Assignment #3: Fuzzy Image
Connecting Point

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Introduction

This paper provides an idealized vision for Connecting Point. Our core values are based on our understanding of what it should be in the Information Age. We will first envision the future and elaborate what new realities are emerging and what kind of society we wish to create, and then describe the purpose and our core ideas of Connecting Point.

Using Banathy’s strategies for envisioning an image of the future system, our team discussed deeply the paradoxical features of our system of interest in order to create core values out of the present complex situation that our SOI is faced with. We reached consensus in that Connecting Point should be a purpose seeking and value-creating organization that transcends the existing system. We also agreed to engage in the creative consensus building process to design the enabling systems and the systemic environment.

New Realities

The following constitute the critical Information Age *New Realities* that impacted our design of an ideal society:

1. **Class Stratification:** In an age when access to education is becoming increasingly expensive and increasingly vital in order to “get ahead,” the gap between the have and the have-nots is growing at unprecedented rates.

2. **Labor Shift:** Due to automation and global competition, the demand for manual labor is decreasing. Unemployed homeless face increasing difficulty in securing jobs in a knowledge society.

3. **Welfare Reform:** A trend concerned with ensuring that welfare not become a “way of life” but rather a temporary means of aid, has and continues to attract nationwide attention.

4. **Rental Market:** Affordable housing for families in San Francisco is becoming an increasingly scarce commodity. Currently, SF has the most expensive rental market in the nation.

5. **Cultural Magnet:** San Francisco has become a cultural “magnet”, attracting people of multiple nationalities and walks of life, including homeless.

6. **Information Technology:** Innovations in IT have resulted in affordable and usable database technologies. Such technologies aid service provider decision-making and enable the tracking of important information about the homeless.

7. **City Mayor:** The mayor is currently up for reelection in the fall. As part of his political campaign he has and continues to attempt to appease SF residents who simply want the homeless “gone” by passing a city ordinance known as the *No Turn Away Resolution*, an ordinance that mandates that CP not turn away anyone in need.
8. **Speed and Power of Media:** Disputes and disagreements between the mayor, SF’s homeless, and service providers are quickly publicized, developing into community-wide issues overnight. Furthermore, homeless advocacy groups leverage the speed and influence of the media to advance homeless causes.

### Ideal Society

Our envisioning of an ideal society resulted in an image of a society characterized by the following:

1. **Human Worth:** A society that honors human dignity and gives equal opportunities for people to maximize their human potential.

2. **Self-Sufficiency:** A society that allows and encourages sustainable development while at the same time narrows the economic gap between the rich and the poor.

3. **Equal Rights:** A society free of any discrimination toward social diversity, gender, religion, and ethnicity.

4. **Caring Community:** A society that consists of a community that has compassion for people with fewer opportunities and proactively seeks to provide them with life’s necessities so that social service providers would be the last resort for the underprivileged to turn to.

### Organization Purpose & Vision

This section of the paper discusses organizational purposes and visions that could foster an ideal environment for a new and better CP. Each item is listed and briefly described:

1. **Family ownership of service benefits and responsibilities:** CP, CCS and COC could envision and work toward fostering further family ownership of their service benefits and responsibilities. Perceiving the homeless as stakeholders, stockholders and clients could facilitate systemic appreciation and design of services rendered.

2. **Family control and decision-making power over their services:** The purpose and vision of CP’s overall service administration and delivery could further focus on family access to service options and their customized decision-making.

3. **Staff as facilitator of services rather than ‘service provider’:** CP administrators and counselors could further perceive their purpose and vision as that of ‘facilitating’ intervention and prevention services, rather than reinforcing their perceived or performed role of holder and keeper of CP services.

4. **From program isolation to community collaboration:** CP, CCS, the SF Consortium of Family Emergency Shelters, COC, advocacy groups, the media and political entities should foster a purpose and vision of ownership, participation and collaboration when facing the SF crisis on
homelessness. Currently, CP operates in service and administrative isolation.

5. **Emphasis on shelter access, safety, sanitation and support:** The purpose and vision of shelter access, safety, sanitation and support should be prioritized by all participants mentioned above over short-term, comfortable and independent temporary homeless family accommodation.

6. **Prevention of homelessness versus homeless family inflow:** Ideally, CP and COC service and political purpose, vision and efforts could further emphasize decreasing the inflow of homeless families relocating to SF or entering a new cycle of emergency services in the City.

7. **Movement from crisis intervention to crisis prevention:** An ideal shared purpose and vision of CP, its sponsoring organization (CCS) and the SF Continuum of Care (COC) would be to move their current emphasis on crisis intervention into collaborative efforts of crisis prevention as means to addressing the projection of further crisis on homelessness in the future of SF.

8. **Availability of financial and human resources overall:** SF and the Bay Area overall could further focus on the quantity and quality of its services if politicians, administrators and service providers had additional confidence on the viable accessibility of basic but sufficient financial and human resources.

9. **Value and investment on prevention in addition to intervention:** Stakeholder, stockholder, client and staff could envision and work toward further valuing and thus investing funds and other resources on prevention efforts in addition to intervention services.

**Conclusion**

This paper represents our team’s efforts to arrive at an idealized, “fuzzy” image of our system of interest—Connecting Point. Taking into consideration the impacting new realities of the Information Age, our discussion of core values and core ideas served as the basis of the creation of our image of an ideal society and in turn the purpose and vision of CP within such a society. This paper has summarized the highlights of our dialogue, including a detailed list of Information Age new realities, characteristics of our ideal society, and the purposes and vision of Connecting Point within the context of our envisioned ideal society.

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