

ABSTRACT

This project investigates gentrification-related displacement in the City of Los Angeles, California by introducing an analytic method that utilizes Volunteered Geographic Information (VGI). Data harvested from the social media network Twitter were analyzed and the results compared against an established method to assess risk of displacement that utilizes aggregated census data. Aggregated census data are problematic in displacement research due to spatial and temporal constraints. The purpose of this investigation is to advance research on displacement by introducing an alternative method to gain a better understanding of the dynamic nature of gentrification and displacement by leveraging spatially explicit real-time VGI data.

This study examined approximately one million randomly harvested geotagged Twitter posts (tweets) within the City of Los Angeles, from August 2013 to January 2014, to investigate patterns of displacement. The research employed two frameworks: 1) a traditional census-based Data Aggregation Method; and 2) an alternative VGI (Twitter) based method. The results indicate that although tweets consisting of words related to displacement were not densely located in census tracts that have a high risk of displacement, as recorded by the Data Aggregated Method, areas of Los Angeles that are going through or just finished revitalization projects did contain such tweets. If left unmonitored, these areas could soon gentrify and displace as indicated by their demographic change over the last twelve years. In other words, the VGI Method detected a signal for potential displacement. Further, the VGI Method shows that data from Twitter produced results that are comparable to an established method of locating demographic change and go beyond an aggregated method's spatial and temporal level of analysis.