

Right-of-way gentrification: Conflict, commodification and cosmopolitanism

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Abstract

As gentrification processes accelerate in American cities, how do newcomers become solidly in-place while longtime residents become hopelessly out-of-place in neighbourhood public spaces? Bringing focus to the often-overlooked public right-of-way – streets, sidewalks and alleys – I examine social rhythms comprising this network of public spaces when used as an everyday infrastructure of transportation and socialisation or when configured for special events. Using the notion of symbolic economy to link the social production of public space with the municipal regulation of public space, this essay approaches gentrification from three perspectives: conflict, commodification and cosmopolitanism. Focusing on Highland, a rapidly gentrifying neighbourhood in Denver, Colorado, I first delve into skirmishes over street legitimacy. I then unpack quiet workaday measures used by cities to regulate the public right-of-way, namely parking policy and liquor license issuances. I move on to the commodification of ethnic culture by those who ultimately benefit from the displacement of Latino families from North Denver. Lastly, I engage with the concept cosmopolitanism, arguing that diversity discourses, both in the academy and on the street, obscure important relationships between asymmetrically positioned symbolic economies and low-level regulation of public space. Foregrounding routine urban governance over neoliberal agendas, this study critiques gentrification as a commonsense urban policy.

Keywords

diversity, gentrification, public space, street legitimacy, urban governance

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Public space is something predictable that has been consecrated by a community as a place where they can simply be themselves.

(Father José Lara, Former Pastor,
Our Lady of Guadalupe)

What happens a lot of the time is all that ethnicity goes with the people, which is sad.

(Paul Tamburello, Real Estate Developer)

To inform me about neighbourhood change in a rapidly gentrifying North Denver neighbourhood called Highland, real estate

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developer Paul Tamburello suggested I interview him while he drove me around. A businessman with long-term personal and economic knowledge of the area, he pointed out former crack houses remodelled by urban pioneers, a service station repurposed an eatery, and even bullet holes in apartment buildings – reminders of the violent turf wars fought by Black and Latino gangs during the 1980s and 1990s. He told me a story of surreptitiously kicking a hypodermic needle out of the sightline of prospective homebuyers, who saw him do this and bought the property regardless. During much of the tour, he pointed out struggling Mexican *pan-darias*, *taquerias* and *piñata* stores. Tamburello told me how numerous long-standing family-owned restaurants have closed, their spaces reopened as hip bistros that, according to him, ‘take away the history and soulfulness of Highland’. To combat Highland losing its character – its soul, as he put it – he imagines a ‘bodega tour’, a walking tour highlighting Highland’s disappearing ethnicity. Clearly, such a tour would place ethnicity on display and run counter to Father José Lara’s insistence that Latinos require a space ‘to be themselves’. It would compel them to perform rather than simply be. Framing this study are the complex tensions between economic development and neighbourhood soul, between practicing culture and consuming culture. I foreground the central role public right-of-way plays in neighbourhood change. Importantly, I shed light on how the production of social spaces along streets and sidewalks is both facilitated and frustrated by parking policy, licensing procedures, informal work, children at play, strolling and church festivals. Changes to these activities alter tempos and rhythms of neighbourhood life.

Theoretical lens

This study grapples with the following question: As gentrification processes accelerate, how do newcomers become solidly *in-place* while longtime residents become hopelessly *out-of-place* (Cresswell, 1996) in neighbourhood public spaces? I focus on streets and sidewalks and how they are used as everyday infrastructures of transportation, everyday socialising and what happens when they are configured for special events. After a brief neighbourhood history and discussions of my theoretical framework and research methodology, this article approaches gentrification from three perspectives: Conflict, commodification and cosmopolitanism. Focusing on conflict, I delve into skirmishes over street legitimacy. Who belongs? When? Doing what? Concentrating on obscure yet quotidian measures used by cities to determine who belongs in the public right-of-way and what behaviours are legitimate there, I discuss the evolution of parking regulations and the issuance and denials of liquor licenses in Highland. I then move to the commodification of ethnic culture by those who ultimately benefit from the elimination of ethnic culture from public space. Early in gentrification processes, public spaces become more socioeconomic and culturally diverse. Celebrations of diversity positioning marginalised communities in danger of displacement contribute to gentrification.

Not only can public practice be out-of-place, it can be out-of-time. Public space, though marked by surprising diversity, is stabilised by ritualised rhythms. Each neighbourhood has unique temporal patterns and spatialised rituals. Being comfortable practicing one’s culture in a neighbourhood presupposes being comfortable with its daily and weekly tempos. For Lefebvre (1996a), any analysis of society that does not incorporate these ritualised and normalised rhythms will come up short of decoding

social space. Extending this theory, Edensor (2010) suggests that a host of shared temporal reference points and shared spatial habits concretise cultural practices. This sense of a shared synchronicity orchestrates our movements within the city and in relation to others. Temporalised practices in public space provide a 'a communal way of seeing the world in consistent terms' (Edensor, 2010: 8), thus facilitating cultural reproduction (Calhoun and Sennett, 2007). The notions of localised time and temporalised space bring objective scholarship closer to the reality of everyday urban experience. In what follows, I show how the temporality of Highland's public spaces ceased to be comfortable for longtime residents, most of whom share Catholic religiosity and Latino ethnicity. As gentrification advanced these public spaces become more comfortable more of the time for the predominantly white, middle-class and secular newcomers. At home in Highland, newcomers work to reproduce their cultural norms in public space. In a word, this is how the gentrification of space operates; the rhythms of public space are changed to reinforce and reproduce gentrifier norms and practices, while the cultural practices of longtime residents become freighted with touristic eroticism. Understanding the subtleties of this process and how it relates to residential gentrification requires a solid theoretical groundwork, to which I now turn.

