

## Chapter 3

# The Ethnic Marketplace as Point of Transition

Laura Vaughan

### Theoretical Preliminaries

Since the founding of the Centre for the Study of Migration at Queen Mary, London, London has emerged as a premier multi-cultural, or even super-diverse city, and the nature of minority cultures has shifted (Vertovec, 2007). This has involved a 'diversification of diversity', with a population characterised by multiple ethnicities, countries of origin, immigration statuses and age profiles (Hollinger, 2006). Rather than waves of discrete migration flows arriving and settling in singular areas of the city, London has experienced synchronous multiple arrivals, creating areas of first settlement that cannot be easily labelled as 'Bengali' or 'Jewish', as was the case in the past. The city itself has transformed in many ways and the aim of this chapter is to present an overview of the way in which the urban realm itself can help to shape encounters within and between immigrant and host communities in this super-diverse context. It proposes that the public realm plays an essential role in bringing together what society divides, especially in settings such as that of London, where multiplicities of identities, backgrounds, languages, religions and cultures would – on the face of it – naturally give rise to tensions or even hostilities. The very fact that London has (with the exception that proves the rule of the recent riots, which were more about poverty than ethnicity) managed to integrate successive waves of migration is indicative of its almost unique character. Some examples of this integrative role are described in the latter part of the chapter.

One of the primary means of encounter between minority and host cultures is in the ethnic marketplace and their formation and long-term persistence is a commonplace urban phenomenon, whether it is a fully-fledged Chinatown, a local centre specialising in ethnic foodstuffs, such as the middle eastern Edgware Road in London, or the countless diverse urban high streets which are as much the outcome of a process of *everyday multiculturalism*, to serve the particular needs of a minority ethnic group (Wise, 2006b). In such places, 'the banality of [the individual's] everyday needs is met together with the requirements of its diverse urban cultures' (Hall, 2012, p. 120) (Figure 3.1). At the outset, the ethnic marketplace is normally set close to areas of initial immigrant settlement. In 19th century Montreal for example the immigrant marketplace was situated so that opportunities could be maximised,



**Figure 3.1 Turkish ‘Food Market’, Green Lanes, London**

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but at the same time localised niches could be created for ‘difference’ to be shared and protected (Gilliland and Olson, 2010). In a similar way the pattern of Jewish immigrant settlement in 19th-century Manchester and Leeds allowed for cultural co-dependence, sufficient density for important religious and communal institutions alongside sufficient spatial accessibility to allow access to the economic heart of the city (Vaughan, 2002). In both cases this shows the importance of residential clustering, especially during the primary stages of minority settlements. At the same time a correctly situated marketplace serves as a point of interaction both within the community and without. A similar situation is true in the US context, where, it is argued, the clustering of ethnic businesses, especially when in conjunction with ethnic residential concentrations, can provide a resource for establishing and maintaining a niche economy (Kaplan, 1998).

This chapter will widen the canvas of public interaction, taking the ethnic marketplace in its broad sense, to capture the range of economic and social transactions that take place in the public sphere, from street market to high street to specialist enterprise. The premise for this focus is that for the immigrant, the most likely point of first footings in society is in public space. Of all the opportunities in the public sphere, economic exchange is arguably the most important for contact between migrant and host culture, since while it requires acquaintance and trust

it remains a rational transaction with little requirement of social contact. It also allows minority communities to continue to preserve their cultural exclusivity whilst integrating into general society: people can have strong commercial ties with minimal levels of intermarriage, for example.

Notably, alongside its social and economic roles in sustaining inner-group contact, the potential for the ethnic marketplace to become an 'arena of competition and cooperation' with other groups is often overlooked (Wallach, 2011). This is a complex issue. Public space, 'third places' such as cafes, bookstores and hair salons and civic institutions can create a sphere for mutual tolerance and understanding, although interaction may remain purely superficial (Oldenburg, 1997). Competition and cooperation will differ according to whether it takes place between the immigrant group and the host community or whether it is between disparate groups of 'others' co-existing and vying for the same resources and clients. The processes and rituals will differ in each case. An additional complexity arises in a context where the host culture becomes a minority, as is increasingly the case in some of London's neighbourhoods. Whilst in most instances tolerance and everyday interaction smooth out differences, some conflict can arise when more longstanding inhabitants feel that their culture has been encroached upon, which can create both tensions and opportunities (Collins, 2004).

