The Housing Crisis and Homelessness: A San Francisco Ethnography[1]

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Homelessness is the result of many factors. The nature of homes, or rather places of residence, versus temporary camps has been defined historically and culturally for the human species. Many animals create structures to live in, others excavate depressions. Still others live in caves or inhabit structures built and discarded by other creatures. In many cases animals simply find limited shelter in temporary settings — to avoid weather conditions or to rest — building nests to sleep in or utilizing existing foliage. Over the past two million years humans have behaved in all these ways. Human-made structures are relatively new, appearing in the last half million years, and some peoples continue to build only temporary windbreaks. The term 'homelessness' is a modern classification, although historical sources refer to its varieties. Most modern discussions of homelessness describe it as a phenomenon of modern industrial society created by the inequalities inherent in modern capitalism. This analysis of a specific community in San Francisco describes complex interactions that developed into what can be called, although temporary, a local 'community' among the homeless, local residents and business. This unexpected outcome provides insight and gives caution to contemporary planners and policy makers across the globe.
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Introduction

The current credit crisis is often blamed on the crisis in the housing industry, but this crisis in the industry is rooted in the problems of housing America's population. How much housing is needed? What kind of housing is to be built and how big should these houses be? The most significant question is: How expensive or 'affordable' should the housing be? Reductions in income cause some people to move in with friends and family and pressure on individuals can result in job or housing losses. Living in cars or in the street is one way of surviving and also maintaining one's social connections in a neighbourhood. Interactions between the once housed and then homeless with former workers, bosses and neighbours is a complex task. Homelessness helps to create a multi-dimensional neighbourhood where people's identities and spaces are temporary yet continue to define who they are. The extent of this phenomenon depends upon how dynamic their performance of self is required to survive.

In the past 50 years, after comprehensive studies of development practices in the USA and abroad, it has become clear to many architects, planners and social scientists that high density inner cities and sprawling suburbs produced not only economic and social problems like congestion and pollution, but also disease, both physical and psychological. In this article I present an analysis of the local environment and the way people negotiate their identities in various social contexts within the built environment. I agree with Harris (1988) that ethnographic fieldwork produces valuable information on human activities. Criticisms of fieldwork as distorting data produced by ideologically motivated agents is also unsupported by the evidence, though bias is a culturally constructed framework that has long been well understood. Some social scientists believe that theory is the only pure activity necessary to achieve knowledge, a considerable return to the armchair approach of the 19th Century, but the emphasis on theory can be just as distorting as a lack of organization and direction in fieldwork.

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[1] The final version of this article has benefited from the comments and criticism of three anonymous reviewers.

The field study material presented here is compared with studies made over the last century and provide a check on the nature of human action defined as 'homelessness'. Some aspects of economic behaviour are described in this study, though not to the extent of that done by Pardo (1992). His study of metropolitan Naples shares a number of features with my study, both in its emphasis on use of the environment by different groups as well as interactions between different members of socioeconomic groups and their negotiating identities within these spaces and transactions. Prato and Pardo (2013) have contextualized urban anthropology as it has developed over the past 100 years and described its relationship to sociology and urban planning. Anthropologists became concerned with cultural change beginning with Rivers, Seligman and Haddon's experiences in the Torres Strait Expedition in 1898. The horrors they found as indigenous people fell under the sway of colonial powers and the crushing products of industrial society led Haddon to change his discipline to Anthropology from Biology. Some way was needed to reduce these effects or at least to document these cultures, and languages, before they passed away. Haddon was shocked by the wanton destruction by missionaries of native cultures, especially their art and artefacts. Similarly, indigenous practices in native towns and cities were quickly impacted by military, missionary and mercantile needs.

In the years following WWI, but especially after WWII, anthropologists became disturbed by the effects of colonial rule and the accelerating destruction of native cultures. A few studies of urban settings were produced, generally they were superficial summaries like those by Sjoberg (1960) and Hull (1976), some limited their focus to small scale village or town life. By the late 1950s a number of new research techniques were beginning to bear fruit in the study of urban environments. There appeared to be significant differences between the work of social anthropologists in Europe, the UK and USA. These discrepancies led to a meeting organized by Raymond Firth to bring together those working in Africa, Europe, the USA and Central and South America in 1962. The gathering resulted in a volume edited by Banton (1966) which included articles by Mitchell on urban studies in Africa, Eric Wolf on South America, Mayer in India and others on Europe and the UK. These were developed to present and discuss new methods (as in the use of network analysis, sets and social field) in a collaborative setting. However, many African-American anthropologists found that these new techniques and approaches did not correct cultural bias inherent in the earlier work and a collection of their criticism appeared in 1999 (Harrison and Harrison eds 1999).

