Apologies for the Following Quantitative Data
Success and Failure in Data-Driven Projects

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“... authors of a paper presented at an IBG meeting in the early 1990s began by apologizing to their audience for presenting some quantitative data in table form as part of their paper.”
Gentrification

Bring on the hipsters

Gentrification is good for the poor

Feb 21st 2015 | WASHINGTON, DC | From the print edition
Takeaways

1. Socially constructed data is social!
2. Power (institutional, media) can compromise / sacrifice / undermine what we publish -- and our ideology.
3. What is the role of the researcher?
4. As cartographers / geographers / GISers, we can be positively radical, but it requires active engagement with, not of, communities.
Positively Radical

Toward a rebuilding of spatial sciences:

“One consequence has been a shift away from the now-familiar effort to expose how scientific facts are constructed, toward more judicious strategies to ...
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“One consequence has been a shift away from the now-familiar effort to expose how scientific facts are constructed, toward more judicious strategies to ...

1. distinguish constructions that are useful from those that are irrelevant or dangerous, and
2. imagine and create more emancipatory constructions of economy, society, or space.”

-- Wyly 2011, Positively Radical
Portland, Oregon: A Tale of Two Cities

It’s the Portlandia we all know, where the dream of the 80’s is still alive.

• Known for sustainability
• Largest share of bike commuters
• Breweries!
• Best place to live in every list
• Foodie city
• Maker city
• Tech and entrepreneurial city
Portland, Oregon: A Tale of Two Cities

“It's poor, it's dangerous, it's growing like crazy—and it's more important than ever.” -- WWeek

• History of institutional racism
• Lack of sidewalks, infrastructure

20-minute neighborhood concept analysis
Dangerous Constructions

- Problematic data sources
- Problematic legend scale
- Problematic conception of “20 minutes”
- White middle class conception of what should be nearby
- Ignored institutional racism

Note: other 20 minute neighborhood initiatives were different.
Badassness Map Media Coverage

• “Portlanders has posted this video in response to the city’s famed ‘20 Minute Neighborhood’ map with a more nuanced version of why they have chosen to live and work in the “mecca of badass-ness.”” CEOS for Cities

• “And do you have a neighborhood that is most likely to ‘put a bird on it?’”” KPAM 890AM First Edition

• “… threw all this data into a formula and the badass-ness scale was born. The top scorers fall into the “hella badass” category and the lowest scorers fall into the “Vancouver-ish” category (sorry, Vancouver).”” KATU TV
About City Observatory

City Observatory is a website and think tank devoted to data-driven analysis of cities and the policies that shape them.

The website will feature posts that tackle misconceptions about cities, break down the latest urban research, and highlight the innovative ideas that strengthen our communities.

The site will cover topics such as transportation, housing, gentrification, place making, economic opportunity, and industry clusters. Core topics will be addressed in issue “cards” that will be updated on a consistent basis to reflect the latest data and research.

Periodically, the site will feature in-depth research report and papers on urban policy topics like crime in cities, traffic congestion, neighborhood change, and migration. City Observatory is based in Portland, Oregon—a city synonymous with creative urban thinking—but our vision is nationwide in scope, looking at the best ideas for promoting city success, wherever they originate.

City Observatory is supported by Knight Foundation.
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### Table 2: Change in 1970 High-Poverty Urban Census Tracts in Large Metropolitan Areas, 1970-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tracts</td>
<td>1,119</td>
<td>1,119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>4,980,522</td>
<td>3,350,821</td>
<td>(1,629,701)</td>
<td>-32.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1,963,870</td>
<td>1,117,255</td>
<td>(846,615)</td>
<td>-43.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Census tracts within 10 miles of CBD in 51 largest metro areas, with 1970 poverty rates of 30% or greater.

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### Table 3: Change in Population in 1970 High-Poverty Census Tracts, 1970 to 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood Type</th>
<th>2010 Poverty Rate</th>
<th>Number of Tracts/Share of 1970 Poor Population</th>
<th>Change in Population 1970 to 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chronic High Poverty</td>
<td>30%+</td>
<td>737 Tracts (74% of 1970 poor)</td>
<td>-40% Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still Poor</td>
<td>15% to 30%</td>
<td>277 Tracts (21% of 1970 poor)</td>
<td>-23% Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebounding</td>
<td>&lt;15%</td>
<td>105 Tracts (5% of 1970 poor)</td>
<td>+33% Population</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Census tracts within 10 miles of CBD in 51 largest metro areas.
“Didn’t get the traction we wanted, so we’re going to repackag..."
Lost in Place: Why the persistence and spread of concentrated poverty—not gentrification—is our biggest urban challenge.

Joe Cortright
Dilkon Mahmoudi
Bring on the hipsters

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Gentrification is rare

Of the census tracts that were high-poverty* in 1970, what % of tracts in 2010 were:

- Less than 15% poor: 66
- 15-30% poor: 25
- Still high poverty*: 9

Source: City Observatory

*More than 30% of population poor

Economist.com
The Myth of Gentrification

By John Buntin

A summer festival in June 2014 in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

It started in Soho, then moved to Chelsea and the East Village. Riots in Tompkins Square in 1990 earned it some headlines but didn't stop its creeping...
Contradicting Social Constructions

Slate: Gentrification is a myth
Economist: Gentrification is good for the poor.

If gentrification is a myth, it can’t be good for the poor, and it can’t be bad for the poor. It can’t be anything. It’s a myth!
Always remember that the vast majority of folks with hot takes on your research topic read an article that summarizes 10% of it.

@jordanclaire

And, as always, never read the comments.

@jordanclaire

*pushes glasses up nose* excuse me i read the reddit summary of the citylab article of the abstract of your paper...i think i'm qualified

@surlyurbanist

@jordanclaire
False-Choice Urbanism

“Weigh up the supposed pros and cons of gentrification, throw in a few half-baked worries about threats to ‘diversity’ and housing affordability, and conclude that gentrification is actually ‘good’ on balance because it represents the reinvestment that stops neighbourhoods from dying during a financial crisis.”

Slater 2014

Economist and Slate miss overall contradictions that cause both poverty and gentrification.
Apologies for the Quantitative Data

“My point is simply that postpositivism can be politically co-opted just like positivist spatial science was.”

-- Wyly 2009, Strategic Positivism
Takeaways

1. Socially constructed data is social!
2. Power (institutional, media) can compromise / sacrifice / undermine what we publish -- and our ideology. *Within non-profits/institutions these two can clash*

3. What is the role of the researcher?
4. As cartographers / geographers / GISers, we can be positively radical, but it requires active engagement with, not of, communities.
Imaginary Crisis: Is Gentrification A Myth?
“Sidewalks aren’t really an issue because there aren’t any [group laughing]... My wife is blind with a cane. And it’s pretty hard to navigate around there when everything looks the same. So that’s a big issue for her.”
Thank you

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http://cityobservatory.org/maps/lostinspace