Beyond the "proper job" in Dayton, Ohio

An exploration of precarity, infrastructure and affect in the American city

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Master's Thesis

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UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

May 2019

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2019

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Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract

This thesis is based on approximately five and a half months of fieldwork conducted in the spring of 2018 in Dayton, Ohio, and contributes to the study of precarity in the global North among mostly young men with working- and middle-class backgrounds. Being part of the American Rust Belt, Dayton has experienced economic hardship and de-industrialization following the recessions of 1980 and 2008 and has been heavily affected by the ongoing opioid epidemic. More recently, an old GM factory was reopened in the area by Chinese investments that questions the narrative of de-industrialization in the region. I engaged in participant observation in a boxing gym, a church, and by living with people via Airbnb. Through scrutinizing the precarity of (1) mobility amidst crumbling infrastructure, (2) the precarity of factory life at a Chinese automotive glass plant, and (3) the precarity of the gig-economy, I shed light on how these various precarities are intertwined and affect the urban existence of my interlocutors. Furthermore, this thesis shed light on life beyond the "proper job" and the anxiety in its wake, in conjuncture with specific historical and cultural trajectories.

Acknowledgements

The process of writing this thesis has been anything other than an individual project. First and foremost, I am grateful to all the people I got to know in Dayton, and those who became my interlocutors. You let me become part of their lives, either at the boxing gym, at church, or through sharing your homes with me. A special thanks to Tal, Martin and Judith who helped me through trying times during fieldwork.

Fieldwork is one of the most challenging undertakings of my life, but also one of the most rewarding. Being able to build relationships with people in a very different place, learning how it is to live in contemporary America, and studying in a relatively "small place and exploring large issues", all in the context of my master thesis has truly been an amazing experience. I would not have managed this without the external support of friends and family.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Elisabeth Schober, for guidance, critical feedback and for invaluable support. Working with you have been both inspiring and motivating. Lastly, I want to thank my co-student and all those who have read my ongoing work and given me valuable feedback. A special thanks to Niklas, Daniel, Karen, Martin and Adam.

Contents

Abstract ... 3

Acknowledgements ... 5

Contents ... 7

Chapter 1: Introduction ... 10

“Dayton: A place called home” ... 13

Conceptual framework ... 15

Precarity as an ontological and globally shared condition. ... 17

Entrepreneurs and the neoliberal subject under post-Fordism ... 18

Infrastructure and industrial ruins ... 20

Affect theory and a note on the political climate ... 21

Structure of the thesis ... 22

Chapter 2: Methodological reflections and ethics ... 24

Producing data ... 24

The boxing gym: punching my informants ... 25

The church: healing with informants ... 27

The car: driving my informants ... 28

Airbnb: living with informants ... 28

Doing fieldwork in urban America ... 29

A fieldwork experience ... 30

Ethical concerns ... 32

Race and extraction in contemporary United States ... 32

Emotions in the field ... 35

Chapter 3: Infrastructure of (im)mobility ... 37

A portrait of Dayton through mobility ... 39

Migration, car-culture, and public infrastructure ... 40

The junction between I-70 and I-75 ... 43

Stories of mobility ... 45

The past in the present at the downtown boxing gym ... 46

Retreat of the public in Dayton ... 48

Chapter 4: Moraine Assembly and (a conflicted) modernity ... 50

Landscape of modernity ... 51

The boom at Moraine Assembly 52

The last truck standing (and industrial ruins) 54

Fuyao Glass America Inc. 57

Contradictions in the continued story of America 60
Chapter 5: Manufacturing work and cultures of flexibility 62
Frictions and accidents at Fuyao 63
Experiences of labour at the factory floor 65

A new generation of manufacturing workers 67
"We are a dying breed" 69

The case of Calvin 70

The precarity of factory work 70
Chapter 6: Hope and failures of the American entrepreneurs 73
Platform labour as an economic opportunity 75
The rise of the gig-economy 78

Barry and the aspirations of a temporary worker 78

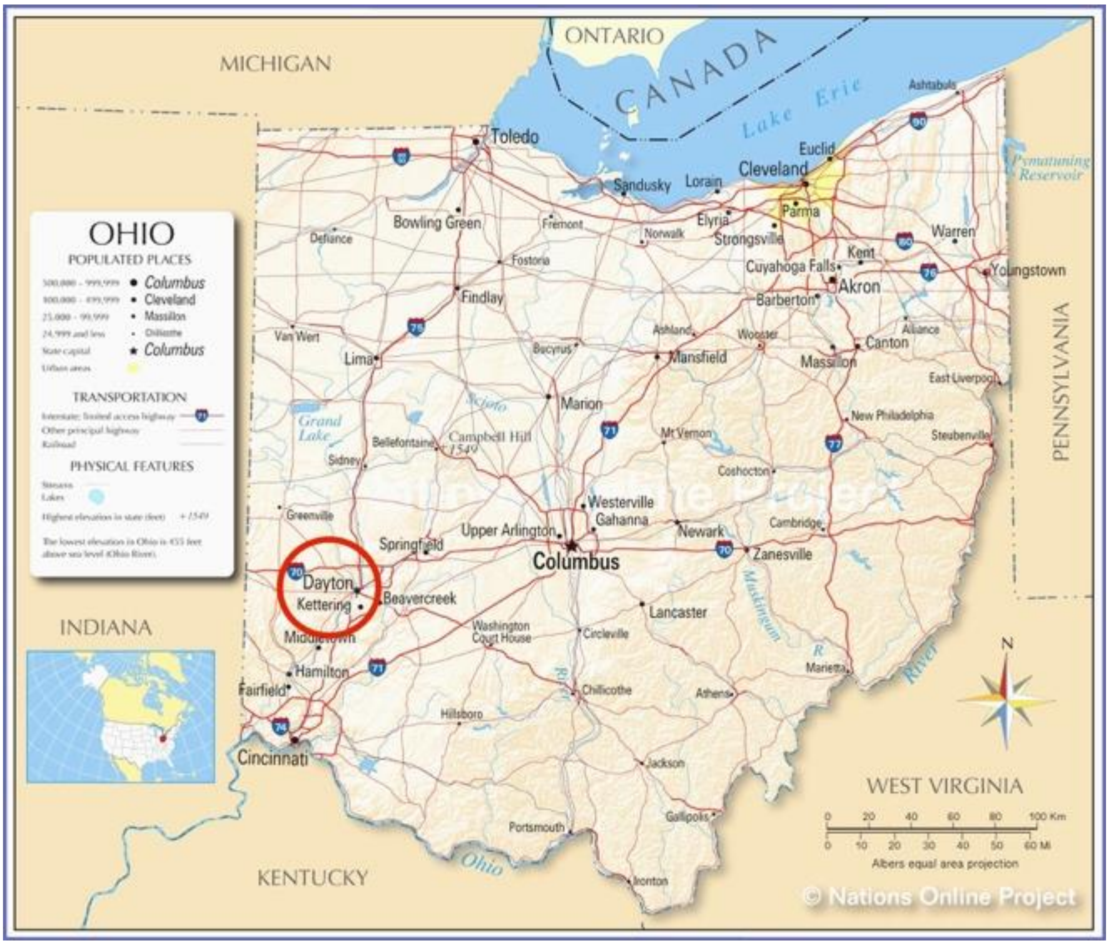
Adrian and his recipe for success 80

The precarity of the gig-economy in the "Left-behind America" 82
Airbnb as 'intimate economy' 84

Post-Fordist affect and the fabled flapping of wings. 86

Platform labour, race, and class in the post-Fordist infrastructure 88
Concluding remarks: 93
Literature 97

Figure 1: Map of Ohio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Fremont
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Elyria
Strongsville
Warren
Defiance
Fostoria
Kent
Cuyahoga Falls
Akron
Youngstown
Findlay
Barberton
OHIO
POPULATED PLACES
Columbus
Cleveland
Massillon
Chillicothe
Columbus
TRANSPORTATION
PHYSICAL FEATURES
Van Wert
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Chapter 1: Introduction

I spotted Barry and Zinan through the window at a pizza and sports bar in Brown Street. Zinan, a short and stout man from Iraq, had his eyes focused on his smartphone while Barry, an outspoken black man from the state of Alabama, was watching one of the many television screens on the walls. It was showing basketball. I was on my way to the doughnut shop a few meters further down the street when I noticed them. I interrupted my doughnut hunt to say hello, on this cold January evening. Barry and Zinan, both in their mid-thirties, were my two best acquaintances so far and I knew them through my Airbnb home at Mayville Street. I shared the house with Barry and another person, while Zinan was our host. “Hey guys. How come you didn’t invite me?” I asked while smiling. They both shifted their focus to me from their previous stimulant. “I texted you earlier,” Zinan answered. “Oh, that’s right. I was busy participating in that sparring exhibition at the boxing gym,” I responded. They both look serious. Barry, who usually was more cheerful, looked up at the monitor again without saying anything. “Who’s playing?” I asked. “It’s two college teams”, Barry answered before taking another sip of his beer.

I took a seat myself and start to watch the basketball game, joining them in their silent undertaking. Barry broke the silence it after a minute to tell me that he had thought more about the agreement we came to this morning. He told me he wished to use the car himself as well and that we had to change the contract. He did not see why he should help me if it did not benefit him more as well. I was already tired after participating at the sparring exhibition two hours earlier, and I was sensing how I’m close to losing my temper I was. It had been a trying and stressful week. On Monday, Barry and I got a friend to drive us down to South Lebanon to look at a car I found on Craigslist. Barry had told me he had some mechanical experience and said he could help me to inspect the car. I decided to buy it after we managed to barter the price a few hundred dollars down. It felt like my proper American experience could begin, now that I finally had a vehicle to move around in through this car-dependent society.

When I then went to register it and got my license plate on Wednesday, I was told I could not get it registered in my name because of the shortcomings of my visa. They told me that the only way I could drive the car was to get it registered in someone else’s name and borrow it. Barry told me he could help me out and I decided to register the vehicle in his name after making an arrangement benefiting both of us. This big man from Alabama was one of the first persons I met in Dayton and seemed to fit my project in a perfect way. He was a 35-year-old man who came to Dayton to work in manufacturing through a temporary employment agency. We soon formed a friendship and he let me write about him for my project. He also started to include me in his plans for the future. He knew I was looking for a place to stay more permanently and a for a car to drive. Therefore, he suggested that we could look for a place to live together and that we could use my car to drive for Uber and DoorDash – both new and flexible ways to earn extra money. As I felt quite sceptical about this, and did not wish to make any promises, I usually just waved these suggestions off during my first two weeks in Mayville Street. We had gone together to the Bureau of Motor Vehicle that morning, and now, just hours later, sitting in front of Barry and Zinan in the sports bar, my frustration reached a new high. Ever since he agreed to help me out on my terms, he had changed his mind once too often. I told him that I have had enough of this and how I now realized that our arrangement would not work: I would rather just sell the car and be done with it. I got up from my stool and left the sports bar in frustration.

Ten minutes later, when I was back home in the house, I received a text from Barry saying the following:

> Your acting crazy fr leave my keys, my registration papers and my license plates on the kitchen table or Im contacting the police letting them know you stole it and wont give it back to me. You wanna fuck me over then you give me back my dam car or Im have u arrested tonight for theft.

I was shocked by his message, but more than anything, I felt resignation: I accepted that this conflict was inevitable even as undesirable as it was. After spending time with Barry, I had experienced how his mood could suddenly shift and learned that he was on parole. He told me that his ex-girlfriend got him messed up in something, but I never got any more details on what he actually was sentenced for. Another ten minutes later Barry came to the house we both lived in, where we shared the same hallway, bathroom, television, dinners and good conversations. I asked him if he actually called the cops and about how many minutes I had left before they would arrive. "I'm not talking to you," he told me while his panting, maybe from anger, excitement or adrenaline, up the stairs to our hallway. I found myself debating whether he had a gun on him or at the house and concluded that he did not.

Shortly afterwards the cops arrived. They knocked on the storm door. The house did not have a doorbell. I got out and meet them on the porch, one female and one male police officer. Barry was now outside the house, walking up and down the sidewalk, in and out of the illumination from the streetlights that still functioned. He appeared to be talking to himself in an aggressive manner. The police officers told me about the situation they had been called to deal with: a theft of a vehicle. My options were either to come with them to the police station or hand over all vehicle registration, keys and license plate to Barry there and then. I chose the latter but asked if I could tell them my version of the situation. They let me explain myself.

While I was explaining, Barry came onto the porch. He was listening in on my story and begun commenting on what I was saying. He towered over the two shorter police officers. I looked at them in frustration and asked if they could tell him to get off the porch as he was making me uncomfortable. They told him to step down and I finished my story. They asked me some questions concerning the case, but my two already mentioned options were still the same. I went the get the items, and while handing them over, I told them the ironic aspect of it all: it is such a stereotype. The naïve Norwegian being fooled in the harsh real world, due to being too trustworthy. At this point, Barry had come back up on the porch and told me in a rough sounding voice: "Well you're not in Norway now. You better learn that!"

* * *

This was my introduction to the United States of America and the beginning of my urban ethnography in the midsized city of Dayton, Ohio (see Figure 1). I left this experience feeling both personally inadequate and a social failure as a student of anthropology – I blamed myself for trusting Barry the way I did after all the knowledge I had already gained of his precarious situation. Still, I wondered, how could this person I thought I could trust, or any person, for that matter, do this to someone else? What led him to take such extreme measures?

In order to answer these questions, I will explore different factors contributing to the condition of insecurity present in Barry's life. During my fieldwork, I witnessed how this condition was widespread among people I met in Dayton, and consequently, this led me to the following conceptual framework: I will employ 'precarity' as an analytical tool to shed light on my other interlocutors' experiences when it comes to meeting the necessities of life in the local context of Dayton, Ohio. 'Precarity' "describes and conceptualizes [an] unpredictable cultural and economic terrain and conditions of life" (Kasmir, 2018, p. 1). It is one of the most widely used new concepts in the contemporary social sciences and describes how millions of workers around the world live in insecure situations that are often attributed to neoliberal deregulation and the subsequent economic crises. The growing sense of insecurity is triggered by how employees have no clue as to whether they will still have work next year or even next month due to their short-term contracts and temporary jobs (Eriksen, 2016, p. 14). Consequently, this thesis is an exploration of various precarities in the Midwestern U.S. The focus is on (1) the precarity of mobility amidst crumbling public infrastructures, (2) the precarity of factory life at a Chinese automotive glass plant that opened in what was once the heartland of American car production, and (3) the precarity of the gig-economy that is currently on the rise. By looking at these three issues, and how they are interconnected, I ask: What are contributive factors to precarity in the context of a new landscape of labour in the U.S. and how does these influence the urban existence of local people in Dayton, Ohio?

This thesis is a result of nearly six months of fieldwork conducted between January and July of 2018. Both theoretical and personal interests led me to undertake this endeavour. My main interest and motivation were to explore young men with working-class and middle-class backgrounds and their lived experiences around labour, and their aspirations for their futures. The election of President Donald Trump and the widespread interest in the new political landscape emerging in the U.S. led me to choose America and the Midwest, with its industrial history, as the region to conduct fieldwork in. Furthermore, coming across headlines such as "Culture Clash at a Chinese-Owned Plant in Ohio" (Scheiber & Bradsher, 2017) while looking at potential fieldsites, which hinted at prevalent tensions in the local community around issues of work, convinced me to go to Dayton, Ohio – a city I had no previous connection to or knowledge of.

In Mayville Street, I stumbled right into the precarity I expected and set out to research – even if it involved myself as a researcher to a much larger degree than I had planned. Arguably, my own interest in precarity is connected to my background in the Norwegian middle-class. While writing this thesis both of my parents celebrated their forty-year anniversaries with their employers: the Norwegian state and the city of Oslo. Such workplace stability is something I, and many of my peers, will not experience due to structural changes in the labour market as well as changing expectations around professional fulfilment. My generation is rather characterized by embracing a notion of flexibility, and we tend to change work much more frequently in search of better opportunities and more rewarding experiences. Consequently, given this background, I have become aware of this tension between security and flexibility, which led me to my interest in precarity – which, arguably, is an increasingly prevalent condition in the global North (Eriksen, 2016; Standing, 2016), as it has been the standard for many parts of the global South (Breman, 2013). Therefore, by scrutinizing precarity, this thesis is also an exploration of the larger tension between security and flexibility, as exemplified by the lives of people in Dayton, Ohio.

"Dayton: A place called home"

Dayton is the archetype of the declining Rust Belt city (Millsap, 2018, p. 3), which involves "abandoned factories and homes, miles of underused roads, empty lots, and crumbling infrastructure." It is located southwest in the Midwestern state of Ohio, in the Miami Valley region, and named after Jonathan Dayton: "a captain in the US military during the American

Revolution and a signer of the US Constitution" (Millsap, 2018, p. 8). It is the county seat of Montgomery County and forms the Metropolitan Statistical Area of Dayton (MSA of Dayton) together with Greene and Miami County. Based on a 2010 census, Dayton had a population of around 140,000, an drastic decline from its peak in the 1960s with 262,332 inhabitants, while Montgomery County included approximately 550,000 people (Millsap, 2018, p. 6). The county is also home to seventeen different smaller cities with confusing and close boundaries to each other. During my stay, I lived in five of these, even as I imagined them all to be the city of Dayton. The city - nicknamed the 'Gem city' - sits in the middle of the two larger cities of Cincinnati and Columbus - just approximately one hour away on the highway. Dayton was established in 1796 by party of settlers from Cincinnati on the Miami River riverbank (Steele & Steele, 1896).

My first meeting with Dayton in the US was not in the city of Dayton itself, but at an exhibition in Washington D.C. Three days prior to my departure to the Gem city, I visited the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in D.C. They had an exhibition on the two brothers, Wilbur and Orville Wright, who invented, built, and flew the first successful heavier-than-air flying machine in the world on December 17, 1903 (Walsh, 2018, p. 66). Among the replica of their first airplane, bicycles they had made, different work sketches on brown old paper, one can find an informational panel with the heading, "Dayton: A place called home." The two brothers lived and worked in Dayton and is the city's most famous historical inhabitants, together with John H. Patterson, Charles Kettering and Edward Deeds – all prominent inventors and entrepreneurs helping to cast Dayton as the American city with most patents per capita in 1900 (Millsap, 2018). Consequently, the city also known 'the birthplace of aviation' has a special place in the American national pride.

Several told me: "Dayton is much like Detroit", and added, "it's just not as famous." Here Detroit stands at the icon for America's biggest failure. Sociologist Matthew Desmond (2016) writes, related to his study of eviction practices in Milwaukee, how it is important to pay attention to these cities who are "left out of the national conversation because they are not America's biggest successes (San Francisco, New York City) or biggest failures (Detroit, Newark)" (p. 333). Even with its exceptional history, Dayton has fallen far since its golden days at the beginning of the last century. Here are some keywords and indicators for the headlines Dayton provides in the national conversation: "Left Behind America" (MacGillis, 2018), "The growing divide between the old and new economy" (Chinni & Shivaram, 2018), and "Faces of an epidemic" (Talbot, 2017). They hint at Dayton's position as a Rust Belt town struggling to find its place in a rapidly changing economy. While the neighbouring city Columbus has managed to recover from years of decline and the latest 2008 financial crisis to create new economy jobs in technology and creative fields, Dayton, on the other hand, is still clinging to the old economy and its manufacturing jobs – even if only 13 percent are employed in this sector in Dayton. Two NBC news journalist comment: “While much is made of the county’s regional urban-suburban differences, the divide between the old and new economy is changing the country as well” (Chinni & Shivaram, 2018). In this thesis, I will explore both how the old and new economy is present in my interlocutors’ urban lives, here in form of various temporary manufacturing jobs provided through labour intermediaries and work at the Chinese automotive glass factory, and through ‘platform’ labour in the gig-economy. Here, I will shed light on the importance of context in the way to understand labour in the gig-economy, as the urban landscape of Dayton is very different from the prosperous neighbouring city of Columbus, or of San Francisco and New York. Still, I believe that by scrutinizing Dayton and its local inhabitants, I can provide important insights into the urban experience of many other similar Rust Belt towns.

Conceptual framework

Sharryn Kasmir (2018) describes the concept of ‘precarity’ as multi-stranded. It refers to (1) a pervasive and general ontological condition, connected to Judith Butler’s writings (Butler, 2004, 2009), (2) labour relations that are risky, uncertain and unpredictable for the worker (Kalleberg, 2009; Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018), and (3) an emerging global politically ‘dangerous’ class formation (Standing 2016). These understandings of precarity are interconnected. This thesis draws on the different understandings of the concept mentioned above to illuminate work relations and the connected urban experience in the lives of my interlocutors under the new landscape of labour. With the term ‘new landscape of labour’ I refer to the flexible labour regime that has emerged under ‘post-Fordism’.

Kasmir (2018, p. 4) explains the connections between precarity and post-Fordism in the following way: “Precarity is often used to describe the late-twentieth century transformation of work from stable, full-time jobs toward a flexible labour regime, commonly identified as the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism”. This transformation “has eroded many people’s sense of security and faith in a predictable future” (Penny Harvey & Krohn-Hansen, 2018, p. 13). In the early twentieth century, mass actions by workers to organize in national unions in the early twentieth century led to the Fordist contract: a compromise between capital, labour unions and state. Unionized workers won job security, wage hikes, and benefit packages attached to increased productivity through collective bargaining agreements (Chun, 2009; Kasmir, 2018). This hegemonic arrangement was dismantled by “the trifold process of globalization, deindustrialization, financialization in North America, western Europe, and Japan, followed by parallel political economic developments in post-socialist countries" (Kasmir, 2018, p. 4).

In his discussion on how 'precarious work' has increased in the United States, sociologist Arne L. Kalleberg (2009, p. 2) writes that these macro-economic changes are generally agreed to date back to the mid- to late-1970s and known as neoliberal globalization. This has led to what Kasmir (2018, p. 1) identifies as a 'new geography of capitalism'. Within this new geography, "neoliberal states passed legislation that wore down labour and social protections" (Kasmir, 2018, p. 4), leading to an onset of the flexible labour regime where unions lost power and were increasingly unable to protect workers. In this large-scale geography of work, many people are struggling to make ends meet with only one job, face declining opportunities for upwards social mobility, and decreased access to industrial work and long-term employment. Therefore, "Precarity thus references the decline of Fordism and the anxiety, insecurity, and feelings of un-belonging in its wake" (Kasmir, 2018, p. 4).

This shift from Fordism to post-Fordism can further be described in terms of a 'double movement', as conceptualized by Karl Polanyi (Polanyi, 1944) to "describe the organizing principles of industrial society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (Kalleberg, 2009, p. 3). Hann & Hart (2011, p. 58) explain the two sides of this movement as follows: "…on the hand the economics of laissez-faire and, on the other, social resistance to it…" This can, by extension, also be understood as the tension between flexibility and security in society (Kalleberg 2009, p. 3). I will show how these tensions become visible in the case of work safety and the question of unionizing at the Chinese automotive glass factory. I understand the reported "cultural clashes" at this factory as "frictions" and as the "the unexpected and unstable aspects of global interaction" (Tsing, 2005, p. 3). This case alludes to the challenges and failure of the American unions under post-Fordism, as explored by Durrenberger and Reichart (2010). Further, I will look at how my interlocutors strive for economic security in the new geography of capitalism through attaining several sources of income. Many of my interlocutors aspired to take part in the gig-economy – one of the most important transformations in the world of work over recent decades according to the International Labour Organization (ILO)[1] – and I will focus my attention on the case of Airbnb. I question whether Airbnb leads to a process where the market mentality begins to colonialize the private household.

The economist Guy Standing's (2016) work stands as an important contribution to the study of precarity. He classifies the 'global precariat' as a distinct, emerging and 'dangerous' class.

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[1] https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/non-standard-employment/crowd-work/lang--en/index.htm, accessed on 2019.03.17

Even if distinct, he notes how the precariat is far from homogeneous, but can be identified by the following characteristics: "…they all share a sense that their labour is instrumental (to live), opportunistic (taking what comes) and precarious (insecure)" (2016, p. 15). For Standing, the experiences of anger, anomie, anxiety and alienation (the four A's) are linked to this group. Further, Standing insist that the precariat is not part of the 'working-class' or the 'proletariat', which he relates to Fordism, but a novel class formation in its own right.[2] In Marxist terminology, Standing states that: "the precariat can be defined as having distinctive relations of production, distinctive relations of distribution and distinctive relations to the state, producing distinctive class consciousness" (2016, p. xiii). Thus, the precariat is a class-in-the-making and internally divided.

This insight very much resonates with what I have experienced in the field: My interlocutors, even if they shared conditions of precarity in the post-Fordist geography of capitalism, showed little sense of solidarity or class-consciousness. Given this insight, my ethnographic material will further highlight the fragmentation, as a process of dispossession and displacement of class, under post-Fordism (Kasmir & Carbonella, 2014). I employ the concept of class and understand it as a flexible term, by drawing on anthropologist Don Kalb's (2015) notion of class as a 'bundle of relationships' that are "unstable, uneven, contradictory and antagonistic relational interdependences" (p. 14) that point to the problematic social inequality of global capitalism. Furthermore, Kalb's (2011) work on the relation between working-class people, their material and cultural dispossession and disenfranchisement, and populism in Europe under neoliberalism is also relevant here for comparison. He notes how these are current "complex and entangled processes that accumulate through time and that are now shaking the established political landscape in the continent" (Kalb, 2011, p. 2).

Precarity as an ontological and globally shared condition.

