

ON THE WONDERS OF WAREHOUSES

CRITICAL URBAN STUDIES ZINE



YONKERS EDITION

VOLUME 3
SEPTEMBER 2026

On the Wonders of Warehouses is a critical urban studies zine exploring the role of deindustrialization in developing artistic and counter-cultural movements. Based out of Queens, New York, it highlights the post-industrial landscape of America's most diverse county as it grapples with a regional housing crisis.

This project draws significant inspiration from the Situationist International, a movement of avant-garde artists and intellectuals established in 1957, whose works were foundational in establishing the field of critical urban studies. In addition to original writings, *On the Wonders of Warehouses* is supplemented by relevant works from the Situationists.



IS YONKERS THE NEXT WILLIAMSBURG?.....	1
TARLABASI 360: THE GENTRIFICATION OF ISTANBUL'S OLDEST SLUM.....	6
HOW WILL MUNICIPAL SOCIALISM REPAIR AMERICA'S CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE?.....	10
<i>THE SITUATIONISTS AND AUTOMATION</i> , BY ASGER JORN (1958).....	21



IS YONKERS THE NEXT WILLIAMSBURG?



Earlier this spring, the most valuable plot of land north of the five boroughs hit the market: 33 acres along the Hudson River with views of the Manhattan skyline, situated just a mile north of the Bronx and 45 minutes away from Grand Central. Presently occupied by a Domino Sugar refinery that had ceased operations late last year, the fate of this property will define a new era for the Yonkers waterfront.

At the time of its closure, the Domino Sugar refinery employed 350 workers and processed upwards of 4.3 million pounds of sugar per day. Despite its long history, which spans over 130 years of continuous operations, regional stakeholders have already expressed their strong urgency to demolish the facility and repurpose its massive footprint—just four months after the refinery shut its doors, Domino Sugar engaged real estate giant Cushman & Wakefield to list the property on the market. The current pitch is for a 2.6 million sq. ft mixed-use development that includes 2,650 residential units, far surpassing the 2,000 units that have been built along the entirety of the Yonkers waterfront since 2018.

The Yonkers City Council has already modified downtown zoning code to allow for this development, and there is certainly no shortage of potential investors to provide funding. Following in the footsteps

IS YONKERS THE NEXT WILLIAMSBURG?

of other municipalities across the tri-state area, such as New Rochelle and Jersey City, Yonkers is capitalizing on its convenient rail link to Manhattan in an effort to spur economic development and mitigate the region-wide housing affordability crisis. At this point, the future of Yonkers' once-industrial waterfront is all but certain.



Unsurprisingly, real estate insiders can't help but point out the remarkable parallels between the current situation in Yonkers and what had happened in Williamsburg just decades prior. Both stories center around a deindustrialized neighborhood, situated along a vital river and anchored by a Domino Sugar plant, being rapidly upzoned and redeveloped into luxury housing.

As with Williamsburg, the industrial history of Yonkers began in the mid-19th century, kickstarted with the opening of the first Otis Elevator factory in 1853 and the founding of the Alexander Smith Carpet Company in 1865, the latter of which employed over 5,000 workers by the end of the century. The industrial output of the city was kicked into overdrive during World War II, with Otis and Alexander Smith temporarily converting their factories to produce tanks, tents, and blankets as part of the regional wartime effort.

IS YONKERS THE NEXT WILLIAMSBURG?



Unfortunately, the post-war period would not be as prosperous for the Yonkers industrial base, as the city suffered from many of the same afflictions that had plagued its peers (including Williamsburg). Increased competition from globalization brought with it an era of deindustrialization and mass unemployment, exemplified by the closure of Alexander Smith's Yonkers operations following a 1954 labor dispute—the company elected to relocate to Mississippi instead, attracted by low taxes, state subsidies, and staunch anti-union politics that suppressed wages. Otis would later close its own Yonkers factory in 1983, dealing yet another economic death blow to the region.



IS YONKERS THE NEXT WILLIAMSBURG?

Fortunately, just three years after the closure of the Otis factory, Japanese rolling stock manufacturer Kawasaki moved in and repurposed the building into an assembly plant for MTA train cars. From the Yonkers Metro-North platform, today's commuters can still get a clear view of the plant's 500 workers as they assemble new train cars for America's busiest public transportation system.



