locally, provincially and nationally, to acknowledge the new territorial strategies of Chinese immigrants in Canada, recognize their new demands for inclusion, and focus on opportunities for transnational partnerships.

References