A source of images and memories, a language of exclusion and entitlement, and therefore a powerful tool for framing and thereby controlling urban space, the notion of *symbolic economy* (Zukin, 1995) provides a robust framework for thinking through neighbourhood change under neoliberal governance. A dominant component of the symbolic economy is discourse comprising the *creative city* (Florida, 2002, 2004), which draws civic leaders into orbit around 'extant neoliberal development agendas' (Peck,

2005: 740). To fuel economic development cities work hard to attract and maintain vibrant art scenes, research-oriented sectors and hip retail zones. Here the devil is indeed in the details, particularly in workaday economic development policy, land use and building codes, business licensing procedures, transportation planning and parking regulations. Business practices, cultural attitudes, bureaucratic protocols and consumer behaviours work in concert to normalise neoliberal accumulation processes (Jessop, 1995; MacLeod, 1997; Peck and Tickell, 1992). Enmeshed in city documents and business plans, symbolic economy changes public spaces.

Different cultures produce different symbolic economies. In Highland, two symbolic economies – one rooted in Latino urbanism, the other in what can be termed Anglo urbanism – work to produce profound neighbourhood diversity. On one hand, regnant notions of the city as a corporation constructed to facilitate profitable commerce and protect property rights emerged in Northern Europe from the late Middle Ages (Frug, 1999). On the other hand, cities established in the New World and planned according to the Laws of the Indies by the Spanish Empire foregrounded community and religion (Diaz, 2005). In a word, community and Catholicism produce and are products of a symbolic economy that diverges radically from one centred on Protestantism and capital accumulation. Unchallenged discourses about the benefits of this type of diversity veil profound disagreements about neighbourhood character. These discourses reveal disconnects between rights to the city and property rights (Berrey, 2005; Medoff and Sklar, 1994; Valverde, 2005; Zukin, 2010). Finally, they cloud how racial and ethnic prejudice sequester in workaday governance. Terms such as blight, development and revitalisation are freighted with moral judgement, exposing power

asymmetries between Anglo and Latino urbanism. Highland resident Marty Roberts insists 'Highland was "vital" before it was revitalized'. Blomley names this rhetorical dynamic 'semantic smoothing' (Blomley, 2007). Defining neighbourhood conditions in terms of the dominant symbolic economy disrespects marginalised communities. It also obscures a divide between governance at the level of the state, concerned with rights of the individual, and urban governance, centred on property rights.

Different cultures produce different public spaces. Everyday public space has significantly different meanings when viewed through different cultural lenses (Young, 1990). My argument is that the gentrification of Highland's public right-of-way results from the successful cultural reproduction of middle-class norms in these everyday working-class spaces. More than a claim to legitimate presence in diverse public space, the gentrification of public space occurs when middle-class presuppositions and predilections become commonsensical public practices. By privileging low-level municipal governance concerned with property rights and human conduct over economic and ethical philosophies comprising notions of personal qualities and human rights, I add important nuance to scholarship orbiting the *right to the city* (Lefebvre, 1996b). By contrasting rights-claims based in property with those based in culture, what Lefebvre calls 'meander[ing]s through nostalgia and tourism' (Lefebvre, 1996b: 157), this study exposes bureaucratic processes that, depending on one's position in the economy and often one's ethnicity and race, facilitate or frustrate cultural reproduction in public space.

Methods

After the recession of the 1980s, a third wave of gentrification marked by public/private

development projects advanced (Wyly, 2002; Wyly and Hammel, 1998; Wyly et al., 2004). Gentrification is simultaneously embedded in local scales and has become a 'global urban strategy' that is 'densely connected into circuits of global capital and cultural circulation' (Smith, 2002). The microgeographies of public space matter too (Blomley, 1997). What helped me disentangle everyday urbanism was to focus on right-of-way management (Blomley, 2007, 2011), neighbourhood aesthetics (Blomley, 2005a, 2005b), business licensing (Valverde, 2003), land use zoning (Valverde, 2005), and the raft of laws, policies and guidelines that shape architectural, economic and social fabrics of street life (Valverde, 2009). By foregrounding low-level governance, this study critiques gentrification as a commonsense urban policy.

I agree with Fairbanks who insists that ethnography is a particularly useful methodology for the study of urban governance and governmentality (Fairbanks, 2012). Combining ethnographic and archival methods, I moved between regulatory policies and business practices as they are conceived and how they are experienced. This study draws from 60 narrative interviews and many spontaneous discussions with longtime Highland residents, newcomers, real estate developers and brokers, community activists, business owners and city employees over the course of five years. Using these perspectives, I gained insight into how different people, often with divergent worldviews, interpret and sanction public behaviour. Using unobtrusive, participant and mobile observation techniques, I gained additional perspective on spatial practices constituting the publicness of North Denver's public rights-of-way during both daily interaction rituals and special events. A North Denver resident myself, I went on many long walks, bike rides and drives. Meandering at different speeds throughout the day, observing

Highland's avenues, streets and alleys, deepened my understanding of neighbourhood rhythms. During the coding process I wove together interviews and field notes, uncovering thematic consistencies between interviewee points of view and the perspectives gained through observation. Selected residents and experts read drafts and verified and/or clarified my preliminary findings and conclusions.

Triangulating ethnographic findings with archival research helps tease out causal mechanisms of dense social systems (Low, 1981; Low et al., 2005) and helps quantify gentrification. Starting with census data I found a rapid decline in North Denver's Latino population – from 67% in 2000 to 37% in 2010. Pursuing tax assessor files, I learned that in the course of these 10 years, real estate prices skyrocketed and that numerous small, single-family homes were scrapped and replaced with large expensive houses and condominium complexes. In tandem with a shift in neighbourhood ethnicity, business license data showed an early 20th-century shift from Mexican jewelry stores such as Joyeria de Alfredo Acevedo to hipster locales such as True Blue Tattoo, and from Mexican restaurants such as Aztec Sol to French bistros such as The Squeaky Bean. Transportation planning archives reveal that many Highland streets were reconfigured from high-volume, one-way thoroughfares to two-way, low-volume neighbourhood streets lined with traffic-calming, parallel parking. Public space is a social process occurring within and in relation to a complex web of city bylaws, what Staeheli and Mitchell (2008) call *tissues of regulation*. In addition to researching municipal codes, permitting procedures, city and neighbourhood planning documents, and parking policies, I also pursued liquor board hearing documents and transcripts. These small levers of governance influence *who* occupies the right-of-way, *what* they do

there and *how long* they remain. Who is present in public produces public space. And public space is an undertheorised component of gentrification (Langegger, 2013, 2014).