However, Kawasaki's role as the top industrial employer in the area is not without controversy, with the company coming under fire last year after a report revealed dangerous working conditions in their Yonkers and Nebraska plants. Of the 180 workers surveyed, 40% reported witnessing a coworker injured on the job, with 17% experiencing their own injuries. Additionally, half of Kawasaki workers surveyed reported witnessing workplace discrimination based on gender, race, or immigration. In comparison to the industry average, workers at Kawasaki's Yonkers and Nebraska plants—neither of which are unionized—earned 16% less than the industry average, with 92% of workers surveyed stating that they were struggling to afford at least one basic expense.

These findings follow a severe 2022 staffing crisis at Kawasaki's Nebraska plant, when an annual turnover rate of 125% necessitated the "constant oversight and supervision" by MTA officials as the

IS YONKERS THE NEXT WILLIAMSBURG?

company fulfilled their \$4.5 billion contract to manufacture R211 subway cars. A separate 2022 audit by the New York State Comptroller's Office found that Kawasaki's contract to build LIRR train cars had fallen nearly three years behind schedule, citing inadequate training, staffing, and inspections as key concerns at their facilities.



With the Yonkers waterfront entering its post-industrial chapter, the few disused plants that remain along the Hudson River serve as ephemeral relics of a bygone era, destined to be demolished and redeveloped as luxury housing over the coming years. For the MTA lots that linger around the area—located just across the street from many of these developments—fences covered in tarps and artificial turf ensure that their unsightly existence are obfuscated from the sensitive eyes of incoming tenants.



TARLABASI 360: THE GENTRIFICATION OF ISTANBUL'S OLDEST SLUM



Immediately northwest of Taksim Square, one of Istanbul's busiest commercial and tourism hubs, lies Tarlabası: the focal point of the city's most dramatic urban redevelopment project. Often referred to as Istanbul's oldest slum, the rampant poverty and decrepit homes of this neighborhood sit in stark contrast to its opulent surroundings.

Tarlabası is most well known for its diversity, serving as home to a breadth of Istanbul's ethnic minorities including Syrian Dom refugees, Africans, and Kurds. As one of very few affordable neighborhoods in central Istanbul—due in large part to a severe cost of living crisis caused by years of hyperinflation—Tarlabası serves as the logical first destination for many immigrants arriving in Turkey. Additionally, Tarlabası has long served as a safe haven for Istanbul's sex workers and transgender community, who continue to face stigmatization and state discrimination.

Established in the 19th century, Tarlabası historically flourished as a middle-class Greek and Armenian community. However, with the expulsion of those groups from Istanbul in the mid-1960s, the

TARLABAŞI 360: THE GENTRIFICATION OF ISTANBUL'S OLDEST SLUM

neighborhood's vast stock of apartment buildings suddenly became vacant. The abandoned homes attracted squatters over the following years—many of whom belonged to the city's most vulnerable communities—including Romani, Kurds, political refugees, and sex workers.

By the 1980s, Tarlabası had gained notoriety for its rampant poverty and deteriorating living conditions, with its redevelopment and gentrification becoming a key pursuit for countless mayoral administrations to follow. In 1984, Mayor Bedrettin Dalan described the neighborhood as “Istanbul's poisoned princess,” later constructing the six-lane Tarlabası Boulevard that severed the neighborhood from the rest of the historic Beyoğlu district.

Two decades later, the AKP, a far-right political party which has ruled since 2002, embarked on Turkey's largest “urban renewal” project in half a century, designating Tarlabası as its first victim. In 2006, the city called for the demolition of 278 historic buildings across nine blocks in Tarlabası, with the contract for its redevelopment being awarded to a firm led by the son-in-law of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.



The neighboring Taksim Square, one of Istanbul's most visited attractions.

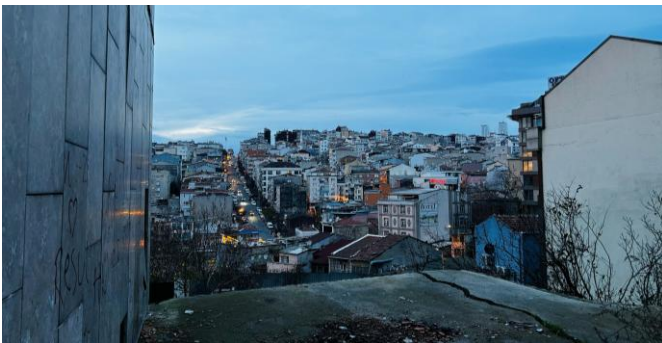
Initially dubbed “Tarlabası 360,” the redevelopment planned for upwards of 500 apartments, 120 offices, 140 commercial units, a 110-room Hilton, and a 550-vehicle parking garage. However, the

TARLABASI 360: THE GENTRIFICATION OF ISTANBUL'S OLDEST SLUM

project was later renamed to “Taksim 360,” with the clear motive of further erasing Tarlabası’s history and integrating the redeveloped area into the neighboring tourist hotspot.



