

Ambivalent ties in a housing coalition

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. . . Los Angeles, March 2008. There is a housing crisis and we need a policy solution. . .

The cases: Two housing advocacy coalitions

Housing Justice (HJ) – the primary case

- a coalition of roughly 100 affordable housing developers, tenant, labor, and religious groups, community-organizing outfits
- 18 organizations sent representatives to coordinating committee meetings during this study

Housing Rights Now – a breakaway coalition

- a new coalition of tenant organizations.
- The two leading organizations along with several others had left HJ

Why put energy into coalitions?

- Coalitions may accomplish what individual organizations cannot.
- Consequence of a funding strategy: Nonprofits sometimes adopt diverse issues in order to maintain their funding. Taking on more individual issues likely increases opportunities for exposure to coalitions working on those issues.

BUT

Coalitions often are fraught or precarious.

- *different priorities produce compromises on issue platforms*
- *differing social backgrounds engender mistrust*
- *different styles of working breed frustration and cross-talk*

COALITION TIES WILL BE *AMBIVALENT* TO SOME DEGREE

Ambivalence: A puzzling fracture in an inter-organizational coalition

A slow fracture in a housing coalition

- five organizations dropped out of the roughly 18-member coordinating committee
- several challenged the coalition at a meeting of supporters

Network evidence shows that coordinating committee members shared denser pre-existing ties than average for organizations in the housing field as a whole. Dissenters and non-dissenters on the committee created similar types of ties too.

The organizations should have been well-matched to work together.

Combining research methods

Ethnography

- HJ coalition: 10 coord. comm. mtgs, 5 rallies, 5 co-sponsored mtgs, 8 city forums, 1 week office work
- HRN: selected meetings, rallies, city forums
- 9 HJ member organizations, varied stints
- Total of 3 years

Network Survey: A Civic Network

- Emerging Sampling Frame:
Organizations involved *housing-related* issues
- Survey conducted 2008: (telephone or web) completed with 145 organizations 58% response rate
- Final un-directed network used in analysis (n=229)
 - 178 nonprofits (78%)
 - 27 government agencies
 - 24 private firms

Combination of methods allowed us to compare HJ coordinating committee with the larger field of organizations and follow the network's evolution.

Organizations in the Affordable Housing Field, circa 2008

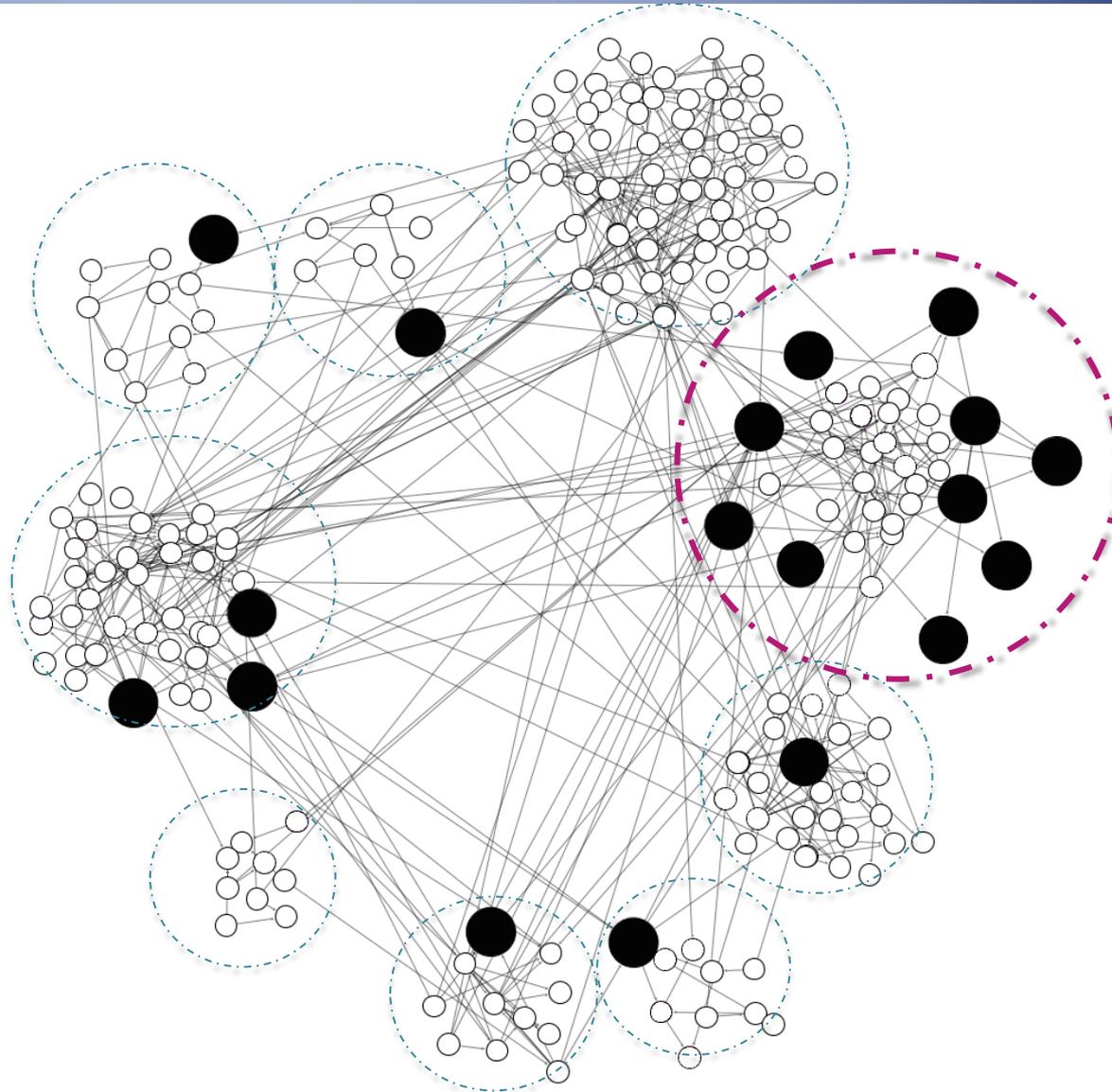
Network Analysis using Community Detection