Finally, my key informants proved vital. Father Lara served as the pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church from 1967 to 1979. During this time he was constant witness to both ordinary and extraordinary historical events and processes. Additionally, his deep personal and spiritual connections with the predominantly Catholic community helped me bridge cultural divides between my secular worldview and Latino religiosity. Pastor of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Church during the 1980s, Father Marshal Gourley offered invaluable insight into publicly celebrated liturgical festivals. Rudy Gonzales, a native of North Denver, former Denver city planner and Highland restaurant owner frequently reminded me that rational city planning often has consequences as irrational as they are longstanding. This study would not have been possible without Martha 'Marty' Roberts. A neighbourhood activist since the early 1970s, she was active in early street improvement campaigns, Highland's urban gardens, the construction of a neighbourhood park on a vacant lot and the neighbourhood's successful battle against a freeway interchange. Not only was she an eager interviewee, she graciously allowed me access to her personal archive in which she keeps the details of 40 years of neighbourhood activism.

Highland history

Like Gotham (2005), I feel that gentrification should be considered in terms of neighbourhood history and historical patterns of social tension. Many Irish immigrants, unable to find housing in Denver's openly anti-Catholic neighbourhoods, settled in Highland in the late 1800s. As Highland shifted from an Irish ethnic enclave to 'Little

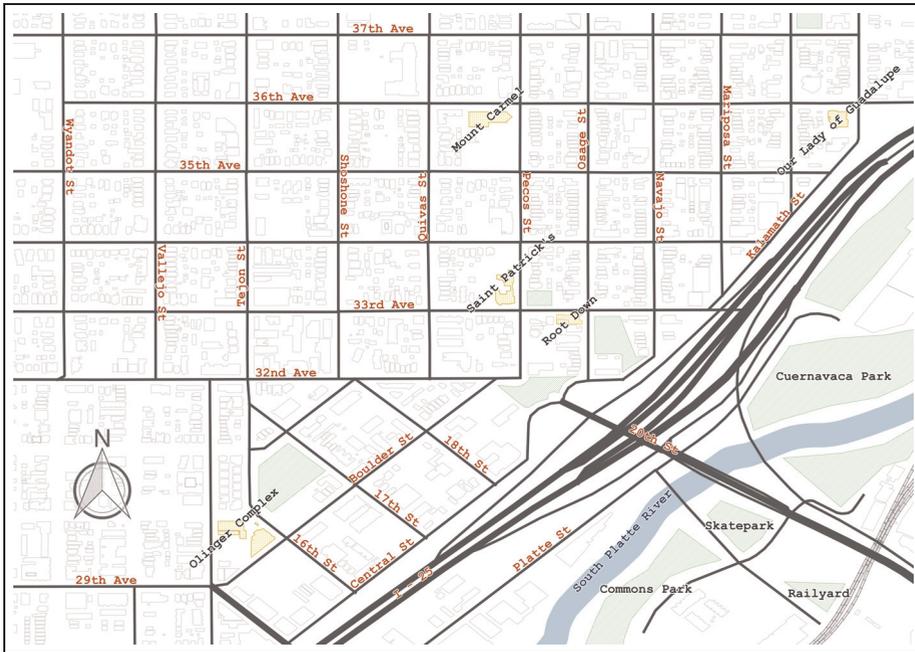


Figure 1. Eastern section of Highland referencing streets, highways, and structures explored in this study. Source: Map by author composed in QGIS using shape files from the City of Denver.

Italy' in the 1920s and then to a Latino barrio in the 1940s, microgeographies of ethnic religiosity, undergirded by stereotypes and lingual barriers, framed its social and cultural history (Goodstein, 2011; Hunt, 1999). This history is visible in Highland's built environment (Figure 1). Between Pecos Street and Kalamath Street stand three Catholic Churches: the Irish Saint Patrick's Mission – located at Pecos Street and 33rd Avenue; the Italian Our Lady of Mount Carmel – located at Navajo Street and 36th Avenue; and the Mexican Our Lady of Guadalupe – located at Kalamath Street and 36th Avenue. As each ethnic group became dominant in the neighbourhood, they were compelled to build their own church. This was never a congenial process. Father Lara shared a story with me, often told to him by his Latino parishioners of their parents' and grandparents' attempts to organise the sale

of the Italian church to a rapidly growing Hispanic Catholic congregation. In 1944, Italian church officials bluntly refused an ostensibly fair offer, unceremoniously stating, 'Before you get this church, the Japs will'. The wound of this racially charged rebuffing stung for decades, fortifying barriers within the neighbourhood.

Many longtime residents I interviewed indexed neighbourhood change by referencing who they encounter in local businesses and in public parks as well as who they see walking a dog or jogging on the sidewalk. Park usage is strongly contingent upon park maintenance (Harnik, 2010). Zukin (2010) uses the term *terroir* to capture social and physical factors contributing to the vibe along commercial corridors. A change in *terroir* is therefore an indicator of neighbourhood change. Analysing business license data between 1970 and 2010, I noted a

profound change in retail mix. Throughout my fieldwork I met many longtime residents who experienced this change. Along West 32nd Avenue and Tejon Street, dive bars such as the Mahogany Lounge, Pic's Corner, The Dog House and The Junction were notorious for underage drinking, gambling, drug trafficking and fistfights that frequently spilled into the streets. During the 1980s, much neighbourhood organising in Highland worked to shut down these disreputable establishments by utilising small levers of city governance. Community activists such as Marty Roberts compelled the city to enforce liquor codes and noise ordinances as well as any criminal laws these establishments had violated. Ironically, entrepreneurs are now busily repurposing these long-shuttered dive bars into trendy wine shops, coffee bars and eateries.