Signs of severe gentrification have already taken hold elsewhere in the neighborhood, with oversized hotels sitting atop many of Tarlabası’s winding streets. The steep incline and limited walkability of these sites ensure that they are physically separated from nearby residents, making them prime real estate for luxury hotels that shield wealthy patrons from the hardships of those who living beneath them. This hostile urban design has resulted in large piles of litter accumulating all around the vicinity, demonstrating a clear lack of regard by the hotels and local government.



TARLABAŞI 360: THE GENTRIFICATION OF ISTANBUL'S OLDEST SLUM



On the northern edge of Tarlabası sits Arter, a contemporary art museum which relocated to the neighborhood in 2019. Like the nearby hotels, the modernist design of Arter stands in stark contrast to its surroundings; from the upper-floor windows of the museum, a frenzy of locals can often be seen swarming around the busy public square across the street where discount goods are sold.



With the piecemeal pace of Tarlabası's gentrification, the neighborhood fortunately remains mostly intact for now. However, the inevitable displacement of Istanbul's most vulnerable communities encroaches ever so closer as each new development comes online, with no clear solution or compensation in sight for those affected. Tarlabası serves as a posterchild for the harsh realities that define Istanbul today, where deepening wealth inequality and radical political ambitions are actively reshaping the urban landscape.

HOW WILL MUNICIPAL SOCIALISM REPAIR AMERICA'S CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE?

On October 1, 2025, in the midst of the longest full government shutdown in American history, the White House announced the freezing of nearly \$18 billion in federal funding for the Second Avenue Subway Phase 2 and the Hudson Tunnel Project, two of New York's most crucial infrastructure projects. Officially, the US Department of Transportation cited "unconstitutional DEI principles" within the contractor selection process for these projects as grounds to suspend funding. However, the Trump administration also not-so-subtly insinuated that the funding freeze was intended to pressure House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, both of whom represent New York, into passing an appropriations bill that would end the government shutdown.

Although the Trump administration's nonsensical claims were ultimately struck down in court months later, with the funding for both projects being restored by June 29, the damage had already been done. By February 6, the Hudson Tunnel Project was forced to suspend all construction after fully exhausting its financial reserves, putting nearly 1,000 people out of work until funding was temporarily restored on March 10; the freeze also placed the tunnel's target completion date of 2035 in jeopardy by forcing the pause of contractor procurement during the nine-month funding lapse.

Unfortunately, the Second Avenue Subway and Hudson Tunnel Project are just two of countless infrastructure projects that have been derailed by the second Trump administration—around the same time, the Department of Energy terminated \$7.6 billion in federal grants supporting clean energy projects, including \$500 million earmarked for New York recipients. This new de-federalist platform spells the end of a century-long era of Congressional infrastructure investment, during which national taxpayer dollars served as an instrumental funding source for America's most critical public works projects.

HOW WILL MUNICIPAL SOCIALISM REPAIR AMERICA'S CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE?

The History of Federalist Infrastructure

From the 1930s until today, the American government has operated under the doctrine of John Maynard Keynes, who during the Great Depression argued that significant fiscal stimulus—mainly through investments into public works—would create the jobs needed to recover from economic downturns. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was the first to put this theory into practice at scale, making key infrastructure projects such as the Hoover Dam central to his New Deal agenda to combat unemployment in 1933.

Federal investment in infrastructure peaked when President Dwight D. Eisenhower established the Interstate Highway System in 1956, the largest public works project in human history at that point—initially, the federal government subsidized up to 90% of all highway construction costs. Infrastructure investment also played a significant role in the government's response to both the 2008 financial crisis and COVID-19 pandemic, with President Barack Obama investing \$105 billion and President Joe Biden investing \$550 billion respectively, although much of the latter's funding has since been suspended by the second Trump administration.

