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# Between the cosmopolitan and the parochial: the immigrant gentrifier in Koreatown, Los Angeles

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## ABSTRACT

This paper questions the currently lopsided relationship between the cosmopolitan and the parochial, in which the former is favored both conceptually and empirically. In response, we propose a relational framework for bringing them into conversation, simultaneously recasting and re-animating longstanding debates via three framing devices – the process of relationality/territoriality, disposition, and spaces of encounter – embedded in and through the subject of the immigrant-gentrifier in Koreatown, Los Angeles, itself a novel category that has hitherto eluded systematic research. We present the results of 25 interviews of Korean immigrant-gentrifiers and 10 key informant interviews. The results constitute a parochial critique that emerges as a series of conflicted paradoxes but also productive tensions: between an ostensibly transnational process compromised by a profoundly homegrown, parochial set of investors and outlooks; between a set of dispositions that seek inner-city diversity and density, yet simultaneously sheltered from its spillover costs; and spaces of encounter marked by a gap between the promise of truly open spaces and the reality of guarded and self-segregated ones. Ultimately, this paper does double duty – conceptually rebalancing the cosmopolitan-parochial relationship, but in doing so empirically elevating the emergence of the understudied immigrant-gentrifier category.

## Entre cosmopolite et local: l'immigrant embourgeoisant de Koreatown à Los Angeles

### RÉSUMÉ

Cet article met en question la relation actuellement inégale entre cosmopolite et local, le premier étant préféré au second à la fois conceptuellement et empiriquement. En réponse, nous proposons un cadre relationnel pour les amener à un dialogue, en recréant et réactivant en même temps des débats de longue date à travers trois cadres – le procédé de relationalité/territorialité, disposition et espaces de rencontre – incorporé dans et à travers le sujet de l'immigrant embourgeoisant de Koreatown à Los Angeles, qui est en soi une nouvelle catégorie qui jusqu'à présent a échappé à la recherche systématique. Nous présentons les résultats de 25 entretiens d'immigrants embourgeoisants Coréens et de 10 entretiens

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avec des informateurs clés. Les résultats constituent une critique du local qui émerge en tant que série de paradoxes conflictuels mais aussi de tensions productives : entre un processus ostensiblement transnational compromis par un ensemble d'investisseurs et de perspectives profondément limitées au local et venant de l'intérieur ; entre un ensemble de dispositions qui recherchent la diversité du centre-ville et la densité et qui se sont toutefois protégées des coûts qui en découlent ; et des espaces de rencontre marqués par un fossé entre la promesse d'espaces réellement ouverts et la réalité d'espaces gardés et volontairement séparés. En fin de compte, cet article a une double fonction – rééquilibrer conceptuellement parlant la relation entre le cosmopolite et le local, mais ce faisant, élever empiriquement l'avènement de la catégorie de l'immigrant embourgeoisant insuffisamment étudiée.

### **Entre lo cosmopolita y lo provinciano: el inmigrante que aburguesa en Koreatown, Los Ángeles**

#### **RESUMEN**

Este artículo cuestiona la relación actualmente dispar entre lo cosmopolita y lo provinciano, en la que lo primero es favorecido conceptual y empíricamente. En respuesta, se propone un marco relacional para llevarlos a la conversación, simultáneamente reformulando y reanimando debates de larga data a través de tres mecanismos de marco — el proceso de relacionalidad / territorialidad, la disposición y los espacios de encuentro — incorporados en y a través del tema del inmigrante que aburguesa en Koreatown, Los Ángeles, el que es en sí mismo una categoría innovadora que ha eludido hasta ahora la investigación sistemática. Se presentan los resultados de 25 entrevistas a inmigrantes coreanos que aburguesan y los de 10 entrevistas con informantes clave. Los resultados constituyen una crítica provinciana que surge como una serie de paradojas conflictivas, pero también como tensiones productivas: entre un proceso ostensiblemente transnacional comprometido por un conjunto de inversionistas y perspectivas profundamente caseros y provincianos; entre un conjunto de disposiciones que buscan diversidad y densidad en el centro de la ciudad, pero simultáneamente protegidas de sus costos excesivos; y espacios de encuentro marcados por una brecha entre la promesa de espacios verdaderamente abiertos y la realidad de los cerrados y auto-segregados. En última instancia, este documento cumple un doble deber: reequilibrar conceptualmente la relación cosmopolita-provinciana, pero al hacerlo eleva empíricamente la aparición de la categoría poco estudiada del inmigrante que aburguesa.

The global mood in 2017 seems at odds with 'business-as-usual' elite cosmopolitanism – whether the backlash against refugees worldwide, the crumbling edifice of the EU via Brexit, or the rise of demagogues such as Donald Trump. And yet, geography and urban studies have moved in the opposite direction, embracing an increasingly extroverted, cosmopolitan approach. This recent cosmopolitan 'turn' (Valentine, 2008) advances a more open, relational and less provincial approach to both places and theory production, and has informed a recent flurry of conceptual frameworks, including mobilities (McCann and Ward, 2010; Ward, 2010), the comparative (Robinson, 2011), spaces of encounter (Amin, 2002), and planetary urbanism (Brenner & Schmid, 2015). Extending earlier sociological debates on the

far-reaching implications raised by transnationalism and migration (Beck, 2002), this cosmopolitan approach is more tolerant of diversity both empirical and conceptual. On the ground, this turn 'celebrates the potential for the forging of new hybrid cultures and ways of living together with difference' (Valentine, 2008, p. 324). But in this rush to embrace cosmopolitanism as approach, critique, and disposition (Yeoh, 2004), there has been limited engagement with its putative 'other', that is the parochial, as an introverted outlook that 'values the local, its culture and solidarities' (Tomaney, 2012, p. 659). Even when approached from an ostensibly relational approach, the parochial has been empirically eclipsed in the recent conceptual recalibrations that privilege the extra-local, the mobile, the global, the exceptional (Tomaney, 2015). If anything, we need more emphasis on the local, the provincial, the immobile, belonging, and the place-based if not the place-bound (Jacobs, 2012; McCann and Ward, 2010; Sheppard, Leitner, & Maringanti, 2013).

Here we are interested in *questioning* this hierarchical relationship by engaging in a conversation that seeks to rebalance, conceptually and empirically, the parochial with the cosmopolitan, providing an empirically-based *parochial critique* that moves beyond binaries to embrace a more co-constitutive approach. We propose an empirical study of gentrification by Korean immigrants in Koreatown, Los Angeles, arguably fertile soil to consider a related cosmopolitanism (via place-bending migration) and parochialism (via place-bound gentrification). We extend Ley's (2004) admonitions about the limits of the transnational subject, of how even the most cosmopolitan agents must bump up against localized, parochial realities. In building our conceptual framework, we *recast*, *rebalance*, and *re-animate* the older cosmopolitan/parochial debate through a series of recently-developed framing devices – the process of relationality/territoriality (McCann and Ward, 2010), disposition (Yeoh, 2004), and spaces of encounter (Valentine, 2008). And in so doing, we underline the hitherto understudied immigrant-gentrifier category as a distinct empirical contribution.

