# Mediating the Tech Boom: Temporalities of Displacement and Resistance

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## ABSTRACT

Since the 2011 emergence of the San Francisco Bay Area "Tech Boom 2.0," anti-eviction activists of the region have been caught amidst a maelstrom of media wars involving an amalgam of real estate and technology speculative analyses. As tensions grow, the media itself becomes increasingly polarized, as some journals and journalists side with simplified renditions of tech being good or bad, of development being right or wrong, of housing justice activists being outmoded or salvific.

This article attends to this media polarization, studying likely and unlikely alliances between journalists, media sources, and advocates of various urban futurities. At the same time, it looks to alternative media arts and hybrid technologies that have arisen precisely to theorize contemporary realities of the region, from critical cartography digital projects to projection art productions. In doing so, I ask, how have innovative media arts projects such as that of the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, People Power Media, and the Saito Group arisen out of both a media dearth and surplus, not only furthering community knowledge production but also shattering dialectical narratives clung to by other media sources? Furthermore, I question, how are entanglements and polarizations across varying media production constituted by, and constitutive of, formations of class, race, and gender? Drawing on cultural and media analysis, feminist technology studies, and critical race and ethnicity studies, this paper situates the technological media crisis and eruption of the Bay Area present alongside the spatial materialization of technological growth, looking at how technologically driven geographic mutation both mediates and is mediated by emergent media technologies.

Kristen Brown's 2015 article shouldn't have surprised me given the state of the Tech Boom media wars. Yet the title of the online version of San Francisco's largest newspaper stood out like a sore thumb, as it seemed to deliberately poke, jab, and provoke its readership: "Is the Anti-tech Movement Obsolete?" [1] There it was, a San Francisco Chronicle writer pronouncing the death of a movement that was never positioned as anti-tech to begin with, based upon the small attendance of a "Google Bus blockade" the week before. The now famous bus blockades were designed to remonstrate the impact of private tech corporations' luxury shuttle infrastructure on housing. Since corporations from Apple to Facebook to Google began taking over public city bus depots in 2011 with their commuter shuttles, rental prices and eviction rates have accelerated within bus stop proximity. Soon after property speculators began revalorizing nearby units to

capitalize upon new tech wealth, which was disproportionately comprised of young, white, and affluent men. This incoming demographic is inverse to that of those being displaced. [2]

As such, the "anti-tech" protests were always positioned against a latticework of racialized and gendered corporate and real estate-driven dispossession rather than the broad and indeterminate rubric of technology. Nor were they situated against the reality that social life has undeniably transformed into what Tom Boellstorff describes as the age the "Digitocene"—the era in which online and offline worlds are unavoidably entangled. [3] They were, however, attentive to the reality that, as Lisa Nakamura and Peter A. Chow-White argue, "[N]o matter how 'digital' we become, the continuing problem of social inequality along racial lines persists." [4] However, as anti-eviction movements contend, critique of the racialized impacts of technology corporations upon gentrification does not foreclose anti-racist digital possibilities.

Indeed, many in the Bay Area anti-gentrification movement have embraced new technological forms with alternative media projects, such as the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project (AEMP)—an initiative I cofounded in 2013. Projects like this one utilized digital mapping technologies to provide interactive cartographies and spatial analyses useful for fighting displacement. After all, "technology," derived from the Greek *techne*, simply refers to the study of technique. Unlike much of the mainstream media, which has reified Bay Area anti-displacement movements as simply against technology, projects such as the AEMP are more invested in theorizing modes to, in the words of Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, think "race and/as technology," particularly as related to eviction struggles. [5] In other words, although gentrification itself is a racializing technology, and although tech corporation-induced gentrification is complexly situated within an array of technological materialities, fighting such dispossession does not preclude "making possible new modes of agency and causality" with technology.

Not only does the AEMP, along with other alternative media projects, attempt to unsettle racializing technologies, such as real estate mapping and mainstream gentrification reporting, but it also utilizes technological media to do different things – racially, spatially, and temporally. In such an environment, questions emerge. How can technology be used to reframe a movement that has, beginning with the first protests of 2013, been written by local and international media alike as anti-tech? How can doing so refrain from dominant narrative arcs that have, in understanding the anti-gentrification movement as anti-tech, written the fictive movement's birth and death. And yet, as we will find, in writing this anti-tech movement's short life as the *Chronicle* article did, material effects are produced.

The blockade that the *Chronicle* detailed was not positioned against eviction in the traditional sense. It was rather an impromptu protest organized by a Fairmount Elementary School teacher angered that teacher parking at the public Spanish immersion school had been replaced by a Google bus stop. There had been a different protest the night before related to "The Crunchies," the annual ceremony hosted by the tech industry's most popular journal, Tech *Crunch*, in which accolades are bestowed upon startups and venture capitalists, some of which, (Airbnb is an example), have directly contributed to growing eviction rates (as long-term housing is converted into more profitable short term rentals). [6] It was outside the Crunchies that the teacher, herself facing an eviction at the time by Google's then head of e-Security, suggested a bus blockade. Thus, less than ten hours later, about a dozen people gathered to contest the abolishment of teacher parking. After the brief demonstration, the AEMP chronicled the events in

an *Indybay* post (the Bay Area chapter of *Indymedia*). [7] A few days afterwards, the Chronicle article appeared, pronouncing the death of the movement largely due to the small turnout.

Just as the media announced the birth of the movement in 2013, it was ready to conjure its death two years later. Although this birth and death were virtual, initially only existing in speculative media worlds, the protest eventually reverberated into the real, inhering new subjectivities, knowledges, and imaginaries. Drawing upon cultural and media analysis, along with critical race and feminist science and technology studies, this paper situates popular renditions of the Bay Area as temporally mediated by the media itself. In doing so, I question what is, in Karen Barad's words, the "ontological distinction between representations and that which they purport to represent[?]" [8] In other words, how did media narrativization of the anti-tech movement's life and death, virtual as it was, induce new onto-epistemologies, or studies in knowing and being practices? At the same time, I look to alternative media technology projects, such as the AEMP, that have emerged to offer variant technological possibilities, as well as alternative temporal approaches to protest materiality. How do these projects shatter the dialectical narrative structure clung to by other media— the idea of technology either being good or bad, or the anti-gentrification movement envisioned as dead or still breathing?



