

# Roundup #9: The Prescient Analysis of Grace Lee and James Boggs

As news outlets continue to distract and confuse with their tireless coverage of Trump, Russia, and the elections, 'progressives' argue about how to revive the decaying corpse of the Democratic Party, and social media activism propagates a politics of the spectacle increasingly separated from any change in real material conditions, it is clear that political discourse bears little relation to the reality that we face. From within this generalized state of confusion, this week's Roundup, posted on what would have been the 102<sup>nd</sup> birthday of Revolutionary thinker and organizer Grace Lee Boggs, reminds us that it is imperative to recuperate the long-term, committed, evolving, intellectual analyses and organizational practices of our predecessors.

In their seminal 1974 book *Revolution and Evolution in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, Grace Lee and Jimmy Boggs posed the question, "What time is it on the clock of the world?" By inviting us to imagine all of human history laid out on a clock, they insisted that as the times change, that is, as our situation changes, so must our strategies of resistance - even the revolutionary ideas that had only just been born in the 20th century could not be taken for granted. As a Black autoworker in Detroit laboring under specter of automation, Jimmy Boggs foresaw, long before other analysts, the collapse of productive labor that would coincide with the rise of financialization. As such, their analysis presaged the crisis that we live today and pointed to the limitations of a politics that continued to imagine the disappearing industrial worker as the revolutionary subject.

The Boggs' work presented here, drawn from their many decades as political militants in Detroit, provides a snapshot of some of their key contributions to (re)thinking capitalism and revolutionary politics and demonstrates their deep commitment to evolving their political philosophy through what they called dialectical thinking. Grace and Jimmy remind us that the massive social change we seek - what they called Revolution - will not be handed to us by the State and will not be brought about by brief acts of rebellion, but rather requires the hard work of taking responsibility for rebuilding social relations that structure who we can be.

In the articles posted here Grace and Jimmy take on American exceptionalism, the trappings of the socialist imaginary, the question of education, the non-democratic nature of electoral politics, the distinction between rebellion and revolution, and the limits of identity politics, among other topics. We think you will find that their insights are as valid today as the day

they were written. — The Workshop for Intercommunal Study

### James Boggs: *The American Revolution*

“Today...the struggle is much more difficult. What it requires is that people in every stratum of the population clash not only with the agents of the silent police state but with their own prejudices, their own outmoded ideas, their own fears which keep them from grappling with the new realities of our age. The American people must find a way to insist upon their own right and responsibility to make political decisions and to determine policy in all spheres of social existence —whether it is foreign policy, the work process, education, race relations, community life. The coming struggle is a political struggle to take political power out of the hands of the few and put it into the hands of the many. But in order to get this power into the hands of the many, it will be necessary for the many not only to fight the powerful few but to fight and clash among themselves as well.”

### Grace Lee Boggs: *Introduction to Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century*

“...a rebellion usually lasts only a few days. After it ends, the rebels are elated. But they then begin to view themselves mainly as victims and expect those in power to assume responsibility for changing the system. By contrast, a revolution requires that a people go beyond struggling against oppressive institutions and beyond victim thinking. A revolution involves making an evolutionary/revolutionary leap towards becoming more socially responsible and more self-critical human beings. In order to transform the world, we must transform ourselves. Thus, unlike rebellions, which are here today and gone tomorrow, revolutions require a patient and protracted process that transforms and empowers us as individuals as we struggle to change the world around us. Going beyond rejections to projections, revolutions advance our continuing evolution as human beings because we are practicing new, more socially responsible and loving relationships to one another and to the earth.”

### Grace Lee Boggs - *Education: The Great Obsession*

“American education, like American society, is based upon the philosophy of individualism. According to this philosophy, the ambitious individual of average or above-average ability from the lower and middle classes is constantly encouraged to climb up the social ladder out of his social class and community. To achieve this goal, like the black Englishman in colonial Africa, he must conduct himself in ways that meet the approval and social standards of those in power, that is to say, as much unlike those in his community and as much like those in the Establishment as possible. If he does this consistently to the satisfaction of those in power, who are always observing and grading his behavior, he is rewarded by promotion and advancement into the higher echelons of the system. This is what is known as “making

it on your own.” The more opportunistic you are, the better your chance of “making it.” ”

### James Boggs: Think Dialectically, Not Biologically

“The eruption of the black movement exposed the historical connection between racism and capitalism in the U.S. and also made it clear that it is not possible to get rid of racism in this country without getting rid of American capitalism; any more than it was possible to carry on a struggle to reform the South without carrying on a struggle to change this entire nation. How is it possible to get rid of racism without getting rid of the method of thinking which has become ingrained in the American people as a result of the special historical development of this country, namely, that special groups should advance at the expense of others?”

