

Houston: Solidarity or Segregated?

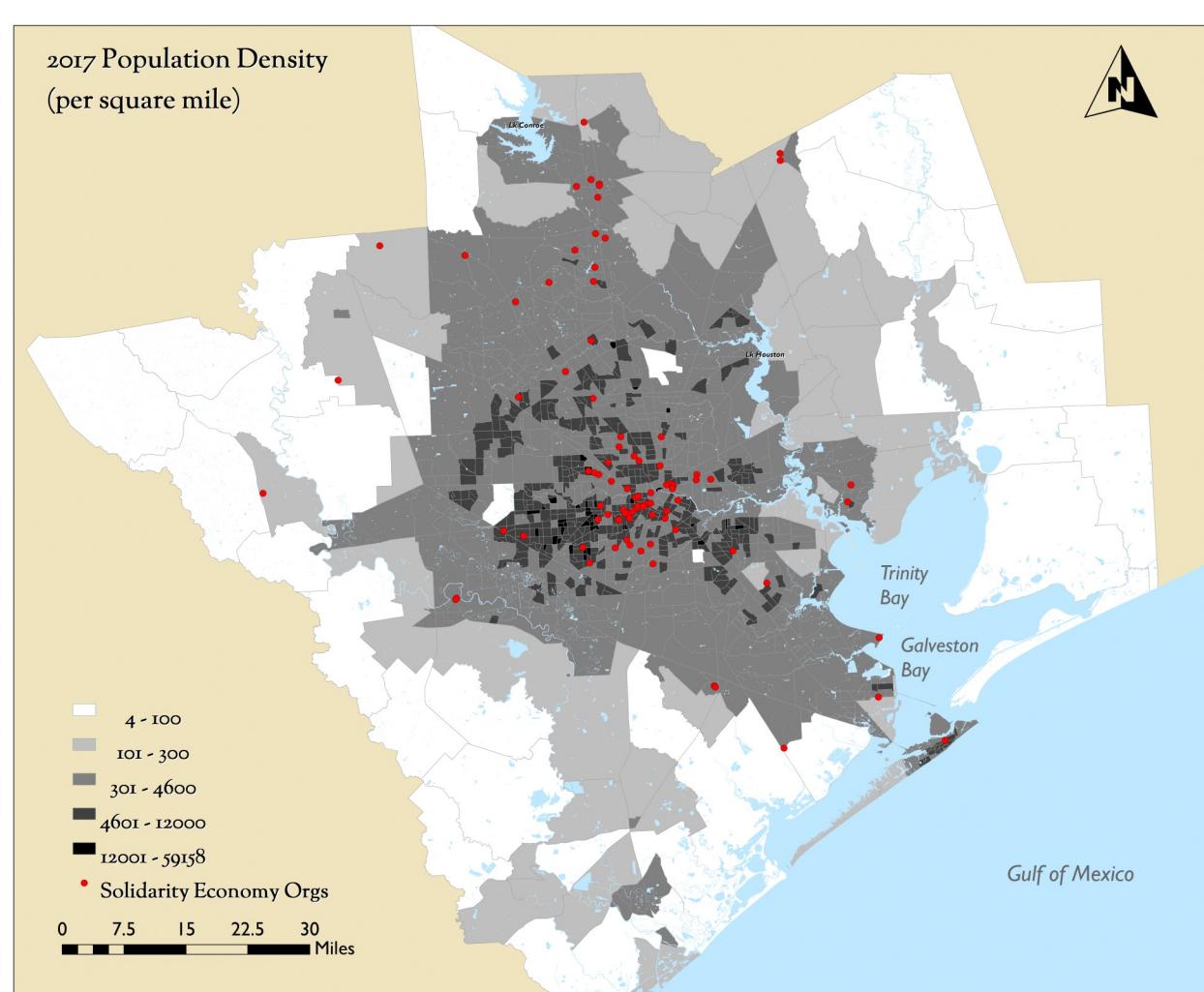
Introduction

Over the past twenty years, Houston has been one of the fastest growing metro regions in the United States. In this time, the city has grown from 1.977 million people in 2000 to approximately 2.19 people in 2019. Much of this is attributed to immigration; Houston was the second most popular immigration destination after New York City during this time span and almost a quarter of the region's population is foreign born. However, the region is also the destination for domestic migration as well – up to 100,000 people evacuated to Houston during Hurricane Katrina are thought to have remained in the region. At almost 600 square miles, Houston is the geographically largest metro region in the country,