*Figure 1. **Why Teachers Blockaded a Google Bus, 2015 © Anti-Eviction Mapping Project***

## BIRTH

By chronicling media treatment of the Bucharest riots of 2012, in which the public dissented new austerity measures and Western-driven global capital, Veda Popovici critiqued the media's strategy of neutralizing the carnivalesque masses. "Media pushes the multitudes back to their passivity," she writes, describing how protestors became transformed into buffoons for the sheer enjoyment of television viewers. [9] Invoking Guy Debord's spectacle theorizations, she argues that by transforming dissent into spectacle, status quo is maintained. As Debord suggested, in contemporary times, political contexts and revolutionary futurities have become overwritten with spectacular imagery. [10] This depoliticizing media prescription comes alive in critical media

analysis, and Popovici is far from alone in employing it. Douglas Kellner, for instance, writes of the media's spectacular coverage of 9/11 attacks to advance US republican agendas, [11] and Kevin Fox Gotham writes of the coverage of the disaster of Hurricane Katrina, in which spectacle functioned to protract the tourism industry. [12] Yet Popovici's words on the mass media's spectacular protest coverage is particularly apropos in theorizing both the birth and putative death of the "anti-tech" movement.

In September 2013, shortly before the first bus protest, the direct action and mutual aid collective, Eviction Free San Francisco (EFSF), held a press conference outside of a four-unit building on 55 Dolores Street. 55 Dolores Street was home to Mary who, at the age of 97, received an eviction notice by her new landlord, 55 Dolores Street LLC. AEMP research found that 55 Dolores Street LLC was one of numerous shell companies owned by a larger investment company, Urban Green Investments, a subsidiary of Colorado-based Cornerstone Holdings, and which began evicting numerous buildings in 2012 as part of their property flipping portfolio. Mary received an eviction notice two months after Urban Green bought 55 Dolores Street. Yet Mary refused to vacate. "They'll have to drag me out of here feet first," she told some of us one day, a euphemistic version of, "They'll have to kill me first." It was this context that EFSF's press conference intended to highlight. Yet no press attended. As I've learned from regional housing justice organizers who have been rallying for decades, lack of press for anti-eviction protests is relatively usual, as generally it takes a lot, perhaps a spectacle, for media coverage to incorporate issues of urban dispossession and resistance.

Just three months after the Urban Green protest, many of the same protestors, myself included, attempted the more theatrical strategy of blocking tech buses, which effectively called attention to the correlation between real estate speculation and eviction within tech bus stop geographies. After all, the AEMP found that most evictions occur within a four-block radius of tech bus stops, as properties increase in value when listed as proximate to tech bus stops. [13] As a UC Berkeley study further revealed, 40 percent of technology workers who ride private tech shuttles to and from Silicon Valley would move closer to their place of employment if the shuttle service ceased to exist. [14] Thus, the placement of the private bus depots has enabled the growth of technology worker residents in the city— disproportionately young, wealthy, male, and white per the industry's hiring practices. [15] Furthermore, as a collaborative project between the AEMP and the city's largest eviction defense legal aid organization, the Eviction Defense Collaborative (EDC), uncovered, disproportionately those being evicted from their homes are poor, working-class, and Black and/or Latinx. [16] Therefore, installing private transportation depots in public bus stops facilitates the mobility/settlement of a relatively inverse demography from those being displaced.
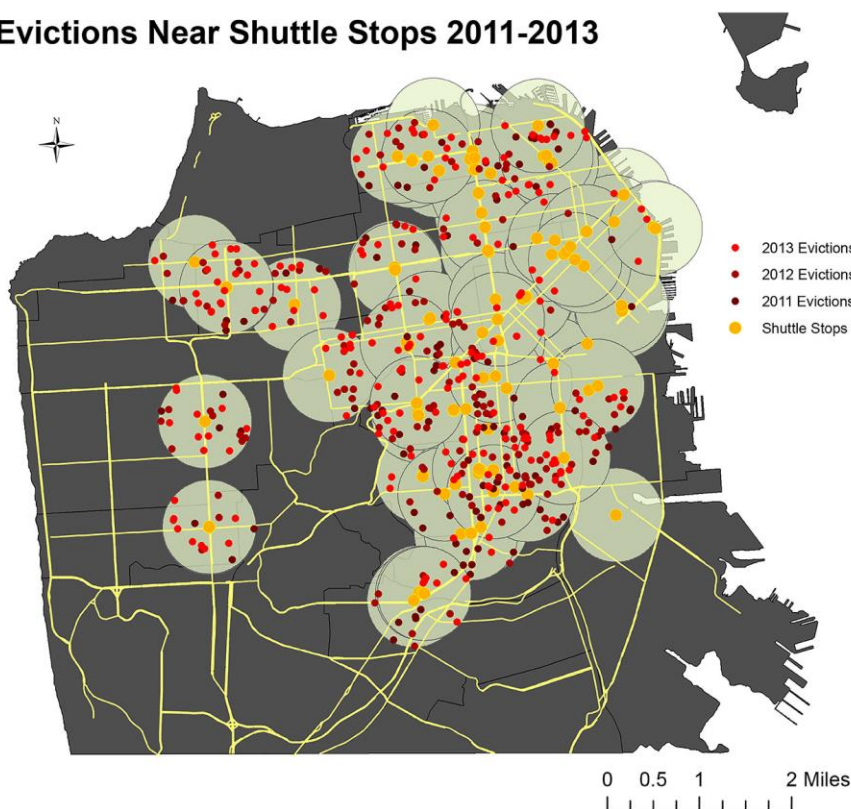
**_Figure 2._ _Tech Bus Evictions, 2015, Anti-Eviction Mapping Project © Anti-Eviction Mapping Project_**
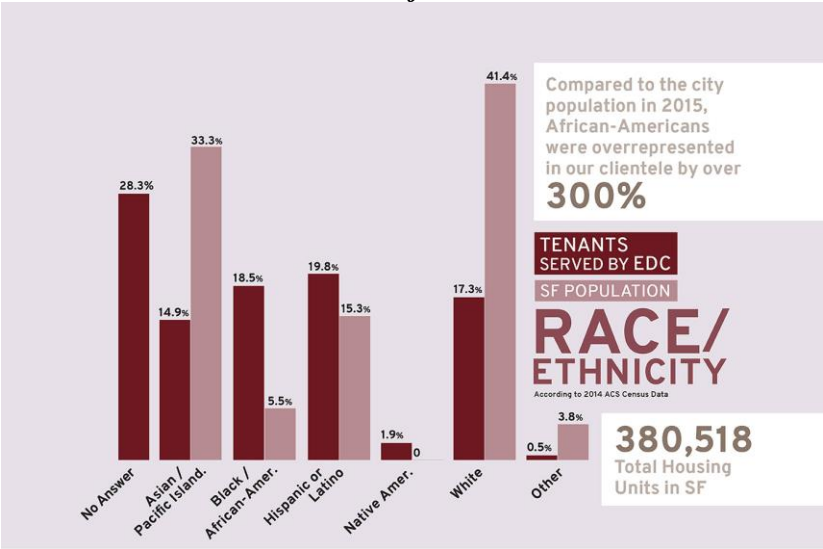


