

## **Navigating Australian Multicultural Spaces: Chineseness, Community, and Council Initiatives in Burwood, Sydney**

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Australia's cultural ecology has been undergoing continuous change, beginning with post-WWII immigration and its related influx of non-English languages into Australian public space. Burwood, a rapidly evolving suburb in Sydney's inner west, exemplifies one such multicultural landscape, with its town centre marked by shopfronts from diverse community businesses that utilise various non-English signs. These shopfronts facilitate intercultural exchanges which I argue showcase both Burwood and Australia's multicultural transformation. In addressing these transformations in my PhD project, I am collaborating with Burwood Council to explore how these local shopfronts serve as a microcosm of the suburb's multiculturalism, shaped by everyday interactions and spatial politics across communities. My project reveals how Burwood's multicultural nature is mediated by ethnic space, shopfronts, and people. Through an ethnographic analysis of signage and related consumer spaces on Burwood Rd, with a particular focus on Chineseness as it is tied to Burwood Chinatown, I argue that Burwood is taking shape as an inclusive cosmopolitan city where local communities are empowered by the recognition of their languages and cultures. This project ultimately demonstrates how the Council's community strategies can influence and be influenced by the politics of multicultural visual communication. My preliminary findings suggest that the new trends of immigration in Sydney's suburbs require culturally specific investment and regulation grounded in the needs and desires of local communities to offer cultural facilities, community events, grants, and education.

**Keywords:** Chinese, immigration, culture, shopfront, community

### **Bio**

Ken Hu is a PhD student in the Faculty of Arts at Macquarie University. His current research focuses on ethnography, social semiotics, and multimodality. His PhD project, titled *Chineseness in Visual Landscape: Everyday Interactions Navigated by Shopfronts in Suburban Sydney*, explores how Chinese cultures are visually communicated and consumed across Burwood Rd shopfronts.