Comeback Detroit

The return of whites and wealth to a Black city

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Abstract

Since the 1950s, the city of Detroit has declined in terms of demography and economic prosperity. Once among the wealthiest and largest cities of America, Detroit now continually ranks as one of nations poorest, Blackest and most abandoned urban areas.

 This dissertation studies urban change by focusing on the emergent reversal of the city's long-term decline, exploring the period of time when both whites and wealth were returning to the city. As this moment of return is closely aligned to local notions of "comeback" and that the city was "coming back", the thesis examines the reflections and contestations of the city's contemporary comeback and the relations of power that frame this process.

 The first part of the thesis examines how the city has changed in the past, and the ways in which this past has furnished particular understandings of the present. Racial and class struggles have defined the city's trajectory and these struggles have shaped a cosmology of division and separation, informing everyday life and mundane relations, while being mirrored and expressed through the material city. In the second part, the thesis concentrates on the temporal, spatial and demographic dimensions of comeback and the emergence of a "New Detroit"; a city that is whiter and wealthier than before. By examining the subjects said to be returning, and how both the city's spaces and futures are molded around them, the study inquiries into how comeback and a New Detroit is made to emerge. The third part of the thesis explores how Detroiters come to labor collectively, through ritualized events, with a city that is changing. It is in ritualized events that Detroiters come to experience diversity and community, integrating what is otherwise divided, while articulating both morality and legitimacy in relation the city's comeback.

Keywords: *Detroit, Comeback, Urban Change, Gentrification, Race.*

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For May, Anna and
Sickan

Acknowledgments

I am also deeply grateful to the people I lived with and now fondly remember as part of my Detroit "family". Every one of you inspired me and left me with new understandings. Hank, you taught me passion and loyalty. Aragorn, you taught me understanding and calm. Rebecca, you taught me that I am always capable of doing more. Juan, you taught me not to give up. Elena, you taught me about how important it was to speak up for myself. And Michael, thank you for picking me up when I was down.

In a broader sense, I am also sincerely indebted to countless Detroiters who shared their city with me, along with their perspectives on it. To the down-and-out men in Capitol Park, to wealthy investors from northern suburbs, to the activists, poets, old-school revolutionaries, urban farmers, cyclists, librarians, bartenders, hackers, builders, planners, preachers, teachers and just about every other beautifully unique person who crossed my path: I salute you all. I must admit that when I first arrived in your great city, I often dreamt of the streets and spaces I had left behind in Stockholm. Now, years later, while walking through those streets I missed at first, I am instead dreaming of Detroit and of the spaces and lives I once shared there. In the words of the late Detroit poet David Blair, from his poem *Detroit: While I was away*: "Detroit, I love you. From your basketball sun that hangs in the sky, then falls only to bounce back up again tomorrow. Down to your alligator shoes. I'll kiss you on the river. Meet you in the middle of a suitcase and wonder: do you ever think of me this way? Do you even know I've gone?"

I have had two supervisors over the course of this thesis, Johan Lindqvist and Mark Graham. To my great frustration, they have critiqued and questioned virtually all aspects of my work. Your tireless efforts to sharpen the point of my pen have resulted in a text that is much clearer, more succinct and better

organized than anything I could have achieved on my own. Through your guidance, I have realized that there is no perfect text, because there are no perfect readers. Every reader has things they notice and fail to notice, things that they like or dislike. In the end, as writers, our end result has to be imperfection if we are ever to finish at all. I will cherish that lesson throughout my writing life.

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I have other friends too, who are not anthropologists or scholars, and the good thing about them is that they do not care about this thesis. The all-consuming nature of writing a text like this would have been worse if I had not known that what it says and does matter very little to those who matter a great deal to me. I cannot name you all, but thank you for not caring. Additionally, I must also give thanks to my dog Sickan McTicklebutt: although you are illiterate and have bad breath, you have an incredibly firm grasp of what matters in life, and you have taught me a great deal about it.

Then there are those who do care a lot, and who – although they do not understand the work – nonetheless understand the dreams and frustrations that go into it. For support, I can always turn to my father, mother and sister. Thank you for never wavering in your belief that I would one day see this thing through.

And then there is my wife, May, whom I often call "my heart". You were with me for 5 months in Detroit, sharing many of the things this thesis explores. You know how difficult it is to explain our experiences of Detroit, their significance and meaning, to those who have never been there. Being able to share my thoughts with you has been invaluable, and you often offer the best

critique. I still remember your response one evening. I do not remember what I had been talking about – Detroit, no doubt – to which you responded, "So basically, anthropology is about saying something very simple and obvious, but in a really complicated way?". You keep my feet grounded. I bow to your wisdom, dear May. None of this would have been possible without you.

Gubbängen, March 2022
Simon Johansson

Introduction

It's the same old soup, just reheated.

Caitlyn, "lifelong" Black Detroiter

You've come at an exciting time. The city is coming back to life!

James, "lifelong" white Detroiter

The story of Detroit's comeback is the story of how a poor, Black city has become whiter and wealthier in a relatively short period of time. It is a story that raises questions and concerns. What happens when whites with wealth begin to migrate into a poor, Black American city? How are these processes understood by those who live there, and by those who move into it? How do whites navigate between being gentrifiers, or something worse, and "good" whites in a Black city? How are the city's spaces, and its imagined futures, developed to accommodate and anticipate this process? How do people labor, collectively with such large-scale urban transformations?

These are questions that I[1] have asked during my work on this thesis. They are big questions, but their empirical answers are often small, multifaceted and contradictory, fragments scattered throughout the many scenes and situations encountered in a city, waiting to be connected. From my perspective, it could be no other way because cities are large and complex enough to encompass many diverging and parallel lines of development at once. It is the multitudes who dwell in cities who make them both interesting and challenging to contemplate.

This is exemplified in my walks with Peter, a white man in his late thirties. On our first walk, he took me on a tour around the new places that had

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[1] I am a white, heterosexual male in my mid-thirties who grew up in Stockholm, Sweden, in a middle-class environment. I spent 10 months undertaking fieldwork in Detroit, divided into three visits from 2014 to 2016. More on my position and methods can be found on pages 34 to 39.

sprung up recently. He showed me a café serving pour-over coffee, a 100% organic fried chicken place, an Asian-Mexican "fusion" restaurant and finally a brewpub clad in "reclaimed wood", which served pints of local artisanal Detroit lager. As we walked back to where he lived, Peter talked about the changes he had seen in the city, relaying both enthusiasm and amazement at how quickly they had been taking place.

Peter had moved to his neighborhood in 2010, "escaping", as he put it, the monotony, bigotry and racism of his suburban upbringing. He remembered being frequently stared at in 2010. Locals turned their heads and gazed at him as he walked down the street. Being a white person in his mid-thirties had made him into a walking novelty, a sight that had generated curiosity and suspicion. Most of his street had consisted of elderly Black households who had been there since at least the 1980s. By 2014, Peter had to walk further north to find the same kind of reaction. Whites in their mid-thirties were no longer an exceptional sight in his neighborhood, and in only a few years, his street had transformed. Elderly Black residents had been selling their properties and moving to the suburbs, while younger, whiter people were buying these same properties, often moving in from the suburbs.

Anne, who lived a few houses away from Peter, once called this the "old switcheroo". She was a Black woman who had lived in the area long enough to remember how the pendulum of change could swing back and forth. Four to five decades earlier, that same neighborhood had been dominated by middle-class whites. Most had sold their houses to Black Detroiters and moved to the suburbs, trying to escape the city with its racial conflicts and tensions.

To Anne, whites and Blacks were once again trading places within the urban region. Whites were now "returning" from the suburbs, as she put it, and it was their wealth that was pushing up real estate prices, meaning that Blacks who sold their properties could now afford to move out of the city. The wealth of these white "newcomers", as they were often called, was breathing and circulating through the area's new consumption places, affecting the state of public utilities that were now, after decades of neglect, undergoing renovation. The altered flow of whites and wealth was leading to large-scale changes, such as the construction of a new streetcar system, and to smaller, more humdrum shifts, such as the extension of bike lanes, which Anne once called "white lanes", across the city's gridded streets.

While Peter and Anne entered into this process of change from different and contradictory positions, they nonetheless shared certain words in articulating the changes and imbuing the process with a variety of meanings.

This was the Detroit vernacular of "comeback"[2], which propagated the idea that wealth, development and whites were now "returning" to Detroit[3], for better or worse. Simultaneously, "return" served to index the city's comeback at the level of experience. In the areas to the south of where I lived, toward "Midtown"[4] and Downtown, the concentration of whites, wealth and development enabled both Anne and Peter to speak of a "New Detroit", one that was emerging and growing, even though they disagreed on whether this was a good thing or a bad thing. Some were looking forward to comeback, and saw it as heralding a period of integration and healing for the region. For others, comeback generated new scars, capable of opening up old wounds.

My own arrival coincided with the city's monumental bankruptcy. I arrived expecting a funeral, but found myself in the midst of a baptism. The "talk of the town" was not the bankruptcy, although this was discussed too, but that Detroit was changing and that a New Detroit was emerging. Peter and Anne showed me that something much more unimaginable than bankruptcy was unfolding.

For the first time in 65 years, there had been an increase in the city's white population (Aguilar & Macdonald 2015). Simultaneously, there was an ever-growing development boom, concentrated in the central parts of the city where most of the new white residents were settling, representing corporate and non-profit investments of several billions of dollars (Aguilar 2016a).

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[2] I have had reasons to question my use of "comeback" in this thesis. The use of this term could be interpreted as legitimizing and reproducing the inequalities inherent in what it is describing. I understand this concern, but my belief is that the way this is interpreted should be based not on *which* words are used, but *how* they are used. Although the growth elites (Molotch 1976) of Detroit seek to commandeer and control the term, I do not consider it to belong to them. Furthermore, the claim, sometimes voiced by interlocutors, that comeback implies a false understanding because not every Detroiter shares equally in the consequent wealth, is both an understandable and an untenable position. If equality is to be the premise for this argument, then Detroit itself has never existed in reality. Even during its most historically prosperous decades, inequality was the norm. Comeback cannot be equal, as I understand it, because there is no equality to return to, and no utopia to "come back" to. In order to examine the city's comeback critically, I see no alternative but to engage critically with the term.

[3] Even though most of the whites who were said to be "returning" had never lived in Detroit before.

[4] This thesis discusses a number of contentious words, which include comeback, Midtown, New Detroit and return. One way of approaching this is to use scare quotes to signal a distance between the words and myself as a writer. However, since there are many of these words in the text, and because I also use quotation marks to highlight concepts and official names, any prolific use of scare quotes makes the text less readable. Therefore, a scare quote is used to introduce a contentious word, but not otherwise.

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In contrast to the fiscal collapse of the municipality, which many seemed to have been expecting, the return of whites and wealth raised questions replete with social tensions and competing answers about what Detroit was, what it would become, and for whom the future was unfolding. This comeback of Detroit simultaneously represented endings and new beginnings (Zukin 2010), emerging as a moment of liminality where the social forces at play evoked both wonder and dread (Berman 2010).

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This thesis chronicles a contemporary moment in Detroit's history when whites and wealth were said to be coming back. Essentially, this is a thesis about urban change in Detroit. Through ethnographic case studies, it seeks to engage and triangulate the reflections and contestations intrinsic in the return of whites and wealth to Detroit, as well the relations of power that frame the city's comeback more broadly.

Comeback is an emergent phenomenon. Although it contains elements of a past, it also represents something novel and unpredictable. As Maurer (2005: 4) reminds us, "the point of an emergence is that you do not know where it is going". A sense of comeback being "up in the air", so to speak, has informed several of my positions in this thesis. As I describe in more detail later, I have struggled to explain comeback entirely through concepts such as gentrification. It was equally difficult to incorporate a fully Marxist understanding of the production of space, or by concepts such as ritual, which either reinforces or inverts the social order. This does not mean that I am against these concepts or the people who use them. I am nevertheless wary of approaching a phenomenon which is "up in the air" through single analytical frameworks, especially those in which the end result tends to be known and given at the start. As an emergent phenomenon, it is too early to see how comeback will take shape. This makes it both premature and ill-advised to categorize it beforehand, even if this type of categorization is customary in writing a thesis.

Given the emergent qualities of comeback, it is clear that there are different possible approaches to it. This thesis focuses on the return of whites and wealth to Detroit. I chose this focus because whites with wealth are powerful actors in Detroit's comeback. They are, furthermore, often the "winners" in this process of change. It is likely that they will ultimately write the history of this moment, guiding understandings of what and why certain changes have taken place in Detroit, undoubtedly through means that will portray their part as favorable. To examine and chronicle this process as it was still unfolding, thus appeared worthwhile to me. Added to

this are methodological considerations. As a white newcomer myself, I could enter this field with a level of intimacy which would have been more difficult for someone with another background.

Through this focus, I wish to examine who the white newcomers are and how they are socially organized (chapter 4). I trace how their presence ultimately alters both urban space (chapter 5) and understandings of Detroit's future (chapter 6), while simultaneously generating public events that ritualize and condense certain aspects of comeback (chapter 7 and 8). This is framed through an engagement with Detroit's history (chapter 2), which structures both its present and future, and an understanding of its cosmology (chapter 3), which places a strong emphasis on the differences between city and suburb, whites and Blacks.

Studying comeback demands an eclectic approach, one that is capable of engaging with qualitatively different phenomena. One must be able to examine comeback in a piece of wood, in a collective bike ride, in the circulation of maps, or in the ways that white newcomers produce racial solidarity, to name but a few dimensions which will be addressed in the thesis. I argue that these qualitatively different phenomena are connected, and a large proportion of this thesis is devoted to bringing these connections to light, not as abstraction and theory, but as part of an empirically known reality.

Comeback is an emic concept used by inhabitants of the region to talk about contemporary changes and to imbue these changes with particular meanings. Its uses and meanings, however, vary between people and groups. My intention in using comeback is not to transform an emic category into an analytical concept to be used for separating parts of the phenomenon into more discrete boxes. In my view, the urban world, and Detroit in particular, is an ocean of fragments, whose lines of relation are difficult to see, and are sometimes intentionally obfuscated. What is needed is not neat separations, but the ability to bind disparate urban objects and phenomena together, drawing out their lines of relation and making it clear that while there are diverging aspects to Detroit's comeback, there are also structures and patterns. Thus comeback, in this thesis, is a tool for *synthesis*, not analysis. I use it for relating a myriad of small-scale empirical observations into a more cohesive understanding of how and why Detroit was changing due to the influx of whites and wealth at the beginning of this century.

Having outlined my ambitions for this thesis and my use of comeback, I realize that this says either a great deal or extraordinarily little, depending on how familiar the reader is with both Detroit and American urbanism more broadly. The contemporary comeback of Detroit is a process that has

emerged from multiple and parallel crises, while some of its most distinguishable aspects relate to processes of gentrification. In the following four sections, I contextualize my study of Detroit's comeback in relation to the kind of city Detroit is, paying attention to its ongoing crises and to the possibilities and limitations in figuring comeback through gentrification. Through these sections, it should become clearer why a study of Detroit's comeback could be relevant beyond the confines of this particular city.

Following this, I discuss how I have operationalized comeback through concepts that bring forth its experiential dimensions. This section provides the reader with conceptual tools for understanding how the city's comeback is made to exist, occur and be sensed. The return of whites and wealth is made manifest through the making of space and place, and through the work of particular affective experiences. It surfaces in ritualized events which condense and engender the phenomena for Detroiters. However, since notions of affect, ritualized events and the making of place and space have multiple, and sometimes obtuse academic meanings, I wish to convey how I perceive these terms and how I make use of them in this thesis. Thus, I discuss how comeback is conceptualized as affect, as ritualized events, and as space and place by detailing how I deploy these concepts to understand the subject matter[5].

I then outline the methods I used for the study, highlighting some of the implications I encountered during the process. These implications relate to my own racial and professional position as a white man in his thirties undertaking empirical research in Detroit. The final section of this introduction provides a chapter outline.

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[5] Some concepts which appear in the dissertation are not covered in this introduction. For instance, in analyzing one type of ritualized event I deploy the concept of "planned spontaneity" to discuss how esthetic elements are organized to afford experiences of spontaneity and authenticity (see pages 235-239). There are other instances, throughout the dissertation, where I have created a concept in order to convey something specific in my empirical material. When I deploy this type of case-specific concept, I explain it and put it to use. I am aware that convention requires each concept used in a dissertation to be neatly listed and explained in the introduction. However, I am also aware that conventions sometimes need to be broken. Listing the details of every tool in the toolbox, even if it is only used once to discuss something very particular, only adds confusion rather than clarity in some cases. It may be useful, instead, to consider it as follows. In the introduction, I discuss the overarching tools used to configure comeback in this thesis. I say, for example, "Here is a hammer, a drill and a saw". Then, as the thesis progresses, I discuss the different kinds of nail that can be used with the hammer to be effective on a specific material. I have considered it more effective to introduce these case-specific concepts immediately before they are used, in order to illuminate the material, rather than adding cumbersome details to an introduction which is already quite long.

America on steroids

In some respects, Detroit is a city like any other. It is full of people who work, play and commute, who fall in and out of love, who laugh and cry and who are generally busy with this strange experience called life. In other respects, Detroit is a more unique urban space. Within a generation, Detroit has gone "from 20th century boom town to poster child of post-industrial decline" (Draus et al. 2014: 2423). Both its economic and demographic rise and fall have been spectacular.

Three aspects make Detroit stand out among American cities.

First, Detroit is one of America's Black metropolises[6]. In no city of comparable size is the Black population so demographically dominant. If Detroit were a room with 10 people sitting in it, eight would be Black.

Second, Detroit continually ranks among the poorest of America's large cities. Going back to our imaginary room, about four out of 10 would be living *below* the poverty line (U.S. Census 2014).

Third, Detroit has abandonment on a scale that can be difficult to fathom. A common estimate of the area subject to abandonment sits at 40 square miles (Gallagher 2010; Pitera 2010). To put this into perspective, this is almost *twice* the size of the island of Manhattan, or close to the entire city of San Francisco. Over the past few decades, Detroit's population has decreased by almost two-thirds. Returning to our imaginary room, there would be two empty chairs for each one still occupied.

How these aspects came to be is a complicated subject, to be unpacked with care later in the thesis. For now, suffice it to say that during the postwar era, both wealth and people have left Detroit. From 1950 to 2005, the city lost "29 percent of its homes, 52 percent of its people, 55 percent of its jobs, and 60 percent of its property tax revenue" (Galster 2012: 238). Between 1972 and 2002, "the number of businesses in Detroit fell almost two-thirds, from 23,500 to 8,300" (ibid: 224). Meanwhile, between 1950 and 2011, the number of manufacturing jobs in the city fell from 296,000 to fewer than 27,000 (Green and Clothier 2013).

Imagine Detroit like a great lake which has been partially drained by canals, funneling people and wealth elsewhere. These canals have been operating for more than half a century and have turned Detroit into a smaller, Blacker and poorer city over time. Dilapidated gilded-age mansions, boarded up churches and hollowed out art-deco skyscrapers are the

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[6] There are, of course, other cities where Black residents make up a large proportion of the total population. Furthermore, there are areas within large cities that are overwhelmingly Black, such as the South Side of Chicago, examined in the groundbreaking work *Black Metropolis* (Drake & St. Clair 1945).

watermarks of this lake, everyday reminders of just how high the tide of prosperity once reached before it receded into suburbia and beyond.

It is for these reasons that I think of Detroit as America on steroids. Many of the concerns that occupy the nation's consciousness are magnified and starkly visible here. The grid of American urbanism can be found in its geographies of inequality and its topographies of fear. In Detroit, the decline of American manufacturing can be read and felt intensely, as can the rise and hegemony of a car-centered society, the vanished middle classes, the collapse of its real estate markets, the failures and increasing impotence of unionized labor, the perpetual entrenchment of a Black underclass, and the reproduction of racial and economic segregation through the lines that separate American cities from American suburbs.

A perfect storm

The protracted and multifaceted decline of Detroit has produced a combination of circumstances which, in aggregate, have created a "perfect storm" of urban crises. The full extent of these urban crises became evident when Detroit made international headlines in 2013 as the largest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history (Fletcher 2013; Lichterman & Woodall 2013; Rushe 2013). Importantly, this far-reaching crisis served as both cause and effect for other crises.

Of greater importance to many residents was the "tax foreclosure crisis". In 2014 alone, up to 100,000 residents, or one in seven Detroiters, were at risk of being evicted due to delinquent property taxes (Hackman 2014), although the method of assessing these taxes was later shown to violate the state's constitution (Atuahene & Berry 2018: 3). Residents who faced eviction due to tax foreclosure tended to be severely disadvantaged in terms of wealth and connections. The "tax foreclosure crisis" represented a massive process of dispossession and displacement, placing a significant number of habitable properties on the housing market. The consequent auctions created an abundance of extremely cheap real estate, even by Detroit standards.

Added to this was the "water shutoff" crisis, where the city disconnected the plumbing in households which did not pay their water bills. This caused widespread displacement and dispossession, especially for households with children, who were at risk of being taken into care by social services because of a lack of basic sanitation. In 2014, the city had turned off the taps in more than 27,000 households, prompting the United Nations to send

two special rapporteurs, who strongly condemned the situation as a violation of human rights (OHCHR 2014).

Furthermore, a crisis developed during 2013 and 2014 involving the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA), when the permanent art collection was at risk of being auctioned off, or "looted" as some observers expressed it (Farago 2013), to raise money for the city's creditors. The crisis at the DIA was symbolically rich. Its vast collections represented the city's cultural riches and its legacy of greatness, whereas its crisis could be taken to represent how malevolent outside forces were plundering Detroit in its time of need.

Added to this was a crisis of democracy and urban management at large. The state of Michigan declared the municipality of Detroit to be under emergency management on March 14, 2013. Emergency managers are unelected officials vested with political power to reorganize a municipality. They are empowered to change budgets without legislative approval, hire and fire employees, renegotiate labor contracts and privatize assets, but not to raise taxes (Cramer 2011). The implementation of emergency management has been described by scholars both as a kind of "dictatorship for democracy" (Gillette 2014), and as something that rendered the local electoral process into a ritual political act, devoid of democratic legitimacy (Kirkpatrick 2015a). Similarly, the public school system was in their own moment of crisis, being under the control of an emergency financial manager appointed by the state.

From a political standpoint, the city of Detroit was being occupied by the state of Michigan. At the municipal level, Detroiters were not disenfranchised in form, as they still had a right to vote, but rather in substance, since their elected officials only had the powers the emergency manager was willing to give them.

In addition, a more general and deeper crisis of public management was unfolding, with roots that stretched back decades. 88,000 streetlights had gone dark (Trickey 2017) in Detroit. According to the emergency manager's report, the Detroit Police Department had an average response time of 58 minutes for priority-one calls[7] (City of Detroit 2013: 13). The Detroit Blight Removal Task Force (2014: 51) reported that 22% of the city was suffering from blight, meaning that properties had dilapidated to such a degree that they were considered uninhabitable – which translates to around 30 square miles.

For the Manchester school of anthropology, crisis and social change is of eminent theoretical and methodological concern, offering ethnographers a point of entry into a wider and more complex social reality. A central

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[7] The highest priority of emergency calls, requiring immediate response and where an immediate threat to life is believed to exist.

premise is that moments of crisis carry within them not only tension relating to the conflicting forces involved, but also a form of opportunity, in that every crisis also carries a multitude of possibilities (Gluckman 1958). As Kapferer (2005: 89) later argued, it is "in crisis […] that the vital forces and principles already engaged in social action (or taking form in the event itself) are both revealed and rendered available to anthropological analysis". Furthermore, moments of crisis, and what they reveal, are matters of public concern in America. They are subject to everyday analysis and interpretation, which influence both the social perception and the social reality of the moment itself.

It is true to say that Detroit has had more crises than many other cities, but this comparison risks occluding an important point. In the realm of finance, Maurer (2008: 69, italics in original) argued that "quantity is simultaneously a *quality* of things". Something similar may be said of Detroit. The sheer quantity of urban crises involves qualities which are not always clear in the numbers and percentages that illustrate it. Importantly, crises add up, and the sum, if not greater than its parts, is at least different.

It is my contention that the existence of these parallel crises served to embed Detroit in a grand moment of liminality. Symbolically and experientially, Detroit became suspended and unmoored, drifting and unable to return to what it was, but neither at a point where it could peak over its own horizon and see what it would become.

In this moment of liminality, all manner of competing dreams emerged in terms of what the city was and could become. It was an opportunity to "dream big in Detroit, to do things that would be impossible almost everywhere else", which backed up the claim in the *New York Times* that Detroit was the most exciting city in America (Larsen 2017). Contradictory and sometimes paradoxical, the depth of the crises opened up seemingly endless possibilities and at the same time seemingly endless despair, where optimism and pessimism were parallel lines of development, ostensibly unconnected to each other, but nonetheless intimately related. It is in this intoxicating and sometimes revolutionary air of uncertainty and opportunity, against a backdrop of multiple crises, that a field of possibility emerged. In fact, the city's comeback must be located in this field, as a space and time where a New Detroit could emerge, and where a poor Black city could be transformed into something whiter and wealthier.

Gentrification and comeback

Areas that interlocutors described as experiencing a comeback were those which were whiter and wealthier than they had been in previous years. These areas experienced higher occupancy rates, rising rents and rising land values. There was an improvement in public amenities in these areas, as public parks and squares were refurbished and bike lanes proliferated. New consumer spaces opened, and older ones underwent renovation, while its "third places"[8] (Oldenburg 1999) multiplied in the form of cafés, bars and restaurants, all of which were understood by interlocutors as incarnations of comeback and the return of whites and wealth.

Clark (2005: 258) defines gentrification as a "process involving a change in the population of land-users, such that the new users are of a higher socio-economic status than the previous users, together with an associated change in the built environment through a reinvestment in fixed capital". If we accept this definition, then it should be clear that the comeback of Detroit overlaps with a process of gentrification. It is therefore necessary to explain why the thesis focuses on the comeback and not on the gentrification of Detroit.

Gentrification is an excellent shorthand for describing my work in Detroit. Most people have an intuitive understanding of gentrification and many also have firsthand experience of the process. The ease with which the word gentrification is used to clarify issues, especially to people who may be entirely unfamiliar with Detroit, is cause for concern. People's familiarity with gentrification is deceptive, because although it is a global phenomenon, it is also a localized process, with a myriad of nuances.

This concern does not result from any failure in the field of gentrification studies, which has produced a wealth of knowledge and perspectives over the course of decades. Instead, my caution stems from its relative success. Latour's description of "blackboxing" is useful in conveying my meaning here. He argues that when "a machine runs efficiently, when a matter of fact is settled, one need focus only on its inputs and outputs and not on its internal complexity" (1999: 304).

For gentrification studies, "outputs" have been a particular concern. Redfern (1997: 1294) has noted a general tendency "to discuss gentrification in terms of results rather than means", whereas Brown-Saracino (2010: 13) paints a picture of a science which "center on gentrification's outcomes or consequences, rather than on its causes or on the character of the process – its everyday manifestations and progress". The historic production-

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[8] Third places refer to the places where people spend their time, but which are neither their home, or first place, nor their workplace, or second place.

consumption debate within gentrification studies, where gentrification was either the output of structural economic forces, or the output of a new middleclass which had emerged within an era of post industrialism, is well-rehearsed (Hamnett 1991; Redfern 1997; Lees 2000; Lees et al. 2008, 2010; Brown-Saracino 2010), but also a moot point today. Looking empirically at Detroit, it is clear that both perspectives are viable and complementary, and that "all of these phenomena are concomitant. People make up structures and the structures make up the trajectories of people – all at the same time" (Schlichtman et al. 2017: 27-28).

In other words, framing my study through gentrification could obfuscate certain nuances and complexities in terms of contemporary change in Detroit. However, there are also other concerns. One of these is that gentrification is associated with a very pervasive morality, and another is the way in which the scholarly concept of gentrification has seeped into the very process it initially sought to delimit and describe.

When Ruth Glass (1964: 18-19) coined the term gentrification, her description involved areas that were being "taken over", along with an "invading" middle class as the "original working-class occupiers are displaced". Smith (1996) considered gentrification a "dirty" word. Slater (2006: 752) joked that the only positive thing about gentrification was "being able to find a good cup of coffee when conducting fieldwork". Even the gentrifiers' professed desire for diversity attracts suspicion as a "commodification of Otherness […] seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture" (hooks 1992: 21).

It has been argued that "researchers studying the middle-class desire for a social mix often work to expose gentrifiers who pursue such ends as insincere" (Schlichtman et al. 2017: 181). I recognize this desire in myself. The one article I found that espouses any sense of enjoyment in relation to gentrification (Byrne 2003) was written by a law professor, "a telling illustration of bourgeois emancipatory romanticism vis-à-vis gentrification" (Slater 2006: 742). There is certainly merit in critiquing a phenomenon that adversely affects cities and their residents. However, there is also something to be said for the drawback of having too singular a viewpoint, where "the very things that were considered key to urban life are inverted, treated as mechanisms for undermining a different vision of urban life" (Schlichtman et al. 2017: 161).

Giddens (1987: 20) argued that a defining character of social science is its double hermeneutics. Because "the concepts of the social sciences are not produced about an independently constituted subject matter […] the 'findings' of the social sciences very often enter constitutively into the world they describe". Since the inception of gentrification studies in the

1960s, the process of double hermeneutics has been in effect, and it has consequently come to alter the subject-matter itself.

Studying gentrification today involves studying a phenomenon that has become a permeating and dominant symbol of urban life. It involves purported chains of cause and effect, purported roles in urban governance, and purported moralities, which are present among the actors – the gentrifiers and the gentrified – who are purported to create the phenomenon. The word gentrification has long ceased to be merely a concept for understanding a process that affects urban space and residents. It has transmogrified into a key concept through which urban residents understand themselves and the spaces around them.

Across urban America, gentrification is increasingly pervasive. A recent article in *The Economist* (2018) claimed that the word "gentrifier has surpassed many worthier slurs to become the dirtiest word in American cities". The potency of gentrification lies in its potential to alter fundamental aspects of a person's existence. It can transform a neighborhood or street. The economic factors associated with it can push a person out. Equally, it can involve cultural dislocation, where previously familiar and cherished establishments become different, catering to the esthetics and desires of a social group that one does not belong to.

The intimate bonds that people form with place can transform and come undone. Gentrification thus produces a multitude of localized processes that can be understood as "social dramas", existing as conflicts inherent in society (Turner 1974). Gentrification involves breaches of the common norms that regulate the relationship between groups. It produces crises as this breach widens, and is the object of redressive actions which seek to reestablish pre-crisis conditions, often invoking public rituals and events for this purpose. Finally, it involves reintegration, where resolutions have to be negotiated, and changes are legitimized.

As a contemporary discourse on the city for both scholars and laymen, gentrification serves as a powerful morality play. It is a story with good guys and bad guys, ultimately serving as a critique of the inequalities and injustices of an urban world under capitalism.

On the ground, however, in people's everyday lives, gentrification is usually messy and contradictory. To the generation of whites who are moving into cities such as Detroit, gentrification poses difficult questions and moral deadlocks, often leading to no-win situations.

On the one hand, gentrification is a social ill. On the other hand, segregation is a social ill. For white gentrifiers in Detroit, remaining in a racially segregated suburb established by their parents and grandparents may not be the morally correct thing to do. Then again, doing the opposite and

moving to Detroit may be equally wrong. As Freeman et al. (2016: 2812) ask, if "the gentrifiers had not moved into the gentrifying neighborhoods, where would they have moved?".

Gentrification can thus be a seed of both ambiguity and moral uncertainty. Not unlike the Azande belief in witchcraft (Evans-Pritchard 1976), gentrifiers can be conceptualized as driving gentrification, yet gentrifiers are almost always someone else in another place. Everyone believes in the existence of these gentrifiers, but hardly anyone will admit to being one, and like witches, people can be gentrifiers without any conscious intention of being involved in gentrification.

My point is that the social perceptions of gentrification influence the social reality of the phenomenon. Although this process can be defined in technical terms and made legible through a change in "the population of land-users" (Clark 2005: 258), understanding the gentrified comeback of Detroit, with its nuances and complexities, necessarily involves engaging with a host of issues which fall outside the purview of the term's analytical thrust.

This is why the thesis has been written and structured around comeback rather than gentrification, and why I have done so in this particular way. Through this, I invite the reader on a journey through the city's history, its cosmologies and classifications, its spatial and material manifestations and its attempts at colonizing the future, and to the events that condense and ritualize aspects of comeback to its citizens. In terms of theorizing comeback through gentrification, there is sufficient knowledge to engage in an academic version of "joining the dots", tracing a pen from number to number until a predefined figure emerges, a figure that we already know to be morally reprehensible. Writing about the gentrification of Detroit, rather than its comeback, would probably have been easier but I do not think it would have been better. This is not to say that gentrification is unimportant, simply that if new light is to be shed on a phenomenon which is so thoroughly "known" to both scholars and laymen, we should tread carefully around its center, finding new perspectives on, and hopefully new understandings of contemporary forms of urban change.

Why Detroit?

In contextualizing Detroit's contemporary comeback it should be remembered that it is America's Blackest, poorest and most abandoned city, and that it has been experiencing severe economic and demographic decline for over half a century. This evolution has, in turn, generated multiple and

parallel crises. Taken together, and taking into account the way they have been managed, these have dispossessed residents of their properties and access to basic necessities such as water, simultaneously disenfranchizing them through forms of emergency management. In both quantitative and qualitative terms, these crises have limited the city's imagination on the one hand, but simultaneously opened up a field of possibility where a New Detroit can be imagined and manifested.

The influx of a younger, whiter and wealthier population to parts of Detroit is bringing gentrification with it, leading to changes in demographic patterns, and increases in land values and capital investment across urban space. Importantly, gentrification is a term "on the ground", used by residents to understand urban change. Its most common function is to assign moral value to both the actors and the processes of gentrification. It is not a concept that can be easily detached from the phenomenon itself either analytically or descriptively, because it has become a constitutive part of it, while scholars of gentrification also play an active part in narrating the phenomenon as a morality play. Even though it should be clear that the comeback of Detroit is a gentrified comeback, it will be important to engage with a more complicated and messy empirical reality in order to understand the internal complexities of the process, rather than simply detailing its inputs and outputs.

Although there are a number of good reasons why Detroit's comeback should be a matter of concern, one in particular suffices as an example. For over a decade, scholars have noted how populations seem to be "returning" to inner cities across the United States (e.g. Simmons & Lang 2003; Fishman 2005; Sturtevant and Jung 2011; Ehrenhalt 2012; Hyra 2012). As Badger et al. (2019) recently highlighted in the *New York Times*, across the nation "[w]hite residents are increasingly moving into nonwhite neighborhoods, largely African-American ones […] affecting about one in six predominantly African-American census tracts".

American cities, and American society, have undergone rapid and thorough changes in the past due to large-scale waves of migration. Some of these waves have led individuals and social groups into cities, where others have led them out of cities. It is plausible that the beginning of this century is witnessing the emergence of yet another large-scale wave of migration, in which the inner cities of America are being "reclaimed" by younger, wealthier and whiter populations.

It is still unclear what this means for American cities and society. However, given that Detroit is one of America's Black metropolises, one of its poorest cities, and the nation's most racially segregated urban area (Logan & Stults 2011) with a long history of racial and class struggles (Sugrue

1996), I argue that there are lessons to learn from how this process plays out in a space like this. This is not because Detroit is typical, but because at the margins and the extremes, certain phenomena become tangible which are harder to notice in more moderate centers.

Having said this, it is now time to turn our attention to how comeback can be operationalized through concepts which expose its experiential dimensions.

Feeling comeback

If comeback is represented by the twin canals of whites and wealth leading into the city, then affect involves the embankments that direct this stream along particular paths. As Thrift (2004: 57) puts it, cities "may be seen as roiling maelstroms of affect". What individuals and groups "feel" and are conditioned to "feel" vis-à-vis their urban environment is of paramount concern in terms of understanding both the symbolic and material qualities of comeback.

Lutz and White's (1986) seminal review article made important theoretical interventions in the study of emotions, demonstrating the role of culture in how emotions are interpreted and perceived, emerging in a "culturally constituted self" (Lutz & White 1986: 417). These insights were then further developed by Lutz and Abu-Lughod (1990), who examined the social construction of emotions through discourse and practice, situated within fields of power. However, the broader interest in emotions since the 1990s has been increasingly displaced by a concern with affect, which is generally perceived as occurring prior to ideology and culture, shaping a person's thoughts and feelings.

A recent plethora of special issues on affect (e.g. Ahmed 2007; Blackman and Venn 2010; Davidson et al. 2007; Fraser et al. 2005; Skoggard & Waterston 2015) reflects its emergence as a key area for social and cultural research. Despite this centrality, there is no stable definition of the concept. A recent anthology argues that it "is in many ways synonymous with *force* or *forces of encounter*" (Gregg & Seigworth 2010: 2, italics in original). Clough (2007: 2) argues that "affect refers generally to bodily capacities to affect and be affected or the augmentation or diminution of a body's capacity to act, to engage, and to connect". Stewart (2007: 2, italics in original) suggests that ordinary affects are "things that happen […] that catch people up in something that feels like *some*thing". Some scholars have also used affect as a way of bringing about more fundamental upheavals in epistemology and ontology, where "the turn to affect becomes a decisive shift

away from the current conventions of critical theory, away from research based on discourse and disembodied talk and texts, toward more vitalist, 'post human' and 'process-based perspectives" (Wetherell 2012: 3).

This thesis follows the orientation of Skeggs and Wood (2012: 5-6), who "define affect as the feelings that produce an effect". Affect is a non-representational force in the world, "outside" or "prior to" discourse and sociality, but which is nonetheless made meaningful as experience through the discourses and sociality which codify it as emotions. This approach leaves room both for "unsettled" qualities of feeling, and for socially patterned forms of emotional experience.

To stand in front of an abandoned house is to encounter "something that feels like *some*thing" (Stewart 2007: 2, italics in original). White suburban newcomers would often relate sensations of opportunity and beauty in these encounters, wishing the house to be "saved" by someone, perhaps themselves or someone like them. Neighbors who lived next door, on the other hand, were likely to refer to it as an "eyesore", something ugly and disturbing, and they might even have delayed calling the firefighters if it was on fire, because this was sometimes the easiest way to have an "eyesore" removed in Detroit.

Affect is intimately tied both to the city's decline and to its comeback. Historically, a combination of racial and economic fears spurred the out-migration of middle-class residents from the city (Sugrue 1996). When both people and wealth "moved away", without being replaced by people and wealth "moving in", store fronts were boarded up, abandonment and blight ensued, businesses left, tax dollars vanished, public spaces were no longer maintained, and municipal services were cut and diminished.

It is important to recognize the relations between affects, responses to affects and material reality, because these relations shape cities and the urban experience, operating dynamically through a multitude of feedback loops. Over time, middle-class fears of Detroit have led to avoidance and distancing, behaviors which in turn produce a material and social reality that the same middle class finds frightening. Fear therefore produces an environment to be fearful of, which leads to and reinforces further distancing and avoidance, in a vicious circle. In this way, Detroit's landscape can be considered to be indexing topographies of fear.

Importantly, however, these feedback loops are not tied specifically to fear. Long before the comeback of a neighborhood in Detroit is made legible and quantifiable in terms of demographics and property values, there will have been a "buzz" around it. For various reasons, it will have become "hip" and "desirable" for those who have more status and money than the people who live there. There is a "vibe" or "atmosphere" attached to it, and

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this affective experience attracts the flows of people and wealth, subsequently altering material reality which, in turn, alters affective experiences.

In operationalizing comeback as an experiential phenomenon, it is necessary to pay attention to how comeback feels, how these feelings become socially patterned and how they are often unequally distributed. It is important not only because comeback represents a process which can be emotional in its own right, but because the way in which feelings flow across space and between bodies ultimately interacts with, and even anticipates, the flow of people and wealth. Understanding these interactions will help understand particularities and patterns related to the spatial and material emergence of New Detroit. It will also help understand the young, white, newcomers to the city, whose ambiguous position is rife with emotional tensions that influence their movements and social networks.

Comeback in terms of ritualized events

The third part of this thesis involves two ethnographic cases, one centering on a collective bike ride called Slow Roll, and the other on a communal crowdfunding dinner called Detroit Soup. I approach both of these cases as "ritualized events" which help constitute the comeback of Detroit. The term "ritualized event" is a pragmatic concept which seeks to reconcile understandings of the separate ideas of "ritual" and "event", in order to overcome some of the drawbacks of each.

A recent textbook explains that ritual "can be seen as a synthesis of several important levels of social reality [...] and it usually brings out and tries to resolve – at a symbolic level – contradictions in society" (Eriksen 2015: 273). Another textbook concludes that rituals "mark out the social categories for the people in question [...] they will always order them in a cultural way related to ideas about the social world in which they are found" (Hendry 2016: 97).

The role of the social order has been a central concern in the ways in which rituals are understood. Bell (2009: 25) points out that Durkheim saw rituals as the "means by which individuals are brought together as a collective group". Radcliffe-Brown (1945: 35) saw them as "regulated symbolic expressions of certain sentiments", whose social function was "to regulate, maintain and transmit from one generation to another sentiments on which the constitution of the society depends". Later generations of scholars (e.g. Darryl & Gluckman 1975; Ortner 1978) have stressed how rituals can serve to address tensions within the social structure, possibly providing a remedy to imbalances in people's social relations. Turner

(1980) cast rituals as "social dramas" that offer certain cognitive and emotional experiences, inherent in the social structure, which could only be known to participants through the enactment of performance. Geertz focused his analysis on meaning and interpretation, postulating that rituals are "read", and that they, in turn provide a "narrative" through which people come to understand their social words (Geertz 1973: 448).

The different anthropological conceptualizations nevertheless tend to agree that rituals represent an important interface. If the structures and orders of society can be likened to our electrical grid, and our desktop lamp is life as we live it, then rituals are like sockets that connect the two. For this reason, rituals have been privileged sites of inquiry where a complex and abstract "society" can be observed in a condensed way, just as a shining light bulb can represent the complexities of electric power. Thus, rituals tend to be imbued with didactic properties in that they can: (1) inculcate participants into society, to its orders and dominant structures; (2) make participants see, feel and understand their society; (3) serve as a mechanism for redressing, and/or alleviating, endemic social tensions[9].

There are difficulties in applying the term ritual to Detroit and the phenomena of Slow Roll and Soup. Most anthropological understandings of ritual were developed through studies of societies and places which are markedly different. The scale, complexity and heterogeneity inherent in an urban area inhabited by millions of people, who belong to different racial, ethnic, economic, religious and political communities, mean that certain didactic properties of rituals are unclear at best. Furthermore, participants move in and out of these rituals, participating when it suits their schedule and desires. Some attend regularly, others only sporadically, and some come once and then never return. Additionally, their meanings are less "fixed", and are subject to a range of competing interpretations, while their very form and content can change within short time periods. For these reasons, I have followed more recent epistemic transitions within anthropology, moving away from rituals and into events.

Handelman (1998) theorizes the event/ritual in accordance with its form rather than its content. One of Handelman's (ibid.) central claims is that a type of event exists which is not connected through an "interface", but

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[9] The tendency to assign a purpose to ritual which relates to the social order has possibly contributed to today's unbalanced depictions of ritual. Chao (1999: 505) has noted that "[f]ailed rituals, those not associated with either the successful reassertion or transformation of social order, are often relegated to the analyst's dustbin". Husken (2007: ix) writes that "rituals are often seen as some kind of machines or infallible mechanism which 'work' irrespective of the individual motivations of the performers", whereas McClymond (2016: 1) has suggested that "ritual theorizing has largely focused on ritual as it should be rather than as it is."

which is autonomous vis-à-vis the social order. It operates as "a microcosm of the lived-in world – a simplified, specialized, relatively closed system that operates in parallel with the indeterminate world that it models", maintaining a "high degree of autonomy from the lived-in world that it models" (ibid: XXII). Handelman suggests that this autonomy gives this particular type of event/ritual a form of recursive intentionality and an ability to transform the lived-in world, in that it sets up "alternative worlds that generate alternative worlds to act on themselves" (ibid: XXVIII). The argument is that the event that models creates a sort of "bubble world", a variation and partial construction that can be reduced neither to a reflection of reality (a model *of*), nor a direction for reality (a model *for*). Instead, the "bubble" affords a space and time where these forces interact, giving the events the potential to act as a controlled and transformative force on the lived-in world.

Another variation on the transition from ritual to event (Kapferer 2010; Kapferer & Meinert 2015) derives from the work of Deleuze (1994), and to a lesser extent Badiou (2005). Here, events are understood as representing a moment where alteration and change can emerge within existing structures, but rather than operating as a clear break with these structures, events can facilitate novel arrangements of them. To Kapferer (2010: 15), the "event in the Deleuzian orientation becomes the critical site of emergence, manifesting the singularity of a particular multiplicity within tensional space and opening toward new horizons of potential".

The notion of space is crucial to this latter form of transition, because "events begin from the domain of affect and the virtual (temporal) but are only actualised in space", and through "their spatiality they also change and reconfigure material reality" (Beck & Gleyzon 2016: 329). Williams (2008: 1-2) has likened this force to "a change in waves", where an event "must be understood as a novel selection in ongoing and continually altering series". As Kapferer (2010: 16) writes, the future event "is not the inevitable and necessary outcome of a preceding event […] the connection, as it were, is made by events in the future that do not flow as a necessity from specific preceding events".

The impetus in both of these transitions is that events can generate something novel internally that can act to transform what is external to them, and which is neither a replication nor an inversion of the social order.

In this thesis, I use "ritualized events" for urban phenomena that serve to generate and distribute affects to their participants, thereby giving rise to new experiences of different Detroits. These experiences continue to act upon the city long after the event has passed. Ritualized events allow for the articulation and mediation of contradictions that are inherent in

Detroit's comeback, and they are to an extent "staged" and "organized" for that purpose. This "staging" and "organization", however, are not meant to be complete. These ritualized events retain a sense of unpredictability, leaving room for all manner of things to occur and unfold. It is in their quality of indeterminacy that I locate their potential to go beyond a response to the contradictions and structures inherent in comeback. It is where they enter into a productive dialog that is not centered on what Detroit should, or could be, but how it is already *otherwise*. They allow participants to experience how another Detroit already exists.

A way of conceptualizing this process of change is offered in the next section by considering the space, place and embodiment of comeback in Detroit.

Growing comeback as space and place

Lefebvre (2011: 53) has argued that "any 'social existence' aspiring or claiming to be 'real', but failing to produce its own space, would be a strange entity, a very peculiar kind of abstraction, unable to escape from the ideological or even the 'cultural' realm."

Following this insight, it can be said that the comeback of Detroit, and the return of whites and wealth, needs a space in order to become concrete, open to the lived experience of residents. If comeback did not produce its own particular space, then it would only exist in the fields of imagination. Through spatialization, comeback becomes open to the everyday and empirical experiences of its residents. It becomes something that can be seen, heard, touched, felt and smelled. Consequently, it becomes indisputably "real" to its residents, as something which is not to be merely believed, but also known.

There are a number of conceptual and semantic disagreements about the relationships between space and place, and about which should be regarded as primary. However, as Low (2017: 32) points out: "the distinctions and their related claims carefully laid out in theory seem less critical when the researcher is grappling with the methodological realities of undertaking an empirical spatial analysis".

In this thesis, I treat space and place as a scale running from the abstract and general toward the specific and concrete. To exemplify this, there are two parks that manifest comeback in Detroit. One is Campus Martius, and the other New Center Park. They are two distinct locations, with two distinct designs, two distinct histories, and neighborhoods around them which also differ. As places, they are distinct and specific.

However, both have recently been "remade" and "reimagined". Both are operated by private, non-profit organizations. Both offer programmed entertainment such as movie nights or concerts in the summer, which attract individuals, shaping their affective experiences. Both have rules, e.g. no smoking, and the private surveillance to enforce these rules. Both work toward disciplining certain behaviors, effectively limiting access for certain groups and kinds of user who are likely to affect the experience of white middle-class users negatively.

The general and abstract symmetries that exist between these discrete places are to be found in the quasi-public space of neoliberal urbanism[10], representing a set of ideas and conceptions about social relations in the city. These abstractions are given form in places like Campus Martius or New Center Park, as well as in other cities where this type of abstraction has projected itself onto the material world that is place, hence becoming "real".

Rather than seeing place and space as separate entities, where one is given primacy over the other, this thesis treats these dimensions as part of a contiguous reality. The abstract and concrete dimensions of space and place are complementary. The abstract could not be perceived as "real" without the concrete. However, had the abstract not been given form over and over again, there would not be much of a concrete aspect to perceive at all in the city. After all, the city is a man-made environment, produced through the countless imaginations of countless individuals and groups.

There are two broad schools of thought about why and how space and place emerge in cities. One highlights the production of space and place, following the work of Lefebvre (2011: 27), who has argued that space is a social product of capitalism, one that conceals its own production with "illusions of transparency". In this orientation, the production of space is driven by underlying political-economic relations. This perspective has been further developed through a number of Marxist and Neo-Marxist frameworks (e.g. Harvey 1976; Smith 1984; Mitchell 1995; 2008; Zukin 1991), each of which highlight the conflicts and struggles that this particular form of spatial production entails.

Another school of thought emphasizes that space and place are experiential and polysemic. Individuals and groups enter space and place from different positions and have different trajectories across it. People perceive

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[10] As Smets and Watt (2013: 27) have described it, "In the contemporary neoliberal city […] 'quasi-public' or 'pseudo-public' spaces have a public appearance, but they are in reality spaces which are heavily controlled and monitored via private security guards and banks of CCTV cameras whose function is to control and/or exclude certain 'undesirable' groups". See also Voyce (2006).

and conceive of space and place differently, and make use of different interpretations of it and different narratives around it. Space and place exist through the everyday movements of a multitude of human and non-human actors, and are infused with narratives, memories and meanings.

As I see merit in both of these orientations, I also see merit in the framework of "embodied space" proposed by Low (2017), in order to reconcile the orientations of production and construction. This framework considers "human and nonhuman 'bodies' as simultaneous spaces as well as producers and products of space" (Low 2017: 94). It draws on insights provided by Munn (1996), who conceptualizes the body as a moving spatial field, active in both producing and consuming space and place. Space and place are both "out there", in a material world, as they are "in here", in the material bodies of actors, where they exist as practice, cognition and representation.

"Embodied space" is useful for understanding comeback in Detroit because it incorporates a strong element of movement and circulation. How individuals and collectives move through Detroit, and how these movements are compelled and challenged, forms a substrate to how and why comeback is spatialized in particular ways. It is a framework which maintains a productive tension between openness and closure. Movement creates unexpected encounters and ruptures that can alter both embodied space and the space that is embodied. However, it is also subject to habit, to perceptions and conceptions held in the body that moves, and several layers of discipline and force are applied to subjects that shape their trajectories in a productive way, forming paths and rhythms which generate both power and inequalities in relation to comeback.

This way of conceptualizing how and why comeback emerges as space and place allows for connections in terms of the ritualized events and affective experiences of comeback. The process through which abstractions of comeback take material form as place involves much more than new materials and physical restoration. It includes opening up new ways of being affected by the urban, and new ways of thinking and moving through the city. The embodiment of space can position the ritualized events of comeback as surfaces where the changes brought about by comeback, and the struggles and conflict latent in the way it unfolds, interact with people by affecting their embodied spaces.

Where spatial change is seen as a change in both the material city and the experiential and embodied spaces of those who make and are made by the city, this raises questions about the most suitable metaphors for discussing this change.

More specifically, I have ultimately framed my discussions around the emergence of a New Detroit and the shaping of place and affect through the organic metaphor of a garden[11]. I use this metaphor to communicate the intimate, decentralized and often haphazard links that form between the New Detroit to be seen in the city of glass, steel and concrete, and its embodied aspects, the New Detroit that grows within the minds of individuals and groups. Both the exterior and interior are subject to cultivation, powerful actors not only cultivate New Detroit as a material or representational space, but they also cultivate their own constituencies, growing the subjects of a space as a way of growing the space itself.

A white vampire following his feet

It will first be useful to address an aspect of this thesis which will have become increasingly obvious: my style of writing. Although I do not consider that my stylistic choices require an apology, I have realized that they often require an explanation. I write in a subjective and reflexive manner where "I" am often present in the text. My understanding of empirical and ethnographic research is that the data I "discover" is reflected through who I am. I cannot see any way around this predicament. Furthermore, I do not consider myself to be attempting to "prove" anything about Detroit's comeback in the same way a natural scientist might "prove" something about a natural phenomenon. Instead, I offer arguments and interpretations I find plausible, and the degree to which a reader might also find them plausible will relate to how much they trust my text. Another style could certainly make the text appear less subjective. However, since this thesis represents a collection of my thoughts, I have found a more subjective and reflexive style of writing to be more honest, not least because it is a more accurate reflection of who I am, and of how I think and express myself.

A number of municipal, non-profit and corporate actors are playing important roles in Detroit's comeback. I tried to access these actors, but with little success, as there was considerable resistance. At best, I received polite responses that an interview might be possible, and was told to contact them again when I was in Detroit. When I replied that I was already in the city, had been there for a while and was ready to meet them, communications would either break down entirely, or I would be bounced around between different departments in an organization. No one was prepared to open any doors. I had better luck bumping into individuals who worked at these organizations in bars or cafés, during their time off, and although they

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[11] I explain this framing further, and in more detail, on pages 151-154.

were usually much more forthcoming on these occasions, they would insist that everything they said had to be "off the record", because they had to worry about things like job security, careers and mortgages. In retrospect, I might have been able to gain entry if my angle and choice of words had been different. If I had been interested in "urban regeneration", for instance, rather than the return of whites with wealth, I might have been perceived as less of a threat or annoyance.

I ultimately consider my inability to gain access to any particular organization to have a positive side. While it would have made my research "easier" in the sense that it would have delimited my empirical field to an office somewhere in the city and the people who worked there, my understanding of Detroit's comeback would have been different, and probably shallower.

Furthermore, despite the presence of powerful actors, the return of whites and wealth to Detroit is a topic with no privileged or delimited site. For this reason, approaching comeback in a more conventional anthropological manner was unsustainable, i.e., following a relatively small group of people who were doing something more or less particular within a circumscribed field. Instead, I had to rely on different techniques that were appropriate for different aspects of comeback.

I used my cellphone extensively during fieldwork. I used it to record conversations and interviews, to photograph or film different events and places, and also to visualize and map where I had been in the city, at what times, and the routes I took to get there.

I observed ritualized events and also participated in them. I interviewed neighbors and residents, along with any representatives of institutional actors such as non-profits who would allow me. Sometimes I experimented, such as studying how the quality of public refuse reflected changes in the racial and economic make-up between neighborhoods, or by walking in a certain direction, seeking to interact with whomever crossed my path. I also spent weeks at the Burton Historical Collection, to see how the city had changed throughout the centuries. Equally, I read any book or article about Detroit and its comeback, including novels and poetry, and sifted through internet forums where users generally engaged in hyperbolic arguments about what this comeback meant.

The fluid character of my work also stemmed from the fact that I knew nothing about Detroit prior to 2014. Though I am aware that it is common for a PhD thesis to represent the culmination of longstanding research interests, be they regional and/or topical, Detroit and its comeback had never been on my "radar". I therefore had a lot to learn, and was forced to expose myself to different fields and bodies of knowledge.

During my 10 months in Detroit, divided across three periods between 2014-2016, I lived and worked in the same house. This was a detached, single-family home, built in the early 1900s and located north of Grand Boulevard. The neighborhood and its adjacent neighborhoods were seeing the effects of comeback at the time. Many of its older and Black residents were moving to the suburbs, while many younger and white residents were moving in from the suburbs.

The house I lived in was owned by a couple roughly the same age as me. Both were white. One of them had grown up in the city, the other had grown up in the suburbs. They operated an Airbnb in this house and a few other houses, and rented out rooms for longer stays too.

Researchers were common tenants. As I moved into my room, I found the scattered notes of a French PhD student who had been working on social justice in one of the city's soup kitchens. Downstairs, in the living room library, there were whole shelves dedicated to urban theory and to Detroit.

The house itself was a social place. People came and went. Some stayed longer, others shorter periods. The owners and their tenants would bring people to the house, sometimes because they thought I might be interested in talking to them. In fact, I did a lot of talking there, and I did even more listening. Over time, while experiencing my slice of life in Detroit, I became immersed in many of the changes that interested me and my interlocutors. These experiences accumulated incrementally, and I began to share many of my interlocutor's emotional registers vis-à-vis their changing city. Their hate, anger, love, guilt and pride became my hate, anger, love, guilt and pride. At times, I wondered whether I was an anthropologist pretending to live in Detroit, or someone living in Detroit pretending to do anthropology, and what really separated the two.

Although I am more than just a white, male researcher in his thirties, these things ultimately influenced much of what I was doing and the type of data I obtained.

My position was made clear when I arrived at an ongoing post-Halloween party in October 2014. One of my key interlocutors had prepared a costume for me to wear. I was to be Dracula. This was both serious and in jest. She considered researchers to be "leeches", capable of "sucking the life force out of you".[12]

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[12] Similar critiques can be found within anthropology itself. Burman (2018) has recently critiqued extractivist forms of ethnography in the Andean context through the figure of the *kharisiri* – a fat-stealing monster, while Knight (2015: 24) has likened anthropologists to vultures that "circle around until the bleeding starts, and then she can engage".

Far from all Detroiters were fond of a researcher who had come to document their misfortunes and hardships, mainly because I looked and sounded very much like the other researcher who had been there the year before, or the year before that. In a crude sense, people with degrees had been speaking "truth to power" for decades, and for some who lived in Detroit, nothing seemed to come out of this exercise. This critical view meant that researchers often assumed the shape of a common figure in Detroit's cosmology: they were the "outsiders", people who came and took something from Detroit, and never gave anything back.

This ambiguous position was further compounded by my race and age. For those who were concerned that comeback was a smokescreen for young, white, hipsters to colonize, occupy and conquer a poor Black city, I certainly looked like a member of its expeditionary force.

Race is of great importance in Detroit. The city remains the nation's most segregated urban area (Logan & Stults 2011), and its most "extreme example of fragmented and polarized urbanism" (Doucet & Smit 2016: 635). A recent guidebook to Detroit suggests that "if you are white and are planning to move to Detroit, or live here for any point in time, get ready to be stared at. Whites may be gawked at, side-eyed, and maybe questioned about their reasons for being in the area in some parts of town" (Foley 2015: 78). Equally, Hartigan (2000: 11) has argued that "Detroit provides a unique perspective on issues of whiteness because it grounds many situations where whites are racially objectified – in settings where the normative status of their racial position cannot be assumed, and where whiteness is not often an unmarked identity". Although we should remember that race, as a social construct, can be both fluid and flexible (Fredrickson 1997), it also has "ocular" dimensions rooted in visible phenotypes, as Omni and Winant (2015: 13) have noted. Whiteness in a majority Black city carries both noticeable and definitive status, especially in public, where people often classify others on the basis of what they see with their own eyes.

The fact that the experience of fieldwork forces anthropologists to recognize their own whiteness is not an uncommon trope in ethnography (Weismantel 2001: 193), but it is often found in encounters where anthropologists have traveled from a global north to a global south. However, given the racial segregation in many cities in the global north, this type of recognition could just as easily be the result of traveling between zip codes within the same urban region.

In Detroit I felt white, and I was white. It was not simply a matter of being classified and categorized by the color of my skin. In a much deeper sense, I became white as I became aware of my own racial position.

My whiteness could, at times, arouse suspicion. As I tried to enter certain circles I was pushed out or ignored. I could say things out loud or ask a question without anyone acknowledging my words. I would try to connect with certain people without success. At times, I was not welcome, and my presence was neither desired nor tolerated. I was a white person, and to some people that was enough to decline interaction with me, or sometimes treat me with hostility.

On an intellectual level, I had no trouble understanding why I was having these experiences. On an emotional level, however, these things hurt. Most of my interactions with Detroiters were not as painful as this, though enough of them were bad enough to influence me, and thus my research. Over time, I adapted to the situation, and this adaptation provided me with valuable insight into to how race, affective experiences and the embodiment of space are intimately interwoven with the way a New Detroit is emerging.

I distinctly remember a day when I was out walking. I had no particular plans or intentions I was aware of. I was just following my feet. I ended up in a place, a café, and tasked myself with writing down what was around me. Everyone else I saw was white. I was in a resolutely "white space", a space thoroughly occupied by white bodies (Anderson 2015) and their Apple laptops, not unlike an anthropological conference. No one stared at me or wondered what I was doing there. Here, I was considered to be "in-place", not "out-of-place", and I remember that this experience was both pleasant and disturbing.

Although my research constantly led me into situations where I was "out-of-place", my personal desires were almost invariably oriented toward feeling "in-place". I never particularly enjoyed feeling as if I did not belong or that I was either the novelty or the oddity in the room. This influenced the places I visited, the routes I took to get there, and the people who could potentially cross my path. Noting and reflecting on this tension of being racially "in-place" or "out-of-place" proved to be an important methodological tool for understanding newcomers and how comeback operates at the level of practice.

