

Diplomarbeit

URBAN CRISIS AND MULTIPLE DISRUPTION: THE INVISIBLE WORKERS AND DWELLERS OF SILICON VALLEY

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ABSTRACT:

This diploma thesis investigates the multidimensional socio-spatial effects of Silicon Valley's creative cluster on the San Francisco Bay Area. The region is dramatically influenced through tech's inherent drive for disruptive innovation, which caused immense economic success and subsequent urban inequality. The contradictions that arise through the techno-economic progress become particularly evident at the given case study on working homelessness. The case is discussed via a qualitative content analysis of various media sources on the everyday life and urban conflicts, which arise through the immediate presence of the working homeless population in public space – supplemented by a reflection on power structures in discourse and semi-structured expert interviews that illustrate the vast context of tech disruption and the interconnected state of a multiple urban crisis. While the invisible workers and dwellers of Silicon Valley become increasingly pushed into unbearable living and working conditions due to ever-growing housing costs and gig economy work ethics, their means of informal dwelling, in residential vehicles and cars parked in urban space, are contested by the city municipalities, formal residents, and corporations. This phenomenon is symptomatic for the urban crisis, which can be encountered globally. Yet it certainly reached gigantic levels in the Bay Area.

KURZFASSUNG:

Diese Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit den multidimensionalen sozio-räumlichen Auswirkungen von Silicon Valley auf die San Francisco Bay Area. Die Region ist besonders von den disruptiven Technologien betroffen, die einerseits zu großem wirtschaftlichem Erfolg und andererseits zu extremer urbaner Ungerechtigkeit führen. Die Widersprüche, die durch den techno-ökonomischen Fortschritt entstehen, werden besonders an der hier analysierten Fallstudie über die arbeitenden Obdachlosen sichtbar. Ihr Fall wird anhand einer qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse diverser Medienquellen, zu ihrem Alltagsleben und den daraus resultierenden urbanen Konflikten, untersucht – ergänzt durch eine Reflexion über diskursive Machtstrukturen, sowie semi-strukturierte ExpertInneninterviews, die die enorme Tragweite der urbanen Disruption und der dadurch entstehenden multiplen urbanen Krise zeigen. Im Silicon Valley werden die verborgenen BewohnerInnen und ArbeiterInnen zunehmend in untragbare Wohn- und Arbeitsverhältnisse gedrängt, durch explodierende Wohnkosten und die prekäre Arbeitsethik der Gig-Economy. Gleichzeitig führt ihr erzwungenes informelles Wohnen, in parkenden Wohnwägen und Autos, vermehrt zu Konflikten mit den Stadtverwaltungen, formellen BewohnerInnen und Konzernen. Diese extreme urbane Ungleichheit ist ein globales Phänomen, in der Bay Area hat die urbane Krise allerdings eine gigantische Tragweite erreicht.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

BART	<i>Bay Area Rapid Transit</i>
BLM	Black Lives Matter
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
ELI	Extremely-Low-Income
FIG	Figure
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HQ	Headquarter
IMG	Image
IPO	Initial Public Offering
MUNI	<i>San Francisco Municipal Railway</i>
NIMBY	<i>Not in my backyard</i> (attitude)
QCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
R&D	Research and Development
RV	Residential vehicle
SF	San Francisco*
SRO	Single-Resident-Occupancy (-hotel)
US	United States*
USD	US dollar (\$)
VS	Versus
WWII	Second World War

* abbreviated in footnotes, figures, and in apposition; written-out in running text

PREFACE:

Today our cities are already highly affected through recent technological developments within the field of digitalisation. The influence of new technologies is one of the biggest challenges for the cities in the 21st century. The big tech-giants are intensively working on new concepts of urbanisation, including highly personalized advertising in public space, urban surveillance and interconnected infrastructure. At the same time they affect the urban space also on a local layer: Through their location policies. While the new economy, its capital flows, and its corporations are certainly not bound to a geographic region (nor to a nation state), the example of San Francisco and the surrounding Bay Area shows the conflict potential within this local relationship of the tech-industry to the city. Here, big tech continues to gain more and more office space, developable land, and influence on public space. Tech's actions, both in urban and technological development, define their role within the city and their self-awareness is illustrated by their appearance in Silicon Valley, where they have an enormous impact on their direct neighborhood. That is most dramatically shown through the sheer social and economical inequality – leading to gentrification, dispossession, evictions, and homelessness. Thus, the question arises, how the cities and ALL of its residents can deal with such aggressive and powerful companies, that were once the saviours of the Bay Area by starting a new 'gold rush'. In the 1990s the tech-industry was deemed to be the incubator of innovation and wealth in the region. Nowadays the perception within the residents has changed. The lack of responsibility on the side of the tech-corporations and the ruthless overtake of whole parts of the cities in the Bay Area, are highly criticized. The tech-boom 2.0 claims to reinvent the whole world's society through technology. However, ironically the tech-corporations are not (even) able to interact sustainably with their close surroundings.

The dramatic fading of basic human needs and rights – most parts of the middle class cannot afford to live in the urban centers any more, some drift into urban poverty and homelessness – is symptomatic for the global disruption of urbanity. Yet the Bay Area represents the tip of the iceberg of global urban disruption. The extreme urban inequality is the reason I picked the region as research site for my diploma thesis. The case of the working homeless of Silicon Valley is hereby particularly paradigmatic: Many low-income workers cannot afford a decent life in the Bay Area and are therefore forced to live in their cars, garages, at friends' places, or on the streets. Silicon Valley has a dual role within the amplification of this form of homelessness: By attracting a high-income

workforce (and thereby drastically increasing the rents) and the simultaneous precarisation of low-income labor through subcontracting, gig-working, and outsourcing. The processes, which lead to these extreme developments are manifold and complex, this given work tries to expand the discourse on tech responsibility and urban disruption in the Bay Area, but is not to be seen as comprehensive. The research phenomenon of tech-disruption is indeed well-researched, but still lacks a deeper understanding. Some aspects, such as gentrification in San Francisco, are even commonly recited in pop culture and art, others such as the subcontracting of work and the working homelessness itself are now about to receive more attention (for example through YouTube videos or blog posts).

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS:

BIG TECH

The *big five* of the major technology companies, namely Facebook, Apple, Alphabet, Amazon¹, and Microsoft². The big tech companies are dominating their market sectors and heavily impact our society and economy (Joshi, 2019). Today they particularly are under public surveillance regarding their power and influence. They also face a crucial role within the discourse on tech-led gentrification in the Bay Area. Facebook, Apple, and Alphabet have their global headquarters in Silicon Valley. Amazon and Microsoft are also increasing their presence in the region. The focus on these five companies within the public discussion on tech influence is certainly justified regarding their market shares. However, it has to be noted that other companies with less publicity have a similar impact on the economy³. Besides other big players in the United States – Intel, Cisco, Oracle, and IBM (Ponciano, 2019), the power and influence of Asian tech companies⁴ should not be left aside in a global discussion on tech responsibility. Furthermore, some smaller US companies benefit from less publicity – especially when dealing with increasing public surveillance⁵.

CREATIVE DESTRUCTION

Is the core ideological framework behind both Silicon Valley's disruptive nature and the general growth through destruction tendencies behind global capitalism: "Stabilized capitalism is a contradiction in terms" (Schumpeter, 1942 as cited in McCraw, 2007, p. 3). First mentioned by Karl Marx, developed by Joseph Schumpeter and further into *disruptive innovation* by Clayton M. Christensen to justify Silicon Valley's disruption, it is still the main theory to understand capitalist growth and innovation through destruction. Additionally it also clearly affects our cities' development (Batty, 2007). In chapter 1.1 the concept is further discussed.

ELLIS ACT

Is a state law of California, which enables evicting tenants in order to "go out of business" (Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, n.d.-a). In general San Francisco has relatively stringent protection of tenants. The 1979 rent control bill reduces rent increases for older buildings to the yearly inflation, but it does not concern single-family-homes. Those and newer buildings are not protected. While the rent control ordinance is generally

stronger than in other parts of the country and state, evictions are still on the rise (Moskowitz, 2017, p. 130). Moskowitz points out that this fact proves "just how valuable the land is" (Ibid.). The Ellis Act offers one of the only legal ways to evict tenants if they do nothing wrong (no-fault-evictions). Landlords can make use of the Ellis Act multiple times. This shows the systematic misuse of the law – "If these buyers do not want to be landlords, why are they buying buildings full of rental units?" (Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, n.d.-a). Usually, the Ellis Act evictions are followed by the transformation of these units into condos that are (as single-family-homes) not eligible for rent control (Moskowitz, 2017, p. 130). From 1994 until 2016 more than 5,300 cases of Ellis Act evictions (approximately 2,000 since 2010) occurred in San Francisco (Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, n.d.-a).

EVICITION

Refers to the expulsion of tenants, but also to displacement in general or compulsory evacuations through financial institutions (Schwaller, 2019, p. 226). The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project differentiates between evictions through *Ellis Act*, *Owner-Move-In*, and *Demolition*. In 2013 the project registered 38% Owner Move In, 43% Ellis Act and 19% Demolition cases within no-fault evictions (Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, n.d.-a). Moskowitz claims that additionally to all cases filed, a significant amount of buyout evictions must be added – Landlords often offer "from \$5,000 to \$100,000 to leave their homes" – and further states that „with rental prices sky-high, it's likely many of those from rent-protected apartments evicted [through any kind of eviction] leave the city completely or become homeless" (Moskowitz, 2017, p. 130).

HYPERGENTRIFICATION

Gentrification has become a buzzword to describe urban changes, rooted within systemic urban inequality (Moskowitz, 2017). It affects local communities in different ways across the world, but the phenomenon in San Francisco's Bay Area is clearly unique as the way it has hit the region is unprecedented regarding its vast scale, tempo, and duration. The city of San Francisco has become the main example of gentrification worldwide, influencing movies, poems, books, artworks, and research. Researchers frequently use the term *hypergentrification* (Cf. Maharawal, 2017; Maharawal, & McElroy, 2017) to describe extreme forms of gentrification (in San Francisco but also elsewhere).

1 Amazon has over 7,000 white-collar workers in the Bay Area (Russel, 2019).
2 Cf. e.g. LinkedIn, Microsoft's sub firm in the Bay Area.
3 Cf. market value of Oracle, IBM, Intel, Cisco.
4 Samsung & the Chinese BAT companies: Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent have monopolies in their countries.
5 Cf. e.g. Palantirs role during Covid-19 (Hatmaker, 2020).

NEW ECONOMY

The shift of capitalist development towards young growth-oriented sectors, mainly underpinned by the new electronics industry. The EU funded *URBACT* program identifies three major types of new urban economies: the *digital*, the *green*, and the *health and care economy*. Furthermore, it outlines that the digital economy is the primary driver of these new economies (de Carvalho & van Winden, 2015). It represents the state of the art within capitalist development history. Technological and organizational forms become exemplarily for a time until their possibilities are consumed. David Harvey points out that this understanding of innovative dynamics lacks “the revolutionary and contradictory social consequences [...] and its associated shifts in organisational form (such as the move from family firms to vertically integrated corporations to horizontally networked systems of production and distribution)” (Harvey, 2010, p. 97).

NIMBY

Not In My Backyard – within public discourse NIMBY refers to long term residents that are criticized for opposing housing and infrastructure development in their neighborhood (City Beautiful, 2018). Within the Bay Area (and especially San Francisco) community protests represent a long history of saving urban commons. At the same time, the NIMBYism is often connected to “anti-poor and anti-middle class” politics, as it emerged in American politics to acquire wealth through homeownership (Perigo, 2020). Such community advocate groups traditionally represent high-income neighborhoods⁶.

REDLINING

A United States policy, which began in the 1930s, to prevent residents of certain lower-rated neighborhoods from getting loans for homeownership. The federal *Home Owner's Loan Corporation* issued ratings to guide investment. Certain areas were deemed riskiest and rated red. These were mainly home to communities of color – the *hazardous* red grade was in fact mainly based on racial demographics. The explicitly discriminatory policy still affects today's American cities. 87% of neighborhoods undergoing gentrification in San Francisco are former redlined ones (Urban Displacement Project, n.d.-b). Redlined areas remained populated by the lower class after the official stop of the practice and they received large amounts of private funding later. Now their residents are often pushed out through gentrification, because of the influx of new capital and higher costs of living today (*Anti-Eviction Mapping Project*, n.d.-b). Additionally, the practice of *reverse-redlining* caused many people of color to lose their homes. Financial institutions specifically directed their impure lending practices to communities of color. In the long term, many houses were repossessed through mortgage debts (Schwaller, 2019).

SANCTUARY CITY

In 1989 San Francisco declared itself to be a *Sanctuary City* by passing the ‘City and County of Refuge’ ordinance. This act prohibits city employees from using city funds or resources to assist the *United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)* in the enforcement of Federal Immigration Law. In 2013 the ‘Due Process for All’ ordinance further complicated assistance and cooperation with ICE (Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs, 2016). The role of Silicon Valley's tech corporations regarding San Francisco's status as Sanctuary City is ambivalent. On the one side, they clearly rely on the immigrant workforce and some firms politically support the ordinance in public. On the other side, some play a key role in facilitating ICE's operations through their technology (Mijente, 2018). The industry in fact has a long history of working closely aligned with federal agencies and thereby oppose city- and state-level protections of vulnerable communities (Ibid.).

TECH

What is a tech company? Amazon, Uber, Visa, Tesla etc. are highly dependent on technology and have developed theirs themselves. Therefore I (alongside leading tech insiders) consider them tech companies, even if they operate in traditional business sectors. In our general perception tech refers to *information technology (IT)* and *information and communications technology (ICT)* and Silicon Valley is particularly known for IT and ICT companies, but the biotech sector is as well increasingly important for the region.

TECH BOOM 2.0

Refers to the context of the Bay Area's current conflicts over housing and public space, including the prominent urban struggles about the Google bus protests and Mission District gentrification. During the tech bus protest, the collective *Defend the Bay Area* urged: “We encourage all Bay Area residents to take action against the tech takeover's many manifestations: increased rents, exclusive access to transportation, and the intensified police repression that accompanies gentrification, which is literally killing Black and brown residents in their own neighborhoods” (McElroy, 2017). Technological innovation combined with venture capital influx led to attracting more and more tech companies to the region. The present boom much resembles the previous tech boom (*dot-com bubble*) in the 1990s⁷ (Maharawal, 2017), with the new tech giants outperform their older pendants in market value⁸.

TECHNOCAPITALISM

Luis Suarez Villa (n.d.) defines *technocapitalism* as the evolution of market capitalism in the 21st century, following *Early Industrial Capitalism* in the 19th century, *Industrial Capitalism* in the first half of the 20th century, and *Late Industrial Capitalism* in its

second half. After the focus on first steel, machinery, steam power and railroads; then chemicals, electricity, the internal combustion engine, and automotive technology; and at the latest petrochemicals, electronics, computing, and aviation respectively aerospace; capitalism now focuses on biotechnology, nanotechnology, software, digital networks, and other technologies. The core of technocapitalism are intangibles, such as creativity, innovation, and knowledge, in contrast to the value of tangibles in the earlier forms of capitalist development. Yet in the emerging technocapitalist era, material resources are secondary. Suarez-Villa raises concerns if the innovative societal potential of today's technologies is prevented by the oligopolistic nature of the new economy, where few companies completely control their sectors, and he claims the need to reconsider the new technologies as public resources (Suarez-Villa, n.d.).

VENTURE CAPITAL

Is the fundamental funding tool of tech startups. More than half of the venture capital in 2015 was used to fund software companies (Berlin, 2017). Even though some tech corporations are based on the ideology to change the world, they are all solidly rooted within capitalism. After their launch, most tech endeavors are highly risky and financial profits are basically fiction within the first years. Thus they are depending on well-financed investors – the venture capitalists (Walker, 2019, p. 27). In the 1970s the lobbying groups sent entrepreneurs to Washington to prove the importance of funding the tech sector with venture capital. In 1978 the US Congress decreased the capital gains tax from 49% to 28% and legalized investment in venture capital from pension funds (Berlin, 2017, p. 254).

WHITE COLLAR/BLUE COLLAR

In the Anglo-American world *white-collar workers* are those with service, commerce, and business jobs, while *blue-collar workers* operate in the industrial and manufacturing sector or generally speaking white collar ones work in an office. The name symbolically refers to the color of their work attire. White-collar workers are inherently better educated and paid. Additionally, terms like *pink-collar*, *black-collar*, or *grey-collar* are used for care-oriented workers (that are predominantly female), heavy-manufacturing or mining industry workers, and work occupations with elements of both blue- and white-collar jobs. In the post-war era, San Francisco experienced a shift from blue-collar workers in factories and ports to white-collar ones in the financial economy when the business elite made the city their center on the West Coast (Solnit, 2019, p. 57).

6 e.g. high-income cities in Marin County and SF's historically White neighborhoods (C.F. Perigo, 2020).
7 The dot-com bubble of the 1990s burst in 2000, hitting the Bay Area much harder than the rest of the country.
8 Except Microsoft and Apple – they are now among the big five of big tech (cf. big tech).

0 INTRODUCTION AND METHODS

0.1 RESEARCH PHENOMENON, CURRENT DYNAMIC, AND CASE

In this first chapter I describe the boundaries and methodological conception of this diploma thesis. Including the overall phenomenon of tech-led urban disruption in the Bay Area, the current dynamic of the global pandemic (which both increases and highlights the urban struggles in the region and globally), the overall perception of big tech's role (and the notion of Silicon Valley as space of innovation) within the urban disruption, and especially the outline of the extreme case study on working homeless. The case paradigmatically shows the further disruption and displacement of the urban poor through the various dynamics of the housing crisis and especially the handling of which through the cities and the tech corporations. I furthermore define the research parameters – the methods, hypotheses, and questions, as well as my own position as a researcher.

San Francisco's loss of identity and livability have long been claimed and it has, in fact, a long history of displacement, segregation, and urban inequality (Solnit, 2019). The city's loss of diversity and culture (Anti-Eviction-Mapping-Project, 2020), which have both defined the city's history and perception, are much discussed and documented. However, the radicalism of this phenomenon is still increasing. The housing costs are still on the rise (McCamy, 2019) and the fleeing of the middle class is not limited to San Francisco and Oakland anymore. Instead, hypergentrification nowadays affects all parts of the Bay Area. This development is directly linked to the influence of Silicon Valley's tech corporations on the housing market (cf., Maharawal, 2017; Schwaller, 2019). The phenomenon of urban disruption in the Bay Area is generally well researched. Yet, within this diploma thesis,



IMG 01: Homeless encampments in San Francisco (own photograph).

I discuss it regarding the notion of the (multiple) crisis. Not only as we are in midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, but with a perception of the interconnectivity of urban crises: gentrification, segregation, displacement are all symptoms of the general inequalities and unjust actions of technocapitalism. The exposition of inequality and the systemic failure of the neoliberal logic through this global crisis has been intensively outlined in various recent academic comments (c.f., Harvey, 2020; Naidoo, 2020; Ferrando, 2020). What makes the case of the Bay Area outstanding as the symptomatic tip of the iceberg within this logic is both the role of big tech as the driving force of the new economy and the tech boom 2.0, as well as the scale, tempo, and duration of tech-driven gentrification and urban inequality in the region.

0.1.1 SILICON VALLEY'S RESPONSIBILITY

“Fear is the disease. Hustle is the antidote” (Kalanick as cited in Techco Media, 2012). In times of social and economic disruption through a global disease, this quote by former Uber CEO Travis Kalanick seems to even more capture the underlying contradictions within the tech industry’s relationship to the city respectively society. By now the urban disruption in the Bay Area is undeniably linked to the presence of Silicon Valley. The tech sector has “made the city [of San Francisco] one of the premier sites of urban capitalist speculation in the United States” (Maharawal, 2017, p. 30). Tech’s actions, both in urban and technological development, define its role within the city. The self-awareness of the tech giants is illustrated by their presence in Silicon Valley where they not only act as landlords, employers, and utility providers, but also as urban developers and even (unelected) city officials (Mattern, 2019). While there has certainly been disruption and segregation in the region before the dot-com bubble and the tech boom 2.0, the role of big tech as the region’s biggest driver of disruption is demonstrated on various layers. Data-driven research from the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project in 2013 has shown that 69% of evictions in San Francisco occurred within four blocks of the tech bus stops, as these areas are particularly sought-after (McElroy, 2017). These buses, which are used by several tech firms to transport their employees, have become the stage for anti-gentrification protests since they caused major demonstrations and blockades from 2013 onwards (Maharawal, 2017).

Besides all other indicators of big tech’s influence on hypergentrification, the tech buses’ impact on housing prices and evictions already proves the significance of the disparity between tech and the city. However, it has to be prominently stated, that Silicon Valley is not solely to blame for the situation in the Bay Area.

But it represents the biggest driving force within the Bay Area’s current development of displacement. Other actors and forces are easily identified in big real estate firms or historically racist and segregating urban politics. The former mayor of San Francisco Ed Lee for example has been accused of having close ties to the real estate industry (Moskowitz, 2017, p. 133), and the city’s neighborhoods are still shaped by the racist historical practice of redlining (Urban Displacement Project, n.d.-b). The above-mentioned segregating urban policies are closely connected to white (sub-)urbanization and the capital, which is flowing during the process of land development (cf. chapter 2).

Although the Bay Area is directly affected through these segregating practices, of which some were implemented long before technology’s uprise, the overwhelming presence of the tech sector is nowadays the biggest driver for urban inequality. When looking closer into those intertwined processes of (sub-)urbanization or capital accumulation through land development (cf. Walker & Schafran 2015), even these complex aspects seem to be connected to Silicon Valley. Hereby its business model is distinctive for the relationship to the stock market and capital accumulation through disruption. The ideology is publicly presented as innovative and sociable but it turns out to be one of the key assets of capitalism, that has already been discussed more than 170 years ago by Karl Marx – the creative destruction, respectively disruptive innovation, as it is mostly referred to today. The implications towards the tech sector are quickly drawn, but one has to be careful with oversimplification and generalization:

“*One of the biggest challenges when looking at Silicon Valley [...] is the common assumption we’re dealing with a homogenous infrastructure, a Big Tech monolith that somehow happened all at once. In fact, Silicon Valley is quite tribal, and evolved into its current stage in multiple layers* (Boyd as cited in Greene, 2018, p. 21).

Yet there still is a unique concept behind Silicon Valley: a culture, a state of mind, common values, and esthetics. For the same reason Silicon Valley goes beyond the geographic location, as Lucie Greene (2018) argues: Amazon⁹ is based in Seattle but still feels intuitively like a ‘Silicon Valley Brand’. Ditto Snapchat in Los Angeles (Greene, 2018, p. 22). So, this group of companies represents a holistic notion of technology as the savior within crises, driver of innovation, and potential predominant policy-maker of the future – a group of leading businesses, with immense market shares, revenues, and net worth (especially the big five of big tech), which directly and drastically affect their urban surroundings (cf. Mattern, 2019).

0.1.2 COVID-19 AFFECTING URBAN STRUGGLES

The rapid response to the Covid-19 crisis through the Californian and local county governments seemed to spare the region (cf., Morris, 2020) compared to the situation of other global economic centers such as London or New York within this pandemic. But after the first shocking two months of March and April 2020, the infrastructural deficits became more obvious in San Francisco and the surrounding region. Nowadays the lacking answer for the homeless during Covid-19 (Bensinger, 2020), the increasing precariat of the housing crisis (Roberts, 2020), or the racist and socially discriminatory health care system (Shih Bion, 2020) are intensively discussed. All of these issues draw a dramatic picture of social imbalance that especially unfolds in an urban context – and raises uncertainty towards the future of urban disruption in the Bay Area:

How are the economic effects of the pandemic driving more people into precarious living and working situations?

How is the region adjusting its caretaking of the urban poor, the unsheltered, the invisible citizens of the San Francisco Bay Area, who are left behind by the economic success of Silicon Valley?

How is the tech sector (as a clear driver of urban disruption) positioning itself amidst the crisis?

With society and the economy still being in a severe phase of uncertainty, the effective impact of this virus and the subsequent quarantine measures cannot be predicted. Neither can the forecasted role of the tech sector as the winner of this pandemic (The Economist, 2020) be confirmed. While the above stated questions are not the core research interest of this diploma thesis and will not be fully answered, they illustrate the need for just and community-driven pathways to overcome the multiple urban crises in the Bay Area and further expose the vulnerability and inequality that affected the area before the pandemic.

0.1.3 WORKING HOMELESS OF THE BAY AREA

Contrasted, the struggles of the homeless population of the Bay Area and the domination of the region by the tech corporations of Silicon Valley, stand for the growing urban inequality of modern technocapitalist societies. In San Francisco homelessness, as the most dramatic symptom of the housing crisis, has a long history that has been much discussed since the 1970s (Schwaller, 2019). However, it still represents an increasing phenomenon (ASR, 2019a), accompanied by vast urban conflicts and criminalization. While street homelessness, pathways to overcome it, and conflicts in between the homeless population and the formal residents are commonly discussed, less attention is drawn to hidden homelessness (Coalition on Homelessness, 2020). Yet in recent years the public debate has been widened onto vehicle homelessness and working homelessness (which are both closely interconnected) due to rising urban conflicts in Silicon Valley. Working homelessness is a growing phenomenon in the United States, but particularly in the Bay Area (Shastry, 2018). In chapter 3 this phenomenon is analyzed in order to understand the socio-spatial effects of the multiple urban disruption in the region. The disruption of the urban is not only represented by the omnipresent gentrification, the displacement and segregation in public space, but also by shifts in the working environment, which leave many workers of the gig economy left behind and forced into homelessness (ibid.). Working homelessness not just represents the margins of society any more. The intention is to firstly show the hidden aspects of disruptive urbanism which affect the urban poor, the marginalized. In the case of the Bay Area, where urban inequality is generally much discussed, the working homelessness is still one of those more hidden and invisible fractions of it:

“There are hundreds of thousands [...] living in conditions undreamed of by anyone who does not bring a sociologist’s interest to bear (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 09)

Secondly, it depicts general shifts within urbanity that change all of urban life similarly: the urban crisis poses a dramatic urban polarization – “unbearable pressure on urban public space and fundamental change in everyday life” (Knierbein, 2020 p. 2).

0.2 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES AND QUESTIONS

The San Francisco city-region is in a state of hyper-gentrification causing long-term urban inequality (housing crisis, systemic racism, privatization & individualization). This permanent state of crisis represents aspects of the multiple crisis, which our society faces due to globalization, climate crisis, economic and class struggles inter alia, and which can be globally observed (cf. Brand, U., 2009). Yet the Bay Area represents an outstanding example of some particular outcomes and reasons for this societal injustice – it is the tip of the iceberg of global financial capitalism interwoven with ‘innovative’ tech networks.

The role of Silicon Valley’s tech industry as a driver for subsequent urban disruption is undeniable. Its inherent creative destruction represents “the essential fact about capitalism” (Schumpeter, 1942 as cited in McCraw, 2007, p. 3) and furthermore enables insights into the connection between societal progress, innovation, and disruption. Silicon Valley represents our common understanding of technological innovation, it stands for potential evolution within capitalism (cf. Schumpeter, n.d. as cited in Elliott, 1980; Luis Suarez-Villa, n.d.), and it is redefining the relationship between tech capital (respectively power) and the state, the society, and the city – to the disfavor of the urban poor as well as the middle class. This careless disruptive urbanism is clearly shown by the struggles of the working homeless and their conflicts with the cities and big tech.

This diploma thesis aims to expand the discussion about this given interconnection through its focus on the working homelessness, which is a paradigmatic example of the multiple dimensions of the urban crisis that is co-produced by big tech. These dimensions, which deeply shape our urban surroundings, are still expanded by disruptive urbanism, even though the phenomenon of the hyper-gentrified, disrupted, and unaffordable San Francisco Bay Area is well known, discussed, and contested. I state the following research questions aiming towards a multi-dimensional conception of the urban crisis, which is in general but particularly in the Bay Area affected through disruption of the city:

How is disruptive urbanism influencing the Bay Area’s urban crisis?

Which socio-spatial dimensions of the urban crisis are directly influenced by tech-led disruptive urbanism – and how is this disruptive influence expanding?

How are these (expanding) dimensions of the multidimensional urban crisis reflected in the struggles of the ‘working homeless’ of Silicon Valley?

How are the conflicts of the working homeless and their perception reproduced by urban disruption?

0.3 RESEARCH METHODS AND OUTLINE

A set of different research tools is used to investigate the case study on working homelessness within the context of tech-led urban disruption in the Bay Area. Here, these are described alongside the directions and approaches on which each distinctive one is built-up. The selection and handling of the methods is based on their value in regards of answering the research questions. The single methods are meant to complement each other and to offer a broad, but at same time representative, valid, and objective analysis. Altogether, the research methods are directly linked to my own position as a researcher and conception of critical urban studies. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic the original research setup has been deeply disrupted by the pandemic. Initially, this research was meant to be conducted as field study in California. In March 2020, I was in the Bay Area (for a planned period of three months) to conduct field research, which was interrupted through the outbreak of Covid-19 in California soon after my own arrival. This unprecedented disruption through Covid-19 is clearly represented within the research methods: physical presence in urban space – as classic and essential method of urban studies – was undoable, both legally and morally. For these reasons, the methodology is based on remote research.

0.3.1 QUALITATIVE (SINGLE) CASE STUDY

“Case study is one of the most frequently used qualitative research methodologies. [Yet] research methodologists do not have a consensus on the design and implementation of case study” (Yazan, 2015). The design of this single case study contains aspects of the approaches of Sharan Merriam and Robert K. Yin (ibid.). It is a descriptive case that “offer[s] rich and revealing insights into the social world” (Yin, 2011, p. 49) of the working homeless population of the San Francisco Bay Area. It thereby describes an extreme case example of the phenomenon of tech-led disruptive urbanism. Merriam (1998 as cited in Yazan, 2015) describes a case study as particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic: The given case focuses on the marginalized group of the working homeless in the Bay Area. To illustrate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study and to provide external validity a thick description is used, to enhance the internal validity special regards are put on potential discriminatory biases (ibid.). The last aspect is particularly relevant when dealing with such a marginalized urban group, which is hidden, transient, and generally hard to approach (especially during a Covid-19 lockdown). Additionally, the reliability is enhanced by the explanation of the researcher’s position with regards to the study (ibid.).

The empirical data for the (single) case study is collected and analyzed through a qualitative content analysis (QCA) of media content. Both Merriam (1998 as cited in Yazan, 2015) and Yin (2011) suggest triangulation of multiple sources of evidence to construct validity – this is carried out by the multiple different sources (and forms of media) of the QCA. The QCA is supplemented by desk research of homelessness reports of selected municipalities of the Bay Area and independent non-profit organizations and thereby also supported through secondary research data (e.g. ASR, 2019a; & 2019b; Bay Area Council, & Economic Institute, 2019b; City and County of San Francisco, n.d.; City of San Jose, n.d.; Coalition on Homelessness, 2020; Joint Venture Silicon Valley, & Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies, 2020). The above-mentioned issue of discriminatory biases on homelessness is tackled by adding descriptions on current debates on terminology, definitions, research issues, and common prejudices (e.g. Coalition on Homelessness, 2020; Huber, 2020; Unite, 2019; United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, n.d.). An excursus into the realms of the Foucauldian discourse analysis is done by a reflection of the discursive context of the analyzed sources of the QCA. This is not to be seen as outrightly comprehensive discourse analysis, but rather as an implementation of certain aspects of which to further validate the case study and the QCA.

0.3.2 QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

The QCA is an approach for the systematic interpretation of discourse content. Hereafter its research symptomatic will be described, following the model of psychologist and sociologist *Philipp Mayring*, who is seen as an essential co-founder of the method. Mayring's model aims to systematically dismantle the analysis to ensure objective verification (Mayring, 1991). The starting point of this approach is the *selection of communication content*. In the forefront of this analysis a preliminary screening of media content, YouTube videos, corporate press releases, and city reports is carried out to understand the context of the case and especially to validate the later used main sources. These main sources are selected in regard to their accessibility (for me as foreign researcher some US-American sources were inaccessible), reliability (validated through the before-mentioned triangulation of sources), connection to the extreme case (on working homelessness), potential redundancies, and up-to-date-ness. Eliminated sources are partially used for the desk research on the context of the case and phenomenon.

The main sources comprise of media content produced through classical media (San Francisco Chronicle, Equal Times, The Guardian, Business Insider, The Globe and Mail), online media websites (WBUR, KQED, Vox, Bloomberg, ABC7), press releases (municipal and non-profit organizations) YouTube videos, and Reddit¹⁰ posts (open-access). The content (also classical media) is generally accessed through online formats due to the easier accessibility in times of Covid-19. The development situation differs for the different sources: While all sources are communication content, classical and online media articles have been produced by journalists, press releases by experts or policy makers, Reddit posts by the affected unhoused individuals or former homeless, and YouTube videos either by journalists (who produce content for organizations (DW Documentary) or private accounts (YouTubers)). This set of different producers on the one hand enhances validity and on the other hand also represents the transition of media content. The production date of the media content lies in between 2018 and 2020 (with the majority of sources from 2019 and 2020).

The context of all sources is the working homelessness or vehicle homelessness (which are closely intertwined). The general focus of the content lies on the Bay Area, respectively Silicon Valley, but for some assorted sources that provide relevant information the geographic boundary has been enlarged on the entire United States¹¹. The formal characteristics of the given material is either textual (mostly combined with photographs) or in video format (YouTube¹²). The content aside of the YouTube videos is mostly textual but of diverse nature: Reddit posts, articles, press releases, website postings, etc.

After clarifying these first parameters Mayring offers different directions of the analysis: In general, the qualitative content analysis can focus on the target group, the producer, the content itself, or the socio-cultural context of the communication. In this case, the objective is the communication content itself and the socio-cultural context as this offers the most potential for answering the research questions and furthermore allows a combination with aspects of the critical discourse analysis. The next step is the *differentiation* of the research theses. The research theses are reframed into sub-questions in order to make the media content comparable and classifiable:

What daily struggles have to be dealt with by the working homeless population?

Which urban conflicts arise around working homelessness in the Bay Area?

How are the cities of the Bay Area reacting on informal vehicular dwelling?

How are the tech corporations reacting to working homelessness?

How is working homelessness perceived by the affected individuals, the formal (housed) residents, the corporations, and the policy makers?

All content is first screened regarding its relevance for these sub-questions and thereby linked to the theoretical part of this thesis. Mayring's further step is to define the technique of the analysis – he offers three approaches: summarizing, structuring, and explicating content analysis. As the objective of this case study is to provide a thick description of the struggles of the working homeless population the structuring approach is applied. It aims towards filtering certain aspects from the material and producing a cross-section to assess it properly. I use the inductive method of classification. Hereby the classifying categories of the texts are defined during the screening. Mayring offers different procedures to contain the content of the communication without manipulating the essence of the material. Textual aspects, that refer to the same proposition, are basically combined and rendered into categories. Corresponding parts of the sources are then allocated to these and non-corresponding ones are reframed into new categories.

After determining this workflow, the units of analysis have to be defined: The recording unit is either a newspaper article, a tweet, a press release, a Reddit discussion thread, or a YouTube video – in general the unit of the distinctive type of communication. The context unit is one paragraph respectively one idea, statement, or concept. It is the biggest textual element that can represent one category¹³. Finally, the coding

unit is simply one word (representing the smallest unit that can fall into one category). During the process, the categories must be constantly reviewed, re-evaluated, and reduced. Finally, the categories can be discussed and opposed. The following categories (and sub-categories) are evaluated through the structuring approach: Reality of daily life (everyday life, sleeping/parking space and security, and homeless working at tech corporations), urban conflicts (city policies and harassment and municipal and corporate handling of the vehicular homelessness), and perception of working homelessness (amongst the affected group, amongst the city authorities and big tech, and amongst the formal residents). The recording units, context units, and assigned categories are stated in the appendix.

According to Mayring the advantages of the qualitative content analysis are its systematic approach (that allows objective verification) and the potential to also gather quantitative data (e.g. how often certain elements appear). Yet he mentions that the approach needs to be combined with techniques of data collection and sensible ways of processing the output.

0.3.3. REFLECTING ON POWER AND DISCOURSE

In the sense of Michel Foucault the essence of discourse is strongly connected to the virtuality of what is being said, what can be said, and what is believed (Füller, 2014):

“Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish between true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, 1980 as cited in O'Regan, & MacDonald, 2009, p. 4).

While this reflection on power and discourse, which is carried out within the case study, is not to be seen as comprehensive discourse analysis, it still features an interpretivist approach to social science. Using aspects of the discourse analysis researchers share the understanding that “the external world is always a selective, partial construction, the nature of which depends on who we are and the perspective from which we view it.” (Hastings, 2013). Both content and discourse analysis are usually based on communication through language. As distinct from the first, the latter does not focus on the content, but on formation rules, that are produced beyond the individual level (Füller, 2014). By applying the reflection on power and discourse, the media content sources of the QCA and the case study in general are validated.

10 Social news aggregation, to rate and discuss web content, based in San Francisco.
11 Reddit subforum: reddit.com/r/homeless/; YouTube channel: Invisible People; & DW Documentary, 2019
12 YouTube videos in English language nowadays automatically generate transcripts, which enable easy (but sometimes defective) transformation into text. The transcripts have to be double checked before the analysis. Yet this feature enables quick and easy handling and analysing of YouTube content.
13 YouTube videos are transcribed into textual content.

0.3.4 SEMI-STRUCTURED EXPERT INTERVIEWS

Qualitative interviews are a way of achieving awareness about the contesting urban perspectives (Kaspar, 2014). Three semi-structured expert interviews have been carried out within this master thesis to gain insights into disruption (anonymous interview with local tech entrepreneur, 2020), the multiple crisis (interview with Ulrich Brand, 2020), and homelessness (interview with Elba Morales, 2020). Although none of the three interviewed experts has an occupation within urbanism, architecture, or urban studies, their expertise offers distinct assessment and interdisciplinary insights to understand the three core aspects of this thesis. They further enhance the view on the phenomenon of urban disruption in the Bay Area. For this reason, the interviews are independently displayed in the first half of this thesis (chapter 0-3), yet later discussed within the interpretation of the case study. The three expert interviews took place in different phases of this thesis and thereby reflect different stages within my research interests as well as different pre-knowledge. The first one with a former Silicon Valley engineer and entrepreneur mirrors an early occupation with tech-disruption in general, social responsibility within the tech sector and urban inequality in the Bay Area. The second one with Ulrich Brand shows the intertwining of disruption (so as urban disruption) and the multiple (urban) crisis. The third one with Elba Morales deals with the specific case of this thesis, the working homelessness in the San Francisco Bay Area.

“The interview is perhaps the most taken-for-granted social research method that there is” (Cochrane, 2013, p. 38), it, however, is usually combined within a wider range of research methods (ibid.). Hence, the expert interviews complement the set of research methods and are especially used to contextualize the outcome of the case study research respectively QCA. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the interviews on disruption and homelessness have been carried out online and the interview on the multiple crisis in person but under safety measures (distance and mask).

0.4 RESEARCH POSITION AND CONCEPTION

0.4.1 RESEARCHER'S POSITION

While elaborating your own position as a researcher is not required when writing a master thesis, I still want to describe some of my key viewpoints that have certainly influenced the production of this thesis at hand. Studying architecture always offered great flexibility and interdisciplinarity. My interests in history of architecture and of cities, urban sociology, and just and ethical city-making are clearly represented within this chosen phenomenon of urban disruption. Disruptive technologies, digitalization of the economy, and shifts in the working environment and their interconnected socio-spatial effects are in my opinion some of the biggest challenges for the urbanity of the 21st century. Even when narrowing all of that down on the region of the Bay Area as the center of the new economy, the phenomenon remains exceptionally broad. Each aspect of the urban disruption seems to be exceptionally interesting, but the frame of this diploma thesis strives for specialization. Thus, the production of this thesis was constantly accompanied by opening the point of observation and vice versa condense the focus. This equally frustrating and inspiring process led me towards the (single) extreme case study on working homelessness, which also reflects some of my first intentions with this work: To observe extreme urban inequality and unjust city-making and to elaborate a critical position.

0.4.2 RESEARCH CONCEPTION

“**Significantly, struggle to end sexist oppression that focuses on destroying the cultural basis for such domination strengthens other liberation struggles. Individuals who fight for the eradication of sexism without supporting struggles to end racism or classism undermine their own efforts. Individuals who fight for the eradication of racism or classism while supporting sexist oppression are helping to maintain the cultural basis of all forms of group oppression. (hooks, 1984)**

bell hooks criticism of one-sided activism against any oppression represents a convenient analogy for the complexity of researching urban empowerment in this given case of the Bay Area. The claim of this thesis is to discuss inequality, marginalization, and segregation in correspondence with each other. The given phenomenon of long-term and rapid gentrification is not only intermingled with systemic racism and historical class struggles. It also manifests in conflicts between certain urban actors: long-term residents versus newly arrived ones, minorities versus tech employees, homeless versus authorities, etc. In 2014 Alex Nieto, member of the Latine community, was shot during a police control in Bernal Heights after two male White gay San Francisco newcomers felt threatened by his presence in their neighborhood (Camarena, 2019). In the same year, the wrangle over a community soccer field in San Francisco's Mission District went viral. A group of tech employees tried to assert their claim for the space against local teenagers through financial means

(Maharawal, 2017). These two cases completely differ in their precarity and outcome. But they illustrate the drastic polarization of the ongoing fight over the right to the city. Furthermore, they prove the importance of a broad critical view of the phenomenon. In his book *How to kill a city*, Peter Moskowitz expresses the claim to discuss gentrification and its interconnected symptoms from a systemic point of view:

“ [...] *gentrification is not a fluke or an accident. Gentrification is a system that places the needs of capital [...] above the needs of people.* (Moskowitz, 2017, p. 9).

