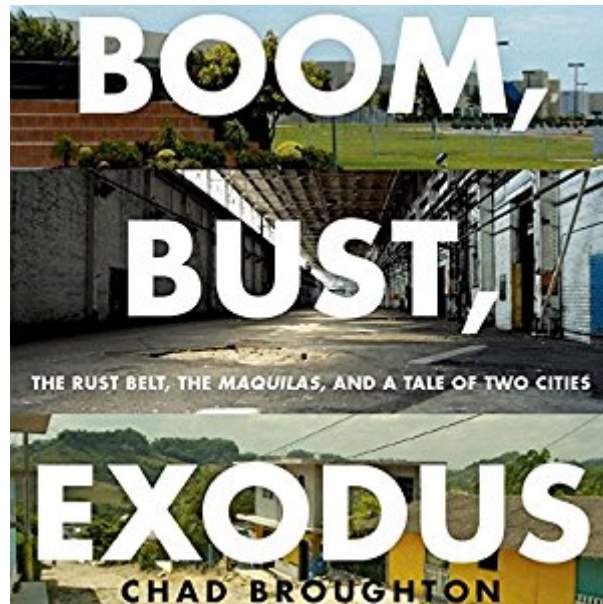


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# Boom, Bust, Exodus: The Rust Belt, The Maquilas, And A Tale Of Two Cities



## 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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Boom, Bust, Exodus: The Rust Belt, the Maquilas, and a Tale of Two Cities starts off in Galesburg, Illinois in the 1950s when Americans were grabbing any appliance they could afford. It tells how Admiral refrigerators were made and describes the life and working conditions of the workers. From there it evolves into the story of the Maytag factory, its workers, and the tremendous effect it had on life in Galesburg. In-between the chapters on the American Maytag factory, are chapters on life in Reynosa, Mexico, the city where Maytag moved to in 2004, after closing the Galesburg factory. The workers in the United States earned \$15 an hour, and had a union, benefits and retirement plans. The workers in Mexico made only a dollar something an hour, and were quickly replaced by other workers if they complained about anything. By the end of the book, the reader is well versed in the lives of the American and Mexican workers, the cities in which they lived, why people chose to work in those factories, what happened when both factories closed, and what went so wrong with Maytag. Most readers will also have a much clearer understanding of what happens when American companies relocate to other countries. This book is listed under both economics and sociology, and that's what you get--a combination of the two. Thus, those readers deeply inclined in one direction or the other may find parts of the books less interesting than others. It's 312 pages, plus 55 pages of footnote references and 9 pages of method notes. It is sure to be used in many classrooms, but a general public reader should have little problem understanding it.

The company that was "here" is now... "there". Author Chad Broughton has done a masterful job examining how globalization has devastated one community, while profiting another. Looking at Galesburg, Illinois, which lost the Maytag factory in 2004, Broughton explores both the corporate loss to the city and the personal loss to the workers when the plant closed and moved to Mexico. And, of course, what was Galesburg loss was Reynosa, Mexico's gain. Manufacturing in the northern part of the United States has been looking "south" for 50 years now. My grandfather owned a lighter manufacturing plant in Springfield, Illinois for thirty years and when the workers began to look at unionizing, my grandfather moved to plant to Tennessee, which was a "right-to-work" state. This was in 1959 and our plant was only one of many that closed up and moved to where the work was done cheaper. I think that, in general, the companies moving "south" stayed in the United States, but other, later, companies moved further and further away from American workers. They

took advantage of NAFTA and the 1990's saw a rush of companies to Mexico and eventually to Asia. But what happened to the town and the workers who had given in some cases decades of their lives for the lost company? Pensions were lost and lives had to be "reinvented". People had to decide to either be retrained for jobs in other, newer fields or to try to find factory work in any factories remaining in the community. And with workers losing their jobs, other community services and consumer enterprises were affected by the loss of revenue from the fired employees. Losing the Maytag factory to Mexico also meant brightened lives in Reynosa. The "cost" of "brightening" lives was considerably less in Mexico than in the United States.

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