### James Boggs: Towards a New Concept of Citizenship

“What we must begin to do is what we find hardest to do - confront our own individualism and materialism, our own going along with the system which has made possible the strengthening and expansion of the system. When we are ready to do this, we will be ready to begin the struggle for the new theory and practice of citizenship which is so urgently needed in the United States today. Most Americans think citizenship is a question of where we are born, or of going to the polls to vote for politicians. Few of us realize that this nation was founded by a great revolution, which inaugurated an age of revolutions all over the world because it gave men and women a new concept of themselves as self-governing human beings, i.e. as citizens rather than subjects.”

### Grace Lee Boggs: Naming the Enemy

“...we must now make a second American revolution to rid ourselves of the capitalist values and institutions which have brought us to this state of powerlessness or suffer the same mutilation, the same destruction of our families and our communities, the same loss of national independence as over the years we have visited upon other peoples and other nations.”

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# Roundup #8

## Janet Biehl: Bookchin, Öcalan, and the Dialectics of Democracy

“The victory of capitalism was not simply fate,” Öcalan wrote in 2004. “There could have been a different development.” To regard capitalism and the nation-state as inevitable “leaves history to those in power.” Rather, “there is always only a certain probability for things to happen ... there is always an option of freedom.”

## Maurizio Lazzarato: “El capitalismo no necesita de la democracia”

“El filósofo italiano realiza una profunda crítica del sistema capitalista, al que define como esencialmente financiero, además de caracterizarlo de bélico, sexista y racista”

## Theodor W. Adorno: Resignation

“The happiness that dawns in the eye of the thinking person is the happiness of humanity. The universal tendency of oppression is opposed to thought as such. Thought is happiness, even where it defines unhappiness: by enunciating it. By this alone happiness reaches into the universal unhappiness. Whoever does not let it atrophy has not yet resigned.”

## Moishe Postone: Capitalism, Temporality and the Crisis of Labor

“The current crisis has laid bare the contradictory and shaky character of contemporary capitalism. Yet the essentially inchoate responses to the crisis have dramatically revealed the absence of a robust conceptualization of post-capitalist society and, by implication, of a robust critique of capital. One result has been the continued hegemony of neoliberal discourses and policies. Moishe Postone seeks to fundamentally rethink the core categories of Marx’s critique of political economy in the fall 2015 Ellen Maria Gorrissen lecture. He argues that Marx’s mature critique of political economy, as elaborated in the Grundrisse and Kapital, provides the basis for a different critical theory of modernity with contemporary significance.”

## Damian Carrington: Arctic Stronghold of the World’s Seeds Flooded After Permafrost Melts

“It was designed as an impregnable deep-freeze to protect the world’s most precious seeds from any global disaster and ensure humanity’s food supply forever. But the **Global Seed Vault**, buried in a mountain deep inside the Arctic circle, has been breached after global warming produced extraordinary temperatures over the winter, sending meltwater gushing

into the entrance tunnel.”

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## Roundup #7

It is increasingly apparent that the structural crisis of capitalist accumulation does not herald the emancipatory future that the movements of the past had imagined. As the crisis deepens, our future (and present) tends to instead be marked by expulsions, endless war, and increasing precarity. This week’s roundup examines the end of capitalism and the concrete effects of its ongoing collapse. It also reminds us, through the examples of the Kurds and Indigenous struggles in North America, that the emancipatory horizon is today inseparable from the organization of life beyond capitalism. — The Workshop for Intercommunal Study

**Glen Coulthard: For Our Nations to Live, Capitalism Must Die**

“...the federal government has invigorated a struggle for Indigenous self-determination that must challenge the relationship between settler-colonization and free-market fundamentalism in ways that refuse to be co-opted by scraps of recognition, opportunistic apologies, and the **cheap gift of political and economic inclusion**. For Indigenous nations to live, capitalism must die. And for capitalism to die, we must actively participate in the construction of Indigenous alternatives to it.”

