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Fear and Awe:
Social Construction of Fear in
Detroit

Acknowledgements

1 All Pictures by the author, unless stated otherwise.

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Contents

1. Storytime

Why Storytime? The fear I write about is localized; whoever or whatever you are afraid of, you fear it where you are. It is the stories that shape this place, and Detroit has plenty of them. Detroit is part of the United States' awe, just like Hollywood, San Francisco, Las Vegas, Chicago, and the famous New York. Any city can host people, but they also host myths.

I will not give the obligatory historic overview; it simplifies, puts events in an order which should not be told coherently, and turns flows into dates. This is not the story I can tell, since it is not the story I have been told. Detroit was "founded"—meaning that white people gave it a French name—in 1701. At some point, it became *the* industrial city of the world, 2013 it became the largest US city in history to file for bankruptcy. Between Detroit's economic rise and fall developed the stories I heard, read, and thought about. They are an assortment of confusing chaotic meanings, contested symbols, and nicknames in which I convey the context the way I lived it: Just as arbitrary as a "proper" timeline, but more obviously incoherent.
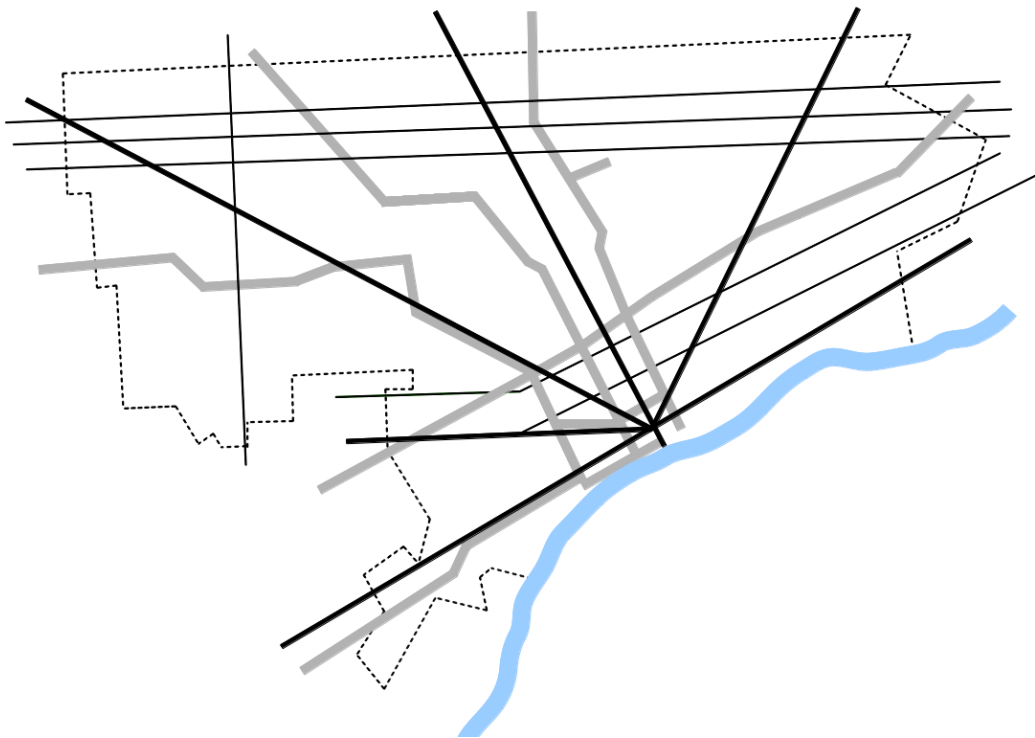
2 Detroit, with its major roads. Do not let the dotted city line fool you; the border is more solid than it looks. Throughout this text, I will use various versions of this map for orientation.

I am writing about moral, crime, race, pain and poverty. Doing so is a sensitive undertaking in any language, and English is not my native one. I chose English so the text is accessible to the people in Detroit that I did my research among, and they could read and judge what I wrote. Detroit is a contested field ripe with stigmatization and prejudice, where people are sensitive to everything they consider offensive. I will try my best to phrase it as careful as I can, hoping to keep the misunderstandings minimal. I will; however, rely on the mercy of my readers: if statements in this text sound racist, sexist or classist please consider if it may be due to language barriers, or insufficient precision on my side. This shall not absolve me of my responsibilities, or put me above criticism; but only if I am granted this indulgence I, a white man with a wealthy background, can write about those issues.

1.1. Steve Utash

Whatever happens, happens in a social context. A number of phenomenal characteristic for fear in Detroit shapes the incident I tell. It is not "Detroit in a nutshell", nor a Balinese cockfight – and it is most definitely not an example, not for the City of Detroit, nor its people. Before anything else, it is the story of a person by the name of Steve Utash, and should not be turned into a *pars-pro-toto*.

In the afternoon of April 2, 2014, Utash[1] drove home from work in his pick-up truck along Morang Street on the East Side of Detroit. Near the gas station at Balfour Street, he hit David Harris, a 10 year old boy, who had stepped on the street without looking for traffic. Utash stopped immediately and left his car to help the boy. Before he had a chance to, he was surrounded by a crowd of an estimated 7-20 men that insulted and attacked him. They beat him heavily, and stole tools, money and credit cards from the truck. The brutal kicking continued even after he fell unconsciously to the ground. His injuries were close to fatal, and during the nine days he spent in a coma, it was uncertain if he would ever wake up. When he did—according to the latest news available, he recovered and went back to work 4 months later—his survival was accredited to a nurse who had stepped between him and his attackers. She, Debra Hughes, was not harmed, and the boy Utash had hit suffered minor injuries and recovered soon after.
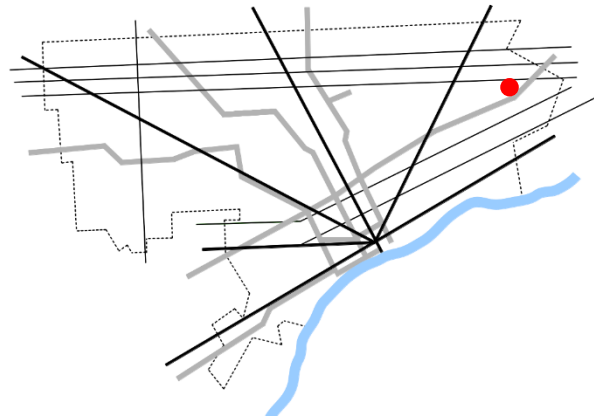
This is the truth meaning that all discourses I had access to agree on these facts. Neither news articles, nor personal comments I heard, nor statements made in court dispute it. Having one shared interpretation of an event is not common in Detroit. In this case; however, a CCTV camera of a nearby gas station had captured the boy carelessly stepping into traffic, proving that Steve Utash is not to blame for hitting the boy.[2]

Steve Utash's fate became the city's main topic, and made headlines for the days to follow. The incident was reported in many national news[3], and even a few international ones.[4] This, I argue, is not due to an excessive amount of violence. Crimes like this are common in Detroit: the long-term "Murder Capital of the USA". Most of them are only noted briefly in the local news. This crime received an exceptional high level of attention because of the sheer

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[1]   I conceal any personal information as far as possible. When it was foreseeable that friends, coworkers, or others could identify a person in spite of anonymizing, or their position or attributes could make them recognizable, they were warned beforehand and asked for permission. However, the names of all persons involved in this specific incident have been reported repeatedly, and any profound description will make them easily identifiable. I therefore decided to use their real names.

[2]   Guessing what would have happened without the camera is speculative, but I assume there would have been voices criticizing the reckless driving attributed to suburbanites in the city. That is why many articles point out Mr. Utash was not speeding.

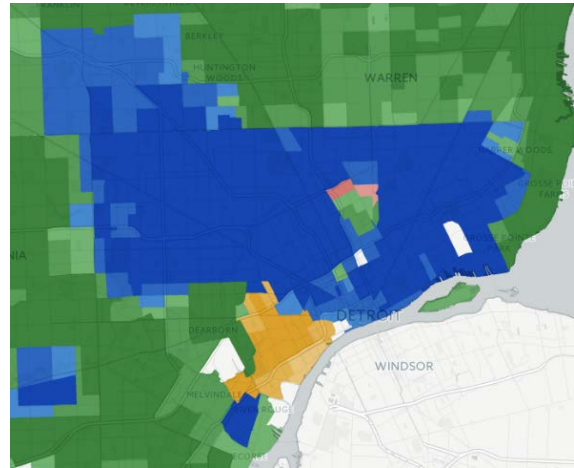[3]   I.e. Washington Post. 4.4.2014. Motorist beaten by mob still in critical condition. Daily Tribune. 3.4.2014. Macomb County man who struck boy with truck remains in critical condition after beaten by mob.

[4]   I.e. The Independent. 4.4.2014. Detroit driver Steve Utash beaten by mob after he accidentally hit 10-year-old David Harris. Focus online. 4.4.2014. Mann fährt Kind an – Zeugen schlagen ihn halbtot.

amount of contested symbols and lines of conflict intersecting it. Underlying the discussion was the question whether, to what extent, and why this excessive violence was exemplary for Detroit.[5]

Steve Utash was a white suburbanite, driving through one of the poorer, more dreaded neighborhoods of the already poor and dreaded City of Detroit. Mentioning ethnicity was not necessary at that point anymore: he was from the suburbs, which to the readers meant he was white. Therefore, because of the crime's location: the City of Detroit, his attackers were assumed to be African American men.[6] The borders between city and suburbs, like the iconic 8 Mile, are a longstanding symbol for the racial divide that made Detroit one of the most segregated cities in the country.[7] Evident of systemic racism, Detroit carries this divide in class and almost every statistic measure for quality of life. The conflict is charged with enormous mistrust on both sides of 8 Mile, with mutual accusations of racism. Detroit is stigmatized as a crime-ridden slum that endangers the suburbs, and feeds off federal funds that wastes taxpayer money. The border is guarded diligently via racial profiling by the police officers patrolling it—the most pragmatic level. The nation perceives Detroit as a "shithole", a description repeated numerously by the people—a majority of them from the suburbs—I met throughout the United States.

3 Graphic representation of the 2010 U.S. Census, sorted for Ethnicity. The border between City and suburbs is clearly recognizable almost everywhere. (Blue: African American/Black; Green: Caucasian/White; Yellow: Hispanic; Red: Asian; GIS-representation: New York Times.

Many people, including the parents and grandparents of my Detroit friends, avoid ever setting foot in the city, and take extensive safety measures if they do.[8]

One common precaution is to avoid leaving the highway, or not yielding at stoplights and signs when driving on the city's roads. The lack of police patrol in Detroit is both reason and condition for all kinds of unlawfulness and recklessness. Behavior like this, which may be caused by fear, but is attributed to arrogance, classism, and racism, is one of the reasons the suburbanites are often hated by residents of the inner-city of Detroit.[9] The perceived arrogance of white faces behind the windows of upper middle class cars fuels anger and hostility, and contributed to the hatred Steve Utash faced when leaving his car. That the crime happened in the proximity of a gas station fits this picture. Gas stations are neuralgic points in

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[5]   The Detroit News. 4.4.2014. Berman: Brutal beating shows extreme side of bad Detroit. Detroit Free Press. 7.4.2014. In wake of driver beaten, Detroit pastor asks, 'What's wrong with us?'. Detroit Free Press. 4.4.2014. Rochelle Riley on driver's beating: Keep your hate, violence out of our city.

[6]   82% of the Detroit population named Black/ African American as their only race: 2010 US Census, http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/ table/PST045215/2622000#headnote-js-a

[7]   Gary (Indiana) is the only U.S. city more severely segregated (Welch 2001:9f).

[8]   Neither the city nor the suburbs are homogenous. There are lower income, blue collar neighborhoods, black and white, and a few of mixed ones, in the suburbs as well as upper middle class areas within the city. Many suburbanites and Detroiters interact in a pragmatic way less ripe with prejudices. The further we go, the less schematic my portrayal will hopefully become.

[9]   This conflict about pedestrians right to the city had already led to street blockades in Detroit during the 60ies, following several accidents involving children (Bunge 2011:240).

Detroit; the seclusion cars offer depend on them. Many people therefore make sure to gas up before entering the City, or at least avoid getting gas at night. They, like me on more than one occasion, are worried by the groups of people loitering around those stations, which once the last grocery store had closed permanently, often form an area's only infrastructure. The young men that almost killed Steve Utash had been hanging around at this gas station. They, in a city with skyrocketing unemployment rates, had been "hanging around", while Steve Utash was on his way back from honest acceptable work. Few articles failed to mention this detail.

Considering this background, this is not just the story of a rampant beating. In greater Detroit, it is a narrative about a man that hit a child without fault, that wanted to help, and was thrashed by a merciless mob that did not even stop when he was on the ground. Their blind hatred outranked even the most basic human emotion, to help a wounded child. The violence was not aimed at anything, though some did not hesitate to strip him of his belongings. Untamed by human instinct, blind to rhyme and reason, those men would not have stopped destroying this body if not for the Good Samaritan Debra Hughes that, as the only person among the bystanders and witnesses, took the risk to save him. The vicious pack disappeared into the wilderness the overgrown city had become when successively falling back to a Hobbesian natural state. They could rely on the anonymity provided by their illicit communities. Those would not hand them over to the police, no matter how big their misdeed because they had long lost the capability to tell right from wrong. Utash's face was on every newspaper, along with background stories and interviews with the family. This painted the image of a friendly, humble man. All other persons involved remained faceless, and only a few statements from the family of the boy made it into print but they were mostly justifications why their child had been on the streets unattended. The longer the debate went, the more openly the attackers were compared to vicious animals; first in the comment section of online articles, then by newspaper commentators, and finally by a statement of Mr. Utash read out in court.[10] Several comments held the surrounding communities responsible not for the crime, but for hiding the perpetrators. Being poor was not their fault, and neither was the crime that had happened among them; but now they had to show which side they would stand on by cooperating with the police and handing over the escapees. Although the city, to the outside world, tried to present the nurse Hughes as exemplary for her overarching attitude, and the men as the exception, the attackers were more widely seen as symbols for Detroit's attributed climate of violence and ferocity. It is the fear of being thrown among the wolves, of being attacked by an entity not commanded by human reason or empathy, but driven by a sheer will to destroy.

This is not what happened, and it is important to tell narrative from occurrence. What happened is that a human being was attacked, suffered from trauma and severe injuries, existing between life and death in a weeklong coma, and brought to the brink of economic ruin due to medical bills and lack of health insurance. Most of my study revolves around crime, fear, and danger as social constructs, but it must not be forgotten that the victims of those quite often suffer from very real pain. My focus is discourse, but what shapes Mr. Utashs life is whether he can return to work, live pain-free, and if he can overcome his trauma. His offenders also try to figure out how their future lives will look. They had been caught after several days, made deals with the prosecutors so that charges of attempted murder and

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[10]   CBS Crimesider. 7.7.2014. Two sentenced in mob-beating of Detroit motorist.

racial hate crime were dropped, and received sentences anywhere from probation to six years in prison. Those facts were only noted in the local news.[11] What persisted was another story, feeding the fear of Detroit, and contributing to the idea that one is better advised ignoring the stoplights when inside the city limits. After the incident, a police spokesman implied that in the case of a crash, it might be wise to just keep driving until you reach a police station; it was seen as another sign of Detroit's moral ruin.[12]

Most people I talked to do not usually fear a specific incident, like being robbed.[13] People feel this even less so, in daily life, the panic that one might share Steve Utash's tragic fate. Due to the endless stories about Detroit being a wild and dangerous space one has—that is, I had, as well as many others that I talked to—the feeling that there is *something* out there. It can hardly ever be pointed at as easily as in the case portrayed, and it would be a mistake to reduce it to race, or any other single attribute. It is a monstrosity, and monsters stay in the shadows. By far not everybody believes in it, and discourse on fear in Detroit is versatile. The discourse I did research on takes its existence for granted, with all the doubts and ambiguities that believing in monstrosities tends to bring.

1.2. Icarus

Detroit has always had an overlay of contested symbolisms: the Motor City, Arsenal of Democracy[14], Murder Capital, Birthplace of the Middle Class, Black Metropolis, or the Paris of the Midwest, to name just a few of its roles. Long before people ever set foot into the city, or read about its history, those myths shape their expectations. Cities like Fort Worth, Texas, and Columbus, Ohio, both outrank Detroit in population number.[15] Detroit's publicity; however, far exceeds the regional fame of places like Fort Worth ("Queen City of the Prairie"). As Grandin writes, "Detroit supplied a continual stream of symbols of America's cultural power" (Grandin 2013:117). Being capable of producing a high-precision V8 big-block engine and put it into a muscle car was as defining for a super power as "the bomb". In the post-depression era, cars Made in Detroit shaped the image of what it means to "be American" as much as the films Hollywood produced. Those myths shape the framework for both stories and history, they build our perception of the places long before we set foot in them, and thereby change the very place we are about to enter. Each symbol and story of Detroit is contested, and depending on your current position in this debate, it will change the very place you stand.

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[11]   Detroit Free Press, 7.7.2014. 'Not one of them cared', Steven Utash's brother says at sentencings.

[12]   Deadline Detroit. 4.4.2014. *Motorist-Beating Roundup: Victim Clings To Life; Cops Canvass Area.* The Police half-heartedly relativized this statement shortly after.

[13]   In the traditional definition it would classify as anxiety, since it lacks its concrete object (i.e. Garofalo 1981:840). I do not entirely reject this distinction, both terms may make sense as two ends of a continuum. But it is unclear where to draw a line between the two: how objectively dangerous does the object have to be for anxiety to classify as fear? Since this distinction tends to come with a mild subtone of anxiety being irrational, as compared to rational fear, I prefer to use both terms interchangeably, as Svendsen does (2008).

[14]   Detroit's plants and workers produced most of the tanks and bombers used in WWII.

[15]   Detroit has currently 680.000 citizens, making it the 18th largest city in the US.

1.2.1. The hubris

An aspect I am hesitant to interpret is how most narratives seem to follow the Icarus-template of Greek tragedy: the hubris, the nemesis and the catharsis. In common history, Detroit's fate started when Ford introduced the assembly line and quickly flooded the emerging automobile market with his Ford T-model. The sky was the limit. The average production rate rose by a solid 5000% in the first decade; Detroit became The Motor City. Today's Big Three, which are: Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler, dozens of more or less forgotten competitors like Packard or Oldsmobile, and the vast mass of third-party suppliers and subcontractors provided steady jobs for the rapidly growing population. To attract—and keep—workers, Ford had introduced the 5-dollar-day payment plan[16], and brought the American Dream into the 20th Century: the idea of a blue-collar middle class. Undoubtedly, they came: the tired, the poor, and the huddled masses, yearning to breathe free. Among them were immigrants that created the ethnic enclaves of which some can still be traced in the city. White farmers from the south, leaving the fields that could not sustain them anymore, bringing with them the southern spirit: that the poorest, most mediocre white man was still miles above any other race—a belief not uncommon to white Yankees, either. African Americans also came, which had joined the Great Migration north to run from lynch mobs, Jim Crow legislation, and the attitude of the aforementioned. The jobs in the industry turned the Midwest steel belt cities into a Promise Land for the rural victims of agrarian revolutions and the Great Depression. This tripled the population from 285.000 in 1900 to almost a million in 1920, and reached its highest point in 1950 at 1.9 Million, according to the US census. the fact that city had grown at an enormous pace even before Ford's revolution, and the 1920's were actually the last decade to show a two-digit growth rate, is often underrepresented in folk history. Without any doubt, those were the heydays of Detroit, the ones

Year	Population	Increase over previous decade
1900	285,704	38,8%
1910	465,766	63,0%
1920	993,678	113,3%
1930	1,568,662	57,9%
1940	1,623,452	3,5%
1950	1,849,568	14,0%

4 Population of Detroit, 1900-1950 (Thomas 2013:14)

myths are built upon, when it seemed like a new skyscraper was added to the downtown skyline every month. Money was plentiful; enough for people to live in hotels permanently, and those that abstained could build their own dream homes in the vast sea of single-family houses the city turned into. Endless jobs at the assembly lines, middle class for everybody! Unrestrained by sea or mountains, the city grew to its present size of 143 square miles (370km^2). If a city's job is to mop up surplus capital, as Harvey states (2012), Detroit exceeded at it to a point where the streets were almost covered in gold. Tar, actually: in 1909, America's first paved mile of road was cemented. Detroit became synonymous with the car industry, and the car industry with the US economy. Icarus soared, staggering for a brief second during the Great Depression, only to rise to new heights when the Motor City, now renamed Arsenal of Democracy, produced the tanks and bombers for the Second World War. When the G.I.s came home they exchanged their tanks for brand new Cadillacs Made in Detroit and newly built single family houses in the suburbs. At least, as soon as they had

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[16]   For a detailed, and very critical, evaluation of Ford's payment policy that is often presented as the nascent, welfare-oriented benevolent capitalism see Chapter 6 of Kenyon's "Dreaming Suburbia" (Kenyon 2004), or Martelle (2011:74ff).

pushed their substitutes: women, Irish or Polish, and African Americans, out of their old jobs at the assembly lines.