The Funding Gap

In the wake of widespread funding cuts that have severed tens of billions in federal grants across virtually all sectors, municipalities across the country are scrambling to find alternative funding models to repair our nation's crumbling infrastructure. A half-century of neoliberalism has crippled the ability for state and local governments to invest in long-term, self-sustaining infrastructure programs that proactively address society's needs before they become crises. Instead, our country has become dependent on sporadic federal subsidies—generally coming in only after a major recession—to enable projects that are already decades overdue.

Every year, the American Society for Civil Engineers (ASCE) releases a report card for the nation's infrastructure needs; in 2025, they estimated that America would need an additional \$3.7 trillion in

HOW WILL MUNICIPAL SOCIALISM REPAIR AMERICA'S
CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE?

investment, on top of what Congress is already funding, to achieve a state of good repair. In their explanation of this massive funding gap, ASCE argues the following:

“Sponsors of infrastructure projects will need to innovate and look to diversify funding and financing sources beyond federal spending to close this investment gap. A typical capital stack for an infrastructure project includes different types of funding and financing to fund [a] project’s development, construction, and operations... federal and state government contributions provide project funding and help to attract investment to projects but typically cannot provide the sole source of financing.”

Cumulative Investment Needs

BY INFRASTRUCTURE CATEGORY BASED ON
MAINTAINING CURRENT FEDERAL INVESTMENT LEVELS

ALL VALUES IN BILLIONS

Infrastructure System	Needs ¹	Funded, 2024-33 ²	Funding Gap, 2024-33
Aviation ³	\$310	\$197	\$113
Bridges ⁴	\$538	\$165	\$373
Broadband ⁵	\$61	\$61	\$0
Dams ⁶	\$185	\$20	\$166
Drinking Water ⁷	\$670	\$361	\$309
Energy ⁸	\$1,886	\$1,308	\$578
Hazardous & Solid Waste ⁹	\$162	\$146	\$16
Inland Waterways & Ports ¹⁰	\$45	\$32	\$13
Levees ¹¹	\$97	\$7	\$91
Public Parks ¹²	\$106	\$62	\$44
Rail ¹³	\$145	\$113	\$32
Roads ¹⁴	\$2,233	\$1,549	\$684
Schools ¹⁵	\$1,100	\$671	\$429
Transit ¹⁶	\$618	\$466	\$152
Wastewater + Stormwater ¹⁷	\$983	\$293	\$690
TOTAL	\$9,139	\$5,450	\$3,689

Breakdown of America’s \$3.7 trillion infrastructure funding gap. Source: ASCE (2025)

Despite what staunch neoliberals like Gavin Newsom and Ezra Klein claim, the underlying cause of this funding crisis has little to do with

HOW WILL MUNICIPAL SOCIALISM REPAIR AMERICA'S CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE?

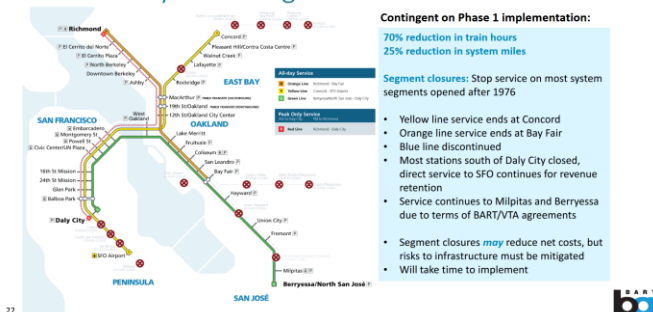
overregulation or NIMBYism. It is the result of a broken system deliberately designed to prevent regional governments from collecting the revenues—either through direct taxation or user fees—needed to support the construction, operation, and maintenance of vital infrastructure. Consequently, municipalities are highly dependent on state and federal subsidies to fill the funding gap, creating an incredibly fragile system where the health of a city's core infrastructure is contingent on the cooperation of higher levels of government.

Thanks to DOGE and the 2025 government shutdown, we are now witnessing the collapse of this funding model in real time. Over the past few years, nearly every public transit system in America has had to battle the same issue: an impending fiscal cliff resulting from the end of COVID-era operating subsidies by the federal government, exacerbated by a substantial decline in ridership post-pandemic.