The ethnic marketplace itself plays a variety of roles: as well as a place of interaction with the public sphere and the host society, it is also a place for others to penetrate the minority culture – whether for the newcomer from that culture or for the host society member wishing to interact with that culture. A third role that it can play is in policing or delimiting, restraining or containing the integration or acculturation of the minority culture – whether by the leaders of the minority community or the host society itself. The ethnic marketplace has an essential *spatial* role to play as well and this will be a recurring theme throughout this chapter. Its situation in relation to the domestic (private) sphere of the migrant on the one hand and in relation to the host society on the other is shaped by the environment in which it is positioned and will shape that environment in turn over time. The spatial dimension of immigrant settlement is essential to understanding the minority group's domain of exchange and interaction with the host community, whether this is through markets, niche industries or business entrepreneurship. The extended *temporal* character of all of these phenomena well beyond the first generation of settlement (so for example London's 'Jewish' Petticoat Lane market persisted well beyond the physical presence of its surrounding residential population from which it sprang) is another topic explored in this chapter.

The following sections review the various dimensions of public space in which immigrant and cross-cultural contact take place in turn, starting with an overview of the role of urban space, followed by public places and then markets, ending with conclusions about the role of the city in shaping ethnic settlement patterns and the way in which changes in London's ethnic landscape reflect these dimensions.

## The Role of Urban Space

The neighbourhood of old Petticoat Lane on Sunday is one of the wonders of London, a medley of strange sights, strange sounds, and strange smells. Streets crowded so as to be thoroughfares no longer, and lined with a double or treble row of hand-barrows, set fast with empty cases, so as to assume the guise of market stalls. Here and there a cart may have been drawn in, but the horse has gone and the tilt is used as a rostrum whence the salesmen with stentorian voices cry their wares, vying with each other in introducing to the surrounding crowd their cheap garments, smart braces, sham jewellery, or patent medicines. Those who have something showy, noisily push their trade, while the modest merit of the utterly cheap makes its silent appeal from the lower stalls, on which are to be found a heterogeneous collection of such things as cotton sheeting, American cloth for furniture covers, old clothes, worn-out boots, damaged lamps, chipped china shepherdesses, rusty locks, and rubbish indescribable. Many, perhaps most, things of the silent cheap' sort are bought by the way of business; old clothes to renovate, old boots to translate, hinges and door-handles to be furbished up again. Such things cannot look too bad, for the buyer may then persuade himself that he has a bargain unsuspected by the seller. Other stalls supply daily wants – fish is sold in large quantities – vegetables and fruit – queer cakes and outlandish bread. In nearly all cases the Jew is the seller, and the Gentile the buyer; Petticoat Lane is the exchange of the Jew, but the lounge of the Christian. (Booth, 1902)

Phillips notes that 'flows of people, ideas and culture associated with globalisation and growing transnational migration have brought increasing social and cultural diversity to many cities' (Phillips, 2007, p. 1138). This new multi-cultural reality is a challenge to people's sense of identity and has affected regulation of the relations among social groups which is obvious in patterns of encounter and clustering in public spaces of the city or residential clustering. She maintains that powerful determinants of identity, such as religion, intersect with race and ethnicity to produce distinctive geographies in cities. In fact, whilst in small towns and villages you might expect the public square to reflect the composition of its surrounding streets, in complex societies containing many and varied communities, public space has a different role to play. In the right circumstances, city squares will enable the encounters between different social groups, both spatial and transpatial.<sup>1</sup> As Hanson has shown, different social groups have different principles of solidarity, encoded into 'different daily routines and practices' that, in turn, 'lead to different modes of spatial co-presence'. These 'code differences' will naturally be 'realised in patterns of local encounter' (Hanson, 2000, p. 115). For example in 19th century London, the internal religious and charitable organisation of the Jewish community

1 That is, both face-to-face and across space. See Hanson and Hillier, 1987.

frequently followed the geographical origins of their founders.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, their economic activity took place only a couple of streets away along the main roads of the East End. A similar pattern has been shown to be the case a couple of generations later in that location: amongst the Bangladeshi immigrants and their descendants in East London (Kershen, 2004). In contrast, Ann Legeby has shown that in the Swedish city of Södertälje, where public space suffers from spatial segregation, this has contributed to the social isolation of its many immigrant inhabitants (Legeby, 2010).