In many ways street design (Bosselman et al., 1999; Zavetoski and Agyeman, 2014) and geometrics (Appleyard B, 2005; Appleyard D, 1981; Dumbaugh, 2005) delimit and potentiate a host of different types of neighbourhood terroir. In the end, changing streets changes neighbourhoods. City of Denver transportation planning documents indicate during the 1950s and 1960s neighbourhood streets were reconfigured to carry thousands of vehicles every day from white collar jobs downtown through Highland to Denver's growing suburbs. Consequently, service stations sprang up along these newly configured high-capacity streets. Starting in the 1970s, community activists began lobbying the city for safer streets. 'First we concentrated on fixing the sidewalks and painting street crossings, then we started petitioning for streets to be changed from one-way collector streets to two-way neighbourhood streets. We worked to have stoplights replaced with stop signs to make Highland a safe place for families, a safe place for kids to play', recalls Roberts. Changing the right-of-way indeed changes

neighbourhoods; the process however is neither immediate nor predictable. To illustrate, Osage Street was changed from a high-volume arterial to a local serving street in 1983. Consequently Johnnies' Texaco, a service station on 33rd Avenue and Osage Street, went out of business in 1985. The structure sat vacant for 20 years. Surprisingly, though designed as a gas station, it now houses one of Denver's most creative and popular eateries, Root Down (Figure 1).

A repurposed service station is not the only irreverent redevelopment in Highland. On the corner of Boulder Street and 16th Street stands the former Olinger mortuary, where according to neighbourhood lore the body of Buffalo Bill was embalmed in 1917. Today this former industrial complex houses three trendy, critically acclaimed restaurants – Lola, Vita and Linger – as well as a coffee shop, hair salon, yoga studio and the popular Little Man Ice Cream stand. Linger, embodying the new neighbourhood vibe, inventively transformed the enormous, iconic Olinger Mortuaries fluorescent sign to now advertise, 'linger eateries'. The complex's redevelopment and much of its funky irreverence was Paul Tamburello's brainchild. He saw development potential not only in Highland's ethnic history but also in its abandoned mortuary.

Conflict, commodification and cosmopolitanism

Conflict

Ostensibly open to a diverse public realm, a place wherein the Other is both encountered and performed, public space is necessarily conflicted space (Lofland, 1998; Sennett, 1990, 2001; Watson, 2006). Public space in these terms must be considered as an amalgam of cultural territories, constantly shaped and reshaped by symbolic boundary

work. Changes to the contours of these boundaries inscribe cultural spaces and serve to index neighbourhood change. Michael Miera, a North Denver resident and City of Denver employee notes, 'Fifteen years ago Highland was a working-class Mexicano and Chicano barrio; now all you see on the street is hipsters with money to spend'. Scholars note that Latino communities often blur boundaries between private, familial and public spaces (Crawford, 2008; Diaz, 2005; Richardson, 1982). My fieldwork corroborates this claim. One longtime resident waxed nostalgic about earlier times when, 'all you needed to do if you wanted to hear neighborhood gossip was open your window or sit on your front porch and listen'. Walking down predominately Latino blocks I often noted toys spilling from front porches onto front lawns and into sidewalks as I entered the aural spaces of street-spanning conversations between neighbours. In contrast to these diffuse boundaries, drivers of gentrification such as art galleries and festivals (Shaw and Sullivan, 2011), boutique shops and trendy restaurants represent symbolic boundaries that sharply demarcate space (Deener, 2007; Zukin, 2008; Zukin et al., 2009). As entrepreneurs opened trendy establishments along 32nd Avenue and Tejon Street, stark symbolic borders of commerce overlaid once blurry neighbourhood boundaries. As such, a symbolic economy rooted in irreverent development and hip vibes delegitimised Highland's long-standing Latino cultural practices.

Conflicts between symbolic economies are often less noticeable. For example, many Latinos are lowrider enthusiasts (Chappell, 2012). By the late 1990s men had stopped displaying their cars on Highland's streets (Langegger, 2014) 'in order to avoid hassles with the city', recalls one longtime resident who had been warned by the police several times he was in violation of the noise ordinance. I noticed a similar dynamic learning

that a number of mechanics working out of their home garages (compare Venkatesh, 2006) were shut down by the city when new neighbours, unhappy with the noise and activity in back alleys, reported these informal operations as violations of business and zoning codes. Vital to consider here is that in cases such as these the city enforces private nuisance law, concerned with violations impeding the enjoyment of private property, not criminal law, concerned with violations against the sovereign state. The former is concerned with conduct, the latter with individuals. The city is obligated to protect property rights and stop nuisance activities. The state is obligated to convict and reform criminals. This is the reason it remains difficult to conceptualise neighbourhood-scale conflicts between symbolic economies in terms of critical or cultural geography. Economic and cultural theories are concerned with people and their decisions. The enforcement of most municipal bylaws – simple zoning code or noise ordinances here – is aimed at general behaviour, not at people. Nonetheless people are affected, in turn affecting neighbourhood character. This theoretical blind spot is significant because small levers of city governance, largely ignored in gentrification literature, are in fact what dominate workaday city management (compare Valverde, 2009).