This November, voters in the Bay Area will decide whether to bail out Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) or allow it to sink towards financial insolvency. Despite serving several of America's wealthiest municipalities, the transit agency currently faces a structural budget deficit of \$375 million starting in fiscal year 2027. In the case that voters reject SB 63—a ballot measure which proposes a one-cent sales tax in San Francisco County and a half-cent tax in the rest of the region—BART estimates that it will need to cut train service by up to 70% to achieve a balanced budget, crippling a transportation network that currently serves 180,000 daily passenger trips across five counties.

HOW WILL MUNICIPAL SOCIALISM REPAIR AMERICA'S CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE?

Phase 2 – July 2027: Segment Closure Scenario



Details of proposed 70% BART service cut if SB 63 fails.

Source: BART Board Workshop (February 12, 2026)

Taxation

Unsurprisingly, the only public transit systems in the US that have managed to avoid this fiscal crisis are those who had already established dedicated funding sources prior to the pandemic. One such example is in Seattle, where a mix of sales, property, and motor vehicle excise taxes means that Sound Transit can easily cover its operating expenses while simultaneously funding a massive system extension for its Link light rail system. These investments have been a resounding success for the region, with Link ridership skyrocketing to 175,000 daily boardings—up 110% from pre-pandemic levels—after the completion of its \$3.8 billion Line 2 project earlier this year. At a time when most transit systems nationwide are in a state of crisis, Seattle is prospering thanks to its financial model.

While direct taxation is the most obvious funding source for infrastructure, it famously has its limitations. Not only are taxes incredibly unpopular among the public, they generally must also be voted on and approved by the state government, even if they apply only to taxpayers within that specific municipality or region. In search of other options, municipalities across the country are increasingly deploying a mix of both traditional and alternative financing methods, many of which are already commonplace elsewhere in the world.

HOW WILL MUNICIPAL SOCIALISM REPAIR AMERICA'S
CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE?

Self-Financing

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ) is leading this transition, serving as a definitive example of how massive public works projects can be funded without reliance on direct taxpayer funding. PANYNJ is a joint venture between the States of New York and New Jersey, responsible for operating a wide infrastructure portfolio that includes all six bridges and tunnels connecting NYC with New Jersey, the Port Authority Bus Terminal, the PATH, and the region's six airports. Shockingly, PANYNJ does not receive any operating subsidies from either state or the federal government, instead relying on operating revenues through airport landing fees, tunnel and bridge tolls, and commercial real estate leases. Through these diversified sources, PANYNJ generated \$7.3 billion in operating revenues in 2025 alone.

2025 PANYNJ Operating Revenues by Source	
Source	Revenues (millions)
Aviation	\$4,103
Tunnels, Bridges & Terminals	\$2,189
Seaports	\$418
World Trade Center	\$358
PATH	\$193
Other	\$35
Total	\$7,296

Last year, PANYNJ brought in a net income of \$1.2 billion from its operations; because PANYNJ is a government agency, the profits generated from their operations are not paid out to shareholders, instead being invested into the construction and maintenance of infrastructure. Currently, the agency is advancing a capital projects portfolio in excess of \$40 billion that includes renovations of all three

HOW WILL MUNICIPAL SOCIALISM REPAIR AMERICA'S CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE?

major airports (Newark, JFK, and LaGuardia) and the Port Authority Bus Terminal, financed almost entirely through current and future operating cash flows.

Notable PANYNJ Capital Projects			
Project	Timeline	Cost	Core Funding Sources
JFK Airport Transformation	2017-2028	\$19 billion	• PANYNJ: ~\$2.9 billion • Private investment: ~\$15 billion
LaGuardia Airport Transformation	2016-2026	\$8 billion	• PANYNJ: ~\$3 billion • Private investment: ~\$5 billion
Newark Liberty Airport Transformation	2017-2030	~\$6 billion	• PANYNJ: \$3.5 billion+ • Private investment
Midtown Bus Terminal	2025-2032	\$10 billion	• Federal loan: \$1.9 billion • PANYNJ capital funds • Air/development rights • PILOT payments by developers
Gateway Program (including Hudson Tunnel Project)	2023-2038	\$16 billion	• Federal loan: \$2.7 billion (PANYNJ share; backed by operating revenues)

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

Notably, PANYNJ has managed to finance a breadth of megaprojects without relying on any federal grants or state subsidies. In addition to traditional financing methods (i.e., bond issuance and budget appropriations), PANYNJ is relying heavily on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to fund the construction of projects with the highest potential for commercial success. Through PPPs, the agency

HOW WILL MUNICIPAL SOCIALISM REPAIR AMERICA'S CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE?

can offload the financing and associated risks of construction projects by taking out loans from the private sector, which are to be repaid using future operating revenues from the completed infrastructure.

