

Addressing Homelessness



Report and Contact Information

- *Homelessness in San Francisco Report* is available on-line at <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~dnoy>
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Purpose

- An analysis of the San Francisco Homeless Policy arena focusing on how to create a working, coherent citywide homeless policy
- A case study of how to understand the social-political dynamics of homeless policy creation



Methodology : Four Key Elements of the Field

1. Organizations

- Interviewed 59, including City Departments and Committees; State and Federal Agencies; Elected Officials; Business/Economy Organizations; Neighborhoods and Civic Groups; Direct Service Providers; Advocacy Organizations; Housing Organizations; Foundations; Policy and Research Organizations; and Media.

2. Relationships

- Networks of Alliance, Opposition, Communication, Information.

3. Ideas

- Over 300 unique frames.

4. Power

- Perceived Influence. Interviewed 20 of 22 most powerful.



Factions

- LEFT FACTIONS

- 1. Poor People's Organizations
- 2. Radical Small Service Providers
- 3. Progressives

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- CENTER FACTIONS

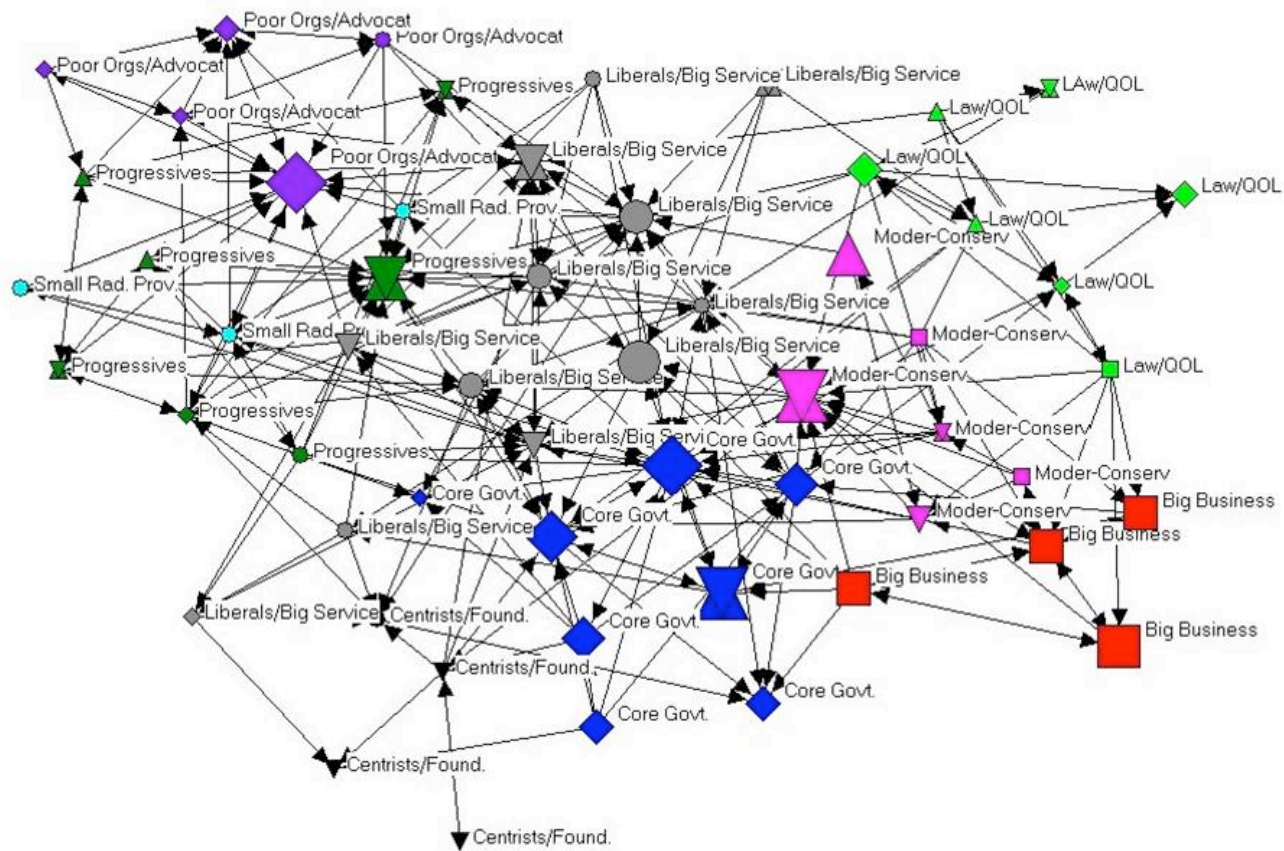
- 4. Liberals / Big Service Providers
- 5. Centrists/Foundations
- 6. Core City Government