Today conflicts along Highland's right-of-way primarily orbit on-street parking. The following skirmishes over the use of the public right-of-way, can be understood in terms of de Certeau's (1984) strategies and tactics. Part of Denver's economic development plan is the implementation of time-restricted parking zones along mixed-use streets. The city also manages the microgeographies of permit parking to increase available parking for restaurant and retail customers. These policies can be read in terms of use and exchange value, revealing the city's priority to increase retail revenues

by commandeering reliable parking from neighbourhood residents. The wording of Denver's Highland parking policy clearly places customers over residents, intending to 'change the parking habits of Highland residents' in order to free up street parking space for restaurant customers. In response to this strategic policy Highland residents employ guerilla tactics. One resident uses traffic cones to save the parking space in front of his house; another boasted of once deflating an offending car's tires as 'payback for stealing my spot'. I spoke to elderly residents who, even though they don't drive, applied for handicap spaces in front of their residences along Pecos Street to, as one put it, 'make sure the hipsters "doing" brunch at Root Down can't find a parking spot on my block'. These tactics and claims to personal ownership of the public right-of-way make sense when we consider the blurred boundaries of residential territory. Particularly in inner-city neighbourhoods, Anderson (1990) argues a car parked on the street in front of one's residence is a peculiar public statement, serving as a vacant extension of self and identity into public space. This common inner-city practice thus blurs boundaries between public and private ontologies while appropriating public space for private identity management. Deprived of this personal space, many residents become frustrated; some openly vent their vexations. Paradoxically, the legitimate presence of all residents, both longtimers *and* newcomers, in the public right-of-way is usurped by privileging short-term parking for transient retail and restaurant clientele. Consequently, parking rhythms change from drawn out workdays and weekends to bursts of happy hours and weekend brunches. Inserting Lefebvre (1996a) here, we see that gentrification can be understood as not merely a spatial but also a rhythmic process.

Who parks, residents or customers, and when they park are related facets of the

conflict over legitimacy in the public right-of-way. The issuance of liquor licenses constitutes another facet, one that clearly reveals elements of opposing symbolic economies during neighbourhood change. After all, the same people who wait in long lines on sidewalks and amble back to their parked cars are those who drive to Highland specifically to eat, drink and socialise. Not only did working-class informants broadly resent changes brought about by gentrification, they begrudged that Highland's new restaurants are primarily marketed toward people who live outside the neighbourhood. Analysing liquor license hearing transcripts and discussing neighbourhood change with business owners and newcomers, I noticed terms such as 'revitalisation', 'positive energy' and even the word 'everyone' used as proxies for middle-class, trendy and desired. Foregrounding this hip new terroir over ethnic character serves to validate and even valorise gentrification.

Colorado liquor license hearings place the onus on the applicant to establish neighbourhood need for any additional business that will be licensed to serve alcohol. As Highland gentrified, exactly who constitutes this neighbourhood need, residents or visitors, became increasingly important. Most new restaurants in Highland are sited in locations once occupied by bars and restaurants, so changes to zoning and building codes or parking requirements were typically unnecessary. However, all changes to restaurant concept and ownership requires approval by the liquor tribunal. In the early 2000s the tone of most new restaurant liquor license hearings was hopeful. Phrases such as 'the neighbourhood is undergoing development' and 'the expected revitalisation of Highland' dominated testimony in favour of new restaurants. A few years later, extant conditions rooted in cosmopolitanism such as 'diverse pulse of the neighbourhood' and 'eclectic neighbourhood buzz' dominated

testimony in favour of still more license issuances. By 2007 Highland's ethnic diversity had been semantically smoothed with touristic terms such as hip, diverse and eclectic. With the application in 2011 for Williams & Graham, a speakeasy concept restaurant, the focus shifted away entirely from neighbourhood residents toward gastronomical tourists. In this case, testimonials included statements such as 'Highland is now a destination for people who would frequent a speakeasy!' and '*everyone* seems to be excited about a bar moving into the neighbourhood'. The symbolic economy of a middle-class, consumption-based ethos apparent in this temporal reading of liquor license hearing transcripts illuminates how rhetoric came to privilege urban vibe, eclectic mix and diversity as a profitable community asset (Berrey, 2005) over the ethnic diversity of the neighbourhood.

In the preceding cases favouring a modern 'vibe' over Highland's ethnic past was merely implied. Liquor license hearings for ethnic restaurants expose the sharper edges of the boundaries between symbolic economies. Licensing and excise should be a matter of evenhanded rather than prejudicial rationality. On the surface, each establishment must ascertain two things: neighbourhood need and its ability to responsibly serve alcohol. In every single case of the new establishments I reviewed there was a sense of purpose and possibility from both applicants and hearing officers. However the case was altogether different for long-established Mexican restaurants. The tone of Rosa Linda's, Aztec Sol's and Patzquaro's liquor board hearings were openly confrontational. Each restaurant wanted to serve alcohol or augment their existing bar in order to vie within the increasingly competitive neighbourhood. Unlike hearings for the new restaurants, the tenor of these transcripts was outright patronising. Clearly not satisfied with the establishment of neighbourhood

need, the hearing officers demanded proof of economic necessity, essentially forcing applicants to argue for their ability to stay afloat in Highland's rapidly expanding restaurant scene.

Rosa Linda's serves as an instructive case, mostly because of the timing of the application, right when new applicants and hearing officers were exhorting the 'diverse pulse' and 'eclectic mix' of Highland. At their liquor license hearing on 6 June 2006, Rosa Linda's manager Oscar Aguirre testified, 'More and more customers are leaving the restaurant because they can't order margaritas'. Their current license only allowed the sale of beer and wine, not mixed drinks; he was seeking a hotel/restaurant license, under which hard liquor can be served. The proceeding began with the hearing officer stating he did not 'see a compelling reason to change this license'. Only after Rosa Linda's demonstrated neighbourhood and economic need in addition to strong community involvement over the years evidenced by thousands of donated meals distributed over the holidays, did the hearing officer reluctantly grant the change. Ostensibly neutral, profound power asymmetries drive low-level governance. Consequently, while the gears of municipal governance barely grind into alignment for longstanding establishments, they shift smoothly into motion for new restaurants that align with creative city discourses. Looking closely at liquor tribunals, we see neoliberal rhetoric not only embedded in the dominant symbolic economy but also normalised by city bureaucracies.

