ABSTRACT

Chinatowns have long constituted one of the most visible social indicators of overseas Chinese communities. Their origins owe as much to the enforcement of segregation by majority groups and colonial governments as they do to the desire of Chinese immigrants to maintain their cultural links to the homeland and provide for their own welfare. Yet, changes since the 19th century mean that such analyses fail to adequately reflect the new circumstances and situation of Chinese minorities in a globalizing and transnational world where the very nature of minority incorporation has been undergoing extensive change. This paper examines the changing nature and role of Chinatown among the Sydney Chinese. In doing so, it questions the extent to which the metaphor of Chinatown or the alternative model of ethnoburb to describe Chinese settlement in North America necessarily captures the reality of Chinese patterns of settlement in Sydney with its relatively large and diverse Chinese population.