The interconnected individual and collective struggles related to urban disruption in the Bay Area outline the scale of hypergentrification in the region and the relevance of further debates about the phenomenon.

Interdisciplinarity and inclusiveness hereby means taking into account marginalized groups, such as the homeless, as obvious losers of the housing crisis and Covid-19, as well as ethnic minorities¹⁴ and demographic groups, that traditionally do not benefit from the tech boom within the region but are historically discriminated against and harassed – also by architects, planners, and policy makers.

0.5 STRUCTURAL OUTLINE

The first half of this thesis contextualizes the phenomenon of the working homeless within the vast and manifold unsettling events and processes that occurred in the Bay Area. In the end of this chapter 0 (introductory chapter), an anonymous interview with a tech insider deals with disruption and social responsibility of the tech sector. Chapter 1 discusses the theoretical framework, concerning the linkage of creative destruction, urban disruption, progress, and disruptive innovation and the effects on urbanity. Disruptive Innovation, which is inherent in global financial capitalism and thereby also technocapitalism¹⁵, directly affects urban development and city life and culture in general. The multidimensional effects of disruption contribute to the urban crisis in the Bay Area. This diploma thesis aims to depict the coherences of increasing urban inequality and the disruptive nature of different dimensions of crises, using the example of the multiple crisis (Brand, U., 2009) – a concept, which seems to be paradigmatic for the region's struggles and conflicts. These crises are clearly interconnected with tech's creative destruction, respectively disruption. A brief outlook on progress, both societal and technological, adds to the theoretical background of this work. At the end of the first chapter an interview with U. Brand discusses the multiple crisis and its connection to Silicon Valley.

Chapter 2 describes the urban context of the Bay Area, the ongoing and historical disruptions and contestations. The region is coined by colonialism, working-class uprising, migration, economic success, and technological innovation. Its current urban crisis is thereby embedded within vast socio-spatial changes, especially those of the last century. The working homeless represent extreme marginalization, which has often been seen in the Bay Area – for example within the displacement of the Black, Latine, and Asian communities in different stages of the 20th century (until today). An excursus¹⁶ briefly describes the handling of the unhoused population of the Bay Area by the city municipalities during the beginning of the (ongoing) Covid-19 lockdown and especially the struggles and inequalities within that handling. This is done in order to illustrate the relevance of the case and the need for a more just approach towards the invisible dwellers of the region. At the end of chapter 2 the interview with Elba Morales discusses the state of the homelessness crisis in the Bay Area.

In Chapter 3 the extreme case of the working homeless (QCA) is analyzed. The main attention of this chapter lies on their everyday lives, daily struggles, and urban conflicts that arise with formal (housed) residents, the city municipalities, and the corporations. At the end of chapter 3 a reflection on power and discourse of the used media sources mentions potential implications on the perception of homelessness and Silicon Valley's hegemonic power. Chapter 4 interprets the findings of the QCA and the case study in general by putting reflecting on the context and theory chapters. The everyday lives of the working homeless and struggles of the working homeless are paradigmatic for the urban shifts through disruptive urbanism.

¹⁴ Taking an interpretivist research approach into account – acknowledging the importance of discursive context, language, and terminology on the wielding of power (Hastings, 2013) – I try to engage as respectfully as possible with ethnic terms. Some of the used terms are vastly debated (cf. Lopez, 2020; Adams, 2020; Diversity Style Guide, 2020) in the United States and some of the terminological decisions I make might seem to contradict the discourses on the same terms in the German language. I use the terms Black, Latine, and White for the following reasons: Not all Black people in the United States identify themselves as African American and the majority of Black activists or researchers use the term Black (Adams, 2020; cf. Diversity Style Guide, 2020). Due to the contested terminology, some authors claim to use Hispanic and Latine interchangeably, for an easier understanding and consistency I use the more widely accepted and less colonialistically connoted term Latine (Lopez, 2020). The question of whether to write White in capital letters is even more critically discussed, referring to the Diversity Style Guide, I capitalize it (Diversity Style Guide, 2020).

¹⁵ The evolution of market capitalism in the 21st century (Suarez-Villa, n.d.)

¹⁶ This excursus deals with the handling of the general homeless population – the ones in encampments on the streets, and the ones living in vehicles, which are closely intertwined with the working homeless.

0.6 INSERT: INTERVIEW WITH A TECH INSIDER ON DISRUPTION

[The Interviewee has asked to remain anonymous. The interviewee has worked for Google (now Alphabet) and one sub-firm as a (top-management) research scientist (before retirement). This anonymous expert interview is to be seen as an insight view on disruption and social responsibility within the major tech corporations and means of broadening the discourse through showcasing the disruptor's/entrepreneur's perspective.]

How is the current pandemic reshaping Silicon Valley? And what effects will the further implementation of new technology have on the industry's ties to this physical tech cluster?

[Interviewee (I):] Who knows what happens next here? In my different jobs at Google I have seen quite a bit of change in the working environment. When I started working in the 70s or 80s you had your own office, those days are dead. My room had one hundred workstations, no walls, no cubicles, a giant room. I mean, most of them were unoccupied, I was always struck by that. The building itself was incredibly crowded, you couldn't park, the lunch room was too crowded, but when you got to your desk, where did all these people go? It is a strange dynamic that I never understood. Now, everyone works from home. Before the pandemic even the tech firms just allowed that to a certain degree. Living in San Francisco and working in Silicon Valley isn't easy because of the long commute. Google employees had to do a daily roundtrip of three hours if they live in San Francisco and commute to Mountain View. I suppose young people want to live in the city. But still it's no fun to commute so long and these young employees have been asking for home-office for longer, because they sacrifice much in order to do that bus ride from San Francisco. Google would have probably let you work from home once a week and now they have just opened an office in San Francisco for 30,000 to 40,000 employees there. The Covid-19 pandemic clearly counteracts this investment and we might see a general tendency towards home-office.

Silicon Valley has strongly shaped the region. The Bay Area is now the economically-strongest region in the United States, if not in the entire world, but on the counterside this economic power has strongly increased inequality. The commuting from bigger cities to the tech headquarters on Google busses, which you just mentioned, has caused particular unrest amongst the rest of the population, as it is symptomatic for tech's overtake of the region. What is your personal opinion on tech's socio-cultural effects on the region?

[I:] I do not consider that as an overtake. There have always been people migrating here, in the 1970s and 1980s it was the bankers, who strived to work at the financial district of San Francisco. I mean the real problem is what happened to housing and why that happened. I guess tech did well and they pay high salaries. We know that this is not a good situation. When you talk about housing at Google it's really funny, because people are making a lot of money, so they can pay more money in rent. But even though these people might displace others, they are complaining about the costs of rent. It's ironic but it's sad. Really.

The urban poverty is indeed striking. It seems like wherever you are in the Bay Area, there is much visible homelessness...

[I:] Where is that? There are lots of homeless people in the city [San Francisco], or do you mean the East Bay?

To me, it is visible in most parts of the whole Bay Area that I have visited...

[I:] I guess I somehow live in a bubble. I mean it's a nicer suburb [in Santa Clara County]. You still see people on the streets in Palo Alto. It's unfortunate.

Have these issues been addressed at the corporations you worked at? If yes, how? And how were they perceived? Is there an internal discussion?

[I:] Sure, there is big emphasis on charity, in the companies I've worked for, that is also organized internally. There is volunteering and that is encouraged by the leadership of Google. It is out there and supported. Still you could argue that we could do more. But they hired people to help with that, to raise awareness. They certainly help you to be charitable but you could argue about the amount of course.

Google has originally and I think still does have a culture that encourages people to talk freely. Till recently there were meetings once a week where you could ask questions with the microphone to the CEOs. There are people who abuse that, but you could criticize and discuss openly. Also via email there have been a lot of



IMG 02: Street homelessness in San Francisco (own photograph).

internal discussions – there are certainly tech people that care about ethics, we have internal social media where homelessness charities are launched, but the employees also discuss random daily issues there, such as where to find a good apartment. But we for example also talked about how to save people in Google busses from thrown rocks. People felt fairly free to discuss things. These things were certainly discussed by the employees and the executives heard this discourse. Eric Schmitt was the executive chairman and he has charitable foundations now. Sometimes these discussions would happen after weekly meetings and by the way it wasn't always about social issues, also purely technical issues. We felt free to criticize every product, but still assumed that the designer is a smart person, who is trying the best.

Do you believe the tech industry inhabits a certain philanthropic or social responsibility towards the San Francisco Bay Area?

[I:] I don't know what the leaders of Google think. I think that the original founders of Google, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, were really generous. I think they tried to be good citizens. That is my personal opinion. They seemed like good people. I understand why people got upset regarding the housing situation. But you can't generalize tech. There are so many different companies. Bill Gates now has a big charitable organization. I don't know what Microsoft did before. I mean Google made a lot of money, so I guess they do have a responsibility to pay back. And that's good and they should have a certain responsibility towards the area. That would be the win-win. Also, lots of people internally give money to charity and Google encourages that. But of course, at Google you have caring people and those who don't care.

The term disruption is used to describe both, rapid innovation and also destruction. What is your own perception of the concept of disruptive innovation that has become infamous within Silicon Valley? Do you think the tech industry is still disruptive? Or is this concept already outdated?

[I:] Self-driving cars disrupt trucking companies and will cause the loss of thousands of jobs but it saves money for the trucking companies. And most importantly it will save lives through more road safety. Disruption is not a new concept, but it is happening faster now than before. We have been working on speech recognition at Google. That was supposed to be replacing phone operators and now this has already been disrupted by the web. In the 1990s there was this famous quote: 'The way things go everyone is a telephone operator by 2000'. But we sort of disrupted an industry of operators and displaced some people but also applied productivity. So, Silicon Valley disrupts itself, for sure. It's about finding new ways that are more efficient, but unfortunately the old system has an ecosystem attached to it. That socio-economic ecosystem benefitted people and they have to find new ways of living.

There is a need for young new people that are innovative and creative. Google is still innovative. Think about self-driving cars. Google brings a lot of money to the table. That is really an underestimated issue in Silicon Valley. They invest money in smaller companies without revenue to produce innovation. Google has enough money to develop self-driving cars without getting any revenue back. Let's assume for a second it's going to be a good technology for this world. I mean I believe so. Think of car accidents. Cars have their benefits but that has its price and I consider self-driving technology to be good. It will

disrupt taxi drivers and so on. To reach this point it will take many years though. And there will be disruption and benefits.

These start-up financing practices you mention are surely crucial for the funding of new technology. Yet do these collaborations not basically strengthen the monopolistic nature of Silicon Valley, which is criticized for posing a threat on small businesses, the local economy, and even democracy?

[I:] Knowledge and profits are shared that way. Google supports self-driving cars with their millions. But there are also small start-ups that work on self-driving cars. So how does that work? They don't get money by the traditional ways of selling. There is a lot of venture capital, that is an important part of this ecosystem. That's what made Silicon Valley – the venture capital. I mean the giant companies are rather an exception. Is Google too powerful? I don't know. I mean there should be a balance between small and big companies. It shouldn't be the case that Google is the only player in the game. And it isn't the case: they don't suck up all small companies, but financially they could. Take our interview right now: Why are we not talking on Google Hangouts. Zoom seems to be doing well during Covid-19 and Google could have bought it, but they didn't and I consider it a smart move, because they don't have to own everything. There needs to be a balance.

Talking of Zoom and Covid-19: Silicon Valley seems to have a special relation to crises, considering the dot-com bubble or the general disruptive nature of crisis. Is this crisis-driven disruption part of tech's understanding of progress?

[I:] I wouldn't be critical of tech companies for benefitting from crises. Right now, all kinds of companies benefit from Covid-19. I am all in for progress and making innovation happen, but I am aware that we didn't always think about all the social outcomes of that. Social scientists should do that. Politicians should do that. Look at the things that happened. Nobody had an impression of how the internet would change society. You can't know what comes next, but also can't put the blame too strongly on the people who developed the innovative technologies.

[The interview was held online (in the Bay Area) on March 30, 2020 and the answers have been anonymized by the author]

1 CRISIS, DISRUPTION, PROGRESS, AND INNOVATION

“The crisis of the community, its dislocation, the distress of most of its members, went hand in hand with technical progress and social differentiation. It is hard for us to imagine the astonishment with which the members of old communities must have greeted these social changes which were happening around them and which they were unable to comprehend. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 208)

In the following chapter, I discuss the interconnected relationship between progress and innovation, as well as crisis and disruption, which eventually leads to disruptive innovation and its urban manifestation – disruptive urbanism. This theoretical chapter is building on the initial deliberations of Marx and Schumpeter (Elliott, 1980; Dowling, & Hüsiger, 2007; & Leube, 1996) on creative disruption, the driving force of capitalism, and its further reframing towards disruptive innovation by Clayton M. Christensen (1997). Capitalism’s (and Silicon Valley’s) inherent drive for innovation combines mankind’s seek for progress, which (in the dominant global economic system) is achieved through technological innovation (besides increasing productivity), and the inherent unsettling of the usual course of things. I thereby not only briefly describe the dominant notion of progress (Coccia & Bellitto, 2018; cf. Lefebvre, 1991) and potential counter-perspectives (cf. Ogburn as cited in Schneider, 1945; & Braiddotti, 2016), but acknowledge crises as key elements of said disruption, urban unsettling, and constant creative renewal of the economy, the society, and essentially the urban: “The crisis of the community, its dislocation, the distress of most of its members, went hand in hand with technical progress and social differentiation” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 208).

Ulrich Brand’s concept of the multiple crisis (2009) offers insights in the interweaved dimensions of the current crises and embeds their urban implications within a global perspective. This reference on the global perspective and interconnectivity of the crises illustrates the need for a broad reconsideration of the relationship between imperialism, colonialism, or class- and social conflicts, which all contribute to the societal crisis and thus the crisis of urbanity¹⁷. In contrast to the historical ‘city’, which has nearly vanished through industrialization, the ‘urban’ is “the emergent society consisting of differences” (Vogelpohl, 2011, p. 1). The qualities of urbanity, the ‘standard of social coexistence’ is currently endangered (Bockhardt-Bodenwinkler, & content.associates, 2013, p. 04). The hereby used notion of urbanity and the urban is built on Lefebvre’s *Critique of Everyday Life*, which further enables to discuss the implications of crisis and disruption on urban space.

The urban implications of the theories on crisis, creative destruction, and progress are identified through the works of Henri Lefebvre (1991), David Harvey (2010; & 2013), Manuel Castells (2009; & 2010), and Kanishka Goonewardena (2007; & 2008) among others. All of these concepts are very much interweaved and dependent. Through this interdisciplinary theoretical engagement I aim to later (chapter 2) discuss the effects of crisis and disruption on the urbanity in the Bay Area, which is probably more than any other region in the world shaped by disruptive urbanism. Nowadays it is both, the most driving economy of the United States (due to Silicon Valley’s economic power) and one of the most unequal metropolitan regions (Maharawal, 2017; Owens & Antiporda, 2017).

¹⁷ The later outlined case of the working homeless in the Bay Area reflects on these dimensions of crisis. Yet it is especially paradigmatic for the struggles of the working-class and their shift into urban marginality.

1.1 THE CONCEPT OF PROGRESS

“*The optimistic idea of 'Progress' lacks flexibility and dialectical understanding. It fails to grasp the different aspects of human becoming. Up until now progress has carried within itself certain elements of regression. Spontaneous, objective, like a process of nature, this 'progress' has not been guided by a Reason. Thought has realized this at a very late stage; and it is only now that efficient Reason is making an attempt to penetrate it actively, to understand its laws and to transform it into a rational progress without negative repercussions. Human life has progressed: material progress, 'moral' progress - but that is only part of the truth. The deprivation, the alienation of life is its other aspect.* (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 229)

1.1.1 OUTLINE OF THE NOTION OF PROGRESS

Progress is the modernist process of development of humankind, which was variously dealt with in the course of Western culture. Accompanied by faith in sciences, evolution¹⁸, and the aim to master the environment, an optimistic notion of progress was particularly discussed by thinkers of the 18th and 19th century such as *Auguste Comte* and *Herbert Spencer* (Coccia & Bellitto, 2018). They promoted the idea that the human condition has always improved and will continue to do so¹⁹. In addition to the fundamental perception of progress as a cosmic law, *Erville B. Woods* included comprehensiveness to the concept of progress:

“*Human progress is thus regarded as the necessary outcome of a universal biological process conceived, if only grasped with sufficient comprehensiveness, as working out the noblest results in every branch of human activity* (1907 as cited in Coccia & Bellitto, 2018).

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno of the *Frankfurt School* then criticized the negative effects of science and technology. Horkheimer stated that it leads to the loss of morality and that “organization is total destruction. Progress tends to culminate in a catastrophe” (1947 as cited in Coccia & Bellitto, 2018). In the 1920s *William Ogburn* derived the term *cultural lag* from studying the processes of cultural change (Schneider, 1945). This term offers a potential link between the contradictions of evolution, progress and innovation respectively disruption (and creative destruction): His theories state that there is a certain “maladjustment produced by the lagging of one of two correlated parts of culture behind the other” (ibid.). Along these lines it must be assumed that social and cultural progress lags behind the technological one. At the example of Apple economist *Shoshana Zuboff* argues that in regards to the constant invasions of classical business ethics (such as the practice of oppressive digital terms of use instead of paper-based user contracts) some tech corporation could appear to not have fully understood societal, ethical, and institutional conditions of the

18 Evolution and progress are to be distinguished: while progress aims towards a perfect society (and is thereby linear), evolution can be perceived as a circle (cf. Coccia & Bellitto, 2018). The opposition to progress is regression. In economic terms, crisis can therefore be perceived as disruption of progress and the return to prosperity is fondly aimed at (a notion which is commonly spread within the dominant discourse on crisis (cf. Brand, U., 2009).

19 Spencer shaped the concept of cosmic evolution: he added an inorganic and a subsequent super-organic evolution to Charles Darwin's evolution of the biological sphere. The latter describes progress in culture, institutions, and society (Coccia & Bellitto, 2018).

economy. With the economic success of some particular products (iPod, iTunes) users gained optimism in the new digital capitalism but at the same time, the innovator Apple did never really develop social and institutional processes within the implementation of these products (Zuboff, 2019, p. 70). This reflects the basic ideas of the cultural lag theory that real economic reformation needs time to trickle into society – time that the rapid internet world does not provide. A continuous flow of capital is essential and this process cannot be interrupted:

“**Those who can move faster through the various phases of capital circulation accrue higher profits than their competitors. Speed-up nearly always pays off in higher profits. Innovations which help speed things up are much sought after.** (Harvey, 2010, p. 42)

With an optimistic worldview, one could believe pursuit of social conditions will occur soon after any technological disruption – maybe even through necessary actions of *protest* and *class conflicts*: Might it even be that the Bay Area’s urbanity is saved, and the housing crisis solved by just distribution of wealth through philanthropist capital flows after the long-lasting tech-protests and struggles through the housing crisis? The deep entanglement of the technology sector, politics, policy-making, and the financial sector currently seem to refuse such optimism.

Progress’ major driving forces lie inter alia in science, technology, and economic growth (Coccia and Bellitto, 2018) – sectors that have particularly shaped the development of Silicon Valley. Firstly, the importance of *science* within our society has significantly increased especially in the 20th century. The multi-layered system of knowledge acquisition has become essential not only for civil and military state institutions but also for production, technological and economic processes (ibid.). Secondly, *technology* (as much as science) has been the main driving force of human progress over the course of history and it is deeply interconnected with economic developments. Over the course of the perception of progress, the significance of technological improvements becomes evident, especially within “mastering the environment” (ibid.). Thirdly, *economic growth* is strongly supported through progress and seems to be one of its main driving forces. The Human Development Index (HDI) particularly supports the perception of growth being directly connected to societal progress (ibid.).

1.1.2 TECHNO-ECONOMIC PROGRESS

The dominant (modernist) conception of progress as unconditional growth and its linkage to technological innovation offers the justification for disruption, displacement, and unsustainable development and is thereby perceived as highly problematic within the humanities²⁰: “Our historical context is marked by the schizoid structure of technology-driven advanced capitalism [...]. Examples of the non-linear and internally contradictory ways of the working of this system are the vast accumulation of wealth alongside growing disparities in income, well-being and access to the very technologies that sustain our economy” (Braidotti, 2016, p. 135). Similar to Braidotti argues Lefebvre:

“**If it is indeed true that the beginning and the end of all knowledge is practical activity, then one may well ask oneself how it can be that during our era of high technology and advanced scientific knowledge the practical lives of human beings can still be so blind and so indecisive. How does such an obvious contrast between a science proud of its triumphs and the humiliation and uncertainty of human lives come about? If all power originates in action, where do life’s weaknesses and uncertainties - and its triviality - come from?** (1991, p. 193 f.)

For my research on the relationship between crisis and urban disruption, especially the stated technological and economic aspects of progress are of particular interest. However, the concept of progress has been discussed broadly and offers various perceptions that go beyond *techno-economic progress* (ibid.). Definitions aiming at the pursuit of happiness, well being, and satisfaction in human life (such as Lefebvre’s Critique of Everyday Life) might offer a broader understanding of the multifaceted development of our society. The modernist perception of progress is one-sided and aims towards everlasting technological innovation and economic growth, leaving aside just societal development, culture, individual

well-being (Cf. Coccia & Bellitto, 2018; Braidotti, 2016; & Lefebvre, 1991). This imperialist notion of progress, is a driver for inequality regarding the distribution of wealth between the global North and South (Coccia & Bellitto, 2018), different places, regions, or cities within distinct countries, as well as between classes (cf. Knierbein, Hou, & Gabauer, 2020; Kipfer & Goonewardena, 2007).

The striking point in Silicon Valley’s drive for techno-economic progress are the internal contradictions, which clearly highlight the economic attempts behind it: “The contrast between an ideology of free mobility and the reality of disposable others brings out [...] the paradox of high levels of mobility of capital flows in some sectors of the economic elites and also high levels of centralization and greater immobility for most of the population” (Braidotti, 2016). Building on the modernist progress, big tech is in midst of gigantic shifts within the global society, illustrated by its self awareness²¹, market dominance, and influence on politics. Further it is reframing the social and public life, as well as the working environment (Braidotti, 2016; Castells, 2009). Considering the working homeless of Silicon Valley, the above mentioned imperialistic notion of progress and subsequent distribution of capital and wealth generates a two-class society through the gig economy and subcontracting (cf. chapter 3): “The worker becomes poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and extent. [...] The devaluation of the human world grows in direct proportion to the increase in value of the world of things” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 59). Silicon Valley is particularly shaped by internal and external flows of work migration (cf. chapter 2.3). At the same time its “part-time, sub-standard, underpaid work” (Braidotti, 2016, p. 135 f.) creates the precedent for the global devaluation of the work environment, which have been claimed by Lefebvre (1991) and Braidotti (2016). The outlined criticism is hereby far from technophobia and regression: Although the general growth-centrism of the progress debate enables multifaceted critique, it has to be questioned, if any society respectively economy might consciously promote retrogression (Coccia & Bellitto, 2018). Instead the cited theories illustrate the need for questioning the dominant notion of progress, its use as justification for displacement, unjust distribution of wealth and commons, and as vindication for hegemonic, imperialist, and colonial politics (cf. Brand, U., 2009), so as the subsequent city-making and urbanization. Mastering the environment and economy without any ethical consideration, leads to the given societal disruption. In the paradigmatic case of the working homeless that manifests as displacement of the working-class – a displacement on the streets, into precarious living conditions in between housing and homelessness.

20 cf. also Coccia & Bellitto, 2018: The “meaning and perception of progress has been linked, more and more, to new science and technology’s economic effects rather than social criteria”.

21 cf. e.g. “Move fast and break things” (Zuckerberg, 2014 as cited in Levy, 2017); “If there’s a need for something to be disrupted and it’s important to the future of the world then sure, we can disrupt it” (Elon Musk as cited in Pramuk, 2015).

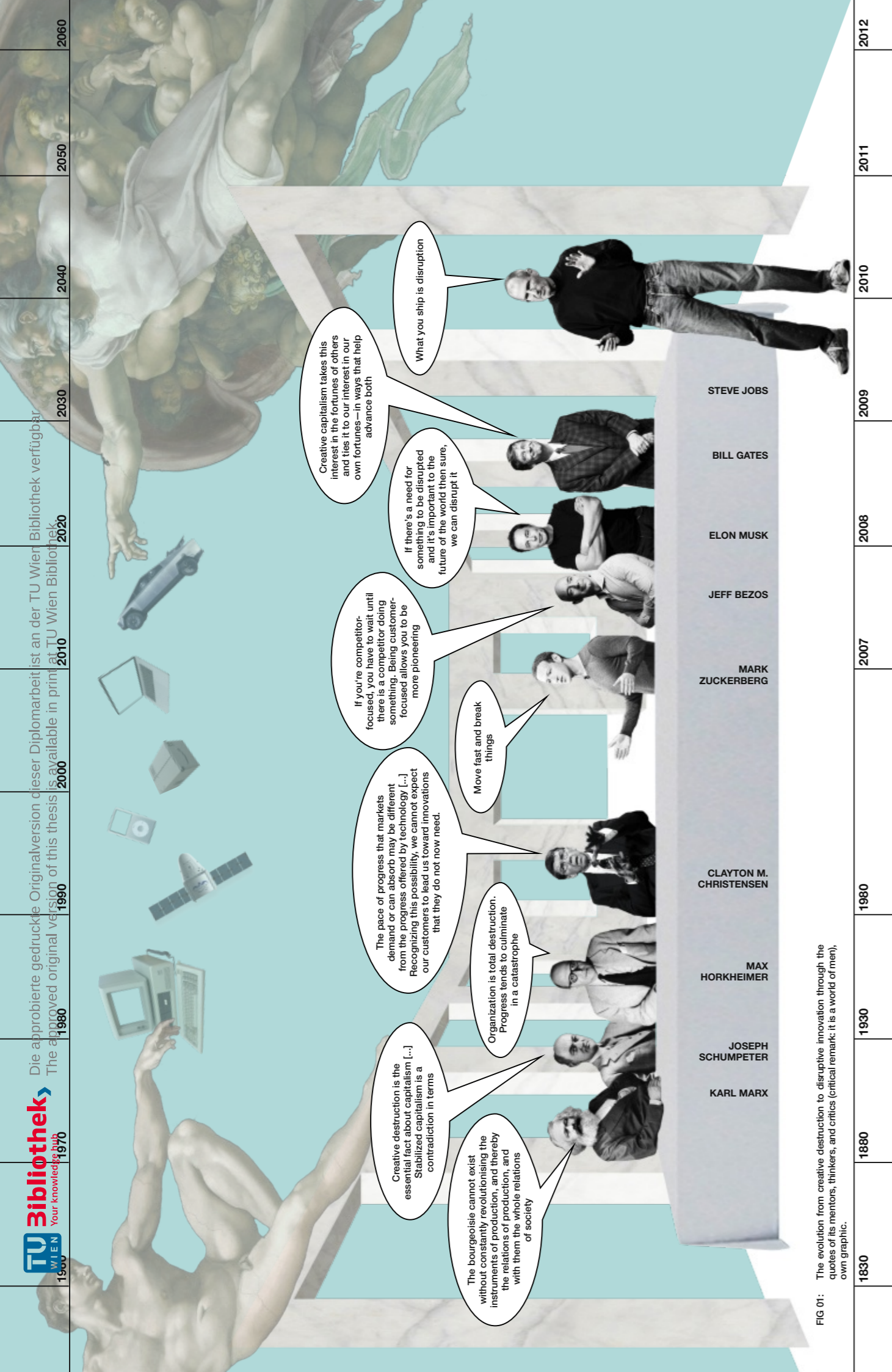


FIG 01: The evolution from creative destruction to disruptive innovation through the quotes of its mentors, thinkers, and critics (critical remark: it is a world of men), own graphic.

1.2 DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION AND CREATIVE DESTRUCTION

“A networked, deeply interdependent economy emerges that becomes increasingly able to apply its progress in technology, knowledge, and management to technology, knowledge, and management themselves. (Castells, 2010, p. 78)

From Schumpeter’s entrepreneurial perspective, Capitalism is an evolutionary (cyclical) process and only a few of its innovations, so-called mutations, actually lead to evolution (Zuboff, 2019, p. 71). Yet the evolutions and the minor innovations are both limited on the technological and economic layer. While “human beings are clearly fascinated by the perpetual pursuit of novelty”, “most social orders were inherently conservative. They sought to preserve the status quo, to protect a ruling class and repress human impulses towards innovation and new ideas” (Harvey, 2010, p.89). In that sense, comprehensive progress is detained by capitalist motives. Creative destruction (respectively disruptive innovation) plays a key role in this evolution of capitalism and offers links between (lacking) societal progress, technological innovation and economic evolution. Disruption is the process of interruption of the usual course of things. At the same time, it is depicted as a usual tool of progress by the hegemonic powers (ibid.). In the course of human progress, it was the common companion of innovation and evolution. In this part I will discuss this driving aspect of capitalism, which has been variously used in economic theory and is still the core idea behind understanding capitalism’s innovative forces and its disruptive urban implications. Within the inside justification and outside criticism of technological development this innovative disruption provides the key ideological frame for Silicon Valley’s nature. The creative destruction is characteristic of modernity itself (Kipfer, & Goonewardena, 2007, par. 18) and hereby represents the techno-economic progress, described in the previous chapter. Additionally, the subsequent disruptive urbanism does not only create the urban displacement, homelessness, urban poverty, and an unprecedented eviction wave (in general the hyper-gentrification), but also neglects any urban alterity, which is so critical for urbanity (cf. Kipfer, & Goonewardena, 2007). It thereby clearly contributes to what “Lefebvre calls urbanization without urbanity” where “encounters between different lifestyles are uncommon” (Bockhardt-Bodenwinkler, 2013, p. 4).

1.2.1 THE ORIGINS OF CREATIVE DESTRUCTION IN MARX’ AND SCHUMPETER’S WRITINGS

“Creative Destruction is the essential fact about capitalism [...] Stabilized capitalism is a contradiction in terms (Schumpeter, 1942 as cited in McCraw, 2007, p. 3)

“[Capitalism inherits an] endless and limitless drive to go beyond its limiting barrier. Every limit appears as a barrier to be overcome (Marx as cited in Elliott, 1980)

The term creative destruction was first introduced by Karl Marx in *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848, then further established by Joseph Schumpeter in *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* in 1942 and later developed into the theory of disruptive innovation by Clayton M. Christensen. Creative destruction is the process of rapid extrusion of established companies and whole industries through new innovative ones (Dowling & Hüsig, 2007). Schumpeter describes it as follows: “in capitalist reality as distinguished from its textbook picture, it is not [price or qualitative] competition which counts, but the competition from the new commodity, the new technology, the new source of supply, the new type of organization [...] – competition which commands a decisive cost or quality advantage and which strikes not at the margins of profits and

the outputs of existing firms but at their very lives” (Schumpeter, 1942, as cited in Leube, 1996). These premises are central in some of today’s most ‘innovative’ companies, as for example Amazon’s founder Jeff Bezos claims: “If you’re competitor-focused, you have to wait until there is a competitor doing something. Being customer-focused²² allows you to be more pioneering” (Bezos, n.d. as cited in Tabeka, 2020).

“**Both Karl Marx and Joseph Schumpeter wrote at length on the creative-destructive tendencies inherent in capitalism. While Marx clearly admired capitalism’s creativity he [...] strongly emphasised its self-destructiveness. The Schumpeterians have all along gloried in capitalism’s endless creativity while treating the destructiveness as mostly a matter of the normal costs of doing business. (Harvey, 2010)**

Marx’s and Schumpeter’s economic theories certainly differ in essential points. Both postulate that capitalism is doomed to fail, but while Marx states that this is due to economic failure, Schumpeter blames the inherent creative success – “capitalism is being killed by its achievements” (as cited in Elliott, 1980). In his book *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1942) Schumpeter deeply analyses and comments on Marx’s work, accomplishing his systematic analysis of the economic system. However, he certainly did not completely share Marx’s “version of the story”, because he criticizes the “oversimplified view of the social classes” (McCraw, 2007, p. 349). “In the Marxian system, capitalist society contains only two classes: capitalists, who own and control the means of production, and proletarians, who do not. Schumpeter’s response is that workers are not alike, and that [...] large numbers of proletarians [...] found businesses and become capitalists themselves” (ibid.), which goes along Silicon Valley’s maker mentality as well as the promises of the American Dream. Schumpeter further questions Marx’s predictions, that the workers income and share of profit would steadily fall and instead argues that since the rise of industrialism their share of total income held steady or increased (ibid.). Almost 80 years later a look at the new economy questions this view of Schumpeter. While the cumulative productivity growth, through technological innovation, networking, and higher education levels, was 30 percent between 1998 and 2008 in the United States, the real wages increased only by two percent in the given decade and weekly earnings of college-educated workers fell by six percent between 2003 and 2008 (Castells, 2010). The idea of increasing productivity trickling down to finally catch up with wages is clearly proven wrong.

In Schumpeter’s view entrepreneurs are the agents of innovation and creative destruction and their projects generate jobs, higher incomes and

economic progress. “Schumpeter identifies entrepreneurial profit as the prime motivator—‘the premium put upon successful innovation.’ When other participants in the same industry see the new level of high profit, they quickly try to imitate the innovation. The entrepreneur tries to preserve his high profit for as long as possible, through patents, further innovation, secret processes, and advertising—each move an act of ‘aggression directed against actual and would-be competitors.’” (McCraw, 2007, p. 255). But while most people will never become capitalists, neither entrepreneurs, their businesses will eventually fail, damaging whole communities as well as individuals (ibid., p. 7). Yet as the case of the Bay Area disruption shows, this damage does not necessarily just occur in times of economic failure or financial crisis but also in a state of prosperity respectively economic growth. Marx, however, accounts the *bourgeoisie* as the dominating capitalist class, which is responsible for the innovation and creative destruction:

“**The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society (Marx & Engels as cited in Harvey, 2010, p. 89).**

John E. Elliott (1980) highlights that both capitalists and entrepreneurs have similar attitudes such as a will to ‘conquer’, a ‘joy of creating’ and the drive for increasing profits. Yet for Schumpeter the entrepreneur is just the class in between worker and capitalist and these features are necessary for the entrepreneur to become a capitalist and to prevent the downfall to becoming a worker oneself – which happened to millions of small businessmen due to bankruptcies during depressions (ibid.).

These debates on the social classes of creative destruction might seem misplaced in times of shifting work conditions and even a shifting meaning of work itself (gig economy). The differentiation between the classical blue- and white-collar workers is not always applicable anymore. The boundaries between employment and unemployment, between subcontractors and employees are fading (cf. Shastri, 2018; & Kobie, 2018):

**Is an Uber-driver an entrepreneur or a modern form of a worker?
 What rank within (or how many shares of) Apple do you need to have to be considered a capitalist?**

Silicon Valley promises a life relieved from corporate affiliation – where everyone is free to choose where, when, and how long he or she works (Shastri, 2018).

The assumption could thereby be that everyone is enabled to fully control one’s everyday life and all factors within it. Yet these uncertainties highlight the topicality of the Marxist debates on the working-class. Lefebvre has reframed²³ Marx’s concepts on *alienation* and *fetishism* within his Critique of Everyday Life:

“**This fact simply means that the object that labour produces, its product, stands opposed to it as something alien, as a power independent of the producer. The product of labour is labour embodied and made material in an object, it is the objectification of labour. The realization of labour is its objectification. In the sphere of political economy this realization of labour appears as a loss of reality for the worker, objectification as loss of and bondage to the object, and appropriation as estrangement, as alienation (1991, p. 59)**

1.2.2 THE EVOLUTION FROM CREATIVE DESTRUCTION TO DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION

“**First, the pace of progress that markets demand or can absorb may be different from the progress offered by technology. This means that products that do not appear to be useful to our customers today (that is, disruptive technologies) may squarely address their needs tomorrow. Recognizing this possibility, we cannot expect our customers to lead us toward innovations that they do not now need. (Christensen, 1997)**

The concept of creative destruction was further developed into the theory of disruptive innovation by Christensen in the 1990s. In his book *The Innovator’s Dilemma* he analyzed the life cycles of technologies and came to the conclusion that established industries are very well capable of adjusting by using technological development. These technologies are then just implemented into the existing markets and the potential of emerging new markets is mostly ignored. However, the new markets can later often disrupt the old ones. This way of replacing innovation is revealed in every generation of technological features and in most cases the disruptive innovation was conducted by small firms rather than established ones. (cf. Christensen, 1997)

Promoted by simplified processes of founding a company in Silicon Valley in the 1980s and financing through venture capital, many employees of big tech firms started their own companies. Sometimes they were so economically successful that they could even displace their former employers through technological innovation (Dowling & Hüsigg, 2007). Christensen’s disruptive innovation enabled not only the further understanding of technological developments, but also helped both start-ups and big companies to identify which kind of innovation has the potential to intrude the established markets (ibid.). He identified more than 50 disruptive technologies within the tech industry and his theory offers specifics of different forms of disruptions and solutions for established firms on how to deal with emerging markets. In general compared to Schumpeter’s creative destruction Christensen’s disruptive innovation is more focused on the technologies and its market segments. His understanding of disruption²⁴ as ultimate innovation

22 Customer-focused hereby means to anticipate what the potential future customer could ‘want’ (in exchange for data) – the tech industry is based on exchange value rather than on functional values (cf. Zuboff, 2019; & interview with Ulrich Brand).

23 Lefebvre’s alienation is not limited to economy, “it is the inability in all areas of life to grasp and to think the other” (Lefebvre, 1991, preface xvi).

24 Creative destruction in Marx’s and Schumpeter’s writings is generally rather comparable. Christensen’s development of the concept into disruptive innovation (1997) is in principle the same: rapid extrusion of established companies and whole industries through new innovative ones. However, Christensen even more than Schumpeter (who is far less critical of capitalism than Marx) describes the logic of disruption from the perspective of the businessmen respectively entrepreneur. He offers distinctive analyses of different types of disruptions and solutions on how to deal with them (as an established firm). Yet, he has no real intention of describing global economic developments, nor mentions the negative aspects of disruptive innovation for urban space and society as a whole (the workers, the underlying financial markets etc.).

became central within Silicon Valley's ideology²⁵ and have as well been used intensively to justify its underlying destructiveness²⁶.

1.2.3 DISRUPTIVE URBANISM

“ [Our cities undergo] a shift from a period of crisis-generated restructuring to the onset of a new era of restructuring-generated crises. In other words, the full-grown postmetropolis has reached a stage when innovative practices and restructured urban spatialities that proved most successful in restoring robust economic growth and in effectively controlling social unrest after the 1960s are now showing signs of disturbing dysfunctionality (Soja, 2000 as cited in Didier, 2018, p. 9)

Marxists such as Lefebvre (1991; & 2014), Castells (2009; & 2010), and Harvey (2010; & 2013) agree that shifts in our society, culture and economy directly affect built space and demand a more just city-making, where urban infrastructure (both the physical and social one) is fairly distributed. Cities change and adapt continuously and naturally, through their residents, workers, companies, and not at least through technology. Creative destruction claims that capitalism is an incredibly efficient system because of its continuous renewal tendencies. No firm or industry can withstand the competition and innovation which is inherent in the economic system that drives our modern societies (Batty, 2007) – nor can a city or region: “Capitalism takes over space as a whole. Without appropriating its use, it dominates space and modifies it for exchange; it produces its proper space of domination, in the form of centres of decision-making, wealth, knowledge [...] and information” (Kipfer, & Goonewardena, 2007, par. 34).

The connection of capitalism and the destruction of urbanity is thereby evident. It is shaped by both the “micro-worlds of everyday life” and the large social order (state, economy, etc.) (ibid., par. 24). The effects of the latter on urbanity are often described as destructive: While Kipfer and Goonewardena (2007) call this *urbicide*²⁷, other writers use a more direct connotation towards the contradictions of capitalism: *creative destruction of cities* (cf. Batty, 2007). In reference to the recent disruptions through the sharing and platform economy the terms *platform urbanism* (cf. Barns, 2020; & van Doorn, 2019) and *disruptive urbanism* (cf. Maginn, Burton, & Legacy, 2018) are used. The implications of Schumpeter's creative destruction and Christensen's disruptive innovation are still evident in these concepts of cities' development (in relation to the economy). Innovations in technology and style are essential within the development of cities, but so is the way property is acquired and managed (as well as the social production of space in everyday life). Capitalist urbanization is not merely defined by simple expansion and growth but rather by chaotic destruction and rebuilding (Batty, 2007). City-building is therefore never completed and urbanity is provisional: “The ‘creative destruction’ oxymoron suggests the tensions at the heart of urban life: between stability and change; bet-

ween the notion of ‘place’ versus undifferentiated, developable ‘space’; between market forces and planning controls; between economic and cultural value, and between what is considered ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ in the growth of the city” (Page, 1999 as cited in Batty, 2007). Even before the uprising of big tech firms, the Bay Area was strongly shaped by capitalist disruptions through industrial shifts. Yet the use of disruptive innovation within the legitimization of Silicon Valley's fast-forward mentality is very distinctive. Additionally, the *permissionless innovation* within Silicon Valley clearly represents the ideology behind Silicon Valley's overtake of the Bay Area (cf. Zuboff, 2019, p. 70).