Commodification

Cities increasingly use entertainment as a driver of commercial viability and gentrification (Lloyd, 2010; Zukin, 2010), which tends to commodify neighbourhood character (Deener, 2007; Mele, 2000). In line with Tamburello's 'bodega tour' as a means of

celebrating Highland's ethnic character, his anchor business in the Olinger redevelopment grew out of the desire to profit from maintaining Highland's 'soul' (see Figure 1). By repurposing a mortuary he commodified death. In Marxian terms, commodification is simply changing a use value into an exchange value, in other words altering something so that it can be bought and sold. Often the only thing altered is perspective. In leasing Olinger's first restaurant space to Lola Mexican Fish House, Tamburello changed the perspective on death from the business of embalming, cremation and burial to one framed by a tourist gaze (Urry, 2002). Lola is a concept 'coastal Mexican restaurant', based in an openly touristic view of Mexican culture, one that in Tamburello's words 'celebrates fiesta and captures the spirituality of death'. Lola's Jamey Fader of the Big Red F Restaurant Group notes 'I want Lola to feel like a Mexican grandmother's house; when you walk in, it's modern and hip, with a reverence for the sacred'. Sipping aged tequila and enjoying red snapper tacos, Lola patrons consume simulacra of the spirituality of death.

Catholicism socially and physically marks Highland. Tucked into the upper east corner of the neighbourhood sits Our Lady of Guadalupe Church located along the inward curve of Interstate 25, separated from downtown by the formerly industrial Platte River Valley (Figure 1). This predominantly Latino pocket surrounding the church does not appear on the mental maps of newcomers, many of whom shared stories of stumbling across this 'unexpectedly quaint' space while strolling through the neighbourhood. For them, finding this unanticipated concentration of Latino culture, an enchanting surprise for many, legitimates their decision to move to a gentrifying, if still slightly edgy, neighbourhood. But for the Latino

residents, this church, its parking lot, and the surrounding streets and sidewalks are places they have long been comfortable practicing their religion in public.

Particularly during festivals the physicality and social practices in and around Our Lady of Guadalupe reveal rifts of cosmopolitanism. Events held in the public right-of-way such as church bazaars, *Ceremonia Tonantzin* and *el Dia de los Muertos* are components of Latino symbolic economy. These street festivals ensure that cultural norms and meanings are passed between generations, sustaining and intertwining religious, linguistic and social practices. For newcomers stumbling upon these festivals the experience of culture is necessarily touristic, amounting to enchanted voyeuristic moments. One Highland newcomer mentioned that while out on an afternoon walk not far from her house she ran into 'a Mexican street fair'. She continued, 'I felt like something magical happened, like I was in a dream'. Other newcomers used phrases such as 'it's like walking back in time' and 'it's like walking down a street in Mexico' and 'all you hear around is Spanish being spoken, it's definitely a different type of experience'. Here temporality and rhythm are important. For newcomers, cultural festivals and Sunday masses are things one visits on weekends, experiences one has occasionally. These instances are individually consumed and do not, as they do for Latino neighbourhood residents, sustain a sense of community. The rhythms of these festivals reassure newcomers that they moved to a cool, hip, and culturally diverse neighbourhood. They also draw new residents. Watching 'cute little kids dressed up in traditional Mexican costumes, dancing, and running around' reinforced one couple's decision to move to Highland. Turning into performative objects of the tourist gaze

(Urry, 2002), people simply practicing their culture (Calhoun and Sennett, 2007) become neighbourhood amenities.

The tenor of festivals has changed considerably during gentrification. In the span of two decades Our Lady of Guadalupe's liturgical spaces changed into consumable amenities. Not simply the festivals themselves but the permeability of the boundaries between public and private, sacred and secular, and familial and communal constituted the shapes of this cultural space. Remarking on the constant permeability of sacred and public space in Highland, and the vital role that everyday public rights-of-way played in cultural reproduction, Father Gourley recalls that in the mid 1980s:

We had a lot of street theater for holy week; we would reenact the Passion of Christ inside the church. We didn't just read it. We acted it out, with nails and blood and screaming, the whole thing! It was just *incredible!* We'd continue this procession for blocks beyond the church. And after parading through the neighborhood we'd come back around to the Church. It was a way of using the neighborhood streets to tie the community together.

According to Father Gourley and Latino residents, who insist that because of 'complaints from new neighbors' and 'potentially worrisome homebuyers', a subdued Passion of the Christ performance is now confined within the walls of the church. Tellingly, the Our Lady of Guadalupe Bazaar, a yearly fundraising festival celebrated on the streets surrounding the church, has become a yearly tourist destination, now even mentioned in real estate brochures. Incrementally, by socially regulating the boundaries and temporality of public space while passively consuming the spaces of religious festivals, newcomers change streets that once knit the community together into conduits for penetrating and exploiting indigenous culture.

Cosmopolitanism

The manifestation of racially, ethnically, socially and culturally diverse actors sharing urban space can be termed a cosmopolitan turn. Much recent work in human geography celebrates this current trend, observed in both public spaces during festivals and private spaces by means of inclusionary zoning measures. A chorus of urban scholars, notably Sennett (2001) and Amin (2008, 2012), claim this is a welcome change to the white-flight, ghettoisation, concentrated poverty and social injustices that marked mid-century cities. Following this arc of scholarship, increased diversity leads to the celebration of, or at minimum a tolerance for, other ethnicities, genders, ages, religions and practices, culminating in a greater potential for less divisive cities. This essay has charted a more discouraging path through the management of public space, arguing that low-level governance aids and abets socially unjust gentrification pressures. I now address cosmopolitanism directly to illustrate how gentrifiers articulate these concepts as levers of neighbourhood change.