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- RIGHT FACTIONS

- 7. Law, Order, and Quality of Life
- 8. Moderate-Conservatives
- 9. Big Business

Alliance Network





Faction Frames : The Left Faction 1-3

Non-Aggregate :

- Unemployment / Low Wage Jobs / Lack of Job stability
- Economic Inequality / Poverty a cause of homelessness
- Housing and high housing costs is one of the causes of homelessness – housing homeless people is one part of the solution
- Social control measures won't solve anything / targets symptoms not cause

Aggregate :

- *Total Housing as Cause of/Solution to Homelessness*
- *Total Economic and Housing Focused Causes of Homelessness*
- *Total Economic Focused Causes of Homelessness*
- *Total Opposition to Punitive/Criminal/Increased Social Control Measures*



Faction Frames : The Center Faction 4-6

Non-Aggregate :

- Unemployment / Low Wage Jobs / Lack of Job stability
- System is overpoliticized
- Economic Inequality / Poverty a cause of homelessness
- Money is the main constraint
- Need real alternatives, not/before criminal approaches
- Mentioned Families as homeless
- A lot of good work being done/ resources/ and a lot of good programs and non-profits into solving homelessness in SF
- Lack of cohesive, coordinated effort

Aggregate :

- *Total Economic and Housing Focused Causes of Homelessness*
- *Total Economic Focused Causes of Homelessness*
- *Total Housing as Cause of/Solution to Homelessness*
- *Total Opposition to Punitive/Criminal/Increased Social Control Measures*
- *Total Much Good and Efficient Work Being Done / System has Model Programs*



Faction Frames : The Right Faction 7-9

Non-Aggregate :

- Homeless Hurt the Quality of Life / degrade the city's habitability
- Homeless Hurt the Economy, stop new business's from coming, reduce shopping / Hurting Tourism and Conventions
- Need more quality of life enforcement / tougher penalties or better process (especially convictions by courts)
- Lack of cohesive, coordinated effort
- Individual focused problems as Primary Cause of Homelessness // Homelessness seen as frequently a Lifestyle Choice // Homelessness occurs primarily because most homeless people are substance abusers or mentally ill:
- Need more ability to forcibly treat some homeless people – to create the alternative of services or jail
- Resources are being wasted / homelessness is draining the city's resources on many levels / need better audit/accountability/ contract performance standards

Aggregate :

- *Total Business and Quality of Life Harms of Homelessness*
:
- *Total Need Stronger Social External/Social Control*
- *Total Homeless System Failing/Inefficient*
- *Total Homeless Hurt Business*



Field Summary

- Left and center frame homelessness similarly
 1. Causes and Solutions
 2. Impacts and Social Control
 3. San Francisco's Response and Homeless Inc.
- Right has twice the power of the left
- Center is caught in between 1) resources/power of the right and 2) frame agreements with the left. This causes fragmentation and fracturing



Field Summary

- Supportive Housing
 - Hybrid Form
 - Systemic Concerns
- Magnet theory
- Local intractability
 - Need for greater federal and state funding
 - Civil rights debates and spiral of accusation



The Center-Left Alliance

- Those engaged in homelessness on day-to-day level should first build trust and a plan, just as businesses engaged in a joint venture would before going to investors
- Address concerns of the right: strong leadership, coherent citywide plan, economic and quality of life harms of visible homelessness, accountability, cost effectiveness



What Has Inhibited Center-Left Alliance

- Resource dependencies
 - Especially given the importance placed by the center on resource constraints
 - Disagreements over resource constraints
- Historical fights
 - Division over wedge issues
- Pervasive misperceptions of framings within the field