The above mentioned concepts and terms (platform urbanism, creative destruction of the city, and disruptive urbanism) are highly intertwined and overlapping. While creative destruction of the city (so as in a certain extent urbicide) captures the overall loss of urbanity through capitalism's overtake of the city without a clear deliberation on the new economy, platform urbanism is more distinctive towards the disruptions through the sharing economy. Yet while the Bay Area is clearly shaped by the new economy and big tech, its urban struggles are clearly more multilayered and emerged long before the development of the sharing economy. Disruptive urbanism (respectively urban disruption) seems to most distinctively acknowledge the impact of both disruptive innovation and the multidimensional urban crises on the Bay Area, by having a strong connotation to big tech, but also implying the pre-new economy disruption within the region.

25
26

cf. “What you ship is disruption” (Jobs, n.d. as cited in Salazar, 2017).
e.g. “Creative capitalism takes this interest in the fortunes of others and ties it to our interest in our own fortunes—in ways that help advance both. This hybrid engine of self-interest and concern for others serves a much wider circle of people than can be reached by self-interest or caring alone” (Gates, 2008).

27

“Urbicide is [...] not only about the destruction of the built environment but the annihilation of a certain kind of urban life (defined by agonistic heterogeneity) through the destruction of physical environments” (Kipfer, & Goonewardena, 2007, par. 13). It reads ‘the oldest story in the world’ [...] comparable to the production of ruins that result from capitalism's dynamic of creative destruction.” (ibid., par. 19).

1.3 DISRUPTION AND THE MULTIPLE (URBAN) CRISIS

“Crises are ‘the heartbeat of neoliberal governance’, which are constantly produced through processes of austerity and mechanisms of de- and re-institutionalisation. Neoliberalism permanently (re)produces political, social, economic, and cultural divides and, consequently, recurrently provokes outbursts of resistance against these ruptures. At the same time, through this politically engineered state of perpetual crisis, neoliberal measures and austerity policies become legitimised. (Knierbein, Hou, & Gabauer, 2020, p. 51 f.)

For the functioning of the capitalist economy continuing capital flows are essential and any interruption or disruption is threatening (Harvey, 2010). At the same time capitalism is not only crisis-prone (ibid.), but constitutively inherents the crisis (Davidson, 2011). In contrast to disruptive innovation happening to singular firms or even whole sectors, a disruption of the whole economy is clearly not desired by the financial markets and its dominating corporations. Temporary disruptions can be absorbed but long term ones are intimidating: after the Nine-Eleven attacks, flows of goods, services and people into and out of New York have been stopped and the financial markets have been shut down – but after a few days the United States had to return to business to prevent a vast economic crisis (ibid.). The Covid-19 pandemic represents a similar presumptively external shock, with drastically increased long term effects. Yet both examples show the interconnected and multifaceted specifics of crises, which are deeply interwoven with capitalist struggles.

Lefebvre acknowledged the meaning of the multiple dimensions of crisis for the development of specific urban crises: “There is a complex of economic phenomena, social facts and ‘crises’ of various kinds from which the housing crisis cannot be separated” (1991, p. 259, footnote 17). Crises are paradigmatic for the proclaimed destruction of urbanity (cf. Kipfer & Goonawardena, 2007; Laimer, 2013), but yet also pose momentums of political and social shifts (e.g. through protest, emancipation, political mobilization) (Knierbein, 2020). These shifts are yet a sign of what Edward Soja calls restructuring-generated crisis (Knierbein, 2020):

“One can clearly observe these phenomena in the new surge of (hyper)-gentrification in many cities in the global North that can be increasingly witnessed since the financial crisis of 2008, and that many cities of the global South have already massively witnessed before (ibid., p. 2).

Ulrich Brand (2009) deeply analyses this complexity of crisis in his work on the *multiple crisis*. The multiple crisis regards obvious hazards such as the economic situation, climate change, loss of biodiversity, famine or migration, but also lack of social integration, societal division and mistrust in politics. In general, we deal with the complex dynamics of problems and crises, which leads to a strain of individuals as well as political and economic decision-makers. U. Brand’s remarks are easily allocated onto the complex urban struggles of the Bay Area, where many of his defined characteristics of the multiple crisis can be observed. In contrast to the overall assumption of economic stress as a main crisis factor, the Bay Area is outstanding in matters of economic success. Yet the region is also struck by excessive urban inequalities. Although U. Brand talks about the general state of crisis of our world, his remarks offer distinctive paths to understand the specific phenomenon of hypergentrification and urban neglect in the San Francisco city region, which are certainly dramatic examples of regional aggregations of the global multiple crisis. In the following subchapters I derive specifics of crisis from U. Brand’s analyses, that are often underrepresented within the discourse on both crisis causes and impacts, and link his concept to the works of critical urban theorists, such as Lefebvre (1991, 2014), Knierbein (2020), and Goonewardena (& Kipfer, 2007).

1.3.1 HEGEMONIC PRODUCTION OF CRISIS

“**Robust political and social action is required for humanity to stay within planetary boundaries and ensure socially just and sustainable development. The challenges that this involves are increasingly discussed in terms of socio-ecological and sustainable transformation. The term ‘transformation’ is an appropriate one because it points to the complex financial, economic, social, political, resource and climate dimensions of the crisis. [...] The concept of transformation has different meanings.** (Brand, U. et al., 2013)

The state respectively the government is usually perceived as the savior in the course of crisis. The role within its creation is often forgotten (Brand, U., 2009). U. Brand states that it is hardly ever asked if and how governmental politics contribute to the causes of crisis. Institutional and governmental instruments seem to enable crisis management. However, there are no progressive answers on how to react to global crises and furthermore their massive impact undermines alternative solutions, which lie beyond stabilization, return to business as usual and promotion of economic growth. U. Brand mentions the role of labor unions, which comply with the mainstream crisis reaction and the deception of capitalism’s shifts towards neoliberalism and imperialism through the term ‘globalization’ as an important contribution to our general understanding of crisis, which lacks sustainable solutions. Eventually, under the interconnected threat of new authoritarianism through potential conflicts over vanishing resources, he postulates the need for an alternative interpretation of crisis (ibid.). Looking at the implications of crisis on urbanity gives a similar maladaptive picture of its disruptive potential: “Although the contradictions of the housing market and its constituent gentrification came to crisis point during 2007, recent state restructuring and austerity measures throughout much of the global North make it clear that we cannot only think of crisis as a de facto moment of questioning: gentrification has not stalled” (Davidson, 2011, p. 1989).

The complexity of the multiple crisis might be a reason for the focus on the economic crisis, that can be studied regarding the crisis responses around the globe and the clear spotlight on economic factors within all recent societal disruptions. However, the most problematic aspect of the crisis handling is that the political and economic elites tend to politics, which ostensibly promote their own or their supporting groups’ interests. To support this case U. Brand takes bank bailouts and a lack of regulation of the financial sector into account. He further states that correlations with non-economic interconnected issues are rarely seen, even though that would be essential to understand the dynamics of crisis. The political institutions

are either not able or not willing to change these developments – they even further enable them through their policy-making and organizational structure. The nation-state is acting as a ‘national-competition state’, strictly oriented on growth and competition and denying the structural scope of any crisis to sustain the current power relations (ibid.): “In a neo-liberal society, the function of a state is solely to guarantee minimum standards” (Bockhardt-Bodenwinkler, p. 6). Through the subsequent “systematic evictions, new patterns of widespread homelessness, poverty and dispossession [that] have become key features of the recent waves of (hyper)-gentrification” (Hou, & Knierbein, 2017, p. 2), the crisis reproduces itself (restructuring-generated crisis).

U. Brand (2009) calls to mind, that post-war-fordism, which is usually just seen as a stable and prospering economic phase, is also strongly connected to ethnic and gender conflicts. It is, however, also the period of inclusion of big parts of the population into society by representing their interests. Yet, in the 1980s neoliberal development prevailed – aligned to deregulation, insecurity, privatization, exploitation, authoritarianism, and the unbuilding of governmental instruments. The latter causes the disregard of the crisis of the political institutions, which is not at all taken into account in current debates. It is common belief that nation-states are able to represent societal interests and to contain problematic situations (ibid.). Braidotti (2016) tackles this lethargy and inaction of the settled power of the state. Her concept of the *nomadic subject* questions the hegemonic and exclusionary power structures through critically addressing the roles of shifting societal margins and centre: “It is therefore important to resist the uncritical reproduction of sameness on a planetary scale” (ibid., p. 136). Acknowledging her nomadic subject and at the same time Lefebvre’s alienation, U. Brand’s (2009; et al., 2013; & 2020) claim to restructure crisis perception and handling becomes particularly evident: In these “globalized times marked by large-scale and technologically-mediated transformations of our social, economic and political universes” (Braidotti, 2016, p. 135) the dominant crisis processing becomes perpetual and stolid (cf. Knierbein, 2020).

1.3.2 OVERCOMING THE DOMINANT PERCEPTION OF CRISIS

The crisis is multifaceted, complex, and interconnected with long-lasting urban struggles. It is an expression of neoliberal, imperial, and globalized capitalism. Thus, the dimensions of crisis are political-institutional (Brand, U., 2009). Increasing instability in our interconnected global markets, lead to a sprawling of crisis dynamics from one country to another, from one market to another, and in between economic sectors, leading to social division, climate change, and inequality (ibid.). Yet he states, that it is still unclear if the financial crisis is an economic one after all (deflation of the market), rather than a structural crisis. However, perceiving the crisis as purely cyclically economic would determine its potential inherent (and multiple) dimensions. U. Brand states various economic crises as such examples of economic bubbles – the crisis of the new economy around 2000 (dot-com bubble) or the mortgage meltdown of 2007/2008, when financial actors used ‘innovative’ financial methods to promote financial growth (ibid.). Although it is yet unclear to what stage this current multiple crisis will evolve, the local symptoms of hence in the Bay Area may just be the tip of the iceberg of its global scale.

The socio-ecological crisis has implications on global and inner societal conditions, regarding the maldistribution of resources, emissions, and food, which are deeply inherited in capitalist industrialism. In the global North, this neoliberal imperial globalization led to the polarization of society, for example through decreasing wage levels or high-risk mortgages, which were mostly allocated to low-income and especially Black households (Brand, U., 2009). The rebuilding of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina caused the displacement of roughly 100,000 Black residents from the city (Moskowitz, 2017, p. 17). “In post-Katrina New Orleans the destruction of ghettoized neighbourhoods is seen by some planners, politicians and developers as a welcome opportunity to increase ‘social heterogeneity’ by ‘diluting’ the concentration of poor people of colour, facilitating gentrification, and dispersing existing residents” (Kipfer,

& Goonewardena, 2007, par. 15). This not only shows how the multiple dimensions of crisis (in this case racism) directly affect city-making, but also illustrates the destruction of urbanity²⁸ through the promotion of homogeneity (ibid.) It furthermore proves that the (disruptive) notion of crisis as a moment of renewal and restructuring is dominant, also within the handling of the urban crisis:

“**Katrina became the perfect opportunity for politicians [...] using the chaos provided by the crisis to push through the reforms [...]: dismantling institutions that served the poor, and making the city more accommodating to an influx of capital** (Moskowitz, 2017, p. 26)

In the process of a crisis illegalized workers and residents become particular targets, while they are essential to economic productivity (Brand, U., 2009). While U. Brand here especially highlights illegal migrants, this as well represents a particular threat to the invisible workers and dwellers of the Bay Area, the working homeless, who have weak job security and no formal dwelling (cf. chapter 3).

Additionally, the multiple crisis is also a crisis of gender relations. It is mainly caused by men, respectively a male type of action, which is rather focused on the market, power, and success, than on societal reproduction. However, the effects of this crisis are also handled or processed through this type of action (ibid.). The Bay Area’s gentrification is a paradigmatic example of these power relations and male crisis management, which is also aligned with systemic racism. Despite ethnically diverse demographics – not only of the Bay Area in total but also regarding the blue-collar workforce in the production sector, the low-income tech employees and the essential or frontline workers – the decision making in big tech and also the interconnected venture capitalist firms is mostly in the hands of male Whites. Just 4.4 percent of venture-capital transactions in 2018 went to women-founded companies and just eleven percent of venture capitalist partners were female (Greene, 2019). Women not only have hazards while becoming entrepreneurs, getting a foot into business, and receiving funding, they are often victims of sexual harassment and toxic masculinity, especially in Silicon Valley (ibid.). In general, entrepreneurship is “traditionally constructed around discourses of a masculine, male subject” (Essers et al., 2017, p. 5).

These social aspects of crisis (gender, racism, class) illustrate its complexity and claim further courtesy and especially sensitivity within both the assessment and overcoming of societal and urban distress. The paradigmatic urban crises reveal “the urban as a social, political and cultural culmina-

tion point of various crises at different scales and in different areas” (Knierbein, 2020, p. 5). Acknowledging the urban as this culmination point thereby means not only to take into account the marginalized aspects of crises, but especially to perceive them as interconnected: “Lefebvre successively issued caution to render the crisis into sectional perspectives as it goes further than becoming nothing more but a difficult moment for the economy and politics, for ethics and aesthetics. Instead, continuous crisis is the everyday state of things” – the crisis of modernity (ibid., p. 466).

1.3.2 PATHWAYS TO OVERCOME THE MULTIPLE (URBAN) CRISIS

“*If we can achieve a better understanding of the disruptions and destructions to which we are all now exposed we might begin to know what to do about it (Harvey, 2010, p. viii)*

U. Brand’s concept aims to broaden the discourse on crisis evaluation and offers certain aspects to overcome the multiple crisis. However, due to the complexity and our lack of understanding the multiple crisis dynamics, many issues remain unclear (Brand, U., 2009). He exemplarily states the ambivalent nature of crisis from the progressive point of view: the common way to contain a crisis is to stabilize the economy. Thereby its multifaceted aspects are marginalized or left aside. Yet the stabilization of the economy is also essential to the urban poor as they are struck hardest, even if that means that alternative and sustainable solutions are undermined (ibid.).

In the sense of good governance, the political and institutional structures have to be reshaped efficiently in order to represent the needs of larger parts of the population. Furthermore, the inherent nature and complexity of crisis needs to be taken into account, especially the socio-ecological crisis and the impoverishment in the global South. U. Brand prominently states that the scale and polymorphism of the multiple crisis cannot be solved through business-as-usual. If anything, our current strategies and solutions will further intensify social division and the socio-ecological crisis. Additional de-thematization of migratory and gender specific implications will further decrease societal integration and boost protests and discontent (ibid.).²⁹ The ‘new progressive transformation’ of our society has to be built as broadly as possible: in political parties, companies, media, NGOs, labor unions, social movements, and the sciences.³⁰ Yet all spheres of life are affected and they have to be transformed. The current pandemic shows and demands a stronger appreciation of the foundational economy – the care and essential work³¹ that is vital for everyday life (Brand, U., 2020). The foundational economy describes those parts of the economy, which focus on the social wellbeing of citizens and its maintenance. This “infrastructure of everyday life” (Earle, et al., 2018, p. 39) contains inter alia health, providential and care services, education, social housing, food and utilities (Foundational Economy Collective, 2018). The concept thereby questions the dominance of the tradable, competitive economy within the global economic system, and the interrelated privileged individual consumption (ibid.).

U. Brand exemplarily names the discourse on commons as a potential for the protection of essential societal goods from the finance markets and their interests (ibid.). He further states (et al., 2013)

that, when dealing with societal transformations regarding the financial, economic, social, political, resource, and climate dimensions of the crisis, certain questions remain open. Some of which comply with aspects of this thesis at hand:

“*What roles are played by the pioneers of change, social experiments, innovation and best practices?*

In what way do networks contrast with or complement states, governance, markets and civil society?

And what is their relation to normative aims of transformation?

How is change constructed, managed or even blocked between state, corporate and civil society actors? (ibid.)

Yet, these questions lack easy quantifiable answers. However, dealing with the given issues might foster an open discourse on crisis and the subsequent societal shifts. There are no easy and universal solutions to overcome the global multiple crisis, neither are there simple ways to tackle the crisis of urbanity and the interconnected housing crisis, alienation, and dispossession of public space. However, some pathways can be derived from the economic, marxist, philosophical theories, which have been stated in the previous subchapters. They highlight the importance of public commons (cf. Brand, U., 2009), public space (e.g. Harvey, 2010; Knierbein, 2020), and urbanity in general (e.g. Lefebvre, 1991; Kipfer & Goonewardena, 2007). The most prominent claim is certainly Lefebvre’s right to the city (2014), which is essential for urban studies and spatial sciences (Vogelpohl, 2011). It has been interpreted in various ways. To prescribe future urbanization, criticize post-modern destruction of urbanity, or claim a right to affordable housing, public space, urbanity and urban participation (cf. Kipfer & Goonewardena, 2007; Vogelpohl, 2011; Harvey, 2013; Knierbein, 2020). In the United States the *Right to the City Alliance* emerged in 2007 as a community alliance against gentrification, displacement, and urban marginalization, which includes various Bay Area community organizations³² (Right to the City Alliance, n.d.). By demanding inter alia housing justice, democracy, inclusion, and economic justice (by referring to Lefebvre), it advocates for urban commoning and acknowledges the multiple dimensions of the urban crisis. Within the discourse of the Bay Area’s housing and eviction crisis and consequent homelessness commoning is particularly often mentioned as pathway to tackle urban inequality: The fight for commonly used and owned public spaces and against privatization (e.g. Mission playground altercation & Tech Bus protests: addressed in chap-

ter 2) (Maharawal, 2017), commoning of crucial infrastructure, such as public transport, but also housing (c.f. Melendez, 2019) or even the establishment of a publicly owned San Francisco city bank, which could potentially finance public housing (cf. Perigo, 2019).

The crucial role of public space within the course of the urban crisis is clearly evident and yet quite ambivalent: It is, firstly, under vast pressure through neoliberalization and subsequent privatization (cf. Knierbein, 2020). Secondly, it serves as a last refuge, for example as informal dwelling space for those who lose their homes through the economic crisis (ibid.). Thirdly, it is the vital space of societal contestation – as space of protest, democratic uprising, and resistance:

“*In times of paradigm shifts and of crisis, public spaces are important places of battle in the fight for human rights and for basic living conditions, particularly linked to appropriations by marginalised groups (minority societies) and in relation to the use of majority societies (Knierbein, 2020 p. 269).*

29 This became evident through the uprising of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, which also addressed vast systemic racism within urban development and renewal (cf. chapter 2.2: White Flight, urban redevelopment, suburbanization, redlining).

30 Especially the elite’s perspectives which target disempowerment of the masses, have to be undermined: U. Brand (2009) particularly states the orthodox economic theories.

31 Besides the foundational economy, the core economy of non-economic work is essential: parenting, volunteering, family-caring, etc (cf. Earle, et al., 2018).

32 e.g. Causa Justa: Just Cause, Tenants Together, Urban Habitat

1.4 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

“*From [...] networks, capital is invested, globally, in all sectors of activity [...]. Yet whatever is extracted as profit [...] is reverted to the meta-network of financial flows, where all capital is equalized in the commodified democracy of profit-making. [...] The net result sums to zero: the losers pay for the winners. But who are the winners and the losers changes by the year, the month, the day, the second, and permeates down to the world of firms, jobs, salaries, taxes, and public services (Castells, 2010, p. 503).*

1.4.1 (RE-)CONNECTING PROGRESS, (MULTIPLE) CRISIS, AND DISRUPTION

What is left from the contradictions between progress and evolution, disruptive innovation and creative destruction, and crisis-prone but fragile capitalism? How are the diverse theories combined and what essentials can I draw from them? And essentially, what are their impacts on space in the city, urban struggles, and urbanity itself? The techno-economic progress (outlined in chapter 1.1) enables and justifies disruptive innovation. Vice versa disruption strengthens this dominant notion of progress. The role of crises is hereby ambivalent: They represent moments of openness to societal change and reflection and the naturalness of political, economic, cultural, and socio-ecological power relations is questioned (Brand, U., 2009). On the contrary, while crises have historically led to societal progress besides technological innovation (cf. Coccia & Bellitto, 2018), our current societal understanding of crisis and its handling, outcomes, complexity, and scale does *not enable progress regarding our socio-ecological cohabitation, governance, and economic system*: “it is acknowledged that technical innovation is important but not enough; social innovations are central to socio-ecological transformation” (Brand, U., 2009). The economic notion of crisis thereby reproduces the underlying unjust status quo. It is crucial to question these underlying structures, which caused the dramatic inequality in the Bay Area. It is a particular crisis-prone region, struck by natural disasters (earthquakes, fires, energy shortcuts), massive protests, a housing crisis, the loss of urban culture etc.

To understand the struggles, which occur in the region affected by a multiple crisis (of which many aspects are connected to creative destruction), the questions and debates raised by U. Brand are essential: What

is the *role of governmentality* within the production and containment of crises? How is the state of crisis spatially expressed, for example through gentrification, dispossession and segregation linked to *racial, social, and gender oppression*? In the disruptive urban surroundings of Silicon Valley many of these issues are interconnected. This reflects one core critique of the multiple crisis: the crises are complex, linked and represent a network – similar to the capital network of the Valley. As mentioned above this network is not solely responsible for all of these crises (as some root in historical inequalities), but is has strong ties to many major urban struggles of today: the venture capitalism background of big tech and the profits made by financial markets through technology destabilize the economy (Walker & Schafran, 2015); big tech’s business ethics do not at all represent an innovative (progress orientated) approach (women in tech, diversity, working conditions,...) (cf. Joint Venture Silicon Valley & Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies, 2020); its approach towards city, suburbanism, and gentrification is driven by disruptive innovation (cf. Walker & Schafran, 2015; Greene, 2019; Harvey, 2010) and momentarily lacks sustainable solutions due to the missing understanding of the complexity and interconnectivity of this phenomenon as well as the lacking social responsibility (cf. interview with a tech insider).

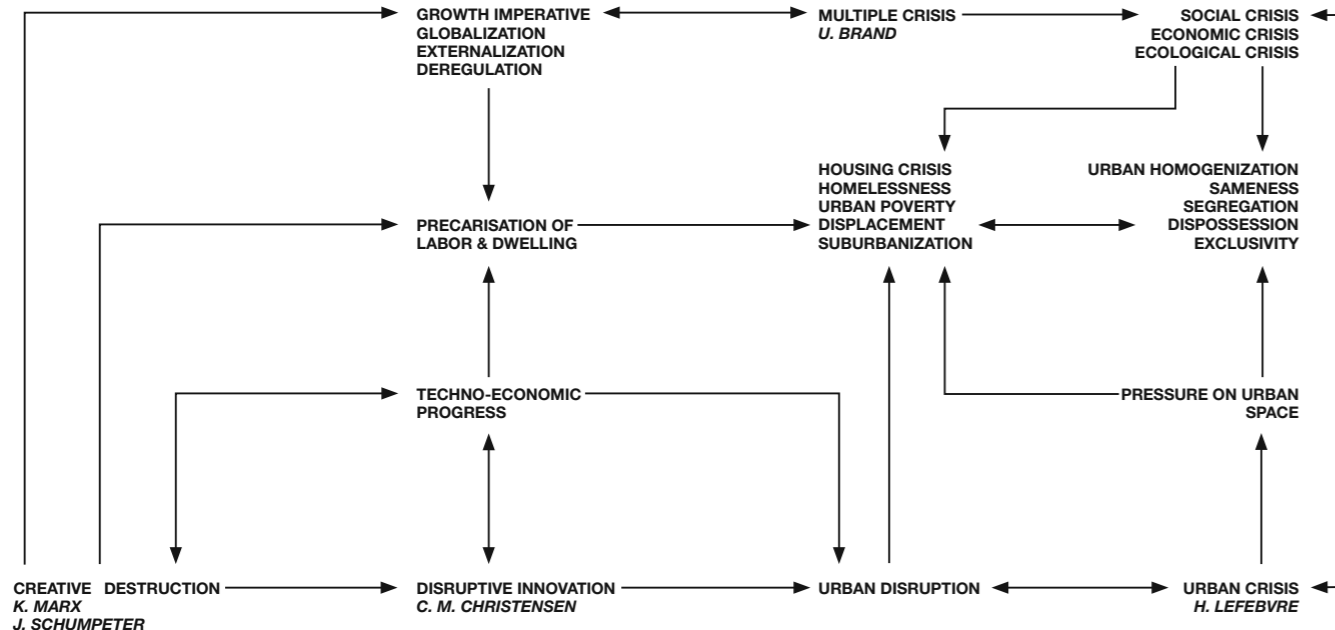


FIG 02: Theoretical framework: urban crisis and global multiple crisis, progress, and disruptive innovation, own graphic.

1.4.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE URBAN CRISIS

The background of this theoretical framework is interdisciplinary: it is mainly based on Schumpeter (economics), Harvey (geography) and Brand, U. (political sciences) and furthermore offers insights to different philosophies, such as Marxism (Lefebvre, Harvey, Castells, Goonewardena), critical theory (Marx, Frankfurt School: Horkheimer & Adorno), Schumpeterianism and growth-theory (Christensen). I derive from these theorists an ambivalent view on the disruptive innovation as well as its relation to crises, and progress. These processes and events all have vast connections to urbanity: “Through crisis, flexible capitalism undertakes another effort to seize and high-jack the meaningful patterns and practices of everyday life; and as a catalyst for social self-organization to overcome the constant pitfalls, aporia and fragmentation inherent in flexible capitalism, taking the forms of response, resistance, struggle, avoidance, and counterculture in the city“ (Knierbein, 2020, p. 5). The historical crisis-generated restructuring of urban space in the Bay Area is addressed in chapter 2. The case of the working homeless illustrates what Soja called the shift from a crisis-generated restructuring towards a restructuring-generated crisis (2000 as cited in Didier, 2018). Through socio-spatial restructuring of the city, the public space, and the privatization of commons the social crisis has become unbearable for many citizens of the Bay Area. As urbanity’s values are themselves ongoingly contested, the homeless population becomes increasingly pushed into neglect and invisibility. At the same time their presence in the public is more and more contested as the urban becomes homogeneous, indifferently, and alienated (cf. Lefebvre, 1991).

1.4.3 DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION OF WORK AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR URBANITY

One of Schumpeter’s major additions to Marx’s term of creative destruction is the introduction of the entrepreneur in midst of the worker and the capitalist (bourgeoisie) and he also stated that workers’ share would not fall but instead increase through the creative innovations of capitalism. Schumpeter’s entrepreneurs are essential for his theories and today seem to be less outdated than Marx’s capitalists: Castells argues that today rather than by a capitalist class, our cities and societies are determined by global capital networks (Castells, 2010, p. 505). There certainly is a form of entrepreneur in Silicon Valley’s bubble: it is common to open up a startup as a former employee of a big tech firm, but without venture capital it won’t last long (cf. Walker, 2019). “In a production system of variable geometry, of teamwork, of networking, outsourcing and subcontracting” it becomes blurry “who are the owners, who the producers, who the managers, and who the servants” (Castells, 2010, p. 506), especially as we have experienced a “move from family firms to vertically integrated corporations to horizontally networked systems of production and distribution” (Harvey, 2010, p. 97) since Schumpeter. In the sense of Harvey and Castells the observation of these networks is more conducive than the blaming of certain single actors as leading capitalists.

Here should be again stated what was already mentioned in the introduction chapter of this thesis: The single actors, the corporations, their individual representatives are part of the holistic nation of Silicon Valley. This is hereby not mainly referring to the geographic valley in the south of the Bay Area, but to the conception of the tech sector (cf. Greene,

2018). It represents as much the whole sector, as its mindset, its way of life, and its way of making business. The self-evidence of Silicon Valley impacts the urban surroundings in manifold ways, which again reflect on some core critique aspects of the multiple crisis (cf. Brand, U., 2009). What is prominently addressed in this thesis, the disruptive innovation, contains much of this given mindset: Its subsequent permissionless innovation, which becomes as well evident as permissionless urbanism, denies all forms of societal reflection, pausing to (re-)think, and in general sustainable (urban) progress, which are all essential compounds of just and fair city-making. On the contrary the disruptive innovation of Silicon Valley reproduces both historic urban inequality (ethnic segregation, maldistribution of infrastructure, gender discrimination, etc.) and adds on new forms of disruption (e.g. gig economy, neglect of foundational economy, etc.).

The phenomenon of working homelessness is an extension of the capitalist classes, which have been argued upon by Marx and Schumpeter. The working homeless are crucial to the network of Silicon Valley (as janitors, carers, Uber drivers, security guards, etc.) (cf. chapter 3) and at the same time they become increasingly displaced and neglected. Their precariat additionally represents the blurriness of today’s working environment (cf. Castells, 2010): Who produces the wealth of Silicon Valley is quite untransparent, but it becomes quickly evident that it is not just based on the innovative potential of entrepreneurs and capitalists.

1.5 INSERT: INTERVIEW WITH U. BRAND ON THE MULTIPLE CRISIS

Ulrich Brand (professor for international politics) works on the crisis of liberal globalization, the internationalization of the state, and the imperial mode of living, and is questioning the dominant hegemonic structures. This expert interview shows the interweavings of tech-disruption in Silicon Valley and the multiple crises of the imperial mode of living and the growth imperative. It is to be seen as a substantiating source and means of broadening the discourse through interdisciplinary expertise. The direct implications of the interview on the urban crisis in the Bay Area are discussed in chapter 4.

The multiple crisis is a global phenomenon. Still, it seems to be affecting the San Francisco Bay Area, respectively Silicon Valley, extraordinarily – in matters of economic inequality, the dramatic housing shortage, climate catastrophes, such as the recent wildfires, or class and racist conflicts. At the same time the tech industry made Silicon Valley the tip of the iceberg of global technocapitalism. Do you have an explanation for this intense concentration of crises in such an economically successful environment?

[U. Brand (B):] From a social science perspective, not only questions about poverty, inequality, or the lack of housing construction arise: Dealing with this kind of dramatic housing crisis means also analyzing the sheer wealth. Why is it regardless to the upper class, if they pay 2,000, 4,000, or 5,000 dollars for their apartments? On the opposite side of this inequality begs the question why and how the working poor are forced to do low-wage jobs. The high-tech corporations also need ‘weak’ jobs. It’s not just system analysts working in Silicon Valley. People clean the offices, work as security guards, etc. How do these people survive? How long do they commute?

Regarding the multiple crisis, it’s crucial to look at the distinct dynamics of each crisis. For example, the housing crisis, drought through sinking groundwater levels and monocultural farming, and racism as a social crisis. How are all these issues connected? Or, what is constituting the multiple crisis?

Firstly, a tentative answer to these questions is the politics of deregulation. Politics mean – if you have an empathic idea of it – to take care of the general public. Thus, looking at the problems of the independent crises and their dimensions, such as climate, housing, energy, or infrastructure, must be done from a community point of view. From this perspective, something clearly went wild. It’s not all simply a matter of capitalism. However, the neoliberal utopia, the neoliberalization of politics and society, clearly led to a withdrawal of the state within caring for the community.

Secondly, we have to question how a society can reproduce itself so long in the context of the imperial mode of production and living. And, furthermore, how it can externalize its consequences: How can wealth be fueled through international supply chains that ignore certain externalized problems? These imperial modes enable the success of Silicon Valley. It’s a deeply inherited unconsciousness and lack of accountability of the industry.

De-growth and international relations are two pathways to potentially overcome the multiple crisis: Both of which are rather international solutions. Are there even options for a region or a city to deal with the crisis or at least distinct dimensions of it?

[B:] How is infrastructure provided and how can a good life for everyone be achieved? What you call technocapitalism promotes privatization and commercialization. Certain public commons, such as public transport, subsidized housing, or the support of the lower classes, are organized on a local layer. But especially these services have been neglected through privatization and disruption through income inequality in Silicon Valley. One potential solution could be infrastructure socialism – the understanding that certain common goods have to be in the hand of the public. In the United States, some proposals from *Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez* tend towards this concept.

Another approach is certainly fighting the inequality and income gap. Here, politics are called upon to implement property taxes and succession duties. In general, de-growth is not proclaiming to shrink instead of grow, but to tackle the capitalist-growth-imperative. What if the big tech corporation in Silicon Valley would not only pay their fair share of taxes, but also change their ownership structures? What if they would be offering more functional values instead of just exchange values and be less profit oriented in general?

The crisis is the time of the executive forces. In this regard, the Covid-19 pandemic offered two distinct moments in Silicon Valley: Firstly, after the initial outbreak

the national government ignored the crisis and the cities and counties, as well as California as a state, reacted quickly instead. Secondly, the tech corporations have been aware of the pandemic quite early and prepared themselves for the lockdown. Big tech also pushed the local authorities and public into taking precautions. How do you perceive these dynamics and way of crisis handling?

[B:] If the national governance fails, the federal state level has to step in. It is still the time of the executive forces: Politics are made quickly without being parliamentarily discussed. While this might seem reasonable within the first containment of the virus, in the long run these politics have to be legitimized by the parliament.

The case of tech influence on governance is an interesting example of a new interplay of levels, which might be best described by the *politics of scale*: The levels of interaction in between the corporations and the government are not given, but are made. Trump represents the national state level by implementing certain politics and the Californian government counteracts that. The politics of scale claim that if a certain actor tries to influence governance, it can easily change the level of interaction. Let's say the tech corporations realize that they are not able to reach the national government, so they just switch to the Californian level of politics, or to the regional or municipal level. With certain tax laws, they might go back to the national level and so on...

In the overall trend of neo-liberalization over the past 30 to 40 years powerful stakeholders are increasingly gaining influence on politics. The Covid-19 crisis represents an aggravation of this development. At the same time, we encounter a strong state, which is also acting against powerful private interests to contain the pandemic. How are public policies generally influenced by private actors? Generally stronger in the process of neoliberalization, but the relationship between public and private is always contested. Today this ever-increasingly works through *structural power*. The tech companies are so important for California that its policy-makers cannot ignore them. The tech interests are instead initially included, because the politicians are aware of the influence of the tech sector on the Californian job market, tax income, and GDP. This form of power has intensified, especially when it comes to powerful monopolist corporations – the systemically important corporations. Something has clearly shifted towards big business within the last years.

How are these shifts reflected within the discourse on crisis management? How is the current crisis generally reshaping the discourse and what will remain of that?

[B:] In my opinion, discourse should here not be perceived in the sense of a public statement but in the sense of Michel Foucault: What is being said? What can be said? What is believed? Today we for example have to question what is conceivable in matters of growth or mobility. De-growth is therefore a counter-discourse – it can question a matter of course – and in fact some institutions seem to be more open about these kinds of approaches nowadays. What will remain? At least to question the everlasting growth of certain industries. Within the current *Corona-capitalism* the crisis is treated on an analytical level based on the ruling forces. This growth oriented crisis management is driven by strong capital groups such as pharmaceutical companies, the automotive industry, or the tech industry.

As a scientist, I am trying to find out what kind of ambivalences exist during the crisis: The lockdown is quite a disaster for many. Yet there are potential learning processes: I mean we can for example restrict short-haul flights or push the state towards more effort in containing the climate crisis in general. It is always claimed that the state cannot help but to be pro-growth. When things go well, profits are privatized and losses are socialized, but now during the pandemic there are aid packages worth billions – that is the contradiction of the multiple crisis.

Maybe the democrats in the United States finally act holistically within crisis prevention in general. That is not pure job optimism and I do not say it happens that way, but I say let's look at the ambivalences of the Covid-19 crisis management and reconsider what is possible.

Further neglectation of migration, racism, or gender aspects of the multiple crisis will lead to further civil unrest. The overlapping racial and class inequalities during the Covid-19 pandemic are claimed to be a core reason for the Black Lives Matter protests. How is protest shaped in crises and are there potential future implications we can draw from the current protest movements?

[B:] We cannot foresee how protest is manifesting itself. Four years ago, during the social backlash after the refugee crisis, one could not have predicted that the politicization of the climate crisis would succeed. Back then, environmental policy was clearly overshadowed by the migration issue and a shift towards right-wing politics. Suddenly, there is *Fridays for Future* and *Greta Thunberg*. At the same time, we couldn't have foreseen the canalization of the Black Lives Matter movement one year ago before the pandemic, even though the movement has existed for longer.

We have latent crises that become manifest. We cannot predict this manifestation of protest, but we

can observe at which points something is fermenting. I, for example, believe that it is possible that we might encounter a certain criticism against online media presence – the obligation for young people to be permanently present in digital space – which might sound absurd from today's perspective. Yet that observation does not mean that there will be a potential manifestation of this criticism.

The concept of the multiple crisis analyses the interconnectivity of current crisis dimensions. What is the relationship between the multiple crisis and temporality? Is it paradigmatic for our current age or simply a part of human history?

[B:] This question leads to a similar discussion on the concept of the imperial mode of living: Is it that we live in the age of imperialism now? Has it always been there or is it connected to the globalization process and post-war capitalism in particular? In my opinion, the term multiple crisis first enhances our perspective on these issues. Critical theory has referred very strongly on the ongoing struggles of the working-class and feminist criticism for example highlights the long-lasting gender injustice. Beyond that ecological criticism targets very actual events. The financial crisis of 2008 was resolved at the expense of the climate. The economic engine and growth machine were boosted. From a perspective of the diagnosis of the times I would definitely state that we are now especially in midst of a multiple crisis. There have always been various kinds of overlapping crises, but usually there are moments of stabilization in between. In matters of an economic point of view, the post-war capitalism of the 1960s and 1970s naturally had individual crises, but was overall a very stable generation. Only at the end of the 1970s this formation got into a crisis. Similarly, societal progress also maneuvers through crises and stabilization. However, the distinct moment of the climate crisis produces a different temporality.

Besides their destructive nature, crises represent moments of renewal and progress. Is there a general connection between disruption and innovation as proclaimed by some capitalist ideologists – and also by Silicon Valley?

[B:] There are indeed moments of renewal and innovation, but we have to question who the most powerful actors within the crisis handling are. There are strong economic forces which are rather able to dictate the pathway. The creative destruction narrative – when everything is rock bottom we will find an innovative way up – does not imply a qualitative and sustainable crisis handling. The dominant forces for example proclaim the electric car or even the self-driving car as the most promising solution of the transport dimension of the climate crisis and thereby prevent more holistic approaches such as broad investments into

public transport. Additionally, the current handling of the rising housing costs obstructs any discussion about dense urban life by instead promoting suburbanization. We have to be careful with the implications of creative destruction on potential innovative power of a crisis.

[The interview was held in German (in Vienna) on October 14, 2020 and translated by the author]

2 THE MULTIPLE URBAN DISRUPTION OF THE BAY AREA

“Each wave of social and physical escapism (for example, the abandonment of inner cities, leaving the lower social classes and ethnic minorities trapped in their ruins) deepened the crisis of American cities, and made more difficult the management of an overextended infrastructure and of an overstressed society. (Castells, 2010, p. 431)

The Bay Area in total, the city of San Francisco, and the innovation hub of Silicon Valley offer an urban surrounding of various dimensions of both crisis and progress. For these aspects, the region represents a paradigmatic example of disruptive urbanism affected by the multiple crisis. While today’s destruction is driven by technological innovations of the new economy, the region was historically always strongly defined by techno-economic progress since its colonization by the Spaniards. Affected through the gold rush, multiple waves of migration (both nationally and internationally), the destruction of the native communities or societal shifts through versatile technological developments³³ and industrialization, the region has had its own specific urban struggles throughout most parts of its history. In the following chapter, some of these evolutions of the Bay Area (and Silicon Valley) are recaptured and the status quo of urbanization (suburbanization and gentrification) is discussed (Walker, 2001; Walker & Schafran 2015; Castells, 2010). Furthermore, the general demographics and the geography are mentioned. These historical, geographical, economic, and demographic contexts are essential to be able to further discuss the multiple layers of crisis in the metropolitan region of the Bay Area. However, they just represent a tiny fraction of the societal turning points, which have been influencing the region. For example, the shipping of the nuclear bombs to the Pacific War theatre, the founding of the *Black Panther*

Party, and the emerging of the counter- and hippy-culture (cf. Solnit, 2010). The region has an especially long history of racial displacement and segregation, as well as class struggles and subsequent democratic protest movements. *Manuel Castells’* (2010) quote on minorities trapped in American inner cities’ ruins becomes evident at the colonial and segregational urban redevelopment in San Francisco and Oakland. Additionally, the development of Silicon Valley certainly has a particularly big impact on the region and on the whole society in the United States. The contradictions of the tech sector (in between economic prosperity, enormous wealth, neglectation of the lower classes, and dispossession of established communities) is characteristic for the multiple crisis and distinctive of its impact on the cities and urban surroundings. The various unsettling historical moments addressed in this chapter contextualize today’s struggles of the working homeless as a contemporary manifestation of the long term urban disruption of the region.

