

Predictability, Adaptability, Immediacy:
Encountering Perceptions of Shelter in Sacramento, CA

By

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Abstract

This project is rooted in understanding the circumstances for misunderstandings about what adequate shelter is – what it looks like, what its function is, where it can exist – because this debate is a part of the problem of homelessness. I used an extended case study which necessitates iterations of participant observation and interviews all grounded in theory, academic and popular discourse. I encountered various perceptions and definitions of shelter being expressed by those engaged in homeless-focused work in Sacramento, California. I conduct a discourse analysis to inquire into the implications of the ways in which shelter is expressed in the data I collected, and grouped the results into three themes – predictability, adaptability, and immediacy. Predictability represents the perception of shelter at its best, not as it currently exists, while adaptability represents what the city and county would like to be the result of shelter in the individual – adaptability to economic circumstances – and immediacy characterizes the general climate surrounding the topic and the search for a solution. I discuss what spaces these perceptions create in Sacramento and how those compare to what is manifest in the city.

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I. Introduction

Standing in the sun on a hot July morning in 2017, I peered around rows of local news crews who were filming an assembly of the area's homeless service providers, high profile advocates, and elected officials to watch as the Executive Director of Sacramento County's Continuum of Care Organization read the results of the most recent homeless census numbers out to the crowd. Hundreds of volunteers conducted the Point in Time Count (PIT) on a night in January of that year and, at the intersection of the region's housing crisis and the record-breaking rains of earlier that year, they counted 2,052 unsheltered people living in tents, under overpasses, in alleys, in spaces still accessible along the river parkways, or generally in places not meant for human habitation. With a successful permanent supportive housing project behind them, area service providers tried to remain positive while grasping the sobering reality of the official numbers reaching record breaking highs: 3,665 people homeless in Sacramento. The tone changed when Sacramento's new mayor, Darrell Steinberg, angrily took the podium – dismissing the need to “give pats on the back” and declaring this newest report damning. “This report is a call to action, no excuses,” he said (Chabria et al. 2017). During the rest of the year political will fused with housing markets, environmental discourses, and ideas about rights to the spaces in the city in pursuit of a solution.

This paper describes a research project located in Sacramento, CA which concentrated on how shelter for those experiencing homelessness is defined by people engaging in homeless focused work. I use this term, homeless focused work, to describe individuals whose jobs include or are solely focused on providing services to, advocating for, or creating policies that affect those experiencing homelessness, or individuals who dedicate much of their free time to those same efforts. Through engaging in participant observation, conducting interviews, undertaking a critical discourse analysis, and reviewing local and state-wide policies and the broader academic discussion surrounding homelessness, I have documented discord between the imagined possibility of Sacramento and the reality of unsheltered homelessness. It is becoming clear that the system is failing itself, and we are not being truthful with one another about which population homeless service systems are in place to aide, nor are we addressing the greater economic and social forces at work that create the circumstances for homelessness in the first place.

Homeless services have developed within an atmosphere promoting individual responsibility and programs that focus on social improvement. This in turn creates fractured services and a system through which the user must navigate. In this environment, Sacramento's evicted have been forced into a transitory state through implicit and explicit practices of the city, service providers, and advocates alike. As national level systems react to the shock of growing numbers of homeless families, veterans, and transition aged youth by creating emergency shelters, service providers, policy makers, and advocates find themselves trapped in a washing-machine cycle of crisis responses, never able to create the stability so desperately needed by those seeking shelter.

Sacramento

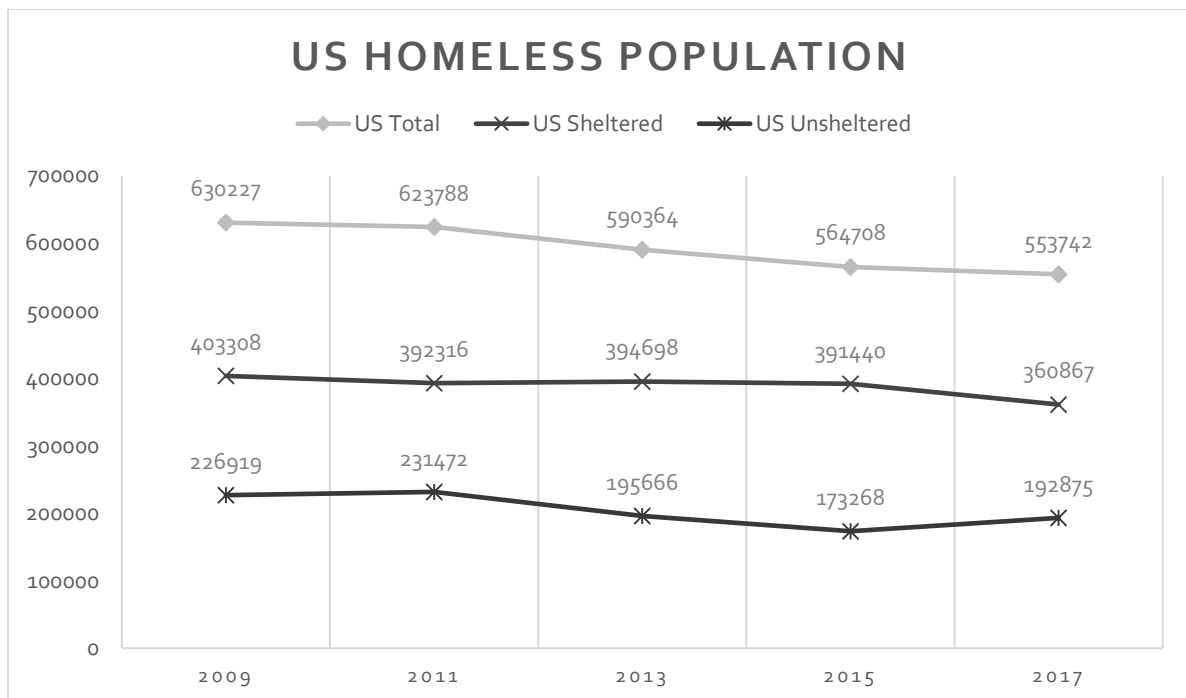


Figure 1

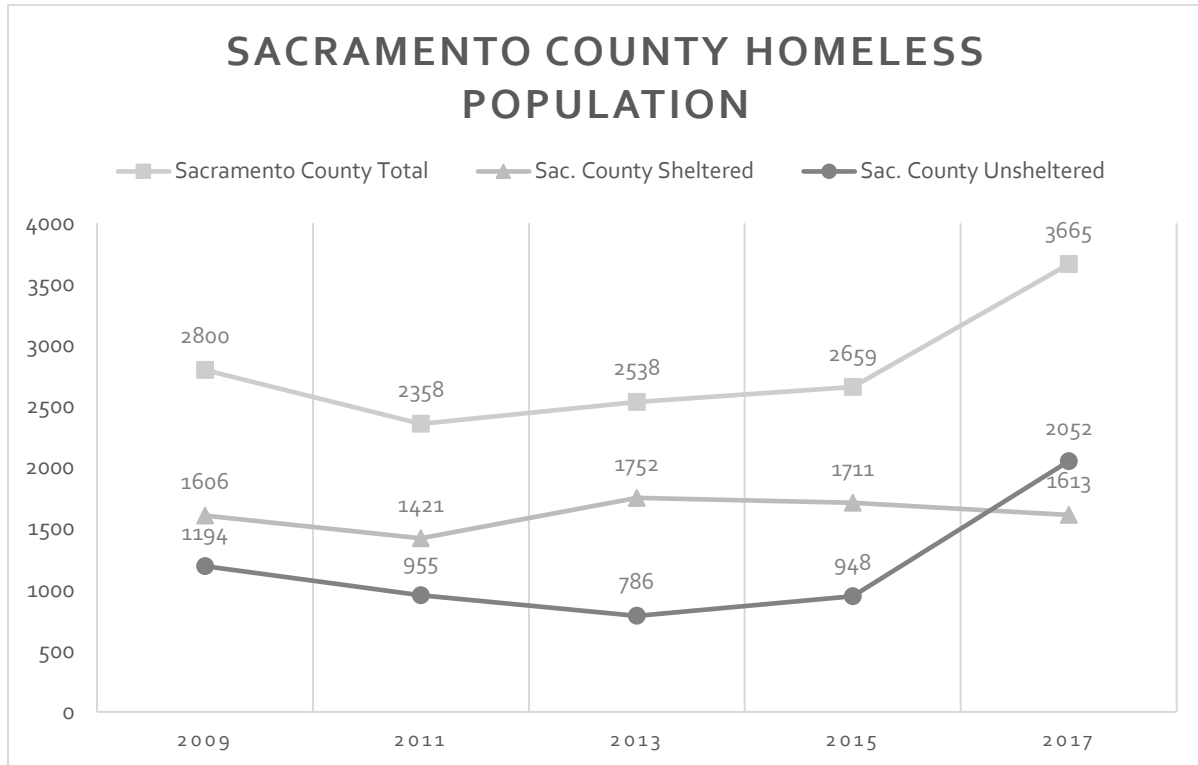


Figure 2

Figures 1 and 2 show a comparison of the Point in Time Count (PIT) numbers recorded for Sacramento County and for the US over the past 9 years. The difference between the two is precisely the reason I became engaged on the subject of homelessness within the specific context of Sacramento. It is clear that something different is happening here in Sacramento as compared to the rest of the nation. Figure 2 shows that the numbers of unsheltered homeless have recently risen at an extreme rate in Sacramento (a 216% increase in the last four years) and have surpassed those of the sheltered homeless. Based on the most recent PIT reports, Sacramento reflects a similar pattern within California – a major spike in homelessness – which is a departure from the trends in the rest of the country (Baiocchi et al. 2017).

Mayor Darrell Steinberg has been leading efforts to reduce Sacramento's homeless population, making shelter for those who are homeless an engaging and contentious political conversation in the region. Because of this political and public focus Sacramento as a case creates the opportunity to reflect and analyze the process that is currently taking a larger place in local discussions than it has in the past.

The Problem, the Question

I will set the stage for us to discuss how people engaged in homeless focused work are defining shelter and what kinds of spaces these definitions create for the evicted. Services and accepted practices are created based upon theories – of economic independence in a neo-liberal state, of space, of power, or example. The construction of theories is in turn based upon language with fixed definitions and meanings. David Harvey addresses this in his book, *Social Justice and the City*, when he describes how he “recognized that definitions could dictate conclusions and that a system of thought erected on fixed definition and fixed categories and relationships could inhibit rather than enhance the world” (Harvey 2009, 12). Harvey argues that fixed definitions create circumstances where policies and practices operate in the potential world without recognizing the actual world, and I will take this further to say that working concepts do the same. Working concepts are those assumptions we use to base interactions with others, and when those working concepts are not regularly challenged they become more and more fixed in our understandings of the world around us - they do not allow for reflexivity. At a time when more and more people are arrested for sleeping in tents, ticketed for sleeping in cars, and assaulted in the middle of the night, the definitions responsible for creating exclusionary spaces must be reexamined. What types of spaces are constructed out of these conceptualizations of shelter, and how do they compare to what has become manifest in the urban landscape of Sacramento?

While this study focuses on a specific group of people involved in the search for a solution to Sacramento’s homeless problem, this paper is meant to give space for reflexivity for all of us living in cities. Solving the problem of homelessness in the US has been relegated specifically to those engaged in homeless focused work, but with this I hope to bring it back to all of us. It is the duty of us as citizens to remain engaged and understand how practices in place that often work toward our benefit have been working in opposition to others for decades. We can no longer stand idly by as cycles of exclusion and criminalization endanger many of our formerly housed neighbors, as it becomes obvious that those engaged in homeless focused work are caught in an eddy without a paddle. In the following chapters I hope to make it clear that this issue affects us all and to advance an agenda for change.

II. Research Design and Methodology

Worldview and Positionality

The approach I have taken to designing this research project is largely borne out of my personal outlook, which can be explained with the help of John Creswell's descriptions of constructivist and transformative worldviews. Creswell outlines these worldviews in his book *Research Design* (2014), and I will use his descriptions of both to paint the picture of my positionality and worldview.

The constructivist worldview is an accepted approach to qualitative research, and I fall into the category of a "social constructivists" who believes that "individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work... [and] develop subjective meanings of their experiences...directed toward certain objects or things" (Creswell 2014, 37). The goal of constructive social research is to rely on the view participants have of the situation being studied. This approach favors complexity and does not lend itself to narrowing meanings or a reductionist approach.

Social constructivists hold that subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. This translates into a research design that puts primacy on a historical overview and highlighting the social mediation of meaning. Social constructivist researchers "recognize that their own backgrounds shape their interpretation, and they... acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their personal, cultural, and historical experiences. The researcher's intent is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world" (Creswell 2014, 37). Within this approach it is common to utilize open-ended questions to allow for participants to share their views and histories, so the researcher can better understand their historical and social perspectives. I understand that meanings are generated socially, and therefore reflect power structures within society. A constructivist approach compliments this understanding in highlighting the importance of grasping the context within which individuals make sense of the world and therefore base their meanings of socially constructed systems (Creswell 2014).

The transformative worldview works well to further describe my personal approach to this research subject. This worldview was developed by "individuals who felt that postpositivist assumptions imposed

structural laws and theories that did not fit marginalized individuals in our society” (Creswell 2014, 28). This helps me in articulating that while I understand that meanings are generated socially, and systems are created out of these socially mediated meanings, I reject that there is a common truth. Or, maybe more specifically, I understand that the most usual “common truth” is not necessarily generated in a way that fits or works for marginalized individuals in our society. The group that represent this worldview are most often critical theorists, participatory action researchers, Marxists, feminists, racial and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, indigenous and postcolonial peoples, and members of the LGBTQ communities (Creswell 2014). The transformative approach takes the constructionist view further in advocating for an action agenda to help marginalized peoples. It “holds that research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political change agenda to confront social oppression at whatever levels it occurs” (Creswell 2014, 38).

I depart from this approach in that I, due to time, was not able to engage the marginalized – those currently experiencing homelessness – into my research approach or design, and therefore will not attempt to provide a voice for them because I have not been privy to that voice in a way that can be represented in this project. However, I do hope to advance an agenda for change. This study attempts to understand how the lives of the evicted in Sacramento have been constrained by those understood as more socially powerful than them within the spheres of the urban landscape, the social services landscape, and the political landscape.

As a white, housed, cis-gendered woman, I have no personal experience with homelessness. Neither do I have personal experience providing services, advocating, or writing policy for people experiencing homelessness. I am an outsider in relation to this topic. I have chosen a qualitative research project because my background and previous experience is grounded in a social approach to oral history. I approach research design in a narrative way, putting primacy on the importance of story-telling to communicate meaning, alternative ways of expressing knowledge, and the complexity of human experience. This necessitates a loosely structured interview guide focused on gaining the participant’s understandings of shelter for those experiencing homelessness through a descriptive, conversational processes.

I take this approach also from my personal experience expressing complex ideas, and a professional grounding in projects and programs that encourage experiential learning and expressing knowledge in a variety of ways. My understanding of knowledge – how it develops and how it influences practice – is expertly summed up by Andrew Sayer in his 1992 book, “Method in Social Science.” Sayer discusses knowledge in context masterfully and I use him here to emphasize my own understanding of the world on the topic of knowledge, power and practice. Sayer holds that there are four misconceptions about knowledge: 1) that knowledge is gained purely through contemplation and observation of the world, 2) that what we know can be reduced to what we can say, 3) that knowledge can safely be regarded as a thing or product, which can be evaluated independently of any consideration of its production and use in social activity, and 4) that science can simply be assumed as the highest form of knowledge (Sayer 1992, 13).

These misconceptions work to create a situation where society fundamentally misunderstands itself. I must put primacy on the variety of ways that individuals develop knowledge in the context of a society where they learn to think and act to combat this misunderstanding. These thoughts and actions are representations of knowledge expression that are ever developing. Human beings have the capacity for self-change and for making their own history, but in this sense, Sayer references Marx in noting that history is not just made by people but also what happens to people, because both language and history are mediums and products of social interaction (Sayer 1992, 19).

Methodology and Methods

I utilized what Michael Burawoy describes as an extended case methodology to structure my approach to the issue of homelessness in Sacramento. This approach deploys participant observation to locate “everyday life in its extralocal and historical context” (Burawoy 1998, 4). To do so, the researcher roots herself in theory to guide dialogue with participants, and applies reflexive science in order to “extract the general from the unique, to move from the micro to the macro, and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on preexisting theory” (Burawoy 1998, 5). It is specifically utilized by Burawoy in the context of ethnographic research to maintain an eye on the complexity of the issue at hand. I

found this structure extremely useful as I worked to better understand the variety of ways definitions of shelter are communicated within the context of critical urban theory, to locate this everyday reality in broader circumstances.

Participant Observation

I conducted participant observation in two distinct ways for this project. First, I attended events and meetings where the topic of shelter for the homeless featured heavily. I attended as a community member, or sometimes representing the Sacramento Housing Alliance as their Intern, to observe the discourse – the way people in attendance would discuss the problem of homelessness, would represent their ideas of solutions, and would evoke emotions when talking about the ways in which those experiencing homelessness find shelter. The result of this mode of participant observation was field notes that documented what was said and expressed by presenters, protesters, and things brought up in smaller the side-conversations in which I engaged.

