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**AN EXAMINATION OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY AND
CHANGING SOCIAL SPACES IN SOUTH BELFAST,
NORTHERN IRELAND**

Abstract:

Social spaces in the city of Belfast, Northern Ireland reflect a history of acrimonious and violent ethno-political conflict. During the Catholic/Protestant communal violence of the Troubles era, the Chinese community was considered a hidden population. A trend toward 'keeping their heads down' has changed with the implementation of peace processes. As social spaces in post-Troubles south Belfast change to reflect a growing ethnic minority population, examples of place making are not without conflict. Navigation of social space by the Chinese community rests within the context of four converging points: Responses to globalization and free market development by declining Protestant Loyalist communities; entrenched Northern Protestant ethnic identity, sometimes referred to as siege mentality or Northern Protestant defeatism; institutional racism associated with housing and policing policy; and social apathy, in the guise of harmless banter and fear of violence. This thesis situates individualized and personal responses among Chinese residents to marked, exclusionary, and neutral social spaces in south Belfast, focusing on how this non-sectarian third party has been excluded from social placemaking as well as how they have created new layers of social spaces and the extent to which neighborhoods defined by ethnic identity are being transformed and assuming diverse spatial meanings.