Cities and towns have often been regarded by some societies and religions as detrimental to morals and spiritual ideals. The famous prohibition of Isaiah (5:8) from the King James Bible, is one example: 'Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land'. Although the New Living Translation Bible gives a different meaning: 'What sorrow for you who buy up house after house and field after field, until everyone is evicted and you live alone in the land'. In a comprehensive world-wide study of cities, the United Nation's Habitat's *State of the World's Cities* (2006) demonstrated that in terms of health people living in cities were not better off and sometimes worse that those living in rural areas. Davis' (2006) analysis of expanding cities and suburbs argued that they leave little space for social interaction and produce crowded, poorly serviced living areas that are ripe for violence and crime. As to the Modern Movement in

architecture, the production of multi-storey, densely designed tenements was common in the late nineteenth century in America and even earlier in England. It is reasonable to say that throughout human history density has been relative, given the contrast in lifestyle between nomadic people and sedentary early urban societies.

A Space Problem not a Housing Problem: An Ethnography of Homelessness

The South of Market area in San Francisco has a long history of occupation by immigrants and workers amid scattered factories. The area was considerably depressed in the 1970s as many factories moved to lower rent locations in other parts of the Bay Area. Population shifts due to S. F. Redevelopment Agency activity in the eastern sector of the area resulted in the demolition of factories and single-room occupancy buildings. A general area plan emphasized clearance and redevelopment (Hartmann & Averbach 1974).

Some urban ethnographies focus on local people's economic activities, as in the case of Mathews' (2011) study of Chungking Mansions, Bourgois' (2003) study of Puerto Rican drug merchants, and Pardo's (1992) study of ordinary Neapolitans, which brings to the fore how people adapt to immediate economic opportunities with entrepreneurial creativity. Peripherally, in these studies we learned how people use housing as a temporary platform for economic survival. Mathews describes how merchants from Africa and India used the premises of Chungking Mansions as a multinational market using the smaller and cheaper spaces to carry out better their long-distance trade. For Bourgois, living spaces are temporary locations negotiated within fragile adult male and female relationships that dramatically affected changing patterns in New York's economy, as well as racist concepts concerning minorities and female roles in the economy. In these circumstances, children learn not only the temporary nature of housing — moving between nuclear family arrangements to grandparents — but also the temporary nature of domestic male status.

In the present article, I focus on outdoor spaces and how home and the idea of 'home' is constructed by homeless individuals, local residents and workers. In 1980, I began living in the South of Market area on Fifth and Folsom Streets. Then, the presence of homeless individuals was minimal and relatively unnoticed by most residents. After the 1989 earthquake many buildings became uninhabitable and attracted homeless and semi-homeless individuals (drug users and suppliers, artists and sexual adventurers). The latter were partly homeless by choice as they used abandoned buildings as temporary locations for their activities and had, or claimed to have, other residences. My research project changed in nature when I moved out of the area in 1992, but occasional research trips continued into 2010.

My field research and choice of informants took the traditional form suggested by Pelto (1970), especially regarding gaining acceptance in the local homeless community. Studies of community have taken various forms since Arensberg and Kimball (1968) attempted to direct attention to this specific area of research. I spent much time with the local business and art communities and attempted not to align myself with either group yet form friendships and develop common ground for discussions. I avoided taking notes in front of respondents, but regularly jotted comments and brief sketches about interactions and central conversations (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011).

Often local residents were involved in the interviews with homeless individuals. This had two *effects*. It allowed for a check on interviewer bias and also provided the opportunity for later conversations between the homeless individuals and these residents. This also allowed for hearsay and eavesdropping information, which has been found to be valuable by a number of researchers — both recent and in classical anthropology (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011; Malinowski 1929).

To a certain extent, this research project could be said to draw on 'participant observation' as it was conducted in the context of the personality of the researcher known to the homeless individuals who also knew (in many cases) where he lived and some also visited his residence. The participation of a few female residents allowed a cross check for gender interpretations and discussions as well as the hearsay and eavesdropping data and reflected benefits of both participant observation and multivocality in research design.

Types of Homes
Since this study addresses homelessness, it seems appropriate to attempt a definition or at least a background context for what homelessness is, and a sketch of the urban environment in which it is most often described as a problem.

Studies of how people live and organize their living spaces are not new. One thinks of Lewis Henry Morgan's comprehensive study of Native Americans, *Houses and House-Life of the American Aborigines,* published in 1881 and Edward T. Hall's *The Hidden Dimension* published in 1956. The latter focused on the optimum space for people to live and work effectively from a cross-cultural perspective, with the least detrimental outcomes. In some contexts, homelessness and poverty are associated with the stranger. Ibn Abi l-Hadid, (1963-4) noted this regarding the poetry of Halaf al-Ahmar (d.796 C.E.): 'Don't think that a stranger is the one who is far away! Rather, a stranger is the one who has little or nothing (al-muqill).'

In the 1960s a transformation of housing took place under a number of architects, including Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright. Since then, a wave of criticism has appeared of the theories of modern housing, especially where large housing projects in the post-WWII period were associated with crime and poverty. In Europe, Le Corbusier's projects have been blamed for the negative social conditions that contributed to the recent riots in France and those in the 1980s and 1990s in England (Aspden 2006).

