PEOPLING PHOENIX’S PAST: EXAMINING THE SPATIAL DEMOGRAPHY OF EARLY CENTRAL PHOENIX USING HISTORICAL UNITED STATES CENSUS RECORDS

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Introduction

- From the late 19th Century, Phoenix’s north-south divide, originating along the Southern Pacific Railroad, separated affluent, well-preserved White neighborhoods from disadvantaged minority communities exposed to a variety of social and environmental injustices (Bolin et al. 2005).
- Census dataset: fine-scale, spatially explicit data to support narratives of racial and economic inequality in early Phoenix.
- Secondary aim: tying historical data to contemporary land-use/demographic data as a means to assess the legacy effects of change through a series of individual landholders and institutional actors.

- Case study period: 1920-1940
- Case study area: three tracts constituting the majority of the Downtown Phoenix Urban Form project area.
- Examining racial/economic inequality during a period of greater urban compactness in Phoenix.
- Examining causal factors of Phoenix’s Postwar downtown decay, vacancy.

Methods

- Using 1920, 1930, and 1940 census data to support narratives of racial and injustices (Bolin et al. 2005) to a variety of social and environmental injustice narratives and ecosystem service distribution.
- Transcribing and analyzing employment and income data in census longforms.
- Constructing historical home/rent data with postwar and contemporary datasets.
- Further analysis of the influence of neighborhood racially-restrictive covenants, HODs, Homebuilding industry boom in early Central Phoenix’s patterns of spatial inequality.

Patterns of Race/Ethnicity and Residential Segregation

Results

- Observed Patterns, 1920-1940

Home and Rent Values, 1930-1940

- Home Values
- Rent Values

Patterns of Race/Ethnicity and Residential Segregation 1920 1930 1940

Phoenix’s original townsite (Tract 2, Van Buren St to Washington St) depopulates 1920-1940 with commercial and industrial expansion, widening the gap between racially restrictive White neighborhoods to the north and largely minority-populated neighborhoods to the south.

Zoning and Patterns of Race/Ethnicity, 1930-1940

Key Points

- Intensification of residential segregation patterns along Phoenix’s north-south divide observed 1920-1940 with CBD/Industrial belt expansion.
- Consistent north-south socioeconomic disparity (home and rent values) observed 1930-1940.
- Inequitable zoning: consistently majority-White residential zones sited adjacent to CBD, growing minority residential zones’ access to CBD limited by light industrial/industrial zones.
- Declining property values 1930-1940 amid residential growth outside Case Study Area signal postwar vacation, decay of Downtown Phoenix.

Future Directions

- Joining Census data to historical land-use data (parcels) derived from Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.
- Modeling historical micro-level relationship between population, land-use, and institutions (zoning) in Central Phoenix, with emphasis on environmental justice narratives and ecosystem service distribution.
- Transcription/analysis of employment and income data in census longforms.
- Bridging historical/home/rent data with postwar and contemporary datasets.
- Further analysis of the influence of neighborhood racially-restrictive covenants, HODs, Homebuilding industry boom in early Central Phoenix’s patterns of spatial inequality.

Sources

- Maps, Imagery and Data: Adobe Illustrator CS6 Data Resources, Maricopa County Health Department, Phoenix Urban Research Lab, Neighborhood Change Database, United States Census Bureau.

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