Having explored two parts of the multi-stranded concept of precarity, I will continue with a discussion on how it can be used as an ontological condition. One critique of Standing's 'the precariat' is that it is ethnocentric. Standing develops his 'precariat' as a novel phenomenon of a global class based on labour market changes that occur primarily in the U.K., France, Germany, Japan, South Korea, and the U.S. Meanwhile, in the global South, which is not included in

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[2] Carbonella and Kasmir (2014, p. 3) hold on to the concept of the working class and notes how many scholars mistake the "transformation and decline of the Fordist working class, a specific historical/geographical formation, for the end of class itself."

Standings focus, insecurity in regard to livelihood is far from novel. According to Kasmir, capital "has always counted upon insecure, unprotected, and super-exploited workforces" (2018, p. 8). Sociologist Jan Breman (2011) leads this critique, given his knowledge of industry and work in India. He points to Standing's lack of historical depth and global width in understanding current labour market changes. "Standing downplays the extent to which the crusade for 'flexibility' has aimed not just to cheapen the price of labour but drastically to weaken its capacity for collective action," according to Breman (2011, p. 138).

Rather, precariousness as an ontological condition is understood as "a general and pervasive human experience, one that extends beyond the current political-cultural moment and affects people of all socio-economic groups" (Kasmir, 2018, p. 2). Further, "this existential perspective brings into view people's feelings of vulnerability, displacement, and hopelessness" (Kasmir, 2018, p. 2). This existential perspective on precariousness, on the other hand, is critiqued for rendering the concept of precariousness as too pervasive and as a consequence it becomes obsolete, ahistorical and without acuity to social analysis. Kasmir (2018, p. 3) notes, "It too readily flattens out import differences among social relations, and it does little to explain the forces that shapes the contemporary world." Holding on to the critique of both strands of precarity, as too pervasive, ahistorical, and without analytical acuity, and as lacking in global understanding, I will use precarity to both explore my interlocutors' 'feelings of vulnerability, displacement, and hopelessness', and use it to illuminate some of the distinct insecure labour relations they are part of. Accordingly, I will scrutinize my interlocutors' experiences by paying attention to historical changes in their local environments and how they deal with their circumstances. I understand them as neoliberal subjects and entrepreneurs, which are the terms I will explore in the following.

Entrepreneurs and the neoliberal subject under post-Fordism

A Zambian copper miner told sociologist Ching Kwan Lee (2014) the following during her research on the presence of Chinese corporations in the Copperbelt: "We are moving from a culture of employment to a culture of entrepreneurship. We are on our own. There is no security in jobs" (p. 62). The context of this statement is based around the speaker's perception of the difference between the present and the past: depending on the mines or the government for meeting the necessities of life in Zambia had become impossible. In a similar vein, Standing (2002) has stated that the 20th century, under Fordism, appeared to be "the century of labouring man" (p. 7). According to Ferguson and Li (2018), it was however only a small fraction of the world population that was actually part of this stabilized urban working class, even as it was "projected as the future of all" (p. 2). Echoing the sentiments of the African miner, Standing argues that "the century of labouring man" has now come to an end. Ferguson and Li further comment that if this is the case, "it is not because stable waged and salaried labour is disappearing in any absolute sense, but because it is losing its plausibility as the universal solution, the obvious telos of a worldwide developmental process" (2018, p. 2). As a consequence of this lost conviction, Ferguson & Li (2018, p. 2), point to "the apparently worldwide contemporary anxiety about jobs and the social and economic stability they were long expected to anchor".

Curiously enough, this kind of anxiety, which both Standing (2016) discusses and the miner above refers to when he says, "We are on our own", was nearly non-existent in the way most of my young interlocutors discussed work and livelihood, with just a few exceptions. I will argue that an existing 'culture of entrepreneurship' in America renders this anxiety bearable, when faced with "the persistent structural unemployment and casualization induced by neoliberal restructuring and "austerity", or the recent and looming technological developments that threaten to eliminate or drastically reduce whole categories of paid labor…" (Ferguson & Li, 2018, p. 2).

When I refer to the American entrepreneur, I am influenced by this Zambian copper miners' understanding of a culture of entrepreneurship that Ching Kwan Lee (2014) alerts us to. This understanding of entrepreneurship stands in relation to the decreasing opportunities of the "proper job" (Ferguson & Li, 2018). In this case, both risk and anxiety are prominent. Thus, I see the entrepreneur in a cross-cultural global framework and follow Kathleen M. Millar (2014) who points to both the particular and the universal "worldwide symptom of neoliberalism":

> […] many theorists of late capitalism perceive insecure employment as an increasingly shared condition that is merging the destinies of the global North and South. However, the way that the relationship between precarious labor and precarious life is articulated depends significantly on the specific history and expertise of capitalism in a given location… (Millar, p. 35).

Therefore, I will explore the historical and cultural contexts and meanings on which this specific labour is based. The entrepreneur as a social type is further connected to autonomy and flexibility in the American social life, as in the global South (Lee, 2014; Mantz, 2007; Millar, 2014). Autonomy, understood in the neoliberal sense, "refers to individual empowerment, entrepreneurialism, and self-help, and to the conception of the self as an economic resource requiring investment, management, and care that the subject brings to social transactions" (Millar, 2014, p. 47). This bundle of characteristics is also how I understand the neoliberal subject[3]. Following Millar, I will add to her argument by shedding light on how the destinies of the global North and South are merging in the local context of Dayton where the presence of a Chinese company in a recently abandoned General Motors auto-plant has caused much discussion.

Infrastructure and industrial ruins

During the last decade there has been a turn in anthropology to pay critical attention to our material surroundings. This turn is indebted to "critical Marxist perspectives from Althusser to Walter Benjamin, and the development studies literature they have influenced…" (Anand, Gupta, & Appel, 2018, p. 8). In post-Fordist America, abandoned industrial factories, boarded up shopping malls, and decaying houses are pervasive parts of the landscape and can be understood as ruins of modernity (Dawdy, 2010). Both in chapter three and four, I explore abandoned places in order to say something about Dayton as a place where the past lingers on in the present, and how such built environments can activate different sentiments.

Similarly, the crumbling infrastructure of many American cities has reopened questions of power and inequality. Anand, Gupta, & Appel (2018) open their introduction to *The Promise of Infrastructure* by describing how the Detroit Water and Sewage Department began to turn off water to tens of thousands of Detroit's inhabitants in April 2014. During the same month, the city of Flint switched their water source from Lake Huron to the polluted Flint River. These decisions and actions were made in the name of regimes of austerity, leading to lead poisoning and outbreak of Legionnaires' disease among Flint's inhabitants. Anand, Gupta, & Appel (2018, p. 2), show how infrastructure is a terrain of power and dispute, and they ask: "To whom will resources be distributed and from whom will they be withdrawn? What will be public goods and what will be private commodities, and for whom?" In chapter 3, to tell the story of precarity of mobility and public infrastructure, I will pay attention to these questions in this landscape where the neoliberal austerity regime and corporate money have played a significant role. Further, Anand, Gupta, & Appel (2018, p. 28) allude to the aspect of power: "Governance, it turns out, does not take place at a distance but through the intimacy and proximity of toilets, pipes, and potholed roads". In this thesis, I will add to this growing interesting in infrastructure (Anand, 2017; Anand et al., 2018; Fennell, 2015b; Larkin, 2013).

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[3] This subject stands in close proximity to the 'responsible citizen': "The "responsibilized" citizen comes to operate as a miniature firm, responding to incentives, rationally assessing risks, and prudently choosing from among different courses of action" (Ferguson, 2010, p. 172).

Affect theory and a note on the political climate

What forms of affect are produced by one's existence in a post-Fordist landscape of crumbling infrastructures and industrial ruins? Affect, in comparison to the more corporeal 'emotion', "carries tactile, sensuous, and perhaps also involuntary connotations" (Mazzarella, 2009, p. 291). In his exploration of affective spaces and ruins, Navaro-Yashin (2009), further illuminates how we can understand affect as non-discursive, as it "refers to a sensations which may move through the subject, but is not known to it" (p. 12), while emotions, sentiments and feelings can be put into words, i.e. discursive.

I follow Millar (2014) in adopting "precarity as a useful analytic for conceptualizing the labor condition as inseparable from issues of subjectivity, affect, and sociality, and desire" (p. 35). With the term 'cruel optimism', Lauren Berlant (2011) has combined subjectivity, affect, and sociality, and desire, which she has explored in the specific context of post-Fordist America. She explains that "a relation of cruel optimism exist when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (2011, p. 1). "The good life" as unattainable is at the centre of Berlant's project and refers to it as "that moral-intimate-economic thing" (p. 2). How do people deal with the realization that they exist "after the good life", so to speak? How do they cope with the realization that "upward mobility, job security, and political and social equality" is being worn out? Living in a world that is both difficult to understand and to get a grasp on, while intensely present at the same time, can lead to what Berlant defines as "impasse" (2011, p. 4). "…*Cruel Optimism* turns toward thinking about the ordinary as an impasse shaped by crises in which people find themselves developing skills for adjusting to newly proliferating pressures to scramble for modes of living on" (p. 8). Throughout this thesis, I will look at different "modes of living on".

The danger of 'the precariat' mobilizing towards populist and neo-fascist politicians is at the centre of Standing's (2016) theory. Due to insecure labour relations, lack of work-placed identity, and the time squeeze manifested among the precariat, "people are disengaged from political activity except when motivated for a short while, enraptured by a new charismatic face or energized by a shocking event." (Standing, 2016, p. 153). While insecure work-relations and material conditions are central to understand the rise of populism in the West, as with the election of Trump, political scientists Ronald F. Inglehart and Pippa Norris (2016) conclude that cultural values are the most consistent explanation for this populist pattern. They write, "We believe that these are groups most likely to feel that they have become strangers from the predominant values in their own country, left behind by progressive tides of cultural change which they do not share" (p. 5). Anthropologist Claudine M. Pied (2018), in a similar vein, explores the remaking of the "white working class" in the U.S. and see this class remade as a racial/cultural category through conservative populism connected to president Donald Trump, even if she notes how there is "not [only] one white working-class reaction to neoliberalism" (p. 204). These sentiments are echoed by some of my interlocutors, both those who supported Trump and those who did not. In the 2016 election, the electoral area of Dayton voted by a small margin in favour of Trump after voting for Barack Obama in the two previous elections. In this landscape of post-Fordism dotted with industrial ruins, his promise of "fixing the economy" carries weight.

Structure of the thesis

The main premise of this thesis is that there are substantial changes in the landscape of labour in the contemporary U.S. and that the emerging forms of labour in this landscape are often precarious. In chapter two, I will explore what methods I used, and at which locations I produced my ethnographic data. I will further look at how these processes were complicated by issues of race, extraction and emotions, and I will use the "welcome to America" vignette introduced above, and my relation to Barry to illustrate these topics. Following Burawoy (1998) and Moore (1999) I reflect on how my ethnography proved to be an intervention into people's lives, as Barry is an example of, who had less social, economic and material resources than I did.

In chapter three, I use my own experience of traveling with the Greyhound bus company from Washington D.C. to Dayton, i.e. my "entering the field"-story, to open my investigation into the precarity of mobility and public infrastructure. I ask, how can we understand the infrastructure of mobility's role in shaping contemporary Dayton? By employing theory on infrastructure, I shed light on urban inequality through the emerging car culture of the early 20th century, with the construction of roads and highways, and how these processes led to more mobility for some, while immobility for others. Here, I also explore how Dayton's location at the junction between two major interstates plays a role in placing the town in the heart of the ongoing opioid epidemic.

In chapter four, I investigate some of the industrial history of Dayton's neighbouring city of Moraine. This is the location of the Moraine Assembly plant and has traditionally been the centre for industry in the area, starting with the Dayton-Wright Company manufacturing airplanes to the First World War. By traveling through this area, I shed light on the local history, from manufacturing warplanes, to refrigerators and automobiles under General Motors, to the present-day occupant in Fuyao Glass America Inc., who moved in to the old GM-shell in 2014. I argue that the case of Fuyao Glass America Inc. and its presence in Dayton can be understood in relation to Adam Smith's (2002) "…vision of a world-market society based on greater equality among the world's civilization" (Arrighi, 2007, p. 8), where there is an economic shift from the West to the East. I am inspired by writings on industrial ruins and affect theory, to reflect on this new landscape of modernity and capitalism in the U.S.

Now, having established this new landscape of both factory labour and the infrastructure of mobility, I move to analyse how my interlocutors navigate this changing American geography. In chapter five, I explore the question of labour and the struggle between security and flexibility through looking at the case of a fatal accident at Fuyao, the question of unionizing, and through my interlocutor Calvin. Here, tensions between the collective and individual, and between the young and old generation become visible. I end by commenting on the question of who can achieve mobility through this labour at Fuyao where new ethnic boundaries are revealed.

Chapter six tells the story of the American entrepreneurs and begin by describing how the loss of the "proper job" leads American workers to take part in the gig-economy. Here I conclude the story of my personal mobility in America with how I sold my (second) car, and I revisit Barry to discuss his aspirations, and that of my other interlocutors, to achieve another form of income through this new economy. I further explore the precarity of the gig-economy by scrutinizing Airbnb as an 'intimate economy' to shed light on how this economic activity in a new way brings the market into the home. Lastly, I discuss how the precarity of gig-economy can be understood in relation to the precarity of mobility and public infrastructure in this post-Fordist American city.

Chapter 2: Methodological reflections and ethics

Henrietta Moore, in her introduction to *Anthropological Theory Today* (1999), discusses what anthropological theory is and what its relationship to fieldwork looks like. She refers to how anthropologists have been discussing the researcher's role in knowledge production and how these debates have problematized questions of power, domination and discrimination within the discipline (1999, p. 1). She states that, "The anthropologist as subject is encompassed within the same frame as the subjects of anthropological enquiry, is coeval with them, and is constituted through relations with them" (1999, p. 19). Consequently, "[…] anthropological enquiry depends on a much more nuanced recognition of locations, positions and subjectivities […] (1999, p. 19). This chapter takes Moore's insistence seriously that anthropological inquiries in the 21st century need to recognize issues related to locations, positions and subjectivities, and also subscribes to a "recognition that the self is not distinct from the relations into which it enters" (1999, p. 19).

How did I 'choose' and define my field or location? How did my background, my class and gender and my role as researcher affect my relations in the field? Social anthropology's method of participant observation is seemingly a less clear-cut process than what competing social scientific methods would offer (e.g. questionnaires or structured interviews). These two latter methods often strive for detachment, rather than engagement, which is embraced in ethnography (Burawoy 1998, p. 5). This engagement and participation in other people's lives needs to be reflected upon. During the early beginning of my fieldwork in Dayton, I soon experienced the problematic side of truly involving myself in my informants' lives. My incident with Barry, which I have described in my "Welcome to America"-story in chapter one, is the clearest example of this.

This chapter will further discuss the already mentioned factors of location, positioning and the production of anthropological data. I will begin by describing the different locations and methods I used to produce data, then I will explore my relationship and my incident with Barry, which will be followed by a discussion concerned with the issues of race, extraction and emotions in the field.

Producing data

I set out to Dayton in the middle of January 2018 with a goal to research how young men with working class backgrounds related to labour, class, masculinity and their future. My focus was mainly on the intersection between economy and gender and was inspired by geographer Linda McDowell's (2003) discussion on how the changes in the world of work affect young men with working-class backgrounds. She explores how the so-called 'informational' or 'new economy', where work is to a larger degree found in the service economy, affects young men and their "[…] sense of self-identity or belonging to a collective that is no longer found in the workplace" (McDowell, 2003, p. 828). I also wanted to research how this group of people related to labour movements and unions, and if work could be found in the new local Chinese owned factory, Fuyao Glass America. My plan to engage with and get to know young men with a working-class background was to begin fieldwork by engaging in participant observation at the local boxing gym. Through the course of this fieldwork and through writing this thesis, my focus changed to also include the material conditions of Dayton in light of the recent interest in infrastructure and affect (see chapter one). While I have kept a focus on young men, this thesis also include data on a few women, who I met at the gym, a church, and lived with. They give a further insight into the precarity of young men, as masculinity is relationally constructed (Messerschmidt, 2016).

The boxing gym: punching my informants

On my second day in Dayton I walked down to "Mark's Downtown Boxing Gym" and showed my interest to try out a boxing class. I was greeted with curiosity by Mark, the head coach and owner of the gym. The boxing class I joined was to a large degree a fitness class with boxing elements. It involved plenty of push-ups, jumping jacks, lunges and the activity of holding a tire above one's head. The boxing elements included were punching heavy bags and punching Mark's handheld mits. This was not what I had expected and was very different compared to my previous experience with the sport. This experience involved five-years of boxing in total. Due to this experience I was able to handle the physically straining fitness boxing class well and received extra attention from Mark and his gym-instructors. Mark soon wanted me to participate at a sparring exhibition the gym held once a month, where anyone with some boxing experience could show up and spar for three rounds in front of an audience paying five dollars to enter. I participated twice as a competitor and twice as part of the team arranging the event.

This gym became one of my main sites for participant observation during my five and a half months of fieldwork. The main actors involved in the boxing gym, apart from us paying members, were a group of six different instructors, excluding Mark. They led different boxing fitness classes during the week and the gym offered between two and four classes every day. Wednesday was special - it was the day for sparring sessions. Here those bravest and most willing took on headgear, mouthguard, and gloves weighing 16 ounces and climbed between the ropes to compete by throwing punches against each other. An instructor named Brian led these sessions. After participating at several of the fitness classes, I began to get bored with the activity. As the exercises did not involve a lot of cooperation or breaks to talk, I found it hard to get to know people better through these classes. I decided to do these less frequently and do my own boxing exercises, weightlifting sessions and always attend the weekly sparring. Even as I chose to engage less in the strictly regulated workout sessions, I experienced more opportunities for small talk and building relationships with the instructors and boxers who sparred and lifted weights. Due to my experiences I was regarded well and other boxers started to ask for my advice.

From earlier experiences I had learned that boxing is a good place to get to know people. Sociologist Loïc Wacquant (2004) reflects on this, following his fieldwork in a boxing gym in Southside Chicago, and writes as follows: "[…] the egalitarian ethos and pronounced colour-blindness of pugilistic culture are such that everyone is fully accepted into it so long as he submits to the common discipline and "pays his dues" in the ring" (p. 10). This egalitarian ethos and pronounced colour-blindness are elements I experienced at this gym in Dayton as well, where I managed to build relations across skin-color lines and divisions related to socio-economic status. Another important factor Wacquant reflects on is how crucial the gym leadership, involving competent trainers who ruled the gym with respect, had been for turning him from an apprentice to a journeyman, without suffering grievous injuries on the way (2004, p. 9). My experiences at the gym in Dayton were nearly the opposite. The instructors lacked experience and knowledge on how to teach proper boxing technique. This led to people participating in sparring without being able to handle themselves appropriately between the ropes, i.e. protect themselves and holding back on their own punching power. Participating in the gym was not always easy: I was thrown to the "wolves" several times and experienced a knockdown. But due to my experience I could handle myself well and deal with most of the challenges I encountered in the

ring, without receiving too much damage. By punching my informants, I gained their respect and interest more easily, and they opened themselves up to me and my enquiring nature as an ethnographer.

The church: healing with informants

I met Travis, a recovering drug addict, on my first day at the boxing gym. As my relationship with Travis evolved, I asked if I could come with him to the church he worked at for Sunday services. He was happy to let me come. I was interested in finding out more about what this church community meant for him and if other young men our age attended regularly. This church was located far out in West Dayton in an area referred by most as "the hood" (in the sense that it was inhabited by predominantly African-Americans with a lower social-economic standing). Travis was a "gatekeeper" into this community, as he was well-known and well-regarded. This energetic young man acted as the joker and clown of the group, as well as a role model for the younger kids attending church. His employment involved maintenance, and he usually let me help him out with his duties. Every Sunday, this church held three services: the first was a breakfast service, where people who lacked access to basic healthy food could come and get a free meal, the second was the main service for the whole church community, and the third was a "celebrate recovery service" which focused on the "twelve steps-program" and motivation for people struggling with addiction.

I usually arrived after the breakfast service ended and sat down at one of the many tables, talking and eating breakfast with Travis and others in the community. When people left for the main service, I often stayed around longer and helped Travis and some of the other church volunteers cleaning the tables. After cleaning we either hung around talking for a while or went to catch either the main service or the later celebrate recovery service. As they were also serving dinner here on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and held bible study groups afterwards, I began attending church on some of these days as well. Attending services and helping out at the church gave me an insight into how they work to combat the ongoing opioid epidemic, the more general drug and alcohol addiction, and how the church tried to be a positive force in the neighbourhood. Church-going was not part of my initial research design and I decided to include it when the angle of "community" started to materialize during my fieldwork. Since my body could not handle more hours at the boxing gym, and as I had problems following people outside the gym since they were at work or school, I needed another location to do participant observation. The church then materialized as a location I could compare with the boxing gym, as an institution for fellowship and a "social infrastructure."

The car: driving my informants

Hamond, an informant at church, saw me exiting my blue BMW one afternoon before a community clean-up in the church neighbourhood. When I went to greet him, he asked, “Howard, are you a prince back in Norway?” while smiling. I laughed at the question and told him the car is much worse and not as expensive as it looks. Car brands hold certain connotations from place to place. BMW, being one of the most luxury and quality car-brands in the world, transferred certain meanings and associations on to me. While most people commented that my car was fancy, they soon changed their opinion when they heard it had 215,000 miles on it - being many miles above its prime. While I had planned on buying a car after consulting American friends who said it would be difficult to live in this part of the United States without one, I began my fieldwork with the intention of finding a cheap but safe ride. My fieldwork ended up involving cars and car related problems to a much larger extent then I had anticipated. I ended up buying two cars due to the incident with Barry. It also led to me flying to LA to buy a new one with the help of a friend, experiencing difficulties registering my new car in California due to emission issues, and it finally led me to several trips to mechanics in both LA and Dayton, all of which meant that I ended up using much more time and money than planned on cars.

Since several of my informants did not own a car, they sometimes asked me to drive them to places, or I offered to drive them if I knew they needed a ride. I ended up driving Travis several times home from boxing practice, as he did not enjoy the longer bus ride. He also needed to take his pay-check – which he received every second week – to the bank to get it cashed. After a few Sunday services, when he was done with his work-related chores, we went to cash it in and celebrated by grabbing some lunch afterwards. I drove Hamond to a neighbouring city to look at a car for purchase, and to his family dinner party during memorial weekend, etc. These trips changed the dynamics of our relationship. Firstly, it was nice to give something back after my informants allowed me to write about them for my project, and secondly, driving through different urban landscapes brought up different topics and past experiences owning our conversations.

Airbnb: living with informants

I began my fieldwork in Dayton with only two certain connections: One being a planned interview with several scholars on masculinity at the University of Dayton, and the other being a pre-booked ten-day stay at an Airbnb-home in Mayville Street[4]. This became the first of twelve different Airbnb-homes I lived in during my stay in the United States. Arriving in Mayville Street, I was uncertain about the state of the house I lived in. It lacked basic furniture and seemed to be more of a warehouse than a home. But I warmed up towards the house and was eventually happy to call it my first home during fieldwork. My plan at the time of arrival involved getting to know people in the boxing gym and hopefully moving in with one of them. This plan never came to fruition. I asked the people I got to know if they knew of someone with an extra room they could rent out, but no one I met could help me out. Mark at the gym said he could arrange a meeting with his landlord, since he rented out studio-apartments downtown, but after a few days of thinking about his proposition, I decided it would be too much work and little would be gained by living alone in a studio-apartment.

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[4] A pseudonym

In light of not being able to move in with anyone from the gym, staying in people's homes through Airbnb became both affordable and fruitful in terms of ethnographic material. Most of the people renting out parts of their homes on Airbnb were young men and women. I managed to book most of my stays for longer periods of time and ended up living one month each at two different locations and three weeks at three other locations. I asked the majority of my hosts at these places whether they would consent to taking part in my research, and they all allowed me to write about them in my thesis. Sharing living space for a longer period of time, even if it might be short in anthropological terms, helped me gain an important insight into very different people's lives, all residing in the Greater Metropolitan area of Dayton. I also used it to understand how people used Airbnb as an economic opportunity and source of income.

Doing fieldwork in urban America

How can one do ethnography, understood as "writing about the world from the standpoint of participant observation" (Burawoy 1998, p. 6), in five midsized American cities? First of all, in a practical manner, and as will be touched on in chapter three, these American cities are as small as larger neighbourhoods in many European cities, and they all were part of the Greater metropolitan area of Dayton. Secondly, none of my informants were just bound to one of these cities as their only locality. For example, Travis, during his normal weekday routines had to travel in and out of three cities. In one he worked, lived and trained, in another was a second church he also maintained, and in the third he met his probation chancellor. As the cities in the greater metropolitan area of Dayton are constructed around car-travel, my fieldwork consequently also became located in several of these cities. Owning a car also gave me the opportunity to follow my informants more easily and provided greater freedom when it came to choosing the most fitting Airbnb-home throughout my stay.

As this sub-chapter's heading ("producing data") hints at, is the element of construction which is part of doing fieldwork. Gupta & Ferguson (1997) writes: """The field" is a clearing whose deceptive transparency obscures the complex processes that go into constructing it" (p. 5), in their discussion of what an "anthropological field" is. This construction is part of my research question, with the included boundaries of greater Dayton, age, gender and class background, which I entered the "field" with, and the theoretical framework I hoped to build on or problematize based on my ethnographic material. These aspects, which Raymond Madden (2010) labels "interrogative boundaries," defines one's fieldwork and do highlight the fact that "fields" are not out there awaiting discovery, but are mental constructions by the ethnographer (p. 39). As he concludes, "Interrogative boundaries are not troubled by geographic or social plurality, nor are they challenged by mobility in ethnography" (2010, p. 53).