This "level of practice" is important because race was difficult to talk about for young whites in Detroit. Discourses on race were not usually forthcoming or explicit when it came to practice. The topic of race would affect white bodies so that they would start to shift in their chairs or look the other way. Many found it uncomfortable, especially if conversations on race included their person and identity. Asking whites about whiteness or race provoked generic reflections on the phenomena in general. Compared to Black interlocutors, white interlocutors lacked a language with

which to discuss their own racial position and explore their own racial identities, notions which I explore further in chapter 3.

When whites spoke about race, it usually involved a strong affirmation of the importance of "diversity", and that race "did not matter to them". Taking stock only of what whites said about race in Detroit would therefore make it difficult to understand the growing presence of so many "white spaces" in New Detroit. Most whites told me that they wanted "diversity", but most also preferred to congregate in places where there were many other whites.

As a critical scholar, it is tempting to take the disconnect between practice and discourse and think: "Gotcha!" thereby exposing the insincerities of a white middle class. However, I do not find this particularly productive, not least because many critical scholars would make an *a priori* assumption about these insincerities. My own auto-ethnographic experiences of "following my own feet" compel me to offer another perspective, one which is related to earlier discussions on affect, movement and the embodiment of space.

As a white person in Detroit I did not wish to be racist. I did not wish to say or think racist thoughts. I did not wish to perpetuate racial inequalities and asymmetrical power relations. In my experience, very few of the other whites I became acquainted with wanted this. If you are a white supremacist or simply a white racist in America, you are unlikely to move to the Blackest city in the nation. Thus, many of the whites who had moved to Detroit expressed their decision as a way of escaping the racial homogeneity and white supremacy of their suburban upbringing. However, at a much more corporeal level, I did not wish to be objectified on the basis of my racial phenotype.

For the purpose of this thesis, these two desires do not need to be reconciled, but they do have to be recognized. Without this recognition, we are ill-equipped to understand how a younger generation of whites, who are entering the city, and who are ideologically opposed to the prejudice and racism of their parents and grandparents, might end up doing something similar. They may not do so through Jim Crow laws, overtly racist ideologies, or by using racist slurs and language, but through mechanisms that alter and guide the flows of people and wealth. Mechanisms that, for the most part, are difficult to see and talk about, let alone consider thoroughly.

Outline

The thesis is divided into three parts.

The first part discusses the city's past and the ways in which this past has gradually informed an urban cosmology of Detroit.

Chapter Two focuses on history, giving the reader an overview of how the city has developed over the centuries. Although considerable attention is paid to the city's tumultuous 20th century, this chapter also covers a more distant past. This is because some important patterns and tendencies in terms of how Detroit developed as an urban area predate its industrial form. Over the course of the *longue durée*, a deeper understanding emerges of how the migration and displacement of groups, with varying levels of brutality, have always been central to how the city operates.

Chapter Three builds on the previous chapter by excavating how different selections from, and interpretations of the city's history have yielded an urban cosmology centering on opposition between whites and Blacks, and between the city and its suburbs. The chapter describes this cosmology from different perspectives, highlighting how it emerges at the level of symbolism, at the level of everyday life and practice, and in the city's physical composition, as materialized boundaries that both mark and reaffirm the cosmology.

The second part of the thesis turns to the present and ongoing changes associated with the city's comeback.

Chapter Four focuses on the newcomers, i.e., the whites who are said to be returning to the city. The chapter seeks to shed light on the newcomers from different angles, as both sign and referent. At the same time it discusses how newcomers maneuver in the gaps between being symbolic figures, emerging against the ground of the "frontier", and people of flesh and blood. The chapter also discusses how newcomers socialize other newcomers into being "good whites" in a Black city, examining the tension that arises from these efforts. Importantly, the chapter excavates how "small" Detroit can be for newcomers by highlighting forms of raced solidarity stemming from a desire to be in-place.

Chapter Five focuses on New Detroit, offering an ethnographic examination of comeback by taking a closer look at an area known as Midtown. This is an area where comeback materializes for residents, and becomes empirically knowable to them. The chapter discusses the efforts of non-profit organizations to cultivate particular forms of development that respond to the desires of newcomers. Showing how comeback manifests itself in Midtown is part symbolic, part spatial and part demographic. This is because the organization cultivates conceptions of Midtown, places in Midtown and, through incentive programs, new populations of newcomers

in Midtown. In delimiting what is and is not New Detroit, esthetics plays a strong role in how comeback is manifest and in communicating who this comeback is for. Thus, the chapter also analyzes the rising popularity of the materials of comeback and New Detroit: reclaimed wood and exposed bricks.

Where chapter Five focuses on how space and place are transformed to fit a new demographic of residents, chapter Six examines how the future of Detroit is being colonized to stabilize comeback in the present. This chapter rests on the argument that if people become convinced about the inevitability of a certain future, this influences their actions in the present. Ethnographically, this chapter follows a series of events which sought to reimagine Detroit's riverfront. It also discusses how this particular process of reimagination exemplifies a variety of broader forms of reimagining in other parts of the city. Throughout the ethnographic case study, the chapter discusses how the future is managed, but also how the consequences of these futures are managed, resisted and challenged.

Building on how a New Detroit is shaped by forces acting upon the city in both spatial and temporal terms, often in a top-down direction through non-profit and corporate actors, the third part examines comeback through more bottom-up processes. This part discusses how the changes and tensions intrinsic to comeback have emerged through forms of ritualized events emanating from Detroit's civil society.

Chapter Six examines a popular weekly bike ride called Slow Roll. The emergence and evolution of Slow Roll is examined, and the argument is presented that Slow Roll is not primarily about challenging the automobile and an auto-centric society, but aims to challenge and interact with the divisions inherent in the city's cosmology and its comeback. The chapter offers an ethnographic description of the ritualized event and its various stages. From this ethnography flows a discussion of how the ritualized event structures the emotions of participants, and the section also analyzes how participants themselves construct the meaning of Slow Roll. Finally, the chapter analyzes Slow Roll as a form of gentrification on a bike, connecting the emotions and meanings it engenders to the city's ongoing comeback.

Chapter Seven examines a ritualized event called Detroit Soup, which mixes elements of crowdfunding, game shows and community dinners to give participants an emotional experience. Detroit Soup offers a place where newcomers and long-time Detroit residents can interact around the process of a changing Detroit, albeit piecemeal and on a smaller scale. The chapter presents an ethnography of a Soup event, which is then discussed in order to highlight how Soup provides its participants with a particular

experience, articulating moralities of comeback which appeal to newcomers.

The eighth and final chapter provides a summary of the different chapters in the thesis. Lastly, I reflect on some of the arguments and perspectives offered in the thesis, suggesting how they might be useful elsewhere and in other circumstances.

PART ONE

This part of the thesis is partly an examination of Detroit's past, and partly an investigation into the ways in which interpretations of this past come to frame an understanding of the city's present. I have called these parts "history" and "cosmology". Although there are many definitions and uses of history, here it involves the events and processes recorded in books and authoritative accounts. My use of history highlights the fact that many of the underlying tensions found in contemporary Detroit are also found in its past. Cosmology, on the other hand, involves ways in which the past furnishes a distinct cultural understanding of Detroit, by selecting aspects which both emphasize and deemphasize certain historical events. Cosmology offers the kinds of stories that make the past meaningful in practical and mundane ways, and the narrative pattern of these stories frames comeback in the present.

In a general sense, understanding the present requires an understanding of the past, while an understanding of comeback requires an understanding of how Detroiters make sense of their own world. More specifically, time and temporality are important in Detroit, not only because of central ideas concerning comeback, but because the city is filled with ruptures that destabilize conventional notions of how time looks, feels and operates within a city.

To illustrate how these ruptures appear at the level of experience, I turn to ethnography. In 2016, a section of Detroit's main street, Woodward Avenue, was undergoing major construction work related to the building of the "QLINE", a streetcar system intended to traverse the increasingly white and prosperous city center. In the words of "QLINE" itself, it is involved in turning Detroit into the "transportation city of the future" (QLINE 2018: 1), and this "embodies a future where the local region thrives as one" (ibid: 7).

This urban future was introduced by ordinary means, as roaring machines and workers carefully laid down rail upon rail along Woodward. On the other hand, it gave rise to a less common sight. While half of the work crews were busy installing rails, the other half were busy removing rails from the same street, remnants of a streetcar system which had once been

the largest in the nation and had been paved over in the 1950s as public-transport policy shifted from rail to bus (Schramm & Henning 1978; Schramm et al. 1980). A past was being excavated and removed in order to make way for a future, even though this future simultaneously represented a return to the very past that was being removed.

The backdrop to this scene was the hazy silhouette of the Renaissance Center. Its five interconnected towers were intended to act as a catalyst for the city's comeback by revitalizing the economy of downtown Detroit. At its inception, it represented the world's largest private development. In 1976, General Motors executive predicted that it would bring about a "reversal of the population and business exodus over the next five to seven years" (Detroit News 2001). More than half a century later, its five interconnected towers remain a past future; a monument to a comeback that never came.

This brief description illustrates that time is not always represented as a linear past, present and future in Detroit. Sometimes, the order is ruptured and mixed up. The emically ubiquitous term 'comeback' is an example of this type of rupture because its trajectory is at odds with the commonplace temporal order. It is even anathema to the common understanding of the word trajectory itself, defined by The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (n.d.) as "the curved path of something that has been fired, hit or thrown into the air". Comeback is the curve that returns; it is a loop, a circle, an elliptical orbit.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have argued that Americans think of time through spatial metaphors. People and things can be "ahead" of their time, shifting pressing items "up" on the agenda and moving "forward" into the future. The past is usually construed as "behind" the present. Such linear and progressive models figure heavily in the study of gentrification, which has been framed through models of "waves" (Smith 2002) or "evolution" (Carpenter & Lees 1995), or "stage-models" (Ley 1996), a process that moves from one end to another. However, what does "forward" and "backward" mean in terms of a loop? Which way is it moving? Is the future that comeback is oriented towards ahead of us, or behind us in the past?

This sense of temporal disorientation is not unique to the phenomenon of comeback. It is not a bubble in which the normal order of past-present-future is confused, superimposed on a more conventional ordering of time. Instead, the temporality of comeback reflects what could be called the temporal substrate of Detroit because the city itself is full of these ruptures and this temporal untidiness. If we understand this relation between substrate and surface, we are better positioned to comprehend why this urban world has such a penchant for using words such as comeback, re-making or

renaissance in order to understand itself. Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) insight that time is understood through metaphors of space helps to clarify this.

The physical and material aspects of any city degrade over time[13]. Urban residents, and their governments, expend labor and capital to counteract this degradation. Recurring or daily activities such as cleaning, repainting and renovating, keep the material city, and perceptions of it, in what could be termed a state of temporal lock-down. The most prominent example of temporal lock-down can be found in the so-called "historic" areas of a city, which planners and laborers tend to make into the fixed material representation of a past lifted out of time. These areas have escaped the most telling effect of time: degradation.

My point is that maintenance of space should be viewed as maintenance of time because understandings of time often derive from understandings of space. Acknowledging this relationship between space and time helps recognize that the unchecked decay of Detroit, its landscapes of abandonment, are simultaneously landscapes where the present is littered with its past. Abandoned factories, dwellings and infrastructure, and with them past futures, all cling to the present in Detroit. In many other cities, these remnants would have been demolished, replaced or rehabilitated long ago. This makes Detroit different, and I would argue that this difference in space affords different experiences of time, and of the passing of time.

Moving through Detroit is to interact with what Adam's (1998: 32) has called "timescapes", i.e., the context that "refers not only to spatial but temporal locations and horizons". Similarly, these experiences form what Deleuze (1994: 81) has called "the paradox of contemporaneity", which suggests that the "past and the present do not denote two successive moments, but two elements which coexist" (Deleuze 1991: 59). Past and present are intimately, visibly and materially entwined in the landscape and "timescapes" of Detroit.

Comeback, which is situated in a present but oriented toward a future, involves ambiguous directions. The past and the future coexist in Detroit and overlap at times, seeping into the present. Areas that are currently undergoing a process of gentrification are areas where the gentry once lived. The "white bubble" at the center of the city, where newcomers are criticized for living separately from "native" Detroiters, is also where white pioneers and settlers lived separated from the indigenous and outlying societies at the city's inception. Even contemporary and utopic visions of

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[13] See Graham and Thrift (2007) for a wider discussion on the role of maintenance and repair in cities. This discussion does not, however, focus on the subject of time that I am highlighting here.

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comeback, framed through a proliferation of urban farms and bicycle lanes, lead both forward and backward. These visions were equally fashionable in the late 1800s, when mayor Pingree launched his "potato patch plan", and when the common mode of transportation was the bicycle.

The reason why I devote two chapters to discussing the city's past and how it has been made meaningful, even though my subject matter is placed in the present, is because the past, present and future of Detroit are not like separate beads on a piece of wire. By seeing the "present in the past" and the "past in the present", I wish to frame the trajectory of both Detroit and its comeback in circular, rather than linear, terms. A metaphor of time to fit this space would be less like an arrow flying forward, and more like an old Motown record, going round and round over the course of generations.

At the center of this spinning record are the struggles over space, and questions about who belongs in the city and to whom the city belongs. These struggles and questions are actualized in the contemporary comeback of Detroit, but they have been actualized many times before. It is the circularity of comeback – its rotating motion of returning – that motivates this part of my thesis. In Detroit, the past is not only behind us, but also in the here and now, and probably ahead of us too.

History

> Those who organized the colony in the wilderness of the lakes, came not because of religious persecution, nor to live under a government of their choice: money and adventure were the objects they sought.
>
> Farmer (1890: 765)

> Karl Marx produced the indispensable theory. Lenin applied the theory with his sense of large-scale social organization. And Henry Ford made the work of the socialist state possible.
>
> Diego Rivera (quoted in Lee 2005: 209)

Economic and racial struggles had a foundational impact on Detroit's history. Glancing at the titles of some of the most cited works on the city's history reveals a clear leitmotif in its historiography[14].

Much of the city's popular history is oriented toward the 21st century and the postwar era. This orientation is understandable. The assembly line, and the rise and eventual decline of wealth and industry, intensified struggles, projecting them with force across a multitude of fields, scales and actors. Moreover, much of this history is engaging, not only in terms of the subject matter itself, but because its writers and professional narrators are intimately connected to a present. Writing the history of Detroit is not only about relaying distant historical facts, but also involves engaging and connecting with the present through a form of detective work, often looking at clues as to what went wrong in the city.

This chapter reflects my concern with how underlying and structural forces related to the social and spatial ordering of society produce similarly structured relations across time. This issue involves discussing the postwar

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[14] Consider, for instance, titles such as Detroit: City of Race and Class Violence (Widick 1972); Violence in the Model City (Fine 2007); The Detroit Riot of 1967 (Locke 1969); Nightmare in Detroit: A Rebellion and Its Victims (Sauter & Hines 1968); Detroit: I Do Mind Dying (Georgakas & Surkin 1998); Detroit And The Problem of Order (Schneider 1980); Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor and Race in a Modern American City (Thompson 2001); Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit (Manning 1997); and Sugrue's (1996) seminal piece: The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit.

era and the 20th century, but also necessarily leads further back in time. After all, there was a Detroit before Ford and the automobile. In some respects, Ford and the automobile represent a continuation, rather than a break, in the social and spatial order of the city, albeit through novel and previously undreamt-of power and resources.

The narrative I produce in this chapter is abbreviated and condensed. I paint with broad strokes and leave a great deal untouched. My ambition has been to impose a sense of order and coherence on the city's evolution which can help understand the comeback of today. Since the contemporary comeback of Detroit actualizes questions about who belongs in the city and to whom the city belongs, I ask this question of its past. In this way, I examine the foundations on which the social and spatial order rest, and how this order has transformed and stabilized over time.

It is impossible to understand the social and spatial ordering that developed in Detroit without taking certain geological facts into account. At the end of the last ice age, retreating glaciers left most of Southeast Michigan extremely flat. The terrain lacks major rivers, except for the Detroit river[15]. There are no massive swamps, no large mountains, no deep valleys and no deserts around Detroit. Recurring natural disasters like earthquakes, droughts, flooding, forest fires or tornados are rare. Its current status as a sprawling, low-density metropolis would have been unattainable elsewhere, in locations where the natural terrain places stronger restrictions on the price and availability of buildable land. As Galster (2012: 47) rightly emphasizes, the physical conditions of Detroit's surrounding landscape have been "benignly permissive" for the type of built environment the city came to exhibit, especially after the advent of the automobile.

Clearing and ordering Detroit – the first 100 years

This section highlights two major tensions in terms of Detroit's early history. Although these involve a distant time period, I sketch some of the antecedent conditions which have generated a contingency of choice in later time periods, thereby setting up specific paths for urban development in Detroit. One salient tension in terms of the city's contemporary comeback is that those who live there now will be supplanted by white newcomers. Another, related tension is between suburb and city, which will be explored in detail in the following chapter. Both are complicated issues in the present, and my ambition here is to uncover their deeper historical roots.

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[15] The Detroit river is not technically a river but a strait.

A conventional narrative (Kinney 2018) of Detroit's history begins in 1701 when French settlers arrived at the base of the Detroit river, at the site of today's downtown skyscrapers.[16] In other words, the conventional narrative begins with the arrival of whites and wealth. However, like other places in America, indigenous communities and settlements predated this arrival. Mays has suggested (2015: 28) that it is more accurate to perceive Detroit, at its very inception, as "a contested space on many levels". By 1710 Detroit was "made up of diverse inhabitants who dwelled together in unsettling intimacy: indigenous people of the Huron, Ottawa, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Miami societies, French people from New France and old France, the children of Indian and French unions, and enslaved people of indigenous descent" (Miles 2017: 11).

This racial diversity reflected a division of labor for Detroit's economy which was centered on one thing: furs. As Hyde (2011: 19) notes, furs "dominated commerce in North America and provided the underpinning for its first capitalist boom". Detroit quickly became an important node in an economic system that linked the European and American continents, and which ultimately drove European expansion westward in the New World. Its geographical position and its proximity to vast waterways meant that the city could access the untapped potential of large swaths of land with fur-bearing animals. Although the automobile industry in the 20th century comes to mind in thinking of Detroit and the vulnerability of "mono-economies", the city's reliance on a singular product of export has a historical precedent.

The political economy of Detroit's first century was dominated by typical forms of colonial extraction, whose social organization rested on established forms of racial hierarchy. Native tribes hunted animals and traded their furs with French settlers at Detroit, who then forwarded them onwards. The relatively low costs of extraction enabled great profits to be

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[16] The French commandant who founded Detroit was named Antoine Laumet, but he is best known today as Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac, which was his self-fashioned alias in the New World. He also came with a self-fashioned "impressive noble pedigree […] the title of esquire, a coat of arms […] and a father who was a counselor in the prestigious *parlement* of Toulouse" (Zoltvany 1982: 1, italics in original). Cadillac has been described both as "one of the few great early heroes in North American history" (Laut 1931: 15), and later as "one of the more interesting scoundrels of the period" (Eccles 1983: 218). Writing to French officials in 1701 about the "luxurious grass" and the "water of crystal clearness", how "the skies are always serene", and how the forests "form a charming perspective" (Farmer 1890: 11), Cadillac is probably the earliest recorded example of civic boosterism in Detroit, a practice which has flourished ever since.

derived from this trade, which were important for whites and indigenous groups alike[17].

The unsustainable character and eventual decline of the fur trade, with "its rapid movement westward as one beaver population after another was hunted out" (Wolf 2010: 161), would not only alter the city's economic base, but also its social and spatial orderings. Agriculture would eventually supplant furs as the staple export of Detroit. This shift is important because agriculture demands cultivated land, and people to cultivate it. As the colonial regime shifted from extraction to one-settler colonialism (Wolfe 2006), it became increasingly important to replace the original population with a new society of settlers. As indigenous groups became economically unnecessary in the agricultural economy, they simultaneously became more politically "threatening"[18]. Racist ideologies, economics and politics would give the American empire the pretexts it needed for launching strikes against indigenous societies, at times culminating in acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing[19].

To further pave the way for settlers who could grow crops, the land itself had to be ordered. This was carried out through the Land Ordinance Act, adopted in 1785 by the Congress of the Confederation[20]. The Act created a system by which settlers could purchase land titles in the undeveloped west, thereby providing a stream of revenue for Congress. For this market to function, land had to be surveyed and organized through a "rational"[21] order. Thus, the land of Detroit, and its surrounding areas, was surveyed and divided into square-mile sections, where local political units known as townships could be created by joining 36 of these squares into a bigger one. This larger square could then be joined to create counties.

This particular way of ordering space has exerted a tremendous influence on the region's development in its own right, compounded by

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[17] As Dowd (2004) has argued, the trade with furs was not simply a way to amass wealth for Native Americans, although some did make impressive fortunes as a result of it. It also served to harness and consolidate political power in relation to friends, kinsmen and other tribes.

[18] Equally, it should be noted that, until "the end of the eighteenth century … native American groups were sought as allies by the rival European powers engaged in political and military competition" (Wolf 2010: 193).

[19] Today's Wayne county, in which Detroit is situated, is named in honor of one of its most "successful" ethnic cleansers, Anthony Wayne, nicknamed "Mad Anthony", who pacified the "threat" with a series of military campaigns in 1794.

[20] The governing and legislative body for the United States at the time.

[21] As Opie (1994: 19) writes, this ordering of the land "offered to newcomers an unexpected sense of security and safety not available elsewhere, replacing an amorphous and chaotic wilderness with the human world of rational familiarity". Through this, "[l]and became a standardized, interchangeable commodity, even though its quality varied widely".

Jeffersonian principles involving a government that was close to its people. In keeping with this ideal, Michigan's state constitution of 1837 gave townships and municipalities the power to decide how land should be used, while easing the incorporation of small squares into a municipality that would be self-governing. This was meant to provide a strong foundation for local democracy, and for municipalities that were able to act in ways they and their constituencies wished.

One effect of this ordering is that the urbanized region of metropolitan Detroit is not a single political and economic unit. The population of the region today, which consists of more than five million people, is organized into six different counties and 185 independent townships and cities. In fact, the city of Detroit completely engulfs two other cities, Highland Park and Hamtramck, which have their own mayors, police departments and fire departments, for example.

During later periods of rapid urban growth, the city of Detroit would expand by incorporating outlying units. Between 1900 and 1925, the city of Detroit increased fivefold by annexing outlying municipalities and townships. For most of the region's history, annexation was not regarded as problematic. Those who lived outside the city could look forward to annexation, as this type of shift in jurisdiction would mean the extension of infrastructure and services into what were then undeveloped and rural areas.

Since 1926, the city of Detroit has remained a unit, while a multitude of rural lands have been incorporated into new suburban cities and townships. It is important to highlight that the process of incorporation was never undertaken "for high-minded Jeffersonian principles but to protect valuable industrial tax base assets" (Galster 2012: 53). The incorporation of land into self-governing municipalities produced many small political units that had to compete over the flows of wealth and people within the region.

In sum, Detroit was founded on exploitation, racial hierarchies, segregation, a desire for profit, the collapse of ecosystems, dispossession and acts of violence. These mechanisms effectively cleared the land on which modern-day Detroit would emerge. Furthermore, beyond the physical sense of land, the indigenous populations of Detroit were also cleared from the realms of memory, history and culture. Most of my interlocutors in Detroit suffered from a historical blind spot regarding Native Americans. Commonly, the absence of Native Americans was framed through the trope of the "vanishing Indian" (e.g. Berry 1960; Dippie 1982; O'Brien 2010),

the idea that the indigenous population of Detroit had "disappeared" long ago[22].

The particular "rational" ordering of the land produced conditions that became beneficial to the large industrial corporations which emerged later. These corporations could establish themselves, or promise to establish themselves, in municipalities that gave them the best offer in terms of taxes or free land for development. In a sense, this ordering of land and the emphasis on local democracy produced "intense parochialism, enshrined in these tiny political units, eroded a sense of common community, encouraged cut-throat interjurisdictional competition, abetted stereotyping, and reinforced inequalities along class and race lines" (Galster 2012: 54).

Modernization and the emergence of a spatial pattern

Detroit experienced a great influx of migrants in the 1800s with the completion of large infrastructural projects in the east. Most notable is the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, which enabled swifter, and less expensive movement of goods and people between Detroit and New York. Most migrants did not remain in Detroit. Many were settlers, heading westward, but as the historic census of the city showcases, a considerable number would remain in Detroit and make it their home. The population had risen to over 20,000 by the 1850s, and it was rapidly approaching 300,000 by the end of the century.

From the early days of settlement to the mid-1800s, Detroit was characterized by a spatial order that emphasized integration of activities and proximity between different groups[23]. The Detroit of the 1830s was a place where "stores and workshops mixed with residences in almost every corner of the city, the fashionable elite lived on any number of streets, and the working class resided almost everywhere" (Schneider 1980: 10-11). It was

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[22] In examining the history of the Fitzgerald neighborhood during the 1960s, geographer William Bunge (2011) observed that, whereas Blacks were historically deprived of their last names in Detroit, Native Americans were deprived of all names. Following a series of interviews, Bunge (2011: 64) concluded that "the Indians did not exist, period! No names, not one at all, of the Indians in the Meyer's Woods in the 1920s was recalled by any of the farm families". Even when confronted with photographs and maps, interviewees were unable to recall the names of native families living right next to them as their neighbors. In the words of one farmer they "did not belong there. They were nothing."

[23] The Detroit City Directory from 1873 (MacCabe 1837: 43-80) provides a case in point. Along Cass Avenue, in close spatial proximity, lived a considerable variety of professions, representing the vastly different social classes in Detroit. Lawyers, manufacturers, wagon makers, blacksmiths, mariners and masons, for example, lived next door to each other.

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common to find the homes "of some of Detroit's richest men […] but a long stone's throw from cheap bordellos and flophouses" (ibid: 49). The spaces where Detroiters lived, worked and consumed were not separated areas or zones, nor did Detroiters of different classes live in separate, segregated and socially homogenous neighborhoods, which is the pervasive norm of contemporary cities in general, and Detroit specifically.

By the mid-1800s this spatial order had begun to change. The overarching tendency for specialization and separation first became visible during this period in the field of urban retail, where "the general store, in which were gathered articles of every kind, gave place to stores making a specialty of some one kind or class of goods" (Farmer 1890: 770). However, this tendency was also visible in the design of residential houses, where reform-minded architects sought to separate private and public areas by creating new spaces where guests were welcomed and entertained, such as the "front parlor" (Clark 1976). Returning to the earlier discussion above on space and place as a form of scale, the space of separation and specialization can be said to have become manifest through a variety of places, representing a change that was equally abstract and concrete.

It is important not to exaggerate the role of physical proximity in "pre-modern" Detroit, nor to equate it with contemporary understandings of social proximity. Residents of "pre-modern" Detroit did not have the same status, even if they lived on the same street. On the other hand, rich and poor did see each other daily. Each was a part of the other's everyday experience of the city. Even if they did not interact or form close and intimate relations, they were not strangers in their everyday life.

If what psychologists call the "mere-exposure effect" (Kahneman 2011) is taken into consideration, where people are likely to perceive the familiar as safe, physical proximity may also have affected perceptions of safety. It is at least clear that when Detroit became "modern", a host of new social fears gradually emerged. As separation grew, wealthy Detroiters increasingly began to fear certain types of poor people such as "*loafers, saloon loungers, vagrants*" (Schneider 1980: 84, italics in original), and they began to fear "as much a 'dangerous area' as a 'dangerous class'" (ibid.). The new and "modern" ordering of the city conditioned the segregated spatial patterns that would later become dominant[24].

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[24] These patterns were a reason for the emergence of a professional and preventive police force in Detroit, the "cop on the beat", and segregation made their work "much more effective if the dangerous elements confined themselves to circumscribed areas; and key properties and important citizens could be that much better protected if they, too, were confined to certain areas" (Schneider 1980: 85).

During the latter half of the 1800s, the city saw a proliferation of ethnic, and/or racial spaces. By 1850, half of the city's residents were foreign born; the largest group was Irish, who were then supplanted by Germans. Together with the small Black population, both would become the forerunners of contemporary spatial patterns in Detroit, establishing themselves on what was then the periphery of development in the city, generally in single-family homes.

These groups established neighborhoods which were residential, rather than mixed-use. They were low-density and identified strongly with an ethnic or racial group. The continuing in-migration from these groups was met with hostility and suspicion from the groups who had already established themselves in Detroit, such as those of French or English descent. Attempts were made, for instance, to curtail and ban the beerhalls and beer gardens that fulfilled important social functions for the German community. In turn, Germans would become embroiled in street-level conflicts with members of the Black community over brothels and establishments associated with vice (Schneider 1980). An example of the growing importance of geographically bounded ethnic neighborhoods in Detroit involved the case of an Irish Catholic church. It had been active in the central part of the city, but in 1849 was lifted from its foundations and moved 15 blocks away into Corktown, which had then become the primary area for Irish migrants and their descendants (Vineyard 1976).

The tendency toward greater spatial and social segregation based on ethnic, racial and economic classifications ran parallel to transformations in the city's economic base. Agriculture, which had supplanted furs, was in turn being supplanted by industry. By the latter half of the 1800s, Detroit emerged as an industrial powerhouse. The Michigan Car Company and the Detroit Car Wheel Company, both under the same management, became industry-leading businesses in the manufacture of train cars[25]. Around these larger corporations grew a host of smaller ones, such as steam forges and furnaces, banks and financial institutions, housing developers and public transit operators. All of these laid important foundations for the extraordinary rise of the automobile industry that came to define the city in the 20th century.

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[25] According to Farmer (1890: 804), "they occupy thirty acres, and when fully employed require 2500 men, and can turn out thirty cars, three hundred and fifty car wheels, one hundred axles, and sixty tons of iron per day".

Wealth, order and precarity in the Motor City

The automobile industry would have far-reaching consequences for Detroit. Importantly, the rise of the automobile industry created enormous wealth in the city, which was instrumental in stabilizing the modern trajectories discussed in the previous section. However, in ordering the city spatially and socially, the wealth of the automobile industry was also instrumental in establishing novel forms of discipline and precarity in Detroiters. This precarity would, in turn, further exacerbate social tensions within the city, and also give momentum to the racial and economic segregation discussed in the next section.

The first company that started making cars in Detroit was The Detroit Automobile Company in 1899. Fifteen years later, 43 different automobile manufacturers had established themselves in the city. Initially, automobile manufacture required modest amounts of capital, but this would change rapidly as production of cars and the demand for them increased dramatically (Galster 2012: 76). The early, entrepreneurial phase of automobile manufacturing was characterized by fierce competition between a great number of companies in Detroit, but this number would dwindle over time, just as it did nationally. In 1909 there were 272 car manufacturers in the U.S. By 1941 there were nine, despite immense growth in the industry (Klepper 2010: 17).

Detroit established itself early as the capital of automobile manufacturing, becoming known as the "Motor City". Seven of the nation's top ten producers were based in the city by 1910, controlling 85% of the market share by 1925 (Galster 2012: 76-77). Henry Ford came to personify much of this industrial legacy of Detroit. Yezbick (2016: 6) argues that school children "are taught the story of Henry Ford as if he were a totemic ancestor", and that he occupies a "larger space in the collective minds of Michiganders" (ibid: 42). Ford's innovations in the field of production and in the field of management ultimately had a huge impact on the city (and economic organization more generally). This is evident not only in terms of production and management themselves, but also in the chain of events that would unfold afterwards.

Ford is remembered for the assembly line, an innovation that proved an enormous advantage in making automobiles, as well as other consumer products, more quickly and cheaply than ever before. In less than a year of tweaking the assembly line, the time it took to produce a Model T Ford had gone from 12½ hours to 93 minutes, lowering the cost of production, which further lowered the price of the product and, in turn, stimulated public demand for automobiles (Anderson 2014). The method of assembly line production has since become the dominant model of production globally. It is

difficult to imagine what contemporary cities would be like if it were not for assembly lines and automobiles.

The manufacturing of cars on the assembly line increased wealth and productivity, but it also had other consequences, some of which were not apparent at its inception. One consequence involved the role of the laborer. The assembly line transformed occupations requiring highly skilled craftsmanship to occupations that required little or no training. This provided unrivaled job opportunities for unskilled and untrained laborers, but it also made the individual laborer highly expendable, since a great number of people could perform the same task. Another consequence was that the assembly line oriented industrial development toward the horizontal plane, making factories relatively low in terms of height, but long and wide, so that large parcels of land were required. The assembly line reinforced urban sprawl, and also the uneven distribution of wealth across the jurisdictional entities that would vie for industrial development. A third consequence was that the assembly line gave management unprecedented control over employees' time and workload, since they could change the speed at which the line was moving. This was a source of continuous contention between employees and management (Thompson 2001). In short, the assembly line produced a work environment that most employees found deplorable, an environment conducive to dispute, unrest, sabotage and strikes. The fact that in 1913 Henry Ford "needed to hire 52,000 workers to maintain an average work force of 14,000" (Galster 2012: 78) is a clear indication that work conditions made it difficult to retain a workforce.

Ford devised a simple but effective "fix" to the problems of retaining workers on the assembly line. The "fix" involved paying the worker higher wages. In 1914 Ford created headlines around the world by announcing that he would double his workers' pay, a move known as his "five dollars a day" policy. Ford also sought to construct a model employee, a model citizen and a model city. His "5 dollars a day" policy came with rules. Many were related to the work of employees, but a surprising number were concerned with the lives they lived outside of work. Employees were obliged to keep their homes clean and decent, to trim their lawns regularly, to abstain from alcohol and from the practice of taking in boarders, and make regular contributions to their savings account. Furthermore, Ford not only laid down the rules, but he also sought confirmation that they were being followed. To that end, he created the Sociological Department of the Ford Motor Company, who sent out inspectors to monitor the habits of

employees. If violations were found, the bonus would be withheld until the employee had made corrections[26].

In more ways than are immediately apparent, the assembly line ultimately disciplined both labor and urban society at large[27]. However, the aspirations and ideals associated with owning a single-family home in Detroit actually predate the assembly line. In the middle of the 1800s, there had been growing fears around the transient labor force in Detroit. This mainly consisted of young bachelors who moved from town to town in search of work, often living with similarly disposed individuals in boarding houses and spending their time at places of amusement, such as pubs, billiards establishments and brothels[28]. As a solution to these social concerns, ownership of a dwelling, physically separate from other dwellings, was not simply a way to live, but was also the way to live *respectably* in Detroit[29]. Thus, Ford's "innovation" involving the spatial pattern of Detroit is less about home ownership itself, and more about the power he and his company had to put it into operation.

Alongside real estate developments and new financial instruments, the fact that automobile manufacturers could pay high wages to unskilled workers would help establish what McCulloch (2015) has described as "Fordist Urbanism". It essentially involves a pattern of sprawling residential settlements dominated by single-family homes. Rather "than self-building incrementally as many cash-poor nineteenth century workers had done, Detroit's similarly cash-poor industrial workers of the 1910s and 1920s could now buy a complete, professionally built home. Large

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[26] The Ford Motor Company also published a series of booklets, with the intention of familiarizing its employees with the company's vision of an ideal citizen. These booklets contained photographs of properties that had been inspected but deemed undesirable. They also showed tenement housing juxtaposed with single-family dwellings, with captions such as "a good representative home owned by a Ford employe [sic]" (unknown author, quoted in Yezbick 2016: 45), underlining the perceived connections between being a homeowner, a model employee and a model citizen.

[27] The paternalistic and "civilizing" aspects of Ford went beyond the confines of Detroit and Michigan, at points even reaching the depths of the Amazonian jungle, as Grandin (2009) has illustrated. Ford's utopic visions of society are, however, best illustrated in the case of Detroit.

[28] From the perspective of an emerging bourgeois elite in Detroit, the transient population was considered a threat to the city. Their "areas were stigmatized, their habitués considered beyond the pale of social normality and degenerated to a potentially dangerous, unpredictable state of random actions" (Schneider 1980: 50).

[29] A Detroit Free Press article from 1867 expresses concern about the potential of Detroit to emulate East Coast cities with working-class tenements. It suggests that "[h]e who owns the roof that covers him and his [...] is a much better citizen, a better Christian, and a happier man" (Schneider 1980: 50).

mortgages telescoped their future earnings into the present, making the kind of formal homebuilding that used to have been [sic] 'by definition' a middle-class activity available to Detroit's 'disciplined' industrial workers" (ibid: 58). This exuberance of wealth did not go unnoticed at the time. A *New York Times* article from 1927 triumphantly proclaims Detroiters to be "the most prosperous slice of average humanity that now exists or that has ever existed" (quoted in Galster 2012: 81).

Home ownership was a source of pride and achievement for many workers. However, as McCulloch's exposition of the period has illustrated, home ownership proved to be a contradictory process. It set up a space of agency for workers, but also a condition of precarity. Importantly, this precarity came from having mortgaged houses based on employment within the automobile industry. The housing boom that followed "Fordist urbanism" would ultimately be "undermined from the beginning by the corporate social control, real estate speculation and the racial segregation of which it was made" (McCulloch 2015: 229). One of the most salient features of this industry is its cyclical instability. It is an industry that is sensitive to the availability of credit and the degree to which consumers have confidence in the general economy. When "the national economy is optimistic and credit is cheap, people buy new vehicles. When unemployment and interest rates rise and uncertainty grows, people drive their old cars a little longer and forego new vehicles" (Galster 2012: 80).

Modern Detroit was founded, both literally and figuratively, on a mono-economy, centered on industries characterized by cyclical instability. When times were "good" there were mass hirings in Detroit, but when times were "bad" there were mass layoffs. Since the capitalist economy regularly fluctuates between "good" and "bad" times, mass hirings gave way to mass layoffs, which then gave way to mass hirings in a vicious circle.

Two important insights can be drawn from how the economy of the Motor City operated. First, over the generations it seems that Detroit has been conditioned to believe in comebacks. Economically, the city has made many comebacks related to the ups and downs of the economy at large, though these fluctuations were especially marked in a city dependent on an industry with cyclical instability. In a culture which is used to this kind of cyclical instability, the basic idea of wealth coming back is not far-fetched, nor necessarily a fantasy.

Second, the ideals of homeownership were realized through loans made available to workers because they earned high wages on the assembly line. However, since the assembly line turned skilled craftsmen into highly replaceable parts, workers, their families, the business they patronized and

the municipality itself became highly vulnerable. The fact that workers built their own single-family homes on the precarity of the automobile industry would also leave homeowners particularly vulnerable to shifts in property values. As a result, the "Motor City" became a place where residents played an active and constant role in defending property values and job security. Routinely and increasingly, the perceived "threat" to these two factors manifested itself in Black people. As a result, both real estate and unionism became sites where whites defended their racial and class positions against the city's growing Black population. This will be explored in the next section.

Segregation and racial tensions in America's boom town

In the 1900s, people from all over the United States and the world at large migrated to Detroit in the hope of a better existence. To many, Detroit was the materialization of the American dream. It was a place where poor and uneducated people could make a living which afforded them a middle-class lifestyle. In per capita terms, the automobile industry made Detroit immensely wealthy and, for a period, the average Detroiter lived in a state of material affluence.

However, these conditions were not possible for everyone. For Black Detroiters, the city did not deliver equal opportunities, middle-class lifestyles or even proper housing. Sharp racial inequalities persisted in Detroit, and these were exacerbated by the precarity of the automobile industry and the housing market.

Between 1900 and 1950, Detroit's population grew quickly. In 1900, the city had 285,000 residents. By 1910, this had grown to 465,000, and by 1920 to 993,000. In 1930, there were 1.5 million residents, and at the peak in the 1950s, the census indicated 1.8 million. Historically, much of the city's labor supply had consisted of European immigrants. The outbreak of both world wars effectively "dried up" this supply and contributed to the beginning of a major shift in the migration routes to Detroit. New workers and residents were increasingly drawn predominately from the nation's southern or more agricultural states, a movement known as the Great Migration[30].

As chapter 4 will show, virtually every new group of people that has established itself in Detroit has been subject to suspicion and hostility from

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[30] During fieldwork, some interlocutors joked, "Detroit is the largest city of the south."

those already there. However, despite this general attitude to new groups, the migration of Blacks became a subject of heightened contention and discussion. Even in more recent narratives of history, the descriptive metaphors used to convey this migration illustrate this point.

The migration of Blacks has regularly been framed in the language of a natural disaster. A quote from Sugrue (1996: 30) illustrates this tendency in a simple sentence which states that "African-Americans continued to *flood* into the city" (Sugrue 1996: 30, emphasis added). Similarly, Thompson (2001: 18, emphasis added) suggested that "Black children *flooded* into city schools". Here, one must remember that both Sugrue and Thompson have produced critical, and illuminating, scholarship on race relations in the city. The use of metaphors of natural disaster is even more pervasive in contemporary and everyday narratives of history. Other groups had previously moved to the city to make it their home, and continued to do so, yet they did not form a "flood" in the way that Black migration has been characterized.

The migration of Blacks from southern agricultural states to industrial cities of the north was driven by several factors. The labor market of the south was undergoing major transformations because the system of labor-intensive share cropping was being replaced by cotton-picking machines. At the same time, new chemical pesticides further reduced the historical reliance on predominately Black, and severely underpaid, farm workers (Lemann 1991). Furthermore, in the face of harsh segregation, discrimination and violence against Blacks, Detroit appeared to be a "land of hope, a 'New Canaan'" (Sugrue 1996: 30). Henry Ford in particular "enjoyed a national reputation as the black man's friend, willing to employ him when others would not" (Thompson 2001: 12).,

Blacks have a long history in Detroit. As Miles (2017) has documented, there were Black slaves as well as indigenous slaves from the onset of French rule, and as noted above, there was a Black population living in close proximity, and ongoing conflict, with the German population in the 1800s. However, for much of the city's history, Blacks have represented a relatively small portion of the population in terms of overall demographics. In 1900, 4,111 of the 285,000 residents were categorized as Black, or about 2% of the city's total population. In 1920, on the other hand, there were around 40,000, and by 1930 this demographic had grown to around 120,000, reaching above 300,000 by 1950.

The organization of the automobile industry both reflected and reinforced racial hierarchies and inequalities. It was more difficult for Blacks to gain employment in the industry compared to whites. The jobs they could access were invariably the most dangerous and arduous, such as

foundry work, while their opportunities for advancement to higher positions were effectively barred by both companies and unions[31] (Thompson 2011).

The spatial and social order of Detroit was a form of acute but obfuscated segregation. Black and white migrants to Detroit were kept physically separate through the areas in which they came to settle. Whereas many white migrants would purchase newly constructed homes in working- and middle-class neighborhoods, Blacks were restricted to Detroit's Lower East Side. Two main areas for Black settlement, Paradise Valley and Black Bottom, grew rapidly during the boom years of the automobile industry. Although they were severely overcrowded with badly maintained tenement buildings, both of these areas were cultural and economic centers for Black America, not just Detroit[32].

Forms of racial segregation have historically differed geographically across the United States. In the south segregation was more visible, where judiciary systems involving Jim Crow laws separated Blacks from whites in a material and spatial sense. In northern cities such as Detroit, this was less overt. No laws stipulated that Blacks had to live in either Black Bottom or Paradise Valley, yet the formation of Black ghettos was the result neither of chance nor of choice.

To understand how this pattern of racial segregation emerged, it is important to consider a variety of forces that were active on a scale ranging from federal policies for homeownership and the practices of financial institutions and insurance agencies, to real estate developers, the activities of

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[31] Several unions which grew alongside the rise of assembly lines would become some of the most influential in America. One reason was the concentration of labor required at a single factory. Another reason was that the assembly line left capital vulnerable to organized labor. Even minor strikes and sabotage had the potential to cripple the assembly line and, due to its vertical nature, effectively shut down the production of entire factories. In response, industrialists would often employ their own "security forces", who sought to control and intimidate union leaders and members (Georgakas & Surkin 1998; Sugrue 1996). Another strategy used by capital to mitigate the powers of unions was to hire Black strikebreakers. This rendered a strike ineffectual, and also fed racial tensions within the ranks of unionized workers. Historically, the issue of race would split the labor force time and again, making it less challenging to capital. The racist ideologies of both corporations and unions eventually led to the formation of increasingly militant and radical Black unions (Georgakas & Surkin 1998). Added to this, the cyclic instability of the automobile industry itself, and its waves of mass layoffs, fomented white fears that Black workers would take "their" jobs, and do so for lower pay and fewer benefits.

[32] In 1946, the Detroit NAACP President Gloster Current would describe the area as a "mixture of everything imaginable – including overcrowding, delinquency and disease. It has glamor, action, religion, pathos. It has brains and organization and business" (quoted in Sugrue 1996: 36).

local homeowners' associations and the gathering of white mobs in the streets. In the absence of clear *de jure* racial segregation, conflicts between whites and Blacks primarily emerged as spatial struggles in Detroit, taking place on factory floors and on neighborhood streets[33].

Although the racial order of space and social relations was hegemonic, it was not absolute. Some Blacks did venture to take up residence outside the area to which most Blacks were confined, but this was a potentially life-threatening practice. The most publicized and memorialized example involves a physician, Ossian Sweet. In 1925, he defended his house against a mob of whites who attempted to drive him out for several nights. His defense resulted in the death of a white man and the injury of another, leading to the arrest of Sweet and his friends. He was tried, but eventually acquitted of murder (Boyle 2005).

As Galster (2012), Sugrue (1996) and Freund (2007) have argued, physical violence, however noteworthy or brutal, was not the primary cause of Detroit's extremely pronounced pattern of racial segregation. Of greater concern were the forms of financial discrimination which, on the one hand, severely limited Black individuals in terms of accessing the capital necessary to purchase a single-family home in Detroit, and on the other hand, enabled whites to buy these dwellings.

The public-housing policies of the Roosevelt and Truman administrations may not have intended to discriminate on racial grounds, but locally elected officials who put them into operation used them for this purpose. The Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC), formed under Roosevelt in 1933, made long-term mortgages more accessible to citizens who wished to purchase or construct a single-family home. The intention was to stabilize the housing market, which was faltering at the time. Following "long-held real estate biases" (Galster 2012: 139), HOLC's concern was that real estate values would drop if all white neighborhoods became mixed, or if the racial and ethnic composition shifted altogether, since this would threaten the value of the property that served as collateral for the mortgage.

To ensure the value of their collateral, HOLC produced maps of neighborhoods and rated them A, B, C or D in relation to how "secure" the value of property was perceived to be. Buying or constructing a dwelling in a top-rated neighborhood made federally subsidized credit readily available,

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[33] The fact that the spatial struggles formed a crucible for racial conflict was noted by municipal agencies. In 1955, Detroit's Commission on Community Relations underlined that the most brutal forms of violence had their own geography, taking place "on the periphery of the area most heavily populated by Negroes [since] there is a strong feeling in this 'border' area that it is being 'invaded' by colored people" (quoted in Thompson 2001: 17).

whereas doing the same thing in a low-rated neighborhood did not. In the 1930s, two-thirds of Detroit fell into category A, B or C. No Blacks lived in A or B-rated neighborhoods, and a mean of only 0.3% lived in C neighborhoods. This left the rest of Detroit's Black population firmly in category-D neighborhoods.

Although HOLC loans came to an end in 1936, the system of grading neighborhoods in relation to their racial and ethnic composition would persist in the programs for mortgage insurance developed by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), and later the Veteran's Administration. For instance, by 1940, "44,000 mortgages in metropolitan Detroit had been backed by the FHA insurance; none were issued to Blacks" (Sugrue 1996: 43), and a "mere 1,500 of the 186,000 properties constructed in the metropolitan Detroit area in the 1940s were open to Blacks" (ibid.).

So strict were these categorizations of neighborhoods on which the financing of properties rested that a Black person simply could not buy a property in a top-rated neighborhood through the federal programs that subsidized home ownership. If he or she did so, that neighborhood would be rendered ineligible for subsidies, since its rating would drop due to their presence[34].

The prolific use of protective covenants also barred the entrance of Black homeowners and kept the racial homogeneity of Detroit's neighborhoods intact. Protective covenants were an innovation of the early 20th century, and were effectively a clause in property deeds which aimed to maintain the characteristics of the neighborhood, from both an architectural and a social perspective[35]. The use of protective covenants in keeping racial and

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[34] Neighborhood classifications also led to the erection of new and physical boundaries in Detroit. This was the case in the Eight Mile-Wyoming area in the 1940s, when a developer who had proposed the construction of an all white neighborhood was denied FHA funding due to the development's proximity to an all Black neighborhood. This problem was, however, "solved" through a "compromise with the FHA, garnering loans and mortgage guarantees in exchange for the construction of a foot-thick, six-foot-high wall, running for a half-mile on the property line separating the Black and white neighborhoods" (Sugrue 1996: 64).

[35] Protective covenants were used to place restrictions on what could be done with a property or piece of land, such as subdividing it into smaller rental units, or detailing the signs which could be placed on the property. However, this was also used to restrict the purchase and use of properties by racial and ethnic minorities (Weiss 1987). After surveying ten thousand subdivisions in Detroit, Harold Black (1947, quoted in Sugrue 1996: 44), found that more "than 80 percent of property in Detroit outside of the inner city (bounded by Grand Boulevard) fell under the scope of racial restrictions […] deeds in every subdivision developed between 1940 and 1947 specified the exclusion of Blacks". Furthermore, areas covered by restrictive covenants were awarded higher ratings by the neighborhood appraiser from HOLC. Real-estate brokers and developers were therefore actively

ethnic minorities at bay was challenged in Detroit's local courts. The matter would remain unresolved until the decision by the Supreme Court on Shelley vs. Kramer deemed the practice illegal in 1948. This decision did not diminish the role of protective covenants altogether. It only made it illegal to issue them on the explicit basis of race or ethnicity. Covenants restricting lot size, taking in boarders or multiple family occupancy could not be legally challenged, for instance, so clauses continued to be included in deeds that were particularly restrictive for Black, and other minority households in Detroit's white neighborhoods.

The difficult conditions facing racial and ethnic minorities in Detroit were further exacerbated by the policies adopted by real estate agents, who had pledged to follow the "Code of Ethics" set out by the National Association of Real Estate Boards. This stipulated that agents would "never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any industry whose presence will be clearly detrimental to real estate values" (Sugrue 1996: 46). Agents who violated this code would be "shunned" by real estate organizations, and ran the risk of being subject to harassment and boycott by white customers.

In the same way as the real estate market rejected Black clients and pushed for the implementation of restrictive covenants, bankers avoided lending to potential Black homeowners. They were supported by the appraisal practices of federal institutions which had deemed Black neighborhoods too risky for mortgages. As Sugrue (1996: 34) notes, areas which ultimately became predominantly Black were simultaneously those which had the "city's oldest housing stock, in most need of ongoing maintenance, repair and rehabilitation". These areas were associated with low-paying jobs, historically low levels of wealth and an inability to obtain loans, along with unscrupulous landlords who charged exorbitant rents in overcrowded areas. This meant that capital was not made available for the improvement and maintenance of properties in which Blacks lived.

The deterioration of housing fed into, and strengthened racial inequality, thereby reinforcing the prevailing social and spatial order of the city. First, the poor material state served as a pretext for the demolition of Black neighborhoods when the city undertook large infrastructural projects such as building highways and hospitals. This destruction gradually limited the housing available to Blacks even further. Second, the ongoing decay of Black neighborhoods also offered "seemingly convincing evidence to white homeowners that Blacks were feckless and irresponsible and fueled

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encouraging the establishment of neighborhood-improvement associations as a tool through which residents could enforce compliance with these covenants.

white fears that Blacks would ruin any white neighborhood they moved into […] deterioration seemed definite proof to bankers that Blacks were indeed a poor credit risk, and justified disinvestment in predominately minority neighborhoods" (Sugrue 1996: 36). Thus, the poverty created by racial inequalities was transformed into empirical evidence for white racial superiority, at the same time legitimizing the need for racial segregation to protect the values of white homes.

Depopulation, disinvestment and violence

At the beginning of the 1950s, Detroit was at its peak economically and demographically. Close to two million people lived in the city, and only New York, Chicago and Philadelphia were more populous in the U.S. During the Second World War, Detroit had added another moniker to its list, "The Arsenal of Democracy", because no other American city had contributed more to the Allied war effort in terms of production. The assembly lines of the automobile industry were redeployed to assemble aircraft, tanks and jeeps at a staggering rate. During the war, and even previously, during the Great Depression, the construction of new housing had been modest, especially if the city's increasing numbers of residents and workers are taken into consideration. Many areas were therefore severely overcrowded by the end of World War II.

The city's return to a civilian economy heralded a rapid boom in the development of new housing. Despite the many ups and downs of both the national and global economy since the 1950s, and despite the effects of cyclical instability within the automobile industry, this real estate development has continued unabated to the present day. Galster (2012: 217) has estimated that, since the 1950s "developers built many more additional dwellings – an average of over ten thousand per year – than the net growth in households required".

One of the most characteristic patterns in postwar development in America was its rapid and massive suburbanization, although it seems reasonable to assume that this pattern of development would have emerged earlier, and in force, had it not been for depressions and world wars. Suburbs had existed in Detroit since the 1800s and had been connected to the city by various streetcar systems and interurban rail lines. Postwar suburbanization, however, came to rely on other infrastructures, such as roads and highways. This reliance on cars and highways resulted in a much more fragmented and dispersed pattern of development than rails, and having

access to an automobile was necessary for households that wanted access to spaces of employment and consumption.

The pattern of modernization, which I identified as emerging in the mid-1800s in Detroit, accelerated rapidly under this form of auto-centric development. Indeed, its characteristic form seems to have matured during the postwar era, and still represents the reality of contemporary suburbia, involving housing subdivision, office parks, industrial zones and giant malls, all connected and divided by roads and highways.

The development of large-scale housing subdivisions produced a striking homogeneity of dwellings. Properties within these new suburban areas were often identical. As Duany et al. (2010) have argued, this was accomplished out of a concern for land values and profits. This way of organizing housing creates strong spatial and social filters, where people of different means and positions move into spaces which are removed from one another.

A primary consequence of this spatial and social pattern was that the geographical distances grew wider between groups in society with unequal status and capital. Added to this was the Jeffersonian legacy of home rule, where suburbs were incorporated as an entity in their own right, independent of the city of Detroit. In the 1800s, rich and poor Detroiters had to share the same city and the same streets. In today's metropolitan Detroit, which gained momentum during the postwar era, Detroiters increasingly lived in different cities, both literally and figuratively. Thus, the metropolitan region of Detroit has some of the nation's poorest zip codes alongside some of its richest, and each one largely fends for itself.

The existence of suburbs, and a desire to dwell at a distance from the city, are nothing new *per se*. A clay tablet in cuneiform, dated 539 B.C., proclaims that "Our property seems to be the most beautiful in the world. It is so close to Babylon that we enjoy all the advantages of the city, and yet when we come home we are away from all the noise and dust" (Jackson 1985: 12). According to Jackson (1985: 6), "Suburbia symbolizes the fullest, most unadulterated embodiment of contemporary culture; it is a manifestation of such fundamental characteristics of American society as conspicuous consumption, a reliance upon the private automobile, upward mobility, the separation of the family into nuclear units, the widening division between work and leisure, and a tendency toward racial and economic exclusiveness".

Although the observations in the above illustration are valid, simplifying and reducing suburbia to a single phenomenon is not particularly productive. It is important to recognize suburbia's mythical properties, the ways in which the "presence of the suburban 'other' has had significant

ramifications for American culture" and how "[o]ften, urbanists have denigrated American suburbs for their conformity, mediocrity, physical and social ills" (McDonogh 2006: 471-72). Suburbia exhibits both dystopic and utopic qualities. For those who dwell in, and develop suburbia, its spaces can evoke sensations of comfort, nature, revitalization and family (Fishman 1987; Beauregard 2006). Additionally, prevailing notions of suburbia's intrinsic whiteness are a social perception, rather than a social reality. As Wiese's (2004: 5) work demonstrates, "[s]cholarly neglect notwithstanding, African Americans lived in and moved to suburbs throughout the twentieth century, and Black communities served as a social and spatial basis for expanded suburbanization over time".

Bearing in mind the dualities and nuances of suburbia, I frame the desire for a suburban life as a necessary condition for suburbanization, recognizing at the same time that it is not, in itself, a sufficient condition in the case of Detroit. In the postwar period, many Detroiters wished for a suburban dwelling, which they took to mean a single-family home and auto-centric infrastructure. However, there was also a desire to leave the city of Detroit. In tandem with suburbia's strong pull factors, or its utopic qualities, there were important push factors at play, in particular racial tensions which made urban life appear more dystopic.

Racial tensions had been a prominent feature of the first half of the 20th century. Race riots had erupted in the summer of 1943, causing 34 casualties, 25 of whom were Black, and injuring 433, 75% of whom were Black. These deaths and injuries were mainly at the hands of white policemen and National Guardsmen (Capeci & Wilkerson 1990). In the postwar period, the racial order of Detroit came under increasing pressure and challenge, in the courts and on the ground, as Black households moved out of the overcrowded ghettos.

White homeowners' fears of both the prospect and the reality of Black neighbors were heavily aggravated and capitalized on by real estate brokers and developers (Sugrue 1996). There were instances of "blockbusting", a practice where brokers deliberately sought to induce a sense of panic in white homeowners, convincing them to "cut their losses" and sell relatively cheaply, while Black households had to pay more because their options remained limited. Meanwhile, suburban developers could sell newly constructed subdivisions that promised to maintain racial segregation across the jurisdictional lines between the city and its recently incorporated suburbs.

Over time, the racial composition of Detroit decreased from 83% white in 1950, to 55% white in 1970, to 21% white in 1990, and finally to 10% white in 2010. Meanwhile, the Black population increased from 16% in

1950, to 43% in 1970, to 75% in 1990 and 82% in 2010. With a Black and impoverished city center surrounded by whiter and more affluent suburbs, the racial segregation that had existed within the city turned into a regional pattern.

Local interpretations of the past, which will be explored in the next chapter, tend to underline the role of racism on behalf of individual white Detroiters, as an explanation for why so many traded the city for the suburbs. Racial bigotry and prejudice were key components in whites moving to other areas in Detroit, as they were elsewhere. However, the economic and political engine underlying the migration generated pressure on homeowners, whether or not they supported segregation or integration as a political policy. Most whites earned a living through a volatile industry, which had given them access to mortgages and their own properties, whose value was intimately tied to appraisals of racial homogeneity in neighborhoods. Additionally, the pressure to leave Detroit would be felt in groups other than whites. Many Black households, especially the Black middle class, would eventually also move away from the city (Skillman Center 2002; Mahler 2009; Payne 2011). Metzger and Booza (2002: 11) have estimated that between 1970 and 2000 the "increases in the black suburban population constituted 34 percent of total suburban growth".

In Detroit, the social and spatial order had been upheld by the city's police force. As the city shrank both economically and demographically, and as Black households increasingly "defied" and ruptured the city's spatial segregation, tensions between Blacks and the police heightened. These tensions were further aggravated by the fact that many individual policemen were deeply racist. A study from 1965 revealed that "43% of police working in Black neighborhoods were 'extremely anti-Negro' and an additional 34% were 'prejudiced'" (Fine 2007: 96). Equally, whites were disproportionately represented on the police force, and although 35% of the city's population in 1967 was Black, "there were only 217 black officers in a force of 4709" (Georgakas & Surkin 1998: 156), with even lower representation in the higher ranks.

Ultimately, it was altercations between the police and Blacks that lit the fuse of what was to become one of America's worst instances of urban unrest. The riot/rebellion of 1967 would become one of the most significant events in the city's history. It is important to note that many similar events occurred throughout America, and the period is sometimes referred to as the "long, hot summer of 1967" (McLaughlin 2014), since 159 urban riots erupted in a few short months. Detroit would, however, prove to be the most destructive, leaving 43 people dead (Fine 2007). The National Guard and two airborne divisions, in conjunction with state and local

police, struggled to contain and pacify the unrest, which nonetheless raged for five days. Numerous atrocities were committed against Detroiters in general, and Black Detroiters specifically.

As the above evidence indicates, many interconnected processes brought about the bankruptcy of America's boom town. However, it is also important to understand that, where the region changed dramatically during the 1900s, the way in which it has been socially and spatially ordered has been consistent. The racial and economic segregation which was hegemonic within the city was later reproduced across the urban region as a whole. There used to be poor Black areas within the city, but as the region expanded, the city itself became a form of poor Black area to the region as a whole.

Reforms and the mirage of comeback during decline

While the immediate destruction and loss of lives following the riot/rebellion of 1967 was terrible, the long-term impact proved to be nothing short of catastrophic. Writing in 1994, Mayor Coleman Young argued succinctly that "The heaviest casualty, however, was the city. Detroit's losses went a hell of a lot deeper than the immediate toll of lives and buildings. The riot put Detroit on the fast track to economic desolation, mugging the city and making off with incalculable value in jobs, earnings taxes, corporate taxes, retail dollars, sales taxes, mortgages, interest, property taxes, development dollars, investment dollars, tourism dollars, and plain damn money. The money was carried out in the pockets of the businesses and the white people who fled as fast as they could" (Young & Wheeler 1994: 179). After the riot/rebellion of 1967, the outmigration of white Detroiters grew three-fold[36].

