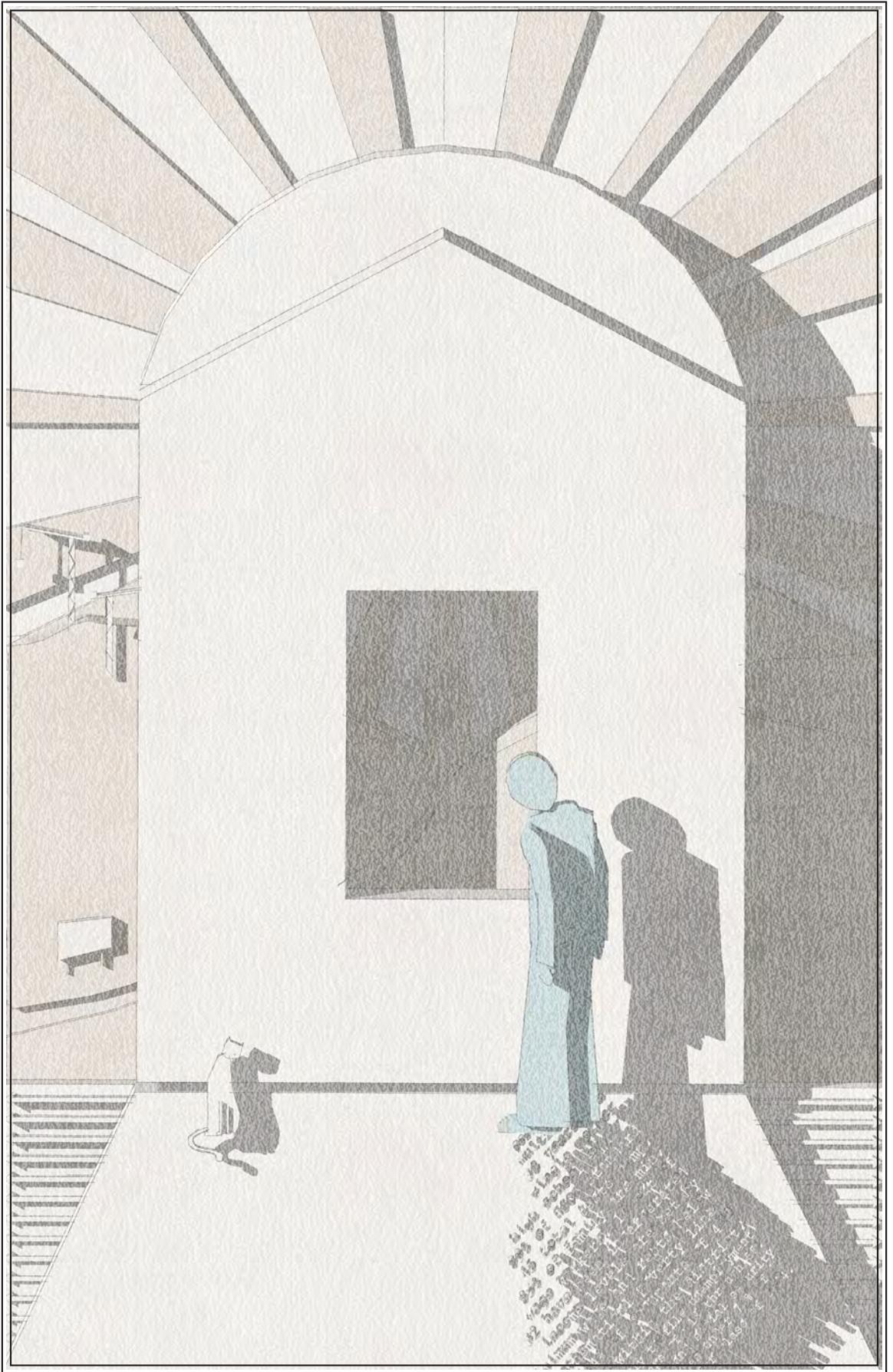


I.

The sun rolls to its side and lets the day shuffle past to blow its horn and start the cranes of infrastructure.