Because of their diversified revenue sources (e.g., landing fees, retail leases, parking fees) and strong growth in the aviation sector, airports are prime candidates for financing through PPPs. Despite being commonplace throughout most of the world, PPPs are shockingly rare in America, with their historical use being limited mostly to highways, bridges, and tunnels. The US represented just 9% of infrastructure PPP deals by nominal value between 1985 and 2011, lagging behind Europe—the global leader in PPPs—and their colossal 45% share. Since many states still have legislation restricting the use of PPPs, PANYNJ is one of few transportation agencies to deploy PPPs at scale, with the ongoing JFK Airport Transformation being the largest PPP in American history.

Although the term might be frightening at first, PPPs are neither inherently good nor bad. As with any other financing model, the efficacy of PPPs depends on the specific needs of the public, the breadth of other funding sources available, and the commercial viability of the project. The term is also incredibly broad, as some PPPs (e.g., Build-Own-Operate-Transfer) transfer ownership of the asset and its cash flows to the private partner, whereas others (e.g., Design-Build-Finance-Operate-Maintain) offload virtually all project risks to the partner while maintaining public ownership of the asset.

Public Pension Funds

Up north, a different type of PPP is finding success by replacing the role of private investors with public pension funds instead. Next year, Montreal anticipates completion of the REM, a 42-mile rapid transit system that employs the most modern rail technology seen in North America today. What makes the REM especially unique is that the majority of its US\$6 billion price tag was funded by La Caisse—a government entity that manages several of Quebec's public pensions—in exchange for a flat fee paid by the local government per passenger mile.

HOW WILL MUNICIPAL SOCIALISM REPAIR AMERICA'S CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE?

Unlike in America, where public pension funds invest mainly in traditional financial instruments such as stocks and bonds, Canadian pensions are managed internally with a strong emphasis on alternative assets such as private companies, real estate, and infrastructure, resulting in portfolios that more closely resemble that of a private equity fund than their American counterparts.

Notable La Caisse Infrastructure Investments (Past and Present)		
Asset	Location	Description
Port of Brisbane	Brisbane, Australia	Australia's third-largest container port
Sydney Metro	Sydney, Australia	Sydney's rapid transit system
REM	Montreal, Quebec	Canada's most modern rapid transit system
TramCité	Quebec City, Quebec	A brand new tram system spanning 12 miles
Alto	Ontario and Quebec	Canada's first high-speed rail line, linking Toronto to Quebec City
Heathrow Airport	London, UK	Company that owns and operates Europe's busiest airport
Eurostar Group	Belgium	Rail operator serving routes linking London with Continental Europe

As part of Prime Minister Mark Carney's nation-building agenda, the Government of Canada is placing growing pressure on its massive public pension funds—the top 8 of which collectively manage nearly US\$2 trillion in assets—to invest into domestic infrastructure projects rather than overseas. This quasi-PPP strategy provides all the benefits of alternative financing while also ensuring that the nation's core infrastructure remains in the hands of the Canadian public.

HOW WILL MUNICIPAL SOCIALISM REPAIR AMERICA'S CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE?

State Infrastructure Banks

Although America has yet to employ a public financing strategy as robust as La Caisse, state infrastructure banks are becoming increasingly common. In 2013, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) launched the NY Green Bank, a state-sponsored investment fund that has committed over \$2.7 billion to clean energy projects so far. By collaborating with private investors, NYSERDA can attract capital for ambitious clean energy projects that would otherwise be commercially unviable, funding a portfolio of innovations from energy storage and clean transportation to building electrification and community solar.

Municipal Broadband Networks

Telecommunications is another key sector ripe for public investment. Thanks to decades of extensive lobbying, America's top internet service providers (ISPs) have ensured that their industry is not regulated in the same vein as public utilities, enabling them to establish and protect regional monopolies in rural areas where they can then charge inflated rates for sub-standard service using antiquated copper cables. Through the \$42 billion Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, the Biden administration sought to end this "digital divide" by subsidizing the construction of modern fiber optic networks across all underserved areas, although this program has since had nearly half of its funding revoked by the Trump administration.