The aftermath of the riot/rebellion of 1967 elicited contradictory responses in Detroit. On the one hand, reforms were undertaken to promote hiring minorities and to improve fairness in the housing market within the state of Michigan. On the other hand, Wayne County[37] Sheriff Roman Gribbs was elected mayor in 1969 on a campaign to restore law and order

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[36] Following these events, President Lyndon B. Johnson formed the "National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders", which came to be known as the Kerner Commission. The report of the Kerner Commission stated succinctly that "White racism is essentially responsible for the explosive mixture which has been accumulating in our cities since the end of World War II" (Kerner Commission 1968: 5), thereby highlighting that the lack of equal economic opportunities had contributed to ongoing frustrations among Black Americans.
[37] The city of Detroit sits within Wayne County.

to the city which, given previous experience of law enforcement there, was a way of communicating to white voters that he would curb Black unrest. During his term of office, Gribbs formed a clandestine and elite unit within the police force called STRESS, an acronym for "Stop The Robberies, Enjoy Safe Streets". This unit targeted Black neighborhoods and Black Detroiters, using decoy tactics to entrap potential criminals. According to Binelli (2017), STRESS would "prove to be one of the most excessive and lawless policing experiments in modern history". The first 30 months of the operation produced "an estimated 500 raids without search warrants and 20 deaths by police bullets" (Georgakas & Surkin 1998: 168).

The protracted struggles between whites and Blacks over equality and control intensified after the events of 1967. These struggles took place in various arenas, from schools to neighborhoods, and from courtrooms to workplaces (Thompson 2001). Yet it was the struggle over law enforcement that became especially important for the city's development, crystalizing in the 1973 mayoral election. One of the candidates, John F. Nichols, was a white conservative who had been a career policeman and police commissioner, and he promised to bring "law and order" to the city. The other candidate, Coleman Young, was a Black liberal who had a background in radical leftist organizations, and he ran on a campaign to eliminate STRESS and to reform the city's police force.

The election of 1973 was the most divisive election in the history of Detroit. Coleman Young defeated John F. Nichols by a slim margin, receiving 51.6% of the total votes. An examination of the racial composition of voters reveals the great divide within the city. More than 90% of all white voters supported Nichols and more than 90% of Black voters supported Young (Stevens 1973). Thompson (1999: 168, italics in original) has argued that the election of 1973 was the "*conclusive* battle" where "whites finally lost full *political* control over the city". After the election, the exodus of whites accelerated, and the economic fallout, compounded by the 1973 oil crisis, made the ongoing decline of Detroit more and more apparent.

Coleman Young would continue to serve as mayor for Detroit for 20 years, winning re-elections by broad margins and with an extraordinary appeal for Black Detroiters. He was popular within the city, but generally despised by many whites, especially white suburbanites who felt that they had lost Detroit to Blacks. Early in his administration, Young terminated STRESS and took many successful measures to integrate the city's police force and to curb police violence. By 1990, Detroit had the most integrated police force of any major city in the United States, with Black policemen in over half of its senior positions (Chafets 1990: 139).

In terms of economic policy, Young was an outspoken proponent of both large-scale development and downtown rehabilitation. The policy relied on economic stimulation, involving generous tax-breaks and public assistance, with a focus on job creation. Young's long tenure saw the completion of several large-scale projects such as the Renaissance Center, two large assembly plants, a hospital, and the construction of large residential complexes and skyscrapers.

Some of these developments were made possible by the use of eminent domain. Eminent domain had been used frequently in the past, most notably when the city demolished large parts of Black Bottom and Paradise Valley to make way for highways. Young went on to demolish a white neighborhood, comprised mostly of people of Polish descent, in order to clear land for the General Motors Poletown Plant. The process sparked both criticism and controversy at the time (Wylie 1989; Binelli 2012), and it remains a popular argument for white suburbanites who claim that Young was racist and anti-white. Over a thousand residents were displaced in the process, and the political backlash was so strong that further use of eminent domain became politically impossible thereafter. A ruling by the Michigan Supreme Court in 2004 has since made it illegal throughout the state to use eminent domain for economic purposes such as the Poletown project (Gallagher 2019).

Neill (1995) has drawn attention to the fact that Young's administration focused heavily on altering the image of Detroit, leading to forms of "image-led development". Pre-1967 Detroit had enjoyed the image of a "model city". It had been praised in the national press for its ability to deal with problems, especially racial ones, that were present in large urban centers across the United States. In many ways, Detroit prior to 1967 served as an emblem of hope that the divides within the nation could be successfully mended (Fine 2007). After 1967, however, this image collapsed and was reversed. Detroit became the "model city" of violence, crime, decline and racial conflict.

The completion of large-scale developments under Young's administration were meant to serve as "a new symbol for the city [...] testifying to the corporate power in Detroit". Events such as bringing the Formula One Grand Prix to the city helped to "showcase the 'new Detroit' [...] to reimagine the city and to inspire confidence" (Neill 1995: 643). This type of publicity was undoubtedly beneficial to Young's own political career, since it furthered an "image of the mayor dealing eyeball to eyeball with the white economic establishment on his own terms" (ibid: 644).

These large-scale developments represented an imagined comeback, and a great deal was promised by both politicians and businessmen. A New

Detroit was being developed which would return the city to prosperity and renown. However, a recurring problem was that this New Detroit never fully emerged. Instead, the efforts came to represent a series of comebacks that never actually materialized. Later administrations, such as that of Mayor Dennis Archer, Young's successor, would continue to boost the city's image with talk of Detroit being an "entrepreneur's dream" and a future "urban jewel" (The Economist 1994, quoted in Neill 1995: 651).

On the whole, throughout the city's long decline Detroit's political class has continued to prioritize downtown space and its business interests, in the hope that these developments would act as a catalyst for a broader resurgence. As subsequent chapters will show, there is still a focus on the central parts of Detroit as the privileged space of comeback today.

On the other hand, there is also an important difference between the failed comebacks of the postwar era and the attempts at comeback today. Young and subsequent political administrations were thoroughly focused on bringing businesses and jobs into the city, often in the form of industry. This is still important, but bringing *people* into the city has become even more of a priority. Whereas the postwar era of comeback prioritized the addition of new assembly lines, the contemporary comeback prioritizes adding a new demographic to the city, a demographic of younger, whiter and wealthier people. This demographic, and the strategies employed to make the city into what this demographic allegedly demands, is the focus of the second part of this thesis.

Conclusion

Detroit has a long and complicated history of racial, economic and spatial struggle, one that underlines how social hierarchies can be successfully reinforced by spatial means. Over the centuries, different ethnicities, races and classes have been drawn to the city by its promises of prosperity. These promises have variously involved furs, industrial production, home ownership and conspicuous consumption. Peeling back its layers, history reveals that a multitude of collective identities have believed in the city, struggled in it, and claimed it as "theirs". However, the same history also reveals that these claims have always been temporary and fragile, and that groups can "vanish", or even be dispelled from popular memory.

The fragmented, divided and myopic character of the urban region in the present did not emerge by chance, nor can it be said to have been created by intentional design. It is, as are many things, a story that develops

in between. Racism has been exacerbated by the competition for space and money, and by the cyclical instability inherent in the city's 20th century economic base. Fear of the city, and of its Black residents, was stoked by economic interest and fears of falling property values. On the other hand, the process of increasing the geographical distance between the various layers of Detroit's society had begun much earlier, even if it accelerated with new technologies and infrastructures.

In examining the social concern that comeback engenders today, the following question emerges: who has a right to Detroit? As I have sought to demonstrate here, this is a perennial question in the city. It has been asked repeatedly throughout its history, in various forms and by various groups. A consistent and uncontested answer has never been found.

I consider it important to bear this in mind, because the tensions generated by the return of white people and wealth as part of the city's contemporary comeback are often articulated as claims that one group or another has a "right to the city". Even claims based on being born there or being a long-term resident, which suggest that Detroit belongs to the people living in Detroit, seem to contradict history. Without the tremendous migration and movement, or the constant displacement of different groups, there would be no Detroit today.

It is also important to recall that people are unable to see into their future. To the reader of today, it might appear absurd to suburbanize a city or an entire continent, and install a way of life so dependent on segregation, the automobile and fossil fuels. The problem is that these things seem like a *good idea at the time*.

An awareness of racial inequalities, and how they are engrained in the region's fabric of life, is greater in the present than it has been in the past. The young millennial whites who are returning to inner cities across America are not the same kind of whites who left in the postwar period, nor the ones who came to trade furs long ago, but like every generation they are caught up in pursuit of what seems like a *good idea at the time*.

This chapter has given a condensed version of the city's history. However, history is not only evident in books and articles. It also exists in the stories and narratives that people share about the past, and these make the present meaningful and charge it with action and affect. Factual accounts of the past give little indication of how, and in what ways, the past matters to people in the present. This is the task of the next chapter, which explores the cosmology Detroiters have fashioned out of their past, and the ways in which they have imbued it with meanings.

An urban cosmology

> You know, Detroit's worst enemies live only a few miles north of here. They can't wait to see the city destroyed. They just hate it. It's just crazy.
>
> Andrea, white, ex-suburbanite

> Almost all of the problems we have come from the city. They can't be bothered to clean up their own mess, so instead they export it to us. This region would be a lot better without them. They've already ruined their own place and now they want to ruin ours too.
>
> John, white, self-proclaimed "lifelong suburbanite".

> I actually dated a suburban girl in my twenties and so I spent a lot of time there. But after a while I felt like I was losing my edge and I didn't want to lose that. I was getting soft and losing my street touch. I remember her friends all asked me to get them drugs. They only asked that because they knew I was from the city. And I did, because, well, I was from the city, but they just assumed I was a thug, because to them, everyone from the city was.
>
> Carlton, Black, self-proclaimed "lifelong Detroiter".

In the fall of 2014, I made a fool of myself. I had met and talked to a Black man in his fifties after a church service. He was sympathetic to my struggle to understand Detroit, and he invited me to his house for dinner a week later, along with four other people he considered knowledgeable about the city. He wanted me to "get Detroit right", as he put it. The dinner started off well. We had wine and played cards before eating, and I listened to what everyone was telling me about their experience of the city.

About halfway through dinner, I was asked what my "honest impression" of Detroit was. I could tell that they were curious to know this because the side conversations ended abruptly, and all eyes were on me. I told them what had been on my mind lately, that the whole city seemed

like a suburb to me. I immediately knew that I had said something wrong. There was a lingering silence and the mood around the table became slightly awkward. My host reiterated to everyone that I was a foreigner and that we were not getting through to each other. He asked me to explain what I meant. I told them that Detroit gave off this "suburban feel" because everyone lived in a single-family home, with a little porch and a little yard, and they all drove everywhere. I still remember his wife shaking her head as I gave this explanation.

Unwittingly, I had delivered a deep and multilayered insult to everyone at the table. I had not only called the city a suburb, thereby confusing what in their world were considered two polar opposites, I had also tried to explain that city and suburb were fundamentally the same, thereby denying the existence of any distinction between them. Clearly, I had foiled the very purpose of the dinner itself, making my inability to "get Detroit right" so painfully obvious to everyone.

That same night I went over all the notes I had taken in the field. I found many offhand comments, passing remarks and occasional rants. There was the customs officer who had given me a hard time at the airport when he realized that I actually intended to stay in the city, telling me I would get "robbed, raped and murdered, but not necessarily in that order". Then there was the time I heard someone driving fast through the streets of the North End, and a neighbor had asked, "How long are we going to tolerate suburbanites turning Detroit into a racetrack!?". On another occasion, I had gone to Eastern Market and seen mounted police, and my Detroit friends explained that horses were necessary to make suburbanites think they were safe. I had met so many people who were either extremely explicit and proud about where they were from, or extremely vague, like the one who said, "I grew up north of here" or "east of here" or "in the general Detroit area"[38]. And finally there were the times I had been asked if, in Sweden, I was considered an urban person – a city boy – or a suburban person, and I had realized that the answer to that question seemed to matter.

A large proportion of the things I had hitherto jotted down about Detroit involved a vague but seemingly omnipresent group of horrifying people who resided just outside the city. It dawned on me that Detroiters had put a great emphasis on teaching me about the suburb and the suburbanite because it was a crucial step in socializing me into being a proper Detroiter. By teaching me about the ways of life in the suburb, their antithesis and nemesis, they were, in effect, teaching me about themselves, who they were and who they wanted to be.

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[38] This was a way to avoid saying that they had grown up in a suburb.

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This chapter examines how Detroiters understand their city through its most salient division, that between city and suburb. The distinction between city and suburb forms a cognitive axiom within the urban region, capable of elaborating a diverse set of positions. It allows Detroiters to form a sense of being a Detroiter, and to use it as a schema for interpretation that permits moral judgments. In short, the city-suburb distinction provides a lens through which the past, the present and the future can be approached and organized.

The city-suburb dyad is fundamental to Detroit because it expresses and condenses a number of salient distinctions that have emerged throughout its history, e.g. the distinction between Blacks and whites, or between rich and poor. It is also able to express distinctions that are less salient, but which nevertheless recur, such as those between diversity and homogeneity, order and chaos, or freedom and control. In Bateson's (1972: 485) terms, the difference between the city and the suburb is "a difference that makes a difference". In other words, it is a difference that produces a difference, both in the substrate of consciousness and in the material substrate of the urban region.

I approach this way of organizing both the material worlds and the worlds of meaning through the label of "cosmology". I argue that parts of this cosmology are grounded in the region's history. In anthropology, cosmology generally refers to the beliefs, interpretations, knowledge and practices that a culture or society uses for explaining how the world came into being, as well as the purpose and meaning of the world, and life within it. As an object of study, the cosmology of Detroit consists of the thoughts and acts that explain to Detroiters how Detroit came into being, and which imbue thoughts and acts within that world with purpose, morality and meaning.

The term itself – cosmology – may seem both anatopic and anachronistic when applied to a time and place like contemporary Detroit. To some, cosmology belongs *elsewhere* and with *other people*. Cosmology tends to have been studied in rural areas, and those who study urban areas rarely use the term[39]. I would maintain, however, that there is no need to venture

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[39] Naturally, there are exceptions, moments when the term has figured in various analytical stances. These include Zulu and Wilhelm-Solomon's (2014) use of urban cosmology to analyze the lives of African migrants in Johannesburg and the unstable boundary between a spiritual and material world, or philosopher Joseph Grange's (1999) use of urban cosmology to examine the relationships between urban experiences and environmental categories.

into jungles or climb remote mountains to find people with cosmologies. Following the meaning of the word soon reveals that cosmologies are where people are, including in ourselves and in our backyards.

Within urban studies, the term "urban imaginary" is more prevalent than "urban cosmology", and tends to refer to "the cognitive and somatic image we carry within us of the places where we live, work and play" (Hyussen 2008: 3). Many of the arguments in this chapter would fit within this broad definition of urban imaginary, yet vital aspects would not. One of these is the foundational character of the city-suburb dyad in Detroit. This could potentially be resolved by introducing a hierarchy into the urban imaginary, where this particular distinction could be conceived as a "primary urban imaginary", a cognitive and somatic image that structures other cognitive and somatic images of the city. However, even this would leave another problem. The distinction between city and suburb is not located solely in a person's mind and body. The dyad of city and suburb is highly material, as I shall demonstrate in this chapter.

One of the advantages of using the term cosmology is that it helps to shed light on the social organization of urban societies. When Herbert Gans (2005: 48) remarked that "people do not live in cities and suburbs as a whole, but in specific neighborhoods […] defined […] by residents' social contacts", he was drawing attention to the important micro scale of urban life. Detroiters certainly live in neighborhoods, but their history and their cosmology generate circumstances where they also live in the city or the suburb as a whole, and these constructs cannot be defined by social contacts *per se*. In a different era of Africanist anthropology, "segmentary" was a popular term for describing social systems in which smaller units combined into larger ones, where "the essential features are the 'nesting' attribute of segmentary series and the characteristic of being in a state of continual segmentation and complementary opposition" (Middleton & Taite 1958: 7). Cosmology plays an important role in the social organization of the urban region because it allows every street and neighborhood to coalesce into one of two broad positions within the region, that of the "city" and the "suburb". Furthermore, these positions appear to be locked in a state of perpetual opposition to one another.

Cosmology demands attention to the material side of the city, and not just to the minds and bodies that dwell within it. The relations between the organization of society and the organization of a society's material space have been a recurring theme in anthropological theory. Griaule's (1954) work from mid-20th century described how the built environment of the

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Finally, Saul and Phillips (1999) analyzed the relations between cerebral palsy and urban cosmology in Nepal.

Dogon tribe came to express Dogon myths and cosmology. The work of Nimuendaju and R. L. Lowie (1937) and Lévi-Strauss (1967) on the topic of "dual organizations" in Amazonian and South American tribes illustrated how societies, and the physical space of their villages, could be split between two dichotomized social groups. Bourdieu (1971; 1992) has further argued that the arrangement of space within a Kabyle household corresponded to basic dichotomies of Berber cosmology.

The distinction between city and suburb is not unique to Detroit. It exists throughout urban America. What is unique to Detroit is how sharp and meaningful that distinction is to its residents, both to suburbanites and Detroiters. Using a term such as cosmology to map this mundane and ingrained distinction can serve to make the familiar stranger, thereby opening it up to further examination and critique[40].

In light of the above discussion, this chapter examines how cosmology appears in everyday situations among the region's inhabitants. The first step is to investigate how the cosmology is expressed in people's understanding of the past, how it elaborates on what the world of Detroit is, why it is, and what role Detroiters play in it. This will be followed by a discussion of how Detroiters use negative qualities of the suburb and the suburbanite as a mirror to reflect positive qualities of Detroit and Detroiters. Third, I analyze how cosmology appears as a material reality, tactile and open to the senses, and how the concrete aspects of cosmology interact with its more abstract qualities. This is followed by two sections which examine how cosmology surfaces in everyday life, one section detailing a situation where Detroiters use cosmology as a model for interpretation, and the other a situation in which cosmology allows a Detroiter to show pity in assessing a suburbanite. I then offer a section on how the cosmology has gradually shaped individuals' paths across the landscape of metropolitan Detroit. In the final section, I draw on points made throughout the chapter to place the cosmology of Detroit in relation to its contemporary comeback, examining how comeback destabilizes cosmology and how cosmology is adapted to the new and emerging reality of whites and wealth that are coming back to Detroit.

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[40] A tendency to take the dyad for granted is equally true for educated Americans, and for Americans who make their living writing educated texts on American cities. Detroit historian Sugrue (2013: 121) has argued, for instance, that the city of Detroit has "fallen prey to suburban indifference or outright hostility". Neil Smith (1996: 115) suggested that newly built gentrification projects were "accomplishing a suburbanization of the city". Sarah Schulman has argued that "that's who gentrifiers are, children of the suburbs […] They like homogeneity and they are more comfortable with it. They're threatened by the mix … When you homogenise a city, you kill it" (quoted in Mullally 2018).

Opposing and converging origins

The city-suburb cosmologies are of moral importance, since they respond to important questions such as "Whose fault is the decline of Detroit?" and "Which group has a right to the city?". These two cosmologies are structured through oppositions. The antagonism of the city-suburb dyad is prevalent when it comes to the meanings contained in the city's past. Although these questions present different and opposing answers through each respective cosmology, there are similarities in their structure.

To examine these differences and similarities, it will be useful to discuss two typical interlocutors and their position on what could be called the "origin" story of contemporary Detroit, which centers on the events of 1967 and the subsequent election of Coleman Young.

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Selena was a Black woman living a few blocks north of me. She was a self-proclaimed "lifelong Detroiter" who had worked all her life as a clerk for the municipality until she had fallen ill eight years previously. In accounting for the decline of the city and her neighborhood, she highlighted the events of 1967. For her, it was important that the event was given its "true" name. To call it a riot was to align history with white supremacy. Instead, Selena addressed the events as the *rebellion* of 1967, or, alternatively, as the *uprising* of 1967[41]. Selena argued, "To say it was a riot is to diminish it. It was not a riot. It was a rebellion. You see, those who wanted to keep us down, the same people who want to keep us down today, prefer the word riot, because riots are unjustified. That's why it gets on my nerves when I hear people talk about the riot of '67. It was a rebellion. Open your eyes."

She did not witness much of this event herself, since her parents had kept her locked in the house, but she had strong recollections of its immediate aftermath. On seeing the destruction, the military and the tanks, she remembered feeling that "it just did not look like Detroit anymore, it did

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[41] The racial distribution related to the usage of rebellion has not gone unnoticed by other observers of Detroit life. Anthropologist Julia Yezbick (2016: 62) writes in a footnote about the riots of 1943 and 1967 that "these events are conversely described as 'Rebellions' by many Black Detroiters", while historian Sidney Fine (quoted in McGraw 2016) has noted "that 56 percent of Black Detroiters polled several months after the uprising chose to characterize the violence of 1967 as a 'rebellion' or 'revolution'". Furthermore, Schneider (2014) has suggested that the use of the word riot or the word rebellion, as a descriptor of civil disorder in America, can be correlated with the skin color of those making the disturbance, bringing attention to the semantic differences between Bacon's rebellion, Shay's rebellion and Dorr's rebellion vis-à-vis the riots of Harlem, Watts and Chicago.

not feel like my city, like something that could happen here". Selena did not condone the violence, but in the grand scheme of things, it had been, if not legal, then at least righteous in some respect. To her, the "true" injustices had emerged in the aftermath when Blacks were blamed for what had happened. The events of 1967 changed Selena and her understanding of Detroit. Her narrative suggests that it was after 1967 that whites started to leave the city. In her words, "the racists ran away", and they were "quick about it". From the relative distance of the suburbs, "the racists" had sought to "keep Detroit down", as Selena put it, because they "did not want to see Blacks and a Black city succeed".

Selena's narrative and the narratives of other Detroiters contain many informative synonyms that describe the migration of whites following the events of 1967. Whites are regularly framed as "abandoning" or "escaping" the city, and many accounts state that whites simply "disappeared", which echoes discussions from the previous chapter. To Selena, the "disappearance" of whites was noticeable in her peer group, the white children who had been her friends in the neighborhood. Her interpretation was that many of the children's parents had been ashamed of moving from Detroit, and that they kept their intentions secret from their children and neighbors. In many instances, there had not even been time to say goodbye. This was a common theme in narratives on the migration of whites in the postwar period, and it is also the centerpiece of an essay that was often discussed by my interlocutors. The essay, written by Marsha Music in 2014, was called "The Kidnapped Children of Detroit". She wrote: "I say, my friends were kidnapped; snatched away from their homes, often under cover of night or in rushed moves that split friends apart for a lifetime" (Music 2014: 226).

In 1973, Selena cast her vote for Coleman Young, whom she saw as a hero. Although she underlined that Young had not been without flaws, he had been more than a politician and a mayor to Selena. He had been an outspoken symbol for Black political power and for the desire to achieve integration over segregation. His electoral victory had been greatly celebrated by Selena, and "there was a feeling that we had won, not just the election, but the city. I don't remember it as being a victory that was vindictive or about revenge, because Blacks had for long wanted to share the city with whites, but it was the whites who never wanted to share it with us".

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Maria was a white woman about the same age as Selena, residing in a northern suburb of Detroit. Part of her childhood and adolescence had been

spent in a neighborhood on Detroit's west side, but her parents moved to the suburbs two years before the riot. In her narrative, Detroit had been shaped by the same events as Selena described, 1967 and the subsequent election of Coleman Young.

To Maria, 1967 was a "race riot" ultimately fueled by Black racist hatred toward whites. Although she agreed that the Black population had suffered racial injustice at the hands of whites prior to the events, she framed 1967 as a period when law and order broke down. It was a process that was more about "burning, looting and shooting", in her words, than the advancement of an integrationist agenda. The raison d'être of the events had been to drive white people out of Detroit through acts of violence and intimidation. To her, the events did not represent a response to segregation, but a tool for achieving it.

It was an important point for Maria that Detroiters subsequently elected Coleman Young as mayor. It could be aligned with her understanding of the contemporary city's origin. One of the first things she told me was that Coleman Young should have been hanged. To her, he was Detroit's worst villain, a corrupt race-baiter and Black supremacist who drove a sharp wedge between white and Black Detroiters. He was, above all, a segregationist, who had wanted white people to leave Detroit so that he could secure his own political power base.

Maria drew attention to something Coleman Young had said at his inaugural speech in 1973: "A forward warning now to all dope pushers, to all rip-off artists, to all muggers. It's time to leave Detroit. Hit Eight Mile Road. And I don't give a damn if they are Black or white, or they wear super fly suits or blue uniforms with silver badges. Hit the road" (Young 1974). To Maria, this sentence demonstrated that Young wanted to export the problems of the inner city to suburban communities, communities that had been set up to escape those very problems. This sentence, and this particular interpretation of it, was often mentioned in my interactions with suburbanites, where it was commonly presented as empirical evidence of Young's intention to "destroy the suburbs".

After Young's victory, Maria and her family had avoided Detroit altogether. She felt Detroiters saw her as a racist because of her views on 1967 and on Young, and because she was white with a family who had moved to the suburbs. She was no longer welcome in the city or in her old neighborhood. Her perception of other people's perceptions furnished her with further evidence that the hostility she experienced was of a racist nature. For Maria, a sense of loss and injustice was intimately woven into her narratives on the past, and in her explanation of the present. She, her family

and others like them had "lost Detroit", as she put it, "driven out by Black supremacists and criminals".

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

In these narratives, the distinctions made between city and suburb are anchored in the same historical facts, where the events of 1967 and the election of Coleman Young loom large. The narratives of Selena and Maria offer two antagonistic ways of perceiving these same facts, rooted in the spatial and racial boundaries of the region. Both cosmologies make use of selective and simplified readings of history, aligning their narratives on the city with the politics and morality of the region. The reader will recall from the previous chapter that, although the events of 1967 intensified the decline, this process had started decades earlier. It is more reasonable to view the events of 1967 as a symptom of decline, rather than its only cause. Likewise, the extract from Coleman Young's inaugural speech is accurate in the sense that this is what he actually said, but its meaning is not apparent, nor are other sentences from the same speech remembered in the same way[42].

Both cosmologies converge in an emphasis on race and racism. Both build on the foundation that racism is the root of regional moral evil, causing the divisions in the area. Both urban and suburban residents employ the epithet of "racist" to demarcate their respective moral geography. The disagreement, however, is in response to the question of who the "true" or "real" racists are, with a suburban cosmology positing the city as racist against whites, and the urban cosmology posting the suburb as racist against Blacks. People's perception of Coleman Young reflects these positions further, as he is perceived as either a hero or a villain.

It should now be clear that whereas these cosmologies draw upon history, they are not to be confused with it. Their focus is not to elaborate on what has happened, but to construct meanings in terms of why things have happened, and, above all, who is to blame.

To Detroiters, the city's contemporary state follows from whites abandoning the city as a result of prejudice and racism. The reason why things did not improve after they left is because they retreated to their suburbs, from which they continued to wage a demographic, economic and cultural war against the city. A strong sentiment, expressed by many interlocutors,

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[42] The address also dealt with the need to overcome racial and economic division, where Young argued that what "is good for those who live in the suburbs is good for those of us who live in the central city" (Young 1974). However, this sentence never appeared in popular narratives among my interlocutors.

was that the "suburb wants to see the city destroyed", or alternatively, "they don't want to see the city come back or succeed". Such sentiments express a moral geography, one that apportions blame, deciding who is the perpetrator and who is the victim in the ongoing story of Detroit.

To understand why these opposing and converging cosmologies have become both widespread and entrenched, the social organization of the urban region as a whole must be considered. In a remarkably simple but powerful way, the distinction between city and suburb reduces what is otherwise an extremely fragmented landscape into one of two entities[43]. From a societal perspective, the conflicting and antagonistic relationships between city and suburb reinforce solidarity within each entity by maintaining the alienation and antipathy between them. Both cosmologies emphasize the threat of "the other", which influences how people classify others, but also produces strong affective experiences of belonging. People consider themselves either a Detroiter or a suburbanite, and being one or the other carries added meanings (cf. Borneman 1992).

Importantly, the way the "other" is framed as a mirror opposite of a person's own group allows both suburbanites and Detroiters to discern aspects of themselves through "the other". Detroiters were keen to discuss how racist and boring the suburbs were, by which it could be deduced, often without saying, that the city was tolerant and exciting. Likewise, suburbanites' insistence on the lawlessness or disorder of the city could serve to emphasize how ordered and stable the suburb was. In this way, the antagonistic relationship between city-suburb makes both city and suburb highly meaningful to residents of the region.

The fact that the region has been organized into two opposing factions has direct consequences for how its contemporary comeback can be framed. When the city is defined as the opposite of the suburb, the return of suburbanites, who then become urbanites, presents a serious challenge to the region's entrenched dichotomies. This blurring of the distinctions on the ground produces responses that salvage cosmology by introducing new distinctions which are structurally similar to those discussed here. This point will be discussed again toward the end of this chapter.

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[43] There are many current and historical differences within the city of Detroit in terms of several relevant variables, and there are also differences between suburbs in the region, and within suburbs.

Drawing Detroit through "the other"

What Detroiters believe about the suburbs and suburbanites takes the form of stereotypes, raising the question of what stereotypes are and do in this context. Lippmann (1998: 96), who coined the term stereotype, indicated its multiple uses, suggesting that a "pattern of stereotypes is not neutral. It is not merely a way of substituting order for the great, blooming, buzzing confusion of reality. It is not merely a short cut. It is all these things and something more. It is the guarantee of our self-respect; it is the projection upon the world of our own sense of our own value, our own position and our own rights". Following Lippman, Dyer (2002: 16) has argued that the "role of stereotypes is to make visible the invisible, so that there is no danger of it creeping up on us unawares; and to make fast, firm and separate what is in reality fluid and much closer to the norm than the dominant value system cares to admit". Whether or not we can live without stereotypes is perhaps an unsettled question, although my own position is that we cannot. Jameson (2008: 617) has asserted that "relations between groups are always stereotypical insofar as they must always involve collective abstractions of the other group", while Rey Chow (Bowman 2010: 51, italics in original) has argued that stereotypes are a "a matter of the outer edge of one group brushing against that of another, that it is *an encounter between surfaces rather than interiors*".

Stereotypes have both individual and collective uses in Detroit. They are a way of structuring, ordering and coping with a complex urban reality. In this way, stereotypes provide a template for conduct toward other individuals and groups, and also serve as a form of explanation and justification for actions.

Importantly, Detroiters' particular stereotypes about suburbanites also reflect stereotypes they have of themselves; simplified ideas of what Detroit and Detroiters are all about. Exploring the stereotypes employed by Detroiters in their understanding of the suburb thus helps understand what these stereotypes reveal about Detroit and Detroiters.

One of the most salient features of the cosmology is the sense of threat that "the suburb is intent on destroying the city", or its mirror opposite, "the city is trying to destroy the suburb". Interlocutors articulated a vision where the suburbs were actively plotting the city's downfall, a vision that "explains" the city's decline and poor state, but also firmly assigning blame to non-Detroiters.

Central to this sense of threat is the figure of the parasite. To suburbanites, the city could appear parasitic because it required help from elsewhere to manage itself properly. To Detroiters, the opposite was true, and the suburb was often framed as actively leeching on the city. Leeching is to be

understood here as part of a larger and malevolent structure that siphons money and precious resources away from the city and its residents[44]. The sense of threat and the figure of the parasite have implications for how Detroiters read comeback and gentrification in the present, because they lend themselves to views which interpret current developments as moves designed to impoverish and destroy the city, but simultaneously enrich the suburbs and suburbanites.

The stereotypical figure of the suburbanite is a white Christian who holds bigoted and racist views. The suburbanite is closed-minded, probably a conservative who votes Republican, and is hostile to deviations from the norm. If the stereotypical suburbanite could be said to love anything, it would be homogeneity. Suburbanites want everything to be ordered and identical, from houses to shops and restaurants, to people and their views. The suburbanite cannot tolerate difference, and will seek either to avoid it or to destroy it.

As figures, suburbanites are considered to be disconnected from the "real" world. Instead, they are thought to persist in what could be called a "bubble society". These "bubbles" include, but are not limited to, their suburban home, the privately guarded subdivision, and the car that zooms to and from the office complex, then takes them to the mall or the big-box store, and then back to their home, where they sit in recliners, consuming conservative media that tells them about what is going on outside of their "bubbles". As inhabitants of a "bubble" society, suburbanites lack basic and authentic interactions with other human beings, and they are considered to be especially insulated from people who differ from themselves.

The stereotypical example of a suburbanite underscores one of their most salient characteristics: they are afraid, a characteristic for which there is a historical foundation, discussed in the previous chapter. Suburbanites are considered to fear the city, to fear the unknown, to fear beggars on the street and to fear crime. Several interlocutors also argued that suburbanites even fear their neighbors, with whom they only have distant relationships. This fear is considered to be the reason why suburbanites avoid the city and its residents as much as they possibly can, which, in the eyes of a Detroiter, becomes a testament to their moral and social degradation.

Although suburbanites are generally thought to avoid the city, there are recognized exceptions to this norm. One involves the idea that suburbanites come to Detroit for entertainment, perhaps to visit one of the three casinos. In fact, two of these casinos are owned by suburbanites, Mike Illitch and

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[44] The theme of "the leech" or "parasite" has also been made visible in how Detroiters have sometimes framed foreign researchers as "taking something" from the city, and "never giving anything back", as discussed in the introduction.

Dan Gilbert, who can readily be made to personify a malevolent suburban interest in the city. Furthermore, the casinos themselves were viewed by interlocutors as an expression of predatory business practices, preying on the dreams and hopes of poor people, and impoverishing their communities even further. In this way, they become part of the bigger structure which siphons money away from those who need it to those who do not. Thus, where suburbanites come to the city, they are seen as participating in activities associated with leeching.

Another form of suburban entertainment involves sports, either baseball or hockey. The hockey and baseball teams, along with their stadiums, are all owned by Mike Illitch. Since many Detroiters share suburbanites' passion for sports, particularly baseball, it is not the enjoyment of sports *per se* that is suburban, but rather the manner in which suburbanites treat the city while they are in it. Suburbanites' cars require surface parking lots, and these represent gaps in the urban fabric which, except for a few days a year, remain largely empty. Suburbanites are known to tailgate on these surface parking lots prior to the game, especially on opening days. They will drink, laugh and play music behind steel fences and within the enclosures created by their vehicles. The Detroit Police will tolerate drinking and intoxication in public, allowing suburbanites to drink and smoke marijuana in a way that otherwise, and at other times, could get a Detroiter into trouble. When it is over, there is trash everywhere, and again this is seen as a good indicator of suburban intent and of how little they care for the city.

When they elaborate on the suburb and the suburbanite, Detroiters are able to articulate a vision of themselves and their city by way of contrast. In this vision, Detroit appears as a place of diversity and tolerance, where residents have "authentic" social relations with their neighbors and other residents. Furthermore, Detroiters are adventurous, seeking out and relishing new experiences, and do not feel anxiety or fear when they are confronted with difference. Where the suburb stands for control and order, the city can stand for freedom and creativity. The city is exciting and interesting compared to the dull tedium of suburbia. This is not only true with regard to the space of the city, but also its inhabitants. Detroiters are supposed to be more exciting and interesting as people than suburbanites, in what they think and say, but also in what they do and what they enjoy doing. Above all, a Detroiter loves the city, where a suburbanite only fears and hates it. Detroiters are considered to manifest their love through acts of caring for the city, visible in the idea that they "give back" to the city, where suburbanites only "take" from it.

An important feature of defining Detroit through its antithesis emerges in the form of views on idealized forms of urban sociality. In contrast to the suburbs, dwelling in a city neighborhood implies close contact and relations with neighbors. In the city, individuals are part of a greater community of neighbors who can be relied upon for help and advice, conceptions that echo Jacobs' (1993) discussion involving "eyes on the street". My city interlocutors often found it impossible to imagine that I lived in the heart of Stockholm without knowing the first name of any of the other tenants in my apartment building, because these levels of anonymity and distance were clear markers of suburbia.

One interlocutor, who had moved from a northern suburb, would often elaborate on this idea of sociality by relating an experience in his life. His house in the suburbs had been burgled while he was vacationing in Florida. The burglary had taken place over several days; two people had parked outside his home with a van and then subsequently emptied it. None of his neighbors had intervened or stopped to ask questions. They had all assumed that he was moving out. To my interlocutor, this lack of response had been caused by the lack of social relations with neighbors. In his Detroit neighborhood, such an occurrence was unthinkable. Neighbors had introduced themselves and started to ask questions even before he had bought the property.

This idealized form of sociality is not a mere abstraction. It has a concrete manifestation in the public life of the city. Many Detroiters will say "Hi", "Hello", "What up doe" or some other greeting as they pass strangers on the streets of neighborhoods. This was considered courteous, and the "Detroit way" of acknowledging the presence of another person, that may be entirely unknown to ego. Most of the time, strangers simply exchange greetings and go on with their life. Sometimes the greeting invites further conversation. This act of greeting represents a way in which Detroiters make small, daily performances relating to who they are, or would like to be, since suburbanites will avoid acknowledging and coming into contact with unknown people out of fear and hatred. Not greeting someone means not acknowledging them and, in a way, denying them a presence in Detroit. It is no coincidence that another widely circulated poem by Marsha Music (2015) is entitled "Just Say Hi! (The Gentrification Blues)".

Material and concrete divides

Cosmology is more than a system of beliefs and practices located in people's minds. It is also tangible and concrete. Just as it may appear that the

divide between two adjacent nations becomes tactile and corporeal at the border, the material differences between the landscapes of the suburb and the city produce a sensorial backdrop to their cosmological divides. Drawing on my earlier discussion of stereotypes, the border between city and suburb is an instructive place and simultaneously a site that makes "visible the invisible" (Dyer 2002: 16). It is a place where the "outer edge of one group brushing against that of another" (Bowman 2010: 51) is made materially manifest through forms of urban design.

In late January 2015, some friends and I had driven to a large fruit and vegetable market in Dearborn Heights, a suburb neighboring Detroit. The market itself was a one-story box-shaped building with no windows, sandwiched between other one-story box-shaped buildings with no windows and surrounded by a parking lot next to a busy intersection with a freeway ramp.

After buying the fruit we decided to take the long way home, across the avenues and streets that came before the highway system. We drove on a four-lane street that was completely empty. We took an underpass that went below the freeway, and this took us out of the suburbs and into the city. In the underpass we left a space of light and emerged into one of darkness. There were no streetlights on the Detroit side and there were no lights from any windows because most places were abandoned, their windows bricked up. We rode through darkness for about 15 minutes, and the only person we saw was a dark shape that appeared on the edge of the car's headlight.

Going from suburb to city represents an intense and rapid visual change. However, more than simply being able to see it, we could *feel* Detroit through the steel springs of the Jeep's suspension system. In the city, the vehicle vibrated from the cracked pavement, and jolted us up and down as we drove over potholes. As we entered Detroit, everything became quiet. The radio was off, and we chit-chatted a little while we concentrated on the road and our surroundings. As we approached Rosa Parks Boulevard, we saw the first streetlights, spaced at a considerable distance from each other to save money, creating little bubbles of light across the dark streets.

It is telling that interlocutors referred to the act of going to the suburbs, or coming back from them, as "crossing the border". A further indication of the significance of this phrase is that Detroit is one of the few large U.S. cities situated on an international border, yet "crossing the border" never signified the type of border crossing that involves sovereign states. To describe these journeys, interlocutors simply talked about "going to Canada". Of course, the "border" in Detroit is not a monolithic construction. It varies from point to point, as does the experience of crossing it. Not every

crossing is as tactile as the one described above, but some are actually *more* tactile. Some stretches of the "border" are known outside of the region, such as 8th mile, where the contiguity of the urban landscape is distinctly ruptured by a wide highway that separates city from suburb.

The materiality of Detroit's cosmology can be probed further by turning to the city's eastern border. This is because the eastern part of Detroit is the most impoverished and most Black area of the city, whereas the suburb it borders, Grosse Pointe, is one the wealthiest and whitest suburbs in the region. In contrast to the 8th mile border, the border with Grosse Pointe does not consist of a large freeway but of a grid of streets and alleys which, at surface level and on maps, appear to be integrated. However, territories differ from the maps that represent them.

The above picture shows a structure that appears at many points along the eastern border but not on maps. Whether this structure is a wall or not a wall was a matter of opinion. A white, male interviewee residing in Grosse Pointe expressed the sentiment that they were fences, not unlike the fences which separate one backyard from another, or the fences that someone might put around a vegetable garden. To him, calling it a wall was "overly dramatic", and he used the term "exaggerate" to describe it. To him, it was a fence, and yes, it ran across the street, but it did so for a good reason and this reason was crime.

A Black, male interviewee residing in an eastern neighborhood of Detroit had a different understanding. To him, these structures were walls, and they were meant to keep him and other Black people out. He compared these walls to the infamous 8th-mile wall constructed in the 1940s (see chapter 2). He also drew parallels between these structures and the Berlin Wall, arguing that these divisions were "basically the same thing". This further allowed him to draw associations with the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea.

These semantic disagreements reflect the cosmologies of the region and the variable nature of the structures. Some structures are represented more as a fence, like the one pictured below, where bushes and trees have been allowed to grow unhindered for decades (cf. Comaroff and Ker-Shing 2016).

The name these structures are given does not alter what they do in practice. They block roads that would otherwise allow pedestrians, bicycles and vehicular traffic to flow between Grosse Pointe and Detroit. Since streets are the largest form of public space in a city, structures such as these represent a clear division of public space, forming obstacles that residents of both sides must navigate. A cumulative effect of these obstacles is that they force pedestrian and vehicular traffic to be concentrated along certain routes which, following the language of borders, serve as checkpoints for moving across a contested geography.

The picture above is taken from one "check point". It shows how the pavement changes from a darker to a lighter color where the sidewalk in Kercheval Avenue shifts from a location in Detroit to one in a suburb. There is a tangible difference between the two pavements which anyone walking across the border can sense. Grosse Pointe is smooth, Detroit is coarse. The Grosse Pointe side seems ordered, manicured and maintained. Detroit, on the other hand, presents itself as disorderly and decaying.

Kercheval Avenue is a main conduit into a shopping district of Grosse Pointe, but not out of it. It sparked controversy in Detroit during my fieldwork. Grosse Pointe had invested in redesigning the intersection, making it into a roundabout. During its first iteration in 2014, the roundabout provided neither entry nor exit between Detroit and Grosse Pointe. During its second iteration, later in 2015, the roundabout allowed cars from Detroit to enter, but not to exit.

The space where cars would have entered and exited had instead been allocated to a series of barnlike structures, which served as a farmers' market for a few days a week. Between the first and second iteration, these barns were moved slightly, to make room for one lane of traffic.

During 2014 and 2015, these sheds became a focus of critique from Detroiters. Media outlets, such as the Detroit Free Press, called it a "blockade" and a "barricade" (Laitner 2014a; 2014b), while Curbed Detroit (Golden 2015) suggested that Grosse Pointe had "fortified" the border. Even a British newspaper, The Guardian, picked up on the story and ran it with the headline "'Detroiters stay out': racial blockades divide a city and its suburbs" (Hackman 2015). The critique had been brewing since the winter of 2014, even before the sheds had appeared, because Grosse Pointe had been plowing and collecting snow into an impassable mound in the same spot.

The contentious intersection provoked consternation and anger in my interlocutors, but they were also resigned to it. When the topic emerged, people muttered something bitter or sardonic, shrugging their shoulders. One interlocutor from the area told me, in a matter-of-fact way, "Yup, that's the suburbs for you. It's fucked up". Another argued, "This is the way it is. This is the way it's always been, for as long as I remember". Although these roadblocks seemed extraordinary to me, my interlocutors saw them as business as usual. They condemned them, but did not think it was worth getting worked up about.

Such common responses highlight how these obstacles come to be symbolized within the cosmology of the region, how they can be "read" and "thought", and how the material and abstract dimensions of cosmology reinforce each other. To interlocutors, the intersection at Kercheval or the walls and fences of neighborhood streets were "hard evidence" that the cosmology had a material and empirical grounding.

This point deserves attention, because the existence of places where Detroiters experience the same divide that they carry around in their minds has profound consequences. The very materiality of the border between city and suburb, its tactile and sensorial qualities, are mundane reminders of the divide and distinctions between city and suburb. They serve as daily empirical evidence of the cosmology's validity. If it seems strange that Detroiters persist in entertaining a wealth of stereotypical ideas about their

suburban "other" who, in fact, lives only a few minutes' drive away, it is because the difference is to an extent "real" in every sense of the word. It is something they can feel, see, touch, hear and sometimes even smell. These types of experiential input can give individuals seemingly irrefutable proof of their beliefs, and even strengthen them.

On the other side of the border, the material and visible differences between city and suburb reinforce suburban stereotypes of the city. Suburbanites, for instance, consider that Detroiters do not to care for their city or neighborhoods, and when suburbanites cross the border and enter the landscape of Detroit, they find abandonment and blight, cracked sidewalks and large potholes. These are the mundane points at which the material and symbolic worlds of cosmology reinforce each other. Similarly, when Detroiters enter the suburbs, they are met with a kind of order and affluence, reflected in public space, that cements ideas of suburban wealth.

The fact that the distinctions of cosmology correspond to how places and materials have been organized entrenches cosmological notions within the subjective experiences of the region. Stereotypes of the "other" retain a strong foundation in people's everyday experiences. A Black man from Detroit can see racial oppression in the barrier that blocks his way, while a white man from the suburb can see the fall of Detroit as a failure of Blacks, evidenced by the ongoing decay of its material places. Although there are factors which destabilize these simplifications, the experiences people have of a reality corroborate their simplifications on a daily basis.

A model for interpretation

The city-suburb divide not only offers ways of engaging with the past, but it is also an important tool for determining what goes on in the present.

When I was taking the pictures for the previous section my behavior attracted the attention of the police. As I was photographing one of the dead ends, a police car came up behind me and blasted its sirens. I was told to put down the camera and keep my hands visible. The police demanded an explanation for what I was doing there. I told them that I was taking photos of the walls between the city and suburb. The policeman speaking to me replied flatly that there were no walls.

"I don't see any walls," he said. "Where is the wall?"

I pointed in the direction behind me.

"That's not a wall," he informed me. "And you don't have permission to take photos of it. That's private property."

I was told to delete the photos and leave the area immediately or face consequences. I therefore drove off and the police car followed me for ten minutes to make sure that I left the area.

The important factor in this section is not so much the interaction itself, but how these events were interpreted by Detroit interlocutors. The very idea of going to Detroit's eastern border had come from an interlocutor, a white man who had grown up in this part of the city. We met up afterwards, in the evening, at a bar in Midtown where I was supposed to "report" on what I had found. He had brought along his partner and two friends, and so I told them what had happened that day.

During my story, his partner, a white woman, became upset with how the police in the suburb harassed people from the city.

I corrected her.

"Wait, what?" she said. "They were from the city? Did it say DPD [Detroit Police Department] on the car? Did you look?" She was astounded. I told her yes, they were city police. There was a pause. Everyone had assumed that this had occurred on the Grosse Pointe side. She then asked if the officer was white. I told her he was not. Nor was his partner. They were both Black. Another pause followed on this information.

The interlocutor who had suggested the trip then wondered if the policemen might be from the suburbs. He proposed the following explanation. They lived in the suburb, perhaps not Grosse Pointe in particular, but they worked in the city. This explanation appeared valid to the others and it seemed to resolve the contradictions. The conversation then went on to discuss the number of city policemen who lived in the suburb, especially among the leadership, what this meant and how it produced experiences like mine. This line of discussion soon branched out to include other municipal services and professions, in both the public and private sectors, who, as they phrased it, "took the Detroit tax dollar and spent it in the suburbs".

In the process of this aside conversation, the same interlocutor had arrived at a second, more refined explanation. If the policeman, against prevailing logic, was indeed from Detroit and indeed residing in the city, they must have thought that I was from the suburbs. I was white, young and drove a rental car at the time. It was a perfectly natural thing to assume. "Yeah, you look suburban," one of his friends queued in with a smirk, "and what would a suburbanite be up to over there anyways?".

This second explanation then led into a story that had broken in the news recently, about three suburban girls who had been charged with coming into the city and vandalizing it with spray paint (Burns 2014; Neavling 2014). My interlocutor referenced this event, and added that it was not

uncommon for suburbanites to venture into the city with bad intentions, such as setting a house on fire, having their cars "stolen" in the city to commit insurance fraud, buying drugs that supported criminal gangs, racing illegally in the streets, or dumping waste, garbage and general junk that was hazardous to Detroiters' health. If they were from Detroit, the policemen could be construed as acting out of a desire to protect the city and its residents.

The consensus at the bar then generated two possible explanations. Either the police had been morally compromised because they lived in the suburb and did not care to treat people in the city with decency, or they were in fact from the city and had been acting in the best interests of the city, in which case their behavior could be explained by my suburban appearance. Although the matter was settled with satisfaction, most of the evening ultimately revolved around the moral deficit inherent in the suburb and the suburbanite.

As a model for interpreting an ongoing urban reality, cosmology offers satisfying answers to questions that seem impossible to answer in other ways (Geertz 1973). Without recourse to the distinction between city and suburb, and its imbued morality, there had been no way of "knowing" what thoughts and considerations precipitated the policemen's interaction with me. This is not to say that the cosmology provided us with scientifically accurate answers. It did, however, provide answers that were in accordance with my interlocutors' understanding of their world. It corresponded to, and expressed the moral dichotomies of city and suburb. It may not be accurate as a model of interpretation, but the city-suburb distinction affords both pleasure and reassurance, becoming a model for action and giving an otherwise messy reality both meaning and coherence.

Pity the suburbanite

Through their use of cosmological knowledge, Detroiters could infer the morality and intentions of individual suburbanites. Importantly, this knowledge was not only used in acts of social distancing vis-à-vis suburbanites. Although the quality of being "suburban" was a negative one, it could also be understood as a mitigating factor in close relations between people. Commonly, the "suburbanness" of a person could be framed as an affliction in the suburbanite, similar in form to a kind of disability or illness. While a person's status of "suburbanness" did not absolve the suburbanite of moral responsibility or blame, it could provide some satisfaction

by explaining to a Detroiter the ineptitudes and incompetence of a person, thereby lowering the bar of expectations, and sometimes even garnering sympathy. In fact, in closer relations, suburbanites could sometimes deserve as much pity as aversion.

This became apparent through my interactions with two men who were coworkers in the Detroit tech industry. One, Martin, had grown up in the city and still resided there. The other, Bill, had grown up in the suburb and still lived there. They worked closely together, sharing a profession and the skills, competences and interests that came with it. Both were also white and of a similar age.

However, they differed in terms of personality, lifestyle and values. The workplace was situated in the central part of Detroit, and Bill and Martin both enjoyed going out to eat a longer and more satisfying lunch. That is how I came to know both of them, as they would invite me and pick me up for "another lunch adventure". Martin and Bill diverged in terms of what and where they wanted to eat. Bill had a liking for fatty, greasy food, such as pizzas or crafted hamburgers, or ribs and steaks with barbecue sauce. Geographically, Bill was oriented toward the central area of Detroit in which they worked, and would suggest locations in New Detroit (see chapter 5). Martin enjoyed this type of food on occasion, but he was more interested in ethnic foods and the types of establishments where middle-class white men in their forties were an uncommon sight.

As a native Detroiter who worked with a suburbanite, Martin had an additional reason for these lunch breaks. His self-appointed mission was to expand Bill's horizons, both in terms of the food and the geographic location of different venues. Martin wanted to expose Bill to the diversity of the city by introducing him to new experiences and new neighborhoods by way of food. Together, we would eat Downtown on occasion, but would usually veer off into the neighborhoods, finding ourselves eating different ethnic cuisines. The smaller and the more inconspicuous the venue was, the more tempting it was to try it out, according to Martin. An example might be a small bodega operating from the living room of a residential house, filled with construction workers who spoke Spanish, and with no signs or advertisements because there were no permits. Sometimes we had to search a neighborhood street for a house where there seemed to be lots of coming and going, which could indicate that there was a restaurant there.

This mystique undoubtedly added to the "lunchtime adventure", and also provided Martin with situations where he could display the privileged "city knowledge" that made him a Detroiter. Martin would often set an example by ordering food he had never tried before, thereby modeling a

passion for trying out new things. We would sample large sections of the menu, sharing our orders with each other.

On one level, this was just three guys going out for lunch now and then. However, certain layers of significance can only emerge by considering the cosmologies of the region. Martin used cosmology as a tool for understanding Bill. Boring ways and a boring life, represented by his colleague's lack of innate desire to explore the city beyond the confines of New Detroit, became a reflection on his "suburbanness". Bill drove a lot, frequently watched television and lacked what Martin regarded as real experiences of diversity, meeting different people and being in different places. To Martin, Bill's "suburbanness" was cheating him out of a better life. Even Bill's taste buds were thoroughly "suburban", as Martin would often lament that his preference for highly processed fast food had left him with a diminished ability to enjoy the diverse flavors on the plates.

In Martin words, he sought to "awaken" something in Bill that he reasoned was an innate quality of humanity which had been suppressed and distorted by his suburban existence. The most common motivation for "awakening" Bill was articulated as a concern for his health. In Martin's assessment, Bill would not live long, or be mentally and physically healthy, if he continued to be so suburban in his ways. As Martin expressed it, his colleague's social and physical person was on "life support", and Martin's recommended remedy was exposure to the city.

Due to changing circumstances involving their work and mine, our lunches faded out over time. I still saw Martin regularly during the field-work. On these occasions, Martin would feed me small updates on his coworker's progress. Bill took no notice of suggestions about moving to the city, but Martin saw other signs of improvement. For instance, Bill had asked about me a couple of times, which Martin interpreted as Bill beginning to show an interest in difference, because I was a foreigner. Similarly, Bill would sometimes order things for lunch that he had not eaten before, indicating a growing passion for diversity and "real" food. Bill had also begun to be more physically active, and had even purchased a bike for recreational use. Furthermore, his old geographical preference for New Detroit had diminished, and he was no longer skeptical about the neighborhoods outside it. Although Bill was far from "cured" of his "suburbanness", Martin argued that his condition was improving.

My argument here is that the cosmology of Detroit helped Martin understand Bill. Furthermore, his relationship with Bill was not based on animosity. On the contrary, the cosmology afforded him a kind of sympathy for Bill, and a desire to "help" him. When Bill occasionally expressed himself like a "true suburbanite", such as when he expressed concerns about

germs and sanitary conditions at a small bodega, Martin did not consider that this was really Bill's fault. To Martin, Bill behaved the way he did because he had been brought up in the suburbs. In a sense, Martin took pity on Bill because of his "suburbanness".

As Martin's relationship with Bill illustrates, the cosmological distinctions between city and suburb, which were at times static and antagonistic, were at other times, and in other situations, more flexible, capable of being adapted and applied as situations emerged and evolved. Although the cosmology can be invoked to articulate the moral deficiencies of suburbia, and thereby the moral deficiencies of individual suburbanites, it can also articulate the idea that suburbanites are suffering as a result of suburbia.

The relations between Martin and Bill also illustrate how cosmology allows connections to emerge between categories with no apparent relationship to each other. Since the cosmology of Detroiters frames the suburb as a bland and homogenous place, it "makes sense" that the taste buds of suburbanites will be accustomed to bland and homogenous food, and that the sense of prevailing order and discipline in the suburb will find expression in the suburbanite's choice of venues.

Moving across a contested cosmology

This chapter has argued that cosmology offers ways to understand a complicated world with a complicated past, and that it provides residents with a sense of belonging. In one sense, cosmology makes the urban world simple, or even simplistic, by providing answers to questions that would otherwise be difficult to answer. In another sense, however, cosmology can also complicate life. Its sharp divides readily give rise to emotions of anguish, sadness and feelings that come with the deterioration of close relations. This latter point was especially poignant for individuals who transgressed the region's boundaries by moving across them. Since comeback involves the idea of people "returning" to the city, often "returning" from suburbia, these complicating aspects of cosmology are important to understand. Thus, this section presents the narratives of two interlocutors who had moved from suburb to city, as this will allow cosmology, social sanctions and comeback to be connected more concretely.

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One evening I was having dinner with Maria and Sarah. Maria was a white woman from Spain, and Sarah was a white woman who had grown up in a

nearby suburb of Detroit, from which she had moved eight years previously. At this particular dinner, Maria was stressed. She had written to her father a month earlier, saying that he was welcome to visit her in Detroit. Her father had now replied, saying he would come and stay for three weeks.

"Three weeks!" Maria exclaimed. "Why does he want to come and live with me for three weeks? It's going to be so weird! He is old. He has never been to America. He wants to get to know my friends here and he wants to get to know the city. He hardly knows any English!"

Sarah and I tried to calm her down, but she was having none of it.

"But he is retired," Maria continued. "Why is he staying here for three weeks, why not three days or even a week, and then go somewhere else? Why does he have to be with me?" What could we say? "He loves you, Maria." But this just made her swear in Spanish.

A few moments later, I noticed Sarah crying. At first, it was hardly visible. Then sadness took hold of her body, making it shake and vibrate, her voice going up and down. She pulled herself together momentarily and lashed out at Maria, calling her ungrateful, saying that she was wrong not to appreciate that her family wanted to visit her in Detroit, and for not wanting her … She could not finish her sentence. Tears were rolling down her cheeks. I had never seen her so upset. There was a silence, then Sarah apologized for lashing out, telling us that the fact that Maria's father was going to fly all the way from Spain to spend time with her in the city had moved her.

To Sarah, the divides between city and suburb were acute and concrete. They were divides that ran through her family and intimate relations. Her family lived just outside the city, but her father had never once visited her in the city. Her decision to move to Detroit had severed their relationship. Sarah described her family as "committed to the suburb". They regarded the suburb as synonymous with the "good life". The city was its opposite, and while she was growing up her family avoided Detroit. It had been a "tabooed place", as she put it. She had been taught that the city was a criminal place and that even short visits could be life-threatening. Longer visits, or living in the city, would put a person at risk of corruption. The city could make a straight person queer in terms of their sexual orientation, socialist in their political views, and atheist in their worldview. To her parents, the city was a deviant space, embodied in the deviant people who lived there.

Sarah's decision to move to the city, first for college and then work, had sent her family into shock, yet the full consequences would not become apparent until later. She had been riding her bike one day when she was hit by a car and sent by ambulance to a hospital in Detroit. Her family had

been contacted, but they refused to come. Still at the hospital, she was informed that she had been removed from her family's health-insurance plan shortly after she had moved to the city.

Her move from suburb to city had alienated her from her family and destroyed her relationship with her father. They had not spoken or seen each other since her decision to move. Although it was only 20 minutes away by car, this distance seemed insurmountable. Following her desire to live in the city, she had gradually rejected the values her upbringing had given her, and embraced their opposite, which had produced further sensations of betrayal. Sarah felt that her family had betrayed her, and she understood that her actions must be seen as a form of betrayal to them, even though she considered their views unfounded.

<center>***</center>

Peter was a white man, older and wealthier than Sarah. He had been working in an executive position for one of the big automobile companies for over a decade. Like many others, Peter's family had once lived in Detroit but moved out in the late 1950s. He had grown up in a very wealthy northern suburb of the city, a place where everyone he knew lived in mansions with hired help and attended private schools. Following the economic depression of 2008, Peter had become interested in the city's real estate market and had started to look at various properties with friends who were in the real estate business.

One house had stirred his emotions. It was a turn-of-the-century, brick mansion in an affluent neighborhood to the east of Downtown. The mansion had been on the market for a while, unable to find a buyer. Peter found the price "ridiculously low" in relation to its size, its architectural beauty and its crafted and well-built nature. The following weekend he went to New York to meet friends and look for capital. Because of the condition of Detroit real estate, financial institutions were wary about giving out mortgages for houses in the city, even to wealthy individuals such as Peter. Thus, he had to borrow money from friends in New York, as his friends in the Detroit region had laughed at the idea and then refused his request once they realized he was serious.

Peter had not intended to live there at first. He had seen the property as a form of capital investment. His purchase made him the butt of jokes and comments in his social network. All his relations saw it as a poor investment, an idiotic gamble. Several suggested that he was having a sort of mid-life crisis.

Then something happened. Peter "fell in love" with the city, and the city "needed love", as he put it. The property itself demanded large amounts of capital in necessary renovations, redesign and decorations, much more than he had originally projected. He found himself in a situation where he was spending much of his earnings on making a dream house that he himself was not going to live in. This seemed preposterous. And that is when, as he described it, "things started turning 180 degrees, and quickly".

At first people thought he was joking when he said he was going to sell his suburban mansion and move into a house in the city that was in dire need of repair and renovation. There seemed to be no reason behind his actions. His immediate family had intervened, orchestrated by his mother and wife. They had hoped Peter would change his mind, but social pressures like this had only served to make him more determined. Neighbors, friends and associates tried giving him "the talk" about the negative consequences that would follow his decision to move.

These consequences soon came to fruition. Peter was ostracized, not just from his family and kin, but from networks he had in the business community and in his relations with former neighbors and friends. He found himself in "awkward silences" at the country club or at larger social events. He became, as he recalled, "a persona non grata, because a lot of people did not want to talk to me anymore, and others did not even want to be seen talking to me". His marriage ended, not solely because of the move, though this had played a part because it had provided a socially legitimate reason for his wife to file for divorce. He expressed it by saying, "It was almost like I had cheated on her", because he was doing something morally wrong, which made divorce a valid response. Between 2010 and 2015, he had only sporadic contact with his family, mostly through his children. Thus, the move came at a high price, yet he articulated no regrets about it.

The present comeback of Detroit, in which Peter firmly believed, served as vindication for his decision and the person he had become. The people who had once scorned his move were now asking for advice on where to invest in the city. His family, except for his mother, had changed their minds. At the country club, he enjoyed sharing how his Detroit house had almost doubled in value in a few short years. His business associates still regarded him as slightly crazy, but now he felt as if they saw him as "the right kind of crazy", someone who had been ahead of his time.