Public space is not neutral. Depending on its setting, its configuration and indeed on who owns it, it may become a contested place in which to display dominance or defiance with regard to the host community, or other communities in proximity that may be vying for the same space (Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006). The notion that public space is anonymous is also debatable, especially amongst more conservative communities. As individuals leave the private domain and enter the street, they are not immediately transformed into becoming part of the urban public. Instead, as has been pointed out by Hillier, community formation is a function of the ability of the pattern of streets to bring people together or separate them out, to create intermingling of different groups, locals and strangers, that is 'dense or sparse ... continuous or sporadic' (Hillier, 1989, p. 18). It is here that movement through the city becomes a key element in creating the potential for cross-group interaction. The urban public realm contains in itself the potential for interaction between people by virtue of the flows of movement that its configuration can generate. The complex interactions between local streets and wider cross-city (as well as global) trajectories together contribute to the way in which urban spaces both acquire social meaning and have social consequences (Hillier and Vaughan, 2007). Marginal differences in neighbourhood street patterning can result in markedly different social realities. As Klinenberg showed in his study of Chicago, the spatial and physical characteristics of two adjacent neighbourhoods resulted in measurably different rates of mortality from an extreme heat-wave. Whilst both had similar proportions of poor elderly and elderly living alone, one neighbourhood incorporated lively retail, bustling sidewalks, and many more dwellings, all of which were occupied. This facilitated 'public life and informal social support for residents' (Klinenberg, 2005, p. 109). Quotidian rhythms, such as in Chicago, build up into patterns of daily encounter which foster familiarity between individuals, whilst the pattern of streets will create opportunities for chance encounters across social and ethnic divides. Indeed, Madanipour has suggested that it is necessary for a group to display itself in the public sphere in order to build group identity and communication toward others (Madanipour, 2004). Nevertheless, as Madanipour has also pointed out, this is dependent on a public space that allows diverse people to coexist. Amanda Wise has shown for example that by employing a strategy of 'non-hierarchical reciprocity', different

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<sup>2</sup> Synagogues were sometimes named after towns in Polish-Russia, for example. See Kershen and Vaughan, 2013.

groups can play out their cultural differences in public as a basis for an everyday smoothing over of difference. She has found that typically certain personalities emerge in local areas and use tools such as gift exchange and intercultural knowledge exchange to create ‘opportunities for the production of cross-cultural embodied commensality; and the production of spaces of intercultural care and trust’ (Wise, 2006, p. 4). Interestingly, Wise’s research points to the fact that just as much as space is not neutral, nor do all individuals take up its potential for interaction in the same way.

Writers on this matter debate whether daily encounters in space translate into meaningful face-to-face interaction or remain superficially at the level of familiarity (Amin, 2002); (Hewstone, et al. 2005); (Valentine, 2008). They further discuss whether supposed superficial co-presence is, and of itself, of a value in creating ‘community’ (Legeby, 2013). Possibly a more useful approach is to see these matters as being on a continuum, from familiarity through co-presence, to encounter, to interaction and – occasionally – to actual social engagement (Lofland, 1998).<sup>3</sup> To dismiss the first element in this continuum as ‘meaningless’ is to overlook the fact that it is the first step in all the other points along the scale and indeed to overlook the fact that the opposite of co-presence is co-absence, or emptiness. Public space without public presence is unarguably dysfunctional; moreover, public space without disorder (Sennett, 1996; Watson, 2006) or without chaos (Barker, 1999) is arguably lacking an essential component of city life.

Assuming this argument is acceptable, it is useful to delve into writers on the subject to discuss how interaction works in reality. Randall Collins has a useful approach in this regard: suggesting that interaction is akin to ritual, a process in which starting with physical co-presence, a joint focus of attention can result in participants becoming entrained in each other’s bodily micro-rhythms and emotions (Collins, 2004, p. 47). The micro rhythms can translate into group solidarity, a feeling of membership and ultimately, experiences of a sense of justice attached to the group (Legeby, 2013). In a similar vein, Watson has proposed the social as being on a ‘continuum of limited engagement – from an exchange of glances or mutual recognition through to “thick” engagement – which may involve embodied interactions or conversation – with many dimensions in between’ (Watson, 2009, p. 1581). This particular sort of engagement requires some degree of familiarity, which is why exploring the physical context in which it takes place is so important. Liebst does this, bringing together Collins’ neo-Durkheimian model of interaction rituals with Hillier and Hanson’s essential micro-morphological exploration of how movement patterns differ in line with spatial configuration, stating that this allows for a full understanding of ‘why variations in the physical co-presence generate solidarity and social meaning’ (Liebst, 2011, p. 26). Hillier and Hanson showed this, in their seminal work, *The Social Logic of Space*: space carries with it social meaning and