The Character of Homelessness
Forms of housing and homelessness were discussed in numerous articles in the American Anthropology Association's newsletter *AN* in December 2008. Recently, ways of living and of ordering people in different societies and in different economic systems have been important issues in the popular media, but without the input of anthropologists.

In her book on continuities in cultures Margaret Mead (1965) emphasized that often housing has encoded instructions for life and guidelines for behaviour in its design and

construction, as well as the landscape in which it is set.[2] We should indeed be more concerned with how people respond to changes in housing. My experience with people being relocated from various areas of San Francisco by the Redevelopment Agency in the 1960s and 1970s taught me the truth of Max Weber's (1948 [1904–5]) reflections on mass relocations in nineteenth-century Europe.

Nevertheless, we must consider carefully the choices people make about housing or to refuse housing. The suppression of neighbourhoods in nineteenth-century Paris and the creation of wide boulevards made cities easier to control by authorities. Today's cities are monuments for transient life, with a workforce without job security and an atomized population without coherence or roots. Increasingly, people are periodically homeless, transhumant between temporary living arrangements and jobs.

'Voluntary' and Economic Homelessness

Homeless individuals have existed throughout human history. In some cases, they have been known as sages, like Confucius and many other thinkers and teachers of his time in China. Similarly, in India the sadhus and sramana, or holy men, wander in the forests and towns (Hartsuiker 1993). The Mediterranean has a long history of secular and holy ascetics and saints who acquired their daily bread by begging. Travelers have often found refuge in towns and cities, in temples or parks (Nels 1961, Weaver and White eds 1972). Today homelessness and the homeless, however, are generally regarded in economic terms. Tolerance of the homeless can be measured in cultural and economic terms throughout history. This is also reflected in the history of terms used to characterize homeless individuals. In parts of the USA, especially in the 19th and early-20th century, homeless or transient workers were often called 'hobos' or 'tramps' or 'vagrants', depending on their availability for work (Bruns 1980, Higbie 2003) or local concepts of criminality (Cook 1979). Indigenous people without established homes are often called nomads or pastoralists, depending on their technology and ethnic origins. They may also be classed as hunters and gatherers. Notably, economic change can upset established long-term relationships and produce homeless individuals from an underclass, as in 16th-to-19th-century England (Polanyi 1944). Temporary urban settlement, or homelessness, caught the attention of many 19th-century sociologists and historians, including Max Weber (1958), as temporary residence has had a role in economic development and urbanization.

Robert Ezra Park, was among the first to study the domain of the homeless (Park 1952), following the work of McKenzie (1933) on the ecology of communities. McKenzie and Park had witnessed the dynamic mobility of Americans during the Depression and WWII and were interested in how quickly people adapted to changes of residence and homelessness (Park, Burgess and Mckenzie 1967). What is most interesting in their work, in regard to contemporary problems with those homeless, is the idea of domain that people construct about themselves, their residence and the environment. In contrast, Bohannan and Curtin's (1971) survey of post-WWII neighbourhoods in developed countries show that ethnic enclaves, paralleling Medieval

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[2] In developed countries these ancient patterns imported from aboriginal contexts are used in the design of the most expensive housing (Lawlor 1994).

cities (Sjoberg 1960), have become largely replaced by land and property marketed as investments reducing choices for self-identified communities. They conclude that by the 1970s communities were mainly formed by realtors and developers and no longer by cultural membership choices. This may be a consequence of the decline in the generational representation of wealth in locations and homes.

Definite differences exist in homelessness, its relation to life history and its duration and form between men and women (Passaro 1996). People who are homeless are often temporarily so, and regard the condition as one that is of a desired or necessary short duration. Often these are alcoholics who abandoned their homes to 'binge' or to escape the confinement of home, spouse or job routine. Neighbours and city authorities tolerate such individuals according to their cultural traditions, religious background, education and the standing of the individuals in the community (Asander 1980, Guzewicz 2000). So, such 'temporary' homelessness allows some people to maintain a degree of resilience in their relationships. The domain of homelessness exists in an extended home and status in the community. The community tolerates the behaviour as an extension of the functional life of some individuals. Some scientists see certain forms of economic homelessness as an increasing aspect of modern life — where people are often one pay check from losing their residence — that reflects a lack of stability; for example, in economic conditions and social welfare (Jencks 1994, Barak 1991). In 2008, the head of San Francisco's homeless programme, Dariush Kayhan, commented on the difficulties in dealing with homelessness in a citywide study (Nevius 2008). San Francisco has apparently succeeded in reducing some forms of homelessness and overall numbers of habitual forms as the result of the City's 'Care not Cash' programme. In this programme, cash allocations in the form of welfare payments were replaced by individual provision for shelter and supplies. This programme's success contradicts the World Bank reports that cash allocations to the poor are more effective means of providing assistance that leads to sustained incomes out of poverty. San Francisco's results parallel those in New York City reported in March 2009 (NYCDHS 2009). However, the methods used to count those homeless are varied and under some criticism (Marcus 2006, O'Connor 2009, Allday 2009, Harrell 2009) and, given the current economic crisis, we should see numbers of homeless go up in the near future. Data provided by a *San Francisco Chronicle* study indicate, however, that by June of 2014 there has been little change in the number of homeless individuals, and that about 19,500 people have been moved off the streets into various forms of lodging (Knight 2014). While Noy (2009) argues that various actors in the city failed to cooperate and thus wasted efforts and resources, it is also possible that the new numbers represent the massive relocations and evictions of low-income people due to rent increases, changes in properties from rentals to tenants in common or 'owner move in', and renovation projects allowed under the Ellis Act (Sabatini 2014). Nevertheless, New York's homeless numbers show the same resilience to programme change with the New York Coalition for the Homeless reporting homeless on the streets in excess of 62,000 (NYCH 2017). New York City's Department of Homeless Services also provides similar numbers (NYDPS 2017).

