

Spatial Proximity, Sensory Boundaries and Institutional Harmony Along South Bridge Road

Inter-religious coexistence and spatial dynamics in the South Bridge Road precinct, Chinatown, Singapore

Produced by Douglas Chiong

Abstract

I wanted to find out where “harmony” ends and simply getting used to difference starts. I decided to find out on South Bridge Road in Singapore's Chinatown, where a mosque, a Hindu temple and a Buddhist temple share one stretch of street. To begin with, I watched and listened. From 28 August to 8 September 2026, I observed Friday prayers and interviewed shopkeepers and street congregants. On 11 September I formed the Chinatown Inter-Faith Harmony Action Circle. The Circle held four weekly sessions across three weeks, from 13 September to 4 October.

Overall, $n = 39$ unique individuals participated. Three things stood out. When I asked shopkeepers in general, they reported no unresolved friction. To them, religious schedules are simply normal commercial cycles. When I asked about the air, incense smoke came up. Leaders of the three religions did not wait for a crisis either, because a phone and WhatsApp channel already linked the temple and the mosque before the Circle was established. The Circle expanded this channel to youth coordinators and congregants. Congregants called coexistence normal. When probed, they identified small irritations, but kept them far from being a source of conflict.

Taking all these answers together, I came to the conclusion that habit can obscure small irritations until someone asks. When people were asked in the dialogues, they named the irritations and then framed them as just another aspect of life in Chinatown. Caution. The Circle was an integral part of my research, and thus, subsequent reflection was partly influenced by the intervention.

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1. Introduction and research question

Singapore is often cited as an example of religious coexistence. The Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act of 1990 is part of this narrative (Singapore Statutes Online, n.d.). Less attention is given to how religious harmony manifests itself at street level, where worship, food, commerce and everyday movement coexist on the same pavement.

The South Bridge Road in Chinatown provides a good example of this phenomenon. A mosque, a Hindu temple and a Buddhist temple are located within a short walking distance from each other. Incense, bells, chanting, sermons, and cooking all pass through the same air.

Research question. Where does “harmony” end and simply becoming used to difference begin? Three sub-questions guided my study. How do institutions manage overlapping sounds and smoke? How do leaders, traders and worshippers live with the arrangement day to day? And what happens when people from the three communities are asked to speak about shared air and sound directly?

2. Methodology and sampling

Approach. My approach was a combination of action research (Lewin, 1946), participatory ethnography, semi-structured interviews and focus group dialogues. I focused my sampling exclusively on South Bridge Road, where the three sites are located within a short walk of each other.

Phase 1: baseline (28 August to 8 September 2026). I began my research by observing. I attended Friday prayers on 28 August and 4 September, before any interviews were conducted. Shopkeeper interviews followed from 1 to 5 September, and street congregant interviews from 2 to 8 September. On 7 and 8 September I conducted two scoping interviews with executive administrative officers from Sri Mariamman Temple and Jamae (Chulia) Mosque. They confirmed that a high-level channel existed before the Circle was formed, and the quotes from Finding 2 come from these interviews. These two interviews are not included in the total sample counts below.

Phase 2: action research (11 September to 4 October 2026). On Friday 11 September I founded the Chinatown Inter-Faith Harmony Action Circle. It met four times over three weeks on 13, 20 and 27 September and 4 October (Section 9). The Circle served as both my focus group and my intervention. The formal interviews with the monk (14 September) and the Dawah officer (15 September) also fall into this phase. They provided me with the institutional perspective on the history of the street and on the formation of the new Circle.

Languages. Most interviews were conducted in English, Mandarin and Hokkien, with some conducted in Malay for certain participants. As the lead researcher, I relied on research team members to translate in real time between Mandarin, Hokkien and English. All quotes were verified against audio recordings.