While most states awarded the majority of their BEAD funding to the top ISPs (i.e., Verizon, AT&T, Comcast), New York was one of very few to invest into building community-owned fiber networks. Through the ConnectALL program, the State has awarded over \$295 million to municipal utilities and other public entities across 20 different projects, with the goal of connecting over 95,000 rural households and businesses over 2,500 miles of fiber optic cable. Although ConnectALL focuses mainly on rural areas, the program also awarded \$898,000 to NYC Mesh earlier this year to connect low-income households in underserved areas to their community-run network.

HOW WILL MUNICIPAL SOCIALISM REPAIR AMERICA'S CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE?

In addition to being publicly owned, municipal recipients of ConnectALL funding are required to open their fiber networks to all internet service providers, ensuring full and fair competition that will drive prices down while simultaneously providing rural communities with long-lasting, revenue-generating assets. Placing fiber networks under the ownership of public utilities also enables more efficient construction and maintenance through the use of a “Dig Once” policy, where fiber optic cables are installed whenever land is excavated for other utility projects.

Several other regions across America, including red states, have already implemented municipal fiber networks to great success. In 2010, EPB, the public utility company in Chattanooga, Tennessee, leveraged federal grants and bond issuance to install a 9,000-mile fiber network and became the first ISP in America to offer gigabit-speed connections to all customers. Another trailblazer is Utah, which has built a regional open-access fiber network connecting 20 different cities across the Salt Lake City region. Unfortunately, because of the sheer political influence waged by incumbent ISPs, publicly owned broadband networks are still heavily regulated (or outright banned) in over a dozen states.

Conclusion

The projects described represent just a handful of examples from the breadth of innovative financing models employed throughout North America in recent years. Although these strategies alone won't get us anywhere close to closing the \$3.9 trillion infrastructure investment gap, they do underscore the importance for municipal governments to develop long-term financial models that establish self-sustaining assets. For municipal socialism to succeed, American cities will have to undo the last half-century of neoliberal governance that have stripped our communities of public wealth. This will require the current wave to develop entirely new methods for building, operating, and maintaining vital infrastructure in the post-federalist era.

THE SITUATIONISTS AND AUTOMATION (1958)

BY ASGER JORN

It is rather astonishing that almost no one until now has dared to examine the ultimate implications of automation. Instead of debating its various possible consequences, one has rather the impression that engineers, scientists, and sociologists are trying to smuggle automation into the society.

Yet automation is now at the heart of the problem of the socialist domination of production and of the preponderance of leisure time over labor time. The issue of automation is bursting with positive and negative possibilities.

The goal of socialism is abundance—the greatest number of goods for the greatest number of people, which statistically implies reducing the unexpected to the level of the improbable. Increasing the number of goods reduces the value of each. This devaluation of all human goods to a level of “total neutrality” will be the inevitable consequence of a purely scientific development of socialism. It is unfortunate that many intellectuals fail to get beyond this idea of mechanical reproduction, and are instead contributing toward the adaptation of humanity to this bland and symmetrized future. Artists, whose specialty is seeking uniqueness, are consequently turning in increasing numbers against socialism. Conversely, socialist politicians are suspicious of every expression of artistic power or originality.

Attached to their conformist positions, both of these sides display a certain antagonism to automation because it threatens to undermine their economic and cultural conceptions. The various “avant-garde” currents all show a defeatist attitude in the face of automation. At best, they underestimate the positive aspects of the future that is being so suddenly revealed by the early stages of automation. Meanwhile the reactionary forces flaunt their moronic optimism.

A revealing anecdote: Last year, in the journal *Quatrième Internationale*, the militant Marxist Livio Maitan reported that an Italian priest had already suggested that increasing free time might necessitate adding a second weekly Mass. Maitan responded: "The error consists in supposing that man in the new society will be the same as in the present one, whereas he will in fact have completely different needs that are difficult for us to even imagine." But Maitan's error is to leave to a vague future the new needs he finds "difficult to even imagine." The dialectical role of spirit is to steer the possible toward desirable forms. Maitan forgets that "the elements of a new society are formed *within the old*" (*Communist Manifesto*). The elements of a new life should already be in formation among us — in the realm of culture—and it's up to us to draw on them to liven up the debate.