Arguments have also been made that many of the homeless are veterans, former mental health patients and victims of failed health care programmes. In a comprehensive analysis, Bourgois and Schonberg (2009) addressed these issues and the tendency to criminalize

homelessness. In some cases, as in my research in San Francisco, those homeless provide long-term services for residences; they watch homes when residents are at work or cars at night, or keep tabs on neighbours and in some cases, watch the activities of police.

Many communities have attempted to eliminate homelessness and some, as in New York, have been rather successful but only temporarily. Usually these efforts are temporary, as municipalities often cannot afford to continue to direct resources to prevent homelessness, and campaigns to do so are usually politically motivated and short-lived. It seems that the first problem to overcome is addressing the attitude about homelessness as an acceptable alternative lifestyle that people are free to choose. This is a cultural and legal issue. To eliminate homelessness requires the provision of resources that most public entities do not have, ethically prohibit, or cannot deliver effectively. Most municipalities do not have a history of a consistent social policy necessary to deal with such a problem. Since homelessness has been with us since the appearance of cities,[3] perhaps we also need to consider its benefits.

The South of Market Milieu
In 1980 I moved into an industrial building where several artists had been relocated.[4] This followed the eviction of 'squatting' artists of the Goodman Building in the west Tenderloin/Central City district of San Francisco.[5] Artists were moving to the South of Market area and out of the Haight, Castro, Fillmore and Tenderloin districts due to increased pressure in housing costs spurred by renovations and real estate speculation. Between 1980 and 1989 this process was characterized in the press as a transition to a 'live-work' ghetto for artists, but by the late 1980s old warehouses had been renovated and turned into commercially available 'live-work' condominiums occupied by professionals. Evictions of artists began to be a routine event as a truce between artists and the city's planners and public health authorities gave way to open condemnation of artist housing.

The 1989 earthquake put a temporary stop to this process only to resume with renewed vigour in the guise of determinations that many buildings formerly occupied by artists were now damaged and uninhabitable and unsafe. Many were tagged for demolition, others were abandoned.[6] Thus began another transition involving large numbers of transients and homeless individuals, the potential value of the abandoned buildings, and police enforcement of vagrancy laws. Long-time artist residents and blue-collar workers responded with some concern, and mass meetings to fight evictions succeeded in obtaining temporary permits for artist live-work spaces. The issue of the new homeless began to be addressed.

As with the process of relocation of low-income residents that had been perfected by the Redevelopment Agency in San Francisco in other areas, the process in the South of Market area was organized and efficient. Officially managed public relations efforts were combined with

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[3] There have been towns in history without homeless individuals, but these are unique cultural and historical situations.

[4] This was one of six buildings that were either residential or artist live-work spaces.

[5] This project followed an earlier one located in the Western district.

[6] Owners were given assurances that if buildings were damaged, permits and processing renovations and rebuilding of sites would be given priority. The removal was thus accelerated.

community meetings by the Planning Department and Police to facilitate removal and relocation. Most of these meetings were advertised to provide information and services and still held out the idea that some residents would be allowed to stay if certain code violations would be corrected.

Observations of Homelessness and Business/Resident Response
My observations from late-1980 to 1989 suggested a distinct character of the homeless situation in South of Market. It was generally minimally visible and there was a low impact on residents and business owners. The central research area was between Fourth Street and Fifth and Folsom and Harrison. This area consisted largely of two-story commercial buildings of brick or concrete construction, with a few wood-frame buildings. There were no vacant lots, with the exception of a parking lot on the corner of Fifth and Folsom on the north side that had been a parking lot during the entire study period (1980-2010). Nearly half the buildings housed sole-owner small businesses. Thirty percent were partnerships with single location businesses, and the remainder were occupied by artists and a few outlets of larger corporations (for example, a gas station). There were few vacancies, and artist occupation of buildings began to rise from 1970 to 1980. This reached a high point in 1985 when rents began to rise, especially long-term rents signed in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The area was starting to attract businesses to its new 'bohemian' atmosphere and cheap rents.