Today, the Citizen will move ahead. Today, alight with clarity, the path to a re-imagined future seems possible even as the growling of over-burdened package trucks clogs the highways. The Citizen leans their forehead against the house window and watches the sun trace the scree of city-scape that pushes into the valley. The persistent alarm of a reversing machine beeps lazily from a distant alley. The glass of the window fogs from the Citizen's breath. They shut their mouth and set their jaw against the day's burdens, releasing the air across their chin.

Slowly, the light pushes out the profiles of buildings and city trucks and cranes and unclaimed piles of identities and leaves new shadows across the city's fabric. The Citizen blinks as the sun lifts above the hills and paints their window with warmth. Behind them, on the floor, they hear the sliding thump of their profile's burden taking form from their silhouette. An amalgam of all the classifications, categorizations, and re-histories of the Citizen's profile per governing Policy; the daily accumulation of burdens is an expected materialization for every numbered member of The Development.



Anna Arellanes Wirth

It could be different.

The Citizen hums, assessing the pile of classifications - a dark tangle of sans serif font and non-conforming percentage signs describing the Citizen's early childhood. Today, there will be time to discuss a different possibility with the Department's Comptroller, but it means an early start and that means joining the toll road before the night shift lets out. The Citizen grabs the top sheet of wrapping paper from The Development dispenser and hurries the accumulated profile into an awkward package for Cataloguing at the Office. Work cap affixed and boots pulled high, The Citizen lifts the packaged profile and jogs out the door of their housing unit.

On the Descending Road, the Citizen navigates the piles of uncatalogued profiles that lean against their neighbors' housing units and spill down the steep yards onto the pavement. A packaging truck for the New System chugs up the incline, forcing the Citizen to pause between two accumulations of housing percentages. The side of the truck promises "New Infrastructure for a Brighter Development" in dull acrylic. The Citizen grunts and steps back onto the path behind the truck's punctuating sphere of exhaust, dodging the sharp edges of a crumbling bit of gender stats.

The toll path to the Office is marked by signs of New System's work - broken elbows of way-too-tall cranes and billboards with dreamy slogans sit delicately above the buttressing piles of broken profile packages. Chains of blurry truck tail-lights trace the nonsense paths of the future infrastructure while the sun continues its climb.

This is taking too long. The Citizen looks up from monitoring the path and immediately closes their eyes to block the glare from the polished edges of the Loopholes that mark entry to the Official District. The rushing sound of streamlined individuals dropping through Loopholes into the District fabric temporarily masks the click of the Citizen's boots on the new threshold paving. Ever since the District Policy of halving the commute time of Streamliners was formalized, improvements along shared thresholds with Development citizens have increased.

The Citizen shifts their package of categorization and profiles to their other shoulder and retraces the steps of their planned presentation to the Comptroller while shuffling past the line outside the Office. Through a re-envisioning of the Pre-existing Conditions Policy, the Loopholes could be relocated and restructured to accommodate not just the Streamliners but all the citizens of the Development. The Citizen has seen elements of the system work. Equivalency has precedence.