The second way I engaged in participant observation was while volunteering at Loaves and Fishes, the most well-known service provider for those experiencing homelessness in Sacramento. This was in the form of volunteering at Maryhouse, a day shelter for women and children operating under the umbrella of Loaves and Fishes. The experience was a fruitful opportunity for participant observation of service provision. It provided a way for me to understand the variety of ways shelter can be provided as well as the traditional approach to service provision that has been a dominant form within the community for many years. The result of this mode of participant observation was also field notes, but looked much more like a journal as I reflected on the experience – documenting tips I was given by staff, questions I received from guests, and hardships I encountered.

In total, I have field notes from nine meetings and events, and from four specific days of volunteering at Maryhouse, along with general notes on the experience. I will detail more about the meetings and events in the Results chapter, but I attended two events organized by faith-based groups, two events organized by Universities, one Sacramento City Council meeting, one event organized by and for the

unhoused, one press-release event, one neighborhood association meeting, and one invite-only meeting between city employees, homeless advocates, and service providers.

Interviews

I identified potential interview participants while attending various meetings and events in Sacramento where the topic of shelter for the homeless, or the problem of homelessness, was being discussed. I paid specific attention to those engaging in homeless-focused work who fell into 4 broad groups – Sacramento city/county employees, service providers, advocates, and policymakers. The individuals were identified because they play or played a role in the current discourse about homelessness in the city, have a hand in current shelter programs and design in the city and county, or dictate the direction of much of the discourse surrounding shelter for the homeless. The following questions were prepared in advance and approved by the Internal Review Board (IRB) of UC Davis:

For Service Providers	For Homeless Advocates	For Policymakers + City/County Employees
How would you describe yourself professionally?	How would you describe yourself professionally?	How would you describe yourself professionally?
Tell me about your organization		
Tell me about the services you provide	Tell me about the ways that you advocate for individuals experiencing homelessness	How do you understand your obligations towards individuals experiencing homelessness in Sacramento?
How long have you been working in this position?	How long have you been a homeless advocate?	
Why did you get into this line of work?	Why did you get into this type of advocacy work?	Why did you decide to get into this line of work?
What have you learned about homelessness from your experience as a service provider?	What have you learned about homelessness from your experience as an advocate?	What have you learned about homelessness from your experience as an elected official/working for the city/county?
How would you define shelter?	How would you define shelter?	How would you define shelter?
What is the most important provision that can help an individual experiencing homelessness	What is the most important thing an advocate can do to help individuals experiencing homelessness?	
Have there been any recent changes to the homeless population that you serve or laws regulating your organization?	Have there been any recent changes in the way you advocate?	Have there been any changes in the way you and your peers have been approaching solutions to homelessness?

- If so, what affect have those changes had?	- If so, what has been the impetus for those changes?	- What has been the impetus for those changes? - What have those changes resulted in?
What do you know that you would like to be able to prove?	What do you know that you would like to be able to prove?	
What do you wish you knew more about that would help you in your current position?	What do you wish you knew more about?	What do you wish you knew more about?

Table 1

In addition, I always ended the interview by asking the individual to envision their goal for Sacramento County as it pertains to shelter for those experiencing homelessness and then to describe to me what our community would look like if that goal was realized. In conversation, participants discussed their experiences and backgrounds with shelter and those experiencing homelessness, what their goals for shelter in Sacramento are, and what a future where this goal has been realized would look like.

Interviews lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to 1 hour. I interviewed a total of 10 individuals, three advocates, four city/county representatives, and three service providers. Four of the 10 interviews were recorded, and the audio transcribed, the rest were only recorded in the form of detailed field-notes. As per my IRB approval, none of the individuals will be identifiable, and therefore will not be referred to by name, gender, or position.

Review of Discourse, Policy, and Literature

I utilize articles from the *Sacramento Bee* and the *Sacramento News and Review* to conduct a critical discourse analysis which allows us to further contextualize information gathered during participant observation and interviews. It also works to represent the dominant public dialogue and understanding of the problem of homelessness. As such, the articles are analyzed for the way they reflect and shape public opinion, and I critically analyze what they add to the broader conversation.

I reviewed Emergency Shelter Ordinances from cities across the state of California and will use this information to aide in understanding what is possible for shelter provision within the context of Sacramento, and how this is in relation to the possibilities represented broadly across the state. This takes the form of a spatial analysis as well as an analysis of language used in the ordinances.

Burawoy emphasizes the importance of reflexive scholarship while engaging with the extended case method and therefore an important method in the context of this project is an analysis of preexisting theory (Burawoy 1998). This takes the form of a review of the literature that engages with critical urban theory and political ecology on the topic of homelessness. Countless scholars have added to the field of homelessness research and I remain reflexive, relevant, and grounded by drawing upon this work to further analyze the definitions of shelter I encountered.

De-limitations and Limitations

This being a master's Thesis, I was limited by the time-constraints of my program, but the relevance of what I have been able to accomplish is not limited. I want to take the space here to fully explain both the limitations of this study and also the de-limitations, what was specifically left out as I necessarily bounded my research. Here I will explicitly state what I can do with what I do have.

The biggest and most important de-limitation to address is the absence of voices of those currently experiencing homelessness in Sacramento. Because I was not able to conduct interviews with anyone from this population, I do not speak for this group and will draw no conclusions based upon how those experiencing homelessness in Sacramento define their shelter. I will keep my analysis and subsequent recommendations firmly rooted within the context of the four main groups engaged in homeless focused work that I have spoken with in interviews and how they define and construct spaces for those experiencing homelessness and searching for safe shelter.

Another voice of note that is not represented explicitly through interviews in this project is that of law enforcement. I was not exposed to this group through the process of participant observation, which made subsequent outreach efforts I took to schedule interview especially difficult. I was never able to gain access to any individuals working on the homelessness task force during the time I allotted for data collection. Their role is an important one in the context of sociospatial organization because they are responsible for enforcing anti-camping ordinances and other laws targeting the homeless population. Their role will be represented through descriptions of laws and ordinances on the books in Sacramento, but I will not discuss

how law enforcement individuals make decisions based upon their individual definitions of shelter. In this context, law enforcement is seen as an extension of the way policymakers and city/county employees understand what shelter is.

Also important to address is the fact that my data set is limited to a small number of individuals engaging in homeless focused work. I did not speak to individuals from all organizations that provide shelter services, or that advocate for the homeless, nor did I speak to all the policymakers that sit on City Council or the Board of Supervisors individually. Because of this I am not able to draw conclusions of what *the* definition of shelter is in Sacramento, as my small sample cannot be a comprehensive overview of a larger cohort. What I can do is draw from what I learned from these people in places of power when it comes to directing policy and services to highlight the complexity of the issue. I will not be able to reduce my data into one succinct conclusion because of my research design. Instead I will be able to show how I encountered multiple conceptualizations of shelter from a broad array of sources at a wide range of scales.

III. Background

The Old Homelessness

Let's begin by placing this complex social condition within historical contexts. Charles Hoch details the evolution of homelessness in his article "Homelessness in the United States" by looking at how homeless individuals have been perceived over the years – as the vagrant, the deviant, the sick, and the victim of circumstance (Hoch 1986). Those experiencing homelessness were depicted in institutional language as vagrants as early as 1735 in laws that enabled townspeople to incarcerate the transient poor, the vagrant population who would move around the country in response to economic activity, when they became concentrated within the city. By the 19th century these vagrants were more colloquially referred to as hobos, known for their social culture of independence and political culture of resistance (Hoch 1986). Hoch explains how the image of the deviant is a result of this vagrant, or transient population, finding shelter in Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels, or other such lodging for single individuals that existed on the perimeter of central business districts in industrial cities where lodging served the purpose of winter residence and was often accompanied with employment information, supplies, and "recreational activities for single men" (Hoch 1986). This spatial concentration and stagnation of the vagrant population allowed for easy control through spatially focused policies. Therefore, when the more stably housed residents of these cities became concerned with the growing masses of individuals drinking and behaving in other deviant ways, the police would round up many of them and take them to labor penal camps thanks to the development and continuation of the aforementioned laws from the 1700s (Hoch 1986).

Hoch details how the "stamina" of hobo culture withstood cycles of economic boom and bust, but as agricultural mechanization became more wide-spread, and unionization took hold, there was less demand for the labor of hobos, and the high-density lodging and rooming houses of skid row became more regularly occupied (Hoch 1986). The vagrant transient population was perceived as more deviant the less mobile they become. Programs of labor camps were replaced with moral reform and rehabilitation. The population at this point was considered maladjusted, transient, and most importantly, in need of individual counseling. This began the still pervasive perception of the homeless population as sick and the ideology behind much of the

social service methods we still see today (Hoch 1986). Both of these conceptualizations are backed by the assumption that once, with help, the individual became adjusted to economic reality, they would find a job, and everything else would right itself in their life.

I would be remiss to not address the question of race within this history of homelessness in the US – vagrancy laws had a more pointed purpose than just to incarcerate the visibly poor. WEB Du Bois details the long and intertwined story of race and capital in the book *Black Reconstruction in America*, and makes it clear that as black labor began to threaten white labor, “a lawlessness which, in 1865-1868, was still spasmodic and episodic, now became organized, and its real underlying industrial causes obscured by political excuses and race hatred.” (Du Bois 2007, 552). Black folks were lynched, terrorized, and at the very least pushed out of work, out of the profitable sectors by the power of white labor, and once no longer laboring, were labeled lazy, and vagrant. Vagrancy laws enabled the incarceration of many black bodies, which were subsequently put to work in labor camps for profit (Du Bois 2007, 571–72). Du Bois makes the point that this tactic of racial separation was used by capitalists to inhibit the laboring class uniting against their exploitation. This uniting of the proletariat “failed to work because the theory of race was supplemented by a carefully planned and slowly evolved method, which drove such a wedge between the white and black workers with practically identical interest who hate and fear each other so deeply and persistently and who are kept so far apart that neither sees anything from common interest.” (Du Bois 2007, 573). I am in danger of going too far off my specific point here, but race is important to address when speaking about homelessness, and specifically when discussing the role that vagrancy laws and practices that focused on spatially stagnant and visibly unemployed bodies played in the creation of homelessness today because black bodies are more often than not the target of such laws.

As the early 1900s approached, the homeless population was still by-in-large made up of single men utilizing shelter resources on skid rows (Hoch 1986). The great depression brought along with it the fourth interpretation of the population: victims of circumstance. The country begins to see a rise in the numbers of families receiving emergency shelter. In San Francisco, for instance, this measure increased from 6,902 in

1929 to 55,879 in 1932, and by 1934, families made up 40% of the transient population receiving Federal Emergency Relief Aid (Hoch 1986, 230). This instigated the expansion of the welfare state and the overall framework of entitlement programs.

The growth of the homeless population and shifting of demographic make-up halted with the economic booms in 1950 and 1970. By the early 1970s, social service and police professionals stipulated that what characterized the homeless population was not a lack of shelter but a general “expression of disaffiliation,” a disinterest in engaging in society (Hoch 1986, 230). By this point researchers and government officials all but rang a bell to indicate that we were seeing the last vestiges of homelessness in America, and soon it would be a problem of the past. Obviously, they were wrong.

Hoch takes us through this expert summary of the history of homelessness in the US to make the very salient point that we can easily see how, through different interpretations of the population, the definition of the problem has changed along with economic conditions, but throughout all these changes it remains tied to the unquestioned value of economic self-reliance. The response to the problem of old homelessness is to put those experiencing it to work, teach them to work, or – if neither of those approaches work – explain the problem away by concluding these individuals are uninterested in participating in society. These responses were borne from laws, social problems, and simple definitions of the homeless population.

The New Homelessness

The term “new homelessness” is used to refer to homelessness in America after 1980, when the numbers of individuals and families experiencing homelessness began to increase and become more visible. The recession in the early 80s has been referenced as the cause of the surge in the homeless population during this time (Hoch 2000). At this point, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was leading the shelter system that began as an emergency response to this growth and to the terror induced as the population became something it never had been before, unsheltered. Shlay and Rossi wrote a seminal literature review of research done on the topic of the new homelessness and outline how research has been prompted because of the growing prevalence of the unsheltered population, and the demographic shift to include more women, families, and transition-aged youth (Shlay and Rossi 1992). At this point in history it

was becoming clear that something different was happening to cause this drastic uptick in the population and major change in demographics.

Counting the Homeless

The combination of increased visibility and population size began to necessitate more national, state, and local responses to what was quickly encouraging a climate of constant emergency. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) conducted the first study of FEMA's shelter efforts in 1984, and subsequently, through the McKinney Act of 1987, was given administrative responsibility for the treatment and care of the homeless population (Hoch 2000). Daniel Bentley reports on literature focused on determining the numbers of those experiencing homelessness, and on identifying distinctive characteristics and life circumstances that might work to explain "what has befallen them" (Bentley 1995). Bentley points out that counting the homeless is difficult for many reasons, but primarily because it depends upon the definition of homelessness. Unless the count is focused specifically on a group accessing a particular set of services, the question of validity comes down to the relatively likely effectiveness of different methodologies, he argues, and is complicated by various definitions of homelessness as well as variation in experiences of the condition by geography. Bentley points out three common identifications of who the homeless are: as mentally ill people, as drug addicts or alcoholics, or as a group that "represents a range of household types and age groups (including children) who are persistently poverty stricken, and are the victims of reprehensible social, economic, and housing policies or re-structuring of the labor market" (Bentley 1995, vi). In reflection, we can see these characterizations of the population present in much of Hoch's historical overview and can also see how grappling with either a structural or individual characterization of the problem remains present.

Many different government programs collect information on their homeless users, and, because of their differing methodologies and motivations for counting, further complicate the question of what homelessness in America is. For our purposes, I will offer up the examples of food stamp programs, school districts, and HUD to illuminate this conflict. The biggest difference amongst the three is the method of counting: specifically, food stamp programs and school districts collect information from users as they fill out forms by giving addresses and descriptions of their living situations, while HUD conducts what is called the

Point in Time Count (PIT). The shelter surveys of the 1980s mentioned earlier evolved from analyzing shelter programs and users, conducted once every four years, into the PIT that estimates the homeless population size and demographics across the country, arguably one of the most hotly debated aspects of homelessness in the US. The PIT is a county's census of its homeless population, conducted once every other year. HUD identifies a county's Continuum of Care (CoC) through which federal funds to the county are dispersed and this organization becomes responsible for mobilizing sometimes thousands of volunteers every other year on a designated night in January to conduct this census. It originated as the chosen method to count those who are defined by HUD as unsheltered, as this group became a larger portion of the population in the years following 1987 (Hoch 2000).

CoCs conducting the PIT are guided by HUD's definition of homelessness:

people who are living in a place not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelter, in transitional housing, or are exiting an institution where they temporarily resided, people who are losing their primary nighttime residence within 14 days and lack resources or support networks to remain in housing, families with children or unaccompanied youth who are unstably housed and likely to continue in that state, and people who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, have no other residence, and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing. (National Alliance to End Homelessness 2012)

Within this definition resides two specific types of being homeless, those who are sheltered, and those who are unsheltered. The bulk of the above definition applies to people who are sheltered homeless: "in emergency shelter, transitional housing...people who are losing their permanent residence within 14 days...unaccompanied youth who are unstably housed...people who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence." These services can be offered by local government, non-profits, or faith-based organizations. Being unsheltered appears in HUD's official definition of homelessness as "people living in a place not meant for human habitation."

Because it attempts to capture the many different shapes that homelessness can take and the myriad different circumstances that often predicate becoming homeless, HUD's definition of homelessness is drawn out and complicated. Instead of having a system through which individuals self-identify as homeless, as

school districts and food stamp programs do, HUD conducts a census, and therefore the numbers reflect those who volunteers can find on any given night and, as Bentley argues, reflect methodology more than the actual population (Bentley 1995). Despite these valid criticisms, the PIT measure will be used in this paper to discuss the size and growth of the homeless population nevertheless, because not only it is the accepted official measure of the population, it dictates local action or inaction and determines federal funding to programs and services.

Sheltering the Homeless

The continuum of care is the term used to both refer to the organization identified by HUD as the group responsible for counting the homeless, as well as represent what has become the preferred approach to solve the problem of homelessness. In another thoughtful paper by Charles Hoch, "Sheltering the Homeless," he details the evolution of institutionalized efforts to solve the homeless problem and points out how the continuum of care concept binds the diverse hierarchy of programs and services set up to address homelessness together on the basis of social improvement (Hoch 2000). This continuum is conceptualized as the way to lift those experiencing homelessness out of their current predicament. This system, still touted by homeless advocates and service providers as the answer to the pervasive problem, was set up to work by taking a homeless individual or family from the streets into emergency shelter, then transferring them to transitional shelter where working-aged individuals will be prepared to enter the conventional labor and housing markets, when, after a maximum of 2 years, the individual or group in question will be prepared and able to find themselves permanent housing. Today this continuum is made up of a few more steps: from transitional shelter individuals can move to supportive housing, and then possibly along to permanent supportive housing. The continuum, in theory, supports individuals through a very difficult transition, and provides adequate access to services along the way to ensure the persons in question are able to become functioning members of society once again. But more often than not, as outlined by Shlay and Rossi, people experience intermittent movement in and out of homelessness, and between being sheltered and unsheltered because of lack of access and exclusionary policies in place in many emergency shelters (Shlay and Rossi 1992).