An unlicensed homeless centre opened in the late 1980s in the middle of the block on the south side, but was quickly closed down due to check-cashing fraud which brought nightly police intervention. The centre temporarily increased the visibility of the homeless in the area, but this quickly subsided. From 1980 to 1989 the visibility of homeless individuals remained stable and the local meetings of residents and businesses focused on problems surrounding housing, weekend violence and drunkenness, and legal and illegal dance clubs and bars. Informal surveys of homeless (never taken with a clipboard or obvious writing instruments) demonstrated a number of 'regulars' who moved from Market Street to Harrison Street where there was a Freeway grassy area. This was used as a congregation point and trading centre on a daily and weekly basis; that is, some people attended daily, while others only visited once a week. Numbers ranged from under 10 in the winter to over 25 in summer. Most slept in the alleyways between Folsom, Harrison and Howard in nooks between buildings or in recessed fronts that provided some shelter from wind and rain.

Figure 1. This photograph was taken by A. Sheldon, a resident on Folsom Street in 1990 at night, seconds after having heard glass break.

As already noted, visibility of the homeless was low and interviews with business owners and workers tallied with residents' ideas that it was not a problem that few homeless individuals used the area.[7] Some business owners provided water, sellable recyclable materials and occasional meal, and some clothing to particular homeless individuals; others simply ignored them. A few business owners and residents repeatedly said that they had seen homeless individuals regularly pick up trash and dispose of it in proper receptacles. I observed this several times, but the same individual was responsible on each occasion. Another claim, less often reported in my surveys, was that homeless individuals spread garbage or set fire to it. I could not verify these claims. However, I did once observe a resident of the East Bay who stopped her car (a BMW) outside our warehouse at Fifth and Folsom and placed a large bag of her household garbage in our garbage can. She defended her action saying that we had large garbage cans and she did not and she had routinely done this for several years. This behaviour was common and contributed to the presence of garbage and of people from outside searching for drugs, sex and 'joyriding'.[8] Thus the residents of the South of Market area could be said to suffer from a variety of negative contacts from outsiders. Women who lived there often reported being shadowed by cars or approached by men who suggested sex for money.

Another aspect of the neighbourhood was the economic behaviour involving the homeless, semi-homeless and residents. Some businesses functioned as banks, in that they cashed checks for people who had no bank accounts. Harvey's (Figure 2), a liquor and grocery store, was run by a middle-aged Chinese-American businessman who was a long-term resident of the city and whose children and relatives worked for him. He allowed the homeless, and many residents and workers, to establish 'tabs' listing merchandise they had taken on credit. Harvey discounted interest on tabs depending on how people paid. Some made partial payments

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[7] That a regular group did use the area was not lost on many, but the idea of a general problem was absent.

[8] I use this term, conveyed to me by a man in his late 20s who said he lived in Palo Alto, as a catchall expression for adventure or unusual experiences.

weekly, others monthly and some asked for more credit to skip payments. People who did not have a bank account could also deposit money with Harvey for safekeeping. He would offer chits or account letters of balances and deduct from them credit and purchases.

Figure 2. Harvey's Place circa 2010. Photograph by Niccolò Caldararo.

In the 1980s and 1990s bicycle messengers accounted for a large proportion of his clientele and many, like homeless individuals and other residents and workers, engaged in a vibrant local money changing business where cash, checks and food stamps would be exchanged at a discount for cash or for goods and services not authorized by the issuer. This behaviour, which he neither encouraged or discouraged, took place outside Harvey's, and when I asked him about it, he simply shook his head and said, 'People have to eat'.

Many local businesses provided aid to the homeless; some at the initiative of employees, some by the owners or both. Harvey acted as both a business and a charity and I often wondered how he balanced his books in the end. I was sure he took losses with his customers but also that the risk they represented provided significant potential for gain in interest, in charges and in the fees for services. He often stored people's valuables, allowed use of his telephones, provided a message service and other useful services for a fee. So, Harvey was a bank, but played a role that regular banks eschewed. By charging interest, he was able to cover his losses from bad loans, but he provided credit and food to people who had no other recourse.

After the Earthquake
On 17 October 1989 at 5.04 PM the San Francisco Bay Area experienced a 6.9 magnitude earthquake. Buildings were severely damaged in several parts of the city and across the wider area. The Bay Bridge was closed and some Freeway sections collapsed or were damaged. Fires broke out in a number of places and some people were killed by falling debris. In my study area, many buildings were 'red-tagged' and could not be occupied. Others were 'yellow-tagged' — meaning that occupation was limited until the buildings could be inspected. Still others were 'white-tagged'; that is, judged to be undamaged and suitable for use.

Almost immediately people tried to remove their possessions from the buildings. In the first nights after the earthquake there were no lights on the block. Residential buildings were

empty of occupants in the first week. In the second week two buildings were re-occupied by their tenants. A strange silence fell over the block day and night, broken only by trucks and cars arriving to carry away possessions or bringing workers to attempt repairs. A considerable disagreement developed between residents and the inspectors from City departments concerning the level of damage and safety. At night, some residents entered their buildings to take away their belongings. I helped one group.