Until the 1960's, this was always the other side of what folk history presents as the story of a never-ending success: no matter how many people found jobs in the booming car industry, unemployment was high among African Americans. Although immigrants from overseas had no easy stand, it was Detroit's black[17] population that was hired last, fired first, and on average held poorly paid jobs at the lowest end of the hierarchies. Ford's 5-dollar-a-day payment plan became famous as the model for a new, benevolent "social capitalism". In reality, only few would qualify for it, and it came at high social costs. For the majority, and especially African Americans, middle class lifestyle was the exception, and poverty and often hunger the rule.
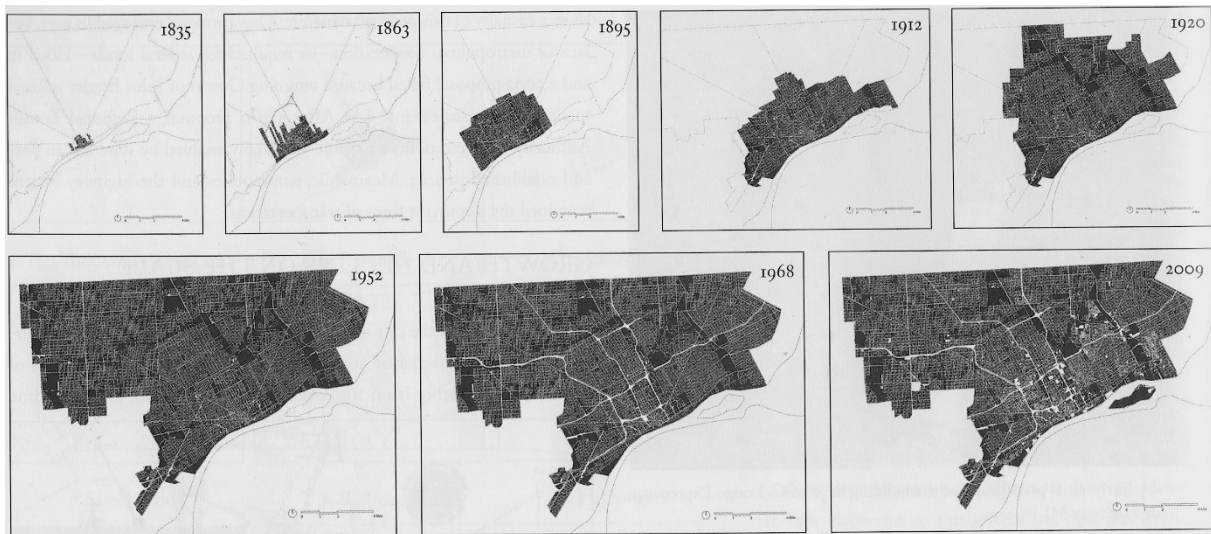
5 After 1930, Detroit grew in size, but not significantly in population. It is now as large as Manhatten, San Francisco, and Boston combined. Map: Thomas (2015:42)

Detroit is now haunted by vacancy and abandonment. This is one of the bitter ironies this narrative of rise and fall has to offer. Housing shortages were at the root of a constant social crisis through its entire prime. While it affected the entire lower class, it was again the African Americans that suffered most. No matter how poor, southern, Irish, or Jewish a white family was, they could still look for housing everywhere in the city. African Americans, on the other hand, were diligently restricted by racial zoning ordinances that prohibited them from settling into white neighborhoods. The U.S. Supreme Court had ruled this practice illegal in 1917, but this had little effect on the situation. Segregation continued in more subtle, but efficient forms until well into the 1960's.[18] The Ku-Klux-Klan had a devastating presence in the city, and whenever black families tried to move into white neighborhoods, they were met by a mob of armed "concerned citizens". Zoning; however, only referred to residence, not to ownership. While it was illegal for an African American to live outside designated ghettos, they could own a house in a white neighborhood and rent it out to a white family. Unsurprisingly, the other case was more common: white people owned apartment buildings

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[17]   Many of my friends and informants called themselves black, and did so proudly. That is why I will switch freely between these two terms.

[18]   Ritzdorf argues based on analysis of current zoning ordinances that patters of segregation to this day only became less obvious as race was increasingly intermingled with class, but not less effective (1997a, 1997b, especially 82ff).
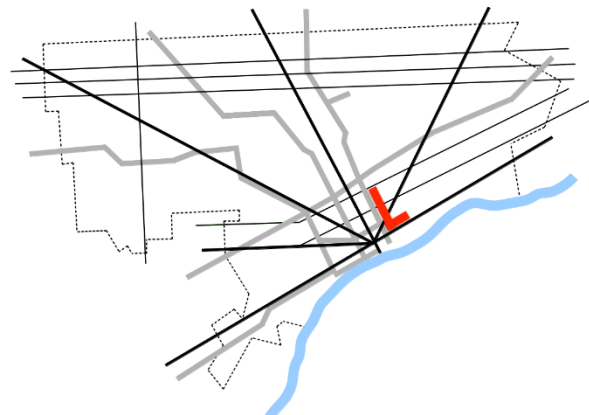
in the overcrowded ghettos of Detroit that they could rent out at enormous rates. Space was scarce everywhere, but the African American neighborhoods were by far the most over-crowded, allowing slumlords to blossom. As Wacquant pointed out, though, the ghetto of the first half of the twentieth century was predominately more than just a place of destitution and desperation. Biology, not class, served as justification for racism, and therefore confined the black middle and upper class to these janus-faced ghettos, as well (Wacquant 2005; Wacquant 2010:23ff). African American neighborhoods were, on average, poorer, but they were not *areas of the poor*. Within these areas included highly educated people that nurtured the roots for what was to become the Civil Rights Movement. Coleman Young, long-time (and much disputed) mayor of Detroit, dedicates a chapter of his biography to a loving description of Black Bottom[19] and its vibrant cultural life (Young 1994).[20] This vivacity was not necessarily restricted to legal entertainment; especially when—like during prohibition—

what was licit did not often correlate with what was considered legitimate.

Even then, it was difficult to determine whether ghettos such as Black Bottom were an abyss of semi-organized crime and im-moral activities that terrorized the commu-nity, or if a safe zone developed in the blind spot of the law. Given the latter, a free and anarchic subculture could live unrestrained by the racist and classist rules of the wider society. Both narratives are exaggerations, but reflect the two portrayals of criminals as either anti-social, or as Robin-Hood-type

6 Black Bottom (red), home of Mayor Coleman Young, was the biggest African American Neighborhood and a cultural hotspot of the emerging Civil Rights Movement.

primitive rebels. Ultimately, it depends on the relationship a community—itself never ho-mogenous—has to its criminals, or persons engaging in deviant behavior.

Conflicts were constant between the various ethnic identities, self-assigned or attributed, that competed for jobs, housing, and ranks on the social and moral hierarchy that was crowned by WASP.[21] The police force, almost exclusively white and infamous among young black men for their racism, excessive violence, and arbitrary shooting, contributed a portion to this climate. On the other hand, Detroit had valid criminal subculture decades before it got the nickname "Murder Capital USA". During prohibition the proximity to Canada had increased mafia activity enough to make Chicago's Al Capone never set foot into the city. These stories are often overlooked when reflecting on Detriot's heydays.[22]

Along with In the case of the working masses, the assembly lines brought the working clas-ses, as well as their—in the perspective of factory owners— nuisances such as: left wing par-

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[19]   Detroit's biggest ghetto, named after its fertile, black river earth.

[20]   His autobiography is the self-justification of a more-than-controversial politician, arisen from and governing within the struggle for African American equality, and has therefore to be read with a grain of salt: Judged by his autobiography he only made one single, minor mistake in his life. But his stories from the pre-riot days of Detroit are vivid, detailed, and evocative, and once the grain of salt is added the description of his time in power is a valuable source.

[21]   WASP stands for the traditional elite of White, Anglo-Saxon Protestants; the 'male' goes without saying.

[22]   There is little point in comparing quantity or quality of the crime today with earlier periods. While population statis-tics exist, definition of crime and deviant behavior, as well as police statistics and police attitude have changed. And in the end, a statistic like this could only state that poor people are possibly more prone to theft, and less to tax evasion.

ties, demands, and unions. For a while, Detroit was on the forefront of leftist and socialist fights. Henry Ford, in all his various, complicated and antagonistic entanglements in the City of Detroit, was the worthy opponent for those fights. By far the mightiest in Detroit's circle of mighty industrials, he had a firm grip on "his" city, for the better or worse. His paternalistic benevolence for some of his workers, the model villages and welfare programs, his surveillance networks and black lists provided by the churches, his racism, anti-Semitism, and militant anti-unionism, were fed by the almost unchecked powers that full-scale capitalism provided him. Even at the point when the main union, the UAW (United Auto Workers), slowly fought its way toward a system of social partnership between employers and employees, there continued to be a significant, more or less organized militant wing that called for wildcat strikes, plant occupations and sabotage. The unions mirrored the racial issues of the time. The predominantly white members of the UAW were by no means convinced that demands for equality should be part of unionized action, and the plant owners were quick to use and deepen this divide by hiring black workers, or other stigmatized ethnicities, as strike breakers—thus adding to the mistrust the UAW had against African Americans. "Black and White, Unite and Fight" was the slogan of left-wing and black workers in order to overcome racial divides and support common working class demands.

These calls for equality were not only rejected by white people, but also from African Americans that saw the Civil Rights movement very differently from people like Martin Luther King Jr., Militant black workers and the Black Panthers had a much more pro-active idea of what "civil resistance" and self-defense might mean. Ideas to form an independent African American Nation were popular, giving a new and very different facet to the official jurisdiction of "separate, but equal". The Nation of Islam, founded in Detroit, turned the stigmatization upside down with their claims of black supremacy. The majority of Detroit's African American population, as far as evident in the literature used for this paper, identified with Martin Luther King Jr.'s goals, though many could definitely warm up for the more active approaches of the Black Panthers. Ultimately, calls for "segregation on different terms" were definitely more than just sole statements of isolated extremists.[23]

While this multitude of conflicts, the housing crisis, and poverty, are a well-established fact in the academic literature on Detroit, folk history emphasizes the bright side of pre-riot Detroit. Some historians argue that the city, in fact, never really recovered from the great depression, with the WWII just giving a short break to its downturn (Martelle 2011:114). Instead, many people, both black and white, call it the heydays. They focus on the vibrancy, when the streets had been bursting with life, when Motown's cultural scene was second to no other city, and social capitalism promised everybody their American Dream. The memory of these glorious days seems to allow for little else besides glory.

1.2.2. The Nemesis

Setha Low develops twelve city types, among them the ethnic city, the divided, the gendered, the contested, the de-industrialized, the global, and the sacred (1999:5). There is little value in debating how useful typologies like these are, but they can provide a framework for a while (for criticism, see Allegra et.al. 2012:562f). In the case of Detroit, it is striking how

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[23] For a profound account of several politic, social and religious subcultures and movements, i.e. the "Black Jesus" movement, read Dillard (2007, i.e. 10ff, 288f).

many of Low's types fit.[24] First and foremost, Detroit recently became *the* global symbol for Deindustrialization.[25] Today, after not only the fate of a metropolis, but also the meaning of a symbol was entirely revolved, history itself is up for debate.

The single main event of Detroit's post-war history is the five days of riots after a police raid on July 23, 1967. Although historians, most prominently Thomas Sugrue, disproved the image of the riots as turning point, emphasizing the continuity of historical processes (2005), they remain the watershed event in folk history of Detroit. Like a small-scale 9/11, they separate into a "before" and "after". After five traumatic nights of race riots, looting and arsons, forty-three people were killed, approximately 1,200 (officially) injured, and more than 2,000 buildings burned down, before the National Guard and two Army divisions were able to re-establish order. There had been riots in Detroit before,[26] as well as in other cities during the "summer of rage" (Herman 2013), but this riot was the biggest single event of civil disturbance, or even rebellion during this time. It is blamed for "white flight", the shift of the white middle class to the suburbs (which was slowly followed by the black middle class once racial zoning ordinances of the suburbs yielded to court rules and zeitgeist). When white people left, the city became the "black metropolis", but stripped of its economic base, and increasingly defunct. Detroit 2.0, according to this narrative, is the result of five days of anarchy and untamed violence by black people, though many narrators freely admit that it was an overdue reaction to the racist police violence. Academic literature started to stress the excessive looting, with an emphasis on class, rather than race, as the driving factor (i.e. Bergmann 2008).

As previously mentioned, this narrative is anything but uncontested. Already, after the riots it was interpreted by some as a "revolution", or an uprising of suppressed African American against an oppressive system. Historians point out that the economic decline, as well as white flight, had started right after the war: "During the 1950s, nearly one out of every four white Detroit residents moved to the suburbs." (Kenyon 2004:12; see also Jackson 1985). Developing politics were aimed at the suburbs, providing

7 It may not look like it, but behind this flag post everytng is different, supposedly. Border between Detroit City and Grosse Point, on Mack Ave.

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[24]   I took the liberty of sacralizing Detroit's cars. If you are unwilling to buy that argument, re-watch the movie *Vanishing Point* (Sarafian, 1971).

[25]   "Global" is a wide word. I do not think too many people, on a global scale, share this symbolism. This, however, is probably true of any city commonly referred to as 'global'. The term seems to refer more to a symbolism shared amongst the famous Global Middle Class, or to a self-exaggeration of 'The West': "Global is what we think everybody should know, or care about".

[26]   In 1943 a white mob was marching through Black Bottom, setting fire and beating up people, leaving 34 dead. Smaller incidents of racialized violence occurred almost every year. None of these events, however, is as present in public discourse as the 1967 riots.

white ex-G.I.s the necessary credits to build single-family houses outside the overcrowded, expansive, and exceedingly discredited cities. These politics came at a cost for the inner cities; not only Detroit, but almost every U.S. inner city suffered severely from this suburbanization. While others recover, Detroit's population has been between decline and free fall ever since. From almost 2 million in the 1950's, it is now down to 680,250 in 2014.[27] In addition, the car industry slowly started to leave Detroit, running from the Unions and high property prices, to the suburbs, the southern "sun belt", or other countries. This move was partly orchestrated by the Pentagon which started to realize the danger of bundling the majority of heavy industry in one single city, especially since by that time the UDSSR had caught up in nuclear arms race. Even in the plants that had remained, mechanization replaced many of the jobs traditionally held by African American blue-collar middle class. Bourgois gives an intimate, small-scale analysis of the trouble People of Color had to adapt to this new form of economy (Bourgois 1995). Most white-collar jobs in the FIRE[28] industry remained white only, and the service-oriented jobs fail to provide a livable income. This fate hit Detroit the hardest, but was shared by all rust belt cities. Voices that ask if the riot should be interpreted as class-based looting in the guise of a racial riot, pointing to the pillages in white working class neighborhoods, find little audience. To this day, the relations of the city and its various suburbs are characterized by antagonism, mistrust, and open hostility, especially in the post-riot years. While one should not homogenize the suburbs or city, statistics show that, on average, the suburbs are more affluent with some ranking among the cities with the highest median income of the US. These suburbs also have a significantly lower African American population; crime and unemployment are lower, housing prices and education higher. Nevertheless, the background for this tension should not be mistaken for its reason: both sides did very little to overcome their discrepancies. As Herman points out, until today there has been no central ritual for commemorating the riots (2013:2). Instead, both sides accuse each other to elevate tensions. In his inauguration speech, Coleman Young, Detroit's first black mayor, promised to fight crime. He advised criminals to leave the city, to "cross 8 Mile". The suburbs understood it as an official *hallali* for Detroit's criminals to open hunt on the suburbs. When Brooks Patterson, the very outspoken chief executive of Oakland County[29], mentioned that stricter gun laws for Detroit would help reducing crime rates, Coleman Young answered that he would never restrict a black person's right to bear arms when white KKK militias were lurking right across 8 mile. Those are just two outstanding anecdotes from decades of mutal animosities, of which the relation of Patterson and Young could be an allegory. During my first stay in Detroit, Patterson had published a long article entitled "Drop dead, Detroit". Since Young had already died, Patterson did not get a proper answer: "Turn Detroit into an Indian reservation, where we herd all the Indians into the city, build a fence around it, and then throw in the blankets and corn."[30] Again, this is not the voice of a single, isolated weirdo, but of a long-time county executive being elected by his community precisely because he builds these walls, sometimes literally. During my first winter, the snow ploughs of a north-

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[27]   http://www.census.gov/popest/data/cities/totals/2014/files/SUB-EST2014_26.csv

[28]   An abbreviation for the new, post-industrial economies: Finance, Insurance, Real Estate.

[29]   Detroit is part of the so-called tri-county area, where Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne County meet. Detroit City is part of Wayne County, many of the wealthier suburbs belong to Macomb or Oakland. County Executive is the highest political position on county level.

[30]   The New Yorker. 27.1.2014. Williams, Paige. Drop Dead, Detroit – The suburban kingpin who is driving off the city's decline.

ern suburb erected a snow wall at the city border, thereby effectively converting Mack Avenue, one of the major thoroughfares for thousands of commuters, into a cul-de-sac. While this may be dismissed as a childish act of defiance, excessive racial profiling by the local police forces that patrol Detroit's border from the outside is more severe. Ultimately, this mindset has the most impact on a structural level for example, when inter-city public transport is rejected, hindering Detroiters, which often lack the means for private cars, from applying for jobs in the suburbs. The suburbs; however, depend on the City's infrastructure for water supply. This is a constant thorn in the suburbanite's side, and control over the Water and Sewage Department became a central issue during the city's bankruptcy.

This is not to say that water pipes were Detroit's only connection to its suburbs. Thousands of commuters cross the city lines every day, in both directions. There are increasingly more jobs in Downtown, as well as the overall city. Although Young had made residency in the city mandatory for civil servants like teachers, police officers, or firemen in order to prevent further drainage of city salaries to the suburbs, many people that work in the city live outside its boundaries. The university is in the city, and rents from city houses flow to their suburban owners. Several entertainment enterprises are also only offered within the City of Detroit, like major sports

8 The Graffiti on top says "Decolonize". It was painted during the fight against the Emergency Manager. One major highway, connecting city and suburbs, runs right behind the small building in the foreground. The demand was carefully positioned were suburban commuters would have to pass by. Image: Google Street View, 14.10.2014.

events, one of America's greatest art museums, the opera, a nightlife district and casinos. For less glamorous sources of entertainment, one is well advised to visit the city, too: strip clubs and prostitution, commonly found south of 8 Mile. Several people told me that they had gone to the city in their adolescence for underage drinking and illegal marijuana purchases. Due to the low police presence within the city, drugs are more widespread, cheaper, and of better quality than in the suburbs. As long as drug deals do not escalate, the city is a safer spot for both dealers and buyers than the heavily patrolled suburbs. A friend quoted a statistic I could not confirm, stating that half of the heroin sold in Detroit was going to the suburbs. Next to poverty, drugs and gangs are seen as the main reason for the high crime rates in the city. As mentioned above, crime has always been an issue in Detroit. In the Roaring Twenties Detroit was already considered to be "among the most violent and crime-ridden cities in the country", with more than 700 brothels[31] within a mile from city hall, an estimated 70,000 "gangsters"[32], and a strong mafia (Martelle 2011:109f). While those "official" criminals may have frightened the honorable citizens, a number of those citizens supported the Ku-Klux-Klan which, together with the police, terrorized the African American population. In the 1970's, the "h-bomb", also referred to as the heroin "epidemic", hit Detroit, than followed by Crack in the 1980's. As in many U.S. inner cities, drugs have since re-

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[31]   Prostitution is illegal in Michigan, as to my knowledge in the entire USA.

[32]   Although I have no idea how the statistic was made, and who qualified as a "gangster".

mained a major issue, and a majority of the murders are said to be drug-related. Even though Detroit had the highest murder rate of the U.S. for only three years[33], it never quite rid itself of the title "Murder Capital", and many Detroiters feel that throwing dirt at their city has become the media's pastime activity. On the other hand, in light of 295 murders in 2015, a rate of 43 per 100.000 residents, few would claim that the negative attention is entirely fake. The rate has been decreasing slowly since the mid-1970's; however, is still way above other major US cities.[34] While the nickname "Murder City" sticks, property crime has a more severe impact on the majority of the population's daily life. In 2014, there had been 3,570 robberies reported, 9,100 burglaries, and 13,700 cases of theft, not counting 10,000 stolen cars.[35] Considering the slow police response and low detection rate, it is fair to assume that many more crimes went unreported, not least because of the aversion some groups feel against the police.[36] The high poverty rate means that a stolen car can often threaten a whole existence, and quite a few incidents escalate because people refuse to give away their meager possessions. Lacking both insurance and financial buffers, losing your car may mean job loss and homelessness thereafter.