This paper is organized as follows. We first consider in more detail recent work on the cosmopolitan and the parochial within geography and beyond, revealing a lop-sidedness in favor of the cosmopolitan. In response, we propose a relational framework for bringing them into conversation and questioning the current hierarchy, via the three key framing devices, embedded in and through the novel subject of the immigrant-gentrifier and the spaces of Koreatown, Los Angeles, itself a fragmented and largely immigrant inner-city community. Just as we challenge the unhelpful cosmopolitan-parochial binary (see also Tomaney, 2015), we also dispel the unstated notion that immigrants and gentrifiers are distinct categories of urban dwellers. We then consider the methods and contexts for the empirical study, and present the results of 25 interviews of Korean immigrant-gentrifiers and 10 key informant interviews using the tripartite framework. The results indicated a set of key tensions and paradoxes between cosmopolitan and parochial, namely a gap between the values of the former and the practices of the latter. In the conclusion, we discuss the value of the relational approach that constitutes our parochial critique, but also consider the utility of examining the empirical relationship between gentrification and immigration in more detail.

## The cosmopolitan and the parochial

Simply, cosmopolitanism is the belief in humanity as a single community. To Ley (2004, p. 159), 'cosmopolitans think globally, aim to exceed their own local specificities, welcome unfamiliar cultural encounters and express the wish to move toward a true humanity of

equality and respect'. The concept is directly relevant to a wide swathe of social geographical interests, and has been applied to topics such as nation-building (Yeoh, 2004), multiculturalism (Keith, 2005; Sandercock, 2003), transnationalism (Smith, 2001), and citizenship (Ong, 1999). Interest in cosmopolitanism has risen in lockstep with increasing globalization, transnationalism, and translocalism (Vertovec, 2009). As Featherstone (2002, p. 1) noted, 'in the recent phase of globalization ... in the wake of expanding marketization and reactive nationalisms, there has been a revival of interest in cosmopolitanism', providing an 'alternative to patriotism and nationalism and ... critical of parochial attachments to place' (Binnie, Holloway, Millington, & Young, 2009, p. 307). This embrace of the cosmopolitan extends not just to people but also policy models and the city itself, in which its 'radical exteriority' makes it now 'difficult to construct overly parochial analyses of urban policy' (Robinson, 2011, p. 1091).

However, the promise of developing cultures, societies, lifestyles, and institutions that exist beyond the place-embeddedness of nations and localities has been critiqued from a variety of perspectives. Foremost has been its exclusionary tendencies. Yeoh (2004) deemed cosmopolitanism as an ethos of tolerance, diversity, and openness joined to a political project that promotes elitism and neoliberalism, using the case of Singapore and its highly articulated strategies to globalize at all costs. This paradox is captured by the sense that while respectful of difference and diversity, cosmopolitanism only tolerates the packaged and elitist versions, and rejects certain 'others', particularly migrants and other transgressors. While potentially emancipatory, cosmopolitan is cast as global citizenship, which is decidedly elitist with no 'language of questions or resistance' (Wyly, 2015, p. 2531), alongside a lack of roots, attachment and obligations, linked to European colonialism and modernity (Venn, 2002). As Harvey (2009) and Ley (2003) made clear, modernism proclaimed and extended a universal cosmopolitanism that did not always sit well with the on-the-ground realities of the world, especially in the Global South (Sheppard et al., 2013). And yet the promise of cosmopolitanism is not monolithic – as Beck (2002, p. 35) noted, 'the emerging significance of cosmopolitanism is about a plurality of antagonisms and differences', rather than a singular, dominant, and elitist one, which allows an opening to (re)calibrate the worth of the parochial.

Interest in a distinctly parochial approach has become correspondingly weaker in social geography, inadvertently at odds with a strident cosmopolitan critique that has spurred the increasing dominance of postcolonial, relational, comparative, and mobile frameworks. More often than not, the parochial has been deployed primarily to defend against the hyper-globalists and disciples of de-territorialization (Beck, 2002; Featherstone, 2002), who maintain the homogenizing effects of globalization that erase territory and place. In these instances, the parochial is expressed through concepts such as civil society, home, citizenship, rootedness, insularity, place-based attachment and place-based identity, and belonging (Tomaney, 2012). While depicted as essentialist, anachronistic, and reactionary, the parochial can also be seen as an indifference to the extralocal, but not antagonistically so, embracing the local scale and the idiographic nature of place as a quiet bulwark against all-embracing notions of hyper-globalization. In this way, the parochial is not inherently pejorative – it is as much about the persistent and deep-seated importance that most people bestow to place-attachment, the ontological security of home and boundary-making (Devine-Wright, 2012; Tomaney, 2015), and that these modest actions are always partial and complex, and never wholly exclusionary in the sense of Vidal de la Blache's *patriotisme de clocher* or the 'local as an uncomfortable category' (Ley, 2003, p. 557). And so the parochial can be understood as

something more positive, in the local defense of place and the struggles over it. Ultimately, at the heart of parochialism is a sense of belonging – the multifaceted and unstable process whereby some people belong to certain places, and how this feeds into the politics of identity and the politics of place (Taylor, 2009), as well as larger issues of the provincial and the periphery.

Our first priority is to question the current hierarchy, which means bringing into conversation a set of newer framing devices that also serve to focus the connotations of the cosmopolitan and the parochial to three areas of (related) concern: the cosmopolitan as (1) transnational flows and processes; (2) competency, social capital with a global reach, and relational dispositions; and (3) diverse and open spaces of encounter. Alternatively, the parochial can be mapped as (1) local and territorial processes, (2) partisan dispositions and a local sense of belonging and boundary-making, and (3) limited and segregated everyday spaces of encounter. Where we lack knowledge is in relating the two – and so our concern is to explicitly join the cosmopolitan and the parochial to debates on the relational nature of places, processes, dispositions, and spaces of encounter. This joining-up recasts these theories in light of a co-constituted cosmopolitan/parochial, using Massey's power-geometry and progressive sense of place as conceptual springboards. Our second (and largely empirical) priority is to apply this relational approach to the integration of two trends usually held apart – immigration on the one hand and gentrification on the other – as they contain and combine strong elements of a related cosmopolitan-parochial, performing crucial analytical and empirical bridgework.

## **A relational framework for the cosmopolitan-parochial**

Massey (1993a, 1993b) outlined what are now well-rehearsed arguments around the relational aspects of place that went against the hyper-globalizing school of thought, yet harboring a cosmopolitan bias (see Massey, 1995 for a critique of the place-bound). First, she rightly noted that time-space compression was necessarily uneven, in that

different social groups and different individuals are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections. This point concerns not merely the issue of who moves and who doesn't, although that is an important element of it; it is also about power in relation to the flows and the movement. Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway-differentiated mobility: some are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it. (1993a, p. 61)

This 'power-geometry' opens up considerations of place-spanning and place-bound agents. This relates to Massey's 'progressive sense of place', in which she joins people's need for attachment to place, of 'how to hold on to that notion of spatial difference, of uniqueness, even of rootedness if people want that, without being reactionary' (1993a, p. 64) to 'a sense of place which is extraverted, which includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world' (p. 66). This 'global sense of place' eschews false separations between local and global, of how place in an era of globalization and time-space compression is produced not just internally but through '... its relational position with what goes on beyond; the local and the global constantly connect and collide' (Skelton, 2009, p. 499). This relationality means that 'interdependence and identity, difference and connectedness, uneven development and the character of place, are in each pairing two sides of the same coin ... in constant tension with each other' (Massey, 2011, p. 4).