**_Figure 2._ _EDC Eviction Report, 2015, AEMP and EDC © Anti-Eviction Mapping Project_**

It was conditions of racialized dispossession, incited by entwined technology corporation and real estate racisms that fueled the bus protests. Beginning in December 2013, these efforts were organized by numerous collectives with a variety of tactics. Some included pickets and speak-outs in front of buses, which featured tenants facing displacement. [17] Others featured festive, carnivalesque performance art. Yet others "weaponized vomit" and bore anti-capitalist messaging. Others tethered conditions of increased racialized policing and gentrification. Accustomed to lack of media coverage for anti-displacement actions, housing justice activists, were far from prepared from the onslaught that followed. [18] Before the group knew it, I quickly recognized, international journalists from France to Japan were booking flights to report on the gentrifying impact of the Tech Boom and resultant discontent. The Mission neighborhood office shared between the San Francisco Tenants Union and the AEMP suddenly became inundated by reporters.
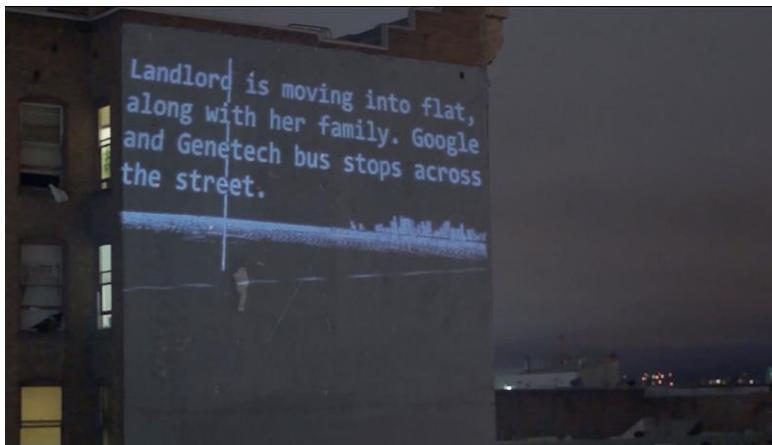


*Figure 3. Eviction Prevention Representation, 2016, Saito Group and AEMP © AEMP and Saito Group*

## REFUSAL

It only took a couple of weeks before housing organizers realized how formulaic most journalism requests were. First, journalists would request to talk with one or two activists, the more "radical-seeming" the better. Then, they would ask for two or three tenants facing eviction who they could also interview. While we appreciated the journalistic highlighting of tenant narratives, before long, we grew wary. Largely, the media seemed to prefer to cover the stories of white middle-class evictees, pitching a narrative of outmoded white hippies being replaced by younger white techies. For instance, during the height of the media onslaught, San Francisco's Housing Rights Committee contacted us, warning of a journalist who wanted to cover tenant stories but who refused to talk to members of a Filipina family undergoing eviction, requesting white tenants instead.

On top of this racial bias, it became apparent that numerous journalists understood tenants as props to fill prefabricated storyboards, listening not to tenants' analyses, but rather inserting story fragments into either an affective narrative of loss, or, conversely, into a demonizing portrayal of a pestering renter. Rather than facilitating what Michael Frisch describes as "shared authority"

between writers and tenants, [19] many of these stories employed techniques of objectification. In bimonthly EFSF meetings, by 2014, it had become rather commonplace for tenants to speak of their misrepresentation in popular media. "I had a press packet ready to go," one friend facing displacement from her home of 32 years told me. "I offered it to the journalist, but he wouldn't take it. And then, the story in the paper, it only quotes my landlord. It's like I'm just an object in the house that's gotten outdated." Another man, facing eviction from his home of several decades, expressed frustration that although he had talked to numerous reporters, none of the journalists reported his own analysis, which centered upon disability discrimination.