<sup>3</sup> See further development of Lofland’s ideas in the London context in Wessendorf, 2014.

shapes society as a pattern of ‘encounter probabilities’; namely, that rather than space being a neutral carrier of social activity, it creates the potential for social encounter to take place at place. Space is then likely to be ordered ‘in the image of’ the social solidarities of the society which it contains. Not in a 1:1 relationship, but according to the differing requirements for daily/ less frequent encounter and according to the differing requirements for segregation or integration of different social groups (Hillier and Hanson, 1984).<sup>4</sup>

Public space thus plays an important role in bringing disparate groups together (Amin, 2008). The transformation of the individual into an urban subject is not necessarily a smooth one. Individual differences will be maintained in areas of the city where a person is known and in communities with strong social rules, this can serve to reinforce them, as shown in Sultan Khan’s study of Southall (Sultan Khan, 2003). Similarly patterns of use can shift across the week, as shown in Low’s study of the spatio-temporal usage of a number of Latin American squares and a recent study of public space in Nicosia. In the latter instance, Charalambous and Hadjichristos found an almost complete separation both in time and in space between the longstanding inhabitants of the old city and temporary migrant workers, the latter whom tended to use sections of the squares only in the evenings and on Sundays (Charalambous and Hadjichristos, 2011).

Spatial dynamics bring about local patterns of mutuality and cordiality. London in particular frequently features as a place where for ethnic groups such as Pakistanis and Indians, residential and economic clustering exist and ‘cordial relations’ are manifested between diasporic communities that were in a situation of hostility in their countries of origin (Robins and Aksoy, 2001). Similarly patterns can be found in the relationship between the Israeli and Palestinian diaspora who live on the ‘Israeli’ and ‘Palestinian’ sides of the street in lower Manhattan. Whilst in Palmers Green, London, Greek and Turkish-Cypriots find common ground in the relatively neutral environment of London’s inner suburbs, although rules of endogamy continue to prevail even a generation or more after their original settlement in the 1970s. The urban setting provides a point of neutrality between supposedly ‘hostile’ or at least, alien communities.

In London’s newly super-diverse context, the street can provide fertile ground for the vitality and economic durability of a highly diverse mix of countries of origin. Ria Thomas has shown that whilst there was co-existence of Indian and Pakistani diasporic population in two inner London suburban high streets (The Broadway, Southall and Green Street, Upton Park), the socio-spatial relationship between the two groups was more complex than originally anticipated. Despite the absence of tangible physical demarcations, distinct spatial positions were clearly manifested in the form of ethno-centric clustering of pedestrians in different sections of the high streets. These distinctions were also reflected in the ethnicity patterns of pedestrian and retail ownership, with the more spatially accessible locations owned by the more prosperous, better educated Indian population. Nevertheless,

4 See esp. ‘Societies as encounter probabilities’, p. 236 onwards.

economic advantage is not the only factor in assertion of spatial advantage, other factors to do with religious dictates, prior entrepreneurial experience, kinship ties and retail typology are shown by the author to influence the preferred location of shops in study areas (Thomas, 2010).

Despite these nuanced studies of ethnicity and space, a 'façade of solidarity' is common in the reporting of the spatialisation of ethnicity in the public sphere. This is partly a preference for the population itself, since it presents a common solidarity to the 'outside world', which can be used to assert political power, such as in the case of the 'Latino' market in Wards Corner in Tottenham, north London (which in reality is comprised of many Latin and Central American business owners and consumers). The counterpoint to this perceived uniformity in such areas, such as 'South Asian' marketplaces is simply a lack of understanding by the general population of the nuanced differences, say, between Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and indeed East African-origin individuals. The emergence of London and other cities as places of 'super-diversity', means that groups that are outwardly perceived as uniform, mask an essential range of differences that is frequently overlooked, such as in the example of Greek/Turkish populations (Robins and Aksoy, 2001).

Hall's research demonstrates that the supposed intermingling of cultures in the public sphere requires detailed observations throughout the day and the week in order to capture the extent to which immigrants are interacting with members of the host culture. She shows how places such as London's Walworth Road work due to the coexistence of street spaces that are 'sufficiently small to allow for a level of self-determination and sufficiently aggregative to allow for a sense of a diverse city' (Hall, 2012, p. 125). Watson's study of a number of London markets comes to the same conclusions, showing additionally that the spatial co-presence of market traders helps reinforce strong communal ties.

