

The affective legacy of Fordism looms large over the collective consciousness of many industrialized nations; there is a marked nostalgia for a time where a household could support itself and own property with a singular income. Strong unions and solidarity among workers led many to feel safe in their socioeconomic position in the middle-class and allowed some to reach relative affluence in professions that today would leave many struggling. However, class mobility and comfortable living conditions were not made so equally available to everyone - women, people of color, and sexual minorities were often left out of this vision of middle-class perfection. Henry Ford himself also tried to regulate how people behaved in their personal and work lives, attempting to clamp down on laborers' workplace rights and liberties to organize and utilize their collective power. It is important to note that the legacy of Fordism does not only exist in the select few nations that were able to industrialize quickly, mostly located in the Global North, but further radiated out to nations of varied industrial development across the globe, prompting different reactions based on social and cultural situations unique to the varied locales. The Fordist affective legacy is inherently patriarchal and heteronormative, and nostalgia often glorifies and smooths the rough edges of history. The collective memory of the status quo is bound to be better than the realities many people had to face in this period, as minority memories often don't make it into the mainstream. With this rose-tinted recollection, many still cling to this fantasy of the middle-class ideal because the modern neoliberal model of global society leaves many without previously accessible social elements such as greater worker solidarity and the model of the nuclear family that are closely associated with the Fordist era. People in today's neoliberal economies, hearing about and remembering the bygone Fordist past, may mourn for these social relations by attempting to recreate them in the modern world, often with limited success as social mores have changed alongside these shifting economic systems.

Through a Fordist lens, work and labor were viewed as far more emancipatory than most think of it today - work could afford one social mobility, economic stability, and the ability to form communities with their fellow workers. Today, we see these communities crumbling - the current 'bachelor economy' as termed by Muehlebach and Shoshan leaves people yearning for the past strength of worker solidarity while simultaneously dismantling the conditions that make such community and collective power possible (Muehlebach & Shoshan 2011: 331). The old conditions of factory work today seem to be, and rightly so, as an extremely flawed system and an abuse of the rights and safety of workers. Within this system, however, there was a unique sense of righteous community against adversity fostered between those on the floor. Today, workers are separated by design, pitted against each other in a constant competition for jobs in the gig economy. The liberalization of labor laws and the introduction of neoliberal policies across wealthy countries sent many into instant precarity - in the EU, unemployment in many countries hit record highs, and in Japan families had to resort to living in public parks (Weston 2012: 431-432). Neoliberalism, as an ideology, promotes the loosening of labor regulations and prioritized the free market above state control, often to the detriment of the working class along with the environment. Work was no longer a stable or long-term commitment, but instead could

be taken away at any time for the slightest mistake or by the whims of an elite owning class far removed from the worker's perspective. The security that existed under Fordism was no more. To keep themselves and their families afloat, in the post-Fordist neoliberal world, workers had to work harder and for longer hours. This left little time for the types of workplace organization and communal culture that used to be far more common, and the mechanisms of developing solidarity with other workers have been broken down by liberalized labor policies ushered in by neoliberal leaders such as Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in the UK. The old sense of solidarity fostered by Fordism seems so out of reach to many because the systems today are designed to separate workers from institutions like unions that would increase their socioeconomic stability and provide more collaborative social outlets with their fellow workers, rather than hostile competition. People in the current neoliberal economy feel detached from one another and their communities. Solidarity in the neoliberal era is changing, Molé highlights in her examination of post-Fordist Italian work culture - instead of coming together in opposition to a higher force, like a boss or corporation, workers are uniting against each other (Molé 2012: 376-377). The phenomenon of 'mobbing', where a workplace organizes to collectively harass another employee, has only become more and more common in Italy as the modern labor model persists. She links this intraclass vitriol to the loss of worker solidarity facilitated by neoliberal politics (Molé 2012: 377). The legacy of Fordism, specifically the memories of solidarity that allowed the working class to unite and collectively better their circumstances, haunts the realities of neoliberal laborers around the world, as they remember a time where economic systems did not simply prioritize the individual over all other forms of being. To quote from one of the most influential proponents of neoliberalism, Margaret Thatcher, in a neoliberal conception, society does not exist, only individual men, women, and families (Thatcher, 1987). This intentionally fosters a breakdown of working class solidarity - if workers do not feel as if they belong to a larger, relatable, and comfortable community of people with whom they share similar experiences, it is much more difficult for them to engage in worker solidarity and movements to challenge the status quo and increase their collective power. Fordism was not a positive system for everyone involved, as it was oppressive and excluded many from its promises of middle-class abundance, however it did allow for workers to feel a sense of security in their labor and additionally solidarity among their fellow workers. It is somewhat ironic that Fordism, in its attempts to dictate the lives of workers to its own ends, allowed for an increased sense of worker solidarity when compared with modern neoliberal policy. But, it nonetheless allows for people to mourn the sense of community that was fostered on factory floors in opposition to the cannibalistic relationships between workers that neoliberalism incentivizes.

