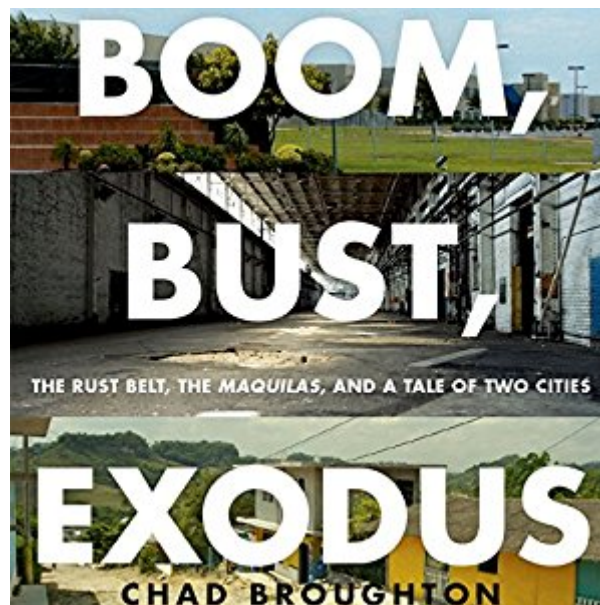




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Boom, Bust, Exodus: The Rust Belt, The Maquilas, And A Tale Of Two Cities



Synopsis

In 2002, the town of Galesburg, a slowly declining Rustbelt city of 33,000 in western Illinois, learned that it would soon lose its largest factory, a Maytag refrigerator plant that had anchored Galesburg's social and economic life for decades. Workers at the plant earned \$15.14 an hour, had good insurance, and were assured a solid retirement. In 2004, the plant was relocated to Reynosa, Mexico, where workers sometimes spent 13-hour days assembling refrigerators for \$1.10 an hour. In *Boom, Bust, Exodus*, Chad Broughton offers a ground-level look at the rapid transition to a globalized economy, from the perspective of those whose lives it has most deeply affected. We live in a commoditized world, increasingly divorced from the origins of the goods we consume; it is easy to ignore who is manufacturing our smart phones and hybrid cars; and where they come from no longer seems to matter. And yet, Broughton shows, the who and where matter deeply, and in this audiobook he puts human faces to the relentless cycle of global manufacturing. It is a tale of two cities. In Galesburg, where parts of the empty Maytag factory still stand, a hollowed out version of the American dream, the economy is a shadow of what it once was. Reynosa, in contrast, has become one of the exploding post-NAFTA "second-tier cities" of the developing world, thanks to the influx of foreign-owned, export-oriented maquiladoras - an industrial promised land throbbing with the energy of commerce, legal and illegal. And yet even these distinctions, Broughton shows, cannot be finely drawn: Families in Reynosa also struggle to get by, and the city is beset by violence and a ruthless drug war. Those left behind in the post-Industrial decline of Galesburg, meanwhile, do not see themselves as helpless victims: They have gone back to school, pursued new careers, and learned to adapt and even thrive.

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Customer Reviews

The american dream goes to the hell. What a story. The free trade and the negative effects on both USA and Mexico. The "benefits" for production are questioned. Is it good cheaper goods for the consumer benefit even that workers loose its job? Does it justify it? The free market is savage. Do humans justify survival ignoring values going just for the fittest? Many myths I have about USA went to the trash box. Others about "good things" for maquiladoras and the song "better to have something to eat than nothing" is aberrant. What is the truth? I stopped many times the reading "for digesting" and "thinking". The worst thing is that this story is not fiction. What a book. Its a pity it is not translated to spanish. I will love to give as a gift to many of my friends who do not read english (I try, sorry for my grammar). Could it be considered a leftist reading? Not at all. A right wing? Neither. It is just appalling. Lovers of "real" economy will like it. When a book left something deep in my mind, certainly it will qualify for a top valuation. Maybe will be outdated in 50 years, certainly I will not read it then. For now, is actual. Maybe today is not mexican maquilas, but certainly are chinese factories. Excellent book.