Scholars note that diversity in gentrifying neighbourhoods can be a hotly contested topic (Berrey, 2005). Whether with art walks foregrounding gentrifier aesthetics (Shaw and Sullivan, 2011) or commercial corridors hawking images of diversity and tolerance (Deener, 2007), inner-city neighbourhoods are reconfigured in terms of an urbane symbolic economy rooted in white middle-class worldviews (Zukin, 2008). For example, a City of Denver farmers' market zoning code authorises Highland's farmer's market to be held along Boulder Street every Saturday during the summer. This is a middle-class public space event in which few longtime residents have the inclination or the finances to participate. The growing absence of longtime residents from public space does not go unnoticed by Highland residents. Often filled with vastly divergent social, religious

and career-oriented worlds, the public right-of-way remains one of the few places newcomers and longtime residents come into contact. Acknowledging that their presence was altering neighbourhood patterns of diversity, many newcomers puzzle as to how to use streets and sidewalks to build cultural bridges, what Anderson (2004, 2011) would term *cosmopolitan canopies*, to foster inter-ethnic contact within Highland's diverse cultural landscape. Two efforts, conceptualised by newcomers and occurring along the right-of-way, expose how cosmopolitanism actually reinforces a thin notion of diversity. Well-meaning newcomers eager to make a positive impact on their new neighbourhood proposed ideas for a First Sunday Stroll and the LoHi White Table Cloth Dinner at HUNI (Highland United Neighbors Inc. – Highlands official registered neighbourhood organisation) meetings.

Operating out of a 28-foot tall, 14,000-pound metal dairy can, the Little Man Ice Cream stand is a neighbourhood phenomenon. Located on the former Olinger Mortuary's loading dock, this space was what newcomers mentioned most frequently when I asked them what they consider public space in Highland. On warm weekend afternoons and evenings, its long, slow-moving line up 16th Street is the place to see and be seen for Highland newcomers and visitors. It was also the starting point of the First Sunday Stroll. This event was an attempt to construct a cosmopolitan canopy, a scripted space in which people assume non-threatening roles of casual contact and public eavesdropping. Proposed as a diverse event, it rooted nonetheless in a decidedly white middle-class notion of strolling and talking. It was intended to get as many people out meandering the streets of Highland as possible, meeting and chatting with neighbours, introducing children to potential playmates, and, importantly mixing Latinos and whites on the same streets at the same

time doing the same thing. By all accounts, the event, which started and ended in the summer of 2010, was a failure. Not many people showed up and most of those who did opted to hang out near Little Man Ice Cream. Out in the neighbourhood, residents simply sat on their front porches waiting for people to meander by. Not many did. Importantly, yet perhaps not surprisingly, no Latinos took part.

Another cosmopolitan canopy constructed in the right-of-way was the LoHi White Tablecloth Dinner. Envisioned as 'the *whole* community coming together for a beautiful dinner on a lovely summer evening', as one of its organisers shared with me, the event was planned and articulated as a means to use a meal shared in public space to build common ground for the entire neighbourhood. Focused around a white tablecloth, the affair appealed to middle-class notions of fine dining. Establishing the event as a collection of diverse individuals, the LoHi White Tablecloth Dinner invitations requested attendees bring 'dinner and drinks for your family, a dessert to share, plates, cups, utensils, and a family candle'. This way the dinner would feature 'different candles lighting the individual faces of *diverse* people at the table'. To ensure a level socioeconomic diversity, neighbourhood food stamp recipients were invited. Mixed income became a proxy for racial diversity (compare Berrey, 2005). The night of the dinner was beautiful; participants enjoyed the food and conversation. The setting was certainly unique – a long table draped in white stretching down tree-lined Bryant Street in the western section of the neighbourhood. Of note, this event not only publicised newcomer culture, it was generally derided by longtime residents who tend to disassociate themselves from anything to do with the realtor-coined 'LoHi' nickname for (lower) Highland. One Latino informant thought the event was 'too fancy for the

street', another said it was 'too sophisticated for *el barrio*'. In effect, the LoHi White Tablecloth Dinner and the First Sunday Strolls worked toward the public display of components of a newcomer symbolic economy along streets used less and less as physical components of a Latino symbolic economy.

Temporary use of public streets for festivals works toward establishing and stabilising neighbourhood solidarity (Staheli and Mitchell, 2008). By organising events, newcomers privilege middle-class notions of culture and articulate notions of diversity and inclusiveness. By inviting the entire neighbourhood, 'making concerted efforts to include Latinos', one HUNI member told me with no apparent irony, 'we're trying to tell them: it's your neighborhood too'. Additionally, newcomers openly support Latino public events as efforts to 'be accepted in the neighborhood', as a former president of HUNI shared with me. New Highland residents tend to see their neighbourhood as Denver's newest 'hip, happening place' and want to share this energy with longtime residents. However, those concerted efforts to be accepted in the neighbourhood remains, to many longtimers, reminiscent of the Spanish colonisation their ancestors experienced. Just as newcomers attempt to be accepted in Highland, so too did colonial Spanish settlers seek acceptance in the American Southwest by making determined efforts, frequently invoking the Catholic Church, to syncretise native and Christian religiosity and change Aztec culture practices through the infusion of European worldviews. 'It's odd', shared a former Chicano activist, 'it feels like we're being colonized, *again*'.

Discussion

On the surface this study revolves around cultural notions of diversity and the

appropriation of this slippery concept by various architects of neighbourhood change. Tamburello's unrealised bodega tour, the LoHi White Tablecloth Dinner and attempt to establish a First Sunday Stroll serve as examples toward this end. While diversity factors into right-of-way gentrification, disentangling its consequences and mapping its contact points with more effective levers of neighbourhood change required that I examine not only the intricate fabrics of cultures but also the fine threads of municipal governance. Doing so, I revealed how the spatial contours of gentrification emerge from frequently invisible power asymmetries embedded in right-of-way socialising, parking policy and business licensing. Blomley's (2007) term semantic smoothing is instructive here. Ignorant of past and present social injustices and the lasting benefits of white privilege, discourse that equivocates diversity cloaks power asymmetries in equality. This study exposes how difference is simultaneously celebrated as a diverse pulse and flattened onto an even playing field, then honed into a powerful gentrification tool. Peering under the cloak, we find race and ethnic discrimination woven into the arbitrary subtexts of commonsense urbanity (compare Modan, 2007). Elsewhere, I argue that in facilitating the gentrification of North Denver neighbourhoods, the City of Denver essentially policed out of existence lowrider cruising (Langegger, 2014) and the cultural significance of a neighbourhood park (Langegger, 2013). Here I showed that the gentrification of public space is often subtle, relying not on police power but on the little understood power of low-level city bureaucracies. And I mapped this vector back to the symbolic economies at play in neighbourhood gentrification.