In the second week, we began to notice a change among the local homeless population. I had not seen my usual informants in the first week. In the second, some returned. By the third week their numbers increased. Larger groups usually included 'caravans' of five to ten individuals of mixed sex and age moving in with shopping carts,[9] dogs and cats from across Market Street; that is, north to south.[10] In the nine years prior to the earthquake the local homeless population included one child and one animal, a cat. The new groups of homeless had more of both. On one weekend in March 1990 I counted three children in one afternoon. Over the next 90 days, interviews with a number of new homeless revealed that police pressure was a factor in their movement. There also seemed to be an increase in private security firms unfamiliar with homeless individuals which were pressing them to move from North Beach/Chinatown and the Financial District across Market.

Prior to the earthquake, residents and business employees seldom reported car break-ins. After the earthquake, these increased dramatically. Many car owners sought garages to place their cars in both day and night. They were few and expensive. Some homeless individuals were found in cars in the morning; appearing to have broken into them. They argued that the cars were already broken into and they just took the opportunity to get out of the weather. On one occasion, I stood by as a resident, furious that his car window had been broken, accused a homeless person in front of a policeman. The officer simply demonstrated how easy it was to break into a car; he deftly picked up small rocks and pieces of metal and then tossed them against a wall to show how objects could be thrown to produce the best results. I never saw anyone arrested for this crime. Residents complained to the homeless they knew about the situation and slowly a solution was mutually crafted. Eventually, residents came to accept the local homeless argument and simply left their cars open at night, thus allowing them to sleep in their cars. The residents would then establish a time in the morning when they wanted to use their cars and would come down to find them empty. Some people rolled down all the windows in good weather, others put signs up stating, 'Doors unlocked, do not break windows'. Eventually the break-ins stopped.

Also, an unofficial alliance of residents and workers developed whereby, at night, homeless groups of individuals (and some small families) would arrange themselves in front of certain buildings acting as 'watchfolk', as one group called themselves. Many had whistles around their necks; these apparently were taken from the gay community's neighbourhood

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[9] Shopping carts appeared with the newcomers; they seemed to be an adaptation to an expectation of movement for a longer time to greater, less secure locations.
[10] A number of these homeless individuals moved in groups through the South of Market farther south into the area along Fourth Street towards the Islais Creek area and beyond.

watch programme that gave out whistles to prevent attacks on people in the Castro area at night. While I never personally heard one of these used at night, I was told of a number of instances during which their use protected homeless individuals from abuse by drunks outside local nightclubs and bars. In some areas, like Fifth Street and Dore Alley, this unofficial watch extended to daylight hours. Many people reported that they had lost mail, and I saw our mail disappear after delivery when a man sitting in front of our door used a piece of metal with a wad of gum to fish it out through the mail slot in the door. This rash of mail theft disappeared as soon as whistles were used to signal such attempts.

Figure 3. General South of Market Area, San Francisco including the area of study.

By late in 1990 a number of empty lots had been created by the demolition of buildings. Some, as those at Fifth and Folsom, became the scenes of art events at night. Several groups of artists projected films on the walls of buildings at midnight or put on performance art pieces or sculptures in them. Homeless groups of individuals used these lots both during the day and at night. Use by local artists was usually limited to weekends and from 10.00 pm to 2.00 am, leaving the sites available for the homeless.

One garden appeared on the block at Fifth and Folsom. Several others were organized between Fifth and Fourth Streets by homeless individuals, residents and workers. These were short-lived in 1990 but reappeared in 1991, though also briefly. Some people planted edible plants, others gardened discarded houseplants or plants they found at other locations.

A more sinister result of the earthquake was the number of homeless and people using abandoned buildings for parties or illegal 'raves'. In 1990 and 1991 almost all the meetings with police and City staff were oriented toward closing down the buildings, having them rehabilitated or torn down. Fires broke out across the Howard and Harrison areas with increasing frequency after the spring of 1990. Interestingly. In contrast, most of the community meetings held in the area prior to the earthquake were organized by artists to try and legalize live-work space code changes.

By 1995 the homeless situation had again changed, partly due to the change in occupancy of the buildings and the new constructions. Rents were skyrocketing and artists were being

pushed out by eviction or rent increases. Small shops and blue-collar industries were also being priced out of the area. Interviews with new residents in the period 1992–1998 revealed a new population of young professionals and service industries, especially those that were part of the dotcom boom.

Local community accommodations with the homeless disappeared as the homeless population seemed to become more unstable. While vacancies increased after 2000 following the dotcom crash, there was no new visible population of homeless, though small numbers could be found on a daily basis. A community of residents, workers and homeless had not survived the earthquake. One additional factor may have been the increase in private security firms in the area.