All journalists struggle with content inclusion and exclusion—a struggle also faced by historians. As Hayden White suggests, such interpretive work is fraught because historical records are simultaneously too sparse and dense, and because there are always gaps requiring inference and speculation. [20] We cannot expect a journalist or historian to tell the entire story; speculation and inference are inevitable. It is one genre of narration to attend to subjects' analytics; it is another to discount them altogether. Such disregard particularly contravenes the work of feminist science studies scholars who write from geographies of situated knowledge production. For instance, Donna Haraway describes a decision to analyze and deconstruct "only that which I love and only that which I am deeply implicated." [21] Or, as Kim Tallbear argues, producing knowledge *for* a group of people inheres violence, arguing instead for scholarship collaboratively produced *with*. [22]

The onto-epistemological violence of replacing a people's analytics with character descriptions about them is not unique to renters. For instance, writing of ethnographic descriptives of Mohawk social and political worlds, Audra Simpson pivots her interest towards "the way that cultural analysis may look when difference is not the unit of analysis, when culture is disaggregated into narratives rather than wholes, when proximity to the territory that one is engaging in is as immediate as the self, and what this then does to questions of 'voice'." [23] Looking to narratives written about her own community, she marks that the Mohawks of Kahnawake "clearly had and have critiques of state power, hegemony, history and even one another that made them appear anomalous against the literature written upon them." [24] Because of the violence of such textual elision, fragmentation, and authority, Simpson has made a conscious decision to deny identification with "that thick description prosemaster who would reveal in florid detail the ways in which these things were being sorted out." [25]

After initial abuse by numerous journalists, members of EFSF decided that at the very least, it was important to prohibit reporters from attending organizing meetings. After all, in meetings, tenants would not only candidly share sensitive stories of abuse by speculators – narratives that they might wish to keep out of the local papers in the event of future court hearings and juridical procedures – but further, tenants would organize press strategies. Yet throughout 2014 and into 2015, journalists would repeatedly enter meetings, determined to report on "authentic" housing justice activists and tenant alliances.

For instance, during one EFSF meeting in early 2014, former *SF Weekly* reporter Rachel Swan arrived, eager to document its authenticity. When Swan introduced herself as a journalist, she was immediately asked to leave by some of the older members of the group, who explained that they didn't want meetings reported upon. Begrudgingly she abided, only weeks later to publish a piece describing her impressions of the activists, and of being refused by them:

> *The anti-eviction activists who gather in a small, drafty building on South Van Ness Street, on a rainy Wednesday night in February, are holdovers from a different era of San Francisco. They wear Ben Franklin haircuts, nose rings, and sensible shoes. They carry their effects in backpacks. They write things down on pen and paper — or on a whiteboard — instead of pecking at laptops. The few young adults who are present refer to the other attendees as "elders."*

Describing her "eviction" from the meeting, she wrote:

> *Housing prices are bubbling up. Google is transporting employees to work by private ferry. San Francisco politicians have introduced a somewhat anemic policy of charging the tech buses $1 every time they commandeered a public bus stop.*
>
> *That rankles the activists, who are even more rankled when a member of the press — me — comes into their meeting.*
>
> *"Well, can you tell us what your story is about?" one woman asks, as others chime in with other questions. "Can we read it first?" "Can we ensure that it supports the movement?"*
>
> *When I refuse, the matter is put forth for a group discussion. I am duly evicted from the anti-eviction meeting.*
>
> *Counterintuitively, progressivism in the Bay Area often manifests as conservatism. [26]*

In Swan's analysis, tenant care, organizing ethics, and protest security culture become rewritten as "conservative." Given the plethora of articles contemporaneously circulating with titles such "S.F. Rent Wars, When the Tenant is the Bully" – a story that misrepresented a senior artist activist with disabilities in favor of a wealthy evicting landlord, [27] and given long histories of activist surveillance by the media, [28] there is little room for reporters to argue on the merits of chronicling activist meetings.

Nathan Heller of *The New Yorker* was also asked to leave the same meeting that Swan attended, which he respected and did not report upon. However, in his long exposé on the anti-displacement movement that proceeded, his work engaged thick and objective descriptions of housing justice activists, including myself. As he wrote: "One of the leaders of the protest was Erin McElroy. She [has] curly auburn hair, which she wears loosely swept up, and gauged earlobes, from which she hangs a selection of jewelry." [29] While I appreciated the movement coverage at the time, the ethnographic descriptive of my physical appearance was irrelevant and distracting. As time commenced, press objectification did too. For instance, reporters from both *Business Insider* and the tech journal, *Re/Code*, interviewed me about the work of the AEMP, purportedly to be included in larger movement piece. However, both journalists, without telling, instead decided to publish feature articles on me, respectively titled, "Meet the Woman at

the Heart of San Francisco's Anti-Tech Gentrification Protests," [30] and, "Coffee with an Anarchist: Memes and Motives Behind Blocking Google Buses." [31]

I recall these experiences of representation here autoethnographically to question the descriptive power of journalistic work. What does it do to a movement to have activists represented by their haircuts and jewelry? What does it do to activist/evictee subjectivities to be recounted, valorized, or pathologized through such media lenses? Critiquing what she describes as multicultural domination, Elizabeth Povinelli suggests that power lies in the ability to inspire "subaltern and minority subjects to identify with the impossible object of an authentic self-identity." [32] In such contexts, subjects are called upon to become impossible objects, transporting older significations into the present "in whatever language and moral framework prevails at the time of enunciation." [33] What older or other imaginaries of neo-luddite revolution become transposed upon a kaleidoscopic collective of activists endeavoring to prevent their social and political worlds from being displaced? What material reverberations are mediated through media descriptives?

These questions haunted the Bay Area housing justice movement of 2014 and 2015. In certain times, anti-eviction actions were organized to include Google bus blockades because we knew that the press favored bus blockades over other anti-eviction actions. In others, activists who had attracted more media than others were called upon to cajole newfound press contacts to attend protests. Twice I was asked to hide a microphone in my jacket during demonstrations, first by National Geographic and then by Tech Crunch. The former went as far to request filming me kicking them out of an organizing meeting through mock performance, asking me to speak of my fears of Google surveillance. Perhaps Oscar Wilde's anti-mimesis formula that "Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life" can be re-scripted here as "Activism imitates Media far more than Media imitates Activism." [34] What anti-tech imaginary movement did the press invent? How did the spectacle of a neo-luddite imaginary obfuscate the rather unspectacular organizing work of keeping San Francisco residents housed? And, how did activist onto-epistemic "worlding" become mired within journalist-driven fiction?