**Sergio Ferrari: El 1% de los propietarios en América Latina posee más de la mitad de las tierras agrícolas**

“El 1% de los propietarios de **América Latina** concentra más de la mitad de las tierras agrícolas. La Organización de la **ONU** para la Alimentación y la Agricultura (FAO), retomó estos datos de un informe de la ONG OXFAM para describir la enorme desigualdad que atraviesa al continente.”

**Institute for Precarious Consciousness: We Are All Very Anxious**

“Today’s public secret is that everyone is anxious. Anxiety has spread from its previous

localised locations (such as sexuality) to the whole of the social field. All forms of intensity, self-expression, emotional connection, immediacy, and enjoyment are now laced with anxiety. It has become the linchpin of subordination.”

### Roland Denis - El milagro Kurdo: Ocalam y el sentido de la revolución 1

“El mundo en todo el transcurso de la era moderna ha estado plagado de luchas guerrilleras, estallidos rebeldes y luchas socio-políticas de cualquier dimensión pero solo en muy pocas surgen realmente los pueblos, cobran vida e identidad como máquinas de liberación que se constituyen desde el escenario de su propio levantamiento.”

### Immanuel Wallerstein and Sasha Lilley: Wallerstein on the End of Capitalism

“Our capitalist world seems mired in crisis, beset by low growth and instability. Immanuel Wallerstein, the father of world-systems theory, argues that the current malaise goes beyond the periodic fluctuations of the business cycle. According to him, capitalism’s days are numbered: in 20 to 40 years it will be gone. What replaces it may be something better or something worse. Wallerstein discusses the end of capitalism, as well as resistance to Donald Trump and the recent attack on Syria.”

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## Roundup #6

The impasse of transformational action in the U.S. is today evidenced in the tragicomic spectacle of a “resistance” beholden to the Wall Street donors of a brutally pro-war electoral machine. This week’s Roundup points to the fact that this impasse must be understood as a consequence of the effective neutralization of the most critical elements of U.S. society—those traditionally found within the Black radical community. In addition, these readings open the discussion regarding the timeliness of an “Inter/communalist” politics in the era of the long-term (if not definitive) decomposition of capitalist society. Although varied in its iterations, broadly speaking this politics de-centers the State (and its representational arenas) and instead places emphasis upon on the ground (or territorial) interventions that can create a web of counter-institutional life and material resources necessary for the production and sustenance of a collective subject that in its very practices in the here and now determines its own fate and slowly breaks free from the abstract and impersonal mechanisms of capitalist control. This in turn once again opens the discussion of

a future beyond capitalism and a politics beyond the question of the (lesser-evil) administration over its contemporary collapse. Despite the fact that such a perspective remains rather marginal to the political imaginary of today's U.S. left, this week's readings, audio and video serve as evidence that this "Inter/communalist" position not only has strong precedent within U.S. society (particularly within Black radical formations), but also that similar visions from Kurdistan to Mexico are at the heart of a rather different "resistance" than the one on offer by MSDNC or FauxNews. — The Workshop for Intercommunal Study

### [Eric Draitser: A Crisis In Black Politics? A Conversation With Pascal Robert](#)

"Eric Draitser sits down with political commentator Pascal Robert to discuss what he describes as the crisis of Black politics in America. Eric and Pascal examine the legacy of Obama on Black politics, and how that legacy negatively impacts Black America in the Age of Trump. This and so much more in this in depth conversation."

### [Huey Newton: Speech at Boston College](#)

"So, what has actually happened, is that the non-state has already been accomplished, but it is reactionary... We think that it is very important to know that as things are in the world today socialism in the United States will never exist. Why? It will not exist because it cannot exist. It cannot at this time exist anyplace in the world. Socialism would require a socialist state, and if a state does not exist how could socialism exist?"

### [Murray Bookchin: The Communalist Project](#)

"Having brought history to a point where nearly everything is possible, at least of a material nature—and having left behind a past that was permeated ideologically by mystical and religious elements produced by the human imagination—we are faced with a new challenge, one that has never before confronted humanity. We must consciously create our own world, not according to demonic fantasies, mindless customs, and destructive prejudices, but according to the canons of reason, reflection, and discourse that uniquely belong to our own species."