Length and analysis. Key informant interviews ranged in length from 45 to 60 minutes. Shopkeeper and congregant interviews lasted between 15 and 20 minutes. Each dialogue session lasted approximately 90 minutes. I analyzed the transcripts using inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Four recurring themes emerged: sensory overlap, spatial logistics, informal channels and civic courtesy. Participants ranged in age from 24 to 68 years old.

Group	Who	n	Phase and dates
Shopkeepers	Traditional South Bridge Road shopkeepers and kopitiam stallholders	8	Phase 1: 1 to 5 September
Street congregants	Regular worshippers interviewed during street observation (6 Hindu, 6 Buddhist, 6 Muslim)	18	Phase 1: 2 to 8 September
Institutional leaders and officers	Resident Monk / Administrator (Buddhist); Board Trustee and Secretary (Hindu); Senior Outreach and Dawah Officer (Muslim); Management Board Officer (Muslim); Temple Board Trustee (Hindu)	5	Phase 2, from 11 September (monk 14 Sep, Dawah officer 15 Sep)
Action Circle members	6 panel participants plus 6 additional core members across the four sessions	12	Phase 2: 13 September to 4 October
Total		39	43 role entries less 4 overlaps

Table 1. Sample as recorded in the field notes: 39 unique individuals (43 role entries). Four Action Circle members are also among the five institutional leaders and are counted once.

3. Interview instrument

I used semi-structured guides for clergy, administrative officials, shop owners and congregants. Here are some of the key questions I posed to clergy and officers:

- **Spatial and sensory coexistence.** How does your institution manage overlapping sensory signals, such as the call to prayer (*Athan*), temple bells, chanting or incense, with neighbouring religious sites on South Bridge Road?
- **Institutional communication.** What informal or formal channels exist between your leadership team and the leaders of nearby faiths? What specific incidents or calendar events trigger these communications?
- **Conflict prevention.** Can you describe a specific operational challenge, such as parking or crowd surges during festivals, that required joint coordination, and how it was resolved?
- **Public engagement.** How do your outreach officers approach non-adherents, tourists or curious neighbours who enter your sacred space?

4. The setting: three sites, one street

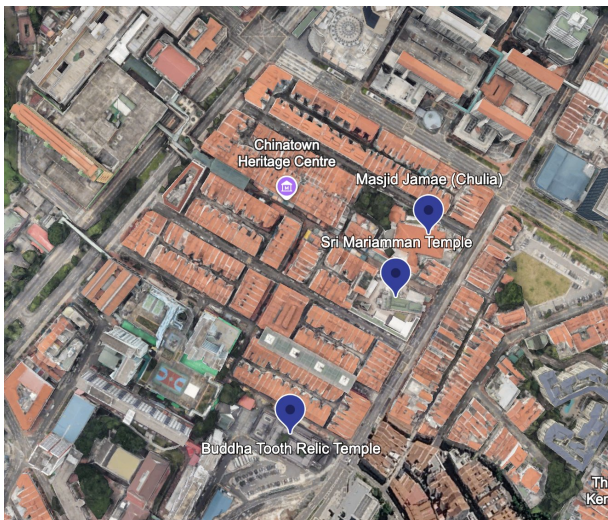


Figure 1. Aerial view of the South Bridge Road sites, with the Chinatown Heritage Centre between them. Masjid Jamae and Sri Mariamman Temple are almost neighbours; the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple lies a short walk to the south-west.

Looking at the map, the first thing you notice is how tightly the sites fit into a grid of terracotta-roofed shophouses. Hawkers, residents, visitors and worshippers all use the same narrow streets. The religious buildings are not separate from daily life; they are interwoven into it.

Site	Religion	Location	Character
Masjid Jamae (Chulia)	Islam	218 South Bridge Road	Established in 1826; national monument (1974); two tiered minarets and an arched entrance
Sri Mariamman Temple	Hinduism	244 South Bridge Road	Founded in 1827; Singapore's oldest Hindu temple; national monument (1973); six-tiered gopuram built in 1925
Buddha Tooth Relic Temple	Buddhism	288 South Bridge Road	Opened on 31 May 2007; largest and most visited of the three; Tang-style architecture

Table 2. The three sites in the study, all on South Bridge Road. Sources: Masjid Jamae (Chulia), n.d.; National Heritage Board, n.d.; Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum, n.d.