Furedi's much quoted "culture of fear" (2005) may seem as a useful term to describe such a state of affairs. The term is well established in the literature on fear, on the USA, or on the entire post-9/11 world (Massumi 1993a:vii; Svendsen 2008:7).[37] Ironically, discourse on "cultures of fear" became fearsome itself. Apparently, the entire world/West is dominated, even more: structured on all levels by its fears, to a point where we should start fearing our fear itself. In fact, I do treat fear as a central emotion that structures the daily life of many Detroiters; however, I refrain from analyzing it as a "culture of fear". Fear is only one emotion constructing the field, next to myriads of others. Talking about a culture of fear gives the impression that the entire city would be ruled by it, and define fear and anxiety as the guiding principles of life's every step. If there is anything I can state about Detroit with full and absolute certainty, then that this not the case. Rather, talking about a "culture of fear" would feed into a discourse way too common about Detroit, and strengthen a reductionist image all my informants asked me to avoid.[38]

While the relation of criminals and community is only one side, the community's relationship with its police force had already been tense for decades.[39] Even after the riots, and after an African American became mayor, the attitude towards the Detroit Police Department

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[33]   1985-1987, but all these statistics should be read with care.

[34]   Chicago, for example, had 17 homicides per 100,000 residents, and New York 4. All figures: http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2016/01/07/detroit-crime-homicide-rates-2015/78401536/

[35]   www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2014/crime-in-the-u.s.-2014/tables/table-8/table-8-by-state/Table_8_Offenses_Known_to_Law_Enforcement_by_Michigan_by_City_2014.xls.

[36]   I would especially doubt the number of robberies. As the FBI admits itself, the statistic relies on figures stated by the local police forces. Not only do Detroit authorities have little incentive to add proof to the stigma, many Detroiters simply do not bother calling the police for crimes they assume will never be solved.

[37]   It seems to have developed a life of its own, where the seemingly evident meaning of the word overruled Furedi's definition. Instead of downscaling the waves of catastrophic horror stories hunting each other it is now often used to describe "cultures" entirely structured and ruled by fear (2005:xi f)

[38]   More generally, "Culture of Fear" is a concept so unsatisfying I would reject it as a whole if only I would trust my own capabilities to do so (For further criticism, see Hopkins, Smith 2008:103).

[39]   While this is no excuse for aggressive behavior, it has to be stated that risk is high for Detroit Police Officers. In the decade after the riots 35 officers died on duty. Since 2000, 13 died (11 by gunshots, 1 stabbed, 1 heart attack). http://www.odmp.org/agency/1000-detroit-police-department-michigan.

changed very slowly, and efforts to integrate the police force were fought fiercely. The attempts to get more African Americans officers were considered racist against white candidates. Similar to other fields, affirmative action was attacked on the grounds of black racism on the one hand, and sacrificing efficiency for political correctness on the other. The more political power African Americans gained, the more excluded the white population, increasingly a minority in—what they considered—"their" city, felt.[40]

At this point, Detroit became the "black metropolis", a title and status in which Detroiters still take pride.[41] There are two ways to read the "Black Metropolis": that African Americans would ruin even the most prosperous city within a few decades, or that white people would rather send their greatest city down the drain instead of allowing a black man (not to mention a woman) to decide its fate. Both interpretations have been used openly in discourse ever since. Recently, a third and subtler depiction arose: Detroit, the "Third World City". Newspapers used the term as a metaphor, and an icon for poverty, danger, drugs, crumbling infrastructure, and people of color. Americans needed to solve the riddle of how all this— the metamorphosis from the Mecca of Modernity to an icon of failed industrialism—was possible so close to home by pushing the city over the border, geographically and morally. As a nice side effect of this mental relocation, there could be no moral demand to act since, as is well known, there is no solution for the third world problem. Black people are now once again amongst black people. Detroiters themselves use this narrative less often, more warily, and with a different touch. By calling Detroit a third world city, they stress that, by virtue of their civil rights as U.S. citizens, "the state" should never have let it come to this point. They implicitly criticize the state's failure to uphold the level of development it prescribes itself as a nation.

As more people left the city, the less taxes it received.[42] Many costs; however, did not change: the 600,000 residents that remained still pay the pensions for those city employees that had once served the needs of 2 million. The infrastructure that has to be maintained for example: roads, canalization etc., was laid out for three times as many users, and payers. The geographic size of the city remained unchanged. Due to its large areas of single-family housing population density had always been low. Today, it is slightly below 1,900 residents per square kilometer (New York: 10,700).[43] Institutions such as: schools, fire departments and police departments, are underfunded

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[40]   Clemens gives a vivid, personal account of the perceived discrimination that drove ever more white families out of town (2005).

[41]   It was originally given to Gary, Indiana, another rust belt city that suffered a similarly tragic fate.

[42]   In the U.S. tax system, cities rely heavily on the property tax residents pay. While they, within limits, can adjust the tax rate, the income itself depends on the housing value and the number of residents. To pay salaries and meet the obligations from a growing pile of debt the city had continuously raised the tax rate. Residents now pay comparatively high taxes for poor city services – which is often pointed out, and does not incite people to move to the City.

[43]   Detroit: http://www.census.gov/2010census/popmap/ipmtext.php?fl=26

   New York: http://www.census.gov/2010census/popmap/ipmtext.php?fl=26

and critically overstretched. The city failed to re-adapt from a city type infrastructure to a more rural layout of services. This is not necessarily the administration's fault; there are few tools to manage de-growth. While decades of urban planners studied ways to canalize growth and development, interest in shrinking cities is comparatively new.[44] The loss of two thirds of the city's residence did not mean one third of the city was intact. One must not imagine a shrinking city as 60% smaller; rather, one should imagine it to be 60% thinner. While impact was harder on some neighborhoods than on others, every neighborhood had thinned out. Plans to "drop" parts of the city—which meant to stop providing city services or move the residents—occasionally circulated, but were fiercely rejected by the population. However, these ideas were later incorporated into the "Future City Plan" which was intended to facilitate recovery after the Detroit fell into bankruptcy.

The most abandoned areas provide the iconography, and physical evidence, for one of the most famous and most dismissed narratives about Detroit: that it is "falling back to nature". This is part of the Icarus myth as well: having been carved out of the endless "untouched" woods itself, the city in its frontier days had served as a haven to conquer the Mid-West. From an endless wilderness it was turned into a monument of man's triumph over nature— just to fall back to "wilderness" a few decades later.[45] When Antoine Cadillac advertised his new settlement to the French king, he excitedly reported: "There the hand of the pitiless mower has never shorn the juicy grass on which bisons of enormous heights and size fatten." (quoted in Martelle 2012:3) Today, the estimated 90,000 empty lots[46] are called Urban Prairie, and the pheasants, and occasional deer or stray dog receive wide attention as symbols

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for wilderness running rampant.[47] These places add to the fear of the city in which many residents advise avoiding them. Around 50,000 houses are empty or abandoned[48], with some used by squatters or homeless people. The average housing prices are low, and the news of 500-dollar-houses, or as low as 1 dollar houses, became part of the standard narrative of this city. Since unpaid property tax sticks to the lot, not to the owner, many houses come with tens of thousands of dollar obligations, making them unmarketable. Many post-WWII houses were built poorly; once uninhabited, the structures fell in disrepair, and will soon be beyond repair. So-called "scrappers" accelerate the process by forcibly removing all metal parts, and selling them to recycling facilities. On the other side, old upper class brick stone houses recently started to market at higher prices, and are therefore more often worth the repair. Overall, the majority of the abandoned houses can only be torn down. The city along with financial support from the state spent large sums of money to bulldoze down 5000 houses in 2016.[49] Nevertheless, abandonment continues to be critically high, and is the biggest source of concern and fear both among Detroiters and visitors. Many of them project all the "bad" they hear about Detroit onto this wilderness: the areas, the houses, the people.

1.2.3. The moral

Among all these narratives, a critical discourse unfolds, far exceeding the city and state limits. It asks the question: Who is to blame? What once was a monument of (white) man's cultivation of the West now stands as a *memento mori*.[50] Who is responsible for this metropolis becoming a shithole—as many openly call it? Ultimately, within US context, the answer you give in this blame-game tells a lot about where you stand.

Was it the unions? UAW has had extraordinary success in winning good conditions for its members. Did those conditions force the companies to move in order to stay in business? Then unions should be restrained in order to keep them from biting the hand that feeds them. Did management become greedy and disappear without reason, leaving the very city that created their wealth to starve? Does globalization only profit a certain class, or was shifting the production to outside the U.S. perhaps the only way to counter the German and Mexican competition, thereby protecting at least a fraction of jobs in the US? Maybe it was the African Americans? Maybe we should never have given them our wonderful city, just to watch them destroy every good thing they can lay their hands upon? Those nasty opinions are common, though not usually as outspoken. There is; however, the counter narrative: how could any city have survived once the entire upper class and a great part of the middle class runs away, taking with them not only knowledge and experience, but their sheer abun-

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[47] Herron (1993:98) gives an analysis how the pheasants became a symbol for wilderness in Detroit, winding through discourse like the romantic's blue flower. Less appealing, wild dogs are feared by many. Often, it is said, they served as guard dogs for drug dealers. The numbers of stray dogs roaming the city, how-ever, seem to be exaggerated: http://michiganradio.org/post/msu-researchers-want-figure-out-how-many-stray-dogs-are-really-roaming-detroit#stream/0.

[48] https://www.motorcitymapping.org/#t=overview&s=detroit&f=all, though estimates wary: the 2010 Census amounts to 80,000: http://www.census.gov/2010census/popmap/ipmtext.php?fl=26

[49] http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2016/06/01/detroit-get-additional-88m-blight-removal/85259360/.

[50] Like the entire idea of "A city falling back to nature", this employs a dichotomy of nature and culture. I use it as my perception of an emic sentiment, not as argument for a return to structuralism.

dance of wealth? Was it they who "pulled the plug on Detroit", as it was repeatedly called,[51] then being ruled by a black mayor? Was it the Republicans in Washington or Lansing, the capitol of the traditionally right-wing Michigan, or the Democrats that governed Detroit for decades? Maybe, and this seemingly post-ideological discourse recently became more *en vogue*, the days of industrialism are over, and Detroit is once more on the forefront of history, and offering us a peephole into the future that awaits the entire world/West? Maybe degrowth and urban farming are the future, now that the assembly lines that produced the American dream came to a halt. As for the drugs so devastating for Detroit, there is a widespread theory among African Americans blaming the CIA to have "brought it into the communities", as one of my informants called it.[52] This is not to say that Detroit (or this text) was the litmus test to judge if globalization, neoliberalism, or African Americans are *good* or *bad*. If you discuss those questions in wider U.S. politics; however, at some point you will have to position yourself on the issue of Detroit. That is the power of this city/symbol: you cannot ignore it, but are forced to navigate its meanings.

1.2.4. Is there Catharsis?

Discourse on Detroit has recently changed due to, as cynics argue, the return of white people. The housing crisis after 2007 seems to have been Detroit's final blow. Another quarter million people left, the city's tax base collapsed entirely, and in 2013, it officially declared bankruptcy. It is believed to have hit rock bottom, though that prediction had been there before. Now, and not for the first time, people are talking about a fresh start for Detroit. From Brooklyn to Portland; artists, hipsters, yuppies, and whatever other denominators the feuilletons came up with wonder if Detroit may become the next Berlin? While the population is still in decline, one specific segment grows: "white people are moving back to Detroit," as headlined in the Detroit Free Press.[53] While not all of those that returned belong to the class of young, well-educated and mostly white professionals, this group received the most attention.

Folk history often ignores the fact that the city was already home to 500,000 people, and one of the nation's biggest economies for wood, tobacco and heavy industries, before Ford ever built his first car.[54] Neither do the Native Americans, which only Bunge in his groundbreaking piece of early social geography, seem to recognize (2011:8f). With every turn of events: its founding, its transition into an automobile city and its economic decline, discourse treats the city like a blank slate, as if the people, structures and communities that had once existed, instantly ceased to exist. Like the three major turning-points of Detroit, Icarus'

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[51] A metaphor referring to switching of the machines that keep a coma patient alive.

[52] I am aware that some people take umbrage with the term "informant". I will call a friend a friend, describe personal relations, and give context whenever it is called for. But this guy, like many others, I met accidentally, we talked for five minutes, and never saw us again. I am grateful for the information people like him gave me, and do not mean to reduce their existence to being an informant. But since this is how they entered my life, and my research, this is what I will call them, hopefully without offending any of them. The CIA conspiracy theory is very influential, and to be honest: the more you look into other incredibilities i.e. of the McCarthy area, the more I was willing to believe it (see Kullmann 2012:81).

[53] http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2015/12/07/new-black-civil-rights-groups-detroit-seek-voice/75214942/.

[54] The first part of "Detroit – a Biography" provides an excellent overview of the pre-riot, and especially pre-Fordist days of Detroit (Martelle 2011).

fall is too dramatic to leave anything unchanged. How could any part of the "Paris of the Midwest" not be transformed by Ford's Motor City? How could any *grandezza* have survived the post-war economic meltdown? This is especially true for the current situation, where low real estate prices and an abundance of vacancies make people think of the city as an empty canvas ready to host their dreams, plans and utopias—a situation that makes Detroiters feel the need to emphasize that: "We are still here! This City is not empty!" While the availability of space for low prices, or unchallenged squatting gave room to the image of Detroit as a heterotopia, the "blank slate ideology" became one of the most crucial accusations against newcomers.

The Bankruptcy had been fiercely debated, but ultimately been pushed through under the argument of economic inevitability. A fresh, post-cathartic start would ultimately lead to a financially stable city, which could finally offer decent services for its citizens. Many rejected this argumentation, arguing that banks and big industry had ruined this city, and therefore, should pay for it. Even those not engaged in a full-scale critique of capitalism argued that a City was a public institution, and therefore should be treated differently from a broke company. Common to all people fighting the bankruptcy was their rejection of the Emergency Manager, Kevyn Orr. He was appointed by the State of Michigan to take the roll of an insolvency administrator, and his powers overrule those of the elected city representatives. Very few Detroiters saw this as a breakthrough in cleaning out the notoriously corrupt city administration. It was mostly considered an undemocratic move by the Republican governor to take power over the traditionally Democratic city—an action not undertaken against New York, or any other predominantly white city that had ever filed bankruptcy.[55] Effectively taking away the right to vote from the residents of the "black metropolis" showed a remarkable lack of political sensitivity. It should be mentioned; however, that mayor Mike Duggan, democratically elected in 2013, is white. While race continues to be a critical issue in Detroit, it would be wrong to assume that it is the single factor structuring every aspect of daily or political life. This also holds true for fear, even among those whose fear I shared and studied (with the focus shifting back and forth between the two). This development, and the spirit and fears it brings, will come up throughout the following sections.

1.3. Fear and Awe

Citing the Icarus theme is more than just a sleight of hand to prove my humanistic upbringing. I assume that, on an abstract level, the fear of Detroit is directly related to the dramaturgy. In Detriot's stories, the city soared so high, and fell so deep, that it has developed an aura. If there are sacred spaces, Detroit is a sacrilegious one. Places of past-shared glory are awe-inspiring, like graves of fallen heroes or the sublime atmosphere of a cathedral left to crumble. Some places are haunted by the ghosts of their own past; Detroit is definitely one of them. Lefebvre: "They can thus be categorized […] on the basis of 'topias' (isotopias, heterotopias, utopias, or in other words analogous places, contrasting places, and the places of what has no place, or no longer has a place –the absolute, the divine, or the possible). More importantly, such places can also be viewed in terms of the highly significant distinction between *dominated* spaces and *appropriated* spaces" (2012:163f; quoted as in the original).

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[55] New York City had to accept financial scrutiny of a State Agent, but Detroiters emphasize that he did not have as much power as Michigan state's Emergency Manager.

Spaces of the possible, in every sense of the word, describe the perception quite well. Though tempting to some, the awe of Detroit more often creates a sublime shiver among its spectators: who may have claimed the empty buildings, the streets, the empty city? For Lefebvre, the "consensus" (he puts it in apostrophes himself) of non-violence and other basic, tacit agreements structuring interactions take the form of a spatial contract, an attribute of "abstract space" (56f). One line structuring the stigmatization of Detroit is that the existence of this very consensus is debated—recall the Steve Utash Incident! Fear is a multi-level "thing", and those familiar with the city, interact with it on much more mundane terms. The fear among those that know little or nothing about Detroit is, as is my conviction after traveling the United States for months, due to this aura of the sublime. The discursive wolves that attacked Steve Utash roam the wilderness of Detroit's former greatness like the zombies walk through post-apocalyptic movies of New York.

2. Walking Fear on the Ground Level

Fear should not be reduced to a macro-level alone, like an ominous cloud of fear hovering over a city, country, or the post-9/11 world. Sentiments; like fear and many others, build the background for specific localized experience. It does not; however, overwrite them,[56] and moments that consist solely of fear, panic, and terror are fortunately rare. Isolating specific moments of fear, all-encompassing or not, from their social context for the purpose of study harbors the risk of universalizing. The results are often overgeneralized psychological insights on the "nature of human fear", if possible deriving from fear among great apes or the akin. This research tends to neglect the fact that Bonobos, as to our knowledge, never put on white lab coats and worked together in networks of thousands to study humans. Without discussing the age-old question of nature and nurture, it is fair to state that millennia of human culture; however defined, changed humans beyond the point simplistic cause-effect studies can explain. Every weekend, in most cities, young humans wait in line to be exposed to high-volume noises that would trigger the flight reflex of any other mammal. To leave the field of irony, and bonmots on bonobos, let us consider that it is your sentiment which distinguishes a cave, site of refugee, from an entrapment, apparently a universal trigger of panic, or at least discomfort (Ward Thompson 2013:29f). Once I add a million parameters, specific to "culture", age, power hierarchies, gender etc., to account for this "sentiment", any "universal" statement about the human psyche becomes worthless. Any human assessment of, and reaction to, situations depend on many more factors, both individual and collective, than quantitative and generalizing psychological theory is capable to fully take into account.
 I do not negate the use of psychology, neither in general or in the field of fear and anxiety, on the contrary. Although, in the case of Detroit the explanations offered about the fear people seem too simplistic to me. I have to admit, this may stem from a simple bias: I shared this fear myself, and few people, neither anthropologists nor psychologists like to be subjected to the structures they impose on others. Maybe I over-exaggerate the deviances from the psychological explanations because neither I, nor those I studied, as far as I can speak on their behalf, like to have their autonomy castrated by those studies. I do not think so, but admit that it is possible.
The fear I studied and felt is not the one that interrupts daily life. It is not the fear you feel when you look down the barrel of a gun, and not even the fear when you walk home at night with the sound of foot steps behind you. It is like an ambient noise that is always there, but only occasionally present. It is a fear that underlies daily life, but rarely breaks it. It hardly ever determines your choices, but is always part of your being-in-the-world. This makes it complicated to write about. Since it does not usually determine a situation, it would be pointless to single out moments were it did. If it underlies daily life, isolating the situations it dominated would be distorting. How do you describe a feature of daily life without reducing daily life to it? Especially since fear is an emotion very voluptuous for attention.

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[56] Rachel Pain uses the image of a DNS-like double helix of micro- and macro level, mutually recreating each other at every contact point (Pain 2008:8f). While I do not reject the content of the metaphor, I do not like its analogy to DNS. Fear is not the blueprint of life.

I try to describe it as it occurs: while moving through the city. While talking and walking along 2nd or 3rd street, from the downtown towards the university, I will tell the changes of environment, signs and emotions, the things I know about the areas and the things people told me about them. Do not mistake this for a description of reality! While I am not making it up, I do select and re-arrange it. The streets we walk are not an "average of Detroit", they do not show reality more or less than any other street. They parallel Woodward, the city's main axis; I chose to follow them because   I often biked them, which is also why several of the issues I studied play out along those streets.
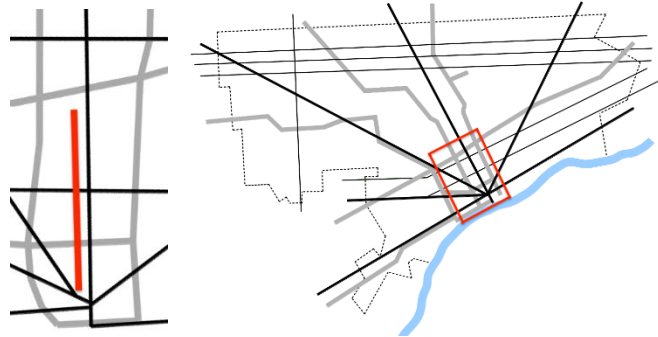
9 For better orientation, I will at times use a more detailed map of greater downtown only

I am a white man with a wealthy background; apparently, we are the *flâneurs* wandering the cities.[57] Detroit is; however, very different from Benjamin's Paris, and you will find neither the crowds, nor the arcades and department stores, nor the trust in your environment. Walking most areas of the city gives the sensation of standing on shaky ground, or rather, ground prone to shake, untrustworthy even when solid. Quite often, I felt the constant need to check, though I had no idea what I should check for. Some of my friends and informants also shared this feeling, and some did not. I will write about the fear of the former.