Basis for a Stronger Center-Left Alliance

- Develop permanent affordable housing. Some possible models for housing solutions include: non-profit or public ownership, land trust, sweat equity for abandoned buildings, scattered site housing, increasing housing density, and inclusionary zoning.
- Enact policies which prevent the erosion of low cost and middle class housing stock, and displacement through gentrification.
- Enact economic policies which prioritize: reducing poverty, increasing wages and benefits, and increasing employment opportunities for homeless and low income people.
- Provide adequate safety net services sufficient for all those unable to provide for themselves or without insurance, such as basic health care, mental health care, and substance abuse services.
- Provide housing first and supportive housing models for those currently homeless and who are in need of on-site supportive services. (At the same time understand that such an approach would not end the causes of homelessness and must be done in combination with other broad systemic approaches to ending the cause of homelessness, but that such an approach is an important way of providing for those who currently are on the streets and who specifically need on site-support services.)
- Recognize that increasing punitive, criminal, or social control measures will only target the symptom and not the cause of homelessness; and often end up in more costly outcomes. Resolve to provide sufficient housing, services, and other alternatives to meet demand before increasing social control measures.
- Emphasize preventative measures, stabilization before crisis, and provision of up front services and housing, above more costly emergency responses to homeless people such as hospitalization and jail.
- Push for increased state and federal funding commitments to address homelessness.
- Insure that entitlement benefits and unemployment insurance are adequate to account for the cost-of-living needs of recipients.



Basis for a Stronger Center-Left Alliance

- Increase focus on providing exits from shelters, and permanent housing alternatives to shelters.
- Develop homeless programs with social models, community building models, and empowerment models. Address homelessness in ways that allow individuals to remain connected with their communities or local support networks.
- Encourage and provide avenues for neighborhoods to connect with and assist homeless people locally in their neighborhood.
- Provide adequate and accessible restrooms, drop in centers, showers, and storage facilities for homeless people; though with the goal of moving towards permanent solutions to homelessness.
- Increase regional collaboration and dialogue around homelessness.
- Initiate a large-scale public education campaign about the causes of and solutions to homelessness, and which describes San Francisco's current efforts to resolve homelessness. Explicitly address stereotypes of homeless people.
- Engage with neighborhood groups to discuss the costs and difficulties imposed by NIMBY struggles. Seek to work with neighborhoods as early as possible in the siting of programs and housing.
- Reduce the regulation and bureaucratic hoops involved in affordable housing production. For supportive housing projects, create single funding sources and matching time lines which align service funding mechanisms with housing funding mechanisms. Push for a simplification of and reduction of the work burden of applications for federal funds. Push for funding application processes which adopt holistic approaches, rather than ones which fragment or compartmentalize individuals' various needs and problems.
- Address other systemic causes of homelessness such as improving discharge procedures from institutions, like jail and the military; improving public education system; and addressing racial disparities and immigrant issues.



Other Recommendations

1. Institutionally remove the development, oversight, and implementation of homeless policy in San Francisco as much as possible from the arena of direct political campaigns, elections, or the politics of any individual elected official.
2. Increase the attention of state and federal elected officials and government agents to homelessness in San Francisco and in general.
3. Develop willingness to “agree to disagree” over contentious issues, while not jeopardizing the areas where agreements do exist.
4. Ensure that any citywide homeless plan has specific priorities, time lines, implementation guidelines, and measures of evaluation, as well as, the authority to be implemented and mechanisms by which all city agencies and contractors are arranging their services to meet commonly set goals.
5. Involve and empower homeless people, front line staff, and service providers in the development and evaluation of any homeless policy or plan.
6. Increase integration and coordination of homeless services and programs.
7. Create a homeless system that is easier for homeless individuals to navigate.
8. Create strong measures of fiscal accountability both of individual programs, but also of San Francisco’s homeless system as a whole.



Implications : The Chronic Focus

- Addresses the primary concerns of the right
 - visible homelessness
 - quality of life and economic harms
- Dangers
 - Losing systemic perspective
 - Focusing on Individual
 - Becomes an expression of social control not community
 - Further lose sight of the hidden homeless