Solidarity Economy

Houston's strong and diverse population growth over the past thirty years, its unique urban planning strategy, and the city's history of mutual aid following catastrophic hurricanes and floods make it an interesting test case for the emergence of a solidarity economy. The solidarity economy is defined by the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network (USSEN) as "an alternative development framework grounded in principles of solidarity, social equity, sustainability, democracy, and pluralism (it is not a one-size-fits-all approach). The aim is to build an economy that serves people and planet as opposed to the mainstream capitalist paradigm that is built around individual self-interest, competition, blind growth, and profit-maximizing."

Below is a population density map with the locations of the solidarity economy location as points.

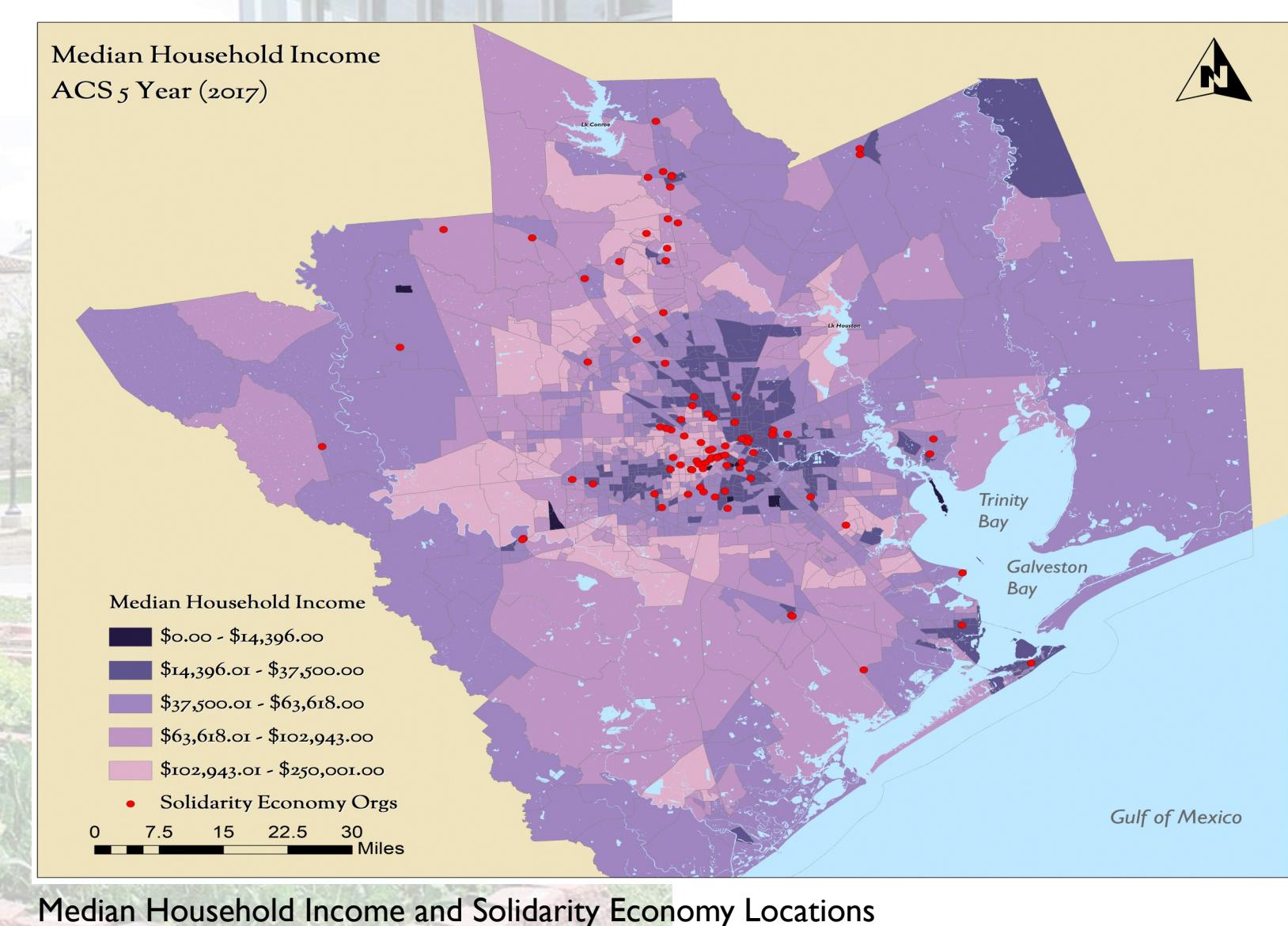


Population Density legend classes determined with average population density for the US, for metro regions in the US, and for Houston in mind.

Cartographer: Drew Merrill
Data Source: 2010 Census
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic
UEP 234, Intro to GIS
Professor Sumeeta Srinivasan