2.1. Downtown's shaky normality

We start at the Rosa Parks Transit Center, the main Bus station a few hundred meters from the main square. Insufficient and unreliable public transport is most lamented among the city services, next to the dysfunctional streetlights. Other than that, the area is not distinctively "detroitian". The houses are in a worn down, but in a decent state. Perhaps it is not as busy as a bus station in New York or Chicago. It is; however, a bit more open, once you look for it: the roads facing north, out of downtown, soon stop to be hemmed by buildings. Although not immediately noticeable, the light has something un-city-like about it. The light adds a lack of depth to the appearance, like a film set whose rear part is still in the making (or nobody knew how to draw a proper backdrop). Right behind you are the tracks for the People Mover Train, a failed attempt to revitalize downtown. Instead of forming the nucleus for a city-wide, rail-based transport system, it remained an underused railway circle around downtown. Another monument of failure shapes the skyline: the Renaissance Center, a high-rise complex directly along River Side, which was built after the riots to incite the return of businesses from the suburbs. Instead, the few businesses still left in the downtown area had moved in there, taking away the last reason why people, both customers and workers, should visit this business district. Older Detroiters paint a dark image of downtown in the 1990's, full of

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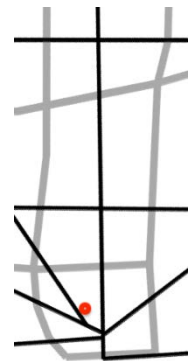
[57]   At least, flaneurship can be criticized as being a predominantly male, wealthy, and maybe whitish undertaking requiring leisure time, lack of spatial restrictions both physically and morally, and feeling comfortable in urban environments.

crumbling buildings lining empty streets populated by homeless and crack heads.[58] While I cannot judge by personal experience, the 1990's and 2000s seem to have been the city's most obviously decrepit times. Compared to those stories, the inner part of downtown now looks like a normal city. "Normal" is not a normal ethnographic category, but for self-positioning in Detroit, it is a crucial term: Are we normal? Have we managed to get back some normality? Should we become normal? "...but that could have happened in any city!"

More specifically to Detroit is one man: billionaire Dan Gilbert and his company Quicken Loans, who bought up 70 prime buildings in downtown Detroit since 2010. In addition, he moved Quicken Loans headquarter to Detroit. The influx of affluent white-collar workers able to spend some money for lunch and a beer after work significantly managed to stimulate urban renewal. You probably will not find too many of them among the people waiting here at the bus station. Most of them come by car, and often from the suburbs. Although they pay their taxes in the suburbs, they keep the newly re-opened and re-fashioned bars and restaurants in the downtown busy. Few businesses had survived the past decades, but new venues, stores and boutiques are starting to open more often today. While the administration gives unrestricted support to the city's hero Gilbert,[59] others are skeptical because the city now depends once more on one single, risky industry, the others are cautious because one single person now effectively owns the downtown. Many see the associated gentrification as a necessary evil if the city is ever to re-stabilize. The fundamental question

is; however, occasionally raised on whether or not the downtown really trickles down into the neighborhoods. Although the downtown looks almost normal, it does not make it any more normal than any other city.

This apparent normality; however, was crucial to facilitate a comeback. If there are no sports games on the weekends the streets are still scarcely populated once the offices close. After dark, homeless people sleep on the sidewalk. At night, the business district has a strange feeling to it—like most business districts—that feels like a hollow waiting vessel of thousands of work lives. A lack of trust can turn strange feelings into threatening ones. Nevertheless, in the eastern part of downtown, Greek Town became a popular amusement district, and during the day, even most suburbanites feel comfortable walking the streets between bars and boutiques. This feeling of security, I argue, is mainly due to the atmosphere of carefully maintained normality, a successful "performance of security" (Katz 2008:59). When strolling the few blocks between Grand Circus and the newly renovated Riverfront you allow

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[58] Obviously, an area populated by crack-heads – a common term for drug users – is not empty. But this logic of only counting 'legitimate' users is pretty common. The way crack abusers are portrayed, zombie-like, unpredictable, remote-controlled by their need for the drug, would well be worth its own study.

[59] It is of course possible that they regulate behind the scenes only, to maintain the image that downtown is welcoming investors. By the looks of it, few building permits are handed out, in order to make investors renovate existing structures instead. But I do not know enough about U.S. administration to tell how much influence the city has on those decisions.

your level of attention to drop, and quite often get a museum gaze: so this is the Detroit I heard so much about? You try to find the signs and traces of the "other Detroit", the Detroit you heard so many things bad things about, but cannot seem to find. . Within downtown you develop curiosity fueled by the discrepancy between what you see and what you know. In other areas, you develop a more vital interest in recognizing the "other Detroit," full of poverty and deviants. After all, you know crime *does* happen. People like those that attacked Steve Utash are somewhere in this city, and you want to avoid those places.

2.1.1. Downtown Dangers

When judging Detroit by statistics, the downtown is a pretty dangerous place (Booza 2008). City centers in general usually are. This is due to a simple bias: business and entertainment attract many users, which leads to a comparatively high amount of crime. I say "comparatively" because statistics measure the amount of crime (i.e. murder, assault, robbery etc.) per 100,000 residents. Since so few people live downtown, much less than there are actual users of this area, the figures for particular types of crime are high.[60] Those are statistical biases that could be changed, i.e. via counting "crimes per visitors" instead of per residents, although these corrections would most likely lead to other biases. More difficult; however is the discrepancy between how safe people state they feel on surveys, and how much at risk they are according to crime statistics.

10 Downtown from above; how normal is this?

The types of crime; however, do not evenly influence the feelings of security. The amount of violence, of course, does matter. Stories and images of harmed or killed victims can cause terror, but it influences the level of fear less than one instinctively assumes. On the day Steve Utash was almost killed, several other violent crimes happened, but none received remotely the amount of attention, or caused comparable fear. Burglars, on the other hand, are dreaded, but not usually violent. Neither Tax evasion nor copyright infringement are crimes that make people feel unsafe. Violent crimes also affect people differently and on different levels. For example: domestic violence seems to have little influence on feelings of security. Robberies, rape (by strangers), assault and murder, on the other hand, have the highest impact. Hollway and Jefferson (1997:260f), following Ferraro's classic "Fear of Crime" (1995), try to come up with a categorization of different levels of dread attributed to specific crimes and/or criminals. Both victim and perpetrator must be identifiable, not necessarily individu-

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[60]   This effect leads to the beautiful fun fact that the Vatican State has the highest crime rate world-wide: less than 1,000 residents, but millions of visitors feeding the pickpockets.

ally, but as a group. Deposing toxic waste in oversea countries lacks the identifiable perpetrator (the seaman discharging the cargo? The businessperson who made the deal, or some Third World government that accepted the poisonous substances? Juristically, these cases may be solvable, but "good" and "bad" are unclear categories in this case. Tax evasion or copyright infringement, on the other hand, lacks the identifiable victim: "the state", or "Hollywood", do not earn too much compassion. Perpetrators, according to Hollway and Jefferson, also lack power; if they had it, they would have the possibility to downplay their deeds, minimizing the fear they spread.[61] However, the most important factor is that they are committed by strangers. Most sexual abuse is committed by "friends" or relatives, which makes the home the statistically most dangerous place for females. Still, the fear of rape is most commonly stated for public places, like underpasses or parking lots.[62] The narrative of "stranger danger" is central to discourse about fear, and is at the root of many "moral panics" and media reports.

However, they are not only strangers in the sense that victim and criminal do not know each other personally. The most fear, up to moral panics, is spread when crimes are attributed to "Others". Each culture creates their own "Other", but the poor and the racialized traditionally rank high among them (Tuan 1980; Haldrup et al. 2008:121).[63] From these assumptions, Hollway and Jefferson derive two more aspects. As being comparatively powerless, in theory they" can be administered, unlike i.e. a riot or guerrilla fighters. And as "Others" they are recognizable, and therefore, theoretically controllable. Only in theory, though, for in practice the amount of imagined offenders tends to be endless; Massumi stated, "the now unspecified enemy is infinite. Infinitely small or infinitely large: viral or environmental. The communists as the quintessential enemy has been superseded by the double figure of AIDS and global warming. These faceless, unseen and unseeable enemies operate on an inhuman scale" (1993b:11). In Canetti's terms, those criminals that spread fear, like those that attacked Utash, are most commonly "pack", not crowd (1960:14f). Like the multitudes of the Third World, they are monstrous hybrids, dangerous to the Constitution of modernity itself (Latour 1993:49f). How fitting that they are colored.

Just as the stated fear of crime is not a direct reflection of the crime statistics, neither fear nor statistics can be translated smoothly into individual risk. If I walk in a nightlife district, where a lot of bar fights have led to high crime rates, in broad daylight, I can feel safe. The same holds true if I know that I have the talent, or temper, to stay out of fights, or win them. Knowing every resident of a street can make it the safest place for me, or the un-safest. I, personally, was at least never at risk of being involved in gang wars. Likewise, my white skin may have worked either way, and while being male usually reduces risks, fellow males may feel more provoked to prove their machismo. Nevertheless it must not be underrated that there are risks and dangers affecting the lives of women that I have little idea about. Though I should also state that the women I talked to, also those that were close to me, named robberies as their number one concern.[64] So, while it is effortlessly possible to estimate the risk

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[61]   It is important to use this as a framework, not checkmarks. Each point can be countered with special cases, i.e. despised dictators, but the points they name still make sense.

[62]   One could argue that illegal acts amongst people which know each other are often dealt with as "social conflict", not crimes, leaving this category entirely to strangers. Calls upon women to inform the police in a case of domestic sexual violence appeal to re-label them as crime, instead of conflict, and act accordingly.

[63]   Boscoboinik goes so far to call Fear of the Other one of the two "fundamental fears" (next to Fear of Death; 2014).

[64]   Considering the stigma and taboo of talking about rape, this is a poor indicator.

of being murdered when spending one year in Detroit (0.00435%) it is absolutely unclear what this figure could say. It tells the precise risk for a social atom, a human without properties or affiliations. The moment you accept that risk is influenced by factors that can hardly be determined, let alone fed into quantitative data sets, risk becomes a social fact. Discourse decides which attribute or behavior is seen as helpful or not.

Therefore, statistics are interpreted, and affect subjective feelings of security as one of many factors at best. What they contribute to heavily is an overall stigma, a reputation of a space as being dangerous. Artfully crafting this normality in the small area of downtown was therefore a major, and expensive task for Detroit. Everything you perceive in downtown signals "whatever you read about Detroit, it is *not here*. Here it is like *in any other city*". Considering its handicap, downtown Detroit has to be even cleaner than other cities: the slightest crack in the pavement would remind the fearful ones of the shaky ground they are standing on. Nobody ever checked crime statistics before visiting a classmate in a specific neighborhood,[65] but how much the ground shakes is influenced by statistics. They set the stage for concrete events.

2.1.2. Encountering Others

Imagine someone offered you heroine at Zurich central station. Unless it happened under especially sketchy circumstances, you would be mildly irritated, and later recount it as mere anecdote. By no means would you sell the story off as example for how bad Zurich had turned. It just would not fall unto a backdrop where this interpretation could possibly fit the picture. That is the role statistics play: with their aura of quantifiable science, they shape discourse for the single narratives to fit. That is why when I told friends how I was offered crack at 10 p.m. on Woodward, 3 blocks east of Rosa Parks Transit Center, it was wildly discussed whether this was: a remembrance of "the old Detroit", something that could have happened everywhere, or just a rampant crazy guy.[66]

The discursive aftermath of the event, which can be summarized as "nothing happened", is of course not the only effect the location "Detroit" had. The setting makes the stage for the *telling*, the aftermath discussion and evaluation. Before you can tell it; however, it influences your reaction during the event. Being aware that I was in Detroit changed how I acted; how I evaluated my choices; and how I assessed the man approaching me. He was a middle-aged, slightly corpulent black man, approximately my size or slightly smaller, well dressed, moving around freely, and far from hiding in a doorway's shadows. He had something very relaxed about him, and did not make an aggressive impression (although I would not try to mess with a dealer). I am not sure if I approached him, or if he followed me. As I recall it, it was me who walked towards him, and I like to imagine that part of me was already wary. This narrative of "I saw it coming, I should have trusted my instinct"; however, is too common, and could be easily refuted as trick of the brain. Singularities like this are much less present to me than occurrences of daily life such as a pleasant encounter, a nice bike ride, or a rewarding interview. I had almost forgotten about the dealer; I was surprised when I re-read about it in my diary.

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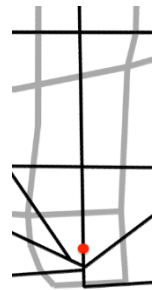
[65]   Many said they would when picking an apartment or buying a house.

[66]   This last option, that something may not reflect on the area because it was just an accident, or a "crazy", irrational guy, is another regular argument when discussing events.

When things like that happened during the study, on the other hand, I was mostly aware that they would become valuable data, and took notes meticulously.

I walked along Woodward, still in the middle of downtown Detroit, on my way home from the Jazz Festival. The festival is another attempt hosted by the city to attract visitors, and to create a feeling of safety and normality. As for the ball games at Commerica Park, the goal is to get a critical mass of people downtown, and familiarize suburbanites with the city and its positive portrayal. Thousands of relaxed people, and my peers–middle class? young? educated? white?–had been the majority.[67] On my way home, the people dispersed quickly; just a few hundred meters from the main stage there were only some homeless people on the street; one police officer, a few guys strolling around solely, and me. One of these people offered me the drugs less than 10 meters away from the cop. It took me what felt like half a second to understand what exactly he offered me, and realize the situation. Without stopping, rather only slowing down for a second, I friendly declined self-confidently and resolutely as I hoped, and walked on. As I continued, I was extremely tense, unsure of what to expect next, or how to react. I wanted to know if he followed me, but looking over my shoulder seemed to me like showing weakness and fear. When I passed by the cop, I saw from the corner of the eye that the guy kept some distance from me. Unfortunately, the officer was walking too slowly to match my pace and stay close to him. I avoided gazing around, and instead tried to "sense" him. You know how you can feel a person entering a room, even if you do not consciously hear him or her? Well, try that once you are scared: you will feel half of Genghis Khan's army approaching you. Once our temporary trio of cop, dealer, and anthropologist split up the dealer caught up to me, offering a free sample, and when I declined, he left once again. Absolutely nothing had happened, he had not threatened me, cursed at me, or tried to drag me into a dark alley. He had only offered me something twice, and when I declined, he withdrew. Although, it was an encounter that I had little experience with, and that I instinctively assumed could go dangerously wrong. I worried the Other could handle the encounter in a very sinister way; draw it into an arena where I did not know the rules. I was not even afraid of physical violence or robbery (I probably would have been, in another area, and without the cop), but rather of the event turning really, really unpleasant. For that to happen in Zurich, I assume much more factors would have to come into play, especially with a non-threatening single guy in a populated street with a police officer less than 10 meters away. I would probably have continued walking, halfway between irritation, and a weird and slightly bewildered amusement. For a situation to be bewilderingly amusing you have to trust your environment; all you know about Detroit—or all I knew, for that matter—including the statistics, destroyed that trust to a degree where incidents like this one become a valid crack in normality. Against that backdrop, which not everybody in Detroit shares, reminds you of the shaky ground you are standing on, and the second, wild reality underneath it. "This could have happened anywhere" is the battle cry of those fighting the city's stigmatization.

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[67] This peer-group is not a racial category, the Jazz Fest is actually one of the most (some say: few) integrated events in Detroit.

A second incident occurred not far from the one with the dealer. Together with three friends, I was smoking outside a bar where we celebrated my former girlfriend's arrival to the U.S. An elderly black homeless guy approached us, babbling and shouting jokingly. He would be what one of my friends called "crazy homeless dude", as well as what a police officer I interviewed classified as "EDP": Emotionally Disturbed Person. As he walked towards us, he screamed, "black man walking down the streets—grab your wallets", a joke we were not sure how to handle. He talked to us for a while, amused and hard to understand, as we all remained wary of the situation. On the other hand, he was one old man, and we were three young men and a young woman, so we felt sure that physical violence was not likely. In addition, and this point is more central, I felt confident that my friend Ramón, who had grown up under rough circumstances in a similarly challenged city, would know how to handle the situation.[68] Still, I was tense during the five-minute encounter, and I assume my friends felt the same. We were certain we would not lose control over the situation, but it was not comfortable either. The conversation seemed to follow unknown rules, making the intruder's—because that is what he was: an uninvited member of our conversation—reactions hard to foresee.
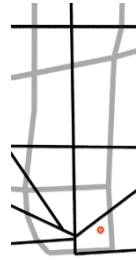
I could not specify, in neither of the two events, what I was worried about. Fear, the way I use it, does not necessarily need a specific object.[69] The discourse about fear; however, includes the question "who" or "what" one should reasonably be afraid of. That the answer to this is vague—usually robbery—does not diminish its importance.[70] In addition, derive explicit or more often implicit assumptions from where danger comes. One of the most common elements runs through both encounters: assumed unpredictability of the other person. Since you "know" of the danger existing in this city, you mistrust contact with those that may be spreading it. This does not necessarily imply that you suspect the concrete person to be a potentially violent criminal. Although, those deeds have to happen somewhere, and be committed by someone, do they not?

Usually it is the very (US-) American notion of "awkwardness" that makes the situation uncomfortable. The idea that the shared signs and clues that structure a conversation are, in that case, not actually shared. This goes beyond the language barrier, even though African American Vernacular English can be extremely difficult to understand for others.[71] What happens when I indicate that I want to end the conversation, and they do not leave? Or if he asks questions I do not feel comfortable with? A friend of mine does not enter a certain McDonalds on her own anymore since a guy extensively complimented her teeth.[72] He did

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[68] A micro-analysis of the entire, 5-10 minute conversation with its back's and forths, and who would take the lead in which approach, would be valuable, but like in all those cases tape-recording does not feel adequate.

[69] As mentioned in footnote 5, I do not follow the classical distinction of fear and anxiety.

[70] There are of course fears that are called irrational (even) by the ones having them (Lupton, Tulloch 1999). One way is to pathologize them, like when people accept for themselves that they are aviophobic, and admit flights 'in reality' are less dangerous than they think. Another way is to refer to an event in personal history: "I was once bit by a dog, that is why I am afraid even of your tiny Chihuahua that objectively could never bite through my jeans". But Detroiters do not generally make a mismatch of perception and reality responsible for their fear; while perception of course varies, they ascribe their fear to very real risks in a very real environment external to and independent from their perception. Well-informed strategies of safety are therefore said to lower the risk by rationally countering the danger.

[71] African American Vernacular English, often called "Black English", is a spoken dialect that can vary highly from 'normal', official English. It has mainly spoken by urban lower class African Americans and often bears a heavy stigma.

[72] Teeth are a meaningful indicator in Detroit since crack abuse leads to tooth loss; lack of public health care and the difficulties of dental hygiene when living on the street are another part of this issue.

not touch her, neither was he insulting or threatening, but it was enough to make her too uncomfortable to enter that restaurant again. A woman from the suburbs told me she would not go with her colleagues if they visited "all-black" bars in Detroit. She was afraid some black guy might flirt with her, and next thing you know his girlfriend attacks you or something... no, she'd rather stay out of that, otherwise a situation could escalate too easily.[73]

Although, you can always say: "Please stop, I do not want to talk to you". Though by saying that you leave the rules of "proper" communication, too. Just as I could have stayed close to the cop, he would probably even have accompanied me if only I had asked him. However, no one wants to make a scene, or wants to abandon the "proper" rules of communication. What if the person feels offended? Not only are you forced to face your prejudices (Am I racist? Am I classist?), such an offense may also escalate the situation – again the fear that they may draw this unruly encounter into another, unknown arena. After all, he or she is the Other". Haraway, with her unerring instinct for dramatic language, lovingly calls them "monsters" (2004; see also Askins 2008). Draus and Roddy also analyze the narratives about Detroit with a special focus on "monstrosity" (2016). I reject the term's post-humanistic connotations, as I assume would most Detroiters. Humanism, with all its flaws, is a success too hard-won to give it up without bitter need. The fear in Detroit is; however, quite often a fear of monsters, and monstrosities, like those starring in the representation of the Steve Utash incident.