Madden uses "interrogative boundaries" to question George E. Marcus (1995) ethnographic approach towards "multi-sited fieldwork", which Madden argues may not be such a paradigm shift, as the latter anthropologist makes it out to be (Madden 2010, p. 53). In comparison to classic social anthropological fieldwork, mine was in many regards "multi-sited," as it involved a plurality of locations. "Follow the people" is one of the approaches I used (Marcus, 1995, p. 106). Using the "snowball"- method as an approach, I managed, for instance to follow Travis to his church community, follow Calvin to visit work colleagues and participate playing soccer with other mandarin-speaking work-friends of his, etc. I did not solely rely on participant observation during my project, and also conducted two semi-structured interviews, recorded information from the local newspaper that seemed of interest to my research question and followed Fuyao Glass America and labour unions communication online through social media.

A fieldwork experience

"You eat good every day," Barry commented one day when he came down from his room on the second floor, to the kitchen where I had put together some food for dinner. Barry lived from pay-check to pay-check and did not seem to be able to eat himself full everyday as I did. As noted in chapter one, Barry came from Alabama to Dayton, Ohio, for work. He had previously worked for Fuyao Glass America Inc. but now worked for a competing Japanese owned company when I met him, where he had found employment through a temporary employment agency. His shifts varied from day- and night- shifts during the week. He came to Mayville Street one day after me, and sharing the same hallway, bathroom and kitchen, we soon formed a friendly relation. During our three weeks staying together, we also shared the house with an international student from

Saudi Arabia, and a few others who stayed a few days at a time in the fourth room of the house. As Barry worked with industry through a temporary agency, I was very interested in getting to know what his experiences were with industrial work, unions and work security, and his outlook on future plans. Consequently, I soon asked if I could write about him for my research. He, on the other hand, found me mysterious, and wondered what I really was doing here and who paid for it. Both Barry and later Travis joked about me being a secret agent.

I found out that Barry did not rent his room through Airbnb but could live there for a while through a man that helped him out, and who knew the owner of the house. The owner had an international doctoral student in computer science, originally from Turkey, fix and host a few different houses for Airbnb in this street and at another site close to the University. I call this man Zinan. I never had the chance to talk to Barry's helper, and I only saw him partially when he arrived on our street with a large pick-up truck. After close to two weeks of living together, Barry was told there was no more work at the factory and how he now was laid off. While he remained positive and said he knew about several employment opportunities, he spent more time in his room and slept long hours. It was during this period that he commented on my food and hinted on how he could not afford to eat well any longer. Our relation was not that of equals, and I ended up paying for several meals for him at home or when going out to the city mall. While I experienced Barry as very cheerful during my two first weeks in January, he started to show mood swings after he lost his temporary job. It was during one of these mood swings, while walking home from downtown, I first learned that he was on probation. As written in chapter one, I never found out what he had been in jail for.

He continued to talk about all the different job opportunities he had lined up for himself and how he just had to wait for them to call – but they never did. Early one Friday, he had decided he needed to change his approach and I followed him while he went to fill in employment applications for different fast-food restaurant jobs. We first went to Five Guys Burger, a popular American burger-franchise, and later Taco Bell, a cheap fast food Tex-Mex restaurant chain, where he put me up as a reference. We then took the bus downtown to get the car registered in his name at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, as he had agreed to help me out and then buy the car from me at a cheaper price in five months' time. Afterwards we parted ways, and I went to the boxing gym to participate at my first sparring exhibition. The next time I met Barry was at the sports bar with Zinan - as described in chapter one. In what follows, we will explore some of the ethical concerns related to my fieldwork and this incident with Barry, with a focus on the issue of extraction, race and emotions in the field.

Ethical concerns

Sociologist Michael Burawoy (1998), in his article on the extended case method as reflexive science, writes the following in relation to positive science:

> In the positive view participant observation brings insight through proximity but at the cost of distortion. The reflexive perspective embraces participation as intervention precisely because it distorts and disturbs. A social order reveals itself in the way it responds to pressure (p. 16-7).

These insights on participant observation through a reflexive perspective are valuable to my own fieldwork. Burawoy advocates how his extended case method benefits from a greater methodological self-consciousness. This recommendation is something I will follow here, as my participation often proved to be an intervention into someone else's life. This intervention was often into someone with less social, economic and material resources than myself. In reference to both Burawoy (1998) and Moore (1999), this type of intervention requires more reflection.

Race and extraction in contemporary United States

My intention was to research relations around work and community among young men with working-class and middle-class backgrounds, by using an economic and gendered analytical approach. Race, on the other hand, was not an emphasized factor from the get-go. From the early beginning of my fieldwork, I soon learned that race, as an analytical factor when researching this topic, could not be excluded in the United States of today. In the following I will reflect on my incident with Barry and the issue of studying relations around work in an increasingly polarized political climate, and use the critique against urban sociologist Alice Goffman's ethnography *On the run: Fugitive Life in an American City* (2014) to highlight the issue of race and extraction in ethnographic research.

Goffman's renowned ethnography has both been greatly praised and severely critiqued. Briefly presented, her book is based on six years of ethnographic fieldwork in an impoverished African-American community in Philadelphia. During her research, she follows a group of young black men, as they live their lives "on the run" from the police around the local neighbourhood, going in and out of jail. Even if critiqued, many agree that her ethnography provides important insights into the mass incarceration of black men and how this group of people tackles everyday life. The critique against her is multi-layered and senior reporter at the Chronicle of higher education Marc Parry (2015) summaries it as follows: "[…] reviewers question the accuracy of her portrayal of black life, the soundness of her methods, and the possibility that her book might harm its subjects".

Anthropologist Laurence Ralph (2015), who has done work on neighbourhoods in Black Chicago, critiques Goffman's lack of methodological and ethical reflections, in his review of her book. Ralph writes, that due to how Goffman presents her informants and her description of life at 6th Street, she ends up "uncritically rehearsing stereotypes about Black urban poverty […]" (2015, p. 442). Firstly, the urban sociologist "[…] rhetorical strategy is to begin her study from a point of ignorance about "street" life" (Ralph 2015, p. 449), and consequently end up making the boys at 6th Street "more exotic than they actually are" (p. 449). While Goffman's approach of ignorance might be as much about writing and presenting ethnography to a wide base of readers as the author's lack of reflection, her work affected my own involvement in the field, as I experienced the consequences of being ignorant to "street" life in my fieldwork experiences with Barry.

The reader might wonder why I placed my trust in this newly acquainted informant and housemate. Especially considering how he had a criminal record and problematic temper. Entering "the field" after reading *On the run* (2014) and several other ethnographies (as Venkatesh (2008), Wacquant (2004), and Desmond (2016)), I began my fieldwork with two conceptions regarding researching "lower-class" or "street" life in relation to an African American community: 1) A large percentage of blacks in America have been incarcerated and some of these cases are due to structural or unfair reasons, and 2) how all of these ethnographers manage to gain the trust of the community or key persons in that community, without considerable trouble. Having read and being partly inspired by these books, I thought I had a nuanced understanding of urban poverty and life among African Americans. When Barry told me he was on probation and showed his anxiety and anger, I understood him in relation to this understanding. Instead of becoming more suspicious and afraid, I framed his comments and my experiences of him as unfortunately normal, for him and many other African Americans in contemporary America.

Social anthropologist Douglas Raybeck (1992) illustrates the unpredictability of the field by comparing the beginning of fieldwork in an unfamiliar culture to diving into an unknown pond:

> You may examine the surface of the pond at length (and breadth and width for that matter; you may even review the observations of others who have swum in the pond, yet when you leap in yourself, you still have an excellent chance of landing headfirst on a submerged boulder (p. 1).

In other words, I could have read as many relevant ethnographies as I wished, but still lack the specific and bodily experience and knowledge of my site. Consequently, my preconceptions, as earlier mentioned, might have led me to jumping into these waters with too much confidence. My Norwegian naivety, connected to growing up in country with high amounts of trust (Kvitting, 2017) might have led me to not take the hints I got from Barry seriously enough. He told me several times, as after he called the cops on me, that "you're not in Norway any longer" and how "this is America," referring to how I should not behave as in Norway here. Through my engagement in Mayville Street and being part of Barry's life, I did not manage to get an insider's view and knowledge. But as quoted from Burawoy, my intervention into Mayville Street, disturbed the everyday life there. Through this disturbance social factors revealed themselves, as the inequality between Barry and I became clear. In this context I represented an economic opportunity for Barry, with my resources and later on, a vehicle.

When it comes to the issue of extraction[5], Ralph delivers the following critique of Goffman, as she fails "to theorize the way that ethnographer, herself, is implicated in the analysis" (2015, p. 442). Her work then ends up feeding into "the colonial fantasy that an adventurous researcher "got lost in the wild," and was taken in by people from a strange land who bestowed lessons that she will now share with the world" (Ralph 2015, p. 450). This intervention highlights Burawoy's points, that intervention is threatened by domination. "The intervening social scientist cannot avoid domination, both dominating and being dominated. Entry is often prolonged and surreptitious power struggle between the intrusive outsider and the resisting insider (Burawoy 1998, p. 22). Burawoy further writes, drawing on his own past fieldwork in Zambia, in how the sites one participates in are "invested with hierarchies, competing ideologies, and struggles over resources, we are trapped in networks of power" (1998, p. 22). Black urban America is far from neutral and writing about other lives, presenting others, performs the danger of dominating, objectifying and re-enforcing stereotypes. In contemporary United States with current president Donald Trump and the Black Lives Matters-movement, issues of race still prevail on the agenda. Lastly, as Burawoy reflects, "as observers, no matter how we like to deceive ourselves, we are on "our own side," always there for ulterior reasons (Burawoy 1998, p. 22-3).

I never intended to follow Goffman's footsteps and write only about Black lives in contemporary Dayton, as mentioned earlier. I did not wish to restrict my research to only questions about race, and its connection to class. This intention, to not focus on race, may have been impossible. To research working-class lives in in contemporary America, without analysing and reflecting on race relations, might have led to a discussion lacking nuance and presenting a research without its required complicity. I ended my fieldwork having talked to, interviewed and participated with people belonging to diverse racial categories, such as African Americans, Caucasians, and Asian Americans. Many of my relations were saturated with inequality, with my social and economic resources, my whiteness in relation to some of my interlocutors' blackness, and my ulterior reason for being in their lives: this thesis. On the other hand, I was alone, without connections at the beginning my fieldwork and placed my trust in my new relations, as my informant and friend Barry. I did think twice about involving Barry to such a large extent as I did, considering how he was on probation, had an unknown background, and showed increased mood swings. But in the end, he seemed like my best option and I wanted it to work out. While on Barry's part, stealing my vehicle may have been his best way of getting by and meeting the necessities of life in a precarious situation, in and out of temporary work, moving from place to place.

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[5] Ralph's critique is also connected to the era of reflexivity and the crises in representation (Madden 2010).

Emotions in the field

Hume and Mulcock introduce their edited volume, *Anthropologists in the field* (2004), as "…intended to help normalize the occasional (or frequent) feelings of personal inadequacy and social failure that are, perhaps, an inevitable part of successful participant observation; deliberately attempting to simultaneously position oneself as both insider and outsider is, after all, socially disruptive" (p. xii). Both personal inadequacy and social failure were something I felt strongly after Barry called the cops on me and took my car. I felt dumb to have done and acted the way I did leading up to the incident. Everything was going great: I had established several promising relations early and felt like I lived in the middle of the precarity I wished to research, in my Airbnb home in Mayville Street. More than anything, I was happy to have established a friendly relation with Barry. In hindsight, I had trouble understanding how I could have trusted Barry the way I did and establishing such an important material relation with him – our contract and agreement about the vehicle – even as I learned of his probation and experienced his anxiety and anger.

Eva Moreno (1995) writes about her experiences and reflections around her research assistance, Yonas, attempted rape in her text "Rape in the field". She writes how she began to have serious doubts about her research assistance qualities and suitability to his given task, and how he made her increasingly uncomfortable. Her reasoning, in the field, was: "I simply hoped for the best, calmed by my previous positive experience of working relations with young men who seemed superficially similar to Yonas" (Moreno, 1995, p. 226). Later on, in Moreno's retelling of the history of events, Yonas brought a gun into their home and placed it highly visible for her to see. Moreno remembers, “I hysterically refused to admit even to myself that this little arms demonstration in any way concerned me” (1995, p. 231). My incident can’t compare to Moreno’s experience, and my solve intention here is to highlight how relations in the field are embedded in power and emotions. Both of her experiences above evoked reflections that were similar to mine in relation to Barry. As Barry made me increasingly uncomfortable, with his aggression and anxiety, I simply reasoned that it was natural and to be expected of the situation he was in, and I was happy to try and be a friend he could talk to about it. Another day Barry made the point to assert that he owned multiple weapons, but that these were located with friends. Reflecting on this and other experiences with him, and in light of Moreno’s experiences with Yonas, I can uncover how our relation became increasingly ominous. With hindsight, some of his actions could be seen to be done with the intent to manipulate.

Following the incident with Barry, I had trouble trusting the group of people I had become known with in Mayville Street. Luckily Zinan was helpful and found another room at one of the other Airbnb-houses he rented out, just a few hundred meters away, the very same night. I wasn’t comfortable sleeping in the same house as Barry any longer. Even if moving to a new house was helpful, I had trouble trusting the new people I met there. My thoughts were beginning to seem like paranoia, especially concerning Zinan. I wondered if he was involved in scamming me as well. I decided I needed to get away from Mayville Street and Zinan for a while and ended up leaving with a Greyhound bus for Chicago to crash at a high school friend place who currently lived there. Struggling with the feelings of failure, not understanding and taking action on the situation I was in, I contemplated changing fieldsite. I decided, together with my supervisor, that the best course of action would be to continue my fieldwork in Dayton. However, I still had the issue of mobility to solve – I needed a car. When I finally returned to Dayton at the end of February, I had been away for 25 days, but arrived with my new car bought in LA, California. During the break I managed to let go of my ill feelings, but still avoided Mayville Street for the rest of my stay. Fieldwork could finally continue.

Chapter 3: Infrastructure of (im)mobility

I step out of the Toyota and collect my three items from the trunk before my Uber-ride drives off into the cold frosty evening in Washington D.C. I'm at the back entrance of Union Station where the Greyhound buses leave from and at the beginning of a long and frustrating journey to Dayton, Ohio. I enter into the massive parking lot structure and soon notice signs for the different bus providers. Arrows point me to the Greyhound area – an American icon and the largest of the American bus-companies. There I find a waiting crowd of people in lines divided by rope and ordered after letters. There is no screen showing what line and letter is connected to which departure. The whole scene strikes me as chaotic and it takes some time before I find out where I'm supposed to wait. While waiting, I observe my co-travellers. A white guy in his mid-twenties rubs his hands together while he lifts his shoulders towards his ears. Frost breath rises from his mouth and nostrils. His not dressed for this cold, with only a large white t-shirt and a thin black jacket on. He finally decides to tuck his shirt into his pants and to close his jacket. My bus should have been here by now – it's twenty minutes late. After some complaining to a Greyhound official by another person in the line for the Baltimore headed-bus, our driver finally arrives. There is no explanation for the delay while he leads us to our bus. Over the following hours on this trip and over the months I reside in the US, I'll learn that delays, lack of information, and inefficiency is to be expected when traveling with Greyhound.

Midway on our way to Baltimore, our driver pulls of the highway and onto a small parallel street to pick up a middle-aged man from the sidewalk, in the middle of what looks to be an industrial area. I realize that this detour and the previous delay would make it impossible to reach my connection from Baltimore to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. When we finally arrive, I learn how everyone on my bus have lost their connections going ahead. People begin to line up in front of the information desk in order to get new tickets, so I followed suit. The station is a large rectangular hall. Two large flat-screen televisions are hanging down from the ceiling broadcasting Fox news. They repeatedly broadcast a weather forecast reporting a snowstorm about to hit the Midwest and the northeast of the country. I get my new ticket with the departure time, 1:05 a.m.

I sit down at one of the metal benches and wait. I entertain myself with watching the Fox News programs. Closer to one a.m., people start to line up for the next scheduled bus for Pittsburgh. After standing there for twenty minutes, a greyhound official tells us that the bus is cancelled due to the weather conditions. She elaborats by informing us that the driver did not want to leave from D.C. and drive on the expected icy road conditions in light of the oncoming snowstorm. “Hell no! Are you kiddin' me?” a black man in the beginning of his thirties says. He is wearing a large red hoodie, wide blue jeans and a short-trimmed haircut. He throws his arms up on the air while exclaiming his frustration, visibly angry. The rest of the crowd, those in the line and those still in their seats, just mumbles as they hear our next scheduled bus is at nine a.m. in the morning – eight hours later. We all brace for a long night at the station.

After twelve hours in Baltimore we board our bus to Pittsburgh, where I have a connection to Columbus, Ohio, before the last leg to Dayton. The seven-hour long layover in Pittsburgh is stretched to fourteen. While standing in the queue to board the bus and during the next hours I hear the following sentiments amongst my co-travelers: "Hey, I could have walked" says a former truck driver and continues to say, "My girlfriend told me not to take the Greyhound bus"; While a black women comment, "That's why everybody hate niggers," after the two Greyhound officials inspect the bus using a long time doing so; "I just have to get my money, I ain't doing this for free", our driver says, after explaining to us how he decided take the job driving us to Columbus, even if it wasn't on his schedule; and after finally hearing, "the next stop is Columbus, Ohio," a white guy two seats in front me comments, "I fucking hate Ohio." I experience that people are looking out for each other, as when a guy asks me if I had received both the food voucher and the voucher for 100 dollars for the earlier cancelled scheduled bus. As the bus to Columbus drive onto the streets of downtown Pittsburgh the drivers voice comes out on the speakers once more. He tells us we have to turn around – the service light signal is on. It's hard to believe and I hear sighs and complaints going through the cabin. I begin to think in resignation: Will I ever arrive in Dayton?

I did arrive in Dayton finally, about five hours later. The last part of the journey was happily uneventful. My stay at Columbus Greyhound station was short and my bus to Trotwood left as scheduled. I arrived in Trotwood in dark – the closest I can get to Dayton with the Greyhound bus. There are three African American men and a white employee at the combined Greyhound and RTA (Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority) station. One of them looks to be asleep, sitting on one of the yellow metal chairs and resting his head and arms on a table. The others sit calmly, gazing up at the information display on the wall. The time tells five a.m. in the morning. What was to be a twelve-hour trip evolved into a thirty-five-hour journey, and I'm relieved that the final leg is with a pre-booked Uber-driver through the host of my Airbnb.

* * *

I experienced chaos, annoyance, frustration and anomie connected with the lack of information, structure and unpredictability during the journey. However, I also experienced fellowship and support among the travellers, and what started as a group of individuals evolved through shared experiences of hardship, into a supporting community. We shared the experience connected to mobility and infrastructure for the disadvantaged poor in contemporary America – an experience I believe to be prevalent in many cities located in the Midwestern rustbelt, as Dayton, Ohio. Anand, Gupta, & Appel (2018) notes how "infrastructure shape the rhythms and striations of social life" (p. 6). They give attention to how "Within and beyond the histories of (neo)liberalism we describe, infrastructure is an integral and intimate part of daily social life: it affects…where we can travel, how long it takes, and how much it costs to get there…" (p. 6). Greyhound is part of the American infrastructure of mobility. For the many Americans without access to a vehicle, the Greyhound bus represents the only feasible option available for traveling form one city to the next. Further, as highly visible during my trips and journeys in the American public system of transportation, access to diverse types of infrastructure are differentiated by class and race (Anand, Gupta, & Appel, 2018, p. 6). Thus, by paying attention to the infrastructure and the connected public transportation, I will explore the development of Dayton in regard to mobility and urban inequality. I ask, how can we understand the infrastructure of mobility's role in shaping contemporary Dayton? I'll use my own empirical experiences as gateways into both distant and recent pasts. First, I will explore how the history of migration, car-culture, segregation and the retreat of the public in Dayton is connected. Secondly, I will explore Dayton's location in the junction between two major interstates and how this plays a part in the ongoing opioid epidemic. Lastly and thirdly, I'll reflect on some of my own experiences regarding being part of the infrastructure of mobility in Dayton.

A portrait of Dayton through mobility

I step out of my Airbnb home into the cold, snow-coved and bright, mid-January weather of Dayton and set my course for downtown. Downtown Dayton is the location of "Mark's Downtown Boxing Gym", named after its owner and head coach, where I will train several times a week during the following months. I turn right and walk along one of the broader and busier streets. Cars frequently pass by me while I have the sidewalk nearly to myself. Walking further along Warren St. I cross under an elevated broad highway and hear cars hum intensely above me. After crossing under the highway, I can clearly see downtown. It consists of approximately ten high-rise buildings, with the tallest being the Kettering tower, with its 124 meters and 30 floors. As I move into the shadows of these buildings, it is difficult to tell if they are occupied. There are five-lane roads dividing the blocks in the area apart, and there is only a small change in the amount of people walking on the sidewalks. The storefronts I expected to see are nearly nonexisting. Warren St. turns into South Jefferson St. as I cross under another elevated transport route – this one for rail freight transport.

Moving through the streets of Dayton and its city centre, one gets the sense of a city built more for cars and roads than for those traveling by walking or by public transportation. This experience of downtown stands in contrast to the picture I saw of Dayton a few days earlier when I visited the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington D.C. (as mentioned in chapter one). The information panel on Dayton included several pictures, where one of them is a bird eye view over downtown Dayton, showing crowded sidewalks, trolley tracks, and different types of carriages along the broad roads. This lively social life was nowhere to be seen and what I experienced on this day reminded me more of a ghost town. Beneath the picture, the information panel enlightens me with the following text, under the heading, "Rushing Towards the 20th Century":

> By its centennial in 1896, Dayton was experiencing unprecedented expansion and economic strength. Its population had reached 80,000. With a thousand factories, machine shops, foundries, it had become a national center for the production of farm implements, bicycles, metal castings, and railroads cars.

Dayton had experienced the industrialization process that catapulted the Midwest and the East of the US as the most important industrial regions of the nation at the time (Meyer, 2003, pp. 286-288). In the further development of Dayton, migration of Afro-Americans from the Southern states and white people from the Appalachian Mountains, General Motors-backed car-culture, and the retreat of public infrastructure, is closely connected and what I will explore here.

Migration, car-culture, and public infrastructure

Local historian Andrew J. Walsh (2018) examines the development and history of significant buildings and neighbourhoods in Dayton. He credits failed urban renewal projects, the construction of interstate highways, car-culture and the proliferation of suburban shopping malls for the ghost-like downtown I experienced. Heading into the 20th century, Dayton was already an early powerhouse in manufacturing, known as the "city of 1000 factories" (Walsh, 2018, p. 56). This nickname told of numerous opportunities and attracted migrants. African Americans began to arrive from the south in increasing numbers around 1870 following slave emancipation. However, most came during the Great Migration between 1910 and 1930 (Walsh, 2018, p. 33). They left discrimination, cotton fields and limited job opportunities and found a community of blacks in West Dayton. Here the new migrants found several black churches and social organizations clustered together, partly due to segregated housing policies preventing most from settling elsewhere. Most came by train since many families could not afford cars at this point in American history (Walsh, 2018, p. 143). After 1899, the trains coming to Dayton arrived at their new and impressive Union Station. Walsh notes how many American cities took pride in erecting "large and architecturally imposing railway stations as doorways to the community" (Walsh, 2018, p. 142). However, the trend with common and affordable train travel did not last far into the 20th century, in light of the emerging American car-culture.

General Motors, one of the world's largest car and truck manufacturers, founded in Flint, Michigan in 1908, plays an important role in shaping Dayton historically. James Howard Kunstler states in *The Geography of Nowhere* (1994) how "General Motors' ultimate goal was to replace public transportation with private transportation, meaning the car, and in this they triumphed" (p. 91). The book is a grim description on how the automobile changed American life and how GM made it their campaign to put an end to the cars most threatening competition, namely the streetcar (also called trolley) and regular railways. The streetcar was developed between the years of 1890 and 1915, during the same period as the automobile, and took over for the urban horsecar. They ran along tracks and were powered by electricity from an overhead wire (Kunstler, 1994, pp. 86-87). With their great amount of capital, GM began to systematically buy up streetcar lines with the intention to scrap them and covert them to routes for buses (Kunstler, 1994, p. 91). In the same vein, by becoming the largest stockholder in Greyhound Corporation, (an intercity bus carrier), GM target the intercity rails providing them with competition. This happened during a period under the Great Depression of the 1930s when they GM knew the rail companies had financial problems (Kunstler, 1994, p. 91). While at the same time they, with the Ford company in lead, managed to manufacture automobiles at a higher rate and less cost, and thus made it possible for many Americans families to acquire one. The processes were again helped by the massive construction of roads and highways across the nation.