### [Victor M. Toledo: "La Batalla Final Es Civilizatoria" Parte I, II, III y IV](#)

"La batalla de escala civilizatoria es también un rudo encuentro de proyectos. De proyectos de vida contra proyectos de muerte. En ese sentido es probable que el territorio mexicano sea...el laboratorio de una batalla que se reproducirá y multiplicará por todos los rincones del planeta en el futuro próximo."

### [Video sobre la propuesta del Congreso Nacional Indígena](#)

“La propuesta no es ir a votar por una candidata...la propuesta es, no es a las elecciones, no es ir a votar a una urna...la propuesta es que les tiremos la fiesta y que ocupemos ese lugar y que aprovechemos ese lugar para denunciar todo lo que esta pasando, que ocupemos ese lugar que esta vetado para nosotros para decir la verdad...Pero no es solamente denunciar, es una oportunidad para llegar a todos esos lugares que no hemos podido llegar...y organizarnos...ese es el objetivo de esto, la meta de esto que cada uno desde su lugar...se organice. “

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## Roundup #5

Here at the Workshop we have believed for some time now that regardless of who won the U.S. presidential elections the overlapping interests and ideological investments that permeate the political spectrum all pointed to the increasing likelihood of war with Iran (and by proxy with Russia). As the U.S. war-machine continues down this path (a path that we have been walking well before the arrival of Donald Trump, see in particular Hersh’s article below), the global war that looms on the horizon can only be understood in the context of the larger contradictions of contemporary capitalism and, more specifically, the violence associated with the turn toward financialization as well as with the structural crisis of capitalist accumulation that has made financialization necessary. This roundup offers the following articles to help make sense of what might in fact be driving this creep toward global war and how we might begin to think and build our way out of this madness. — The Workshop for Intercommunal Study

[To Our Enemies \( A Nuestros Enemigos - incluido en Español\)](#) by Maurizio Lazzarato and Éric Alliez

“It’s like being in a war,’ was heard in Athens during the weekend of July 11-12, 2015... The statement “It’s like being in a war’ should be immediately corrected: it is a war. The reversibility of war and economy is at the very basis of capitalism. And it has been a long time since Carl Schmitt revealed the ‘pacifist’ hypocrisy of neoliberalism by reestablishing the continuity between economy and war: the economy pursues the objectives of war through other means...”

[How Will Capitalism End? \(¿Cómo terminará el capitalismo? - incluido en Español\)](#) by Wolfgang Streeck

“The capitalist system is at present stricken with at least five worsening disorders for which



no cure is at hand: declining growth, oligarchy, starvation of the public sphere, corruption and international anarchy. What is to be expected, on the basis of capitalism's recent historical record, is a long and painful period of cumulative decay: of intensifying frictions, of fragility and uncertainty, and of a steady succession of 'normal accidents'—not necessarily but quite possibly on the scale of the global breakdown of the 1930s."

[Capitalism's Crisis of Care](#) by Sarah Leonard and Nancy Fraser

"The idea that we could somehow bring back manufacturing, that's what's utopian—again, in the bad sense. Unlike the idea that you could build a society that assumes every adult is a person with primary care responsibilities, community engagements, and social commitments. That's not utopian. It's a vision based on what human life is really like."

[Map Shows Where President Barack Obama Dropped his 20,000 Bombs](#) by Harriet Agerholm

"...as the world gears up for a seemingly more violent four years, it is worth reflecting on President Obama's tenure. According to newly released figures, President Obama had already upped the number of bombs on foreign countries. US forces dropped over 3,000 more bombs in 2016 than 2015, taking the grand total of strikes for the year to at least 26,171."

[Trump Attack on Syria a Deadly Political Game and Reflection of Deep Systemic Crisis](#) by Gerald Horne and Paul Jay

"...Unfortunately, we're not finished, I'm afraid. As noted, North Korea is certainly in the crosshairs. The problem there, of course, is that North Korea is rapidly developing the capability to have missiles that it can reach Hawaii at least, if not the west coast of the United States of America. And likewise, I think that Washington may be under-estimating the ability of Iran, to organize and resist an attack. That if launched, could open the gates of hell."