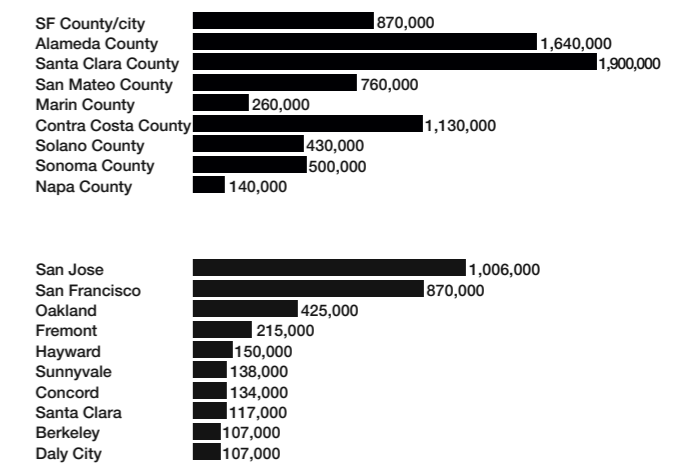


FIG 03: Population of (ten biggest) cities and counties of the Bay Area (9-county Bay Area), data source: United States Census Bureau, 2018).

33 Central Pacific Railroad, infrastructure in general, microchip and internet technologies, etc.

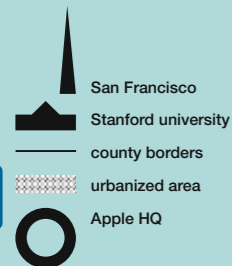
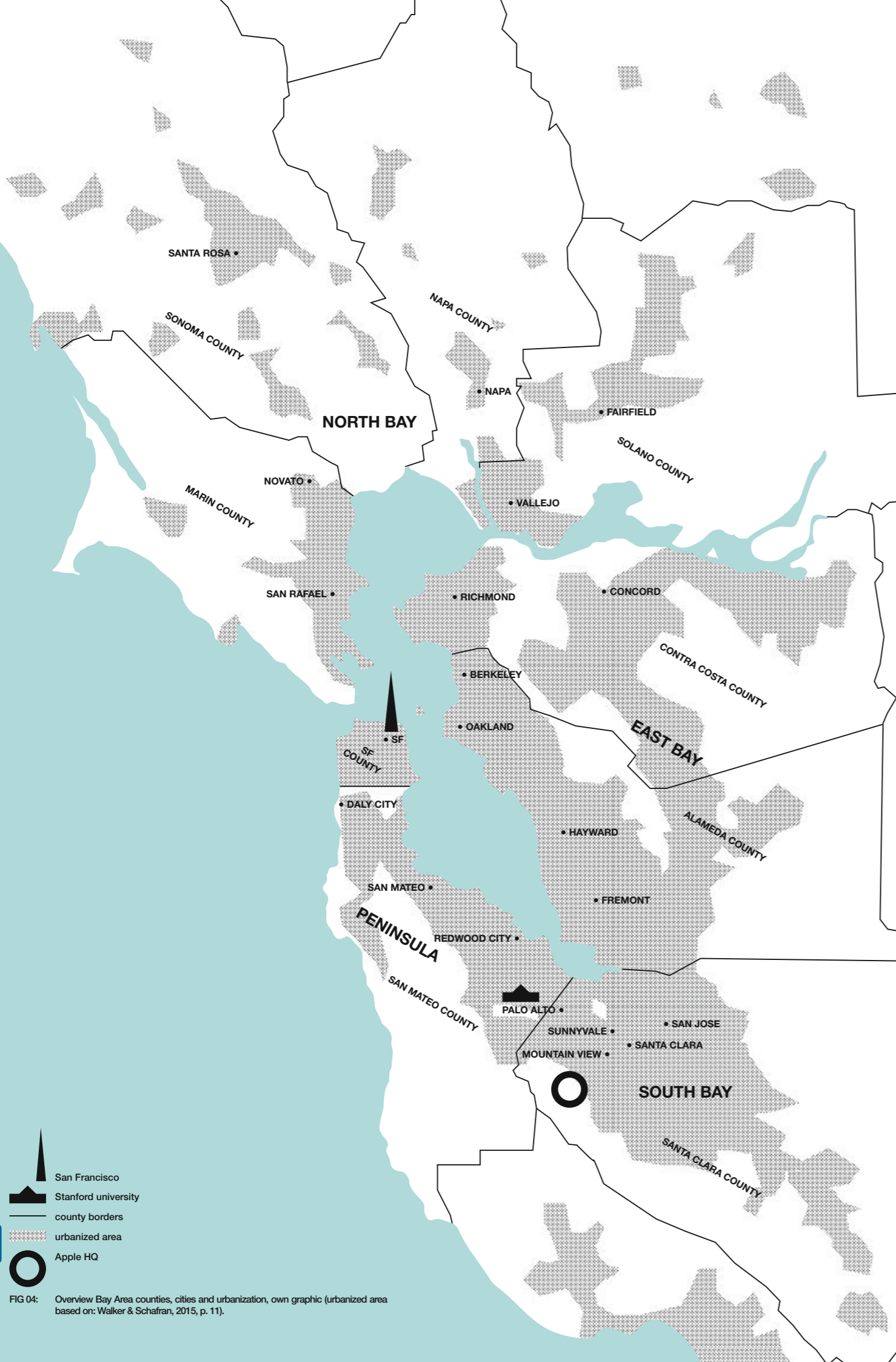


FIG 04: Overview Bay Area counties, cities and urbanization, own graphic (urbanized area based on: Walker & Schafran, 2015, p. 11).



2.1 URBAN CONTEXT

“The San Francisco Bay Area is hard to get one’s head around and is, as a result, frequently misunderstood: underestimated for its massive size, distorted because of its odd spatial footprint, and falsely praised for its social order (Walker, & Schafran, 2015, p. 10)

The San Francisco Bay Area is the metropolitan area surrounding the San Francisco Bay in Northern California. The exact boundaries of the region differ³⁴ (Walker, & Schafran, 2015), but the principally used definition includes nine counties which together form the Association of Bay Area Governments (regional planning agency). Among locals the Bay Area is further divided into the East Bay (Alameda and Contra Costa County), the North Bay (Marin, Napa, Solano, and Sonoma County), the South Bay (Santa Clara County), the Peninsula (San Mateo County) and the city respectively county of San Francisco. With its 7.8 million inhabitants, the region is now the fourth largest metropolitan region in the United States (Walker & Schafran, 2015), and the population is projected to grow up to 9.3 million in 2040 (MTC, & Association of Bay Area Governments, 2017). What makes the region outstanding within North American urbanization is its polycentricity – with San Francisco, San Jose and Oakland it has three central cities, that are more or less equal even though Oakland and San Jose were historically dependent on San Francisco as the center of the Bay Area (Walker, & Schafran, 2015). “The three principal cities are based on massive clusters of employment: San Francisco for financial and business services, plus tourism and conventions; the East Bay [with Oakland as center] for metalworking, oil, and food products; and Silicon Valley [with San Jose as the largest city] for electronics [...] and the North Bay is a major pole of economic activity around agriculture and wine” (ibid., p. 13).

“The residential suburban sprawl observed by American urban studies in the 1960s and 1970s is no longer the predominant pattern, even in American metropolitan areas. Nowadays we observe a distributed centrality and a multi-functional spatial decentralization process. The key feature is the diffusion and networking of population and activities in the metropolitan region, together with the growth of different centers interconnected according to a hierarchy of specialized functions. (Castells, 2010, preface xxxv)

Castells (2010) points out that the technological transformation of society is closely connected to the evolution of its spatial forms: “All major social changes are ultimately characterized by a transformation of space and time in the human experience” (2010, preface xxx). The strongest characteristic of this development is the uprising of the new spatial form of the *metropolitan region*. This is usually consisting of several metropolitan areas that together form a spatial unit. Castells states that “the metropolitan region arises from two intertwined processes: extended decentralization from big cities to adjacent areas and interconnection of pre-existing towns whose territories become integrated by new communication capabilities” (2010, preface xxxi f.). The metropolitan area contains highly dense urbanized areas as well as agricultural land and open space, including multiple centers. The multicentricity of the Bay Area is a key feature. There is no traditional separation between central cities and their suburbs. Castells gives the example of the Bay Area for a metropolitan region without a dominant urban center: the biggest city is San Jose, yet San Francisco remains the key location for advanced services (ibid.). His general indications of the metropolitan region – different hierarchies between the centers, decentralization of activities, residence, and services with mixed land use and undefined boundaries of functionality – clearly make the Bay Area a perfect example of this spatial form.

This transition of the spatial form toward the metropolitan region, which is performed through land development, suburbanization and privatization, is not just the implication of American culture (as suburbanization is generally perceived) but it rather follows the logic of capital in city-making (Walker & Schafran, 2015). The particular urban landscape of the Bay Area is shaped by the spreading of both industry and housing, a clear segregation of residential and business areas and a complex network of highways, bridges and ferries to connect all of which. These specifics of suburbanization do their part within the consequent urban inequality and gentrification, as for example the homogenization of suburbia in general or the segregation of marginalized communities and the displacement of the homeless in particular show.

34 cf. Nine-county Bay Area vs. 14-county San Jose-San Francisco-Oakland combined statistical area

2.1.1 GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT OF THE BAY AREA

Altogether the Bay Area is economically thriving: with its nominal GDP of 748 billion USD, it would be the 19th largest economy worldwide, just in between the Netherlands and Switzerland (Bay Area Council, & Economic Institute, 2019a). However, wealth is unequally distributed amongst the counties. The median household income nowadays peaks in Santa Clara County (116,000\$) and San Mateo County (113,000\$), where most of Silicon Valley's tech firms are based. Regarding this particular indicator, they have thereby outranked Marin County (110,000\$), which *Richard Walker* and *Alex Schafran* (2015) still describe as "the richest county in the country, known for its precious way of life, and elite suburbs" (Walker, & Schafran, 2015). In matters of the median gross rent Santa Clara and San Mateo also rank top followed by Marin and San Francisco, all four almost double the United States' score in both income and costs of rent (United States Census Bureau, 2018). The most northern Counties of Sonoma, Solano and Napa are ranked lowest regarding the above-mentioned indicators and also in matters of the housing value (together with Contra Costa County) – they are furthest away from the high-tech jobs in the South Bay and the three center cities – but they still have slightly higher incomes, rents, and housing values than average California (besides the housing value of Solano, which is only half of the Bay Area's average). This maldistribution of wealth is also reflected by the poverty rate and the number of *Extremely Low Income (ELI)* households. The poverty rate is highest in San Francisco (10.9%) and Alameda County (10.6%) and lowest in the counties of San Mateo (7%), Santa Clara (7.9%), and Marin (7.6%; *ibid.*). The city of San Francisco also has the largest number of ELI households relative to the number of residents (66,100 ELI households and 848,000 inhabitants; Bay Area Council, & Economic Institute, 2019b). San Francisco is clearly outstanding in terms of inequality in the Bay Area, as the number of households which are directly threatened by homelessness (ELI households) and the number of homeless itself are extremely high relative to its population (*ibid.*) whereas, the city has the highest median housing value (United States Census Bureau, 2018). With approximately 7,000 homeless, almost one percent of its population is living on the streets and 66,000 households are classified as ELI ones and 34,000 of these pay more than half of the household income for rent (Bay Area Council, & Economic Institute, 2019b). In general, the rate of homelessness increases significantly, where median rents exceed 22 percent of median income, in San Francisco, this rate is 39 percent³⁵ (*ibid.*).

In the *Global Power City Index 2019* the San Francisco city-region ranks 18th in the comprehensive worldwide ranking and seventh and eighth in the sub-ranks of the economy and research and deve-

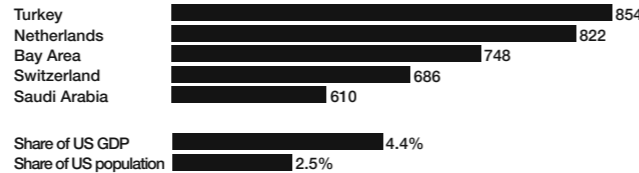


FIG 05: 2017 Nominal GDP (in billion USD) Bay Area compared to selected countries, & Bay Area's share (%) of the US GDP vs the share of the population, data source: Bay Area Council, & Economic Institute, 2019a.

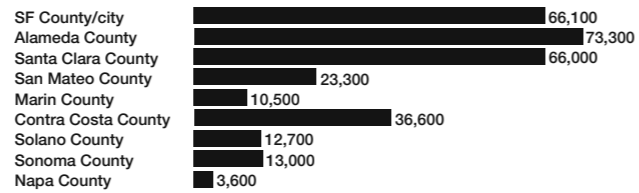


FIG 06: Absolute number ELI households and score relative to population in Bay Area counties, data source: Bay Area Council, & Economic Institute, 2019b.

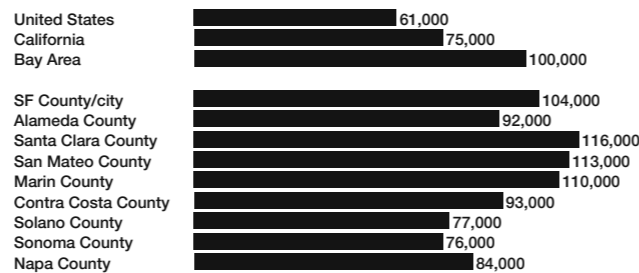


FIG 07: Median household income (in USD), data source: United States Census Bureau, 2018.

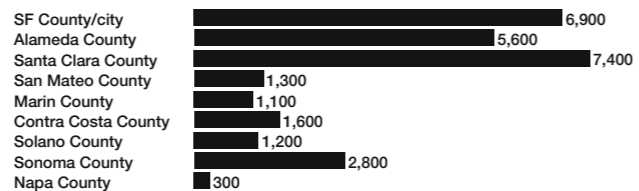


FIG 08: Homelessness numbers Bay Area counties, data source: Bay Area Council, & Economic Institute, 2019b.

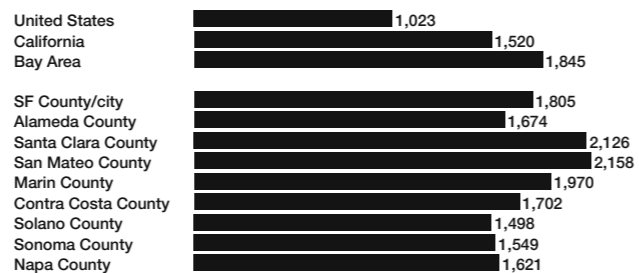


FIG 09: Median gross rent (in USD), data source: United States Census Bureau, 2018.

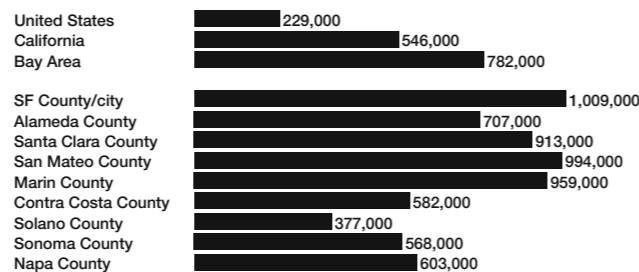


FIG 10: Median housing value (in USD) 2018, data source: United States Census Bureau, 2018.

lopment while ranking just 36th in livability (Yamato, Matsuda, Dustan, Hamada, Isogaya, Asano, & Suzuki, 2019). The ranks regarding major actors' interests also offer insightful results, as the evaluation of corporate executives have the city ranked as well number eight, while residents have it ranked 35th out of 48 (*ibid.*). This clearly reflects the city's and region's struggles over the housing crisis and gentrification. The *Gini Coefficient*³⁶ of the Bay Area (0.485) is lower than that one of California in total (0.491) and just the same as the national average, with the one of Silicon Valley (respectively Santa Clara and San Mateo 0.473) surprisingly even lower. The authors of the *2020 Silicon Valley Index* state that this may be due to lower-income workers having slightly higher wages in Silicon Valley compared to the rest of the Bay Area and especially California and also because the Census data only includes cash income, "whereas many of the higher-income earners in Silicon Valley receive significant non-monetary compensation, bonuses, and additional employer benefits" (Joint Venture Silicon Valley, & Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies, 2020, p. 34).

In general, the Bay Area is a very diverse region with just 37 percent of White residents overall in 2020. Economic success has not only drawn migration from other parts of the United States but also globally. However, the region is historically diverse with strong influence from Asian, Latine migrants, and the Black community. Latter is decreasing continuously from nine percent of the population in 1980 to six percent in 2020 (PolicyLink, & Pere, 2017). At the same time,

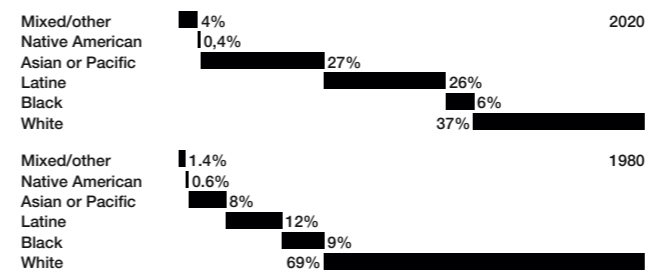


FIG 11: Ethnic composition Bay Area 1980 and 2020 (projection), data source: PolicyLink, & Pere, 2017.

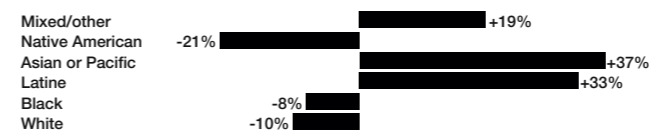


FIG 12: Growth rates of ethnic groups (2000-2014), data source: PolicyLink, & Pere, 2017.

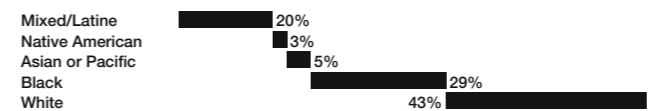


FIG 13: Ethnicity³⁷ of the Bay Area homeless population, data source: Bay Area Council, & Economic Institute, 2019b.

people identifying as Latine, mixed ethnicity/other, Asian, or Pacific are steadily increasing (*ibid.*). Within the homeless population of the Bay Area the ethnic minorities are clearly overrepresented: 29 percent are Black compared to just six percent of the overall population of the Bay Area (Bay Area Council, & Economic Institute, 2019b)³⁸. Similarly, in the ethnicity of new tech talents who were drawn to the region in 2018, where just 0.4 percent are Black and 67 percent are Asian (Joint Venture Silicon Valley, & Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies, 2020, p. 19). This is obviously also reflected in other indicators such as per-capita income, of which Blacks residents earn half and Latines a third compared to Whites.

35 San Jose: 35.5%
 36 The Gini Coefficient statistically measures income- and wealth inequality. A hypothetical Gini ratio of 0 represents maximal equality (a system where wealth is equally distributed among all people), a hypothetical Gini ratio of 1 represents maximal inequality (one person holds all wealth).
 37 Race/ethnicity includes 88% of total Bay Area homeless population: all counties except Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Mateo (no data available); Latine/Hispanic are not separately quoted in the source, as they are often multi racial.
 38 Data on homelessness is not to be seen comprehensive as reports are often fragmentary and county are incomplete due to hidden homelessness and the mobility of the homeless population.

tech sector. Despite its neoliberal aspects and lack of acknowledging the produced inequalities, Florida's concept still offers some insights into the attraction of 'creatives' whose numbers disrupt the population, workforce, and nonetheless the housing market of the Bay Area. However, their attraction can also easily be justified through the economic indicators of the region.

Silicon Valley and San Francisco combined, with just above one percent of the land area and ten percent of the population, provide 17.5 percent of California's GDP (Joint Venture Silicon Valley & Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies, 2020). The numbers of patents, Merger and acquisition (M&A) activities⁴⁰, IPOs⁴¹, and venture capital investments are particularly interesting regarding the importance of these factors for tech companies. 53.8 percent of California's patents are issued in the region and 36.7 percent of M&A activities as well as 70.8 percent of IPOs take place (ibid.). These figures strongly indicate the economic potential, which also strikes down in the numbers of *Fortune 500*⁴² companies. 38 Bay Area companies were listed in the 2020 edition of the global rank, with Apple and Google outranking all of the region's companies in profit and revenue⁴³ (Fortune, 2020) and just ten out of 38 companies are not directly associated with the tech sector. Besides these listings, numbers of merging companies, and stock market launches, the percentage of venture capital investment is outstanding. 79 percent of California's venture capital is invested in San Francisco or Silicon Valley (Joint Venture Silicon Valley & Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies, 2020). That kind of high-risk investment is fundamental for the development of tech companies, as they are hardly ever profitable after their initial launch (Walker, 2019, p. 27). Together, Silicon Valley and San Francisco generated 42 billion USD in venture capital in 2019 according to the *2020 Silicon Valley Index* (Joint Venture Silicon Valley & Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies, 2020).

The described attraction of tech-workforce is strongly male-dominated. In Silicon Valley only 27 percent of the core working-age group (25-44 years) are women. In general, within this group, 20 percent of women and 46 percent of men work in tech (ibid.). The tech-workforce can be subdivided into three groups: high-skill/high-wage, mid-skill/mid-wage, and low-skill/low-wage. Roughly a third of the total 1.47 million tech jobs in Silicon Valley are low-skill/low-wage ones (ibid.). Additionally, the biggest share of tech workers is white. Of the newly recruited tech talents, which moved to Silicon Valley in 2018, 67 percent were White and 30 percent Asian⁴⁴. This unequal balance is also shown in the wages of the general population of Silicon Valley: the median per-capita income of Whites per annum (83,000\$) is twice as high as of Blacks (41,000\$) and almost triples the one of the Latine population (29,000\$) (ibid.).

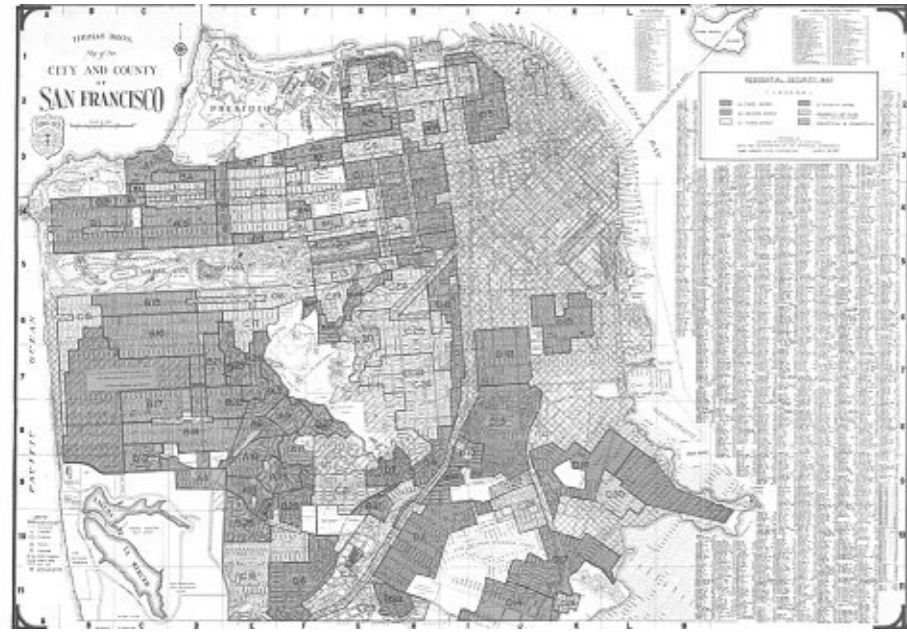
2.2 HISTORICAL DISPLACEMENT IN THE BAY AREA

“Apparently, too much of San Francisco was not there in the first place
 This dream requires more condemned Africans
 Or
 State violence rises down
 (Eisen-Martin, 2016)

What *Tongo Eisen-Martin's* poem carries out above, Bay Area historian and activist *Rebecca Solnit* also states prominently: The displacement of the working-class and the segregation of minorities in San Francisco and the Bay Area have not just started with the uprising of the tech sector (Solnit, 2019). In fact, the region has in general a long and diverse history of displacement, closely entangled with its economic uprising and interrelated migration. Solnit even states that "California has attracted migrating peoples to its shores for thousands of years, as it does even today" (Solnit, 2010, p. 13). Much of the implementations in this chapter are strongly based on Solnit's analysis of the history of urban inequality in her story-telling atlas *Infinite City* (Solnit, 2010) and her chapter *Von Urban Renewal bis Gentrification* (Solnit, 2019) in *Katja Schwaller's* book *Technopolis*. In general, the race inequality and interrelated struggles in the Bay Area are well documented and researched, mostly regarding certain minorities such as the vanishing Latine population of the *Mission District* in San Francisco due to recent gentrification (Maharawal, 2017), the ongoing oppression of the Black community or the forced exodus (Japanese during WWII) and recurrence of the Asian population, that is now economically thriving compared to other minorities.

2.2.1 COLONIZATION AND INDUSTRIALIZATION
 The region's history of displacement eventually started with the passing-by of Francis Drake in 1579. In that time, the region was inhabited by 28 indigenous groups including the *Miwok*, *Ohlone* and *Pomo* Natives. They practiced sustainable land management, for example through cyclical burning of meadows, and thereby helped to shape the ecosystem's diversity without exploitation (Solnit, 2010, p. 13). In 1769, after the final arrival of Spanish Franciscan missionaries (the eponyms of San Francisco) the Native culture was disrupted. This early disruption means not only the evangelization of the Native population, but the destruction of their communities, way of life, rituals, and means of sustainable land use (Moore, Mauri, and Montojo, 2019). Following disputes over the land ownership the mission land finally went to the Spanish government. After its independence from Spain the Bay Area became part of Mexico in 1821 and at the end of the Mexican-American War part of the United States in 1848. "The earliest forms of racial exclusion in the Bay Area were the violent dispossession of Native Americans' land and concentration of ownership of land by Spanish, Mexican, and early US settlers and governments" and this "forced dispossession of land from Native peoples followed a logic of economic profit and racial hierarchy" (ibid., p. 16). Under the rule of the United States the Native population in California declined by nearly 90 percent from 150,000 in 1846 to 16,000 in 1880 (ibid., p. 17), also because of extrajudicial violence (dispossession, racial exclusion and lynching) (ibid., p. 23).

40 Mergers & Acquisitions refers to corporate transactions such as fusions, takeovers, acquisitions, spin-offs, outsourcing or cooperations.
 41 Initial Public Offering is the stock market launch of company shares – a privately held company goes public.
 42 The 500 top-selling companies worldwide as stated by the *Fortune* magazine.
 43 The revenue of Apple, 260 billion USD, would rank number 16 (just in between Sweden and Russia) in the list of countries regarding their government revenue.
 44 2.0 % two or more races, 0.9 % other race, and just 0.4 % Black (Joint Venture Silicon Valley & Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies, 2020)



IMG 03: Redlining map of San Francisco (Caltman-Stanford, 2018).

In the same time period the California Gold Rush caused a massive population increase starting 1849, that not only drew European settlers but also the first Chinese migrants to the region. The gold rush led to the foundation of Wells Fargo and the Bank of California, two of the most influential banks in the United States (Solnit, 2010). Immigration kept flowing at the promise of wealth. By 1870 the Asian population of San Francisco grew up to eight percent, mainly due to the labor migration for big infrastructure projects (ibid.). From the late 19th century onwards, federal laws were implemented to exclude the Asian population (federal *Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882* and *Immigration Act of 1924*) and restrict the immigrant's rights to property (ibid., 2019, p. 19). These racist policies were again accompanied by extrajudicial violence such as the burning of several Chinese neighborhoods. Several towns in the Bay Area declared themselves *sundown towns*, which means that people of color were not allowed in town after sunset due to the threat of violence by the white population. San Jose is proven to have been a sundown town, Palo Alto was probably one as well and some realtors even suggested to make the entire San Mateo County white only and subdivide the minorities into set aside parts of land (ibid., p. 23). While these ideas were not executed, “threats and violence largely kept people of color from moving in” (ibid., p. 24).

In the early 20th century the region was disrupted by the earthquake of 1906 in San Francisco and the 1929 stock market crash, but the authorities managed to ensure job growth through large infrastructure projects such as the construction of the Golden Gate Bridge and Bay Bridge. WWII again led to major shifts within the demographic structure and economy of the Bay Area: “The U.S. effort to defeat the Axis powers during the Second World War brought more profound changes to the Bay Area than to any other region” (Solnit,

2010, p. 57). Eventually, after the United States joined the war the region became a major hub for the army and navy. With the bay as natural harbor, rail infrastructure to provide steel supply and proximity to the war theater of the Pacific it quickly became “the greatest ship-building center the world has ever seen”, turning out 1,400 vessels during the war (ibid., p. 60). The uprising of the military industry not only strongly influenced the development of Silicon Valley, but as well drew major migrant workforces to the area – in particular African Americans from southern states (that were now first enabled to work in war related industries after president Roosevelt opened those for minorities).

In that time, the general population grew by half and the Black population rose from 0.01 percent in 1940 to 5.6 percent in 1950 (and to nine percent in 1980), especially affecting San Francisco and Alameda County with its docks, shipyards and naval bases (Solnit, 2010, p. 59). “To list the centers of wartime shipbuilding – Richmond, Vallejo, and Oakland, Hunters Point, Marin City – is to reel off the names of places that today remain centers both of black population and of black poverty” (ibid., p. 61). But in parts of the region the new Black population was prohibited of locating themselves in developments, built for war workers. In the East Bay the Blacks had to establish squatting settlements with informal infrastructure and in San Francisco some newly built housing was excluding Blacks and they mostly settled down in the *Fillmore* district, a mixed working-class neighborhood west of downtown, that was known as *Japantown* until 1941. That was only possible because the authorities forcibly removed and internated the former Japanese inhabitants during the war. A few months after Pearl Harbor, they were forced out of the United States (Solnit, 2010, p. 72). In 1942 the San Francisco Chronicle reported: “For the first time in 81 years, not a single Japanese

is walking the streets of San Francisco” (Moore, Mauri, and Montojo, 2019, p. 20). The black community filled the vacant Victorian houses and storefronts with life and made it the center of Black culture, that for example had a lasting effect on the evolution of jazz. Besides Fillmore West Oakland (with the main thoroughfare of *Seventh Street*) became the major area of Black life, Solnit even describes it as “the geographic and emotional heart of the Bay Area” (Solnit, 2010, p. 62).

Many of the neighborhoods where minorities resided fell victim to cost saving infrastructure and racist urban renewal practices. Additionally, the Black and in general people of color communities were targeted through racist urban policies: *Redlining* practices started in the 1930s and made receiving loans hardly possible for members of those communities that were already largely defined through segregation in the entire United States. Redlining means that the creditworthiness of individual borrowers was based on the socioeconomic and racial composition of neighborhoods, which led to significant disinvestment and further racial disparities (Moore, Mauri, and Montojo, 2019, p. 52). The federal *Home Owner's Loan Corporation* issued ratings to guide investment. Certain areas were deemed riskiest and rated red. This practice represents a joint-venture of structural racism, enabled by the federal government (through the implementation of the Home Owners' Loan Corporation that rated the neighborhoods) and local actors (municipal offices, local banks and appraisers that provided information based on racist biases). Moore, Mauri and Montojo (2019, p. 53) state that the money lenders “would not issue a loan to a ‘first-entry’ minority in an all-white district, [...] and that ‘entry of nonwhites made loans to white borrowers more difficult’”. Such redlining maps were created in 1937 for cities of the Bay Area including San Francisco, San Jose, Oakland and Berkeley (ibid., p.

52 f.). They classified areas using a color code and the hazardous red grade was assigned to neighborhoods of people of color (Urban Displacement Project, n.d.-b).



IMG 04: 1977 Eviction of International Hotel (Yu, 2017).

2.2.2 POST-WAR RACIAL INEQUALITY AND CLASS CONFLICTS

“The replacement and/or transformation of working-class populations in post-industrial cities did not occur naturally. [...] The processes that gave rise to these changes have a politics. (Davidson, 2011, p. 1990)

After the war-related shipyards and factories disappeared in the 1950s, Black emigrants from the South stayed in the Bay Area and “their friends and family members [...] continued to thrive the centers of black culture and commerce” (ibid.). But after the economic downfall through the loss of thousands of jobs in the war-industry “what the free market left alone the state attacked” and “the black residents [...] fell victim to ‘redevelopment’” (ibid., p. 63). In both Fillmore and Seventh Street many homes disappeared

through urban renewal and residents had to move elsewhere in the Bay Area. In the ‘heart of the Black life’, the Seventh Street, the BART rail system cuts through the neighborhood on elevated tracks while it runs below ground in downtown Oakland, Berkeley and San Francisco (ibid.). After the war parts of the Japanese community returned to the city and the Bay Area in general. They were now partially sharing the same neighborhoods and were as well “forced into a second migration by redevelopment” (ibid., p. 72).

Both the Japanese community, that was flourishing before the war and was now returning, and the vibrant Black community that eventually settled down in parts of the former Japanese areas now faced ill-planned redevelopment, that “ripped out its heart and displaced thousands” (ibid., p. 72), for example when hundreds of Victorian houses in Fillmore were replaced with lower-quality housing

and Japantown being rebuilt as shopping center, that is today failing community-wise according to Solnit (ibid.). The redevelopment agency perceived the neighborhood as defamed because of the lacking investment in the housing stock and its high percentage of renters (compared to the rest of the city) and when protest against their redevelopment plans emerged they claimed the mostly Victorian houses were in desperate condition (Solnit, 2019). Solnit highlights that some of these iconic houses are today sold for millions, which proves that the building substance argument of the agency was just a pretense, and the real issues of the Fillmore district were caused by the lack of infrastructure such as doctors. She further argues that the urban renewal practices were clearly not socially motivated but financially, as the city and the agency could acquire federal subventions without actually benefiting those in need (ibid., p. 56 f.).

In the United States (sub-)urbanization is closely connected to racial segregation. ‘Blacks live in cities and whites in suburbs’ is the distinctive American pattern of urbanization, as Leah Platt Boustan (2010) argues. Attracted through its economic success Black migrants from the rural southern states came to the cities of the Bay Area. After the violent displacement of the Japanese communities (Solnit, 2019) and the suburbanization of the White population due to land development and segregation policies (Walker & Schafran 2015) the Black community settled down in the urban centers, which were left partially vacant and economically ran down after the Second World War. Between 1940 and 1970 four million Black migrants left the South for northern cities causing the White flight to the suburbs, as Whites avoided racially diverse neighborhoods (Boustan, 2010). By 1980 72 percent of metropolitan Blacks were pushed into run-down central cities. That led to vast disparities in the accessibility and quality of

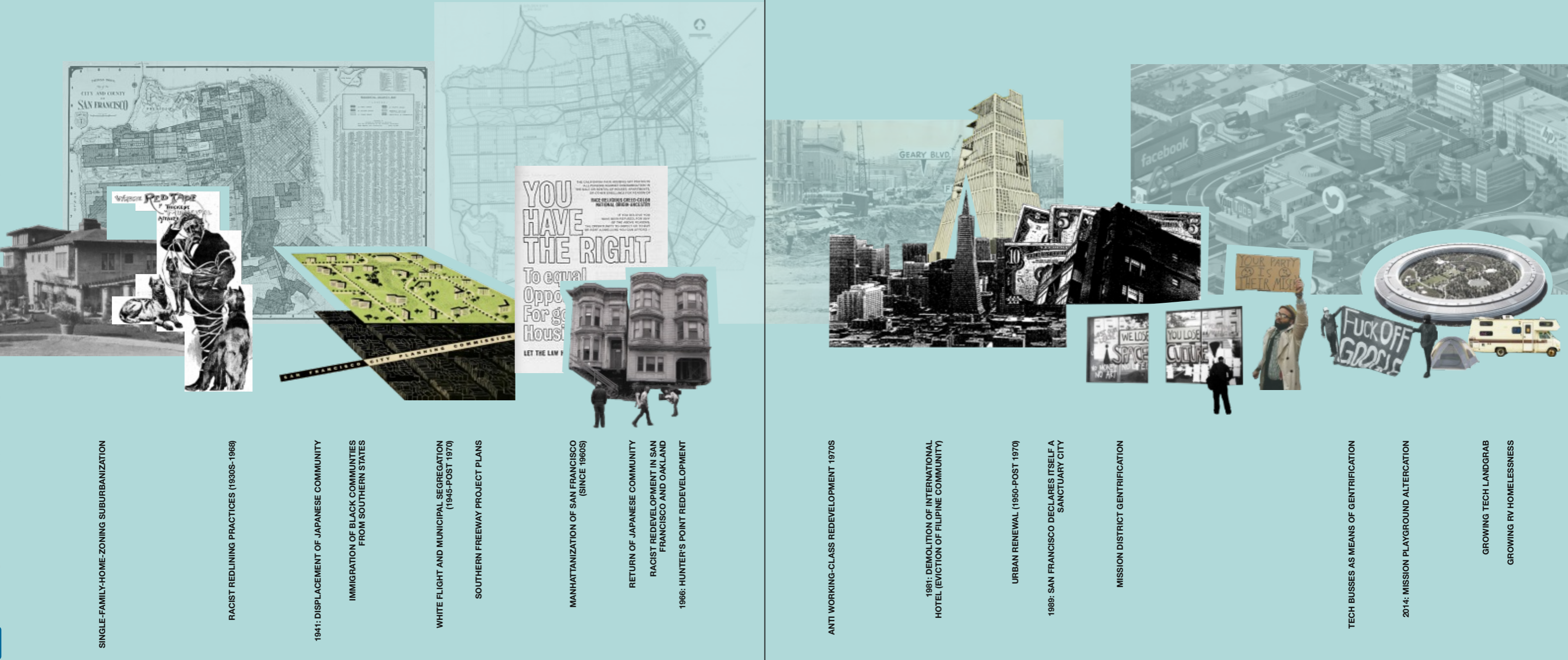


FIG 25: Timeline of urban redevelopment in the San Francisco Bay Area, own graphic.

public commons such as infrastructure, education etc. High quality infrastructure increasingly became a privilege of the White suburbs. While this process certainly reflects structural (the disparities in city financing) and everyday racism, it is in general closely interwoven with complex urban shifts: “Did black migrants happen to arrive in cities at the wrong time, just as suburbanization got underway? Or was their arrival an important explanation for suburban growth?” (ibid.). Could White urban exodus also be motivated by construction of new highways, promotion of suburban life through industrial shifts, etc? And could the Black arrivals, vice versa, be attracted by low housing prices (as consequence of the White departures)?

Parallel to the above mentioned racial discriminations San Francisco emerged to become both the business and finance capital of the Pacific and one of the United States centers of protest culture and urban empowerment⁴⁵. The conflicts over displacement of ethnic minorities became accompanied by general class struggles (Solnit, 2019). With the vanishing war factories and port facilities came the obvious shift from blue-collar working-class jobs to white collar office ones (ibid.). Within this transformation the business elite of the 1950s and 1960s acted rather ignorant in opposition to the lower income class of San Francisco especially when looking out for potential development neighborhoods. In the 1960s the *Manhattanization* of downtown San Francisco caused the displacement of the working-class communities who lived in South of Market (cf. Aguilar, 2020). The Redevelopment Agency acted more and more towards systematically displacing the poorest (Solnit, 2019). While the Fillmore renewal is just one of many such redevelopments in the city (and also the whole Bay Area), some of them led to large protest movements⁴⁶, for example in the Tenderloin or South of Market. Although Solnit (2010) generally assumes that some of these developments of the urban-renewal-era brought actual benefits to the communities (e.g. Hunters Point), most were accompanied by vast urban destruction. In South of Market the city respectively the redevelopment agency used the pretense of avoiding slumification for their destruction and renewal plans, which were actually driven by city (downtown) enlargement plans of the hotel and real estate industry (ibid.). In 1969 the community, which mostly consisted of retired white dockworkers, organized itself in unions and went to court and onto the streets. The urban fights were drastic: houses were burnt, people were killed or intimidated. Eventually the community was destroyed and rebuilt. Not at last because the redevelopment agency was able to play out class against race struggles and could thereby prevent a merging of different protest groups. In the urban-renewal-era San Francisco saw many protests: against a further extension of the highway net, the potential loss of the famous cable cars, the eviction and demolition of the *International Hotel* (the Filipino and Chinese community), or in general for fair rent prices and remaining social institutions (ibid.).