The decline of the inner-city in Dayton began with the urban renewal processes in 1933, also during the Great Depression (Walsh, 2018). Here, Dayton commissioned a housing survey that tracked areas and housing in poor conditions. Thus, this began a process of urban demolishing and renewal for the locations that didn't meet the given standards in both west- and eastern-central parts of Dayton – areas that border to downtown. This process continued with more large-scale urban renewal projects in the 1950s, as the construction of both highway US-35 and I-75. "Some of the most successful public works projects of the Depression were the early superhighways – creating thousands of jobs, [and] boosting rural real estate values," Kunstler (1994, p. 78) writes. These road building projects were backed by a growing auto-lobby and different road acts, as the Federal Road Act of 1916 and 1921 (Kunstler, 1994, p. 90) and the Interstate Highway Act of in 1956 (Kunstler, 1994, p. 106). The US-35 was the one I crossed beneath when walking from my Airbnb-house to the downtown boxing gym. It sliced the Oregon district in two – a district that began no more than fifty meters east of Marks downtown boxing gym. Walsh (2018) writes that this "cut people from one another and from stores, schools and other community resources that are needed for a neighbourhood to thrive" (pp. 17-18). In a similar way, I-75, isolated the black community of West Dayton from downtown. Before the construction of that Interstate, the west side of downtown featured beautiful residential streets, but these areas are now "replaced by everything from surface parking to government buildings and one of the largest community colleges in Ohio," with Sinclair college (Walsh 2018, p. 136). On the east side of downtown the renewal processes ended with building Le Corbusier inspired "towers in the park" with high-rises with green spaces around them. Ultimately, according to Kunstler (1994), these developments led to the "degradation of urban life caused by enticing the middle class to make their homes outside of town…and ultimately cost America its cities" (p. 90).

Carl E. Feather (1998) writes that "One of the last great rural-to-urban migrations in the United States was that from the Southern Appalachian Highlands…" (p. xiii). This migration "began in the early twentieth century, but reached its peak in the decades after World War II" (p. xiii). They moved because of lack of jobs at home and were pulled by the industrial opportunities in the North. The construction of I-75 is connected to this migration. As Feather (1998) writes, "They followed the highways: Kentuckians to Cincinnati and Dayton, West Virginians to Akron and Cleveland" (p. xiii). One million people migrated to Ohio between 1940 and 1970. Thus, a large portion of people living in Dayton hail from the Appalachian Mountains, as several interlocutors pointed out to me.

While the other migration population of African Americans, who arrived earlier and settled in West Dayton experienced massive changes during these post-war years. As already mentioned, the construction of the interstate and the US-35 sliced the thriving West Dayton apart, the former isolating West Dayton of from downtown. In this area, 95 percent of Dayton's black population lived during the 1960 (Walsh, 2018, p. 33). At the same time as the highway construction, incidents connected to the civil rights movement and the heightened tension between African Americans and whites nationally, as well as locally, escalated and led to riots in West Dayton in 1967. These riots ended in the burning and damaging of several houses and businesses in the neighbourhoods (Walsh, 2018, p. 34). Since the area was already labelled a "ghetto", these houses and plots were not rebuilt, but left desolated. Consequently, multiple blocks of what was once "dense African American commercial and entertainment district are now completely empty" (fix source). On a more positive note, these newly built highways helped residents pick up and leave, as the segregated housing policies were eased up (Walsh, 2018, p. 34). For those with a good enough basic income, this was an opportunity to move out of an impoverished and neglected area.

The ghost town-like conditions of downtown Dayton are similar to many other contemporary American cities. These developments, with both Le Corbusier's "towers in the park" and building highways in the middle of cities, is closely connected to the American car culture of the same period. As the car became affordable, it paved way for a new way of life, where one could commute long distances for work. Consequently, cities became more spread out and some neighbourhoods became more isolated. The development of downtown Dayton is in many regards a history of mobility and infrastructure. It's a story where the capital-backed car-culture won. Even if Dayton still operate a fleet of trolley buses, "it's one of the largest to lack a much more common form of transportation: intercity rail" (Walsh, 2018, p. 143). The last passenger train running from the downtown Union Station left in 1979, and the station was later demolished. While initiatives to connect Ohio's cities together with passenger rail projects has been proposed during the last two decades, they have all lacked political will. After one of these initiatives was awarded four hundred millions dollars in federal funds in 2010, John Kasich, the newly elected governor, "made killing the project a campaign priority, declaring that "train is dead…passenger rail is not in Ohio's future," the money was revoked and directed to other states" (Walsh, 2018, p. 146). Next, I will explore these highways further and look at Dayton's location at the junction between two major interstates entails in the present day.

The junction between I-70 and I-75

Penny Harvey and Hannah Knox (2015) explores the "the histories of specific road-building projects in Peru to explore the dreams and effects of past road-building programs as projects of national, and even of international, integration" (p. 7). They further write: "Roads enable the networked flow of goods, labor, and services. They deliver the basic conditions of modern living, although, as all scholars of modernity are aware, the benefits are uneven and unpredictable" (2015, p. 7). In Dayton, located far from Peru, my interlocutors, to my surprise, pointed to the city's location in relation to highway I-70 and I-75. During my first-time attending church with Travis, the preacher during service, talked of systematic evil, and in this context, said as follows: "The crossing between I-70 and I-75 is one of the worst places for human trafficking in the country." This was not the first or the last I heard this, while they usually pointed to the prevalence of a different sort. One told me, "Dayton is the number one corridor in the US both for industry and drugs."

Dayton is located in the middle of a region greatly affected by what is known as the opioid epidemic, which was declared a national emergency in October 2017 by President Trump. In October 2017, two months before I arrived, *The New Yorker* (Talbot, 2017) released a picture-story named "Faces of an epidemic" with information and pictures on opioid addiction from Montgomery County, Ohio. It informs that opioids led to more than fifty thousand deaths a year in America in recent times – more than the AIDS epidemic at its peak, and more than gun homicides and motor-vehicle accidents. In their picture story, a mourning mother comments how a whole generation is getting wiped out, as these overdoses is the leading cause of death for people under the age of fifty (Talbot, 2017). They describe it as a "mass-casualty event" played out in slow motion: "The quietness of the tragedy is also connected to the effects of opioids themselves: people hooked on them numb their pain, whatever it causes, rather than raging against it" (Talbot, 2017). In January 2017, one year prior to my arrival, sixty-five people died from overdoses in Montgomery County that month.

Under the heading, "Dayton's overdose crises has a regrettably easy pipeline: Its highways," Chris Stewart (2017) reports for the *Dayton Daily News*, how "Dayton straddles two major trade corridors, the Atlantic Corridor and the Central Eastern Corridor," and how "Overdoses frequently occur in parking lots and businesses just off the interstates." I-70 takes you from Cove Forth, Utah, to Baltimore, Maryland, while I-75 takes you from the southern Florida to the northern part of Michigan. These major highways take you through important cities as Denver, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Atlanta and Detroit. The local Dayton newspaper further reports how for seven or eight years ago, one would have to go to Columbus, Cincinnati, or even Chicago or Atlanta, to get a bulk quantity of drugs for a discount price, traveling from Dayton, according to Captain Mike Brem – commander of the Regional Agencies Narcotics & Gun Enforcement Task Force. He continues: "Now it's Dayton. It comes from the border to here." Andrea Hoff, a Montgomery county official, echoes Brem and says that both the access to cheap drugs due to the intersection and widespread job losses following the Great Recession explains the opioid epidemics prevalence in Dayton (C. Stewart, 2017).

Even if the opioid epidemic was widespread in the area, not many were interested in talking about it at length. It was sensitive subject, since many of my interlocutors knew someone who had died or were past drug addicts themselves. They rather tried to stay optimistic. In Dayton, those who has the opportunity can drive from their house, straight to their workplace parking lot and then get their groceries, without walking more than few tens of meters on the city streets. Dayton is built for them. Travis gladly jumped into my car after boxing practice and commented on the alternative; "I hate taking the bus." While Barry, echoing Travis, adds, "There are so many weirdoes there." For those who doesn't have a car, getting from A to B can be a long process. From the car and highway, one does not have to relate to the problems of the poorer community. In terms of mobility, they are far away, even if they're close in space. In the industrial region that began the mass production of the car, people are now overdosing on the street, as others, still well off, drive past them.

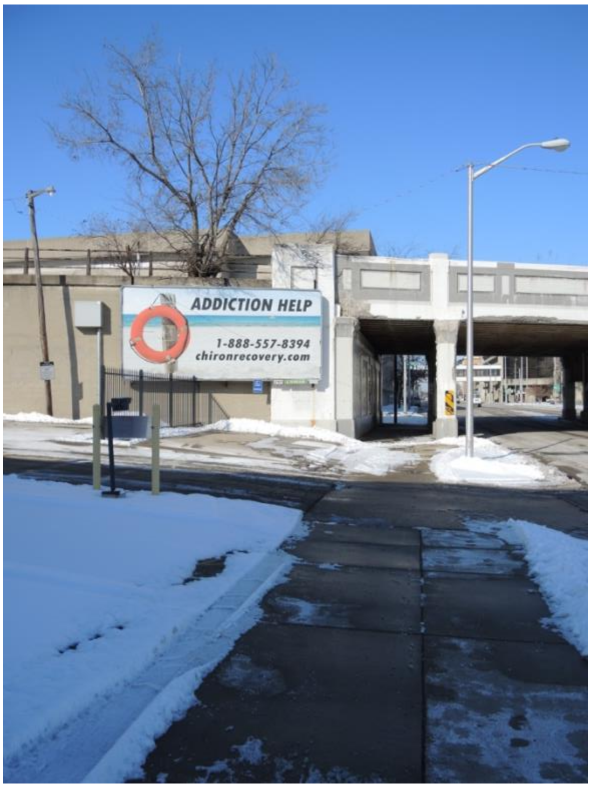

Figure 1: *A billboard hinting at the areas drug epidemic. Picture taken by author.*

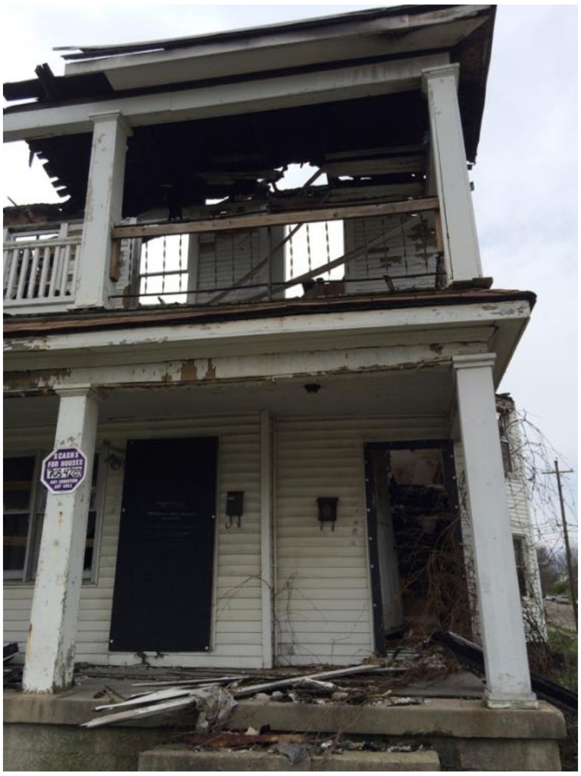

Figure 2 Desolate house in East Dayton. Picture taken by author

Stories of mobility

During the months I resided in Dayton I took part in this infrastructure of mobility as explored here. By walking the streets, taking the local bus, driving my car, and taking the intercity Greyhound bus over these five and a half months, I got an insight into how "infrastructure shape the rhythms and striation of social life" (Anand, Gupta, & Appel, 2018, p. 6). While walking on the sidewalks in the different neighbourhoods of Dayton, I often received questioning glares from those driving on the road, as if they wondered how I fitted into the urban picture, as I neither looked homeless or poor. When taking the bus with Barry, a white man wearing grey hoody and sweatpants turned around from two seats in front us, letting us know how, "Two people got stabbed over there last night," while pointing out the window towards West Dayton. When we later walked through the streets and I point to a car, as to comment on a sticker on its bumper, Barry quickly reacts and tells me: "Don't do that! You want to get shot? Don't stare at people's car dude." Walking the streets with Barry made his anxiety and fear visible to me (see chapter six). Before we began the walk, he told me, "I'll walk with you. I don't want you to get killed," and how these streets are not as safe as in Norway, even if we were walking in one of the safer neighbourhoods in Dayton. As several told me, it's the east and west Dayton which is bad.

Several of the neighbourhoods of Dayton are littered with vacant and abandoned houses in the process of ruination. As most Midwestern-cities, Dayton was hit hard by the housing crises of 2008 leading to more than 5,100 foreclosed properties in Montgomery County (Kenney, 2018). *Dayton Daily News* (Hulsey, 2018) further reports that drug dealings and prostitution are major problems in the areas with many vacant, dilapidated houses and trash-strewn alleys, inviting more crime to the neighbourhood. Because of high demolition costs, these houses are left standing as an reminder of Dayton's position in the global political economy and the process of de-industrialization. Before the concluding discussion on the topic of infrastructures of mobility in Dayton, I will here, inspired by the earlier mentioned "new materialism" and affect theory, reflect on Greyhound bus company's past presence in downtown Dayton.

The past in the present at the downtown boxing gym

The local Dayton radio is playing old school funk tunes today. The beat works well together with my jump rope routine. It's Wednesday evening and people are entering Marks Downtown gym for boxing class and the weekly sparring. I'm in the main hall, behind the elevated boxing ring warming up. The light high above me flickers and turns dark. I look over at Mark, the owner and head coach of the gym, but he doesn't seem to have noticed. He's busy greeting people coming into the gym. As I let the rope fall down at my side to end my warm up, the light flickers back on again. Walking further through the hall, past the weight lifting section, I cross into a room with twelve spinning bikes to get to my locker and boxing gear. I bring my boxing bandages with me and start to wrap my hands while I look out the window at the end of the spinning room. Through the window one can see a neighbouring hall and signs that hints of the structures past purpose.

A red exit sign dimly lights up the hall and one can notice weight lifting racks, wooden shelves, cardboard boxes and other items scattered around the tile-covered floor. While on the right wall the numbers from one to seven written in black on white backgrounds hang above seven matching doors. "Detroit", "Indianapolis", and "Cincinnati" are names of Midwestern cities still clinging to the wall below few of the numbers. These are destination cities for when the structure used to be Dayton's Greyhound bus station. The station was shut down in 2009 and moved to the outskirts, to the suburban city of Trotwood – a predominantly black neighbourhood closer to interstate 70 (Page, 2009), where I arrived on my journey to Dayton (as described above). Mark rents the hall and moved his gym here in 2014, giving the structures its new purpose.

After grabbing my boxing gear, I head back towards the ring, where I pass the last visible promotional Greyhound sign in the hall, portraying a white greyhound in full speed on a blue background. Downtown Dayton doesn't seem to be going anywhere soon at full speed, even as things are changing. I put on my boxing gear and climb into the ring to box my friend Isaiah, who has "Thug Life" written in all caps on his shoulder, while meeting the necessities of life by working long hours at the Walmart retail store.

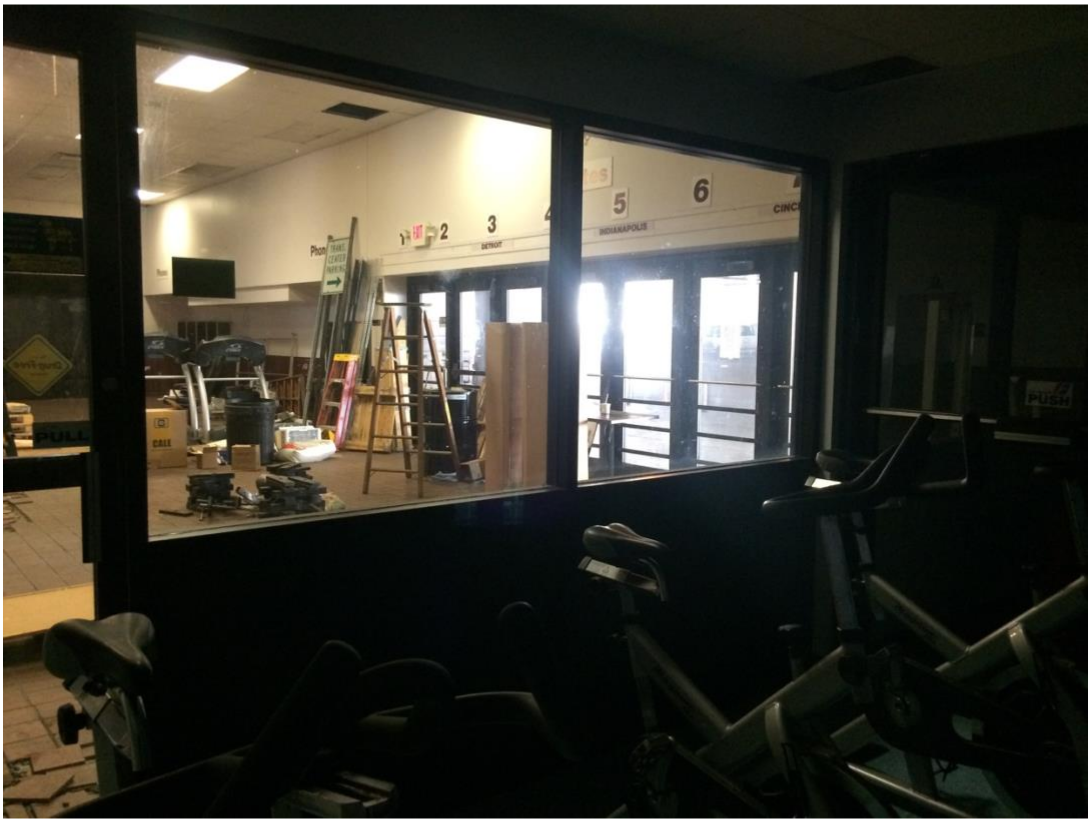

Figure 3 Inside the boxing gym. Picture taken by author

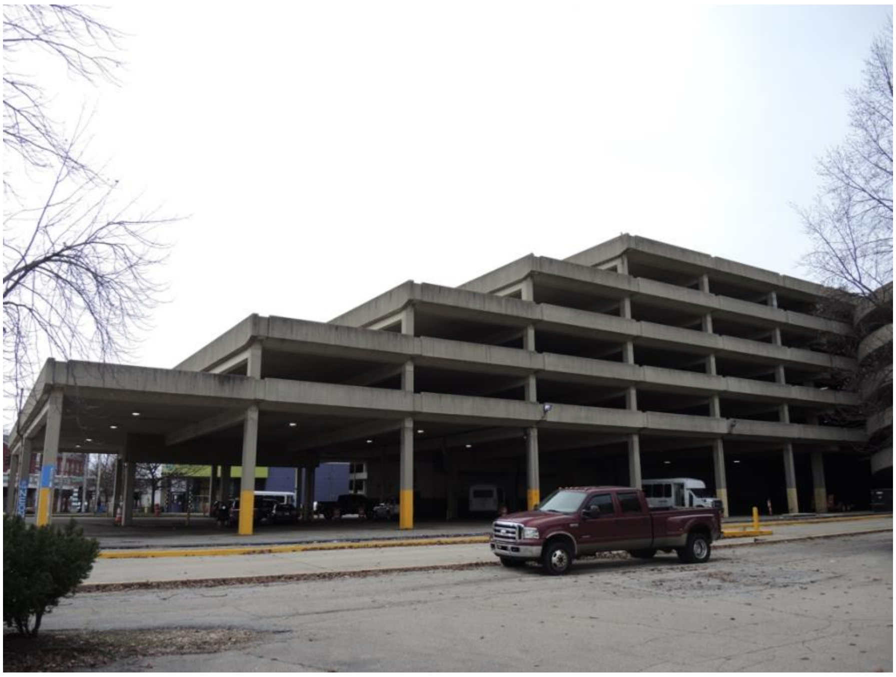

Figure 4 The location of Mark's downtown boxing gym and the previous Greyhound station. Picture taken by author.

Retreat of the public in Dayton

Dayton, while it used to feature a trolley station, a train station, and the more recent Greyhound station, a city bus hub is now all that remains of public infrastructure. When the move to Trotwood was made public, residents in the neighbourhood worried how a Greyhound station would bring with an increase in crime, damage the areas roads and lower property values, in an already neglected area. Anand, Gupta, & Appel (2018) writes how, "The uneven flurry of infrastructural investment in the global South coexists with its mirror image in the United States and the United Kingdom, where neoliberal austerity regimes have withdrawn public funds for building and maintaining infrastructure" (p. 5). Every fourth year, the American Society for Civil Engineers issue grades on the nation's infrastructure. In their most recent report, released in 2017, they grade America's overall infrastructure as a D+. The American roads receive a D and American transit a D-. Thus, in poor condition due to underinvestment and overdue maintenance.[6] As explored through this chapter, infrastructure, mobility, and urban inequality are connected in Dayton, and is a factor contributing to precarity in the lives of many of my interlocutors. My experience traveling with Greyhound shed lights on the experiences of many disadvantaged poor and how infrastructure is an integral part daily life, and in the case of my experiences, rendered us immobile for long stretches of time. As reporter Bibbi Abruzzini (2016) writes, after crisscrossing through Arizona by way off Greyhound:

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[6] https://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/americas-grades/, accessed on 26.04.19

> …public transportation in the US is reduced to a feeble network of buses. The disinvestment in this sector and the widening gap between who can afford mobility and who can't, prevent the US from functioning on a very basic level. If there is something the Greyhound can teach is that it is possible to be united in diversity and human experience, if anything, on a bus.

These are sentiments I also reflected on after my experience with traveling by Greyhound in the car-centric America. I argue that to understand livelihood in contemporary Dayton, one has to pay attention of the material infrastructure that shapes everyday life for the city's inhabitants. Walking through the city's streets compared to traveling by car, was two completely different experiences. Having access to mobility becomes and important privilege in this car-centric environment and has further consequences for access to work, as traveling by bus could be time-consuming and unreliable. I experienced that a ten-minutes car ride could equal more than an hour on the bus system. In the expansive and loosely structured city of Dayton, the gig-economy has now achieved a foothold, in the city's infrastructure, as will be commented on in chapter six. Next, we will explore the other "goods" that these roads bring to Dayton, in industrial manufacturing.

Chapter 4: Moraine Assembly and (a conflicted) modernity

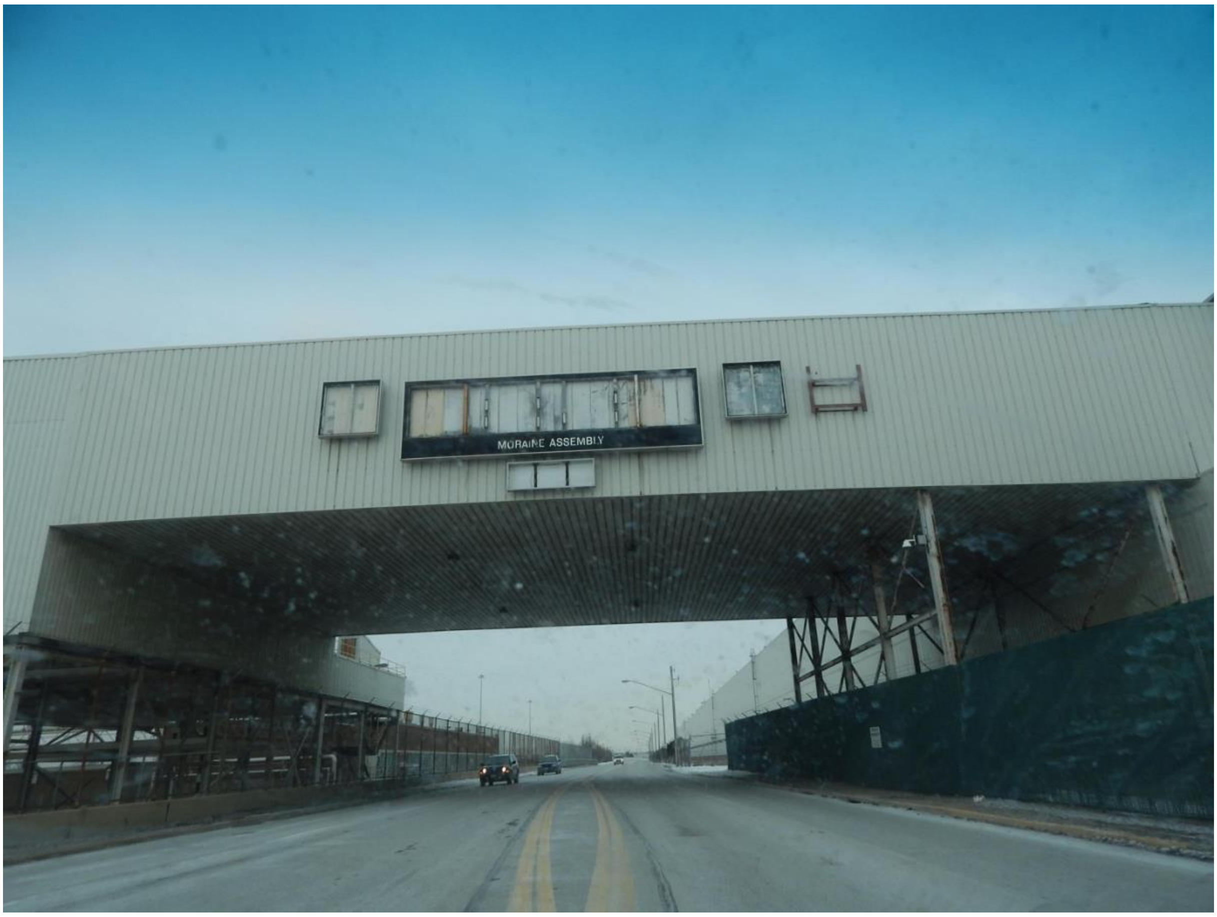

Figure 5 Figure 1 Moraine Assembly. Picture taken by Lewis Wallace for WYSO: retrieved from: https://www.wyso.org/post/fuyao-bring-least-800-jobs-miami-valley

“The Chinese are everywhere…” I was told while eating at a Chinese restaurant in May. An American business man told me this and referred not only to China’s prominent presence in the global South (Lee, 2014), but China’s presence both in the South and in the global North, when I asked him about the presence of the Chinese automotive glass manufacturer Fuyao Glass America Inc. in Dayton, Ohio. In this chapter, I ask, what can we learn by scrutinizing the history of Moraine Assembly and how does these insights complicate the understanding of modernity as progressive? The story of America, heard from school benches across the country and recaptured in speeches and news briefs from Washington D.C., is a story of America and the West in opposition to the rest and of capitalism and modernization. The values of individualism, materialism, education, reason, and democracy are added to the list. Here, according to Kathleen Stewart (1996), the story of “America” as nationalist myth is told over and over again and consequently: “the cultural production that constitutes an “America” of sorts are frozen into essentialized “objects” with fixed identities; a prefab landscape of abstract “values” puts an end to the story of "America" before it begins" (p. 3). In this chapter I will continue the story of "America" – a story which takes a different turn than this nationalist retold myth and highlights the prevalent contradictions of capitalism and modernization.

