Examining the Sustainability of Sustainability: The Relationship between Residential Solar Energy & Gentrification in San Diego, CA

Minimal research examines the social impact of residential solar energy on communities. This thesis provides a first look at the wholistic sustainability of renewable energy by examining the relationship between solar energy growth in both owner-occupied and renter-occupied households and the probability of gentrification occurring in San Diego, CA. The research aims to help policymakers, solar businesses, and nonprofits make educated decisions about solar energy deployment. The regressions indicated that residential solar energy growth in owner-occupied households and gentrification occurring between 2000-2018 is not statistically significant. However, residential solar energy growth in renter-occupied households and gentrification occurring between 2000-2018 is statistically significant under some conditions. The qualitative interviews also found renters faced greater barriers to residential solar energy. Thus, solar energy growth in renter-occupied households creates an area of concern. Further research should use a diversity of cities and conditions to examine the relationship between residential solar energy and gentrification pressures.