5. The sites in photographs

Masjid Jamae (Chulia): Islam



Figure 2. Masjid Jamae (Chulia), 218 South Bridge Road. Two tiered minarets rise above a green-and-white façade with an arched entrance.

Masjid Jamae is one of the oldest mosques in Singapore. Its signboard at the entrance is written in **four scripts**: Tamil, Arabic, Chinese and English. One sign, and it speaks to every community on the street.

Sri Mariamman Temple: Hinduism



Figure 3. The gopuram of Sri Mariamman Temple, covered in tiers of sculpted deities, with guardian lions beside the entrance.

The gopuram is the most prominent structure on this stretch of road. Regardless of your faith, you cannot walk past it without noticing the temple.



Figure 4. The temple doorway at No. 244, with a “No footwear beyond this point” sign in Tamil and English and a notice that also carries Chinese.

The doorway is where the temple’s rules meet the street. The footwear sign is in Tamil and English, and the notice next to it includes Chinese. The temple is communicating with visitors from outside its own community. Removing your shoes is a sign of respect that outsiders are encouraged to follow, and the mosque shares this same custom.

Buddha Tooth Relic Temple: Buddhism



Figure 5. Entrance of the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple, 288 South Bridge Road. Red columns, a gray-tiled roof, guardian sculptures and a multicolored banner frame the entrance.

The Buddha Tooth Relic Temple is the largest, most visited and newest of the three sites. It arrived on a street that had been home to a mosque and a Hindu temple for nearly two centuries. Its Tang-style architecture and Chinese signboard connect it to the Chinese community surrounding it.



Figure 6. Inside the main hall of the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple during a gathering. Worshipers sit in rows of folding chairs facing an altar decorated with flowers and offerings.

Inside, the hall is accessible to both visitors and worshipers simultaneously. A seated congregation can occupy the same space through which visitors pass to view the altar. Anyone who enters can witness the temple's own ceremonies.

6. Observational data: sensory and spatial landscapes

I conducted these observations on Friday 28 August and Friday 4 September 2026, prior to the formation of the Circle.

Auditory overlaps and soundscapes: South Bridge Road corridor

1:00 PM to 2:00 PM, Friday. The Friday sermon (*Khutbah*) is playing inside Jamae (Chulia) Mosque. At the same time, temple bells and drum ceremonies are sounding from Sri Mariamman Temple, located a short distance away on the same road. The street carries both simultaneously. From what I observed, neither institution appeared to use high-decibel external amplification for regular services. This seemed to create an acoustic boundary that respected the public street.

Olfactory and visual boundaries: Chinatown temple complex

Incense and ritual offerings at the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Sri Mariamman Temple are generally contained within designated courtyard burners and internal ventilation systems. Visual iconography and ceremonial decorations appear to remain mostly within the site boundaries, away from adjacent shophouses and public walkways. I did not quantitatively assess this.

Pedestrian traffic and crowd flow: peak hours and shared urban space

Foot traffic significantly increases on Friday afternoons for Muslim congregants and on weekend mornings for Hindu and Buddhist devotees. Shared sidewalks, narrow five-foot ways (*kaki lima*) and side alleys accommodate streams of worshipers without any physical separation. Public courtesy and supplementary security personnel facilitate the smooth flow of pedestrian traffic.

7. Key informants and ethics record

The Action Circle is an independent, non-governmental research initiative. Where necessary, individual institutional participants obtained internal organizational approval. All participants consented to participate. I anonymized everyone using generalized labels. Only the two key informants identified below provided explicit consent, in either written or recorded form, to be identified by their precise titles and photographed.