Hoch explains how most emergency and transitional shelters work to weed out those individuals with serious addiction, alcohol, and mental illness conditions, and argues that this reflects a motivation to minimize social disruptions within the shelter and to improve the chances of successful outcomes for those let in (Hoch 2000). Hoch argues that the implementation of the continuum of care under these circumstances represents a success story as a form of social support. However, if the goal is not to routinely move groups of homeless poor people from destitution to subsistence, but instead to have these services empower those experiencing homelessness to move out of poverty altogether, we will be let down by these programs that have been created; social support is by-in-large the outcome of the continuum, not the creation of economic independence (Hoch 2000).

Emergency shelter programs, the intervention intended to be the intake into the continuum, create circumstances where the line between being sheltered and unsheltered under HUD's definition becomes blurred. The common approach to providing emergency shelter takes the form of buildings with other official uses during the day being opened to the homeless population during nighttime hours, and accepting individuals on a first-come, first-serve basis. These programs often necessitate sobriety and focus on specific demographics because of funding availability. In Sacramento, CA, there are many different emergency shelter programs – for an example of the range of forms the service can take, I'll describe two different programs: one offered by a faith-community, and another funded by the city.

Steps Ministry, run by St. Francis Parish, originated after neighbors of the church began to grumble about the numbers of homeless individuals who would sleep on the steps of the church at night. At this same time one of the Parish's administrative buildings became available at nighttime and they had space for 16 individuals to sleep in the courtyard. St. Francis Parish describes their service as offering "a daily welcoming presence, a safe sleeping space and a nutritional breakfast to approximately 16 of our homeless brothers and sisters." The group gathers in the evening for a support-group session, where individuals can share with one another. This service is funded through donations to the program and operates with volunteer assistance. Shelter rules are determined by the minister to assure the safety of everyone present. The second example

comes from a city funded shelter program. The city of Sacramento recently began funding a Winter Triage Shelter, set up in response to the 2017 PIT estimate of over 2,000 unsheltered in the county. This new emergency shelter is low-barrier – people are accepted as they are with possessions, partners, pets, and under the influence of drugs or alcohol – and by police referral only. The facility can house up to 200 guests, is open for use 24/7, and staff works to connect guests to other services.

These examples work to show the range of forms shelter takes, as well as rules governing them. They also illuminate how complicated access to shelter can be, and how there are a wide variety of experiences that fall under the umbrella of homelessness. But most importantly they highlight how, because of the necessitated transitory state and the difficult relationship with law-enforcement, those who are sheltered in emergency shelter one night might be unsheltered the next.

Criminalizing Homelessness

In our current political climate of government divestment from social service programs that have operated since the late 80s to assist the visibly poor, and the continuing commodification of housing, neighborhoods, and urban green-space, we see increases in enactment and enforcement of anti-homeless laws in the state of California. Fisher et al. wrote an extensively documented report on the increase in these laws and their enforcement of crimes based not upon behavior, but status (Fisher et al. 2015). Their very pointed message is these laws, enacted and enforced at the local municipal level, are a direct reaction to state level divestment and non-action to attempt to fix the homeless problem. These laws most often focus on the most visible of the homeless population, the unsheltered - those who may attempt to access emergency shelters during night-time hours. Fisher et al.'s report focuses on laws that criminalize four categories of activity associated with homeless people – 1) standing, sitting, and resting in public spaces, 2) sleeping, camping, and lodging in public spaces, 3) begging and panhandling, and 4) food-sharing (Fisher et al. 2015). They raise pertinent questions about the ways in which these laws harm people and society, and about the constitutional rights of homeless people, and call for aligning stakeholder incentives along with seeking state-level solutions and improving data collection.

All this history and research brings to bear questions about definitions – definitions of homelessness, of the “problem,” of the population, of stakeholders; and these questions about definitions begin to culminate around the reality of transitory states within specifically defined places and programs.

IV. Theory

If there is one thing abundantly clear about the topic as we've laid it out so far, it is that we are looking at a very complex issue. To begin to make sense of this complexity we can turn towards theory as a point of departure. But like cleaning a room, things might get messier before order begins to set in.

So far, we've dealt with some historical context for the current condition of homelessness in America, and have come away with questions about definitions, and about constructing solutions. In this context, it becomes important to talk about power, space, and social processes in the urban sphere. The field of critical urban studies was united in the late 1960s and early 70s by many radical scholars, among whom were Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey (Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer 2012). This uniting took place despite political, methodological, and theoretical differences, because of the scholars' common goal of understanding how capitalist circumstances construct cities as sites for processes of commodification. Space, treated in western philosophical tradition as "the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile," slowly began to be seen as a product of capitalist development, which further illuminated how it affects and is affected by human activity (Sibley 1995). While the built environment is a relatively stable element of the socially produced environment, it provides context for action (Sibley 1995). Urban space is shaped and reshaped by social forces with differing opinions about appropriate exchange-value and use-value. Harvey specifically argues that spatial forms are not simply "inanimate objects within which the social process unfolds, but as things which 'contain' social processes in the same manner that social processes *are* spatial" (emphasis original) (Harvey 2009, 10–11). From this argument, it follows that in the same way that spatial forms contain social processes, they also shape and are shaped by social processes.

Using Anthony Giddens's structuration theory from his 1984 book, "The Constitution of Society," in concert with Harvey's point, we can highlight how physical space reflects a dialog between social forces. Giddens describes recursive human activity and reflexive social life through the development of structuration theory; the repetition of acts by individual agents reproduce the social structure within which they occur (Giddens 1984). While this theory exists singularly within the social sphere – human actors shape general social life through their interaction with other human actors – its relevance extends into the interaction of the

social sphere with the spatial sphere. Not only are social customs and structures created and recreated through actors demonstrating their individual agency, but also through non-verbal communications of use-value demonstrated through the built environment. I turn to Don Mitchell's use of Harvey to further illustrate this concept – “[the built environment] functions as a vast, humanly created resource system, comprising use values embedded in the physical landscape, which can be utilized for production, consumption and exchange...” (Mitchell 1996, 112). Questions of the meaning of space can be found in human practice. Mitchell uses Harvey in his book “the Lie of the Land” to open a conversation that includes power in the ways that use-value of landscapes is determined. He holds that “the form of the landscape stabilizes when no one arises to contest the morphology and its representation.” (Mitchell 1996, 121). However, when multiple parties arise to contest the morphology and representation of urban landscapes, we see the repercussions play out across social and spatial scales. Therefore that the question is not “what is space?” but “how is it that different human practices create and make use of distinctive conceptualizations of space?” (Harvey 2009, 14). Our question here is very similar, necessitating focus on all the ways that sociospatial organization is achieved.

In the case of Sacramento, individual attitudes shape interactions which shape policy or practice, which in turn affects inclusionary or exclusionary attitudes, that then sends us back into the cycle again. Homelessness has a storied history with this cycle, and as we work to better understand the current definitions of shelter for those experiencing homelessness in Sacramento, we must keep an eye trained on this relationship between the social and the spatial.

Critical Urban Theory

Critical urban theory acts as a lens through which to encounter definitions mediated through this cycle of dialectic social and spatial processes. Neil Brenner, in a chapter from *Rights to the City*, aptly titled “What is Critical Urban Theory?” works to parse the relationship between critical social theory and urban theory, and how the two form a more perfect whole in critical urban theory (Brenner 2009). From this we come to see how urban space is malleable in nature, a continual reconstruction as a site, medium, and outcome of historically specific relations of social power (Brenner 2009). Use of urban space, particularly

urban *public* space is both positively and negatively reinforced according to dominant social norms. Critical urban theory – as Brenner describes it – emphasizes the politically and ideologically mediated, socially contested, and therefore malleable character of urban space (Brenner 2009).

An important piece of critical urban theory is the way in which it asks us to focus upon the disjuncture between the actual and the possible. In its insistence that another urban form is possible critical urban theory necessitates a critique of ideology, of power, of inequality, of injustice, of inclusion and of exclusion at once within and amongst cities. This specific interpretation of critical urban theory is instrumental in my analysis of homelessness in the way that it highlights the importance of examining conflict with a continual focus on the possibility of an alternative.

Homelessness Through the Lens of Critical Urban Theory

Rosalyn Deutsche weaves a discussion of homelessness and public art together with critical urban theory in her article, “Uneven Development” by examining a piece of public art in New York City by Krzysztof Wodiczko called “the Homeless Vehicle” (1988). She uses this art piece as a proxy for a discussion surrounding the public urban sphere and who has access to those spaces. She shows how flows of capital throughout the public sphere create spaces primed for uneven development and excluding the marginalized (Deutsche 1988). Public space therefore reflects social hierarchies and places primacy on capital, not humans. She perfectly performs how researching homelessness is not for those who would avoid controversy as she makes explicit that finding a solution to homelessness necessitates at least a partial examination of the structures that operate in its creation – specifically commodification of housing, the existing patterns of employment, and the social service policies of today (Shlay and Rossi 1992; Deutsche 1988). She introduces two principle dominant forms of understanding the problem of homelessness that she argues are often complimentary: the first being situated squarely in the individual and understands homeless people as apolitical beings that represent social problems, and the second understanding that encourages a solution that would “neutralize the outrage homelessness produces in those who see it,” essentially seeking to solve the problem homelessness creates for the housed population (Deutsche 1988, 3). The conclusions Deutsche reaches and the points she makes, even though they are 30 years old, deeply resonated with me as I worked to

understand the working concepts of shelter in Sacramento, and the light in which those who use public spaces to fill their basic needs are painted.

Neil Smith also uses Wodiczko's Homeless Vehicle in his article, "Contours of Spatialized Politics" to examine the urban sphere (1992), and Smith continues Deutsche's practice of referring to the homeless population as the evicted, stating explicitly that this term more closely captures the reality and the violence of experiencing homelessness as it is produced by technical decisions made by state and municipal planning agencies about land uses (Smith 1992). I continue this tradition to illuminate the effects these decisions, actions, and working concepts have. Smith discusses the Homeless Vehicle as an intervention in the landscapes of the evicted, and one that at once shows and ameliorates the difficulty of how the evicted's presence in the urban landscape is fiercely contested. Unlike Deutsche, Smith discusses how these public art pieces can reflect the production of geographic scale and highlights the central realization that political liberation requires spatial access. Smith's style helped me better understand how taking up the topic of homelessness through the lens of critical urban theory must be calculated and work to illuminate the specific actions that result in individual suffering. He became an example of how to highlight humanity without absolving the system of its responsibility for the homeless crisis.

While "Contours of Spatialized Politics" is not widely known outside of homelessness research, Neil Smith is widely cited for his use of the term "revanchist city" in his book *The New Urban Frontier* (1996) and how he uses it to explain this uneven development, and unequitable spatial access to urban spaces in America. Revanchism is a policy seeking to retaliate, especially over lost territory. Smith uses the example of France in the late 19th century as a historical pretext for what he terms "the current American urbanism" (Smith 1996, 211). More than anything, Smith emphasizes that the revanchist city "expresses a race/class/gender terror felt by middle- and ruling-class whites...It portends a vicious reaction against minorities, the working class, homeless people, the unemployed..." (Smith 1996, 211). The biggest danger that the revanchist city poses, he argues, is the way in which it strongly reasserts many of the same oppressions that created the problem in the first place – namely the built and spatial reproduction of social relations (Smith 1996). Smith's analysis of

urban politics and policies allows for an explicit description of the ways in which cities and the dominant class within them, react to minority and degenerate populations by using policies.

These pieces not only worked as examples that I use to inform my approach to writing about the topic of homelessness, but also gave me tools to express the violence associated with the condition of homelessness. They inspired me to use the lens of critical urban theory, something that now seems like the only way to write about my specific focus and empowered me to be unwaveringly critical. Through an approach to critical urban theory inspired by Smith and Deutshe, Sacramento's approach to homelessness can clearly be understood as the city taking up revanchist policies to abate the terror felt by housed residents as they are confronted with the visibly poor.

Agency and Resistance

Giddens tells us to remain cognizant of agency, and that even in the face of revanchist policies, with local law makers working to benefit the already privileged, those actions do not take place in a vacuum. In other words, the marginalized and oppressed, the evicted, have agency to react in their own way to the actions taken by those in power. So even though Smith and Deutsche gave me the tools to acknowledge the violence and power at work, I needed to recognize the actions taken by those who are being oppressed. In "Geographies of Exclusion" David Sibley works to identify forms of social and spatial exclusion and examine what occurs to knowledge produced by members of excluded groups about space and society (Sibley 1995). Throughout the book, Sibley explicitly addresses how power is expressed through the monopolization of space and "the relegation of weaker groups in society to less desirable environments" (Sibley 1995). Sibley works not only with the idea of spatial, physical exclusion, but also with the ways in which populations such as those experiencing homelessness are referred to and portrayed by the affluent, and how this social process results not just in social exclusion but in physical exclusion. Spatial separations of the city make the homeless specifically invisible to the affluent; exclusion is built into our urban spaces.

Even when being excluded and portrayed as degenerate by the affluent, all actors have agency and the capacity to affect the circumstances of their existence (Sibley 1995). To this point, many scholars discuss resistance as it pertains to those experiencing homelessness and spatial access. Randy Amster, in his book

“Lost in Space,” addresses patterns of exclusion and methods of resistance within the context of homelessness in America, and discusses attempts to acquire political liberation through resisting exclusion from space and staking claim to specific spaces in the urban sphere (Amster 2008). Amster approaches the subject of homelessness with critical urban theory and applies both a legal and political ecological framework to identify both strategies of othering used by dominant social forces, and strategies of resistance used by the marginalized to combat othering. His conclusions are similar to what we see in Sibley’s work – perception and attitudes work to create social relationships within urban spaces and those relationships further influence policies regarding spatial access and ways in which our cities are built. Amster is also in conversation with structuration theory as he argues that power and resistance are locked together, flowing throughout time and space. Unique to Amster, however, is the way he displays the utility of an ecological perspective on resistance when examining the nexus of people and place (Amster 2008).

An ecological perspective is also used by DeVerteuil et al., in their article “Any Space Left?” to examine resistance amongst a group of 25 homeless informants sleeping rough in L.A. County (DeVerteuil, Marr, and Snow 2009). Their point is that most scholarly work on homelessness either works to romanticize or to completely ignore homeless resistance, a dichotomy which works to simplify the homeless experience. Their aim with the study was to better understand ways individuals are practicing resistance within the context of the escalating anti-homeless measures. They conclude that reconceptualizing resistance is essential in unpacking and rejecting the persistently negative representation of homeless people as stigmatized, powerless, and disaffiliated (DeVerteuil, Marr, and Snow 2009). This piece held importance to me not only as another example of incorporating the natural and the urban, but more importantly as a reminder to embrace and highlight the complexity of the condition of homelessness and the state of homeless focused work. It became important then to acknowledge the actions taken by those experiencing homelessness, both those taken in reaction to revanchist policies and those taken for other reasons.

In a similar vein, Casey et al. examine personal agency and resistance in homeless women in England, to redraw spatial boundaries through analysis of homeless women’s use of public spaces (Casey, Goudie, and

Reeve 2008). They conclude that there are broadly two categories of resistance women take up in public spaces: challenging the rules and legitimacy regarding use of public space and resisting homeless identities. They found that public spaces represented an essential resource in the absence of formal service provision by the state (Casey, Goudie, and Reeve 2008). This piece helped me lean into complexity a bit more as it worked to understand the myriad reasons why women utilize public spaces. It is also highly important in its conclusion that public spaces act as essential resources as the women in the study worked to meet their basic needs.

Overall this snapshot of the literature that focused upon agency and resistance becomes extremely important as we begin to explore the concepts invoked when talking about shelter and its importance in Sacramento. The ways that those experiencing homelessness are often portrayed or conceptualized work to completely silence their individual agency, and in the spirit of embracing complexity the works of Sibley, Amster, Deverticul et al, and Casey et al are at my back urging me to lean into it more.

Shelter

Working concepts play into general social relationships within urban spaces, and physical structures of those urban spaces work as more concrete versions of those dominant relationships and conceptualizations. Charles Hoch's paper "Sheltering the Homeless in the USA" discusses ideas about the homeless problem and its solution and how these ideas emphasize social improvement for the poor which encourages shelters to focus on changing the individual household rather than on structural or policy related improvements (Hoch 2000). A solution to the problem of homelessness will likely take an examination of these structures that work in the creation of the condition of homelessness, but from Hoch's 1986 paper we know that there is a long and storied history of understanding the solution to be creating economic self-reliance. Articles featured here as those representing "shelter" work to complicate popular approaches to shelter services and what shelter means to those experiencing homelessness.

In his 2000 paper, Hoch emphasizes the importance of shelter services weaning themselves from the rhetoric of social improvement and instead "[embracing] the project of community building" (Hoch 2000, 875). He works with the baseline assumption that housing is a commodity in the US and brings to light the

fact that “shelter uncertainty” is experienced on a sliding scale, and that we all experience it to varying degrees (Hoch 2000). Hoch plays a large role in informing my understanding of the history of homelessness and how it is so closely tied to our working concepts of the importance of economic self-reliance. His papers are prominent ones that do the work of outlining the historical evolution of the problem and our approaches to the solutions as a society.

