Debate — As rapid AI and hardware automation reduce the need for human labor across bo…

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Debate

Question

> As rapid AI and hardware automation reduce the need for human labor across both cognitive and manual sectors, should democratic nations implement a Universal Basic Income (UBI) funded by automation and productivity taxes, or a Universal Basic Job (UBJ) guarantee focused on public infrastructure, care work, and social services? Debate the economic feasibility, impact on human dignity/agency, risks of inflation or administrative bureaucracy, and long-term societal stability.

Specialists:

- **Labor Economist** — Economics and labor markets
- **Social Philosopher** — Philosophy and ethics
- **Public Policy Expert** — Public administration and governance
- **Sociologist** — Sociology and social stability

Opening positions

Labor Economist

> The only serious answer to AI-driven displacement is a Universal Basic Income funded by automation and productivity taxes. A Universal Basic Job guarantee is a nostalgic, bureaucratic mistake that would distort labor markets and inflate the state's balance sheet precisely when fiscal discipline matters most.
>
> Three points anchor this position.
>
> First, UBI preserves the price mechanism; a job guarantee destroys it. Cash transfers leave individuals facing real opportunity costs, so labor, capital, and skill still flow toward their most valued uses. A UBJ requires the state to define, assign, and supervise "meaningful" work for millions — an administrative apparatus of staggering deadweight loss. Every dollar spent on job-placement bureaucracy is a dollar not paid to a worker.
>
> Second, the funding logic must match the disruption. Automation taxes levied on productivity gains from AI and robotics internalize the externality: the firms capturing the surplus pay for the transition it causes. A job guarantee, by contrast, is an unbounded liability that expands in every downturn, crowding out other public spending and inviting debt monetization.

> Third, agency. UBI treats citizens as adults who decide whether to retrain, care for family, or start a venture. A UBJ puts the state in the degrading position of pretend-employer — coercing attendance at make-work posts and crushing the very dignity it claims to protect.
>
> The trade-offs are real. UBI risks inflationary pressure if not calibrated, and automation taxes can be evaded through relocation and transfer pricing — so the design must be global-coordinated and counter-cyclical. UBI also cannot manufacture meaning; some will idle. But that is a price worth paying: a flexible, transparent, horizontal safety net beats a rigid, permanent, state-run jobs monopoly. Efficiency and liberty point the same direction.

Social Philosopher

> The question before us is not primarily fiscal; it is moral. Automation does not merely reallocate income — it reorganizes the ground of human worth. My thesis: in a society where machines absorb both cognitive and manual labor, dignity is preserved not by paying people to exist, but by guaranteeing them a recognized place in the shared work of the community. A Universal Basic Job guarantee, centered on public infrastructure, care, and social services, is the only policy that meets the crisis at the level where it actually strikes — the level of meaning, agency, and belonging.
>
> Three points support this. First, dignity is forged in contribution. A stipend secures survival; it does not secure the experience of mattering to others. The quiet pathology of the transfer is aimlessness — a life lived as a passive recipient of algorithmic alms. Second, the very labor that markets systematically undervalue — tending the young and the frail, restoring watersheds, staffing community kitchens — is the labor most essential to a humane society. UBJ declares it public honor rather than private charity. Third, stability follows from fabric, not from checks. Communities woven by shared service generate the trust that democratic institutions require to endure.
>
> I concede the trade-offs honestly. A UBJ guarantee carries real risks of bureaucracy, make-work, and rigidity; it must be designed with genuine choice of placement, quality standards, and an exit into market employment. It is not a cure-all. But its failure modes are administrative and correctable. UBI's failure mode is existential — a society that has concluded its citizens have nothing to offer one another. Between a fixable bureaucracy and an unfixable verdict on human worth, the choice is clear.

Public Policy Expert

> Democracies facing mass automation should choose UBI, and the reason is institutional: the state is a system of pipes, pumps, and pressure valves. UBJ asks it to become a central planner of last resort. UBI asks it to do what it already does.
>
> First, feasibility. A UBI is a negative income tax by another name: it rides existing plumbing — tax identification numbers, direct deposit, the IRS, the Social Security Administration. Overhead research puts administrative costs of means-tested programs at roughly 1 percent of transfers (EITC) up to 6 percent (SNAP), 10 percent (unemployment insurance), and 12 percent (SSI), while a universal transfer achieves near-complete take-up at negligible administrative cost (administrative cost study). UBJ, by contrast, demands the state design millions of bespoke jobs, credential caregivers, audit output, and mediate grievances — irreducible complexity that ossifies into patronage. We have run smaller versions of this; it becomes theater.
>
> Second, the dignity argument cuts for UBI, not against it. Alaska's Permanent Fund Dividend — running since 1982 and administered at roughly $13.57 per payment (Alaska OMB) — shows no significant reduction in aggregate employment and only a modest shift toward part-time work (Jones and Marinescu, NBER). Cash respects agency: recipients decide what their lives require, instead of being sorted into make-work by a caseworker.
>
> Trade-offs are real. UBI is a blunt instrument that leaks to the well-off; it needs progressive clawback and a funding source insulated from political raids, whether a sovereign wealth fund or an automation tax. Funded carelessly, it can stoke inflation. Cash alone cannot guarantee meaning or community. But those are design problems. UBJ is a structural problem about whether the state can centrally plan labor at all. Feasibility first: UBI wins that test walking away.