## DEATH

As much as the media struggled to materialize an anti-tech imaginary, their crafted fantasy could not sustain itself without acts of subject interpellation. The more that the media's fictive characters practiced ethnographic refusal, the more that the plotline of the neo-luddite, anti-tech revolution evaporated into thin air, resulting in diminished coverage. However, while such subsiding might be construed as victory, it bore unexpected effects. Despite critiques of media coverage, many activists had nevertheless grown accustomed to its presence and thus expected coverage. Therefore, the fictive death of the imaginary movement imparted its own materiality. For instance, in December 2015, a fellow organizer called me, fraught with fear that the movement was dying because of coverage decreases. If a fictive birth couldn't kill a movement, pronouncements of obsoleteness tolled the bells for a new kind of funeral, one that maintained sustaining power, despite the ongoing presence of anti-eviction protests and organizing.

To theorize this tonal shift and the textual rewriting and consequential comprehension of the anti-eviction movement, David Scott's work on romance and tragedy is instructive. In both *Conscripts of Modernity* and *Omens of Adversity*, Scott articulates an increasingly myopic set of contemporary political possibilities. [35] The twentieth century, he argues, is marked by modernist utopian projects of emancipation – projects that yearned for political revolution, expressed in romantic narrative arcs with themes of overcoming, vindication, salvation, and redemption. This romantic form articulated freedom on the immediate horizon to-come, one to be fought for by iconic, heroic figures. However, following the revolutions of the mid-twentieth century, the utopian imaginaries dreamt of by revolutionary movements largely failed to materialize. Instead, new nationalisms and then neoliberalisms took root and grew.

Making use of White's work contrasting romance and tragedy as modes of historical emplotment, Scott argues that this rooting led to the rewriting of utopian futurities past as tragic. Tragedy unsettles an imagined teleology of human history moving towards a determinate end, and unlike the progressive rhythm of romance, embodies choppy paradoxes, broken reversals, and individual failures. In other words, modern revolutionary politics inhere tragedy through the romantic individuation of political characters. As Scott argues, "Modern revolutionary movements have often sought to insulate themselves from the inherent unreliablility of human action in one or both of two ways: they have sought to bind action to abstract and invariant principles or to bind action to a single personality—which is only to say, to degrade or defeat or preclude political action, properly speaking. They are, in this sense, antipolitical." [36]

Scott's reading of post-revolutionary tragedy, of being stranded in the neoliberal present while haunted by utopian futures past, is illuminative in theorizing media treatment of anti-eviction organizing. So are his studies of the pitfalls of binding actions and invariant principles to singular personalities? While the Bay Area anti-eviction movement has endeavored to highlight tenant stories of loss and resistance, it has done so without desire of romanticized mythos and impossible objects. But this practice became subsumed by the media, reliant upon illusory romance writing in publics and counterpublics alike. Without an endured spectacle (made impossible through tenant practices of ethnographic refusal), the media lost interest and murdered its own fantasy. And this slaying bore material reverberations, interpellated as tragedy, and manifested as depoliticization.

## ALTER

But this is far from simply a story of death by spectacle, narrativization, and depoliticization. There are futurities other than those carved by mainstream media outlets through the finite temporal lens of spectacle. Albeit these futurities are perhaps more carnivalesque. As Popovici reminds us, the carnival, or carne vale, is an anarchistic event of consumption and irreverence, and it is one that inverts all governing logics and dismantling masks of the everyday. [37] To understand protest as carnival rather than spectacle is to see beyond teleological narrative arcs of progress and reform—beyond something killable through fragmentary, iconic misrepresentation.

Protest thus becomes imaginable as revolutionary – or that which undoes systemic confines and teleologies, that which creates something new.

But in a world so epistemologically wrapped through and into systems of representation, how can we combat the force of mainstream media arcs? Per Popovici, "How can one disrupt this historical development of the carnival into the spectacle, trick its contemporary therapeutic function and make it permanent or at least unpredictable? How can one turn the temporality of the carnival into the permanence of political revolution?" [38] Arguably, to pivot carnival into revolution is to avoid spectacularization, and is to avert from crafting romantic narrative structures reliant upon impossible objects and depoliticizing fantasy production. This does not infer that media work need be foreclosed upon. On the contrary, by producing media aligned with traditions of feminist technology studies and situated knowledge production, for instance, it remains possible to trick the therapeutic function of spectacularization.

In what follows, I describe a technology media project that I have been working on since 2013, one that has sought to offer differential narrative arcs, imaginaries, and political possibilities. As a collaborative volunteer-based activist collective, the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project endeavors to offer documentation, analytics, and narratives useful for movement building, carnivalesque sustenance, and revolutionary futures-to-come. What differential role might anti-capitalist technology projects might play in imagining sustained revolutionary futures? What might they, also as media, otherwise materialize? As technology, how might they offer new studies into techniques of anti-racist world-making?

It is important to note that the AEMP is only one of numerous media projects that have emerged to differentially document Bay Area spatial struggles. For instance, coinciding with the early tech bus protests, a new documentary beat reporting project [people.power.media] arose, which strove to produce media in consultation with community organizations, prioritizing poor and immigrant community narratives and land use issues. There are also community-powered radio stations such as KPFA, and online reporting sites such as *48 Hills*, producing numerous pieces on local housing struggles. In print is Fireworks, an anarchist "counter-information" project of the Bay Area, also linked to Indybay, offering analysis of displacement struggles. There is also the Latinx bilingual largely volunteer-led *El Tecolote*, which developed out of a La Raza Studies class at San Francisco State University in the 1970s to privilege Latinx perspectives. That era saw the emergence of the *San Francisco Bay View*, the city's "National Black Newspaper," which increasingly incorporated information about racialized local housing struggles. Recently relocating to East Oakland after being priced out of San Francisco, *POOR Magazine,* birthed in 1966 by an indigenous and landless mother and daughter, endures as an active experiment in ethnographic refusal. As its members poetically describe, "Journalism coming back to the streets / Where it all began / No more running for degrees / scholarship defined by the man" (Po'Poets/Poetas POBRE's of *POOR Magazine* 2010). [39] Lastly, aligned with POOR Magazine's embodied media politics is San Francisco's *STREET SHEET*, a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness and the oldest continually printed street newspaper in North America. Not only does STREET SHEET publish content directly related to the eviction crisis, it is sold by

homeless or low-income vendors who retain all profit made through distribution. Thus, like *POOR Magazine, STREET SHEET* embodies ethnographic refusal both in its analysis and distribution.