Although Massey does not explicitly address the terms, the progressive sense of place hints at the co-dependent nature of the cosmopolitan and parochial, of the global with the place-bound, the extralocal and the 'elsewhere' with the local. More conceptually, they are fluidly related, not as polarities but as 'combined and mutually implicating principles' (Beck, 2002, p. 17). Ley (2004) provided a more explicitly cosmopolitan-parochial reworking of Massey's insights, convincingly repudiating the artificial separation of the global and the local and its oversimplifying 'global = universal/mobile' and 'local = parochial/stasis'. Rather, even cosmopolitan transnational lives are circumscribed by local intransigencies, and marked by unfamiliarity with the local, such that 'the partisan and the local are always contained within cosmopolitanism and the global' (Ley, 2004, p. 161). Along similar lines, Beck's (2002, p. 36) relational approach to the local and global promoted 'cosmopolitan forms of life and identities are ones that are ethically and culturally *simultaneously* global and local', a 'rooted cosmopolitanism' if you will. And yet since Massey's pioneering work, geographers have tilted in favor of the cosmopolitan, stranding the parochial in a conceptual and empirical no-man's land, or avoiding the loaded implications of the term altogether.

Each of the subsequent framing devices represents distinct branches of concern (political economy, cultural geography, social geography) that strongly benefit from a relational cosmopolitan-parochial perspective, helping to answer the following questions: How do the cosmopolitan and parochial infuse and relate to processes occurring at different scales, joining spaces of flows with fixed territorialities? What sort of strategies do agents employ to navigate both global contexts and place specificities? And through what kind of spaces do they interact with others, how and to what effect? By addressing these questions via the case study, we build up a comprehensive, relational approach to frame novel aspects of the Korean immigrant-gentrifier in Koreatown.

## Process

This literature aims for multiple and relational understandings of the local in the global, and vice versa. In their account of the urban/global nexus of urban governance and policy-making, McCann and Ward (2010) insisted on being sensitive to the tensions between relationality and territoriality, of flow and fixity, 'of global contexts and place-specificities (and vice versa), of structural imperatives and embodied practices' (p. 175). Unlike the hyper-globalists, territory is not abolished in this schema, only its bounded nature. This re-territorialized approach is particularly useful for understanding process as both cosmopolitan and parochial, even if the authors do not employ such terms. Referring to policy mobility, they argued that 'while motion and relationality define contemporary policy-making, this is only half the picture. Policies and policy-making are also intensely and fundamentally local, grounded and territorial' (p. 175). This embedded/mobile, local/global relationality is useful in that it can be applied to a myriad of urban processes, not just policy (im)mobility but immigration and gentrification as well. Earlier on, MP Smith's (2001, p. 157) transnational urbanism equally moved beyond global-local binaries, in that

the global-local duality in social theory rests on a false opposition that equates the *local* with a cultural space of stasis, ontological meaning, and personal identity (i.e. the 'place') and the *global* as the site of dynamic change, the decentering of meaning, and the fragmentation/homogenization of culture. (i.e. the 'space' of global capitalism)



Smith outlined a 'transnationalism from below', translocal tendencies that combine the cosmopolitan and the parochial in equal measures but without invoking binaries or fixed categories, yielding the 'fruitfulness of viewing cities as sites where national and transnational practices become localized; local social actions reverberate transnationally, if not globally' (p. 70).

### **Disposition**

By 'disposition', we mean cosmopolitanism or parochialism as an individual attitude of, competence toward and tactics to deal with difference and diversity, a matter of concern to social, cultural geographers, and sociologists alike. As Binnie et al. (2009, p. 309) explained, 'the cosmopolitan is ... held to actively seek out difference or the "Other", and as a result apparently embraces a global outlook which can involve rejecting their own cultural background and the apparently constricting confines of local communities'. Presumably, the parochial individual would do the opposite, drawing on and favoring locally-embedded allegiances, thereby (re)producing and negotiating local belonging. Once again, much of the recent literature has focused on cosmopolitan dispositions among Western elites, educated and transnational, but also on high-end Asian migrants who tactically use mobility to secure 'flexible citizenship' (Ley, 2004, 2010; Ong, 1999). In this discourse, the urban figures prominently: the assumption is that cosmopolites prefer the diversity of city spaces. As Featherstone (2002, p. 1) argued, 'cosmopolitan dispositions are closely associated with cities ... long the sites for markets and the mixing of people, commodities, ideas ...', which would dispose the parochial toward more rural, or at least lower-density, spaces that feature less diversity. However, the cosmopolitan disposition is not so much an openness to difference but a series of competences – analytic, emotional, communicative, imaginative – that allow transnational elites to navigate complex social fields across the globe (Vertovec, 2009). These social fields are necessarily embedded in particular places – the negotiations through which are the subject of the next analytical category.

### **Spaces of encounter**

Within the rubric of urban social geography, there has been a fruitful debate over 'spaces of encounter', particularly in terms of difference (Amin, 2002; Keith, 2005; Sandercock, 2003; Valentine, 2008). In her landmark paper, Valentine (2008, p. 323) focused on 'the role of shared space in providing the opportunity for encounter between "strangers"'. To her, the bulk of the literature has a strong cosmopolitan bent, positively contending that contact (not just co-presence) within public spaces can help bridge the various differences (e.g. racial, gender, age) that typify the twenty-first century city (Keith, 2005; Sandercock, 2003). The city thus becomes a 'site of connection', of encountering and living with others, of Gilroy's (2004) 'conviviality', the boisterous interplay of different races in the city. Yet Sandercock cautioned that despite the (cosmopolitan) promise that contact can lead to mutual respect for difference, spaces of encounter remain tinged with under-appreciated parochial tendencies of suspicion, competition over scarce resources, resentment, and imposed isolation. A paradoxical gap thus opens up in public space between cosmopolitan values of openness coupled with parochial practices of muted intolerance. As Valentine warily noted,



encounters never take place in a space free from history, material conditions and power. The danger is that contemporary discourses about cosmopolitanism and new urban citizenship, by celebrating the potential of everyday encounters to produce social transformations, potentially allow the knotty issue of inequalities to slip out of the debate. (2008, p. 333)

The limits of spaces of encounter have been examined by Datta (2012), who noted that concepts of neighborliness in Delhi squatter settlements were marked by the complexity of bringing the cosmopolitan (of the city) and the parochial (of the village) into the same (marginal) space. Employing Sandercock's concept of the 'mongrel city' of intense mixing of 'other' and 'self', Datta showed that there is such a thing as a more bottom-up, 'ordinary' cosmopolitanism deployed by those with far more limited opportunities. Conversely, Sandercock (1998, 2003) showed that top-down cosmopolites can suffer from bouts of parochial behavior in terms of actively limiting their interactions with 'others', including avoiding shared spaces altogether.

## Methods and context

Beck (2002, p. 18) spoke of cosmopolitanism as a methodological perspective, one which is animated by a 'dialogic imagination' aware of rival ways of life that compel us to compare, reflect, and incorporate a 'this-as-well-as-that' principle to overcome 'methodological nationalism' and its monologic, binarizing imaginations. In other words, to drop the provincial gaze but not the local itself, dropping the universalizing gaze but not the global. This perspective provides a compelling framework with which to theoretically and empirically interrogate 'pan-urban processes and patterns, relationally understood' (Peck, 2015, p. 160) – in this case, how immigration and gentrification interact while usefully illustrating the cosmopolitan-parochial. But the Koreatown case study itself makes an important empirical contribution, by introducing and combining two agents normally held apart – the immigrant and the gentrifier.

## The immigrant-gentrifier

Given our empirical focus on Korean immigrant-gentrifiers, it is essential that our methodological approach adopts a non-Eurocentric version of the relationship, one more suited to the hybrid and polyglot experiences and spaces of Koreatown, itself more than 90% non-White. By their very place-spanning nature, immigrants are taken to be natural cosmopolitans, the very agent of the transnational (Portes, Guarnizo, & Haller, 2002; Vertovec, 2009). Their mobility 'jolts the taken-for-granted world' (Ley, 2004, p. 159; Smith, 2001). Yet simultaneously, immigrants can be downright parochial, in terms of operating closed ethnic economies (Portes et al., 2002) as well as employing mutual aid and survival techniques that draw strength from insularity and self-segregation (DeVerteuil, 2011a; Marr, DeVerteuil, & Snow, 2009). The concept of *diaspora* has long served to connect the cosmopolitan and parochial nature of immigration, but combining it with gentrification adds an entirely new layer of complexity.