The focus on social improvement by shelter services is the topic of many scholarly articles. For instance, Donley and Wright’s paper “Safer Outside” takes a look at the unsheltered population of Orange County, FL to better understand why they do not utilize shelter services (2012). They found that the “helping people back to self-sufficiency” ideology represented by many shelter staff created circumstances where guests often felt infantilized by practices (Donley and Wright 2012). Those who are unsheltered have unique needs that differ from those of the sheltered homeless, and Donley and Wright stipulate that what has been missing to make the changes necessary to serve the unsheltered population is not the requisite knowledge but the will to make the necessary changes (2012). This piece works to correct the often-held and largely incorrect opinion that many people sleeping rough simply don’t want to be sheltered. It reminds us that the reality of their choices are not that simple, and are often predicated by the approach to service provision that has been popular since the 1980s.

In a recent paper by Quirouette, “Managing Multiple Disadvantages,” she highlights the institutional practices that create exclusionary services (2017). She argues that the recognition of people’s complex needs translates into tighter regulation and/or decreased support in shelter institutions. Her findings support this larger argument about poverty governance as a whole – specifically that it adopts a paternalistic ethos and remains sensitive to market and managerial pressures as a productive project of discipline (Quirouette 2017). In the specific context of shelter services, she argues, this means they are designed to help people who are motivated and have normative goals (Quirouette 2017). Existing shelter service structures were not created for individuals with multiple intersecting issues that affect their housing situation, even though many shelter staff approach the problem of triage in this way. Quirouette’s focus and conclusions help to continue to paint

the picture of current circumstances. I found it fascinating that many of the issues highlighted in her study have echoes in papers 10, even 20 years old. It makes apparent that even though approaches are changing and working concepts of those experiencing homelessness have slowly shifted, they may not have the intended effects. This to me highlights how individual actors may be working with progressive understandings of the condition of homelessness and the population overall, the systems in place work to render that understanding or attitude irrelevant.

In his 1994 paper, “No Place Like Home,” Friedman poses the question what shelter services would address the problems of the people facing homelessness, and more broadly what role does shelter play in addressing the problem of homelessness? This paper addresses how we have responded to the problem of homeless with the creation of shelters in a state of emergency, yet the nature of their operation is not clearly defined, and the role they play has relied upon the values and attitudes of policymakers (Friedman 1994). Friedman examines two different approaches to shelter provision, and finds that there are two different approaches to shelter services: one that provides “house” and the other that provides “home” (Friedman 1994). The social supports that result from “home” services create positive outcomes, Friedman argues, and therefore shelters offering these services are more effective in addressing the multiple and intersecting problems of individuals who are homeless (Friedman 1994).

We can further inquire into the nature of “home” through more scholarly work that sees it in different or more complex ways than Friedman. Hill, in his 1991 article, “Homeless Women, Special Possessions, and the Meaning of Home,” highlights the individual nature of the meaning of home and argues that women in shelters often lack the ability to create the emotional stability of home for themselves within the confines of that shelter. This gets at the inability of shelter services to be flexible enough to meet multiple needs, in that many are not prepared to offer the “appropriate goods and services,” (Hill 1991). This piece works as a way for me to continually inform my understanding of the very wide field of shelter service provision and is more evidence of academic research highlighting the inflexibility of traditional shelter provision.

Kidd and Evans also take a look at the meaning of home for a section of the homeless population in their 2011 paper “Home is Where You Draw Strength and Rest” as they look at youth narratives on the topic of home. Youth expressed many different conceptualizations on the construct of home across a continuum with home as a state on one end and home as a place on the other (2011). The authors argue that both home and homelessness are constructs, and to better understand the experiences of homeless youth the dialogue needs to be deepened surrounding these two terms (Kidd and Evans 2011). I use this study to bring in another important aspect of the homeless experience, namely that of youth experiencing homelessness. The research focused on this group takes a refreshing approach of uplifting the experience of youth in the context of homelessness, similar to that necessitated by feminist theory. The efforts focused on this group in practice are also refreshing, and I bring this in as an example of how the research and practice nexus is stronger than others

Finally, Parsell in his 2012 paper “Home is Where the House is” discusses how home represents a public commitment to normalness and participation in society amongst a group of people sleeping rough in Australia. He found that, because of the participants’ problematic experiences residing in public spaces, together with their biographies of feeling disconnected with society which underpin their ideas of home, housing and home were synonymous (Parsell 2012). This study was very well executed and even though it focused on a group of individuals in Australia, the conclusions drawn about the importance of appearing to be a participating member of society still resonate here in Sacramento. The way “normalness” presents itself in our conceptualizations of shelter can be seen in the insistence of so many in power that individuals must be economically self-reliant, and how shelters work in favor of those who have personal goals to become so. It also highlights how, from a different perspective the working concepts of home and housing are the same, and I see this echoed in my study with the myriad definitions of shelter and how they intersect in different ways for different people – for instance how shelter is not housing, how shelter is a roof, how shelter is stability, etc.

This selection of scholarly work aims to complicate our ideas of what home means, and to point to the fact that the way we as a society work to understand what shelter looks like, and how one must be economically self-reliant to be able to obtain it. It is easy to conclude here that the shelter system in the US is not positioned to be a solution to the problem of homelessness.

V. Results

I collected data at 19 separate events, meetings, and interviews all involving people doing homeless focused work. For the ease of referring to individual interviews, I have created gender neutral pseudonym for my participants and will display the important information that I collected about that individual below. I did not collect any demographic data on these individuals, and because of that I don't refer to them with gendered pronouns.

Pseudonym	Homeless Focused Work group	Interview Date	Organization/Institution
Jamie	Advocate	July 20 th , 2017	Loaves and Fishes
Alex	City Representative	Aug. 10 th , 2017	City of Sacramento
Jordan	City Representative	Sept. 19 th , 2017	City of Sacramento
Peyton	Advocate	Sept. 29 th , 2017	Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee
Gray	Advocate	Nov. 10 th , 2017	Sacramento Area Congregations Together
Elliott	City Employee	Jan. 5 th , 2018	City of Sacramento
Corey	Service Provider	Jan. 8 th , 2018	Volunteers of America
Max	County Representative	Jan. 12 th , 2018	County Department of Human Services
Logan	Service Provider	Jan. 17 th , 2018	Mercy Pedalers
Sage	Service Provider	Jan. 18 th , 2018	WIND Youth Services

Table 2

I will begin this section with a general timeline overview of the gatherings where I collected data to provide context for our discussion of results and analysis. The timeline narrative will be followed by the presentation of the working concepts of shelter – predictability, adaptability, and immediacy – and how certain excerpts represent the myriad understandings of those concepts.

Data collection began on July 10th, 2017, at the Point in Time Report press conference. This event, detailed in the introduction of this paper, was held at a Mercy Housing project in the River District of Sacramento called Quinn Cottages. The results of the count were presented by the ED of Sacramento Steps Forward, Ryan Loofbourrow. He detailed the methodology for the count which was developed by Sacramento State Institute for Social Research and allowed the 400 volunteers to count the population more accurately than ever before. Other reasons cited for the increase in the population were the heavy rains over the winter of 2016-17, and that four out of every 10 people in Sacramento experience rent insecurity, with more than 50% of their income going to housing costs. Mayor Darrell Steinberg claimed the issue as one that specifically effects the city of Sacramento because 61% of those counted were reported within Sacramento City limits.

Ten days later, I interviewed Jamie in their office on the Loaves and Fishes campus, just down the street from Quinn Cottages in the River District of Sacramento. We had met previously at advocacy meetings and I knew them to be a very caring but no-nonsense person. The interview was very informational, as they have worked in homeless advocacy in Sacramento since 2001. I learned that there are a very small number of shelter beds in



Figure 3

Sacramento and therefore we cannot be designated as a “shelter on demand” county. They firmly believed that the fractured communication and goals across different entities in the county is causing access problems and gaps in services, and that while funding is a big barrier to providing adequate services, understanding experience translates into dollars.

The very next day, Jamie and I met at the Emergency Shelter Ordinance Meeting at City Hall on the first day of my internship with the Sacramento Housing Alliance. There were eight others at this meeting, including some city staff, others from Loaves and Fishes, Legal Services of Northern California, and the Sacramento Housing Alliance. The meeting was called by city staff on bequest of the Mayor to come up with a game plan to research alternatives to the current city emergency shelter ordinance and to better understand the level of interest from the faith community to work with the city to provide shelter. The genesis of this meeting came from Loaves and Fishes leadership advocating for a change in the anti-camping ordinance to allow for folks to sleep in church parking lots in tents and cars. City council responded to this with a resounding “no, but,” and directed staff to pursue possibilities for broadening access to indoor shelter. The overall goal we had after the meeting was to create more opportunity for shelter and services in the city.

On August 10th, 2017, I interviewed Alex in the conference room on the fifth floor of city hall. Alex had also been present at the Emergency Shelter Ordinance Meeting in July and had begun working at the city just six months earlier. We spent most of our hour together bouncing questions and ideas off one another and building upon the issue of shelter access in the city. Our questions highlighted what they understand as the paralyzing nature of not knowing the most effective route to providing shelter, and the simple enormity of the problem of homelessness – how it spans and encompasses a plethora of other social issues. They opened my eyes to the complexity of competing facts – that on one hand shelter is always considered an emergency service, but on the other hand there is a basic lack of beds and that makes emergency response impossible.

About a week later, on the 16th of August, I attended the Interfaith Council Homeless Summit at the Capital Christian Center – a huge facility off of highway 50 east of Sacramento. I was not raised in the

Christian faith, so this was quite the experience for me. The Center was huge, and the event was formal. I had heard about this meeting from connections at my internship and was encouraged to go by my supervisor. The event was billed as a discussion of the status of homelessness, and a meeting of solutions. Attendees were asked to do the work of being present and offering up proactive thoughts for solutions. I remember feeling like I was in the presence of a lot of thoughtful and powerful people. The overwhelming message from all different faith groups that day was that while they feel they have a duty to help those in need and to act as a moral compass to city leadership, congregations don't want to be seen as the ones to rush in with a band-aid response. They expressed feeling like "just one leaf blowing in the wind," and that civic leadership needs to be mobilized in response to this crisis and to create pathways to success.

On the 23rd of August, I attended another faith-based event, this time put on by Sacramento Area Congregations Together (ACT). About 300 people gathered at St. Marks church for a Public Commitment Meeting where Mayor Steinberg, Councilmember Harris, Supervisor Nottoli, and Ryan Loofbourrow were called to publicly commit to a statement put forward by ACT – to "make a personal commitment to bring a directive to executive management to initiate and assure the development of a draft comprehensive plan to end homelessness by a set date." Media coverage of the event described it as "political theater with a pinch of preaching."

At the Sacramento City Council Meeting on September 12th, a comprehensive plan to address the state of emergency shelter in the city was presented by city staff, the result of the Emergency Shelter Ordinance Meeting in July. The meeting was well attended, and there was a general atmosphere of anger and frustration from those in attendance – my notes from the public comment section have the heading "HEATED." The anger seemed to stem from a lack of sharing, or transparency, of the coordination, research and legwork that was not recognized by council members for the benefit of the public. I learned at this event that the capacity of shelter in the city is currently 1200 people at any given time, and that the gap we are seeing is not just quantity but operational capacity – not only is there not enough beds, but there is no straightforward way to provide more beds. The plan presented to council at this meeting was to provide an

additional 300 shelter beds in the city by December 1st, which would also include assertive outreach, case management, mental health and substance abuse services, and permanent housing. City council accepts and perpetuates the opinion that many sleeping rough don't want help, and many insist that a space inside for individuals sleeping rough is much preferable to the outdoor option. Only one council member recognized that indoor shelter might not currently be conceivable.

A few days after the council meeting, I met with Jordan in their office on the fifth floor of city hall. I was given a hard 30-minute timeline and upon entering the room was asked "so how did you find my name in connection to homelessness?" They seemed very suspicious and it felt like I was being tested, but after I described my research and familiarity with the local context, Jordan opened right up and talked almost non-stop for the whole 30-minutes. This interview helped me better understand a main viewpoint held by many who sit on city council – namely that of being unequivocally opposed to the idea of sanctioned tent encampments in Sacramento. Jordan emphasized the bad behavior displayed by the homeless population and the difficulty of creating solutions that combat those bad behaviors. Jordan insisted that "without the tool of the anti-camping ordinance, crime would be rampant" and the city would struggle to manage the "lawlessness" of the population. "It's all a crisis," they said in response to my question about defining shelter, shelters are all reactions to crises and the main issue the city faces is capacity.

On the 23rd of September, I went to an event titled Unhomed: Voices of the Unheard, held at the Latino Center of Art and Culture close to the Sacramento River, just off of Broadway street. The event was organized to address the feeling that no one was considering the voices of those experiencing homelessness while searching for a solution. It was a beautiful day, and the event was held outdoors under the shade of a large oak tree. There were seats set up in front of a stage, but it became clear that all the seats were reserved for two types of people – the invited, but not in attendance, local officials, and the unhoused. A few people took a seat, but for the most part the audience of about 30 people was standing in a ring outside the seats facing the stage. The main message from folks who stood up to address the crowd was that they just want to be treated like people, to feel compassion – "be friendly, be nice" was echoed by a few speakers.

On the 29th of September I interviewed Peyton at Shine Café in Sacramento. Peyton and I had met previously, as they are a very active homeless advocate. They sit on the board of Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee (SHOC) and previously experienced homelessness in the early 2000s. We met at a quiet downtown coffee shop in September, when the oppressive heat of the Central Valley summer was just beginning to abate, and we both smiled and sighed in talking about the nice cool breeze along the streets that day. I learned a lot about the history of tent encampments in Sacramento from Peyton, and about SHOC's leadership, but what really stuck with me was something they made a point to tell me, and said they work to make this clear to everyone interested in helping those experiencing homelessness – that there are times of great happiness they remember from their time being unsheltered.

About a week later, on October 5th, I attended the Envisioning California Conference in the Tsakopoulos Library in downtown Sacramento. I attended the first half of the day, where there were 2 panel sessions I could attend – first “The State of Homelessness in California,” and second “On the Front Line: Observations and Ideas to Move Forward.” I learned a lot of general information from this event and also came away with a better handle on the research practice nexus. I learned that many understand prevention efforts to mean addressing youth homelessness – which necessitates trauma informed care and low barrier services. A big message from the first panel was research that focuses on trajectories into homelessness look only at the individual and therefore absolve the system of any responsibility, which continues to perpetuate the problem. It also became clear that the system is designed in such a way that requires user navigation – in other words the brunt of the work of getting out of homelessness is put on the shoulders of the victims of the situation.

A good two weeks later, I attended another academic event focused on the topic of homelessness, this one was Capitol Insights: Homelessness in CA, Causes and Solutions. I learned a lot from speaker Gary Blasi, who is professor Emeritus at UCLA Law and has done much research into the history of homelessness in California. I learned that Housing First policies were successfully demonstrated in New York in the early 1990s, and didn't arrive to California until 2007, and that California's focus on the chronically homeless has

necessitated emergency responses which have dramatic effects to the approach to the solution. There were some contradicting comments, a hallmark of any event dealing with homelessness in my mind at this point, such as “all simple explanations of homelessness are wrong,” and that the macro cause can be explained simply by the gap between resources and housing prices, in other words wage stagnation and rising market prices breeds homelessness. There was a general agreement that the current discussion of homelessness in government has an undercurrent of “earning your way back.”

A few days after Capitol Insights, the Sierra Curtis and Land Park Neighborhood Association (SCLPNA) held a Multi-Agency Meeting on Homelessness on October 23rd. I felt a strong urge to attend, even though I knew much of what would be said by representatives in attendance, because I had seen most speak at a plethora of other events. What drew me to this meeting was the fact that I live in a bordering neighborhood, and the SCLPNA had been extremely active on social media over the summer, posting photos and publicly shaming individuals who appeared homeless and often sit on the curbs of Broadway either resting or asking for food. This general approach to the homeless population had a very prominent platform on popular media outlets over the course of my research and I jumped on the opportunity to attend one of



Figure 4

their only open meetings. There was standing room only in Curtis Hall, and I stood in the back of the room with many other people. Those representing service providers, law enforcement, and local government held a united front and talked about creating an inclusive system, and many of the questions from the crowd had to do with where the people they see so close to their homes can be sent, what services are they refusing to use.

On November 10th, I met Gray to specifically talk about their work organizing for homelessness advocacy with ACT. I was interested in learning about their unique approach to advocacy and their use of data in communicating messages to policymakers. I learned that ACT's homelessness advocacy is unique amongst their other advocacy efforts in that they work to advocate for a coordinated plan, not any specific outcomes. I learned about the history of the local efforts to provide extra shelter in the winter, called Winter Pilgrimage which is currently operated with goodwill assistance from local faith congregations, but began as a program sheltering people at the Cal Expo event space close to the Sacramento airport. Cal Expo became too costly for the city, so congregations were asked to volunteer time and space to provide shelter. Gray described the role of advocacy work as using your own social capital to talk to the those in power in local government, and to assure that the right messenger is in the room so as to be less threatening.