It is within this landscape of alternative media projects that the AEMP emerged. While the AEMP does engage in documentary work (producing oral histories, videography, and zines), it also engages in data analysis and counter-mapping. Counter-mapping, well theorized by critical geographers and scholars of feminist data visualization, produces topographical accounts while at the same time interrogates the representational powers of maps. The process explains how, why, and with whom maps, as technologies, are constructed. [40] Understanding map-making as far from neutral, and as a form of media, the AEMP produces digital cartographies that render gentrifying landscapes and spatial analysis in modes that amplify activist organizing. Embracing digital and geospatial technological practices, the AEMP upholds the importance of technological engagement produced through praxis with (rather than for or about) those most impacted by technocapitalism's gentrification projects.

At the same time, the AEMP produces work against a tradition of spatial recognition being, in Simpson's words, "the impetus of settlement." [41] Arguably, the gentrifying Bay Area landscape has been transformed into its current palimpsestic state through histories of dispossessive map-making, upon which other media projects are laid. From the first colonial maps that wiped clean indigenous land relations, to redlining maps of the 1930s that set the stage for racialized ghettoization and displacement, maps are far from simply descriptive technologies. As Laura Kurgan argues, maps create spatial realities. [42] Further, as Chun observes, through mapping projects such as colonial land-claiming and redlining, maps themselves exist as spatial technologies that inhere future racialized futures.

For instance, the geographic placement of tech bus stops upon a map of public stops incited bus materialization, and fomented increased rates of racialized dispossession proximate to them. And as a tech-realty hybrid mapping project, one designed to increase capital for both industries, this example is far from alone. For instance, in early 2016, advertisements appeared on numerous public Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) trains, paid for by the San Francisco datacenter Digital Reality. Reading in capitalized letters, the posters proclaimed, "YOUR NEXT STOP. WEST OAKLAND. THE NEW EDGE OF SILICON VALLEY." Below the text was a map, revealing the proximity of West Oakland – a historically Black and working-class neighborhood – to both San Francisco and Silicon Valley. Digital Reality's map thus imposed a geographic proximity, signaling neighborhood viability to tech corporations, and increased property value possibilities to the real estate industry.

*Figure 4. Digital Reality Sign on BART, 2016 © Erin McElroy*

Aware of the gentrifying potentiality of map-making, the AEMP instead creates counter-maps to offer alternative analysis and to push for variant futures. Methodologically, we privilege what Tallbear articulates as "objectivity in action," or inquiring not at a distance, though as situated within the spaces that we study. [43] Rather than individualize a kaleidoscopic terrain of resistance and struggle, as mainstream media narrative arcs do, the AEMP seeks to understand displacement on multiple scales and impacting numerous people and collectivities.
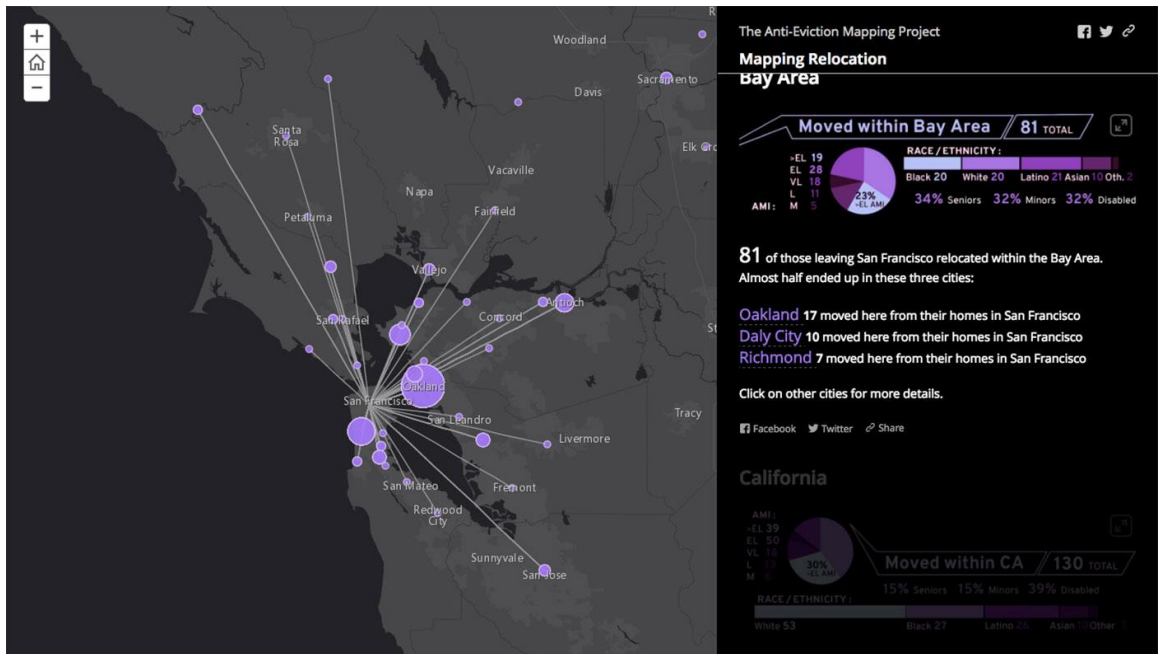
*Figure 5. Relocation Map, 2016 © AEMP*

While we do analyze quantitative datasets obtained from city, county, and state record requests, as well as eviction clinics, we do so not because we believe that they posit some comprehensive truth, but because they do reflect fragments of current realities obscured by bureaucratic record keeping and moneyed geographies. By analyzing this data with community partners and with those fighting to stay housed, and by supplying this data to media allies, we offer analysis in venues beyond the mainstream media.