- “Latent Communities”
- Girvan-Newman Partition
- Figure shows 9 “communities”

Large nodes

one time coordinating committee
members of HJ coalition

We might assume fracture would
occur between the different
sub-groups



Organizations in the Affordable Housing Field, circa 2008

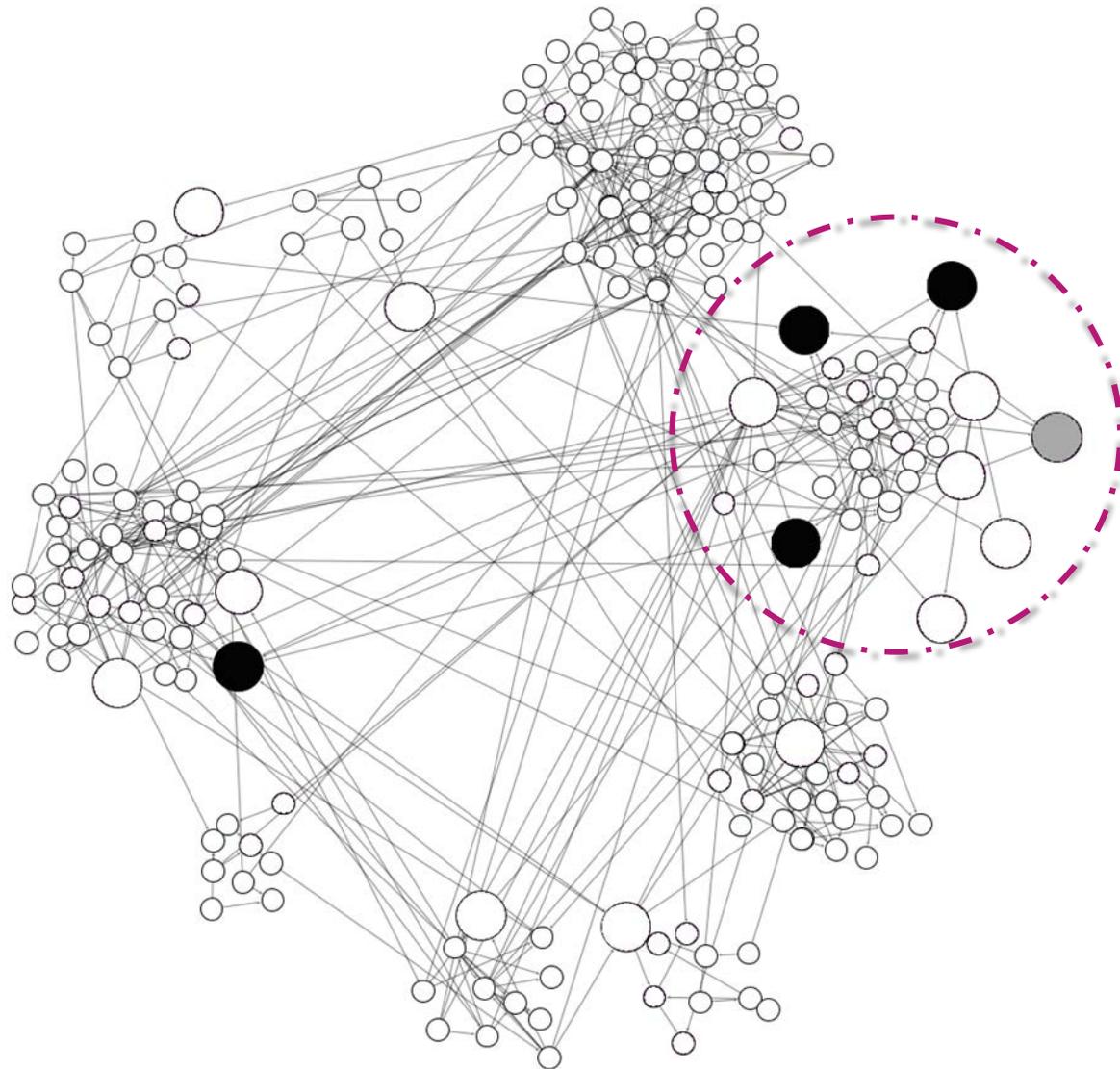
Post Fracture

Large nodes
one time coordinating committee
members of HJ coalition

Black nodes
joined new HRN coalition

Grey node
Member of HJ coalition and
HRN coalition

Findings Reveal
HJ coalition fractured across and
inside Girvan-Newman sub-groups



DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES: CONSTRUCTING THE PROBLEM

The “housing crisis” vocabulary: dominant in HJ

The crisis requires the three-point plan

“Work in LA, live in LA”

The housing rights vocabulary: dominant in HRN, subordinate in HJ

“Housing is a human right!”