Figure 7. A Buddhist monk carrying an alms bowl, a Dawah outreach officer holding an “Islam Peace Guidance” pamphlet, and me, Douglas Chiong, on the street in Chinatown.

Key informant 1	
Name and title	Venerable Seck Huat Keng (Resident Monk / Administrator)
Institution	Buddha Tooth Relic Temple / Local Buddhist Administrative Liaison
Photo consent	Granted (signed media release form; full publication permission)

“*In Singapore, spatial proximity demands a practice of patience. When the mosque’s Athan sounds during our evening chanting, we do not see it as noise interruption. It is simply the rhythm of our neighbors at worship. True harmony is not silence; it is learning to share air space.*”

— Venerable Seck Huat Keng, formal interview in English, 14 September 2026 (Phase 2)

Key informant 2	
Name and title	Ustaz Muhammad Farhan (Senior Outreach and Dawah Officer)
Institution	Jamae (Chulia) Mosque / Local Mosque Outreach Secretariat
Photo consent	Granted (signed media release form; full publication permission)

“*Dawah in a pluralistic society like ours is never about debate or conversion by pressure. It is about clarify [sic] and demystify. When non-Muslim neighbors walk past during Friday prayers, our primary job is hospitality and answering simple questions so fear has no place to root.*”

— Ustaz Muhammad Farhan, formal interview in English, 15 September 2026 (Phase 2)

8. Findings and analysis

Finding 1: commercial adaptation versus specific sensory probing

Sample: $n = 8$ shopkeepers along South Bridge Road, including merchandise vendors, traditional medicine shops, and kopitiam stallholders. When asked generally, they reported no unresolved inter-religious friction. Religious schedules were viewed as simply normal commercial cycles. However, when I inquired specifically about the environment, minor, temporary discomforts emerged, primarily incense smoke drifting on windy days. They accepted this as an inherent aspect of conducting business in Chinatown.

“*Tension? No lah, we don't think about religion when the crowds come. On Friday afternoon, the Muslim brothers come after Solat Jumaat for cold drinks. On weekend mornings, the temple devotees buy vegetarian noodles. It's just lunch peak hours to us.*”

— Kopitiam owner, South Bridge Road

“*The mosque noise or temple bells don't bother us. We have been sitting next to each other for 40 years. The only thing we complain about is when parking wardens come during festival days because delivery vans cannot park!*”

— Religious goods merchant, South Bridge Road

“*If you ask me generally, no problem one lah. But sometimes when wind blow from temple side during big festival, the incense smoke come into shop, eyes very sting, must turn on fan full speed. Small thing only, after festival finish okay already.*”

— Traditional medicine shopkeeper, South Bridge Road, 60s (when probed about smoke)

Note the solitary complaint expressed in these accounts. It pertains to parking wardens on festival days. This is a commercial and logistical concern, not a religious one, and it aligns with the pragmatic manner in which shopkeepers describe the street.

Finding 2: existing high-level channels and Circle expansion

Key leaders: executive administrative officers of Sri Mariamman Temple and Jamae (Chulia) Mosque, interviewed during my Phase 1 scoping sessions on 7 and 8 September. **Existing contact:** prior to the formation of the Circle, an informal bilateral channel (via phone and WhatsApp) facilitated communication between top institutional leaders to coordinate large-scale municipal logistics. **Prompts:** significant events such as the Hindu Thimithi (firewalking ceremony) and Islamic Hari Raya gatherings. **Circle impact:** the Circle extended this high-level communication downward to youth coordinators and regular congregants.



We don't wait for a crisis to talk. When we host the Firewalking Ceremony, thousands line up right along the mosque lane. I pick up the phone weeks prior to coordinate loading areas with the Mosque Chairman so their congregants aren't blocked during prayer times."

— Senior Hindu Temple Representative, Phase 1 scoping interview (7 to 8 September)



Our contact is triggered by practical courtesy. If we have major upgrading works or loudspeaker adjustments, we inform the temple administration first. Because we have each other's direct numbers, small issues get resolved in 5 minutes before they ever turn into complaints."