The transition to a neoliberal society has had further existential consequences, leaving many people feeling unfulfilled by the results of their labor, and a diminished sense of purpose and drive by comparing what they were able to achieve during the Fordist era, as the modern gig economy does not guarantee that work produces the same security as it did in the past. Labor often does not feel as if it is truly useful or contributing towards the betterment of the individual

or broader communities, rather serving the agenda and prosperity of an unattainable elite upper class. There seems to be a greater level of alienation and disengagement between individuals and society under neoliberal capitalism than in the Fordist era. Those working in the factories that produced the first automobiles felt as if they were providing the world with something new and revolutionary: something that made the world a better place for all - the upper and lower classes alike (Muehlebach & Shoshan 2011: 330-331). This increased their satisfaction with the work they did, even though the labor itself was grueling and difficult. Any similar degree of fulfillment seems to be missing today, as people don't feel that their labor is contributing as much to society - or that the products they dedicate time and effort to could be personally attainable. Instead of working for the betterment of society and the enrichment of one's local community, many feel as if they are working their whole lives only to benefit large conglomerates that would not care about their personal well being, success, or contentment outside of that which would make them a more productive laborer. Certain companies have attempted to recreate the nostalgic sense of workplace community that existed in the Fordist era, inventing their own sorts of corporate culture to mixed success. They attempt to create personal identities for the workers that align with the goals of the corporation, insisting that individual self-fulfillment can be found through labor with the company (Ezzy 2001: 633-634). 'Family' and 'team' are common phrases that companies attempting to create their own in-house cultures utilize, with the workers being 'team members' rather than employees. The engineered cultural facade that these companies try to create only further alienates most workers from the facsimile of solidarity. Under Fordism, workers were able to more easily associate with each other and create a sense of solidarity between themselves. The new corporate-led cultures make it more difficult to create solidarity that is not under the supervision and guidance of the corporation - eliminating the potential for any changes not tacitly approved by those in power. That is not to say that under Fordism workers felt understood and cared for by their workplaces, but in fact this direct adversity compelled the fostering of community and an intention to work for collective benefit, not solely individual gain. This leaves workers trying to fill the cracks left by neoliberalism, seeking other avenues to recreate the positive communities that work provided in the Fordist era.

In her studies of Italy in the early 2000s, Muehlebach finds that many Italians, especially in the northern regions where heavy industry was prominent, mourn the realities of the end of Fordism. This is indicated by a widespread engagement in unpaid volunteer labor, where the sense of community that is missing in the current neoliberal socioeconomic landscape is replaced by the individual's intentional choice to dedicate time and labor engaging with society to the end of mutual benefit, and to be publicly recognized by their peers for participating in this work (Muehlebach 2011: 64). In Italy, nonprofit organizations have largely replaced government institutions in regards to providing social care, with a vast majority of their social services budget used to fund these organizations (Muehlebach 2011: 65). Many seek the social status that work would provide in the Fordist economy, and so they engage with volunteer labor in order to replace it. This type of work benefits those in society who would normally rely on state

intervention, by extension benefitting the neoliberal order by leaving caring for society's most vulnerable to the free market, loosening the control the state has in comparison. Under Fordism, the state would frequently exercise the authority to assume labor that would support those in need or provide necessities such as healthcare and other resource infrastructure, and the average civilian was materially benefitted by the fact that they did not have to engage in the labor that the state promised to do. However, the public perception in Italy does not necessarily fault the state for conceding the welfare system to the free market - rather, by new social convention, the individual who declines to engage in this labor is morally insufficient. Elderly volunteers commonly stated that they engaged in this voluntary work because they did not want to burden Italy's already overtaxed healthcare and pension system, and wanted to repatriate a perceived debt to their society through their labor (Muehlebach 2011: 69-70). The shift to neoliberalism left a vacuum in the sense of community that many were comfortable with under Fordism, but also greatly replaced key facets of state welfare systems with the labor and resource conventions of free-market capitalism. Some feel that neoliberalism has left them more vulnerable than under previous conditions, replacing a sense of community and labor solidarity with a much more fractured and precarious society that must rely on the unreliable extents of individual altruism, rather than guaranteed security.