Dayton's landscape of used and abandoned industrial buildings becomes a place, in the same manner as Stewart's Appalachian hills, "where the effects of capitalism and modernization pile up on the landscape as the detritus of history" (Stewart, 1996, p. 6). These remains have been given attention through the "new materialist" turn, inspired by Walter Benjamin's writings on the interplay between past and present in our urban existence. I'm inspired by Shannon L. Dawdy's (2010) notion of 'ruins of modernity', where she draws on the rediscovery of Benjamin and Bruno Latour's (1993) realization that 'we have never been modern', in troubling our understanding of progressive time: "A materialization of this particular end-time is the ruins of modernity – those shells of abandoned factories, burned-out tenements, boarded-up schools, weedy lots, piles of concrete rubble, and faded commercial districts. They are ubiquitous part of our urban landscapes" (p. 762). Dawdy writes that by attending to these ruins in the contemporary urban landscape they "…remind us that modernity is always incomplete, always moving on, and always full of hubris" (p. 762). This hubris, as excessive pride, was also prevalent in Dayton, but now also challenged from the East. Therefore, I will tend to the ruins and landscapes as vehicles of history and use these to approach the present in the first part of this chapter. I argue that the presence of this Chinese factory in Dayton signals one small, but significant, local outcome of an Global process where the U.S. global hegemony is challenged by the East, represented by China, and how both the industrial ruins of North America and the reactivation of industrial ruins, as with Moraine Assembly, highlights and troubles the notion of progressive modernity as complete.

Landscape of modernity

N. Springboro Pike road, an urban corridor going through the entire city of Moraine, runs straight as a nail and parallel to the interstate 75-highway, which is located on its left side, dividing Moraines western and eastern side together with the Miami River. Driving north-bound on N. Springboro Pike road, one is headed in the direction of downtown Dayton. But the slight curves of the Miami Valley landscapes hinder one from seeing the modernistic skyline of the city centre. One is left with the view of lush green vegetation on the hillsides on the far horizon at one's east and west side. Several small shops and fast food restaurants occupy the road side: Domino's pizza is on my left, Dixion's automotive coming up on my right, a few scattered trees here and there, and a larger Dollar general store with only one lonely car parked at its entrance. There are few people to be seen on this late afternoon in May and the cars I share the lanes with seem to be passing through, heading home from work or to the larger malls or retails stores as Walmart, Krogers, and Meijers – all located in close proximity. The five lanes are expanded by one as one approaches the intersection with South Dixie Ave. Shell gas station's yellow and red colours and "Frisch's Big Boy"- dinner red elevated sign, advertising; "red velvet hot fudge cake is back" and their option of "Drive Thru"-service, dominates the semiotics of this intersection.

Crossing straight through, continuing on N. Springboro Pike road, passing by Moraine Fire Station and "Copart – Auto auctions" grounds, where you can get salvaged cars for sale, the landscape opens up to enormous empty parking lots. The dark asphalt has green weeds and plants growing up through the many cracks. At the parking lots perimeter, a grey and brown two-story house with a shamrock green awning sits abandoned. The colour alludes to this area high percentage of inhabitants having Scot-Irish backgrounds and hailing from the Kentucky mountains. "Upper Deck Tavern" is spelled on in white letters on top of the green sunscreen. On the other side of the vast landscape of grey asphalt, large white squared structures dominate my horizon. The structures are shaped as rectangular boxes, standing in different heights, with multiple chimneys covering the roofs. At this distance, one can just make out an entrance, located on the left side on the base, which stands as a measurement of the buildings size. Together, the multiple white structures create an immense industrial complex, known as Moraine Assembly – a former General Motors factory.

The boom at Moraine Assembly

The green weeds and cracks of the asphalt outside the industrial complex points to a different temporality, as its past industrial highs and its period of abandonment. It points to the transformation of the labour market and the deindustrialization of the northern hemisphere. This long-term dismantling of the manufacturing base, an on-going process for more than a half century, has had local consequences in Dayton, Ohio, as this abandoned industrial building calls attention to. Before exploring some local consequences of the deindustrialization, I will here revisit history and the plants' hay days. It was one these grass covered grounds Edwards Deeds and Charles Kettering established the Dayton-Wright Company's main manufacturing plant at the end of the 1910s. Going back hundred years, military airplanes rolled out of the factory daily. They were then sent and used at the warfront in France during the First World War. This was a time Dayton and its surrounding cities lived up to the already mentioned nickname of the "city of 1000 factories" and consequently provided employment for many. In the larger industrial halls of Moraine, planes were lined up and workers in overalls and foremen in suits worked on the engines before attaching the wings. While in other parts of the factory you found female employees in white dresses manufacturing airplane parts under the watchful eye of a male foreman. In 1919, Deeds and Kettering sold the Dayton-Wright Company, catapulting the industrial area into a more than eight-years long period of industry under the General Motors corporation conglomerate (Walsh, 2018, p. 64). It began with a Delco-Light operation, manufacturing generators for automobiles, before GM rebuilt the plant to produce refrigerators under the Frigidaire company-brand. This was a steady operation from 1926 all the way until the 1970s.

For decades, GM provided the Dayton community with what I have discussed (see chapter one) as the "proper job" under the period of Fordism, thus cast many into a growing middle-class. The secure employment was backed by unions who had managed to provide new levels of welfare benefits for their members during this period (Chun, 2009). The workers at GM-owned Frigidaire were unionized by the UE (The United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers) during the 1940s, and later on by the IEU (International Union of Electrical Radio, and Machine Workers). Entering the second half of the century, the deindustrialization process begun, and statistics show a steady six-decade decline of workers in manufacturing nationally from the 1950s to this day (Wallace & Kwak, 2018, p. 131). Frigidaire and GM survived the challenging economical years of the recessions of the 1970s, when the national percentage of workers in manufacturing dropped from 25.1% in 1970 to 16,2% in 1990 (Wallace & Kwak 2018, p. 131). In 1979 GM sold-out Frigidaire but kept the plant. They retooled and expanded it to become a GM auto-manufacturing plant, starting with the production of the Chevy Blazer in 1981 (Jefferey, 2008).

GM and its auto plants past presence still echoed through the Dayton area during my fieldwork and I was told of the good times there. Sitting in church with Travis in the middle of May, a former GM employee shared his history with addiction at a Sunday's celebrate recovery service. He told of an ongoing alcohol and drug addiction which begun at adolescence and continued through serving in the Vietnam War and 31 years of employment at the old GM-factory in Moraine. "Thank God we had a union" he announces, as they let him take long stretches of time off work, getting sober, and still come back and have employment. While at the boxing gym, Mark greets an old member with a smile and noting the aspect of temporality by saying: "I haven't seen you since the GM closed down" and "how have you been?" Here the closure of GM signals a rupture – a time before and after Dayton as a GM-town. These positive sentiments were also broken by views of a different kind. I was told stories of men who worked at the old GM most of their lives. Cindy, a daughter of one of these men, tells me they were a small and lucky group who were paid well and had slow days. While growing up she began to understand how her father drank a lot at work and lets me know that many of the men there were alcoholics. July, which I stayed with at the time, nods in agreement to her friend's account. They also stole from their workplace, mainly tools, and it rarely had consequences. There was a sense that they could do what they wanted as the union protected them, they let me know, and how the workers thought it all would last. These and other stories are examples of how the past lingered in the present in Dayton and still carried symbolic meaning. While for some, GM was a symbol for a past "good life", with work security protected by the union, while for others, a narrative on American workers entitlements, creating lazy, unproductive and spoiled employees, according to some of my interlocutors.

The last truck standing (and industrial ruins)

Driving further on, past the first section of the white anonymous industrial buildings, one reaches an intersection in the middle of the plant structure. Continuing straight, one drives below a corridor, functioning as a bridge, connecting the different buildings together. There, on the corridor, an emptied-out sign spells "Moraine Assembly" in white letters on the black frame – as to welcome or remind you that you're in the North American Rust Belt. GM history of manufacturing in Moraine ended in 2008 during the Great Recession – a period which officially spanned over 19 months from December 2007 to June 2009 (Wallace & Kwak 2018, p. 127). Already in 2005, then GM's chairman Rich Wagoner, announced the closing of five U.S. assembly plants, including shutting down one of the shifts at Moraine. This led to cutting a total of 30,000 jobs across the country. Wagoner explained the actions by stating the following: "… these actions are necessary for GM to get its costs in line with our major global competitors" (Maynard, 2005). The general downward trend in manufacturing continued and in 2008 it was Moraine's turn to be shut down for good, playing its part in the statistics: From 13,1% of workers in manufacturing in 2000 to 8,8% in 2010 (Wallace & Kwak 2018, p. 127).

The HBO documentary, "The Last Truck – Closing of a GM plant" (Reichert & Bognar, 2009), captures some of the emotions among the workers leading up to the closure. The documentary features a toolmaker from the plant nicknamed Popeye. He's got a long partly grey and brown beard, with a dark cap, glasses and red, white and black checkered shirt on. The camera is following him talking about work at GM while his driving around the Moraine neighbourhood. In the next scene, standing outside his home, Popeye points to all the different houses in his surroundings where co-workers or people who has work connected to the plant live. The documentary reports that 2,500 lost their job at the factory and 10,000 jobs in community as a whole. The next seconds features his voice over shots showing the evening outside the motor club I already passed on the road, the one with the shamrock green awning named The Upper Deck Tavern. The scene also features the GM plant in the background, of people talking and going of their Harley motorbikes, before shifting to a view of rain pouring over lines of trucks standing still as the night falls over Moraines core industrial building. I'm fascinated by Popeye's prediction:

> I think we're at the end of the good life, so to speak. I don't think it's gonna be a thing they can attain anymore. I think, we are not gonna go up anymore. We're either gonna level off or even have a down-trend. It's all changing now. Go to Walmart and shop. Walmart, when it first opened, their big selling point was that it was American made. Now if it's American made, they don't have it. We're not gonna have a manufacturing base anymore. It's gonna be foreign owned (The last truck 2009).

The closing of GM's operation at Moraine Assembly signalled the end of the "good life" for many. The old GM workers comment, as to how it all is changing now, how the U.S. is losing its manufacturing base, and how in the future, this industry will be foreign owned, signals emotions of loss and the unknown territory for both the worker and the nation. When people lost their "proper jobs", many had to secure the necessities of life through precarious work (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018).

One day while volunteering at centre they made and served free food for those homeless or poor in Dayton, I chopped fruit together with Fred – a 45-year-old African American originally from Michigan. He and his family left during the 70s as industry was rapidly shutting down. They moved to Dayton as they heard the city still had a healthy industry and job market. He tells me how they had a couple of good years before it started to get 'crazy', referring to the prevalence of drugs and crime. As much of the industry shut down in Dayton during the 80s, things changed for the worse here as well. "Heroin is what's big here. Real big" (as explored in chapter three), Fred tells me, as he throws another handful of chopped strawberries in the bowl. He further tells me a story of a friend who accepted a buyout from his employer during the recession of the 80s. He picked up Fred in a brand-new truck the same day – being his third vehicle. Surprised by this purchase in precarious times, Fred's friend explained that he planned on acquiring another good paying job and got the vehicle through a leasing-contract. Things did not go as planned. Fred's friend was not able to get another job at the same pay-level and consequently soon lost all his three cars. This was the faith of several of his friends during that period, Fred tells me. Thus, few managed to deal with the transition between the "proper job" to the "precarious work" of the present, as many were forced to take up employment in low-paying service work in lack of better alternatives. Consequently, people could not manage to keep up their middle-class lifestyle and the "good life," as Popeye referred to.

Another former Ohio based GM worker who took a buyout in 2008, says the following during a discussion;

> I went from making a great living to poverty. I went from 28 dollars an hour to 8 dollars an hour…I had to do everything I could to get through that. I worked two and three jobs. I cleaned out gutters, I babysat, I walked dogs… You know, it was great to get hired in there at 12 dollars an hour. I was thrilled to death to get 12 dollars an hour[7].

In there being referring to the topic of the following section and the next chapter.

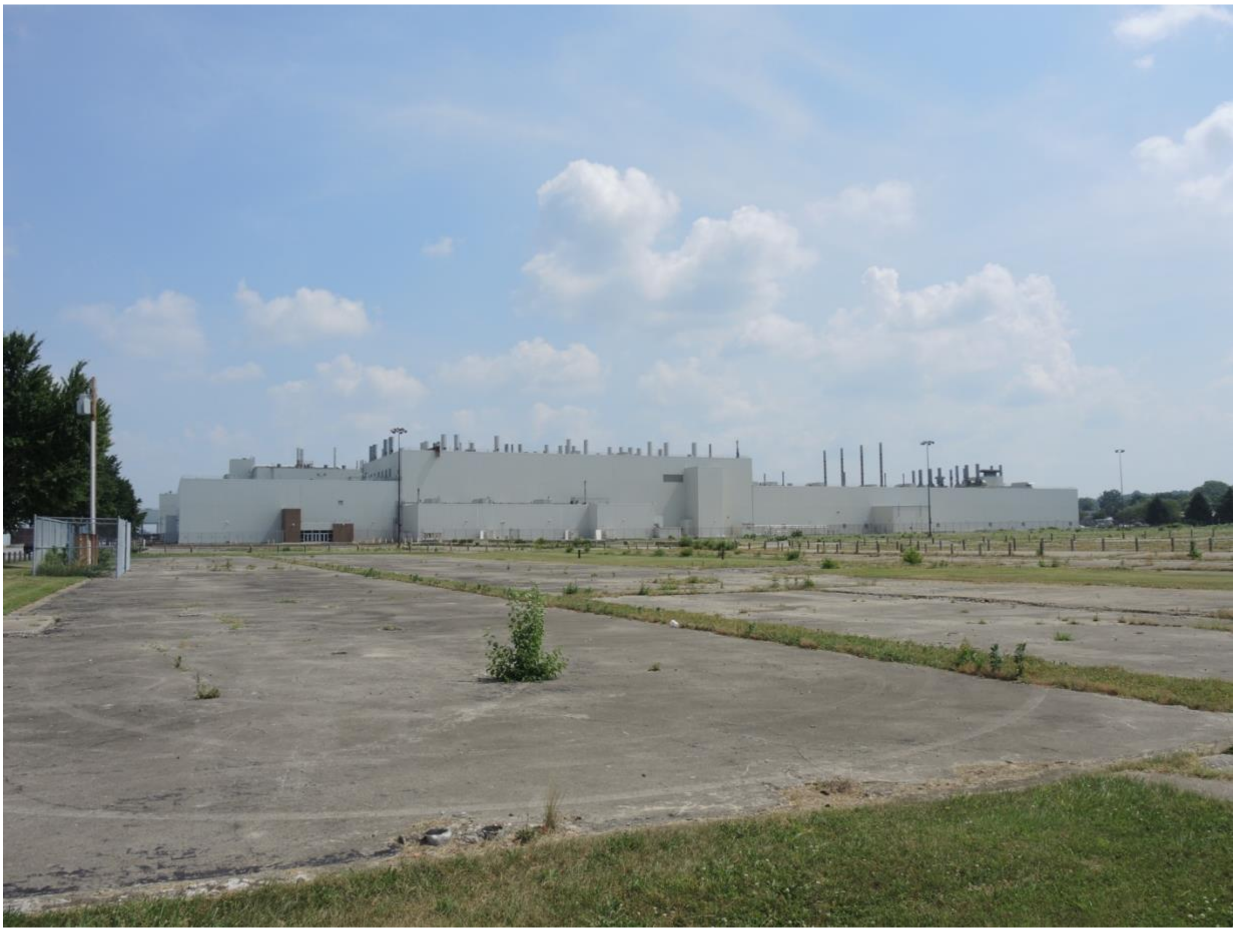

Figure 6 A part of the Moraine plant complex not in use. Picture taken by author

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[7] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9PdOHGmtyo&t=393s, accessed on 2019.01.20

Fuyao Glass America Inc.

Back on the N. Springboro Pike road, driving past the intersection and the hollowed-out sign, further along the industrial structure, "Fuyao Glass America Inc.," is written in all caps and freshly painted blue letters on the wall of the structure. Beneath it, one white and two black workers in blue shirts, sit on chairs smoking and taking a break from their afternoon shift. The plant as an industrial ruin ends here. Popeye's prediction came true for GM eight years after its closing with Fuyao Glass America Inc. (from now on Fuyao) moving some of its production from China to this midsized midwestern town and into the shell of the old GM plant. Fuyao's operation at Moraine is the largest automotive glass fabrication plant in the world and among the first major Chinese manufacturing operations to be established in the United States, according to Fuyao President Jeff Daochuan Liu (Kenney, 2017) (name of a person?) (fix source). They arrived in Ohio in 2014 and spent more than a half-billion dollars to fix up the plant to become ready producing automotive glass by 2016. At the time I arrived in Dayton in 2018, they employed more than 2,000 workers and delivered glass for automotive companies such as Ford, GM, BMW, Honda and others. The story of the rustbelt since the 70s has been that of deindustrialization, as already mentioned, and a Chinese company opening shop here seems like a counterintuitive narrative. Why did Fuyao come to Moraine, Ohio? In an interview with Yicai Global, a Chinese new service, CEO and founder Cao Dewang lists the following reasons for coming to the United States[8]:

> I moved the plant to the US because Americans have repeatedly asked me to set up a factory there and China's manufacturing is stalling. Why? Overall tax burden is 35% higher in China than in the US. […]. Therefore, it is more profitable to open a factory in the US than in China.

The more than seventy-year-old Dewang, goes on and lists how "land is virtually free here," "electricity is half of that in China," and "natural gas price is only one fifth of that in China." "How about labor?" the interviewer asks. Dewang answers, "Wages of blue-collar workers are eight times compare to Chinese workers. Wages of white-collar workers are more than double." When further asked about labor and productivity, Fuyao's CEO answers, "The first challenge the US has encountered in its effort to rebuild a manufacturing powerhouse is labor. Young people don't want to take manufacturing jobs. They all go to Wall Street or Silicon Valley." "How did you recruit the 2,000-plus workers in your US plant?" he's asks. "They are all relatively old" Dewang says and laughs.

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[8] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=En81rjWE49Y, accessed on 2019.03.01

I drive to the end of the Fuyao structure and up a slight hill to an intersection. From here I can see the green hillsides on the horizon better. I go straight and turn right onto West Dorothy Lane and right again at Encrete Lane. I'm now outside Fuyao's main entrance where I park my car at a parking lot connected to a red brick walled building. My clock shows 5 p.m. and I stay in my car waiting for Calvin, a Fuyao employee, to arrive. It's late May and I haven't seen him since I moved out of his house three weeks back, renting a room there through Airbnb. There's only one other car on the hot asphalt outside the restaurant we agreed to meet. I'm about to sink further down into my seat as a large Jeep Grand Cherokee in black swings into the parking lot and parks right next to me. Calvin smiles at me from his driver seat. Calvin is an Asian American in his late twenties with short dark hair and carries a mild expression on his face. I ask if he's still happy with his Jeep, which he bought a few days before I moved – he still is. We walk around the building and into the main entrance of the restaurant. Gold painted bamboo sticks on our right and left side reach upwards to the high ceiling at the reception area. They stand in contrast to the grey walls of the rest of the interior.

A middle-aged woman rises from a desk upfront and greets us speaking mandarin. Ten minutes later our table is covered by several Chinese dishes, some containing pork, vegetables and noodle, while others with different animal entrails. We are at "Taste of the world" – Fuyao's own restaurant. It stands in contrast to the abandoned Upper Deck Tavern I passed at the perimeter of the industrial area earlier. There, as seen through the documentary, the interior was in dark brown wood with plenty of pictures on the walls. A long with the liquor bottles behind the bar, a Budweiser-sign in neon-red shined on the wall. Televisions were mounted high-up close to the ceiling showing sporting events of old. It gave the impression of a place that had been there for a long time. That environment is now replaced by Taste of the world as the closest place to socialize outside Fuyao's gated factory. Here, the symbols of the American working-class in Upper Deck Tavern has been replaced by a very different semiotics: The colours of gold, grey and dark brown gives the restaurant a modernistic and impressive feel, communicating power and wealth. Kasmir (2014), in her exploration of the Saturn plant in Spring Hill, Tennessee, notes the farmland surrounding the factory and the lack of establishments like bars and fast-food-restaurants: typical after-work meeting places for factory-workers. Instead, people drove home in various directions. She notes: "The residential dispersal shaped social life and hindered the emergence of a public, working-class culture" (Kasmir, 2014, p. 227).

After some minutes of focused eating, I tell Calvin how I went to visit the factory's former union the other day to talk to them about the closing of the GM plant and hear their opinion on Fuyao. The receptionist there told briefly: "I'm happy for the employment, but I'm not sure if I agree with how they run things". Calvin leans forward and says with a confident smile, as to communicate a well-known fact: "You know the unions closed the old factory?" "No, I didn't know that," I answer. He leaves the statement in the air for a while and goes on to tell me how he received a promotion the other day. Calvin works with inspecting the quality of the glass. Now he will take part in training new employees as well. "So, you're not looking at other jobs any longer?" I ask, as he's been telling me he would like to be closer to his family in Florida or have a job where he can use his education in engineering. "No, I'll stay there," he says while looking down at his phone. As we get up to leave, more mandarin-speaking Fuyao-workers, easily recognized by their blue work-uniform, begin to enter the restaurant and occupy some of the other tables. Calvin and work-related issues at Fuyao will be discussed at greater length in chapter five.

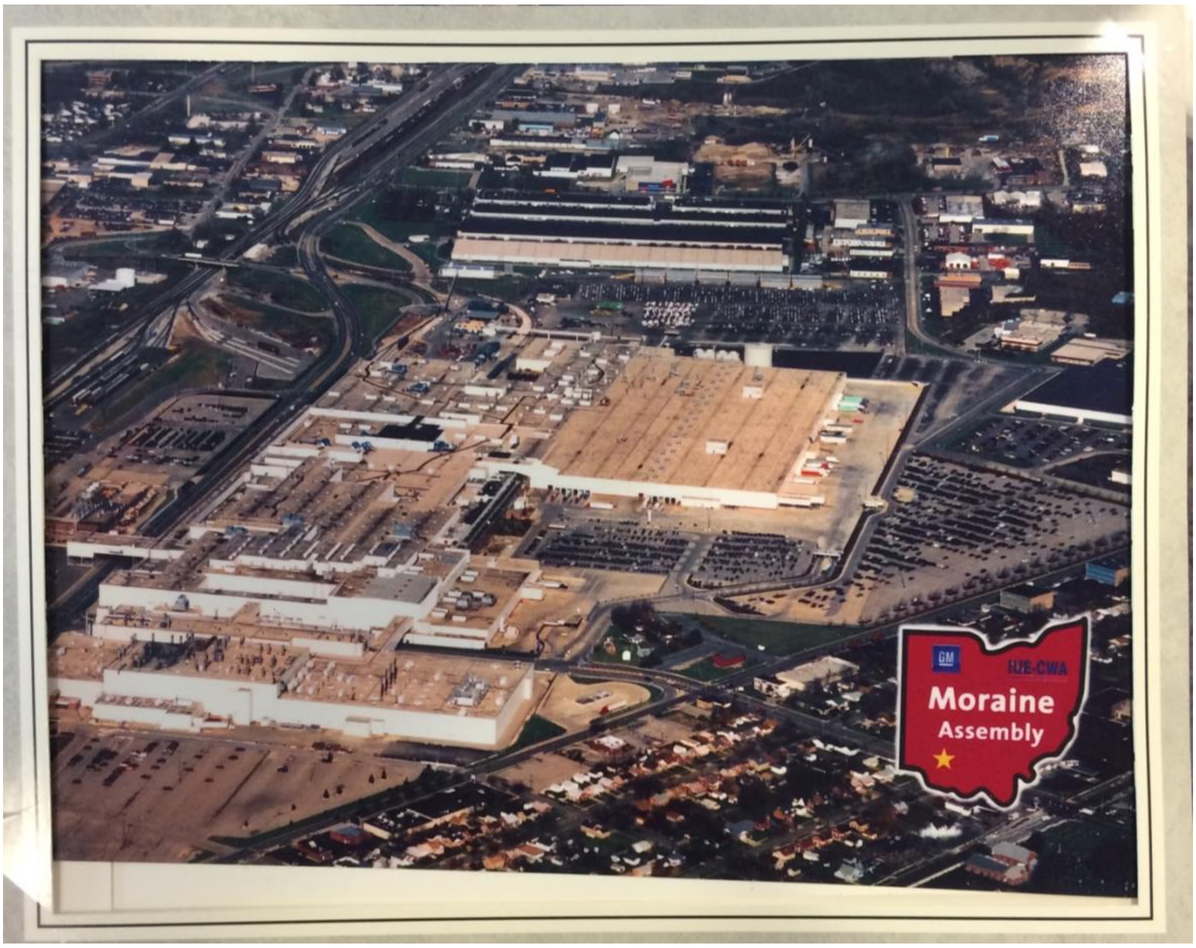

Figure 7 An overview picture of Moraine Assembly. Taken by author at the union local in Dayton

Contradictions in the continued story of America

The GM plant as an industrial ruin questions the linear narrative of modernity and capitalism. Wolf points out that through the education system in America, we learn that there exist and entity called the West, and the West has a genealogy where the final destination is what we learn the US to be: "Industry, crossed with democracy, in turn yielded the United States, embodying rights to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness" (Wolf, 1982, p. 40). After multiple decades of decline in the North American manufacturing base the Midwestern landscape is covered in abandoned industrial buildings, caught in different stages of ruination. "Dayton is much like Detroit," was heard several times during my fieldwork, where Detroit stands as the icon for America's biggest failure. Dayton with its abandoned factories and houses, prevalent high crime rate and ongoing drug epidemic can conjure post-apocalyptic pictures to mind. In this landscape the American dream seems out of reach. In this landscape, democracy crossed with industrial ruins yielded president Donald Trump, who promised to bring the industry back. He also promised to tackle the Chinese threat. But in Dayton, the contradictions loom large.