As already mentioned, the fear I write about is not shared by everyone; obviously, only some construct a shared, common "Other" to be afraid. I struggled whether or not (or how) I could specify my group. Who did I research amongst, and whose fear of whom or what am I studying? I decided to refrain from describing 'my' group. First, because I would not know how: it is not (just) newcomers, not (only) white people, not (mainly) financially stable ones. Second, I was afraid that by specifying who constructs the Other, I might, *en passant*, re-write the Other itself, adding to an unpleasant discourse. I write about those that share a specific fear; who they are, and what they are afraid of, will hopefully become somewhat comprehensible in the writing.

11 As normal as it can get: Woodward Avenue in the heart of Downtown. The giant poster in the distance (top right coner) is from the image campaign "Outsource to Detroit"

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[73] The sexually over-active, unrestrained African American man is among the oldest classics of racist narratives.

2.2. Localizing fear: Bad Areas

How carefully downtown's normality is displayed becomes clear once you walk further north towards Cass Park. Downtown Detroit is small, the freeway forming its northern limit is just 1.5 km from the central square, Campus Martius. For the last 500 meter behind Rosa Park Transit Center you will walk through a fast labyrinth of mesh wire, fencing off empty parking lots. Until the early 2000s, this area had been densely covered with the ruins of Detroit's former *grandezza*. The city tore them down to make a good appearance for the 2006 Super Bowl. Now, the parking lots only fill up for sport events when suburbanites come to the city, and are afraid to park their car too far from the stadium. For the owners, it is an easy way to create some capital return with little to no investment while they wait for the prices to go back up. This "wait-and-see" attitude popular among investors in Detroit, where low sums can buy a ticket in the lottery called Detroit, while making a real impact would be costly and the result unsure. Until this stalemate at the margins of capitalist theory is solved, the area before the highway remains an awkward place, setting the mood for things to come. It is wide open, and during the day, the few people walking around are visible from a mile away. At night, when the downtown is almost empty, you realize how far apart the few remaining streetlights are, and wonder who may lurk in the shadows between.

Together with some major roads, the freeways are used as a system for orientation, and with a few exceptions, descriptions like "at Grand Boulevard and I-94" have replaced neighborhood names. They inscribed themselves into the city fabric, delineating areas and neighborhoods, like Downtown from Cass Corridor. Leaving the parking lot area, in 2013 you saw two empty high-rise hotels; above the blind windows, huge black letters read "Zombieland". It pretty much summed up the attitude many of us students living on campus had towards these kilometers between Downtown and Midtown, where the Wayne State University is. It

12 The "Zombieland"-Hotel, as seen when leaving downtown. The slogan can be detected right under the roof of the first building. Under the new mayor, the City started to fight the iconography of decay that had developed around Detroit. Among many others, the "Zombieland"- and the "Decolonize"-Graffitis got removed, and the much- photographed ruin of Michigan Central Station got new windows, replacing its 13 floors of black holes.

is the "bad area" closest to the campus, and the first bad area with which I came in contact. I myself walked it quite often, for several reasons. One part was because there were less cars then on Woodward, making it more pleasant to walk. Another was to proof to myself that I am less fearful, at least less irrationally fearful, than those avoiding it. The biggest reasons of all was because I felt I had to do so as an anthropologist: to expose yourself to the whole city, to leave your comfort zone of close-to-campus diners and Downtown coffee houses. After all, Wacquant or Bourgeois did not let their fear stop them! (Maybe they did, and just do not write about themselves being afraid). Although, I would never walk there at night, and would dissuade anybody from doing so – even though I have no idea what would happen. A friend of mine used to live there. At night he would never leave the house without his dog. Nothing bad had ever happened to him when living in the area, but the view of drug deals and prostitutes finally made him move back to the suburbs. I walked through the area quite often, not terribly scarred, but tense from the moment I crossed the highway. I had been warned of this area, and had passed this warning on to others.

That is how I came across the topic in the first place: when I came to Detroit I asked the people I met how I could stay safe. I had read about Detroit, and was aware of the danger, but not how to avoid it. Therefore, I did what any good traveler is told to do and asked the locals. Unaware of the various lines of conflict crisscrossing "the locals", I asked whoever I met— mainly people on campus, and in the bars around it. That was where I felt safe walking around, since during my first days I had consciously decided that I *had* to feel safe around campus.[74] As far as I recall—these early days were planned as an arrival period; I had not intended to start research this early, and therefore only wrote in my private travel diary— every statement I could make sense of was that in general the city would be okay, there were just a few "bad areas" I needed to avoid. Although, when I asked where exactly these places were, the descriptions became vague, or only one or two (unspecific) areas could be named.

Chances are that back then, people had already made the fine distinctions I came to study later, but failed to hear during those first weeks. I became more attuned once I realized the " "people made before saying "bad area". Very few people simply used this term, and instead, they showed that they were aware of its problematic connotations by making short breaks. Some even made air quotes, or stuttered.[75] I started with the idea to map the "worst", or most stigmatized, areas, to see how much it correlates with official crime statistics and look into other factors such as race and class, but also cleanliness or maintenance, and how they might play into the construction of the stigma. I wanted to conduct a small sample of 50 surveys, 15 of them with a more extensive follow-up interview.[76] Somewhere along the actual making of the survey, I realized that I should probably question the category of "bad area" itself, instead of just presupposing it. Therefore, the first question I asked was:

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[74]   Today I would walk there day and night; it takes quite some imagination to recall my fear of the first days.

[75]   Later I realized how some people make quite a point of saying "disinvested" or "less fortunate" areas, just like some say "broken homes" instead of abandoned houses.

[76]   I ended up with 46 surveys and 14 interviews, together with many informal conversations. There was no sampling, although I took care to ask a variety of people. The surveys were not intended to pro-vide quantitative data, which would have exceeded my scientific capacity even more than the amount of available time. Their purpose was to give a wider, though thinner foundation to the information I got from the interviews.

       I tape-recorded and transcribed all interviews but one; the interviews were semi-guided and between 45 minutes and 2.5 hours. In addition, I took well above a dozen short interviews of less than 5 minutes on Wayne State Campus to ground a specific impression I had about cell phone usage in public.

"Do you use the term 'bad area'?", with the options "yes", "no", and "I do not know the term" While the rest of the survey produced mixed results—among them the foreseeable insight that testing your survey with a focus group is time well spent —this first question made me realize how contested the idea of "bad areas" is. Approximately half of the people claim to use the term, although everybody knew it. I found that there was little correlation among the areas people marked as "bad" on the map I had attached to the survey. Only one person included Midtown or Downtown, but other than those, there was no common idea where exactly the "bad areas" should be. I therefore came to understand them as mental spaces, imagined areas where all the crime and deviant behavior you hear about is pushed. This is not to say that they do not exist: they exist as ideas (of many, not all), and also as geographical places. People assume that "the bad" is unevenly distributed in space, look for areas that may be potentially dangerous, and attach the label "bad area" to them. How they judge areas was one part of the interviews. Others challenge this place- making as racist or dysfunctional. There is no common shared geography on which areas to avoid —the concept, even among those that employ it, is highly fluid, individual, and constantly re-evaluated.

Either you believe in bad areas, or you do not. "Believe" means that you assume the geographic area you are in significantly influences the risk you are exposed to, therefore the danger you are in, and ultimately the fear you should or should not rationally have. I will try to phrase this carefully in order to keep the different levels of "rational" and "reality" apart: in the emic perspective of those thinking in a concept of "moral landscape", this is the "reality" they live in. This reality comes with its specific causalities, rationalities, and functional and dysfunctional behavior to counter risk.

It could be counted as "false consciousness", leading to irrational and exaggerated fear. During the 1960's, "false consciousness" was a popular explanation why groups that had the lowest risk stated to have the highest fear. Official crime statistics indicated that young men were most prominent among the victims of violent crime. The women and elderly, on the other hand, felt the least safe (Pain 2001:900). Instead of increasing security measure, the proposed solution was to inform women and elderly people about the "real" danger they were (not) in to make them feel appropriately safe. The famous argument, that fear would grow because news reports on murder increase steadily, contrary to the number of delicts, takes a similar line.

Feminists fiercely fought the idea of false consciousness,[77] and it is not in my interest to revitalize it. Perception becomes false only if you counter pose the perceived reality with a positivistic, pre-discursive "real reality". There is no doubt that in "the Western mind", and western epistemology, this "real reality" exists as a "fact", demand, and position of might. Of course, I acknowledge the power this *idea* of a "real reality" holds, but I reject that there *is* a pre-discursive reality itself, at least in the sense of a norm that one constructed reality could come closer to than any other. In my opinion, there is no "real", pre-discursive reality, and therefore no consciousness should be treated as "false".

This position obviously has its weaknesses, as a positivist does, too. Without letting this discussion go too far, it can be stated that there are no means to validate or falsify the assumptions of safety and risks people make, based upon moral landscapes or otherwise. I can walk the most dangerous area ten or a hundred times without anything happening to me, and it
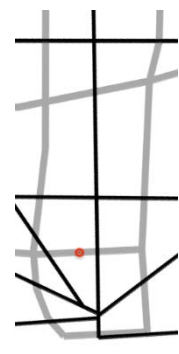
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[77] The two main standpoints were either a positivist one, that dangers affecting women or fear felt by man are not properly shown in the statistics, or a relativist one adding more weight to an emic perspective on fear regardless of statistics.

still does not prove or disprove statistics. Maybe I was black, and therefore attracted less attention by the "bad guys"? Maybe I was white, and they assumed the police would follow up my case more thoroughly. Maybe I was just lucky, and the bad guys were all out playing basketball. All the while, I could be robbed on my first day in Zurich, due to risky behavior or nothing but bad luck. The point is: "bad areas", like other concepts of risk and safety in this city, is a concept of its own right. It can be challenged by other approaches, and the assumptions it rests upon and the challenges it faces allows insight on how risk and fear are negotiated. At some point in time, this discussion will fade and be forgotten, but it will most definitely not be solved by an "x is right, y is wrong – q.e.d."

2.3. Crossing the Bridge to Cass Corridor

When you cross the bridge over the freeway and step into Cass Corridor, you do feel that you left downtown; however, you do not feel that you are in a supposed bad area. There are no universally comprehensible signs reading out "Bad Area", no chalk lines in the form of a corpse, no (regular) gunshots.[78] In the surveys, people stated that their indicators for a bad area are visibly vacant or abandoned houses, ruins, trash or blight, and poor maintenance state by both private property and public infrastructure like roads and streetlights.[79] Those points fit nicely into the famous Broken Window Theory, which states that visible signs of neglect, if

13 The freeways have been torn into the flesh of the city in a Hausmann'ian façon. In the 1950ies and 60ies they have been cut through the unruly ghettos and led to decades of social unrest. Sugrue considers this the major source for the riots of 67 (2005). Promoted to solve the city's traffic problem, the freeways improved the connection between the suburbs and downtown, making the commute more attractive and adding to 'white flight'. Today they offer suburbanites a convenient way to visit downtown without having to get in touch with the rest of the city proper. Detroiters, however, suffer from the disconnection: the 50-meter-trenches are bridged only occasionally and cut off entire nighborhoods, adding to the tense infrastructure: due to lack of grocery stores, great areas of the city are considered a 'food desert'.

not removed immediately, give the impression that nobody would care about the neighborhood, and therefore attract new crime (Wilson, Kelling 1982).[80] The problem in Detroit is that far too many areas show these features. With 50,000 thousand abandoned houses falling apart citywide, you are bound to see ruins in most areas. The city is so broke that maintenance is poor everywhere. Many outsiders consequently invert the moral landscape

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[78] Even gunshots are not as obvious a symbol as one may think. I never managed to hear them, or rather to identify them and tell them apart from the normal city noises – something none of my friends had any problem with.

[79] Crime was named 15 times, ruins or houses in poor maintenance state 14 times, trash, blight or decay 8 times, just as often as poor maintenance state (like bad roads or dysfunctional lighting). ["Named" means: stated for either question 10 or 11, without separating for question 8; see Appendix A. Somebody may have stated "race" as criterion either because they avoid areas predominately inhabited by African Americans, or they accuse others to use the term "bad area" to cover up their own racism].

[80] This theory gave rise to the Zero-Tolerance-policy in New York City and other places which successfully filled up prisons all over the U.S.; its merits in fighting crime are not uncontested (see i.e. Ranasinghe 2012). I only give a functional counter-argument here, without challenging the concept of human nature underlying the Broken Window theory, a concept I am inclined to reject.

and consider the entire city a bad area, with Downtown, Midtown, Corktown and a few others set apart as "Good Areas". When you navigate the city daily, this is obviously not a practical rule to follow.

Once you cross the freeway, you will come across your first visibly abandoned house. There is a big difference between a vacant house, maybe guarded and still on the market, which is still in a good state, and a visibly abandoned house. The first one is still a house, even if it is empty; it has value, the result of an investment once made and now still defended against both intruders and nature. Someone cares for it. The others are ruins, like those long brick walls you walk along after crossing the bridge, with their windows boarded up, barbed wire fences and overgrown stretches of land leading towards narrow, secluded backyards. Passing by buildings such as these feels different each time. You often take them for granted, and do not pay further attention to them. If the weather is bad, you just had an interview with an especially fearful person, or a detail reminds you of the news you read in the morning those ruins may well become intimidating. Most of these buildings are placed a few feet back from the sidewalk, and not having to pass these empty, black windows within arm's length is comforting. While on a rational level you *know* they are empty, you never know what may be inside, or who may have claimed the space. In front of you is a liquor store, one of those dark windowless bunkers with a Plexiglas wall separating the cashier from the customers. Passing by the group of people hanging around in front of it was not always a pleasant undertaking, and I often felt inclined to change the side of the road. Fear is a major restriction of one's right to the city. One interview partner, a white teenager from the suburbs, told me that he repeatedly perceived those encounters as strong muscling, as a conscious display of claiming one's turf: "you are in the city, (white) boy, not in your shiny little suburb!"
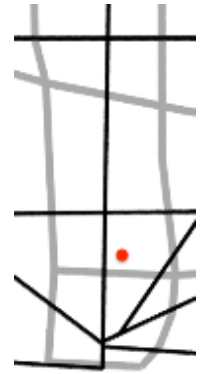

14 This community is not gated; even though only the park is private, aesthetics make clear that the streets are not public, either.

It should not be forgotten that this works both ways; the coffee shops, busy clerks, and police patrols making downtown feel so familiar and safe may make others feel excluded and at risk. A person I interviewed, a middle aged IT manager and family father, had moved to Detroit to escape the racist police in the suburbs. According to him, he was harassed twice a month on average when returning from night shifts. Public space, like "the public" in general, is a problematic concept. It implies a democratic egalité that hardly ever exists (and is also contested in itself). Especially public space: places that are open to everybody and not usually locked off, are often glorified in theory as seedbeds for a subversive, creative, or counter-hegemonic "public" (i.e. Mitchell 1995), and in practice more and more restricted by privati-

zation, creating class-segregated, and semi-open spaces like shopping malls or gated communities (Low 1997). Unfortunately, the debate often oscilates between the image of a progressive, democratic, and solidary (somewhat Marxist) "public" distributing ownership evenly, and evil capitalists claiming elitist ownership illegitimately by means of money. However, a place is always claimed by somebody, and actors of "the public" may make highly ex-

cluding claims in sometimes ruthless, non-egalitarian, even violent ways. This is often forgotten, at least until you find yourself in a place that makes you feel strange.

Walking further north you pass by an overgrown lot, almost a valid forest, with trash between the branches growing through the huge fence. Somewhere in there is an old mattress. In this small, solidly enclosed area, it does not quite give you the wilderness-sensation that urban prairie can evoke in other parts of the city, but it helps to set the mood. How did this nature get so *solid*, so forest-like, right in the middle of the city? Some neighborhoods in fact do resemble prairies, urban wildernesses where only a handful of houses are scattered out amidst wilted vegetation. The woods had grown quite old, and grow over the sidewalks, which act as remnants of an infrastructure that served millions of people. Even in broad day light it is a bit uncanny, and you start to wonder if you *belong* here, in this place, at this time. Not because of the looks you would get, once you pass the liquor store there is hardly any body who could look at you. You feel out of place without anybody telling you that you

might actually be. If a community etches itself into its space, this place signals your otherness; as if *different* values were embodied in the very place you are standing on (see Abu-Orf 2012:163, 169). The abandoned schoolyard next to Cass Tech High School is not a ruin like the Colosseum. Roman ruins are the way they *should* be, they do not remind anybody still alive of what they *could* be. We can lay our hands upon it, feel the warm yellow sandstone without violating any taboo. The schoolyard, on the other hand, is a corpse, a dead playground

15 This sacrilegious sensation finds its extreme form in the old, abandoned factories. I have been in Detroits industrial ruins close to a dozen times, but hardly ever did I touch a thing. I only realized how much I had instinctively avoided it when watching how naturally a more experienced "urban explorer" interacted with items like door handles or handrails, things I would never have used. Photographers like Marchand & Meffre tried their skills in creating visual representations of this sensation (2010); the – undoubtedly artistic – results are often despised by Detroiters as exploitative and 'ruin porn' (Millington 2013).

without its essence. The little park you cross is not in a bad state. The paved paths are cracked on more than one occasion, and the flagpoles are rusty from lack of use and paint. Somebody removed the copper cables from one of the beautiful, neoclassical lampposts to sell them at a scrapyard. Some turned the abandoned city into a mine for evisceration, out of economic necessity or profiteering. The more professional scrappers are said to come from far away suburbs. Although, it is not just a mine: The park seems to be mowed regularly. This makes all the difference, not so much because of the heights of the weeds, but because of its color. Starting in early spring, the city's wide overgrown areas are of a brownish, sickly yellow color. The park; however, is green and shaded by huge old trees; the mowers also took care of the ubiquitous trash. Often one or two people sit underneath the trees, and watch you pass by. When they are old, you feel okay, when they are young men, you may feel preyed upon. Once you become attuned to it, safety is dealt with in a regime of gazes: who looks at whom, and with which intentions in mind?

Simultaneously, a guilty conscience arises: you are not wary of them just because they are black; but would you feel this way if they were white? Towering over the area is the high,

dark silhouette of the Masonic Temple. Outside Downtown there are not many high buildings, yet every once in a while you encounter one, enthroned over a neighborhood, monuments of power impressing enough that only a vibrant city could deal with it. To your West, Michigan Central Station creates an endless stream of iconic pictures of decay. In the East, the empty windows of the Packard Plant run along Concord Ave for more than a kilometer. Those landmarks of historic glory lay their shadow upon the area. On East Ferry and Mount Elliot, the view residents wake up to every morning are the plant's dead windows, the graveyard in between, and an abandoned liquor store on the left. One should still not mistake those places for dead for the sake and dignity of the people living there, and for the fights fought over both present and history. Detroiters react very emotional to the "there is nothing left" idea, which also underlies many well-intended attempts to help. The city still is home for 700,000 people, a fact that is fiercely pointed out when residents feel that plans are made without them.

The empty hotel towers so visibly displaying the "Zombieland"-Graffito have been torn down, giving way to the gigantic construction site of the new Ice-Hockey arena. The city has given the land to another of Detroit's biggest investors, Ilitch, on a long-term and rent-free lease.[81] They hope that the arena will attract further businesses and contribute to the area's upswing, which would make the land's low selling price a good investment. Others; however, criticize that the administration makes "donations" to rich investors

16 Detroits school system may be challenged, but the newly re-built Cass Tech High School is highly successful in educating future engineers for the jobs that came after the assemble line. A graffito outside furiously writes "People died so black men could get an education". Again, this outcry can go either way: that the state should provide a decent education for the students of Detroit, 75% of which leave the education system without even a High School diploma. But the critique that some young black men would not work hard enough is stated not only by white old Republicans, but also among African Americans.

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[81]   This measurement had been criticized fiercely; i.e. http://www.sanduskyregister.com/Hockey/2014/03/03/Ilitches-to-get-all-revenue-from-new-publicly-financed-Red-Wings-arena.

instead of investing in "the neighborhoods".[82] The calculation behind supporting huge projects like this is to create critical mass. Lines like the freeway work as borders; if someone opens a small restaurant on the other side, chances are that it will suffer from the stigma of the area, and will have to close before having an impact to change it. A huge project such as a stadium can change an area. In addition, due to being a huge investment, it works as a promise to smaller business owners: "You fly in the shadows of an enterprise too big to fail. You can rely on both investor and city to go great lengths to make this work, and thereby also protecting your investment". This guarantee of an institution functioning as an "anchor", like Wayne State University or Henry Ford Hospital, helped to stabilize several neighborhoods. Stabilization, like "revitalization" is a widespread term in Detroit, which only ever works to the good of some. Like in other "improving" neighborhoods, the people populating Cass Park now: the homeless, the pushers, and the pimps, the street corner societies of "Others" and others, will be pushed out of the area. The police already raided the park once (as to my knowledge), at some point the soup kitchens, shelters and blood banks will close, selling loosies [83] will be prohibited. Soon the "Others" will feel as out-of-place as I do now, and they probably already do when they go north.