I took a break from data collection over the rest of November, and then worked through the month of December to coordinate a few more interviews in January, beginning with Elliott on January 5th, 2018. Elliott is a city employee and we met in their office on the fifth floor of city hall. We had met in July while coordinating work on the emergency shelter plan, and they were very warm and open with me. We began by talking about how the city has not traditionally been involved in any actions focused on homelessness, because the funding streams go through the county. However, within the past five years the city wanted to have a seat at the table and to have their voice heard in the general conversation, specifically because of the growing unsheltered homeless population which Elliot describes as "the interface of the homeless in the city." They explicitly recognized that shelter is not a solution to homelessness but a solution to the crisis of seeing the unsheltered, and we spoke at length about the difficulty that city councilmembers and staff specifically face because "when you're mad about something, you go to city council to air your grievance, and

the city is responding to *this*.” The main problem as Elliott understands it is the lack of flow through the programs currently in place.

On the 8th of January, I interviewed Corey as they were driving between meetings. They had me handsfree in their car, and I was sitting in my living room. I learned a lot about the brand-new winter shelter operated by Volunteers of America in this interview, how they were able to take their time in setting the space up which hasn’t been an option in the past, and how they were dealing with resistance to the service from the community and from those experiencing homelessness. An interesting anecdote that they shared with me explained why some people sleeping rough didn’t want to utilize this specific shelter service – they had been told by a few guests at the shelter that word on the street was FEMA was running this space, and that the plan was to gas any homeless people who showed up. For me this really speaks to the relationship of fear that has been built between the city, service providers, and those sleeping rough in the city. They made sure to communicate that they are operating with proven best practice approaches, such as providing low barrier spaces to welcome partners, pets, and possessions.

A few days later, on January 12th, I interviewed Max at their office at the county’s Department of Human Assistance Offices. They are a project manager for the county’s homelessness services and were the architect of the newest initiatives for the family homeless services program. This interview felt hard to reign in in the moment, but as I listened back to the recording and transcribed the interview it was clear that they were trying to address the scale of the county's services and the fact that they are trying to tackle the issue from all angles. I learned a lot about how the California Entitlement Programs are meant to work together, but how they often find that services being offered were being utilized by families who were not literally homeless, and that those who are literally homeless were being left out of recent shelter provision efforts. They mentioned having to ask themselves and others at the DHA often "who did we build these programs for.” I learned about how the previous emergency shelters that served families operated, and how the barriers to being able to utilize the services were made incredibly high by the intake process – namely that both required attendance of a 2-hour orientation before you were put on the list to wait for a bed, and these

orientations were only offered once a week and both shelters had their orientations at the same time. Their ultimate goal for shelter was permanent housing, “whatever that looks like, whether that’s shared housing or it’s a single unit.”

On January 17th I met with Logan at Mel's Diner in Sacramento. We knew each other from the advocacy meetings and my time at SHA and is one of the warmest and most caring individuals I have ever had the pleasure of sitting down with. They mentioned that they found themselves drawn to working in homeless and housing services after trying out the Airforce Academy and deciding that that career track was not what they wanted to do for life. Logan highlighted the importance of creating good neighbor policies and the ability of that approach to create ownership, meaning, and purpose in the lives of those seeking the stability of a home. They also made it clear that when they encounter those unsheltered in their work today, they never refer them to nighttime services and shelters because there is no room, “it is pointless.” Logan also told me that there is no drug detox center in the county, and that the detox facility we do have is for alcohol, which is leaving a large need unanswered.

My last interview was on January 18th with Sage. We met at their offices off Florin Rd in Sacramento and had a comfortable conversation for about an hour. They told me the story of how they became the director of a homeless service provider in Sacramento, and we talked at length about the particular difficulties that youth experiencing homelessness face. They were adamant that the way their service approaches each of their guests is the way to solve the problem for good. However, we grappled with the difficulty of scaling programs and how sometimes things need to be small to be effective. Sage has worked very hard to focus the services of their organization towards those homeless youth who have no one, not even the foster care system to fall back on, and work on repairing familial relationship whenever possible. They highlighted the importance of building relationships, and trauma informed care.

Expanding Working Concepts

Results from the data collected at these gatherings can be expressed through three different concepts that were invoked across all platforms and contexts – predictability, adaptability and immediacy. I determined these concepts through an iterative process of listening to, summarizing, and coding interviews. I began data

analysis by summarizing each event, meeting or interview – the results of which we just worked through. I then pulled quotes and excerpts to summarize what important information I learned at that specific venue, the understandings and descriptions of shelter that were brought up, and any key quotes or anecdotes that I found specifically interesting. After this process I was noticing that there were three main ways that shelter was discussed. At first, I described these concepts as improvement, stability, and crisis, as these were things also brought up in the literature I reviewed. Improvement communicated this sense of social improvement that was referenced often in the literature and at the academic events I attended as a primary approach to helping those experiencing homelessness. Stability communicated the sense of immobility and security, the references to being able to return and to feel safe. Crisis communicated the atmosphere that permeated many of the gatherings we just detailed, and the need to have an answer today. After a while of working with those terms to describe my concepts and workshopping them with my peers and committee members, I became aware that while these three concepts are not mutually exclusive in many ways, they all invoke different types or aspects of temporality. Out of this realization came the terms predictability, adaptability and immediacy, which I believe do a better job of describing what I found.

I conducted a deeper analysis through a process of coding transcripts and field notes to pull any excerpt or quote that invokes the concepts of predictability, adaptability or immediacy. I began by compiling the coded data and organizing it by each individual gathering. I further organized the data by the different groups represented in my study – advocates, service providers, and city/county representatives, visually represented on the next page. Orange represents predictability, yellow adaptability, and pink immediacy.

From my secondary analysis (fig. 5) we see the concepts organized by group – advocates, service providers, city/county representatives, and all data from participant observation. Right away we see that advocates and service providers overwhelmingly evoked the concept of predictability, while city/county representatives talked more about adaptability and immediacy. Within the context of participant observation, all of these concepts feature heavily as definitions of shelter and its importance. Visualizing the data in this way works to show the broad trends and ways in which data differs between the different groups. Next, we

will begin to peer deeper into each concept and see what we can learn from what was implied when participants evoked different concepts to describe shelter.



Figure 5 – orange = predictability, yellow = adaptability, pink = immediacy

Predictability

When invoking the concept of predictability, individuals spoke about notions of stability, permanence and reliability. The concept of shelter as predictable means reliable access, it means a safety net for you when you fall, it means that there is trust and that there is work being done to build relationships. This concept was often raised in talking about what is needed, what is being built or worked towards currently, and was overwhelmingly represented when interviewees discussed their goals for the future.

This concept exists on a long-term scale, and also carries with it implications of emotions and feeling settled and trusting what you expect to happen will happen. Predictability therefore allows for building something for the future, investing in a future you envision because return to a comfortable status quo is guaranteed. Predictability was talked about as something that is built through relationships that can be called upon at any time and are something intimate and close, but at the same time was talked about in terms of personal space and safety, distance and being able to retreat into solitude.

Data does not reflect similar understandings of what predictable shelter looks like, however, and a good example of this highlighted by the differences presented by advocates and city/county representatives. Advocates argue that there needs to be safety outdoors as well as inside physical structures for those without a home but are met with resistance to the idea of outdoor safety, or predictability, from policymakers and city or county employees (Jamie, Peyton, Logan, Jordan). This conflict implies difference in perception of agency of those experiencing homelessness. For those in favor of predictability for those experiencing homelessness regardless of indoor or outdoor living circumstances, the ability to create those safe spaces for yourself is a basic right, especially in the face of no other options (Logan). For those resistant to the idea of outdoor predictability, they are resisting actions that would be outside the realm of possibility of victims of circumstance, because being a victim implies lack of agency. Victims of circumstance cannot take action on their own, therefore those who create predictability for themselves, taking up places not meant for human habitation for example, are not victims but deviants and become criminalized.

The following are a few examples of the ways the concept of predictability was invoked. They work to show the breadth of this concept, and to show that there are many different implications of thinking of shelter as predictability.

“Shelter should be available for everyone, but shelter on-demand does not exist in Sacramento” (Jamie)

Here it is implied that the predictability of being able to find shelter should be the status quo, that it should be a basic right of everyone regardless of economic status. This was voiced by Jamie – a cornerstone of both service provision and advocacy for those without a home in Sacramento. Jamie was very matter of fact about how local government, service providers, and advocates do not all share the same understanding of the way that shelter fits into the idea of the continuum of care. They voiced the way the system should work but then recognized how that is not the reality of the system in place. This excerpt shows the way in which Jamie is grappling with the disjuncture between the actual and the possible, or even the necessary.

“The main benefit of living in encampments was that people would look after your things or pets while you were out job searching or working” (Peyton)

Peyton detailed their experience advocating for those currently experiencing homelessness and how they draw upon that to inform their current work. This conversation was an eye-opening one for me in that while talking about the struggles of advocacy work in Sacramento, they talked about the importance of recognizing that the relationships they built worked to create a sense of safe shelter. This drives much of Peyton’s advocacy work today, and the quote above implies how they understand the importance of trust in building relationships as well as investing in the future. The quote also implies that there must be a sense of reciprocity in building relationships as well as in investing in the future, because trust and reliability only exist in social relationships of give and take.

“They don’t have to look for where they’re gonna sleep that night. They don’t have to worry about closing their eyes in the middle of the night.” (Corey)

“It’s the first time he’s eaten three meals a day in many years” (Corey)

The above quotes are both in reference to what the new winter shelter that opened its doors in December 2017 affords its guests, and the common practices that they no longer have to engage in while they spend time in the new space. The first quote implies that what this new shelter does for these individuals is allows them to find a secure space, both physically and mentally, and while implicating a sense of rest and peace, also invokes ideas of settling in, settling down. To me this implies that solution finding cannot happen when the individual is in a state of constant unrest, anxiety, or danger, and that first individuals must find safety in both body and mind before other things can be addressed. The second excerpt implies this connection between shelter and basic nourishment and survival. Without this type of shelter the man in question was not getting enough food to sustain his existence, and in this connection, Corey was implying that shelter is itself a basic necessity to survival.

“Stop moving children from shelter to shelter, families need more stability and it takes more time to develop it than these programs are allowing” (PO_08)

I heard a community member say this as they were asked to speak at the ACT event held in the beginning of September. This quote was in reference to programs that attempt to aid families and individuals experiencing homelessness and arguing that the time in which they expect positive outcomes that align with normative expectations is unreasonable. It implies that the current system does not provide stability, that it is not a given when accessing current shelter services but should be if shelter can become a part of the solution to homelessness. Stability here is used to emphasize the importance of being able to count on a space, the same space, to come back to – that you can predict where you will lay your child’s head down that night.

Along with implying that stability is a necessary but not currently present form of shelter, it implies that stability is equivalent to time, and that it must exist in the long-term. Therefore, stability is a necessary piece of shelter that exists on the long-term and can also only exist in a spatially fixed context.

“Everyone has their own space, a bathroom and a shower, a place to cook” (Logan)

This quote from Logan was an answer to the question of what Sacramento would look like if their goal for shelter was realized – and I want to know how practical and material their answer was. This focus on the material aspect of shelter was one that came up often in my data and was either expressed as representative of shelter or what shelter is not. This excerpt shows that Logan’s understanding of shelter invokes the concept of predictability and permanence – the shower and the place to cook implies an investment in the future, nourishment and self-reliance with a place to cook and a sense of self-renewal with the shower. This sense of ownership is also an important one to note, in the context of having your *own* shower and place to cook it implies that this self-nourishment and self-renewal can happen on your own timeline, when you need it or want it. Having your own space also implies this sense of concrete and permanence in a spatial context, that the space is fixed.

“[The city] helped 2,000 people last year, we’re keeping them in a stable situation” (Jordan)

This last example comes from an interview with a city representative. It is important to note while there are many examples of the concept of predictability being utilized by service providers, and advocates and within the context of participant observation, it was hardly invoked at all with those from the city or county. This quote I use to show the way in which Jordan talked about the role of the city- namely that they are there to create stability in the lives of individuals and, most importantly, to “keep” them in that state. This to me is in opposition to the understanding of stability as something to be owned and created by people for

themselves voiced in the previous quote, because this seems to imply that it needs to be created by the city and that it is the role of the city to make sure people stay in this specific state.

These examples work to show the complexity of this concept and also highlight a sense of fractured understanding of reality in Sacramento as well as what is possible. Advocates seem to mostly talk about predictability as a solution to the problem, a goal that maybe happened in the past but doesn't currently exist today. Service providers are split between seeing predictability as a reality for some experiencing homelessness today thanks to a new approach to service provision and as invoking it as a dream or goal for Sacramento in the future. A city representative seems to understand predictability as an existing form that has provided solutions but must be created forcibly and maintained through efforts of the city. People have different interpretations of what shelter currently represents in Sacramento, which makes the vision for the possible and the efforts to take steps towards that possible urban form, almost impossible. Is predictability something created through relationships or through a sense of being bounded spatially? Is predictability something that can arise within an individual through a sense of ownership, or a state that is unnatural to some and must be maintained through continual efforts of local government?

Adaptability

Shelter defined by the concept of adaptability means that change is needed, the status quo is not acceptable and doesn't result in desired outcomes. Shelter within this context was defined either as a way to influence adaptation in the individual, or as a space that is adaptable to individuals. This tension between spaces that adapt to individual's needs, and spaces that influence individual's adaptation to normative society/outcomes creates a climate of confusion. It creates individuals either forced into a mold compatible with our society of late capitalism, or individuals who have experienced situations in which systems and others approach them as unchangeable – but within both of these variances there is an assumed inflexibility of the economic reality of our society.

Shelter is hospitality (PO_04)

This first quote comes from the Interfaith Council Homelessness Summit at the Capital Christian Center in August 2017. The above sentiment was expressed by those congregation leaders who spoke about their specific congregation's approaches to providing shelter for those experiencing homelessness. It implies that those providing shelter are adapting to the needs of the individual. It implies it is more important to change the circumstance of not having a place to sleep than changing the individual. It implies that the function of shelter is to bend and change to the needs of those in search of safe shelter.

"Shelter is not respite from the elements for a day or a week, it is a place to work on issues, find safeties, to help them on their path in life" (Jordan)

"Focus of the city should be to teach people how to survive in the economy and to provide opportunities"
(Jordan)

The first quote here was in reference to Jordan's understanding – and in defense of many on city council's position – that tents are not shelter. It implies that shelter is a place to work on yourself, and that being sheltered means that there would be nothing else to worry about aside from these "issues." This quote invokes adaptability in the way it highlights the importance of change happening within an individual for shelter to exist, or at least the purpose of it should. This quote also implies that without shelter you are not safe, and that the individual is not capable of change on their own – that they do not have agency in creating "their path in life." The second quote has to do with how Jordan sees what the role of the city should be, and the way in which they understand how shelter efforts by the city should be conceptualized. This specifically implies that the city is the gatekeeper to knowledge about how to act within the economy, and that the economy is unchangeable, and some must be taught how to adapt to its circumstances. It was implied that this was a higher calling than just giving individuals respite from the elements, which implies that the fact that they do not have respite from the elements is not the core problem, the core problem is that individuals are not participating in the economy in what the city understands to be a productive way.

“If we [the city] are going to do shelter, we’re going to do it differently. It’s not just going to be a bed and a meal...people might be safe and inside, but they are still homeless.” (Elliott)

This specific quote is in reference to how Elliott is envisioning the shelter programs they have a hand in creating and designing, and how those compare to the ways in which shelter has been provided and conceptualized previously by the city. Specifically, it shows how there is a difference between how Elliott understands shelter and home. Shelter does not solve the problem at hand for each individual experiencing homelessness, namely that they do not have a home. This implies that the traditional approach to shelter needs to adapt, that these previous approaches were not sufficient in addressing the actual problem being experienced. This implies a new understanding of the problem, or that the problem was not fully understood before seeking solutions previously.

Many get the feeling that providers think that something is wrong with them, that there is something that should be fixed (PO_08)

This excerpt is from the event, Unhomed: The Voices of the Unheard, and was expressed by a few people in reference to going to Loaves and Fishes, and the other large shelters provided by Volunteers of America or the Salvation Army. It implies that current shelters deploy a deficit model approach, where to those who use their services are approached as lacking some sort of ability that “regular” individuals have, or as if they don’t possess or present certain attributes before really learning about them.

“Teaching life skills, this budgeting thing, this individual responsibility” (PO_10)

This quote from the Envisioning California Conference was in reference to the approach taken by the program called Family Promise of Sacramento. This implies that life skills are something that is learned,

not by experience but by being told by someone who possesses that knowledge and who has access to it. It implies that individuals experiencing homelessness have never had access to others who possess that knowledge before. It also implies that shelter is a space where these things are learned, that shelter is a transitory and liminal space between two types of existence: one in which you enter having no training or employment history and through the process of existing with shelter you exit with those abilities.

Overall, this concept is just as broad as the previous, with individuals invoking the concept of adaptability to refer to a host of different aspects of shelter – of the space, of the service, of the individual. For the most part, I heard the concept of adaptability in terms of creating a change in the individual. If shelter represents this form of adaptability, it can be understood almost as a space of initiation where individuals enter the space and through the process of going through whatever programs are in place within that shelter, they exit as individuals with different abilities and with a different identity – no longer unable to participate in society as they were before. To me this is troubling, not only because of the way that learning how to exist within the current economy is approached through a deficit model, but also because there is no questioning of larger systems at work to create the situation that countless individuals and families find themselves in, but instead there is this undying focus on the deficits and failings of that individual.