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The narratives of Sarah and Peter echoed stories that other ex-suburbanites shared with me. Losing touch with family and friends was a common

experience in terms of moving, as were the sensations of being ostracized in their former social life, people "trash talking" their decision to move, and trying to intervene to stop their decision. Like Sarah, others had found themselves hospitalized for one reason or another, and learned that their family and kin would refuse to visit them because the hospital was in Detroit. Many more attested to the fact that they would invite family and friends from the suburb to their house in the city, even though they were certain that they would never come. Moving to the city had changed the perception others had of them, often in a negative way. Ex-suburbanites like Sarah and Peter also attested to how things had changed over the past few years. Their decision to move to Detroit had gained acceptance over time. As Peter's case illustrates, this acceptance was intimately tied to comeback becoming more manifest.

Destabilizing and reformulating cosmology

Despite the natural flatness of the terrain, a mental map of Detroit's urban region must include wide canyons and tall mountains, barriers that can make people's movements across the landscape both meaningful and perilous. The city and suburb share historical facts in terms of their cosmology, but they differ in their interpretations of those facts and the meanings they assign to them. These differences, and the meanings arising from them, are often structurally similar but arranged through contrasts. In practice, elaboration on the negative qualities of the "other" serves to elaborate positive qualities of the suburb or city. In either case, the morality of groups and individuals forms an important part of the cosmology. Through cosmological knowledge people can infer the agency and intentions of everyday social situations, in terms of both strangers and non-strangers. These situations would otherwise, in a less simplistic model, be exceedingly complex and unknowable.

I have made the argument that although the certainty derived through cosmology may be factually incorrect, it is nonetheless satisfactory in the sense that it allows for a rather messy urban reality to become ordered and understood. In many ways, Detroit "makes sense" through its cosmological narratives. Another point is that cosmology is practical, flexible and highly material. It can be adapted to fit different situations, and is anchored in seemingly irrefutable[45] empirical evidence. Thus, the cosmology I have sketched in this chapter, and the way it insinuates itself across multiple and

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[45] Irrefutable in terms of the fact that it exists, but not in the way it is chosen, since empirical evidence contradicting the cosmology tends to be ignored.

diverging fields and actors, is not something that exists solely in Detroiters' minds. Their material world reflects and reinforces their symbolic world.

In a city that has been in demographic decline for half a century, it is understandable how the return of people could be framed as "good". However, without an understanding of the meaningful and satisfying role of cosmology, it would be difficult to understand why this process is, at the same time, deeply disturbing and threatening.

The city's contemporary comeback represents a challenge to its cosmology. The fact that suburban whites are returning to the city, not for ballgames or acts of vandalism, but to *live* in it, wanting to *become* Detroiters, undermines aspects of the cosmology by blurring the otherwise sharp distinctions of the city-suburb divide. In a region understood through divisions and segregations, the notion of integration is volatile and recognized as dangerous. Detroiters can loathe suburbanites who avoid the city at all costs, but this distance has kept Detroit, as a system of ideas, separate and intact. In this sense, comeback can seem threatening on the ground because it destabilizes a way of knowing and navigating the urban world of Detroit, a way considered enjoyable, as I have sought to demonstrate.

Despite this destabilization, there is little to suggest that the underlying structure of the city-suburb divide will be abandoned any time soon. As discussed above, cosmology is flexible, capable of being adapted to cope with new situations, and I argue that it is a process which has already begun to unfold.

As the following chapter will demonstrate, suburbanites who have moved to Detroit are not classified as "real" or "authentic" Detroiters. Furthermore, the "tale of two cities" mentioned in the introduction is noteworthy both for its popularity, as Detroiters loved to tell me this tale, and for its structural similarity to cosmology.

Effectively, the "tale of two cities" reproduces the regional division between city and suburb within the city. It sets up a New Detroit that is white, suburbanized and wealthy, siphoning off resources from its surrounding Black and impoverished neighborhoods. The notion of a divided region can easily be turned into notions of a divided city, and just as the cosmology of the region is anchored in material manifestations, so too is a New Detroit not only symbolic, but tangible, concrete and open to the senses.

The next part of the thesis will examine comeback more closely through its demographic, spatial and temporal manifestations. It will begin to engage with the people who have represented both the alleged ruination of the city and its salvation: the white millennials who have begun to settle in the city, otherwise known as newcomers.

PART TWO

The previous part of the thesis examined Detroit's past and how it has been culturally mediated through cosmology. This part will investigate how contemporary forms of comeback take shape against the backdrop of this cosmology. Focusing on Detroit's newcomers, the spaces designed for them and the ways in which the future comes to be colonized can help appreciate the contested and multilayered nature of comeback. Over the next chapter, the makings of a New Detroit emerge, one that is whiter, wealthier and in some ways smaller than in previous decades. My analytical interest does not involve judging this process, but rather understanding and discussing how a New Detroit is socially organized.

A New Detroit emerges through a combination of demographic, spatial and temporal changes. It is the result of concomitant forces that nonetheless create a pattern or structure. A fascinating aspect of how this pattern emerges simultaneously makes it difficult to understand and communicate clearly. There is no obvious "center", no equivalent of a Haussmann or Le Corbusier, no entity that is decidedly "in charge". Instead, it involves a multitude of actors across a multitude of scales.

Importantly, this means that the social organization of New Detroit is both elusive and powerful. Without sustained analysis, it is difficult to see how different pieces come together and act in a cumulative way, often in the background, to produce the particular forms of change which reflect comeback. Without a "center", comeback is simultaneously nowhere and everywhere, not unlike the ambient light of a dream, lacking any identifiable source. This lack of a "center" has led me to seek words to express the conditions and historical formation of New Detroit in an appropriate way.

I articulate these conditions through the metaphor of a garden, thinking of New Detroit as a space and place where things grow "on their own", so to speak, but where they are always subjected to acts of pruning, weeding and watering which seek to direct this growth along particular paths. Across these chapters, I invite the reader to see how newcomers, and the space, places and times involved in a New Detroit, are grown rather than produced or constructed. I have sought this metaphor to bridge what I consider to be a conceptual gap. On the one hand, New Detroit is deliberately

shaped. On the other hand, given the lack of a "center", there are aspects of the emergence of New Detroit that are both improvised and uncontrolled.

Newcomers

A newcomer is someone who is not from around here. Someone who doesn't belong yet.
Harold, a Latino who had lived in Detroit for 30 years

Newcomers are people that come in and say: "Hey, I'm gonna save this city. Y'all just need to do things my way and everything will be fine". They don't care about the history of a neighborhood. They don't care about the culture. They just care about themselves. And everyone loves them for it. Like, "Here, take this money, you are doing great!" Shut the fuck up, where was you when things were sour? Not here, I tell you that.
Rhonda, a "lifelong" Black Detroiter

I love newcomers and I love everything new with Detroit. That's my Detroit. But I hate having to feel ashamed of that, of not being able to say it in certain circles. Old Detroit is what it is, but personally, I'm more excited about its future.
Eric, a white newcomer

As noted in the introduction, in late October 2014 my hosts threw a post-Halloween party and dressed me up as Dracula. The party was an open-house event, with people coming and going throughout the evening and night. Several guests were whites in their twenties and thirties who had moved to Detroit in the past months and years. To many Detroiters, this cohort is subsumed within the category of newcomer, and several of them, including myself, used this same label to describe ourselves and each other.

Toward the end of the party, I found myself in the backyard of the house, standing around a fire, holding a red plastic cup and chain smoking. There were seven of us watching the dancing flames while we talked. A woman from Germany, a theater and film director, was bubbling with impressions of Detroit. She had been in the city for less than three weeks, but the experience had been overwhelming. If Detroit was a drug, she seemed to have become an addict. She was inquisitive, and asked questions about the city and about the essence of those who lived in it.

Different people answered her, but I was not sure whether they gave different answers, or whether these answers were simply variations on a more fundamental theme. In any case, we talked about it for a while, in the lofty and pretentious ways that educated people sometimes speak. Detroit was grit, it was resilience, it was resistance, it was struggle. It was urban life, unhinged from idealized distortions, a space and time where the masks that mystify and obfuscate urban conflicts had been torn away, a city that had lost its halo (Berman 2010). In simpler terms, Detroit and Detroiters were raw, real and authentic. It was beautiful and ugly, ephemeral and enduring, a city of steam and steel.

All this praise posed a question for me. When does someone become a Detroiter?

It was an awkward question to ask, and the exuberant atmosphere we had just shared fell away. Finally, one man cleared his throat, looked around, and said, "We are all newcomers. I think I've been here the longest, and I've been here for, what is it …?" He looked around some more, a little uncertain, then concluded, "… probably six or seven years now".

I asked him, "How long would you have to live here in order to see yourself as a Detroiter and not a newcomer?"

This was even more difficult to answer. The man who had replied earlier shrugged his shoulders, then said curtly, "I'd probably have to be born here. I don't know."

He gave me a look that told me to get off his back about it. Soon afterwards, however, another voice chimed in and added, "And you'd have to be Black". These words produced a shared laughter which blew away the tensions that had been building up. None of us were Detroiters. And perhaps none of us ever would be. All those standing around and watching the fire slowly die out were white, including myself.

Newcomers are intrinsic figures of both comeback and gentrification in Detroit. They are thought and talked about as "returning" or "coming back" to the city, even though most of them have never lived there before. In popular ways of imagining comeback, newcomers straddle the role of both cause and effect. Their presence is read equally as evidence of a change that has occurred and as the constitutive force behind these changes.

The newcomer is both abstract and concrete.

As an abstract concept, "newcomer" is a classification that typifies many of the qualities Simmel saw in "the stranger". Newcomers are not seen as typical suburbanites or visitors, nor as people "who arrives today and leaves tomorrow, but as one who comes today and stays tomorrow" (Simmel 2009: 601). As a category, newcomers are an amalgamation of

opposites, a "union of the near and far" (ibid.). They are spatially proximate vis-à-vis the local Detroiter, but at the same time remain socially distant. As symbols of comeback, newcomers stir both meanings and feelings.

However, newcomers are also individuals of flesh and blood, and have bodies in which meanings and feelings stir. They are conscious agents, aware of, and often in opposition to the very abstractions they are thought to embody.

Given the city's history and cosmology, newcomers occupy a particular position within the world of Detroit. To many newcomers, this world is not something entirely unknown, as many of them hail from the city's suburbs. This awareness and knowledge are important, because they lead many newcomers to interact reflexively with the category itself, and with the system of meaning in which it, and they, become positioned. Thus, it is not only native and "lifelong Detroiters" who look at newcomers and wonder who they are, and what their presence means. Newcomers increasingly look at themselves, and at other newcomers, and wonder the same things.

Stewart (1996: 179) once asked her readers to picture "what happens when meanings do not rush to conflate sign and referent but grow 'big' in the space of the gap and lie nascent in mediating forms […] They become not the mirror of, or model for, an absolute Real World but the means of creating and tracking a cultural real in which there is room to maneuver." Here, I ask the same. In this chapter, I consider how the newcomer grows "big" between abstract and concrete manifestations of the concept, in the space between the newcomer as a person and as a classification.

To this end, the chapter examines the newcomer in Detroit, both as something abstract and as something concrete. At the same time, it explores the gap between them in order to illuminate how newcomers maneuver around their own position as newcomers. The purpose of this chapter is to produce a nuanced understanding of newcomers by examining them from different angles and perspectives.

The chapter begins by tracing how and why the newcomer has emerged as an important emic category in Detroit and what, if anything, is "new" about the newcomer. It will then consider what sorts of figure are articulated through the newcomer, and the type of ground that sticks these figures together. This consideration will lead to notions of the "frontier", the imaginative landscape in which newcomers are tracked and created. The "frontier", in turn, leads to an exploration of how a moral landscape becomes embodied in the lives of newcomers, through investigating what a "good" and "bad" newcomer is. The social world of newcomers in Detroit will then be examined, a world where whiteness makes the city "small", but also facilitates forms of raced solidarity and community. Finally, the

chapter delves into the ambiguities that emerge in newcomers, revealing how notions of the frontier produce contradictory feelings of power, guilt and privilege. It will pay particular attention to how these feelings influence the spatial practices of newcomers.

"All we talk about": the ubiquity and precedents of a category

In everyday conversations on how Detroit was changing, the newcomer was a recurrent and central topic. I particularly remember one interview with a Black teenager from the east side of Detroit, in which we explored his perceptions of urban change. Toward the end of this interview, he broached the subject of newcomers, explaining how he often saw them on the streets of his neighborhood. At the time, he was living with his mother, grandmother and two sisters. I asked him if he ever talked about newcomers at home. He gave me a look and a little smile, then said, "It's all we talk about". Their appearance in the public spaces of his neighborhood was, as he put it, a "big deal". To him and his family, their presence signaled that something had happened, and that something was happening.

His experience was commonplace. Detroiters knew about newcomers, if not as individuals with whom they interacted, then certainly as a category, and most Detroiters could be expected to have an opinion on them.

The newcomer also played a prolific role in representations of the city, and was explored in a series of articles by Jackman (2014a; 2014b; 2014c; 2014d; 2014e; 2014f; 2014g) in an edition of The Detroit Metro Times. His stories about newcomers even made the cover of the paper, with the title "So You Want to be a Detroiter? For the newcomer, it was a guide to Detroit and how not to 'save' it". A year later, Foley (2015) published a 280-page book entitled "How to live in Detroit without being a jackass: It's not the new Brooklyn!". It was a social guidebook, meant to help newcomers become productive and healthy Detroiters.

Public spaces were also replete with mediations on the newcomer, but on a smaller scale. These often came in the shape of brochures and pamphlets advertising particular services, and articulated the "cultural real" in which newcomers were framed to exist.

The "informative guide", pictured above, is one example of cultural artic-
ulations of the newcomer and the newcomer's landscape. Through humor,

it plays on themes that can be recognized from the region's history and cosmology, such as suburban fears and misconceptions about the city.

On the other hand, the brochure does more than this. Through the drawings themselves and in the interests they express, it frames the newcomer as a younger person without children. It suggests that newcomers are looking for wild parties, beers and shots, eating out, starting new business ventures and realizing home ownership. Desires for quality schools are not present in these articulations, even though the public school system has been in and out of crisis and emergency management for the past two decades (Zaniewski 2015), while charter schools continue to proliferate around Downtown (Zernike 2016). The brochure also disseminates the notion of Detroit as a "wild west", a space that seemingly allows for a kind of freedom and creativity which cannot be found elsewhere.

Other mediations in public space, such as pamphlets from the Detroit Experience Factory, promised "interactive experiences" and "innovative resources" to help newcomers and locals "connect" better.

The process of "connecting" newcomers and natives formed the focal point for many social initiatives across the city. It was the foundation for a series of events entitled "I was here", where long-time Detroiters could share with newcomers their experiences of growing up and living in Detroit through their personal and biographical narratives (Barrett & Hood 2014). It also served as an impetus for the crowdfunded platform "Native <> Newcomer", which aimed "to close the gap between native Detroiters and newcomers" (Lee 2016a). Similarly, it played an active role in Cornetta Lane's "Pedal to Porch" and "Detroit Dialogues" projects, which sought to connect Detroiters, locals and newcomers through storytelling and interaction (Golden 2017).

I bring these cultural reflections to light in order to illustrate that the presence of newcomers, and the issues raised by their presence, produced wide and diverse forms of articulation and mobilization within the city. The newcomer emerged at a level of everyday experience, in the media and in localized community projects involving the socialization of newcomers, or projects which aimed to build proper relations between newcomers and natives. In other words, and as my teenage interviewee put it, the newcomer was a "big deal" in Detroit.

Newcomers were regarded as a novelty, something that had not been there before, yet the term itself, and the images it conjures up, are far from new. Furthermore, the imaginaries of the newcomer are not entirely local, or even regional. The newcomer and the newcomer's landscape are ubiquitous features of national imaginaries. The newcomer is a "big" category in this sense, because it speaks to the city, the region and the nation.

The newcomer is a perennial character in Detroit and the United States as a whole. The genealogies of present-day Americans generally include ancestors who, at one point or another, were newcomers. Furthermore, Americans are, in general and comparatively speaking, highly mobile people. According to a recent Gallup survey (Esipova et al. 2013), nearly "one in four U.S. adults (24%) reported moving within the country in the past five years". Thus, many Americans have firsthand experience of newcomers, either as newcomers themselves, in terms of interacting with newcomers or in terms of contemplating the category of newcomer. In other words, the newcomer is not only a "big deal", but also a thoroughly *ubiquitous* "big deal". For instance, a dissertation (Mumm 2014) on the changes to a neighborhood in Chicago mentions newcomers 301 times over 383 pages, without further elaboration on the category itself. The concept of the newcomer, it seems, "goes without saying".

Historically speaking, newcomers are not new in Detroit. In previous chapters, I have argued that the city would not exist without the continuous arrival of new groups of people. Furthermore, these new groups of people have generally been framed as a threat to the groups already present in the city[46].

The historical continuity of the newcomer begs the question of what is "new" about them, but also why they are a "big deal" today? I argue that the historical precedent of newcomers reveals two themes: first, the presence of newcomers has tended to appear threatening to the city. Second, there have been times when this threat has been elevated to a matter of public concern. This corresponds to periods when the city experienced large waves of migration. Newcomers became a growing social concern in the middle of the 1800s after the completion of infrastructural projects brought unprecedented numbers of newcomers to Detroit. They became a

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[46] Schneider (1980: 68) argued that as "far back as the 1830s and 1840s, Detroiters commonly attributed crime and disorder to people who were not residents of the city". Sugrue (1996) documented a wide range of injustices that befell Black newcomers to Detroit, and how white supremacists mobilized themselves in a variety of ways to keep these newcomers out. Hartigan (1999: 18) explored how whites labeled other whites, showing that "southern whites arriving in Detroit between the 1940s and the 1960s were scorned by contemptuous native white Detroiters. 'Hillbilly' inscribed a stigmatized intraracial distinction, articulating a sense of refinement and sophistication that the 'rude', out-of-place white could not attain". In his "Geography of a Revolution", Bunge (2011: 61) notes that "perhaps the most important theme in Fitzgerald's [a neighborhood in Detroit] history is the incessant 'invasions'. 'They' are always coming […] Each race and subgroup predicted a disaster for their neighborhood at the hands of rapine invaders". In both the present and the past, newcomers have tended to be perceived as a threat. However, Bunge (ibid.) also noted that, instead of a catastrophe, "each group left something and someone behind, a street name here, a marriage there, integration and assimilation".

concern in the years following the advent of the assembly line, during the Great Migration which brought both Blacks and "hillbillies" from the south. The newcomer can therefore be seen as someone who is in one sense ever-present, but who is also, at particular times in the city's and the nation's history, elevated to an issue of public concern.

The ongoing migration from suburbia to inner city (Simmons & Lang 2003; Fishman 2005; Sturtevant and Jung 2011; Ehrenhalt 2012; Hyra 2012) represents a fundamental transformation of urban America today, similar in scope to earlier periods of heightened migration. Once again, the newcomer has moved from the background to the foreground of urban concerns.

However, recognizing continuity of form should not be allowed to obscure variations in substance. The newcomers of today differ from newcomers in the past. There is, in other words, something "new" about them. First, it is important to understand that the newcomer who is a "big deal" in Detroit is not the undocumented immigrant sweeping the floor at the Mexican bakery, or the Uber driver who recently arrived from Zambia. Although people like this do immigrate into the city, they are not the newcomers who occupy the public's attention in relation to comeback.

What sets the newcomers of today apart from those of the past, and current ones who are also new, is a difference in power. Today's newcomers are wealthier and better educated than the city's native population. They have better access to capital of various forms, and they tend to have professions and jobs that pay well and come with higher status. Furthermore, they have white skin, which many interlocutors interpreted as evidence that they are systemically favored or privileged, situated at the top of America's racial pyramid. The newcomers of today can, with relative ease, assume the position of gentrifier. This can be said neither of Black nor "hillbilly" newcomers, nor the vagrant workforce of the mid-1800s. Nor can it be said of other, contemporary, newcomers to the city. Furthermore, this power differential is an important feature of the newcomers' understanding of themselves as newcomers. Many do not only see and sometimes talk, or find it difficult to talk, about this difference; they harbor an outspoken desire to transcend it, and not reproduce it in the future.

Grounds and figures of a "frontier"

In practice, the category of newcomer would often serve as convenient "code" for broaching subjects which could be controversial. Talk about newcomers can operate as talk about gentrifiers or about suburbanites, or

about white people in general. The newcomer can also be used to discuss or draw attention to racial privilege, segregation and racism, and severe economic disparities between individuals and groups. Even though the newcomer is a contradictory and contentious category in itself, it would often appear as the least volatile word to emically describe the changing demographic patterns associated with comeback.

In the cosmology of Detroit, the category of newcomer is associated with other categories of relevance. These other categories have become coded through the newcomer, and their associations have been attached to newcomers. Through associations that draw on cosmology, the newcomer becomes culturally mediated, and breaks apart, into different figures, e.g. the gentrifier, the savior, the urban pioneer, the colonizer, the settler, the occupier and the "blank-slater".

To describe the meanings Detroiters find in these figures succinctly, it will be useful to define some terms. Firstly, gentrifiers are figures who alter a neighborhood, resulting in local residents and local establishments being pushed out. Newcomers are generally assumed to be gentrifiers, and although newcomers often agreed on the associative links between newcomers and gentrifiers, these links were only rarely acknowledged in relation to themselves as individuals. Newcomers would commonly argue that other newcomers were gentrifiers, but often insisted that they were not gentrifiers themselves. In short, newcomers did not wish to be gentrifiers because that would make them morally bad newcomers.

The figure of the "savior" is also a morally bad newcomer. Saviors are figures who act and think from a position of racial and economic privilege, and consider themselves to be saving Detroit. A "good" newcomer should not try to "save Detroit", or pretend that they are "saving Detroit". For instance, to avoid being seen as "saviors", if they renovate a dilapidated building, or start a business or a social enterprise, they should be humble and not consider themselves to be doing anything special for the city.

The "urban pioneer" is another popular figure within the category of newcomer. This figure perceives Detroit as a wilderness or jungle, full of exoticism and danger, even though hundreds of thousands of people simply perceive it as their home. "Colonizers", "settlers" and "occupiers" are a more vicious version of gentrifiers, figures who actively strive toward supplanting what was there before with their own exclusive bubble. "Blank-slaters" are figures who think and act as if Detroit were an "empty canvas", a blank slate on which they can create something new and fantastic.

These figures have in common that they are morally reprehensible. They serve as "bad examples" of newcomers, highlighting behavior and thoughts that should be avoided and, if detected, subjected to social

sanctions. This will be explored further in the next section. For now, my concern is to outline the ground which makes these figures perceptible and culturally meaningful in relation to "comeback".

Drawing on Gestalt psychology, Holston (1989: 120) argued that "the figure stands out because it appears to possess a contour that separates it from the ground". This simple but profound observation leads to the conclusion that, by tracing the contour of the figure, we trace the fields of both figure and ground. The dialectics between figure and ground have recently been reexamined within the field of urban anthropology. Harms et al. (2013: 166) have argued for "understanding particular figures as evocative nodes that reveal relationships and forms of mediation between individual lives and wider social processes". In distinguishing this new analytic use of the figure from the earlier, more static conceptualization of the Chicago School, Harms et al. stress how their figures are "not just products (or unwanted by-products) of society; they play a role in making the world they live in (if not in ways they themselves imagined). Not just models of, they are models for society" (2013: 165).

I argue that in the United States, the frontier is the "ground" upon which the figure of the newcomer emerges. The frontier represents a particularly rich and pivotal imaginary in the nation itself. An early and influential perspective was offered by Frederick Jackson Turner in a short paper called the "Frontier Thesis". Turner (1893) claimed that:

> American development has exhibited not merely advance along a single line, but a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line, and a new development for that area. American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character […] in winning a wilderness, and in developing at each area of this progress out of the primitive economic and political conditions of the frontier into the complexity of city life.

At the time, Turner's paper was stimulated by a declaration by the U.S. Census Bureau that the frontier was "closed", since there were no longer any wild or untamed lands between the Atlantic and the Pacific. To Turner, this closure was monumental, representing an end to America's first historical period. In his paper, he argued that the frontier had accomplished several things. It had clearly added new lands to the United States, but more importantly, the frontier had come to fashion a uniquely American experience, fostering a national character based on rugged individualism.

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Even though the actual frontier was "closed" in Turner's day, the frontier as a cultural reality has remained central to the popular imagination in America. Over time, it has found expression in new figures and grounds, in movies and stories about the cowboy and the Wild West (Murdoch 2001), and in the astronauts of the Cold War era, where "space represented the ultimate geographical frontier" (Reichstein 1999: 131).

In the 1990s, an influential reinterpretation of the frontier emerged within critical urban studies. Smith (1996: 15) made a convincing argument that as "part of the experience of postwar suburbanization, the U.S. city came to be seen as an 'urban wilderness'". The argument also noted that a number of scholarly works from the postwar era had constructed the city in terms of dangers and disorders. It was during the postwar era that the city became seen as a "pathology", "rendered a wilderness, or worse, a 'jungle'" (ibid). Thus, between the 1960s and the 1990s, the American frontier reasserted itself as tangible and physical space, this time in the nation's urban centers.

Notions of the frontier differ in the work of Smith and Turner. Turner's frontier was an ephemeral space, continually moving, transforming out of its frontier status. It was something that was constantly beginning anew. Natives Americans were, in his vision, a naturalized part of the frontier, representing a wilderness that the American imitated and incorporated. On the frontier, a person "strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin" (Turner 1893: 2). To Turner, the style of American civilization came about through physical removal from it, followed by a rebuilding of civilization within the hybridity of frontier life.

The urban frontier that Smith (1996) imagined was more sinister and tragic. Rather than establishing civilization *ex nihilo* in the wilderness, the new city ultimately emerged on top of a preexisting one. Although the urban revival of the 1980s and 1990s emerged as a contrast to the city-as-pathology, where "*revival*, *renaissance*, and *revitalization* were the new buzzwords" (Beauregard 2003: 187, italics in original), these movements were premised on tragedy. Emerging on the heels of what Smith (1996: 19) framed as "revanchist urbanism", the frontier embodied a "revengeful and reactionary viciousness against various populations accused of 'stealing' the city from the white upper classes". This sense of tragedy has arguably increased in the decades following Smith's reformulation of the frontier. If, in the 1980s, the "urban pioneers, urban homesteaders and urban cowboys became the new folk heroes of the urban frontier" (ibid: xiv), they are now more likely to be perceived as villains.

As a result of its extreme decline, Detroit has "evolved" as a cultural imaginary, moving beyond terms such as "wilderness" or "jungle" to encompass representations of a "wasteland", or as different forms of "desert", such as a "food desert" or an "internet desert". The space conjured up by these metaphors of a cultural ground is essentially empty and difficult to survive in[47].

Critical approaches to the urban frontier tend to focus on deconstruction, highlighting how the narratives of dominant political and media institutions frame cities like Detroit to the detriment of its residents. As Gregory (2012: 223, italics in original) asserts, "The constructions of Detroit as a *blank slate*, a *vast*, *enormous canvas*, a *frontier*, or *the land of opportunity* serve to devalue and/or negate existing people, structures, and artifacts while glorifying the new". Hill (2017: 242, italics in original) makes the argument that "Detroit is not a *desert*, devoid of food, absent of any community assets. Detroit is a place of inequity and missing opportunity, populated by innovative and persistent residents". Yezbick (2016: 106) states that "The frontier ideology is alive in statements […] that see only opportunity in the disinvestment and hollowed out urban core of places like Detroit". I would argue that such lines of critique implicitly draw on Smith's (1996) reformulation of the frontier, not as something "really real" but as an ideological metaphor and construct, deployed for nefarious and Machiavellian ends, and ultimately furthering disinvestment, gentrification and dispossession.

The critique of the frontier raises valid points about the power and inequity behind metaphors. The strength of approaching the frontier in this manner is that it enables a cultural critique of the narratives which ascend to a position of dominance in politics and the media. However, applied to everyday urban life, with its many ephemeral and routine situations and events, such perspectives can be constricting. The frontier, as a "means of

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[47] These ways of framing Detroit are common in mediations on the city. In 2009, police chief Warren Evans described the problems with crime by saying, "It's the Wild West out there" (quoted in Oosting 2009). A reportage by CBN (Holton 2013) on the "urban wasteland" of Detroit began with the sentence, "Some call this the dead zone". In a column of the New York Times, David Brooks referred to Detroit as "destination restaurants in the middle of urban wastelands" (Brooks & Collins 2014), whereas Reuters ran a story in 2009 entitled "Detroit house auction flops for urban wasteland" (Krolicki 2009). In the New York Times, Barlow (2009) argued that Detroit "offers a much greater attraction for artists than $100 houses. Detroit right now is just this vast, enormous canvas where anything imaginable can be accomplished". A critical scholarly book about Detroit's comeback was entitled "Beautiful Wasteland: The Rise of Detroit as America's Postindustrial Frontier" (Kinney 2016). A recent anthropological dissertation was entitled "Domesticating Detroit: An Ethnography of Creativity in a Postindustrial Frontier" (Yezbick 2016).

creating and tracking a cultural real in which there is room to maneuver" (Stewart 1996: 179), risks being lost, together with an understanding of how the frontier operates outside of newspapers, policies and political speeches. Rather than deconstructing the frontier, to demonstrate that it is neither "true" nor "really real", I wish to pay attention to what the frontier creates and tracks, and the room it offers for maneuver.

The frontier in Detroit is a moral landscape. It creates and tracks a morality of development and change. Talk about the frontier operates as a morality play, an allegorical drama that carries instructions for what is considered good and bad. The figures that emerge on this ground are characters who personify abstract qualities and vices. As such, they do not always have an embodied existence in particular individuals. During fieldwork, I made continuous attempts to find gentrifiers, blank-slaters, urban pioneers, and other such configurations of newcomers. Newcomers often mentioned them in their conversations and stories about the city. However, these figures, as flesh and blood, were almost always "someone else", existing "somewhere else". The city was full of them, but I seemed only to be able to confirm that the city was full of *stories* about them.

I do not discount that such figures exist in the flesh simply because I could not find them. Nor is my argument that a person must confess to being a gentrifier in order to be a participant in the process of gentrification. Many newcomers clearly are participants, whether they call themselves gentrifiers or not. Instead, I am suggesting that the frontier and figures such as pioneers, saviors, blank-slaters or gentrifiers should be understood as similar to props in a theater. They are words which allow certain performances to be spun, and they establish points against which newcomers can maneuver and position themselves.

As the chapter will reveal, newcomers actively discipline and sanction other newcomers who display traits associated with these figures, and these actions serve to define newcomers and socialize them into proper conduct. By facilitating performances where newcomers can discursively disassociate themselves from both the frontier as a ground and the figures which emerge against it, the dialectic between figure and ground produces negative examples. It forms a collection of traits and views that are *not* to be adopted and emulated.

In this inverted sense, the figure of the newcomer becomes a model for society, not in terms of something to strive toward, but something to strive against. As such, it participates in shaping the world of newcomers, and of native Detroiters, by outlining acts and beliefs which are morally wrong. If this perspective is adopted on what the frontier and its figures are about, it positions us better in terms of understanding the enduring qualities of its

existence. Although the frontier and its figures are denounced by newcomers and native Detroiters, or deconstructed as "false beliefs" by scholars and critics, the frontier remains central to conversations and perceptions involving comeback and its changing demographic patterns. It plays an integral role in the morality of urban transformation, in the same way as sin and the devil are integral to religious beliefs involving god and virtue. In other words, it is there to be denounced, but not necessarily demolished.

"Good" and "bad" newcomers

When I first met George, he had been in the city for less than a month. He was a short man in his late thirties, with white skin and dark, curly hair. A friend of mine had "found" him while he was volunteering at an urban farm and subsequently introduced us, thinking we could have a lot to talk about. During his month in Detroit, George had first been staying at an Airbnb but had then moved into a commune. As it turned out, we had several acquaintances in common, and this is a prominent aspect of the social world of newcomers which will be explored in the next section.

George had been looking for a more permanent solution to his housing situation. His plan was to own his own property, perhaps even two if they were suitable and adjacent to each other. He had been a successful engineer working across the United States and in parts of Central America, updating and designing electrical infrastructures. His move to Detroit had been a way of escaping his "soul crushingly boring" existence and starting a completely new life. For the past decade he had lived as cheaply as possible and worked as much as possible in order to accumulate capital. His goal had been to "opt out", retiring as early as possible in search of a more meaningful existence. He had projected that he would be able to do so in his early fifties. However, he had then heard about Detroit. Its depressed housing market had opened an earlier route to retirement. He had gone to the city over a weekend and then quit his job the following Monday. When I met him, he was very much in love with Detroit and in a phase of his life where he had begun to dream "big".

George had nurtured and planned his dream for years. He had it all "worked out", approaching the situation very much like an engineer. He had numbers and spreadsheets, drawings and designs. He was not simply "retiring" from work. His ambition was to create a self-sustaining system that would secure his basic and more profound needs. The plan was to live "off grid", growing his own vegetables and farming his own fish by

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combining hydroponics and aeroponics. Solar panels would cover the roof, providing him and his sustenance system with energy. When everything was up and running, he imagined himself reading books, practicing music, doing volunteer work, and helping neighbors and other residents who wanted to know more about sustainability and how they could build their own systems for living "off grid".

While cheap property had drawn him to Detroit, other things had convinced him to stay. There was a large and burgeoning field of urban agriculture in the city. Furthermore, it had "grit", it was "alternative" and "defiant", its people were "resilient" and it felt "free". Here, he imagined, he could live differently from anywhere else in America. The abandoned landscapes around him teemed with possibility and potential, leaving him with a sense of empowerment. To him, the comeback of Detroit would produce a new kind of city, with new modes of urban living. Although he never used the word "frontier" to describe and position himself in Detroit, his story draws on meanings that emanate from this "ground".

One night I introduced him to two other newcomers, Toby and Andrea. Both had been in Detroit longer than George. Both had grown up in the suburbs. Both were white. Both were chasing grants in the Detroit art scene.

Over beers and starters, George revealed to Toby and Andrea why he was in the city, what his background was and the dreams he entertained about his future in Detroit. I could tell by their facial expression that they did not approve of what they heard. George went on for a while, talking about his passions.

When he had finished, Toby wanted to know why his "big dream" was to become self-sustaining, and why on earth he thought that Detroit would be a good place for that. Why did he not live in the woods, or in the mountains? Why a big city, why a majority *Black* city? Andrea chimed in, saying that the way George talked about these things sounded very much as if he did not want to be a part of the community, given that he seemed to want to isolate himself in a bubble.

I had the impression that this was the point where George realized that neither Toby nor Andrea was impressed by his dreams. He assured them that he did not want to isolate himself and that he very much looked forward to having a deep relationship with his neighbors. He tried to win them over by expressing a desire to be a part of the community, partly because he thought he had a lot to contribute. He mentioned his long-term plans of eventually teaching others about sustainability, hydroponics and aeroponics. Perhaps such knowledge could improve the health of the community, he suggested.

Rather than getting him off the hook, this suggestion only served to dig him in more deeply. Both questioned the assumption behind his plan. Andrea suggested that he might want to "check his privilege", while Toby wondered if he thought the community did not know how to eat healthily, or if he thought they actually needed him to come in and enlighten them about what was right and wrong. Did he not know that Black people had been growing food in their backyards for generations? Or did he not care? And was he planning on buying a property from the tax auction? Those properties had been someone's home until they were foreclosed and the householders were evicted by the city.

George's spirits dropped, and he excused himself early, saying he had things to do in the morning. Before leaving, however, he acknowledged that Toby and Andrea had given him a lot to think about, things he had not considered before. I left too, feeling awkward for bringing this situation about. A few days later I caught up with both Andrea and Toby at an event. After we had left, they seemed to regret how "hard" they had been on George. He had "seemed nice", but they were disturbed by this whole "settler-logic" that they saw as very prevalent in Detroit, especially in the art scene. Newcomers like George were less than respectful to whatever and whoever had been in Detroit before them. They came with all kinds of assumptions born of ignorance and privilege, and they often expected to be taken seriously, perhaps even given a pat on the back for being so "nice". To Toby and Andrea, people like George were "all jacked up on their own dreams and ambitions".

It was almost a month and a half before I caught up with George. By then, he had learned more about the complicated nature of Detroit and his presence in it. He had met other newcomers who had reacted negatively to his ideas and plans. He had become jaded, but still thought that the city had much to offer, although it posed a lot of challenges and difficulties. Even though his heart was in the right place, he realized that the way he had said things must have come across as insensitive and offensive to others. He told me that he had decided to wait at least a year, to get to know the city and its different neighborhoods more thoroughly before even purchasing a property.

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In December 2016, I went to a small party of around 20 people in the North End. All but two were newcomers, and some had been there for some time. A few had arrived more recently. The group consisted mainly of white

people in their twenties and thirties. We hung out, drank, listened to music, socialized.

Two situations related to newcomers developed at this party.

In the first situation, Wendy had looked at her phone and then burst into tears. She was sad and upset. I knew her from before. She was a white graduate student doing research for her master's thesis on how the city, and what sort of city, was mediated through images. Earlier in the day she had done some interviews, and on her way home she had passed a building that was on fire. She had stopped and photographed the burning building, and then she had posted it on social media. Several of her interlocutors had sent her messages, arguing that she should remove the image. She had done this, but messages had kept streaming in. Other interlocutors were upset and disappointed with her.

Sitting on the couch, she briefly displayed a message from a person who was accusing her of practicing "ruin pornography", a photographic genre that estheticizes abandonment and decline. These images portray urban space as empty, with no people in them. "Ruin pornography" was, at the time, critiqued from different angles in Detroit. It was said to be premised on unequal power relations. It estheticized the effects of segregation and disinvestment, and was practiced by "outsiders" who profited from its misery without giving anything back. It fed into narratives of Detroit as abandoned, devoid of people, a blank slate, a wild frontier, the city as a desert or wasteland.

Wendy had a good understanding of why her interlocutors were upset. She was critical of "ruin pornography". She had not imagined that her picture would be perceived as belonging to this genre. The house on fire had not been an abandoned structure, nor was the photograph devoid of people. At the bottom, firefighters were busy doing their job. It was something she had seen on the way home, a spectacle she had wanted to share. She kept saying that "ruin pornography" was so wrong, but now she was part of it. Others tried to comfort her, saying she should just apologize, maybe publish a statement on her profile.

The second situation developed later, when about half of the guests had left. We who remained were sitting around a big table in the kitchen. Perhaps because of the situation surrounding Wendy earlier, we were discussing movies and documentaries that had some connection to Detroit. One person mentioned a piece they had recently seen called Detropia (2012), a documentary focusing on the parallel decline of the automobile industry and the city. A white man next to me commented, "That was a good one".

A white woman across the table asked if he had not found it controversial, claiming that a lot of people had thought so. The man responded,

saying that perhaps parts of it were, but his tone and body language suggested that he was not one of those people, and that he did not like where the conversation was going.

"Well, what do you think about what he said at the end?" the woman from across the able asked. "That stuff about Detroit being a blank canvas. Is that what you think?" It now became obvious that a confrontation was brewing at the table. The side conversations simmered down as people observed the exchange.

The man next to me was surprised and defensive. He said that it was not what he meant, and that he understood that it was controversial. The woman explained that implying that Detroit was a blank canvas was to deny the history of the city. It was to say that the people who lived here did not matter. She explained that buying into the myth that Detroit was empty of people was to deny the presence of Black people, to say that they did not matter. She concluded by stating how it was a very colonial and racist thing to say. People nodded in agreement.

The man voiced his agreement with her, but he also proclaimed that his interpretation differed. He argued that the person in the documentary was talking about the opportunities in Detroit, how it was creative space at the time, and that something new could grow there, something better. He trailed off. Several people looked at him with skepticism. One was even shaking her head slightly.

"So, you think it is a blank canvas then?" the woman said. The man disagreed with his body and face, so she added, "Because you are defending it right now". At this point the host started to mediate, acknowledging her perspective, then his perspective, saying that they probably agreed on a lot of things. After this, the conversations took another turn.

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During the fieldwork, I witnessed and participated in many similar situations. With regularity, newcomers came to reflect and articulate their morality through juxtapositions in terms of the ground of the frontier and its assorted figures.

The newcomer position is a volatile one in Detroit, carrying an ever-present risk of acting and talking like a "bad" newcomer. The situations I have detailed ethnographically indicate what "good" newcomer acts look like, acts that allow newcomers to display their compassion, enlightenment and sensitivity toward Detroit. In the meeting with George, both Toby and Andrea were acting like "good" newcomers. Likewise, the argument at the party allowed the white woman to assume the position of a "good"

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newcomer. In short, the act of being a "good" newcomer often amounted to people positioning themselves against a "bad" newcomer, either in the flesh, or in principle. Thus, it was common for older newcomers to instruct more recent newcomers on what was perceived as morally good and bad in Detroit.

Although these instructions could seem harsh at times, and sometimes even unfair, they were an important tool for socializing new arrivals to the city. They contained important lessons for how individuals should morally maneuver the figure-ground dialectics of frontier and the different figures of newcomers. Furthermore, since new people were arriving in the city regularly, recent newcomers would eventually become older newcomers, often socializing others in similar ways to how they were once socialized themselves.

Two aspects compounded this volatile position of newcomers and the modes by which they were socialized. One was the strong tendency by newcomers to socialize with other newcomers, rather than local Detroiters. The other was the prevalent notions of whiteness, guilt and privilege that were strongly associated with the newcomer. Both of these aspects will be examined in turn, before returning to what the figure of the newcomer in Detroit can reveal about broader demographic shifts in urban America.

Whiteness and the making of a "small place"

In the spring of 2016, an Italian architect was staying in our house in Detroit. He was only in town for a few days, but had already experienced a common Detroit moment. Rising from his seat at the kitchen table, and gesticulating toward my roommate, he exclaimed, "It's like a village! This is not a city". Everyone laughed. The background to the story was that the day before he had visited Eastern Market, where he had bumped into a stranger and started a conversation. It turned out that this stranger knew our roommate and had been at our house many times. Later the same day, he had found himself in a conversation with another stranger, this time at a café in Downtown. He had told him about his experience at Eastern Market. The stranger in the café replied that he knew him from Eastern Market. "Can you believe it?" he asked our roommate, to which our roommate replied, "I don't have to, I already know about it". Both had texted him about running into an Italian staying at our house.

Detroit was full of these seemingly unlikely social coincidences. I vividly remember going to my local bar in the hope of drowning out work with some live jazz. As I walked in, I noticed that nine people I had

previously interviewed, who were not associated with each other, had gathered there for the evening.

Interlocutors would remind me that "Detroit is a small place", and that this quality made it different from other cities. The "smallness" of Detroit would often seem to contradict the expectations of newcomers and visitors. This is not surprising, since larger cities are thought to be more anonymous, and filled with strangers. Tonkiss (2003: 298) writes that "theories of the modern city have frequently figured urban life as isolating, anonymous, degrading of social ties, inimical to community"[48].

Experiencing situations where Detroit's "smallness" became evident was so unexpected that it could feel surreal, sometimes even magical. There is nevertheless nothing mysterious about it. From a certain perspective, and for a certain demographic, Detroit is a small place. This is especially the case for whites, and especially white newcomers. I will argue in this section that there are reasons why Detroit can be expected to become a "small place" for newcomers. Examining the quality of "smallness" will help investigate how race, sociality and space shape both the newcomer and the newcomer's world.

First, it is important to remember that Detroit is America's Black metropolis. Equally, since the postwar era, whites have historically not only traded the city for the suburb, but many have also actively avoided the city altogether. To return to a quote given in the introduction, Foley (2015: 78) writes in his "guidebook" to newcomers, "If you are white and are planning to move to Detroit, or live here for any point in time, get ready to be stared at. Whites may be gawked at, side-eyed, and maybe questioned about their reasons for being in the area in some parts of town". Newcomers cannot "hide" in public, because in public their presence is highly noticeable. Naturally, not every newcomer is white, nor is every white person a newcomer in Detroit. Yet these variations serve to underline the norm for what counts as a newcomer in the city.

In new social interactions, white natives tended to establish their provenance quickly, detailing where they grew up and the schools they went to. In this way, they effectively preempt the classification of being a newcomer which would otherwise be inherent in their racial position. Black

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[48] Wirth (1938: 12-13) argued long ago that cities are characterized by a physical closeness and a social distance toward others. Where "the individual gains, on the one hand, a certain degree of emancipation or freedom from the personal and emotional controls of intimate groups, he loses, on the other hand, the spontaneous self-expression, the morale, and the sense of participation that comes from living in an integrated society". Additionally, Simmel (2002: 15) argued that the density of cities forms a particular urban mode of being, characterized by indifference.

newcomers could, in contrast, pose as "locals" in public. One of my interlocutors, who had moved from California to open a business in Detroit, even argued that being perceived as "local" or "native" by his customers made his business "worthy of support", especially with whites who wanted to support a "local Detroit business". He had no problem in doing so. All it took was to alter his accent when he addressed customers. What is of importance here is that the racial visibility of whites makes them susceptible to being immediately categorized as newcomers, and therefore framed as an "other", or a stranger who does not fully belong.

Because Detroit is one of America's Black metropolises, it can yield interesting insights into how whiteness is construed and also into how it is experienced. Hartigan explored whiteness in Detroit, and how it intersects with notions of class (1999; 2000). He argued that whiteness in the city becomes grounded in "situations where whites are racially objectified – in settings where the normative status of their racial position cannot be assumed, and where whiteness is not often an unmarked identity" (Hartigan 2000: 29). In short, whiteness is not the norm in Detroit, it is a deviation from the norm. It can neither be taken for granted, nor operate as an unmarked category. Being white in an environment where whiteness is the norm and taken for granted is different from being white in an environment where it is not the norm[49].

It is important to connect these arguments of how whiteness operates in Detroit with the demographics of white newcomers. Newcomers in general, and newcomers from nearby suburbs in particular, would articulate their move to Detroit as a form of "escape". The change of address and residence was often held up as evidence that they had fled the entrenched positions of racism held by their peers, their families and wider suburban communities. Newcomers would espouse a wish to transcend the racial divides of the region, to "move beyond race", as several interlocutors put it.

A desire to "escape" issues of race and the way in which whiteness operates in the city creates an ambivalent and paradoxical situation. By moving to Detroit, the racial identity of newcomers becomes heightened. Although they had white skin before, they may not have experienced whiteness as a marked racial category. Furthermore, by moving to Detroit they inevitably find themselves in situations where they are reduced and objectified on the basis of their race. Rather than a "move beyond race" a move

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[49] Bonilla-Silva (2013) has argued, for instance, that it is the normative quality of whiteness in America that affords whites unique beliefs about race, manifested in their ability to "not see race", since in a normatively white society fewer whites will share the experience of being reduced and objectified on the basis of their racial identity.

to Detroit is, on a more practical level, a move toward race as a bodily experience.

At this practical, everyday level of race, white interlocutors and newcomers often lacked the appropriate discursive means to address their position. Compared to Black interlocutors, who could readily address this directly, white newcomers lacked a language that would allow them to discuss their own racial identity, in essence their whiteness, at the level of experience. The language of whiteness that was available to white newcomers was an indirect and sometimes abstract language, often rooted in forms of theoretical criticism. White newcomers could discuss white privilege, or systemic forms of oppression and historical forms of segregation, in the abstract. However, whenever it became the subject of personal identity, or a descriptor of the self and the self's activities in space, whiteness quickly evaporated.

The reasons for this relate to the previous section on the "good" and "bad" newcomer. Whiteness at the level of experience was a topic where people's articulations on the subject could easily lead to social sanctions from other newcomers. Native whites were, in comparison, much more forward and unhindered in discussions on race that were grounded in personal experience. For white newcomers, it was more prudent not to engage directly with whiteness and race if they did not wish to be construed as racist and morally bad.

The lack of direct language meant that discussions on more concrete experiences of whiteness were mediated by euphemisms, which would allow for a distance between the self and the city. Euphemisms were particularly common when white newcomers related their racial identity to their movements and impressions of urban space. As an example, "good" white newcomers would not say that they avoided low-income Black neighborhoods because they were low-income Black neighborhoods. They would, however, avoid areas that they perceived to be "sketchy". However, "sketchy" areas were invariably low-income Black neighborhoods, areas where a newcomer's whiteness would be an extremely marked category of "otherness".

This brings new understanding to discussions of how Detroit is made into a "small place". In practice, newcomers would largely move, settle and remain in areas of the city where there were other white newcomers. Since notions of race and whiteness were uncomfortable to white newcomers, they avoided areas where they were more at risk of being reduced to their skin color, thereby avoiding situations where their whiteness was neither indirect nor abstract, but embodied through feelings of "otherness".

Douglas (2002) and Cresswell (1996; 1997) approached the areas which newcomers avoid, and the areas in which they congregate, through notions of being in-place and out-of-place. Cresswell (1997: 334) argues that the "notion that everything 'has its place' and that things (e.g., people, actions) can be 'in-place' or 'out-of-place' is deeply engrained in the way we think and act". In practice, at the level of experience, newcomers feel in-place where there are others like themselves, and they feel out-of-place where their presence is highly noticeable and deviates from the norm. Articulating this at the level of discourse is difficult, however, and is fraught and inflected with notions that many newcomers have sought to escape, such as racial objectification and segregation.

To summarize, Detroit can be an experientially "small place" for newcomers because it is linked to whiteness, a racial quality and grouping that is highly noticeable in a city with relatively few whites, from which whites have historically moved away and stayed away. Newcomers themselves, especially those from nearby suburbs, make their move meaningful as a form of "escape" from the racism and segregation of their suburban upbringings. Furthermore, they are involved in a process of socialization, where the moral perils and ambivalence inherent in the category of newcomer make many vulnerable to either being, or being perceived as, a "bad" newcomer to other newcomers. Lacking a language with which to discuss race at the level of experience without risking social sanctions, and as part of their socialization in terms of becoming "good" newcomers, they use euphemisms to articulate the places they avoid and the places they frequent.

My argument is not that the newcomer is a racist or a white supremacist in hiding. It is because of the region's history and cosmology, and the city's demography, that newcomers become the "other" in most parts of the city. Being in these neighborhoods, where they are "out-of-place", produces sensations of not belonging, sensations which they seek to avoid, not least because of the tense symbolism between city and suburb, where many newcomers have had to sacrifice close relations and social status specifically because of their move to the city.

The above argument has sought to sketch an understanding of the mechanisms that underlie how newcomers settle and move within Detroit. These mechanisms directly impact the city's comeback and the material manifestations of a New Detroit, the focal point of the next chapter. How newcomers settle and move affects land values, real estate prices, retail and public amenities. New Detroit is where the "white spaces" (Anderson 2015) of newcomers can be found. It is where newcomers' bars, cafés, breweries, boutiques, restaurants, grocery stores and galleries are

emerging. It is where newcomers seek to live and spend their money. It is where the process of gentrification is most pronounced. Detroit is, geographically speaking, a "large place", larger than Manhattan, Boston and San Francisco *combined*, yet its development, which is heavily concentrated in a small percentage of this area, consists of a "small space". Furthermore, since the advent of gentrification, newcomers and comeback have been nascent phenomena in Detroit. Instead of a multitude of "white spaces", there are a few cafés, a few brewpubs, a few galleries and a few other places which make this "small space" even "smaller", because limited options increase the likelihood of seemingly serendipitous encounters. If you are white and a newcomer, you are bound to run into the same people repeatedly. Although "smallness" can be an unexpected quality of urban life, for white newcomers this quality is a consequence of a desire to be "in-place" rather than "out-of-place".

Raced solidarity and community among newcomers

The position of newcomer not only offers new arrivals a sense of ambivalence and anxiety. It also provides fields of commonality. There are experiences that newcomers can share with other newcomers, such as navigating the cultural world of Detroit, being "out-of-place", or being a stranger and outsider. Above all, the city's heightened sense of racial identity is conducive to establishing newcomers as a racial group, leading to solidarity between white newcomers, yet they were largely unaware of this. I could spend an evening with white newcomers, and the next day discuss how we had been in places where there were hardly any Black people. This would often come as a surprise to the interlocutors in question, and sometimes I had to show them my journal where I had recorded the numbers.

At the level of experience, the solidarity between white newcomers was not only observable in how individual newcomers interacted in social situations, but also in the composition of their social networks. White newcomers tended to socialize with other white newcomers, and they also tended to have considerable numbers of white newcomers in their social network. Importantly, white newcomers did not speak about preferring to interact with other white newcomers, as this would have made them a "bad" newcomer and could have led to social sanctions from other newcomers. It is the potentially negative consequences of these tendencies that the various social projects mentioned above are seeking to address by "closing the gap" between newcomers and natives.

A series of events that began with an evening at the Ravens Lounge, one of the oldest blues clubs in the city, can help make this obfuscated reality of white solidarity between newcomers more tangible. That evening, the proprietor of the Ravens Lounge, known as the "Bossman", was celebrating his birthday with his wife, the "Bosslady", who was sitting next to me and my wife, with a customary birthday sash that participants stuffed with dollar bills. There was a band playing and a free buffet in the back. When the place had filled to capacity, the "Bossman" gave a welcome speech. He announced, rather ostentatiously, the presence of some notable individuals: a mayor, a scholar and a detective who had solved a famous "cold case". The Bossman then walked over to our table, where he announced our presence to the whole club. He asked us to stand up and wave, saying that we were newcomers in Detroit.

Shortly thereafter, a white man sat down at our table. He was also a newcomer, named Stephen, who used to live in New Orleans. Stephen was in his mid-fifties and dressed in a nice suit. He bonded with us over the topic of "being new to Detroit". Before leaving, he invited me to a bachelor party that he was hosting in a few weeks. He promised that there would be a "good mix" attending, which in Detroit usually meant that both Blacks and whites would be present.

There were two broad groups at the bachelor party. The first involved local Detroiters, who seemed to reflect Stephen's interests in business and music, offering a "good mix" of bankers, lawyers and blues musicians. The other group consisted of newcomers. This group was more diverse in interests and professions than the other group, their common denominator being that they were newcomers and that Stephen had "found" them like he had found me.

Despite Stephen's efforts to bring newcomers and locals together, after an hour of mingling, the bachelor party had largely divided into two groups which occupied two adjacent rooms, local Detroiters in one, newcomers in the other. Now and then, someone would go between the groups, but for the most part guests focused their social attention on their group.

In the newcomer room, the talk was about common acquaintances, other newcomers in the "small place" of Detroit, but also about things their newcomer eyes and ears had picked up. Thus, they socialized around new bars or restaurants that had opened or were rumored to have opened, what it was like to live in this or that neighborhood, and whether this or that area was seeing any "change".

If they moved into the local room, newcomers were asked the questions locals would routinely ask when they began to interact with a newcomer, questions about who they were and what their reason was for being in

Detroit. Although I consider that these "normal" local-newcomer questions arose out of interest rather than malice, they nonetheless serve to demarcate the degree to which people belong in a place. Like the incident where the "Bossman" asked me and my wife to stand up at his birthday party, being asked these questions in front of a group can produce sensations of otherness, of being singled-out, of not "fitting in". The fact that these interactions repeat themselves across groups of people and their respective fields also means that newcomers not only experience them as a singular instance, but as part of a larger pattern in which their status in Detroit is questioned, compounding the ambivalence and uncertainty of their position.

This short description led me to formulate two ideas. In America, I found myself socializing with other Europeans, sharing in the kind of affinity that forms between strangers of a similar kind. In the same way, an affinity develops between newcomers, in that they share a position of "otherness" in Detroit. As individuals, they may have little in common, and may even seem socially incompatible at times, but as newcomers, they share experiences of belonging to a category that does not fully belong to the city. Thus, it was not uncommon for newcomers to entertain relations with other newcomers who were different in terms of their economic means, educational background or choice of profession. These differences may have been too great had it not been for their newcomer status and that Detroit is a "small place". This pattern of socialization recalls Berman's (2010: 218) assertion that an "important feature of the mythological frontier world is its classlessness: one man comes up against another, individually, in a void". Although "good" newcomers avidly denied that Detroit was a "frontier", some of the rigidity of an otherwise more established social structure which might be an issue elsewhere was, for the time being, set aside.

This realization can help to expand how newcomers are understood, beyond the truism that they socialize and form a community with other newcomers because they enjoy doing so. Detroit's history, cosmology and classification of newcomers mean that they become members of a group of categorical misfits and outcasts, people who do not really belong, but who then belong to each other. Equally, the raced nature of the newcomer and the city at large means that white newcomers will experience a form of raced solidarity, a community grounded in whiteness.

Another important aspect is highlighted by the "small place" of Detroit, and the solidarity and community established between newcomers. The morality game of "good" and "bad" newcomers, a discourse which resists the "frontier" and its associated figures, is one that newcomers largely play

on their own, in their own social group of newcomers. The morality of newcomers articulates a concern for the city and a rejection of colonial or racist attitudes, by which they might mean seeing Detroit as a "blank slate", or thinking that a newcomer can "educate" locals on healthy eating. Although this can certainly be a concern for local Detroiters, the city is a rather "large place", and there is no singular Black or local opinion. Nevertheless, in maneuvering between being a "good" or "bad" newcomer in the eyes of other newcomers, such nuances are lost. Instead, white newcomers articulate a morality around their own position, seemingly at the behest of people who are largely absent from their everyday interactions in the city.

Power, guilt and privilege

The position and category of newcomer yields conflicting emotions and responses in individuals. This sense of conflict can become clearly visible in an examination of how newcomers relate to one of the city's most pronounced features: its widespread abandonment.

To native Detroit interlocutors, abandonment was commonly associated with loss. An abandoned house on the street might be referred to as an "eyesore", a reminder of a neighbor who had left. Similarly, abandoned factories or boarded up storefronts were reminders that businesses and economic opportunities had also left the area. Yet to newcomers, abandonment could simultaneously be invigorating, signaling opportunity and serving as a source of empowerment.

This mix of positive and negative feelings toward the city became evident during an afternoon I spent in conversation with Jim, a white newcomer, observing from his porch the sleepy residential street before us. In the distance rose the Fisher building, an exquisite art-deco skyscraper[50]. Much of the conversation centered on the Fisher building. The reason was that it was being auctioned off, together with a garage and another large building. The minimum price the seller would accept was $8.4 million. In the end, it closed at $12.2 million (Gallagher & Reindl 2015).

Neither Jim nor I had anywhere near the asking price. We nevertheless had dreams, and, on that porch, we fantasized about gathering together our families and friends, and their families and friends, and I would go back to

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[50] When it was built it was known as the "Cathedral of Commerce", fashioned out of many varieties of marble, limestone and granite. Once, the roof had even been coated with a layer of gold. The story goes that the Fisher brothers, who commissioned the building in the 1920s, gave the architect Albert Kahn a blank check with instructions to build "the most beautiful building in the world" (Houston & Culpepper 2001).

Sweden to find investors, and maybe with a loan, maybe … It was make-believe, but almost believable make-believe, like a possibility on the very margins of our reach. Had that skyscraper been standing anywhere else but Detroit, it would also have been standing outside our imagination.

To Jim, Detroit was rather dreamlike. It was open and vast, a place where he could imagine anything taking hold. "There is so much space," he said. "If you need space for business, or creative things or just to experiment, it is here, everywhere around us, just potentials and opportunities you don't find anywhere else in this country."

Jim spoke from experience. We were, after all, sitting on his porch, in front of his house, a two-story structure of brick and wood. He had moved from San Francisco, where he had lived in a small studio apartment he could barely afford, even though he was well paid in the tech industry. Owning a house like this had not even been within his registry of dreams in San Francisco. The depressed housing market and the past decline of Detroit had produced a landscape in which he felt empowered. Reflecting on this sensation, he told me that the city made him dream. It made him think of possibility, of things he could do and accomplish.

On the other hand, he also felt guilty for thinking and feeling the way he did. "I'm not ignorant," he said. "But what should I do? Would you say no to a house like this?" I shook my head. "So, you see," he said, "it's like a dream to me, but it's like a dream inside someone else's nightmare".

To understand better why newcomers develop sensations of opportunity and power, it is important to consider that space is a very precious commodity in most urban centers. This precarity is reflected in its monetary value and in the fact that people struggle to afford it. Lefebvre (2011: 53) once made the argument that any "'social existence' aspiring or claiming to be 'real', but failing to produce its own space, would be a strange entity". This poses a question about whether the insurmountable barriers produced by the real estate market in terms of space mean that cities are filled with "strange entities", social existences lacking a space onto which to project themselves. Clearly, this not the case in Detroit, where property is easily available, and where a person can purchase a single-family house for a modest sum of money. This availability allows for many different social existences to spring into reality in Detroit. This is why newcomers can find freedom, creativity and empowerment in the same landscape that, for others, represents loss, dispossession and depression.

Considerable spatial experimentation in artistic, agricultural, entrepreneurial and social fields underlines the claim that "Detroit still attracts dreamers" (The Economist 2013). It is a city subjected to novel imagination, such as Lockwood's (2013) "The Commonwealth of Belle Isle",

which seeks to turn the largest city-owned island park into a tax haven for 35,000 of the world's wealthiest, making it "the Monaco or Singapore of the Western Hemisphere" (Henderson 2013). Other ideas have sought to turn Detroit into "natural", low-budget scenery for horror movies (Smith 2016; Blevins 2016) or convert it into a live-action zombie theme park (Huffpost 2012).