Conversely, gentrification is assumed to be more parochial, spatially-bounded and home-grown, locally contingent and locked into specific built environments and historically-embedded infrastructure, 'gentrification in cities' (Wyly, 2015, p. 2515) rather than 'gentrification as a dimension of planetary urbanization'. Bridge (2007) asked whether there is a 'global gentrifier class'; he found that despite the fact that gentrification 'has gone "global"'

(Atkinson & Bridge, 2005), it remains 'beset by localisms' (Bridge, 2007, p. 35) comprised of 'intensely localized strategies of social reproduction of the middle class within the city' (p. 34). And so gentrification remains deeply localized and territorial; Maloutas (2011) further reinforced the indigenous nature of gentrification, that the term remains firmly embedded to its Anglo-American heartland and does not travel easily. Ley (2004, p. 160) suggested that while the dispositions of gentrifiers were ostensibly cosmopolitan (see Rofo, 2003 on the 'globally aligned', locally-detached gentrifier), 'this global *habitus* can also be intensely local. Meticulous heritage preservation ... and an ideology of resistant localism to land use change identify a subject whose partialities are parochial as well as expansive'.

Paralleling geography and urban studies, however, the field of gentrification has lately made theoretical strides to incorporate a more cosmopolitan, decolonized approach, and to place gentrifiers in a more cosmopolitan light (Lees, Shin, & Lopez-Morales, 2016; Wyly, 2015). These strides include Smith's (2002) focus on the transnational nature of gentrification as both strategy and capital, leading to its global profusion and parachuted colonization via new-build schemes, as well as Lees et al. (2016), who used a comparative approach to gentrification on a planetary scale. The question remains, of course, as to the extent to which gentrification as a material force can create cosmopolitan places, whether it is a cosmopolitan process, and whether gentrifiers are disposed to be more cosmopolitan rather than parochial, or somewhere in between.

In sum, immigration and gentrification occupy different positions along the cosmopolitan-parochial continuum and in tension with each other: immigration veers toward the cosmopolitan but still has a place-embedded parochial side via self-imposed insularity and segregation, while gentrification is more place-bound but also has cosmopolitan tendencies via gentrifier disposition and ambition. While Ley (2004) investigated the immigrant and the gentrifier as potential alloys of cosmopolitanism faced with locally intransigent realities and parochial barriers, he did not combine the two nor was he particularly interested in the recovery of parochial elements. And so the immigrant-gentrifier remains as a potentially crucial yet overlooked agent in the relationship between the cosmopolitan and the parochial. More to the point, they might well epitomize the tension within it, but also offer possible overlap.

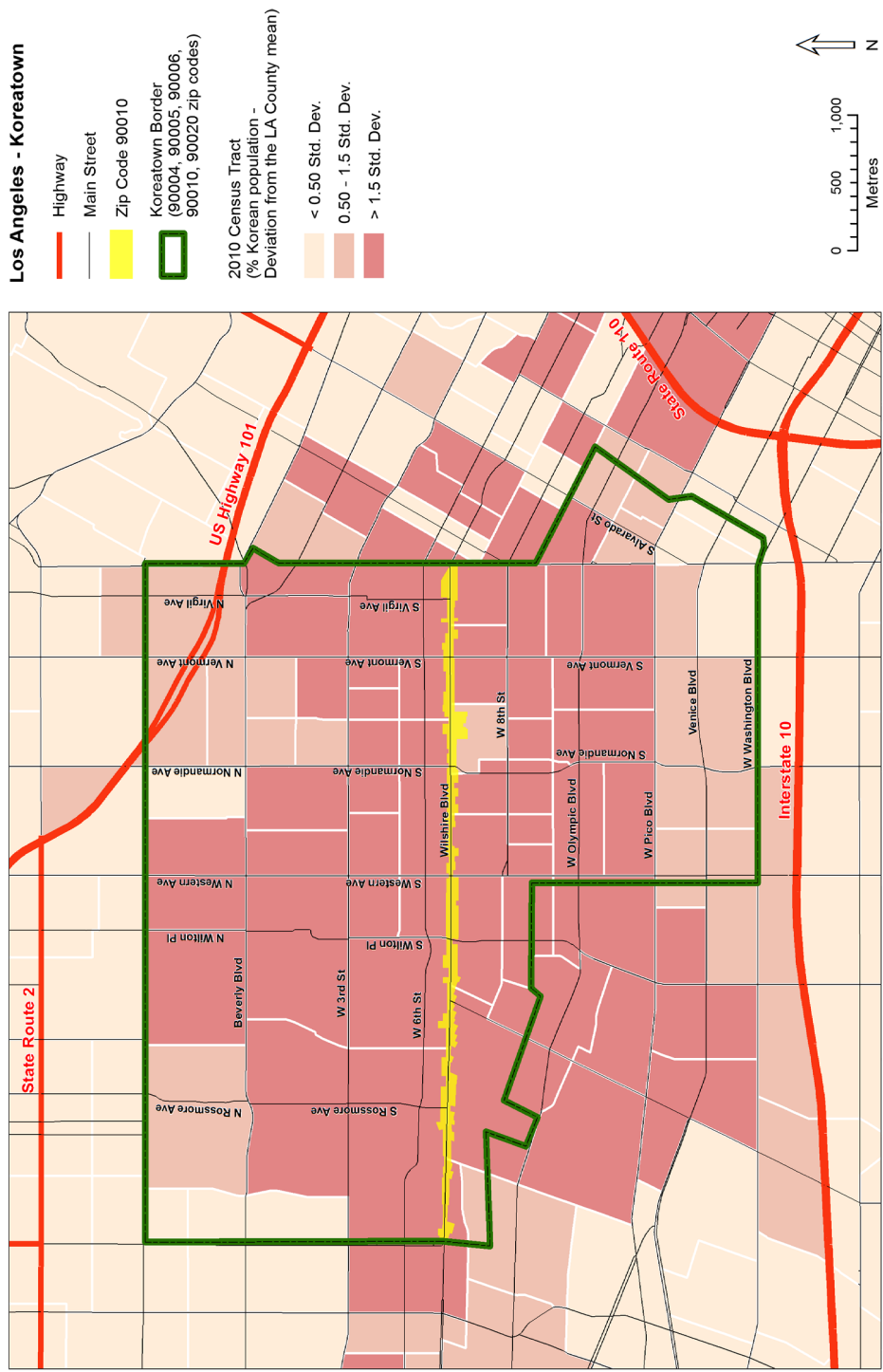
### **Context and data collection**

Data were collected in the Fall and Winter of 2013, and Spring 2014 in Koreatown, itself the focus of numerous studies (e.g. Lin, 1998; Park, 2005; Park & Kim, 2008; Smith, 2001) and represented variously as an immigrant neighborhood, a hub for ethnic entrepreneurialism, an ethnic enclave and crucible for the Korean-American experience, but also the site of ethnic difference and occasional strife, a struggling, crime-ridden inner-city neighborhood, and increasingly as a gentrifying place. Lee and Park (2008, p. 245) characterized the Korean population as 'fragmented into wealthy transnational investors, small-business owners who comprise first-generation Korean Americans, generation 1.5, and second generation Korean-American professionals, and poor transnational guest workers ... Koreatown also houses a sizable number of Latinos'. No study so far, however, has focused on the emerging nexus between Korean 'gentrifier' and Korean 'immigrant', nor cast the nexus in cosmopolitan/parochial terms.