2.2.3 CONTEMPORARY AFTERMATH OF 20TH CENTURY DISPLACEMENT

The practice of redlining was in place at least until the Civil Rights Act of 1968⁴⁷, but does still affect the segregation of American cities today as 87% of neighborhoods undergoing gentrification in San Francisco are former redlined ones (Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, n.d.-b). Those areas remained populated by the lower class after the official stop of the practice and they received large amounts of private funding later. Now their residents are often pushed out through gentrification, because of the influx of new capital and higher costs of living today (ibid.). As census data shows, the Black population is on decline, while the Asian and Latine ones are on the rise in the Bay Area (Joint Venture Silicon Valley, & Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies, 2020). That accounts especially for the urban centers – “the ceaseless march of gentrification and the skyscraper-high cost of living continue to push blacks and other members of the old working classes to cheaper towns inland” (ibid. p. 65). Already in 1979 *Phillip L. Clay* stated that “whereas half these neighborhoods before gentrification were dominated by whites and half by nonwhites, 82 percent of the gentrified neighborhoods are dominated by whites” (Clay, 1979). Looking at the most gentrified areas shows a general loss of diversity, also regarding the Asian and Latine population. In the Mission District, the historically Latine neighborhood in San Francisco, their population has declined from 60 percent in 2000 to 48 percent in 2017. In general, the city will be mostly White in 2040 (Moskowitz, 2017), while the whole Bay Area of 2040 is projected to be highly diverse with just 31 percent Whites (MTC, & Association of Bay Area Governments, 2017). This disparity shows the racially unequal distribution of housing – the most expensive parts of the region become more White, while the general population becomes more diverse.

Today, San Francisco experiences the fastest decline of the Black population of any major city in the United States (Walker & Schafran 2015) and working-class Blacks majorly reside in the outskirts of the Bay Area. Together with Latine and Asians they make up the bigger part of California’s working-class, living in the suburbs at the “outer rings of the metropolis”, which are known for their past explicit racism (ibid.). For Walker and Schafran (2015) “millions in the white working class saw themselves levitated into the middle class through suburbanization during the postwar”, while “communities of color got there too late [...] and in age of neoliberalism the suburban American dream was [...] ultimately out of reach for the new working class of color.” The observation of class and race struggles in the last century shows how deeply these discriminations interfere: What Lefebvre called *colonization of everyday life* “proceeded unevenly, through the controlled management of domesticity [...] and the re-segregation of urban space along lines of class and ethnicity” (Kipfer & Goonewardena, 2007, par. 28). This everyday life and policy-led racism and class discrimination, which are rooted in uneven post-war urbanization, have strongly contributed to today’s urban homogenization and segregation, which can be encountered in the whole United States. These losses of heterogeneity and diversity also affect the ongoing urban struggles of both marginalized ethnic communities and low-class workers (with the working homeless as contemporary extreme form) through neglect of their needs and everyday lives by the municipalities and homogenized residents (cf. chapter 3 & 4).

45 The Black Panther Party for Self Defense was founded in Oakland in 1966 (Solnit, 2010).
46 Accompanied by racist police brutality and murder (Solnit, 2010).
47 Also known as Fair Housing Act.

2.3 HISTORY OF URBAN DISRUPTION IN SILICON VALLEY

“*Silicon Valley (Santa Clara County, 30 miles south of San Francisco, between Stanford and San Jose) was formed as a milieu of innovation by the convergence on one site of new technological knowledge; a large pool of skilled engineers and scientists from major universities in the area; generous funding from an assured market with the Defense Department; the development of an efficient network of venture capital firms; and, in the very early stage, the institutional leadership of Stanford University. (Castells, 2010, p. 62)*

In a digitalized age, one could easily underestimate the importance of a spatial aggregation for the technology sector, which could as well persist fully online, as we encounter through the current Covid-19 pandemic. Yet the geography of Silicon Valley is crucial for its success and directly influences the metropolitan region of the Bay Area – with all known consequences of gentrification, economic and racial inequality, and segregation. What Castells (2010) calls the *space of flows*, the spatialization of social practices, which emerges from the new economy and disruptive technologies, has a consequent impact on global increasing urbanization. More than 50 percent of the world’s population live in cities and yet the ‘end of cities’ has been predicted in the light of rapid digitalization (ibid.). Even though it has often been copied, Silicon Valley’s success is unique. The reasons for that are manifold and some appear to be random: It has been developed by some coining firms and figures, which were funded by the federal government, the army and the financial sector of the region. In the following part I will focus on the historical context of Silicon Valley and the disruptive innovation, which was always a part of it. Contemporary tech-led urban disruption joins the ranks of the Bay Area’s historic context: On the one hand the before mentioned historical waves of displacement and dispossession, on the other hand the region’s urban renewal and (sub-)urbanization.

2.3.1 (SUB-)URBANIZATION IN THE BAY AREA

“*Suburbanization is normally attributed to two factors—transport and the single-family home—and the Bay Area was an innovator in these decentralizing technologies and continues to be shaped by these two forces into a particularly suburban metropolis (Walker and Schafran, 2015, p. 15)*

Walker and Schafran (2015, p. 15) name the Bay Area “one of the most profoundly suburbanized cities on the planet”. Suburban sprawl is in fact characteristic for North American metropolitan areas. Yet the Bay Area is particularly shaped by it. Most of the region’s built-up area is low rise. Even in the denser cities of San Francisco and Oakland there are rarely more than four stories and single homes dominate the housing stock. The wealth, which was acquired through long-term economic thrive in the Bay Area, has made the residents extra supportive of the single-family home. San Francisco was not only shaped by the famous Victorian houses but as well through workers cottages. Oakland was always a city of freestanding homes and San Jose had spacious houses. In general, more than 60 percent of the housing stock in 2010 were free-standing units (Walker and Schafran, 2015). Besides this focus on the single-family home, public transport is essential for suburbanization. Today’s public transportation is weak and the Bay Area’s commuting is dependent on individual cars. However, the region was well connected by trains, ferries and cable cars in the early 20th century



IMG 06: San Francisco's comprehensive traffic plan: urban highways 1948 (Cairman-Stanford, 2018).

to connect cities, farm towns, industrial satellites etc. As in the whole state of California automobiles quickly took the lead in traffic. Boosted by the economic thrive, car ownership rates were high and an expansive road system was implemented (Walker and Schafran, 2015). This traditional appreciation of the American suburbia and the interconnected importance of individual transport has strongly shaped the contemporary urban form of Silicon Valley (as a sprawled cluster of tech hubs). It is as well reflected in the famous founding acts of some of its biggest corporations: startups originate in suburban garages, where the initial computer programs have been coded and the hardware prototypes have been assembled (cf. Greene, 2019). The spatial form of Silicon Valley thereby lacks an immediate connection to urbanity, what can be observed in most of today's tech headquarters exclusivity. It furthermore promotes the multiple crisis through its ecological footprint, which is not just enlarged through global externalization (cf. interview with U. Brand), but as well through local suburban sprawl. This again justifies the acknowledgement of the multiple dimensions of the (urban) crisis within the discussion about tech-driven disruptive urbanism: The Bay Area and Silicon Valley are prototypes of the sprawled metropolitan region. Through the sheer inequality and maldistribution of wealth large parts of their population are pushed into suburban areas (due to gentrification and the housing shortage) and into expansive everyday commuting.

The solutions, which are claimed by the municipalities and tech corporations, are mostly limited on additional suburban housing and infrastructure construction, rather than promoting urban density (cf. Shastry, 2018). The general affluence in the Bay Area further promotes suburbanization. Not

only through individual money invested in private cars and homeownership but also through flows of capital into urban development and construction. Walker and Schafran (2015) hereby highlight the logic of capital in making cities and suburbs, contradicting the general perception of the phenomenon as cultural implementation. Because California and the Bay Area have been capital-rich since 1850 there has been a strong tendency in property investment, especially at the urban fringe. Already in the 19th century realty associates built thousands of Victorian houses in San Francisco and large residential developments in San Mateo, Mill Valley and Marin County.

By 1940 the Bay Area had the largest spectrum of community developers in the country. While small builders have always been numerous as well, these big ones have strongly shaped "style, innovation, and politics" (Walker and Schafran, 2015, p. 17). They go beyond simply reacting at the market to generate profit: Firstly, by stretching suburbia as far as possible rural land is converted into urban one (ibid.). This promotes the increasing rent gap in between urban, suburban, and rural areas. Additionally, influencing governments and private providers infrastructure projects are pushed outwards as well. Secondly, they develop gigantic areas, as the size increases profit and inherits potential for cost-saving in universal design and construction. Thirdly, through their domination they can directly popularize styles of housing to promote developments (from Victorian to Craftsman or Mexican ranchero style) (ibid.). The private property providers and municipalities thereby promote the "policy-led wiping of the social and physical infrastructure of working-class neighborhoods" (Davidson, 2011, p. 1991).

“The electronics age has inverted the metropolitan area, making San Francisco and the East Bay subordinate to Silicon Valley. No other metropolis in the country has seen anything like this: flipping centrality on its head. (Walker and Schafran, 2015, p. 14)

Walker (2001) identifies three essential moments of growth in the region: the industrialization after the Civil War, the 1880s, and World War I and the rise of Silicon Valley around WWII. He highlights that there was no industrial core until the last-mentioned turning point. The urban expansion begins in San Francisco, then sprawls to the Peninsula and Oakland and later to Contra Costa. In the 1860 agricultural development increased all over the Bay Area and fueled San Francisco's demand from the manufacturing sector, which occupied a third of the city's workers in 1880. The industrial sector was then fed by locally accumulated capital and migration. Around 1900 the principal working-class area was South of Market in San Francisco, with the development of cable-car lines the 'suburban' Mission District, Nob Hill, and Pacific Heights followed. Local decentralization first appeared in South San Francisco, fueled by industrial restructuring and suburbanization, as well as property ownership. Because big parts of the Peninsula were occupied by the wealthy, the suburbanized industry continued to move towards the East Bay. Housing generally always followed the industrial extension. Before the First World War, the city of San Francisco lost its dominant economic and commercial role along the West coast through industrial stagnation. While Los Angeles overtook the city as the largest urban region, the Bay Area as a whole industrially outgrew Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore and ran even with New York and Baltimore. (Walker, 2001)

By 1920 San Francisco's dominance started to decrease, as factories were relocated to industrial suburbs from 1890 onwards. While certain industries, such as smelting, shipyards, meatpacking, etc. moved out of the city in the early 20th century, others, such as oil refining, steel, automobiles, and chemicals grew up outside the city –benefitting especially the East Bay (ibid.). One major reason for the Bay Area's suburbanization was the development of entire industries outside of San Francisco. However, regional labor organization culture also had big effects on it. Wages have been higher and workers had more rights in the city – conditions which before caused mass immigration from both inside and outside the United States. Walker (2001) claims that in 1919, also due to lacking industrial city planning, all leading industries such as sugar, canning, meatpacking, machining, etc. vanished from San Francisco.

Castells' (2010) metropolitan region is largely defined by its regional nodes, which attract capital, labor, and innovation. Oakland, one of the three

core nodes of the Bay Area, had been highly dependent on San Francisco in the 19th century. Until the construction of the *Central Pacific Railroad* in 1869, it was simply an extension to San Francisco's industry. With the railyards as the biggest employer, Oakland's population then grew from 10,000 to 35,000 (Walker, 2001). After the depression of the 1890s Oakland became an 'edge city'⁴⁸ and the East Bay became essential for the Bay Area's economy through the leading industries food processing, metalworking, shipbuilding, automobiles, and electrical machinery (ibid.). The county of Contra Costa went through a similar development from the 1870s to the 1920s, when dozens of factories, processing explosives, chemicals, oil, sugar, metal etc., opened in the northeast Bay industrial belt. In contrast to Oakland (Alameda County), the regional spread of industry did not cause vast urbanization, as worker villages and small towns dominated the county's structure (ibid.).

Walker highlights the importance of the suburbanization of the industry in the Bay Area for its spatial extension and multi-centrism in more than one work (cf. Walker & Schafran, 2015; Walker, 2001). The reasons for these 'new eruptions' of industrial activity are versatile: land prices, infrastructure, the powerful San Francisco worker's unions (which chased away investing capitalists) and the development of whole new industrial sectors – yet the urban centers (respectively nodes) are still highly financially dependent on each other (Walker, 2001). In Castells' theory, this represents a dramatic contradiction, as the sprawled cores are still in need of political decision making and mutual policies. The lack of which causes "urban distress and misery in American inner cities" – *metropolitan marginality* (Castells, 2010, p. xxxix). The region is famous as the *San Francisco Bay Area* although San Jose is more populous and even more economically driving. Still, San Francisco remains the priority in the popular imagination, because of its domination of the region from 1850 to 1900. Back then Oakland was San Francisco's edge city and Silicon Valley the edge city of the postwar era. Today Silicon Valley is the "principal node of employment, corporate headquarters and value added" (Walker & Schafran, 2015). The transformation from mono-centrism to poly-centrism and the region's influence through suburbanism already began in the second half of the 19th century, when industrial shifts and business development in urban expansion areas caused decentralization. The dominance of Silicon Valley's suburban cities as nodes of employment produces a socio-spatial disturbance regarding the socio-cultural and socio-political urban life in the Bay Area: While San Jose, Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Palo Alto, and to some regards the financial

⁴⁸ Oakland's population rose up to 284.000 until 1930 (Walker, 2001)

district of San Francisco represent places of wealth, prosperity, and innovation, the political and social emancipation, that the Bay Area so famous for, happens in other cities (or other areas of San Francisco). In the 20th century, when San Francisco lost its position as single core city of the Bay Area, it became the venue of workers' rights, anti-redevelopment, gay rights, and anti-war protests (Solnit, 2010). Similarly, Oakland became a center of the civil rights movement in the 1960s (ibid.). The current contestations over the various outputs of the urban crisis are still mainly carried out in these two cities, rather than in the cities of Silicon Valley, which today undergo an even more dramatic process of gentrification, urban poverty, and segregation (cf. case on working homelessness, chapter 3). This shows the discrepancy within the use of urban space and the production of urban life in between Silicon Valley's cities and San Francisco respectively Oakland. The first are traditionally suburban and thereby lack the urbanity of the latter: Homogenization, segregation, and sameness are inherent within suburbanity.

2.3.2 HISTORY OF SILICON VALLEY

The importance of Silicon Valley's tech cluster for both the region of the Bay Area and the United States is undeniable. Its development is closely connected to the establishment of the *Stanford Industrial Park* in 1951, which was suggested by *Fred Terman* (Castells, 2010). Terman was an engineer, who directed a top-secret radiation laboratory during the war, and should now reshape *Stanford University's* research department in close collaboration with the *Department of Defense* by setting up the *Stanford Industrial Park* and attracting leading tech companies to Northern California. The Bay Area had already been a research and development site for the navy since the two world wars. After the Soviet Union launched the first space satellite *Sputnik* in 1957, the United States put further efforts into becoming the leading technology nation and pushed more government money into research facilities in Silicon Valley to further develop the semiconductor (ibid.). In the late 1960s the electronics industry near Silicon Valley was filled with optimism. Thousands of young talented engineers came to the region from all over the country and transformed the land surrounding them. The South Bay and San Jose finally transformed from an agricultural-based economy to the center of the high-tech industry (Berlin, 2017). In the same time period the internet was first deployed. But it took 20 years for it to become used on a larger scale (Castells, 2010). Until then the government of the United States still strongly encouraged the tech sector (1930s-1980s), leading towards "the formation of the milieu of innovation where discoveries and applications would interact, and be tested, in a recurrent process of trial and error, of learning by doing" (Castells, 2010). Already in these uncommodified times (when technological innovation was closely connected with governmental institutions and the research community) strong links to today's creative destruction are visible: What Castells calls 'learning by doing' contemporary tech leaders call 'permissionless innovation' (Zuboff, 2019).

The immigration reform of 1965 caused an influx of Asians, Latines and Portuguese to Silicon Valley. These immigrants then supported the industry's development, mostly by working in the production sector, but as well in high tech. Still today the production sector, which does the preliminary work for the tech sector, is sustained through the migrant workforce. Yet the relationship of the sector towards migration is ambivalent. San Francisco declared itself a *Sanctuary City* in 1989 and today the whole Bay Area is extraordinarily diverse. This is mainly reflected by blue collar working-class jobs in Silicon Valley, rather than by high ranked engineer or leader positions. At the same time, some tech firms play a key role in facilitating the immigration authority (Mijente, 2018). In the 1970s "the spatial concentration of research centers, higher-education institutions, advanced-tech-

nology companies, a network of ancillary suppliers of goods and services, and business networks of venture capital to finance start-ups" (ibid., p. 65 f.) were essential for Silicon Valley's development. Venture capital started to become essential and decreased the influence of federal investments on Silicon Valley. Since the 1990s all innovation has shifted from the governmental and research to the commercial sector (Greene, 2019) – the *privatization of the internet*. The global consumer technology market in 2020 (estimation) is worth three trillion USD (ibid.). Thus, the tech sector has access to more money than ever before. Economic activities are highly concentrated in world cities and decisions, which are made in its corporations, dominate the global economy. However, despite their power, these transnational firms cannot maintain an economy on their own. They rely on producer service firms, which offer specialized assistance, for example in accounting, law, management, financial services and so on. As a result, economic centers tend to become more and more concentrated in the established centers of the leading cities (Abrahamson, Mark, 2014). At the same time their infrastructure and buildings are ageing and too expensive to upgrade or there is simply not enough space to densify the city. Even though in the United States the regions of the West Coast such as Silicon Valley or Los Angeles-San Diego have relatively less increased economic and financial concentration than New York City this phenomenon can also be seen there.

The corporations tend to relocate their activities to suburban areas that are usually well connected to the original centers (ibid.). In recent years a bit of a reversal shift of this development can be observed in San Francisco, where parts of the IT-sector move back into the city's center (cf. Joint Venture Silicon Valley & Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies, 2020). Yet suburbanization still is the main spatial urban form of the new economy: "Silicon Valley companies have thrived on extremely flexible space, so that's why the office park dominates here" (Mozingo as cited in Greene, 2019, p. 11). The power hubs of global technology, the headquarters of Google, Facebook and Apple, are arranged next to Highway 101 (that connects San Jose and San Francisco) without any distinct urban qualities. This goes along Lucie Greene's observations about Silicon Valley signaling no "proximity to wealth, or that you're frequenting what is now perhaps one of the world's biggest global power centers" (Greene, 2019, p. 19). This is clearly opposing the historical notion of power, wealth or capital, and Greene states that "Silicon Valley, [...] in the Bay Area at least, still seems to keep the full magnitude of its iceberg beneath the surface, or obscured at a distance by green pastures and campus like-optimism, and in fortress pastures like Apple's new ring, which you can only take stock of from above and which are outside town centers. This is sprawling but low-rise power" (Ibid. p. 20). The processes of disruption, growing, shrinking or acquisi-

tion is thereby perfectly represented by the suburban office parks. Yet, today some companies change their architectural presence towards new gigantic designs, which offer prestige and corporate design but lack of flexibility and may end up as white elephants, because there is no potential re-use (ibid.). Still the suburbanization of Silicon Valley is not only just practical but also motivated through racist segregation practices. The White flight (mentioned in chapter 2.2.2) did not only affect housing but also the industry and the departure of corporations contributed to the neglect of the inner cities in the second half of the 20th century: "While city tax bases are eroding and their job markets declining as companies seek cheaper, newer, or more accessible facilities in the suburbs, their schools and services struggle against the combined impact of inflation, unemployment, and shrinking federal assistance" (Blakeslee, 1979). American cities rely on their tax base to fund public services and therefore attracting the wealthy is crucial for their financing (Moskowitz, 2016, p. 6). This shows why the 'Creative Class' theory is so successful in many American cities, because Florida's "creatives" are high-wage employees and independents (cf. chapter 1.3). While wealthy residents are important, many cities offer major tax cuts and exemptions to tech corporations for settling down there or for settling down in a particular area. Twitter for example got a tax cut of 56 million USD from the city of San Francisco just to move to a less built up part of downtown (Moskowitz, 2017, p. 128).

Today, the presence of the tech industry in the South Bay (and Silicon Valley in general) have turned the suburbanization mechanisms in the Bay Area upside down. In the 20th century, people commuted from the East Bay or the Peninsula into San Francisco's downtown. Today commuting numbers have reversed and more people head south from San Francisco than the opposite. Walker and Schafran (2015) take the Google and Facebook shuttles⁴⁹, which drive workers from San Francisco and residential areas in the East Bay and the Peninsula to the tech headquarters in Silicon Valley, as epitomes of this reversal of traffic and state that "the city has been suburbanized by its own suburbs" (ibid., p. 14). Additionally, people commute from medium-sized cities to outlying centers in the suburbs (tech headquarters), as from "Oakland to Walnut Creek or San Jose to Mountain View" (ibid.).

49 there are numerous private shuttles run by various tech firms

- 1 SAN FRANCISCO DOWNTOWN AND FINANCIAL DISTRICT
- 2 OAKLAND HARBOR
- 3 OAKLAND DOWNTOWN
- 4 BERKELEY UNIVERSITY
- 5 GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE
- 6 UCSF BENIOFF CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL
- 7 ZUCKERBERG GENERAL HOSPITAL AND TRAUMA CENTER
- 8 MISSION PLAYGROUND PROTESTS
- 9 SALESFORCE, SAN FRANCISCO
- 10 TWITTER, SAN FRANCISCO
- 11 LYFT, SAN FRANCISCO
- 12 AIRBNB, SAN FRANCISCO
- 13 UBER, SAN FRANCISCO
- 14 TECH BUSES CONNECTING SAN FRANCISCO AND SILICON VALLEY
- 15 YOUTUBE (OWNED BY GOOGLE), SAN BRUNO

- 16 SYNnex, FREMONT
- 17 LAM RESEARCH, FREMONT
- 18 FRANKLIN RESOURCES, SAN MATEO
- 19 VISA, FOSTER CITY
- 20 GILEAD SCIENCES, FOSTER CITY
- 21 ORACLE, REDWOOD CITY
- 22 FACEBOOK (INCL. INSTAGRAM & WHATSAPP), MENLO PARK
- 23 TESLA, PALO ALTO
- 24 GOOGLE, MOUNTAIN VIEW
- 25 NETAPP, SUNNYVALE
- 26 STANFORD UNIVERSITY
- 27 INTUIT, MOUNTAIN VIEW
- 28 HP, PALO ALTO
- 29 AMD, SANTA CLARA
- 30 APPLE, CUPERTINO

- 31 NVIDIA, SANTA CLARA
- 32 APPLIED MATERIALS, SANTA CLARA
- 33 NETFLIX, LOS GATOS
- 34 SANMINA, SAN JOSE
- 35 LINKED IN, SUNNYVALE
- 36 EBAY, SAN JOSE
- 37 ADOBE, SAN JOSE
- 38 WESTERN DIGITAL, SAN JOSE
- 39 INTEL, SANTA CLARA
- 40 AMAZON SILICON VALLEY CAMPUS, SUNNYVALE⁵⁰
- 41 MICROSOFT SILICON VALLEY CAMPUS, MOUNTAIN VIEW⁵¹
- 42 CISCO, SAN JOSE
- 43 PAYPAL, SAN JOSE
- 44 BROADCOM, SAN JOSE
- 45 SAN JOSE DOWNTOWN



This collage map shows just a fraction of Silicon Valley's tech headquarters. Yet the depicted companies are the most politically powerful (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Google,...), economically successful (Apple, Google, Intel,...) or disruptive to its urban surroundings in the common perception (Airbnb, Uber, Lyft,...). In this map the tech headquarters are accompanied by some places that represent the tech overtake of the region (e.g. Mission playground) and some which were essential for the rise of Silicon Valley (e.g. universities).

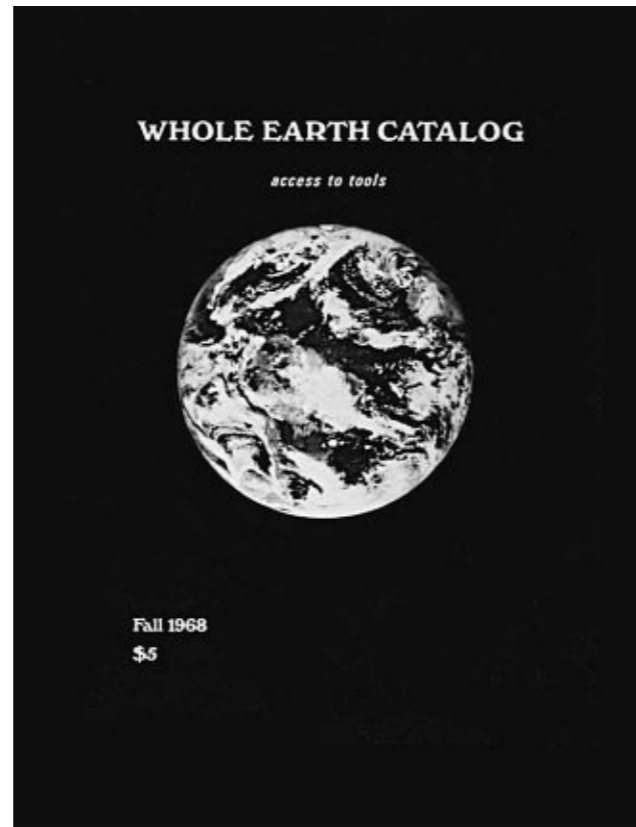
⁵⁰ Amazon's Global Headquarter is in Seattle, WA
⁵¹ Microsoft's Global Headquarter is in Redmont, WA

FIG 26: Major tech headquarters of Silicon Valley, own graphic.

2.3.3 THE IDEOLOGICAL BACKBONES OF SILICON VALLEY

“We are as gods and might as well get used to it. So far, remotely done power and glory – power of the individual to conduct his own education, find his own inspiration, shape his own environment, and share his adventure with whoever is interested. Tools that aid this process are sought and promoted by the WHOLE EARTH CATALOG. (Brand, S., 1968)

In the 1960s the Bay Area not only became the technological center of the Western world but also the center of the counterculture movement (with student, anti-war, Black power and, gay rights movements). At first one would not assume that these two developments are connected. Yet counterculture plays an important role within the evolution of Silicon Valley's ideology and business ethics. In 1968 the first edition of the *Whole Earth Catalog* was published by Stewart Brand. It contains instructions for alternative lifestyles, gadgets for a self-sustained life in remote counterculture communes, theoretical texts on future technologies (e.g. early thoughts on cybernetics), and in general claims individual empowerment (cf. Turner, 2008; Brand, S., 1968). Fred Turner (2008) states that by 1990 Silicon Valley's technology became allegorical for the ideal society, utopianism, and societal optimism, while thirty years earlier it was perceived as the “industrial-era social machine” – as a tool of oppression and dehumanization. The catalog thereby played a central role in promoting trust in techno-economic progress by displaying a utopian future of self-empowerment and personal liberation. New technology was not any more seen as dehumanizing, but as empowering. The subsequent individualism offered a vision for a new social order in opposition to established institutions (ibid.). Through the *Whole Earth Catalog* many ideals and practices of the counterculture movement were appropriated by Silicon Valley. Turner (ibid.) states that the common praising of the catalogue, articulated by certain tech leaders, shows how the “new Communalist wing of the counterculture embraced” the “forces of capital, technology, or the state” and in the end the *Whole Earth Catalog* even contributed to the privatization of the industry by setting out for its liberation. Additionally, S. Brand perceived Silicon Valley as the main driver of progress: “I think hackers... are the most interesting and effective body of intellectuals since the framers of the U.S. Constitution” (Brand, S., n.d. as cited in Turner, 2008). In another work, Turner (2009) also locates this connection of Silicon Valley's ideology and the counterculture in the importance of the (formerly) alternative Burning Man Festival in Nevada, which is an essential meeting point for the tech elite. While the net increasingly promotes remote and globalized work, the festival is usually overrun by tech employees and entrepreneurs, who celebrate individuality and at the same time use the seclusion of desert for networking (ibid.).



IMG 06: Cover Whole Earth Catalog 1968 (Brand, S., 1968).

S. Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog* coined a whole generation of tech leaders (including for example Steve Jobs) and cleared the way for the liberalization of the internet and its strong ties to neoliberalism. The establishment of big tech as the main contemporary driver of capitalism might at first seem odd (cf. Fortune, 2020), as Silicon Valley's leaders publicly promote pure faith in progress and humankind aligned with altruism. However, with S. Brand's ideology at hand, it becomes evident that tech's faith in progress is indeed faith in technology, its notion of humanity is individuality not collectivism, and altruism is rather philanthropism. The case of the working homeless shows how this philanthropism which is firstly often forced upon the tech corporations by vast protest movements and secondly used to further increase political influence (cf. chapter 3). All together the ideology of big tech is quite precisely overlapping with the techno-economic progress. It additionally has a notion of anti-establishment and anti-institutionalism, which have also been influenced by the *Whole Earth Catalog* (Turner, 2009). The catalog proclaimed the liberalization and privatization of technology in the midst of the cold war, when Silicon Valley was still vastly funded by the government and the army. Nowadays, tech is independent and privatized, while it is, at the same time, one of the most politically influential industries, given technology's integration to democracy, elections and governments (ibid.). Today, tech's relationship to the nation-state is generally ambivalent: On the one side, it has close ties to the government, on the other side it somehow acts like standing above the law, or held back and put to limits by it (cf. Greene, 2019).

2.4 STATUS QUO: URBAN CRISIS

“The technologically driven advanced culture that prides itself in being called the information society is in reality a concrete, material infrastructure that is concentrated on the sedentary global city. The contrast between an ideology of free mobility and the reality of disposable others brings out the schizophrenic character of advanced capitalism, namely the paradox of high levels of mobility of capital flows in some sectors of the economic elites and also high levels of centralization and greater immobility for most of the population. (Braidotti, 2016)

Braidotti's above-stated quote captures the contradictions of techno-economic progress, that affect humanity on a global scale but become particularly evident at its effects on the local surroundings of Silicon Valley. The Bay Area's urban disruption is outstanding and clearly related to the tech industry. Yet this chapter on its historical context shows how deeply the disruptive urbanism phenomenon is connected to the region's history of both displacement and colonialism and techno-economic progress. Silicon Valley's evolution from the publicly funded research hub of the 1950s to the liberalized network it is today made it deeply intertwined within the financial markets. The thereby established close relationship makes it affected by (and responsible for) the cycles of booms and crashes of financial capitalism. These crises are the core of the global multiple crisis and deeply affect the subsequent urban crisis: Silicon Valley profited from subsidiaries of international tech companies

and the influx of engineers and was able to jump on the commercialization of the internet and to survive the dot-com crash and the mortgage crisis of 2008, which have been partially caused by the network economy (Castells, 2010). While these crises have deeply disrupted the housing market in the Bay Area and caused a temporary decrease of housing costs, they also caused a massive eviction wave due to the economic effects. However, the housing market has quickly recovered and has faced unprecedented extreme rent and value increases (Lien, n.d.). In the end, the crisis of 2000 and 2008 have caused the diminishing of support of public commons, further social inequality, and a setback within the handling of climate change (Harvey, 2013; interview with U. Brand). The crises have, additionally, facilitated “even more predatory activity in private appropriation of the commons as a necessary precondition for the revival of growth” (Harvey, 2013, p. 85-86), what is also visible within the Bay Area's housing crisis. This subchapter on the status quo of the disruption, displacement, and gentrification in the region allows a contextualization of the case of the working homeless, which is described in chapter 3.

2.4.1 BOOMS AND CRISES

“**Capitalism takes over space as a whole. Without appropriating its use, it dominates space and modifies it for exchange; it produces its proper space of domination, in the form of centres of decision-making, wealth, knowledge (savoir) and information.** (Kipfer, & Goonewardena, 2007, par. 34)

“Urbanization runs on finance, and urban booms and busts follow credit cycles quite closely” (Harvey, 1982 as cited in Walker & Schafran, 2015). Due to the interconnection of urban investment and economic development, new urban spaces are dependent on housing cycles respectively the underlying financial booms (Walker & Schafran, 2015). San Francisco’s economic success (from the gold rush to becoming one of the top banking centers to the emergence of Silicon Valley) has always pushed it at the forefront of American capitalism. Big parts of the acquired capital went into infrastructure and housing development or land expansion. After the Second World War, major Californian banks issued millions of mortgages for homeownership in the Bay Area’s suburbs and became key players on the financial markets (Walker & Schafran, 2015). Subsequently, by the 1970s, housing prices in the region began to overtop national ones drastically. In the 1980s the housing market in the whole United States became highly unstable causing the *savings and loan crisis*, which forced the federal government to inject 300 billion USD into bailouts – also to the Bank of America in San Francisco (ibid.). The market could revive and in the 1990s land prices rose again. The burst of the succeeding *dot-com bubble*⁵² in 2000 hit the financial economy of the Bay Area and its small investors much harder than the rest of the nation (ibid.). While the new economy was hardly affected by this crisis, it revealed the deep interconnection with the global financial markets and the subsequent financial crisis of 2008. Castells (cf. 2010, preface xix) identifies six key factors regarding the interweaving of the network economy and the financial economy, which led to the crisis in 2008: Firstly, the digitalization of the financial sector enabled the handling of advanced computer models. Secondly, the liberalization and deregulation allowed free global capital flows. Thirdly, due to financial valuation of economic organizations financial products became more and more complex. Fourthly, the imbalance, which emerged between capital accumulation and lending, exposed the lenders financial capabilities. Fifthly, the mortgage crisis in the United States (starting in 2007) knocked off a chain reaction globally. Sixthly, lack of supervision caused risky lending practices (Castells, 2010).

The dot-com bubble of 2000 financially struck the Bay Area harder than the rest of California and the United States (Walker & Schafran, 2015). This is not just evident due to some Silicon Valley internet companies that

failed and shut down, but especially due to suburbanization of the dot-com boom of the 1990s. The acquired wealth was predominantly invested in suburban development in the outskirts of the Bay Area (ibid.). The middle class was pushed into the newly-built developments in the suburban inland (Contra Costa, Alameda and Solano counties in the Bay Area and counties further west) (ibid.). That caused the obvious effects on traffic, urban sprawl, and subsequent neglect of the ecological crisis, but also the further homogenization of the region. The wealthy remained living in the centers (Silicon Valley and San Francisco) and pushed housing costs and subsequent evictions: Before 1995 just 14 apartments had been cleared via Ellis Act eviction, until 1999 the total number rose to 664 (Solnit, 2010, p. 120).

After the 2000 crash small investors soon started to increase investment in land and housing again and thereby contributed to the mortgage crisis of 2008. In 2006 (the peak of the housing boom) the Bay Area’s median home prices quadrupled the national ones.⁵³ The dramatic outcome of the urban development of the dot-com bubble became evident in the burst subsequent bubble when many of the middle-class homeowners went bankrupt and got evicted (ibid.). The recession after 2008 left California with two million people unemployed and ten million in poverty, the inland suburban counties have been struck hardest (ibid.). In the course of the current economic effects of the Covid-19 crisis, experts and activists claim that the government of the United States and California must learn from the last crisis, when they rolled out several programs against corporate and bank foreclosures while neglecting the most-affected – the urban poor and middle class. After 2008 many homes have been eventually evicted and sold by auction, often to banks and corporations which received bailout money from the federal government and used that money to buy homes and push the housing prices again (Hershey, Cohen, & Hood, 2020; Axel-Lute, 2020). In general, all these interconnected aspects of (sub-)urbanization, land development, versatile financial booms, etc. indicate the actual complexity of the multiple crisis (cf. Brand, U., 2009) and clearly show the way crises are reproduced by deregulation and neoliberalization. After the 2008 financial crisis the United States Department of Housing and Urban Redevelopment started to privatize more public housing and to further undermine the social safety-net of the most marginalized communities Davidson, 2011, p. 1989). The handling of previous crises shows that a perception of crises as moments of rethinking and reorganizing economy and society (disruptive innovation potential of crises) is naive, as they clearly reproduce and even increase urban inequality (ibid.).

2.4.3 TECH PROTESTS IN THE BAY AREA

“**As urban real estate markets across the United States have increasingly taken up the function of absorbing or ‘mopping up’ international capital and surplus value in the wake of the financial crisis in 2007 and 2008, San Francisco stands out as a city where such ‘absorption’ has precipitated a social and political crisis. This crisis has taken the form of what housing advocates call an ‘eviction epidemic’, as large numbers of long-term, rent-stabilized tenants are evicted** (Maharawal, 2017)

The success of Silicon Valley and the subsequent pull of high-powered and high-income workers to the region has drastically increased rental and housing prices throughout the region. San Francisco and the Bay Area are today one of the most unequal cities, respectively regions: “By almost any measure, San Francisco ranks as one of the most unequal places in the United States” (Maharawal, 2017). In opposition to the historical White suburbanization or White flight, today, we encounter a contrary phenomenon of the loss of diversity in urban centers. In 1979 Jan Blakeslee stated that America’s inner cities became ghettos for the poor, the unemployed, the disadvantaged, and in general the minorities. In 1973 64 percent of the metropolitan poor lived in the central cities (Blakeslee, 1979). In the 2000s this development turned and now more poor live in the suburbs (Schafran, 2012). As demographic statistics show, this generally accounts for minorities and urban poor: San Francisco and other major cities become more White and the urban fringe becomes more diverse, while the Bay Area in general becomes more diverse. Because of the historical neglect of the inner cities in America, these are still hotspots of urban inequalities, as for example the increasing homelessness shows. In combination with the immediate urban effects of the last financial crises and the neglect of the middle and working-class population in favor of the banks and big corporations, this sheer inequality increasingly sparks protest.

Displacement and segregation in San Francisco’s Mission District have sparked the initial protest action against the tech overtake of the region. In November 2013 40 protestors started the first ‘Google bus blockade’. These protests continued the next few years against the privately-operated busses, which were contracted by various tech firms to pick up their employees in San Francisco and take them to the corporate headquarters in Silicon Valley. The city government did not hinder the busses from using the public bus stops of the run-down public transport agency MUNI. After the protests, the city started charging one dollar per stop to the tech busses – a measure which sidesteps the actual issues of gentrification and also legalizes the use of the public stops. Maharawal states that the disruptive protest tactics had a dual function. By blocking the busses, the activists were able to bring attention to the tech-led gentrification in San Francisco and the “city administration’s collusion in this process” and they also hindered the tech employees on their way to work. By reminding the public about the exclusion of non-tech employee residents from these corporate infrastructures (on public property) the tech busses became a symbol for the inequalities of the Bay Area and within the discussion about their impact on the city different urban issues (such as colonialist urban practices of the municipality and the tech firms, as well as lacking inclusivity, or general misuse of public goods) were discussed. In 2014, one year after the initial protests and in the midst of the multiple following ones, a video about an altercation over a soccer field in the Mission District went viral on YouTube. The conflict was carried out between mostly-Spanish speaking youth and techies – newly residents of the district, who work in tech. The tech employees had obtained a paid permit for the field and attempted to displace the teenagers, who have been used to play there for their whole lives and refused to leave: “just because you got money and you can pay for the field doesn’t mean you can book it and take over” (teenager on site as cited in Maharawal, 2017). This conflict between the long-term residents and the newly arrived tech-employees caused a vast political debate about dispossession and the right to the city. For Maharawal both incidents, the Mission playground altercation and the tech bus protests, represent modern practices of settler colonialism. The protests in public space target the neglect of shared social practices, the urban commons, which are endangered through privatization. (Maharawal, 2017)

Alongside the above mentioned protests the Occupy Oakland movement, “the fiercest Occupy movement outside of New York” (Walker & Schafran, 2015), is to be mentioned. Starting 2011 the Occupy movement mainly drew attention to New York’s financial sector. However,

52 The dot-com bubble or tech bubble was a stock market bubble in the late 1990s. It was caused by excessive speculation of internet-related companies and first burst in 2000. Many companies of the internet boom failed, others could even gain market share and dominate their fields since then (cf. Harvey, 2013; Walker & Schafran, 2015).

53 Much of today’s economic development (pre-Covid-19) resembles the peak of the previous bubbles (Maharawal, 2017).



IMG 07: Tech bus protests San Francisco (Cabanatuan, 2018).

the Occupy Oakland movement as well gained national media coverage for their actions against displacement, racist unjustness, police brutality, and contemporary settler colonialism through the practice of squatting (occupying vacant buildings) (Owens & Antiporda, 2017). All these protest movements share a certain overlapping within their core activities and core issues – tackling multifaceted and interconnected urban struggles. As discussed in the previous chapters, the Bay Area and particularly San Francisco, have a distinct history of activism and urban protest. Even though the Occupy Oakland, Mission playground and Google bus protests did not stop the unjust and unequal urban practices of displacement, dispossession, and structural racism, they have drawn attention to all these issues, of which some are directly connected to Silicon Valley’s disruptive innovation (cf. following subchapter). Additionally, they formed an active and collaborating urban protest community, in contrast to the anti-redevelopment protests of the 1970s, when class and race struggles were played out against each other (cf. Solnit, 2019). Overall the Bay Area is traditionally a protest-prone region, considering its long long respective history, especially in the 19th century: The last century has brought the region the 1930s labor strikes after the 1929 crash, the post WWII workers protests, various anti-redevelopment demonstrations, the occupation of the Alcatraz island through Native Americans and vast civil rights and aids/HIV movement activities (Castañeda, 2017). The anti-tech protests align itself as part of this urban empowerment.