**Can You Still Afford to Live in Los Angeles?
People of Faith Unite
TO ADDRESS
THE *HOUSING CRISIS* and SAFETY ISSUES
IN LOS ANGELES**

“And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.”

Isaiah 65:21-22

Town Hall Meeting:



DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES: TWO STYLES OF WORKING TOGETHER

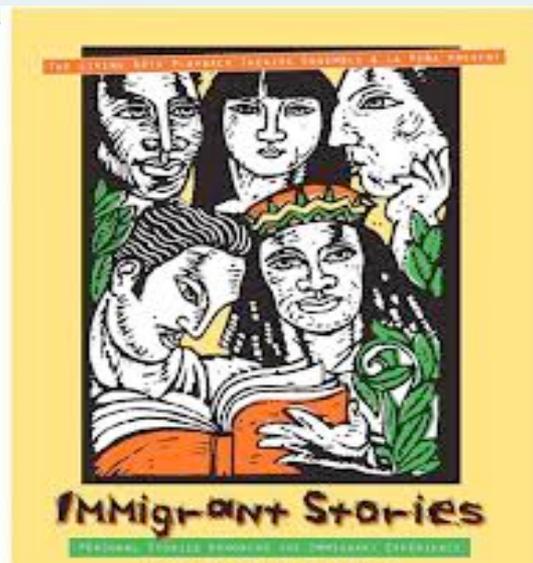
Community of interest - HJ

MAP

- conflictual: fight for an **ISSUE** like housing
- aspires to collaborate widely

BONDS

- expect short-term bonds (a campaign, e.g.)



Community of identity - HRN

MAP

- conflictual: fight for a **social category or community**
- collaborates selectively

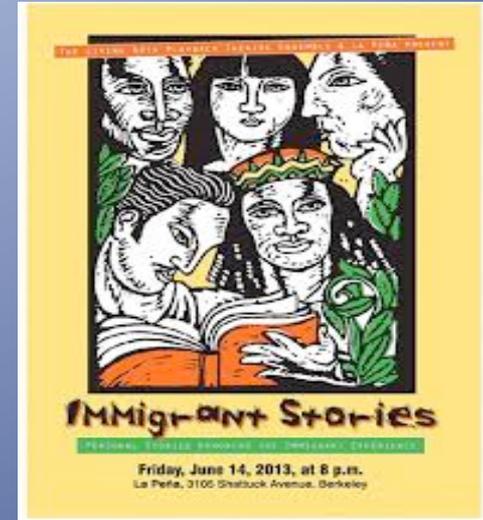
BONDS

- expect long-term commitment

Two styles clashing

community of interest

community of identity



“Housing is a social justice issue, right? [But] if you have signs that say ‘housing is a human right’, that’s not going to work!”