Socialism, which strives for the fullest liberation of the energies and potentials in each individual, will be obliged to see automation as an inherently antiprogressive tendency, a tendency that can be rendered progressive only by relating it to new provocations capable of bringing forth the latent energies of man. If, as the scientists and technicians claim, automation is a new means of liberating man, it should imply the supersession of previous human activities. This means that man's active imagination has to go beyond the realization of automation itself. Where can we find such perspectives, perspectives that will make man the master and not the slave of automation?

In his study *L'Automation*, Louis Salleron explains that automation, "as almost always happens in matters of progress, *adds* more than it *replaces* or *eliminates*." What does automation, as such, add to man's possibilities of action? We have learned that it completely eliminates man within its own domain.

The crisis of industrialization is a crisis of consumption and production. The crisis of production is more important than the crisis of consumption, the latter being conditioned by the former. Transposed to the individual level, this amounts to the thesis that it is better to give than to receive, better to be capable of *adding* than

of *suppressing*. Automation thus contains two opposing perspectives: it deprives the individual of any possibility of adding anything personal to automated production, thus representing a *fixation* of progress, yet at the same time it saves human energies by massively liberating them from reproductive and uncreative activities. The value of automation thus depends on projects that supersede it and open the way for the expression of new human energies on a higher plane.

Today, experimental activity in culture has this incomparable field of play. A defeatist attitude here, a failure to confront the possibilities of our time, is symptomatic of the old avant-gardes that remain content, as Edgar Morin puts it, "to gnaw on the bones of the past." A surrealist named Benayoun says in the latest expression of the movement (*Le Surréalisme même* #2): "The problem of leisure is already tormenting the sociologists... Technicians will no longer be in demand, but rather clowns, sexy singers, ballerinas, freaks. One day of work for six of rest: the balance between the serious and the frivolous, between the lazy and the laborious, is at great risk of being upset... The idle 'worker' will be cretinized by convulsive and invasive television that is short of both ideas and talent." This surrealist fails to see that a week of six days of rest will not lead to "upsetting the balance" between the frivolous and the serious, but to *changing the nature* of both the serious and the frivolous. Looking at the world through his faded surrealist glasses, he sees it as a sort of vaudeville show and can imagine nothing but reruns of its ludicrous routines and misadventures. Why should this future be nothing but an overdevelopment of present-day vulgarities? And why should it be "short of ideas"? Does that mean that it will be short of 1924 surrealist ideas as updated in 1956? Very likely. Or does it mean that the imitation surrealists are short of ideas? We are already well aware of that.

The new leisure time appears as an empty space that present-day society can imagine filling only by multiplying the pseudoplay of pathetic hobbies. But this leisure time is also the basis on which could be built the most magnificent cultural construction that has ever

been imagined. This goal is obviously outside the concerns of the partisans of automation. It is in fact antagonistic to the direct tendency of automation. If we want to talk with the engineers, we will have to enter their field of interest. Maldonado, who currently directs the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm, explains that the development of automation is in jeopardy because young people show little enthusiasm for going into advanced engineering, except for those specializing in automation itself, who lack any general cultural perspective. But Maldonado himself fails to present, or even to be aware of, any such perspective: *Automation can develop rapidly only once it has established as a goal a perspective contrary to its own establishment, and only if it is known how to realize such a general perspective in the process of the development of automation.*

Maldonado proposes the opposite sequence: first establish automation, then figure out what to use it for. This schema might be worth discussing if its goal were not precisely automation. The problem is that automation is not an action in a domain, which would provoke a counteraction. It is the neutralization of a domain, which will also end up neutralizing other domains if conflicting actions are not undertaken at the same time.

Pierre Drouin (*Le Monde*, 5 January 1957) sees the growth of hobbies as fulfilling the potentialities that workers can no longer express in their professional activity, and concludes that “a creator lies dormant” in each person. This old platitude is now of vital importance if we relate it to the real material possibilities of our time. The sleeping creator must awaken, and that waking state could be termed “situationist.”

The idea of standardization is an attempt to reduce and simplify the greatest number of human needs to the greatest degree of equality. It's up to us whether standardization opens up more interesting realms of experience than it closes. Depending on the outcome, we may arrive at a total degradation of human life or at the possibility of perpetually discovering new desires. But these new desires will not appear by themselves within the oppressive context of our world. There must be a collective action to detect, express, and fulfill them.

