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May 10th, 2019
Final Report
Intro to GIS Methods

Mapping Gentrification in Little Senegal - Final Report

Project Summary

My project aims to complement the research that I have been doing on Little Senegal (for the course titled Urban Dislocations and Architecture of Diasporas) and map out the demographic change and the income and rent value change through Manhattan to see how the area was gentrified in the course of about 40 years.

Purpose & Background

Senegalese diaspora in New York is located in Central Harlem. Located around Malcolm Shabazz Mosque, Little Senegal has been affected by the ongoing gentrification that is caused by various factors; a major one being the presence of Columbia. The effects of Columbia on the neighborhood can be listed as increasing rent and property values, dislocation of Senegalese immigrants out of the area and changing demographics of the location. This effect of Columbia on the neighborhood has been one of the biggest obstacles for us during our research process on Little Senegal. Our legitimacy as researchers are both enhanced and destructed by our affiliation with Columbia due to the authority of the institution and the negative impact on the neighborhood done by the institution. Thus I wanted to focus my project on the gentrification that is very present in the neighborhood. Mapping out the increased rent and comparing it to the changing demographics of the neighborhood would help me shine a light on the changes that the neighborhood have faced over time. This could potentially help raise awareness for the protection of the area and move away from gentrification as a long term goal.

Literature Review

Previous research on the topic is quite numerous. The research, however, is mostly qualitative and focuses on the narrative of gentrification instead of numbers. The first source that I want to mention is an Untapped Cities article which has an overview on the general history and description of the neighborhood however it lacks the data aspect of a thorough article. Another article written by Madeleine Thompson could be an example for the present research and resources on the topic. Even though her argument of gentrification in Little Senegal is supported by solid proof (such as examples of unaffordable housing units, various recordings of interviews, etc), they are not quite supported by qualitative data that maps out and thus gives more solid evidence of gentrification. The last research on the neighborhood - conducted by a CUNY student Fatima Shama, has a better example on how the qualitative and

quantitative data could be integrated into the final product of research, however even that is not enough to show a site specific set of information due to the limited area of the neighborhood.
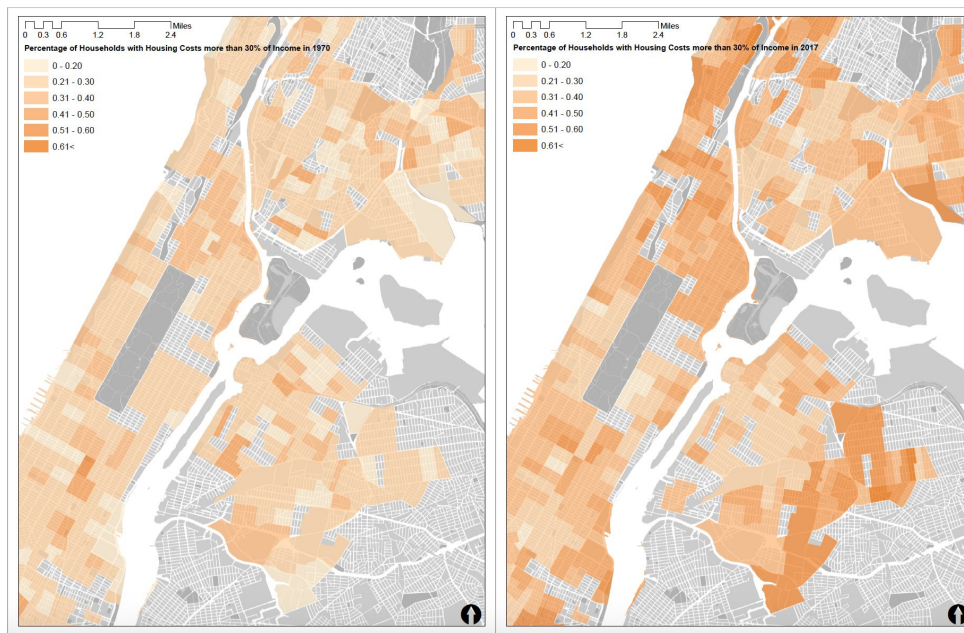
Data

I have used US Decennial Census Data for the year 1970 and compared this information with ACS 5-Year Estimates for 2017. I combined the racial demographic distribution data with the information on housing and rent over time. I also used MapPluto data to get building specific data in order to zoom in at a neighborhood scale.