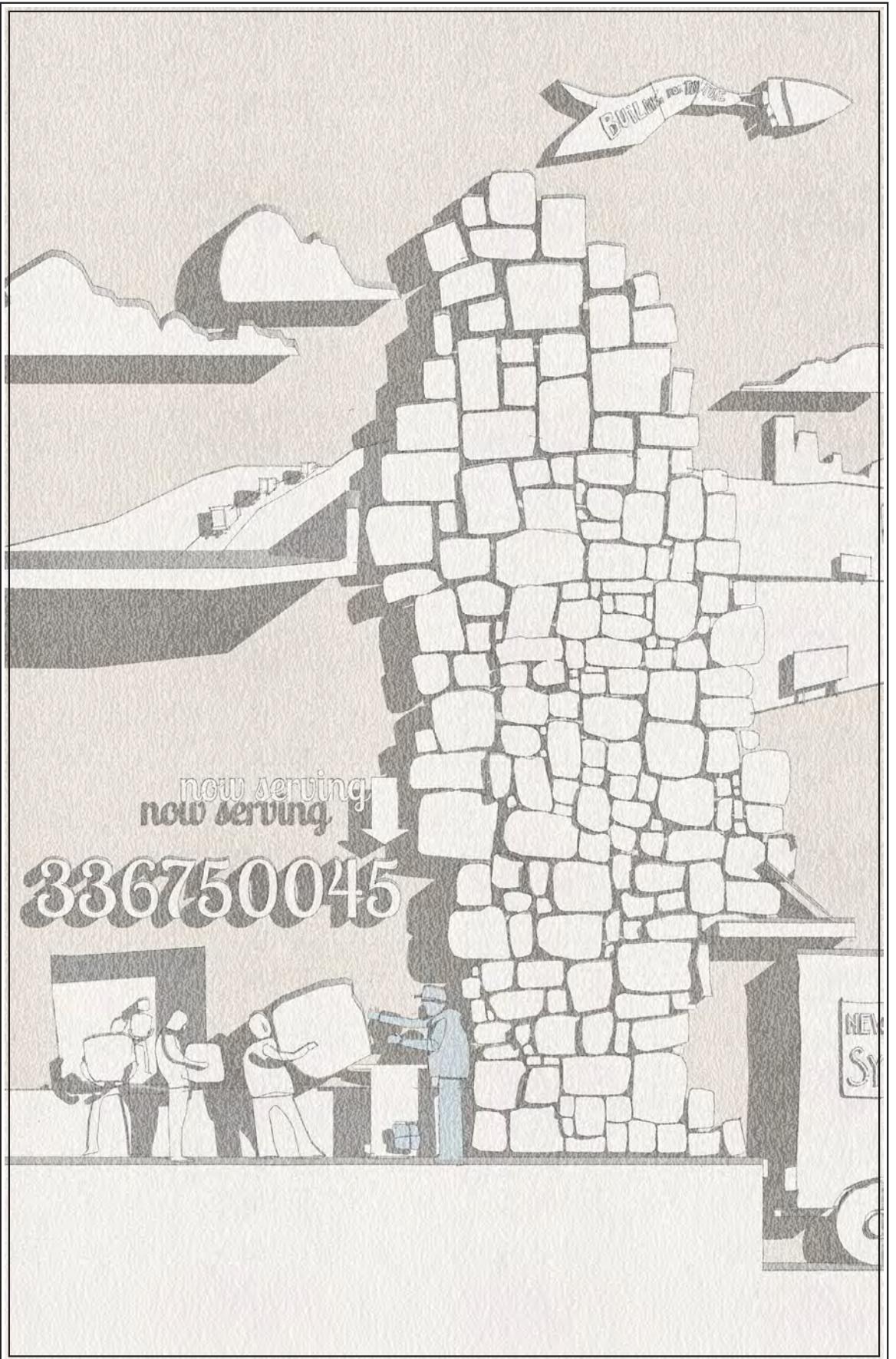
Huh?

The Citizen startles at the prompting from a co-worker seated behind a pile of yesterday's past-dues. They had been mumbling through the plan aloud and had not taken note of their arrival on the first floor of the Office of Registration and Cataloguing. One hour twenty minutes from door to desk. The Citizen manages a greeting to the invisible co-worker and stows their package under the Receiving Counter. The sun bustles through the double door as the Office opens to the line of early profile package drop-offs from The Development. The Citizen chews the corner of their lower lip and counts as the package holders queue up at the Counter. The number is mournfully high.

After their second can of Investment Soda from the Office vending machine and processing three hundred Official Receipts of Categorization, the Citizen receives a memo through the Interface System. The Comptroller looks forward to meeting with the Citizen, during the workday and following receipt of all client packages, in order to discuss exciting new Policy developments. It is an unexpected encouragement from the Office! and the Citizen finds themselves at a light canter along the breakroom hallway in anticipation of an efficient processing of the day's remaining package holders.

II.