[The Redirection](#) by Seymour M. Hersh

"In Iraq, most of the insurgent violence directed at the American military has come from Sunni forces, and not from Shiites. But, from the Administration's perspective, the most profound—and unintended—strategic consequence of the Iraq war [was] the empowerment of Iran."

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# Roundup #4

**Eric Cheyfitz: The Disinformation Age** - Interview conducted by the Workshop for Intercommunal Study

“My meaning of disinformation is a real historical break in political discourse so that what begins to happen, and it is reflexive rather than conscious or planned by any particular entity, is that another history starts to emerge which itself is detached from actual history. That [detached] history takes hold and becomes the status quo in a particular nation state...What ultimately happens is that there is no longer a political vocabulary to deal with political realities so consequently problems can't be solved and the status quo which, is increasingly an unequal status quo is exacerbated. And that's where we are: we have intense income inequality in this country [The U.S] that is not being dealt with, we have endless war in this country that is not being dealt with and we have absolutely no language to address these issues.”

**Community Building: An Idea Whose Time Has Come** by James Boggs

“That is why the main question before us is “How can we become new men and new women?” willing to accept the challenge to live by the vision of another culture, a new culture we still have to create, a culture based on social responsibility and respect for one another instead of individualism and materialism and on a love for and kinship with the land and with Nature, instead of viewing Nature as something to be conquered and land as a commodity to be owned? How do we create a culture that is life affirming rather than life destroying, which is based on caring and compassion rather than on the philosophy of the “survival of the fittest” ?

**Record-breaking Climate Change Pushes World into ‘Uncharted Territory’** by Damian Carrington

“2016 saw the hottest global average among thermometer measurements stretching back to 1880. But scientific research indicates the world was last this warm about **115,000 years ago** and that the planet has not experienced such high levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere for **4m years**. 2017 has seen temperature records continue to tumble....”

**Of Flying Cars and the Declining Rate of Profit** by David Graeber

“Americans do not like to think of themselves as a nation of bureaucrats—quite the opposite—but the moment we stop imagining bureaucracy as a phenomenon limited to

government offices, it becomes obvious that this is precisely what we have become. The final victory over the Soviet Union did not lead to the domination of the market, but, in fact, cemented the dominance of conservative managerial elites, corporate bureaucrats who use the pretext of short-term, competitive, bottom-line thinking to squelch anything likely to have revolutionary implications of any kind.”

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## Roundup #3

[The Economic Crisis in Fact and Fiction](#) by Paul Mattick with John Clegg and Aaron Benanav

“What’s going on now is the reappearance of the crisis that should have happened in the mid-1970s.”

[1 in 4 Americans Apparently Unaware the Earth Orbits the Sun](#) by Samantha Grossman

“And the fact that only 74 percent of participants knew that the Earth revolved around the sun is perhaps less alarming than the fact that only 48 percent knew that humans evolved from earlier species of animals.”

[Speech on the Kurdish Struggle at EZLN Capitalist Hydra Seminar](#) by Havin Guneser

“Without understanding how masculinity was socially formed, one cannot analyze the institution of state and therefore will not be accurately be able to define the war and power culture related to statehood... This is what paved the way for femicide and the exploitation and colonization of peoples...”

[Capitalism and the Destruction of Life on Earth: Six Theses on Saving the Humans](#) by Richard Smith

“At current rates, Harvard biologist E.O Wilson says, “half the world’s great forests have already been leveled, and half the world’s plant and animal species may be gone by the end of this century.” Corporations aren’t necessarily evil – although plenty are diabolically evil – but they can’t help themselves.”

[The age of humanism is ending](#) by Achille Mbembe

“Neoliberal capitalism has left in its wake a multitude of destroyed subjects, many of whom are deeply convinced that their immediate future will be one of continuous exposure to violence and existential threat...In a world set on objectifying everybody and every living thing in the name of profit, the erasure of the political by capital is the real threat. The transformation of the political into business raises the risk of the elimination of the very possibility of politics.”