“We have just enough energy for the platform”

“If you don’t like where we are going you can get off here. . . .”

“We need to be...not so focused. . .on politically palatable ways of framing the issue.”

We need to have an “outside strategy” and “act like a social movement!”

“[If you neglect to mention the lowest income people] you’re talking race!”

AMBIVALENT TIES: TWO SIMULTANEOUS PROCESSES

Consonance in ties

Prior ties between
organization and
coalition members



Perceived
accessibility

→ dominant culture of
organization and coalition → **consonant
relationship**

Dissonance in ties

Prior ties between
organization and
coalition members



Perceived
accessibility

→ big distance between
dominant culture of
organization and coalition → **dissonant
relationship**

Two questions to ponder

- Do past experiences with other organizations in a coalition influence a potential member's decision to join?
- “How much is too much?” How do advocacy organizations deal with ambivalent ties?

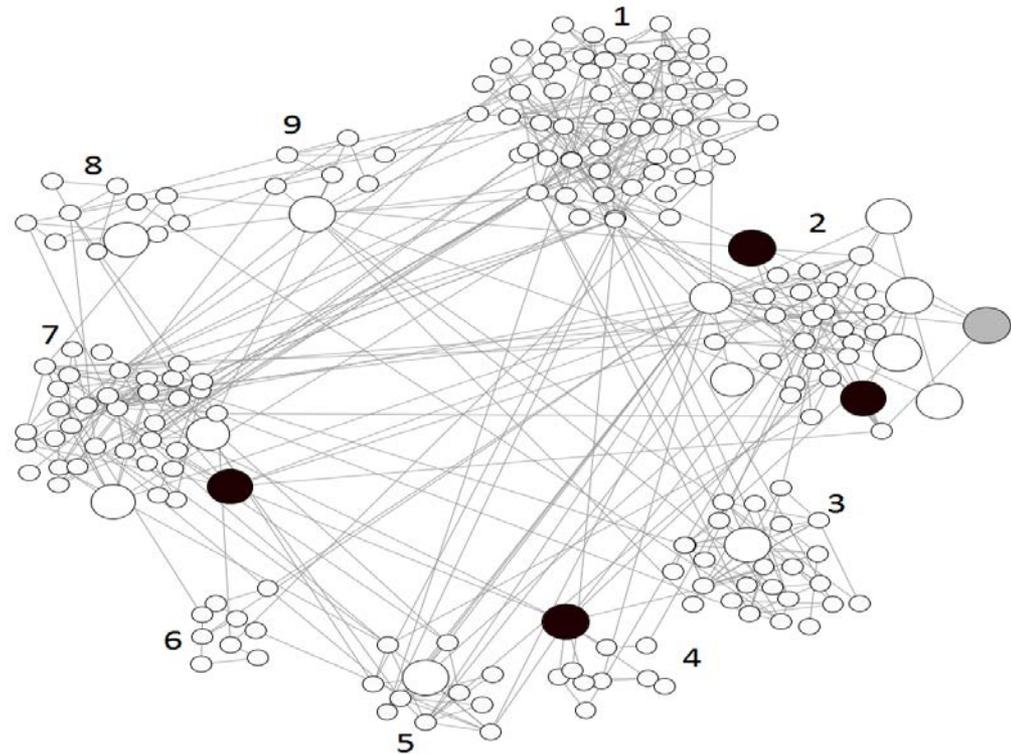
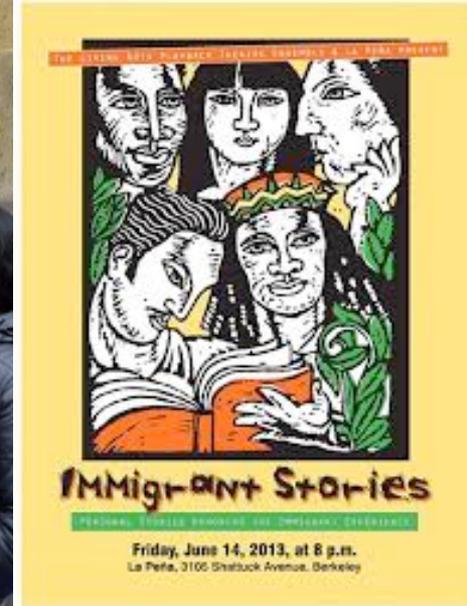
Thank you!