17 Masonic Temple, still defining its space.

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82   Like "the communities", "the neighborhoods" is a term with many meanings. In this case it is probably best translated as "the little (wo)men".

83   Individually sold cigarettes.

3. Transforming Cass Corridor

Socioeconomic restructuring, which is planned around the site of the future Ice-hockey arena, already happen a few blocks further. This change was not accidental, but rather the result of concerted efforts. The area around Cass Park, where we are now, once spanned further north towards the campus. Within the last decade, Cass Corridor was re-branded as Midtown[84] This was the result of a joint effort of the Wayne State University, the Detroit Medical Center,[85] and the public-private partnership, Midtown Inc., to give the area a new image. The area was once associated with the prostitution, drugs, homelessness and robberies, but before that it was an upper class neighborhood. The buildings from its days as an affluent area still stand in a condition that could potentially attract new affluent residents. Residents wealthy enough that they can actually choose to live in a neighborhood that made them feel safe. In the last few years, the area around Wayne State campus was completely renovated. This attracted new stores and restaurants that occupied both the new buildings erected on the empty lots, and remodeled ruins. Today, the monthly rent for a Midtown apartment could buy two houses in other parts of the city. To attract a new class of residents, Wayne State University set up a housing program that gave away free houses to professors and staff if they were willing to move in the area next to the campus. Within a few years, the run-down Cass Corridor became young and vibrant Midtown.

This gentrification was not welcomed by all. A friend of mine named Lilly, had moved to Cass Corridor—she vehemently refuses to call it Midtown—decades ago as a young woman. She still reminisces about the vibrant, close-knit, and culturally engaged community that had once existed there before the renovations and spawned after the hippies and beatniks of the 1960's. By this time, the area had already been declining, and crime was prevalent. . According to Lily; however, "the bad guys"—as she called them—did not interfere with the livelihood of local residents. "By Wayne State, and about half-way down it was basically hippies, writers, artists, musicians. And then when you got... … down by Peterborough[86] it started changing to junkies and pimps and hookers. But they didn't bother us, and we didn't bother them. […] We could go down there and nothing would happen to us. People from the suburbs did the same thing, they could get robbed – whatever. […] Generally we were not targeted. Because we were residents. We actually lived there, we would go to school there, all that, we were all kind. So in a very very weird way we all co-existed." Whether this state of affairs was pleasant for all participants is another question. Interesting enough, though she does not try to hide her hatred of Cass Corridor's rebranding—which drove her out of her neighborhood—, she sees it as a necessary process. The argument that the city would need more and more affluent residents is widely agreed upon. Many criticize the tendency to call literally every change "gentrification."[87] The length at which the city administration should

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[84]   The name Midtown had been in use before, but denominated a wider area including Brush Park east of Woodward and the area between I-75, I-94 and M-10. Lately it got rescaled and is now used for the former Cass Corridor area.

[85]   A big hospital complex with 12,000 employees.

[86]   A street crossing Cass Corridor between Wayne State University and Downtown

[87]   It appears strange to talk about gentrification in a city with so much vacancy. Several things have to be considered, though: many of the abandoned houses are inhabitable. Lacking economic capital, poor people rely on social capital that cannot easily be transported. Sometimes gang affiliations further restrict mobility. And gentrification does not have to be citywide; in Detroit it is restricted to 3-4 neighborhoods (with a few more at the brink of it). While you will find available apartments in many parts of the city, there is a waiting list for each building in Midtown.

go in order to attract newcomers; however, is contested. How much money should the city invest in the well-being of those middle class kids coming back from the suburbs their parents fled to, especially when it comes at the cost of underfunding long time (African American) residents? Many claim that they kept the faith with the city in its hardest days just to be re-placed by white hipsters the moment things seem to get better. Few Detroiters would play down the city's problems. On the other hand, in the black metropolis, African Americans currently live in those middle class houses that were built to host white families and white families only! (No Jews, no Irish, please). In the rest of the country, half a century after the Civil Rights Movement, white-family houses are still inherited by white children. The economic disparities outlived state-sanctioned racism, and while optimists point out that things slowly change, I do not know of any other U.S. city being inverted as thoroughly. This came at a high price, no doubt, but the city also gained something. The more white suburbanites buy back black houses, this progress will be contested, making African Americans fear to lose control over "their" city.


18 Some decades ago, this inner city neighborhood was white-only. Now, my host was the first white person to move in.

Being black is already a complicated category among the African Americans. All through this text I used the term "black" as a self-explanatory term, and in the U.S. today, in some way it is. White is white, and a single drop of black blood makes you black, or colored, or African American, or whatever you want to call it. Hispanics or Arabs mingle somewhere in between the two, as the Jews and Irish did well into the 1950's. While this perception is not wrong—in the sense that it is powerful—, on a deeper level the issue is more complicated (more than I could explicate in this context) and more contested (more than I would dare to touch in a research). To many, African Americans and others, "being black" is also a culture, a way of being. Some call president Obama an "Oreo"[88]: how could this Harvard alumnus, financially well-off golf player be black? Others counter: does an African American have to be poor, uneducated, and a basketball player to be "properly black"? I do not want to go into too much detail about this dangerous territory. It is important to emphasize; however, that while race does matter in Detroit, it is not the one principle structuring the field. It is mainly young African American men that form the dreaded "Other", but neither are all African Americans othered, nor are only white people constructing the Other (or scared). Race and racism extend beyond skin color. Class matters, maybe as much as race, though the two can barely be separated. However, the practices of racializing go far beyond such superficial markers. Many stereotypes of "Other" still follows bio-racist lines, but the urban poor prominently entered the narratives of risk and danger.

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[88] A candy, consisting of a white filling between two chocolate cookies. It is a demeaning term, usually by African Americans, for people that were "black on the outside, but white inside".

3.1. Inside the Bubble

These black, dangerous, urban poor people densely populate Detroit and its narratives, but you will not see much of that once you get close enough to university's campus. Investors and Wayne State University make sure public space is spotless, in every regard. However, visibly poor people and African Americans were still around the campus. Nevertheless, you are aware which turf you are on: yours! ours! [89]
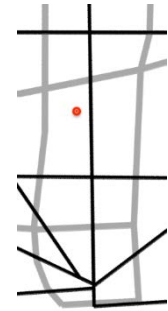
Wayne State Police guarantees that an officer will arrive 90 seconds after you call them. Detroit Police Officers, on the other hand, needed more than an hour on average according to a 2013 statistic.[90] Although higher police presence is a standard solution by politicians to increase the feeling of security in an area, it should not be misinterpreted as the main factor for the change in Midtown. Increasing police presence; however, can even have a twofold effect. When encountering a drug dealer, having a cop around is soothing,[91] but under more normal circumstances, it may even make people feel more anxious. In 2013, when I was still living on campus, a patrol car sat on the campus' main junction all night. Its red-and-blue lights constantly rotated over the walls of the surrounding buildings, instinctively reminding me of thriller movies. I know from at least one female friend that the police presence made her feel safe when walking home from the library. According to her, it formed something like an "isle of light", a safe spot to head towards. Under different circumstances, if you were standing in front of the dorms, smoking and chatting with a group of friends, the flashing red and blue lights drenching the building walls gave the impression of a campus under siege, a violent force that was necessary to keep the surrounding evil outside. In 2015, the police car was gone; apparently the students felt safe enough (or even safer) without it. Their trust in the area, in Midtown itself, had increased.[92] Luckily, I know that for a fact.

Throughout both research periods, I constantly struggled with my own subjectivity[93]. There is no scale to measure fear or security, and I had several moments where I was afraid I might actually push people into talking about safety issues they would otherwise not notice. If you ask someone long enough, especially when this person is trying to be polite, at some point they will talk about fear; nobody never feels anxious. I was afraid to create the field myself, and thereby adding to the stigmatization of Detroit. During my second research these questions brought me close to dropping the topic entirely—an emotionally challenging and unpleasant moment.

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[89] Actually, you are not aware to be on anyone's turf. The opposite of feeling anxious is not feeling safe, but not asking yourself how you feel: normality.

[90] The numbers have improved since, and even in 2013 they were partly due to a police reform gone wrong. It is not sure if the statistic is representative, but everybody took it for granted: if you call the police outside Midtown, you will wait for one hour – until then, you are on your own. True or not, that was the mindset people worked upon.

[91] This is written from the perspective of those thinking of the police as 'on their side' – in most countries, and under most circumstances, the prevailing perspective. Alice Goffman (2014) gives a vivid account what live looks like when the police is against you.

[92] Coming from a very psychological angle, Boomsma studied how women feel safer even at lower light levels if they trust a certain space (2014).

[93]Not that any research would ever not be subjective; but fear is a very emotional and stigmatizing topic, while at the same time lacking unambiguous indicators, precise description, or quantitative denominators that could ground experience and memory.

You can imagine how lucky I felt when I found one indicator I could definitely, and beyond any doubt, lay my finger upon: in 2013 absolutely nobody on campus took their mobile phone out for more than a few seconds for the fear of being robbed. It was common knowledge to go inside a building to write a text, and most used hands-free devices for calls. On a single occasion during my nine months stay, I saw a person using a laptop outside, an event so rare even a professor, who was just as surprised, pointed it out. In 2015 there were less police present on campus, and a lot of people carried their phones in their hands to write texts or play games, and several people sat outside with their laptops. In 2013 you looked over your shoulder before quickly glancing at your phone; in 2015, when I took short interviews with several phone users, they were so concentrated on their phones, they did not realize I approached them until I was literally standing 2 feet away—and even then they were not shocked! Each of them stated that they used their phones so freely because they trusted the place; they would assume nothing bad would happen to them on campus.

3.2. A normal atmosphere

Within the last decade, life in Midtown became pretty normal. "Normal", in this case, means that for a certain group, an atmosphere of positively exciting normality got re-established. Positive, because the people that moved in would not expect anything bad to happen to them; the "anormality" of the city was only happening elsewhere, in the areas where Detroit still looked and felt chaotic and possibly dangerous. The places where the streetlights do not work, grass creeps through the sidewalks, and abandoned houses lined scarcely populated roads. They are also exciting because it was still "the city", a dense, free and young place

19 (Top) Very cool: Café in Midtown; very critical (below): sticker at an (cool) anarchist housing collective.

20 (bottom): Very organic: Avalon bakery keeps German exchange students alive; background: luxury lofts.

so much different from the boring suburbs. When Wayne State University built its dorms,[94] thousands of young students moved into the area and filled, not only the dorms, but also the surrounding, renovated apartment buildings. They had been populated by predominantly black, lower income residents until recently, and a few served as crack houses, some of which still remained in 2013 when I first came here. East of Woodward, the university bought up and renovated several blocks, and used some for the professor and staff housing project.

Due to the renovations, Midtown became more white and more affluent. Shops, restaurants and bars opened, all directed at the new residents. A few enterprises, most prominently the watchmaker and bicycle company, Shinola, moved to Detroit. They both thrived on and supported the hype of "producing in cool Detroit". In 2007, a fashion label started to

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[94]   There had always been one dorm house close to campus, but within the last decade three more had been built.

sell the first clothing that prominently featured identification with the once despised city: "Detroit hustles harder". Several others followed to a point where you can now buy ironic shirts that say "Just another Detroit Shirt".

The streets became clean and well maintained, ruins are now so rare one could declare them a landmark, and the streetlights work marvelously. Wayne State Police patrols regularly, contributing to the sense of security. There may still be hit-and-run crimes, but one would be stupid to rob a liquor store in Midtown Detroit. The shops slowly began to tear down their excessive safety measures. Big supermarket chains, with Whole Foods being the first,—an all-organic food chain aiming at customers willing and able to spend a (significant) little more for healthy, non-GMO [95] food—, moved back to the city. Among students, Young Urban Creatives, and suburbanites-gone-shopping, you still see "the Others", African American urban poor, hanging around at the street or in front of liquor stores. There may even be more than in other, less populated parts of the city. However, they lost the turf war, atmosphere and aesthetics are created by and for the racially diverse, affluent, well-dressed and hip crowd of students and newcomers.[96]

Within the last few years, moving to the city became cool, as the national and international discourse about Detroit changed. People began to see the opportunities the city offered, as large amounts of cheap or free space became available. Many Detroiters sometimes compare this development to 1980's Berlin. According to the Podcast "The Detroit Berlin Connection", Detroit, like Berlin, became a space for artists, musicians, urban farmers and other "urban explorers" that saw the shrinking city as the "new urban frontier"; a new form of the bygone myth of the Wild West. Spaces like Midtown do not fit this image anymore. Instead, it resembles the "normal", with its structures restrains and capitalist order where space suddenly has economic value again. A common process of gentrification, coolness all of a sudden eats its own children. This holds especially true for the residents that had been there before, those urban poor and lower middle class of the "black metropolis". Some of them had to move, others—often those that had held jobs at the University or the hospitals—had bought houses in the area early on and now profit from this development.

3.3. DIY City

While this debate cannot separate race from class—debates in its various levels could fill volumes of its own—, it would definitely be wrong to reduce it to those categories. Friends of mine emphasized aspects of both utopian promises and threats that could best be described in terms of social aesthetics. In a long interview, an old anarchist called it the "suburban mindset" that many of the newcomers would bring. What this is exactly, is hard to define. To many, the city in both discourse and atmosphere has an aura of heterotopic anomie to it. Those affected by this aura tend to perceive the city as either promising or frightening, as if the city was lacking restrains, and people are not sure what to expect from this unrestrained place. Others are fighting this depiction, claiming that Detroit is just a normal city with some peculiarities. The city also gained recognition as a "space for alternatives" from this image. This is, once more, a wide and vague term that different people associate

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[95] Genetically Modified Organisms.

[96] Even though students do not in general have a lot of money, they have a certain cultural capital, access to better paid jobs already during their studies, and often a more affluent family background.

with different things. One could go as far back as 1920's and 1930's when many people dreamt of leaving their fields and farms for the "city life", or "black metropolis" in the violently discriminatory climate of the 1960's. Recently, the city's heterotopic aura stems from offering space for artists, urban farmers, and others searching for an alternative lifestyle. Under the slogan "DIY-city [97]," some see it as seedbed for post-capitalism. Those approaches; however, are anything but a shared common ground. Many Detroiters would like to return to decent jobs in a decent capitalistic society as opposed to head-in-the-cloud utopias of young people with college degrees. They are wary of what they feel as abuse, as being reduced to another blank slate, a canvas for the utopias of hipsters, artists and the like, making their plans without considering those long-established residents. For them, practices such as the often celebrated urban farming were born out of necessity, and should go back to being a hobby once normality is restored.[98] The "back metropolis" may have been left-wing, but it was (mostly) not post-capitalistic.

A return to these "normal" capitalist rules and conditions, on the other hand, is widely dreaded among the aforementioned "utopists"; who dream of a different state of affairs. Those embracing the newcomers, as well as the new money and vibes they are bringing into the city are also concerned with, as shown by the gentrification debates, how the development will affect them, and their position within a widening and restructuring field.[99] The city's new charisma as a "space of opportunity", instead of being a "lost cause", contributed a lot to the recent changes of Detroit. It became "cool" among young people to live in Detroit.

A constant debate is fought out among these newcomers over who is a hipster, who is a "(wo)man of the first hour", or who is "feeding on the hype". In their call for authenticity through immersion, the hipster resembles the anthropologist. Both are new to a culture, and therefore cannot establish their claims on "having-been-around-forever". Instead, they desperately try to be or become part of "the real Detroit". I am not up to date with the latest trends, but in summer 2015, the highest of cool was to buy a house in an all-black neighborhood (which obviously just makes sense for the white majority of the newcomers).[100] Fear is a marker in this fight for authenticity. Having too much or the wrong fear demonstrates suburban-ism: if you had immersed yourself in Detroit, if you had learned to navigate it and gained your right to the city, you would only be afraid of the *right* things. The freer you moved, the more respect you received. On the other hand, if you are not afraid at all, if you wander every corner of the city day and night, you are just stupid and "had it coming"—if you were attacked. If you knew how dangerous Detroit can be, and had shown proper respect for the city, you would not have done that. Those whose authenticity was beyond

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[97]   DIY stands for Do-It-Yourself.

[98]   Maybe they also realized what the Young Urban Creatives fail to see: that the idea of a weak government is shared by both anarchy and neoliberalism. The Do-It-Yourself City is not far from the watchmen-state laissez-faire economists dream of.

[99]   To show just one aspect affecting middle class home owners, a class usually considered well-protected from gentrification since they do not have to pay raising rents: property tax is calculated based on housing value. Rising property prices, i.e. due to money coming in from the suburbs, increase the tax burden, and may thus drive owners out of their homes. Renters, obviously, will feel the rising rents.

[100]   This is an amusing potshot on the 'blockbusting' strategy real estate agents had in the 60s and 70s. They sold one house on an all-white block to an African American family. Soon, most white families left, due to racism or because they feared the value of their homes would decrease, thereby creating further business for the real estate agent. It is obviously easy to make fun of today's practices described above, but they also bear a chance to overcome the age-old segregation in the wider Detroit area.

question, like a friend's African American roommate who was born and raised on the East Side, were of course not subjugated to this judgment. Among the newcomers, it was decided in discourse who was too afraid and who was foolhardy, a discussion that sounds silly in the aftermath. In this climate of anxiety, we, who did not yet feel familiar with the city, tried to find out how far we could (or should) go, and whose judgment and advice we could trust. Just as a "proper" tourist is supposed to leave the hotel complex, we left the confines of the safe and tidy enclaves in downtown, Corktown, or around university campus in fear of missing the "real". In this case, the Cass Corridor Area was forbidden, but tempting, particularly for me as anthropologist.


During my first stay in Detroit, I really bought into this hope for heterotopia; if I had bought a house in Detroit, as I had actually considered, it would probably also have been in an all-black neighborhood (as both anthropologist and hipster I would have been double-authentic!). As a far-left activist, I was—and am—more than fed up with the capitalist standstill in my hometown. In Munich, TINA[101] seemed all-encompassing: nothing would, should, or could change. Ever. In Detroit everybody agrees that, aside from differing plans for the future, keeping the status quo cannot be an alternative. Seeming to be caught in a disastrous status quo for too long, opportunity for change is generally much desired. I experienced it as a city of hope, an endless playground, a lab where ideas for a different society were not immediately silenced by the pressure for profit. A German comrade of mine was sentenced to four years in prison for squatting a house in Germany; if squatters in Detroit take care of a house, their neighbors may bring them a cake. After my stay, and during data analysis, I became more aware of how unevenly these opportunities were laid out. This heterotopia, well-meaning as it may be, is far from open to everybody. I went to community meetings in neighborhoods that were 90% black, and the open-to-everybody events were still predominantly white. I became more aware that, on my playground, others had buried their hopes. Each abandoned house was once someone's home that they had saved for, had grown up in, called home, and possibly considered their ticket to the American middle class. My everlasting excitement in these beautiful ruins, crumbling cathedrals to industrialism, was made possible because I knew I would *leave* again: to the coffee shops on campus and later back to Munich.

I am not ashamed of my feelings during my first stay in 2012/13; I tried my best to *do no evil*, as
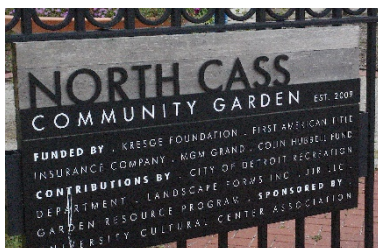
Community Garden at Trumbull and Martin Luther King Boulevard (top);

Right: Nicely kept and fenced-off Pocket Park in Midtown; Left: List of its corporate sponsors.

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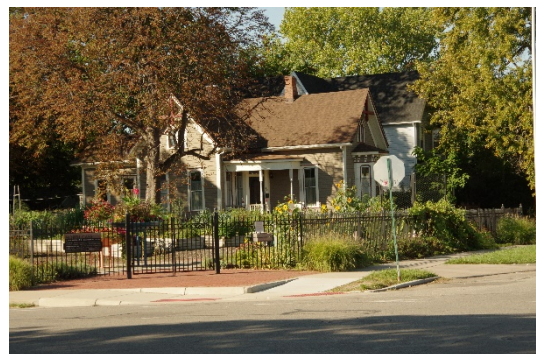
[101]   Margaret Thatcher's famous, baleful slogan "There is no alternative".

the Google slogan goes, and maybe accidentally did as much good as my attitude did unintended harm. The second time I was warier, and my feelings more ambivalent. I was also shocked at how the Detroit had been transformed within just one year due to the flood of money coming into the city. My dream of a utopic space seemed to stand on shaky grounds from two sides.