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## Roundup #2

**Manifesto Against Labour** by the Krisis Group

“The more the crisis of labour society is worsening and reformist attempts of ‘repair work’ fail, the more the gap is widening between the isolated and helpless monads as constituted by (capitalist) society and the potential formation of a movement that is ready to re-appropriate the socially constituted species capacities. The rapid degeneration of social relations all over the world proves that the old ideas and sentiments on labour and competition are unshaken, but are readjusted to ever-lower standards. Step-by-step de-civilisation seems to be the “natural” course of the crisis despite widespread discontent and unease.”

**Crisis: Tendencias y alternativas** by Pablo González Casanova

“Con razón muchos autores no sólo hablan de una crisis del capitalismo sino de una crisis de la civilización. Algo de eso es lo que está pasando aquí y en el mundo que domina el complejo empresarial-militar-político y mediático de Estados Unidos y de la Unión Europea, con sus redes de aliados, socios y subordinados de una globalización que se distingue de la política imperialista anterior, por lo menos en dos terrenos: Uno consiste en que más que dominar a los Estados-nación desde un centro rector, las sedes imperiales están organizando una burguesía global, cuyos enlaces consolidados reciben el apoyo necesario para enriquecerse y acumular, siempre que del ingreso nacional total, las corporaciones se queden con la mayor parte”

**Until We Win: Black Labor and Liberation in the Disposable Era** by Kali Akuno

“Autonomous projects are initiatives not supported or organized by the government (state) or some variant of monopoly capital (finance or corporate industrial or mercantile capital). These are initiatives that directly seek to create a democratic “economy of need” around

organizing sustainable institutions that satisfy people's basic needs around principles of social solidarity and participatory or direct democracy that intentionally put the needs of people before the needs of profit...To ensure that these are not mere Black capitalist enterprises, these initiatives must be built democratically from the ground up and must be owned, operated, and controlled by their workers and consumers."

**Building Democracy without the State** by Dilar Dirik

"It is of course difficult to raise society's consciousness in a short span of time, especially where war conditions, embargoes, internalized mentalities and ancient despotic structures have been deeply institutionalized and can lead to power abuses and apolitical mindsets. An alternative education system, organized through academies, aims to promote a healthy social mentality, while self-organization practically reproduces a conscious society by mobilizing it in all spheres of life."

**Goodbye, American neoliberalism. A new era is here** by Cornel West

"The monumental election of Trump was a desperate and xenophobic cry of human hearts for a way out from under the devastation of a disintegrating neoliberal order - a nostalgic return to an imaginary past of greatness."

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## Roundup #1

**Get Organized (On the Elections)** by the Zapatista Army for National Liberation

"We don't call for people to vote, nor do we call for them not to vote. It just doesn't interest us. What's more, it doesn't worry us. What interests us as Zapatistas is knowing how to resist and confront the many heads of the capitalist system that exploits us, represses us, disappears us, and steals from us."

**Politics Without Politics** by Anselm Jappe

"Everywhere, these representatives of the "radical" left end up supporting neoliberal policies. Do we need, then, to form "truly" radical parties, parties that will not founder in such swamps? Or are the reasons for these "betrayals" structural; does every instance of

participation in politics inevitably lead to surrender to the market and its laws, regardless of any subjective intentions to the contrary?"

[The Coming Global Civil War: Is There Any Way Out?](#) by Franco 'Bifo' Berardi

"In order to grasp the dynamic that drives the global civil war, we first have to see the relation between the icy wind of financial abstraction and the reaction of the aggressive body of society separated from its brain."

[Secular Stagnation, or is it worse?](#) by Immanuel Wallerstein

"Here is the danger of not going far enough in critical analyses of the system. Only if one sees clearly that there is no way out of persistent stagnation can one in fact become strong enough to win the moral and political struggle. One prong of the fork stands for the replacement of capitalism by another system that will be as bad or even worse, retaining the crucial features of hierarchy, exploitation, and polarization. The other prong stands for a new system that is relatively egalitarian and relatively democratic."

[Who owns our cities - and why this urban takeover should concern us all](#) by Saskia Sassen

"It is easy to explain the post-2008 urban investment surge as 'more of the same'... But an examination of the current trends shows some significant differences and points to a whole new phase in the character and logics of foreign and national corporate acquisitions... We are witnessing an unusually large scale of corporate buying of whole pieces of cities in the last few years."