The expansive and imaginary aspects of the frontier usually escape critique focusing on deconstruction. They are nevertheless there, and they generate passionate interests and feelings of pleasure. To newcomers, these pleasures are, on the one hand, highly animating, giving individuals a sense of potential and empowerment. On the other hand, they can also produce feelings of guilt, in that they are sensed at all.

Several newcomer interlocutors believed and acknowledged forms of "white privilege". McIntosh (1989: 1) sees "white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious". This definition remains close to emic usages of the term, which usually highlights the invisible perks involved in having white skin in America. In the fieldwork, these perks were often taken to be unconscious, or at least exceedingly difficult to realize in a conscious way, and it was acknowledged that this hidden quality of privilege was an instrumental aspect of its systemic power.

As noted earlier in the chapter with regard to George, newcomers who sense that other newcomers are deviating from morally appropriate conduct may tell them to "check their privileges". Checking their privileges was about making themselves aware of the benefits derived from a position in a racial hierarchy. The expression could also be used in a looser sense, as a caution or reminder to newcomers not to express themselves as a figure of the frontier. The phrase was sometimes used sarcastically or in jest, as when someone claiming not to like falafel was told they should "check their privileges". However, the fact that someone was asked to "check their privileges" was generally an indication that they had misbehaved in the eyes of other newcomers.

Newcomer interlocutors regarded "checking privileges" as part of a continuous process of self-development. Many claimed that it had helped them become a better person, allowing them to adapt to living in a majority Black city. Because of its assumed subconscious and invisible nature, "checking a person's own privilege" could be a way of demonstrating social consciousness. By vocally acknowledging their white privilege, newcomers could display and communicate moral superiority toward other white newcomers. Although the act of being aware of their position in the racial hierarchies of society was seen as morally good, in a concrete sense

and on an individual level it could have paradoxical results in relation to segregation.

George is a good example of this type of paradox. A year after his arrival in Detroit I had a follow-up interview with him to see what he had discovered about the city and about himself. In his own words, he had become "more aware" of his privilege since our first meeting. There were many things he had been ignorant about as a white American male who had grown up in a sheltered middle-class suburb. One of these involved the depths of segregation and racial injustice in both the place he lived now and the area where he had grown up. He had a new understanding of transportation and car ownership, for example. He had previously not considered these political, but now viewed them as "very political", as they influenced mobility and regulated access to spaces in racially unjust ways. In terms of his plans for self-sustainability, he had decided to slow everything down. Where he had previously wanted to realize his dreams quickly, he now wished to take his time and listen to locals, their stories and their needs. It seemed as if he had been socialized into a morally "good" newcomer, but he also admitted to having difficulties in dealing with certain moral ambiguities which arose from his position.

To illustrate, he recounted an evening where he had gone to a community meeting about the poor, often non-existent, street lighting in the area. Present at the meeting was a representative from a grassroots organization that sought to help neighborhoods construct their own, solar-powered, streetlights. The representative had talked about different concepts and ideas that could be implemented in their community. George's background as an engineer working with electrical infrastructure probably made him a good candidate for spearheading the project. He had, however, remained silent during the meeting.

"It was all really basic stuff to me," he told me in the interview. "But I don't want to be that white savior type that just stands up and is like 'follow me. I know what to do'". Shaking his head, he continued, "But then on the other hand, we could really use some lights. It's a real need where I live". He had struck a compromise with himself and signed up as a volunteer for the group which had formed around the issue. However, a Black neighbor in the group discovered his background as an engineer, which had offended her deeply. She had suggested that he did not want to take responsibility because he did not care for the community, which George had interpreted as an accusation of racism. In the end, nothing came of the project because the city installed several new streetlights in the area, but the experience had left him feeling bitter and unmotivated in terms of engaging in the community. Furthermore, he could not decide whether he had done the right thing

or the wrong thing, or whether there was any result that would have been morally appropriate, given the circumstances. In the end, George stopped participating in the community meetings.

George's narrative illustrates that, while it can be difficult to be a "good" newcomer, it is rather easy to become a "bad" one. The morality that newcomers spin around themselves is ostensibly intended to protect disadvantaged residents, but in doing so it increases the likelihood of them disenfranchizing themselves. This bears a resemblance to a form of gentrifier who, out of a concern for others, "opts out" of local life on the assumption that "the pre-existing non-white community is impotent and disorganized, fearing that the community's very essence will wither in the presence of their overpowering privilege" (Schlichtman et al. 2017: 169).

The polarized world of Detroit makes the phenomenon of newcomers, as a category and as individuals, more attenuated and perceptible. The concept of the newcomer is locally grounded and culturally mediated, but many of the issues it exhibits are also part of national conversations. The newcomer is, after all, a perennial figure in America's history, and the frontier is a staple of national mythology.

During fieldwork, several interlocutors referred me to an article shared online, called "20 Ways Not to Be a Gentrifier" (Lambert 2014). The article was not based on Detroit, or any city in particular, but represented how newcomers and gentrification are seen more generally in America. It did, however, find resonance with interlocutors in Detroit. The piece laments people who "think they can move into someone else's neighborhood and start making it over as their own, regardless of the folks already living there". This description fits several figures who have been discussed so far. The article also underscores the importance of treating everyone as part of a neighborhood in order to avoid being a gentrifier. This includes "single mothers with three jobs and migrant workers who might not speak any English, as well as the homeless people who sleep in the park, the drug dealers who sell outside the liquor store, and the prostitutes walking nearby streets" (ibid.).

Another example shared by interlocutors involved comments made by director Spike Lee, who had stressed that, "You can't just come in the neighborhood and start bogarting and say, like you're motherfuckin' Columbus and kill off the Native Americans. Or what they do in Brazil, what they did to the indigenous people. You have to come with respect. There's a code. There's people" (Coscarelli 2014).

Both examples draw on the imaginary of the frontier and the dialectics between its ground and figures, as well the presumed relations between these figures and the native or indigenous population. They resonated with

interlocutors because they drew a familiar picture of the bad newcomer in Detroit. In Detroit, the "bad" newcomer intrudes on, or alters the existing ways of life in the neighborhood or city. He or she is someone who tries to "save it" (Jackman 2015; Foley 2015), someone who is being a "jackass", i.e., "someone who's disrespectful of Detroit culture, Detroit history, someone who is trying to erase what we have here, change what we have here" (Foley, quoted in Doerer 2016).

A "good" newcomer resembles the figure of the "curator", discussed by Schlichtman et al. (2017). The "curator perspective on gentrification implies that it is either the gentrifier's responsibility or the gentrifier's desire to keep the sociocultural fabric of the neighborhood as it was when the gentrifier entered" (ibid: 163). The "good" newcomer is thus a person associated with *continuity*, someone who does not make waves or splashes, but rather seeks to conserve what is already there. Newcomers show respect for what is there, and for people who were there previously, as an integral part of what they recognize as the neighborhood or city.

However, the notion of "curating" a neighborhood or a city is complicated. The very concept of *continuity* may indeed be anathema to urban life. Neighborhoods and cities change, not least because people move in and out of them. As chapter two highlighted, Detroit was created through migration. Furthermore, it is difficult to know what the "community", the "neighborhood" and the "city" are, because these are all polyphonic entities. Even relatively homogenous neighborhoods contain a multitude of perspectives and voices and can field numerous disagreements. Those Lambert (2014) regards as "locals" may not even consider "the drug dealers who sell outside the liquor store, and the prostitutes walking nearby streets" as integral parts of their neighborhood.

It could just as easily be argued that these ways of framing are fictional, products of the middle-class imagination of urban lives in the inner city. The figure of the "native" is likewise a prop for the imagination, emerging against the ground of the frontier, and in relation to its other figures. Newcomers often lack personal relations with residents and local communities, which means that when they attempt to protect these groups from the impact of newcomers, they are influenced by their own perceptions of them and their spaces.

In the relative disconnect between newcomers and locals, the perceptions of recent arrivals in particular are extremely relevant. Fictional ideas about what the community is, what the neighborhood wants and what the city needs can easily take hold. This disconnect allows the moral world of newcomers to operate with relative autonomy vis-à-vis the people intended to be the beneficiaries of their morality.

If they have concerns rooted in notions of privilege and guilt, the opportunity to "opt out" increases the likelihood of white newcomers establishing new patterns of segregation, the very aspect of their parents' generation they are seeking to "escape". This could be the case even if they consider themselves to be acting as enlightened individuals who care about the community.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented one of the dominant symbols of Detroit's contemporary comeback: the newcomer. I have argued that the newcomer is a "big deal" in Detroit, by relating the concept to local circumstances in chapters 2 and 3, and by connecting it to deep-seated national concerns and imaginations. By outlining the ground of the "frontier", I have sought to trace different configurations of the newcomer. I argue that understanding the dialectics between figure and ground allows us to approach the moral world of newcomers, and the tensions that exist between "good" and "bad" newcomers. Whiteness forms an important dimension of the concept of the newcomer in Detroit. It permits an exploration of Detroit as a "small place", illuminating the forms of raced solidarity and community that exist between newcomers. Whiteness also surfaces in sensations and notions of guilt and privilege, forming a crucible of ambivalence and room for maneuver in ways which are both abstract and concrete.

Key arguments developed in the chapter include the fact that the morality of newcomers is an affair between newcomers, while the way in which newcomers socialize, and are furthermore socialized into becoming "good" newcomers, operates with relative autonomy vis-à-vis the city they are seeking to protect or be "good" toward. In other words, there is a gap between locals and newcomers which is formed by different forces deriving from the region's history and cosmology. As individuals, newcomers themselves are concerned with being "good" and living a morally "good" life, being careful not to repeat the history of racism, segregation and forms of systemic oppression that have shaped the city. However, despite claims to the contrary, there are many obstacles and pitfalls to maneuver their way around. It can sometimes be easy to be "bad" or do the wrong thing. Importantly, as individuals rather than as a classification, newcomers must contend with being outsiders and strangers who, because of their race and background, do not fully belong, and will perhaps never belong in Detroit. The strong and mundane process of othering and not belonging is in turn conducive to solidarity between newcomers.

The newcomers discussed in this chapter are concerned with being "good" whites in a Black city. They wish to belong to Detroit, and they feel uncomfortable if they are reminded that they do not belong. Some have also sacrificed close personal relations to become newcomers, as discussed in the previous chapter. These newcomers tend to congregate with other newcomers in particular areas, in establishments where they are "in-place" and where their presence is neither questioned nor perceived as a novelty. Chapters 7 and 8 will focus on this desire of newcomers, and native Detroiters, to "come together" and break down the gaps and divisions in the urban fabric.

The dynamics sketched above produce paradoxical results. The discourse and morality of newcomers are strongly opposed to those of their parents' generation, which they consider to represent values and spaces from which they have "escaped". On the other hand, their own spatial practices, in the places where they move and spend their money, can be read as practical manifestations of distance and segregation. Building on Lefebvre's (2011: 53) insights into the connection between space and social existence, the thesis now moves into the space of the newcomer, which is also the space of comeback. The next chapter will therefore turn to New Detroit.

A New Detroit

I hear outsiders talking about a New Detroit, but I remember the beauty of Old Detroit.

> Jessica Care Moore,
> from her poem "You May Not Know My Detroit"

It's not Midtown, it's the Cass Corridor. Midtown doesn't exist. Never has, never will.

> Anne, white newcomer in her thirties.

Detroit is not coming back. You can't say that it is. It only makes sense if you think that the city is the same thing as Midtown, "The Greater Downtown Area", the "7.2" or whatever name they come up with. But that ain't the city. That's New Detroit. The real Detroit is not coming back. In fact, it's the opposite. And that's the "Tale of Two Cities" for you. One fake Detroit and one real Detroit, with the fake Detroit getting all the money and all the attention, while the real Detroit continues to fall.

> Mike, lifelong Detroiter in his fifties

This chapter examines New Detroit and comeback through its manifestations in an area known as Midtown. Although New Detroit is larger than Midtown, much of what we learn in this chapter has a wider relevance, not least because Midtown is hailed as a "success story", exerting an influence on other parts of the city. The "success" of Midtown and the non-profit organization associated with its name and development – Midtown Detroit Incorporated (MDI) – serve as material proof of comeback. In Midtown, comeback is given substance, wrought from the realms of abstraction and placed within reach of everyone's senses, even if not within reach of everyone's wallets.

The chapter begins with an introduction to some of the places in New Detroit. This serves as a brief tour, to give the reader a feel for how comeback presents itself to the senses. After this, the chapter outlines a perspective on the emergence of Midtown through metaphors of gardening,

arguing that a perspective on how this space is grown offers insights into the spatialization of comeback. MDI is then outlined as an organization, along with the way it has invented and stabilized the notion of Midtown, a new name given to appropriate older areas. Remaining with the metaphor of growing, I then examine how MDI seeks to "tend its field", through forms of zoning intended to encourage certain manifestations of comeback while discouraging others. Importantly, MDI is not only growing comeback as an urban space, but also cultivating the subjects of comeback. The chapter therefore examines how economic incentives have attracted a particular demographic to Midtown. It then moves on to investigate the esthetic patterns that define and connect Midtown and its new demographic with the material culture of comeback through an ideology of "reclamation". This is legible in the materials that signify comeback at the level of experience.

Both Midtown and New Detroit exemplify what Zukin (2010) has discussed as "new beginnings", material manifestations born out of a gentrified desire for urban authenticity. Importantly, this authenticity does not exist as an innate quality of the world. It must be "re-presented" in order to exist. As I will show, plaster literally has to be removed to expose the authentic bricks underneath. Wood has to be re-claimed, re-processed and re-installed in order to be authentic, and the popular pour-over coffees of the gentrifying class in Detroit have to "re-present" drip coffee. Meanwhile, crafting and manufacturing have to be "re-imagined" as performances of authentic production, even though the bulk of the production is done elsewhere.

The relation between what is "re-presented" and "authentic" is also visible at the level of ideology. The school of urban thought that manifests itself in New Detroit, promulgated by organizations such as MDI, is commonly known as "New Urbanism"[51]. As an ideology of the city, "New

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[51] "New Urbanism" is also called "neotraditional planning", and it represents an approach to urban planning and design that seeks to provide an alternative to urban sprawl and its low-density, auto-dependent land use. This approach is, in itself, polyphonic, with many variations subsumed under its rubric. Principles of "New Urbanism" include "metropolitan regions that are composed of well-structured cities, towns, and neighbourhoods with identifiable centres and edges; compact development that preserves farmland and environmentally sensitive areas; infill development to revitalize city centres; interconnected streets, friendly to pedestrians and cyclists, often in modified grid or web-like patterns; mixed land uses rather than single-use pods; discreet placement of garages and parking spaces to avoid auto-dominated landscapes; transit-oriented development (TOD); well-designed and sited civic buildings and public gathering places; the use of building and street and building typologies to create coherent urban form; high-quality parks and conservation lands used to define and connect neighbourhoods and districts; and architectural design that shows respect for local history and regional character" (Ellis 2002: 262). Obviously, there are many

Urbanism" rests on "re-presentations", seeking to recapture urban life as it is considered to have been before the age of highways, automobiles and suburbanization transformed urban America beyond recognition.

The prefix re-, in both its abstract and concrete forms, is a pivotal feature of Midtown and New Detroit. The space is not only a "re-presentation", a "re-naming" and "re-branding" of an existing area, it is also a "re-vitalization" and a "re-turn" of people with money, thus constituting a form of "re-gentrification" in this part of the city. Interlocutors who were young in the 1950s remembered, and enjoyed remembering, how the area now known as Midtown used to be affluent, with numerous stores selling luxury goods. Even further back in history, in the 1880s, the neighborhood around West Canfield was known as "Piety Hill" because of its reputation for moral and socially upright residents who formed the political and economic elite of the city. In 2016, a new generation of gentry, discussed in the previous chapter as newcomers, was in the process of "re-claiming" this part of Detroit, "coming back" after decades of absence.

Places and spaces of gentrified desires

In May 2014, I found myself at the Tomboy grocery store on 2nd Avenue, between Alexandrine and Willis. At the time, the Tomboy was an affordable grocer, and I spent a few hours hanging around its entrance, talking to other individuals who were hanging around there.

In 2009, the grocer's and the surrounding neighborhood had been explored in the Metro Times. In the article, Carlisle (2009) had described it as follows: "the neighborhood it's in is home to the down-and-out and those who feed their habits. They all wound up here in the city's long-time Skid Row with others who are just like them. And many make their living in the Tom Boy parking lot […] Boxes of local staples are simply set there on the floor – cans of Vienna sausage, Jiffy Corn Bread Mix, pork and beans. There's a mountain of ramen noodle packages – six for a buck – which sell like crazy toward the end of the month, when people's government assistance checks are mostly spent. A third of the purchases here are bought with food assistance cards".

ways of putting these principles into practice, and these make "New Urbanism" even more varied in practice than in principle.

Two years later, in 2016, I returned to the spot but found that the Tomboy was gone. Another business had opened, Will Leather Goods. The individuals who used to congregate outside the Tomboy were gone too. As I approached the new store, I was met by the sight of two lanky white men in their late twenties unlocking their vintage racers in the parking lot. They

looked like hipster Amish, with suspenders over their white shirts, and with flat, wide-brimmed hats on their heads.

The façade toward 2nd Avenue was now composed of exposed bricks, unpainted wood and large windows. Gone were the awnings and the steel cylinders poking up from the sidewalk that used to protect the Tomboy from robberies. The interior no longer housed cramped aisles of affordable and processed foods, but had become spacious. A variety of leather goods was on display, mostly within a price range of several hundred dollars. The former ceiling had been removed to expose the wooden rafters above it, with "fixtures made from reclaimed wood and Douglas fir trees from Oregon" (Witsil 2015).

It was obvious that Will Leather Goods catered to wealthy customers. At the side of the building, someone would later write "Shi Tpa Town", a reference to a South Park episode that had commented on gentrification (Neavling 2019).

When I walked in that day, the manager informed me that Will was a "concept store". I asked him what that meant, and he told me that it was something more than just a shop or boutique. For instance, they had a barista working at a "coffee station". He proudly informed me that the entire "coffee station" had been built out of materials salvaged from an old firehouse in Detroit. There was a photo gallery displaying the works of local artists, and in the main room there was a weaving machine, where a craftsman turned "reclaimed rugs" into products such as tote bags and belts, while customers watched and shopped.

The manager's proudest area was the "community space" they had created. In this space, Will Leather Goods offered a program called "Coffee & Conversation". The store would invite speakers and the public to share in discussions around certain subjects over free coffee. The first of these events had featured a radio host, and the topic was "The new Detroit and how it's shaping our future" (Lee 2016).

Overall, the place had a rustic ambience. It involved aspects discussed in the previous chapter, which portrayed the city as a "wild west" or a "frontier", albeit in a very curated and luxurious form. The centerpiece of the store even featured a large teepee covered in cow hides.

I stayed for a while, chatting with the manager. What did he make of all of this? He was excited. He felt that they were part of something bigger. A larger transformation. Sometimes he doubted whether the city was "ready" for a store like this, but the owners were from Detroit and wanted to "give something back" to the city, as he put it. Time would tell, he argued, and in some ways it did. The store closed down in 2019. An artisanal pizza restaurant, with "naturally fermented, sourdough-starting Neapolitan

pizza" was slated to replace it (Sasson 2019, quoted in Neavling 2019). In a sense, this development could be read as both a confirmation of the manager's doubts, and a confirmation that they were part of a larger transformation. Perhaps Detroit was not "ready", but then again, artisanal leather had turned into artisanal pizza, and gentrification, it seemed, had marched on.

Only a few years earlier, the neighborhood around the Tomboy had been known as Detroit's "skid row", a word Americans use for areas of a city where poor people of marginal status live. Whether or not it was justified, much of Midtown had been referred to as a "skid row" for decades. By 2016, however, that label was no longer used. In fact, the area around 2nd Avenue and Cass, and between Alexandrine and Willis, was booming with residential and commercial development, emerging as a cultural and economic center of the area known as Midtown.

As I exited Will Leather Goods and looked across the street, I could see the El Moore, a large building that was being transformed. Construction workers were busy everywhere. They were turning abandonment and decay into a sustainable apartment complex and a hotel. This "dual use" was meant to facilitate connections between visitors and local residents, a matter discussed in the previous chapter. Where residents would live in apartments of various different sizes, visitors would be able to stay in rooftop "urban cabins" clad in reclaimed wood for about $200 a night, as if this were, once again, the frontier.

Turning the corner of Willis, three different establishments specializing in craft beers came into view. I passed the Shinola store, which was tucked between two of these brewpubs. Their cheapest watches cost roughly the same as the cheapest houses in Detroit, $500, but they also sold leather goods and crafted bicycles. Their interior consisted of exposed bricks, a revealed ceiling, and lots of wood. They too had a place for coffee with a barista at the counter. Inside the store, there was a window through which customers could see a handful of workers assembling watches, industry turned into performance, not unlike the weaving machine at Will Leather Goods.

Shinola had opened in 2013, a few months prior to my first visit, and since then they had generated both praise and condemnation for positioning themselves as symbols of the comeback of Detroit and the comeback of American manufacturing as a whole[52]. Since 2013, the company had

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[52] Both Bill Clinton and Barack Obama praised Shinola as a symbol of the rebirth of American manufacturing (Heller 2014; Wayland 2014; Miller 2016), and the latter even gave the British prime minister David Cameron a Shinola watch (Green 2016; Carvell 2016). When director Peter Farrelly accepted an Oscar for his 2019 picture "Green Book", he walked on

spread to other fashionable locations around the world. It had also developed a "boutique hotel" in downtown Detroit, and the Midtown Dog Park on the corner of Willis and Cass Avenue, in partnership with MDI.

As I walked around, going in and out of the shops and boutiques of New Detroit, I thought about how these places had a certain *smell*. The use of scented candles was popular then. These were, of course, made in Detroit by artisanal candle makers. Everywhere I looked, I saw white people coming and going, entering stores and leaving them. They were mostly young people, some of them hanging around outside the stores, on the benches put there by the stores for people to hang around on.

Further down the street, I stopped by the fence of a dog park long enough for a woman to start talking to me. She was white, in her fifties, and lived in a suburb to the north. She told me that she drove for 45 minutes, once or twice a week, to take her dog to this very park. I wondered why. The park was extremely small, nothing special. She agreed, but she enjoyed coming here. She enjoyed being here, and walking around this area, to see what was new and what was coming. She told me that it excited her, especially because of what it used to be like. She told me of how, in the late 1980s, she had worked downtown at a dentist's office. She had been "scared to death", she said, of the mere thought of walking around in this area, known then as the Cass Corridor. Now, she was happy. She came to Midtown, she said, to feel optimistic about the future. To feel hope for Detroit.

As I walked around the neighboring blocks, I passed another popular brewpub, HopCat, and then Great Lakes Coffee. One my interlocutors once described this café as the "ur-place of hipsterdom in Detroit". The inside of Great Lakes Coffee consisted of reclaimed wood, exposed bricks and exposed ceilings, while its restroom walls, pictured below, articulated underlying tensions of New Detroit. Lots of young white people were sitting

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stage sporting a Shinola watch, proclaiming, "Shinola watches! Unbelievable! They're saving Detroit!" (Hinds 2019). However, considerable criticism has also been leveled at Shinola and its role in Detroit. Journalists have criticized its "Made in Detroit", and "Made in America" moniker as a disingenuous and opportunistic marketing ruse, arguing that their products are not manufactured but *assembled* in Detroit (e.g. Moy 2014; Perkins 2016). Perman (2016) called Shinola "America's most authentic fake brand". Scholar Rebekah Modrak (2015) further criticized Shinola's role in gentrification and segregation, arguing that they were a prime example of a store that peddled "bougie crap", i.e., "expensive consumables that evidence wealth, power and discriminating taste under the pretense of an evolved palette […] Bougie crap uses the design esthetic of 'calculated authenticity' and elements of hand-craft or personalization to suggest that the product is motivated by these values and not by crass economic gain". Modrak argued that the term cultural appropriation sounded "too innocent" for Shinola, preferring instead a term borrowed from Pooley (2010): "the colonization of the apparently earnest".

down, working on their MacBooks, meeting other young white people for business or for pleasure. I had my first pour-over coffee here in 2014. The barista had told me that it was a *crafted* coffee. This is similar to drip coffee, with the difference that in a pour-over the barista, and not a machine, pours the hot water onto a filter filled with ground coffee. The other difference was the price. A pour-over costs a lot more.
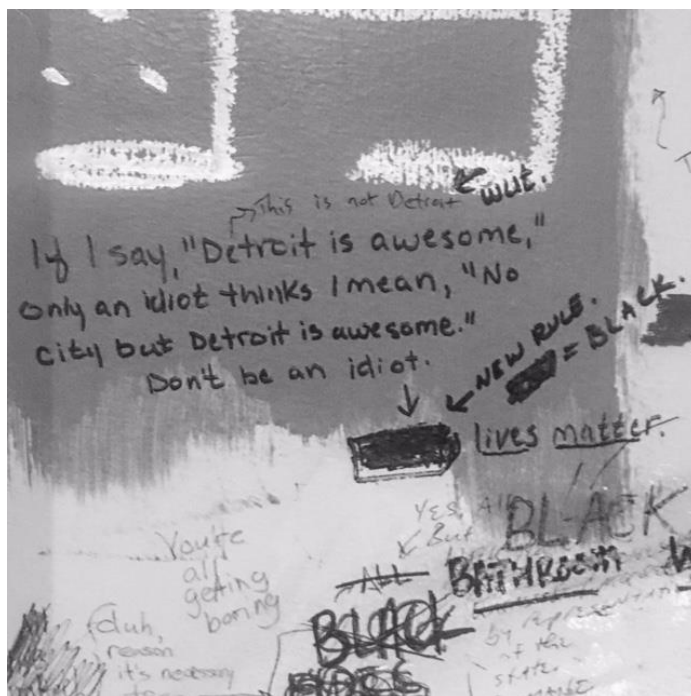
Spatializing New Detroit as a garden

The way in which comeback is spatialized in Midtown can be examined through an analysis of how New Detroit is being *produced* (Lefebvre 2011). An orientation toward production raises critical questions about the economic relations and distribution of power underpinning the emergence of this space. The emphasis on production highlights how the emergence of New Detroit is a deeply uneven process, characterized by inequality in economic terms and in terms of power. This has led to the criticism that

New Detroit is built for capitalist profit, not for the people who live there, and especially not for those who have lived there for a long time.

On the other hand, given the city's past, is there anything new in how comeback is spatialized today?

In pondering this question, I provide an alternative metaphor to that of production, a less mechanistic one which I consider to be less tied to the imaginaries of the 19th and 20th-century factory. It is not that I find the metaphor of production without merit, but I simply wish to offer new ways of comprehending how urban space comes into being. Therefore, I configure New Detroit not as something which is produced but as an entity that is *grown*. I make the argument that organic metaphors can be helpful in understanding how comeback becomes spatialized in novel and contemporary ways.

To begin unpacking this vocabulary, I return to arguments I made in previous chapters. The preceding chapter shed light on how a particular demographic cohort – white, young, educated and, until recently, suburban individuals turned "newcomers" – has begun to settle in the city. The preceding chapter detailed the dichotomies between the city and the suburb as common ways of making the region meaningful. If the suburb, which is perceived as inauthentic in relation to the city's authenticity, is characterized by a particular pattern of retail, spatialized as big-box stores, malls and chain restaurants, then the spatialization of the "authentically urban" logically becomes the mom-and-pop store, the independent craft beer and brewery pub, the small-scale and locally sourced restaurant, and the establishments that sell crafted and handmade merchandize.

These novel and contemporary developments flow from the gentrified desires of newcomers for "urban authenticity". For example, several establishments in New Detroit come in the form of small boutiques, selling crafted beers and wines, together with artisanal cheese and other consumables. To a particular demographic this is "authentically urban", the opposite of the mall or the big-box store run by major corporations. However, it is also, and importantly, a "re-presentation" of authenticity. Common liquor stores, where salesmen work behind bulletproof glass, are arguably some the most prolific types of establishments in Detroit, but they are not markers of "urban authenticity" in spaces such as Midtown. This is not because liquor stores are not "authentically urban", which they are, but because they appeal to a different economic and racial stratum whose definitions and understandings of "authenticity" are not taken into consideration.

The space of "re-presented urban authenticity" emerges through forms of what I call "hipster development", a form of urban development that emphasizes the perception of being small-scale or independent, crafted

rather than manufactured, and "connected" to notions of "community". This form of development is not dependent on any one big development or developer.

In the city's past, the economic and political elites of Detroit have sought, and failed, to spatialize comeback through large projects. In the contemporary case of Midtown, this is not the case. There are instead a multitude of developments and developers, which vary in scale, but which largely appear at the level of individual entrepreneurs or business owners. Although there is a shared esthetic language that joins the many small transformations of Midtown, which will be discussed later in the chapter, in comparison to the mega projects of the past, hipster development is more acephalous and dispersed in its social organization. I consider that its social organization makes it ill-suited for imagery drawing on mass production, which is intrinsically hierarchical and centralized.

The garden is, in this case, more meaningful. Things are indeed "planted" by someone or some entity, and this varies in terms of the main purpose of turning a profit, but there may be other purposes involved as well. Non-profit organizations, such as MDI, often assume the role of a gardener, not an industrialist. They seek to cultivate and curate particular gentrified desires, but they do not conjure them into existence. They "weed" their fields by blocking certain establishments, such as liquor stores or fast-food joints, while "watering" and "fertilizing" establishments that are more in line with their vision of "urban authenticity". In the same way as a gardener does not "create" a carrot, but rather an environment in which a carrot will thrive instead of weeds, organizations involved in furthering hipster development seek to create the conditions necessary for particular desires to materialize. They work with affordances, rather than with causalities.

Going back to the introduction and the discussions on the production, construction and embodiment of space, the material manifestations of comeback can be positioned alongside the perceptions, sensations, habits and affects of comeback, so that New Detroit can be said to grow, both in the space of the city, and in the space of people. To illustrate, the Midtown Dog Park is a material manifestation. As a space turned into a place, it is *produced*. But as a place, it also nurtures sensibilities, perceptions and feelings which, in turn, intensify the circulation of both wealth and people within the area. The woman I met at the Midtown Dog Park how New Detroit is also an embodied phenomenon, intimately tied to notions of return and the growth of comeback.

Using the metaphor of a garden provides a more effective way of examining the intimate, decentralized and often haphazard links that form

between the New Detroit that is "out there" in the city of glass, steel and concrete, and its embodied aspects, the New Detroit that grows within the minds of individuals and groups. Both the "exterior" and "interior" are subject to cultivation. It will become clear that organizations like MDI not only cultivate Midtown as a material or representational space, but also cultivate their own constituencies, growing the subjects of a space as a way of growing the space itself.

What is "new" in the contemporary spatialization of comeback is its polyphonic and organic nature. Previous spatialization of comeback, the Renaissance Center or the GM Poletown Plant, were essentially large-scale projects built through coalitions between the city's political and economic elite. It is a differently ordered process today. This is why this chapter is not solely about the activities of MDI, or even Midtown, but also the patterns of esthetics which produce symmetries that both reveal and conceal the ideological character of this spatial process.

The formation of MDI

In 2019, National Geographic published a piece in its travel section entitled "The story behind Detroit's comeback". To National Geographic, the story behind Detroit's comeback was largely a story of Midtown. In the article, journalist Amelia Duggan (2019) optimistically remarked that "Midtown's resurrection from seedy no-man's land to flourishing retail area that's home to microbreweries and off-beat businesses is part of a tide of uplift and reinvestment that, in just a few years, has revitalized the depopulated heart of Detroit".

In stories like this, the center of excitement is often the rapid material turnaround. Yet the relative suddenness of material transformations, "in just a few years", is not always accurate. The invention and stabilization of Midtown is a process that has been unfolding for decades. It does not progress along a straight line. On closer examination, it becomes clear that there have been many previous attempts at cultivating a new space.

The non-profit organization was created in 2001. It grew out of the work of another non-profit organization, the University Cultural Center Association (UCCA), formed in 1976. UCCA had emerged as a local response to broader economic and demographic decline, which was affecting the area around Wayne State University. In 2011, MDI merged with another non-profit, the New Center Council (NCC), a local business organization set up in 1967. Both the UCCA and NCC had been actively using different means

to market and develop their respective areas for residents, businesses and visitors. Several of the people I interviewed at the MDI had previously worked for the NCC. One of the NCC's main objectives was to stabilize and transform people's perception of the New Center neighborhood. To that end, NCC had organized and staged various public events intended to convince those who lived and worked in the area that the New Center neighborhood was safe and exciting.

The NCC had also been involved in more long-term placemaking efforts. The house where I lived, and its adjoining streets, had been a crucial object for such efforts in the 1980s. For this project, NCC had partnered with General Motors to stabilize a neighborhood which was then experiencing a flight of people and capital. It was this stabilization effort that created the "Historic New Center" neighborhood. It relied on the historical preservation and renovation of residential units, mixed with defensive public architecture, such as cul-de-sacs, and green infrastructure, such as Pallister Park. It was meant both to keep people with capital in the neighborhood, and to attract them there. The project appeared in the media during the 1980s, signifying at the time the comeback of New Center (Cain 1989; King 1998). Its new yuppie residents were framed in the familiar terms of a "frontier", as "the new pioneers" of New Center (Russel 1982). When neighbors from the 1980s looked back on this project, they considered it to have produced some positive effects, especially in terms of beautification, although it ultimately failed in terms of turning the tide of decline.

Through the merger with NCC, MDI ultimately added new territories, such as the New Center neighborhood, and included parts of the adjacent Woodbridge and North End neighborhoods, which nearly doubled the geographical size of Midtown. Since then, MDI has further expanded its boundaries by adding territory adjacent to the Henry Ford Hospital. Midtown is thus a territory with flexible boundaries, having grown in size and scope over the course of several years.

During its first decade, Midtown saw little of the demographic and economic growth that would later generate headlines. In fact, between 2000 and 2010, Midtown lost close to 21% of its population, while up to 28% of its residential properties lay vacant and abandoned (Vidal 2014). However, as I was leaving Detroit in 2016, 98% of all rental units were occupied, while rents had increased by 10% between 2014 and 2015 (MDI 2016a). In 2018, Sandy Baruah, CEO of the Detroit Regional Chamber, stated, "If you're looking for commercial grade real estate … you can't get it. We're essentially sold out" (quoted in Ravve 2018).

During my time in Detroit, MDI was active in different but adjoining fields that cumulatively altered the area they had defined as Midtown.

These fields included real estate development, beautification, zoning and planning, economic development, marketing, and the management of public places, such as parks and green spaces. It is worth remembering that, in comparison to the city itself, the area known as Midtown is small, but it is crammed full of so-called "anchor institutions" such as hospitals, universities and museums.

It is also worth remembering that MDI is a non-profit organization, even though it shoulders many responsibilities that commonly fall to municipalities. The organization runs on donations from private business, philanthropic foundations and municipal and state agencies. Among the 14 donors who gave in excess of 1 million dollars in 2012-2013 are names such as the Ford Foundation, the city of Detroit, the Kresge Foundation, Wayne State University and the Michigan Department of Transportation. It should, however, be clear that the work of this non-profit organization generates profits as an externality. For those who own property in the area, the success of Midtown and its spatialization of comeback leads to rising property values and rising rents.

Inventing and stabilizing Midtown

MDI was not the first to refer to an area as Midtown in Detroit. Some observers, such as Gallagher (2013), have claimed the label of Midtown emerged in 1990s, while another group, called the Midtown Business Alliance, told me that they had been active since the late 1980s. Although MDI is not the originator of the label, which is also a generic urban label in America, they have popularized it and guided the meanings attached to it.

In the widespread and often quotidian use of the name lies part of MDI's success. Using the name serves as a mundane reification of both the name itself, and that to which it refers: a distinct and separate territory. For instance, when someone asked me what I did during the day, and I responded that "I hung around Midtown", there was an understanding of where I had been. The repeated use of the name even fed into criticism of it. Even those who, like Anne in the epigraph, claimed that Midtown did not exist and that it was "made up", had to relate to its existence.

The widespread acceptance of Midtown as a label for a territory with flexible boundaries was the result of concerted efforts by MDI. For more than a decade, MDI has disseminated its representations of Midtown. Over time, these representations have been adopted by the media, as in the article

by National Geographic, and the media then become participants in the project of establishing the territory's existence.

An important and prolific product of MDI involves its maps, which are constantly disseminated throughout its territory. By producing maps of Midtown, MDI has grown the idea that Midtown exists. Although maps are ostensibly used for navigation, their widespread distribution around the area hints at other uses and users.

The map below is an overview of New Detroit, circulated by the Detroit Metro Convention and Visitor Bureau. Areas surrounding New Detroit are grayed out on this map, whereas Midtown appears in bright orange.

Maps are useful for navigating spaces with which a person is unfamiliar, and it could be argued that their usefulness diminishes with the level of knowledge a person has of the space in question. Residents, and especially long-time residents, tend to have intimate knowledge of where things are in the neighborhood and how to get there, often on a par with, or even better than any knowledge they could acquire from a map. Maps of Midtown are useful first and foremost as navigational technology for visitors, newcomers and new residents. They are the representational aides of a potential gentry, but may be less useful to those who are already members of the community.

A closer look at how these representations are circulated and mediated in practice reveals additional connections between gentrification and maps. Cafés are a prime example of these places, as are bars and to an extent retail

businesses. My local café on Grand Boulevard, pictured above, had reserved a space for printed materials, where maps of Midtown and New Detroit could be picked up. Other establishments featured similarly designated spaces for the circulation of information and maps involving Midtown and New Detroit.

Places with these "information areas" tended to serve the growing demographic of newcomers, playing to their desires of consumption. In fact,

many of the locations themselves were new or newly opened, and they mediated knowledge of other places and events that were emerging within New Detroit. These spaces of mediation were not commonly found in liquor stores or fast-food restaurants. They were apparently reserved for the more upmarket, gentrified establishments of New Detroit.

The way in which these representations circulated formed an ecosystem of gentrification in Detroit. New establishments serving gentrified desires furnished an understanding of the new territory called Midtown, and at the same time provided connections to other new establishments within this new territory in the form of information. Individual business owners cultivated their own informative spaces, thereby participating in a much broader process of cultivating Midtown and a New Detroit. Within this ecology, particular establishments mutually reinforced each other, channeling consumers to other potential consumer locations. Importantly, not all types of establishments appear on the maps of Midtown, or in the physical spaces where they have begun to circulate. Many establishments exist outside the confines of the territory, yet these parts tend to be "grayed out", as if there is nothing is there, rendering the places outside the boundaries invisible and non-existent.

The relationship between gentrification and maps helps understand how a label such as Midtown can become useful. One of its uses is to facilitate a spatial concentration of capital, thereby also serving to concentrate the material manifestation of comeback. By representing certain locations but not others, and crisscrossing information between the type of places which plays to gentrified desires, maps of Midtown influence the circulation of people and wealth. In this way, they nurture a set of affordances that make a particular area seem privileged, and simultaneously place other areas at a disadvantage. In other words, maps of Midtown play a constitutive role in shaping the territory itself, cultivating it as both a material reality and an embodied space that grows inside people.

For newcomers, and in particular for newcomers who hailed from nearby suburbs, the invention and stabilization of Midtown and New Detroit were particularly useful. One interlocutor, a newcomer named Andrew, illustrated this usefulness to me. Andrew had moved to Midtown in 2014. Like the newcomers detailed in the previous chapter, Andrew aspired to an urban life and wished to "get away" from the suburbs and the values he associated with his parents' generation. As noted briefly in the chapter on cosmology, property values have risen in parts of Detroit, especially in Midtown, yet many financial institutions still considered property in Detroit to be a poor asset. Potential property buyers were thus often forced to find capital elsewhere. Andrew's situation was no different.

Although Andrew considered Midtown a "sham", calling it "a poorly hidden effort of gentrification", this did not mean Midtown was not a useful "sham". His parents had first refused to provide him with a loan to buy a studio apartment. In his words, they had "freaked out" when he told them where he was planning to move. He admitted that he had made the mistake of saying he was moving to the Cass Corridor. His parents knew of nothing but the bad connotations associated with the Cass Corridor, and had refused to help him purchase an apartment.

Six months later he had pitched a similar idea. Another apartment had come onto the market, fairly close to where the first one had been. This time, however, he had not asked for capital to move into the Cass Corridor, but for moving to Midtown. His parents had heard nothing but good things about Midtown and how it was "coming back". They even agreed to go with him to Canfield and the Shinola store to see Midtown. This had been the first time in decades that they had gone to the city. His mother, he remembered, had commented that the city did not feel the same as she remembered it. Something was different, in a positive way. They had still been skeptical, but they could also see that Andrew was not acting irrationally. The area was clearly "on the rise", as his father had put it, and perhaps this was a good time to "get in". Even though the area of development around Canfield and the Shinola store was exceedingly small, especially in 2014, and something of a Potemkin village of gentrification, it had nonetheless swayed his parents.

Andrew's story was not unique. In discussing their move and current address with suburban family and peers, interlocutors revealed that Midtown was the preferred label, carrying positive connotations compared to the Cass Corridor. Andrew's story illustrates how the invention and stabilization of Midtown contributed to making certain flows of capital possible, further contributing to the area's continuing gentrification and rise in property values.

Tending a walkable and mixed-use field

On a Wednesday in late January 2015, I joined a meeting of around 20 participants to discuss the proposed re-zoning of Midtown. A few were residents, but the majority were small business owners whose establishments lay within the proposed area of re-zoning. Prior to the meeting, the planning department had contacted residents by mail and had held a number of meetings where participants had been able to contribute their views.

At the meeting in question, the proposed re-zoning was to be communicated and questions answered. Two presenters chaired the meeting, one representing MDI and the other the city's planning department.

The power to create and enact zoning belonged to the municipality, but the MDI had worked in cooperation with the municipality to devise the details of the plan. Later interviews with MDI employees and members of the city's planning department confirmed that MDI had played a significant role in pushing for re-zoning, and was regarded as the successful "steward" of Midtown. It would have been unthinkable not to involve them in the design of new zoning regulations. Furthermore, all the different planners were grateful for their input because MDI had expertise in terms of

developments in Midtown which the city's planning department could not match. Key figures in this process would later transition from working at MDI to becoming members of the city planning department, illustrating the overlap between the two entities. Where zoning was clearly a municipal responsibility, the formal relations between MDI and the planning department also acted as a "social firewall" in the face of criticism (e.g. Aguilar 2016b), as MDI could correctly state that the plans for updated zoning had been developed by the municipality (e.g. MDI 2016b).

The proposed re-zoning introduced two new classifications of space in Midtown, "Special Development District 1" (SD1) and "Special Development District 2" (SD2), which were to replace previous zoning classifications. They were presented on a map, pictured above, where most properties would be re-zoned according to SD2, with SD1 zones sprinkled in between. The purpose of both SD1 and SD2 was "to encourage mixed-use developments that are compatible with the surrounding area and promote pedestrian activity" (MDI 2016b). Unpacking this discourse of planning and governance, the intentions of the plan were to (1) force development that combined residential, commercial, cultural and entertainment uses; (2) ensure that these developments fit the "profile" of the area; and (3) encourage people to walk in the streets.

At the meeting, concerns about "promoting pedestrian activity" generated distress in many participants. Business owners worried about a potential lack of parking that might ultimately result in losing customers. These concerns were noted and addressed by making reference to more efficient modes of parking, the construction of the M1 Rail along Woodward which would provide an alternative to cars, and the "science of planning". Representatives of both MDI and the municipality relayed the results of studies that had shown how a decrease in parking space benefited businesses, compared to policies that made parking abundant and cheap.

Both SD1 and SD2 articulate ideals of New Urbanism (Duany et al. 2010). The emphasis is on mixed-use development and "walkability". In the planning discourse around New Detroit, "walkability" and comeback were often intimately linked. Increases in Detroit's "walkability score" were a metric routinely tied to ideas of the city's comeback and development (e.g. Lewis 2015; Raven 2016; Facher 2016).

The emphasis on "walkability" in the development of Midtown fits within the wider framework of New Urbanism, but it also articulates local understandings which connect the lack of pedestrians to the city's decline. The loss of residents and suburban avoidance of the city, covered in chapters 2 and 3, have resulted in empty urban sidewalks and deserted urban squares. This type of absence has come to symbolize the demise of urban

public life in the city. Variations of "I see people walking", "people hanging out" or "people sitting", were common indicators of change at the level of experience. Incumbent mayor Duggan stated that it "is emotionally very powerful, to see crowds on the streets shopping on the weekends, to see the nightlife again, to see people moving back into the city. It's very exciting" (quoted in Ravve 2018). The presence of people in public serves as a strong indication that comeback is "real" to Detroiters[53].

On the other hand, the presence of people in public and the strong emphasis on "walkability" also demonstrate how the spatialization of comeback is restricted to New Detroit and areas such as Midtown. The seemingly progressive ideology of "walkability" also begins to articulate notions of race, class and inequality. This is because the "walkability" of a city does not measure the degree to which people walk in public. Many Detroiters have no choice but to walk if they wish to go anywhere in the city. 26% of households lack access to a vehicle (Laitner 2015a), so in a city that has been described as having "America's worst transit system" (Grabar 2016), walking is not a question of choice for many residents. They have to walk[54]. It is not the absence of pedestrians, but the gap left by the two-thirds of the population who leave, that gives the impression that the city's sidewalks are empty.

This begs the question of who the people are who are supposed to walk in Midtown. Clearly, people who live there can do so, as well as those with the resources to use the necessary infrastructure to get there. Although the notion of "walkability" is aimed at improving pedestrian access to the city, in practice "walkability" can become a tool for promoting and circumscribing a particular economic and racial category of residents and their access to public spaces. In a rather obtuse way, emphasizing "walkability" and de-emphasizing automobiles and parking serve to circumscribe the spatialization of "comeback", limiting access to New Detroit to those who live there and those with the means to get there.

Another important dimension to the proposed zoning was to ensure that developments fit the "profile" of Midtown. The wording "compatible with the surrounding area" neatly illustrates how MDI and the municipality were striving to cultivate a particular kind of development. The proposed zoning gave indications about what should be considered compatible and incompatible, by differentiating between by-right uses and conditional

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[53] The following chapter will consider visualizations of crowds more closely, as well as how particular crowds come to symbolize the city's future.

[54] The fact that people *have* to walk is illustrated by the story of James Robertson, who made international headlines as Detroit's "walking man" through a 21-mile (33 km) daily roundtrip on foot between his work and home (Laitner 2015b).

uses. By-right uses referred to what property owners could do by virtue of being property owners, whereas conditional uses related to what property owners could do only if they obtained an appropriate permit. Examples of by-right uses included the development of lofts and multiple-family dwellings, art galleries, animal grooming shops and pet shops, brew pubs and microbreweries, coffee-roasting industries, knitted goods and leather manufacturing, as well as restaurants *without* a drive-in or drive-through facility. Examples of conditional uses included the development of boarding houses and single-room-occupancy houses, pool or billiard halls, youth hostels and motels, arcades, secondhand jewelry stores, radio/television/household-appliance repair shops, and tattoo and/or piercing parlors.

In interviews, MDI personnel often demonstrated enthusiasm for the proposed zoning and how it would contribute to the development of Midtown. In the past, MDI had fought to avoid developments they considered "bad urbanism". This included establishments such as fast-food restaurants, strip-malls, surface parking lots and liquor stores. Several interviewees also highlighted how "chain-stores" were undesirable elements in terms of the profile of Midtown. This last point was, however, rather contradictory, because resisting the establishment of "chain-stores" seemed contingent upon the demographic that would frequent a particular "chainstore". For example, MDI had strongly supported the establishment of Whole Foods in the area, an upscale chain grocer.

The distinctions drawn between by-right and conditional uses map onto other distinctions related to racial and economic status, or, in organic metaphors, the distinctions made between plants and weeds in the garden of Midtown. Municipal re-zoning represents an instance where MDI acted as a gardener for Midtown. MDI does not produce development as such, but curates a kind of ecosystem favorable to certain developments and unfavorable to others. Built around contemporary notions of "good urbanism", such as walkable, mixed-use, development, it remains a highly political project. Through municipal re-zoning, MDI is growing an urban space commensurate with the aspirations of a demographic that is generally whiter, wealthier and more educated than preexisting residents. For this demographic, the progressive rhetoric of "New Urbanism", with its limitations on parking and its promotion of bike lanes[55], can appear as "common sense". In this way, MDI "trims and prunes" both New Detroit and gentrification, through efforts which ultimately spatialize the city's comeback.

Although a powerful institutional actor, MDI does not fully control the circumstances or forces at play. It nevertheless guides, and seeks to guide,

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[55] As mentioned in the introduction, long-time residents and interlocutors sometimes referred to bike lanes as "white lanes".

the flows of people and wealth. Importantly, it is not always successful. It was not without irony that the only business in Midtown to adopt the moniker of Midtown, Midtown Liquor & Deli, manifested MDI's notions of "bad urbanism" just a few blocks away from their offices.

Cultivating the subjects of Midtown

The preceding sections have sought to demonstrate how MDI cultivates not only the material space of Midtown, but also a broader imaginary that has become part of people's embodied spaces. I now wish to turn to another form of cultivation, one where MDI has *directly* begun to cultivate a particular demographic, growing, as it were, the subjects of New Detroit. I write *directly* because *indirect* forms of cultivation have already been covered. By growing both a particular space and particular representations of that space, MDI is cultivating the attractiveness of Midtown, thereby contributing to a transformation of both residential and commercial patterns capable of manifesting comeback.

A more direct way of cultivating subjects can be found in the "Live Midtown" program, a cooperative effort which operated under the aegis of MDI, engaging employees of three major "anchor institutions" in Midtown: a university and two hospitals. Through the "Live Midtown" program, employees were given economic incentives for purchasing and renovating homes in Midtown.

From its launch in 2011 to its termination in 2015, the incentives were as follows: (1) new homeowners, who were purchasing a primary residence, could receive $20,000 in a "forgivable loan"; (2) homeowners could receive $5,000 in match funding for exterior home improvement; (3) new renters could receive $2,500 in their first year, and $1,000 in the second year; (4) existing renters could apply for $1,000 to renew their leases.

In order for the loan to be "forgiven", participants had to maintain the property as their primary residence for a five-year period. As long as the participant remained registered at the address, no interest and no installments were associated with the loan. Interlocutors who participated in the program described it as "free money".

The participants I interviewed were doctors, teachers, administrators and skilled technicians, all of whom were highly educated employees. The geographical boundaries of the program largely coincided with the boundaries of Midtown set by MDI, but they were expanded in 2014 to include the North End neighborhood, immediately north of New Center, and the

Historic Boston-Edison neighborhood to the north of the North End. According to data from MDI (MDI 2016b), "Live Midtown" involved 2,025 people, around half of whom had moved to the area. Thus, more than 10 percent of Midtown's estimated population had been recipients of incentives (ibid.). Although it is impossible to isolate the program from other forces that have influenced the property market (Vidal 2014), "Live Midtown" has been hailed as a "runaway hit" (Oosting 2011)[56].

Studies confirm that large injections of capital in a depressed property market lead to rising property values, while distributing that capital through educated professionals leads to increased gentrification (Doucet 2013; 2016; Vidal 2014). There is nevertheless more to this program than real estate economics. A striking feature of the program involved the silences it generated. Few participants wanted to discuss their participation. Although I scoured the neighborhood for interviewees, evidence of participation would often remain hidden to both nosy researchers and next-door neighbors. One of my closest interlocutors did not reveal his participation until two years after we had met. It was, according to him, "a complicated and difficult thing", something that had "taken years to get comfortable with".

Interlocutors often expressed feelings of shame about their personal participation in the program. "Live Midtown" viscerally exposed the deeply unequal qualities of the city's comeback. It brought into sharp contrast the ever-present, but often latent, power relations between the old, declining Detroit and the new, up-and-coming one. It also communicated clearly that different demographics were assigned different positions in relation to comeback. Whereas the objective of "Live Midtown" was to "stabilize" certain neighborhoods, participants in the program argued that this "stabilization" consisted of gentrification and white-ification. The program, and participation in it, therefore exposed discrepancies between moral principles and actions.

One interlocutor, a white newcomer named Diana, saw the "Live Midtown" program as way to privilege the already privileged. Diana considered her salary to be "good", and relative to the city at large she considered it "really good". She was in her early thirties with a budding career in

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[56] The program was mentioned as a positive example in a report entitled "Community First", developed by the Minnesota Housing Partnership (MHP) in 2017 for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (MHP 2017). Another measure of its perceived success was that the program had been emulated by the "Live Downtown" program, which offered similar incentives to employers of downtown businesses and institutions (Muller 2014). Although MDI personnel were modest about the success of "Live Midtown", they would nonetheless express concerns that the rise in property values, and the rise in rents, were in part due to the program's success.

medicine at the Henry Ford Hospital. In her mind, "Live Midtown" was not the reason why she had moved into her particular house and neighborhood. It was the house itself, the neighborhood, and the proximity to her work and leisure activities that she had "fallen in love with".

"Look at this beautiful home," she told me, as we were sitting on her porch one warm summer evening. "Just look at it, and look at this street and the houses around us. They don't make them like this anymore". I agreed, it was a beautiful home, built in the early 1900s for automobile executives. "You know, I could have turned them down," Diana told me, "or just not applied for the program. I mean, I would have been able to afford it on my own, everything was so cheap then [in 2011]".

We sat for a while, discussing this option. Diana was conflicted. On the one hand, she strongly disapproved of the program. In her view, the neighborhood would have been more "stable" if capital had been available to long-time residents who were struggling economically. Instead, many of those residents had been pushed out. Even if she accepted the objectives of the program, about which she had her doubts, it did not make sense that she had been given this opportunity instead of some of her struggling neighbors.

"You know, sometimes I have trouble looking certain neighbors in the eye, if you know what I mean. It's this shame of knowing that I got this house for free while they are struggling. That we are not equals in this." Diana fell quiet for a while. I then asked her what she did with those feelings, upon which she shrugged her shoulders, saying that she preferred to avoid the issue altogether.

On the other hand there was the house, which she loved, and of course there was the money. She asked me, "What are people supposed to do? Would you have said no to 'free money'? Do you know anyone who would?"

Another interlocutor, a white newcomer named Adam, stated that the program "is gentrification, and I am against gentrification, but you see, I am gentrification, we are gentrification". Yet another participant talked about how the program had "forced her" to sacrifice her principles for money, and that this had made her feel "dirty". I failed to meet any participant who thought that the program was morally neutral, let alone laudable.

Rising property values and intensifying forms of gentrification were one effect of "Live Midtown". Another effect was that it enlisted people in a process that they considered morally despicable. It implicated them, on a personal level, with notions of Midtown, comeback and gentrification. The feelings that participants derived from their participation fed into existing notions of privilege, shame and whiteness, discussed in the chapter on

newcomers. It rendered them complicit in the ongoing transformation of the area's social fabric.

Importantly, this complicity deprived them of ground from which to critique the systematic nature of gentrification around them. In essence, they had been "bought" through the program, and many even expressed it as a form of "selling out", an act of abandoning certain principles of equity for personal gain. It is difficult to substantiate whether enlisting them like this was responsible for the lack of vocal criticism toward the program, noted by Vidal (2014). At least among my interlocutors, however, the program was so controversial that it often could not be discussed.

Through the program, MDI, in cooperation with so-called "anchor institutions", cultivated a particular kind of gentrification, but it also cultivated a particular kind of subject and, importantly, particular feelings within these subjects. Returning to the theoretical discussions in the introduction, participants in the program came to embody the unequal space of comeback, where the division between rich and poor, newcomers and lifelong residents, New Detroit and its surrounding neighborhoods, was not only carved into the urban landscape, but also into them as beings. This embodiment affected and conditioned their bodies and movement, emerging as emotions of shame and guilt, audible in the silences it left in its wake. Through the program, MDI grew a constituency that was both complicit in their project, and silent because of the shame associated with its complicity.

The moral issues raised by the program were complex and not always one-sided. Long-time residents, who were homeowners but not participants in the program, had both praise and criticism for it. Several had lived through decades of decline, and many recognized that the program, and Midtown more broadly, had led to the renovation and restoration of properties that had once been empty or in disarray. The resulting rise in property values was greatly welcomed by some, who considered it high time. Equally, the prospect of further gentrification might give them the opportunity to recapture some of the losses they had incurred over decades of decline.

However, for those who rented, rather than owned their home, the program could insinuate itself into everyday situations, breeding suspicion and jealousy. While I was walking around the neighborhood with Joe, a Black renter in his thirties, he would often take stock of different houses and their occupants, wondering what circumstances had brought these people onto that street. Had "Live Midtown" paid for their new gutters or sidings, or had some other program he had never heard about supplied the money? Joe could not know, but he could suspect and imagine. What Joe did know was

that his landlord wanted to increase the rent on his one-bedroom apartment. Two years previously he had paid around $400, and now he was being asked to pay $700 per month.

"Damn man, that's what you pay for a crib," he lamented several times, saying that he might move further north but that he would prefer to stay, especially since it was becoming livelier around New Center. As a matter of interest, Joe worked at one of the "anchor institutions", a hospital, but in the capacity of janitor, cleaning floors and doing the occasional maintenance job. Since he was employed part-time for an outside contractor, he had not been eligible to participate in the program. He doubted whether he could get a raise to mitigate his increased cost of living. A year ago, his employer had agreed to a raise, linked to the rent rises, but another raise seemed unlikely. In all likelihood, Joe saw himself moving out of the area. To him, the situation was "deeply unfair and unjust", but it was also something he was resigned to. It was "the way things are", meaning that it was Detroit to him, the divisions he had always known and felt. He asked me, "Why do newcomers get free money but long-time residents, and old people, are getting their water shut off, their electricity cut, the city taking their homes because they don't have enough money to pay their property taxes? It's wrong. The whole thing. But that's Midtown now. It's just the way it is."

On this occasion, I asked him if he often used the word Midtown.

"No," he responded, shaking his head. "But they do, and that's what matters".

"Who does?" I asked and he looked at me with a wry smile.

"You guys, white people."

Gentrification is, by definition, a divisive social process. Compounded by the history and cosmology of Detroit, it grows ever more divisive. When this is taken into consideration alongside programs like "Live Midtown", it becomes easier to appreciate the affects and tensions stirred by comeback.

Responding to concerns and criticism of gentrification, MDI was working on a program called "Stay Midtown" during the final weeks of my fieldwork in 2016. This program aimed to address the sharp increase in rents in the area. As Susan Mosey, the executive of MDI, explained, "We thought that since we were incentivizing people to move here, we might as well try to help people who have a housing burden deal with their rent acceleration" (quoted in Gallagher 2016). A program officer from a large donor to the program, The Kresge Foundation, stressed its role in creating "a recovery that's inclusive and equitable […] to keep Midtown grounded as an economically and racially diverse community while increasing

opportunity and improving the quality of life" (ibid). The "Stay Midtown" program was intended for residents whose annual incomes were between 50% and 80% of the area's median income levels. The program offered this group up to $4,500 over a 3-year period.

From interviews with MDI employees, it was clear that they were concerned with the effects of "too much gentrification", as one of them put it. Several also expressed moral doubts about the work of their own organization[57]. There seemed to be fears that too rapid and thorough a gentrification process would lead to a loss of diversity, which was purportedly one of the most appealing facets of Midtown. MDI officials thus expressed concerns about gentrification, and a desire to "control" it.

Despite these intentions, raising capital to mitigate the effects of gentrification proved more difficult than raising capital to exacerbate its effects. As I was leaving Detroit, "Stay Midtown" had managed to allocate $400,000 to cover the program's incentives, whereas the "Live Midtown" program launched with $10 million in capital (Muller 2014). A major difference between the programs was also that "Stay Midtown" did not confer any assets on participants. The "Live Midtown" program, on the other hand, granted participants full ownership of properties if they completed the terms of their participation. This bestowed a greater degree of wealth and security on a participant in the "Live Midtown" program than on a participant in "Stay Midtown".

To summarize, MDI has grown a particular demographic through a program which has not only exacerbated gentrification and rising land values, but also fostered particular subjects who begin to embody the inequalities of comeback in Detroit. This has cultivated shame and avoidance in these subjects because individuals who are otherwise critical of the program find themselves participating in it, thereby furthering gentrification, comeback and the emergence of a New Detroit.

Communicating comeback and the esthetics of New Detroit

Until now, this examination of New Detroit has traced the relations between MDI and Midtown in terms of representations, spatialization and incentives for particular demographics. This examination has underlined

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[57] I vividly remember my first interview with an employee, a senior planner, who began by asking me, "Am I a bad person? Sometimes I think I am".

that MDI is an important actor in Midtown, an area that exemplifies many tendencies in terms of how comeback emerges. This next section leaves MDI behind, as neither New Detroit nor comeback can be adequately explained by reducing it to the aspirations of a single organization.

At the level of experience, New Detroit is closely related to the places of consumption designated as "new", whereas comeback becomes "grounded" in the restaurants, bars, cafés and concept stores that fill the city center. When Detroiters referred to comeback in conversations with me, they not only pointed to the new crowds of white people in Downtown or Midtown, but to all those "new places that are opening up".