Boom, Bust Exodus by Chris Broughton is a fairly in-depth study of a segment of the globalized economy. But what makes Broughton's book stand out is that he looks at it from a human perspective rather than just numbers on a spreadsheet or a nicely produced graph. As an added point, he doesn't just look at the workers at the Galesburg Maytag plant who lost the high paying union jobs that many had held for decades, but also the workers in Mexico who replace these people at lower wages, virtually no union protection, and are often exposed to toxic chemicals. The evidence would seem to indicate that there are few real winners other than corporate and business entities. On the other hand, this is far from a doom and gloom story as we see some Maytag workers reinvent themselves while others have the struggles that one might expect of people whose only life was manufacturing. I really liked this story because it brought humanity into the debate over the modern economy - there are winners and losers, but I don't think standard economic analysis really captures the basic fact that you are dealing with human beings. But then again, you can say that about so many things in the United States these days.

The author does an amazing job of covering the human dimensions behind global integration. And so illustrative and engaging I'm going to refer this book to my many economist friends, who often undermine the value of qualitative research. I do find that author takes the anti-corporation rhetoric a little too far at times. I'm also skeptical of the equivalency the author draws between Mexico post-NAFTA and the Porfiriato. I think that one can make a strong argument that, although there is still a lot of work to be done in protecting the rights of low-income workers, struggling populations in Mexico are better off today than they were under the Porfiriato. At least today there are strong social programs, like Oportunidades, that are trying to actively combat poverty. And, to some extent, workers have cheaper and greater options as consumers today than they did when they were forced to buy from the "Tienda de Raya" under Porfirio. I agree with the book that the "free trade benefits everyone" argument is BS, but I do question the validity of the comparison, especially given how circumstantial history is. Some of the characters, like Governor Montemayor (who I had never heard of before), give me hope that there is room for a "third way," under strong leadership, in Mexico. I recently saw Miguel Angel Mancera "the mayor of Mexico City" speak at a conference. I can't make a definitive statement about him, but I do think he's someone with vision and strong leadership, who can hopefully pave a new road for Mexico in the future.

My attention span for non-fiction is generally short - of the New Yorker variety. I tore through this book in only a few nights - it's one of the only non-fiction books I've done this with. Broughton does an excellent job of portraying both the settings and the characters in a way that I became invested in their journeys. It sounds strange to be invested in the "journey" of a physical place, but that is what happens to both settings in this book. By the time the settings (and their inhabitants) have become transformed, I was heartbroken, and outraged, and all of that good stuff. You'll never look at your kitchen appliances in the same way, or, in this election year, listen to speeches about trade and jobs overseas, and the working class, and immigrants, and pretty much everything in the same way. I strongly recommend this book.

A beautiful, poignant portrait of the impact of shady trade deals that benefit CEOs and the wealthy few . . . while pitting working people from the U.S. and Mexico (and elsewhere) against each other. Chad Broughton reveals that free trade has big costs--in jobs and the livelihoods of workers in the U.S. and Mexico and in the loss of livelihoods in rural Mexico. This is a must-read for anyone concerned about working families in the U.S. and abroad.

Well researched. Galesburg is my hometown and I could relate to the stories, right down to the sign at my boyhood church and the camaraderie of bowling. It always hurts when I visit my parents in Galesburg and see the continuing impact - it's like a miniature Detroit. Before globalization I had already chosen to seek a professional career and avoid the factory life. Dr. Broughton studied at Knox College, as did I, but before he was there.

This is a brilliant book that delves into issues that I have never heard anyone else talk about is truly a page-turner where the human story is put forward and the highly scholarly underpinnings support everything from the background. I would not say that this goes one step deeper than Klein's shock doctrine for fear of failing to acknowledge the subtlety and humanity with which this work approaches unraveling Mexico and The US's knotted economic past.

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