The co-authors used their familiarity with Korean culture and the Korean language to do most of the interviews in Korean, the language in which the interviewees felt most comfortable, which were then translated into English. The interviews focused on the following elements: a residential history spanning both South Korea and Los Angeles; current living quarters; reasons for living in Koreatown; everyday spaces of encounter with others in Koreatown; and evidence of transnational movements back to South Korea. Immigrant-gentrifiers were selected using a convenience sample of residents in six condominium towers in Koreatown, with 25 open-ended interviews, at which point it was decided that empirical 'saturation' (Small, 2009) had been achieved, that is diminishing new information for each subsequent interview rather than the seeking of some sort of quantitative representativeness. All interviewed considered themselves both as immigrants (or their immediate descendants) and gentrifiers, enabling a perspective on how the cosmopolitan/parochial related to each other *through* and *in* the spaces of Koreatown. The interview material worked well to respond to the disposition and spaces of encounter discourses, but an additional 10 'big picture' key informant interviews (e.g. real estate, redevelopment officers, voluntary sector) were also done to get a better handle on the *process* of gentrification in Koreatown within and beyond the Korean community; this was supplemented with census data (1990–2010), research reports and real estate data (2003–2013).

## Results

The dominant representation of Koreatown is of a particularly transnational and thus cosmopolitan place. As Park (2005, p. xi) noted, 'since the mid-1990s, Los Angeles Koreatown has been experiencing unprecedented geographic changes, transforming itself from an immigrant ethnic enclave filled with small businesses into a transnational economic space developed by hegemonic development actors'. This dominant understanding, however, obscures more mundane and remarkably parochial aspects to which we will give equal footing. Koreatown remains balkanized by race (heavily non-White, divided between Asians and Latinos) and class (mostly working poor), both an immigrant reception area and an area undergoing incipient gentrification. The complexities are underlined by the demographics: Latinos are the majority population<sup>1</sup> in this majority foreign-born, non-white space, while Koreans make up but 20% of the area's population yet own the bulk of the commercial space. Although their proportion is growing, only one zip code (90010) featured a Korean majority in 2010. Figure 1 below shows the boundaries<sup>2</sup> of Koreatown and the proportion of Korean-origin population by census tract: the pattern of gentrification has been highly uneven as well. Real estate data (Data Quick, 2013) for the 2003–2013 period showed that Koreatown as a whole saw median prices increase 25%, which is between the City of Los Angeles (37%) and Los Angeles County (18%) increases, save for 90010 zip code, whose increase of 55% sets it apart. Not surprisingly, this was the only zip code with a Korean majority in Los Angeles (going from 13% in 1990 to over 57% in 2010), as well as the only one with significant new-build gentrification; all 25 interviews focused in this zip code. Using median price per square foot in 2013, the 90010 zip code at \$503 was well above County values (\$260) and the City of Los Angeles (\$326), and its increase of 93% was far greater than the County (18%) and City (32%). The other zip codes saw muted increases per square foot, reflecting the limited gentrification as well as large zones of newly-depressed real estate in the immediate post-2008 period.



**Figure 1.** Koreatown locator map. Source: The map was based on 2010 US Census data and geography, and was created by Richard Bedford at Cardiff University.

The patchy nature of Koreatown gentrification parallels the patchiness of gentrification in the wider Los Angeles context. Gentrification is not only a Western construct but a peculiarly Anglo-American one (Maloutas, 2011), one in which Los Angeles sits awkwardly, given its polyglot immigrant population and a relatively recent built environment (DeVerteuil, 2015; Lees, 2012). As such, gentrification tends to be anchored by new-build construction (DeVerteuil, 2011b, 2014), which is more similar to the Asian developmental model (Shin, 2009), but also via an intriguing set of agents including immigrants reinvesting in their enclave as in the case of Koreatown. Los Angeles never saw the gradual inner-city disinvestment that many older cities (such as New York and London) did in the 1970s and 1980s followed by relentless reinvestment. Rather, rent gaps have been produced by sharp shocks, such as the destruction wrought by the 1992 unrest that deflated most of inner-city Los Angeles' real estate value but also sowed the seeds for future redevelopment:

I still remember the LA riots in 1992. It looked like a warzone. Koreatown was completely ruined by the riots. However, as various Korean communities grow, we could succeed in the re-development of Koreatown. Korean-Americans were leaders of the community and they made a great town here. 30-39 Male.

Sims (2016) saw the post-1992 period as a 'unique catalyst' during which certain owners significantly expanded their holdings, a sort of 'shock' disinvestment/reinvestment that overlapped with the 1997 Korean financial crisis, bringing a wave of transnational capital seeking safe haven (Park & Kim, 2008). It was during this period that Koreatown began to experience homegrown commercial gentrification (Light, 2002), laying the groundwork for more recent residential gentrification, 'enclave' style. However, the sense was that residential gentrification was only partially abetted by transnational flows and largely overshadowed, as we shall show, by an important internal financing by long-established, first generation Korean immigrant-investors themselves.

The profile of the 25 immigrant-gentrifiers interviewed sets the scene for the tripartite analysis to come. Most were first-generation immigrants – 21 were born in South Korea, and the rest were from immigrant households. Only half came directly to Koreatown from South Korea or elsewhere, while the rest had spent time in suburban areas of Los Angeles and beyond. Many were well-established – the average stay in Los Angeles was 16 years with over 10 years in Koreatown itself, and a majority were over 50. Very few traveled between Los Angeles and South Korea on a regular basis; only 4 out of 25 held visas, while the rest US green cards or passports. Across the sample, 8 of 25 had second homes, but all but 2 were in the suburbs of Los Angeles, with none in Korea itself, and only 3 spent more than a month away from their Koreatown home in any given year. A slim majority worked in Koreatown itself, and the vast majority relied on work to fund their lives, not investments. Finally, 18 of 25 owned their premises, with an average price \$540,000 USD in 2013.

### ***Processes of gentrification***

Gentrification has taken hold in the 90010 zip code of Koreatown, catering to a largely Korean clientele and composed almost entirely of new-build, high-rise developments no more than five years old, which follows the preference of nearly all those interviewed:

Luxury condominiums like the Solair and many luxury shops are gradually turning up in Koreatown. Rent fees for a house near my office are over \$3000 per a month. Recently a luxury-shopping mall opened near my office called Madang Mall. We can find different Korean

culture and entertainment services there such as Korean cinema, Korean books, Korean food, and Korean cafes. I've heard that rent fees in Madang Mall are very expensive but all shops are already completely rented out. Immigrant-gentrifier, 30-39 Female.

There was evidence that this gentrification was at least partially transnational. This occurred within a post-1997 context of capital exportation from South Korea and new opportunities for investors via the E-2 visa (more than \$1 million investment in the US). The visa program is essentially part of a 25-year effort now to court Pacific Rim capital (Lin, 1998; Ong, 1999).

Seoul is one of the world's densest and most expensive cities, and transnational Korean agents touching down in Los Angeles are interesting in that they know little about the Anglo-American model of gentrification. Rather, the model is new-build high-rise and planned, just as Seoul is among the most redeveloped cities in the world, and in which gentrification proceeds strictly as state-led urban regeneration (Shin, 2009). The endless 'search for the new' in Koreatown parallels what Ley (2010) found in Hong Kong investors interested only in new-build in Vancouver. The Koreatown model is also remarkable for its high degree of socioeconomic comprehensiveness: 'the Koreans ... like the Cubans in Miami, are an exception in the sense that they have developed a comprehensive and coherent ethnic economy' (Keil, 1998, p. 119).

