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Notes

i From news reports and discussions with area activists and service providers, similar patterns of re-emerging encampments have been experienced in St. Paul, MN; St. Petersburg, FL; Nashville, TN; Camden, NJ; Lakewood, NJ; Providence, RI; Champlain, IL; Gainesville, FL; Athens, GA; St. Louis, MO; Huntsville, AL; Lowell, MA; Lubbock, TX. Other west coast encampments that had emerged during this time-period, but had been dismantled by the period of research included, Reno, NV; Las Vegas, NV; San Jose, CA; San Diego, CA; Los Angeles, CA; Sierra Vista, AZ.

ii The one exception, Seattle’s Nickelsville, was clearly a political reaction to municipal anti-homeless strategies more than any recessionary trend as discussed later.

iii The federal definition of a chronically homeless person is “an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years” (HUD working definition of chronically homeless, 2010). For a critical assessment of the term see Willse, 2012. Although formal surveys were not done in all of the camps, there was broad consensus of the proportion of chronically homeless by campers, non-profit actors, and government officials.

iv While the number of homeless persons in families continued to increase between 1998-2008, there was a 30% overall reduction in the number of chronically homeless nationwide, comprised primarily by an annual 15% reduction since 2005 (HUD, 2008).

v For an explication of the place of these punitive policies within the broader structure of welfare and economic restructuring see Herring, forthcoming.

vi For an overview of how this tactic was used as temporary protest actions in dozens of cities in the late 1980s see Wagner and Cohen (1991).

vii During my fieldwork there were a number of times that homeless campers and myself had wanted to call the police in witnessing violence or overhearing domestic abuse, but feared retaliation from other homeless, and felt that the police would either not respond, would be unable to do anything, or place charges on other illegal activities surrounding the camps.

viii When Fresno’s city government provided a porta-potty in New Jack City it was consistently used for illegal activity. Being blamed for enabling drug use, the city assigned an officer to sit around the clock to monitor the toilet. Fearing liability claims that could be brought against the government, the city removed the porta-potty: a telling example of how providing even the most basic service mandated by the UN commission on Human Rights is blocked by litigious concerns.