It is the concrete, material manifestations of New Detroit that become visible to an observer. In the sensations, smells and sounds perceived by individual actors, New Detroit transforms from abstractions into something concrete. This transformation is, in turn, brought about by a multitude of individual actors who are both consumers and producers of space. There is a multitude of entities, people and things that grow New Detroit cumulatively and in relation to one another. It is people's presence in the city, their embodiment of comeback, emerging as routes and desires, talk and silence, reviews and recommendations, that merge into larger flows of wealth and status. These determine which places are "in" and "out", constantly maintaining and redirecting comeback as an economic, cultural and spatial reality. Against this multitude of ongoing actions and affects, institutional actors and organizations have limited control.

Lefebvre (2011: 44) drew attention to the links between space and ideology by asking, "[What] is an ideology without a space to which it refers, a space which it describes, whose vocabulary and links it makes use of, and whose code it embodies?". He (ibid: 47-48) also argued that "a spatial code is not simply a means of reading or interpreting space: rather it is a means of living in that space, of understanding it, and of producing it". Previous sections of this thesis have delved into certain aspects of New Detroit's ideology and spatial code, namely its push for walkability, mixed-use and stabilization. This section will turn to the act of consuming the materials of New Detroit, which by extension is an act of becoming New Detroit. This is a project of world-building as much as a project of economic transformation.

Of interest here is how the consumption spaces of New Detroit operate through a system of material cues. Comeback has a style, a distinct esthetic. This esthetic pattern communicates the intended uses of place, and its intended users.

The two most pervasive materials in this esthetic pattern were reclaimed wood and exposed bricks. These two materials were found in cafés, bars

and restaurants, but also in retail premises, businesses and offices. However, these materials were not limited to the insides of these spaces, but were often found on their outsides too, clearly communicating their position to the surrounding street, saying, "This is part of New Detroit".

Reclaimed wood appeared as furniture and design objects (Kovanis 2015), as signs or storefronts as in the picture below, and in consumer goods such as high-end guitars (Walsh 2018) and eyewear (Zemke 2014). Reclaimed wood was the material of choice for the gentrifying classes of Detroit. Exploring reclaimed wood can therefore provide insights into how comeback is communicated at the level of experience, and to the ideological basis of its spatial code.

Due to its decline, Detroit has an abundance of materials that can be reused. Much of this material is wood because it "grows" in ever widening fields of abandoned homes. Thus, there was a burgeoning market for reclaimed wood in the city, and several different businesses procured it, refined it, redesigned it and marketed it. Many businesses refused to take part in my study, and a few even asked me if I was affiliated with a competitor, or if I was planning on entering the market myself.

This stiff competition was confirmed through interviews with Charly, one of two founders of a reclaimed wood enterprise. The first thing he told me was that "timing is everything", expressing doubts about whether his business would have succeeded if he had launched it later than 2012. Charly was a white newcomer who had discovered a passion for

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woodworking when he moved to the city. When I interviewed him in 2016, he had several employees and a recently purchased property on the edge of New Detroit. He was negotiating contracts with national retailers who all wanted a piece of what he called the "made in Detroit" and "comeback feel-good" that his products had come to symbolize. His company procured its wood from a variety of sources. Much of it came from the streets of Detroit, from illegal dumping and left-behind construction materials. Other wood was donated by people, and some of it came from abandoned properties they had purchased and disassembled.

Standing in his workshop, rushing to finish an order he hoped to ship that afternoon, Charly explained how reclaimed wood was processed. Importantly, reclaimed wood was not sold as reclaimed material. Reclaimed wood had to be made into a product through a series of processes and refinements, depending on the nature of the finished product. Furniture required more finishing and processing, usually demanding finer wood to begin with, whereas the reclaimed wood used in the production of signs needed less attention.

A crucial aspect to processing was to attenuate the differences within the finished product. Materials of various colors and sizes were intentionally combined to form a wooden bricolage. He described the product as "mixed", or "diverse" in contrast to products made from regular wood, which he saw as more "homogenous" and "streamlined". This echoed some of the contrasts in the region's cosmology, where the city's "diversity" often stood in opposition to the "homogeneity" of the suburbs.

Although Charly had several customers in the city, most of his clientele came from, or lived, somewhere else. Suburbanites and newcomers were particularly fond of his products, especially the smaller pieces, such as signs with Detroit printed on them, or trinkets such as bottle openers, keychains and minor decorative objects.

Charly considered that his business gave added value. His enterprise directly addressed the widespread abandonment that had come to symbolize Detroit. This produced a lot of "good will" toward his business, and the relation between abandonment and his products was something customers regularly commented on. For these reasons, he doubted whether reclaimed wood from anywhere else could have the same "competitive edge" as the wood that was "made in Detroit".

Another entrepreneur who manufactured high-end furniture confirmed the value of geography. Geographical provenance was highlighted in his products by stamping the wood with the address it had come from, such as "1938 Elmhurst". This signified the location of a specific house in Detroit, which had been transformed into a new consumer product.

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On a symbolic level, the label "reclaimed" is significant. Words like "reused" or even "recycled" wood could have been used, but they were not. The word "reclaimed" indicates possession and ownership, implying that an object, at some point, was abandoned by someone who relinquished whatever claim they once had to it.

To newcomer interlocutors, who had daily interactions with the material, the resource of reclaimed wood tended to be framed in a similar way to a natural resource. It was something that lay there, awaiting discovery and reclamation. It is appropriate to call this framing a type of fetishism (Marx & Engels 1996) because when it is in the form of a commodity, reclaimed wood retains no connection with the material relations in which it emerged. There are clear political and economic reasons for the abundance of the material in Detroit, none of which are particularly flattering. Much of its more recent supply of wood has become available through evictions. The fact that the materials of former residents' homes have become the coffee tables and keychains of a new gentry, and the materials of choice for constructing the habitats of New Detroit, is completely muted when the wood becomes a "reclaimed" commodity.

The label "exposed brick" evokes different associations to something simply made of brick, or a brick wall. Exposed brick is most commonly a feature of walls that have once been covered with some form of plaster which has subsequently been removed in order to "expose" the brick underneath. Although exposed bricks are generally more uniform in appearance than reclaimed wood, they too come to symbolize greater "diversity" than their previous plaster of a single color. Bricks have slightly different shades, slightly different sizes, and are in slightly different states of repair. Removing the plaster produces a sense of historicity, the authenticity of the past laid open and bare, exhibited and displayed to the eye, revealing something that has been covered up. Exposed brick summons ideas of restoration, an act of peeling away a sediment of the past in order to recover its hidden authenticity, its sense of "discovery" echoing previous discussions of Detroit as a "frontier".

Reclaimed wood and exposed brick are both symbolically potent materials that could manifest core ideological positions of a New Detroit and its spatialization of comeback. These are ideas involving diversity, conceptualized as a "mix" of elements. They introduce notions of authenticity and of broader dreams of a return, a "coming back", whether in wood or bricks, or the people who originally consumed these products.

Neither reclaimed wood nor exposed brick exist in a vacuum. The symbolic potency of their materiality is always related to where they are placed in relation to other things and people, and to the activities they frame. As

detailed above, these materials were used prolifically in spaces of consumption in New Detroit, and newcomers and the economically privileged commonly aspired to owning them.

How the materials "fit" and exemplify larger webs of relations becomes apparent if the case of new restaurants is taken into consideration. Many of the "new places that are opening up" were part of a trend toward small-scale, ecologically sound, artisanal enterprises, which preferably used ingredients locally sourced from the city's urban agriculture sector. It is in the "spatial code" of such places, where newcomers and the economically privileged consume comeback both symbolically and physically, that the ideology of a New Detroit is viscerally manifest.

Observations during the fieldwork revealed that the cuisine of these "new places", their styles of cooking, had two predominate forms. One form is best described as "fusion", a form of bricolage and "diversity" where different styles of cooking are supposed to mix and separate. Another form was the higher-income "reclamation" of styles formerly associated with the eating habits of the lower-income groups. This refers to artisanal hamburgers and sliders, crafted pizzas, organic fried chicken and other variations of "soul food". These tended to elicit responses from newcomer interlocutors such as, "This is how a *real* hamburger should taste". This sort of "reclamation" of cuisines and atmospheres for a new economic class was also visible in the establishment of "food halls", which were the artisanal version of the mall's "food court" (Kurlyandchik 2018). Furthermore, food in "new places" very often came in the shape of "small plates", where servers encouraged their customers to pick different things, or to share and collaborate within their respective parties, thereby enabling customers to assemble mini bricolages out of the menus provided. This type of food was often served against a background of exposed brick, on "communal tables" made out of "reclaimed" wood.

There are two reasons why reclaimed wood and exposed brick had become central esthetic elements in how comeback was manifest in Detroit. One has been discussed above and involves the symbolic qualities of these materials, making them apt representations of comeback. Another becomes apparent if previous analyses of newcomers are incorporated, with their often unarticulated desire to be "in-place". The fact that New Detroit was saturated with these materials also meant that it was saturated with material "signposts", often visible on facades of new establishments. Reclaimed wood and exposed brick communicate both the intended use and the intended users of a place. Just as maps of Midtown draw up links and direct the circulation of newcomers toward new establishments, reclaimed wood and exposed brick serve as "markers", materials read by newcomers as an

indication of establishments where they are "in-place". The esthetic pattern of New Detroit is not only for esthetic purposes. It is also a practical mechanism through which the everyday flows of people and wealth can begin to grow comeback in its multitude of spatializations. These include some, but exclude others.

Although facets of the material and ideological coating of New Detroit are part of more generic esthetic patterns manifested through contemporary hipster development in different cities, as specific material elements they are nonetheless always inserted into local circuits of meaning. My local cafés in both Stockholm and Detroit made use of exposed bricks and reclaimed wood, but they carry different meanings and associations in different places. As materials of comeback, used to spatialize New Detroit, reclaimed wood and exposed brick can represent the city's return, and furthermore, a reclamation of space by whiter and wealthier demographics.

In other words, these materials tell different stories in different cities, and they are also used by residents to tell the story of their cities differently. In terms of the growth of New Detroit, the places, people and ideas detailed in this chapter can ultimately be understood through locally grounded repositories of meaning that relate to the city's history and cosmology.

Leaving New Detroit

This chapter has examined the spatialization of comeback through an exploration of Midtown, seen as a manifestation of New Detroit. Through organic metaphors I have sought to discuss how comeback is grown as materials, representations and subjects, and how non-profit organizations have successfully cultivated and curated forms of gentrification.

I have used this perspective because I consider the contemporary spatialization of comeback to be different from past spatializations. Its social organization is often dispersed and acephalous. It relies on a multitude of small-scale actors and projects, rather than exceptionally large projects headed by a select group of industrialists and politicians. In other words, there is something novel in how comeback is manifested today, compared to how it has manifested itself in the past.

Importantly, I have sought to demonstrate that while the social organization of comeback is different, it is not without structure. What I have detailed in this chapter is a different ordering of space, not a lack thereof. Patterns are constantly emerging. These patterns, emerging out of the seemingly coincidental acts of individuals who might have no particular connection, are not coincidental. From policies and planning decisions,

aspects represented on maps and who has which house for free, down to the materials and their symbolism, there is a "design", but no clear designer. Even an actor such as MDI cannot hope to control the process, and can only guide and curate parts of it.

It may be difficult to discern some of the connections this section has sought to draw out, but I would argue that these difficulties should be conceptualized as an integral aspect of the process in question. In a city characterized by a history of violent class and race struggles, there are reasons why the current process of reclamation becomes obfuscated, not least given the inclination of its white newcomer demographic to try to do "good" and live moral lives as whites in a Black city. There would be an uproar if a trendy café had a sign reading: "Whites and wealthy individuals are welcome here". On the other hand, reactions differ if they dress their façade in reclaimed wood, although, at a practical level, these different communicative acts are intended to grow similar spaces.

This discussion on how a New Detroit is grown has left out an important topic. To both critics and supporters, this growth tended to be presented as inevitable, both in terms of Detroit's present and its future. This inevitability has important implications for understanding comeback in Detroit. As soon as an aspect of the future is projected as inevitable, it becomes immensely powerful because it begins to constrict actions and imaginations in the present. Thus, Detroit's comeback cannot be approached solely in terms of space; it also exists on a temporal level. The following chapter will examine how the future is being colonized in Detroit, and how this serves to occupy its present.

Colonizing the future: (de)stabilizing a present

You can't look forward and backward at the same time.

Coleman Young

No, I don't like it. How could I? It's a future that doesn't include me. New Detroit is all about making the city smaller, whiter and wealthier. I mean look at me. I have lived here all my life. I thought I would do so to the end. But now I know that what is coming is not for me. My city and my future have become something else entirely. Even if I could afford it, I don't want it. It's all cookie-cutter development. There is nothing authentic about it. And if Detroit isn't authentic, then it isn't Detroit. So yeah, the writing's on the wall. Get out. But I don't know where to go yet.

Terry, a Black Detroiter in his mid-sixties.

It's exciting to live in a city with so much potential, a place where the future is still being made and where I might actually have some kind of impact on what that future will be. I think we can create a new kind of city here, something which has never been done before. But it will require a lot of struggle to make Detroit more diverse and inclusive for everyone. But at least there is this shared idea that that's what we want the city to be like. That is what is happening and will happen, fingers crossed.

Jenny, a white newcomer in her thirties.

Appadurai (2013: 5) has referred to the future as a "cultural horizon", thereby highlighting how different societies organize their futures differently, while simultaneously lamenting the limited contributions of anthropology in providing a social and cultural analysis of the future. The situation may have improved in the past decade, but in terms of cities and urban futures, other professions and disciplines are usually more prolific vis-à-vis the future, such as economics, engineering, planning and architecture. It is nevertheless important to remember that "the future is not just a technical or neutral space, but it is shot through with affect and sensation"

(ibid.: 286-87), and that "the future is part of how societies shape their practices" (ibid.: 292).

Continuing this line of reasoning, I would argue that comeback is not only projected across space, but also across time. These projections guide people's understanding of the future and how they imagine it, and this, in turn, affects the present. This chapter examines how an understanding of the present organizes the way the future is imagined, and the consequences this form of organization has on the present.

I have called this process *colonizing* the future, a way of framing the concept which is open to critique. For some, colonization is a word best reserved for other processes, and it has been suggested to me that the use of the word in this context degrades those who have suffered, and continue to suffer under colonialism[58]. Others have suggested that there is nothing special about how Detroit's future is being colonized, and that the process I am describing can be located elsewhere and in other circumstances. Ultimately, I adopted the word colonization because it effectively conveys the power and inequality underlying contemporary efforts to manage the way a future Detroit is imagined. Just as the spatialization of comeback articulates unequal relations of power, the temporality of comeback raises similar concerns in terms of *who* a New Detroit is for.

Since both time and the future are contested fields, I wish to make my position as clear as possible. Readers should understand that references to the future in this chapter do not indicate a form of lineal temporality. In my view, the future remains separate from the present because, when it arrives, it is no longer a future but a present, on its way to becoming a past (cf. Hodges 2008). A way of framing this without making things too complex would be to say that I am examining a present that interacts with itself, through its collective ways of imagining a future. This future can be represented as a mirror which reflects a version of the present to the present while maintaining the appearance of being temporally distinct from the present it reflects. A great deal of power therefore rests in the person holding this mirror, determining who and what is reflected in it.

The "RiverFront East" project, which unfolded during the late spring and summer of 2016, forms the ethnographic center of this chapter. It was

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[58] Although it might seem reasonable to separate "actual" colonization from what is unfolding in Detroit, there are clear historical links between colonies and how urban futures were treated by metropoles. As Wright (1991) detailed in discussing French Morocco, Indochina and Madagascar, cities in the colonies were often treated as laboratories for testing solutions to problems of urbanization in the metropoles, e.g. sanitation and overcrowding. Furthermore, Andersson (2022: 39) has recently suggested that "colonization may be resurrected as an analytic beyond the territorial frame of spatial domination, settlement, and exploitation".

facilitated by the Detroit RiverFront Conservancy (DRFC), a non-profit organization (NPO) founded in 2003 whose ongoing mission is the "establishment, improvement, operation, maintenance, security, programming and expansion of the Detroit RiverWalk and associated green spaces" (DRFC 2018a).

A section of Detroit's riverfront, in the vicinity of the Renaissance Center, had already undergone extensive remodeling and revitalization prior to my arrival in Detroit. The RiverFront East project involved a future expansion of the riverfront, all the way to the McArthur bridge that leads onto Belle Isle. DRFC (2018b) described the RiverWalk East project as a "once-in-a-generational opportunity for the community to work hand-in-hand with the city of Detroit and the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy to re-imagine the areas as an inviting, inclusive and diverse place".

The following section will first discuss how comeback relates to temporality by presenting an overview of the practices involved in colonizing the future in Detroit. This is followed by three ethnographic sections detailing three events which have ordered how the future is imagined in the RiverFront East project. These sections explore how, in practice, the future is "workshopped", "walked" and "presented" to participants. Since the RiverFront East project both resembles and diverges from notions of participatory planning projects, the following sections detail how this difference can be conceptualized as a shift from cultivating space to cultivating the imagination. The section will then discuss how the future order is cultivated in the project and in what form, and then move on to explore the emotions and tensions which emerge from these ways of cultivating the future. Finally, the section will examine how the future emerges as contested ground for the different projects and actors who seek to intervene, temporally, in the city's comeback.

Comeback and the future city

Neither the DRFC nor the RiverFront East project are isolated phenomena in Detroit. They are part of a cohesive set of emerging practices through which residents become involved in acts of "collective imagination". These processes cultivate particular ways of imagining the future among participants, and at the same time manage the affects and social tensions which emerge from these ways of imagining.

Parallel to the unfolding of the RiverFront East project, I also attended a series of events that sought to reimagine the Eastern Market district as a

"live/work" space[59]. I also attended events organized by Karasi, a local development group that was seeking to reimagine the future of the Boston-Edison neighborhood by "salvaging the remnants of the existing land and properties", creating a community that "encompasses the ability to live, work, shop, entertain and thrive". A similar instance of collective imagination was taking place in relation to more specific domains of urban life, such as public transit, safety and the arts, in which participants were tasked with establishing a vision of the future. An important point is that the RiverFront East project was part of a much larger pattern of activities where residents were guided in imagining the city's future.

These events focusing on imagination were characterized by a particular ambiguity toward the future. On the one hand, they could be unpredictable and uncertain, resulting in visions of futures that "could be" rather than "would be". On the other hand, the act of collective imagination was always organized by facilitators, who sought to grow the process for particular ends. The facilitators and the organizations behind these events had the power to summarize the different voices of participants into a consistent voice, which was then re-presented to participants as the "community's" voice or desire. It was common to experience diverse visions of the future from participants with different outlooks and positions within the city, yet the final vision of the future, the "community's voice", often ultimately echoed the facilitators' and planners' vision of the future.

The future thus appeared to have contradictory qualities. It could seem both uncertain *and* heavily programmed. In practice, acts of collective imagination resemble techniques employed by educational institutions. These involve situations where students are tasked with formulating their own rules of conduct, but under the supervision of an authority figure. The latter then sorts, emphasizes or ignores certain suggestions to compile a list of rules that largely mirrors the dispositions of the authority figure and the educational institution. My experience of events to order the future in Detroit suggests a strong element of consensus among facilitators in terms of what counted as "good urbanism", but this consensus was significantly lower among the residents who attended the events. Thus, visions of a future Detroit tended to emphasize different notions of New Urbanism, mixed-use development, diversity and inclusion, and to prioritize public transit, walking and biking. On the other hand, they de-emphasized the automobile and its related infrastructures.

The precedent of enlisting residents to imagine a New Detroit collectively under the aegis of a NPO was set by Detroit Future City (DFC). DFC

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[59] This term was often used to signify the kind of mixed-use development encountered in the previous chapter.

is an NPO that grew out of a public-private partnership initiated in 2010, called the Detroit Works Project. This process sought to create a vision for a future Detroit. The long-term part of this process entitled the "Detroit Future City Framework", a vision spanning 50 years into the future, was released in 2012, and DFC was then "formed to act as a steward of the DFC strategic framework" (DFC 2018). The 758-page framework was built on public participation, consisting of "hundreds of meetings, 30,000 conversations, connecting with people over 163,000 times, over 70,000 survey responses and comments" (DFC 2012: 5), and it has been called "the most ambitious and innovative urban makeover strategy in the world" (Muller 2013). Incumbent mayor Mike Duggan's development czar, Tom Lewand, called the framework his "bible" (quoted in McGraw 2015). Importantly, however, the framework is not a plan *per se*, but rather a "roadmap" or "vision", underscored by the fact that it is stewarded by an NPO and not the municipality.

The DFC framework envisions a smaller and greener Detroit through a process known elsewhere as "rightsizing" (Ryan 2012) or "smart shrinkage" (Rhodes & Russo 2013). Ultimately it seeks to address the budgetary strain resulting from decades of disparity between, on the one hand, a declining population, and on the other, an infrastructural reality which has remained unchanged. Kirkpatrick (2015b) has aptly called the strategy a form of "urban triage", because the vision rests on abandoning the poorest and most depopulated parts of Detroit, turning them into sustainable "green zones", and simultaneously channeling resources into more populated and more affluent neighborhoods. Following the medical allegory of triage, the area then stands a better chance of being "resuscitated" by external stimulus.

DFC and its operations have been successful, but have also attracted criticism. Several resident activists and interlocutors argued that the participatory aspects of the framework had been undermined or ignored by DFC. Furthermore, the legal status of DFC as an NPO meant that these activists had been unable to use the Freedom of Information Act to request information that, in their view, would show that the framework did not represent the aspirations of Detroiters. In a critique of the framework itself, Hammer (2015) brought attention to how it had omitted issues of race, regionalism and reconciliation, portraying the city of Detroit as separate from the metropolitan region and ignoring its history of spatialized racism and economic division.

Comeback is a phenomenon that joins notions of a past with notions of a future. As argued in preceding chapters, comeback conjures up notions of return, involving the return of people and wealth, but also the return of

certain materials and techniques. This is manifest in the removal of plaster to expose the bricks underneath, the reclamation of wood from abandoned houses, and the reintroduction of artisanal, handmade and crafted products. Importantly, since there was no fully realized comeback in the past, notions of return, which are intrinsic in comeback, have remained in the future. Comeback, like the future, has been tomorrow, never today. It is the recent surge in development and gentrification, and the increasing numbers of newcomers, that have placed the future of the city squarely at the center of present-day social concerns, where both new and old residents express anxiety and curiosity in terms of what Detroit is becoming. Therefore, recent material and demographic manifestations of comeback are largely informing collective urban efforts in terms of the city's future.

My interest in the RiverFront East project stems from how it typifies certain patterns of labor that encompass both the comeback and the future of Detroit. As a project of limited scope, its concern was the riverfront and the riverfront alone, and this also gave it certain methodological advantages. The "big" future of Detroit is nebulous and complicated, difficult to approach empirically and ethnographically. I do not aim to avoid this "big" future, but I intend to approach it by studying a limited and tangible series of events where Detroiters collectively imagined a future. This will hopefully help concretize some of the elusive qualities of the future, while also furnishing an understanding of the wider patterns at play.

Workshopping the future

On the 24th of May 2016, DRFC held a workshop on the future of Detroit's riverfront at Shed 5 in Eastern Market, an industrial building composed of exposed brick, steel and glass in the center of the market. It was an excruciatingly hot day, and the giant ceiling fans were operating at top speed when I arrived. About 50 people had gathered that afternoon, most of them middle-aged or older, about half of them white and half Black.

The meeting started with presentations. Chairs had been arranged directly under the ceiling fans, in the middle of the room. Several PowerPoint presentations followed, showing pictures and illustrations of what a future riverfront could look like. Maurice Cox, the newly appointed chief of the city's planning department, took the stage and stressed the importance of ensuring that the riverfront was "an authentic Detroit place", arguing that it must remain inclusive and open to everyone. Several presenters used the

term "world-class city"[60] arguing that the future riverfront would showcase this claim. One presenter suggested the future riverfront would "put Detroit on the map", but a member of the audience interjected, raising his voice so that everyone could hear, saying that Detroit had been on the map since 1701.

A middle-aged Black woman was in charge of community outreach, and she summarized the key themes that had emerged out of a previous listening session. Participants had given their input, which had then been organized into different themes: "Riverfront Experience"; "Community"; "Connectivity"; "Nature & Ecology"; "Authentically Detroit" and "Engagement & Equity". At the listening session, participants had also had the opportunity to place stickers on a map of Detroit. These stickers had indicated where participants were from. The woman presented an image of the map, showing that participants came mainly from Downtown, Midtown and Lafayette Park. The map clearly indicated that few people living in the proposed area of transformation were engaged in the process.

Toward the end of the presentations, the lead architect explained the workshop exercise that was to follow. In his hands he had several white rectangular stickers with black print. Participants were instructed to place them on a large map of the riverfront, indicating what they wanted the riverfront to be like. Participants had a choice of 20 different symbols, and an additional one where a comment could be written instead. The lead architect went over the list of symbols: water, community, sustainability, transit, work, trees, children, health, bike, play, safety, café, city, love, Detroit, education, restaurants, neighborhoods, international and entertainment. The illustrations all differed. Safety was indicated by a shining streetlight, sustainability came in the shape of two fish, whereas transit looked like the front of a bus. The lead architect asked if there were any questions, not just about the exercise but about anything that had been said so far.

A Black woman spoke, saying that they should do more to involve people living in the affected areas. She complained that the meeting had been announced at short notice, not giving people enough time to prepare their schedule. She would have appreciated information she could have shared with neighbors and friends. The woman in charge of community outreach responded, thanking her for the input and saying that they would improve that aspect of the project. A white man in the audience then asked whether they had announced the meeting in any paper. They had not, and once again

[60] Throughout the world, the concept of a "world-class" or "global" city has spurred development efforts by many different actors (Ghertner 2015), serving as an "authorized image of city success" and an "end point of development" (Robinson 2002: 246).

the woman in charge of community outreach expressed her gratitude, saying that they would "double our effort".

At this point, a young Black woman stood up. She found the pictures and illustrations "really problematic". All she saw were white faces in the pictures. She reminded them that this had been an ongoing problem in the city and that the question had emerged in relation to other developments. She said, "Despite Blacks being the overwhelming majority in Detroit, all we see are whites walking their dogs, working on their laptops, drinking their lattes. How is that supposed to be the future of our city?" Loud applause followed. *Everyone* was applauding, participants and facilitators alike. The lead architect agreed with her, saying that she had made a "very important point" and that they would continue to work on it, underlining that it was suggestions like this that made meetings like this so valuable.

The last question came from a Black man, who was slightly older than the rest. He asked if the next meeting was on the 7th, and whether they had decided on a place for that meeting. The facilitators talked briefly among themselves on stage, and then said that they needed to confer with other stakeholders before they could communicate when and where the meeting would be. An aide walked over to the man in order to collect the microphone, but the man had no intention of giving it back so quickly. He continued, "I think you really need to decide because June 7 is two weeks away. If you want people to show up, they need to know in advance. We are here planning the future of the city and the Riverwalk for future generations, and you are telling me that we can't plan when the next meeting is going to be?" No applause followed this comment, but plenty of other sounds of approval were heard, such as "hmm", "preach" and "that's right". The lead architect apologized and asked everyone to be patient, saying that time constraints made it difficult to answer any further questions. The workshop exercise was still to follow, and this was the point of the meeting.

On my way to a table with refreshments I met Barbara, an elderly white woman. She was talkative and told me that she was retired and an avid "Riverwalker". When I looked puzzled, she explained that the "Riverwalkers" gathered every Tuesday and Thursday morning to walk the riverfront. It was part of a health program run by the Detroit Medical Center to promote exercise and wellness among senior citizens. Barbara told me that she was disappointed that there was too little time for questions because she had wanted to ask about parking.

Barbara ultimately had her chance to ask about parking by the map, but asked why there was no specific sticker on this issue. A white facilitator, a man in his thirties, looked perplexed. A more senior white male facilitator

joined in and asked Barbara what she meant by parking. Barbara replied that she would like to see more surface parking lots by the riverside, because they were a form of parking she could afford.

To the facilitator who engaged her in discussion, Barbara's vision seemed absurd. Nearby facilitators and participants took turns in convincing Barbara that surface parking lots were not part of the future. If anything, parking needed to be limited. Instead, they wanted to promote "bikeability" and "walkability", and pointed out how surface parking lots were a waste of space and potential. One person suggested that she biked or made use of public transit instead, and that this would benefit her socially, economically, culturally and in terms of her health.

The mention of public transit seemed absurd to Barbara. She asked the person who had suggested it, "Do you take the bus?" He did not, and agreed that public transit was dysfunctional. In the future, however, it would be a different story, so they encouraged Barbara to take the sticker for transit and place it where she wanted parking to be. Barbara was irritated, and withdrew from the exercise, saying that this future was not for her, and that by the time it was realized she would be long dead, so she saw no point in putting stickers on a map. She did, however, remain at the event, engaging both participants and facilitators around the issue of parking and affordability.

At the other end of the map, facilitators were having to sort out confusion about the exercise. One participant asked how he was going to represent multiple desires in the same space. He wanted to have both entertainment and safety in the same place but only one sticker could be on top. And what if he wanted more than two? The solution was to take a blank sticker and write on it. Another group of participants expressed uncertainty as to what these symbols really meant. A woman asked a facilitator, "What sort of entertainment are we talking about? What kinds of restaurants? And what does international even mean?" To this, the facilitator's reply was simple: "It means whatever you want it to mean".

In general, the exercise ran smoothly. Participants approached the map with their stickers and placed them at various locations. They engaged with each other and with the facilitator about the future. Many were clearly "dreaming out loud", talking with excitement, saying, "What if I put this there? What if we did it like that?", imagining problems and solutions in terms of how the eventual future of the city might materialize.

Many participants were also active in a shared form of reflexivity. Together with other participants, they attempted to clarify their own social position in order to "step outside" it and imagine what other social groups such as young people, Blacks, Hispanics, the elderly and athletes would

want from the riverfront. This was probably influenced by the facilitator's insistence on a "riverfront for everybody". The map itself was quickly filled with stickers and suggestions, with unexpected creativity in some cases, such as a group of people who built a new bridge from the riverfront to Belle Isle using bicycle stickers. There was a creative buzz around the map. Ideas were bouncing off each other, stimulating conversations on what Detroit was and what it could be. The ideas were both abstract and anchored by the concrete nature of the map and its stickers.

Walking the future

Before leaving the workshop, participants had been given an individual "passport" to the future, pictured below. These passports served to highlight that participants were embarking on a journey into the future, stating that the "future is a journey not a destination". It enabled participants to collect the equivalent of custom stamps, to serve as memorabilia of their
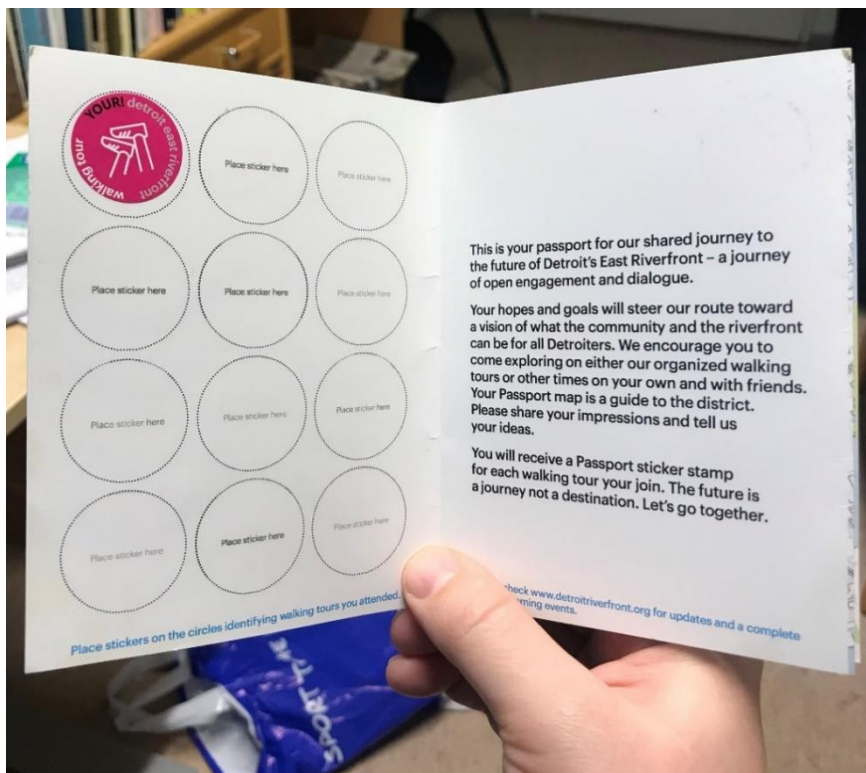
journey. The passports were to be used for the RiverFront East project's walking tours, and each tour awarded the participant one sticker.

I went on one of these walking tours with Barbara. I had met up with her after the workshop to get a sense of what it was like to walk the riverfront as a Riverwalker, an experience she had graciously shared with me. The tour itself, with 30 participants, started outside the Outdoor Adventure Center on Atwater Street. There was a mix of Black and white faces, and most of the participants were middle-aged or older. The group went for a joint walk, made stops at preplanned points, and then shared in conversations about their surroundings. The lead architect was heading this particular tour, accompanied by a city landscape architect and some other associates of the project. Photographers from the DRFC came along to document it.

Our first stop was Orleans Landing, a residential development marketed as "luxury waterfront apartments" (Runyan 2018) that was still under construction in 2016. The main concern at this stop was whether the development would put up a fence and employ security guards. Participants and facilitators all agreed that security and surveillance measures would be a mistake in development terms. Several participants argued that a fence would make the space less "inclusive", because it communicated a desire to segregate the residential development from the rest of the city.

As we continued our walk, the lead architect talked candidly about the ambitions his team had for the Riverwalk. He pointed to areas he called "dead spaces", which were fenced-in areas of broken concrete or tarmac. He repeated the term "world-class city" several times, and mentioned "walkability", "bikeability", "diversity" and "art" in talking about discussions they had had on what they would like to see developed further on the riverfront.

One stop at the so-called "wetlands" involved an area consisting of grass, bushes and a pond. The landscape architect explained the intricacies of the "wetlands", how the landscape helped to retain rainwater, alleviating the risk of flooding in the area and contributing to Detroit's resilience. Many participants seemed genuinely impressed by the ingenuity of the "wetlands", and several commented on how they had previously thought it was just a pond. The landscape architect claimed that the "wetlands" were "a special place, a place where the grass was supposed to remain uncut. We only cut it at the edges, so it looks a little better". They only removed plants "invasive" and foreign to Michigan and the U.S. He continued by making the argument that "this place is really important for our youth. This is the first time children in the city get to recognize and see nature."

After the "wetlands", we made a stop around Franklin Street. This was another "dead area" according to the lead architect, who asked, "So how does this space make you feel?" Only one participant answered, and with a single word: "bad". "So what could we put here instead?" the architect asked. Barbara took the opportunity to suggest that they could put a parking lot there. A young, white, female participant turned to Barbara and corrected her, saying, "We want to get away from surface parking lots". The lead architect made a gesture, pointing toward Downtown, where the billboard of a parking garage was visible in the distance. Another participant said he would like to see an affordable restaurant there, but someone objected to this immediately saying, "No, no, not a chain!" A third person said that they would like to see the "chain-link fences" removed that currently surrounded the "dead area". Someone then wondered aloud, "Who owns this lot anyway?" The lead architect did not know, and shrugged his shoulders. Another participant answered, "Probably the city", which produced a low murmur of complaints about the ineptitude of municipal governance in Detroit.

We moved forward along Franklin Street, an area consisting of brick buildings, old warehouses, depots and industries from a bygone era. Much of it was dilapidated and worn. This environment excited the lead architect, who praised the way this place "felt", saying, "This is the human scale. It feels good, even though there is a barbed-wire fence over there". Looking down an alley that ran between the brick buildings down to the riverfront, he made a short stop which seemed to be improvised. He made a sweeping gesture over the alley, and addressed the group. "We can keep this scale," he said, "but mix old and new elements, and reuse the old in new, creative ways". We all looked at the alley, trying to see what he was seeing. I was not sure what to make of it myself. It looked like any other alley in Detroit, aged and beaten, with chain links, junk and broken concrete. We had already passed a few just like it, but the lead architect was excited. "Imagine," he said, "a café with café tables spilling out into this alley, people talking, interacting, working on laptops, all that cool stuff!"

Toward the end of the tour, everyone lined up to get a stamp in their little passport. People from the DRFC were waiting for us. They had rigged up a camera where we could go, one by one, and record our aspirations for the Riverwalk. They encouraged everyone to join in, saying that it was important to "memorialize that everyone got in on this project".

Presenting the future

On the 16th of June 2016, the visionary framework for the RiverFront East project was revealed at the Outdoor Adventure Center. Maurice Cox was in attendance, along with journalists from different Detroit newspapers and representatives from other notable NPOs, as well as members of the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, an important downtown quasi-public development agency.

The meeting was divided into two parts. One consisted of presentations, the other of activities. During the presentation part, the lead architect explained the results of weeks of community participation. He stressed that his team had listened to the "community". They had taken various points of view into consideration, weighed the different and sometimes contradictory concerns against each other, and then, through a lot of hard work, synthesized all the input into a single output: a preliminary and visionary framework for Detroit's eastern riverfront.

As with the workshop meeting, there were a number of short presentations by different speakers. Most presentations placed an emphasis on the *preliminary* nature of their work, saying things such as "nothing is carved in stone", and pointing to the well-made illustrations and maps as "possibilities" that might or might not change as they received more input from the community. The future of the riverfront was communicated as simultaneously a clear vision and highly uncertain.

Several illustrations of the future Riverwalk were displayed during the presentations. Some of these illustrations used footage of the present Riverwalk, but added a layer of proposed development to give participants a sense of how the future landscape of the Riverwalk would appear. Other images focused on people, showing them hanging out in the grass, riding their bikes or talking on their phones as they walked down a street where children were playing.

These illustrations were more diverse than those displayed at the workshop meeting. Images were also shown in relation to one another, juxtaposing visualizations of the "present" with those of the "future". One such image of the present showed a group of young Black men. In the front of the image a young Black man appeared to be squatting over a flipped-over trashcan, using it as a form of improvised bench. On the image that represented the future, the space had been transformed into a boardwalk where people were out taking a stroll. The future of this space was composed of people who looked much more affluent than the image which represented the present. At the center of the front part of the image was a white woman walking her dog and holding a takeaway coffee.

A landscape architect had been flown in from France to give a presentation on his ideas for the riverfront. Those sitting around me found his presence more insulting than impressive. People murmured comments about his English accent and the fact that he, a clear "outsider", was supposed to teach *them* about *their* riverfront. Most of his speech centered on a distant past rather than a near future. He showed pre-industrial maps of the riverfront, from an era where farms and creeks cut across its landscape. His ideas for the riverfront focused on ways in which the future could reclaim and uncover the "authentic" landscape beneath the surface, concepts that resembled discussions in the previous chapter about exposed brick and reclaimed wood. He stressed the preliminary and speculative character of his ideas, repeating how the sheer scale of the riverfront shifted the project out of the realms of urban design and into the realms of geography.

The preliminary aspect became even more pronounced in the activities that followed the presentations. Participants split into different groups to attend different stations. Several, like myself, also moved between stations, sampling and taking part in discussions on a variety of topics.

At one station dealing with "neighborhood scale and identity", the RiverFront East project showcased the style of the five new proposed neighborhoods in its framework. A Black man I did not recognize from previous events asked, "So what will happen with the plan? When do you start construction on these houses? When can I move in?" He was pointing at the image of a modern tenement building.

A white woman in her late thirties, in charge of this station, responded that it was a difficult question to answer. She explained that a group of people were working on finding ways of financing the RiverFront East project, but that it required major capital. Another complication with the riverfront's future was that the area had multiple landowners, who did not always see eye to eye on what should be done. She explained that there was no developer, or group of developers, behind the RiverFront East project. Even the city of Detroit had yet to decide on a masterplan that included this area.

The man responded to this information frankly and with a hint of humor, "Then what the hell am I here for?" He turned around in jest, as if he was looking for the exit. "This whole process has been about the ideas," she answered with a smile, and placed extra emphasis on the word *ideas*. "It has been about creating a vision for the riverfront, of imagining its future and to collaborate with the community so that we have something similar to a masterplan for the Eastern Riverwalk. And then later, if this area starts to develop, I mean it is probably just a matter of time. There is already a comprehensive body of ideas to draw from and be inspired by, which have

all come from the community. So, you know, this could guide those other plans in the future. But having said that, we have to be clear that whatever we are seeing today will probably not be what will happen, but hopefully, pieces will become realized someday."

"Oh, I see," the man said, scratching his chin, then he asked, "Well do you have any idea of when that's gonna be? Because if we're talking about the city, this thing is gonna take forever".

To this, the woman could only throw her hands up in the air and shake her head. The man was clearly puzzled by what he had learned, and he was not alone in expressing surprise about the project's intentions. Even though I had participated in various stages of the project, this was news to me. I suppose I had, like other participants, simply assumed that the process of generating a future vision for the riverfront was related to its immediate development, and that there was some entity or authority with the necessary capital and contacts to transform the riverfront. This might not have been in exactly the way participants wanted it to transform, but it was going to be transformed nonetheless. Instead, it seemed that a visionary document had been created and a future had been imagined and curated, but there was no immediate developmental need for it. As these processes unfolded, there was essentially no public or private entity positioned to use the framework[61], which raised the question of what this process was for and what it aimed to accomplish?

Colonizing the future

Compared to other events which sought to enlist the participation of Detroiters in imagining a future, the RiverFront East project was extravagant. It involved an architectural firm from Chicago and another from Detroit. The project flew in a French landscape architect with an international reputation for designing riverfronts. The project involved materials such as stickers, maps and "passports". Even the venues and the refreshments

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[61] Years later, one element of the framework did materialize, albeit in an altered and piece-meal manner. A recurring aspect that emerged from the community input was a desire for a place to swim at the riverfront. Many had expressed their excitement about the idea of creating a beach. On the 27th of August 2018, DRFC broke ground on the construction of Atwater Beach after raising $6 million from various foundations. The beach would not, however, permit any form of swimming. Instead, it would be, as its CEO Mark Wallace expressed, a "huge sandbox designed to feel like a beach" (quoted in Dudar 2017), including a West Coast lifeguard station for children.

clearly communicated that time, consideration and money had been invested in the process.

The way the RiverFront East project was organized resembles practices involved in "participatory planning" which have been subject to various forms of critique in the past. These began with Arnstein's (1969) seminal depiction of the "ladder of citizen participation", which highlighted how the technologies of "participatory planning" could be captured by political interests. However, more recently, the practice has been criticized for the way in which its emphasis on "consensus" could undermine urban democracy by marginalizing voices of dissent and antagonism (Bond 2011; Hillier 2003; Inch 2015; Lennon 2017; Tahvilzadeh & Kings 2018). Although my ethnographic material from the RiverFront East project certainly echoes the above critique of "participatory planning", it is necessary to take a step back to examine the concept.

In suggesting an anthropological approach to planning, Abram and Weszkalnys (2013: 11) have highlighted the importance of paying attention to the performative linguistics involved in promises, where a plan "may not be a vow, but always includes some element of moral obligation that ties the present to the future". This form of framing may be appropriate for participatory planning events where a developer has the intention and necessary resources to go ahead with the development. These cases involve a promise that the plan will be realized. Plans can be seen through the metaphor of a bridge that connects the present and future and stabilizes the relations between them. In more prosaic terms, plans signal that something will be done, whether according to the "plan" or in opposition to it.

On the other hand, could the RiverFront East project be considered a "plan"? Although most plans ultimately negotiate between reality and the imagination, the project was resolutely weighted toward the latter. Even in the final presentation, the facilitators did their best to avoid the word "plan" in describing the final product, opting instead for the term "visionary framework". Importantly, the RiverFront East project involved no promises about future implementation. If plans signal that something will be done, it is telling that there was no developer, no organization, no municipality, and no money for executing its visionary framework.

If the preliminary visionary document represented the conclusion to weeks of participation and planning, what had been achieved through the process of producing it?

The RiverFront East project and similar processes force us to pay attention to their temporal direction. It is the quality of this direction that makes it differ from other forms of "participatory planning", and understanding this difference helps conceptualize what these processes achieve.

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Returning to the previous chapter and the proposed re-zoning of Midtown, that plan involved technologies for the development of space. It served as tools with which a present could impact and transform a future. Its maps and illustrations were a means to an end: the transformation of space. This form of planning was close to colloquial ways of understanding the aims of urban planning, and by extension participatory planning, i.e., to develop urban space through participatory practices that generate a plan for development. In the re-zoning of Midtown, the present was planning to alter a future.

However, in the RiverFront East project this direction was reversed. It was not a present acting on a future, but rather a future acting on the present. Its "plans" were tools for the development of a shared imagination in the present. Under this temporal direction, "plans" functioned as a technology through which a future ultimately interacted with a present. Its illustrations and discourses did not serve as a means to a spatial or material end. They served as artifacts of the imagination, anchoring fantasies that were likely to remain fantasies. Its artifacts of imagination, the passports given to participants, or the images displayed during presentations, served as surfaces for this future-to-present interaction.

My argument is that the RiverFront East project represents a shift away from cultivation of space toward cultivating the imagination. Approaching projects like this with the assumptions that accompany the word "plan", and thereby evaluating it against "what and how" it did something to the city as a spatial and material reality, would lead to a conclusion that it did nothing and achieved nothing, that the process was an "empty ritual of participation" (Arnstein 1969: 216).

However, this would miss the point of the project, which is nevertheless well understood by the urban elites and organizations that consistently fund processes such as these in Detroit. Influence over the future can translate into influence over the present, and this is why, as a tool for engineering the city's comeback, the future is constantly colonized by powerful interests in the present. Through constant efforts to harness the collective imagination, the future, which is unknown and vast, becomes populated with particular representations. These render it narrower and knowable, as the ways in which people collectively imagine their future ultimately impact what they might do in the present. The way in which this form of management emerged during the project will be analyzed in the following section on the basis of the understanding outlined above.

Managing an imagined future

In phenomenological terms, the way the RiverFront East project unfolded was a form of spatial protention. It represented a series of acts that collectively imagined a trajectory of space, visualizing matters as if they had already unfolded. Such a future "is not built exclusively of conjectures and fantasies" (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 439). It is "carried along by intentional lines that trace out in advance at least the style of what is about to arrive" (ibid).

A "style" can be identified in the imaginations nurtured by the project, which is also visible in the imaginations it discards. Major elements of this "style" can be found in other projects that seek to alter both space and the imagination in Detroit, and which together create a sense of cohesion in terms of the ideas, politics and esthetics of New Detroit. Importantly, and related to my above argument about how the spatialization of comeback is socially organized, cohesion of this kind does not imply coherence, in the sense that this "style" has been logically and rationally worked out and related. Instead, it is a process in which a multitude of minds develop the "style" of the future in Detroit, the RiverWalk East project being one example of many.

An examination of the RiverFront East project reveals clear connections to what Marin (1984; 1992) terms the "spatial play of utopics". Although Marin (ibid.) uses this term to discuss modernity and the processes that transform the imaginative and abstract into the material and spatial, it is a useful concept in attempting to understand how the "style" of the future arrives and becomes centered. Through the "spatial play" of utopics, the future riverfront becomes a vehicle for articulating ideas about the social, the moral, the political and the economic in Detroit.

The utopic riverfront that emerged was both "diverse" and "inclusive". It creatively "reused" what was already there and "reclaimed" a distant past, thereby exposing its underlying "authenticity". The utopic riverfront would combine different spatial functions through "mixed-use" development. It would be devoid of "dead spaces" and visible barriers, encouraging residents to walk, bike or make use of public transit. Additionally, a riverfront of this order would serve as an indication of the "world-class", or "international" status of Detroit, effectively putting it "on the map".

The visualization of the future Riverwalk was ultimately framed by its future residents. They became both the users of the space, who jogged, strolled and read books in it, and consumers of the space, taking a stroll with a takeaway coffee in their hand or sitting down at a restaurant table to work on a laptop.

Facilitators guided the "spatial play" of participants so that the project was steered toward this particular vision of a utopic riverfront. They managed the listening session that preceded the workshop, summarizing participants' aspirations for the future, and how they had imagined it. They then re-presented these summaries to participants as the "community's voice", and translated aspirations into categories. These categories were then transformed into stickers and symbols to be placed on a map, and the facilitators translated the map full of stickers into a framework. They re-presented this framework, once again, as the "community's voice". The facilitators also managed the imagination of participants by providing illustrations of what the future would look like. They managed participants through interaction, seeking to cultivate in them a sense of importance around values that were central to the project, such as walkability, mixed-use and "all that cool stuff".

For the most part, this management of the imagination was relatively frictionless. Participants engaged creatively with each other and with facilitators around imagining a future within the boundaries set by the project and its facilitators. Several expressed feelings of optimism, hope and enthusiasm for what a future Riverwalk could be. The overall smoothness of the process could suggest that many accepted, indeed anticipated, the project's vision of the future. Given the geography of participation, where many participants were currently living in affluent areas, mostly New Detroit, there was an overlap in class and status between participants and facilitators, and this helped establish consensus as to what the future would be. It would seem that for many participants, the RiverFront East project articulated a future in which they could see themselves. Thereby, it reasserted, as it were, that they had a future in Detroit, or that this future belonged to them.

Despite this overlap and the relative ease of reaching consensus, the process also demonstrated that the future is always a potentially volatile matter because of its ability to index relations of power in the present. The RiverWalk East project was not free of social tensions. Managing the imagination of participants required managing the emotions and affects stirred by this imagination, some of which could be potentially disruptive to the process at hand. Paying greater analytical attention to moments of conflict helps understand the limits and preconditions that structure these managed visions, and helps reveal the important role of the event in managing affects and emotions that flourish under conditions of crisis, rapid transformation and comeback.

Managing affects and tensions in the present

During the project, two distinct sources of tension emerged. One involved the issue of racial representation, and whether the future of America's Blackest city could, or should, be imagined as belonging to white newcomers. Another tension involved accessibility, a question which was made concrete by Barbara's vocal expression of a need for affordable parking, but also in discussions on chain-link fences, "dead space" and the prospect of certain developments raising barriers towards the rest of the city.

Both tensions revolve around a familiar question articulated through comeback: who is the city for? They also fall squarely within the region's major fault lines of racial and economic disparities, and articulate widely shared fears that Detroit is transforming into a whiter and wealthier city, one that would be alien, and, given its cosmology, perhaps even hostile to large sections of its current population. The situations in which these issues emerged were charged with emotions. Barbara and the young Black woman who raised her voice during the workshop both displayed anger and fear about what the future seemed to hold in store. However, the issues, and the affect that emanated from them, were managed by the facilitators in different ways.

To manage Barbara and the issue of a riverfront accessible to low-income Detroiters, facilitators sought to redirect and retranslate the concern she had articulated. Barbara was instructed to place the sticker for public transit on the areas of the Riverwalk map where she wanted low-cost parking. Barbara's own wishes, to be able to drive and park by the riverfront, were translated into an issue of getting to and from the riverfront. In terms of her own wellbeing, facilitators suggested other modes of transportation, such as the bus or a bike, even though they agreed that these modes, especially the bus, were currently dysfunctional.

The futures Barbara and the facilitators wanted were diametrically opposed on several points. Surface parking, essentially an area of concrete surrounded by a chain-link fence, was the epitome of a so-called "dead space". At a more fundamental level, her insistence on automobile infrastructure went against the core values and ideologies underlying the project, largely derived from notions of New Urbanism and its intrinsic program of deemphasizing the role of the automobile in urban planning. It went against the very "style" of the future. In a sense, Barbara's desires aligned more with a present and a past that the facilitators, as well as some participants, wished to "move away from".

Barbara's attempt to use the discourse of the facilitators, who emphasized walkability, accessibility and inclusion, had no visible success, even though the Riverwalkers were recognized as symbols of "walkability" or

"inclusion". These Riverwalkers walked the riverfront twice a week and included senior citizens like Barbara who had meager incomes and lived a long way from Downtown and the Riverwalk. When this managed future was visualized, "walkability" was represented by young, affluent white people who were routinely portrayed not only as users of a space, but as consumers of it.

As Barbara continued to insist on the need for parking, facilitators began to ignore her, not answering or acknowledging her questions and sometimes behaving as if her wishes for the future indexed a broader pathology. In a sense, by insisting on a future that seemed to be the antithesis of the future the events envisaged, Barbara was stereotyped as a "crazy old lady" who was seeking to hijack the meetings and the future.

Importantly, Barbara was alone in her views and opinions. The affects she displayed had no traction with either facilitators or participants. Her fear and anger over a future where parking was expensive and limited made no impression on anyone else at the meeting. Again, the majority of participants were residents who lived in either Downtown, Midtown or Lafayette Park, areas that are both affluent and geographically close to the Riverwalk. In terms of class, Barbara and her wishes seemed to be an anomaly for the group of participants, who had been categorized by facilitators as the "community" from whom visions of the future would be sought.

The ways in which facilitators and some participants managed the issues and affects raised by Barbara echoes a wider body of critique that has been levied against participatory planning. For instance, McGuirk (2001) highlighted how planners in Newcastle, Australia, exercised power by modifying the input from the community through a process of translation, prioritization and sorting, where certain forms of knowing, primarily technical and rational ones, were privileged at the expense of others. Similarly, Tewdwr-Jones and Thomas (1998: 139) examined community participation in planning national parks in Wales, where they found that despite planners' intentions, community input was not incorporated. Instead, planners "tended to impose their perspectives and priorities as, allegedly, technical, value-free, professionals and bureaucrats and to thereby discount alternative views and modes of expression".

The issue of racial representation in how the future of Detroit was visualized was managed differently. Although the issue of race can be tense and divisive in Detroit, there was consensus and cohesion when it was articulated. Everyone applauded. Everyone seemed to think it was important. No one disagreed or dissented. Facilitators and participants alike agreed

that the future of the Riverwalk should include a much larger proportion of Black individuals than it currently displayed.

Instead of being interpreted as a fundamental criticism of the project, the lead architect presented the issue to participants as an example of why a meeting like this was important. Thus, criticism was transformed into a stabilizing and legitimizing factor in the process, partly through the quick-witted rhetoric of the lead architect and partly because the affects displayed were so widely shared. Suddenly, an absolute consensus emerged on an important quality of the future.

The question of where displaying and sharing potentially disruptive affects can lead is important. In the case of the RiverWalk East project, it ultimately influenced how the future was visualized at a later stage of the process. Although these visualizations did not come close to mirroring the present demographic composition of the city, more Black people were represented in later images. For the final presentation, the young Black males who had been squatting over a flipped trashcan in the representation of the present had been erased. In contrast, in the background of the image representing the future of the same space, other young Black people could be seen working on laptops, walking their dogs and consuming coffee.

During the fieldwork, I experienced similar situations in different meetings across the city. These meetings would be presented under different guises, such as "listening sessions", "workshops" or "community meetings", facilitating moments where Detroiters could "speak up" and communicate their emotions vis-à-vis the city's comeback and future[62].

The management of affects related to the city's racial future during the RiverWalk East project exemplifies a wider pattern through which affects were managed in Detroit. The management of affects that arise in the present as a result of the future involves techniques that facilitate situations where these affects can emerge in manageable and controlled ways. A metaphor might involve a kettle full of boiling water, where events like the

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[62] I particularly remember one session which illustrates this pattern well. It involved the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), who had staged a "listening session" with residents of the North End neighborhood. Residents were tasked with supplying their solutions to the transit problems of their neighborhood. They were decisive in their response: they wanted more busses, better routes, better frequency, better reliability and better affordability. They were angry about the local transit situation, angry that a low-income and majority Black neighborhood was given such poor public transit. Rather than trying to avoid displays of anger, facilitators encouraged participants to "let it all out" and "not hold back". Toward the end, one participant asked whether "all the suits" from the RTA, who had college diplomas in transit planning, could share their vision of how to fix the problems. They could not. A representative of the RTA stated that they were there to listen, not lecture. They had come to interact and engage, not to explain.

workshop of the RiverWalk East project serve as moments for bringing pressures and tensions to the surface. Anger that had been built up over time could be brought to the surface by being displayed, vocalized and shared.

This management of affect is not inconsequential. Returning to the introduction and Thrift's (2004: 57) notion that cities "may be seen as roiling maelstroms of affect", comeback can be positioned as a current which has a powerful impact on this maelstrom, a phenomenon that continually stirs affects and emotions in people. Continuing with the metaphor of a kettle, the stove is still burning, and the water is still boiling. The multitude of events where affects involving comeback and the future were consistently managed were too many for a single fieldworker to cover. The prevalence of events that sought to imagine the future collectively, but manage the affects which persisted in residents, underscores its importance as technology for contemporary urban governance.

In Detroit, this technique is not primarily used by the municipality. Instead, it is NPOs, individual developers, community organizations and quasi-public entities who manage the collective imagination of the future, and who manage the affects that arise from these processes of imagining. For citizens, these diffused, privately organized futures lacked both the transparency and the formal accountability on which the institutions of representative democracy are based, at least in theory if not always in practice.

There is an intrinsic paradox to the forms of collective imagination discussed here. Contemporary futures, emerging outside the institutions of representative democracy, place great emphasis on engaging residents and ensuring that this engagement is categorized and recognized as representing the "community". However, while the "community" has acquired great relevance for the future, the power to put these participatory "plans" into practice is extremely ambiguous and sometimes non-existent. It would seem that when the "community" plans the future in Detroit, the results are not "plans" but "frameworks" or "visionary documents", and no one is in a position to execute them or be held accountable for them.

Under these circumstances, challenging the colonization of the future is difficult. I met several residents who, like Barbara in the RiverFront East project, or Terry in the epigraph in this chapter, had reached the conclusion that the future did not include them. Resignation and defeatism were not uncommon in these residents. Detroit was already lost in their eyes, not because of its turbulent past, or because of its equally turbulent present, but because its vision of the future had acquired an air of inevitably, making resistance seem futile. One interlocutor, a "lifelong" Black Detroiter in his sixties, explained his ambition to move away from the city in the following

terms: "This cookie-cutter future which is coming is simply not meant for me".

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, colonizing the future involves the present projecting a future that can be projected back onto the present. My aim has been to illustrate how the multitude of meetings, with their multitude of names, seeking to enlist the participation of residents to plan their collective future, are not solely about the future. They are also about the present, because if residents in the present accept the "style" of the future as inevitable (and it certainly can seem inevitable when this "style" is projected from a multitude of sources), then this future acts upon the present, altering people's actions and thoughts in the here and now. It may push some residents away, but also attract others, who may perceive that the future is in line with their aspirations. Managing imaginations, and the affects and tension that these imaginations give rise to, is a powerful technology of urban governance, with consequences that relate to demographics and the flow of people and wealth across the city. It is all the more powerful because it does not present itself as such.

Challenging the future and present

The wider patterns of colonizing Detroit's future go beyond the illustration of a single case. They also go beyond the controlled events intended to cultivate and fixate a particular future in the minds and bodies of participants. The future and its "style" flourished in Detroiters' everyday conversations, and it surfaced in other forms of event, some of which will be examined in the next two chapters. It is important to recognize that although considerable organization and thought is involved in managing and projecting a particular future, it remains a fragile process because the future is a contested field. Ways of contesting the future emerge not only within organized events which are specifically oriented toward the future, but also outside these events, as an aspect of urban life during comeback.

Challenges to the future were as diffused as the processes they sought to challenge. This section focuses on illuminating prevalent ways in which people contested the future during fieldwork. Challenges consisted of a triangulation of interrelated struggles, involving (1) denying the relational ties of utopics; (2) appropriating and inverting the temporal frame of comeback, often in the form of looking to a more recent past, rather than a would-be future; and (3) unmasking and critiquing the ideological components implicit in the artifacts of imagination that come to represent the future.

The first point of contestation, denying the relational ties of the utopic, sought to resist the framing of Detroit by reference to other cities. In tracing the genealogy of "utopics" in relation to early modernity, Hetherington (2001: 51) has made the argument that the importance of a utopic site emerges in its "relation to other sites against which it can be compared".

Events that managed the imagination of the future, such as the River-Front East project, relied on explicit comparisons between the future of Detroit and the presence of another city, and also on implicit comparison, e.g. that Detroit was not a "world-class city" in the present, but could/should/would become one in the future. Residents made prolific use of "antecedent cities" (Bunnell 2015) in framing the future of Detroit in their everyday conversations, especially newcomers who had moved to Detroit from other urban regions. The media also compared the present of another city with the future of Detroit, so a New Detroit could be framed as either a "New Berlin" (Vooght 2017), or a "New Brooklyn" (Duany 2014).

The fact that Detroit's future tended to be juxtaposed against these particular cities, and not framed as the "New Hanover", or the "New Fort Worth", articulates the position these cities occupied within the imagination of urban life in Detroit. Both Brooklyn and Berlin were considered centers from which new ideas and ways of being were emerging, acting as a model for other places. The conceptual labor of referencing a future Detroit to the present of these cities was informed by gentrification and the esthetics of hipster development. In other words, if gentrification could be considered a device, these locations would appear as prototypes, and if hipsterism could be seen as a religion, Brooklyn and Berlin would be holy sites.