The resistance to accepting tents as shelter rises from this perspective in that the tent does not provide other services to that individual that have been created by gatekeepers of economic and normative society knowledge. I think it is important to point out that the reason tents are currently just a respite from the elements for a day or a week, and the reason that when living in a tent there are still other “issues” to worry about, is because of the laws in place and enforced by the city and county. These laws are not only responsible for the creation of circumstances where tent-living is necessary, but also responsible for the fact that tent-living cannot be adequate shelter according to their values. Those in places of power completely fail to recognize their complicity in the creation of the circumstances that necessitate living in a constant transitory state in a tent. Tents are simply assets used by those experiencing homelessness to shelter

themselves from the weather as they are forcibly moved about the city because of laws in place and a fundamental lack of shelter beds.

Immediacy

Much of the way people invoked the concept of immediacy to define shelter was their sense of urgency and of crisis. Band-aids, stop-gaps, survival services, vulnerability, epidemics, and death were all things invoked and implicated when using this concept to describe shelter and its importance. By understanding shelter in this way responses are limited and not thought through. They are dependent upon access to quick funds, or the will to do without secured funding, which often means these crisis responses are done by churches and rely on good will and donation.

"If real people were lying on the street with broken legs we would get them off the street in a few days"

(PO_00)

This quote comes from the PIT report press conference specifically as the Mayor was expressing his disapproval of the status quo, of the current response to the problem of homelessness in Sacramento County. It is quite a loaded statement, which implies that because the homeless are not real people with real crises such as injuries that make them real victims of circumstance we don't find the will to quickly fix the problem. It implies that there is some sense of fault in the condition of extreme poverty and therefore the solution is not as straightforward as to that of a health or injury crisis. It implies that "real people" do not have the problems of those that are faced by the homeless population.

Emergency is currently being understood by individual basis crisis (Alex)

Different zoning and or defining shelter differently may not matter because of a basic lack of availability of beds (Alex)

The excerpts from Alex’s interview highlight this tension created by reacting to the crisis felt in the individual experiencing homelessness while not having the basic necessity to provide to that individual in the moment – a bed. It implies that it might not matter how we understand the approach to providing shelter if there simply isn’t enough, which to me then implies that it doesn’t matter in this scenario if we want shelter to serve as an emergency response if, because of a basic lack of supply, it simply cannot. This therefore implies that in the current reality, there is no such thing as immediacy.

“There has to be an emergency stabilization first, the emergency shelter piece is critical to bring them in and to do triage and assessment” (Corey)

This quote from Corey’s interview highlights the importance of having an action to take in the moment, something to do, an answer to provide right away to someone who is experiencing homelessness. It implies that the ability to react to crisis is instrumental in any effort to assist those experiencing homelessness – that the most important thing is feeling stable, but that it must be able to happen with immediacy, and every moment that a person has to wait for stability is a crisis.

Those experiencing homelessness are 32 times more likely to die of homicide – “telling people to ‘move away’ is sending them to their graves” (PO_05)

This quote from the ACT meeting was evoked by a community member and representative of a Sacramento Business District. This was said to underscore not only the importance of having safe shelter, but also to highlight the fact that moving people from place to place just pushes them further and further out of reach where they can become victimized. This screams that the situation is dire, that there is a huge risk of death because no one wants to see those experiencing homelessness in their neighborhoods. It implies that our approach of using law enforcement to make the visibly poor less visible is actively endangering people.

Together these excerpts work to show a general climate of emergency that grips all venues and conversations where homelessness is the topic. Crisis invokes feelings of terror, and I think it is especially important to understand who the focus of this terror and this crisis is – is it the fact that housed residents see so many homeless, the fact that people are dying on the streets, or is it the fact that an individual or family is about to have to spend their first night without a place indoors to sleep? When the crisis being reacted to is that of the housed residents, we see laws that enable law enforcement to further criminalize the visibly poor and to be able to move them away from certain spaces where their use of space is not socially acceptable. When we see the crisis of so many individuals dying on the streets as the focus of reactions, we tend to see that play out in frenzied public comments at city council which seems to have the effect of elected officials and policymakers digging their heels in more forcibly to the answers provided by law enforcement solutions. And lastly, if the crisis is that of an individual or family experiencing homelessness for the first time, we see service providers and advocates having to think outside of the box, being extremely reactive and creating new solutions each time. This last scenario results in not having an idea of what has previously been tried and tested, failed or succeeded. It results in having to create and recreate the wheel over and over because there is not enough time to analyze and evaluate, and it creates this fractured system that we see today.

VI. Discussion

Across the urban landscape of Sacramento, we see a variety of spaces created for those experiencing homelessness by the definitions of shelter I have encountered. I use the term “spaces” broadly here and include social, political, and physical spaces within this interpretation of the term. This is because, as we have seen, conceptualizations of and attitudes toward shelter are many, they are varied, and the ways in which they are expressed play out on a multitude of scales and platforms.

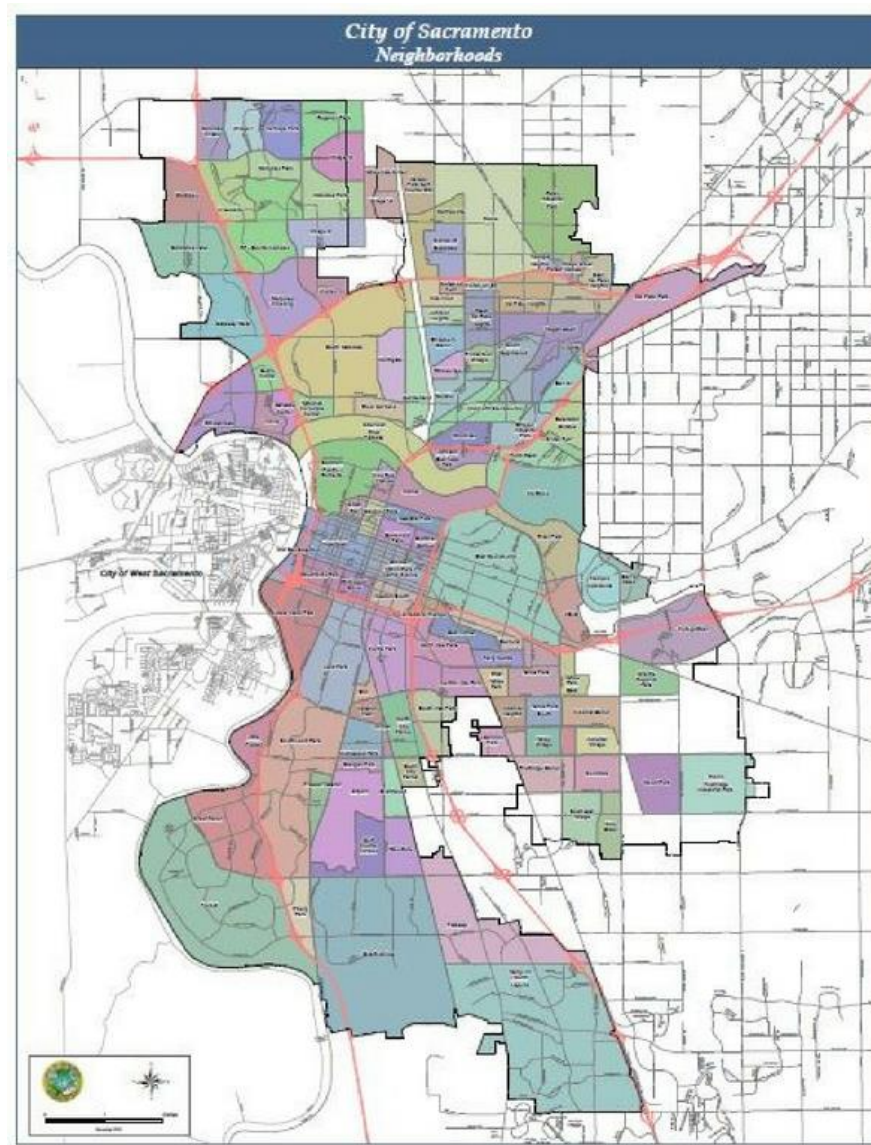


Figure 6

The above map is provided for context throughout the following section. A larger version of the neighborhood map of the city of Sacramento can be found in appendix I.

Throughout history, governmental bodies and people in places of power utilize laws to further marginalize those who appear to be poor or “other.” This plays out in spatially focused policies that allow for a type of corralling of individuals towards, or the banishment of individuals from, specific spaces. These policies can be seen as early as 1735 in formal laws that evolved from a way to incarcerate the transient and visibly poor to monitor and persecute newly freed slaves and then people of color in general. Something that became a subversive tactic of the white and the rich to erase and further marginalize people of color and the less-affluent is becoming explicit again, written into local ordinances as each county jurisdiction in California attempts to solve the problem of growing visibility of the evicted (Fisher et al. 2015).

In the following pages, I will engage critical urban theory as I discuss the historical context for the working concepts of shelter. I will do this to show the spaces that these concepts created and continue to create, and to display what has been done in the past and how that has led to the reality we see here in Sacramento today. We will begin with a discussion about immediacy and how that ties into the environmental narratives apparent in popular media by detailing the history of the anti-camping ordinance. Then we will move on to discuss how a policy review reflects values and attitudes of local policymakers and what that helps us say about adaptability. Finally, we will push a little further into the concept of adaptability and how it necessitates predictability.

Emergency, Environmentalism, and the Anti-Camping Ordinance

We have come to understand that a way that shelter is conceptualized is out of a sense of immediacy and urgency, which creates a frenzied atmosphere within which local leaders must act. In attempting to stem the sense of immediacy, the easiest recourse available is to react to the terror felt by the housed community by creating a revanchist city, one that allows for the exclusion of the visibly poor through criminalizing them when they become stagnant and concentrated. An example of this type of criminalization in place in Sacramento is the anti-camping ordinance which is used as a tool to control and direct groups or individuals who take it upon themselves to create adequate shelter. I learned about the history of this ordinance and

pieced together its story with the help of my interview with Peyton, reading the original ordinance and articles in the Sacramento Bee, and from some anecdotal information given at venues where I was conducting participant observation.

In 1995, Sacramento City Council voted to amend Chapter 15 § 52.030 of Sacramento City Code into its current form, making it “unlawful and a public nuisance for any person to camp, occupy camp facilities, or use camp paraphernalia” in any public or private property not owned by them. All members of the city council at the time voted to pass the anti-camping ordinance except for one, then Councilmember, now Mayor, Darrell Steinberg (Kempa 2017). Over the following decade, law enforcement within the City used the anti-camping ordinance as a tool to try to solve the problem of visibility.

Peyton described how, as they were living on the streets of Sacramento in the early 2000s, they were often asked to “move on” by police officers, to pack up their things and get off city or private property. They explained how the “nice police officers” would tell them to “go over to that lot or to that spot on the river” so they would not be ticketed or arrested for camping (Peyton). This, they said, is why larger groups of people who were homeless began congregating in certain areas of the city and eventually county – those sleeping rough don’t necessarily congregate otherwise (Peyton). Peyton made it clear that these directives to move along were an extension of good-will from police officers who interacted with the homeless population on a daily basis and didn’t want to be ticketing and arresting the same folks sleeping rough all the time. Nonetheless, it is a classic form of exclusion that pushed the visibly poor to the edges of the city, out of the business districts and into areas where the flows of capital are not as strong. During the early 2000s, the anti-camping ordinance predicated the migration of large amounts of people sleeping rough towards the railroad on the northern side of downtown and eventually on to the American River Parkway (ARP) that runs East-West through the county and into the city of Sacramento.

Peyton’s experience of sleeping rough had overlap with the Great Recession, a time when many national media outlets were looking to humanize the financial crisis and its effects on American people. Lisa Ling, a Sacramento native, did an exposé for the Oprah Winfrey Show where she reported an estimated 1,200

people living in encampments throughout the city in 2009, the largest of which was located along the ARP (Ling 2009). Ling talked to people who shared their stories – many of whom highlighted how they had no idea how close to being homeless they were before the recession, how quickly they lost their homes and slipped through the safety net. In the quiet coffee shop downtown, Peyton shared their experience living in this encampment with me and talked about it in contrast to what they see and hear presently from currently homeless folks. They highlighted the ability people had back then to create a space of their own – “there were picket fences, people could leave their things, even their dogs all day while they looked for work or for supplies. I even remember a guy renting his tent out!” (Peyton).

It is easy to see how certain spaces are valued more than others in this story, and how use-value predicated where those experiencing homelessness were informally pushed. We also get the message from Peyton that this space along the ARP, along with the ability they had to exercise expressive ownership – through the example of putting up fences – is something that doesn’t exist for those finding space along the ARP today. At first, and with the help of the Oprah special, those who lived in tent cities along the ARP were understood and portrayed as victims of circumstance – the Great Recession brought the experience of being homeless closer to everyone’s lives for a moment and, while those experiencing homelessness were excluded from spaces where flows of capital ruled, we could all see a piece of ourselves in those who were without a home. But over time, this attitude changed, and the encampment – and encampments in Sacramento in general – began to be seen as spaces that encourage deviant behavior.

Jordan taught me a lot about the perception of those experiencing homelessness as deviants, specifically when they live in tent cities. Jordan spoke often about the need to discourage “bad behavior” and used that reasoning to explain the need to close public bathrooms and to break up groups of tents. Port-a-potties specifically were discussed as spaces to do drugs or seen as a resource and “dismantled for parts to build shelter within a matter of days” (Jordan). They were adamant that “without the tool of the anti-camping ordinance, crime would be rampant,” and that we would struggle to manage the “lawlessness” of the population without it (Jordan). This specific perspective of those experiencing homelessness in this region

seems to be a popular one throughout city government, and highlights how shelter is understood as something that the individual seeking it cannot create for themselves.

Shortly after the Ling piece broke in 2009, and those living there were perceived as victims for a period of time, opinions about them began to shift. We now know that the media frenzy surrounding those living on the ARP in 2009 got much of the story wrong. Reporters were out to find the human victims and faces of the Great Recession and specifically sought out those living in tents because they had recently lost their homes, but in reality, many living in the “Oprah Tent City” had been living there for years because it was where local law enforcement encouraged those who had been sleeping in more visible places to relocate (Zapler 2009). Once the story of Sacramento’s tent city hit national media, local government was faced with an image of the city that didn’t align with the Sacramento they wanted to represent – to reference Neil Smith, the actual did not align with the possible. So, law enforcement broke up the encampment, and forced those living there to further boundaries of the city. The message was clear: if you insist upon sheltering yourself you need to do it in places where no one can find you.

Exclusion from the ARP also implies capitalization of the city’s green space. This implication is at the forefront of the conversation of homelessness in Sacramento today, because the ARP has become a beacon the city uses to attract new residents and businesses. It is nature in our urban backyard, it is a space where the privilege of having time and energy for a bike ride, run, or walk with your dog is extolled, a place that encourages home values to skyrocket because of access and boosts sales of specialized athletic ware. In other words, capital accumulation sees broad new horizons on the ARP, and that progress cannot be stymied by the sight of our neighbors who are suffering without a home. Again, the power of the potential Sacramento is enough to bowl over, exclude, and further marginalize those who are a reflection of the actual Sacramento.

During the summer of 2017, while the County was deciding whether to increase funding to Park Rangers along the ARP to deal with the homeless population that still resides along the river banks and under the trees, the narrative of the problem of human waste was one of the main talking points. Here is a taste of the environmentalist narrative that came out in support of the increased enforcement:

The boat ride down the American River began near Howe Avenue and seemed idyllic for long stretches until we got closer to the city of Sacramento. Then it seemed like we had entered a third-world favela right under the capital of California. We saw makeshift shelters lined up on the banks amid piles of trash. We saw abandoned shopping carts stranded in the water. We even saw a bicycle chop shop, with scores of bikes and metal parts stacked up on one another... The captain of our excursion last week was Maury Hatch, a seasoned fishing guide. In addition to shopping carts, he's seen propane tanks in the water. He's seen human feces in the water, the same water in which illegal campers also urinate, and do their dishes.
(Breton 2017)

By focusing only on what is left behind by those evicted and displaced to the Parkway, environmentalists argued for maintaining a pristine waterway and garnered support by spreading fear. This fear took two specific forms, either the general negative impact that humans and our non-biological waste – campfire residue, camping paraphernalia, etc. – have on the environment, or the diseases that can be spread specifically through an accumulation of human biological waste in water systems.

The first type of fear is a classic environmentalist narrative that supports an ideology of humans as separate from nature. Many environmentalists argue that the ARP is a pristine environment, void of traces of human development (except for paved biking trails and strategically placed garbage bins, of course), and because of this is one of the region's main attractions. They contend that maintaining a riparian habitat and providing green space within an urban environment will bring more money and development. Thus, they argue that we must protect it from invasion by human use except for temporary, socially sanctioned human uses like jogging, biking, and dog walking. In the article referenced above, housed residents of Sacramento were asked to recall countless fires sparked in late August along the Parkway that were chalked up as ignited by people living in illegal encampments. We are shown images of overturned shopping carts in the river and blue tarps that stand out against the lush greenery of a springtime Parkway, all contrasted with up close images of beautiful birds, that we can only assume were found on the Parkway as well. The use of images of animals in a natural habitat juxtaposed with images of trash, implying human use but never depicting bodies, prompts the reader to identify which is more appealing, and poses the question: how would you like your city to be represented (Breton 2017)?