### The Role of Public Places

When Lakshmi, one of my Indian research participants, moved into her house in Ashfield earlier this year, she was pleasantly surprised when Frank, her Lebanese neighbour, called over the back fence to present her with freshly picked figs from his garden in a gesture of welcome. He had seen her admiring his crop the day before. This first gift precipitated a regular exchange between them; the latest produce from their respective vegetable patches would be passed over the fence along with cooking hints to accompany unfamiliar varieties ... Bringing home a box of peaches or cucumbers or whatever, inevitably some would come Lakshmi's way ... And from the other end of the street, curry leaves from the tree in the yard of the sister of another Indian neighbour would be offered to Lakshmi whenever a new crop arrived at their place. (Wise, 2006, 5–6)





**Figure 3.2 Southall Broadway – shops spilling out into the high street**

Source: Sadaf Sultan Khan, reproduced with permission.

Public life takes place not only in the streets and squares of the city, but also in the market itself, the café, pub, church, cinema or library, all of which are in differing degrees public spaces and all of which allow for varying degrees of interaction between the ‘guest’ culture and the host community (Figure 3.2). For example Wessendorf has found in her ethnography of ‘commonplace diverse’ contemporary Hackney, London, that mixing in public is rarely translated into private relations. However, this is not perceived as a problem, as long as people adhere to a tacit ‘ethos of mixing’ (Wessendorf, 2013). This confirms Wise’s findings in Sydney where ‘inhabitants do not need to know their neighbours intimately or even wish to become friends, but (...) gestures of care and recognition (...) can create a feeling of connection to the diverse people who share the place’ (Wise, 2005, 182). Wise reiterates the importance of local proximity and small-scale interactions. Food takes on a symbolic role of sharing as equals across cultural boundaries. This is not the same as the superficial consumption of a Chinese meal in the local town centre.

There is a gender aspect to these examples of cross communal cooperation and negotiations and Wessendorf writes about how Turkish women took the lead in

cooking at school events and similar activities brought about to negotiate difference within the everyday sphere of activity. Whilst the school is not a fully public space – more of a ‘parochial’ space as defined by Lofland (1998) – it is one of those routine spaces where the anonymity of the truly urban street has to be discarded in order to maintain everyday parenting routines. Everyday routines create a degree of familiarity, ‘familiar strangers’ (Milgram, 1977). Perhaps this is unsurprising that even in the contemporary city, women take a lead on such activities. So long as the majority of childcare falls on the woman, she is more likely to be available in the local neighbourhood to create the ties with her neighbours. Indeed, Laura Ring writes of a similar mode of negotiation and diffusion of possibly volatile situations in a multi-ethnic apartment block in Karachi (Ring, 2006). Evidently social interactions in everyday locations such as schools, pubs and marketplaces facilitate cross communal cooperation.

Hall shows in her study of supposedly mundane London ‘ethnic’ high streets, how places such as the local café create familiar spaces ‘formed out of the orientating processes of daily convenience and regularity within a local area’ (p. 101), allowing for different worlds to intersect in one place, making a social space for family, friends and locals who are not necessarily from the same group, allegiance or political inclination. The café, alongside similarly semi-public spaces, provide locations for the essential ‘small-scale meetings in which a public is constituted’. This has been the case for centuries, whether in the Parisian working-class cafes of the late 19th century, where social as well as political friendships were constructed, or in turn of the 20th century Warsaw (Ury, 2010). The cafe can also provide a point of transition for the immigrant into society as well as a point of entry for the host community into a supposedly ‘alien’ world. The film *Little Georgia*, about a Georgian cafe in Hackney illustrates this point well. The film explores notions of home, belonging, nostalgia and change told through the stories of people working in the cafe. It shows how working at a place like Little Georgia may ease some of the stresses of migration by providing a home away from home both for the workers and for Georgian immigrants who have settled in London. At the same time the aesthetics of the cafe (its Georgian-themed objects and kitsch decor) play a part in transmitting Georgian culture to the London, just as much as the supposedly ‘Georgian’ foods served there remain Georgian enough to provide a memory of home, but are adapted to suit the British palate (Wicki, 2010). Such multiplicity of roles provided by a small street cafe is captured in Hall’s ethnography, which shows how the ethnic high street provides a realm that allows individuals ‘to participate in a collection of sub-worlds that together constitute the collective public life of the multi-ethnic street’ (Hall, 2012, 108).