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Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

| | <i>N</i> | Percent of Sample | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|----------|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 1. Girvan-Newman partition | 17 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Member of steering committee | 18 | 7.86 | -0.068 | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Housing is most important issue ¹ | 61 | 47.66 | -0.082 | 0.141 | | | | | | | |
| 4. Public organization | 27 | 11.79 | -0.005 | -0.107 | 0.085 | | | | | | |
| 5. Advocacy/civic organization | 65 | 28.38 | -0.116 | 0.356* | 0.140 | -0.230* | | | | | |
| 6. Social service nonprofit | 44 | 19.21 | 0.281* | -0.142* | -0.205* | -0.178* | -0.307* | | | | |
| 7. Neighborhood council | 12 | 5.24 | -0.093 | -0.069 | -0.262* | -0.086 | -0.148* | -0.115 | | | |
| 8. Nonprofit housing developer | 34 | 14.85 | 0.241* | 0.015 | 0.142 | -0.153* | -0.263* | -0.204* | -0.098 | | |
| 9. Business association | 23 | 10.04 | -0.178* | -0.098 | -0.092 | -0.122 | -0.210* | -0.163* | -0.079 | -0.140* | |
| 10. For-profit organization | 24 | 10.48 | -0.223* | -0.100 | 0.154 | -0.125 | -0.215* | -0.167* | -0.081 | -0.143* | -0.114 |

Note: n=229. ¹This information comes from a survey of 145 organizations. Approximately 48% of survey respondents stated that housing was the most important issue to their organization. * p<.05

Composition of Girvan-Newman Partitions or Community Subgroups by Organization Type

| | 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 4 | | 5 | |
|-----------------------------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|-------|-------|
| Organization Type | | | | | | | | | | |
| Business Oriented Nonprofit | 21 | 32% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Social Service Nonprofit | 4 | 6% | 1 | 3% | 12 | 44% | 4 | 40% | 0 | 0% |
| Advocacy/ Civic Nonprofit | 14 | 21% | 28 | 82% | 11 | 41% | 6 | 60% | 9 | 82% |
| For-Profit | 20 | 30% | 2 | 6% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 9% |
| Public Sector | 7 | 11% | 3 | 9% | 4 | 15% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 9% |
| Total | 66 | 100% | 34 | 100% | 27 | 100% | 10 | 100% | 11 | 100% |
| | 6 | | 7 | | 8 | | 9 | | 10-17 | Total |
| Organization Type | | | | | | | | | | |
| Business Oriented Nonprofit | 0 | 0% | 1 | 3% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 14% | 0 | 23 |
| Social Service Nonprofit | 1 | 11% | 14 | 36% | 7 | 64% | 6 | 86% | 6 | 55 |
| Advocacy/ Civic Nonprofit | 6 | 67% | 14 | 36% | 3 | 27% | 0 | 0% | 9 | 100 |
| For-Profit | 0 | 0% | 1 | 2% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 24 |
| Public Sector | 2 | 22% | 9 | 23% | 1 | 9% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 27 |
| Total | 9 | 100% | 39 | 100% | 11 | 100% | 7 | 100% | 15 | 229 |

Other causal influences of scene styles: selected examples

| Scene style | Cases | Consequences culled from selected literature |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Club-style volunteering | Eckstein (2001) Eliasoph (1998) Kaplan-Daniels (1988) | Impedes broad-ranging discussion |
| Community of interest | Swarts (2008) Delgado (1986) Kornblum (1972) | Facilitates political mobilization Impedes broad-ranging discussion |
| Community of identity | Wood (2002) Beamish and Luebbers (2009) Lichterman (1996) | Impedes access to state resources or expertise |
| Personalized politics | Juris (2008) Epstein (1991) Isserman (1987) | Impedes diversity of membership Facilitates broad-ranging discussion |

(Lichterman, Eliasoph 2013)