Research Questions

- 1) Where are the solidarity economy orgs in Houston?
- 2) Is Houston's population clustered along race and income lines? Are foreign born residents clustered?
- 3) Are the SEO locations near these clusters?



Methods

After retrieving the location data, I had to geocode the locations into points, first through an address locator created from the Census TIGER shapefiles and then manually for the locations the address locator did not add.

Using the ACS survey demographic data, I then looked at overall population, income level, immigration, and race to produce maps for population density and median household income, as well as maps to show the percentage of the population of each tract that is foreign born, Black, Asian, and Latinx.

Using Aneslin Moran's I, I determined where there was clustering for each of the above maps. I also combined the results to find tracts that had scored as a High-High cluster in all the previous maps.

Sources

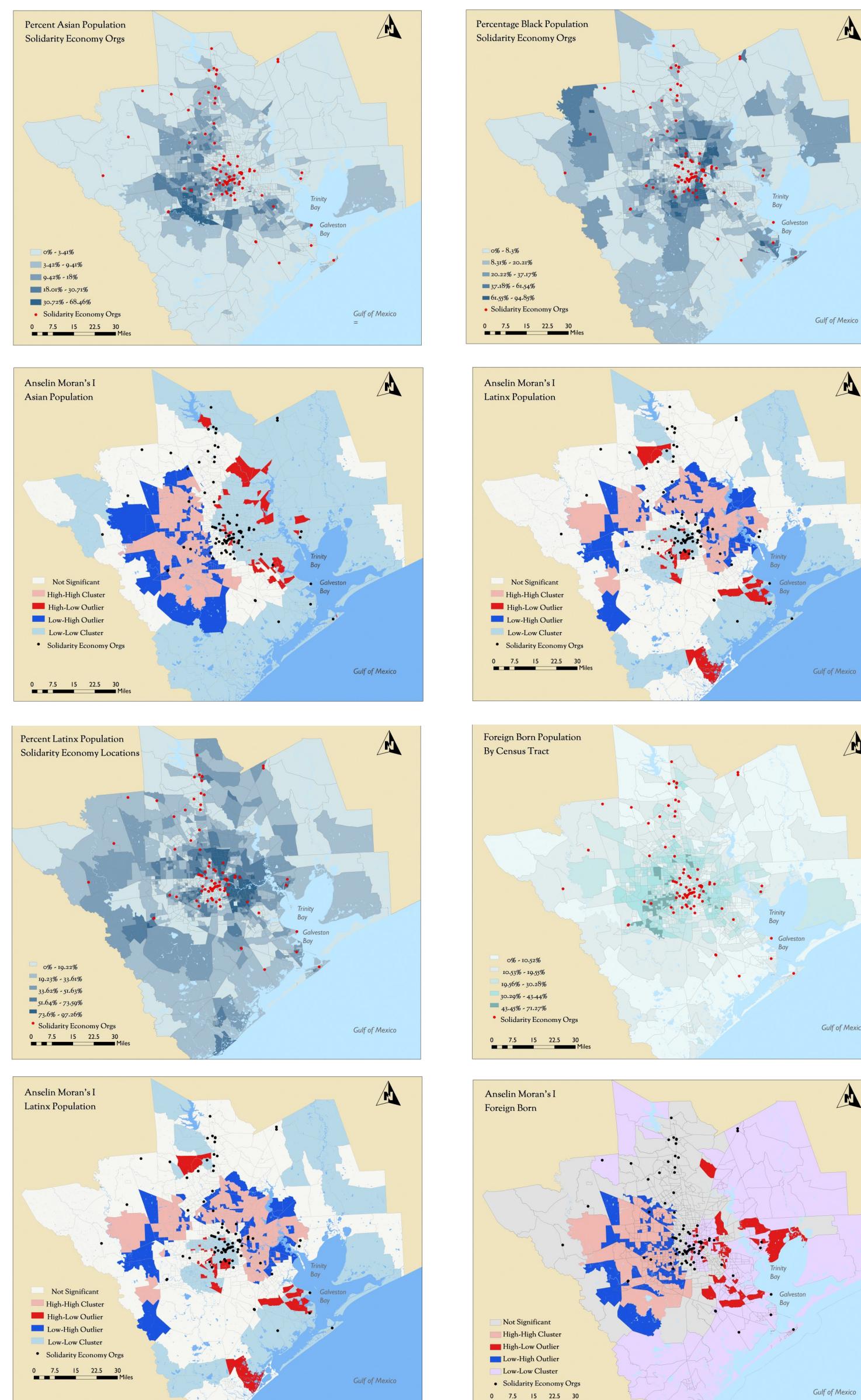
- Borowiak, C., Safri, M., Healy, S., & Pavlovskaya, M. (2018). Navigating the Fault Lines: Race and Class in Philadelphia's Solidarity Economy. *Antipode*, 50(3), 577-603.
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Data