A supposed uniformly diverse street can mask subtle spatial divisions within. As well as the research by Thomas mentioned above, earlier research by Vaughan shows that, depending on the location and the way in which the street network is utilised, clustering can enable the intensification of communal

activity, socialisation, networking and self-support (Vaughan, 2007; Vaughan and Penn, 2006).

A different argument about ethnic marketplaces as having shifting spatio-social roles is proposed by a study of London's Chinatown (Chung, 2009), which shows how the area shifts in its character throughout the day and the week according to the mix of Chinese, tourists and Londoners co-present in its streets. The growth of eating out as a leisure practice alongside a dramatic increase in access to formerly 'exotic' foodstuffs means that the cultural consumption of the minority food stuffs has become commonplace, to the extent that Barrett and McEvoy claim that 60 per cent of the clients in 'Indian' restaurants along Rusholme's (Manchester) Curry Mile are 'White British'. This is an example of how the ethnic marketplace has changed in its character in recent years, to become in some cases an 'ethnic destination' (Barrett and McEvoy, 2006). One feature of many of these outward facing ethnic marketplaces is their long-term persistence and there are many examples of ethnic destinations that are evidently the outcome of long-term adaptive reuse of formerly mixed use high streets. Places such as Brixton, Edgware Road and Southall, renowned for their Caribbean, Arab or South Asian businesses are clearly able to take advantage of the street centrality that made them successful high streets in the first place. Equally, their longevity as destinations may be down to their city-wide accessibility as well. Time will tell whether these ethnic marketplaces, which are characterised spatially by being incorporated into London's streetscape will withstand competition from enclosed shopping centres on the one hand and franchises and chains on the other. Whilst the former signifies a danger of interruption of the natural process of urban streets adapting to the changing nature of the cultures they contain, the latter signify a wider homogenising of the UK (and global) economy. Whilst both of these dangers are real, recent research shows that although the high street has changed and continues to do so, it still plays a role that has remained recognisable for centuries, in bringing together the rich mix of activities, flows of movement and types of people that characterise cities such as London (Bolton and Vaughan, 2014). Equally, the burgeoning of traditional street markets, such as Columbia Road, East London, to encompass vibrant and economically successful trading posts puts paid to the idea that people only wish to carry out transactions in air-conditioned anonymous boxes. The suq, market and bazaar have been with us for thousands of years. It seems unlikely that they will disappear anytime soon.

### **The Role of Street Markets**

Market Day means Ridley Road or Brixton Market, Dalston or Shepherd's Bush. It means finding goat's meat and greens, salt fish and ackee, bammy and breadfruit, plantains and frying bananas, and maybe even a juju talisman to ward

off unemployment or to win at the pools. Market Day means peacock plumes and combed-out Afros, corn-roll braids or straightened hair, Rasta presence and Rasta dread. It means hours spent hassling to save a few pence, and never enough money to buy never enough food. It means big, fat mamas with rags tied around their heads, babies straddled over their shoulders like a sack of just picked yams. Market Day means keeping one's stomach in tune with the Islands, at the expense of salted fish and chips, or steak and kidney pie. Market Day means a shared ritual, every Saturday morning and half the afternoon, a ritual of the gut. It means a city block full of black folk who speak the same tongues, the language of shanty-town, back-a-yard. All this and more is Saturday Market Day. (Henry Louis Gates Jr., 1976, p. 312)

As Henry Louis Gates Jr. illustrates in the quotation above, the market is not only for buying and selling. It has a vital role to play in providing a social space, as an information resource, as an opportunity for work, or as a site of 'social connections and interactions' (Watson, 2009, p. 1578). Many also maintain that the marketplace is the point of contact between otherwise disassociated groups such as immigrants and their host community. This concept of the market as a place of abstract transactions between extremes, or strangers, is proposed by Wirth who wrote of the Jewish trade relationships, that this type of relationship takes place in a situation where no other contact can take place, since trade is an abstract relationship where emotions drop into the background. Wirth maintained that the more impersonal the trader's attitude, the more efficient and successful are the transactions likely to be (Wirth, 1928, p. 25). Hence, the evident propensity for immigrants to tend towards such economic activities, whilst the dispersal of immigrants after the initial stage of settlement is enabled by successful integration into the host economy. Examples from the past, such as Leeds – where 'Don't ask the price, it's a penny' was the slogan Michael Marks used when he opened his first market stall in Leeds in 1884 – exemplify this process.<sup>5</sup> And an earlier study by this author suggests that the spatial correspondence between work and home plays an important role in forming immigrant niche economies too (Kaplan, 1998).