Just the same, the transnational nature of Koreatown gentrification has been exaggerated. A real estate developer noted in 2014 that for overseas transfers,

every year it kept getting loosened up. Right so at first you make a million dollar investment and you could get a visa. Then it became you make a half a million dollar investment and you could get a visa. Then it became 300,000 and then 100,000. So it became much easier to get visas and all of a sudden, people were saying that there was going to be an influx of Korean money flowing in to ... Uhm, but we just never saw that in large scale. Key informant, real estate developer

Another real estate developer, who was once an architect, concurred:

Everybody says, 'Oh yeah, there's a lot of Korean money ...' But no, because one, it's hard to take money out of Korea. You know you might see like individuals send money and ... for their kids and things of that nature ... but there's only been two companies that I know of that invested or bought land and tried to do something. One is the Aroma, that was the Korean company back in year 2000, 1997. The other company was called Shinyoung that bought the land right next to Aroma and sold it and left because they didn't know how to do their project. Other than that, there hasn't been another South Korean company.

As such, the process of gentrification in Koreatown remained more a homegrown affair, grafting onto a longstanding immigrant enclave growth machine. In this respect, Koreatown gentrification represents a distinct phenomenon – the equivalent of older, Americanized Italian immigrants returning to and solely gentrifying Little Italy in New York! This process cannot be anything but profoundly parochial, indigenous, and localized, attracting a return of Korean-born immigrants to the hub neighborhood, many of whom are now empty-nesters, the elderly, or young adults in their 20s from the suburbs. This homegrown capital could be seen as a logical extension of the parochial immigrant growth machines and place entrepreneurs (Light, 2002; Lin, 1998) of the 1980s and 1990s. As an older resident put it,

I am getting older and consider the convenience as being most important for my life and Koreatown provides just that. My children are grown up and I don't need to worry about their education. My children live not too far from my current house. Without driving, I can access all Korean-related culture and entertainment here. Moreover, in my house I can watch all Korean TV programs without needing to buy any satellite dishes. I even don't need to pay extra fees to watch those channels in my house.



Many first-generation immigrants have done a residential loop, beginning in Koreatown in the 1980s, moving to the suburbs for raising families (and for some, to escape the damage of 1992), and then returning to the enclave as gentrifiers in the early 2010s:

Many Koreans live here but many immigrants who are just starting off also live in Koreatown. Many Koreans live here until their children are grown up. They move out of Koreatown for their children's education and they return after they become older. This became a pattern. There are many ethnicities here and due to this Koreans think it has become a bad educational environment for their children. I've heard that many Korean parents don't want to send their children to school here where their children have to study with bad students in Koreatown. So most families who have children move to places that have good education systems. After they grow up, they return to Koreatown. I think Koreatown is good for single or older people. Immigrant-gentrifier, over 60, male

According to one real estate developer with deep knowledge of the Koreatown market, 90% of his clients were long-settled immigrants, not transnationals. Crucially, the vast majority of the *developers* in Koreatown were also well-established, first-generation immigrants who had been in the United States for thirty years or longer and had dedicated their entire professional lives to the cause of Koreatown, to the point of being parochially disinterested in anything else:

The Koreatown old-timers are predominantly the property owners. They have been in the country for a long time, and among those there are very successful cases. Those are the people who invest ... The investors are accustomed to Koreatown and the Korean community here. They have primarily done business with Korean people. That's why they can't leave Koreatown. First of all, because they don't know. The reason why Koreatown has developed so much is no other reason than the fact that these people don't know anything about life outside of Koreatown.

A key informant from the voluntary sector had much the same perspective:

I don't think there is a lot of Korean money from Korea; I think most of the money is coming from the first generation developers. It's very self-financed, within the Korean community, by Korean banks as middlemen. It's like an insular, organic kind of growth.

Crucially, many of the Korean developers had deep connections to the real estate developers of the 1960s–1980s, many of whom were Jewish and who had gradually sold their stock to Korean-American investors. The jarring events of 1992 accelerated this trend, forcing Koreans to pay more attention to local ties to the community, the need for co-existence with the Latino majority and the opportunity to replace the old institutional capital with their own by buying commercial real estate at very low prices. More recently, the trend has been to convert some of this office space into residential, although still muted compared to the new-build.

As of 2014, gentrification in Koreatown was primarily a fixed, localized and parochial process, both in terms of the gentrifiers' motivations and the indigenous, homegrown nature of new developments catering to them. There was scant evidence of a transnational, cosmopolitan 'Korean model' of gentrification flowing into Koreatown, although the preference for new-build, high-rise gentrification was more in line with the Asian model, which in turn is not entirely dissimilar to the Los Angeles model. This process parallels the findings of Chung, Bloemraad, and Tejada-Pena (2013), who noted that Koreatown politics were transnationally linked to the Korean homeland but primarily embedded in local American realities.



## Disposition

While the first framing device is more structural, this next one is focused on human agency, culture, identity, and everyday life, embedded in more post-structural notions of identity and the cultural logics of globalization via individual strategies, tactics, and preferences. The motivations for coming to Los Angeles were not always based in economic maximization, however, and as such they differed from the high-flying, flexible citizenship chronicled by Ong (1999) and Ley (2010). In effect, a majority of the 25 immigrant-gentrifiers had moved to Los Angeles as much to escape what they saw as a parochially-minded South Korea as for opportunity and social well-being. There was consistent mention of avoiding the 'prying eyes' of South Korean society by living freely among cosmopolitan Koreans in Koreatown, in a city well-known for its transience and anonymity:

I just want to focus on Korean residents in Koreatown. There are many open-minded Koreans. They don't care of other people's lives unlike Koreans in Korea who make it a habit to pry. Koreans in Korea are interested in other people's lives and try to show off what they own or their fortunes to others. However, here in Koreatown we don't nitpick others' lives over such small matters and most the Koreans here have an air of indifference towards things that don't matter them personally. Immigrant-gentrifier, 50-59 female

This spoke to the strong urban preferences among all the interviewed – that the density and diversity of Koreatown served them better than a suburban lifestyle. As the following quotes indicate, they were well-disposed to its (superficially) diverse spaces:

Various ethnicities lead to improving a city's value. Koreatown mustn't develop as Chinatown did. Other ethnicities except Chinese feel difficult to live in Chinatown. Diversity brings improvement to many things. Immigrant-gentrifier, 50-59 female

I think that diversity is a positive thing for Koreatown. This is not Korea. If they want to stubbornly maintain that the sole ethnicity of the town is Korean and don't like living with others in Koreatown, then they have to go back to Korea. Immigrant-gentrifier, 30-39 female

Some commented that gentrification was *adding* to the (class) diversity of Koreatown, as this real estate developer insisted:

So that gentrification you know, even though you may say we are displacing tenants, we are building new units and adding more tenants. The income gap is different but I think that's healthy. You can't have Koreatown be all low-income. So I think you need to have a good balance of low-income, middle-income and people you have some money so they can spend in Koreatown as well.

