

Case Study: China Town in Barcelona?

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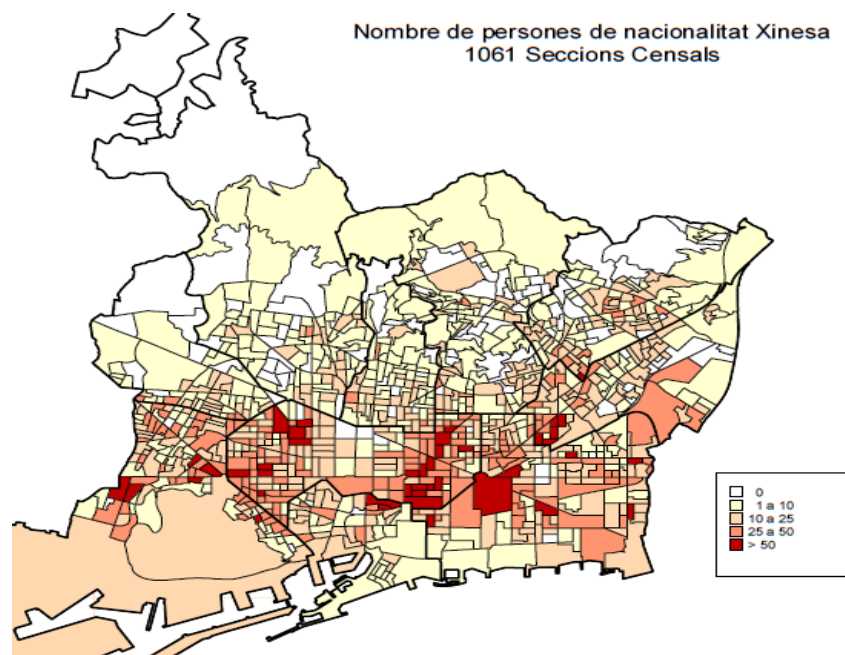
Barcelona has become an international city and a magnet for a large number of economic initiatives over the last few years, although it has also suffered significant economic changes, with its industries gradually losing the importance that historically had. It is in this new economic context that the service sector has been enjoying increasing importance, and tourist activities have become a big economic powerhouse. Barcelona saw 7.7 million overnight hotel stays in 2013. Tourism has certainly been one of the few economic sectors to have maintained its employment levels during the crisis years.

Barcelona has traditionally been a magnet for immigrants, from within Spain itself as well as, more recently, the rest of the world. The city has grown and developed in step with the various influxes of immigrants. One of the most dynamic communities over the last few years has been the Chinese. Over recent years, the number of Chinese people living in Barcelona has developed as follows:

	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2015
Chinese residents	7,195	11,637	12,938	14,398	15,875	17,487

Source: Municipal Statistics.

Meanwhile, the settlement patterns of Barcelona's Chinese residents show a tendency for them to concentrate in specific areas and neighbourhoods in the city. In particular, the number of Chinese residents is high in the Fort Pienc neighbourhood, around Trafalgar Street and Ronda de Sant Pere, where the number of Chinese businesses has multiplied over the last few years and they are very visible, although Chinese residents represent around 15% of the total residents.



¹ This is a fictitious case put together for academic purposes.

Only a few years ago the Chinese residents were perceived somewhat suspiciously by the other people in the city, and pigeonholed into a few, very specific economic activities. But the rise of China as the world's great economic power and the diversification of the activities carried out by Barcelona's entrepreneurial Chinese community are changing that perception. Additionally, Barcelona has become the main gateway for China's exports into southern Europe, as the main container terminal in Barcelona's port, the 100% Chinese-owned Hutchinson, has been attracting an ever-increasing volume of trade.

Chinese business people are very well organised and enjoy full support from the Chinese consulate. This group of business people has smooth dialogue with the municipal representatives. Today they have requested a meeting with the Mayor, and presented her with an interesting proposal:

Given the buoyancy of the economic activities around the Fort Pienc neighbourhood, the growing number of Chinese people living in that area and the increasing importance of tourism as Barcelona's economic powerhouse, they wish to propose that the City Council build a Chinese arch at the start and end of C/ Trafalgar and rename it "Barcelona's Little China Town", to make it into a great Barcelona tourist attraction, in image and in a similar way to other big cities in the world, like San Francisco, Washington DC and New York. They are also hoping to be able to attract future Chinese investment into the area, thanks to its "Chinese Friendly" atmosphere.



The business people are offering to defray the costs of transforming this small area of the city and creating a new focus for both tourism and economic activities.

1. How would you rate this proposal according to the 3 principles of interculturality (equality, recognition of diversity, promotion of interaction)?
2. What consequences could it have for the neighbourhood if this request is granted?
3. What consequences could it have for the city?
4. What response should the City Council give, to be consistent with its policies for managing diversity? What arguments should this response be based on?
5. What would be the answer in your city if a similar proposal is made? why?