The affinity between a future Detroit and a present-day Brooklyn or Berlin had a resonance that varied across different demographics. To young creatives and professional interlocutors, who were often newcomers in Detroit such as George in a previous chapter, these references were meaningful but not always desirable. Younger interlocutors in their twenties and thirties imagined, with both hope and despair, that Detroit would eventually "become" like other more developed cities. Bike shops, cafés and fusion restaurants would spring up, houses would be renovated, and rents and land values would inevitably rise. It was essentially only a matter of time before the future arrived, if it was not already there.

A rather typical example of this line of reasoning was given to me by Cara, a Black woman in her thirties who was looking to move from Portland to Detroit. To Cara, Portland was "a place where young people go to retire". What Cara meant was that Portland had all the things that she

thought young people desired; they had bike lanes, public transit, small cafés, fusion restaurants and progressive environmental policies. This had made Portland desirable to young people, and the desire to live a "retired" life in Portland had, in her view, altered the city because of the rampant gentrification which had followed in its wake. As Cara stressed to me: "I have seen this process unfold already. I have seen where it ends up. Now is the time to get on board because in five years I could be priced out".

Cara's experiences from Portland mirrored experiences shared by newcomers from New York, who often expressed that they had seen "what it [Detroit] will become", meaning that the future, as a form gentrified spatial pattern, had already been produced at other sites. One interlocutor from New York even argued that he had seen the "final product", and that this experience had made him a bearer of privileged knowledge, allowing him to draw conclusions and act accordingly in the present.

Denying both the implicit and explicit relational ties represented a challenge to the colonization of the future and its particular "style". These challenges could take the form of comments made during the RiverWalk East workshop, where the notion that the future "world-class" status of the riverfront would "put Detroit on the map" was immediately challenged by a participant. It could also take a form resembling earlier discussions where there was strong resistance to the idea that Detroit was a blank slate. Similarly, residents expressed their conviction that Detroit was not a "New Brooklyn", or a "New Berlin". This type of challenge was popular. To a certain extent, it was commercialized as a form of resistance that could be incorporated into mainstream consumer culture in the form of printed stickers, posters and t-shirts. As *The Economist* (2018) noted, "Don't Brooklyn my Detroit" T-shirts were a common sight in the city.

In discussing the genealogy of utopic sites, Hetherington (2001: 51) also underscored the fact that a "distinct temporal frame" becomes associated with utopic sites, in that "they are often oriented to the future, or to some sense of the new, rather than to the present or past". This leads to the second set of practices which challenged the colonization of the future. These inverted its temporal direction from a near future to a near past.

This form of contestation centered on inserting the modern history of Detroit into conversations about its process of becoming. At a colloquial and everyday level of urban life, this often involved "lifelong" Detroiters or more seasoned newcomers attempting to cultivate a sense of awareness of the city's modern history in more recent newcomers. In exploring this second set of challenges, I make a practical distinction between different types of past. The French landscape architect drew on a distant past, seeking to "uncover" the land on which settlers had established ribbon farms

along the riverbank. Similarly, the esthetic patterns of New Detroit, the materials which formed the objects of reclamation or exposure, often hailed from a turn-of-the-century version of the city. The more recent past involved the postwar era, a past of racial injustice, red-lining, segregation and violence perpetrated on the Black community by the white community in Detroit. The broad, diffused emphasis which comeback placed on the city's future was conducive to reactions in which this recent past was elevated and commemorated.

When I first arrived in Detroit in 2014, I made my way to its museum of history. I was surprised by the absence of displays on the events of 1967, especially since these were often framed as a watershed moment in my interlocutors' narratives of the region's cosmology. When I left Detroit in 2016, the Detroit Historical Society had just begun work on a project called "Detroit 67", which would address those events. Importantly, however, the "Detroit 67" project was more ambitious than simply adding a missing display in a museum. In a way that begins to feel familiar, the project reached out to the "community" by collecting a large number of oral histories about the event itself, and also about the city's history more broadly. The project enlisted the participation of Detroiters, who were given "field guides" (Detroit67 2016) that described how they should interview and collect the oral histories of other Detroiters, ultimately generating material which would be made available online. The title of the community engagement aspect of the project is revealing in terms of the points made in this section. With deliberate capital letters at the end, it was called "Detroit 67: Looking Back to MOVE FORWARD".

This aspect of history-making was built on forms of engagement that sought to create a "model for bringing diverse voices and communities together around the effects of a historic crisis to find their roles in the present and inspire the future" (Detroit67 2018a). Detroit67 also eventually included a number of placemaking projects as a way of "engaging residents, highlighting possibility and reimagining the city" (Detroit67 2018b).

During my final days of fieldwork in 2016, I attended the unveiling of a large sculpture in Detroit by the Detroit sculptor Charles McGee, located on the campus of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. Entitled "United We Stand", it was partly intended to inaugurate the "year-long 50th anniversary remembrance of the 1967 Detroit riots" (Wickliffe 2016), and partly to serve as the centerpiece of an event called "Reunite at the Wright: A Detroit City Reunion". This event sought to repair the division between city and suburb, or, as McGee suggested in explaining his own art, to display "the power of togetherness" (quoted in Stryker 2016).

The practice of "looking back to MOVE FORWARD" represented a social and cultural response to ongoing attempts to colonize the future in a certain direction. It problematized the image of a future Detroit as smaller, whiter and wealthier, highlighting "blind spots" in the "spatial play" of utopics, most notably those of race and, to some degree, class.

Emphasizing the recent past in order to imagine a near future relates to a third type of challenge, which sought to collapse the artifacts of imagination by exposing the implicit bias and ideology underpinning representations of the future. These challenges echo the same language as the events that seek to colonize the future. Words such as "diversity" and "inclusion" represent core values not only for those who seek to manage the imagination in a certain direction, but also for those who seek to resist this management.

An example of this challenge was found in criticism leveled at the RiverFront East project, in terms of the way white people dominated in images used to visualize the future. Bringing attention to, and critiquing, how "diversity" and "inclusion" were visualized were common elements at most events which sought to manage imaginations of the future.

An illustration of similar contestation outside the controlled and managed events about the future can be found in a controversy which emerged in 2017. It centered on the advertisement illustrated below, which appeared on the corner of Woodward Avenue and Congress Street, in the heart of Downtown Detroit. The ad was part of a public relations campaign by the property management company Bedrock Detroit. Bedrock and its owner Dan Gilbert are influential corporate actors in the contemporary revitalization of downtown Detroit, and the company has over a hundred Detroit properties in its portfolio. It has invested $5.6 billion, and accounts for over 17,000 jobs, making Dan Gilbert the city's largest employer and tax generator (Feloni 2018). In fact, his impact on Downtown had been so great that parts of the area were colloquially known as "Gilbertville", and the New York Times recently referred to Dan Gilbert as the "mayor of Gilbertville" (Larsen 2017). The slogan on the poster, "See Detroit Like We Do", thus carries weight, not just because of the message itself, but because of its sender.

The controversy centered on the absence of Black faces in the ad compared to an abundance of white faces, pictured below. It became a struggle fought on social media, and a number of threads appeared in my personal feeds, pictured below.

The ad was part of a broader campaign, "See Detroit Like We Do," which drew widespread criticism from journalists (e.g. Winowiecki 2017; Neavling 2017). Law professor Khaled Beyoun commented that African American communities were "not only being pushed out of the city, but seemingly intentionally left out of the new vision for Detroit". He argued that "[t]he Bedrock ad vividly and brutally illustrates what has been taking place on the ground in the city for years, particularly in downtown, Cass Corridor and other sections of the city that have been rapidly remade without tending to the needs, interests and humanity of Black families" (quoted in Sherter 2017).

Shortly after the controversy, Dan Gilbert issued an apology on Bedrock's Facebook page (Bedrock 2017), explaining that the campaign had been cancelled in its entirety. He nevertheless included the caveat that the image shown above had been part of a series of images intended to be rolled out the following week. Gilbert argued that the set of pictures as a whole would have been "very inclusive and diverse" and would have reflected "the population of the city". These other pictures were published alongside the apology. However, these additional images became the subject of further criticism and outrage, as they contained only four people of color, two of whom were pictured in roles of servitude, such as pouring cocktails for white patrons.

The comments the apology drew opened up a space where residents of the metropolitan region could engage in arguments with one another along the fault lines laid out in the previous chapter on cosmology. On the one hand, the campaign was framed as a symbol of racism, and of suburban malevolence and intent to destroy the city. Others, albeit a minority, framed the outrage itself as a symbol of racism against whites, arguing that it was proof that "Blacks [had] destroyed the city". The post that drew the most "likes", however, came from what appeared to be a young Black woman, who concluded that "This ad was done in poor taste, this apology was fake and horrible, and we know that we're wanted to make money for you, but the 'New Detroit' you're creating is not for us."

Challenging the artifacts of imagination ultimately goes beyond questions of representation. There was no "easy fix" to the social tensions stirred by images of the future. Including Black people in renditions of the future could equally be a source of criticism, depending on what they were doing and what Detroiters perceived their role in the images to be. Attempts to include more Black bodies in representations of the future were at times questioned. These issues revolved critically around notions of race and diversity, asking whether images representing Black people walking

their dogs, drinking takeaway coffee or working on their laptops were valid representations of Black culture, or whether Black people were used as "props" for white visions of diversity.

The effect these challenges could have on the colonization of Detroit's future is a pertinent question but a difficult one to answer, compounded by the fact that comeback is subject to many parallel lines of development. On the one hand, interlocutors who were engaged in the city's contemporary development would assert that "money talks" in Detroit. On the other hand, widespread dissatisfaction, and constantly emerging fear and anger vis-à-vis a future which is considered to exclude existing residents, have led to organization along political lines and the emergence of new events within the region.

In terms of politics, "money talks" but can also be brought under pressure to "listen". In 2016, Detroit became the first city in the United States to enact a city-wide Community Benefits Ordinance, which aimed to force large-scale developers to ensure that their projects benefited the surrounding area and its residents. The original proposal, developed by grassroots activists, was supplanted by a less radical one backed by the incumbent mayor and large corporations. It nevertheless indicates a movement toward more inclusive futures for Detroit.

The spatialization of comeback, discussed in the previous chapter, and the colonization of futures in the current chapter, are characteristically top-down orientations. NPOs, corporations and the municipality are collectives seeking to manifest comeback as "real" in terms of its material existence, and "inevitable" in regard to its temporality. It is nevertheless important to recognize that, although there are top-down aspects to comeback, other aspects flow in the opposite direction. During the same period that the material representation of comeback formed in the guise of Midtown and acquired a kind of inevitability through the future of a New Detroit, a host of events in Detroit's civil society began to address race, regionalism and reconciliation. These will be investigated in the next part of the thesis, which begins by examining an immensely popular event in the city and region: the Detroit Slow Roll.

PART THREE

Detroit is both a divided metropolitan region and a divided city. So far, the thesis has excavated a number of related historical, cosmological, demographic, spatial and temporal fields where divisions between individuals and groups are immanent. I have discussed how these divisions inform a multitude of struggles involving questions of who Detroit belongs to and who belongs in Detroit. I have also argued that the contemporary comeback of Detroit has both highlighted and exacerbated these divisions.

Divisions are an analytical key that offers a particular approach to the city and its transformation. However, seeing them as the only key would mean many aspects of Detroit were left unexplored, providing a less complete understanding of comeback. By now, I fear that my depictions of Detroit's comeback have given the impression that life in the city is characterized by conflict and strife, emanating from a contentious economic and racial struggle over urban space which has been centuries in the making. Readers need not abandon such impressions, but these impressions need to be complemented with other aspects. Returning to the basis for this thesis, Detroit and its comeback can be seen as sufficiently large and complex to be many things at once.

As well as exacerbating divisions, comeback also involves experiences through which residents take part in profound displays of community, hope and passion. The intensity interlocutors attributed to these experiences is related to the intensity involved in experiences of separation and conflict. In a divided region and city, coming together with others across these divides, and at this particular juncture in time, carries broader meaning.

This final part of the thesis will examine how comeback relates and reflects motions located within urban society[63] in Detroit. It does this by paying attention to the ritualized events which highlight solidarity, community and the bridging of divisions, and which have emerged and flourished during the period of comeback. Through these ritualized events, residents and

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[63] Another term might be civil society. However, this is not the civil society represented by public or private institutional actors, but more loosely the kind of civil society that emanates from residents who begin to interact with the city and its comeback by organizing themselves.

others have begun to assert a right to the city and a right to define the city's future.

The following two chapters examine two ritualized events called Slow Roll and Soup, each of which cast the city and its comeback in a different light. I experienced both of these events many times throughout the fieldwork, and the ethnography I use seeks to detail how they emerge at the level of experience. Both chapters involve excavating how these ritualized events are organized, and what they do in relation to the city's comeback. The empirical focus is on how participants experience these ritualized events through meanings and affects, thoughts and emotions.

The concept of affordances is introduced as a way of conceptually balancing the unpredictability of individual experience with how ritualized events eventually organize these experiences into patterns. Similar to the way Mead (1934: 280) once argued that the "chair invites us to sit", Slow Roll and Soup can be considered to invite participants to experience passion, empowerment, community and comeback in particular ways. Keane (2018: 31, italics in original) has further clarified that "properties are *objective phenomena* […] they serve as affordances only in *particular combinations* and relative to *particular actors*".

Imagine Slow Roll and Soup as puzzles in which participants combine different pieces to form their experience. The combination of pieces can afford unique and idiosyncratic experiences, but each piece of the puzzle has its own characteristics and has been designed to lock into another, very specific piece. Importantly, each piece carries latent potential, an *affordance*, for particular experiences to emerge.

Thus, in this thesis, the experiences derived from these ritualized events do not mean that other experiences are not possible or that they do not exist or matter. Nor are any neat lines of causality implied, where A always leads to B. Instead, I am interested in how these ritualized events are socially organized, and how their "puzzles" have been designed to afford particular thoughts and feelings which interact and articulate the city's comeback.

There are both analytical and methodological reasons why the following chapters are more ethnographic than previous chapters. Expanding on both the concept of heterotopia and Marin's (1984; 1992) concept of "utopics", Hetherington (1997: 37) drew attention to how certain sites "act as obligatory points of passage through which an alternate mode of social ordering is performed". These sites represent "spaces where ideas and practices that represent the good life can come into being, seemingly from nowhere, even if they never achieve what they actually set out to achieve" (Hetherington 1997: ix). Both Slow Roll and Soup are representative of this description, and both recall the discussions of ritualized events in the introduction. They

are events where certain notions of comeback become grounded and part of the embodied spaces of residents.

The fact that they are regularly occurring events which generate affordances in terms of particular experiences also makes them open to sustained empirical attention. It is possible to experience and study these events over and over again. Hetherington's (ibid.) sites were historical, centuries removed from his analysis. A more ethnographic focus in the present, however, can help understand how comeback becomes grounded in practice. It helps clarify how comeback does not emerge "apparently from nowhere", but through the careful organization and sequencing intrinsic to ritualized events.

Slow roll, slow roll

> It's social and fun and it doesn't cost me anything.
>
> Jeffrey, a Black retiree, and "lifelong" Detroiter

> I do it because I want to, but also because I need to. Sometimes, I need to feel like this.
>
> Denise, a white newcomer in her thirties

> Hey, I think this is the first time the police are following me without chasing me.
>
> Cara, "lifelong" Black Detroiter

This chapter examines a regular bike ride known as Slow Roll, where participants pedal slowly through various parts of the city together, interacting with each other, the city and its comeback. I approach Slow Roll as a ritualized event that allows a different Detroit to be embodied and experienced. A temporary integration of otherwise divided groups can be observed in Slow Roll as suburbanites and urbanites, Blacks and whites, rich and poor, old and young, newcomers and lifelong Detroiters, gentrifiers and gentrified, all pedal together. This integration is generated and disseminated by powerful affective experiences conducive to social solidarity within the region. Importantly, Slow Roll creates an experiential dimension to what participants called "feelings of togetherness", the sensation that the metropolitan region belongs to a diverse but single community that has the capacity to act upon, and claim, urban space for its own purposes.

Through "feelings of togetherness", the ritualized event gradually casts the city in a new light for participants. The argument developed in this chapter will show that the Detroit which emerges through these experiences is not an "alternative" Detroit, a city that could be or should be. What participants experience and embody during the event is not a "possible" or "potential" Detroit, but a reality of what Detroit is. These experiences reveal that this other Detroit is ever-present, even when it is latent and

obfuscated by the dominant paradigm of the city as a fractured and divided reality.

Although the ritualized event lends itself to interpretations in which it either transcends or transforms the intrinsic division of the region's social order, these divisions tend to surface in the ways participants make sense of their experiences, and in situations where interpretations of the event clash and diverge. I therefore suggest that it is better to understand the event as one which offers participants both a "way out" of the division and a "way in". In this way, Slow Roll serves as a technique for encouraging urban society to interact in order to understand a changing urban world.

The chapter will begin by introducing and framing the phenomenon of Slow Roll Detroit. It will then examine Slow Roll ethnographically, giving a intimate account of how it operates within its own context. Following this, the chapter goes on to analyze Slow Roll by exploring (a) the affects generated and distributed by the ritualized event, (b) the ways in which participants verbalize and attribute meanings to Slow Roll and (c) how co-eval and sometimes conflicting articulations of Slow Roll and the city emerge within the ritualized event.

The emergence and evolution of Slow Roll

Slow Roll started in 2010 as a bicycle ride involving two friends who wished to promote their t-shirt brand. During its first year, promotion remained an important objective, but with each ride, more and more people took part in the event, so Slow Roll grew incrementally. Collective bicycle rides are a common type of public event in Detroit[64], but the size and popularity of Slow Roll have made it particularly successful in attracting the attention and support of businesses which are capitalizing on the city's comeback, such as Shinola, or large corporations seeking to capitalize on the event's perceived authenticity[65].

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[64] Residents and visitors can choose from a number of different forms of ride. These vary in terms of their purpose and organization, their speed and routes, and the number of participants they attract. For the summer of 2018, the Detroit Metro Times listed 10 different recommended rides (Stocking 2018), but there are many more, which are smaller and more intimate, that escape the notice of the media. Some of these, like Critical Mass, predate Slow Roll, whereas others have sprung up in the wake of it. Thus, Slow Roll can be framed neither as an original, nor even a unique, phenomenon in Detroit. It is nevertheless by far the largest of these types of event in terms of the number of participants.

[65] In 2014, Apple made a 2-minute commercial for iPads focusing entirely on Slow Roll Detroit and one of its founders, Jason Hall. Hall has also been featured in a TEDx talk, and in the state of Michigan's advertising campaign "Urban DNA: Seek AuthentiCity". The

During a ride in 2011, one of the founders, Jason Hall, was approached by a friend who was taking part in the event. This friend had said to Hall, "Do you know what you have here? ... You bring people to Detroit. You show them a different way of thinking. You're bringing people together. Look around" (quoted in Waraniak 2015). This was allegedly what made Hall recognize the potential of Slow Roll, and it eventually influenced the direction in which the event evolved. T-shirt promotion was dropped, and Slow Roll was reformulated as an event with "the goal and the mission of bringing people to Detroit and seeing Detroit in a different light" (ibid.). By 2013, the event had grown to such an extent that the municipality had begun to receive complaints from motorists about widespread obstructions to traffic (AlHajal 2013).

Interlocutors who participated during its first year stressed the spontaneous nature of the event. Originally, the event had little in the way of formal organization. The routes taken were communicated through social media, so that participants would join the ride at a point that was convenient to them, and exit at their leisure. Many described it as "fun" and "spontaneous", or as one interlocutor put it, "It was just a group of people that casually met up and rode their bikes in the evening". Several interlocutors remembered the radical edge of early Slow Roll events with fondness, as this "casual" gathering of hundreds of riders would claim the road and impede traffic. During its first years, the pace was faster, and because participant numbers were in the hundreds, the event could venture into neighborhoods and parts of the city that would have been less accessible to participants in the thousands.

Research on collective bicycle rides has tended to focus on the politics generated by the phenomenon of Critical Mass (Carlsson 2002, 2008; Furness 2005, 2010; Cupples and Ridley 2008; Ferrell 2018; Sheller 2018). Critical Mass emerged in San Francisco in the early 1990s, and has since spread to other cities around the world as a technique rather than in the form of an organization (Stehlin 2014). A central element in Critical Mass is its opposition to the automobile and associated urban regimes. It emerged as a form of direct action, enabling cyclists to claim urban space and articulate a vision of a city built around other modes of transportation[66].

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publicity of Slow Roll Detroit has helped diffuse a local, ritualized event to a global audience. There are now Slow Rolls in Cleveland, Buffalo and Chicago, to name but a few U.S. cities, and in places such as Berlin, or the city of Slemani in the Iraqi part of Kurdistan, as well as several cities in Sweden (Moutzalias 2019).

[66] As Horton (2003: 45) has discussed, the bicycle is also an important object in defining environmentalist and activist identities more broadly, where "in environmentalist discourse it is opposed to the car".

Compared to the extensive documentation on Critical Mass, Slow Roll has remained relatively unexplored. One exception is the work of Scott (2020: 138), who concludes, based on participation in an event, that it "is part of a larger transnational movement encouraging slowness and deceleration", a movement that also finds expression in phenomena such as "slow food and tourism to slow professing" (ibid.). Quoting Popan (2018: 285), Scott (ibid.) argues that the slow speeds adopted in Slow Roll represent an "inventive tactic of resistance against an overwhelming strategy of speed". He therefore frames Slow Roll Detroit within the same form of opposition to cars prevalent in analyses of Critical Mass.

This chapter offers an alternative reading of Slow Roll. I do not consider that people participate in Slow Roll as a form of political protest against automobiles, as the majority of participants were automobile owners themselves who often drove to the event. In keeping with the discussion in previous chapters, it would make more sense to locate the "radical edge" of Slow Roll Detroit in the fact that it brings together different and sometimes opposing groups within the region, creating a context where they can share the city and interact around its transformation, rather than protest against the automobile. The next section therefore involves an ethnographic attempt to define Slow Roll at the level of experience, and to show how it operates.

Waiting

One Monday in July 2016, I was hiding in a café in Downtown, and heard rumors that the evening's Slow Roll had been cancelled. No confirmation had been given on Slow Roll's Twitter account or website, but a number of customers in the café were saying it had had to be cancelled. "Who would even show up in this rainy weather?" As the afternoon rolled on, the showers became less frequent, and through the café's large windows I could see sunshine coming through gaps in the clouds and steam rising from the hot pavement.

I left the café around 5 p.m. and headed north along Cass Avenue. I cycled at a leisurely pace, taking stock of the scenes around me. Traffic was heavier and slower than usual. Drivers were looking for parking spaces, weaving in and out of lots as they filled up, or stopping suddenly to see whether they could try parallel parking in the street. Many cars had bicycles attached at the back, or on roof racks or in small trailers. Many people were there on their bike, some by themselves, and others in groups. Friends were riding together, and strangers were brought together into

groups by the motions of traffic lights. As I approached Canfield, both drivers and cyclists multiplied. Everyone was heading in the same direction, and I could see more and more people. I could hear waves of music, different songs, different genres. The tunes were mixing and then separating, over and over again, sometimes fusing and blending into each other as ad hoc harmonies, sometimes descending into cacophony and noise.

The Roll was happening despite earlier rumors. On the Canfield stretch between Cass and 3ʳᵈ Avenue, introduced in chapter 4 as the "cultural center" of Midtown, hundreds of cyclists had already assembled. As more people arrived, bikes and people were packed together more and more tightly. Everyone was nudging closer to each other, leaving less and less room for maneuver. The atmosphere was joyful, like at a festival. People were smiling, talking and joking with each other. In the mass of bodies and bikes, people were bumping into coworkers, neighbors and friends. On the sidewalks, commerce was in full swing. Individual vendors were selling items such as bottles of water, knitted socks, artistic prints and ice-cream.

Around the crowd were people in yellow t-shirts, busy preparing everyone for the Roll. They were the facilitators and organizers, known as the Slow Roll Squad, or more commonly just the Squad. Some were helping to communicate safety instructions, reminding participants to go slowly, to stay on the appropriate side of the road, not to use the sidewalks, and to listen for instructions as the Roll progressed. Others were repairing participants' bikes, filling tires with air, fixing flats, and dealing with chains that had come off. A considerable number of Squad members followed the Roll as it set off, helping people whose bikes had problems. The police were there, in cars and on motorcycles, directing traffic, advising people where to stand and where not to park.

As I looked on at the growing commotion in Canfield, I felt a tap on my shoulder.

"I thought I recognized you," a voice said. It was Avery, a Black man in his early forties. I had met him on the last Roll, the previous Monday.

Avery was a "lifelong Detroiter", and the previous Monday had been his first Slow Roll. He worked in a boiler room on Milwaukee Avenue, and his hours had prevented him from going in the past. A month earlier, his schedule had changed. His night shift began a few hours later, leaving him enough time to squeeze in a ride before heading to work. Since our last encounter, he had updated and modified his bicycle, and was now keen to show it to me. Most of all, he was proud of the small engine he had welded to its frame. It ran on gasoline, and was from a kit he had bought on eBay and just installed that afternoon.

"Now it goes up to 30 mph. I used to think that bikes were for kids, but this is way too fast to be a toy now," he said, adding that he was already thinking of buying a more powerful engine with his next salary. He also had other modifications in mind. He wanted a large speaker in the back for music, and he wanted a more comfortable seat, preferably with an attachment so that he could lean back. Then there were the handlebars. Avery really wanted long ape-hangers like the ones on chopper motorcycles, and later on, new rims and tires, with some alternating led-lights to create more of a "disco feel". He could do most of this himself in his garage. In his youth he had worked for Chrysler assembling automobiles, so he knew how to work with cars and engines. Anything he could not fix himself he took to a mechanics shop in Dearborn that made custom motorcycles, but now also worked on bicycles. He told me about his visit with great excitement. They had shown him a piece they were working on. It was a bicycle costing $18,000, made of the same material as jetfighters, but he could no longer remember what the material was called.

"Well, at least you can dream," he said, and directed my gaze to a group of Black cyclists not far from where we were standing. All their bicycles were works of art. There were low riders with golden rims and hundreds of golden spokes converging on an exquisite pattern at the hub. They had powerful sound systems, and one bicycle even carried a small turn-table. It had a custom paint job, leather handles with tassels at the end and crafted white leather seats and pedals. We spotted other similarly extravagant bicycles. Some aspects of Slow Roll are similar to car cruise events. It was a time and place where proud owners displayed their polished bicycles in search of public admiration.

Unlike cars for cruising, however, Slow Roll bicycles were as diverse as their owners. Fast racers traveled alongside slower low riders, and unicycles shared space with tricycles and quadricycles. Some were old and beaten up, others looked like they had never been used. There were mountain bikes, electric bikes, fat bikes, bikes with seats 10 inches from the road, and bikes with seats 10 feet in the air. The riders themselves were Black and white, Latino and Asian. Some were newcomers, or suburbanites, gentrifiers or gentrified. Others were foreign tourists from abroad. There were children in the crowd with their parents. I could see men and women who populate the Downtown business district standing next to men and women who were struggling to make ends meet. There were old and young faces, the highs and the lows of the city's different strata, all of them waiting to Roll.

The previous Monday I had thought at first that Avery was taking drugs. He had been standing at the edge of the crowd, and had not noticed me

until I was right next to him and said, "What up doe?". Even then, he had responded as if he were waking up from a dream. "Man, this is what it's all about". Gazing into the crowd and glancing over at me, he continued, "Everyone is here, like everyone in one place. There are whites and Blacks. I see people from all walks of life. This is true diversity, man. I've never seen this before. Not in 40 years." Standing next to me at this Roll, he had a similar expression. His mouth was slightly open, his eyes wide. He looked like a man who was "taking it all in".

This time, Avery did not stay with me for long. He was eager to move to the front of the Roll, saying that he wanted to be in the lead this time, rather than at the back. "I'll catch you later," he said as he leaned forward into his bicycle, crisscrossing through the crowd until I lost sight of him.

Shortly afterwards, two Black men about my own age started to talk to me, breaking the ice with a comment about my bicycle, a red Schwinn racer from the 1980s, full of scratches and stickers and a seat I had fixed with duct tape. Both of them were on mountain bikes, and I soon learned that they were brothers who had grown up in the city. The older brother had left to go to college, but had returned afterwards, and the other one had remained in Detroit. Nowadays, they told me, life was hectic. Both of them were busy with work, girlfriends and children. They had started going to Slow Roll the previous year, as a way of seeing each other and staying in touch. I asked them why they were taking part in Slow Roll. They gave me a common reply: Slow Roll was fun, and it was more physically active than sitting at home or other places where they socialized.

"What makes it fun for you?" I asked halfheartedly, because "fun" is difficult to explain and put into words.

"I don't know," the younger brother replied. "It's just fun, you know, riding your bike, talking to people, seeing what happens".

"Yeah, it's a fun thing to do," the older brother pitched in. "It's like one of those things, you're like hey, what are we gonna do, oh but it's Monday, let's get our bikes and bike around a bit. It's something that happens, you know, and that you can do, and it's just fun."

As I waited and talked, I heard someone calling my name. After a few moments, I recognized Rebecca, a white woman in her fifties. We had met once at a Roll that had started in Downtown but had been delayed by a downpour. We had both taken refuge under the scaffolding of New Detroit. Rebecca was a suburbanite living in the very affluent St. Clair Shores suburb. Her family had originated in the city but had left in the postwar period. She was well-rehearsed in the statistical differences between Detroit and the suburb where she lived. It was one of the first things she told me as we struck up a conversation with the sound of raindrops hitting the scaffolding

above. She had been an avid Roller since 2014. "This is a broken region," she said, and she told me that the Slow Roll was something more than simply riding your bicycle through a part of the city. It was about healing, at both a collective and individual level.

"This is my therapy now," she had told me, ringing the bell on her bicycle. "I get all I need every Monday evening." Her only concern was the long, cold winters when there were no Slow Rolls in the city. "But then I always have something to look forward to. Something to carry me through the dark. You know, knowing that it all starts over again when spring arrives."

Her husband was with her that day, along with colleagues from his downtown lawyer's office.

"I have converted him," she said musingly, touching his arm with her fingers. "It took me about a year until he tried it. Now he can't get enough of it."

"It's true," her husband chimed in. "I'm hooked."

On the current occasion in Canfield, I waved to Rebecca, but neither of us tried to close the distance. We simply waved and smiled.

Starting

The start of the Slow Roll is difficult to pin down. There is no signal to tell you it is beginning. Instead, you have a vague sense that something has changed in front of you, but your sight is still blocked by the throng of people. There is a ripple of motion that travels down the line of participants. People ready themselves. They move so that they are standing with one foot on each side of their bicycle. They grab their handlebars with more of a sense of purpose. They stretch their necks upwards and to the sides, trying to see ahead. Some adjust their helmets if they have them. Others put their phones away, while others take them out and hold them up in the air, trying to record the moment. Almost unconsciously, my body began to mimic the bodies around me as I readied myself. Above the commotion I could hear voices shouting, "Slow Roll", to which the crowd responded, "Slow Roll" over and over again, as hundreds of bicycles started to inch forward.

The start was so slow that hardly anyone pedaled more than a few feet before stopping. Many people simply pushed their bicycles, ready to get into the saddle as soon as space opened up. They pedaled once or twice, only to stop a few moments later. Balancing on a bicycle can be difficult

at low speeds. Packed tightly together, there is rarely any room to avoid minor collisions. Yet, despite the tightness and speed of the start, I observed no accidents around me. Now and then someone bumped into another person, but this was mild, and no one fell as a result. Everyone seemed to be patient and careful with their fellow participants, making small, almost microscopic adjustments with their bodies, and altering their speed and direction in unison with others.

Rolling

A few blocks along 3rd Avenue, the distance between cyclists began to grow. Space opened up. People were now pedaling and riding at a leisurely pace. The heightened awareness which had been necessary at the start had now dissolved. Around me, people adopted more relaxed postures as we headed south through Midtown, making a right at Martin Luther King Boulevard.

Squad members in their yellow t-shirts were cycling alongside the main participants. They reminded the crowd to take it easy and to stay on the right side of the road. Many shouted words of encouragement, urging participants to talk, to socialize with one another, to take the opportunity to converse with someone they did not know.

During this part of the ride, a game of call and response developed. At Martin Luther King Boulevard, a man in front of me called out, "Slow Roll", and many responded accordingly. The man who had made the call was not satisfied with the intensity of the response and called again and again, until everyone was shouting back loudly, "Slow Roll!" Similarly, people called and responded when an obstacle or potential danger appeared. I faintly heard someone ahead of me shouting, "Hole". Other voices responded by repeating the call, shouting, "Hole". These calls and responses created a chain of communication which appeared to roll backward through the cluster of riders, until it was my turn to shout, "Hole", and then to hear my words echo behind me.

The further we rode down Martin Luther King Boulevard, the further the roll reached. Gaps emerged between groups of participants. As I looked ahead, and then back, I could see a long line of bodies moving. The Slow Roll reached as far as I could see. Whether by chance or design, many of the routes followed by Slow Roll involved loops, giving participants a sense of how large Slow Roll was. The scale of our collective mass filled me with a sense of wonder, and equally a sense of power. This latter sensation was exhilarating, even intoxicating. Taking part in Slow Roll, with

so many others alongside me that we were filling one of the largest boulevards in the city, gave me a sense of "us", and I felt like "the road was ours". For a brief moment this wide boulevard belonged to us.

As we approached West Grand Boulevard, I saw a raised fist at the front. The gesture traveled backward, mimicked by participants in the same way as the earlier calls and responses. A police car was parked by the sidewalk and an officer was standing in the middle of the road. When the riders in my cluster had stopped, the officer waved to the motorist at West Grand Boulevard to pass. This lasted for less than a minute. Many of the motorists honked at us as they passed, waving through their windows. Some of them shouted, "Slow Roll", to which participants responded, "Slow Roll".

As we passed the officer, almost every participant waved at him, and he waved back. I saw this interaction between riders and the police on several Slow Rolls. At certain points, riders would call out, "Thank you" or something similar as they passed the officers who were keeping the cars at bay. The police would often wave back and return the compliment. It was not uncommon to hear officers call out, "Slow Roll".

As the ride continued down West Grand Boulevard, past the long-abandoned Michigan Central Station, leaving New Detroit and the central city behind, the smell of marijuana became more and more noticeable. Blunts and joints that had previously been smoked with discretion, hidden halfway inside people's palms, now sat comfortably between their lips and were passed around openly between groups of riders. Others consumed alcohol in brown bags or even straight out of the bottle. The police were still there, but appeared to look the other way.

Moving down West Grand Boulevard and onto Vernor, I could see the people who lived there. Some families and households were standing on their porches, and others came rushing out of their houses as the ride approached. They were there to witness the Slow Roll pass by, to be entertained and amused by the cyclists, but also to interact with them. Many waved their hands and smiled happily. Others shouted out greetings and encouragement. Riders interacted too, sometimes in response to the bystanders' calls, sometimes pre-empting them with calls of their own. Between a moving mass of cyclists and a line of stationary residents, interactions bounced back and forth between strangers.

Interacting

As the Slow Roll exited Vernor and veered north, I began to interact with two participants who were riding alongside each other. One of them was

an Asian man in his thirties. He was riding a mountain bike with a tablet attached to the front of his steering wheel. Next to him was an older Black woman riding a brand-new, bright-pink cruiser bicycle with brown leather handles. She was wearing a helmet, and he was not. Her name was Janet, and he was called Michael.

As I joined them, they were talking about the neighborhood we were riding through, discussing who lived there, what it was called and what it had been like in the past. They had something in common. Janet lived in the suburb of Bloomfield where Michael had lived previously. Originally, Michael came from a place south of San Francisco, a place he assured me I had never heard of. He worked in the "tech industry", and I did not bother asking for a more detailed description. Janet was a stay-at-home mother who homeschooled her children while her husband ran a business. She and her husband had no "real ties" to the city, she explained. They had moved there in the late 1980s from South Carolina. For a decade they had lived in Royal Oak, before moving further north to a larger house with a spacious yard.

Michael had first settled in the suburb of Bloomfield based on what he had read and heard about the urban region, i.e., that the city was dangerous and should be avoided. Someone from work had told him about Slow Roll and it had made him curious. Now he lived in the city, not far from where I stayed. Janet asked him why he had moved, but she also preempted his answer, adding that he was young and that Bloomfield, which she thought was both good and bad, was more "family oriented".

"Yeah, it got a bit boring after a while," Michael admitted. "But the main thing, I think it was the main thing, was that I just did not know the city. Like, I had come down here now and then, with my car, to Downtown and Midtown, but outside of that …" His words trailed off, leaving his sentence unfinished.

"I hear you," Janet said, looking around the residential street full of narrow, worn-out bungalows, many with boarded up windows and roofs in need of repair and maintenance.

"I've never been here," she continued, waving back at the children of a Latino family barbequing in the warm glow of the evening sun.

"I would never ride here alone. I wouldn't even think of it," she continued, emphasizing the words *never* and *think*. She laughed and looked at Michael. "I wouldn't even want to drive through here."

We rolled on in silence, reflecting on Janet's words, looking around us at the street and being watched by people witnessing the Slow Roll from their lawns and porches.

After a while, Michael picked up the thread of the conversation he had lost. He said that he understood her because he understood himself. Slow Roll had played a part in changing his perceptions of the city. It had taken him around the city several times, and the experience had made him feel comfortable about exploring it on his own. He had enjoyed the interactions during his solo explorations, the short conversations with pedestrians and residents. At some point, he had realized that he could see himself living in Detroit, and a year later he had moved there.

I asked Janet if she thought Slow Roll had changed her.

"It has," she answered slowly and in a lower voice, then paused, as if she was unsure about how to arrange her answer. She then began telling us that she had studied psychology for a semester in her youth. She considered Slow Roll to have given her prolonged and repeated exposure to environments, people and situations she was unaccustomed to, ones she would normally avoid because she was afraid of them, whether this was rational or irrational.

"It is baby steps," she said. "One roll through one part of town, another roll through another part of town. It builds an experience that it is okay for me to be here, that it is safe, that nothing bad happens, only good things. After a while I think that begins to seep in, maybe change you. Like Michael said, you know, your perception of things. It's not like I would want to move here or anything, but I am pretty sure that the street we were on earlier, the one with all the Mexican stores..."

"Vernor," I said.

"… Yes, thank you. Thirty minutes ago, I didn't even know it existed. I'm not even sure I knew there was a Mexican part of Detroit. Well, maybe I've heard it somewhere, but I can't remember it now. Now I want to be the one to show it to my husband."

"Have you ever taken him with you on Slow Roll?" I asked.

"I have," she said, and looked me briefly in the eye. "Two times, but it's too crowded and too slow for him. I have gone with friends a couple of times too, but anyways, I enjoy going by myself a lot. It's easier to meet other people that way, people you wouldn't otherwise meet."

As we slowly approached the end of the race, at Canfield where it had begun, Michael dropped out to head back to the North End. Janet soon left too. She was parked on Cass Avenue, close to Grand Boulevard.

Finishing

Near Canfield, I caught up with Avery who was talking to a white man in his thirties. Moving closer, I saw it was Thomas, a man I had first met at a bar in Downtown a year earlier, then later at a Soup event, and then later at another Roll. Thomas was a newcomer to Detroit who had moved to the city from a small town in Connecticut in 2013 to pursue a business opportunity that had gone badly wrong. He had nevertheless remained in the city, finding other opportunities as time went on.

"We keep running into each other," I said as I pulled up beside them.

"You know this cat?" Avery said, looking at Thomas.

I had not been there at the start of their conversation, but when I joined it the topic of discussion was the police and Slow Roll. I already knew Thomas' opinion.

"All I'm saying is, what are they really needed for?" Thomas said, gesturing toward a police car. "We didn't need them before, and we don't need them now. The whole thing just becomes so …" but he trailed off, searching for the word, and finally settled on "organized".

"But it needs to be organized, right?" Avery said.

"Yeah," Thomas agreed. "But the whole thing, the Slow Roll, it just becomes so planned and artificial. It devolves into a tourist thing. It used to be organic, casual. Like just people on their bikes and you could go however you wanted to. It's the same thing with Critical Mass. You used to be able to ride to the front, take charge, and redirect the ride somewhere else. Block off an intersection, go up on the freeway, that sort of thing."

"The freeway?" Avery said, shaking his head. "I ain't going on no freeway, man, even if I had a faster engine."

"Don't you think more people participate the way things are now?" I asked Thomas.

"Yeah, they do, but that might not be a good thing in itself. Things can become too safe, too organized, too much like Disneyland. It just loses its spontaneity. It doesn't feel organic."

"Nah, I think that's a good thing," replied Avery. "The more, the better. I wish the whole city, everyone, including the suburbs, would come down here on Mondays and ride their bikes. That would be great for the city. And you're still here, buddy. I see you riding with the rest of us."

Thomas laughed. "Yep, yeah, you're right," he said. "It beats sitting at home doing nothing."

Looking at his watch, Avery spun up the engine and accelerated quickly, going north on 3rd Avenue to his night shift at the boiler room.

There was still a festive atmosphere around Canfield where the event had begun two hours earlier. The evening sun was slipping beneath the

horizon, and in the growing darkness, lights from spinning wheels glowed ever more brightly. Music was playing: techno tunes, the heavy bass from a hip-hop beat, and gliding past us on 3rd Avenue, a middle-aged white man was attempting to outdo Aretha, rolling forward, making a turn, then rolling back up again, singing the tunes of Motown at the top of his voice. Groups of riders were standing by their bicycles, or sitting down on the curb, chatting, drinking and smoking. Others were making their way to their cars, hitching up their bicycles for that final ride home, and honking their horns in salute to the riders still standing around where it had all begun.

I stuck around Canfield with Thomas, sharing some warm beers that he had brought. All of the adjacent brew pubs were packed. Sitting outside the Shinola store, Thomas brought up the topic of Slow Roll once again. This time he was criticizing the rule, introduced for that season, that riders needed to register with the organization before taking part in the ride. It was bureaucracy to him, wholly unnecessary, and it made the Roll feel less authentic, dulling whatever radical edge he had once found in it a few years ago. It was as though he was thinking aloud, seeing in the evolution of Slow Roll the evolution of the city itself, suggesting the broader tendencies and the direction in which they were heading. To Thomas, the city was dying. It was quickly transforming into something else, something designed from above rather than below. The anarchic, disorderly and creative world he had found in 2013 would soon be a lost paradise, if it had not reached this point already.

As we left Canfield, Thomas went south and I headed north. There was still a handful of people around, but most had either moved on, perhaps to go home, or into a bar or restaurant nearby. Passing Milwaukee, I thought of Avery in the boiler room, of the distance between the interpretations of Slow Roll Thomas and Avery had given, though the event itself had brought them into contact with each other. I thought of Rebecca and Janet who had both seen it as a form of therapy, albeit from differing angles, and of Michael, who had joined the ride out of a sense of curiosity, but had ended up trading Bloomfield Hills for the North End.

The morning after, I biked to Canfield before breakfast. I had an urge to recapture something, perhaps a feeling of Slow Roll, or the faint echo of one, but this was just an ordinary Tuesday. Nothing from the day before lingered in the space. No markings remained. Even the refuse, which would have been an insignificant but material relic of the previous night, had been cleared from Canfield. If Slow Roll had been a rupture in the everyday rhythms of Detroit, the humdrum and commonplace harmonies of the city had once again been reasserted.

The inevitable "return to normal", as I saw it the morning after, told of the transient qualities of Slow Roll as a movement and as an experience. People, voices and conversations had mixed and separated during the event. Even though I am sure that there were people who formed deep and lasting bonds through the event, many of those I met treated it as an opportunity to encounter, in body and mind, strangers that would probably remain strangers. It was a short period of time where they could share both superficial and deep conversations about the city and its comeback at that moment, and once the moment rolled on, they rolled on, and so did I.

The embodied space of Slow Roll and comeback

Given the character of Slow Roll, the ritualized event is particularly apt for conceptualizing the body as a moving spatial field, and at the same time considering how affects and emotions afford particular embodiments of Slow Roll, Detroit and comeback.

This line of inquiry begins by noting how each Slow Roll is organized in a circular fashion. The start and finish of a given Slow Roll are always the same, and in between the start and finish, participants always travel in a loop through the city. In all of the events in which I participated, the beginning and end of this circle were in the central parts of the city, areas discussed in chapter 5 as New Detroit. Similarly, the "loop through the city" that followed the start would always take participants into neighborhoods that were peripheral to New Detroit.

Due to the long economic and demographic decline of Detroit, examined in chapter 2, and the recent return of wealth and whites to the city's center, explored in chapter 5, these "loops" inevitably traverse a geography of contrasts. The ride moves participants through areas characterized by both intense investment and development and intense disinvestment and decline. In terms of cosmology, the ride traverses and moves participants through a geography that, as a result of the city's comeback, has become ever more contested. Importantly, the ride facilitates its own analogy to comeback by starting in a space of prosperity and development, moving through decline and impoverishment, and finally "returning" to the prosperity and development in which it started. Through their bodies and through the motion, participants interact with the changing spaces around them, while simultaneously embodying particular qualities in relation to these changes.

One such quality is that of comeback itself, and how this quality is manifest in the event and its participants. As discussed in previous chapters,

there are strong associations made in Detroit between the city's decline and the decline of "people in the streets". Conversely there are strong associations between an increase in "people in the streets" and ideas about comeback, where crowds can easily be interpreted as a form of return of urban public life. During Slow Roll, members of the Squad, in tandem with the police, actively concentrated participants into a very densely packed crowd of people. Although this was motivated by organizers for practical reasons, producing a crowd in this way has effects that are both highly symbolic and affective in Detroit.

Furthermore, the event is structured to afford a relatively long period of waiting before the ride actually begins. During this period of waiting participants are able to experience, observe and interact with other participants without having to balance, pedal and avoid obstacles at the same time. The diversity of participants is very visible, expressed not only in the different groups of people who attend, but also in the event's material culture, in the specialized and customized bicycles on display, and through its sounds, as different genres of music from a variety of sources mix and separate.

Waiting can embody both "diversity" and "community", often described by interlocutors as "feelings of togetherness". "Diversity" and "community" are powerful words in Detroit, often indicating a "social good", the legitimacy of which can inform diametrically opposed visions of comeback and New Detroit, as seen in chapter 6. From both historical and cosmological experience, Detroiters relish the opportunity for "feelings of togetherness". Furthermore, experiencing "diversity" and "community" at the same time can often be difficult at the level of practice. The experiential dimension of "diversity" in Detroit tended to be informed by difference, whereas the experience of "community" tended to be informed by recognition of common characteristics. It is this gap between similarity and difference which is bridged by "feelings of togetherness", as "diversity" and "community" become fused in bodily experience.

Waiting thus provides powerful experiences for participants who belong to different and often divided communities. Waiting to "start" offers a visual feast where "diversity" and "community" are experienced simultaneously, without the tensions that otherwise persist between an experience of difference and an experience of similarity. These abstractions, useful for analysis, do not exist in real situations. In terms of how it is enacted, Slow Roll is not a cerebral affair. It does not offer an intellectual exercise in overcoming division, but instead a bodily and sensory experience, a "feeling of togetherness" which emanates from doing something together with others.

When waiting gives way to the start of the Slow Roll, bodily interaction comes into play. To avoid collision and injury, participants constantly adapt and adjust themselves to the participants around them. The slow pace demands a heightened sense of awareness. Participants are constantly forced to judge their speed and direction in relation to other participants and places, in situations where they become dependent on the speed and direction of those around them. When they start the Slow Roll, participants embody qualities of patience, tolerance and care. They move in unison, not unlike a great school of fish.

This bodily performance depends on, and solidifies trust in others and in the community of riders. Importantly, trust is constantly tested through the motions of cyclists, but it is also constantly reaffirmed, since accidents and injuries are so rare.

After the starting line has been crossed, Slow Roll enters a sequence which takes it in a loop out of New Detroit and into the city's neighborhoods. During this sequence, the ride affords experiences of how the "community" has become extended spatially. These are reinforced by the routes taken, which tend to include points that make it easier for a participant to gage the scale of the Slow Roll. Participants visibly stretch across large boulevards and can witness how the event alters the everyday operations of fundamental urban infrastructures. The event affords sensations of empowerment in that it asserts authority over roads by way of action. I argue that this sense of empowerment is not fundamentally about the bicycle temporarily overpowering the car. Instead, it is about how a "diverse community" projects itself across large swaths of public space.

The diverse community's right to Detroit is affirmed by the actions of the police when they manage traffic and mediate between motorists and participants. It is also affirmed in the actions of motorists in that the vast majority voice their support for the event. Although some motorists react negatively, there are no general or overarching situations of disagreement between motorists and participants. Instead, cyclists, motorists and the police *share* the city at the level of experience. The presence of visibly illicit behaviors and the passivity displayed by law enforcement further add to the experience that the city is *shared*, and that the community of participants has a right to share the city without conflict.

The last sequence, when the Slow Roll ends, is characterized by a festive ambience, with music playing and people conversing, smoking and drinking in the street and on the sidewalk. However, the ending could not be considered a climax to the experience. Participants "ease out" of the event even before they reach the finish line, and most of those who make it to the finish line do not wait around for long. Acts of socializing, at the end of

the event and afterwards, tend to migrate to particular places, bars and restaurants in the immediate vicinity, which become livelier with more and more customers. The experience of community, diversity and empowerment within the event dissolves in increments, rather than being disbanded all at once. Participants return slowly to a more "normal" state of affairs.

I would argue that Slow Roll affords participants experiences of comeback grounded in their bodies. First, the spatial field of participants comes to traverse both New Detroit and neighborhoods around it, moving and embodying a geography of contrasts and contestations which play a central role in the city's contemporary comeback. They do so by manifesting a "diverse community", characterized by individuals who are patient, tolerant and careful toward others. This "diverse community" is then spatially extended across the public space of Detroit, its roads and avenues, where they peacefully share the city with others, such as cars, residents and notably the city's law enforcement. In this way, participants assert through the event that the often divided groups within Detroit are simultaneously part of a "diverse community". This community can facilitate a return, a mixing of the urban and suburban, grounded in performances of sharing, tolerance and care. Importantly, this is not primarily a process involving symbolism or discourse. To return to Stewart's (2007: 2, italics in original) understanding of affect, Slow Roll "catch[es] people up in something that feels like *some*thing". Through Slow Roll, Detroiters come to embody their city and some of its ongoing transformations. As emphasized here and in the introduction, I do not consider Slow Roll to be either an affirmation or an inversion of the social order. It is not a ritual in that sense, but it is nevertheless a ritualized event, capable of facilitating and disseminating experiences of how the city is already transforming.

Making sense out of experience

This section turns from embodiment to questions of interpretations, because participants are not simply vessels who experience the event through their physical senses. They are equally meaning-makers, concerned with making sense out of their bodily experiences.

Participants interpreted the event differently, and gave a variety of motives for participating in it. During and after the event, participants would often engage in "reading" Slow Roll, seeking to explain it both to themselves and to others. Through reflection, interpretation and discourse, participants were building a body of knowledge about the event. They were

finding ways of ordering the "whats and whys" of Slow Roll. This engagement with meaning adds a recursive and reciprocal element to the experiences afforded by the event. Not only does experience come to shape participants' understanding of it, but this understanding also influences the ways in which the event is ultimately experienced.

Although I heard idiosyncratic interpretations of the event, I am concerned with interpretations that were more stable and shared, and how these formed a pattern in terms of the reflexive labor of understanding the event. These patterns can, in turn, be systematized into two groups as a way of organizing and presenting the material, even though these "groups" overlap in practice and are by no means mutually exclusive.

The most common group tended to articulate how the event and their reasons for participating were informed by notions of "fun". When participants were asked to define "fun", they responded with a tautology. Since Slow Roll was fun for Detroiters, they were participating in it because it was fun. In this case, "fun" meant something enjoyable, to a person's liking, which gave a person delight or pleasure or made them happy. Importantly, Slow Roll gave Detroiters an opportunity to socialize, both with people they knew and with people they did not know. "Other people" was thus a common answer to what this fun was about. Avery's reaction to the scenes he encountered at his first Slow Roll, its display of "diversity" and "community", was that "everyone is here, like everyone in one place". In short, he considered it *fun*. He took delight in the scene. It made him happy.

The second set of stable interpretations stressed representations of "healing" and "therapy" in making sense of the experience. Although there are differences between "healing" and "therapy", both articulations drew on and emphasized the notion of "habituation". The "healing" or "therapy" of the event operated by exposing and familiarizing participants with Detroit. A case in point was Rebecca, who construed the event as something which sought to mend the divisions of the region. To her, the event exercised a healing force, fixing what she saw as "broken". I met several participants who, like Rebecca, described their experiences of Slow Roll as a form of therapy, where participation simultaneously sought to cure the region and the participants themselves.

Others, like Janet, interpreted the event through a lens of cognitive behavioral therapy. To her, the fears and stigmas associated with Detroit were, over time, "treated" by the event and participation in it. The very act of riding through places a participant would normally avoid out of concerns for safety was understood as offering novel ways of processing information about urban space. This ultimately helped participants acquire new mechanisms for coping with Detroit and their potential fears of the city. For this

group, participation had didactic qualities. It taught participants in a hands-on way that their presence in the public spaces of Detroit did not constitute a threat to their person. For Janet, as for other participants, the event was commonly framed as a form of "nudge", or opening, toward further exploration. Commonly, there was a sense of the future, in that they would return to this or that place which had piqued their interest or curiosity during the event, or even that they had already returned to it. The fact that they had been somewhere in the city during Slow Roll was articulated as influencing future decisions to return, more often than not in the company of someone else who had not yet experienced a particular spot in the city.

Thus, "habituation" was construed as transforming the thoughts, beliefs and attitudes a participant held toward the city. This transformation was, in turn, articulated as creating a chain of actions which could eventually culminate in a participant becoming part of Detroit. This type of transformation was at the heart of the way Michael articulated Slow Roll, and although he acknowledged other factors, he emphasized the role of the event. For some, "habituation" manifested itself in moving to the city from a suburb or even from another part of Michigan or the country. For most, however, "habituation" meant spending more time in Detroit, exploring other events and neighborhoods, and becoming more cognizant of the opportunities the city offered without necessarily becoming a resident. To varying degrees, "habituation" was something that brought people closer to the city.

The interpretation that Slow Roll afforded a form of "habituation" to Detroit was not only expressed by those who positioned their own experience in these terms. Participants who were there to have "fun" sometimes suggested that the event served as a form of "habituation" for others, generally speaking "outsiders", "suburbanites" and other types of sociological stranger. Identifying "habituation" as an important aspect of Slow Roll was thus a common practice in participants who sought to evaluate the event as a whole. "Fun" was nevertheless the most common way of making sense of Slow Roll as an individual experience.

Going back to the introduction, the way in which participants made sense of their experiences highlights an important dynamic. Slow Roll certainly has affective qualities, in so far as it foregrounds "bodily capacities to affect and be affected" (Clough 2007: 2). Although my discussion forces me to dress affect in words, thereby producing representations of it, it is not a primarily a discursive or representational force. Instead, it is a force that is felt and experienced through the body. This non-representational force is nevertheless made meaningful through discourses that codify the

force as emotions and thoughts at the event, in "feelings of togetherness", "fun" or "habituation".

Importantly, participants are not passive receptacles in which the spaces of Slow Roll and comeback are embodied. Going back to the discussion about ritualized events, and the fact that their relative autonomy sets up "alternative worlds that generate alternative worlds to act on themselves" (Handelman 1998: XXVIII), I would argue that Slow Roll establishes a reflexive space in which participants can ultimately interact with that which they embody. It is through this reflexive space that participants can generate something novel, not necessarily in the material and physical city but in the space which they embody.

Comeback and gentrification on a bike

Slow Roll articulates notions of the "good city" (Amin 2006) by emphasizing urban solidarity, an appreciation of difference, tolerance and care, an opportunity for convivial interaction with strangers and forms of public enjoyment which do not involve money. At the level of practice, Slow Roll integrates suburb and city, effectively joining social groups who might otherwise be removed from one another, and are often in opposition to one another.

On the other hand, despite its apparent intrinsic "goodness", Slow Roll is not unproblematic. Even where Slow Roll appears to be doing something positive for the city, this does not take place in a vacuum. Its effects play out in a political and economic context of which many participants were intimately aware. In making sense of Slow Roll, participants would inevitably draw on their experiences of the event, but also on their experiences of the city and its contemporary comeback. In this way, they were engaging with, and drawing on themes which normally generated tension and dissenting ways of understanding what was happening. In practice, talking about Slow Roll could never be completely separated from talking about the city and its comeback, for which the event itself had become a powerful symbol.

This is illustrated by notions of "habituation" expressed at the event. On the one hand, "habituation" was articulated as necessary and integral to the city's comeback because it promised to "cure", or alleviate, the symptoms of decline and division.

On the other hand, could this "cure" potentially be worse than the "disease"? Since fears of Detroit, whether real or imagined, kept gentrification and suburban interests at bay in the past, "habituation" could potentially

have adverse consequences for current residents of the city. When the ritualized event is successful in achieving its own aim, to show the city in a different light, it inevitably begins to interact with the wider comeback of Detroit. If Slow Roll results in increased proximity, as in the case of Janet, Rebecca or Michael, then it must be a form of gentrification on a bike. In mending some of the region's divisions, the event also advances others, not by design or intention, but through externalities and chains of effect that go beyond the event itself.

Some of these tensions can be gauged in the conversation between Avery and Thomas, where they were both grappling with the role of the police and the increasing bureaucracy of the event. These were common issues of contention among interlocutors during my time in the city.

The disagreement centered on whether the police should be involved in Slow Roll or not. Avery argued that the police should be a part of Slow Roll and Thomas that they should not. Although the issue may seem concrete ("Should the police be there or not?"), their disagreement extends to issues of power within the city and the event.

On the one hand, a ride with too much freedom would not draw as many participants as one that was ordered and organized. A more anarchic, or disorderly, event would not appeal to participants coming from diverse backgrounds and dispositions within the metropolitan region. To be a mass phenomenon, Slow Roll could not be unpredictable, nor could it be potentially dangerous.

On the other hand, the level of organization could be construed as antithetical to both the sense of community and the sense of power experienced by participants. The inability of a rider to redirect the event articulated a criticism of the lack of power in the community of participants. With too much order, Slow Roll risked becoming an inauthentic experience of power and community. Safety could be seen as the antithesis of what Slow Roll was perceived to be about, in the sense that community, diversity and power cannot be safe and authentic at the same time. Removing the potential for disaster, nuisance and even injury could "sanitize" Slow Roll.

The tensions between these interpretations of Slow Roll mirror concerns in terms of other aspects of comeback. The tensions between order and freedom, or between the authentic and inauthentic, also emerge within the region's cosmology, and in understandings and struggles over both the space and time of comeback.

The novel aspect does not lie in the fact that these tensions exist, but that the event brings them into play through concrete experiences. People like Thomas, Avery and many others consistently meet and interact around these wider issues of comeback through the specificities of the ritualized

event. As well as allowing the embodiment of comeback and a reflexive space where participants can interact with this embodiment, Slow Roll also offers participants a way into wider moral issues associated with comeback.

Ending Slow Roll

This elaboration of Slow Roll has sought to discuss the different aspects involved in the ritualized event, how they connect to one another and how they relate to larger transformations of the city. Analyzing how the event is sequenced and structured helps understand how it produces particular affects in participants, which are then codified into emotions and experiences such as "feelings of togetherness", patience, tolerance, "fun" or "habituation". The chapter has demonstrated how the ritualized event integrates various groups within the metropolitan region, and how this integration can be seen in both the bodily and verbal interactions taking place at the event. Participants seek to make sense of the experiences the event affords them by subjecting these experiences to a variety of interpretations. Some of the recurring and stable interpretations eventually clash in moments of contention, where participants disagree on how to make sense of the event and their participation. In deliberating on the meaning of Slow Roll in relation to how Detroit is changing, participants are approaching the city's comeback through a lens of concrete experiences. Thus, the ritualized event of Slow Roll offers its participants both an experiential "way out" of a divided city, and an experiential "way in" to divisions.

Slow Roll Detroit, as well as Detroit Soup which will be explored in the following chapter, have emerged since 2010. Both have spread far beyond the city of Detroit, and both have evolved from being small-scale, spontaneous affairs to something larger. I have argued that, during this same decade, the city of Detroit and the metropolitan region have experienced a form of economic, spatial and demographic transformation that had been unimaginable in previous decades.

The correlation in time between the emergence of these ritualized events and the larger transformations of the city could be coincidental. It would be difficult to provide concrete "proof" for or against this, but the evidence set out in this thesis suggests that they are not coincidental. I see them as related because these events represent instances of people's collective efforts, often with an element of humor, to change the city and at the same time to come to terms with a city that is changing.

The global spread of these events could possibly discredit this argument. If both Slow Roll and Detroit Soup are related to the circumstances of division and transformation in Detroit, why are they also found in other corners of the world?

It could be that these events are meaningful to participants elsewhere, but in ways that are different to how Detroiters see them. It could also be the case that there are many other urban locations around the world struggling with fundamentally similar issues, brought about by similar forces. Many cities have their own version of a "tale of two cities", their own sets of divisions to relate to, and their own groups of residents who wish to claim public space for the experience of both "community" and "diversity". These may also be taking place within a context of urban transformation driven by deindustrialization, suburbanization, austerity and gentrification.

What difference does this actually make in reality?