Some blamed the unions, as Calvin and my other interlocutor Larry. The former saw the unions as responsible for creating artificial wages that wasn't representative for the market and pointed to how they created entitled workers. The leading narrative of the Rust Belt and processes of deindustrialization has been that of industry leaving for Asia or Mexico, leaving the blue-collar worker without his proper job, and leaving the known modernity, as "a vision of history as progressive, man-made construction, to an ideology of improvement through the accumulation of knowledge and technical skill […]" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012, p. 9). The narrative is now turned on its head with the U.S. receiving record investments from China and moving their manufacturing operations into abandoned factories, thus hinder the process of further ruination. As Harvey & Krohn-Hansen (2018, p. 12) notes, "capital is always looking for sites where labour is cheaper and where regulations are less onerous, where sites of production are nearer to growing markets and/or more technologized". Furthermore, it can allude to renaissance of China and the transformation of the world order, as Arrighi analysis (2007).

When I pointed out the contradiction in the narrative to my Trump-voting interlocutor Eric, he tells me: "The idea about a Chinese company coming here is terrible!" He adds to this, "I'm very patriotic: I want it to be American companies giving jobs to Americans". While Layla, an interlocutor I will further present in a later chapter, worried about the racial makeup of the factory. She was not concerned about the Chinese, but how the factory brought African Americans from West Dayton to these predominantly white blue-collar areas and how these workers did not spend money in the local neighbourhood, as was the case for the old GM-workers, she tells me. This work-living-pattern is similar to Kasmir (2014) fragmentation of the Saturn work-force. The sentiments concerning this Chinese presence in Dayton were thus mixed, while gratefulness about employment seemed to trump the rest. Both Fuyao and Trump, who stand in opposition in many regards, tried to reactivate sentiments of old: that of industry crossed with democracy yields the American Dream. These explored processes, begs the question, who can now attain the American Dream at Fuyao? Is it still relevant in this new unknown landscape of a (different) modernity?

Next, I will explore some of the cultural complexities of Fuyao's and the Chinese presence in Dayton, Ohio, by exploring the case of a fatal work accident and the question of unions amongst a new generation of industrial workers, calling upon questions shedding light on Karl Polanyi's 'Double movement' between flexibility and security.

Chapter 5: Manufacturing work and cultures of flexibility

Calvin is driving at high speed down the highway. He's in the left lane and the speedometer is showing 77 mph. We both see the police car waiting in between the two sections of the highway, and Calvin breaks hard right before we pass in front of it. He curses faintly and tells me in a matter-of-fact tone, how that police car will stop us. I turn around in my seat, and rightly so, the police car is turning out onto the highway about to pursue us. Calvin shifts to the right lane and stops the car at the side of the road. We are on our way to a Sunday outdoor soccer game with my Airbnb-hosts work-colleges from Fuyao. I was supposed to leave for church but jumped at the opportunity to spend more time with Calvin outside the house. At the beginning of the drive from Moraine, I asked how often he meets colleges outside work, and after saying, "Not that often," followed by a longer pause, he sayed, "Are you writing all of this down?" "I try to," I answered. He told me he thinks it's strange how I ask so many questions, even if he has agreed to me writing about him. After a few seconds of more silence he told me, "I kinda just try to go with the flow." "That's your approach to life?" "Yeah," followed by, "Everyone need some stability." After another pause, he continued, mumbling slightly, "It's too hard to try and change things." I let his statement linger and constrained myself from asking further follow-up questions. We continued on in silence as we approached the point on the highway where we caught the highway patrol's attention.

In Calvin's at the time puzzling and conflicting comment, on his approach to life with both "go with the flow" and "everyone needs some stability," materializes in lived life. By working in a factory driven by a Chinese-model, with a much lower salary compared with workers at the old GM-assembly, and by partaking in the new gig-economy, where Calvin has his own "gig" in both hosting Airbnb and driving for the ridesharing company Lyft, he manages to have economic stability. However, since Fuyao began production, workers have flagged safety issues at the plant, which escalated with a fatal accident on March 20th, 2018, four months after a union was unsuccessful in organizing the Fuyao manufacturing-workers. Calvin voted against unionizing and shared the opinions of most of the young manufacturing-workers I talked to – they did not see the point of bringing in a union and wanted to keep the full share of their pay-checks to themselves. Consequently, Calvin's comment, "It's too hard to try and change things", can be reflected by his lack of class and work-place solidarity. Rather, Calvin, as most of my other interlocutors, can be understood as "neoliberal subjects" and micro-entrepreneurs, embodying the "active" citizen responsible for their own position in the world (see chapter one and six).

In this chapter, I will explore the role of labour and the struggle between security and flexibility at Fuyao, through "frictions" (Tsing, 2005), materialized through so-called "culture clashes". Through the question of unionizing and the work-accident, tensions between the young and old generation, and between the collective and individual, became visible. Laura Bear (2014) writes that accidents, as failed acts of labour, has the potential to "reveal to us and to our informants the limits of attempts to suture together incommensurable temporal rhythms and workplace demands" (p. 74). I consequently wondered how my interlocutors and workers reacted to the first fatal accident at Chinese factory. I argue that this case of labour at Fuyao, adds to the literature on how democracy and the possibility for collective action at the work-place is getting worn out in the American automotive industry in the face of regimes of flexibility (see Durrenberger & Reichart, 2010; Kasmir, 2014).

Frictions and accidents at Fuyao

"Who is Fuyao?" a young woman asks, during a late-night boxing class at the downtown gym, carefully tasting and pronouncing this foreign word. "It's a Chinese company down at Moraine" Gina, one of my boxing instructors answers her, while the group who participated end up standing beside the ring to take of our hand wraps. "It's bad there, right?" a tall short-haired white middle-aged man in the group says as partly a question and partly a statement from the tone of his voice. The man turns slightly to our boxing instructor for the evening and tells her, "I knew a guy working on safety management there and he said it was bad. They won't follow the rules and think problems will solve itself by throwing money at it. But nothing changed, so he quit working with them." He seems irritated and frustrated about how Fuyao operates here in the Dayton region. Two days earlier, Fuyao had experienced its worst accident to date.

On Wednesday, March 21. 2018, Dayton's local newspaper, Dayton Daily News, wrote the following[9]:

> The Tuesday early-morning death of Fuyao Glass America Inc. forklift operator Ricky Patterson of Dayton has renewed attention on safety at the Chinese automobile glass manufacturer. […]. Patterson died from blunt force trauma to the head and neck in what has been ruled an accident, according to the Montgomery County Coroner's Office. […]. Patterson died after being crushed between a forklift and more than a ton of glass, Moraine Police Division incident report states.

Further they wrote:

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[9] See also the web-article: (Blizzard & Driscoll, 2018)

> Workers have been concerned about safety since the plant opened, according to a man who identified himself as a former Fuyao employee. "It has long been said that nothing will change in the plant until someone dies. Now, here we are," John Durham said in an email Tuesday to this news organization.

These sentiments heard from the man at the boxing gym and former Fuyao employee John Durham reported by the local newspaper can be understood in the reported "**culture clash**", as the earlier mentioned headline from chapter one, where Noam Scheiber and Keith Bradsher (2017) write the following in *The New York Times*: "At Fuyao, a major culture clash is playing out on the factory floor, with some workers questioning the company's commitment to operating under American supervision and American norms". One part of this culture clash refers to the issues of safety. Scheiber & Bradsher (2017) further writes how employees are fired after absences from work, even while on workers' compensation leave . The United States Department of Labour reports already in November 2016 that they received multiple complaints of unsafe working conditions at the factory not long after they opened in October 2015. They found several safety issues related to machine safety violations, lack of personal protective equipment, electrical hazards, and failing to train workers about dangerous chemicals. This led to OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) penalties of 227,000 dollars.[10]

Furthermore, in *The New York Times* (Scheiber & Bradsher, 2017), feature a comment from David Michaels, a professor at George Washington University, who gives the question of culture clash nuance by saying that these violations are common in the "brutally competitive auto parts industry." Still, on a more general level, Ohio based newspaper *Norwalk Reflector* reports that the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show an increase in fatal work-related injuries from 2013 to 2016 and that deaths in 2016 topped 5,000 for the first time since 2008. They further write: "Some argue an improved economy is putting more pressure on employees, saying fatigue becomes a factor as more work comes in" (Gnau, 2018). The question then presents itself, if it's possible to understand the reported safety violations in light of the mentioned culture clash or if it's due to the improved economy. Next, I will explore these issues further by paying attention to how Fuyao employees reflected on work in the factory, where another dimension to this culture crash revealed itself.

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[10] https://www.osha.gov/news/newsreleases/region5/11102016, accessed on 25.04.19

Experiences of labour at the factory floor

The internet site Indeed.com features a section on company reviews where employees can rate and comment on their working experiences at a firm. At the time of writing (January 21, 2019), Fuyao Glass America Inc. has an overall score of 2.9 stars out of five, based on 130 reviews. Here are two examples of reviews from employees:

> Salary employees are expected to work at least 50 hours per week. Some are required to travel out of state with very little notice. Management is not in touch with what happens on the production floor. Policies are constantly changing with no warning or explanation. Culture is difficult to get used to. It is a Chinese company, so there are many differences there. […]. Hardest part of the job is that there is no recognition for a job well done or for going above and beyond, but the minute you make a small mistake, it's as if the world is about to end. [11]

Another former employee comments further:

> A very fast paced workplace. With culture that is 75% from China, it has been a great experience with learning hard work and discipline in a different text then the American culture. The down side to this, is learning what is a SAFE place to work in our [American] culture and theirs [China]. They take to many short cuts, in our safety practices. They also do not promote The American worker over the China worker, so there is no room for advancement. [12]

Both these reviews comment on the Chinese work-culture they believe to exist at the workplace, where the first emphasizes the number of hours one is expected to work and how one is required to work extra shifts without much notice. While the other review focus on the pace, safety, and the same none-existing room for advancement.

Barry was the first person I met who had worked Fuyao. While driving or walking around downtown or in other blue-collar neighbourhoods in Dayton, I often saw people, both American and Chinese, wearing a Fuyao t-shirt in clear blue with their white company symbol on the breast. They were visible in the urban picture. Walking home from downtown Dayton with Barry one Sunday in January, after bumping into one of his old work colleagues, a man in his mid-twenties, I ask Barry about his experiences working at Fuyao. "It's the biggest factory I have ever worked at," and tells me it stretched out as far as the road we walked on did. "How did you like it?" I continue to ask. “I hated it,” he tells me, and says that he felt treated like a slave working there. He worked long shifts and never got any breaks, not even to get water. They told him; “Fetch this, go there,” making him run around the factory without breaks.

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[11] «High Stress, Low reward» February 1, 2018: https://www.indeed.com/cmp/Fuyao-Glass-America/reviews?start=20, accessed on, 2019.01.21

[12] «China run Company» January 7, 2018: https://www.indeed.com/cmp/Fuyao-Glass-America/reviews?start=20, accessed on, 2019.01.21

The second person I met who had worked at this factory, was Stephan – another young black man in his early-twenties who grew up in West Dayton, which also comments on this “culture clash” at the factory. He and his girlfriend spent two nights at the Airbnb-house in Mayville Street in January. Stephan started working at Fuyao two years earlier, during the summer, after they had just opened a new production line and worked there for three months in total. For the short time he spent there, Stephan tells me he enjoyed it. When I mention the headlines of “Culture clash” and safety issues, he comments, “They just got here and need time to figure out how we like to do things in America”. However, he did observe tensions between the American and Chinese workers there. The Chinese workers, he tells me, gets to decide where they want to work and keeps to themselves, as most could not speak English yet. Most the people in management were also Chinese, echoing the work-reviews above. While working there, rumours had it that the Chinese workers lived and slept in the factory, as there were still enormous areas not in use. He had not witnessed this himself, but just seen some thin mattresses lying around. Stephan continued to tell me that he’s heard how there are many suicides among industrial workers in China and that they have no life outside the factory walls, as to further highlight the difference between the perceived “industrial cultures”.

Scheiber & Bradsher (2017) also flag the “none-existing room for advancement” for the “American”-worker and Fuyao and point to a lawsuit by a former manager who said he was let go in part because he was not Chinese. When Fuyao first arrived, they said their goal was to hand the plant over to American managers, while workers instead have observed an increased portion of Chinese supervisors during the months leading up to the summer of 2017. The trend of Chinese overseas investments in Africa and Asia, shows a “pattern of reluctance to transfer operations to local control”, according to Weiyi Shi, a professor of political economy at the University California, San Diego (Scheiber & Bradsher, 2017).

In contrast to those who could not obtain promotions, Calvin with his migrant background from Taiwan received two promotions during the months I knew him, as mentioned in chapter four. He told me he was valued as worker because of being bilingual, speaking both English and Mandarin fluently. On a Tuesday in April, I ask Calvin if he knew Ricky Patterson who died during the previous month. “No, not personally, but I knew of him”, Calvin tells me, as Patterson drove around the plant in his forklift. The accident and death happened around five a.m. in the morning, at the end of the night shift. In the aftermath of the accident, they had a meeting with an OHSA-manager (Occupational Health and Safety Act), according to Calvin. As the paper had stated, I ask if the accident was a human failure. "It's difficult to explain," my Airbnb-host answer in a lower voice. He echoes Barry and the already cited interview and reviews and tells me that they demand you to be very efficient. He continues to tell me that even if it was a human error, this error might have been created by the stressful conditions the managers place their workers in. While he considers himself more fortunate working in the quality department where he thinks there is less pressure.

As a consequence of the fatal accident, Calvin became aware and reflected on what this pressure and stress could in the worst-case lead to. In her article, Bear (2014, p. 74) shows how these dramatic accidents on the rivers in India ultimately became normalized and how paying attention to them might recognize how they are central to "contemporary practices of capitalism". She writes: "Away from dramatic publicized events, accidents have become accepted as inherent in the work process" (2014, pp. 74-75). Drawing on this insight, and in the lack of factory floor changes at Fuyao or demands of more security by the majority of workers, the accident as accepted as inherent in the work process also made sense here.

A new generation of manufacturing workers

The decline of organized labour began in the 70s across the industrial world, as I explored in chapter one, through the shift between Fordism and post-Fordism. Jennifer J. Chun (2009, p. 24) writes for countries as the U.S. with low level of unionization, global market competition "spelled early, rapid, and devastating defeats" for organized labour. Plants were shut down and relocated to lower-waged, nonunions regions, both within the U.S. boarders and internationally. At its peak, unionization in the United Sates was at 35 percent in 1953. In the year 2000, union membership was down to around 12-13 percent nationally (Chun 2009, p. 24-25). Chun further writes that "the state played a decisive role in dismantling the postwar industrial welfare system and establishing a more hostile labor-relations climate" (2009, p. 31). In addition, "aggressive anti-union campaigns were aided by the use of public relations firms and management lawyers who could turn the opinions of both workers as well as the public at large against unions", Chun (2009, p. 33) writes. As already mentioned in chapter four, many of the young workers I met during my fieldwork, shared a negative opinion towards unions and viewed them as responsible for the industry leaving Dayton.

CEO and founder Cao Dewang noted how his biggest challenge operating in the US was the American workers, as all the young Americans wanted to make it tech industry of Silicon Valley or at Wall Street (see chapter four). True, many of my interlocutors told me how young people left Dayton for larger cities and more thriving areas. Still, there were several young people working at Fuyao. Elonza, an African American man at 49 years-old, from the earlier mentioned discussion hosted by MVFEC (see chapter four), says that approximately 60 percentage of the people working at the plant are part of the younger generation and in majority during the early winter months of 2017. He and the rest of the panel are worried about how the younger generation at the factory won't vote for the union, as this discussion was recorded a few days before the workers at Fuyao voted to be unionized by the UAW (The International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America). Suzanne, a former Fuyao employee also being interviewed, explains how there's been a generational shift. "In the beginning there was a lot of older people leaving their old jobs for better opportunity [working at Fuyao]," and comments how she was one of them. As many others, she was fired. The workers featured in the interview notes how there is a high turnover rate at Fuyao, with over 5,000 being employed on the 2,000 positions available. Elonza goes on to say, "They [the younger generation] have their opinion on different things that is attached to the unions. […]. I think they are scared in regard to it." He goes on to tell how he discussed this with a younger man and was told that he was just here to make money for a short period of time, and not for a career. Consequently, he had no use for a union.

The question of unionizing shed light on the tension between the old and the new generation when it comes to the question of collective bargaining. Both Calvin and Stephan had no use of the union, they told me. Stephan, said that there are always somebody who wants more security and better working conditions at their workplace, but he did not understand the point of bringing in unions. Consequently, he was sympathetic to Fuyao and how they ran things. However, compared to Elonza and Suzanne who were at the end of their working career, Stephan was there to make some quick money before pursuing something better.

The UAW began a campaign to unionize the workers at Fuyao in 2016 which lasted 18 months and culminated with a vote on the 9th of November 2017. The union's campaign highlighted "arbitrarily enforced rules and retaliation against those who speak up" (Scheiber & Bradsher, 2017). 886 people who voted against Fuyao to be unionized, while 441 voted in favour of joining. *The Dayton Daily News* (Gnau, 2017) reported that Fuyao worker Jeremy Grant, a UAW supporter was surprised by the wide margin against unionizing: "It was fairly shocking," Grant said followed by, "We were really confident." While Fuyao President Jeff Daochaun Liu stated: "We are pleased that (Fuyao) associates chose to maintain a direct relationship with our company and resist the union's attempt to intervene". According to Joe Allen, a historian and writer on labour issues, recruiting workers at Fuyao to the unions was crucial for the momentum of the movement. "The union [UAW] hoped to stem a decades long-decline in membership, down to about 416,000 members nationally today, well under a height of about 1,5 million in 1979" he is quoted to comment. He further pointed out, "When the UAW can't organize an auto parts plant in Ohio…then what does the future hold for an auto union?" (Gnau, 2017)

"We are a dying breed"

Joe Allen's question, on what the future of an auto-union is when they can't unionize an auto-parts plant in Ohio seems pressing and is further illustrated by the answer I get when calling the UAW to ask if they had any active locals in the Dayton area: "No, we are a dying breed". I will argue, that part in explaining the massive increase in overseas in investments from China to the U.S., as referred to in chapter four, and to the Dayton area, has to be understood in relation to the defeat of American organized labour, and added to CEO Dewang's other listed reasons (also see chapter four). According to political scientist and China-expert, Mary Gallagher, "entrepreneurs like Mr. Cao [Dewang] often populate their factories with migrants from rural areas, whom they expect to be relatively submissive, unlike American workers, who expect a more collegial management style", *The New York Times* (Scheiber & Bradsher, 2017) reports. However, sociologist Lu Zhang (2015), following 22-months of ethnography inside various automotive-manufacturing plants in China, argue against the conclusion that labour protest among Chinese workers are ineffective, localized and apolitical, and contrary show how "widespread grassroots protests have succeeded in winning substantial wage increases and improved conditions for workers on the shop floor" (Zhang, 2015, p. 10). Consequently, Gallagher statement in *The New York Times* (Scheiber & Bradsher, 2017), with "He [Dewang] hasn't ever had probably this type of pressure from a work force", needs to be nuanced by Zhang (2015) insights.

However, when workers at Fuyao have complained about their low-wages in relation to their earlier GM-union-salaries, Mr. Cao has rejected the premise of the question. He told reporter Alec McGillis (2018), that the proper yardstick was not between what people in Dayton used to make and now, but compared to the wages in Mexico and China – thus, Fuyao's pay in Dayton looks better. Dewangs says, "Old GM workers are thankful towards us, because they lost their jobs after the closure. They are very happy since we came and offered them jobs" (MacGillis, 2018).

The case of Calvin

I first met Calvin in the beginning of April and lived in his large suburban house in a quiet neighbourhood in Moraine. He's just a short four- or five-minutes' drive from his workplace at Fuyao. Calvin came from Taiwan to the U.S. with his uncle and aunt when he was ten years old. His family sent him along as he was oldest of three and thought he would have the best chance to be successful in the "land of opportunity." His parents had to stay behind to look after Calvin's grandparents. They settled down in Florida and Calvin tells of a childhood working hard at school to achieve good grades. Because of these good grades, Calvin managed to enter the Air Force where the military paid for his engineering education. McDowell (2003, p. 845) writes that the army is one of the few "escape routes" left, together with sports, for upwards social mobility among young men with working-class backgrounds. After several years of serving in the Air Force, Calvin left due to not being able to progress further in rank, as he could not obtain a higher security clearance level because of his migrant background. The Air Force brought him to Ohio and Dayton, stationed at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base - this region top employer. After leaving the service, he stayed in Dayton, got an affordable loan through the veteran service to buy his house in Moraine, and found work in the quality department in the automotive glass plant, where he's been for one year when I met him. While renting one of the two rooms he advertised on Airbnb for a month, I experienced the daily life of an automotive glass worker from the outside of the factory walls.

On a Friday in June, I meet Calvin outside his house talking to a neighbour. He's letting his neighbour know that he's moving and renting out the house. My previous Airbnb-host told me a few days earlier that he had taken a new job and asked me if I could come and help him move out. I was surprised to hear this news as he told me had decided to stay in Dayton after he had been promoted and received a raise by Fuyao when we ate at "Taste of the world" (see chapter four). His new job is with another Chinese company based in Florida and he will end up living closer to his aunt and uncle. In a month's time, he and his other American colleagues will travel to China to take part in several weeks of work training. Calvin has a moving company help take all his furniture and store it in Indianapolis while he leaves for China. I help him, together with two women from the Chinese church community he's part of, to put things in boxes.

The precarity of factory work

In this chapter, I have described how labour at the factory floor at Fuyao is precarious. In sum, it's precarious in relation to high work demands and pressure, lack of safety and low-wages, and little work-place security, as exemplified by the high-turnover rate. As a laid-off worker reported:

"It's quite the revolving door over there at Fuyao". I have explored the cultural frictions between this Chinese factory with their Mandarin-speaking management and the American worker. In this case, the "unevenness of expectations" (Tsing, 2005, p. 21) are revealed: Older workers campaign for more workplace security through unions, while the younger generation want to hold on to the full amount of the pay-check and accept the unsecure and flexible work, and lastly, with the factory management demanding high productivity and flexibility – telling their Americans to compare their wages in a global framework with automotive workers in Mexico and China, instead of how it used to be at old GM.

Kalleberg (2009, p. 15), writes in relation to Polanyi's "double movement" (see chapter one), that "all industrial countries are faced with the basic problem of balancing security (due to precarity) and flexibility (due to competition)". Collective actions through unions has been a way to achieve shared goals for security among workers. At Fuyao, the question of unionizing was voted down by a large margin. In this case, and through my ethnography, I claim that an ethos of flexibility has taken a foothold among my interlocutors. Calvin's earlier mentioned comments, of "I kinda just try to go with the flow" and "It's too hard to try and change things", can be illustrative of this new, younger generation of manufacturing workers. Their sentiments also need to be seen in relation to the American unions weakened position in this new landscape of labour and how their role changed when adapting to this. Durrenberger and Reichart (2010, p. 10), write that, "Unions became professionalized bureaucracies whose leaders were hard to distinguish from their counterparts in the corporate world – management bosses".

In light of the precarious work present at Fuyao, one may ask, can this labour be a vehicle into achieving the "good life", as was the fact for work at the previous industrial operations at GM? Calvin might be an interesting example in regard to this question. Calvin, as a migrant child, sent by his parents to fulfil expectations of upwards mobility, had problems attaining this through the American military. His success was hindered by his background as a migrant from Taiwan. This background, on the other hand, gave him opportunities in the growing sector of Chinese companies coming to the U.S. to do business and manufacture, since he was bilingual. As an example of an individual, part of the new generation of manufacturing workers, Calvin was valued because of his personal language assets and obtained several promotions with wage-hikes and higher job-security. Therefore, while the sun is setting on many white and black American blue-collar workers, "forced" to accept precarious work in the context of lack of better prospects, Calvin experienced new opportunities in this new geography of capitalism and globalization. At the end of my fieldwork, Calvin travelled to China to get work-training and begin a new career at another Chinese company in Jinkoo Solar – the world's largest solar panel manufacturer.

