

SPLINTERING COMMUNICATIONS:

The Reality of Digital Practices among People
Experiencing Homelessness in an Urban Ghetto

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This talk focuses on the precarious digital access and use among homeless people in Skid Row



Theory: Digital Divide & Splintering Urbanism



Ethnographic Fieldwork & Research Questions



The Digital Life of the Unstably Housed

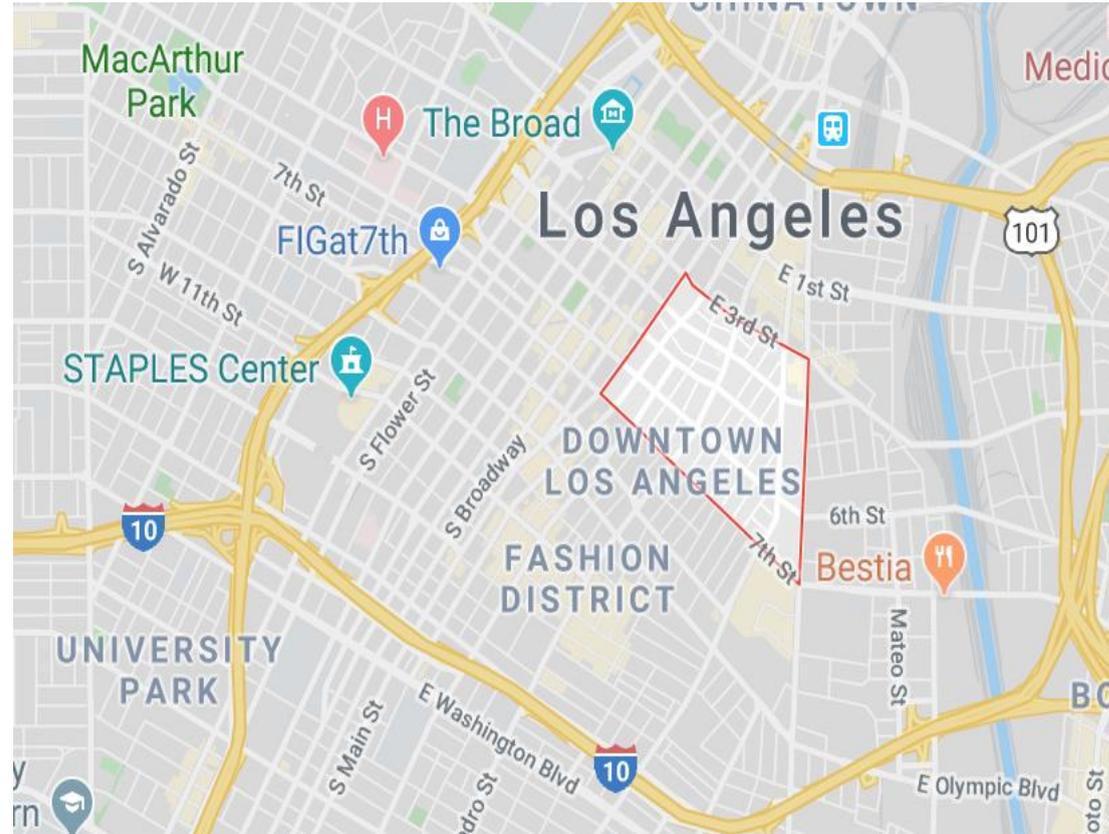
FROM DIGITAL DIVIDE TO DIGITAL INEQUALITY

- *Digital divide* research saw technology access as a yes/no binary and emphasized the lack of access in non-Western & rural areas.
- Researchers have now used the language of *digital inequality* to consider internet temporary disconnections and digital access instability.
- Little is known about struggles in digital access among the poor in resourced urban societies.

Splintering Urbanism discusses roles of urban technology and infrastructure provision in fostering social-spatial inequality



This study concerns telecommunications technology access in Skid Row using ethnographic methods



Major approaches are field observation, community engagement, and in-depth interviews.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- RQ1: What are the patterns of technology ownership and access among the unstably housed people in Skid Row?
- RQ2: How do they navigate access to telecommunications technology amidst the challenging living environment?
- RQ3: What are the consequences of access instability on their lives and wellbeing?