2.4.3 STATE OF URBAN DISRUPTION

“ *politics means: people did it and people do it. understand that when in San Francisco and other places that were never really there bet this ocean thinks it’s an ocean but it’s not. it’s seventh and mission. (Eisen-Martin, 2016)*

San Francisco’s loss of identity and livability have long been claimed and today’s racist and unjust practices are rather dominated by privatization and gentrification than by open racism or brutality. Gentrification in the city is not only well documented and scientifically discussed, but also often cited within contemporary art and pop culture. (cf. e.g. *The Last Black Man in San Francisco*). San Francisco’s Mission District might represent the most cited epitome of gentrification worldwide and the same-named protests after an altercation over a soccer field between local teenagers and tech-employees together with the tech-bus protests (occurring in the same neighborhood) (Maharawal, 2017) might be the most famous ones against gentrification. In San Francisco of that time the Mission District made it

through the urban renewal era unscathed, even though the economic situation started to dramatically worsen in the late 1970s. Solnit (2019) states that urban poor continued to come to the city and continued to be displaced from there. Salaries stagnated and rent rose, while through Reaganomics social benefits and support was cut. In that time, the precariousness of urban life in San Francisco started to affect the Middle class as well (ibid.). While the other districts were affected long before the gentrification in the Mission got off to a flying start after the crash of the dot-com bubble in the 1990s. More than half of the original stores vanished between 1990 and 1998 and made space for luxury restaurants (ibid.). This development continued to become more intense until today: “over the past few years, struggles over gentrification and public space have become increasingly charged as the city rapidly becomes more expensive and unaffordable to long-term residents, particularly for the city’s Black and Latino residents and those in lower socioeconomic brackets” (Maharawal, 2017). While the intensity drives conflicts between different communities and protests arise, Moskowitz (2017) points out that “there’s a losing side and a winning side in gentrification” but the process is not produced by millions of ‘hipsters’ overrunning a city, but because of a few hundred urban actors (corporations, politicians, public intellectuals, planners, real estate developers). Moreover, the fact that evictions are still on the rise despite San Francisco’s progressive tenant rights⁵⁴, shows how vulnerable the city is and how profitable the evictions and displacement are for developers and owners (ibid.).

While the obvious effect of the tech presence in Silicon Valley, the ever-rising rents and gentrification, certainly cause big parts of the region’s inequality, another factor is the lack of office space due to big techs constant growth. Alone the six major companies Alphabet, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, LinkedIn, and Netflix occupy almost 50 million square feet of office space (Joint Venture Silicon Valley & Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies, 2020). Of the additional 25 million square feet under construction in Silicon Valley in 2020, 60 percent are pre-leased to tech companies (ibid.). Meanwhile many small businesses and even tech start-ups struggle to find reasonably-priced office space, which is not already leased. Disruptive urbanism has a direct impact on usable space for the everyday foundational economy, the non-tech-related economy (cf. *Foundational Economy Collective*, 2018). In Santa Clara county alone Alphabet and Apple are the second and third biggest commercial space owners after Stanford University (Castañeda, 2019). They impact the usable space in manifold ways – a multidimensional perception of disruptive urbanism is thereby necessary. Besides the much discussed pressure on the housing market in general, the thereby increased displacement (evic-

tions, segregation, homogenization), pressure on public and common space (Mission playground alteration), common infrastructure (tech busses and general traffic increase), influence on suburbanization through corporate headquarters and urban policies (cf. interview with U. Brand; case study chapter 3) the disruption nowadays has to include the effects of the gig economy and subcontracting on the local work environment (cf. Shastry, 2018). The next chapter establishes the case of the working homeless, which describes the effects of the combination of these multiple aspects of the urban tech-disruption-led crisis.

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 The approved original version of this thesis is available in print at TU Wien Bibliothek.



- 1930S LABOUR STRIKES: BLOODY THURSDAY
- 1938 CHINESE DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST JAPANESE WAR CRIMES
- 1951 POST WAR WORKERS PROTESTS
- 1950S PROTESTS AGAINST THE SOUTHERN FREEWAY
- 1960S RESISTANCE TO REDEVELOPMENT IN SF
- 1964 CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN SF AND OAKLAND
- 1966 BLACK PANTHER MOVEMENT OAKLAND 1966
- 1969 AMERICAN INDIANS OCCUPY ALCATRAZ
- 1974 ANTI VIETNAM WAR PROTESTS
- 1977 RESISTANCE TO DEMOLITION OF INTERNATIONAL HOTEL
- 1980S AIDS ACTIVISM
- 2004 ANTI TECH PROTESTS
- 2009 OSCAR GRANT MOVEMENT: ANTI RACISM
- 2011 OCCUPY OAKLAND
- 2013 TECH BUS PROTESTS
- 2014 MISSION PLAYGROUND ALTERCATION
- 2020 BLACK LIVES MATTER
- PROTESTS FOR HOUSING THE HOMELESS
- CANCEL RENT/ANTI COVID-EVICTIONS

FIG 27: Timeline of economic crisis, urban unsettling, and (selected) protests (y=growth of real wealth in USD), own graphic, (crisis timeline based on: The Investor, 2013).



IMG 08: Covid-19 homeless encampment in San Francisco 2020 (Associated Press, 2020).

2.4.4 EXCURSUS: COVID-19, THE HOUSING CRISIS AND URBAN DISRUPTION

“*It’s plainly sheer madness to throw millions of Californians – and nationally tens of millions of Americans – out of their homes due to a sudden pandemic crisis. It is an ultimate reductio ad absurdum outcome of Market Capitalism (Elberling, 2020)*

The Handling of the Covid-19 crisis in California and the Bay Area has evoked ambivalent media commentaries. The immediate rapid response through the Californian and local county and city governments seemed to spare the region (cf., Morris, 2020) compared to the situation of other global economic centers such as London or New York within this pandemic. At the same time the most dramatic symptom of the housing crisis – the homelessness – seemed particularly out of control (Brosnahan, 2020). The health crisis has unfolded vast urban inequality, for example through the unequal exposure of essential blue-collar workers compared to white-collar workers, the increased pressure on foundational businesses, and especially the neglect of marginalized communities and individuals. The handling of homelessness was one of the last priorities in the midst of the pandemic, the unhoused could obviously not shelter in place. Over the course of the first lockdown in California options to safely sheltering them were intensively discussed within politics, media, and public discourse in general (cf. SFADC, 2020; Brosnahan, 2020). The most extensive temporary claim, housing the homeless in vacant hotel rooms was not fully executed. Yet it has been vastly demanded by protestors: Two squatters occupied a vacant San Francisco house for this claim, others protested in front of the mayor’s house, or organized protest car caravans (ibid.). Eventually the city of San Francisco provided a ‘socially

distanced homeless encampment’ next to the city hall, which enforced six feet distance in between homeless tents and basic infrastructure (Parrish, 2020). Another municipal project offered residential vehicles (RVs) to selected homeless individuals and families (Invisible People, 2020). In the end, most of the unsheltered population was either left on the street or put in emergency shelters, where later mayor Covid-19 outbreaks occurred (Fuller, 2020).

The protestors did not only tackle the response of the city of San Francisco against the handling of homelessness during the pandemic, they also claimed ‘cancelling the rent’ (Axel-Lute, 2020). The state of California has issued an eviction moratorium for the course of the Covid-19 crisis, which announced to prohibit evictions due to missed rents (Elberling, 2020). The interview with Elba Morales from community advocacy *Centro Legal de la Raza* in Oakland unveils that the prominently stated eviction ordinance does not generally prohibit evictions due to missing rent payments. The claim of the cancelling-the-rent protestors goes indeed much deeper as to criticize the hypocrisy of the Californian government – by questioning the meaningfulness of an eviction moratorium that only lasts for the course of the lockdown but does not acknowledge the subsequent long-term economic crisis, nor potential following pandemic related lockdowns (cf. Axel-Lute, 2020).

The tech sector was claimed to be one of the big winners of the pandemic, due to shift towards temporary and permanent home-office, philanthropic donation to health and community care, surveillance and contact tracing technology, etc. (The Economist, 2020): “Investors have been hunting for start-ups that might evolve around the pandemic [...] the virus would bring five years of change in five months” (Bowles, 2020). The tech firms of Silicon Valley were

amongst the first to prepare for the pandemic and to order home-office for their employees (ibid.). Many tech firms have already announced to keep working in home-office: Facebook expects 50 percent of its workforce to remain working permanently remote, Apple and Google have similar expectations (GIP, 2020). These plans raise the question if the tech employees that have disrupted the Bay Area so dramatically through their buying power will leave the region once they can switch to work from wherever they want. Some Bay Area locals have raised hope that this would bring an end to the ever-lasting gentrification and extreme rents, but experts question this prediction, as the housing market is in the meantime deeply affected by real estate speculation and is not simply caused by lacking supply (Said, 2020, interview with E. Morales). The Bay Area is especially in demand of low- and median-income housing (Said, 2020). The crisis is thereby not a relieving factor (through the potential tech vanishing), but a stressing one, as the economic crisis will potentially cause mass evictions (cf. interview with E. Morales): “An even more troubling future is on the horizon. [...] A new wave of homelessness is likely. More than 60,000 have filed unemployment claims this year in San Francisco alone, and the mayor expects at least 40,000 more, suggesting one in nine residents will have lost their jobs” (Bensinger, 2020).

2.5 INSERT: INTERVIEW WITH ELBA MORALES ON HOMELESSNESS

[Elba Moralez is the director of development and communication at the community advocacy Centro Legal de la Raza in Oakland. Being born out of the civil rights movement, Centro Legal de la Raza was founded in 1969, to serve the Chicane⁵⁵ community. Now it has a very open approach towards Oakland's community and focuses inter alia on worker and tenant rights, immigration, and homelessness prevention. The interview with Elba Morales represents a local perspective on homelessness and the housing crisis, gives voice to the unheard and marginalized homeless population of the Bay Area and substantiates the outcomes of the following case study (chapter 3) on working homelessness. The direct implications of the interview on the disruption and the urban crisis in the Bay Area are discussed in chapter 4.]

The housing and eviction crises are long-lasting phenomena with multiple dimensions. How do you perceive their development within the last years?

[Elba Morales (M):] It's been a disaster. It's been a complete, unmitigated disaster, I think, especially in cities like San Francisco and Oakland. The Bay Area is the prime example of all the housing issues in this country, extreme wealth, and the wealth disparity. You walk downtown [San Fran]Cisco, there's two million dollar homes and it's beautiful. And then you look up literally across the street and there's needles everywhere. There are unhoused people. And there are sanitary issues.

One main issue is that the funding is going to the wrong people and projects. There is not enough money and the money that we do have is often not managed well. Everything affects homelessness. We've for example seen the wrong policies put into place. Prop 22⁵⁶ has just passed here in California. It was very much pushed by Lyft, Uber, Instacart, and other gig economy corporations. The fallout from that is going to be massive. The workers remain without benefits, protection and proper

payment. All of that leads to housing insecurity, homelessness, and so on. Here, housing is the number one issue affecting most social issues. Housing is the cornerstone of health. And it's an economic justice issue. There are a lot of comparable state policies, which protect tech giants. It leads to housing instability and outrageous rents. Landlords, developers are pushing the people more and more out.

Within the last years there have been massive development projects promised by the municipalities, the tech corporations, and housing developers. How do you assess those private and public efforts?

[M:] I like to compare Silicon Valley's role to Bruce Wayne and Batman. Bruce Wayne creates all the mess in Gotham during the day and then Batman tries to clean it up. I feel very similar about these big tech companies because they're the ones creating the mess. Housing developers are often quite sneaky, because there's so many loopholes: When they have to offer a certain percentage of affordable units [due to municipal building codes] they often just pay a fine instead. And it's an exorbitant fine. But they'd rather take the hit and make more money – to violate these regulations is just an investment for them. The affordable housing units that are available are mostly for an average median-income. What we really need is low-income units. There's not a lot of solutions that include the homeless or the ones who are struggling with housing. They're not at the table when they're making these big decisions. And I think that's a big part of the problem. I don't have hope when it comes to the responsibility of corporations. I barely trust our elected officials to do the right thing about housing, because they have so often neglected the needs of the local people for the benefit of big corporations here in the Bay Area. What gives me hope are the organizers and the activists who have been pushing the debate for decades here in the Bay Area.

In general, capitalism and believing housing is a right is always going to be in tension. If we believe housing is a right, then that's going to really screw up a lot for landlords and developers. But I think we are very far away from that just housing distribution, housing as a right for everybody. We have to work towards disempowering land owners as much as possible.

⁵⁵ Mexican American community
⁵⁶ Proposition 22 enables the ongoing sub-contracting of gig workers and prevents regulation and subsequent improvement of work conditions. To get Proposition 22 passed, tech companies spent 205 million dollars on campaigning, which is "a lot less than the long-term prospect of paying a living wage to workers and being responsible to consumers for safety and accessibility. [...] They also used their control over workers to force them into promoting the measure [...]". Uber, for its part, tied white-collar workers' raises and promotions to their work in getting Prop 22 passed" (Whittaker, 2020).

The Covid-19 lockdown [starting in March 2020] showed how neglected and marginalized the homeless population of the Bay Area is. How has the health crisis affected the housing crisis in general?

[M:] In the United States the fallout from the unemployment numbers is going to be atrocious. Gavin Newsom⁵⁷, our governor, falsely said that there was going to be an eviction moratorium. Our lawyers looked into that and proved that this is not true. Instead of generally preventing evictions, the moratorium basically hands the responsibility to the cities. So, it was one more empty promise. And we, as a community agency, prepare for a mass eviction defense right now.

How do you generally assess the crisis management of the Bay Area cities during this pandemic, particularly regarding its connections to housing and homelessness?

[M:] The cities handle it more like handling a nuisance rather than a public health crisis. Homeless people are really stripped of dignity. I think a lot of the solutions that have come forth are really just about getting rid of them in the public eye rather than actually helping them and creating long term sustainable solutions. I believe unhoused people need wrap-around services. It's not just throwing them in a little shed and calling it a day. You also need services like mental health support, health care, and all of these other things. And you also need those services to be done in an appropriate way. There are so many other pieces that need to come into play, even if they do find some kind of temporary housing. I believe you really need permanent housing for folks. Temporary housing kicks the can down the street. If somebody told me: 'oh, well, you're going to live here for three months and then we don't know', that doesn't make me feel good. That's a lot of anxiety. There needs to be permanent solutions.

Within the last years there has been extended media presence on working homelessness and especially people sleeping in their cars, vans, or RVs [residential vehicles]. Have you encountered an increase in these transient forms of homelessness?

[M:] In the last homeless count I did, which covered 2014 to 2018, we definitely saw an increase of people living in their cars. And in general, hidden forms of homelessness have increased. But it is very hard to get data, because parents don't want to lose their kids, and most people don't want to go into a shelter, because there they lose all their belongings and their dogs. Or, they don't want to get separated from their spouses. They get sent to different shelters based on gender. And obviously there are some non-binary trans people that are not welcome in these shelters either⁵⁸.

Counting the homeless population is very difficult, it's very inaccurate, it's not a science. And people living on couches or crashing in friends' homes are not being counted because they're ashamed. But that's definitely also a form of being unhoused.

Recently, homelessness has especially increased in smaller cities in Silicon Valley, such as Mountain View, Palo Alto, or Sunnyvale. Does this represent a shifting focus of homelessness from the cities towards the suburbs?

[M:] In the city [San Francisco] they came up with an 'emergency encampment plan', which basically enabled the authorities to move homeless individuals if they were not following any Covid protocols. This was now during the pandemic but resembles the general handling of the homelessness crisis here. They were moving folks without giving them a place to go to. So they first moved to Oakland and Berkeley and then to the smaller cities of the East Bay and south to Silicon Valley. It is a regional effect, similar to the housing crisis in general: All those folks who have been displaced from Oakland and San Francisco because of rent, went to Richmond. Richmond is now also getting gentrified. So, people move further away to East Contra Costa County. It's ridiculous.

Dwelling on the street means being under constant threat through the authorities. How are police harassments and conflicts with the municipalities influencing the lives of the homeless population here in Oakland?

[M:] I mean, police harassment is just a mainstay in Oakland, in the United States in general. I mean, Black Lives Matter has been getting stronger, but yet nothing's changed within the last ten years since they're present. In Oakland we've definitely seen a lot of harassment targeting homeless folks. In general the vulnerable communities are especially threatened. So we have these encampments all over the city, like under bridges, and empty lots. So the city has been cracking down on them for the last year: They just literally bulldoze people's belongings – they bring one of those little bulldozers and destroy their encampments and possessions. It's awful. People are screaming and being so upset. If you're mentally unstable, how traumatic is that going to be? They're just exacerbating the issue. So this is Oakland's response to homelessness.

Recently some media commentaries highlight that lots of Bay Area residents, and especially tech employees and even whole corporations, leave the region due to shifts in their work environment, such as promoting a general switch to home-office solutions. What is your opinion on these developments? Is that a potential relief for the housing crisis?

[M:] I'll believe it when I see it. I think a lot of techies are heading off to the Midwest right now to work in home-office and be with their families, but they're just going to come back once the pandemic is over, or once they realise the issues about completely working remotely. I don't have much hope that this is going to be changing a lot. For now it doesn't relieve the housing market at all, it's just temporarily.

I have been growing up here, I have my family around here, and want to be around the culture, but the situation has clearly worsened within the last few years. Rent control was again on the ballot in this last election and it failed. So much for progressive California. We passed Prop 22 and failed on rent control. It's just ridiculous. We said no to workers rights and housing.

[The interview was held online (Vienna/Oakland) on November 19, 2020]

57 Gavin Newsom is the current governor of California and former mayor of San Francisco.
 58 Transgender homelessness is particularly threatening as the affected individuals are also marginalized and discriminated against within the homeless community (Coalition on Homelessness, 2020).

3 CASE STUDY: THE WORKING HOMELESS OF SILICON VALLEY

“The blue-collar workers here in Silicon Valley – the people who are your typical gig workers – on average only make \$19,000 a year. That’s not nearly enough to live here. (Shastri, 2018, 0:44)

Urban disruption in the Bay Area has many visible aspects: For example, the tech shuttles which block public bus stops, the corporate headquarters which draw immense traffic into Silicon Valley’s suburbs, or the spatialized philanthropic efforts of certain tech billionaires such as the renamed public hospitals of San Francisco (UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital, Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center). Undoubtedly the most visible aspect is street homelessness. As the most dramatic symptom of the housing crisis it is often the immediate consequence of evictions in the Bay Area. The region has the third highest number of people suffering from homelessness in the United States (Bay Area Council, & Economic Institute, 2019b). The economic thrive due to Silicon Valley’s success might at first seem to contradict this development. With just 2.5 percent of the US population the Bay Area is accountable for 4.4 percent of its GDP (Bay Area Council, & Economic Institute, 2019a). Despite the resulting low unemployment rate, the homeless numbers are still growing (ASR, 2019a & 2019b). The general perception of homelessness seems to be limited to its visible urban symptoms and the interconnected urban conflicts about littering, defecation, noise, drug abuse, or the simple unpleasantness of poverty. The invisible homelessness seems to be less of a public respectively political problem. Most recently more attention was drawn to the *working homeless* who are in general particularly neglected by the cities, their employers, and the general public. Connecting to their lives, several struggles over the use of public space, informal dwelling, or shifts in the

working environment, arose (cf. Shastri, 2018). The working homeless represent the various before mentioned inequalities: The general imbalance between generated jobs and housing stock (especially in suburbs like Mountain View, Cupertino, Sunnyvale, etc., which are attractive for Silicon Valley employees), the displacement of the working-class in public and private space, and especially the economic disruptions generated by the tech presence in the region. For these reasons, this diploma thesis analyzes the working homeless of the Bay Area as paradigmatic case study for the multiple urban conflicts in the region and the global urban disruptions that are potentially carried out through digitalization and the rise of big tech. In the meantime working homelessness is a rising phenomenon in the whole United States.

3.1 INTRODUCTION: DEFINITION, TERMINOLOGY, AND DISTINCTION

“ I know people are frustrated about gentrification happening in the city, but the reality is, we live in a free market society. The wealthy working people have earned their right to live in the city. They went out, got an education, work hard, and earned it. [...] I shouldn't have to worry about being accosted. I shouldn't have to see the pain, struggle, and despair of homeless people to and from my way to work every day. (Keller, 2016)

The discontent about the homeless population among parts of the new tech inhabitants became one of the most discussed aspects of the tech disruption of San Francisco. The above-stated sentences are part of an open letter from one tech entrepreneur to the former mayor of the city. This is just one example of this kind of tech-hubris uttered by individual tech members. The urban struggles related to homelessness in the Bay Area go indeed much deeper and are oftentimes rooted in systemic disruption. In the subchapter 3.3 the systematic neglect of working homelessness, respectively the interconnected vehicle dwelling, and the harassment from the police and through urban policies are described.

Homelessness is hard to grasp and researching it offers certain problematic issues. Firstly, there are clear methodological problems such as the terminology, definition, and distinction (cf. chapter 3.1.1). Secondly, homelessness is a particularly sensitive research focus, which is not only highly personal and intimate but also very complex and multifaceted (Huber, 2020). The general research perspective of this diploma thesis is to perceive homelessness as one aspect of the multifaceted housing crisis in the Bay Area, all of which contextualized within the multiple crisis of contemporary global neoliberalism (cf. Brand, U., 2009). Yet this broad context allows only a distinct insight in the manifold daily struggles of homelessness – particularly working homelessness. This case study leaves out some of the most dramatic aspects of being unhoused namely extensive drug abuse and mental health issues, which are both often used to justify regressive policymaking, assaults, and brutality from the general public and the authorities. Additionally, trans homelessness, which represents

further marginality, is not addressed. This research instead focuses on the emerging phenomenon of working homelessness and its socio-spatial contestations, which are especially affecting the public space in the Bay Area. The number of employed homeless people in Santa Clara County has increased from eight percent in 2017 to 18 percent in 2019 (ASR, 2019b). This particular county represents the one in the Bay Area with the highest number of homeless people (9,706) (ibid.) and at the same time the core county of Silicon Valley including the cities of San Jose, Sunnyvale, Mountain View, Palo Alto or Cupertino, which are famous for their number of tech corporations. Additionally, many of the working homeless of Santa Clara County are employed at one of these corporations as blue-collar workers (Shastry, 2018). The focus group of the working homeless should not at all vindicate any form of superiority of employed individuals over unemployed ones: In that sense, within the screening of the sources of the qualitative content analysis, one quote particularly strikes attention: “Homelessness is a job. Just like you clock in nine-to-five, it's a job to be homeless” (Invisible People, 2019b, 5:48). Particularly for this reason a brief description of the daily routine of working homeless is outlined within chapter 3.2. Instead of said vindication the case is meant to address the further fading of the middle class and struggles of the working poor to the benefit of the general discourse.



IMG 09: RVs and campers on Shoreline Boulevard in Mountain View (McMahon, 2019).

3.1.1 HOMELESS OR HOUSELESS?

The English term ‘homeless’ is frequently criticized for its one-dimensional perception of home and the subsequent neglect of homelessness itself. The German word *obdachlos* (shelterless) is indeed more precise and quite similar to the alternative English term *houseless*. It is meant to differentiate in between a roof over one's head and the notion of home. Furthermore, the term homeless might delegitimize the informal spaces of the houseless. Moving or destroying these spaces is thereby eased and justified (Huber, 2020). Humankind is not limited on houses as living spaces and to store belongings, sleep, gather in community, etc. In this sense, the connotation of community – which can be crucial to survive homelessness – is denied by the terminology. Moreover, by definition home is “the place where one lives permanently, especially as a member of a family or household” (Oxford Language as cited in Huber, 2020). As mentioned in the introduction of this diploma thesis I acknowledge the importance of the social context for experiences of social reality and that the perspective we take shapes this context further. Despite this interpretivist conception I still continue using the classical term homeless. This is not because it is widely used and understood but due to a certain fuzziness of the term houseless. Firstly, it is as well used to describe intentional homelessness and thereby also marginalizes the struggles and dangers of forced homelessness: “Homelessness is caused when a person is unable to live in a permanent home because of circumstances that are out of their control” (Huber, 2020). Secondly the majority of homeless people prefer the classical word and identify themselves as *homeless*. (ibid.) Summarizing, the context of discourse and terminology certainly carries a stigma, subtext, and potential delegitimization of homeless’ spaces and structures. Yet the debate on the use of alternative terms is not supported by the affected individuals themselves.

3.1.2 DEFINITION(S) OF HOMELESSNESS

In 2019 the City and County of San Francisco’s website stated two different homeless count numbers: One adjusted to federal standards and one to the San Francisco standard. The first indicated a count of 8,035 homeless individuals and the latter 9,808 (City and County of San Francisco, n.d.). The federal standard defines homeless individuals as “living in a supervised publicly or privately-operated shelter designated to provide a temporary living arrangement” or “with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground” (ASR, 2019). The City and County of San Francisco expands this definition including persons who are staying respectively living in the homes of family or friends, jails, hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, or in *Single Room Occupancy (SRO)* units. All of these groups are believed to be otherwise homeless (ibid.). In general homelessness can be subdivided into chronic, episodic, transitional, and hidden homelessness (Unite, 2019), all of which can be working homelessness. The various sources of this qualitative content analysis, however, indicate that it is particularly connected to hidden homelessness and also shifting towards a chronic phenomenon. The *Coalition on Homelessness* in San Francisco mainly differentiates sheltered and unsheltered homeless and precariously housed. The category of precariously housed thereby expands the City and County of San Francisco’s definition (e.g. hotel, SRO, etc.) onto squatting and couch surfing.

3.1.3 HOMELESSNESS IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

With 28,200 individuals, the San Francisco Bay Area has the third highest population of homeless in the United States after New York City (76,500) and Los Angeles (55,200) (Bay Area Council, & Economic Institute, 2019b). While in New York just five percent of the homeless population are unsheltered, that accounts for 75 percent in Los Angeles and 67 percent in the Bay Area (ibid.). In comparison to the other Bay Area counties Santa Clara has the highest number of people generally experiencing homelessness: It rose from 7,394 in 2017 to 9,706 in 2019, of which 82 percent are unsheltered (2019) (ASR, 2019b). The high numbers of homelessness in Santa Clara County both question the general perception of San Francisco as the main driver for homelessness influx to the Bay Area and represent a crucial factor of the tech economy – low income blue collar jobs. From 2013 to 2019 the homelessness number in the city of San Francisco grew from 6,858 to 8,035, of which 64 percent are unsheltered (2019) (ASR, 2019a). The numbers for San Francisco represent the first increase of homelessness since 2013, both in matters of sheltered and unsheltered individuals. The unsheltered population is particularly relevant for this case on working homelessness, as shelters mostly require long waiting periods and offer low flexibility regarding working hours. While San Francisco in particular is often claimed to be a huge attractor for homeless from other cities and states (Schwaller, 2019), 70 percent of its homeless lived in the city before getting unhoused (ASR, 2019a). Of the rest, 14 percent lived in Alameda, San Mateo, Marin, Contra Costa, or Santa Clara County (ibid.). In Santa Clara County (which has the highest homeless number) 57 percent live there for more than ten years (ASR, 2019b). Besides the different conceptions and definitions of homelessness, the research is further complicated by the difficulties of counting the



IMG 10: Car encampment on a sidewalk in an industrial area in Oakland (Ho, 2019).

homeless population. It is highly mobile, often changing locations, and generally prefers to stay hidden (especially working homeless individuals). Homeless counts are thereby never to be seen as fully comprehensive (ASR, 2019b). Thus, the given numbers are alarming and crucial for the funding of homeless aid and services, but almost certainly too low. This is exceptionally true for the working homeless, who often do not want to be outed, and the ones living in vehicles, who are transient and hidden (cf. Ho, 2019). Additionally, in particular working homeless or families with children often seek options to live on private property (with family or friends), to avoid sleeping on the street, in vehicles, or shelters (ASR, 2019a). They are thereby even harder to identify, but nevertheless account as part of the homeless population.



FIG 28: Number of new jobs per new house in the Bay Area, 2011 to 2017; own graphic, data source: Buhayar, & Cannon, 2019.

3.1.4 WORKING HOMELESSNESS

“ [The other cities] need jobs and we've got people with jobs living on our streets. Working homelessness is something that to me is unusual for the country as a whole [...]. Silicon Valley and the tech industry created this problem. (Shastry, 2018, 3:12-3:47)

The working poor are individuals who work full-time but whose income lies beneath the poverty level. The phenomenon of the working poor is increasing since the 1980s in Western industrial nations driven by deregulation of the economy, the unbuilding of the welfare state, flexibilisation of a globalized economy, and the rapid growth of low income jobs (Spektrum Akademischer Verlag, 2001). In the United States this development is closely aligned to the Reaganomics (cf. Solnit, 2019). In addition to the worsening of the economic situation of the working-class (which is in place since the mentioned Reaganomics) today's costs of housing are skyrocketing,

especially in urban centers in the United States (but as well globally). The median cost of a one-bedroom apartment in San Francisco is 3,450 dollars at market rate, but minimum-wage workers make only 2,702 dollars monthly (Coalition on Homelessness, 2020). In Santa Clara and San Mateo County (the main counties of Silicon Valley), the median gross rent is even higher than in San Francisco nowadays (United States Census Bureau, 2018). Thereby especially Santa Clara represents the hotspot of working homelessness in the Bay Area, as it has not only the highest numbers of homeless in general but also the highest percentage of working homeless (ASR, 2019b). The above-stated map (fig. 28) shows the lacking housing construction in the region, which is additionally increasing the urban crisis. A healthy ratio between job creation and housing construction is approximately 1.5 new jobs per new home. Bay Area counties display ratios ranging from 2 to 10 overall from 2011 to 2017, and some cities have ratios of 25 newly created jobs per new housing unit (McMahon, 2019).

The sources of the QCA show that the working homelessness is not merely a local issue but that there are rising numbers all over the United States, especially in the big metropolitan regions. Besides the Bay Area South California (Los Angeles-San Diego), Portland, Seattle, and Texas (Austin-San Antonio) are mentioned in the individual stories of affected homeless (e.g. Invisible People, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c; 2019a; 2019b; & 2020; Shastry, 2018). Yet the Bay Area, respectively Silicon Valley, plays a key role within the development of this new working-class. As discussed in the previous chapters the urban crisis has multiple dimensions. Aside from the much cited hypergentrification – the dispossession of the urban surroundings which is mainly driven by housing supply and demand – the working homelessness is deeply rooted within shifts of the labor market. Silicon Valley is famous for its drawing power for young highly educated tech engineers. However, the low wage jobs, which are directly attached to high-wage ones, are often left aside. Additionally, the gig economy is further dumping wages and working conditions (Kobie, 2018). In 2018 in San Francisco and San Mateo County four of the top-five fastest growing occupations were low-wage ones (Dineen, 2019). Also because of that the Bay Area has an exceptionally low unemployment rate: Jobs in food preparation, cleaning and maintenance, or driving and transportation gigs are thereby directly connected to the rise of high-wage tech jobs, both due to demand of consumer goods and services for high-paid employees and assisting services for the corporations. As the succeeding QCA (chapter 3.2) shows these particular jobs are as well often done by working homeless.

3.1.5 VEHICLE DWELLING

“ For the few years that I slept in my car, the Toyota Corolla was what I came home to. Parks and gyms that I frequented started to feel like homes. The metropolitan area where I roamed (the San Francisco Bay Area) was also a consistent home. Being in my car felt like a half-choice. (Huber, 2020)

Working homelessness is often connected to vehicle dwelling. Especially in the context of tech disruption of housing and working in the Bay Area, most of the affected live in cars or residential vehicles (RVs). This is not only shown by the number of stories about individual fates on Youtube (e.g. Shastry, 2018; DW Documentary 2019) or the classical media (e.g. Do, 2019; McMahon, 2019), but also by reactions of certain Bay Area cities, which for example ban RVs from their city areas (e.g. Ravani; Ho, 2019) or prohibit sleeping in cars (Ho, 2019) as the main 'solution' for the homelessness crisis. The vehicle as living space for the working homeless is directly connected to big tech, not only as compensation for the unaffordable housing (cf. fig 32, p. 106), but also as combined living and working space – for example for Uber or Lyft drivers, who simply do not have time to commute to their homes outside the Bay Area because of the intense working hours required by the gig economy (Shastry, 2019). Vehicle dwelling is neither a new phenomenon, nor is it uncommon in the United States, but it is increasing (Ho, 2019). In Santa Clara County 18 percent of the homeless sleep in vehicles (ASR, 2019b). As mentioned in the previous subchapter it is difficult to identify and count homeless persons, who are sleeping in cars, vans, or RVs (ASR, 2019a). It is thereby indicated that their percentage is underrepresented. They additionally receive fewer resources and are not prioritized for subsidized housing. Yet vehicular dwelling is perceived as the safest option by the affected individuals, homeless advocates, and city officials. At the same time, vehicular dwellers are under constant risk of losing their only form of shelter through displacement, harassment, and criminalization (Coalition on Homelessness, 2020).

There are various different forms of this kind of homelessness, starting with living in a car or van, RV or even in a formal trailer park. The RVs are both rented or owned, and parked illegally on public land, or legally on rented space (sometimes in backyards), or even in the mentioned trailer parks which offer vast infrastructure (cf. e.g. DW Documentary 2019; Ravani, 2019; Ho, 2019; Scommegna, 2004). Many affected people do not consider themselves homeless (Gunnupuri, 2018), but in most local media commentaries on informal RV dwelling in the United States authors claim that it is a form of homelessness (ibid.). At the same time the 8.8 million Americans who live in formal trai-

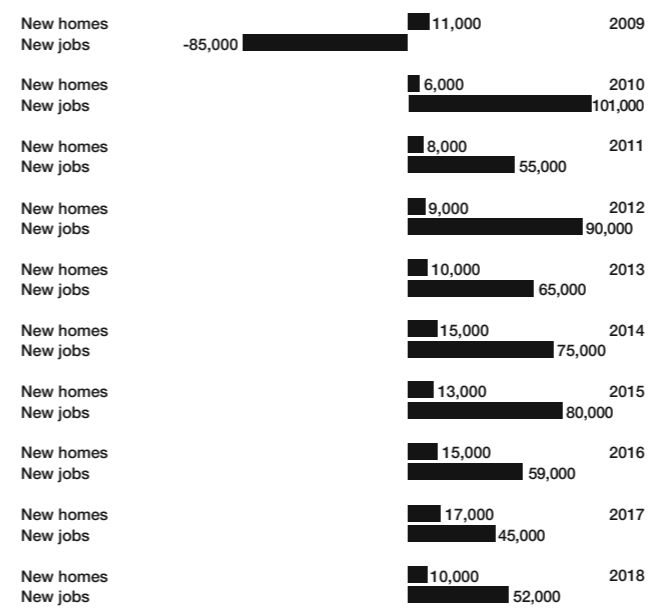


FIG 29: Silicon Valley job creation vs new housing development (counties of Alameda, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara), data source: McMahon, 2019.

ler parks or mobile homes (Scommegna, 2004) are left aside. In the Bay Area RV parking spaces are rented for 500 dollars (Sonoma County) up to 1,600 dollars (San Mateo) (SFBay Area Housing – Craigslist; 2020) and the RVs are rented for additional 800 dollars (Gunnupuri, 2018). These numbers clearly illustrate the housing crisis in the Bay Area: RV parking space rents and RV rent together sum up to 1,300 to 2,400 dollars. The concurrent popularity of RV dwelling shows how precarious the housing situation in the region is. At the same time the struggles about informally parked RVs in many cities (cf. chapter 3.3) of the Bay Area prove that a significant number of (working) people can neither afford to rent a regular apartment or house nor a RV parking space. These people are thereby driven into illegal dwelling. While formal RV parking spaces certainly provide better infrastructure and prevent harassment by the authorities, they still represent a precarious form of dwelling. This quasi-homelessness makes inhabitants dependent on the landlord as there are few regulations on trailer-parks and mobile homes in the United States. Landlords can easily evict tenants, urge for fees, or raise the rent (Scommegna, 2004).

There is a thin line in between homelessness and being housed and this case study is not providing a clear distinction. It rather indicates the precariousness of various forms of low-income housing and that these blurred dwelling forms can indeed serve as pathways out of homelessness, but as well leading into street homelessness (ibid.). There are certainly also working homeless on the street (cf. Invisible People, 2018c), but in the Bay Area the majority is using some form of vehicle as sleeping space: Uber or Lyft cars, RVs and regular cars or vans. This case study on working homelessness is thereby directly linked to vehicular dwelling. The affected group represents a transient urban population and its use of public space – at the crossover of formal and informal dwelling, visible and hidden poverty, living on private and public space.

Usually, the socio-economic effects of financial crises do not get directly visible in public space, but rather “behind the private curtain of shame and guilt” (Knierbein, 2020, p. 213). The emerging discourse on vehicular and working homelessness in the Bay Area cities shows the extreme dynamic of the disruptive urbanism in the region: The visible conflicts on homelessness and the struggles of the affected people, which are both described in the following chapters might just be the tip of the iceberg of the actual effect of foreclosures, evictions, skyrocketing rents, and gentrification. At the same time this case illustrates the need for an inclusive and just public space in matters of design and policy- making as it serves basic human needs like shelter or access to crucial infrastructure that is particularly demanded by the homeless population after the immediate loss of housing

(ibid.). This significant demand on public space becomes especially clear as the situation of being temporarily homeless becomes more and more permanent in the Bay Area and informal dwellers have to deal with the lack of some of the most basic human needs on an everyday basis (cf. chapter 3.2).

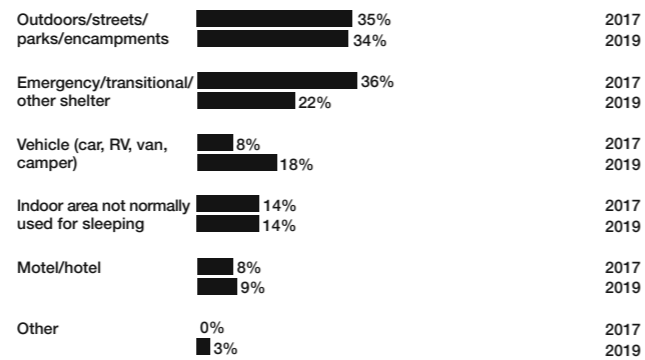


FIG 30: Homeless living arrangements 2017 vs 2019 in Santa Clara County, data source: ASR, 2019b.

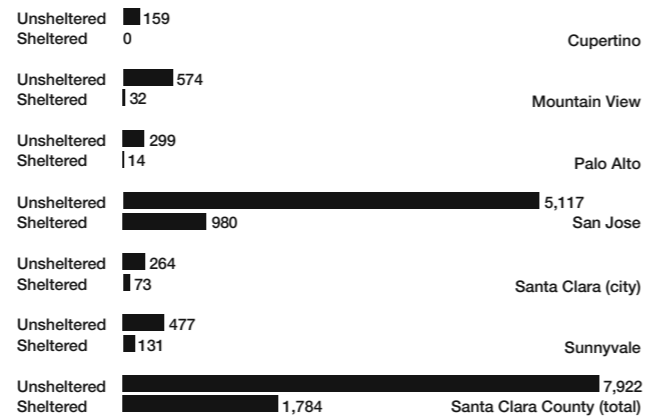


FIG 31: Santa Clara County: 2019 homeless count numbers of selected cities and whole county (unsheltered vs sheltered) data source: ASR, 2019b.

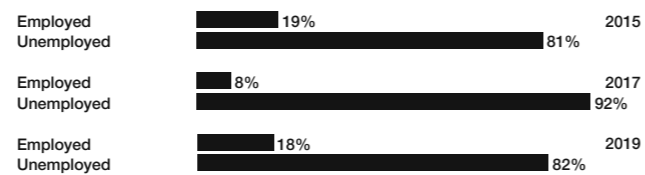


FIG 32: Employment status of Santa Clara County homeless population, data source: ASR 2019b.

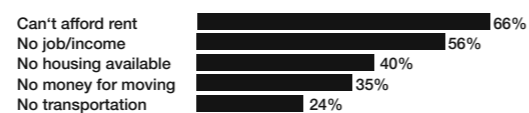


FIG 33: Santa Clara County: Main obstacles for homeless individuals to obtaining permanent housing in 2019, data source: ASR, 2019b.

3.2 REALITY OF DAILY LIFE

3.2.1 EVERYDAY LIFE

“About to be homeless. [...] Any advices how to survive... (recording unit 10)

There is a strong community aspect about homelessness. In online open-access discussion forums (e.g. Reddit) affected people guide each other through the first stage of being unhoused and share experience and clues on how to make money, where to sleep, or how to keep clean – to be able to work and quickly find shelter. The first question is always if there is a vehicle available, which makes the transition a lot easier and is mostly the only chance to still be able to work. As mentioned in chapter 3.1.5 there is no accurate number of working homeless in the Bay Area (Gunnupuri, 2018), but there is a clear connection between vehicular dwelling and the possibility to work, which is also indicated by the outcome of this QCA (cf. recording unit 12; & 29). Besides sleeping space, vehicles are used for transportation, storage, or as means of a job (in the case of gig drivers). There are various kinds of vehicles used as living space in the Bay Area. As the salaries are generally high (also for low-income jobs) some of the cars and vehicles are of high value, which is eventually just another evidence of the region’s high housing costs: “[Their owners] are clearly people with some sort of assets, as opposed to some guy curled up in a blanket sleeping in a doorway” (recording unit 25). The different forms of vehicles and parking space reveal the versatility of the phenomenon of the working homeless. There are different levels of living quality depending not only on the model, condition, or size, but also on the infrastructure, legal status, and position of the parking space: “Big van SUV and it’s a house” (recording unit 4).