The data were retrieved through several techniques. A similar mapping project by Professor Borowiak, et al breaks solidarity economy organizations (SEO) into five typographies. I have used four (in the below chart). The fifth, Alternative Finance includes credit unions which may or may not adhere to SEO guidelines. I could not personally vet credit unions and so have excluded them.

Alternative Consumption	Alternative Production	Alternative Exchange	Governance
• Consumer cooperatives	• Worker cooperatives	• Fair Trade	• Participatory budgeting
• Buying clubs	• Producer cooperatives	• Community supported agriculture	• Collective community management of resources
• Co-housing, intentional communities	• Volunteer Collectives	• Peer lending	
• Community land trusts	• Community Gardens	• Time banks	
	• Collectives of self-employed	• Barter or Free-cycle networks	
		• Unpaid care work	

Results



With these typologies in mind, I first used the Reference USA database to find potential SEOs. This produced over 3000 results, some of which were easily determined not to be SEO. Others I had to research through their websites to make the determination. This method left out several important kinds SEO, specifically community land trusts, community agriculture and gardens, and cooperatives. For these, I had to manually search on the internet for the names and location of each SEO type.

SEO Type	Count	SEO Type	Count
Addiction Services	4	Childcare Co-op	2
Worker's Co-op	1	Community Org	1
CDC	1	Community Farm	32
Community Garden	1	Community Market	1
CSA	A	Farming Support	2
Food Assistance	26	Health	5
Housing Assistance	1	Business Incubator	3
Mutual Aid	4	Shelter	11

The demographic information was retrieved from the 2017 ACS (5 years) and is at the census tract level looking specifically at total population, median household income, immigration, and race.

Conclusions and Limitations

Most of the solidarity economy organizations are located near the Houston downtown area, though there are several small clusters to the north of the city. There are fewer to the south and to the west of the city. Demographically, while the city may not have the enclaves of Latinx people, Black people, Asian people, and immigrants the way cities such as Boston or New York may have, these populations are still largely clustered in together. While the locations of SEOs may be relatively close to some of these clustered tracts, it does not appear that these organizations, in general, have been created with the residents of these tracts in mind.

Some important limitations:

The collection of the SEO orgs relied solely on internet research and Census-based databases. This poses two problems. There is not a reliable way without some sort of first person engagement to determine if these orgs actually follow SE guidelines. Any further study should be done on the ground. Second, many parts of the solidarity economy are informal and perhaps illegal, and people may take pains to stay off the radar. Not only would we not find these via the web but they should not be collected and counted by researchers on the ground unless explicitly given permission to do so. Finally, while these maps appear to suggest many of the SEOs don't cater to the populations I looked at, I did not examine the role of accessibility, whether through driving, public transit, or walking.