That was a shared fear among many of us: the times of heterotopia were coming to an end. People bought up whatever empty lot or house they could afford "before some investor swoops it" (or someone else who plans to actually live in there, one may add). Many people hurried to get legal titles on the property that they had used for quite a while, but never owned. I got to know a couple that commercially farmed on 24 lots, and owned only four of them. Aside from the fear of speculators and outside money – Chinese investors are said to buy up huge chunks of land—the climate itself changed. Laissez-faire, "anything goes", seemed to us to be a thing of the past.

Whenever I, as a newbie to Detroit, had asked if something was legal, or whether we would get into trouble for something, the answer had always been: "they got better things to worry about". I had heard this sentence so often that it almost became a mantra for me. The "they" did not only refer to the police, and instead meant "everybody". As long as you did not steal, shoot, or sell crack, nobody seemed to care; often not even then. An informant told me how he and his friends drove to the city as teenagers to skateboard. In the suburbs, somebody usually called the cops to end this "deviant behavior". Detroiters had better things to worry about. He now

22 Not in accordance with suburban zoning ordinances: the "Detroit Radiator Farm"

fulfilled his dream of owning a coffee shop, something he could not have afforded in other cities. Friends told me how they used to drive around looking for old TV sets. They brought them to old parking lots and used them as shooting targets. At a local market you can buy wood that people chop professionally from all the abandoned lots in the city. There are construction workers from the suburbs who bring truckloads of building rubble or old tires and dump them in the backyards of empty houses. Squatters and homeless people live in some while others are used as drug houses. Sometimes neighbors or rivaling gangs burn down empty houses to prevent such use, or owners will engulf their houses in flames trying to get the insurance money, but most fires are ignited by "scrappers", burning it down for the wires and plumbing. In some areas, nobody seemed to *care.* Things seemed to go their way. Since most people did not burn down houses or sell crack, things were not that bad. We enjoyed the good-natured chaos anyway. The "we" is the young people with little cash, but enough social and cultural capital to keep going, parents able to help out here and there, and lots of energy and excitement. We enjoyed the spontaneity, while other residents complained that the structural weaknesses of the city, its dysfunctional state of administration, prevented any attempt to live your life in quiet routine. So what?! We did not mind the bad public transport; this is the Bike City! We had no kids, neither did we have to provide for a

family, nor did the poor state of the school system matter. Skin color gave us access to student jobs that paid decently, bars with customers that actually tipped instead of McDonalds, and the academic degrees we had or about to finish were our tickets back to normality. In our bubbles, we enjoyed the sunny side of anarchism.
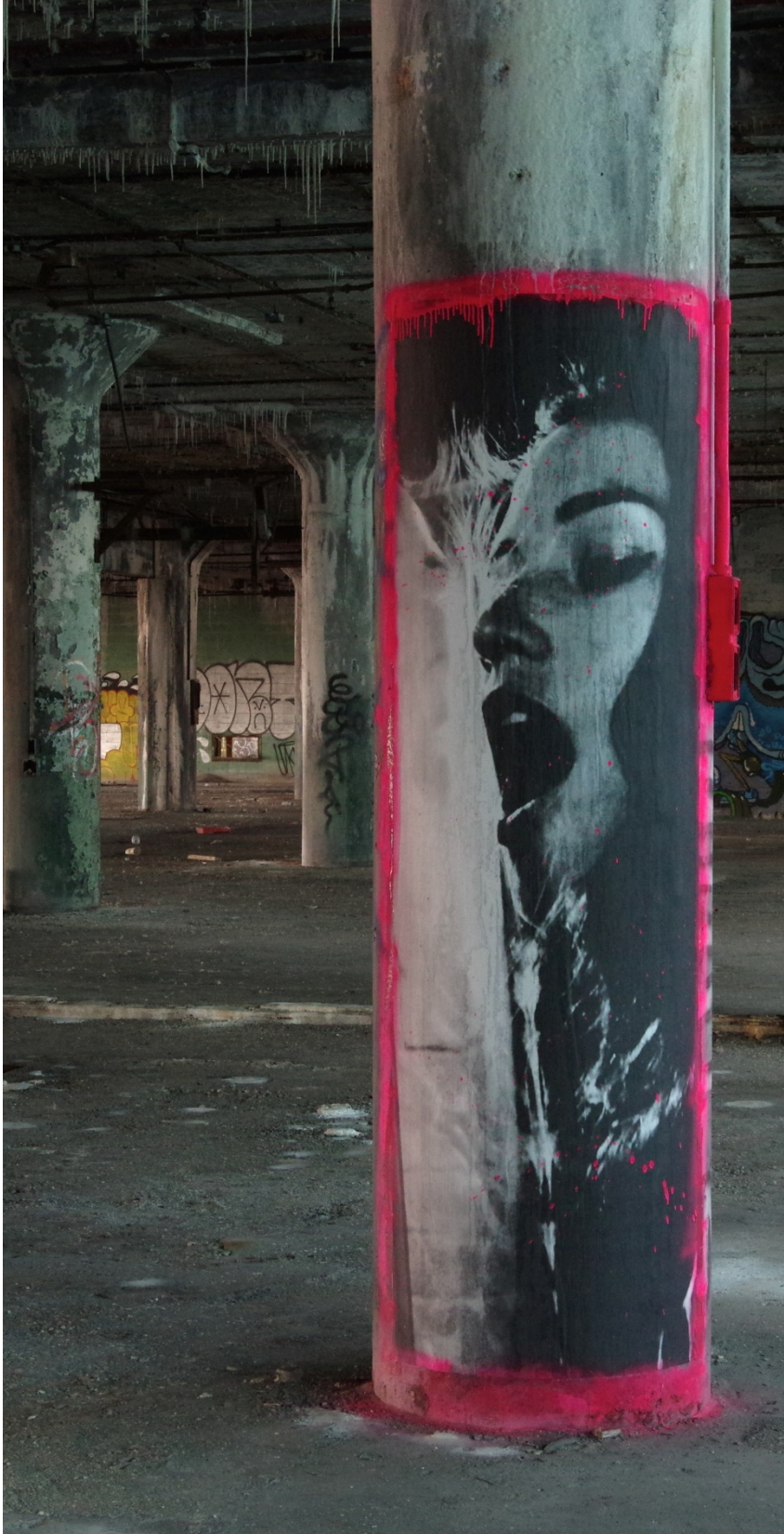
The entire social aesthetics of the DIY city reject the order of the suburbs. That is not to say that Detroit as a whole is different, many residential areas obey to the same spacial structuring as the suburbs. The abandoned, overgrowing areas; however, have their distinct atmosphere, like the houses and lots of those that are proud to be different. To some extent, people lack the economic capacity to keep their properties up to standard, but often they do not care about the standard itself. Lefebvre localizes the consensus of society, especially capitalist society, in "abstract space". If a community carves itself into its surroundings, turning space to place (together with the eye of its beholder), then residents of some areas seem to care for quite deviant aesthetics. For the utopists, this heterotopia was inspiring and promising, for others it was threatening. The deviant spacial consensus seemed to mirror a deviant, possibly dangerous social consensus.

4. Practices of Care

With "the state", in its more common forms and representations, withdrawing from some areas,[102] another aspect comes to the foreground: practices of care. The term formed a red line through many of my interviews, as I realized midway through my second research. It was a major criterion for many in order to distinguish a good area from a bad one: whether people *cared* about it, or not. Those rejecting the idea of "bad areas" also considered it important with how much people *cared* about themselves, their property, and their surroundings and community. Within structuralist terms, it could be described as *cultivating*, as maintaining the border between nature and culture; given the trend to (and hype around) urban farming, the analogy with agriculture is not purely accidental. As Gold and Revill write, the spacial order comes to symbolize the moral one; and not caring for the former implies sinning against the later (2003:37).

For many, *care* meant: to mow the lawn, and to clean up the trash around you home. It means to keep up the appearance of your house, to paint the front steps regularly, and again and again to mow the lawn, to mow the adjoining lawn if nobody does, and the next three if you have to.[103] It means to know your neighbors, to keep an eye out who is walking around in your neighborhood, and to call the cops under the pretense of suspicious behavior. It is the duty of the individual to feel responsible, to claim ownership and make longstanding investments, not just in your own property, but also to fix up abandoned houses, participate in community clean-ups and help boarding up empty houses.[104] Analogies were drawn to body hygiene: not caring for your surrounding would be like not showering for a week. One interview partner, a nurse, linked lack of maintenance, decay, and self-care deficits with smoking and alcohol abuse as his prime indicators for a bad area. People were quick to make a point out of the fact that this would not be a classist criterion: it would not be about the money invested in upkeep, but about the effort, or mindset. There would be no shame in being poor, especially not in a city like this, but even without money, you could let yourself go, or not. Most were lenient on those not caring enough, arguing that it would be hard to keep a proper mindset when surrounded by debris. Without a community surrounding you, you would stand little chance against the inevitable, all-encompassing crumble around you. How can you mow five lots with a push mower? The more respect was

23 Community board-up: a "good neighborhood" meets every other weekend to collectively make sure all ruins in the neighborhood are sealed properly.

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[102] To name a few examples: police hardly patrols many areas, and does not react to emergency calls. Traffic rules get ignored. Informal economy blossoms. Schools get closed. Infrastructure crumbles and does not get repaired. Ideas to officially 'give up' on parts of the City are wide-spread. Even the land register was not kept properly throughout the time, leading to confusion who ultimately owns certain lots and buildings.

[103] For the cultic positions lawns have in the USA, read Robbins beautiful and entertaining "Lawn People" (2007).

[104] One of the reasons why owner-occupied neighborhoods were usually considered better than areas were most people rented.

shown for those who did: those who were left as the only inhabited house on the block, surrounded by nothing but uncontrolled nature, and still managed to keep their property neat. For quite a while, especially during my first study, I assumed this worldview would feed on Hobbesian philosophy.[105] For him, people submitted to a sovereign to protect their property (Hobbes 2010 [1651]: 151ff). Without a higher source of power, accumulating capital is always in vain. Blind, animalistic violence rules and life is famously nasty, brutish, and short. When you recall the portrayal of the Steve Utash incident, and the stigmatization of Detroit as an overgrowing, wild place "falling back to nature", as a popular headline stated, Hobbes as a comparison could not be avoided. The state is weak in Detroit; police, as the Leviathan's strongest muscle, is hardly present. In addition, many people do not have any capital worth protecting. If they own houses they are not worth more than a handful of dollars, their cultural capital on average is virtually non-existent (statistically, 75% dropped out of high school), and social capital cannot give access to formal jobs due to the hyper-ghetto racial segregation. Within a Hobbesian perspective, there is little reason to assume they would still share the social contract. I am not convinced, and am going back and forth on this issue myself; but the excessive fear of the Other present in Detroit sometimes seems to follow these lines. The attention paid to practices of care would make more sense: those practices would form evidence, a continuously pledge to the social contract, to abstract space, and "the rules governing society" (meaning: the *proper* rules governing a *proper* society). The image of "a city falling back to nature" would then be more than just a superficial fascination for trees growing in ruins; it would be sacrilegious fear of a society falling back into a state of nature. Again, I am not entirely convinced myself; but the similarities seemed to striking not to mention this line of thought.

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[105]   To phrase carefully: I do not share Hobbes worldview, and do not think Detroiters had revoked the social contract. Especially, I do not state that black people were living in, or closer to, a state of nature. I merely state that I found the resemblance of Hobbes' ideas and several lines structuring the discourse in and about Detroit stunning.

5. Knowing your ways around

Both "Others" and monsters tend to dissolve the closer they get. This shall not be confused with a romanticized version of the Contact Theory [106]: people can live in close proximity and still successfully avoid contact, let alone the erroneous assumption that social contact would always turn out pleasant. However, the imagination of the monster, or the monstrous space, grows weaker as interaction increases. As you become more familiar with an area, the safer you start to feel. A functionalist, psychological explanation would be that you know both your escape routes and people around that could come to your help. However, even in the area I frequently visited, I knew four people living on that street, none of them dumb enough to interfere with an armed robbery. Likewise, there is no point in trying to outrun a bullet. My interpretation is: familiarization builds up familiarity and trust in the space itself. This is most obvious in the city administrators' desperate attempts to move suburbanites downtown, even if it is just for a football match. Due to the repeated visits, they will feel more familiar, and maybe dare to expand their route by visiting a bar afterwards. Likewise, the more often you bike through an area, the safer you tend to feel. Detroit, to quite some extend, does look different from other, more "normal" cities. Gaining trust in a city known for its dangerous reputation takes time, and a geographic area may not be as "bad" as others say.

There is a second aspect to knowing an area worth taking into consideration even for those that reject the concept of "bad areas". Certain situations tend to happen at certain localities. Liquor stores and some gas stations are neuralgic points, as are other "hangout spots". The better you know an area, the better you can assess which road to take, and which corner to avoid.

5.1. Unfortunate Encounters

Before reaching the outskirts of Midtown, leaving from Cass Corridor,[107] you will pass through an area of transition. I had the advantage of visiting Detroit several times over a two-year span to experience the Midtown's growth. This turf war is unlike conquering territory. It is not fought by sending the University police to this or that particular street. Wayne State Police patrol the entire area anyway, starting from the bridge over the freeway. Neither is this transition of Cass Corridor / Midtown a delineated one-street-at-a-time movement. There is no sharp border, and therefore changing that "border" will always be an ambiguous process. Around campus, though, Midtown is thoroughly renovated. Investors have a hard time finding ruins to renovate and rent out,[108] and instead have their eyes on the crumbling apartment buildings further south, closer to Cass

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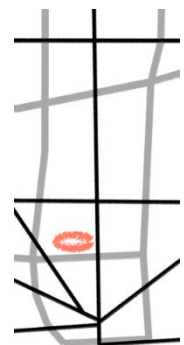
[106]   The old sociological assumption that racial and other prejudices decrease the more social interaction happens; unfortunately, this theory always took the definition of the respective Other, and the line demarcating it, for granted. For criticism, see also Valentine (2008, esp. 326f)

[107]   Again: Midtown is technically Cass Corridor's new name, and is supposed to replace it entirely. But since this change of words is supposed to entice a social change, too, I refer to those parts that were not yet transformed as Cass Corridor.

[108]   I know of two ruins around campus, both single-family houses that are harder to renovate than apartment buildings, while promising less profit.

Corridor. This is not a block-by-block movement; the area is too scarcely built-up to call them blocks. Around 50% of the buildings have been torn down for decades, and the empty areas within the net of streets have been filled up with empty parking lots, gravel, or are simply overgrowing. Of the remaining buildings, some are more promising than others based on their size, condition, and what the respective owners may speculate. Several of the apartment buildings are still occupied, so you find people on the streets every now and then. Until recently, university students and non-students moved to the city without considering this area and its residents trustworthy enough to move there. Therefore, many abandoned apartment buildings stood empty two years ago. The rental units close to campus rose in price, and therefore more apartment buildings in Cass Corridor are now being renovated.

When I arrived in 2013, a Wayne State police officer warned me about moving further south than Slows, a restaurant on Cass and Alexandrine. There were few venues located in that area both as a reason and a consequence of students avoiding the area. Today there is a high-end restaurant at 2nd and Selden, one block south. Even on Martin Luther King Boulevard, three blocks south, a lot of money was invested into restoring a grand old seven-story apartment building. By gentrifying Midtown as a nucleus, the area changes increasingly fast. The hope of city administration, urban planners, and all those having a certain future for Detroit in mind, is that Downtown, Midtown, and New Center will slowly "grow together", as it is usually referred to. The term itself shows the weakness of the plan: "growing together" is a

24 Selden Standart, in 2015 the most fashionable upper class restaurant (left)

Above: by 2015, WSU had put up signs to 'lure' students to explore Midtown. In 2013, we were advised not to leave campus.

creative process, and implies building something of value from thin air.[109] Most people currently living between Downtown and Midtown are not part of this plan.

If Cass Corridor for many is a "bad area," and Midtown a "good" bubble, those streets in between are in transition. It was in this area where I walked with a friend and experienced one of the few dangerous moments I had during my stay in Detroit. She and I had to walk by a group of young black men. There were approximately six of them, and I was not exactly scared, but alert. Situations like this are known to escalate every once in a while, with one side provoking the other or making them feel provoked. The machismo leads to violence, which in Detroit may well exceed the level of pushing around and insulting. Again, stories like the one of Steve Utash set the stage. Sometimes these conflicts take the form of strong-muscling, bullying and insults to show whose ground you are on. In this contested place, intimidations and fear are part of the turf war: who has the right to the city. I had avoided every such situation by emphasizing that I am European, and have therefore no stake in the game: I did not make any claims to the city which could be contested. This had usually worked out well for me. We passed the group with a few yards of distance; I was not exactly

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[109] Other terms in use have similar implications, like in "revitalization", which assumes a place to be dead space. Considering that it does not refer to build structures alone, even the more neutral "renewal" has its flaws.

scared, and did not suspect any of the teenagers in particular. I did not even look at them too closely, partly because it might be interpreted as provocation, and partly because my friend and I were engaged in a stimulating conversation, maybe about Wittgenstein, or baking goods.[110] What I am trying to convey: it was just *normal*. We were walking down a street, and passed by a group of young men sitting on a bench. Though, considering the locality I, and probably my friend, were very *aware* of the group, much more than I would likely have been on campus. It did not interrupt our conversation, it did not break daily life; until the stone soared by, they were just a part of the environment worth being aware of.

It would sound poetic to write, "the stone whistled right by my ear,"[111] but honestly I have no idea. Maybe it missed us by several yards; maybe it was not even an aimed throw. In that moment a very different reality opened up. This, I say, is not due to the act itself; throwing a rock does not automatically incite terror. If a group of teenager in Munich, or even on Wayne State campus, threw a rock after me, I would give them the lecture of a lifetime, without fear of their reaction. I also know Detroiters that would have done just the same to this group of youngsters; an elderly white woman I used to work with would probably have given them a lecture effective enough to turn them into churchgoers. To my friend, many others, and me; however, Detroit's aura in many areas have induced a constant feeling of being in a lower position. What if one of those kids answered my rants with a gun, or a fist-fight? I have not been in a physical confrontation since seventh grade, and even though I know nothing about these teenage boys, considering what you know about Detroit made me believe that they were better street fighters. The place itself seems to say, "this is not your turf, this is not your arena: fights here are fought in ways you do not understand, and cannot cope with". Therefore, lacking the option of confrontation (on our terms, that is: talking, insulting, calling the police), we kept on walking, feeling victimized, and hoping that no second stone would follow.

5.2. „There are no bad areas, only bad people"

"Situations" like the soaring stone, or passing by a liquor store as described above, are the counter-concept to "bad areas". As mentioned earlier, the moral landscape by which some navigate the city is not only discussed among those that use it, a process that both adjusts and reassures it, but also is fiercely rejected by those that do not use it. Some call the concept dysfunctional and unfit to lower risks. Most people reject it as superficial justification of racism or classism. "Bad areas", they state, is just a way to stigmatize lower income or racially segregated areas as dangerous and criminal. Poverty itself thereby becomes immoral and potentially anti-social. Within social sciences, this shift from "neighborhood of the poor" to "dangerous neighborhood" has been well documented (i.e. Yonucu 2008).

Those rejecting the idea of "bad areas" are obviously aware of the crime and dangers in the city. They merely insist that it is spaced out more evenly, and not restricted to delineated

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[110] I have no idea what we talked about anymore; but since she is a stimulating thinker I am sure we had an intelligent conversation.

[111] This is a valid problem when you are asked to tell about Detroit: of course you are not going to describe how you walked down a street and nothing happened; but how do you retell these stories, which are worth retelling, without giving the city the impression of a war-zone, which it is definitely not? And, going in a similar direction: how do you warn visitors to be careful in Detroit if you cannot tell them *what* to be careful of?

"bad areas". When I mentioned this term, I was criticized for it on several occasions: "There are no bad areas. There are bad situations, or bad people, but that can happen anywhere!" There is a major theoretical divide between these two standpoints which cannot be united in the seemingly obvious statements that bad situations were more likely in certain areas. It is about stigmatizing the poor, or black. It is also, and even more so, about making a neighborhood responsible for "its" criminals.[112] Though never phrased in those terms, the question of moral landscape vs. "bad situation" touches upon the questions on how to explain crime: pathology, or subcultural theories.[113] Will a society automatically produce a certain amount of wrong-doers due to: accident, character, or family background? In this case, the main question would be: How to keep them in bounds? Or can communities, under certain circumstances, produce their own set of values deviating from the "mainstream society" and its laws? Traditionally, law-and-order politicians and their intellectuals preferred the first explanation, emphasizing the role of the individual. Leftist thinkers were more inclined to look at a criminal's wider surrounding. Borrowing from Durkheim's *anomalie*, sociologists like Whyte assumed that certain neighborhoods develop their own moral codex (1981). It makes sense that people less familiar with Detroit expect to find those illicit communities in the "abnormal" places, spaces where even the material fabric of the place seems to prove that nobody cared about normal (middle class) norms.