Overall, the number of homeless seen on the streets has not changed and this appears to parallel the trend in the city. Problems that are often associated with homelessness, like panhandling, are still present in many parts of the city, but in my study area the frequency of panhandling is about the same as it was in the 1980s. As I have said, another aspect of homelessness is the diversity of its performance. Many people cycle into housing and even when placed in housing centres they spend their time on the streets in much the same way as when they are not resident in homeless shelters or city temporary housing. While homeless numbers have dropped from a high of 8,640 in 2003 to a steady figure of about 6,500 in 2013, in the same period the formerly homeless individuals in 'supportive housing' have increased from 2,000 to 6,000 and the 'supportive housing' units have increased from 1,000 to 5,300. This stasis is frustrating for city officials and homeless advocates but may reflect a saturation point of homelessness in the San Francisco environmental context.

Final Considerations

One might suggest that the common experience prior to the earthquake would have produced a form of communal spirit and resilience among the homeless, resident and business employees. However, the community seemed more fragile than expected. Neglect produced by the economic effects of the earthquake left property available for a number of non-economic uses, and the bonds — temporary yet useful — that were formed as a result produced reciprocal benefits. This symbiosis however was short-lived. Economic pressures after 1992 began to eliminate some of these conditions and created new ones that did not favour community formation and actively militated against its survival.

This process of creation of community, whether in South of Market before the earthquake in San Francisco in 1989 (or that in 1906) or during encampments of Occupy Wall Street from Oakland to New York, points to a transition from stranger to acquaintanceship to community. In the case discussed in this article, the bonds of community between homeless individuals, residents and workers shifted from sympathy and antipathy to solidarity depending on the nature of the issues differentially impacting the lives of individuals in each group. Parallels to this process are seen in the literature on established communities and the homeless in other locales and historic periods, as in the case of hobos.

Society	Largest Settlement (L.S.)	Estimated Population of L.S.	Estimated Floor Area of L.S.	References
Vanua Levu	Nakaroka	75	412.8	Williams 1870: 71; Quain 1948: 3(note), 82–3
Eyak	Algonik	120	836	Birket-Smith and de Laguna 1938: 19-20
Kapauku	Botekubo	181	362	Pospisil 1958: 101
Wintun	?	200	900	DuBois 1935: 28, 122
Klallam	Port Angeles	200	2,420	Gunther 1927: 184
Hupa	Tsewen-alding ?	200	2,490	Goddard 1903: 13, 88, 104
Ifaluk	Ifaluk	252	3,024	Bates and Abbott 1958: 252; Spiro 1949: 5–6
Ramkoka-mekra	Ponro	298	6,075	Nimuendaju 1946: 33, 37; Nimuendaju and Lowie 1937: 566
Bella Coola	Bella Coola	400	16,320	Mackenzie 1927: 421–2; McIlwraith, personal communication
Kiwai	Oromosa-pua	400	1,432.2	Landtman 1920: 6, 9; Riley 1925: 62
Tikopia	Tikopia	1,260	8,570	Firth 1959: 182; 1939: 40
Cuna	Ustupu	1,800	5,460	Nordenskiöld 1938: 13–14; Stout 1947: 19, 59–60
Iroquois	?	3,000	13,370	Morgan 1901: 229, 299
Kazak	?	3,000	63,000	Hudson 1928: 24; Kosrenko 1880: 99
Ila	Kasenga	3,000	47,000	Smith and Dale 1920: 109-14, 299
Tonga	Nukualofa	5,000	111,500	West 1865: 44; Neill 1955: 126
Zulu	?	15,000	65,612	Stuart and Malcolm 1950: 132-3, 325; Krige 1950: 45
Inca	Cuzco	200,000	167,220	Means 1931: 322, 534; Sancho 1917: 191

Table 1. Floor area and Settlement Population

The fact that no self-organized neighbourhood groups appeared in the South of Market area in the entire period from 1980 to 2000 reflects the economic status and lifestyle of the residents and workers. The day-to-night shift in population, with most workers and owners living outside the area, while many artists and residents worked elsewhere, was not conducive to the formation of strong local community organizations. Previously, in the 1950s and 1960s a powerful organization of residents, property and business owners and workers was formed — TOOR (Tenants and Owners in Opposition to Redevelopment) — but became inactive by the 1980s (Hartmann and Averbach 1974). Hartmann and Averbach attributed much of the success of TOOR to the large population of active retired former union members living in the area's single room occupancy buildings and in union-owned retirement housing.

The lack of organization of 1980-2000 was reflected in the failed attempts by artists to organize code changes to allow live-work spaces to be legalized. These efforts were compromised by builders and architects who used the issue to change codes to accommodate the rehabilitation of older office buildings and warehouses into condos and rental lofts at prices most of the artists could not afford.[11] Another example of the lack of intergroup cooperation of

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[11] This information is derived from interviews at meetings in the SOMA area in the period 1979 to 1990 and with San Francisco Planning Department employees.