Methodology

My approach to mapping this information in a legible manner has been to start off with browsing the data that is available to me. I needed to see which sets of data would be let me have a historical comparison. After I have decided which categories I will use in my maps, I decided the scale of my maps. I chose to map out the entirety of Manhattan because doing so would help me point out the specific areas that gentrification is concentrated at - which then would get me one step closer to the fact that Little Senegal is especially highly affected by the changes due to it.
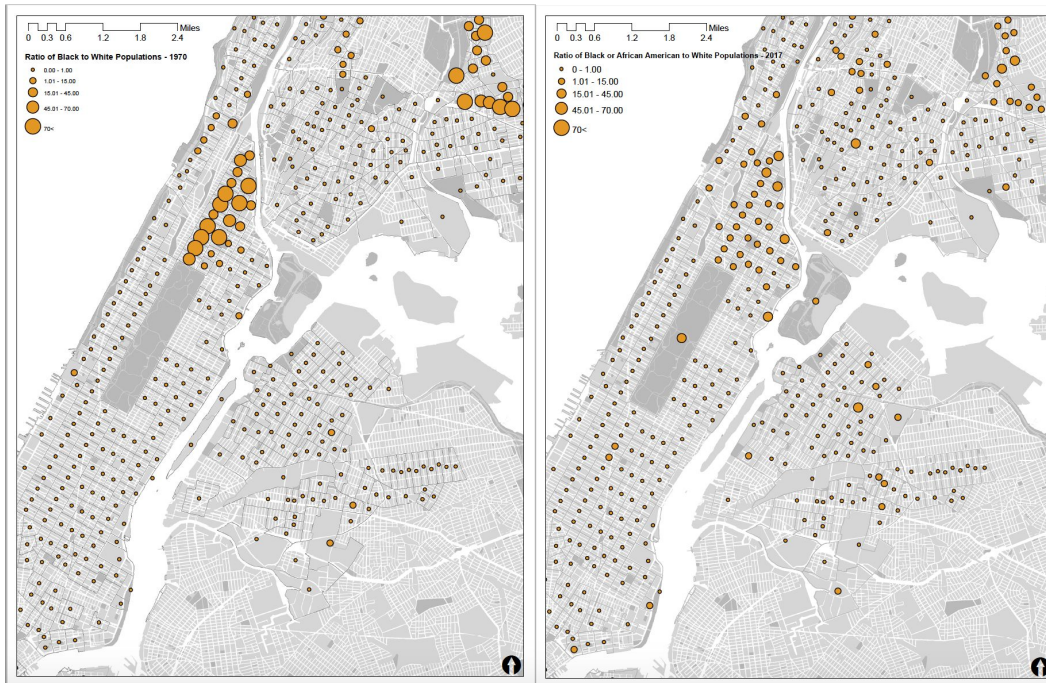
I created three sets of maps that initially provide the audience a general look on the subject and then zoom in on the neighborhood with the building specific mapping of zoning and land ownership type. I created a series with graduated colors and the others graduated symbols (the bigger the circle the greater the ratio). For the last series I looked at the actual zoning categories and matched my color scheme to the official colors of zoning and land use.
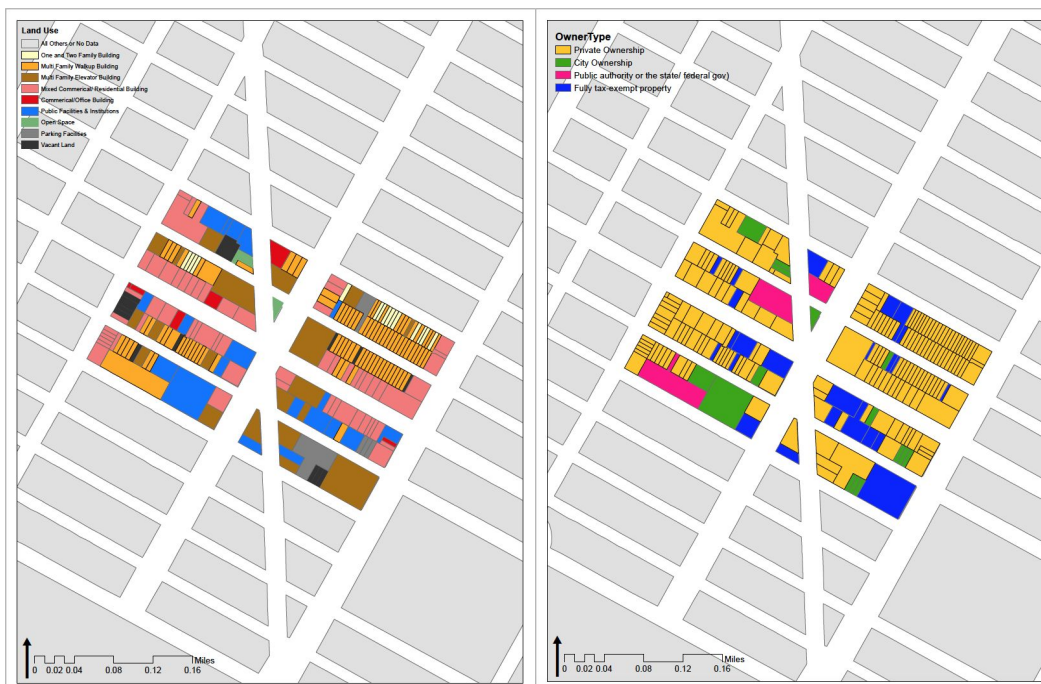
Findings

These maps show the change in time (from 1970 to 2017) in the percentage of households with housing costs more than 30% of their income which is an indicator on the difficulty of maintaining location. It is visible that Central Harlem is very

much affected by the increase in this percentage. This is one of the first steps that lead to dislocation of the locals.

These maps show the demographic change of the ratio of black people to white people. The visible change of demographics of the black dominated census tracts further prove my point that especially Central

Harlem - which is a hub for black people dominated communities - face diasporic dislocations.

Limitations

There has been a couple of limitations during my mapping process. First, and I think the most effective, limitation that I have faced is due to the changing notions of racial identity. In the racial categories in the 1970 data, the groups were White and Black whereas on the 2017 data the categories were much more specific; white only, african american only etc. So exact comparison was not possible due to the lack of corresponding information sets. Another limitation that probably affected the maps is the difference in data collecting methodology between the ACS and US Decennial Census datasets. One is data from 5 years and the other is 10 years. And this difference is a factor that potentially skews the data.

Conclusions

Through my maps, I have proven the implications of gentrification on Manhattan - focusing the density in Central Harlem, where Little Senegal is located. Looking at the demographic change of increase in white population to black population combined with the increased housing costs, the audience is pointed towards the direction of believing that gentrification is a very real and tangible phenomenon in the neighborhood. To go further with this research, the effective institutions could be researched in the hopes to find out the factors that play a role in the changing of the neighborhood.

Works Cited:

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3) Cohen, Marjorie. "Little Senegal on Harlem's 116th Street Shrinks as Gentrification Takes Hold." Brick Underground, 24 Mar. 2017, www.brickunderground.com/live/little-senegal-in-Harlem.
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