In relation to this precarious manufacturing labour, some workers took up another strategy to achieve economic security under this regime of flexibility. Instead of relying solely on their manufacturing job, some workers, as Calvin, took up another flexible income-source in the gig-economy, to achieve economic stability. The gig-economy is what I turn to scrutinize next.

Chapter 6: Hope and failures of the American entrepreneurs

I'm standing outside the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV). It is 1 p.m. on a Monday in the middle of June. A guy named Jake contacted me on Craigslist, as he is interested in buying my car for a decent amount of money. He arrives in a blue Ford truck together with two other people. My heart starts to race – I didn't expect a group of people and in the light of my previous experiences, dealing with money, cars and strangers makes me nervous to a higher degree than it used to. Barry's lesson – "This is America – you'd better learn that!" – has stuck with me. They are all between 30 and 40 years old. Jake is tall, has short, light hair, and wears jeans, a blue t-shirt, and black sunglasses. I greet the group, and while Jack asks me a few questions regarding the vehicle, his two friends inspect it from the outside. They seem to be in a rush. I unlock the car and Jake takes the driver seat, opens the hood, and hits the gas pedal hard a few times. The two others listen to the engine – they clearly know what they are doing. One of them nods to Jake. He comes out, gives me the keys, and tell me he'll take it. We move over to the shade that is provided by the strip mall where BMV is located amidst several deserted stores. While I hand him the car title (the ownership paper), he hands me the money. "I don't know if you know how we do things here, but we set the sale price lower".[13] I tell him that I'm aware of that and ask, "How low?" "We set it to $150. Trust me, they will not ask any questions," and he continues to say, "I pay enough taxes as it is." I remember one of Barry's other lessons: "In America we don't always follow the rules."

The transaction inside the BMV goes smoothly – no questions are asked. Outside, by the Ford truck, one of the men wants to know how I'll get home, as there is no public transportation nearby. "By Uber", I answer. He nods and seems familiar with the concept. They could have given me a ride, but I'm happy that I have other options. After answering a few questions about Norway and my reasons for being here, they get into the truck and drive off. Jake takes a seat in my old Beemer and changes the seat settings. I'm lucky – the Uber-application on my smartphone tells me that a vehicle is just five minutes away from my destination out here in West Carrolton – no man's land, in many regards. On the Uber-application, I get the following information: The driver's name, that he drives a red Ford auto, that he's a great conversationalist etc. When he arrives, I enter the front passenger seat – after I pause to decide if I should sit in the backseat. Some Uber-drivers clearly show that you should enter the backseat by storing items in their front passenger seats.

As we drive out of the parking lot, Jake, seated in my old Beemer drives out in front. "That's a nice car," Brady, the driver, tells me – a large man with a clean-shaven head and tattoos that cover his arms. After sharing some stories related to car issues, I ask about his experiences driving for Uber. This is his first day driving full-time, I learn, as he has just been laid off from a union-job in Dayton. Brady worked eight years at a truck-engine factory that General Motors co-owns, and just got to know that he wouldn't be able to get back to work after Labor Day on September 3rd, as originally planned, as there had been a fall in production. He and his wife have four kids at home and they just bought two new cars they have down-payments on through a leasing contract. I'm sitting in one of them now. It's not a good time to be without a job, I heard, and being an Uber-driver presented itself as the easiest way to get a new source of income in his post-union-job situation.

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[13] Here Jake is talking about the paperwork for BMV.

His first day driving full-time for Uber hasn't been very successful – I'm his third trip after five hours of working. We discuss if Dayton is too small of a city to make ends meet driving for a ridesharing company. A few days earlier he applied for a job at Fuyao and hopes to start working there, but he hasn't heard anything back from them yet. Exiting his car, I decide to tip him on my smartphone application and give him the top score on his service. I'm not sure what percentage he gets from the 15,50 dollars I paid for the ride. Seeing him drive off, I'm surprised by his positive attitude in this very difficult situation. And this is by no means the first time I experience this: Throughout my fieldwork, I've repeatedly been struck by people's optimistic mindsets in the face of precarity.

* * *

The ethnographic vignette above highlights the presence of both the old and new economy in the life of Brady, as was the case for many of my interlocutors in Dayton. It also brings to an end the story of my vehicle – an actor in many regards, who gave me joy, headaches, enabled relations and gave me insight into the complicated issue of mobility – which is an issue that negatively affects many low-income workers in America. Brady's experience of losing a union manufacturing job and consequently drastically losing out when it came to wages is also a widespread experience that many share during this period of deindustrialization throughout the Midwest. The reduction of income and opportunity during times of crises is of course nothing new. What is new, however, is that actors seek to now make ends meet by entering the gig-economy. But as we have seen, there were not many 'gigs' to be taken in the midsized metropolitan area of Dayton, where people either relied on the bus or a personal car for their mobility. Those who had to take the bus were unlikely to be able to afford the luxury of an Uber. As explored in chapter three, mobility and public infrastructure in Dayton, and many other

American cities, are often neglected and increasingly insecure. In this chapter, building upon these previous insights, I will comment on how the gig-economy fits into this crumbling infrastructure and activates questions concerning the boundary between public and private. But first, let me explore the role of the gig-economy in the lives of my interlocutors.

Jake, who I sold my car to, worked as a fire fighter and ran a small construction company. The two men accompanying him were his employees. Therefore, Jake can be understood to be an entrepreneur, and one who is a "job creator" on top of it. Brady, on the other hand, just lost his unionized manufacturing employment – the quintessential "proper job" under Fordism during the old economy. Now, Brady was forced into becoming an entrepreneur himself in order to survive in the changing labour market. However, I understand this type of entrepreneurship in the gig-economy as being of a very different character when compared to the entrepreneur as a job-creator (as I also laid out in chapter one). In this chapter, I will analyse how we can understand the American entrepreneur as a neoliberal subject and how such an interpretation opens up an analytical space that allows us to scrutinize this character within a global framework beyond the "proper job". Consequently, following Millar (2014), I use this space to shed light on how the destinies of the global North and South are merging when view through the lens of shared conditions of precarity. I will also argue that the existing culture of entrepreneurship, and the 'cruel optimism' that accompanies it, renders my interlocutors' anxiety bearable when faced with precarity. Firstly, I will scrutinize how we can understand the rise of the gig-economy in this geography of capitalism and how my interlocutors aspired to, or took part in, this new economy. Secondly, I will introduce my interlocutor Layla and describe her precarious circumstances, which allows me to illuminate Airbnb as a kind of 'intimate economy' and look at some of the sentiments produced in this 'left-behind America'. I will also use an exploration of these feelings and opinions to comment on current president Donald Trump and point to Standing's notion of 'the precariat' which he describes as a politically 'dangerous' class. Lastly, I ask how we can understand the precarity arising from this new gig-economy and whether we can analyse it as both an economic opportunity and as a private infrastructure.

Platform labour as an economic opportunity

What are Uber and Airbnb? How can we understand these phenomena in the landscape of today's changing labour? The ILO (see chapter one) categories the gig economy as a prominently non-standard form of employment and defines it as follows:

> An important component of the platform economy is digital labour platforms which includes both web-based platforms, where work is outsourced through an open call to a geographically dispersed crowd ("crowdwork") and location-based applications (apps) which allocate work to individuals in a specific geographical area, typically to perform local, service-oriented tasks such as driving, running errands or cleaning houses.[14]

In this part of this thesis, I will explore the location-based applications, with an analytical focus on Airbnb. Uber will be touched on slightly. These enterprises are two of the flagship companies of the gig or platform economy and are leaders among a growing group of companies that all started up in the San Francisco Bay Area of California, and many of them in the technology hub of Silicon Valley. The acclaimed journalist Steven Hill and author of *Raw Deal: How the "Uber economy" and runaway capitalism are screwing American workers* (2015, p. 4) writes that several of these companies "have conceived of nothing less than a wholesale redesign of the U.S. workforce, the quality of employment and the ways we live and work". When viewed from a scale, gig-economy companies present themselves as viable alternatives to more "traditional" "proper jobs" (Ferguson & Li, 2018), which comes with stability and hierarchy attached. In the gig-economy, on the other hand, one is able to work for oneself, be a micro-entrepreneur and decide when and how to work, according to the companies involved in the platform economy.

By way of Uber, one can use one's private car to take part in a ridesharing-service. The requirements that must be fulfilled in order to become a driver are simple: owning a four-door car that has to be no more than ten years old. One also has to pass a background check and a driving record check, have a car-insurance and a social security number.[15] Through Airbnb's platform, on the other hand, a private person can rent rooms, or an entire house or apartment from another private person, which is easily made possible through an internet browser or a smartphone application. As a host one can set the rental price, and whether one wants to use automatic booking or not. As a guest, one can choose a place to book based on pictures, price, and the guest's experiences that are available via text comments or ratings in the forms of stars. If the host receives a lot of positive feedback, one gets the status as "superhost". Uber features similar practices of rating their drivers through stars. An important aspect of this platform labour is that neither the Airbnb host nor the Uber driver actually work for these companies but are classified as "independent contractors". Consequently, these companies are not responsible for their workers health benefits, retirement, unemployment, disability, or their employee breaking a local law, etc. – all the responsibility is placed on the individual rather than the company that they are using to make a living (Hill, 2015, p. 6).

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[14] https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/non-standard-employment/crowd-work/lang--en/index.htm, accessed on 2019.03.18

[15] https://www.ridesharingdriver.com/uber-driver-requirements-qualify/, accessed on May 18. 2019

Airbnb's vision goes beyond work. CEO and co-founder of Airbnb, the young 34-year-old now billionaire Brian Chesky (2014), says they are "tapping into the universal human yearning to belong". On a blog-post from 2014, he explains how he and his co-founders did some soul-searching to discover what Airbnb's true mission is:

> We asked ourselves, 'What is our mission? What is the big idea that truly defines Airbnb?' It turns out the answer was right in front of us. People thought Airbnb was about renting houses. But really, we're about home. You see, a house is just a space, but a home is where you belong. And what makes this global community so special is that for the very first time, you can belong anywhere. That is the idea at the core of our company: belonging

But who can belong? Who is this housing infrastructure for? As a built digital network, connecting thousands of hosts around the world, Airbnb allows for and make new ways of traveling possible. By combining the digital infrastructure, built by Airbnb's tech engineers, and the physical infrastructure, as homes provided by local people, one can now travel in new ways. Significantly, this flow can create new disruptions: what this new infrastructure brings, that is, new people, goods and ideas, is not always welcome in the local communities and often brings about boundary maintenance of some kind. These boundaries are partly controlled through Airbnb's own "infrastructures of connectivity, evaluation, and surveillance…" (Van Doorn, 2017, p. 899).

Taking a seat in a stranger's car by way of Uber and sleeping in an unknown person's home through Airbnb seems like a strange misfit when considering the rather proverbial American culture of fear (Glassner, 1999). Thus, some see the social activities brought about by the gig-economy as a cultural breakthrough: "We are entrusting a complete stranger with our most valuable possessions, our personal experiences – and our very lives. In the process, we are entering a new era of internet-enabled intimacy" (Tanz, 2014). Airbnb, however, has recently created headlines of a different kind: "Airbnb and the so-called sharing economy is hollowing out our cities" (Hinsliff, 2018), and "Profiteers make a killing on Airbnb – and erode communities" (Harris, 2018) are just two recent examples. Many have, in summary, commented on how this practice is pushing up rents, exacerbating urban inequality, and compromising people's privacy and security, given the lack of proper regulations. This is especially clear in tourist-magnets such as San Francisco, New York, and Los Angeles, where Airbnb has been used as an "impetus for the eviction of longtime tenants…" (Hill, 2015, p. 42) who were part of the local neighbourhood and is thus replaced homes with Airbnb tourist "hotels" (p. 44). Journalist Steven Hill (2015) is convinced that Airbnb helped "regular" homeowners make ends meet through this service after interviewing several hosts, as it did for my interlocutors, but he adds as follows:

> …by taking such a hands-off, laissez-faire attitude toward the professionalization of hosting by greedy commercial landlords and multiproperty agents, Airbnb becomes its own worst enemy. As the number of victims piles up, it undermines its own "sharing and trust" ethos (p. 67).

The rise of the gig-economy

How can we understand the rise of the 'on-demand'- and 'gig'-economy? Scholars argue that the recent Great Recession (2007-2011) has laid the groundwork for the expanding gig-economy of today, given the backdrop of "the combined pressures of mass un- and underemployment, fiscal austerity policies, and rising inequality" (van Doorn, 2015, p. 900). The shrinking and increasingly precarious middle-class workforce has consequently welcomed this new form of labor, even as their "only asset available is embodied as labor power." Others have commented on how such a view is a too narrow explanation of these companies' success, and van Doorn (2015) argues that this economy's rise must be analyzed in relation to an era of 'rollback neoliberalism', the beginnings of which he dates back to 1979 (as I also explored as the shift from Fordism and post-Fordism in chapter one). As the labor market changed, temporary staffing agencies have become increasingly important actors in the economy of the West (Standing, 2016, p. 38; Kalleberg, 2009, p. 7). Van Doorn consequently argues that platform labor and the on-demand economy must be understood in relation to the growth of flexible labor and temporary staffing agencies. The next two interlocutors I will discuss, Barry and Adrian, both worked in temporary staffing agencies with mixed experiences, with both aspiring to take part in the gig-economy.

Barry and the aspirations of a temporary worker

Walking through my local neighbourhood during my early fieldwork days, I noticed several promotional posters for DoorDash, an on-demand food delivery service, displayed in the windows of fast-food restaurants. As mentioned in chapter one, Barry wanted us to cooperate and begin driving for Uber and DoorDash together. He tells me excitedly, one evening while living in Mayville Street, how his friend had made a decent amount of money driving for the former mentioned company when working through the night. Through DoorDash, customers can get restaurant food brought to their front door. Consequently, Barry hoped this could be another source of income lifting him out of his precarious situation.

It's like a roller coaster ride living with Barry, as he has new ideas and plans for making a living every day. Our Airbnb-host Zinan told him he could drive for Uber using his car and they tried to set up this arrangement. Walking home from downtown with Barry on another occasion, he tells me in a frustrated tone, "I just want to settle down and get my shit together." He's tired of moving from town to town and from state to state for work, but also feels torn between making a life in Dayton or moving back to his family in Alabama. According to Barry, he is not restricted by his probation officer to staying in Ohio. Walking on, his face darkens, and he tells me how you cannot trust Arabs, referring to Zinan and their uncertain deal to cooperate around driving for Uber. He feels that Zinan wants to take advantage of him and trick him. In an even more angry and intense voice, he then says, "I might end up hurting that guy", "Fuck probation," and "I won't let anyone use me anymore." This is the most aggressive I had ever experienced Barry until that point. The deal between him and Zinan never materialized while I lived in Mayville Street, even though Barry had high hopes that he would take part in the gig-economy. He told me he was done taking orders – from his probation officer, the management at Fuyao, as he said they treated him as a slave, or anyone else, for that matter. Consequently, he strived to become a micro-entrepreneur, where he could be his own boss.

In the wake of losing his manufacturing-job, as described in chapter two, Barry had to look into the service sector for opportunities. Linda McDowell (2003) points out how young working-class men in the West, instead of taking part in industrial work (as was the case for many in their parental generation), often participate in more 'feminized' work in a growing service sector. Here, the norm is "poorly-paid casualized and temporary positions under a wide range of contractual arrangements" (McDowell, 2003, p. 828). For Barry, working in the service sector was his last resort.

In sum, Barry's social and economic state of precarity often led to visible anger and anxiety, which are prevalent conditions connected to 'the precariat'. Barry was far from his home state and had trouble finding employment to meet the necessities of life. He came to Dayton to work at Fuyao, but as many others, he ended quitting work due to the working conditions which he found to be too rough. Obviously, his experience of precarity has to be seen in relation to him also being on parole, black, and having a working-class background. He told me in an excited manner one day that he would manage to get a job that would earn him 18 dollars an hour, but later found out that they would "check everything", as he framed it. Consequently, his felony would stop him from attaining employment. This situation can be further highlighted by Saskia Sassen's (2014) exploration of predatory "formations" and inequality as a kind of expulsion. She notes how, "in the United States alone, an additional 5 million people are currently on probation or parole, which means they are effectively second-class citizens, not easily hired for a job or able to get housing" (2014, p. 64). Even if existing in a precarious condition, Barry told, "I don't let nothing keep me down".

Adrian and his recipe for success

"I would like to have more than one source of income. Like three or more sources. Then I would like to start investing and making extra money." Adrian, a 23-year-old African American, told me this when I interviewed him about his experiences of work and the urban existence in Dayton. Adrian grew up in West Dayton with his mother and two siblings and was a friend of Calvin's. Adrian, just like Barry, had a job working in a factory through a temporary agency. He's already had five different paying jobs through his work-life. When we talk in April, he's been working eight months at a company that manufactures and markets home appliances under different brands. It's his best paying job yet with 12,50 dollars an hour.[16] He tells me he enjoys the work and gives the following reason, "I'm busy, I'm working and time flies by." He would like to become a full-time employer there. Adrian has an adventurous spirit and wants to see the world. To be able to achieve his goal of traveling and visiting different countries – something few of his family and friends have experienced – he needs more income. Securing several forms of income was his recipe for success. While living in Dayton, I often saw advertisements that promised several sources of income on YouTube. The headlines were similar to one Forbes website-article I came across: "5 ways to generate different sources of income", where the article's author Jeff Rose (2017) explains as follows:

> Simply put, more income streams equals more security. It's hard to rely on a 9-5 job for your entire livelihood with layoffs and pay cuts always right around the corner. With multiple streams of income, on the other hand, you can avoid putting all your eggs in one basket – and use several streams to of cash to grow rich.

Rose's examples of income streams are investing in stocks, offering a service or sell something (such as starting a home-based business or in the direct selling industry, creating a product) or writing a book about that special thing you are good at, and finally, investing in real estate. Multiple of my interlocutors either already engaged in one or more of these activities, or aspired to do so, like Adrian. As it was difficult obtaining promotions at his workplace, partly due to working through a temporary agency where he was sent from job to job, having access to several sources of income represented itself as the best option for achieving upwards mobility. During the months I knew Adrian, he worked on saving up for a car and prepared to take the theoretical part of the driver's test. When he finally got this vehicle, he wished to begin driving for Uber, consequently offering a service to sell.

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[16] Minimum wage was raised to $8, 55 per hour in the state of Ohio on Jan. 1. 2019 but is still too low according to Michael Shields, a researcher at the left-leaning think-tank Policy Matters Ohio, as many minimum wage workers still struggle to meet daily living expenses (Tucker, 2018).

The recipe involving multiple streams of income stands in opposition to the Fordist "proper job" where one only needed a single job to meet the necessities of life and achieve upward social mobility. In this new landscape of labour however, the multi-stream option is presented as the way to achieve economic security and "grow rich". Ara Wilson (2004), in her exploration of the making of Thai Entrepreneurs, use the term "economic bricolage" to address how Thai women engage in "direct sales" as Amway distributers to obtain supplemental income. Amway is short for "American Way" and is a multi-level marketing company where individuals, working as distributors sell "cosmetics, coffee, household products, and so forth, using catalogues to take orders from, and later deliver to, their own local network of buyers…" (2004, p. 164). Wilson writes, that the Amway sellers embody an ideal of self-help, which "is rapidly becoming hegemonic under global restructuring" (p. 183), and how the self-help model contains the following: "the idea that people as individuals (…) carve out solutions to economic conditions that are nationwide" (p. 187). Adrian, like Wilson's Amway distributors as well, tried to carve out solutions relying only on himself, as can be illustrated by his answer when I asked him if he had any healthcare during our interview: "I have some. I rarely get sick though. I never worry about that because I know how to take care of myself." As healthcare is one of the benefits that is difficult to attain when working through temporary staffing agencies (Economist, 2016), Adrian is thus involved in a high-risk activity when working dangerous manufacturing jobs.

In a similar vein, my interlocutor Larry, a white man in his mid-thirties who I lived with for a while via Airbnb, was an avid supporter of self-help podcasts and books and saw huge opportunities in the gig-economy. He, as the Amway sellers too, embodied the entrepreneurial ethos and the ideal of self-help, that became clear when he discussed the new opportunities in the digital economy:

> You got to be responsible for your position in the world. We got google, we got YouTube, and we got search engines. If you're not a millionaire now, you don't know shit. There is every opportunity to make any business in the world, copy, emulate everything. […] Now, excuses are the most transparent. Excuses are the most laughable. Now that we got Google and YouTube - there are no limits. […] I think we exist in this explosion of opportunity.

Here, personal responsibility and a focus on self-training shines through in his opportunistic economic habitus. Furthermore, these ideals become even clearer when I ask Larry if he identified with his current job where he worked night-shifts at a warehouse, and if he considered himself to be working-class: "Not really. I am, in effect." Larry identifies with those who are "productive, thinking ahead, [and] make plans," i.e. embodying the entrepreneurial ethos, and respecting hard work – "they all have something to offer." His typical work-colleagues, he says, need to be labelled as "losers and failures." Larry, in contrast to Barry and Adrian, comes from an upper middle-class neighbourhood in the Dayton-area and has gone through private school and attained higher education. After completing his education in 2007, right on the brink of the Great Recession, he had difficulties getting employed, and experienced downward mobility. Having high amounts of student debt, Larry had to take what he could get, so he began working at Whole Foods – a grocery store for upper-class clientele. Now, inspired by self-help literature and podcasts, he hoped to make it in the housing market, fixing and renting out apartments.

In Barry, Adrian and Larry, we see a clear optimism displayed that involves aspirations towards upward mobility and a belief in the American Dream that entails achieving a better life, even if, as noted in chapter one, the actual structural possibilities that allow achieving an improvement of one's life circumstances are at a historically low. To further understand the entrepreneur and my interlocutors' 'optimistic mindsets in the face of precarity' I will next lean on Lauren Berlant (2011) and her term 'cruel optimism'. First, however, I will introduce my interlocutor Layla, with whom I lived with for one month through Airbnb.

The precarity of the gig-economy in the "Left-behind America"

"Dream", Layla's artwork spells. It is painted on a rectangular wooden canvas in large all-cap's letters, with white clouds in the background, and is placed on the lawn in front of her house, leaning in onto her front porch. It is early morning, cloudy, humid and hot. Layla arrives at the house in her black Chevy truck while I am reading a book outside, sitting on her porch, right above her "Dream" artwork. When I call her truck a car, as I have done a couple of times before, she corrects me by saying: "it's a god-damn truck!" And everybody who drives a truck is a redneck, she states further. She brakes and turns the truck around to back up into her driveway. My host yells "Good morning" through her rolled down car windows, raising her voice above the country music playing at full volume insider her vehicle. She comes around to the front of the house and walks up to the porch with light steps, joining me by sitting down in a chair and asking me how I have slept. I tell her it was a bit too hot. The previous night she told me, "I'm a Kentucky girl", and consequently she liked it hot, but she also tells me we can start to turn the air condition on. My Airbnb host, Layla, is around fifty years old and is wearing tight blue jeans, short cowboy boots and a pink sweater. She has her hair held in place with a hairband in a purple and thin fabric.

Layla's home is located in a neighbouring city of Dayton called West Carrolton, just south of Dayton and the Fuyao Glass America factory. This city is a blue-collar area, where many used to work at the old GM plant and frequently hail from the Kentucky mountains. When I arrived here one week earlier, I noticed some new information posted on the Airbnb-website about this home that I had not seen before. Under "facility limitations", I found the following: "I'm losing my home. Selling everything. You will be unplugged. If the bank tells me to get out, you have to leave also! Be aware. Lol!" Because of this information, I was quite anxious about moving in, but Layla was categorized as a "super host". That day on the porch, Layla brings with her a brown paper bag, a cup from McDonalds and a stack of paper and envelopes. From the paper bag she takes out a burger, opens it and asks if I want to eat the egg. "No thanks," I say, and she throws it over the hedge. She has just been to McDonalds and the local police station. Layla drives to McDonalds and sits in her truck while using their WIFI-internet, as her house is "unplugged". She got the stack of paper and envelopes at the police station, and tells me, "I'm at war with the police station. They won't come here when I call any longer." "I also got your money. Thanks," she says with a smile. At that moment, I am Layla's only source of income.

Layla, I believe, illustrates an extreme case of the precarity of some of the gig-economy's participants, and she exemplifies vulnerability, hopelessness, insecurity and *impasse* – a situation in which no progress is possible. In this context, Layla can be seen to have developed skills that allow her to "scramble for modes of living on" (Berlant, 2011, p. 8). In many ways, she exists "after the good life": Layla used to hold a well-paying job administrating a municipal welfare program, she used to be married to man with a union-job, she used to be close with her family who all live in the same neighbourhood, and she used to live what is commonly understood to be a descent middle-class life. Her existence is now very different. According to Layla, things took a turn for the worse when she became ill and needed a costly treatment. She could not work for one year, and during that time, her husband left her. She has not been able to get back to work ever since. It was from her sister, who lives in another state, that she learned about Airbnb. This would help her economically but was not enough to cover the monthly payments on her mortgage. As many Americans have earlier experienced during the housing crisis and economic recession of 2008, Layla is currently going through a foreclosure, which represents a brutal form of expulsion (Sassen, 2014, p. 48; see also Desmond, 2016): Two weeks into my stay at her place, she receives the official notice from the police and puts the piece of paper up on the refrigerator in the kitchen.