Further, the AEMP also crowdsources and produces narrative data, making use of community knowledge and story. For instance, our Narratives of Displacement and Resistance map, contains over 100 embedded oral histories conducted by a team of AEMP volunteers, housing stories of loss, deep neighborhood history, and analytics of interviewed residents. Such narrative work is aligned with Frisch's concept of shared authority, and what Nancy Mirabal describes as practice in which "knowledge is both de-centered and weaved into a larger narrative where different voices, experiences, beliefs, and practices converge." [44] Additionally, by including stories of struggle and resistance, the map serves as a tool for movement building, as anti-eviction strategy and complex forms of resilience saturate the audio files.
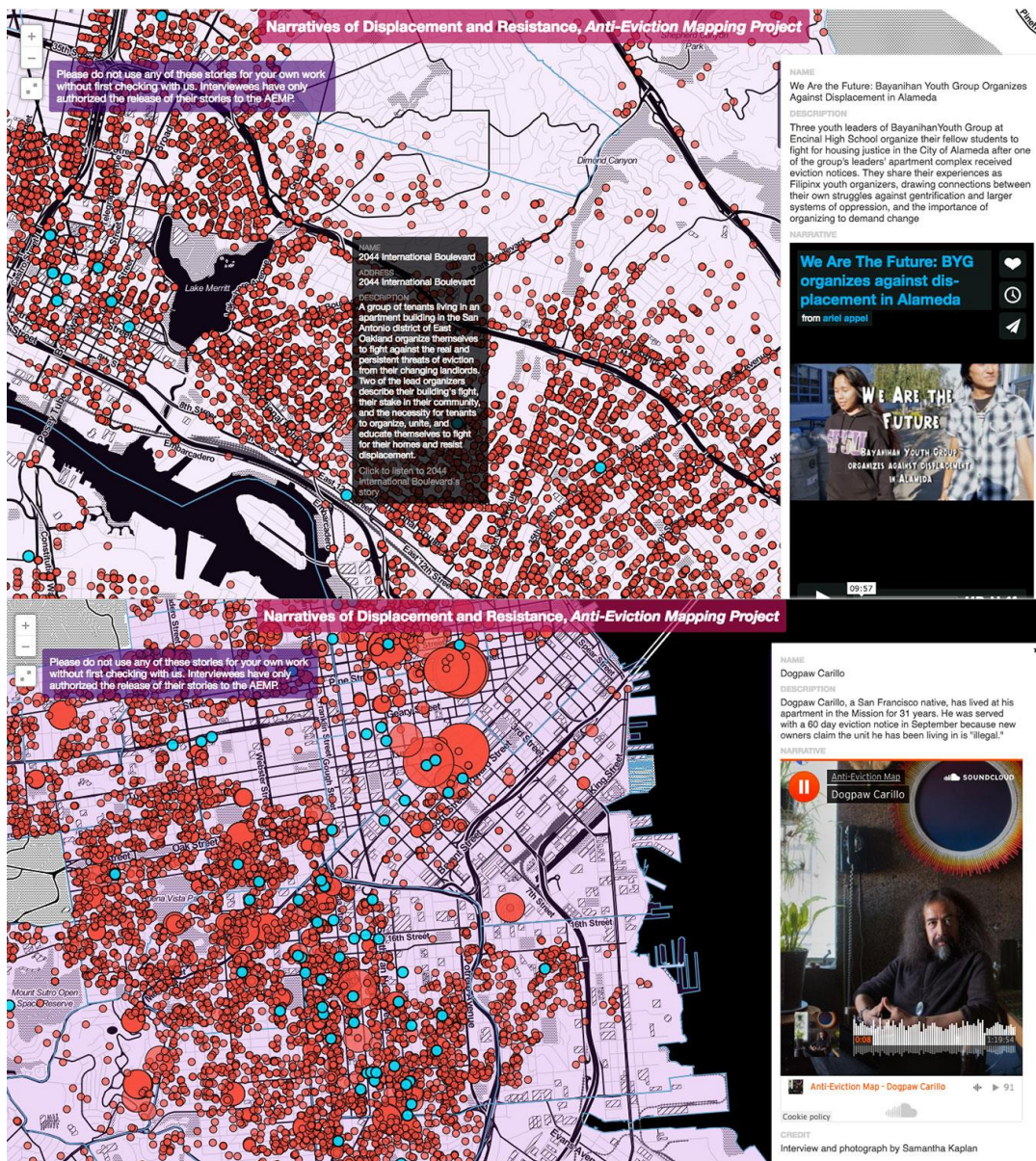
*Figure 6. Narratives of Displacement and Resistance, 2016 © AEMP*

Committed to refraining from spectacularization, yet also determined to avoid only narrativizing loss and tragedy, in 2016, the AEMP began producing community power maps, crowdsourcing data detailing community assets and spaces worth fighting to maintain. In this way, we endeavored to flip the narrative, reframing space not through what has been lost, but through what endures. Critical of a geographic tenancy of mapping urban space through what Clyde Woods describes as landscapes of premature and racialized death [45], community power mapping can be understood as a concerted effort to undo pathological topographic temporalities