My fieldwork reveals Skid Row residents' precarious access and use of telecommunications technologies

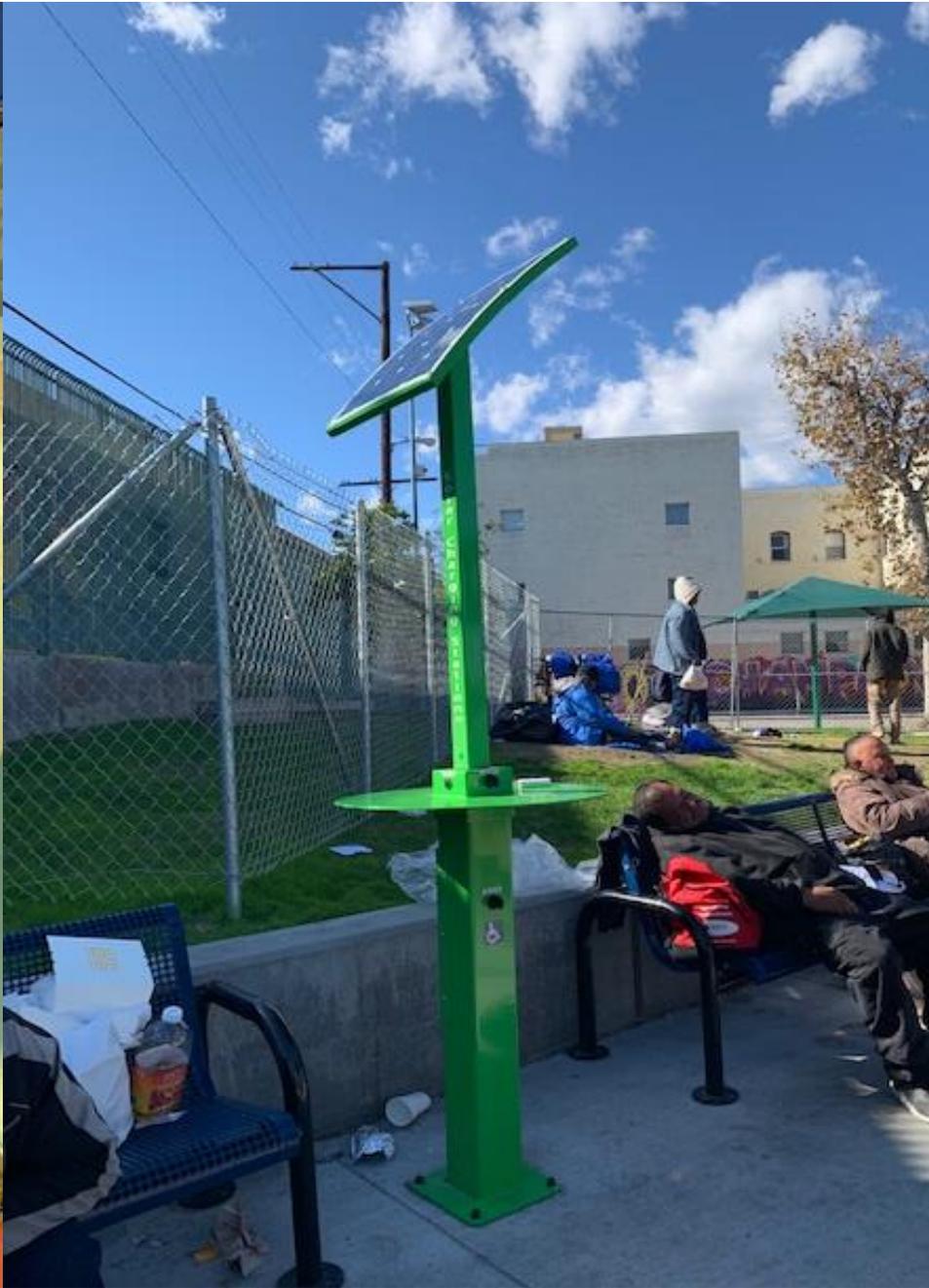


Working-class phones

**Lack of charging facilities
and internet access**

Mobile theft & breakdown

Limited use of public computers



Digital instability affects the marginalized users' daily communication, information seeking, & wellbeing



To conclude, this study suggests the need for better provision of telecommunications technology and infrastructure for the urban poor.

The urban poor have limited access to telecommunications technology



The digital struggle affects their wellbeing & quality of life



THANK YOU!

Questions?

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