— Senior Mosque Representative, Phase 1 scoping interview (7 to 8 September)

Finding 3: baseline normalisation and probed reflections among congregants

Sample: $n = 18$ street congregants (6 Hindu, 6 Buddhist, 6 Muslim) interviewed during Phase 1. The six Action Circle panel congregants are assigned to Phase 2 and are discussed separately in Section 9; thus, no individual is double-counted. Unprompted, congregants characterize multi-faith coexistence as a routine, non-problematic aspect of daily life in Singapore. When probed during dialogue sessions, they distinguish between minor physical annoyances such as smoke and crowds and genuine conflict. They perceive the former as an inevitable consequence of a dynamic urban environment.



Growing up here, hearing the temple procession music outside while doing prayers inside the mosque is totally normal. You learn to focus on your prayer. It's just part of Singapore."

— Muslim congregant, 30s



We share the same street. If they have a big event, we adjust our walking route. If we have a big feast, we make sure our incense burning doesn't blow smoke directly toward nearby footpaths. It's common sense."

— Buddhist devotee, 50s

Reading the findings together

The three groups occupy the same street in three distinct manners. In each instance, my observations were influenced partly by how I phrased my inquiries.

Group	How coexistence is experienced	Evidence
Religious leaders	Proactively maintained: a direct channel existed prior to the Circle's formation and was subsequently enhanced by the Circle	Phone and WhatsApp contact, calls weeks in advance of festivals, notification prior to upgrade work

Group	How coexistence is experienced	Evidence
Shopkeepers	Incorporated into the commercial routine; minor inconveniences tolerated when probed	Crowds characterized as lunchtime peak periods; incense smoke on windy days when specifically queried
Congregants	Unremarkable when unprompted; minor inconveniences differentiated from conflict when probed	Modifying walking routes, redirecting incense smoke, focusing on prayer

The sensory boundaries outlined in Section 6 align with these perspectives. Institutions regulate sound through self-imposed restrictions, refraining from utilizing high-decibel external amplification. They manage incense within designated burners and ventilation systems. A Buddhist devotee explained how worshipers prevent smoke from entering nearby footpaths. Pedestrian flow relies on courtesy rather than physical separation. These are boundaries established by individuals; they are not barriers separating individuals.

“ True harmony is not silence; it is learning to share air space.”
 — Venerable Seck Huat Keng, key informant

Harmony or habit? On the basis of this evidence, the determination of where the boundary lies is contingent, in part, on how the inquiry is framed. Unprompted, shopkeepers and congregants describe coexistence as ordinary and unremarkable. When asked specifically about air and sound, the same individuals identify minor discomforts. Subsequently, they categorize these discomforts as situated on the proximate side of conflict. Habit performs the majority of observable actions. Nevertheless, habit can lead to unvoiced minor irritations until an inquiry is made. For leaders, the situation differs. Coexistence is actively fostered through communication that predates the Circle and prevents minor issues from escalating into grievances. From the perspective of the street, harmony and familiarity may appear indistinguishable. Differentiation becomes evident only when individuals are prompted to articulate their perceptions (Section 9).

9. Action: the Circle and its dialogues

Phase 2 represented the point at which I transitioned from solely observing to actively participating. The Chinatown Inter-Faith Harmony Action Circle brought together representatives from the three communities for four weekly dialogue sessions. The Circle served as both my focus group and my intervention.

The Circle

I initiated the Circle on 11 September 2026, in collaboration with grassroots community coordinators affiliated with the South Bridge Road inter-faith network. The Circle operates independently of the government's official Racial and Religious Harmony Circles. It is an autonomous, grass-roots research and dialogue initiative comprised of 12 core members, four representing each community.