and social death while also according recognition of accumulation of loss. [46] This pessimism-optimism reversal is not simply a mind game, nor a call for re-romanticization. It is rather one that understands the need for the simultaneity of framing strategies and the unproductive potentiality of negation reification. While loss sustains and grows, it is far from monolithic. By collectively mapping assets and sites of power, we collectively rethink spatial organizing strategy and tactics, opening future space beyond the romance-tragedy binary.
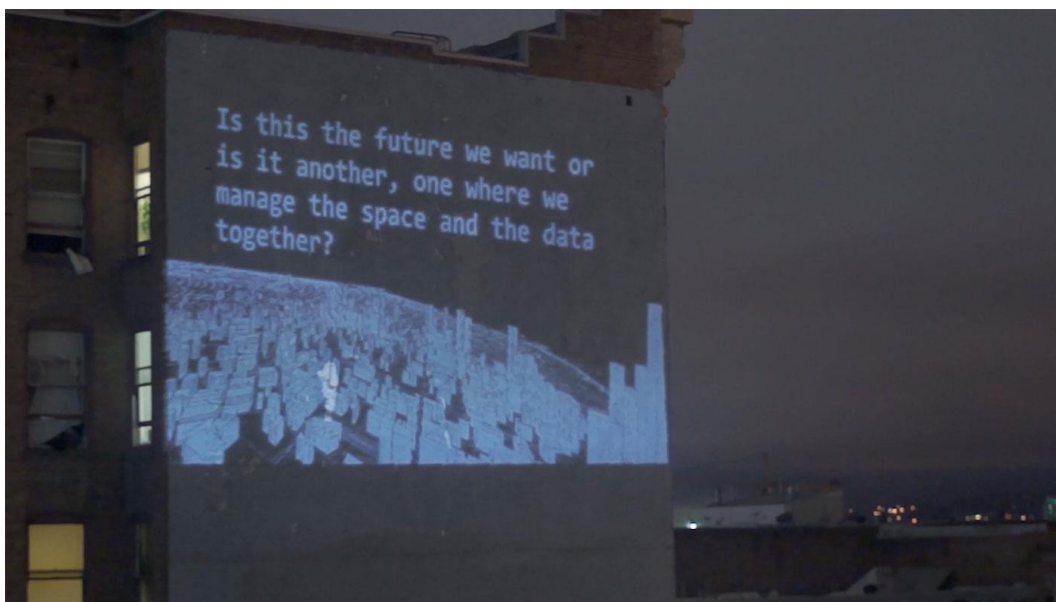


*Figure 7. Oakland Community Power Map © AEMP*

In 2016, the AEMP began a collaborative project with another media arts collective, the Saito Group. The AEMP had been crowdsourcing eviction data for years, building a database of displacement and resistance narratives, which the Saito Group then remixed into political-poetic text then projected upon downtown buildings. The Saito Group also built social media scanning software to encapsulate ongoing public debate surrounding gentrification, engaging the public in questioning the present and the future. As was textually projected on 6th and Market Streets, "Is this the future we want or is it another, one where we manage the space and the data together?" In other words, how can we think about housing and technology in ways that don't invoke tragic death (whether through romanticization or otherwise), but that mediate the present through future possibility? As the Saito Group questions:

> *"Do citizens also have counter-platforms that allow them to develop intelligence about how the real-estate market (and the data market) affect their ability to maintain their residence? If so, are they able to leverage these platforms to sustain their place in San Francisco? In short, can the city simultaneously sustain its growth and its soul?" [47]*

The AEMP endeavors to be one of many answers to this latter question, understanding its map-making as a technological media project collaboratively curating, analyzing, and producing data useful to heterogeneous future-building. In doing so, it participates in a wider call to rethink technology. While gentrification can be theorized as a racializing technology that the project works against, the project clearly is far from anti-tech. Similarly, while mainstream narrating of the anti-tech's birth and death can be understood can be understood as a violent flattening of both anti-gentrification movement and technology, it need not be allocated narrating power. After all, there are countless media projects that tell other stories, offer other analytics, and inhere other futures.
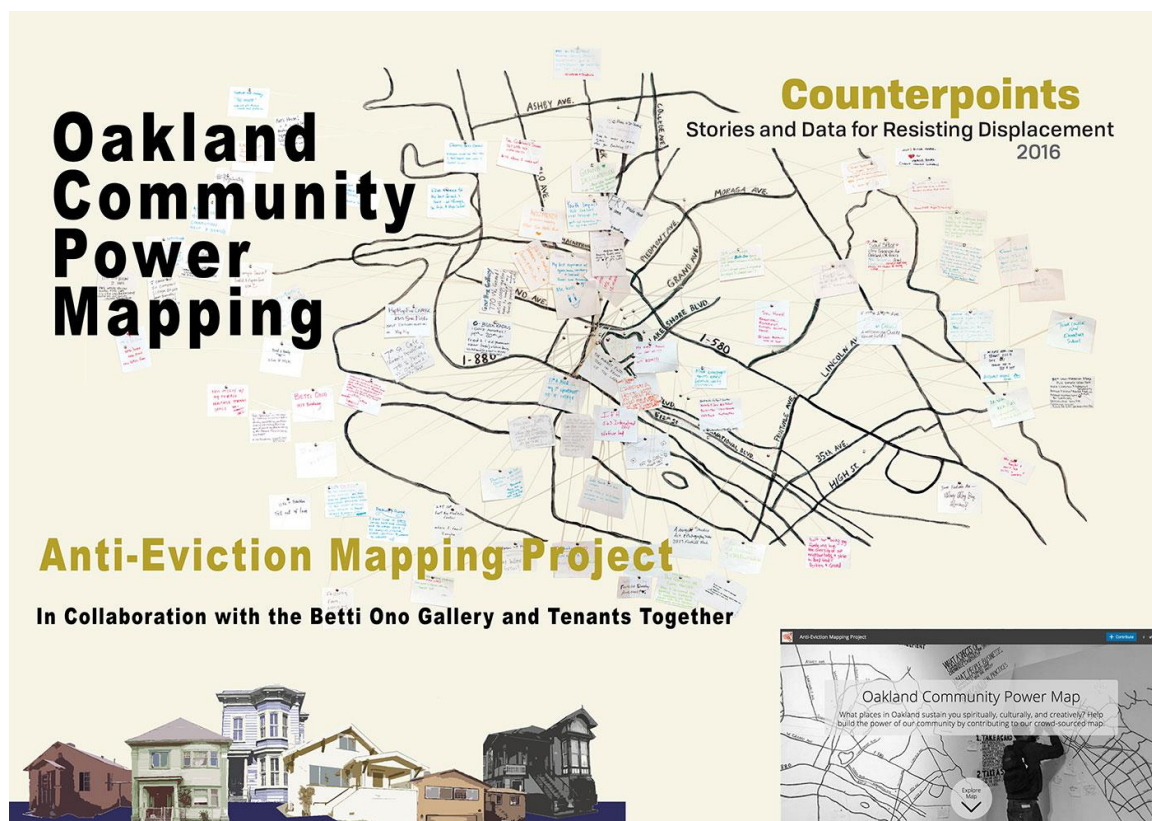


Figure 8. Eviction Prevention Representation, 2016, Saito Group and AEMP © AEMP and Saito Group

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