Conversely, the suburbs of Los Angeles (and beyond) from which some of the respondents came were represented as parochial spaces; living in Koreatown was evidence of refusing to 'go suburban' (Freeman, 2006). The preference for high density living, so rare in Los Angeles, placed the immigrant-gentrifiers at odds with other immigrant groups who strongly preferred lower-density suburbia, such as the larger Chinese group in the ethnoburb of the San Gabriel Valley (Li, 1998). Koreatown is residentially the densest part of Los Angeles, and its gentrification goes hand-in-hand with a particular urban form and density: 'When I am in Koreatown, I can feel as if I am in the concrete jungle that is Seoul. It makes people feel comfort, especially, who those who come from big cities ... surrounded with skyscrapers' (Immigrant-gentrifier, 50-59, female).

Having left Koreatown in the 1980s to raise families or due to the 1992 unrest, most of those interviewed had returned to enjoy its everyday closeness and convenience, which seems entirely justifiable yet parochial when compared to high-flyers jetting across the Pacific on monthly trips (Ley, 2010; Ong, 1999):

Koreatown is really convenient. I have lived in Koreatown for 9 years before I moved to the Mercury Building. It's easy to eat Korean food here and to enjoy diverse culture, diverse ethnic restaurants and diverse ethnicities. The location is in the heart of LA and it has a good transport system. I commute to my work place by Metro, which only takes 30 min. Sometimes, I commute there by bike. Immigrant-gentrifier, 30-39, male

For Koreans over 70 years of age, Koreatown is also a good place because they don't need to speak English. Many older people have lived in big and calm houses in the suburbs but end up moving to Koreatown after selling their houses because Koreatown is a comfortable place for them. Immigrant-gentrifier, over 60, male

This last quote points to a paradox – Koreatown's very openness, diversity, and cosmopolitanism was compromised by pervasive tendencies toward a parochialized social and cultural disposition typical of self-segregated enclaves, tied into long-held and well-honed survival strategies via clustering (e.g. DeVerteuil, 2011a). This was evidenced by some of the older residents:

Koreatown is a little version of Seoul. My wife doesn't speak English well but she feels comfortable living in Koreatown. It's easy to go shopping here, enjoy recreation, socializing and doing business. All of things are easy to do in Koreatown. Immigrant-gentrifier, 40-49, male

I only considered Koreatown for a residential place. It's such a convenient environment for me. I have lived here only 15 years and came to America when I was already in my 40s. I guess my habits and lifestyle were fixed as Korean by then. It's not easy to apply myself and my lifestyle to a truly American way. I feel very comfortable here and couldn't notice big differences between Korean cultures in Koreatown and in Korea. I like an environment in which I can experience Korean culture. Immigrant-gentrifier, 50-59, female

So while many immigrant-gentrifiers professed values that seek out the unfamiliar and the diverse, in practice they are more likely to shelter themselves from their full brunt. Moreover, the longer they spent in Koreatown, the less disposed they were to returning to South Korea, even just to see family and friends. Indeed, most only visited South Korea once a year at most, with little interest in moving back or in investing there. This is despite the fact that at least half the sample complained about the crime, poor educational infrastructure, and grime of Koreatown:

In Seoul, everything is high-tech. The IT system in houses is amazing. I am jealous of the train system in Seoul, too. The streets in Seoul are so clean. I think everything in Seoul is much better than here in Koreatown. (Immigrant-gentrifier, 30-39, female)

In this way, local exposure and belonging had superseded the tendency toward favoring, or even considering, the extra-local.

The findings from this section confirmed the admonition of Portes et al. (2002), that only some migrants actually lead transnational lives, that only some hedge their bets by having assets in the country of origin and the destination country, or hold dual citizenship and multiple passports. The immigrant-gentrifiers sought and practiced a limited cosmopolitanism, rooted in a distinctively hybrid identity and sense of belonging composed of the Korean and the American.

### ***Spaces of encounter***

Amin (2002) emphasized the cosmopolitan potential of micropublics, that is the everyday urban and the daily negotiations of (ethnic) difference. In this respect, the public spaces of

Koreatown could be considered a proverbial 'contact zone' (Keith, 2005; Sandercock, 1998; Yeoh, 2004), especially between the Asian minority and Latino majority, and through which vastly different social, economic, and cultural groups following different trajectories ostensibly share the same space. Building on the previous section, the spaces of encounter for our immigrant-gentrifiers revealed a gap between the promise of open-mindedness and exchange versus the practice of a putatively closed existence, given that the new-build towers were at least 90% Korean, if not close to 100% according to the key informants, and very much socially separate from (yet spatially proximate to) the Latino majority. Put differently, our interviewees professed to being cosmopolitan but their interactions with 'others' (e.g. Latinos) would prove quite limited and superficial (Sandercock, 1998), compounded by the lack of truly open public space (especially parks) in Koreatown itself.

Indeed, there was a desire on the part of virtually all of the interviewees that Koreatown be open to non-Koreans, to not end up a ghetto like Chinatown. This has certainly happened of late – Koreatown has become a 'cool' destination, one of the few spots in Los Angeles with a dense clustering of nighttime drinking establishment, karaoke and all-night restaurants, according to this real estate developer:

Back in the day, Korean businesses hated non-Koreans coming into the restaurants. They would actually turn away business. Now it's the exact opposite. When you go more mainstream, a lot more money comes into the area which helps you know bring in more people. So it helps more people to be more successful. The problem is, it kind of changes the culture because now you start catering to people that bring in the money.

Koreatown has, in twenty-five years, gone from crime-ridden and riot-prone to a hip place to visit and inhabit, tirelessly promoted by such luminaries as chef-turned-entrepreneur Roy Choi. And yet, many of the interviewees were fully aware that gentrification threatened other kinds of diversity that may have brought them to Koreatown in the first place. This included (1) the diversity of the Korean-American population itself, and (2) its relationship with the Latino population, set within a highly balkanized racial landscape. For the former, an older resident of a new-build tower worried that

gentrification will ultimately threaten diversity. I am pessimistic because of the current situation. Many small shops run by Koreans closed and the owners are gradually being replaced by non-Koreans. Many chain stores run by multinational companies are opening up in Koreatown.

For the latter, gentrification only further complicates the vexed Korean-Latino relationship, as Koreatown becomes more parochially segregated not just by race but also by built environment – incoming gentrifiers living in 90% Korean new-builds have little chance encountering a Latino population living in older, crowded and degraded apartments built between the 1920s and the 1970s, and increasingly subject to gentrification-induced displacement. This upends the usual White-minority dynamic, 'an uneasy fit within gentrification models that stress racial privilege rooted in historical forms of segregation and exclusion within urban America' (Sims, 2016, p. 46). Indeed, several of the interviewees were quite sensitive to the matter:

Koreatown is getting younger and more diverse. This diversity includes illegal immigrant laborers who are mostly from Latin America, and those of them who can work are increasing. They are taking low quality jobs such as those in the 3D fields (Dirty, Dangerous, and Demeaning) and purchase low price products. Actually, their current jobs were originally done by people of my generation. Immigrant-gentrifier, over 60, male

But others felt that Latino working poverty, their undocumented status and almost 100% renter conditions were increasingly out of sync with the upgrading landscape of Koreatown. Gentrification only heightened the sense that Koreatown is polarizing, an expression of deep class inequality: 'I feel that gentrification is removing the middle class. Even in the same building, there are big price differences of rental fees. There is no middle and instead there is just extremely high or low' (Immigrant-gentrifier, 40-49, male).