One of the most addressed issues is showering and body hygiene in general, as most working homeless try to hide their living status from their employers – respectively are forced to do so. One of the most frequently shared pointers on Reddit is to shower in a gym. Many homeless have gym memberships and go there late at night or early in the morning to shower (recording unit 1; 2; 12; & 29). However, they have to be careful to hide their homelessness in front of the other gym members and staff to avoid being expelled. Another option for body hygiene are truck stops, but showering there is costly (recording unit 1). Depending on the size of the RVs some of them might

include a toilet, but some might not work, all lack of sewage, which often causes conflicts with the authorities and neighbors (recording unit 25). In general, “conditions are cramped, and the vehicles offer no heating, running water, toilet facilities or privacy” (recording unit 9). For these reasons, streets next to public toilets are often sought after by vehicle dwellers. However, some cities and organizations offer limited parking spaces with portable toilets and water basins or even outdoor kitchens (recording unit 29; & 19). Yet this is a clear exception and most working homeless depend on soup kitchens, storable food, eating at work, or donations (recording unit 2; & 29). Altogether these aspects offer insights into handling ordinary tasks of the daily life of (vehicular) homeless. They already show how much planning and organizing being homeless requires: “it becomes a full-time job to survive” (recording unit 25).

3.2.2 SLEEPING/PARKING SPACE AND SECURITY

“ *At first, it's hard to spot RVs that are used as homes. But these vehicles are all over Silicon Valley. They line frontage roads that run alongside highways. There will often be a chain of them on quieter streets in office parks and light industrial areas. But they can also be found on suburban residential streets parked in rows opposite the ranch-style homes common to the area.* (recording unit 11)

The core urban aspect of working homelessness is the selection of the dwelling or parking spot. It determines not only access to infrastructure, but also potential urban conflicts and security. Some of the affected are able to find a semi-permanent spot, others have to regularly change their location. This accounts for both street homelessness and vehicle homelessness. Having a semi-permanent spot enables routine, safety, being reachable for support, and potential community-building. Yet most vehicular dwellers and unhoused homeless in general lack this option and live in highly unstable conditions, meaning they have to switch spots often to avoid being harassed (e.g. recording unit 5; 8; 9; & 11).

Typical overnigher spots are Walmart parking spots. They are spacious, free, and usually tolerate a certain number of vehicular dwellers – if they are not too noticeable. Other options are industrial parks without nighttime security, hotel or fitness center parking spots, rest and truck stops (recording unit 2; 3; 5; & 8). Still, all of these places require switching up and having different options: “I suggest finding 5 or 6 locations and switching it up” (recording unit 5). Finding the right spot is a difficult undertaking. The spot should be close to facilities such as public restrooms, community centers, or sustenance options, provide privacy and a certain concealment, yet be public enough to prevent any kind of abuse (from the authorities, close-by home-owners, or fellow homeless) (recording unit 8; 9; 16; & 25). Many team up to form encampments consisting of vans, cars, RVs, tiny houses, and tents. Oftentimes these communities have common spaces, for example outdoor kitchens, mobile sanitary facilities, or makeshift dollar-stores (recording unit 25; & 29). In comparison to permanent encampments (which include informal structures) cars and vans sometimes form communities on private parking lots. They are tolerated just for the nighttime and have to clear the spaces during the day: Gates close and reopen at a certain time and the spaces are not supervised or guarded (recording unit 25). For the working homeless that means they are not only under constant threat, but also underlie a very strict time management, because they have to adjust their job hours to the access conditions (ibid.).

In Silicon Valley's suburbs, next to the headquarters of the biggest tech corporations the typical way of living for the working homeless population is RV dwelling. They usually avoid parking in residential areas, but this is not always possible – especially due to the needed proximity to crucial infrastructure and on behalf of multiple close-by jobs (recording unit 9; & 16). While the vehicle living generally causes less complaints from the housed neighbors they still often call the police: “On one hand, a car provides more security and safety for the individual, and attracts fewer complaints than tent encampments or the more visibly homeless. But still, constituents complain about vehicle dwellers. They take up valuable parking spaces. They leak gasoline and sewage. And in general, trash pickup doesn't exist for people living in cars. Not every individual has a working bathroom.” (recording unit 25).

Criminalization of sleeping in cars, vans, or RVs is a major threat, but so is criminality. Firstly, that leads to a difficult selection of the perfect dwelling space with several exclusion criteria: “Do not park near night clubs and bars, [...] in high crime areas, [...] in front of single detached houses” (recording unit 8), or “rest areas and country roads” (recording unit 6). Secondly, it leads to vast individual security options: “Be sure to get something to cover the windows, not [...] stay in one place too long” (recording unit 2), “close the door”, “put the [car] alarm”, and get a pepper spray and knife (recording unit 25).

3.2.3 HOMELESS WORKING AT BIG TECH

“ *That's Facebook corporate policy – they literally subcontract out the blue-collar work and that's a way so that they can pay those people less. The security guards at Facebook along with many other security guards throughout Silicon Valley are organizing a campaign to win our first union contract in Mountain View.* (recording unit 23, 8:37-9:15)

Working homeless often work as security guards, drivers, carers, or cleaners. They mostly do physical work and sometimes work multiple jobs (recording unit 10; 29). This is a general phenomenon in the United States. In Silicon Valley, many of those working homeless work as subcontractors of tech corporations: “If you have a car, I'd start doing Lyft or Postmates to make money” (recording unit 10). While Uber, Lyft and other drivers (delivery and taxi-services) are especially overrepresented, there are various cases of security guards, cleaners, or maintenance workers at big tech firms (10; 11; 23; 24; & 29). As most of these working homeless are employed through sub-contractors the tech corporations produce a two-class working environment. While white-collar workers, who are directly employed, receive vast social benefits, the subcontracted gig-workers live in precarious situations. While some dwell in garages or tiny homes, a significant number is indistinctively homeless (recording unit 11; 23; 24; & 25). The affected have to hide their homelessness, not just due to social marginalization, but also because their employers or clients would otherwise fire them, respectively refuse working with them (recording unit 11).

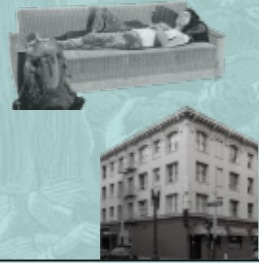
Homeless people of the Bay Area generally live in the region for longer, some working homeless subcontractors move to Mountain View, Cupertino, San Jose, etc. to work for the tech firms (recording unit 11). Uber, Lyft, Instacart, and other drivers represent a particularly alarming case: In order to make their living, they have to either sleep in their cars or RVs or commute several hours per day (11; 23; 24; & 25). Some even have homes in far-away counties, but cannot make the commute due to long work hours and decide to (oftentimes illegally) sleep in their cars in between shifts or in general (recording unit 23; & 24). On the following two pages the blurry nature of homelessness is depicted next to the socio-spatial needs and issues of vehicle dwelling, the common occupations of working homeless, and the essential social and sanitary infrastructure of homeless communities (fig 34, p. 110-111).

← **BLENDING FORMS OF HOMELESSNESS** →

FORMALLY HOUSED: EVICTION, DIVORCE, ILLNESS, ETC.



COUCHSURFING, SLEEPING AT FRIENDS AND FAMILY, AIRBNB, HOTEL, MOTEL,....



RV, VAN, CAMPER, ETC.: ORGANIZED PARKING SPACES, ILLEGAL OVERNIGHT PARKING, OR ROADSIDE...



TRAILERHOME, TRAILERPARK: INFORMAL AND FORMAL



CARS: FUNCTIONING OR STATIONARY, PARTIALLY USED AS MEANS TO WORK (FOR MOBILITY OR AS DRIVER)



TINY HOME/EMERGENCY HOME/ SHELTER



LIVING IN STATIONARY/BROKEN DOWN VEHICLES,....



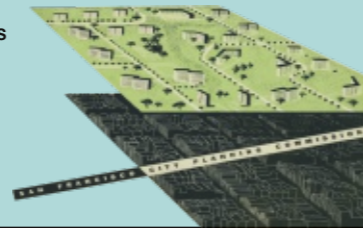
STREET HOMELESSNESS, ENCAMPMENTS, HOMELESS COMMUNITIES



CENTRAL SPACE: ACCESS TO URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE, STREETWORKERS, SOUP KITCHENS, JOBS,....

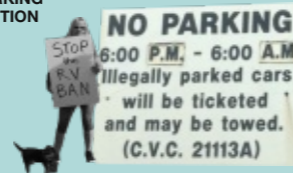


BUT: KEEPING DISTANCE TO RESIDENTIAL AREAS



SAFETY: SOME PARKING SPACES ARE SUPERVISED BY THE CITIES, SOME BY THE HOMELESS COMMUNITIES THEMSELVES

LEGAL OR ILLEGAL PARKING: THREATS THROUGH POLICE, FORMAL RESIDENTS, CORPORATIONS, CITIES (PARKING BANS, SLEEPING BANS, EVICTION OF CAMPS),....



SEWAGE, TOILETS, SHOWERS: GYM MEMBERSHIP, TRUCKSTOPS, PUBLIC TOILETS, NGO FACILITATED SANITARY INFRASTRUCTURE

↑ **NEEDS AND ISSUES OF PARKING AND DWELLING SPACES** ↓

GIG-DRIVER: UBER, LYFT,....



MAINTAINANCE, WAREHOUSE WORKER, DELIVERY,....



SECURITY, GROUNDSKEEPER,....



CARER, CLEANER,....

FIREFIGHTER, NURSE,....



↑ **COMMON JOBS FOR WORKING HOMELESS** ↓

COMMUNITY-BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE: E.G. MAKESHIFT DOLLAR-STORE



ACCESS TO INTERNET AND ELECTRICITY



KITCHEN, BARBECUE, FRIDGE,....



TOILETS, WASHING BASINS, SHOWERS,.... (SELF-CONSTRUCTED OR FACILITATED BY CITIES AND NGOS)



SECURE SPACE TO SLEEP AND TO STORE BELONGINGS



↑ **ESSENTIAL SOCIAL AND SANITARY INFRASTRUCTURE** ↓

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FIG 34: Transient, mobile, and blurry nature of everyday life in homelessness, vehicle homelessness, and working homelessness, own graphic.

3.3 URBAN CONFLICTS

3.3.1 CITY POLICIES AND HARASSMENT

“Occupants of trailers and motor homes that are being used for living and/or sleeping quarters may be cited and/or told to move immediately. [...] Concerns about trailers or motor homes that are being stored on a public street can be reported using our Service Request form or by downloading and using the free San José 311 Mobile App. Concerns about trailers or motor homes that are being used for living or sleeping quarters on City streets should be reported to the Police Department’s non-emergency 311 dispatch center (recording unit 28)

Within the last years the working homeless vehicle dwellers of Silicon Valley raised media attention, as their numbers rose. They mostly try to park their cars, RVs, and vans not directly in front of residential buildings, but this is not always possible (recording unit 11; 16; & 25). Additionally, their presence in other areas of the cities as well causes unrest among the formal residents. This is mostly due to the bad living conditions, which were discussed in the previous chapters. The informal vehicle dwellings leak sewage, have no garbage disposal, are cramped with belongings, consume parking spots, and are often in bad technical condition (recording unit 11; 16; & 25). While this form of homeless dwelling is clearly more accepted than street encampments, it is still a constant source of neighborhood unrest and complaints (recording unit 25). At the same time, many formally housed residents acknowledge the underlying urban conflicts about gentrification, the housing crisis, and shifts in the work environment. Yet they clearly oppose vehicular dwelling in their own neighborhoods and in general in the city areas (recording unit 13; 16; & 25). Thus, cities provide different options to log dwellers and issue complaints. Disconcertingly, the officers and city staff dealing with these complaints often cannot afford living in the respective cities (San Jose, Palo Alto, Mountain View, etc.) themselves any more (recording unit 11). At the same time the informal dwellers are aware of the unrest, but simply have no other place to go (recording unit 16).

While many homeless dwellers live in their own vehicles, or on the street, some rent RVs or lease cars (recording unit 9; 23; & 25). They are situated in between formal and informal housing conditions, as they often informally or illegally park their vehicles

in urban space. Vehicle dwelling certainly provides more safety against the loss of personal belongings, compared to street homelessness. However, the informal rent situation can sometimes lead to the dramatic loss of all belongings: “Earlier that morning she discovered that her RV had been driven away by the owner who had illegally rented it out to the family” (recording unit 9). Without a formal housing situation, the ownership and rent protection is highly limited. Additionally, the vehicle dwellers are anyway an unwanted urban group from the viewpoint of the city authorities. Even though they are at risk of lessor and neighborhood harassment, most harm is done by arbitrary city policies and disturbance through the police: “The homeless have obstacles to deal with also, of course there are the typical ones such as the police harassing them.” (recording unit 15). This becomes apparent through issued tickets, threats of towing, RV bans, temporary parking restrictions, etc. (recording unit 9; 11; 15; 16; 20; & 23). This criminalization often leads to cars being towed with all their belongings inside and cannot be bailed out due to the lack of money of the owners or renters (recording unit 25). Various cities have municipal ordinances that tackle the vehicle dwellers and thereby the working homeless: San Francisco generally prohibits sleeping in cars from ten p.m. to six a.m., San Jose and Mountain View ban parking for longer than 72 hours, and Berkeley and Mountain View have ordered a total parking ban, but have not executed it yet (recording unit 16; 25; & 30). San Francisco has certain exceptions and considers stopping the sleeping ban and funding a controlled parking lot for vehicle dwelling, as Oakland already does. Both cities, however, have RV parking bans in big parts of their inner cities (ibid.). In San Francisco the fine for a violation is 1,000 dollars or six months in jail (recording unit 30).

All these city policies further aggravate the lives of the vehicle dwellers of the Bay Area. The actual enforcement of total vehicle dwelling bans respectively RV bans would force people into street homelessness or further displace them into the urban fringe. The different strategies already lead to migration of vehicle homelessness amongst the cities – this has been vastly discussed in the course of the Berkeley RV banning plans (recording unit 26). But as the struggles of the working homeless and vehicle dwellers in general become more present within the discourse on tech disruption and gentrification in the region, some cities act in stealthier ways, such as issuing wrong tickets or constantly waking up dwellers at night (recording unit 9; 20; & 23): “Officials in Mountain View pay lip service to tolerance while harassing RV dwellers” (recording unit 9).

The bans, unrest of the formal residents, and the arbitrary harassment cause fear of being forced to leave among the vehicle dwellers. The criminalization of their situation is



IMG 11: RVs and campers line up in Silicon Valley (Cassidy, 2020).

already one of the biggest struggles. Altogether, the way they are treated by the authorities clearly promotes the housing crisis of the middle class in California: “They can’t even find a small place for us to park our RVs, [...] and we’re supposed to expect them to build affordable housing?” (recording unit 16). Hence, some vehicle dwellers are actively protesting against the harassment of the authorities to be allowed to stay in their communities (recording unit 26).

3.3.2 MUNICIPAL AND CORPORATE HANDLING OF THE VEHICULAR HOMELESSNESS

“ *It’s better to have people sleeping in their cars and in RVs than have them sleeping outside [...] We should work to provide them a place to park their cars and their RVs that doesn’t impede public safety and public health. I think that’s the bottom line. I think we need to figure out what the best practices are because there aren’t any best practices at the moment (recording unit 26)*

The harassment through the authorities is clearly aiming towards the displacement of people, who have already been displaced from their formal homes before, without providing any alternatives. This lack of alternatives is one of the most often claimed fears of the working homeless population (recording unit 26). While some cities as Mountain View, Palo Alto, or San Jose are either enforcing or planning a total vehicle or RV ban, San Francisco, Berkeley and Oakland rethink their approaches and install legal parking spaces or plan to do so: “Individuals with vehicles that fit certain parameters can securely leave their belongings without fear of enforcement for an allotted period of time” (recording unit 25). Yet the existing legal parking lot in Oakland just covers a fraction of the city’s vehicular dwellers (ibid.). San Francisco and Berkeley plan to open spaces with similar capacities and San Francisco has housed some of its homeless population in a temporary RV facility during the Covid-19 lockdown (recording unit 17; 23; 25; & 26). These shifts in handling the vehicular dwellers require infrastructure, funding, space, but also policy and administration code changes, as San Francisco for example generally prohibits sleeping in vehicles (recording unit 25).



IMG 12: Google bike in front of RV (Bloomberg, 2019).

The cities of San Jose, Palo Alto, and Mountain View have particularly many RV dwellers (as they are in close proximity to the tech-subcontractor workplaces) – 300 to 400 vehicles are parked in each of these cities (recording unit 11; 14; & 23). These cities in the South Bay and the Peninsula tend towards further criminalization of vehicle homelessness as mentioned in the previous subchapter. Particularly Mountain View has an intensely debated discourse on RV dwelling (recording unit 14). Due to the fact that most formal residents of the city are opposing the parked RVs, the mayor has alternative ‘solutions’ for the housing crisis, such as the construction of additional housing units and encouraging major corporations in the city to open their parking lots for “their employees who might be living in vehicles” (recording unit 27). The (presumably addressed) tech corporations nowadays have extensive plans to tackle the housing crisis and homelessness: Apple, Google (Alphabet), and Facebook have pledged a total of four billion dollars to support housing construction and Google has for example given 14 million dollars to groups which tackle homelessness in Mountain View (recording unit 11; 13; & 16). But the philanthropic efforts of big tech raise criticism. The efforts of the corporations come too late, are leaving aside community aspects, and are too small compared to their impact (recording unit 31; & 32): “Google specifically has donated millions towards homelessness initiatives in the Mountain View area [...] The 67 units in the project, however, will only put a small dent in the housing crisis local residents are facing” (recording unit 31).

In addition to the existing presence of these firms, thousands of new tech jobs are going to be created in the region. So, for example Facebook is building new office spaces for 20,000 additional white-collar workers (compared to 10,000 existing ones) and Google is doubling its white-collar employees in the Bay Area

through new offices for also 20,000 people (recording unit 32). There are different estimations on the number of blue-collar service jobs that are attached to every white-collar tech job. The projections range from one to five low paying jobs per high-wage one (recording unit 23; & 32). The collaboration between big tech and homelessness initiatives generally seems to be complicated: “It was difficult to persuade tech titans to donate to homeless initiatives. The results were hard to precisely measure, and the tech crowd needed to measure success by clear metrics” (recording unit 28). While homelessness initiatives are often also funded by tech corporations, the funding is mostly just a fraction of what is invested into housing in the region by those companies.

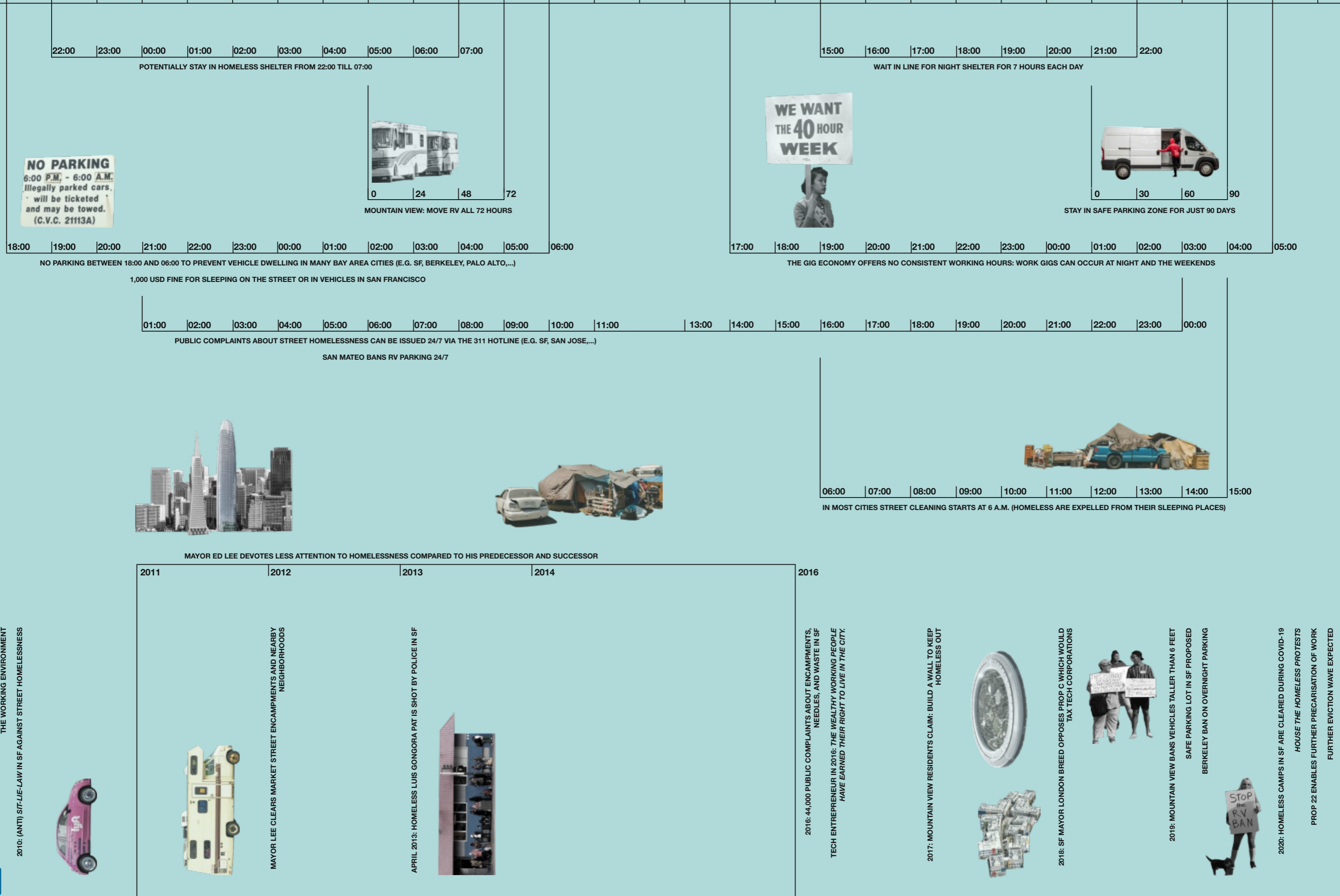


FIG 35: Urban conflicts and the time factor of homelessness, own graphic (homelessness timeline partially based on: Green, 2019).

3.4 PERCEPTION OF WORKING HOMELESSNESS AND VEHICLE DWELLING

3.4.1 AMONGST THE AFFECTED GROUP

“It’s not a luxury to live in an RV like this, it’s a necessity, [...] I can either go to work and pay the rent, or I could live in an RV and get food and clothes for my kids. (recording unit 16)

The reasons why the affected individuals and families become working homeless are in most cases directly related to evictions or the housing costs in general. Yet health issues and mortgages are also sometimes claimed to be the underlying reason (recording unit 23). The economic burden in the Bay Area and Silicon Valley’s core counties is, however, particularly often perceived as the main root of the housing and homelessness crisis and working homelessness by the affected people themselves (recording unit 9; 11; 16; 17; 23). Almost each affected person who is interviewed for online media articles or YouTube videos highlights being simply priced out by the competition on the housing market: “The rent was already a lot and then they increased it. We couldn’t find any other reasonable accommodation” (recording unit 9). The usual first reaction is to move to family members or friends and when conditions become too cramped or heated-up the working homeless decide to buy an RV or van or to sleep in their car, depending on their income: “Many RV residents say they must choose between sharing a room with strangers in overcrowded rentals for as much as US\$1,000 a month, or living in an RV” (recording unit 16). For some living in a vehicle is a very rational decision. In order to save money for healthcare, retirement, education, or even food, they reduce their quality of life, because they know that they are forced to do so in the Bay Area – the claimed alternative is usually to move to another state as California is too expensive in general (recording unit

9; 11; & 16). In Silicon Valley, the working and unemployed vehicle dwellers draw a clear connection to the tech corporation’s presence: “When Google came in, suddenly the rent started to skyrocket so I moved into my car” (recording unit 23).

The vehicles are generally perceived as the last means against street homelessness and to stay employed, no matter if it is a car, a van, or an RV (recording unit 9, 23, 25). The dwellers make a clear distinction between street homelessness and vehicle homelessness and state that vehicles not only provide security and shelter, but also cause fewer unrest amongst the formally housed (recording unit 25). People also seem to be aware of their substandard housing-quality but manage to deal with every organizational aspect as good as they can (recording unit 23; & 25). Still, “Conditions are cramped, and the vehicles offer no heating, running water, toilet facilities or privacy” (recording unit 9). But, as mentioned in the previous chapters, the biggest threat to the vehicle dwellers is the criminalization of their last remaining livelihoods: “The only rights is [sic] property rights, this world is a joke” (recording unit 7). As the last years brought several vehicle bans in the South Bay and the Peninsula, many of its informal residents are pessimistic about their future living situation and their options to stay in the Bay Area and are prepared to be further displaced (recording unit 16).

Both the working homeless and the interconnected vehicle dwellers represent a certain indistinctness: “There’s a fine line between homelessness and being able to afford a place to call home, in fact that line is blurring and becoming unrecognizable more and more by the day. You can’t tell anymore who’s homeless and who isn’t outside of the typical stereotype” (recording unit 15). Most sources and individual fate stories illustrate that working homelessness is a forced way of living which is difficult to organize and at the same time requires constant vigilance (cf. recording unit 12). Most affected people claim that they work as hard as possible to either get out of this situation or to prevent worsening. The attitude of dissociating from street homelessness is very present among the working homeless (recording unit 15; 18; 19; & 22). However, it is often met with a general claim to dismantle stereotypes about homelessness:

“The only reason the working-homeless appears uncommon is because they don’t meet the common stereotypes associated with the homeless. Instead of sleeping in the streets, they are either couch-surfing at a friend’s place or living in their car. Some of these people intermittently rent a cheap room for a few nights a week with their measly pay check or the tips they’ve earned or combine this with the couch-surfing option (recording unit 15)

At the same time, most working homeless acknowledge their privileged position compared to street homeless:

“The homeless who have a job get away from being discriminated against because they don’t look homeless, they don’t dress like a stereotypical homeless person, they don’t smell like a stereotypical homeless person, they look and act just like we do. They don’t have to deal with the cries of ‘get a job you bum!’ The working homeless have access to luxuries such as being able to wash our clothes or get a haircut and shave. They don’t have to worry about having shoes with holes in the soles, feet being exposed because of worn out stitching or cheap materials, or something as mundane as broken or missing laces (recording unit 15)

3.4.2 AMONGST THE CITY AUTHORITIES AND BIG TECH

“Well, as you know, we’re the largest taxpayer in Cupertino, so we’d like to continue to stay here and pay taxes. Because if we can’t, then we have to go somewhere like Mountain View. (Steve Jobs as cited in Kendall, 2019)

The various forms of harassment and the general criminalization of vehicle dwellers in the Bay Area is highly polarizing not only within the population but also the policy-making level. As discussed in chapter 3.3 certain cities try to reassess their ways of dealing with the vehicle dwellers. At the same time cities in the South Bay and Peninsula counties plan to further criminalize living in vehicles, especially RVs, which are popular among working homeless. Still, some policy makers acknowledge a needed shift in dealing with the housing and homelessness crisis. The working homelessness is widely perceived as an alarming sign of class segregation: “If teachers, nurses, trash collectors and other regular workers can’t afford to live in the area, the fabric of society begins to fray” (recording unit 11). The (partial) vehicle dwelling bans in Mountain View, Palo Alto, and San Jose are thereby sometimes seen as dramatic contradictions within the cities’ relationship to big tech: “The policy question is: How do we house these workers or do we assume they will just commute from Antioch⁵⁹?” (recording unit 24). On the other side the real politics seem to adjust to the tech demands, as the corporations are usually the largest taxpayers of the respective cities. The most addressed reason for the housing crisis is a shortage of affordable housing and the imbalance of housing and office construction (ibid.). Most political and corporate solutions to the housing crisis target these supply-oriented aspects (recording unit 11, 16, 32).

In this sense both big tech and the authorities are mostly neglecting the struggles and displacement of the working homeless (and vehicle dwellers). Thus, the pretense of public safety issues, due to sewage, hygiene, garbage, or road safety, are deployed publicly to justify the displacement (recording unit 27). The mayor of Mountain View for example claims that there are various options for vehicular dwellers, which is completely contradicting the actual fears and struggles of the affected: “prohibiting overnight parking will encourage people to engage with the city’s case workers to move into ‘more stable housing’. There are some people also living in the oversized vehicles by choice and they do have other options that they can move into immediately” (recording unit 27). Many cities fuel the urban conflicts between formal and informal residents by offering complaint and citation hotlines and even apps (cf. Schwaller, 2019, p. 134; recording unit 28). These hotlines and apps complement the 911 police hotline, which is usually used.

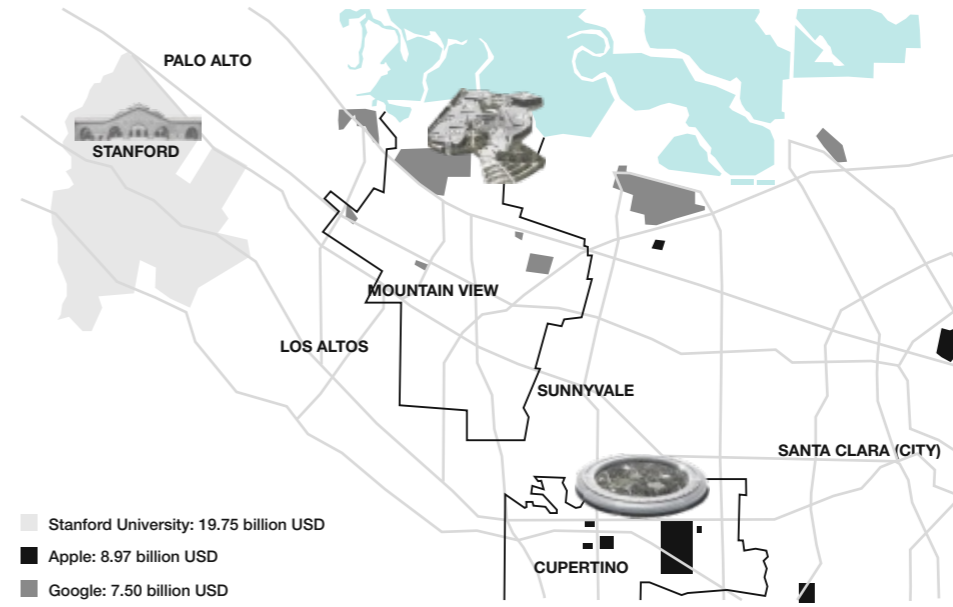


FIG 36: Santa Clara County, 3 largest landowners by value of land 2018, own graphic (data source: Castaneda, 2019).

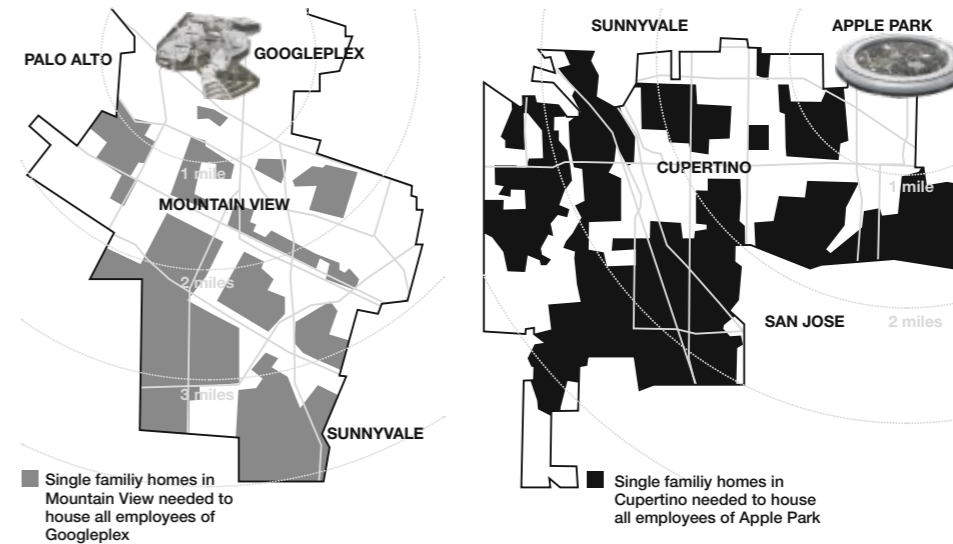


FIG 37: Single family homes in Mountain View and Cupertino needed to house all Google (23,000) respectively Apple employees (12,000) of the two cities, own graphic (based on: Castaneda, 2019).

Many formal residents are not aware that their issues are mostly directly forwarded to the police and not dealt with by social workers. The police often react with harassment, clearing of encampments, and further criminalization in general (Schwaller, 2019, p. 134).

The big tech corporations admit having an impact on the housing crisis but relativize it by charging responsibility to others and prohibiting any discourses on fair working conditions and wages for blue-collar jobs, even after labor protests (recording unit 11; 16; 23). A Google representative for example states: “Obviously, our footprint creates pressure. It creates pressure on housing and transportation, but that pressure isn’t just tech. It’s not just Google [...] We don’t necessarily want to comment on our employees participating in those activities [working while homeless]” (recording unit 11). Hereby all efforts to discuss the working homelessness are denied. Additionally, working homelessness is per se negatively connoted (“participating in those activities”), respectively pictured as volunteer activity rather than forced living

standard. Related to the perception of the municipal authorities, the tech corporations mostly highlight their investments in housing projects (cf. recording unit 11; 16; & 32). Sometimes investments into community projects are used to illustrate a deep connection to the region: “Apple says that it is ‘the largest contributor to the local economy’, and is ‘supporting schools and public works projects across the Santa Clara Valley [...] Cupertino has been Apple’s home for more than 40 years and we are proud to have a strong relationship with the community here’” (recording unit 32).

“A lot of blue-collar workers in Silicon Valley live out of their cars [...] and there's concern that this problem could get worse as Google is planning to build a campus in San Jose for up to 20,000 employees making it the largest tech campus on the west coast (recording unit 23, 6:56-7:20)

Working homelessness and vehicle dwelling raise general questions about livability and affordability of the Bay Area's cities: “We're losing the people that are the life-support network of any society” (recording unit 16). As stated in the subchapter above, on a municipal level these implications are as well made by some policy-makers. However, among the general public this interconnection between the displacement of the unhoused and the pressure on the middle class seems to be widely acknowledged (recording unit 11; 16; 23; 27; & 32). While the vehicles itself are unpleasant and mostly unwanted, the formally housed residents are aware that they represent a symptom of the economic shifts in the region – shifts that already directly affect the working-class. In contrast to the politics, the public mainly blames the tech corporations for the developments that affect their cities dramatically: “In my neighborhood there are a group of five or six duplexes and a couple that I know lived in one of them for 22 years. When Google moved in next door, their landlord raised the rent by \$700 a month” (recording unit 11). Both the disruption of the housing sector and the disruption of the working environment are equally part of the discussion (cf. recording unit 23; & 32).

One major fear that is particularly often mentioned is that the tech corporations create even more jobs in the respective cities: “We were appalled what Facebook

were proposing to build – some very small amount of housing, and bringing in 6,000 employees” (recording unit 32). Therefore, recent plans of big tech to build additional office spaces or even campuses run into vast protests from local residents (recording unit 23; & 32). While the policy-makers and corporations usually highlight the vast philanthropic housing development, the general public is judicial about the tech generosity: “The narrative that has been preferred by these corporations is that it's all because of their largesse. But they were coerced to the table” (recording unit 32). The opposition to this *not-ask-for-permission-but-for-forgiveness* urban development (cf. chapter 1) is carried out through protests during the city council meetings (recording unit 27) and advocating (recording unit 23). However, it is a highly polarizing matter, due to the issue that most residents clearly refuse any homeless dwellings in residential areas (recording unit 13; 16; & 25). Some housed citizens criticize the neglect of informal dwelling: “Preventing parking and throwing more people out of our community is unconscionable” (recording unit 11). Others demand vast populist actions: “Two years ago [2017] at a city hall meeting in nearby San Jose, those who opposed building more affordable housing chanted ‘build a wall’, in reference to keeping the homeless out of their town” (recording unit 31). In the end, the situation of the working homeless respectively vehicular dwellers remains highly unclear and unstable. The formal residents are in between the fear of further displacement of the working-class and a typical not-in-my-backyard attitude – *NIMBYism*. They reject any visible signs of this class conflict and especially of those on the losing side.



IMG-13: Protesters in front of Mountain View's City Hall in 2019 (McMahon, 2019).

3.5 DISCURSIVE REFLECTION OF THE MEDIA SOURCES

The discourse on urban disruption in the Bay Area and especially the city of San Francisco is inseparably connected to the one on homelessness (cf. Schwaller, 2019; Solnit, 2010). While big parts of the discourse are framed around the homeless individuals, they are usually not included within these debates. As the city of San Francisco has a long history of homelessness, the manifold institutions dealing with it are increasingly taking views of the affected into account (e.g. Coalition on Homelessness, 2020). Yet the working homeless respectively vehicular dwellers are often particularly marginalized as they are less visible in public space, seem to be less in need of immediate help, and often prefer or have to keep their situation a secret (ibid.; ASR, 2019a; & 2019b). For these reasons the above analyzed QCA mainly⁶⁰ includes opinions, interviews, talks, statements, etc. as secondary data (all used media articles; DW documentary, 2019) or primary data⁶¹ (YouTube channel: Invisible People; Reddit posts). This inclusiveness and the stated diversity of the sources allows the comparison between affected individuals who talk or write about their lives and journalists or reporters.

Building on the last chapter on the perception of working homelessness (content based), I can thereby also discuss this perception on a meta-level (discourse based). Hereby it becomes evident that the working homeless and vehicular dwellers themselves mainly address their daily struggles, needs, conflicts, but mostly do not talk or write about the systemic dimension of their situation. Online media sources (produced by journalists and reporters focus on the systemic level – the connections to the struggles of the middle class, the gentrification, the tech dominance. This illustrates the potential target groups of the communication content, which is either the affected group itself (regarding pointers to survive, building a community, and sharing experiences) or the general public⁶². Most classical media sources (Gunnupuri, 2018; Bloomberg, 2019; Lien, n. d.; Cassidy, 2020; Do, 2019; McMahon, 2019; Dineen, 2019; & Hobson, 2019) draw a clear connection to Silicon Valley. On the one hand, this is generally not surprising and certainly justified, as big tech is a major driving force of the housing crisis and homelessness. On the other hand, this implies that working homelessness, home-

lessness in general, and vehicle dwelling is an issue if it happens in proximity to Silicon Valley, but not necessarily if elsewhere. This implication supports some of the common contestations between the tech corporations and the homeless population and furthermore carries out a NIMBY attitude.

Foucault (1980 as cited in O'Regan, & MacDonald, 2009) states that “what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is the fact that it does not only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse”. The power of Silicon Valley that is executed on urbanity (not to mention its impact on society as a whole) thereby does not only manifest through the urban development itself and the implicit effects on housing, homelessness, displacement, etc., but also through the discourse over these impacts. While the tech industry has powerful instruments to impact the discourse itself through their own technology (cf. Greene, 2019), as well as the linkage to the policy-making layer (Greene, 2019; interview with U. Brand, 2020) the essence of the Foucauldian discourse analysis lies in the questions on what can be said, what is being said, and what is believed (Füller, 2014; cf. interview with U. Brand, 2020). The *permissionless innovation* (Zuboff, 2019) respectively *learning by doing* (Castells, 2010) ideology of Silicon Valley is also shown implicated in its communication: This is not only done through direct communication⁶³ itself (content based) but through the above-stated discursive power, the conception of tech to be able to solve everything. It is believed to be so powerful that it should be able to cure homelessness through investment, and that the sheer presence of homelessness next to the tech headquarters seems to be a contradiction and a surprise, rather than the symptomatic outcome of urban disruption. These notions are not at all questioned by any of the used media sources, which connect working and vehicular homelessness to Silicon Valley, nor by those researched in the pre-selection process. It seems to be a common expectation that big tech is not only responsible for this unjust development in the Bay Area but also has the competence and authority to tackle social and urban issues with their own means.⁶⁴ This vast discursive power justifies a reconsideration of the discourse on crisis (cf. Brand, U., 2009) and a just rethinking of the relationship between society and big tech.