Another legacy of Fordism is the idea that humanity can infinitely harness the resources of the planet without negative consequences (such as pollution or climate change) as humanity continues to consume resources for innovating without regard for what is consumed for this growth. The threats of climate change and ecological collapse are pressing subjects today, with environmental impacts such as the carbon footprint of a company at the forefront of many marketing strategies and consumers' minds. With greater awareness of what human progress hitherto has meant for the health and security of the natural world, the Fordist dogma of innovation without regard for the ecological consequences has become societally disagreeable, and scientifically unacceptable. Yet still, the memories and stories of times when factories and manufacturing meant a booming economy and prosperity blind many to future threats, when these past conditions imply a much more immediate benefit. There exists a longing for these times where people did not have to constantly concern themselves with the ecological guilt that accompanies simply existing within our modern-day capitalist system - many know that the vast majority of our systems of consumption and production have a negative impact on the global environment, but do not have the luxury of choosing more expensive and less accessible sustainable lifestyles. Today's innovation is often inextricably linked to immense ecological baggage that further chides the reluctant working class polluter through persistent media and internet feeds. This omnipresent feeling of guilt for the harms and futility of engaging in institutions that one has no choice but to, leads many to long for the simpler times where they could live in blissful ignorance. The automobile, Ford's seminal innovation, serves as the perfect symbol of this legacy. It has been iconic throughout the world, from a symbol of freedom in the United States, of an economic miracle in Japan, and of class mobility in many parts of South Asia into one of the primary drivers of our current ecological crisis (Weston 2012: 431). There

exists a kind of love-hate relationship that seems to be a common refrain of the post-Fordist affect - the car once was such a powerful positive symbol but now carries tinges of nostalgia for the past where innovation could be free of such weighty environmental concerns. And as a personal conveyance, the car conflicts with the underlying comfort of being unable to directly refuse to engage in pollutive systems: an individual has to eat, regardless of the impacts of agriculture, but the question of whether one *needs* a vehicle or if it is simply a luxury - particularly if more efficient options are accessible - is much more vague.

The narrative of precarity mentioned earlier in the context of work applies significantly through the lens of ecology. People wish for a time when it did not feel like the world was crumbling around them no matter what personal actions they took. Natural disasters and freak weather events, exacerbated by anthropogenic climate change, are striking communities unprepared for the extent and frequency of damages that these calamities can inflict. To cite an anecdotal example of this, Hurricane Harvey struck my hometown of Houston, Texas, in 2017, submerging most of the city in floodwater. The drives of these storms, high gradients of air and sea temperatures, have intensified as a result of climate change, and the hurricane was much more powerful than those that have been observed in the past. While helping to clear out wreckage from a friend's ruined home the refrain of 'it's never been this bad' was incredibly common. The longing for the old days, where these types of disasters would occur yet at lower intensity, was incredibly palpable. The same dynamic has occurred in extreme weather events and rising temperatures. The summer of 2022 was one of the hottest seasons on record across the entire state of Texas. Houston had the highest average temperatures for June and July ever recorded, with other major cities including Austin and San Antonio also breaking records (Zuvanich 2022). Summer months have always been hot in Texas but atmospheric conditions, altered by the carbon-intensive industrialization that Fordism sponsored, have made these conditions increasingly dire. Those in more precarious housing situations or homes that lack adequate air conditioning have their health and safety directly threatened by the increased temperatures, and there is a marked nostalgia for a past where environmental conditions were not as pressing of a concern. Libraries and other public buildings this summer - intended for learning and recreation - were forced to become cooling centers, where the public could access air conditioning and cold water, a relatively new phenomenon that has only become more common as temperatures continue to rise. The same refrain of missing the sense of security exists in Texas, because not only were the means to escape the heat more broadly accessible and affordable by reliability of income, there was simply lower heat to contend with. Environmental, employment, and existential insecurity are all products of neoliberal labor policies. Production takes priority over the wellbeing of both human and environmental communities, encouraging resource extraction, the propagation of a status quo directly causal of climate change, and capitalizing on the need for work from laborers, who are broadly stuck in a gig economy with no avenues to class mobility or positions of labor that address institutional harms. Under these conditions, the legacy of the Fordist past looms as a comforting escape to the increasingly urgent insecurities of the present.

Fordism has left a long legacy of nostalgia and longing for a past where people felt much more secure in their identities as workers, and could more reliably access a dream of middle-class security and engage with their communities than in the present society marked by neoliberal policy. Fordism, in retrospect, was clearly not an ideal system. Laborers were subjected to unregulated and often hazardous working conditions, mistreated by their bosses, and underpaid and overworked before they agitated for better working conditions. Additionally, the middle-class dream was highly patriarchal and women were generally not able to define their own futures in relation to their male family members and husbands. Marginalized demographics such as communities of color and queer people, as well, did not have access to the same rights that their white and heterosexual counterparts did. Overall, the affective legacy of this system does not match the broad realities. People remember life under this system largely as a better time, an easier time, and a more secure time. Many were able to trust in the security of the state to ensure that they wouldn't fall through the cracks in society, but neoliberal policies have eroded that trust and the ability of the state in many ways to properly care for its citizens. Neoliberalism opened up the markets and took away many state institutions from the people, promising lower prices and larger returns but instead becoming less accountable to the average person. It has also eroded the ability of many working-class people to ensure stable work and reliably provide for their families on a single income. This security also applied to the environment and the climate - in our modern era, worry about impending climate doom is overwhelming and the impacts clear and extremely harmful. The relative stability of the Fordist era is gone, and neoliberalism has replaced it with a system that pushes more people to precarity and leaves them longing for the days where work could more reliably ensure safety, prosperity, and community.

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