During Highland's dramatic demographic shift, unassuming, local-serving pizzerias and tacquerias lost street legitimacy to hip restaurants with taglines such as 'farm-to-

table', 'world street food' and 'Asian comfort food'. Without exception, these new restaurants align with the creative city rhetoric, in that they are conceptualised, advertised and managed in ways to attract customers from the greater metropolitan region and simultaneously to lure talent and investment to Denver. In Highland, at first imperceptibly then strikingly, the critical mass of dining patrons shifted from locals grabbing a taco and a beer after work to culinary tourists willing to drive to the neighbourhood, hunt for a place to park, then wait in line to sample 'steamed buns with fried green tomatoes, miso mayo, pimento, and Thai basil' or 'honey-sriracha duck wings with salted cucumber and togarashi ranch'. Contemporaneously, social codes regulating the boundaries and rhythms of Highland's public right-of-way shifted, privileging lunch hour and night-out touristic consumption over Latino everyday urbanism. Other street rhythms changed too. Festivals, vital to the reproduction of Latino culture, gradually transformed into places to be gazed upon and consumed as a neighbourhood amenity.

Territory is more than a spatial concept; it has temporality and rhythm. Commonsensical notions such as play, work, rest and celebration have strong cultural foundations. Looking closely at liquor licensing hearing transcripts, I found that middle-class symbolic economy is part and parcel of the regulation of the city's right-of-way. Who parks, when, and why they park, and whether their pedestrian movements along sidewalks are driven by sporadic bursts of consumption or the sustained, intertwining movements of groups of friends and families, directly impacts the rhythms of everyday public space. Additionally, the type and tenor of the restaurant scene is directly connected to who waits in line for a table and who, after a meal, strolls down neighbourhood streets to their house or car. I have shown that low-level municipal

bylaws matter. Using parking regulations, the city of Denver intends to habituate residents to new temporal orders. 'After all', insists transportation planner Cynthia Patten 'streets are public, not private property'. An unintended consequence of these regulations is the fortification of public-private divides, boundaries that each longtime resident mentioned was far more permeable before 'the hipsters started moving in'. Multiple scholars have noted that Latinos practice a patently public culture (Betancur, 2011; Davis, 2000; Diaz, 2005; Rios, 2010; Rojas, 2010; Valle and Torres, 2000); others note that the boundaries between public and private spaces for Latinos is more blurred than for mainstream society (Crawford, 2008; Hood, 2008). As Highland gentrified, the rhythms of this permeability changed and as they did, so changed everyday spaces. Playing in the streets and audible conversations between houses gave way to closed windows and the open admonishment of children playing on sidewalks and in alleys. More than one interviewee informed me that the construction of this boundary was enforced with police violence. 'Who' asked one longtime local, 'calls the cops on kids playing in the street? Hipsters, that's who!' he answered. Rhythmic shifts are also apparent with the march of seasons. As Father Gourley noted, rhythms of religiosity and celebration tied to calendrical Catholic and Aztec traditions changed as the focus of these festivals shifted indoors to accommodate the gazes and complaints of newcomers.

In Highland, a touristic cosmopolitanism implies excitement over and tolerance of difference, rather than the amelioration of injustice, and thus dislocates discussions of rights from the mechanics of gentrification. Extending Valverde (2012), I further insist that this disconnect between rights to the city and gentrification is woven into the fine layers of municipal governance. This study

shows how euro-centric notions of the city, specifically those reproduced by parking policy and in tribunal procedures such as business licensing, work to facilitate gentrification pressure while frustrating indigenous claims to public space. We shed light on this complex and essentially invisible process when we consider rights to the city in terms of urban governance rather than state-level governance. States are structured around constitutional legal canons; these canons root in notions of human rights that arose during Europe's Enlightenment. North American and European civil law is therefore concerned with individual prosperity, criminal deviance and penal reform. Valverde (2012) helps us understand that unlike civil law, municipal laws are concerned with rights attached to property, not to persons. I bridge this divide by showing how licensing and right-of-way management, intended to simply regulate private and public property, affects individuals.

This brings us back to conflicting symbolic economies. The euro-centric notions of the autonomous self (Taylor, 1989) interlaced with those of real property and city planning undergirding North American urban governance (Valverde, 2012), disharmonise with Latino urbanism particularly in the American Southwest (Davis, 2000; Diaz, 2005; Rios, 2010). Newcomers and longtime residents often share overarching goals of neighbourhood revitalisation; however, the means of attaining these objectives are often widely divergent. Considering the architectures of low-level governance, this study exposed how the regulation of the public right-of-way frustrates the symbolic economy manifest in ethnic neighbourhoods by favouring the symbolic economy of gentrifiers. Finally, I argued that in deconstructing neighbourhood change, the type and tenor of diversity must be carefully considered. Put simply, conflict over street legitimacy, cosmopolitanism and the commodification

of diversity are integral elements of the gentrification of public space. This article provides multiple perspectives to help scholars reframe the often discussed yet seldom empirically pursued relationships between asymmetrically positioned symbolic economies and low-level regulation of public space. Further research unravelling legal geographies of urban governance will help us recognise why longtime residents feel increasingly excluded from public spaces in gentrifying neighbourhoods.

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