The fixity of Koreatown – its legacies of segregation, polarization, and racialization so intrinsic to the American inner city – makes it inevitable that truly open spaces of encounter are compromised, expressing the larger difficulty of creating a meaningful multicultural city crosscut by so much inequality (Keil, 1998). The two quotes below typify the self-segregation that compromise potential spaces of encounter:

But we were thinking at some point when you get older, when you retire, suburban living does not make as much sense. Especially if you need assisted living. So like senior living. People's parents don't want to put them in Caucasian, non-Korean seniors housing. My parents would go nuts if they had to eat toast everyday. People gravitate towards Koreatown. So you see that people who moved out to the suburbs, when after they retired or their kids graduate, they would come back to Koreatown. It was just a lot more convenient. Key informant, real estate agent

Easy access and Korean culture are both the push factors and pull factors. Koreatown is the Mecca of Korean-American culture. It's easy to find Korean cultural information here. Korean food and various cultural events are abundant here. I think it's the first place Korean tourists visit in the US. We don't need to feel nostalgia here. It's an oasis for Korean immigrants because we can communicate in our language rather than in English and we can have Korean food. I feel that Koreatown resembles Ilсан or Bundang, which are two big suburb cities of Seoul. Sometimes I feel Koreatown is more Koreanized than Gangnam (southern area of the Han River in Seoul). Immigrant-gentrifier, 50-59, female

What is evident, despite professed intentions, is that spaces of encounter follow more of a bubble model (Butler, 2003), in which gentrification and diversity are tectonic – they exist alongside each other but rarely meet and never act in concert. This links to the idea that areas of highest diversity are also frequently among the most deprived (Gale, 2013, 2014). This 'gritty diversity' and its attendant material hardship presents a barrier to meaningful spaces of encounter, itself compounded by the lack of public space in Koreatown as well as the exclusionary tendencies of some of the immigrant-gentrifiers.

## **Discussion and conclusions: compromised cosmopolitanism and the recovery of the parochial**

In the introduction, we underlined the need to rebalance the parochial with the cosmopolitan, and proposed a relational framework to do so, updating and reviving longstanding debates via the three framing devices. Armed with the innovative empirical results from the Koreatown immigrant-gentrifiers and key informants, we can now fully question the current hierarchy, emphasizing the limits of cosmopolitanism even in this supposed global age and even in the most global of areas (Koreatown) and cities (Los Angeles). So recast, the cosmopolitan-parochial relationship emerges as a series of conflicted paradoxes but also productive tensions: between an ostensibly transnational process compromised by a profoundly home-grown, parochial set of investors and outlooks; between a set of dispositions that seek inner-city diversity and density, yet simultaneously sheltered from its spillover costs; and spaces of encounter marked by a gap between the promise of truly open spaces and the reality of

guarded and self-segregated ones, an exclusionary cosmopolitanism that typifies how gentrification has been shown to approach the 'other' (Butler, 2003).

Building on the cautions issued by Ley (2004) and Valentine (2008), our critique surmises that the cosmopolitan, like the mobile, the global and the flow, must bump up against remarkably entrenched parochial spaces, dispositions and processes, reminding us of the risk in downplaying the localized, banal and the everyday. This may sound trite but it is rarely demonstrated empirically. The promise of a truly cosmopolitan set of processes, dispositions, and spaces of encounter – what Sandercock (2003, p. xiv) deemed a 'mongrel city' in which there 'is genuine acceptance of, or connection with, and respect and space for "the stranger"' – is invariably difficult in the face of long-established barriers, be they of habit, inertia, fear or exclusivity. This paper has responded to McFarlane (2008, p. 497), who suggested that 'all forms of cosmopolitanism are to varying extents inclusive or exclusive, implying that one important role for the critic is to illuminate the politics, limits, and exclusions of different forms of cosmopolitan imaginary and practice'. As long as place and fixity matter, so does the parochial, invariably paralleling and sometimes offsetting the cosmopolitan (Mitchell, 1997).

The disposition of gentrifier-immigrants enabled the development of practical skills to encounter and deal with the exigencies of Koreatown, building up a situated knowledge that vexes the cosmopolitan, generic knowledge of how to navigate (and gentrify) an American inner-city area (see also Harvey, 2009). Along these lines, the empirical results moved the received wisdom of gentrifiers beyond young White professionals, to include immigrants, those over 50, and empty nesters, all connected to a new-build model, and suggesting a new residential trajectory – begin in the immigrant enclave, flee to the suburbs due to family and/or violence, and then return to the enclave to gentrify it, as befitting their urban affinities but also as part of social mobility. This rooted, bottom-up, and ordinary cosmopolitanism draws inspiration from diaspora theory and transnational urbanism, but also cautions against *reversing* the hierarchy in favor of the parochial, a situation that Peck (2015) argues has been achieved by those assemblage and anti-essentialist readings of the city beset by particularisms and only vaguely connected to macro-logics and contexts of urbanization.

More empirically, the paper questions the representation of a truly transnational Koreatown. Following in the footsteps of Ley (2004), we have confronted the important parochial, home-grown nature of a supposedly hyper-globalized place, of how even the lives of gentrifying elites are limited by local conditions, if not influenced heavily by them, Koreatown as 'in-between spaces of everyday life as it shapes and is shaped by power structures, social relations [and] ... political economic processes ... that are expressed at more-than-local scales' (Derickson, 2015, p. 654). In turn this suggests that immigration can be more parochial than presented, but conversely that gentrification can be, at least on the surface, more cosmopolitan (albeit exclusionary). Just as Ward (2010) drew out the cosmopolitan in the parochial world of BIDs in Wisconsin, finding the parochial in the supposedly cosmopolitan performs important conceptual work, compelling us to think earnestly about valorizing (but not necessarily celebrating) the immobile and the recalcitrantly local. This is not to deny the cosmopolitan nature of Koreatown, but merely serves as a reminder of how even supposedly 'transnational bubble' areas are deeply territorial and have important local limits.

By bringing into conversation the parochial and the cosmopolitan through the lens of immigration and gentrification, this paper has sharpened both fields of study. This double duty rebalances the parochial with the cosmopolitan but also highlights the immigrant-gentrifier as no longer a mutually-exclusive figure in the (global) city, representing an important empirical contribution. In turn, this promotes a more rigorous understanding of global-local gentrification, which until recently suffered from being overly-empirical and confined to insular debates and theories based in political economy. So rather than extending the theory of gentrification, we have used the case study to extend gentrification into more broad-based theoretical territory, of adopting what Wyly (2015) called a more cosmopolitan, decolonized approach. As a key contribution, the proposed framework could delve more deeply into the empirical relationship between immigrants and gentrifiers, one that has been largely implicit in the literature and in need of further study. Immigration is one of the main generators of demographic change in cities – increasingly the main one for many global cities – while gentrification is one of the main paths of class-based restructuring and recomposition of urban space currently – yet the two have rarely been counterposed. The assumption that gentrification and immigration repel each other seems plausible, but the Koreatown example clearly shows that the two can work in concert. More conceptually, the process and practice of immigrant-gentrification also seem symptomatic of an emerging Korean-American hybridity, the broader points of which geographers ought to further consider, given the lack of work on how minority populations feel when they encounter each other (Valentine, 2008). This highlights a key limitation to the study, focused as it was on the Korean immigrant-gentrifier – that despite their own opinions of the Latino majority, Latino voices were not sought. Responding to this gap could move us more meaningfully beyond the usual White-minority binary that frames both the study of gentrification but also immigration.

## Notes

1. The Latino population, as of the 2010 Census, was close to 60% of Koreatown. They were not interviewed, as the privileged subject was the immigrant-gentrifier (who were 100% Korean), rather than the immigrant.
2. Given that the real estate data was by zip code, I chose the five (90004, 90005, 90006, 90010, 90020) that best approximated the official boundaries of the City of LA, which is Western (west), 3rd Street (north), Vermont (east) and Olympic (south).

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