The market works in varied degrees of depth according to the individual's own background. A superficial engagement will occur for the outsider; at the other end of the scale this becomes a way in to making actual social ties. Barrett and McEvoy show how the market serves these multiple roles simultaneously: different products in the ethnic market attract different communities; whilst the co-ethnics may frequent the market for clothes, jewellery, music and food products, 'outsiders' frequent restaurants and other eateries.

Urban form has a tangible role to play once we focus in on the physical space of market transactions – in their broadest sense. As Dines showed in his

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<sup>5</sup> Mark's 'penny bazaar' went on in subsequent years to become one of the UK's most successful retailers – Marks and Spencer. For more on Leeds' Jewish settlement, see Vaughan, 2006.



**Figure 3.3 Brixton market: ‘routine, unexpected and new encounters’**

Source: Sadaf Sultan Khan, reproduced with permission.

ethnography of a north London market: ‘the lines of stalls, aisles and series of openings set back from the busy pavements of the adjacent Green Street – turned the market into a sort of surrogate town square that provided the setting for routine, unexpected and new encounters’ (Dines, 2007, p. 8) (Figure 3.3). Similarly, Watson (op. cit.) describes a whole range of spatial interrelationships that are fundamental in creating the sorts of social connections described above, whether the seemingly trivial matter of availability of places to sit, the close proximity of market stalls, meaning that market trades build dense relationships over time, the intense physical proximity between buyer and seller which can build up into a relationship of care (looking out for the elderly in the community) and in some cases, credit. The integration of the market within the surrounding network of streets, such that it forms a continuity with the public space of the city (with no sense of constraints on behaviour as is the case with the enclosed shopping mall) is another essential feature of its spatial character. Markets with a particular ethnic ‘ownership’ carry these features more intensely still and the quote above from Louis Gates Jr. is just one of the many examples to be found across London or any other major city of its type.

Notably, the quote at the start of this section alludes to the role of the ethnic market in sustaining memories of home. In his journal article 'Black London' written for *The Antioch Review* in the 1970s, Louis Gates Jr. writes how reggae music along with the sights and smells of Caribbean culture helped connect people to their home. The ritual of getting kitted out in one's finest for market day is significant, illustrating the fact that the ethnic market can be a continuation of the private domain of the home. As Botticello showed in her study of a Nigerian market in contemporary London, 'practices and spatial negotiations in the public space' are comparable, in this context with the rules of behaviour in the domestic setting and where the public sphere contains specific forms of sociality common to the private sphere (Botticello, 2007). Notably this extension from the private to the public sphere may be partly due to the fact that immigrant homes are so small, that the living room extends into the city. In other instances this may be a cultural practice brought from the country of origin, such as is the case with Latin American social practices of holding celebrations in restaurants within the local neighbourhood, rather than at home (Greene, Mora, and Berrios, 2011).

An even finer spatial scale comes to play when considering the entrance of the market visitor into the inner sanctum of the market trader's domain. To receive an invitation to come to the trader's side of the stall is an important physical, as well as symbolic transition from anonymous trade to social engagement. For Botticello, such an invitation is evidently a sign of trust and familiarity. Yet more subtle rules of social control may be at play also. As Sultan Khan showed in her study of Southall's 'South Asian' high street, the very layout of the stalls, spilling out from the interiors of the shops to capture the pavement space, along with the close observations of (predominantly male) traders of the supposedly public sphere of the street creates a sense that the social rules of Karachi are being played out in London's suburbs, such that a woman walking alone is no longer anonymous. The urban experience has been transformed (Sultan Khan, 2003). In extreme situations (not necessarily the case in markets) this familiarity facilitates the policing of behaviour from within thus giving rise to the desire of younger generations of co-ethnics to move out but remain close enough to avail the conveniences of the enclave/market but far enough so as to fall outside the purview of community surveillance (Phillips, 2006).

The connection to the original place of settlement is frequently maintained for a variety of reasons: familial (as older generation still living there); religious (a desire to continue to attend a particular place of worship) and commercial (businesses are not as easy to relocate as homes are). For this reason London's 'Jewish' East End continued to be a locus of Jewish businesses at least a generation after the postwar exodus to the suburbs. The move from exclusion to integration was effected by market-activity outside of 'ghetto' area whilst maintaining foothold within it for social network purposes.