Because of capitalist ideals of improvement of land, certain common and customary use-rights which were once extended to all are denied to some because of their visible lack of capital or their need to rely on the space for survival activities. Those experiencing homelessness and forced to find safe shelter for themselves are continually and evermore shuffled around the city, from the streets, to the industrial areas, to the ARP, and back to the streets again. Already here we are seeing a conflict arise between what is taking place and the concepts of shelter being expressed by those doing homeless focused work in the summer of 2017 – namely that the more spatially concentrated and fixed those experiencing homelessness become, the more excluded they are. The more individuals try to find safety for themselves, the less stable their lives become. So, what can we say when we found that shelter implies predictability, specifically a spatially fixed and long-term predictability? It comes down to differences in manifestations of predictability – when created by service providers or the city for those sleeping rough, predictability is acceptable, but when individuals experiencing homelessness find a space that is predictable on their own they are punished and told to move on, further iterating a sense of crisis.

Values and Attitudes in Policy

We have come to understand that the intervention of emergency shelter services was originally created out of a state of emergency, and that the conceptualization of the service remains the same today. Through my conversations with Corey, Logan, and Sage, I learned that – especially when looking to create shelters for single adults – service providers are often called upon by the city in the last minute to create emergency shelter. It is therefore often “guided by funding available in the community,” where the “how and who” is dictated (Corey) – in other words, service providers may not have a lot of say in what their service looks like because the funding available will dictate the form. Because this is the atmosphere within which shelter services are often conceptualized in Sacramento, we can see Friedman’s conclusions playing out – namely if the nature of emergency shelter operation is not clearly defined and its role within the continuum is based upon values and attitudes of local policymakers or funding streams, they are never an effective piece of the continuum (Friedman 1994).

Sacramento City Code: 17.228

Temporary Residential Shelter Zone Restrictions

This map shows areas within City of Sacramento limits where temporary residential shelters for people who are homeless can and cannot be built

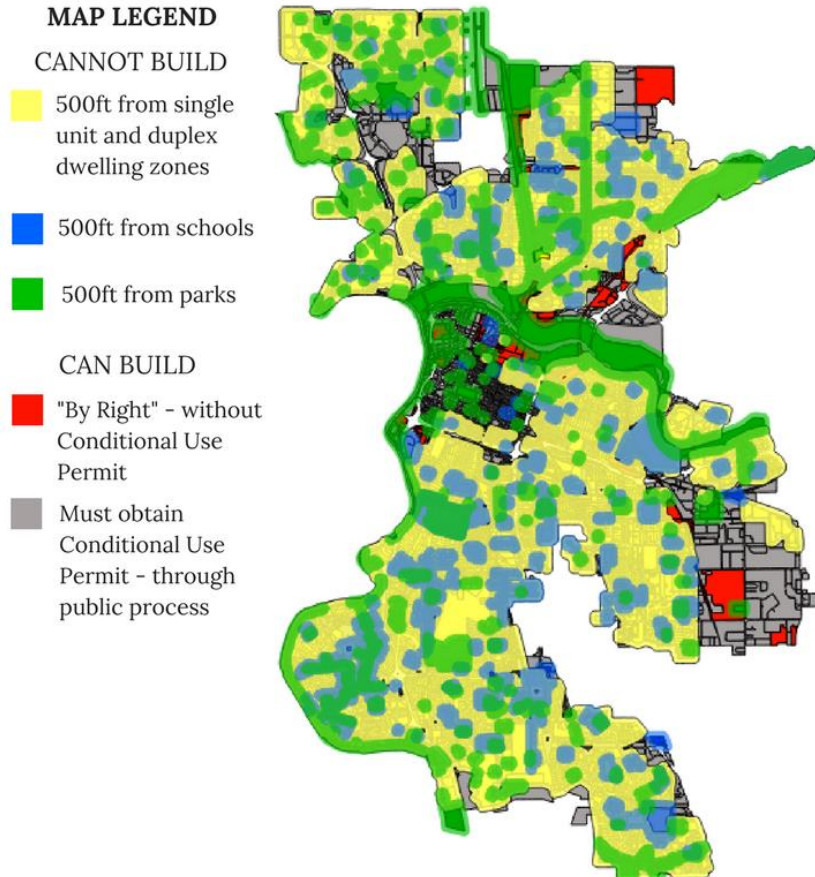


Figure 7

A fantastic example of the values and attitudes of local policymakers can be found in Sacramento City Code. Shelter for the homeless is defined as “temporary residential shelter”—a facility that provides short-term temporary housing to individuals or families for free or substantially below cost—in §17.108.210. Large temporary residential shelters have more than 24 beds and must have a conditional use permit regardless of zone. Small temporary residential shelters may have up to 24 beds and are allowed by right in industrial zoned areas in the city, which means that they can be placed in a few specifically zoned areas without having to go through the public process of obtaining a conditional use permit (§17.228). As currently

written, both shelter types shall not be located within 500 feet of any park, school, church or faith congregation, or single unit or duplex dwelling zone, and must be located more than 1000 feet away from any other temporary residential shelter (§17.228). A visual representation of this code can be seen on the previous page in figure 7.

This ordinance is seemingly at odds with California State Emergency Shelter Code, which requires three specific things. One, that every jurisdiction identifies a zone or zones that contain compatible uses (i.e. residential) where emergency shelters are allowed as a permitted use without a conditional use permit. Two, that they only be subject to those development and management standards that apply to residential or commercial development within the same zone, and three, that each jurisdiction sets restrictions on development and management standards so as to encourage and facilitate the development of shelters §65582(a)(4)(A). Sacramento's code implies that shelter for the homeless has nothing to do with residential services, and that it is somehow a danger to the public. This aligns very well with what I was told by some city representatives, that "shelter is not enough," that it must incorporate some sense of adaptation or transition for those utilizing the service, and where individuals must be indoors, essentially removed from society.

This specific interpretation of shelter conjures the concept of liminality in my anthropologist brain. And when I lean into the comparison a bit more, I find that there is a lot to say about emergency shelters that rely on the concept of adaptation acting, or being conceptualized as, a type of initiation space. In Chapter 3 of his book, *The Ritual Process*, Victor Turner discusses the concept of liminality and liminal personae and describes the state to be "...neither here nor there... betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial. As such, [its] ambiguous and intermediate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions...liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness..."(Turner 1969, 95). Experiencing homelessness in general can be likened to the state of liminality – the way in which those experiencing homelessness are understood as agency-less, as not able to participate in society, as generally invisible. But I think within our specific focus here, and especially when considering

the concept of adaptability, emergency shelter takes up many of the hallmarks of liminal spaces. It would certainly seem as though the city understands shelters to be a liminal space in the way they insist upon removing the use from residentially zoned areas and further excluding shelters from spaces meant for people through the use of the ordinance.

Many cities in California, and all of those with city coordinated shelter programs – Folsom, San Francisco, and Los Angeles specifically – have programmatic policies written into their code in the form of a shelter or emergency shelter ordinance chapter. For example, Folsom City Code §17.108.030 and 17.108.040, emergency shelters are permitted in conjunction with religious facilities as a matter of right and are permitted by right in neighborhood apartment and general apartment zones as an allowed use. In Chapter 20: Social Services of the City of San Francisco Municipal Code, formation of a shelter monitoring committee is stipulated, as are standards of care for city shelters, including both city and contract requirements. In L.A. City Municipal code, practices and special allowances during a declared time of emergency are addressed in order to allow the swift establishment of temporary homeless shelters on public or private property in response to that declaration. Having such policies written into code exemplifies how a Housing Element can be used as a tool. The above approaches allow for quick action in times of emergency, and management and site requirement standards that promote and facilitate the creation of equitably accessible and sited shelter services that fit into the continuum.

If an Emergency Shelter Ordinance Chapter in Sacramento City code were created that mirrors the City of Folsom's and lays out management standards and requirements for both city-run and city-contracted shelters in the spirit of San Francisco's, the Housing Element could become another tool in combatting homelessness in Sacramento. As currently written, the restrictive language in Sacramento's code is a barrier to siting shelters, and the code cannot currently be used as a tool.

Adaptability for social improvement

The literature we reviewed widely concluded that the emergency shelter system is in place to benefit those with normative goals. The current state of emergency shelter creates individuals who are not economically independent but instead are a success story of social support, and therefore a major change in

training and staffing requirements is needed to meet the multiple needs of those in need of emergency shelter services. When we take this into consideration with the voices represented in this study, we can see that while the government's approach is to affect adaptability in the individual to economic reality, the emergency shelter system – in the way it is conceptualized and run now – will not result in that outcome. Either we need to stop expecting such outcomes from our emergency shelter systems or we need to re-evaluate their framing.

The initial creation of emergency services was motivated by the feeling that the status quo is unacceptable and that those sleeping rough just need to get inside. It is still understood as a tool that needs to be used when reacting immediately to an individual crisis. There is a sense of crisis and urgency surrounding the fact that there are so many unsheltered people, and there is a sense of crisis and urgency from the individual experiencing homelessness because of the perilous and dangerous nature of their circumstance. The key here is that there is a path towards responding to the first sense of crisis, but not to the second, because there is simply nowhere for those without a home to go and receive a simple roof over their head tonight in Sacramento. This reality was expressed by Logan when we met at Mel's Diner in Sacramento and they talked about how they address this issue as they hand out survival items (water, toiletries, first aid items, non-perishable food) all around the city and along the ARP. Logan seemed exasperated as they talked about how they don't even refer anyone to the local shelters anymore because "it's pointless."

Because there is simply no action that can be taken to solve the problem of being unsheltered, we see the emergency response favoring the crisis felt by the housed population, and of course because of that we are placing those without a home in more and more perilous situations because of this reaction. This becomes complicated within local discourses and it doesn't seem clear to local government and law enforcement that the crisis responses currently being taken are ones that further endanger the homeless population, or that the responses generally are not in the favor of those without a home. City/County representatives understand the population of those sleeping rough as those who don't want shelter in the first place, or are abusing drugs, or don't possess normative goals. Therefore, shelter within that context was generally described as a way to affect change in these behaviors or attributes – to create adaptation.

However, stability was often implied as a necessary precursor to adaptability – there needs to be a general sense of safety, of calmness, and security before people can change (Jordan). This was often the biggest reason given for why the current status quo is not resulting in favorable outcomes, and it seemed to be generally well accepted that the concept of predictability often implied stability and that stability is necessary. Therefore, it seems as though predictability is not only the primary definition of shelter *at its best*, not as it is, but also it is the precursor to affecting change in the individual.

Sage focused on the ability they experienced with their shelter services to build relationships and affect change in individuals lives based on those social supports, and from the literature we learned that social supports within shelter services result in more positive outcomes than those shelters without a focus on social supports (Friedman 1994). This again speaks to the concept of predictability, that it is equitable with stability which is, at times and according to some, created through the bonds within social relationships and supports. We learned that these social supports implied a sense of reciprocity, of both taking and giving support to one another. It seems to be a widely held opinion that these types of social systems can only be created when there is a measure of physical and mental stability. There were individuals who spoke about the importance of not always physically moving around, but also the importance of knowing where you will rest that night. This ability for the body and the mind to rest in its search for safety seems to be of utmost importance for all of those engaged in homeless focused work that I spoke to. Its importance was voiced from the viewpoint of it being a basic human right to not have to worry about these things, to the viewpoint that individual improvement or adaptation cannot happen when you are constantly in search of safety. Without stability there is crisis, there is no option to counteract the crisis, and individuals cannot change for the better. From this I can conclude that stability is a basic necessity, a human right.

VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

The unshakable feeling of a pressing or current crisis loomed in many of the gatherings I attended. People implied a host of things when using the concept of immediacy to describe shelter, but possibly the most sobering viewpoint came up in my discussions with Alex, Logan, and Sage – there is *no* immediate response to take as an answer to the problem of sleeping rough. After seeing all the ways that shelter is defined and described, I would argue that this sobering reality is the outcome of trying to make the solution too complicated. While speaking with Jordan, there were many ideas that came up as possible solutions to the myriad problems that are faced by having so many people in the city without shelter, but each possibility had to somehow include this sense of adaptability, of improvement of the individual. Somehow, without that specific aspect, shelter is not enough.

I argue that if shelter is predictability, or if predictability is at least a key aspect of it, shelter needs to be just that – expected, a place with a guarantee of return, that lets you in as you are, that is a place where you feel welcome and safe. However, as Elliott said – if we get people formerly sleeping rough into a facility that only supplies beds and a guaranteed 3 meals a day, “they are still homeless.” Providing security, safety, and predictability does not solve the very specific definition of the problem from the city’s point of view, namely dependence upon the city.

Emergency shelter is conceptualized within the continuum of care; with that in mind, we know that it is the first step in a sometimes-long line of different efforts to enable individuals to not only stabilize themselves, their mental and physical state, but also to provide for themselves and ensure that they will not slip back into homelessness in the future. If this is the conceptual model, it makes sense that the first step in the continuum should be simply to provide stability in people’s lives while they do not have a home to call their own – to ensure that they won’t be criminalized and further punished for their economic status. If we try to make emergency shelter into something that creates adaptability, we are left with a step in the continuum that is trying to do everything. And as results we see people who feel like they are not good enough as they are, like they haven’t learned the requisite knowledge to participate in society correctly, and

possibly most significant, we are left with an ideal of the solution that takes considerable time, coordination, and funding to create.

The concept of flow featured heavily in Sage's interview and was a goal of theirs for shelter in the city - to be constantly at 90% capacity with always a free bed for that individual entering homelessness for the first time and in immediate crisis. The immediate crisis of those experiencing homelessness today in Sacramento is that of being in constant and heightened danger of violent crimes at all times, of being harassed and arrested and ticketed by law enforcement for survival activities. To abate this, Elliott emphasized the importance of always having a legal and safe space to sleep available to those just entering homelessness. This concept is key to the success of the continuum of care: if there is not flow through the different levels, there is little chance that anyone will benefit fully from the system in place. Flow is essential to the ability to react to crisis – and interestingly enough, to have flow we must also have adequate permanent options available to those who have made their way through the different levels of the continuum – something stable to exit the continuum into. Housing.

To no surprise, homeless advocates have been encouraging the creation of equitable and affordable housing for many years, and there are countless papers focusing on the topic of housing – how to create it, why to create it, what role it plays in the lives of those who have access to it, etc. It is also no surprise to city and county representatives because it has been the main focus in the efforts to solve the homelessness problem in the county for years – and much of the money that Sacramento Steps Forward receives from HUD for homelessness services goes to building permanent supportive housing. So why then are we not seeing access to housing improve, why are we not seeing work being done on extremely low-income housing access? There is a plethora of reasons outside of the scope of this study – NIMBYs, YIMBYs, material costs, the concept of development, etc. What can we say about creating flow within the context of this study? To me it comes down to the concept of immediacy, and the general frenzied atmosphere. Services are created in last minute, last ditch efforts and shelter design and access is therefore dictated by available funding, not the need in the community. County and especially City representatives are endlessly enforcing laws that punish

survival crimes and sweeping homeless camps in reaction to 211 calls. Nowhere are those engaged in homeless focused work allowed some time to reflect upon what is being done and what is needed, and it takes the most dedicated individuals to push further and ask the question “who does this action benefit?” I argue that simply putting a temporary stop to enforcement of the anti-camping ordinance would allow for the city and county to take a collective breath. And once there is a modicum of stability, not only within the bureaucracy but also in the lives of those who have been forced into a transitory state by our local practices, progress on creating that flow, that equitable access to permanent housing, can be made. This process will be slow, for sure, and because of that we all need to make sure we are focusing at the goal at hand – responding to the crisis of the most marginalized in our community, creating solutions for their problems and understanding how the systems currently in place are implicit in the creation of said problem. This work requires reflexivity, something that cannot be attained in a state of constant crisis.

Logan insisted that “good neighbor policies are key” to the success of shelters, not only in their siting, but also in their ability to create a positive impact in the lives of their guests. We spoke about this in the context of siting the new shelter run by Volunteers of America, and also in the context of shelter solutions in other cities, namely in Seattle. Logan said that over their years of homeless focused work, they saw the greatest results when shelters had community agreements, created amongst the guests of the shelter but also in partnership with the larger neighborhood. Giving those entering emergency shelter a sense of purpose and responsibility could go a long way toward providing the aspect of adaptation in a way that encourages personal ownership and develops upon individual strengths and shifts the deficit model approach to social improvement towards one more asset based.

Specific Recommendations

All in all, my findings show that those engaged in homeless focused work need space to be reflexive and mindful of the approach that they take, and to do the work of providing answers to the problems faced by those in need of emergency shelter. In the following pages I have compiled specific recommendations for a few avenues to approach to facilitate this reflexivity, and how we as humans and engaged citizens can play

our part in moving towards a solution and towards our possible future where everyone has equitable access to safe and affordable shelter. My hope in offering these recommendations up here is that they may encourage further research, and that they may inspire you to advocate for similar efforts in your city.