Although the events can give participants powerful experiences, which some claim have changed them personally, change is difficult to substantiate. People riding in Slow Roll do not emerge as totally different people at the end of each event. Where both individuals and collectives are concerned, urban change is an incremental process, the result of which tends to become noticeable over time.

Importantly, I do not consider Slow Role to be offering an alternative Detroit. In other words, the experience does not fundamentally suggest that the city could be different. It suggests instead that the city *is* different. It represents Detroit as it is, not as it could be. Detroit is also a space where people can share and experience "togetherness", or engage with the police without the police chasing them.

Some participants were not deeply affected by these experiences, but others carried them forward, unfolding them across future events and situations which could be entirely unrelated to Slow Roll. The effects of the event on Detroit are not yet clear. Change of this kind operates like ripples across the social environment, like waves across water, bouncing and echoing against other waves, not unlike a roll, a very slow roll perhaps, which fades and comes back again.

$5 for soup, bread and a vote

> The day after I won, I quit my day job. Once I knew that I had the
> support of the community, I knew that this is what I wanted to spend
> my time doing, and that I could spend my time doing it.
>> Ricky, white newcomer, and former winner of Soup

> Good times man, all good times, good people and good food too.
>> Drew, white suburbanite and "avid Soup-goer"

*Sections of the ethnography in this chapter have already been published
(Johansson 2021) as part of an anthology exploring emergent urban
spaces and how urban change can flow from the margins. Although some
issues overlap between the texts, I make use of the ethnography differently
here, advancing other lines of reasoning which focus more heavily on
comeback.*

As I have argued in preceding chapters, the contemporary comeback of
Detroit has brought to the fore questions of who has a right to the city. The
tensions contained in this question, and in its different answers, feed into
questions about the city's future, the spaces and places of New Detroit, and
the moral ambiguities embodied in white newcomers.

Having a right to the city entails having a right to change the city and to
alter its course, but it also entails, as Harvey remarks (2008: 1), "the right
to change ourselves by changing the city". The affinity between changing
the city and people changing themselves returns to the tensions between
the production and construction of space discussed in the introduction.
Changing the city that is external to them in order to change the one inside
them brings forth the embodied qualities of space and the interactions be-
tween the city around them, as well as the city they carry in their thoughts,
emotions and movements.

This chapter examines this notion of urban change as both internal and
external, located within people's embodiment of comeback, and how this
embodiment seeks to alter both the city "out there" and the city "in here".
To this end, the chapter involves the ethnography and analysis of a

ritualized event which had become popular during the period of rapid transformation in Detroit. This event is known as Detroit Soup, and takes the form of a community dinner that collects donations and offers project pitches that seek to improve the city. Those who participate are allowed to vote on projects they prefer, and the winning project receives all the donations.

Returning to discussions in the introduction involving ritualized events and the role of affects and emotions, I wish to highlight two guiding conceptualizations.

First, ritualized events have a degree of autonomy vis-à-vis surrounding and more permeating ways of ordering the city. They should not be treated as "standard" rituals that either reinforce or invert these ways of ordering, nor should they be considered either a "model of" society or a "model for" society. Instead, ritualized events set up an alternative microcosm that comes to embody not a Detroit that could be different, or should be different, but one that is already *different*.

Second, to understand this alternative microcosm and the ways in which it is embodied, it is important to focus on the affects that this ritualized event stirs in the bodies of participants. As outlined in previous chapters, what individuals and groups "feel", and are conditioned to "feel", in relation to their urban environment is important in understanding both the symbolic and material qualities of comeback. To borrow from Thrift (2004: 57), and consider comeback to be "roiling maelstroms of affect" in Detroit, Soup is not unlike a vortex within this maelstrom. It makes people feel good, excited and involved in the city's transformations. Although a quick glance at Soup might lead an observer to conclude that it is mainly about generating and distributing money, I argue that Soup is mainly about generating and distributing feelings of hope, passion and empowerment. The purpose of my ethnography and analysis is to highlight how the event encourages these experiences through material, performative and discursive labor. This chapter will detail my observations and experiences of how Soup embodies these particular emotions. The purpose of this chapter is to examine what makes Soup "work", how it affords these experiences and how the "work" that Soup does relates to Detroit's comeback.

The chapter begins by briefly introducing and framing Soup as a phenomenon which has emerged and been replicated within Detroit and beyond. It then provides an ethnographic description of the event, centered on how it is experienced in its own context. This is followed by an analysis of how the event provides affective experiences that relate to "comeback".

The first part of the analysis discusses the emotions generated and disseminated at the event. This discussion begins by examining how

"authenticity" is produced through the use of esthetics and performances. The focus then turns to how a passion for change is shared and disseminated among participants through performance, and how a sense of community emerges through food and eating. The second part of the analysis focuses on how legitimacy is produced within the event. Soup offers forms of direct intervention vis-à-vis the city's spatial and cultural fabric, and those who gather there are given the opportunity to influence the city's transformation. This raises questions of power, and the circumstances under which a select group of people, many of whom are newcomers or "outsiders", can claim a moral right to the city. This part discusses how legitimacy builds on a discourse of "need", and how it is managed through notions of "community" and "democracy", thereby articulating forms of morality around the city's comeback.

The emergence and evolution of Soup

Detroit Soup started in 2010 as a small-scale, experimental one-off event. An artist had experienced a community fundraising dinner in Chicago, and had wanted to try something similar in Detroit. Along with friends, she organized the city's first Soup event in a storage room above a Mexican bakery in southwest Detroit. The event aimed to fund art projects in Detroit, while simultaneously empowering and connecting artists and their practices to a wider urban community.

The concept of Soup grew to encompass other projects, branching out to include the fields of social justice, social entrepreneurship and urban agriculture. Importantly, the event has spawned other, localized, iterations. Within the city, there is now a plethora of so-called "neighborhood Soups", which function like the original but within a more circumscribed geographic area.

In a similar way to Slow Roll, Detroit Soup has spread across the nation and the world, but has done so as a technique rather than an organization. As of 2018, there were 63 active Soups in the U.S., 79 in the United Kingdom and another 15 in the rest of Europe. Others can be found in Africa, Asia, Australia and in South America (Soup 2018). The organizers of Detroit Soup provide guidelines for those who wish to organize an event, encouraging organizers to "Use it until you don't need it anymore. Recycle it or give it away. Write your own guide" (Soup 2015: 4). There is no licensing, branding or intellectual property associated with Detroit Soup. Anyone, anywhere, can start their own event, make their own rules, and call it Soup.

This chapter focuses on the so-called city-wide Soup event. These events are larger in scale than their neighborhood counterparts, regularly bringing together hundreds of people. The city-wide Soup also tends to collect and distribute larger amounts of money than neighborhood Soups, and the projects that seek funding tend to address issues which are less confined to a specific neighborhood.

Like Slow Roll, Detroit Soup has transitioned from being a relatively small-scale gathering, largely drawing participants from the organizers' social networks, to becoming more structured and more popular within the metropolitan region. The event mixes and combines elements that are emerging elsewhere and on their own. Soup is a community dinner, but it is also a form of micro-granting and crowdfunding, while parts of its format resemble television shows where participants pitch their business ideas to a group of investors.

Arriving

It was a Sunday in January 2015. I was walking to Soup in the company of a neighbor, Martin. As we approached The Jam Handy, a building on East Grand Boulevard, we started seeing people entering the building, others looking for spaces to park, and a few standing outside the entrance, smoking hurriedly in the cold, engaged in conversations.

At the entrance, two women were sitting behind a tiny table with a stainless-steel pot half-full of bills. We were told that the recommended donation was five dollars, but could see that many were giving much more. A murmur of voices filled the main space of the event. It was a large, open room with brown wood flooring and brick walls. Some of the walls were exposed, while others had beige and gray coating darkened by age in places, and in other places this was peeling off completely. The ambience was a mix of industry and theater. There was a high ceiling with wooden walking bridges above the light fixtures. In the middle, to the far side of the entrance, was a microphone stand. In front of the microphone there were people sitting directly on the floor, or on the pillows and mats they had brought along. Some had also brought their own garden loungers and placed them in the middle of the room. To the side, there were long tables covered in black cloth where loaves of bread were lying untouched. Beside the stage, toward the corner of the large room, was a small bar selling beer and wine, and next to this was the voting booth.

Martin and I found a bleacher toward the back. Cameramen were walking through the crowds, filming from various angles. A middle-aged Black

woman sitting in the row behind us leaned forward and told us that they were from the BBC, shooting a documentary about Soup[67]. I could see that this was a well-attended Soup. There were already over a hundred people in the room, the murmur of their voices growing louder. From the bleacher, I observed a room full of interactions. Almost everyone seemed to be talking to someone.

Soup participants tended to describe the crowd as "diverse". I could see millennials and middle-aged people, senior citizens, children and infants. There were suburbanites, "lifelong Detroiters", newcomers, visitors and tourists. Different races, ethnicities and nationalities were present at Soup. Some seemed to come from privileged economic positions, and some did not. I met artists, activists, social entrepreneurs, teachers, doctors, bus drivers, security guards, farmers, programmers, engineers, servers and janitors at Soup. Despite this perceived "diversity", the group consisting of white people in their twenties and thirties was usually the largest. Although it would not be fair to reduce Soup to a "newcomer event", it was nevertheless an occasion involving considerable numbers of whites and newcomers.

The physical design of the place, involving the arrangement of chairs and tables, brought these different individuals and groups closer together. They rubbed against each other, hearing the conversations of others, interjecting in these conversations, introducing themselves, asking questions or making comments. There was a relaxed social ambience at Soup.

At some point, I got up from the bleacher to buy beers. As I waited in line, I studied the adjacent message board. On it, people had listed the projects they were working on, or would like to work on, and what they needed and currently lacked in order to put them into operation. At the other end of the message board, people had written down the skills and resources they could offer others. For example, I could see that someone wanted to clean up a vacant lot, but that they had no power tools. Next to this, someone had written the contact information for "Lots of Love Detroit", a previous winner of Soup who operated a mobile tool shed out of a retrofitted ice-cream truck.

Introductions

The murmur of voices receded. A white woman came onto the stage. She was wearing glasses with large, square, black frames, and a flannel shirt

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[67] It was aired a few months after the event, in March 2015, under the title "Can soup change the world?" (Fenton-Smith 2015).

and dark jeans. People applauded and whistled as she approached the microphone. She addressed the audience. Her style was cheerful and quirky, like a motivational speaker who had been to art school.

"Hello. Hi. Welcome, welcome, welcome. I'm gonna grab your attention. Sit down, get comfortable. So welcome to Detroit Soup. Hello. My name is Amy Kaherl. I'm the Executive Director of Detroit Soup. Is this loud enough, can everybody hear me?" she asked, lowering her voice. "And if I talk like this can you hear?" People cheered and she lowered her voice even further. "And if I talk like that can you hear? Okay. So. Real quick. For how many of you is this your first time at Detroit Soup?" The audience cheered and many raised their hands.

"Hi," Amy responded, waving her hand at the audience. "Detroit Soup was started in February 2010. Over the last five years we have raised 84,617 dollars and 76 cents. From Detroiters to Detroiters". The positive response that bubbled up from the audience, its cheers, whistles and claps, almost seemed to take her by surprise, making her pause for a moment and smile. Then she exclaimed, "This is really great".

Amy explained how Soup worked and what was about to take place. We were about to hear four sets of presentations, each four minutes long. Presenters were not allowed to use any technology that required electricity, meaning no PowerPoints or videos. After each presentation, the "community" was allowed to ask the presenter four questions. When the presentations were over, everyone moved into an adjoining room to help themselves to food for the communal dinner which then ensued. Following this, the audience cast their votes for the project they thought was best and most deserving of funding. Everyone had one vote.

Since no one was checking on participants, Amy explained that Soup relied on an honor system, trusting them to behave honestly and not cast multiple votes. Whoever received the most votes took all the entrance money collected at Soup. The winner took all. There was no bureaucracy or red tape. They would simply be handed an envelope with cash at the end, together with the community's trust that the money would be spent wisely. Later on, the winner would be invited back to share the achievements of their project. Past winners also selected the project proposals which would be given the chance to present at future Soups.

Amy's talk was brief, part explanatory, part building up the excitement for what was to come. She stressed a few points, all of them related to interactions between participants. Echoing the Slow Roll Squad, she emphasized that Soup was a social space and encouraged people to "talk with someone they [did not] know, someone they might not otherwise have talked to". She suggested ice-breakers to get the ball rolling. "If you don't

know what to say you can just ask them, like hey, what project did you think was the best? And ask them why".

Her presentation framed Soup as a place and an event where people could "connect", where they could be exposed to "difference" and "diversity", where they could discover new ways of collaborating, and new people to "collaborate" with. She relayed how Soup was an opportunity for people to share in an experience of the city, where they could form collective responses to issues they themselves had identified.

Presentations, questions and answers

The projects seeking funding that evening were the Tricycle Collective, the Detroit Little Library, the Bike Detroit Log Cabin Farm and the Spiritual House Outreach.

The Bike Detroit Log Cabin Farm project was presented by two white, middle-aged men, one a landscape architect. They briefly introduced Bike Detroit as an organization that facilitated bike rides through the city, aimed at allowing participants to discover the beauty of the city and to transform people's prejudices and stereotypes about Detroit. The project in question centered on Palmer Park, a large public park on the western side of Woodward. The group was seeking to restore the park's historic log cabin, and to establish an urban farm around it. One part of the project aimed to restore a public space that had long been neglected by the municipality. The other part was about ecological, technological and social sustainability. They argued that establishing a farm would mitigate recurring water entrapment problems in the park, which had already led to the deaths of several trees. They suggested that it would also provide healthy sustenance for local residents, improving their access to fresh and affordable produce.

The presenter of the Detroit Little Library project was a white, middle-aged woman from Ferndale, a suburb just north of 8th mile. She was the founder of the organization Detroit Little Library, a regional offshoot of a micro-library movement that was sweeping across America at the time. Originally inspired by micro-libraries in Portland, Oregon, the Little Library movement had produced and installed structures to house and facilitate public book exchange, where people could take and deposit books free of charge. These structures often came in the form of a tiny house, with a roof and walls around it, and an open space in the front where the books were stored. With the assistance of the organization, volunteers produced and located these structures in their own neighborhoods or in places deemed in need of a book exchange. The presenter noted how literacy and

access to books were abysmal in the city of Detroit, and that many school libraries, and public libraries, had been systematically impoverished, or abandoned over time, leaving residents in a disadvantaged position. In a city where people espoused values associated with a DIY culture, building and erecting the Little Libraries had proved easy. The project was asking for funds to buy books to stock the exchanges, specifically children's books written by Black authors which focused on stories involving Black children.

A middle-aged Black man presented his plans for improving the situation for young people and the city's homeless. This was the Spiritual House Outreach project, which was seeking to provide a space where people could learn to read and write, a space where the homeless and the young could be during the day. The presenter had previously won two Soups, one for a project to clean up Detroit by direct action, where residents took to the streets to remove debris and trash. He informed participants that he already had a space for the Spiritual House Outreach, a building he had rented for just $250 a month. A neighbor had donated a stove for heating, while a local Catholic group had donated three computers. The presenter quoted statistics to show that over 40% of Detroiters were functionally illiterate, and he told his own story about how he had learned to read and write at the age of 22 with the help of a charity foundation. Now he was asking for the community's support to pass the gift of literacy on.

Finally, the Tricycle Collective was proposing a project to address the ongoing foreclosure crisis in Detroit. The presenter and founder was a white woman in her thirties with a law degree. She explained the foreclosure crisis and the stakes involved, not just for those facing eviction, but for the community at large. Her argument was that a house in Detroit became a target for "gutting"[68] shortly after it was abandoned, thus making it difficult to bring it "back" to its original shape. Abandonment was thus fueling an expanding process of blight which was ultimately leading to the destruction of housing. She argued that, coupled with the multitude of personal tragedies involved in foreclosure, keeping people in their homes was ethical at an individual level, and at the same time a prudent social policy that would benefit the city at large. She had worked with people who had been evicted, and had realized that they often lacked the resources and knowledge to help them fight the process. Many were therefore being evicted because they could not engage in any meaningful way with the

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[68] "Gutting" is the process where illegal scrappers remove the most valuable materials from an abandoned house. In the final stages of "gutting", scrappers may remove pipes, which can lead to either flooding, in the case of water pipes, or to fires and explosions, in the case of gas pipes.

bureaucracy of foreclosures. The argument was that evictions, abandonment, blight and demolition could be avoided if residents were better equipped to handle the legal and bureaucratic aspects of eviction in the city. Since the number of residents facing eviction was in the tens of thousands, the presenter focused her efforts on the presence of tricycles in yards, as this was perceived to be an indicator of small children in the household, hence the name of the project.

After each presentation, the presenter remained on stage to answer the community's four questions.

The room became unusually silent. Amy, who facilitated the Q&A session, had to encourage participants to make a start. When the initial hesitation was broken, however, many hands shot into the air. At the Soups I had attended, the community's questions had generally been variations on recurring themes. A common question was to ask the presenter to explain how a project would work in practice, such as "How will the Tricycle Collective actually educate residents about foreclosures?" Another common question involved whether the project would benefit the local community. This question was often coupled with a query about whether the project had checked this with neighbors and associations to make sure it was what they wanted. The Detroit Bike Log Cabin farm was asked in this way about how their project would benefit surrounding communities.

Other concerns were of a concrete and practical nature, such as asking the Detroit Little Free Library how they would prevent people from just taking the books and selling them for profit, given that their structure would be stocked with new and interesting children's books. Several also questioned the longevity and sustainability of the Spiritual House Outreach, wondering how they would continue to fund the project once the capital provided through Soup was gone.

Breaking bread

When Q&A ended, Amy took the stage, explaining that it was now time for the communal dinner, to which we would help ourselves in the adjoining room. Before this, however, the community needed to hear from those who had brought food to the event.

A line formed beside the stage, consisting of about 15 individuals. Around half of them were citizens and residents, the other half consisting of local businesses that had donated food for the event. Most presentations emphasized the intimate and personal aspects of the food they had brought. An older Black woman explained that her gumbo had been made according

to her grandmother's recipe, and a man whose family came from Lebanon had brought Tabbouleh. Another man, from Detroit, had brought his favorite version of greens and beans. The representatives of local businesses were also seeking to embed their offerings in layers of intimacy. A bakery that had donated bread talked of how they had served their local community for decades. A young woman who had brought cupcakes introduced her newly established cupcake business, where she only intended to employ local residents. A fish and aeroponics farm run by a Christian charity presented its produce of Tilapia and herbs, at the same time advertising its local, non-profit, grocery store.

Toward the end of these presentations, Amy offered final encouragement, urging participants to approach people they did not know during the dinner and to engage in conversations about the presentations.

Standing in the long line that was slowly shuffling forward from the main room to the adjoining space, people did as Amy had suggested. The murmur of voices was more intense than before the presentations. I could hear the suggested icebreaker repeated around me: "Which presentation are you leaning toward?"

As we were moving slowly forward, Martin and I were drawn into a conversation with a group of people in front of us, two white women, one slightly younger than the other, and a white man holding the hand of a white child. We talked about how difficult it was to pick one candidate, and this led to a discussion of the merits, and possible drawbacks, of each proposal. Together we pondered the question of what the city needed, but also the question of which of the presenters most needed our support.

Focusing the conversation on notions of need was a common way of conversing at Soup. These discussions also often turned away from specific presentations to broader urban issues. In line, we shared information on the neighborhoods where we lived, what they were like, what was going on, and the types of change they were experiencing. Broaching these general aspects of Detroit and its comeback also opened a space for critique and articulating social concerns associated with development, gentrification, racial and economic difference, the political situation of the municipality and large-scale investments that were either underway or rumored to be in the pipeline.

Multiple rows of tables filled with different foods awaited us in the other room. We were handed paper plates and plastic utensils by people in front of us. I helped myself to the gumbo, together with some greens and beans, and a cupcake with pink frosting. I went back to the other room with Martin, moving past people who were still in line. We found some space at one

of the long tables at the side of the stage, sharing one of its corners with an elderly Black couple, a man and a woman.

"Let's break some bread," the woman said, reaching toward the center of the table, and scooping up a loaf with a white paper napkin. She handed it to Martin, who pulled off a slice and then handed it to me. I repeated his gesture and handed it to the man, whose name was Wayne. He then handed it back to his wife, Rhonda, who passed it along to a young white man on her left. I then watched the loaf of bread travel down the side of the table, growing smaller in size, until it was completely gone.

Wayne was talkative and asked the kinds of question newcomers were usually asked. Who were we? Where were we from? What were we doing in Detroit? Why were we there? Between these questions and answers, he told us that he and Rhonda had lived most of their lives in Detroit.

At one point, Rhonda joked that they had come to Soup to pray. I returned the joke and asked if she thought it was like a church. With a smile, she said no, shaking her head with passion. Wayne then explained that they liked to say that to each other, the bit about praying, but that they went to church every Sunday, and that this was different. Then again, Rhonda interjected that some things were similar, saying it felt good to be here, just like it felt good to be in church. Wayne nodded his head and talked of how they enjoyed going to Soup because they got to meet people who were doing good, and that it made them feel more connected to the city. Holding up his piece of bread as if he were addressing it, he said that this was what Detroit was really about. He said, "It strengthens your faith in the city and in the people who live here, our ability to pull together and make this place better, not just for ourselves, but for everyone else too."

I had heard this sentiment at other Soups. Some participants called Soup a form of "therapy" or "healing", not unlike how participants of Slow Roll explained their participation in that event. Others used less serious descriptions, calling the event a "shot of positivity", a form of emotional inoculation which boosted their emotional immune system. Others commented on how Soup made them feel "hopeful" about the future of the city, no matter how bleak the present seemed, saying that they left the event "lifted" or "high".

At our table, we moved on to discuss the presentations for the evening. Wayne and Mary were both quite clear about which project they preferred. Both of them were planning to vote for the Tricycle Collective.

We spent some time discussing the "delivery" or "performance" of each presenter. In a situation where the winner takes all, and where presenters only have four minutes, the verbal and bodily performance matters. For Wayne and Amy, the Tricycle Collective's presenter had spoken with

passion. Her performance had been well-structured, each sentence building on the next. In her Q&A, her answers had been clear, without hesitation. They contrasted her performance with that of the Spiritual House Outreach, where the presenter had stood on stage, reading directly from a piece of paper and asking rhetorical questions. The Q&A had been difficult, and some of his answers had contradicted what he had said during the presentation.

"I think he might have been nervous," I said.

"Yes, you are probably right, but I also think he hadn't prepared enough, and maybe hadn't thought everything out just yet," Mary responded. Wayne agreed, saying that it looked like he had been struggling, and that whatever he had written on his piece of paper did not come over well when he read it aloud. Reading from a paper, Mary added, also limited his gestures, and he could not maintain eye-contact with the audience in front of him.

"You need to look the community in the eye if you're asking for their money" , was Wayne's conclusion.

Crowning a winner

Toward the end of the dinner, participants went to cast their vote at the booth next to the bar. After a few announcements that the voting booth would soon close, the votes were taken away to be tallied. Not long afterwards, Amy was once more on the stage.

The winner was the Tricycle Collective, and the white woman with a law degree was called on stage. A total of $1,151 was handed to her in a brown envelope. The audience was cheering, clapping their hands, whistling into the air. She stood on stage, struck by emotion, and the composure she had displayed during her presentation had given way to shaking. It looked like she was close to tears. She thanked the community for their support and trust. More cheers and applause followed.

In my interviews with past winners of Soup, the importance of this moment was often stressed, but not principally because of the money involved. Winning was interpreted by winners as proof that they had the "support of the community". Winning meant that their ideas and vision had been acknowledged and had met with approval. It meant that others wanted to see them succeed and that others believed in them, sometimes more than they may have believed in themselves.

All the winners I interviewed spoke of how winning had given them confidence. Several had even abandoned their careers and professions. With the "community's support", they had redirected their lives toward new ambitions, more in line with the projects they sought to fulfill. As one winner remarked, "It gave me the courage to try and make this my living".

As the woman behind the Tricycle Collective exited the stage, I could see how she was shaking hands with members of the audience who came up to congratulate her individually. After a brief moment of celebration, Amy declared that this edition of Soup was over, but that people were free to stay, chat and interact for a while longer. They were not asking people to leave yet. On the other hand, they did not have to. Droves of people were already pouring out of the door. In less than five minutes, half of the audience was gone. 20 minutes later the room felt a lot larger. Organizers and volunteers were putting things away, while the people who had donated the food collected their pots and pans, preparing to go home.

An authentic experience

To understand how Soup affords strong affective experiences, articulated socially through passion, empowerment and hope, it is first important to acknowledge the importance of sincerity and belief. The way the participants themselves articulated how Soup made these experiences possible involved evaluating the event with words like "authentic" or "real", highlighting the "organic" and "spontaneous" qualities.

In analyzing Soup, it is important to take these statements seriously, but not at face value. In the emic terms of Detroiters, the distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic is cast as a difference between what is considered "real" or "fake", "true" or "false". It is not an existential classification. They are words speakers use to evaluate the manner in which an event exists. They are, in effect, evaluating its sincerity. Importantly, participants did not consider that their experience had emerged through any form of manipulation or design.

Although authenticity[69] was perceived to exist in its own right, as an innate quality of the event, I contend that a closer examination reveals that

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[69] "Authenticity" is a contentious subject for many scholars. Several have attributed the growing importance of "authenticity" in Western thought to the emergence of modernity, linking it intricately to simultaneously emerging notions of the individual (Trilling 1972; Handler 1986; Lindholm 2002). Notions of both modernity and the individual have co-produced a present where "the cult of authenticity pervades modern life" (Lowenthal 1992:

experiences of authenticity are affordances born out of particular material and semiotic circumstances. Authenticity is, in this sense, an experience produced by the event, just as hope, passion or empowerment are produced. I would also contend that authenticity is a basic prerequisite for the other affordances of Soup. There is a crucial difference between experiencing hope as an authentic feeling and experiencing it as inauthentic or artificial, incorporated by the design of others. Authenticity is thus a necessary product of the event, but crucially, it cannot be seen as produced if it wishes to remain authentic.

This highlights a latent tension in how Soup operates. On the one hand, the effectiveness of the events in terms of instigating urban change relies on it being perceived as authentic by participants. On the other hand, the social and practical arrangements for the event demand design and planning to be effective. In other words, since participants regularly experience authenticity at the event, there must somehow be an assurance that authenticity will consistently emerge. However, what does this consistency mean, and how is it made to emerge? To open this line of inquiry, the next section will discuss how the event grapples with a form of "planned spontaneity", a challenge which is visible in both the esthetics and performances involved in the event.

The esthetic of planned spontaneity

Planned spontaneity emerges, at the level of experience, through particular objects that afford interpretations of the event's authenticity. These objects may be inconsequential on their own, but in combination, they form a more coherent pattern. This pattern draws on notions of counterculture, positioning the event as a form of alternative to notions of a mainstream society.

The first experience a participant has of Soup involves entering the space in which the event takes place. Generally, participants will encounter

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184) The concept of authenticity has been deployed to understand the experience of leisure, such as in experiences of tourism (Waller and Lea 1998; MacCannell 1999), the experience of trading souvenirs (Evans-Pritchard 1987) or the experience of themed environments, such as in the generic Irish pub (Muñoz et al. 2006). Recently, Zukin (2010) has used authenticity to discuss how urban residents come to grips with ongoing transformations of life in the city of New York. However, despite the attention paid to the concept, both as a phenomenon of *longue durée* and in its more particular and circumscribed manifestations, authenticity remains a slippery term. As Chronis and Hampton (2008: 112) have pointed out, authenticity is "a very elusive concept, as it does not have the same meaning for all authors". In this chapter, my interest is not what "authenticity" really is as a philosophical abstraction, but on understanding how participants of Soup came to experience the event as "authentic".

a line that ends with a table where donations for the event are collected. The large metallic pot where bills accumulate form an obligatory point of entry between participants and the event's esthetic pattern. For those who are new to Soup, it can be a source of uncertainty and awkwardness. When participants have no exact change, they are instructed to place their bill in the pot and retrieve the change for themselves. Judging by the number of jokes made by participants if they had to reach down into the communal pile of money, this situation generated tensions which they felt the need to relieve. Many would joke about stealing the money, or their gestures would involve theatrical renditions of transparency, so everyone around them could observe that their intentions were honest.

There are layers of meaning to this first experience. In one layer, the pot itself is symbolic of an event called Soup. Additionally, when participants interact with the pot they invariably draw on wider forms of classification. To Detroiters, the common category of the "donation box" or the "collecting box" conjures up images of an object that can readily be found throughout the public, private and religious spaces of the city. These boxes accrue money for a cause or social good. They are usually box-shaped, and locked with a lid that has a small slit or hole at the top, allowing people to deposit money. At the same time, this hole prevents other residents from removing the money. In reference to this wider category, the pot at Soup affords an experience of how the collection of money is otherwise.

Interactions around the pot are conducive to trust. The event trusts participants to dip their hands into the communal pot of money, and participants must also trust other participants not to act dishonestly. Another experience involves novelty and improvisation, because metallic pots are designed for uses other than collecting money.

After they have made their donation, participants are able to experience the room itself. They will see and walk across a floor made of wood that is visibly stained and worn. There are many irregularities in this space. The colors and hues of the walls vary. There is scaffolding above them, and in between there are exposed ventilation shafts and pipes, crisscrossing the ceiling. Tall, metallic, industrial looking doors lead into the adjoining room. The yellow paint on the wall beside the door has broad streaks of grayness, dirt and dust. As with the pot, participants begin to draw from wider classificatory schemes when they interact with the room.

Soup is an event that revolves around changing the city. However, in both the way it is imagined and in its concrete forms, it is different from other events which seek to enlist and interact with residents to change Detroit, such as those described in chapters 5 and 6. The location of Soup has a more unfinished and improvised quality than the places used by these

other events. It is bohemian, in some ways uncared for, and decidedly different to the standardized conference room from which other events and organizations seek to change Detroit. The room fits with notions of a "counterculture" as originally outlined by Yinger (1960), a concept which emerges with reference to the dominant forms of spatializing events in the surrounding society.

Seating arrangements, and the objects on which people sit, are another challenge involved in planned spontaneity. The bleacher I sat on was made of wood which could be found at any lumber yard and held together by regular screws. It was a simple and straightforward design. However, importantly it was not a mass-produced bleacher, nor a bleacher that came in prefabricated modules with a predetermined pattern of assembly. Some planks were a little bit longer, others a bit shorter. Screws were slightly irregularly fixed, and at certain points extra screws had been drilled in. It was a do-it-yourself bleacher, crafted by someone who had improvised as it was taking shape.

In the middle of the room, in front of the stage, people were sitting on the floor. Soup was one of few public occasions where I saw Americans sitting directly on the floor. Generally speaking, if they have to sit without proper seating in public, they generally prefer sitting on the curb of the sidewalk, or on stoops and staircases. Sitting directly on the floor or ground was highly unusual within the context of public events of this kind.

Floor seating affords a greater degree of spatial proximity between participants, which would have seemed unusual at other public events of this kind. There is generally a surplus of seating at other public events, so Detroiters normally maintain an appropriate distance from others in terms of where they sit. Where seating was abundant, Detroiters would sprawl very much in the same way as their city, maintaining a spatial buffer with others seated in their vicinity, assuming that these other subjects were strangers. In an environment with abundant seating, it would have seemed strange to sit immediately next to someone. Equally, many people would also claim a spatial buffer by spreading out their possessions on adjoining chairs. At Soup, on the other hand, the opposite occurred because of the way the seating had been structured, affording participants an experience of intimacy and conviviality.

At Soup, the objects of seating served as elements in the esthetic pattern of planned spontaneity, adding to the event's sense of informality and intimacy. Other objects fed into this pattern, such as the stage, the bar and the voting booth, and the arrangement of food in the adjoining room.

The dinner itself was a large potluck, uncommon for public events, where participants brought various dishes to share, and which they also

announced on stage prior to commencing the dinner. A potluck is a display of informality and counterculture. Again, through the experiences afforded by this style of dinner, this frames the event as alternative, intimate and informal.

Food itself is a particularly potent element in this pattern because it is incorporated by participants. Food acts as a material and symbolic conduit between the self and the world, where the act of eating food "is in both real and imaginary terms, to incorporate all or some of its properties" (Fischler 1988: 6)[70]. The food is often cooked by someone from the community and participants must trust in the food they are served. Thus, the Soup potluck dinner encouraged participants to incorporate central aspects of the event's esthetic pattern: diversity, informality, trust and intimacy.

In themselves, the qualities of these elements, and the room where they were situated, may seem trivial. They were rarely noticed or commented on by interlocutors, who tended to focus on interactions and on what was happening on stage. I would suggest, however, that this sense of triviality is an important quality in itself. The level of organization, inherent in how these objects relate to one another and form an esthetic pattern, is successfully obfuscated due to the trivial quality of any individual object. And so, in the same way as a black cloth successfully obscures the standardized communal tables underneath, triviality obscures the systematic selection and arrangement of objects and places which afford experiences of authenticity. Planned spontaneity thus emerges from design, even though the influence of design does not prevent people from experiencing the spontaneity as authentic.

Authentic performances of passion

There were three performative phases to a Soup event. The initial phase centered on Amy's performance, which framed the event. The middle phase comprised the main event, which involved the presentation of the four different projects. The final phase comprised the announcement of a winner, where one of the presenters stood on stage with Amy to receive the brown envelope with cash in it.

There was considerable similarity between the first and the last performance across different events. In framing the event, Amy used a rhetoric

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[70] In discussing the modern food system, Fischler (1988) used the term "gastroanomie" to denote a state of uncertainty about the self's identity, stemming from an uncertainty about the food a person consumes.

of spontaneity in her performance. She interacted in a playful way with the audience, checking the volume, for instance, and made clear displays of affect, such as happiness and surprise when the audience started cheering at the amount of money the event had raised so far. At other events, I saw her recall something suddenly. "Oh, I forgot to ask how many of you are new", or make quick, jovial responses to comments people had made. The performance had an ambience of improvisation and intimacy, elements that fit with the larger patterns of the event.

The final performance tended to be a display of powerful emotions. The voices of winners, which were strong and deliberate during the presentations, began to crack or shake. Many had difficulty articulating themselves, but their body movements indicated that they were experiencing happiness, relief and gratitude. At many of these final performances the winner started to cry. Amy and members of the audience were seen to cry as well, and I too was moved to tears on occasion.

To interlocutors, crying made for memorable experiences. For regular attendees, crying even acted as a mnemonic device for remembering particular events, such as "I remember that winner, because she/he cried at the end". Although I was told, and have no trouble believing, that people also cried elsewhere in the city, at sports events and religious services, for example, Soup was the only context during fieldwork where I actually observed Detroiters crying in public. Not every performance was this dramatic, but when they were, they were emotionally touching, making for powerful finales to the event.

The middle performances were what many participants considered the main part of the event. The restrictions placed on project presentations removed certain layers of mediation which were pervasive in contemporary public presentations, especially in other events that sought to reimagine or transform Detroit[71]. These restrictions made the performances dependent on the oral, rhetorical and embodied communication of presenters. Without visual aids, the ability to speak became important, and to display the appropriate emotions through words and gestures.

Most performances began with a personal story of discovery, where the presenter recounted how they had first identified the particular problem in the city that they wished to address. Thereafter, they delivered some facts about the context of the problem they had identified. This was often done by relaying sets of hard facts, i.e., figures, statistics and technical data. Then the project itself was outlined as a response to the facts and as a way of mediating the problem they had discovered. Toward the end, the

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[71] The ubiquity of PowerPoint presentations during the RiverFront East project is one example.

performances made arguments for why their particular project was particularly suitable for solving the problem.

This typical sequence in terms of performances also involved an associated sequencing of emotions on the part of the performer. Although the performances could communicate different emotional states, passion was a key concern. If Soup can be regarded as a technique for generating and distributing affects and emotions, passion was the most prolific emotion in evidence at the event. In generating and distributing passion, performers relied on different techniques. Some of these interacted more with the minds of participants, and others had a more embodied quality.

One technique involved giving oral accounts which could be interpreted as evidence of passion, leading a listener to conclude that presenters were passionate about their projects. The performer might provide information about their past experience with the project. Often, performers had already begun working on their project, which may have been running for quite a while before they presented it at Soup. This information aimed to establish that they had already invested a substantial amount of time, energy and resources into their project, and the technique was related to suffering, the etymological root of passion. The more information a performer could supply to corroborate a form of suffering, whether financial or in terms of their time or career, the more authentic their passion appeared to be.

Embodied techniques do not rely on words, but on the manner in which words are spoken. Their non-verbal nature relates to notions of style and intensity on the part of a performer. Performers could present appropriate cues for suffering, without necessarily giving off or radiating, as interlocutors put it, a sense of passion at the moment of performance. Here, passion was communicated in the tone of voice, gestures and body language, seen vividly in arm movements, in how a performer's body paced and shifted across the stage, and in the ways sentences suddenly speeded up and became more voracious.

The performance of passion marked a pivotal moment in the event. Successful performances depended on an experience shared between the performer and the audience, moments when passion was shared and the distance between the performer and audience seemed to collapse.

Interlocutors found this exciting, but it is important to note that the passion they claimed to experience often seemed different to the passion expressed by performers. Where a performer had become passionate about their project on stage, the passion mirrored in participants was not limited to the project in question. Instead, many participants claimed they had become passionate toward the city at large. It was in this moment that many interlocutors discovered that their reason for participating in Soup was to

learn about the good things that were being done in the city in general, not to learn about any good thing in particular.

The theoretical discussion in the introduction helps clarify this. The space of Soup embodies intimacy, diversity, trust and authenticity. These notions are given concrete form at Soup, as material elements arranged in patterns of planned spontaneity. Exposure to the space and place of Soup, and to the food offered, affects the embodied space of participants, producing the potential to generate and disseminate affects. This, in turn, becomes meaningful and codified through passion. All of this emerges within what I have called a ritualized event, capable of generating novelty within the event itself. This novelty can act to transform the city, which is external to the event. It is both unpredictable and indeterminate in the sense that it cannot be reduced to either a replication or an inversion of the social order.

Importantly, these events are not predominantly grounded in ideas of what Detroit should be, or could be, but in offering the senses a concrete and tangible experience of how Detroit is already different. Furthermore, this event was established and became relevant during the city's period of comeback. Although this period has been conducive to feelings of apathy and despair, it has also brought forth a passion for change through ritualized events such as Soup. The fact that people from a divided region come together to share experiences of passion for Detroit itself, and a passion to change Detroit, is an important dynamic in comeback. In a similar way to Slow Roll, Soup affects the embodied space of participants, producing the potential to see Detroit in a different light, and nurturing hopes that a better Detroit will emerge.

I understand that this change could be seen as inconsequential in terms of its wider effect. In this sense, it is important to recognize two factors.

First, the city-wide Soup event takes place every Sunday, but there are also numerous "neighborhood Soups" whose structure is similar, albeit on a smaller scale. Likewise, Slow Roll is only one type of joint bicycle event among many which seek to affect the embodied spaces of participants in terms of the affordance of particular emotions and experiences. I chose to write detailed ethnographies of Soup and Slow Roll not because I view these events as unusual, but because they are the tip of an iceberg, places where the details of a much deeper and varied engagement with the rapid transformations associated with comeback can be explored.

Second, events such as Slow Roll and Soup always involve a large number of participants who are new to the event. Hetherington (1997: 37) has drawn attention to how historic "utopic" sites "act as obligatory points of passage through which an alternate mode of social ordering is performed". The substantial number of new participants at every event highlights the

fact that considerable numbers of people pass through them, attributing particular embodiments to a larger number of people than might be expected.

However, Soup is not only a ritualized event in terms of feeling and embodiment. It is also a social event where interactions and discourse between strangers are a strong ideal. The time between the middle performance and the end performance offers a moment of discursive labor. It is during this phase that participants construct and confirm meanings for the event. In this process can be found articulations of morality and legitimacy, both of which relate to the question of what gives the individuals gathered at Soup the right to intervene and transform the urban fabric. This question invites answers which relate to the morality of comeback.

Consensus, affirmation and the labor of need

The conversations that ensued between participants during the dinner tended to center initially on the projects, about which participants shared their opinions. A consensus was usually reached during these initial conversations in the sense that participants agreed it was impossible to choose a single project. It was not uncommon for participants to begin their evaluation with something along the lines of "they are all great projects", "I wish I didn't have to choose", or "they all deserve our support". There was rarely any disagreement about how difficult it was to make a final choice, and people considered this to be clear within the context of the event.

This recurring consensus helps evaluate the event itself. The agreement on how difficult it was to choose any single project simultaneously shows that the performances had been effective in providing appropriate emotional experiences. When they said how difficult it was to choose, participants were demonstrating that all the performances had made them passionate about transforming the city.

This basic agreement in the initial stages, that everyone cared for the city and that everyone liked the event, developed an atmosphere of safety and respect in terms of the interaction that followed. Even though contentious topics sometimes emerged at Soup, the event did not yield much in the way of combative rhetoric or strong, polarizing verbal conflicts.

After establishing this basic atmosphere, participants tended to begin the process of assessing contenders to choose a winner. During these deliberations, participants evaluated both the projects and the stage performances of each presenter. In practice, these two aspects of evaluation are

interconnected, and in making a choice, participants did not always distinguish between them.

Two recurring types of question structured these deliberations. One involved the level of need, and the other whether the project could be successfully completed.

Importantly, the question of need was considered from the perspective of the city, rather than that of the performer. Although participants were pondering the question, "Who needs to win?", this usually took a backseat in terms of "What does the city need?". The preceding consensus had shown that all projects were "needed" to some extent, so the question "What does the city need?" helped participants prioritize one project over another.

I experienced many instances in which participants disagreed about the prioritization of needs. For instance, literacy could be framed as a superfluous need in comparison to shelter, but it could also be framed as a need that superseded shelter if literacy was seen as part of the reason shelter was needed in the first place. "What the city needs" was thus a flexible question which accommodated both shifting and diverging interpretations of Detroit.

Through these deliberations, participants ultimately elaborated a way of knowing the city in terms of its problems and needs, and a way of knowing the community in terms of the needs identified by other members and how they prioritized them. Needs were thus a practical way for participants to engage with the city as a transforming material and spatial formation, and with the city as an imagined community (Anderson 1983).

These deliberations also sustained the notion that Detroit was a city of needs. Disagreements centered on the prioritization of needs, but at the same time this reified that need was an appropriate way of framing the city. The premise of needs was routinely left unexamined in itself. It was treated as self-evident and common sense, as something that "goes without saying because it comes without saying" (Bourdieu 1977: 167).

However, this premise of need is important because it informs perceptions regarding interventions more broadly. Need legitimizes changes in the urban fabric. It does not fill the moral framework with substance, but it establishes a foundation on which other aspects of morality can emerge. Need was thus a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for creating morally legitimate interventions at Soup. Two other notions interacted with need to give substance to the moral legitimacy of transformations at Soup. One of these notions was community, the other was democracy.

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Community, democracy and a morality of comeback

An analysis of the words used at a Soup event reveals that they are replete with references to "community"[72]. During the event, phrases can be heard such as "the community has gathered". Presenters will be "asked questions from the community", and "the community will vote". Equally, "people have brought food for the community", "the community will decide on a winner", "the winner will have the trust of the community", and "winners may be asked to return and report to the community". Participants regularly commented on the community, specifically asking, "What will the community decide?"[73].

At Soup, community served as a fixture in the ritualized event. Every iteration of Soup made reference to a community concretized by actions and calls to action. The community was a flexible label that could refer to the people gathered at the event who were acting in unison, to people who had gathered at past events, or to those who would gather at future events. Even though the composition of participants was different at each event, there were no distinctions within its community. Its ambiguous and slippery characteristics meant that every group which had gathered and would gather at Soup became subsumed under the rubric of community.

During the course of the event, as presenters delivered their performance to the community, members of the audience became decision-makers, tasked with choosing one project out of many. Since the demographics of participants did not reflect the demographics of the city, those who fulfilled the role of decision-makers may have had little or no experience or knowledge of the urban fabric for which an intervention was proposed. The event altered the notion of community, which no longer referred to the group of people who happened to be taking part on a Sunday evening, and instead referred to a "community of Detroiters". Through the community, participants had apparently begun to represent the city as a whole, though they were far from representative of it.

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[72] Community lacks stable and precise definitions among scholars. Amit (2010: 357) has argued that a "common scholarly response to this proliferation of unspecified invocations of community has been to suggest that this ambiguity fatally undermines the analytical utility of this concept". Although I agree that its ambiguous character hampers its analytical utility, I equally see this ambiguity as central to its practical utility. In its own context, community at events such as Soup or Slow Roll tends to be defined at the level of precision required for the task at hand, and this task does not require an understanding of what community is.

[73] Community is a pervasive notion that constantly resurfaces at all levels of life in Detroit, as if community were always on the verge of disappearing if its existence were not reiterated over and over again.

This extension of community afforded legitimacy to the collective decision reached by participants. This legitimacy was often an especially important factor in terms of the strength of emotion demonstrated by the winner. Those who won felt the "the support of the community", and many of them saw this as more significant than the cash itself. Again, their emotions were not stirred specifically by the support of the people gathered on that particular Sunday but by the support of their city itself. The latter also contributed strongly to the sense of empowerment felt by participants. They were the ones who would decide how the city would be transformed. Although community is an ambiguous and slippery term in theory, these qualities make it a useful concept in practice.

This ambiguous and slippery configuration of community was also legitimized by the mechanisms of decision-making at the event. The event utilized a form of direct democracy which successfully drew on both local and national frames of meaning and mythology. An apt analogy of the process would be the town-hall meeting[74]. The directness of democracy at Soup also feeds into the event's esthetic pattern, at the same time reifying national democratic ideals of one person, one vote, and a system of first-past-the-post or the winner takes all. In terms of the procedure involved, trust is not placed in bureaucratic controls but in the decency of the community.

Through a discourse which involves needs and invokes community and techniques of direct democracy, Soup articulates a morality in terms of urban change that relates to many earlier discussions. As detailed in chapter 4, the newcomer is a morally ambiguous character, strongly linked to a morally ambiguous comeback. Many of the moral complexities of newcomers are centered on their real and imagined impacts on a real and imagined local community. Like gentrifiers, newcomers can be morally bad, even though their intentions are not.

Soup provides another framework for moral evaluation in terms of urban transformations in the city. At Soup, the ambition of transforming the city in a concrete and practical way is largely predicated on the intentions of performers. A morally legitimate proposal demonstrates the intention of doing good, predicated on need and validated by the community through forms of direct democracy. Alongside passion, the event thus affords other experiences. Participants embody notions that transforming Detroit is possible, that they are themselves agents of transformation, that such transformations are morally justified if the agent's intentions are good and

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[74] The democracy of the town-hall meeting has a particularly long history in the United States. It is its oldest form of democracy, even predating the emergence of the United States as a nation by about a century (Bryan 2004).

approved by the community, and that good intentions can be indexed by passion.

For white newcomers, who in other situations might worry about their impact and role, $5 is a low price to pay to feel good about the city's comeback and their role within it.

Concluding Soup

This chapter has sought to show how Detroit Soup labors with place and materials to produce a form of authenticity that affords participants powerful emotional experiences vis-à-vis a changing city. I have made the argument that the event is about generating and distributing affects which lead to emotional experiences, and that a pivotal moment in this process is when performers and audience share and experience passion. Furthermore, I have argued that the event facilitates a consensus and discourse on needs, and that the interventions are made legitimate by reference to community and democracy, thereby providing participants with a morality for comeback.

Naturally, there are other aspects of Soup that could have been scrutinized. Specifically, experiences of community and togetherness play a central part in the event, and should be aligned with discussions in the previous chapter on Slow Roll. Like Slow Roll, Detroit Soup offers participants a way of becoming agents of a comeback that is closer to their hearts. They are allowed to marvel at the good things being done within the city, and to kindle and expand their passion for Detroit. They learn that intervention can be both needed and morally justified.

Soup is a concrete manifestation of a "right to the city" (Harvey 2008, 2013; Lefebvre 1996; 2003), which entails, as Harvey remarks (2008: 1), "the right to change ourselves by changing the city". By facilitating direct action and direct democracy, participants in the event share in the effort of claiming the city, as well as the right to change it and be changed by it.

On the other hand, the political economy of the current era reverberates within Soup. In Detroit, both corporate and state forms of governance have been retreating from urban space and public life for several decades. The Tricycle Collective, the Detroit Little Library, the Bike Detroit Log Cabin Farm and the Spiritual House Outreach are all examples of projects that make sense in this light. Soup is creating a community of urban residents who collectively identify the deficits left by the retreat of the above entities. They are gathering capital to fund projects which aim to correct these deficits and make everyone feel good about it at the same time.

What rises from the ashes?

Speramus meliora; resurgent cineribus – We hope for better things,
it shall rise from the ashes
<div align="right">City of Detroit motto</div>

Detroit is so far ahead of the curve that it only looks like it is behind.
<div align="right">Dennis, "long-time" white resident</div>

In Detroit, you have to take the good with the bad, and the bad with
the good.
<div align="right">Carl, "lifelong" Black Detroiter.</div>

These pages have chronicled the return of whites and wealth to one of
America's Black metropolises. They have drawn on different case studies,
connected through the emergence of comeback, in order to discuss urban
change in Detroit and explore how a New Detroit is taking form.

The first part of the thesis discussed how the city had changed in the
past, and the ways in which this past had furnished cosmologies of the re-
gion. The second chapter explored how racial and class struggles had de-
fined the city's trajectory. It also considered how the question of who be-
longs to Detroit and to whom Detroit belongs, which manifests itself in the
present comeback, has a long history. This question has been posed on
many occasions in the past, when whole groups of people have been re-
moved from both the city *and* its memory. Furthermore, actions that appear
negative today seemed like a good idea in another time. The chapter illus-
trated how the automobile industry shaped Detroit, and how the city's
eventual decline has led to different attempts at "comeback", predomi-
nately through large-scale construction projects aimed at retaining and at-
tracting jobs to the city.

The third chapter illustrated how certain threads of the city's past have
become woven into regional cosmologies. These offer a model for under-
standing contemporary Detroit, and for addressing who is to blame for its

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decline. I argued that this was a cosmology of division and separation, structured through oppositions between the city and the suburb, between whites and Blacks and between rich and poor. This chapter introduced the cosmology of Detroit through the abstract aspects of its order, but also showed how this ultimately informed everyday life and mundane relations. I argued that the cosmology was not located solely in the mind, but that it was mirrored and expressed through material reality. The borders between city and suburb are both symbolic and material, and ways of conceptualizing the cosmological ordering of the city-suburb divide are ultimately validated at the level of experience.

The second part of the thesis focused on the temporal, spatial and demographic dimensions of "comeback", and the emergence of a New Detroit. The fourth chapter was an exposition of the "return" of whites. It examined newcomers both as a category and as living, breathing, human beings involved in navigating the gap between their everyday lives in the city and what their presence signified. Newcomers take different forms, but they share, and emerge against, the ground of the "frontier", a hallowed and criticized mythological backdrop to America at large. Inherent in the figure of the newcomer are several moral ambiguities and contentions related to their association with comeback and their racial position within Detroit. Many are concerned with being "good" whites in a Black city. However, they are also concerned with having a "good" life in the city and embody a desire to feel that they are "in-place". These aspirations guide their movements through urban space, making Detroit simultaneously a "small place" of white solidarity, and a space that evokes in newcomers sensations of power, guilt and privilege.

An examination of the area known as Midtown in the fifth chapter discussed how comeback had been spatialized as New Detroit. Through metaphors of the garden, it detailed how a New Detroit was being cultivated through ideas and representations, by working on material places, and through economic incentives which aimed to attract and bolster the presence of particular demographics. In this way, I illustrated how NPOs' were seeking to curate the process of gentrification and comeback by a variety of means. The chapter also analyzed the "spatial code" of New Detroit, examining the materials and esthetics which have been associated with comeback, and which have also served as signs in communicating new forms of establishment, and who these were for.

The sixth chapter discussed the temporal dimensions of comeback, and the propensity of a present order to project itself onto a future order, which is then projected back onto the present. Using the "RiverFront East" project as a case study, I argued that a vital component in comeback could be

observed through efforts which aimed to colonize the imaginations of the future in order to stabilize the present. The plethora of public events intended to enlist Detroiters in formulating the future played an important role, both in managing imaginations and in managing the affect to which these imaginations contributed. However, the chapter also illustrates how the ongoing colonization of the city's future has not been without challenge. Both the city's future and its more recent past have become contested ground for continued struggles over what Detroit is becoming.

The third part of the thesis addressed how Detroiters labor collectively with comeback through ritualized events. The seventh chapter analyzed a regularly occurring bike ride called Slow Roll. This ritualized event gathered residents across a divided region and afforded experiences of diversity, community and "feelings of togetherness". The chapter paid attention to the level of experience, arguing that the ritualized event was embodied through the motions and phases of the event. The chapter also explored discourse and the ways in which participants made the event and their experience meaningful to themselves and to others. Importantly, Slow Roll contributed to comeback partly in the way it facilitated reintegration across otherwise pervasive divisions, and partly because the effects of reintegration were played out in a larger political and economic context, altering the flows of wealth and people, thereby contributing to gentrification and the economic base of New Detroit.

The eighth and final chapter centered on an event called Soup, which consisted of a mix of crowdfunding, game shows and a community dinner. Soup afforded strong emotional experiences, arousing passion and hope in its participants. The chapter sought to understand how Soup worked, analyzing the importance of "authenticity", and how esthetics and the performances themselves expressed forms of "planned spontaneity", facilitating an intrinsic sharing of emotion. As Soup changed the city directly, the analysis also sought to uncover how the legitimacy of the event was established, and the sort of moralities it articulated in terms of comeback. I argued that the morality of the city-wide Soup event was particularly suited to newcomers, who were also the most prominent demographic component at this event, because it tied them to comeback in positive, rather than negative, terms.

The thesis has deployed a number of idiosyncratic conceptualizations that raises further question. Can urban cosmologies, with their intimate connections between the material and the symbolic city, could be considered to exist elsewhere, and if so, where does this lead us? Are urban space and place grown rather than produced or constructed, and how can this help understand development in other cities? Can futures be colonized to

stabilize a present, and is this even a good way of conceptualizing the issue? Has affective management, allowing citizens to "air" their anger and despair through meetings, become a technique of contemporary urban governance? Is planned spontaneity a way of affording "authentic" experiences? Have ritualized events become vehicles for urban residents to generate and interact with the changes around them?

The eclectic and emergent character of this subject matter has forced me to abandon any ambitions of analyzing it within an isolated frame. Moving through history, cosmology, people, spaces, futures and ritualized events without a singular, circumscribed or established theoretical framework, can be confusing. However, there may be few alternatives to this confusion if change in cities is to be approached in an objective way. The scale of cities means that they encompass many diverging lines of development *at once*, and residents inhabit a world of fragments and contradictions that they stitch together on a daily basis.

Anthropological methods lend themselves to sustained analysis of particular fields of urban life, but I find them equally capable of producing synthesis between fields. In fact, I believe that even greater synthesis is required, not of the kind that paints everything in one color, but of the kind that relates different pieces and different perspectives to one another. Phenomena such as comeback persist across different scales and locations within a city. They cannot be captured in a single theoretical frame. They raise a multitude of questions, many of which lack stable answers.

As noted in the introduction, this is a thesis about urban change. "New" cities inevitably grow out of "old" cities, as new establishments, residents, ideas and places ultimately supplant what was there before. This change, especially when it happens fast, can be both terrifying and inspiring to live through. Urban life is ephemeral because things change, but at the same time it is enduring because change is always there. In the tensions between what is already there and what emerges to supplant it lie much of the vitality associated with urban life.

Detroit has considerable vitality because it involves a great number of tensions and oppositions. It is America on steroids, an urban America that is itself changing, as younger generations of whites return to the places from which their parents and grandparents once "escaped". These are the places in which this generation seeks to realize other ways of being and living, and where the depressed real estate markets can help make age-old American dreams of home ownership into a reality. If this flow continues, along with the gentrification it engenders, it is likely that at a later point in this century, some of the social concerns of the suburb will have been transferred to the inner cities and vice versa.

I have sometimes been asked whether my thesis relates to any political project. Earlier in life, I entertained ideas of becoming a priest or a politician, but in my role as a scholar I never thought of my job as advising people on what was right or wrong, or saying what should or should not be done. I never approached my work with a desire to change Detroit, and I will not pretend to know what Detroit *should* be. The more I have learned about the city, the less certain I have become, and the more suspicious of those who speak with certainty about right or wrong and what should or should not be done. My ambition has been to understand Detroit and its transformations better, and to leave some record of this understanding to others.

The understanding I have produced can nevertheless be frustrating because it evades answering two questions of interest to many people. Is this contemporary comeback real, and what will Detroit turn into? It is frustrating to admit that even after years of study I can offer no definite answer to these questions. To me, comeback has yet to find a clear form. It is still emerging and it is too early to determine the result, especially given the many parallel lines of development.

One point which is clear is that the contemporary comeback of Detroit is both different and similar to past comebacks, similar in the sense that it privileges the central parts of the city and that it ultimately expresses the inequalities and power relations of its time, and different in that it places a greater degree of importance on attracting a new, preferably wealthy and educated demographic, rather than attracting jobs and industry. Another important difference is that the younger, wealthier, more educated whites who are "returning" are different to the generations of whites who left in the postwar era. Furthermore, they *want* to be different. Many of them speak the language of diversity and inclusion, and are concerned with being "good" whites in a Black city. Many do not wish to hear racist slurs, use racist words or think racist thoughts.

Although this tends to be perceived as an improvement on how things have been in the past, this new moral landscape is not without its own dangers. Few want to be "bad" whites in a Black city, and this makes it difficult for them to see negative aspects in themselves. They see gentrifiers everywhere, but they do not see themselves as gentrifiers. Gentrifiers are always someone else, somewhere else.

As these younger generations of whites "return" to Black inner cities, often critical of the segregation and injustices of the past, integration is not the only option. Another possibility is that the segregation of the present will become more invisible and dispersed. The nebulous character of comeback in Detroit may not be entirely coincidental, nor simply a product

of my limited analytical capacities. For me, the ways in which it is ordered through esthetics and by NPOs', its indeterminate but programmed futures, its unspoken economic incentive programs, its maps and representations, its events and affective management, its signposts of "reclaimed wood", all form a pattern which can be difficult to discern fully. Not in its immediate and apparent aspects, that Detroit is becoming whiter and wealthier, but in its underlying mechanisms, because these mechanisms have become so obfuscated through dispersed webs of power making them difficult to pin down, let alone hold to account. Hopefully, my work has helped to connect some of these mechanisms, mapping their lines of relation, thereby furthering an understanding of the city in this period of rapid transformation.

Sammanfattning på svenska

Sedan 1950-talet har Detroit tappat både befolkning och ekonomiskt välstånd. Vad som en gång var ett av Amerikas rikaste och folktätaste städer är nu ett av nationens fattigaste, svartaste och mest övergivna urbana områden.

Avhandlingen undersöker urban förändring. Den granskar hur den långsiktiga trenden av nedgång tycks brytas och ge plats för en tid då vita och välstånd återvänder till Detroit. Lokala förståelser av denna tid uttrycks genom begreppet "comeback" och avhandlingen utforskar således de reflektioner och motsättningar som ryms inom comeback, samt de maktrelationer som ramar in förändringsprocessen.

Avhandlingens första del beskriver stadens historia och hur denna historia skapar särskilda förståelser av nuet. Ras- och klassmotsättningar har alltid varit aktuella aspekter av Detroit och dessa motsättningar har gett upphov till en särskild kosmologi hos stadens invånare. Denna kosmologi betonar skillnader och framhäver avståndet mellan svarta och vita, och mellan de som bor i staden och de som bor i förorten, skillnader som kommer till uttryck både i vardagslivet och i stadens fysiska planering.

Avhandlingen andra del granskar comeback genom dess demografiska, rumsliga och tidsmässiga uttryck. Genom att undersöka de nyinflyttade vita invånarna, samt hur stadens platser och framtid anpassas till dem, beskrivs processen där "nytt Detroit" uppstår, ett Detroit som både är vitare och rikare än innan.

Avhandlingens tredje del utforskar hur invånare gemensamt försöker förstå förändringen och deras plats i en förändrad stad. Den här delen fokuserar på två olika rituella event som uppstått under tiden för comeback. Dessa rituella event integrerar svarta och vita, förortsbor och stadsbor, nyinflyttade och de som bott i Detroit länge. Därigenom skapar de även upplevelser av mångfald och gemenskap i relation till stadens comeback.

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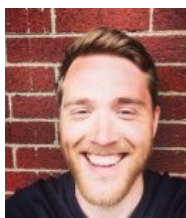# Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology. New Series.

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Comeback Detroit investigates how whites and wealth are returning to one of America's poorest, Blackest and most abandoned urban areas. It is a study of urban change, examining a period of time when decades of decline seemed to turn into growth. For some residents, this period of comeback was anticipated, signaling a time of integration and healing for the city. For others, comeback produced new scars and opened up old wounds. In the tensions between these positions, *Comeback Detroit* frames the return of whites and wealth against the city's history, and shows how this history informs understandings of comeback in the present. Through ethnographic case studies, it explores how both the city's spaces and its imaginations of the future are made to accommodate the whites who are returning, as well as how people labor collectively to both change the city and to understand a city that is changing.

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