the South of Market area was that this was the only district of San Francisco that denied parking permits to residents. Meetings were organized by SOMA residents to establish such permits and petitions were circulated but no organization appeared to follow through with the necessary political process to achieve this end. My experience with other San Francisco neighbourhoods demonstrated that such success was largely dependent on the existence of community organizations with long-standing influence in local politics, and a stable resident base as renters, owners or both.
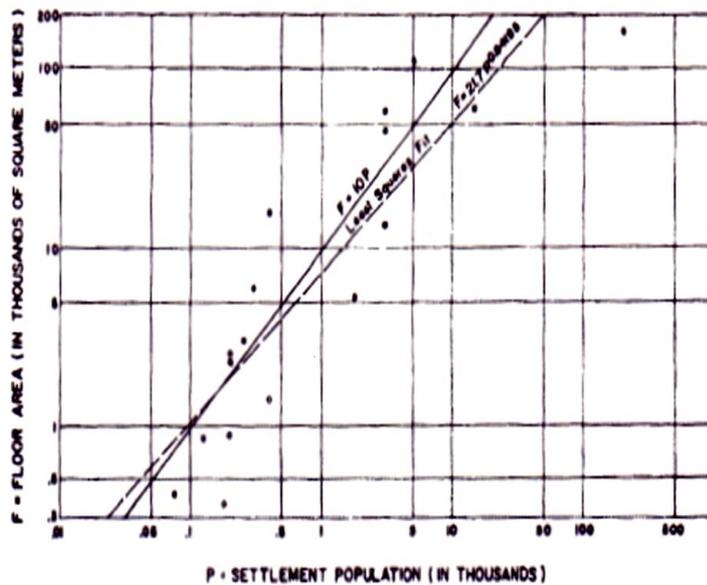

Table 2. Settlement Population - Graph

It is obvious that the redevelopment of modern cities around the world is resulting in systematic deviations from the space utilization described in Narol's (1962) charts above. The recent exposure of substantial private ownership of allegedly 'public spaces' during the Occupy Wall Street and other similar locations outside New York City are another symptom (Hammond 2013). Similarly, in my fieldwork in Istanbul in 2010, I identified a definite trend of demolition of smaller units occupied by working class Turks for building larger expensive luxury units. In an interview by Dombey (2012), Abdullah Baysal, head of Istanbul's construction association, reports an increasing demand for large towering structures. He related how Vedat Asci, head of Astas Holding, the firm behind the new Macka Residences, argued that even when older housing is replaced, the former tenants demand units larger than their old ones.

The only trend I have seen that does not conform to this increase demand for private space is in preliminary surveys I conducted in Lisbon, where new construction on the outskirts of the metropolitan area had provided affordable units consistent with the previous small family spaces. India does not fare much better. In cities like Mumbai at least half the population lives in slums of makeshift structures that are unlikely to survive severe weather. In the case of these structures, whether in Mumbai or favelas in Brazil, the difference between 'homelessness' and living in an illegal structure on private or public property is a narrow one. This is not only due to eviction when development takes place but, significantly, also to of the unsanitary conditions and poor protection from the elements.

Recently slum housing has been almost celebrated (Brand 2010), ignoring the suffering of the population, lack of security, violence, the poverty traps and lack of services, including education. This literature has focused instead on the 'entrepreneurial' opportunities of 'self-made' living conditions. Kotkin (2005) has argued that the past failure of cities to provide security for all their residents has been a significant factor in their disintegration. In these definitions of city life, the idea of what is a home and what constitutes a living space come into focus as blurred visions of the struggle for simple survival for the majority of the world's population. Cities may no longer be recognizable as coherent social entities, as they rise and expand wherever people can survive long enough to produce and consume. This future looks much more like the medieval city described by Sjoberg (1960) than the ordered cities of Sumer and Mari that have defined our ideas of city life for over four thousand.

What is interesting in these theoretical contrasting visions of the city, is that out of uncertainty, homeless and residents unexpectedly created forms of community in common spaces. The autonomous nature of these associations produced services of reciprocal exchange, which continued as long as the spaces were unclaimed and residential stability provided continuity. My recent research in San Francisco indicates that where local residents have been given control of neighbourhood parks (specifically, Brooks Park) they have organized and built gardens, controlled graffiti and policed litter. This is the same conclusion reached by Schuessler (1992) in her study of parks in Providence. However, as described above, individual choices and the economic conditions that lead to homelessness are dependent on local policy. The personal abilities and problems of the homeless also cannot be dealt with uniformly. Any policy has to be plastic, giving government employees, neighbours and homeless individuals the ability and option to modify responses. Utah has instituted a new approach (partially implemented in San Francisco) of providing free housing for those who are homeless (Laine 2015) and as a result overall spending on the chronically homeless has been reduced substantially. The effectiveness of this approach and its durability could provide new insights into the problem of homelessness.

It is also obvious that homelessness affects individuals and families across many urban and rural landscapes. Homelessness also creates its own community with a fluidity that finds people moving in and out of housing, across towns and into suburban or rural areas depending on opportunities and personal contacts. Questions about the sustainability of cities and social life is seldom addressed comprehensively (Caldararo 2004). It is my contention that without such a comprehensive view that takes into account issues such as homelessness, our cities will become expansive slums with most of the population ill-housed and neglected (Neuwirth 2006, Thakur 2008, Xinhua 2005).

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