The shadows of the queuing citizens stretch long against the flat white floor tiles. Despite promises of new efficiency, the Citizen feels certain that the number of burdens has grown this week. A colleague draws a barrier across the queue as another closes and locks the Office door, blocking a collection of non-committal curses from the unlucky petitioners. The Citizen watches as the



crowd relinquishes the queue. They seem as if they were holding their weight against falling a great height - leaving only after no finger could bear the burden. Inside, there are still too many. The Office is closed, but all client packages have not been processed. The Citizen dismisses the idea of screaming, but is certain that they are missing the opportunity to talk to The Comptroller. The opportunity might not come again.

The last client thumps a double load of burdens on the counter, and as if to mark the unequivocal, the receipt alarm of the Interface System sounds. The Citizen hurriedly processes the packages and runs to the Interface Terminal.

The Comptroller regrets that they are no longer available. Through the New System of Improved Development Infrastructure, however, the Comptroller is excited to offer the Citizen a new opportunity that better fits their policy profile. Congratulations on your new system!

The Citizen rips off the message from the automated printout and reads the words again. They are not what the Citizen had planned for, but a new system must be better than the old. The Office lights turn dark in the queuing room and the whir of the heating machine throttles down to a purr somewhere in the lower floors. The Citizen places the note in their pocket, and picks up their package, still unprocessed, from below the countertop. Maybe tomorrow.

Back through the pipeline pass, now filled with other commuters leaving the District, the Citizen considers the Comptroller's note with slightly more optimism. Perhaps the Citizen's demonstrated ambition has changed their profile. A new position at The Re-definition Office would definitely put them in the right place for reshaping profile policy. Perhaps the new system will afford new opportunity. The Citizen steps from behind a large New System truck to exit for the Development and stumbles over a traffic cone.

There is a new traffic pattern that leads to the Development. The piles of discarded, uncategorized profiles have been cleaned up, and the road slopes, unimpeded, to a new entry. The Citizen brims with tentative pride. This is part of the New System that I will belong to.

The Citizen follows the path down below the new, improved, homogenous façade of the Development. The new circulation efficiently moves all Development citizens through the simplified entry to a core of vertical movers. The Citizen enters one vertical shaft and a disembodied voice directs the car to a numbered floor. The Citizen mutters agreement and wonders at how little effort will be required to become a part of the new system.

After a whoosh of compressed air, the doors on the car open directly onto a residential unit and a new voice fills the space.

Welcome to your new streamlined® experience! Now work and home are only an armswidth away! No more wasted commute time and safer for the community!

The Citizen fills their lungs and waits, allowing the air to force its way back out through mismanaged teeth. Watching as the sun falls across the singular, small opening in the wall to trace a mass of unprocessed profile packages along the perimeter and then roll behind the horizon and leave the space in darkness.

2007, the gap in wealth between families with the bottom and the top of the distribution has nearly doubled over the past 24 years, but the pace has slowed recently. Figure 3 shows that the median wealth with children in the lower half of the nation fell from \$13,000 in 1987 to \$8,000 in 2007, a loss of 40 percent. It is likely that small households that own higher than 40 percent of households with children. For families also on their median wealth fell by one-third in real terms—from \$34,000 in 1987 to \$23,000 in 2007. The top 5 percent of families with their median wealth fell only 9 percent, from \$2.2 million in 1987 to \$2 million in 2007, after inflation.



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Figure 4 shows that the average net worth of the lower half of the nation, representing 49 million households, fell from \$1.1 million in 1987 to \$700,000 in 2007, a loss of about one-third of their net worth. About one-fourth of these households reported zero wealth or negative net worth in 2007, up from 15 percent in 1987. The average net worth of the lower half of the nation, representing 49 million households, fell from \$1.1 million in 1987 to \$700,000 in 2007, a loss of about one-third of their net worth. About one-fourth of these households reported zero wealth or negative net worth in 2007, up from 15 percent in 1987. The average net worth of the lower half of the nation, representing 49 million households, fell from \$1.1 million in 1987 to \$700,000 in 2007, a loss of about one-third of their net worth. About one-fourth of these households reported zero wealth or negative net worth in 2007, up from 15 percent in 1987.