Using the Housing Element as a Tool

Through the process of conducting a policy review, I learned that Sacramento's code is far from representing a progressive take on homelessness, and there are many examples within California of cities who have utilized code as a strategy to make shelters work as a part of the solution. There are a lot of changes that can be made to Sacramento's code to not only help us in using it as a tool, but to also bring us closer in line to approaches used in neighboring cities which is important because homelessness knows no boundaries. My recommendations to changing local code are as follows:

- **Remove language that puts restrictions more onerous than other residential and commercial uses on emergency shelters.**
 - Specifically, those distance restrictions that largely limit spaces available for emergency shelter siting.
- **Update by-right zones in the spirit of Folsom's code to move them from industrial zoned areas into residentially zoned areas**

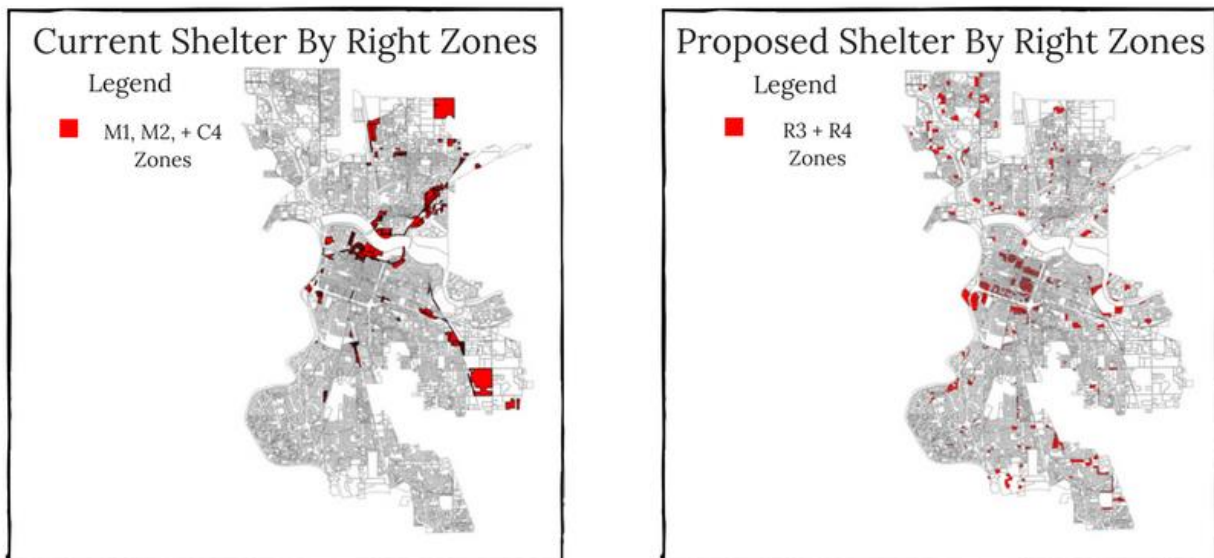


Figure 8

- As shown in the above figure 8, the current by right zones mirror that of the exclusionary practices currently in place, pushing emergency shelters towards the

edge of the downtown and midtown neighborhoods towards the rivers, and out of the predominantly white and wealthy neighborhoods of Land Park, Curtis Park, and East Sacramento towards the outer edges and along the interstates. What is written into code mirrors and further perpetuates social practices, showing the relationship between the built and social environments of the city. Changing by right zones to encourage a more equitable spread of the emergency shelter use across the city may work to begin to break down other exclusionary and dangerous practices and attitudes. Or at the very least, it will more equitably spread the use across the city and treat it as the residential use that it is.

- **Create a Chapter in City code, in the spirit of the city of Folsom, where operational requirements can be stipulated.**
 - **For example, this is where the city could require a creation of a “good neighbor policy” for any emergency shelter (or sanctioned encampment!) with cooperation of the neighborhood.**
 - **This could be required within six months of opening the doors, and could require listening tours, panel discussions, and the creation of community agreements**
 - **Another example is to stipulate different operational requirements for shelters within structures and sanctioned encampments, and the latter could stipulate that encampments are only allowable in a time of declared shelter emergency.**

Creation of Sanctioned Encampment Spaces

Advocates and some city/county representatives have suggested the option of creating spaces where camping is legal across the city as an option for years, but it is one that never gains much traction. This doesn't mean we should stop advocating for sanctioned encampment, however, just that we should continue to think outside of the box and come at the issue from all sides. To this end, I will communicate this idea using questions. What if the city were to put a temporary hold on the anti-camping ordinance, as a matter of emergency? How could the “lawlessness” of the population be managed if camping were legal (Jordan)? What if it were legalized in specific empty lots throughout the city? How can the issue of siting – with fair and equitable spread across the whole city – be addressed? What types of meetings or gatherings need to be facilitated, and who needs to be at the table to answer this question of siting? How can these encampments provide both “house” and “home” to the residents?

For Local Governments

Through the process of participant observation, it became clear to me that an extra issue faced within the context of homelessness in Sacramento is a lack of communication between governmental bodies and

concerned citizens. I could take this further to say that there is a lack of communication amongst any entities attempting to take steps to solve the problem of homelessness, and between those organizations and the general public. But the most pressing issue is that of communication between governmental bodies and citizens within their jurisdictions. So often what is communicated is in planning or development language, and take the shape of long, dense, hard to read plans about a whole host of projects. Many individuals want to be more in the know about projects within their city than they currently are, but do not have the time, nor the stamina, to sit down and read the various proposals that go in front of city council each week. This is a problem that needs to be remedied for a whole host of reasons, but in this specific case could abate some of the feelings of crisis coming from the housed population. Better communications of plans, actions, and proposals would also enable all of us to become more civically engaged.

Looking Towards the Future

Throughout the process of data collection, I took painstaking strides to remain reflexive, and with this document I hoped to show how I remained grounded within local contexts throughout the course of this project. However, as I finalized the data collection process and moved into writing my recommendations, I almost instinctively began to draw back from keeping up on local politics and felt myself struggling to maintain the same level of reflexivity. It is very fitting that I had a hard time reacting to the realities of homelessness on the ground in Sacramento as I went through cycles of writing and editing, especially because it became clear to me what happens when you step back from a social issue to practice reflexivity – to some degree you lose sight of the current reality. What I conclude with this thesis – that our efforts towards providing shelter for those sleeping rough need to be more measured – is no small task, and I have experienced a very small taste of what has to be relinquished in order to be measured and thoughtful. It has made me realize that it is my specific place, and my specific privilege, as an academic is to create the space for reflexivity, so that those engaging in the work of providing services to, advocating for, or creating policies that affect those experiencing homelessness do not have to relinquish their grounding in the current reality to also practice reflexivity. I have had the ability to immerse myself in this subject and then have been able to take a step back to reflect upon what I learned and create a conversation with theory and practice – asking

this of those engaged in homeless-focused work is quite possibly too much. However, I, as an academic, am in the unique position of being able to take this space for reflexivity and am therefore obligated to facilitate this space for those engaged in homeless-focused work.

Homelessness in Sacramento remains a vital civic issue, and more discussion, new developments, and set backs have occurred since I began writing. Many other cities are experimenting politically, and many other brains are focusing on this issue, pursuing innovative new avenues for service provision or theorizing about new ways to use technology. If I had the time, I could probably write another 40 pages on what has happened since February 2018 (don't worry, I won't). I will take a little space to summarize the major happenings in Sacramento, and what we can learn from across the country.

The first half of 2018 has seen the successful operation of Sacramento's winter Triage center, which was also successfully extended past the initial proposed close date of March 31st. City Council seems to be motivated to find not only another site but to create a permanent triage center. We are also seeing the city and county using close to \$70 million in funding focused on homeless mental health, drug abuse and addiction, and Medi-Cal use to begin to get a better handle on both providing services to those most at risk and chronically homeless and tracking data on those individuals. At the same time, we are seeing interim Mayor Farrell of San Francisco ordering sweeps of the homeless population in the city. L.A. is grappling with a staggering 75% surge of their homeless population over the past six years, and the LA Times Editorial board came out with a series of editorials in early 2018 to put a spotlight on the issue and focused on everything from mental health to NIMBYs called "Homelessness in LA: A national disgrace that must be fixed." But across the country cities are continuing to make progress and thinking of innovative answers to the complex and multiple issues facing those engaging in homeless focused work.

Of specific interest to me is Austin, TX, and how they are experimenting with blockchain – the digital ledger that makes cryptocurrency platforms secure and records transactions chronologically and publicly – to aid in keeping records. A huge hurdle to overcome for those experiencing homelessness as well as those in homeless focused work is the difficulty of maintaining secure records of individuals, especially

when our current ledgers depend so heavily on personal documentation and our ability to keep those documents secure. Think of where you keep your passport, or social security card, or drivers license...then think about where you would keep it if you didn't have a home...what do you think would happen to your documentation if your things were stolen? Or swept by the city? Keeping a hold of personal documents is especially difficult for those experiencing homelessness, and no progress can be made towards getting into systems if you are constantly having to get new IDs and go through processes over and over. Blockchain provides a secure method to keep data and does not rely on the individual to maintain security. This possibility for improving identity services to those experiencing homelessness is exciting and could provide a real and effective answer to the issue faced by attempting to provide services to individuals who live in sanctioned encampments.

This is just a small snapshot of the current conversation, one I am eager to dive back into after this process is over. My last words will be ones of encouragement for all of us living in cities, and how we can be a part of the creation of spaces that are safe and stable for everyone.

For All of us Humans

We all can make a real difference by becoming and reminding critical and engaged on the topic of housing in our communities. Politics of NIMBYs and YIMBYs aside, we know not all housing is created equal and we can all be advocates for affordable housing, because housing access and stability affects us all.

This process introduced me to city council meetings, which I had never attended prior to this process. I came to realize that it is a space where residents go to air their grievances, and having to respond to varying degrees of anger and crisis each week must be tiring. It became clear to me that as we all work to become more engaged on the subject of housing and housing access in our communities, we can take this one step further to be a measured voice in our local governments. We can encourage our representatives to not only listen and respond to the loudest voices in the room, but to focus on those who are silenced, quieted, and marginalized by these dominant discourses. We can all have an effect on the social spaces created in our communities.

Margaret R. Pannkuk
PREDICTABILITY, ADAPTABILITY, IMMEDIACY

Lastly, I hope this inspires you to empower others to become more engaged, and to use their voice
no matter their housing status.

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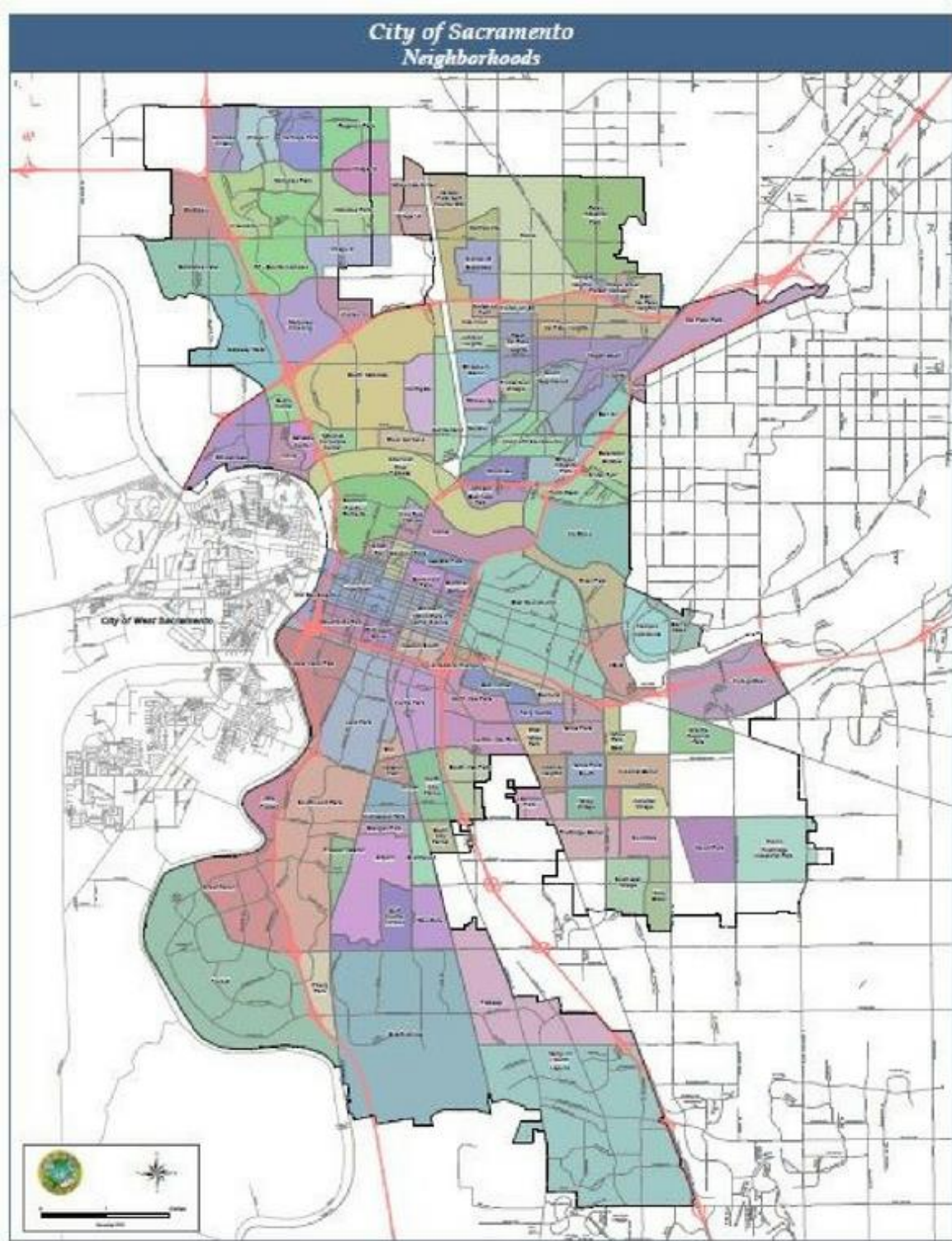
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Interviews:

Alex (City of Sacramento) in discussion with the author, August 10, 2017.
Corey (Volunteers of America) in discussion with the author, January 8, 2018.
Elliott (City of Sacramento) in discussion with the author, January 5, 2018.
Gray (Sacramento Area Congregations Together) in discussion with the author, November 10, 2017.
Jamie (Loaves and Fishes) in discussion with the author, July 20, 2017.
Jordan (City of Sacramento) in discussion with the author, September 19, 2017.
Logan (Mercy Pedalers) in discussion with the author, January 17, 2018.
Max (County of Sacramento) in discussion with the author, January 12, 2018.
Peyton (Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee) in discussion with the author, September 29, 2017.
Sage (WIND Youth Center) in discussion with the author, January 18, 2018.

Appendix

I.



II.

Sacramento City Code: 17.228

Temporary Residential Shelter Zone Restrictions

This map shows areas within City of Sacramento limits where temporary residential shelters for people who are homeless can and cannot be built

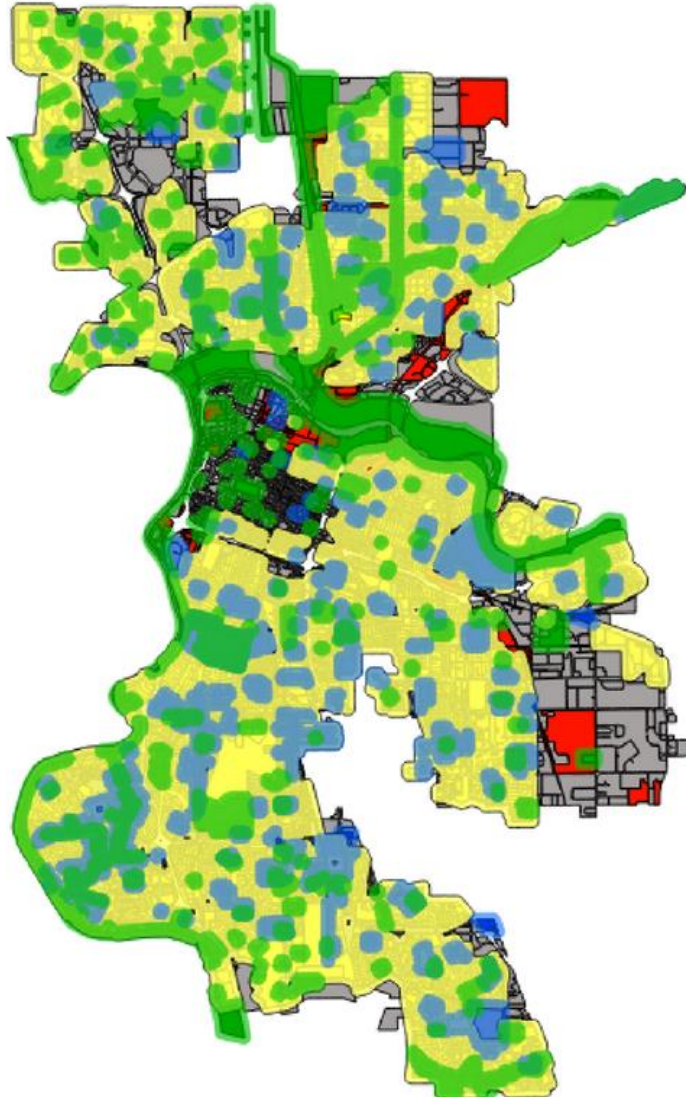
MAP LEGEND

CANNOT BUILD

-  500ft from single unit and duplex dwelling zones
-  500ft from schools
-  500ft from parks

CAN BUILD

-  "By Right" - without Conditional Use Permit
-  Must obtain Conditional Use Permit - through public process



III.