Layla talks warmly about her father, who is now sick and dying, stressing how they were very close once. Her relationship with her mother, on the other hand, is different: following a series of escalating incidents, her mother has filed a restraining order against her. Layla is not allowed to come near her father or mother any longer. She violated this order a week before I moved in and spent four days in jail. Layla has two kids who now are both grown men – one is in jail for a robbery and one is living off the selling and trading of video-games and consoles on the internet. The second son comes by once a week to mow the lawn. Layla is very open about her life and I often find her sitting on her veranda in the mornings, reading the bible, sipping cold coffee, while smoking a cigarette. I join her, eating my oatmeal-breakfast and listen to her stories about family relations, the neighbourhood, and former Airbnb-guests.

Even in the face of her life's precarity, Layla is lively and optimistic most of the time. However, to cope with her situation she sometimes turned to drugs to sleep, relax or disconnect. Her plan for after the anticipated loss of her house is to get a job for a short while, get a new used car – one that doesn't use as much petrol as her truck – and travel around the US, while staying with those she has hosted and built relationships with through Airbnb. Existing in this post-Fordist form of precarity and having lost her footing amidst the shrinking American middle-class, Layla now tells me (as will be picked up again through another vignette at the end of this chapter): "I've stopped believing in the American dream a long time ago. Now I just believe in my own dream."

I claim, that the optimism present in Layla, Larry, Adrian and Barry can be understood as 'cruel', in the sense that they are all attachments to "good-life fantasies", of freedom beyond work (Layla), of the power of self-help narratives and endless possibilities in the new economy (Larry), and of aspirations to become an micro-entrepreneur despite structural constraints (Barry and Adrian). Next, I will explore the relational aspects of Airbnb further to question if the market mentality has begun to colonialize the private household. Can we speak of a further exploitation of people in vulnerable conditions, or does the gig economy in Dayton represent an opportunity to achieve greater economic security?

Airbnb as 'intimate economy'

> I got the whole fucking world in my house, sweetheart. Fucking one love. I'm taking care of people. I don't need no God damn [family name] family, I don't need no fucking [family name], I don't need the fucking Outlaws, I never did.

Layla, in an argument with a family friend, exclaims this, referring to her practice of hosting Airbnb. Both her family and several people in the neighbourhood accused Layla of not being responsible, since she rented out rooms to strangers. However, Layla in her precarious situation needed the income and enjoyed building relations with strangers. She goes as far as to say that she does not need her family, as she has people from the whole world in her house. In what is to follow, I will ask whether we can understand Airbnb as a form of 'intimate economy' and how this social and economic practice complicates the duality between the intimate private sphere and the public market?

McKinnon and Cannell (2013) note that "the separation of domestic (kinship) and public (political and economic) relations should not be presupposed…" (p. 13) in modern societies. Wilson (2004), following McKinnon and Cannell who advocates that the connection between domestic and public needs to be scrutinized through ethnographic inquiry and put in historic context, asks, "What is intimate about capitalist modernity?" (p. 8). By intimate, she understands "features of people's daily lives that have come to seem noneconomic, particularly social identities (e.g., woman) and relationships (e.g., kinship)" (Wilson, p. 11). I follow her definition here to illuminate how economic practices like "Airbnb-ing" are part of people's intimate lives, thus contradicting orthodox conceptions of the economy as separate from the private realm. In such orthodox understandings, social relations and structures are seen as a barrier to "true" economic development. Indeed, development theorists "required economic activity to be detached from noneconomic demands of family and friends…" (Granovetter, 1995, p. 128). In the case of Airbnb, and through Chesky's proclamation that the true meaning of Airbnb is connected to belonging, community and trust, the company is explicitly troubling the boundary between public and private. However, it begs the question if "commodified exchange is extending its reach into social life – into sexual, domestic, and romantic arenas – and expanding its role in defining public and personal identities" (Wilson, 2004, p. 9), then how are intimate social dimensions shaped by transnational capitalism in Dayton, Ohio?

During my fieldwork, as laid out in chapter two, I stayed at Airbnb-homes through the entirety of my fieldwork (except three weeks). Through experiencing everyday life with my hosts, I developed bonds within their domestic spaces, even if we began our relations as strangers.[17] The message of Airbnb can be understood as social and about a common humanity. Thus, they position themselves against "the unbounded and unknowable" market (Hann & Hart, 2011, p.

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[17] Janet Carsten (2004) points to the known bounds of the house and how it "brings together spatial representations, everyday living, meals, cooking, and the sharing of resources with the often intimate relations of those who inhabit this shared space" (p. 35).

169). Still, my ethnographic material illuminates how Airbnb complicates this meeting between the intimate and public. For Larry, Layla, and Calvin (see chapter four and five) Airbnb provided them with a viable economic opportunity and another source of income. Through this activity – a market-based service – we developed relations, even fostering a common humanity. However, I also experienced how my presence added pressure to their already hectic lives, since they had to make an extra effort to make sure their Airbnb-guest had what he or she needed. The labour done here involved flexible skills, and was characterized by communication and affect, and stands as an extension of immaterial labour done in the informational economy (Hardt, 1999). As my interlocutors pointed out, one relies on guest's positive evaluation to be a successful host. Therefore, these Airbnb-hosts lives with a fear of receiving negative reviews, which again illustrates how 'commodified exchange is extending its reach into social life'. In sum, with Airbnb, your home is your newest economic asset, and being successful further relies on how you utilize your 'intimate skills' within the terrain of your home.

Post-Fordist affect and the fabled flapping of wings.

Let me return to the question I posed in chapter one here, where I ask: how do people cope with the realization that "upward mobility, job security, and political and social equality" are increasingly becoming worn out? Arguably, the election of president Trump can provide us with some answers here. Berlant wrote on her blog in September of 2012 under the heading "The Trumping of politics":

> Many of you would say that Donald Trump…has no traction as a political candidate, and is generally viewed as a clown whose spewing occasionally hits in the vicinity of an opinion that a reasonable person could defend. But I am here to tell you that he…is dominating the airwaves during this election season. He has done this the way the fabled butterfly does it, as its wing-flapping sets off revolutions (Berlant, 2012)

When I arrived in Dayton, Trump had been in office for approximately one year. In this post-Fordist landscape (see chapter three and four), Trump made sense as a political figure, as he promised to "fix the economy" in this "left-behind America". Layla did not vote for Trump but would do so now, if she had the chance. She further tells me that she talked to a friend about how Trump has been given to the American people by God. Layla has recently "found God again" and she believed the following: "He's [Trump] sent from God. I think he's a catalyst for love". I asked her, "Wouldn't you think that he rather is a catalyst for hate?", making a reference to "his hostile rants against migrants, Mexicans, Muslims, women, the disabled and other politicians, and open advocacy for torture" (Standing, 2016, p. xiii). She tells me that Trump brings chaos for a while, but afterwards it will be quiet again. After a pause, she added: "People really want some change around here and he's doing a lot of things right, like cleaning up and firing all these politicians".

Neither Barry nor Adrian voted for Trump or cared for him as president. Adrian tells me he disliked how disrespectful Trump was, even though he saw him as an able businessman: "Businesswise, he's really good. But you can't run a country like a business". Thus, he feared that Trump seemed to turn America against other countries. Larry is an example of one of my interlocutors who did vote for Trump (all of whom happened to be white). He tells me that he thinks the president will be able to fix the economy and adds that Trump is "more about substance", compared to Obama who was all about "style". He follows up by telling me, "You know, Trump manages to talk with people. I think a lot of people around here felt ashamed that they wanted to vote for Trump. There weren't many people talking about him around the election here." However, the electoral area of Dayton voted in a slight favour of Trump. Larry further shares some of his sentiments on the existing political divide in America, when he tells me how the media and Hollywood-movie-stars tell young people what to vote and how to live, while themselves residing in Los Angeles or in Manhattan, New York. "But not everyone can live in Manhattan", he tells me, "some of us live in Dayton as well". Much has been made of the rural and urban divide as a factor the election of Trump, but less has been written about the divide between the old and new economy, as noted in chapter one (Chinni & Shivaram 2018). In this "Left-behind America", among industrial ruins and crumbling infrastructure and in the middle of the devastating opioid epidemic, the liberal advocacy of celebrities and of the mainstream media located in prosperous American cities does not count for much among my interlocutors. As they were striving for upward mobility – an achievement that was still possible for their parents' generation through manufacturing work, Trump's proclamations to "make America great again" seemed to fall on fertile grounds with some of them.

Guy Standing's (2016) 'precariat' fits well with the social realities I have found among my interlocutors. The labour they engaged in was instrumental, opportunistic and precarious – as is the defining characteristic for the precariat's relation to work. Standing's understanding of 'thin democracy' (Standing, 2016, 172) in which people are disengaged from politics, also resonates well here, and can be exemplified by Barry who told me when I asked him if he votes: "Nah, I don't vote. They will put anyone in there. It ain't hard [to be president]". This kind of disengagement, or even disillusionment, with politics is what Standing warns of as the most likely outcome of a growing mass of people who are "in situations that can only be described as alienated, anomic, anxious and prone to anger" (2016, p. 28). The lack of work-place solidarity can further lead to different forms of solidarity to emerge that do not necessarily involve class. And indeed, populist politicians have picked up on how "a group that sees no future of security or identity will feel fear and frustration that could lead to it lashing out at identifiable or imagined causes of its lot" (Standing, 2016, p. 28). One of the men from the boxing gym points to this aspect of Trump's popularity among some: "Trump is community for those people. He makes Americans hate everybody else".

Larry supports Trump's politics of strengthening border control and also expresses a fear of loss of identity, when he tells me how kids in the American school system learn that white people will one day become a minority in the nation. "You get kinda depressed from hearing that", he tells me. "This is about your identity", he elaborates. He notes that white Americans should start to think of each other as a minority and as a tribe[18] to be able to strengthen solidarity among each other in this perceived future as a racial minority in the U.S. In order to strengthen his claim about tribalism, Larry tells me, "You know, they have spent trillions of dollars on fighting inequality between races over the decades, but nothing has changed."

My interlocutors shared the experience of precarity. However, they did not all support Trump. My ethnography in this regard very much supports Standing's (2016, p. 28) theory when he says that: "The precariat is not a class-for-itself, partly because it is at war with itself. One group in it may blame another for its vulnerability and indignity". Consequently, "tensions within the precariat are setting people against each other, preventing them from recognising that the social and economic structure is producing their common set of vulnerabilities" (Standing, 2016, pp. 28-29).

Platform labour, race, and class in the post-Fordist infrastructure

How can we understand the precarity of the gig-economy? Who belongs in this economy? In this final section, I will scrutinize this phenomenon as both labour and as private infrastructure. Firstly, gig-economy companies, following van Doorn (2017), should be understood as labour intermediaries. The emphasis on self-employment and "flexibility" that these companies promote fits well with the existing cultural model of the American entrepreneur and the neoliberal subject. The gig-economy presents an economic opportunity to my interlocutors, as a way to get another stream of income and attain security in this post-Fordist landscape of labour, which, in the end, proved to be more attainable to some than others. Both Barry and Adrian are men of colour with limited financial means. Even if they both aspired to take part in this economy, it only ever materialized in the form of hopes for them, as they experienced many obstacles meeting the requirements necessary to become a platform labourer.

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[18] See Packer (2018) article for more on "…Tribalism in the age of Trump"

Under Fordism, unionized factory work represented a viable route towards upward mobility into the middle-class. These "proper jobs" are now fewer in numbers and consequently harder to obtain in a market that has shifted towards temporary employment contracts to meet the increased demands for a flexible workforce. In this post-Fordist landscape of labour, "Workers are asked to behave nimbly, to be open to change on short notice, to take risk continually, to become ever less dependent on regulations and formal procedures" (Sennett, 1998, p. 9). These processes are of course nothing new, and following van Doorn (2017), I will argue that the gig economy to some degree is just another form of flexible and exploitative labour. Van Doorn (2017) argues that even if on-demand platforms like Alfred, Handy, and Managed by Q – all companies that sell the services such as running errands, or cleaning homes and offices – brand themselves "as a post-racial and gender-neutral opportunity that combines good pay with a flexible schedule" (p. 907), they are in fact a mode of subordination where racial and gender inequalities are encoded into the software infrastructure (Kaplan, 2018). Van Doorn (2017) concludes:

> Cloaked in the language of market efficiency and technological solutionism, the on-demand model nevertheless conjures an all-too-familiar colonial imaginary of pliable servants who can be, in Haraway's words, 'disassembled, reassembled, exploited as a reserve labor force' that is thoroughly surveilled and mined for value (p. 907).

Even being exploited by Airbnb and Uber requires entry-level resources, such as having access to the private property of a house, an apartment, or a car. These were all assets Adrian and Barry did not have. Brady, the former unionized manufacturing worker who was laid off, with his background in the white middle-class and having previously had a "proper job," had the resources to drive for Uber, as he tried to hold on to his class-status and the "good life". The same goes for Larry, Calvin, and Layla, even if they experienced different levels of success with their endeavours.

Secondly, how can we understand Airbnb as a private infrastructure? We have already explored public infrastructure and mobility in Dayton through the examples of highways, roads, buses, trains and cars. However, following Brian Larkin (2013) we can also look at Airbnb as an infrastructure by exploring it as both a digital and physical network that "facilitate(s) the flow of…people…and allow for their exchange over space" (p. 328). As Larkin observers, infrastructures "comprise the architecture of circulation, literally providing the undergirding of modern societies, and they generate the ambient environment of everyday life" (p. 328). Airbnb, too, can be seen as an infrastructure that facilitates the flow of people and that generates the ambient environment of everyday life, both for hosts, guests and the local neighbourhood. Susan Leigh Star (1999) writes the following on how people commonly view infrastructure: "As a system of substrates – railroad lines, pipes and plumbing, electrical power plants, and wires. It is by definition invisible. Part of the background for other kinds of work" (p. 380). Can we understand Airbnb as part of 'the background' for a more relational and 'intimate' work, where the intimate private sphere of the home is now part of the public market sphere? And where this work, following Van Doorn (2015), is a mode of subordination of the platform labourer, which can be taken for granted or become invisible. As noted in chapter one, Anand et. al. (2018, p. 2) show how infrastructure is a terrain of power and dispute through asking "What will be public goods and what will be private commodities, and for whom?" Consequently, Airbnb and Uber as privatized infrastructure of housing and mobility is unequally shared, based on class and race background. It stands in danger of becoming invisible work and exacerbate urban inequality in the post-Fordist city

If Airbnb is an infrastructure, then who can belong to it? After all, Airbnb has a vision of promoting belonging, trust and community for everyone. My interlocutors, and others (Packer, 2018), have argued that America feels more divided than ever before in their lifetime. The phenomenon of president Trump is one facet of this, and the Black Lives Matter-movement is another; and taken together with the emergence of discussions around political and social tribalism, these are all political processes that occur under the new geography of capitalism where we witness an on-going sharp growth in inequality (Sassen, 2014, p. 25). In this landscape of increased political polarization, can gig-economy companies actually promote belonging, trust, and community, as well as economic gain, as they claim to?

Existing beyond Fordism, and beyond the American "good life", Layla planned on utilizing Airbnb as an infrastructure for housing in the aftermath of losing her home. In this landscape, in wake of the American Dream and with the insight of the Zambian miner who summed up on increasingly shared condition of precarity globally, with "we are on our own", Trump as a catalyst for change made sense. Fennell (2015a) notes on infrastructure, "we can also understand it as a thing that facilitates other projects, a thing that expands flows, standardizes distributions, and extends political rationalities". Existing amidst crumbling public infrastructure, where the private infrastructure provided by the gig-economy is on the rise, where one utilize one's intimate skills and private assets to achieve success, the strain of this intimate, flexible and precarious labour can lead to and extend political rationalities, which Standing (2016) might label dangerous for a 'thin' disengaged democracy. To end this chapter, and inspired by Stewart (1996) who urges anthropologists to make their readers "imagine", let me share a final story:

* * *

I'm sitting in the living room eating, at Layla's spot in the couch – as this is the only position where you can see the television. There is a sitcom on about the relationship between a mother and her daughter. I put down my plate on a coffee-table after clearing some space. The coffee-table is littered with things, such as stacks of papers, two mobile phones, one half-empty coffee cop, and more. When I try to stretch out my legs I'm stopped by more stacks of paperwork, organized in plastic envelopes placed on the floor. The clock shows that it is around 10 pm when Layla comes down the stairs. She's cut her hair short using a hair clipper. "Hey. How was your day?" she asks me, and I return the question after letting her know that it's been good. She answers that she slept all day, for eight hours in total, which is a long stretch for her standards. Layla used two sleeping pills to knock herself out. After heading to the bathroom, she yells in my direction, "I look like shit!" I'm not sure what to say and remain silent. I get my computer to write some fieldnotes down while enjoying a comfortable position in the second couch, leaving her spot in the other couch available for her return.

I tell her about the experiences of the Fuyao workers that I had come across in a YouTube-video discussion (as discussed in the previous chapter), and how they experienced the drastic fall in wages when the old GM-factory closed. She thinks it's awful and mentions her similar experiences of losing her sound footing within the middle-class. When she was still married, her husband had a good union-job as a pipe-fitter, and she worked in the municipal welfare-system herself. She tells me, "Even if you are middle class you can't put your kids to college with 50,000 a year. It's crazy." The U.S. should have free higher education and a healthcare system for everyone, she says. "I'm not a feminist", she tells me now, and says that she never wanted to be part of the employment market. "I wanted to be home taking care of the kids." Layla longed for living the 1950s lifestyle, being a fulltime housewife, taking care of the house and kids. She thinks that a lot of American families were ruined by both the father and mother working. The women are overworked, as they have to work both in and outside of the house, and consequently the kids are neglected. "But that doesn't really work anymore," I say, "Both the man and the woman have to work to support a family today." I illustrate this point by casting myself as married, working at Fuyao, and "I have one car, or maybe we have to have two cars…" Layla interrupts me and says: "You don't", with a smile. Referring to how I don't *need* two cars, or all those things. "That's the American Dream that has been shoved down our throats. That is something they have made you believe." Referring back to her two sons again, and her inability to provide them with proper education, she ends up saying: "We are like the greatest country of the world, or whatever. But we are not…we are really not." She sighs and gaze out into her chaotic living room, where her life lies scattered in different cardboard boxes, stacked on top of each other and against a brick wall that is about to be taken down once she will have been evicted. She turns to me again and says with one of her charming smiles, "I got to take my 'pill' now. I'm getting too serious!"

Concluding remarks:

In this thesis, I have followed Ferguson and Li's (2018, p. 18) insistence for a "political-economic analysis of life beyond the 'proper job' that is both global and differentiated". The emergent realities I have scrutinized here, "give empirical answers to" life beyond the "proper job" in conjuncture with "specific historical and cultural trajectories" (Ferguson and Li, 2018, p. 9). By employing 'precarity' as an analytical tool, I have explored both material, social and affective outcomes of the precarity of physical mobility, factory work and the gig-economy and how these are intertwined. By scrutinizing these various precarities, I have asked: What are contributive factors to precarity in the context of a new landscape of labour in the U.S. and how does it influence the urban existence of local people in Dayton, Ohio?

Through my urban ethnography in the greater metropolitan area of Dayton and through fieldwork at a boxing gym downtown, at a church in West Dayton, and through living with local people via Airbnb, I was able to do participant observation and get an insight into the widespread forms of precarity present in Dayton. As a researcher I learned about the difficulties that can occur when we engage and intervene in other people's lives – who in my case often happened to be with less social, economic and material resources than myself. I also learned that race has to be centrally included when researching urbanity in the United States, given how much this country is an increasingly unequal socioeconomic and politically polarized landscape these days. Through my incident with Barry I reflected on my own emotions as a researcher, and the issue of extraction and race, in relation to the production of ethnographic material.

The precarity experienced by my interlocutors was vitally connected to the possibilities for physical mobility and the lack of public infrastructure. I have highlighted, following recent trends in anthropology, the importance of paying attention to one's material surroundings in order to shed light on urban experiences in contemporary America. In Dayton, as in many other midwestern American cities, the railroads provided the infrastructure for The Great Migration following the emancipation of African Americans in the Southern states. Migrants were pulled to Dayton by the opportunity of industrial work. In contrast, when I travelled to Dayton, railways had long been replaced by highways, and passenger trains replaced by the Greyhound bus company. I have explored how General Motors played a significant role in both eroding passenger train travel and public city transportation in favour of the emerging private car-culture. Following local historian Walsh (2018), I have connected the ghost-like inner-city of Dayton I experienced to urban renewal processes and the building of highways dividing previously thriving neighbourhoods. I have drawn on Harvey and Knox (2015) to shed light on how the current opioid epidemic's presence in Dayton is connected to major highways. To illustrate the precarity of mobility and immobility further, I have also reflected on my own experiences traveling with Greyhound to Dayton, moving around the urban environment alone or with Barry, and contemplated the fact that my boxing gym was now located in the old Greyhound bus-hub.

Building on the focus on crumbling public infrastructure, I then turned to exploring the industrial ruin of Moraine assembly and the conflicted progressive modernity at play in this industrial landscape. By scrutinizing the case of Moraine assembly, we get a glimpse into both Dayton's and and broader national and international economic market changes. From being "the birthplace of aviation" and a "city of 1000 factories", Dayton eventually became the quintessential Rust Belt town, when GM left moraine in 2009. However, some aspects of the industrial story of Dayton continue: the Chinese company Fuyao Glass America Inc. set up shop in the shell of the abandoned GM-factory back in 2014, pointing to Adam Smith's vision of the renaissance of the East (Arrighi, 2008, p. 8). This is just one case among many that indicate an increased amount of Chinese investments in America. I further argued that the role of labour within this changing geography of capitalism should be analysed in relation to an ongoing push towards flexibility at the expense of security. I explored this by looking at the case of a fatal accident at Fuyao, the question of unionizing at this facility, and through introducing my interlocutor Calvin, which allowed me to scrutinize the question of "cultural frictions".

Lastly, I analysed precarity within the gig-economy and the hope and failure of the new American entrepreneur that is being sold here. I discussed how we should understand this particular form of labour, and following van Doorn (2017), I claimed that the platform economy is best viewed as a labour intermediary. In the gig-economy, the individual partaking in this economy does not work directly for the company, but is rather a micro-entrepreneur who carries all the responsibility of their circumstances on their own shoulders. Here, I described how my interlocutors aspired to or took part in the gig-economy and used it as a supplemental income-stream. I argued that some of my interlocutors' hope to take part in this economy can be illuminated via the concept of 'cruel optimism', in the sense that this desire may become "an obstacle to [their] own flourishing" (Berlant, 2011, p. 1), due to my informants' limited financial means.

With this thesis I have contributed to our understanding of precarity in the global North by: (1) scrutinizing the role of infrastructure in affecting urban existence and inequality, (2) by exploring the presence of a Chinese factory, it's dangerous and stressful working conditions, and the perceived low chance that some Americans have when it comes to achieving promotions in competition with Mandarin-speakers, (3) by analysing the phenomenon of the gig-economy, which blurs the boundaries between the 'intimate' private and the public market, and (4), by exploring the American entrepreneur as an neoliberal subject at the intersection between the old and new economy in Dayton, Ohio. Hence, I have argued that the existing culture of entrepreneurship, and the 'cruel optimism' that accompanies it, renders my interlocutors anxiety bearable when faced with precarity.

In conclusion, I also want to reflect briefly again on Guy Standing's 'precariat' and the political consequences that widespread conditions of precarity may bring with them. Kalleberg (2009, p. 17) pointed to the danger that prevalent precarious working conditions entail, when writing: "There is always the danger that Americans will not reach a 'boiling point' but will treat the present era of precarity as an aberration, rather than a structural reality…". Since Kalleberg's (2009) statement, Donald Trump has won the American presidential election and now sits in the oval office. He signals an abrupt change in the status quo of politics in the U.S. Throughout this thesis, I have only discussed this political phenomenon in passing. In chapter four, for instance, I noted that industrial ruins combined with democracy brought about President Donald Trump in this conflicted landscape of modernity. This insight, combined with the widespread condition of anxiety under precarity, points to Standing's (2016) notion of 'the precariat' as a politically dangerous category.

Lastly, I return now to one of my personal motivations for writing this thesis: Barry. I have asked: What led him to break my trust and steal my vehicle? Throughout this thesis, I have also touched upon aspects of Barry's condition of precarity, i.e. the absence of work, family, and social relations he could trust in. Even if Barry insisted: "I just try to keep out of trouble", his anxiety and anger became visible while living together with him. I now understand his comment, "I won't let anyone use me anymore", as pointing towards his self-understanding of being a "survivalist". Berlant comments on this kind of existence in her exploration of post-Fordist affect, drawing on David Harvey's *Spaces of Hope* (2000) and connecting it with two movies, *La Promesse* and *Rosetta*. Her words, when discussing what being part of the surplus labour and an illegal citizen might mean, resonate with how I understand Barry's situation of precarity as well: "All might as well be called survivalist, scavengers bargaining to maintain the paradox of entrepreneurial optimism against defeat by the capitalist destruction of life" (Berlant, 2011, p. 172). Barry's situation of precarity can further be highlighted as a condition marked by the increasingly widespread social phenomenon that Saskia Sassen has described as "expulsion" – "from life projects and livelihoods, from membership, from the social contract at the center of liberal democracy. It goes well beyond simply more inequality and more poverty" (Sassen, 2014, p. 29). This experience of expulsion might await many more Americans, if social, economic and political change does not come about. Consequently, precarity and expulsion, and its political and social outcomes, requires our attention, in the US as much as in the rest of the global North and South. Reflecting on "survivalist" strategies amidst growing "expulsion", and by studying precarity up close in relation to this thesis, I now feel I understand better why Barry stole my vehicle from me when the opportunity arose to do so.

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