60 All but one source which is dealing with San Jose's RV dwelling ban (City of San Jose, n.d.)
 61 affected individuals or former homeless
 62 leaving aside the multifaceted target groups of the single media sources (e.g. Business Insider, Bloomberg)
 63 “Obviously, our footprint creates pressure. It creates pressure on housing and transportation, but that pressure isn't just tech. It's not just Google [...] We don't necessarily want to comment on our employees participating in those activities [working while homeless]” (Bloomberg, 2019) (cf. chapter 3.4.2).
 64 The hereby executed power through the discourse had as well implications on my own research as my initial research interest was driven by similar notions: How can it be that this immense poverty exists in the richest area of the U.S.?

1	ALAMEDA COUNTY:		
	HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS	5,600	
	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	92,000	
	ELI HOUSEHOLDS	73,300	
	MEDIAN GROSS RENT	1,674	
2	SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY/CITY:		
	HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS	6,900	
	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	104,000	
	ELI HOUSEHOLDS	66,100	
	MEDIAN GROSS RENT	1,805	
3	SAN MATEO COUNTY:		
	HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS	1,300	
	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	113,000	
	ELI HOUSEHOLDS	23,300	
	MEDIAN GROSS RENT	2,158	
4	SANTA CLARA COUNTY:		
	HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS	7,400	
	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	116,000	
	ELI HOUSEHOLDS	66,000	
	MEDIAN GROSS RENT	2,126	

- 5 FURTHER SPRAWL OF HOMELESSNESS FROM CITIES TO SUBURBS
- 6 COVID AS DRIVER FOR GENERAL SUBURBANIZATION
- 7 POTENTIAL TECH EXODUS FROM THE BAY AREA? (CF. INTERVIEW WITH E. MORALES)
- 8 OAKLAND'S SAFE RV PARKING ZONE HAS A RESOURCE CENTER, BATHROOMS, & SECURITY
- 9 BERKELEY CONSIDERS OPENING A SAFE PARKING ZONE
- 10 SF CONSIDERS OPENING SAFE PARKING ZONE
- 11 SAN FRANCISCO PROHIBITS BEGGING, SITTING, COOKING, & LYING DOWN ON THE STREETS
- 12 SAN FRANCISCO CHARGES A FINE OF 1,000 \$ FOR SLEEPING IN VEHICLES
- 13 SF PUTS HOMELESS IN SOCIAL-DISTANCE AREAS DURING COVID-19
- 14 THE NUMBER OF VEHICLE HOMELESS IS RISING IN THE WHOLE AREA
- 15 MANY CITIES OFFER A 24/7 HOTLINE TO ISSUE COMPLAINTS ABOUT HOMELESS DWELLERS
- 16 THROUGH COVID-19 SOME CITIES HAVE OPENED TEMPORARY RV LOTS TO HOUSE THE HOMELESS POPULATION
- 17 EAST PALO ALTO PROHIBITS RV DWELLING AT NIGHT
- 18 MOUNTAIN VIEW PLANS TO TOTALLY BAN RV DWELLING
- 19 HOMELESSNESS NUMBERS HAVE GENERALLY RISEN, DURING COVID: SHELTERS POSE A PARTICULAR THREAT
- 20 PROP 22 ENABLES FURTHER PRECARISATION OF GIG-WORKING
- 21 IN SILICON VALLEY RESIDENTS PROTEST AGAINST RV BANS
- 22 IN SF PEOPLE RESIDENTS PROTEST FOR HOUSING THE HOMELESS
- 23 BLACK LIVES MATTER PROTESTS ALSO CLAIM HOUSING & INFRASTRUCTURE JUSTICE
- 24 PEOPLE CHANT BUILD A WALL TO LOCK THE HOMELESS OUT AT A CITY HALL MEETING IN MOUNTAIN VIEW IN 2017
- 25 SAN MATEO CITY GENERALLY PROHIBITS RV DWELLING
- 26 MOUNTAIN VIEW: RV HAVE TO BE MOVED AFTER 72 HOURS
- 27 BERKELEY PROHIBITS RV DWELLING AT NIGHT

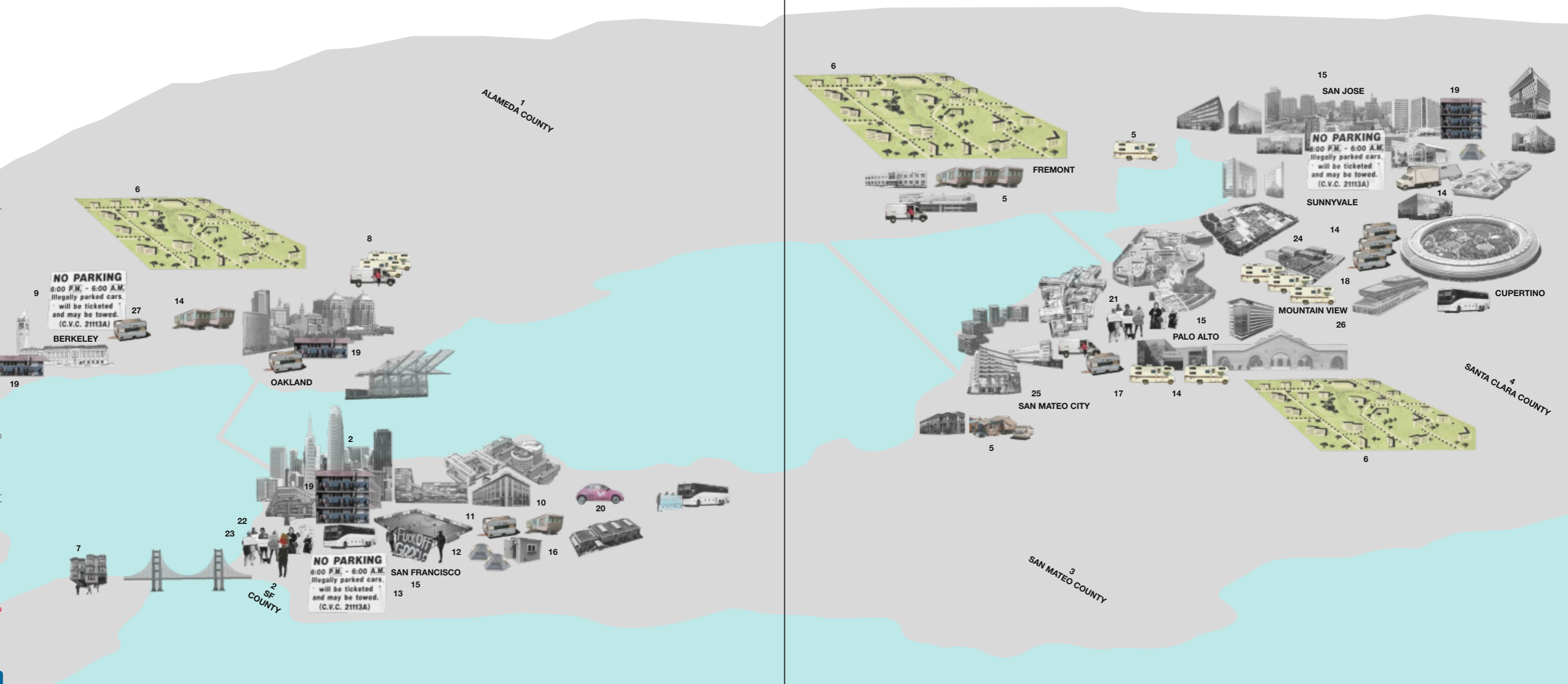


FIG 38: Vehicle Dwelling in the Bay Area, own graphic (data homeless individuals & ELI households: Bay Area Council & Economic Institute, 2019b; median gross rent & median household income: United States Census Bureau, 2018).

4 INTERPRETATION

“Looking at the problems of the distinct crises and their dimensions, such as climate, housing, energy, or infrastructure, must be done from a community point of view. From this perspective, something clearly went wild. It's not all simply a matter of capitalism. However, the neoliberal utopia, the neoliberalization of politics and society, clearly led to a withdrawal of the state within caring for the community (interview with U. Brand on the multiple crisis, chapter 1.5)

The everyday life of the working homeless in the Bay Area undergoes constant threats of further displacement and dispossession. Further evicting through destroying their belongings and their hustle from one city to another through harassment and neglect, represents a form of penalization (cf. Schwaller, 2019, p. 135). They have to get by with just a few hours of sleep and constant threat of criminalization and dispossession, while working and living under precarious circumstances. The urban conflicts arising due to their informal way of dwelling are symptomatic for their alienation within the formal city. All together this case is paradigmatic for the imperialist city-making of late capitalism, aligned to the technocapitalist influence of Silicon Valley on urbanity – the disruptive urbanism – and yet it is so extreme and unprecedented. The underlying reasons are manifold and multifaceted: sky-rocketing rents that meanwhile affect the whole of the Bay Area, and are not just limited to the urban centers San Francisco, Oakland, and the *tech-suburbs of Silicon Valley* any more; the subsequent eviction waves, that are to be supposedly exploding due to the economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic; the privatization and corporate-driven dispossession of public commons; the extrusion of local culture and small non-tech-related businesses; the neglect of long-term systematic segregation policies; the precarisation of labor, not at least through the gig economy, and the undue preferencing of the needs of the financial, tech, and real estate sector over the basic needs of the population, and care and foundational economy.

Neither could all of these aspects have been discussed thoroughly in the course of this thesis, nor can the above stated list mention all of the crucial reasons, which connect to the disruptive urbanism in the region and the destruction of the urban through technocapitalism and techno-economic progress. However, the multifaceted dimensions of this alarming development have to be acknowledged when researching

the multiple crises affecting urbanity, respectively the crisis of urbanity itself. Disruptive urbanism without a doubt strongly contributes to these crises, but they are at the same time rooted within the context of post-fordist urban renewal, neo-liberal privatization of public commons, colonialist and imperialist urban policies, etc. (cf. chapter 2). Yet the new economy is certainly a giant game-changer within the development of urbanity and will certainly strongly shape the city of the 21st century. This is especially evident in the Bay Area – the *front yard of Silicon Valley*. At the same time the dynamics that unfold there are representing global developments: most notably what is claimed by urbanists (e.g. Lefebvre, 1991; Kipfer & Goonewarina, 2007; Harvey, 2013) as the loss of the core values of urbanity; pressure on public space through both privatization and dispossession; evolving conflicts over their use as essential space for the invisible population (cf. Knierbein, 2020) (homeless, migrants, informal workers, etc.); and the dramatically increasing housing costs in cities globally, which cause further urban sprawl.

This interpretation chapter discusses the findings of this diploma thesis on three layers, that all together illustrate the above stated connections of the case of the working homeless to the multiple dimensions of the urban crisis and the disruptive urbanism (which without a doubt strongly contributes to these multiple dimensions). Firstly, in chapter 4.1 the working homelessness is distinctively embedded within the dimensions of the multiple crisis and multiple disruptions through the tech sector in Silicon Valley. Secondly, in chapter 4.2 the alienation of the working homeless in the urban realms is addressed in relation to tech's disruptive urbanism (acknowledging Lefebvre's alienation as one key social aspect of the urban dimensions of the multiple crisis). Thirdly, chapter 4.3 elaborates on the reproduction of the urban crisis through ongoing disruptive and unsettling processes which can be rooted to techno-economic progress.

4.1 WORKING HOMELESSNESS THROUGH CRISIS AND DISRUPTION

“The precariousness of actual work conditions makes for social instability, transitory citizens and impermanent settlements, as well as violent evictions. Globalisation challenges the hegemony of nation-states and their claim to exclusive citizenship but it also strengthens their hold over territory, cultural identity and social control (Braidotti, 2016 p. 135 f.)

The case of the working homeless reveals a concerning status quo of urban poverty and ongoing displacement. The neglect of this invisible population is depicted through the ignoring of their basic needs, further reproduction of homelessness through the ongoing housing crisis and eviction surge, and their displacement from the urban surroundings. Working homeless of the Bay Area exemplarily stands for the complexity of the urban crisis and its strong interconnectivity with disruptive urbanism. The vast dimensions of crisis are not only reflected within the previously stated reasons of these unsettling practices of urban disruption, but also through the multiple urban dimensions of the disruption itself: Besides the well-known and well-researched areas of gentrification, rising rents, and displacement in public space, it also includes vast shifts in the world of work. The QCA (chapter 3) shows that working homelessness in the Bay Area is strongly connected to the gig economy and the subsequent sub-contracting of areas of work, which are not white-collar jobs. Those ways of working are part of the general normalization of precariousness of essential work: “The so-called ‘precariat’ has displaced the traditional ‘proletariat’” (Harvey, 2013, preface xiv).

A significant population of the working homeless works in gig economy-based jobs. They get paid per unit of work and are not fully employed (which means they have low job security and few benefits). This not only concerns tech-related jobs, but also those in the security, care, maintenance, and utility sectors (cf. chapter 3.2.3). However, the shift towards subcontracting has been strongly driven by the tech sector, with companies like Uber and Lyft as driving forces. This is reflected by the number of gig-drivers, who permanently or temporarily (respectively partially at weekdays) sleep and live in their cars, because they

cannot afford to live in the cities of the Bay Area any more. This is not only a matter of an imbalance between housing costs and income, but also directly affected by corporate policies: While the gig economy promises free time management, the gig-drivers are mostly still forced to work long shifts and to accept all rides. In the economically highly successful world of Silicon Valley a significant part of the workforce is pushed into similarly precarious working conditions: “It’s not just system analysts working in Silicon Valley. People clean the offices, work as security guards, etc.” (interview with U. Brand on the multiple crisis, chapter 1.5). This disruption of the workforce is aligned by a general depreciation of low-wage-economy and the foundational economy in particular (cf. Foundational Economy Collective, 2018). Especially in the city of San Francisco and the county of Santa Clara firefighters, teachers, carers, nurses, store-clerks, etc. can hardly ever afford a living and are often pushed into vehicle homelessness, or to live with friends and family.

The Bay Area is becoming increasingly inclusive for white-collar workers, managers, developers etc., and exclusive for all the others. The acknowledgment of these interconnected processes is crucial to understand the complex dynamics of the urban crisis (housing, homelessness, eviction crises) in the Bay Area: “The workers remain without benefits, protection and proper payment. All of that leads to housing insecurity, homelessness, and so on. Here, housing is the number one issue affecting most social issues. Housing is the cornerstone of health. And it’s an economic justice issue” (interview with E. Morales, chapter 2.5).

The urban conflicts around vehicle dwelling and homelessness in general illustrate the multidimensional disruption, which also unfolds through urban sprawl and suburbanization. “When the centers of cities are reserved only for those who consume and can afford expensive apartments – be it tourists or residents – and all the others are forced to the periphery, one can no longer speak of urbanity” (Laimer, 2013, p. 76). Those who cannot afford a living in the centers of the Bay Area (San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose) any more are first forced to move into more affordable cities (e.g. Richmond, Concord, Fremont), then into the suburbs. They often either end up in peripheral parts of the region (or in other parts of California and the United States) or in transient forms of dwelling, be it formal (RV parks) or informal (vehicle dwelling in the street, street homelessness, squatting, or couchsurfing). The above described path from the core cities, to the suburbs, and the periphery is often also the one taken by the homeless population: The authorities in San Francisco “were moving [homeless] folks without giving them a place to go to. So they first moved to Oakland and Berkeley and then to the smaller cities of

the East Bay and south to Silicon Valley” (interview with E. Morales). This ongoing displacement and passing of responsibilities leads to the paradox situation that many working homeless sleep in their cars, but have to commute to their jobs to other cities (cf. Shastri, 2018).

The displacement of the urban poor, the working homeless, and the middle class into suburban areas and peripheral cities further illustrates the multidimensionality of the urban crisis: “The current handling of the rising housing costs obstructs any discussion about dense urban life by instead promoting suburbanization” (interview with U. Brand). Through suburbanization, commuting, and sprawl, the destruction of urbanity has as well a clear ecological dimension. This is particularly evident in the San Francisco Bay Area, but poses a potential pattern for global (sub-)urbanization.

4.2 SPATIAL ALIENATION AS PARADIGMATIC ASPECT OF DISRUPTIVE URBANISM

“Firmly grounded and centred in world-cities that function as organizing principles in the stratification and distribution of wealth, the globalized network-society functions by controlled mobility. Goods, commodities and data circulate much more freely than [...] the less-than-human subjects who constitute the bulk of asylum-seekers and illegal inhabitants of the world. [...] The dense materiality of bodies caught in the very concrete conditions of advanced global societies flatly contradicts advanced capitalism’s claims to being immaterial, flowing or virtual (Braidotti, 2014, p. 177)

Working homelessness poses a general societal unsettling, the vanishing of the US-american middle class, and the *techno-economic progress-driven* drift towards increasingly precarious working and living conditions. It is as well representing the crisis of urbanity. Besides the tangible effects of increasing housing costs, gentrification, segregation, displacement, and disruption of the working environment (which was described in the previous chapter) this urban crisis also consists of the abstract loss of urbanity’s distinct and substantial qualities as a space of difference, heterogeneity, diversity, and inclusivity. These values of the urban realms have for example been claimed to be endangered by Lefebvre (1976; 1991), Goonewardena (& Kipfer, 2007; et al., 2008), Harvey (2010), and Knierbein (2020) – endangered through alienation, homogenization, sameness, and exclusivity. These transformations within public space and the urban become clearly evident in the everyday life of the working homeless population of the Bay Area (cf. chapter 3). Public spaces hereby become “spaces suited to fulfilling human needs in times of a restructuring-based crisis. At the same time, however, lived space is the sphere in which the same neoliberal modernity is reproduced over and over again” (Knierbein, 2020, p. 38).

The Bay Area’s public space is paradigmatic as both, contestation space and space to fulfill basic human needs. It is also the distinctive parameter, which makes homelessness visible and present within the public discourse, due to the stated contestation: The struggles that arise for the affected individuals

and the conflicts that emerge between the homeless population and the formally housed citizens and the authorities (which increasingly deny responsibility for the informal citizens). This is especially ironical as San Francisco vaunts itself as one of the most caring and just cities in the United States: It is a proud Sanctuary City since 1989. Why is the municipality not doing as much for the homeless as for refugees? In fact, sociologist Chris Herring claims that the city’s homeless are economic refugees, as many of them came to the region because of the economic success of Silicon Valley (Schwaller, 2019, p. 140). Additionally, the question arises, what the point of protecting refugees’ rights is, if the city cannot provide affordable housing for them to permanently settle down?

In the given case on working homelessness in the Bay Area, the focus within research, public and media discourse lies on vehicle dwellers. As described in chapter 3.1 homelessness is hard to evaluate, to research on, and to assess, because the homeless population is transient, mobile, and prefers to remain unremarkable⁶⁵ behind the “private curtain of shame and guilt” (Knierbein, 2020, p. 213). Working homeless individuals are still rather associated with vehicle (RV, car) dwelling, couchsurfing, or living with friends and family, than to be completely exposed to the street⁶⁶. The RV and car dwelling are thereby the more visible form of working homelessness. Yet the distinctive feature of this visibility is the presence of their vehicles in public space. In the case of the RV and car dwellers this presence in public space is transient and blurry, compared to the complete exposure of tent encampments or sleeping bags and being without a home but living in a kind of private space (couchsurfing, squatting, friends and family, homeless shelter). It is blurry as they own or rent private spaces in the form of their cars and RVs, but those are usually parked in public space. Sometimes the parking space can also be a private parking lot, but these spaces are anyway contested, as the main (and intended) use is still parking and not living or dwelling (cf. chapter 3.2.2). All together the vehicle homeless have similar needs and demands for social and sanitary infrastructure as street homeless. They try to settle down groups, to provide security and basic infrastructure and to build a community. However, their dwellings, their property, and their communities are extremely threatened by destruction and dispossession.

The state of transience becomes distinctive for the given case study. It represents what Lefebvre (1991, p. 229) calls “deprivation, the alienation of life”, affecting the realm of work, where the disruptions through the gig economy and subcontracting disable a traditional *work-everyday life-balance* and the foundational and care jobs are further downgraded. Furthermore it is an alienation from the

65
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cf interview with E. Morales
Due to their larger financial assets (cf. chapter 3.2)

traditional forms of home and dwelling, which are not affordable any more, yet might not even be suitable for the flexible (blue-collar) Silicon Valley working environment. Low-income tech employees have to decide, whether they want to have a proper home, or food, health care, a university degree, pension etc. Some decide to live in precarious living situations for some years to save money, some have no other option than to live in RVs or cars. Some are increasingly forced to do so through their job occupation (Uber, Lyft, and other gig-drivers). These alternative and oftentimes precarious forms of living and dwelling are not new to the urban realms in the United States. Trailerparks are the homes of urban poor since the Reaganomics.

Vehicular dwelling is an alienation from and within urbanity itself (and public space), illustrated by the above mentioned conflicts over the use of public space as dwelling space: Paradoxically this becomes a direct contestation as formal residents of the homogenized (and high-income) neighborhoods are bothered about the use of the public space in front of their private homes (cf. chapter 3.4 & 3.4). Those who can afford a living in the cities of the Bay Area mostly understand the struggles of the urban poor (the ones at risk of homelessness, and the homeless itself) and they understand the underlying inequality (chapter 3.4.3), but still perceive them as unpleasant or unwanted intruders within their direct neighborhoods. Due to this reason the RV and car dwellers try to avoid residential areas as parking and dwelling spaces. This homogenization that Lefebvre (1991) has warned of represents a dramatic polarization: diversity, difference, and heterogeneity are vanishing from the cities of the Bay Area.

The everyday lives of the working homeless are becoming more and more precarious: Their vehicles which are the basic supply, possession, home, and shelter, are at the same time a cause for potential conflicts. While both authorities and formal residents acknowledge them as means to prevent the more dramatic street homelessness, which might in most cases directly lead to unemployment, they increasingly enact or demand further measures to displace the vehicle dwellers from the cities and urban agglomerations. The further criminalization of homelessness in the Bay Area is discussed in the next subchapter as a process of reproducing the urban crisis. The increasing urban conflicts and further unsettling of their everyday life leaves the working homeless without perspective for a better future, or even the preservation of their current lifestyle.

4.3 DISRUPTIVE REPRODUCTION OF CRISIS

“ In general, capitalism and believing housing is a right is always going to be in tension. If we believe housing is a right, then that's going to really screw up a lot for landlords and developers. But I think we are very far away from that just housing distribution, housing as a right for everybody. We have to work towards disempowering land owners as much as possible (interview with E. Morales)

The loss of faith and trust into solving the housing and homelessness crisis seems to be widely spread across the San Francisco Bay Area (cf. *ibid.*, chapter 3.4). This lack of hope for a caring community is especially driven by the ongoing privileging of the needs of the monopolistic corporations. What is today clearly associated with the domination of the region through big tech, their ‘permissionless innovation’ is deeply rooted within Bay Area’s historical context starting with the colonization and gold-rush-driven displacement of the natives (cf. chapter 2.2). In the industrialization this exploitation became accompanied by unquestioned trust in techno-economic progress, outlined by huge infrastructure projects (railroad, bridges), the establishment of San Francisco as the center of financial activities on the West Coast, and the settling-down of the naval industry and military research facilities during WWII. In post-war fordism it finally became the global hub of the digital revolution through the development of Silicon Valley. All of these processes have been deeply unsettling for the population, as they were accompanied by large migration waves, urban and regional redevelopment, segregational and displacing urban policies, and shifts in everyday life and the working environment. In most of the Bay Area’s history of displacement and inequality the municipal, regional, and federal governments advocated for these unsettling changes amongst the population, took side of the developers and corporations, which benefitted, and used segregation, racism, and homogenization as means of division (cf. chapter 2.2; 2.3). So for example during the vast urban renewal processes of the post-war era, which led to the ‘Manhattanization’ of San Francisco and the subsequent displacement of huge parts of the working-class and ethnic minorities (chapter 2.3). These constant disruptions of the everyday life, local (foundational and care) economy, and basic needs of the population (housing, infrastructure, community,

etc.) have manifested as the vast urban crisis, described in the previous subchapters. As Soja argues, this constant stage of crisis is restructuring-generated: “Innovative practices and restructured urban spatialities [...] are now showing signs of disturbing dysfunctionality” (2000 as cited in Didier, 2018; cf. chapter 1.2.3, p. 9). This disturbing dysfunctionality becomes evident in the crisis handling of the authorities and the corporations, which is continuously ignoring the basic needs of the (formal and informal) citizens and further enhancing the (working, dwelling, and living) precariat – the multiple urban crises dimensions are constantly reproduced. This is a core claim of the concept of the multiple crisis:

“ We have to question who the most powerful actors within the crisis handling are. There are strong economic forces which are rather able to dictate the pathway. The creative destruction narrative – when everything is rock bottom we will find an innovative way up – does not imply a qualitative and sustainable crisis handling (interview with U. Brand)

In California recently Proposition 22, which enables the ongoing precarisation of work, passed the vote through a giant financial campaign of big tech corporations and the forced support of its employees. This campaign is claimed to have cost more than 200 million dollars (Whittaker, 2020). At the same time the proposition for rent control has failed (cf. interview with E. Morales). This shows the true interests of the tech corporations, which are no surprise given the logics of the techno-economic progress and disruptive innovation tendencies. It furthermore illustrates the immense political power of the industry, which is so important for the economy of California. This power is used for further deregulation: “The neoliberal utopia, the neoliberalization of politics and society, clearly led to a withdrawal of the state within caring for the community” (interview with U. Brand). At the example of Proposition 22 it becomes clear that the power to influence policy-making is accompanied by discursive power. In recent years big tech has increased its efforts to influence the public opinion – also through philanthropism. While it certainly tackles issues of the urban crisis, this seemingly altruistic investments are firstly coerced ones (through the increasing public attention on tech-led gentrification and displacement) (cf. chapter 2.3.4; chapter 3.4) and secondly clearly a part of the problem, as they represent a further political investment, the gaining of additional discursive power, further stakeholding within development projects and neighborhoods, and increasing privatization. When dealing with such extreme and manifold influences on the urban society, one could simply argue that these processes have to be stopped at a global or national level, but the situation in the Bay Area offers a different perspective as the interview with U. Brand outlines:

“ **How is infrastructure provided and how can a good life for everyone be achieved? [...] Technocapitalism promotes privatization and commercialization. Certain public commons, such as public transport, subsidized housing, or the support of the lower classes, are organized on a local layer. But especially these services have been neglected through privatization and disruption through income inequality in Silicon Valley. (interview with U. Brand)**

This is not least due to the US-American system of city funding: The cities rely on wealthy inhabitants and especially corporations to produce tax revenue. In a financial sense, the urban poor are completely unwanted, as they cost money and are a threat to tourism, corporatism, and the high-income residents. The local policy-making layer in the Bay Area is thereby co-producing much of the region's urban inequality through the capitalist reproduction of the urban crisis. So to be seen at the micropolitics of the neglect of homelessness. Cities such as San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, Mountain View, Palo Alto, San Jose, or Sunnyvale use different ways of displacing the unwanted homeless population. Either through vehicle-sleeping bans, parking bans, systematic harassment, or even the violent destruction of informal structures and settlements (chapter 3.3; cf. interview with E. Morales). This municipal competition for most dehumanizing handling of the homelessness crisis is further undermining the trust in overcoming the crisis:

“ **Developers, companies, and the government make all these decisions for hundreds, thousands of unhoused. We've seen that in the city of Oakland quite a bit during Covid-19, when the responsibilities for the unhoused and their encampments have been pushed around and the affected people have not been included in the conversation (interview with E. Morales)**

The disruptive reproduction of the urban crisis shows that the capitalist growth imperative and the notion of techno-economic progress prevails over common public interests. The Bay Area is undergoing further privatization, dispossession, and displacement, which lead to the subsequent loss of urban difference, heterogeneity, and diversity. These urban values were not only the celebrated and famous characteristics of the region and especially the city of San Francisco (as center of gay culture, diversity, queerness, Asian, Black, and Latine life, labor unions, political activism, etc.), they were ironically also the values, which according to Richard Florida's creative class are essential within enabling creativity and innovation. Vice versa further diversity should have been attracted by the economically successful cities. San Francisco's and the Bay Area's current status quo as global tip of

the iceberg of tech-led hypergentrification and urban inequality shows that Florida's creative cities become not only crisis-prone (cf. chapter 4.1), but also homogenous, indifferent, alienated, and thereby lacking of urbanity's distinct qualities. Today the urban actors become increasingly contesting through the given segregation and urban antagonism: While the different urban groups are certainly aware of each other (cf. chapter 3.4; interview with a tech insider), they are not used to sharing urbanity, public space, and to acknowledge urban difference and heterogeneity: “I guess I somehow live in a bubble” (interview with a tech insider).

5

CONCLUSION

The acknowledgement of the effects of disruptive urbanism as part of the urban crisis and furthermore the global multiple crisis brings a lot of complexity into the discourse on urban disruption. My intention hereby was to question the dominant perception and handling of these crises and crisis dimensions and to open up the debate for alternative solutions and global pathways to overcome the urban crisis. The urban crisis consists not just of gentrification, segregation, and displacement, also of various other disruptions within the urban realms – in the case of the working homeless this is for example the shifts within the working environment through the gig economy and subcontracting. Additionally, the importance of the values of urbanity is highlighted. These values of urban space, inclusivity, difference, heterogeneity, diversity, are increasingly contested through disruptive urbanism and the urban crisis, and yet becoming increasingly important in times of crisis.

The deterministic ideology of techno-economic progress has to be questioned by society, the cities, and the tech corporations itself, as they gain more and more political power. The dominant notions of crises and the underlying drive for growth must also be questioned: Crises go beyond economic and financial instability and human progress is more than innovative technologies and the capitalist growth imperative. Considering the gigantic effect of Silicon Valley, the power of land developers and speculators in the Bay Area, and the increasing intermingling of all these within local, federal, and national governance, the above stated questioning of techno-economic progress and the dominant perception of crisis seems to be unrealistic. Neither the immense investments of big tech in the housing market of the Bay Area, nor the hoped tech-vanishing from Silicon Valley through the Covid-19-pandemic offers sustainable urban change. Yet the demanding of policy changes towards anti-racist, anti-colonialist, anti-imperialist ones might offer a first step. Some of the core claims of the multiple crisis (de-growth, strengthening of commons) have slightly gotten recognition within US-American politics (Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Elizabeth Warren, Bernie Sanders). In her run for the democratic nomination for the 2020 election Elizabeth Warren strongly addressed tech-monopolism in an open letter: “It’s time to break up Amazon, Google, and Facebook” (Warren, 2019). Yet the distinct hope for change remains in the hands of local community organizations and broad urban protest groups, which seem to deeply acknowledge the vastness of the urban crisis (gentrification, housing and homelessness cri-

sis), the importance of inclusivity, difference, heterogeneity and diversity within the urban space (as they stand up for *all* marginalized groups), and claim alternative politics, policy-making, and crisis handling.

This diploma thesis is situated within the direct urban implications of tech’s presence within the Bay Area. While it tackles the given issues of disruptive urbanism on a broad scale, the researched phenomenon has to be contextualized within the global urban effects of digitalization, automatization, and interconnectedness. The case of the working homeless is also so dramatic and extreme because it reveals the true nature of techno-economic progress. Silicon Valley’s tech corporations persist on being able to solve every problem of society through technology, without any sense of wariness, prudence, caution, or responsibility – deterministic disruption for the sake of everlasting growth and innovation. This thesis should not indicate any form of technophobia or regression, but highlight the essential need for reconsideration, forethought, and especially the acknowledgement of social aspects of change and progress. The urban changes and disruptions in the San Francisco Bay Area are symptomatic for the lack of these aspects within the current technocapitalist world: The gigantic tech corporations, which descended from counter- and hippie-culture in the 1960s (cf. chapter 2.3.3), nowadays display a don’t-ask-for-permission mentality while pretending to work for the sake of human progress. In the end, they are deeply interwoven within contemporary capitalism (stock shares), the financial markets (venture capital), and politics. At the same time they have a vast urban footprint on their direct neighborhood, being mainly responsible for segregation, displacement, the destruction of urbanity, etc. A tentative claim can be made that Silicon Valley never understood the values and potential of urbanity. Its first generation innovations have been produced in suburban garages, its success is based on the knowledge and industries of the post-war Bay Area, but its companies have always preferred suburban solitude over San Francisco’s urbanity, also for economic reasons (cf. chapter 2.3). Yet it is surprising how disruptive the tech industry’s various actors have acted towards their own neighborhood(s).

The gigantic effects of new technologies strive for further research – also in the field of urban studies. This given work more closely looks at the urban disruption through the creators of these technologies, which have reached enormous market power, political influence, and profits,

rather than on the urban shifts through technologies themselves. Aspects such as urban surveillance, automatization of infrastructure, or the alienation from physical space through digitalization have to be discussed. In general, the influence of technology on the urban surroundings, is broadly researched, mostly focussing on monetizable developments (such as smart cities), but also in the field of critical urban studies: Some of the cited works (Maharawal, 2017; Maginn, Burton, & Legacy, 2018; Schwaller, 2019; van Doorn, 2019; & Barns, 2020) deeply engage with tech-led gentrification, urban disruption, or platform urbanism. Additionally, the work of the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project (Maharawal, & McElroy, 2017; Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, nd-a; & nd-b) and similar counter-mapping (Urban Displacement Project, nd-a; nd-b; & Solnit, 2010) and community research initiatives (Coalition on Homelessness, 2020) have to be mentioned and acknowledged. The long-term urban struggles of the Bay Area and especially San Francisco have led to both a broad community engagement and research on marginalized communities. The working homeless are generally rather researched at the sidelines of homelessness counts, while the authors acknowledge their marginalization due to their hidden and transient everyday lives. Here comprehensive quantitative and qualitative studies must be made to further understand this growing phenomenon. Furthermore, research has to embed the long-claimed (Lefebvre, 1991) fading qualities of urbanity in the context of digitalization. This includes the here researched impact on marginality, but goes far beyond.

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“Google announced it plans to invest US\$1-billion over the next decade to build as many as 20,000 homes. Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg pledged to help raise US\$500-million through his personal charity toward housing. Google’s announcement came amid negotiations between the tech giant and the City of San Jose over a planned new downtown Google campus that drew protests from low-wage workers. ‘Our goal is to help communities succeed over the long term, and make sure that everyone has access to opportunity, whether or not they work in tech,’ Google CEO Sundar Pichai wrote in a blog post announcing the US\$1-billion housing investment.” (recording unit 16)

“There is often so much emphasis on the growth of high-wage jobs in the tech industry, and our housing production tends to emphasize the high-wage people,’ said Fred Brousseau, an analyst with the Budget Analyst’s office. ‘But the high-wage jobs and the low-wage jobs go hand in hand.’ [...] ‘The policy question is: How do we house these workers or do we assume they will just commute from Antioch?’ said council Co-director Fernando Marti.” (recording unit 24)

“‘There are more and more people who have assets and means that are becoming homeless, which is very scary,’ said Jeff Kositsky, the director of San Francisco’s Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, noting that many RVs, for example, are worth some money. ‘[Their owners] are clearly people with some sort of assets, as opposed to some guy curled up in a blanket sleeping in a doorway.’” (recording unit 25)

“Mayor Lisa Matichak [Mountain View] tells Here & Now’s Jeremy Hobson that she’s concerned about public safety and health — and remains adamant that there are “lots of different choices” for current RV dwellers.” (recording unit 27)

“She says she hopes prohibiting overnight parking will encourage people to engage with the city’s case workers to move into ‘more stable housing.’ There are some people also living in the oversized vehicles by choice and they do have other options that they can move into immediately,’ she says. Matichak says the aim of the ban is to improve visibility for bicyclists and pedestrians, and to address human waste and garbage piling up in city streets.” (recording unit 27)

“Now, the Mountain View City Council is debating whether to ban people from parking their RVs and other oversized vehicles overnight. Residents voiced criticism earlier this month during a raucous, nine-hour city council meeting after the ban was first proposed by some city staffers. In a 6-1 vote, city council members decided to hold back on implementing the ordinance — for now — but said they plan to draft a new ordinance in order to solidify the ban’s language.” (recording unit 27)

“[Former housing director:] People are starting to talk about a Bay Area nether region that goes all the way up to Sacramento” (recording unit 32)

“Apple says that it is ‘the largest contributor to the local economy’, and is ‘supporting schools and public works projects across the Santa Clara Valley’. It adds: ‘Cupertino has been Apple’s home for more than 40 years and we are proud to have a strong relationship with the community here’” (recording unit 32)

3.3 AMONGST THE FORMAL (HOUSED) RESIDENTS:

“In December, Mountain View police logged almost 300 RVs that appeared to be used as primary residences. Palo Alto, Berkeley and other Bay Area towns have similar numbers.

“Some Silicon Valley towns have cracked down in recent months, creating an even more uncertain future for RV residents. At a March city council meeting, Mountain View voted to ban RVs from parking overnight on public streets. The ban hasn’t taken effect yet, but soon, the town’s van dwellers will need to go elsewhere. The city council also declared a shelter crisis and passed a new ordinance to ticket vehicles that ‘discharge domestic sewage on the public right of way.’ At the meeting, some people opposing the ban blamed Google for the housing crisis.” (recording unit 11)

“In my neighborhood there are a group of five or six duplexes and a couple that I know lived in one of them for 22 years. When Google moved in next door, their landlord raised the rent by \$700 a month,” said resident Susan Barkin. ‘Preventing parking and throwing more people out of our community is unconscionable.’” (recording unit 11)

“Storefronts and restaurants are filled with help-wanted signs, while local newspapers report on teachers commuting from two hours away. ‘We’re losing the people that are the life-support network of any society,’ Mr. Regan says.” (recording unit 16)

“The people paying the heaviest price for the housing crisis are the minimum-wage service workers who cater to well-paid tech employees by staffing restaurants, painting homes and caring for children. The escalating cost of living has pushed many of those workers onto the streets.” (recording unit 16)

“When I think about the gig economy I think about San Francisco and Silicon Valley [...] they’ve sold it as a life free from a corporate existence where you can create your own schedule and you can do multiple jobs. Executives from companies like Uber and Instacart have even called this the future of work but this future is not working for everyone. The blue-collar workers here in Silicon Valley — the people who are your typical gig workers — on average only make \$19,000 a year that’s not nearly enough to live here. In contrast, the average full-time white-collar employee at a tech company makes a hundred and thirteen thousand dollars a year” (recording unit 23, 0:21-1:02)

“how she has to live despite the fact that she does several jobs and a lot of blue-collar workers in Silicon Valley live out of their cars like she does and there’s concern that this problem could get worse as Google is planning to build a campus in San Jose for up to 20,000 employees making it the largest tech campus on the west coast” (recording unit 23, 6:56-7:20)

“While Google be creating jobs for service workers by moving here they will we know it’s about eight to ten thousand service jobs that will likely be attached to a project of this size what we don’t know is the quality of those jobs. We have gotten no commitment from Google to make sure that those subcontracted positions are actually family supporting jobs; groups are working hard to notify Google about their concerns but housing in San Jose is already hard to come by for blue-collar workers” (recording unit 23, 7:40-8:10)

“‘I recognized the signs,’ Brown, now a San Francisco lawmaker, said. ‘When you see a van or a car with curtains up, or a towel rolled up in the window for privacy. People with their doors open, and you see a bunch of stuff in their car, or they’re airing out clothing. They don’t consider themselves homeless,’ she continued, adding that the line between living in a vehicle and being homeless is sometimes blurry. All around the Bay Area, they hide in plain sight, the vehicles doubling as shelters. Some, as Brown described, are easily recognizable — an overstuffed RV with so many items strapped to the sides that the wheels appear sunken down, a van with a taped-up window, a camper so antiquated that it doesn’t seem operational. Others can pass as your neighbor’s car: a 2006 Lexus sedan in great condition, a late-model vehicle kept neat for Uber and Lyft rides.’” (recording unit 25)

“Now, the Mountain View City Council is debating whether to ban people from parking their RVs and other oversized vehicles overnight. Residents voiced criticism earlier this month during a raucous, nine-hour city council meeting after the ban was first proposed by some city staffers. In a 6-1 vote, city council members decided to hold back on implementing the ordinance — for now — but said they plan to draft a new ordinance in order to solidify the ban’s language.” (recording unit 27)

“She says she hopes prohibiting overnight parking will encourage people to engage with the city’s case workers to move into ‘more stable housing.’ There are some people also living in the oversized vehicles by choice and they do have other options that they can move into immediately,’ she says. Matichak says the aim of the ban is to improve visibility for bicyclists and pedestrians, and to address human waste and garbage piling up in city streets.” (recording unit 27)

“Two years ago at a city hall meeting in nearby San Jose, those who opposed building more affordable housing chanted ‘build a wall’, in reference to keeping the homeless out of their town” (recording unit 31)

“But even leveraging that up with other cash will probably bring only 200 housing units, says Carlos Romero, an East Palo Alto council member and resident for more than 35 years. Estimates put the number of new jobs — many of them low paid — that are created indirectly for each new tech worker at between two and five, adding to the housing squeeze and greatly magnifying the impact of tech expansion.” (recording unit 32)

“We were appalled what Facebook were proposing to build — some very small amount of housing, and bringing in 6,000 employees” (recording unit 32)

“I do give Facebook some credit. They do in general terms accept the impact tech is having. But it’s been a long road.” (recording unit 32)

“The narrative that has been preferred by these corporations is that it’s all because of their largesse. But they were coerced to the table” (recording unit 32)