It is interesting to see that this very left wing city fiercely rejects the theories of well-meaning leftist sociologists. After all, it would be easy to dismiss moral landscapes as a dysfunctional safety strategy, give those employing it a fair warning that they are not as safe as they think they are, and to go on with one's business. Subcultural theories; however, have two major flaws to them. They too often neglect that the residents of such a neighborhood are often the first to suffer from these criminal activities; romanticized "primitive rebels" still roam the theoretical underbrush more often than they should (Schneider, Schneider 2008:357). Even worse: While they do take responsibility off the individual, they widen the liability to include the entire community. After all, deviant sub-cultural norms are a social system no sole individual can ever be guilty of on their own. If it takes a village to raise a child, in subcultural theories it takes a community to raise a criminal—an accusation most Detroiters do not accept.

As I mentioned, both moral landscapes and "bad situations" are social constructs, attempts of giving sense to events occurring in the city. The question of which one is "correct" lies beside the point; instead, one should ask which assumptions underlie the concepts. However, both approaches come with their own functionalisms, functional or dysfunctional strategies to lower one's individual risk. The risk of being victimized in a "bad area" is best minimized by avoiding social contact within it, or avoiding the area altogether. Do not leave the highway. Do not stop at intersections. Change the side of the road if someone approaches you. All those strategies are a sign of mistrust, and therefore inherently offensive: If I change the side of the road I assume the other person to be potentially against me in an illicit way, to operate on a different set of values, and therefore be against society itself. Although, when a friend of mine and I drove down 3rd street at night, close to the Masonic temple—I had asked her to pass by there because I wanted to see the place at night—around 30 people were standing around a street corner. They were chatting in loose groups. Maybe it was

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[112]   Vgl. Green (2014, first chapter). For a good introduction, see Vigil (2003).

[113]   As you may guess, people tried to answer this question before me, and giving a less abbreviated overview of the debate would take more space than I have.

a homeless shelter that had not yet opened its doors, or a blood bank[114]. For all I know it could have been a church meeting that just had ended. It was night, it was a "bad area", there were people standing on the street, and we rolled slowly towards the streetlight, making sure not to come to a halt before it switched to green and we could head off again.

If you do not consider geography the main index for risk, and emphasize randomness and situation instead, the techniques are subtler. Avoiding certain areas, and the people within, is not a viable option in this mindset. Instead, the one main safety strategy mentioned by almost every "situation-ist" I talked to is to pay attention to one's surroundings. It is also the prime message the operator of a youth hostel gives his guests when they are nervous about how to navigate the infamous city: "Be alert, then you should be good. Just don't do anything stupid. Walk in the street. Don't walk on the sidewalk. They are not in a good state, you may twist an ankle. And the trees and stuff provide good cover for whoever may be up to something no-good, on the street at least you got like a 3 or 5 feet buffer area. You look people in the eye, you smile, and you should for the most part be good." Being aware of one's surroundings was mentioned in most interviews I took, but when I asked how to react, and how to react to *what*, answers became vague.

The relation of awareness, implying that you can recognize a situation beforehand, to safety is only superficially a functional one. The additional time I receive, which could be used to prepare for protection, only grants safety when I actually have the means to counter a risk. This may be the case for hit-and-run crimes, where it would be sufficient to put away my cell phone if I see a suspicious person approaching me (leaving aside the question how to recognize a suspicious person). The most dreaded crimes are usually robberies or other violent crimes. Being aware of your surroundings may give you the time to react to a mugging—it does not give you the means to it.[115] I assume awareness is a tactic of its own right, a strategy to feel safer by increasing one's feeling of control over the situation. You feel more comfortable in the area and situation if you know, or assume to know, what the people around you are doing. As long as you trust your own attentiveness, you do not have to trust an area to feel safe; instead, you are confident that you would realize if someone was walking up to you with bad intentions. In the worst case, a mugging will probably be less shocking if you "saw it coming", even if you did not have the means to prevent it. However, awareness is not seen as a coping strategy; people do not perceive it as a way to *feel* more secure, but to *be* it. Criminals are thought to rely on surprise; once they feel seen, they would mostly shy away. In a country where guns are widely spread, and a city where police is scarce, this is not a functional criterion; not being functional; however, does not mean that it is not efficient *both* to prevent feeling insecure, and being victimized.

Along with this comes a call for "bold walk", for showing confidence, and street smartness. This can be employed as a conscious, well-rehearsed performance; but it may just as well become part of one's habitus, and even hexis.[116] A friend of mine, an old, very beardy anarchist who had lived in and around the city since the riots ("I guess I never bought into the

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[114]   Blood donors get a financial reward, making blood donations a survival strategy of homeless and urban poor.

[115]   Even though many people I met carried knifes, pepper sprays, and some even guns, fighting off a criminal is not a strategy people usually stated to rely on. Only one person, a bike courier, said he would fight off an attacker. Otherwise the word would get out that bike couriers carry a lot of money, which might make him and his colleagues regular targets.

[116]   Security should probably be thought not only as performance, but also as embodied. The term 'bold walk' is from Koskela (1997), which uses it in relation to gendered safety strategies.

'American Dream' and stuff…") described it like this: "Stuff happens in the streets anyway, even if you live in the suburbs. More of that has to do with your own consciousness and how you present yourself in the street, how you look, your body language and things like that, when it comes to like 'on the street level' […]. If you just walk down the street like anybody else, and you don't act different from anybody else, and you don't look like you have more than anybody else, you are less likely to have a problem. If you try to be pretentious, well, you may get problems [laughs]… anywhere, doesn't matter where you are." This; however, should not be confused with trust in the space you are in, be it a 'bad area' or not: "You gotta be aware of what's going on around you, if you're walking down a street in the nicest suburb, you know…"

Several interview partners made a strong point that you would have to be aware of your surroundings no matter where you are, whether it be on campus or in the "worst" part of town. Awareness and "bold walk" are parts of the almost mystical quality of "being street smart", the capability to handle urban space. You may not necessarily trust a space, but you trust your own capacity to navigate it, and judge specific situations accurately. This leads to an entirely different interaction with people sharing this space. Instead of perceiving contact as potential threat, you seek security in micro-conversations like nodding to other people, or saying "hi". Once more my anarchist friend: "You walk down a street and you see somebody coming, you don't act like you're afraid of them, you don't coward away from them or cross the street when they walk up on you. You make eye contact with people when you walk down the street". Lilly, the woman energetically waving the flag for Cass Corridor, went a step further. When Midtown/Cass Corridor changed too much for her taste, she moved north to the Palmer Park Apartment District, a rather rough area. After night shifts, she had to cross the adjacent park on her way home. "Everybody is like 'How can you walk through Palmer Park at 1 o'clock in the morning', and I'm like 'Because all the drug dealers know me, they say 'Hi Lilly', offer to walk me to my building to make sure I get there'. They started by offering me drugs, and I'm like "No, I don't do any of that shit any-more, just coming home from work". And never once was I ever robbed. It's how you interact with people. If you look the bad guy in the eye and say 'hi' he's not gonna do anything to you."

Obviously, not all encounters play out as smoothly.[117] Literature often describes "situations", moments when an abstract risk turns into a concrete fear, as shocking or even traumatizing. Koskela, from whom I borrowed the term "bold walking", describes them as "breakings": moments when fear becomes etched into a place (or social situation) permanently, blocking off its comfortable usage for long periods of time, if not forever. I do not mean to challenge this interpretation in general; it seems intuitive, and her examples are convincing. My informants; however, described it in a different way. A friend of mine, a young white woman who had moved to Detroit from the suburbs, even called her first mugging a liberating experience. Let me call her Carla for the time being. She had been robbed three times, twice at gunpoint, and continued to use these places without hesitating. "I've been robbed three times. Twice there was a weapon involved, like, there was a gun. But what is interesting, after those things happened I didn't feel less safe, I felt more safe. Or maybe not more safe, but more comfortable because I saw that the thing I was so scared of happening happened, and I was okay. And afterwards I felt like 'Okay, if the worst case scenario is you get robbed,

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[117] Right next to this park I had tried to hand out a survey to a car thief at work. In my eyes, he had just been 'standing around' next to the parked cars; he and I were both evenly shocked when I approached him, and quickly agreed that maybe it was not the right time for a questionnaire.

then you know what that's like.' And it sucks, but you're okay. And what is interesting, every time that happened, especially the time they held me at gunpoint, [laughs] that's upsetting, but afterwards I was like 'well, now I know I can live through something like that, now I know it is not this, like, blind… scary… thing that is in my imagination. I like actually know what that feels like. And I know that my ability to react to something like that, like, I am able to survive something like that. I don't freeze up or anything.'"

Similarly, nobody ever stated to live in a "bad area". This holds true even for the people that used the term and several said that their neighborhood might be called bad by others. While they were fully aware of the impression their street may make on others, they claimed that it is actually not that bad, once you get to know it better. Carla re-told the story of when she first came to the city she would, stick with the areas and roads she already knew. "I always think of it in this, like, illuminated thing. The city was dark to me, and then I would slowly illuminate patterns of light, of familiarity, as I walked through. I'd just go to the outskirts of the illuminated area, and then, like, the next time I would go *one* block further. I would *never* say, 'I'm just gonna ride from one side of town to the other, and just figure it out'. I always stayed here [and] I felt semi-safe. Like, I know I can go to this *one* place for coffee, and it feel comfortable to me. Establishing this familiarity, I think, was a big deal. And then it is just a matter of time." In her first months, she had even had nightmares about moving through the city: the spaces between the single "safe zones", places she knew, like campus or a friends' place, were filled with darkness and fear of wild animals haunting her. The more familiar she got with her surrounding, the safer she felt.

5.3. Gender

This feeling of victimization is not only related to turf wars, and claiming a right to the city. Fear has multiple entanglements in a city that is not only black, but also male. Detroit is to a majority male space in the very simple sense that you will see more men than women on the streets.[118] This does not mean that there are no women walking around, rather that men are the majority, especially among the groups gathering around street corners, parks, liquor stores or gas stations. In feminist theory, portrayals of gender and race are often viewed in relation, like in the case of blackness as hyper-masculine.[119] Fittingly, suburbs like those surrounding the "black metropolis" and its masculine street corners are portrayed as female spaces. In her study on a neighborhood in Washington, D.C., Modan (2008) describes at length how African American residents of both sexes associated the suburbs with both white and femininity. Young black city-girls distanced themselves from them by emphasizing their city toughness.

Feminists like Rachel Pain claim that, at least in the case of women, it would be misleading to think of fear as something that is off until it is triggered by an event (2008:10). Instead, it should be thought like an ambient noise, something more or less encompassing, that in moments of panic becomes total, and in happier times may cease to the point of virtual non-existence, but will never be fully gone. Maybe one should not even call this feeling fear,

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[118] I became aware of this when I went through the first half of my surveys and realized that most of my informants were men. Wondering why that is, I realized that – amongst other biases – I had approached more men because I had found few women walking the streets.

[119] For an excellent account how much skin color and 'race' can differ read Brodkin's wonderful "How Jews became White Folks" (1998; for gender, see chapter 3 [78ff]).

since—if I interpret her correctly—in relaxed moments it does not have such an emotionally charged connotation. Maybe at the low end of the continuum it would more fittingly be described as being conscious of one's security situation. I assume Rachel Pain's argument was not restricted to gender, or sex, but may be applied more generally to groups that feel in a vulnerable position. It at least describes my own sentiment very precisely, and sheds a new light on the statements of many of those I interviewed. Both race and gender are critical issues, and I know the respective scientific debates too little to propose a grand-scale theory. The clusters of black-city-male and white-suburb-female, together with the feminist take on fear, however, fall into place too nicely not to mention them. This shall not imply that African Americans in general would not share this fear, or all black men perform their masculinity in a common way. On the contrary, I met one elder white woman that lived in the city all her life, and literally bullied the dealers occupying the house across the street until they left. The feeling to stand on shaky ground is not necessarily related to sex, or gender.

5.4. Fortunate Encounters

My very last week in the U.S., I spent in Detroit together with a German friend. It was probably his third day in Detroit, and I had only three more until I had to leave. We had been to a bar, and on our way back we walked a street I usually would have avoided. It was late, I was tired and a bit drunk, and walking a route more trustworthy would have been a major detour. We walked down the quiet, deserted alley when out of nowhere a black voice said "gentlemen." [120] I am pretty sure my heart skipped a beat, adrenaline made me almost jump up the closest tree, and rationality had already estimated how much money I had in my wallet (maybe $15, but credit cards, ID card, all kinds of stuff—and of course I would have to give away my phone). Another thought was "For real? After criss-crossing the city for months, going all kinds of places, almost taking chances to get robbed at some far east side corner, I get robbed *here*, three days before I leave?!". I *knew* that there was no one behind us, I would have heard a car, or footsteps coming closer, even without listening for it, I was calibrated for monitoring my surroundings. He must have waited behind a tree, maybe... In the meantime, my friend had looked over his shoulder and made way for the old man on his bike who wanted to pass by. My friend had trust in the place, he did not expect anything but a guy who wanted to pass by. At least in this moment he did not have the mindset that something bad might happen. He was not standing on shaky ground.

In a study like this, the personal fear becomes a necessary part of the data set. It is very common for ethnographers to be afraid, or anxious, and include this in their texts. Most often, though, we are afraid of something different than the people we study: that our research design is flimsy, that we step on people's toes, that nobody wants to talk to us. The noises, smells and crowds of our host place may be frightening, or definitions of personal space be overwhelmingly different. Those are hardly shared fears, but our own. In addition, we study the fears of others: Of hells and gods that we do not believe in, power plays we can withdraw from, or droughts that do not affect us in comparable ways. Since some emotions,

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[120]   Many African American Detroiters have a distinct dialect.
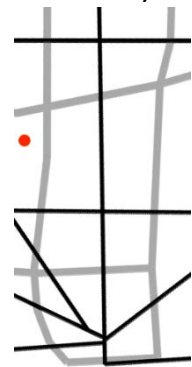
with fear being prominent among them,[121] are sometimes considered universal there is a certain fascination for fear truly shared by ethnographers and their "objects". Mollica (2014) described how he, by accident, was caught up in the war between Israel and Lebanon in 2006. He and the Lebanese shared the same risk, sitting in the same bunker under fire from the non-discriminating Israeli bombs.[122] This case of a shared fatal risk distributed evenly by a power beyond their influence is luckily rare.

Since the risk I studied does not follow definable rules, I cannot say how much at risk I was, and neither is there a language or measure to express precisely how scared I was, let alone a fear-average through the months I stayed in Detroit. Being young, male, tall, and blessed with the self-confidence of the fools was definitely to my advantage. I am financially stable, which allows me to hand over my carry-on possessions without losing vital essentials. I am not sure; however, if I would always have handed over my possessions in the case of an (unarmed) robbery. The Wild West "stand your ground" mentality many display probably had a slight tendency to rub off on me. The city, in parts, portrays itself as a very male space, and masculine ascription, identification, and stereotypes is not something you leave easily behind. I also came to a point where I just wanted to *know it*. Not mainly *how* it would be to when robbed, but *if* I would be robbed. I asked all kinds of people what would happen to me, just as I am, young, white, male, middle class, if I were to walk around the "worst" area of the East Side at 2 a.m.

The answers I received—again, each from Detroiters whose estimate I trust ranged from "some sneaky comments, but if you are smart enough not to talk back you should be fine" to "you will get robbed, and beaten up really badly" and "you will be killed. After ten minutes, somebody feel like he has to prove something, and shoot you dead." This is just one small example of the ambiguity you live (and research) within Detroit: you hear all these stories. You know that while some may be exaggerated, for the most part it is true. Yet here you are, wandering, biking up and down the city's east and west, north and south sides, not giving too much thought about safety—and absolutely nothing happens. For all I know, Detroit could be the safest city in the world.

For all that, I came to a point where I simply wanted to *know it*. I had this plan, one night I had literally already walked out of the door, jacket in my hand. I did not do it; again, remember Steve Utash.

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[121] I do not see use in this debate: maybe there is a brain reaction common to all humans, setting off chemically identical messenger substances – so what? If, as should be obvious, triggers, sentiments, and appropriate reactions are social, not biological, I see no reason why "universal emotions" should fulfill the fantasy of gaining a pre-discursive vantage point for epistemology.

[122] Although (only) he was after weeks escorted to safety by EU soldiers, and knew he would not suffer from the future costs of the war, during his days in the bunker he did share the same risk.

6. A Reconciliatory End

I am grateful that my first encounter with Detroit was not mediated by a research question. I went there to study, with only vague plans to do research at some point during my second semester. Therefore, in the most radical form of grounded theory, this topic did not become mine until it almost forced itself upon me. It later became my research question, intellectual stimulation, source of fascination, as well as increasingly nemesis. By studying and living in Detroit, I had done quite a bit of research before ever paying attention to the theory on fear. It was soothing to see how many of my ideas and interpretations had occurred with other scientists, too, and I found it stimulating to read their thoughts. I did not; however, start out to prove or falsify one specific hypothesis, and I did not come across the one and single theory on fear or anxiety that I could grapple with. Therefore, I will not end with a grand-scale explanation on how to correct the fears of the world, let alone Detroit. This text—hopefully—is a selected and structured collection of observations and corresponding interpretations. Like with several other issues, I struggled a lot with my incapacity to carve higher theoretical implications out of the endless amount of empirical data. During the two years, I struggled and loved in and with Detroit. I did the Icarus narrative myself, several times round-trip.

Fear is an emotional topic, and Detroit, for me, is an emotional place. At some point during my research, I felt like all I ever talk about was fear. The city has wonderful emotions to give, and all I seemed to care for were bad ones: fear, anxiety, risk, danger. People around me sometimes reacted angrily, or short-tempered to my selective interest; like me, they were afraid I might come up with just another portrayal of the city as a bad place. I sincerely hope I did not present fear as the sole emotion governing people's lives. A long and heavily edited quote from the last pages of my field diary:

"In the evening I headed out to bring Mike back his bicycle. It was a beautiful mood, I was rolling up 2nd, then Chicago Boulevard, Arden Park and Caniff over to Hamtramck. Detroit is dreamy. A wonderful evening light, perfect
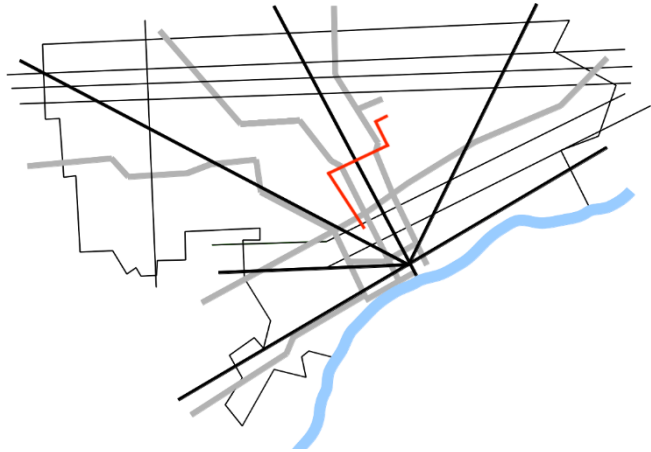
25 Yet another ambigious aspect of the Icarus-narrative around Detroit: are there trees growing from the ruins? And if so, what does that mean? That we as an industrial society have come to an end, that the future has to be post-industrial, maybe even post-capitalist? Or does it mean that Detroit is finally done for good, we can switch the city of, and forget about this entire mess? Is it a sign of hope, that this city may start its upswing? On the other hand, it is just a tree. Although, if so many people take and print and post and coment pictures of it, it is probably more than just a tree.

temperature, a soft breeze and an amazing city. I will miss the green, and the wide empty roads. It hurts to know that I will leave tomorrow, even though during some of the last days I found myself almost longing for departure day. My level of curiosity had dropped lately, and this made me feel guilty: curiosity is something you just *don't lack* as anthropologist. I felt lazy, and constantly afraid I may not be doing enough. Talking about fear had made me depressed, I had already heard every answer to every question, and could not bring up the momentum and interest to come up with new ones. Now, when biking through this peaceful late afternoon, the pain of parting made me sentimental. I have spent a lot of time here, good times mostly, and now I do not know how Detroit and I shall continue. Whether I should come back one last time, buy a house in Detroit and see what else the city and I could give each other, or whether I should leave it for good this time: no hurt feelings, but we had enough of each other.

There is this same soft, southern light like in Italy. It was a peaceful ride, I barely saw anybody, not even cars. In this light, the city had nothing threatening to it. It is hard to imagine that all the stories you know actually happened in *this* city. I felt the incredible love for Detroit coming back that I had been missing a bit during the last days and weeks. It is a wonderful city, full of wonderful people, and we met each other during a great time of our lives. Say nice things about Detroit."

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