Community	Members	Roles
Hindu	4	1 Board Trustee and Secretary, 1 Youth Volunteer Coordinator, 2 Senior Regular Congregants
Muslim	4	1 Management Board Officer, 1 Senior Outreach and Dawah Officer, 2 Regular Congregants
Buddhist	4	1 Resident Monk / Administrator, 1 Temple Volunteer Lead, 2 Regular Devotees
Total	12	

Table 3. Circle membership.

The sessions

Four weekend sessions were conducted weekly over a period of three weeks, on 13, 20 and 27 September and 4 October 2026. Each session lasted 90 minutes. The initial 45 minutes comprised a structured icebreaker, a collaborative Zentangle pattern-drawing activity. The final 45 minutes were dedicated to open-ended focus group reflection. Sessions rotated between temple multi-purpose rooms, mosque community classrooms and outdoor community tents situated along South Bridge Road.

No.	Date	Theme	Focus
1	13 Sep 2026	Shared Patterns, Shared Space	Collaborative Zentangle pattern drawing as an icebreaker, to reduce social barriers and identify individual perceptions of Chinatown's sensory environment
2	20 Sep 2026	Navigating Prayer Calls and Temple Bells	How neighboring institutions coordinate overlapping calls to prayer (<i>Athan</i>), ritual drums and chanting along South Bridge Road
3	27 Sep 2026	Managing Smoke, Incense and Pedestrian Airflow	Olfactory cues, furnace chimney heights and courtyard smoke management during festival seasons
4	4 Oct 2026	Establishing Direct Neighbor Protocols	Formalizing informal communication groups and scheduling community events to minimize street-level conflict

Table 4. Session themes and focus.



Figure 8. Session 1 (13 September 2026): participants collaborating on the Zentangle drawing icebreaker at a table beneath a public tent erected along South Bridge Road. Photographed with participants' consent.

The dialogue panel consisted of a six-person subset of the 12 members. For the Hindu community: a senior temple representative (leader) and a youth volunteer (congregant, 20s). For the Muslim community: a senior mosque representative (leader) and a regular worshiper (congregant, 30s). For the Buddhist community: a senior temple representative (leader) and a senior devotee (congregant, 50s).

What participants said about shared air and sound

“Kampung spirit means learning to share air space lah. When the mosque’s Athan sounds while we are doing our chanting, we don’t think it’s noise interruption or what. It’s just our neighbors doing their prayers, simple as that.”

— Senior Buddhist Temple Representative, Circle participant (written consent)

“We all sit on the same South Bridge Road, so must be considerate lor. If we have big procession or pooja with drums, we tell our volunteers don’t face the speakers directly towards the mosque side during Friday Solat time.”

— Senior Hindu Temple Representative, Circle participant (written consent)

“Last time before we sat down to talk over these drawing activities, sometimes you smell the incense smoke or hear the temple bells and feel a bit annoyed. But actually no bad intention one—it’s just Chinatown atmosphere! Now got direct contact, anything just WhatsApp only.”

— Muslim congregant, 30s, Circle participant (verbal recorded consent)

Agreements and follow-up actions

- **Expanded WhatsApp coordination network.** Leveraging the existing bilateral contact between top temple and mosque board leaders, the Circle established an expanded direct messaging channel encompassing youth leaders and regular congregant representatives, enabling real-time, ground-level communication.
- **Incense and smoke offset protocol.** The facility management team of Buddha Tooth Relic Temple committed to moving high-volume ceremonial incense burning in the main courtyard away from 12:30 PM to 2:00 PM on Fridays. This adjustment aims to mitigate smoke drift onto the South Bridge Road pedestrian walkway during peak Jumaat prayer arrival times.

Shift in perception

Initially. When I solicited feedback regarding shared air and sound, participants articulated everyday practical inconveniences. Examples included incense smoke drifting over on windy days (a traditional medicine shopkeeper in his 60s stated in his baseline interview that “the incense smoke come into shop, eyes very sting”). Festival crowds impeding passage along five-foot ways. Overlapping sounds when *Solat* prayers and temple ceremonies occur concurrently.