Food is also a common theme in discussions of the ethnic market. Kershen has shown that clustering can enable immigrants to 'set down roots and accommodate change in an alien society'. At the same time, linguistic sounds or 'kitchen' talks

can evoke memories of home – the creation of ‘a fusion of real and the imagined in the evolving myth of home’ (Kershen, 2004: p. 265). As Claudia Roden has stated, ‘food is that part of an immigrant culture that immigrants hold on to longest – when they have abandoned the traditional dress, the language, the music’ (Roden, 1999).

### **Conclusions: The Role of the City in Ethnic Settlement**

In the super-diverse landscape, where no single minority group stands out, the ethnic marketplace represents a new form of social integration. Wise maintains that: ‘this is not integration into some normative mode of pre-existing community, but rather, represents integration as a form of open, emergent community across difference. That is, a true multi-culturalism of place-sharing’ (Wise, 2005, p. 185). As London has become more diverse, it has created increasingly complex spatial and cultural juxtapositions, requiring negotiation of difference between groups at least as much as with ‘host’ society (Wessendorf). Research suggests that for immigrants, spatial location not only shapes processes of ‘mixed-embeddedness’ and economic integration, but can strengthen social networks and reciprocity, and enhances electoral power (Body-Gendrot, 2000). A fragmentation of the community can, conversely, arrest the development of political activity (and power), such as in the state of the Caribbean community of 1970s London, which according to Gates (1976) was scattered across its geography with people from Trinidad in Ladbroke Grove, from Barbados in Finsbury Park and Jamaicans in Brixton and so on.

International geography is also apparent in the ethnic marketplace. Whilst sending remittances has been a longstanding activity, for example for Bengalis in London a generation ago (Garbin, 2003), in addition to the appearance of facilities for transferring money home, ethnic high streets will frequently contain branches of local banks from the community’s homeland. Possibly an indication of the volume of remittances sent home as well as the longstanding establishment of the community. Similarly, the availability of phone-cards for international telephony – providing a social glue that connects scattered communities (Vertovec, 2004) – and the presence of travel agents catering specifically to the needs of the immigrant population are an indication of a significant association to the country of origin both for and beyond the first generation of settlement. Another emerging phenomenon is the increasing presence of solicitors specialising in immigration or tax and other such facilities on the ethnic high street, turning it into a “one stop shop” of sorts where one can pick up groceries, the local gossip as well as legal/medical advice pertaining to their status as a migrant. One example of this is Brick Lane – (in fact, situated in one of London’s oldest immigrant districts), where food outlets, travel agents, telephony shops, estate agents, solicitors, clothes shops and its famous mosque (originally a Huguenot church, subsequently a Methodist chapel and then a synagogue) all intermingle in this way. Interestingly, this specialisation is quite contained within the southernmost stretch of the road, whilst its character shifts

dramatically from the old Truman Brewery northwards, where the infiltration of 'hipsters' to the area is evident in a proliferation of independent fashion shops, cafes and the like.

In addition to the ethnic marketplace, other urban functions such as religious buildings (see especially the work of Dwyer) serve to maintain cultural cohesion within a community as well as connections with the host community (Dwyer, Gilbert and Shah, 2013). The main point of distinction is the essential public nature of the market, square or high street.

This chapter has demonstrated the important role of urban layout in shaping the social power of the ethnic marketplace. Arguably, spatial distancing of the point of origin helps explain the shift of ethnic market to touristic destination and it is possible to identify a continuum from Walworth Road, serving a predominantly local residential population, through the South Asian examples, which serve both local and city-wide populations through to places such as Chinatown in central London's Soho quarter, which shifts during the space of the day and the week from being 'Chinese' during the dim sum Sunday lunch period to being a non-Chinese touristic destination during the remainder of the week, forming a distinct spatial and temporal pattern of occupation amongst the ethnic Chinese that differs from that of visitors to the area (Chung, 2009). Chung's analysis shows that Chinatown provides a multi-layered social spatial context for mixing and separating the various groups that occupy it. In a super-diverse landscape such as that of London, such nuanced differences are important. It is evident that in a context in which no single group predominates, shifts in spatial, temporal and ethnic mix will change the form of the ethnic marketplace in a much more dynamic fashion than the simple label of 'ethnic market' might suggest.

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