Ultimately. Over four weekly sessions spanning three weeks (13 September to 4 October 2026), participants recontextualized these overlaps. They ceased to view them as potential irritants and began to perceive them as a normal, baseline aspect of life in Chinatown. Experiencing the Athan and temple bells and smelling incense on one street is “the Singapore way,” as a Muslim congregant in his 30s articulated in the Session 4 reflection. All that is required is fundamental courtesy and open communication channels to maintain operational efficiency.

Two caveats. The reflections were compiled within the confines of the Circle, thus they partially reflect the positive influence of the intervention itself (Section 11). Furthermore, the transition from annoyance to normalcy mirrors what shopkeepers and congregants had previously communicated to me spontaneously during Phase 1. Consequently, I do not believe that the dialogues altered the ultimate destination reached by participants; rather, I believe they elucidated the path taken to arrive at that destination. Discomforts were articulated, contextualized against real conflict, and associated with practical courtesy and direct communication.

Related outputs

Two outputs complement this report. *Shared Air, Common Ground: Spatial Coexistence on South Bridge Road* is a monograph, formulated as a field report and intended for submission to academic and civic repositories. *Voices of the Street: South Bridge Road* is a completed short video summary archived internally within the project's media library.

10. Conclusion

Along South Bridge Road, a mosque, a Hindu temple and a Buddhist temple share the same air and the same sound. When queried broadly, shopkeepers and congregants characterize this as normal. Leaders have already established a direct line of communication for major events.

So where does the boundary lie? My response is that harmony and familiarity are layered, rather than opposing concepts. Habit accounts for the majority of visible activity. It can render minor irritations unexpressed until someone inquires about air and sound. When the Circle inquired, participants articulated those irritations and contrasted them with genuine conflict. Subsequently, they reached

consensus on practical solutions: an expanded messaging network and an incense and smoke offset protocol. The lesson I derive from this experience is that this form of harmony is sustained by small acts of courtesy and open communication channels. It is facilitated by opportunities for discussion prior to a problem necessitating such dialogue.

I remain uncertain whether those changes will endure. Three weeks is a relatively brief period, and the reflections are self-reported. What I can assert is that residents on this street were already engaged in dialogue prior to my arrival. That is the aspect I wish to explore further.

11. Methodological limitations

- **Sample limits.** $n = 39$ unique individuals (43 role entries, as four Circle members are also institutional leaders). Phase 1 (28 August to 8 September 2026) included 8 shopkeepers and 18 street congregants. Phase 2 (11 September to 4 October 2026) included 5 institutional leaders and officers and 12 Action Circle members. The findings reflect one dense urban micro-site; thus, generalization to non-urban or differently regulated environments should be exercised with caution.
- **Intervention effect.** The Circle created new forums for interaction, including Zentangle drawing sessions. Subsequent reflections are therefore partly a result of the positive impact of the intervention itself.
- **Selection bias.** Leaders and congregants who voluntarily participated in the dialogues may already exhibit greater willingness to collaborate across faith traditions compared to the general populace.
- **Observer effect.** Recording equipment present during peak prayer hours may have subtly diminished informal street interactions.
- **Stated tranquility does not imply absence of conflict.** Unprompted responses indicated no conflict. Targeted probing elicited minor discomforts. What participants disclosed to me was contingent upon how I posed my questions.
- **Limited duration and self-reporting.** Four weekly sessions spanning three weeks is relatively brief, and the reflections are self-reported. Therefore, I cannot demonstrate whether the reframing persists.
- **Use of generative AI.** I used Claude (Anthropic, 2026) and ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2023) as support tools for formatting, layout and checking citations. The fieldwork, data and interpretation are my own.
- **Translation.** Interviews conducted in Mandarin and Hokkien were translated on-site; thus, quoted language reflects both the translator's choices and the speakers' intentions.

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