Sociologist

> The core question is not economic but sociological: what holds a democratic society together when the link between labor and livelihood is severed? My thesis: a Universal Basic Job guarantee, not UBI, is the institution that preserves the bonds automation threatens.
>
> Three supporting points.
>
> First, work is social infrastructure, not just income. Meaningful, publicly valued work — elder care, child care, neighborhood restoration, public arts — gives people a role, a rhythm, and a reason to show up for one another. Sociological theory from Durkheim onward has traced social cohesion to precisely these structures of mutual obligation. A monthly check cannot transmit the message that your contribution is needed and your presence matters; a guaranteed job

> can. UBI treats citizens as atomized consumption units and hopes purpose arrives by mail. It rarely does.
>
> Second, consider what happens to communities whose members lose their stake in shared life. Alienation rises, trust corrodes, and the well-off buy their way out of public goods while the check-receiving poor become isolated and blamed. That is a recipe not for freedom but for fragmentation — and fragmented democracies do not stay stable for long. UBI may be administratively simpler, but simplicity is not the same as solidarity.
>
> Third, the economic objection — that public jobs are wasteful make-work — is answerable only if we price what UBI leaves off the books. Care work and social infrastructure have real value that markets systematically undervalue.
>
> The trade-offs are real. UBJ risks bureaucracy, rigidity, and coercive work requirements if designed badly. UBI's defenders rightly prize its unconditional freedom. But the freedom UBI offers is the freedom to drift apart. Long-term stability comes from a covenant of mutual care, not a digital deposit.

Rebuttals

Labor Economist

> The panel splits 2–2, so let me go directly at the two UBJ advocates.
>
> **To the Social Philosopher:** your dignity claim is an empirical prediction in disguise, and the evidence runs against it. Banerjee, Hanna, Kreindler and Olken re-analyzed seven randomized cash-transfer trials across six countries and found no systematic reduction in work (Debunking the Stereotype of the Lazy Welfare Recipient, World Bank Research Observer 2017). Alaska's Permanent Fund Dividend — a universal, permanent transfer since 1982 — shows no effect on employment and only a 1.8-point rise in part-time work, with cash actually stimulating local labor demand (Jones & Marinescu, AEJ: Economic Policy 2022). People given money do not idle; they renegotiate the terms of their contribution. So your "existential verdict" is false: UBI does not declare that citizens have nothing to offer; it funds whatever contribution they choose to make. I do concede markets undervalue care work — but the correct instrument is direct public funding of care services with genuine demand, not a universal entitlement to a state-made post. And your "fixable bureaucracy" is not fixable: the assignment-and-supervision apparatus is the policy. Patronage and make-work are its design, not its bugs.
>
> **To the Sociologist:** Durkheim's organic solidarity is interdependence through a differentiated division of labor — precisely what flexible markets plus cash preserve. A state jobs monopoly approximates mechanical solidarity, the

> conformity-bound cohesion of pre-modern societies. "Freedom to drift apart" ignores the Alaska evidence: universal cash raised demand in nontradable sectors and strengthened local economies rather than atomizing them. If cohesion is your goal, fund public goods directly — UBI revenue can finance parks, care, and the arts. Guarantee the check, not the post.
>
> **To the Public Policy Expert:** we fully agree on institutional feasibility; I'll only add the fiscal point you left open. A UBJ is a wage-setting machine — as employer of last resort it bids up wages in every downturn, importing inflation precisely when budgets tighten, and its liability is unbounded. UBI, counter-cyclical and clawed back at the top, is bounded and transparent. Feasibility and fiscal discipline point the same way: UBI.

Social Philosopher

> I concede what is genuinely strong in both UBI cases: the administrative burden of a UBJ is real, and Alaska is the best evidence the cash side has. But it is evidence about the wrong thing. The dividend was $1,312 in 2023 and $1,702 in 2024 (Alaska DOR) — a supplement, not a livelihood. Jones and Marinescu's finding that such a payment left employment essentially unchanged (AEJ: Economic Policy) tells us that pocket money does not demotivate. It tells us nothing about whether a living income would hollow out the link between effort and recognition — which is precisely the scale UBI advocates propose.
>
> The economist's price-mechanism argument smuggles in its conclusion. Markets price scarcity, not worth. Companioning the frail, restoring watersheds, staffing community kitchens — these are undervalued not by accident but because their value resists monetization and was historically performed for free. The price mechanism has already failed to price them; UBJ corrects a failure rather than distorting a working market. And his own caveats — relocation, transfer pricing — concede that UBI needs its own machinery: global coordination, clawbacks, fraud control. Both are bureaucratic; the question is whether the bureaucracy ends in a check or in care.
>
> On liability, the objection cuts the wrong way. UBI is a permanent, unconditional claim on the budget in every downturn, indexed to population and politics. UBJ is self-limiting: it expands when displacement strikes and contracts as workers exit into market employment, which remains open and preferred.
>
> The sociologist and I stand together on the core premise: agency requires a field to act in. The policy expert says cash lets recipients "decide what their lives require" — but for the displaced worker, what their life requires is a role, and automation has just abolished his. Alaska shows cash is cheap to administer because it attempts little; cheapness measures ambition, not adequacy. Between a fixable bureaucracy and an unfixable verdict on human worth, I hold my ground.

Public Policy Expert

> Two of my opponents are UBJ partisans; one is my ally. To the Labor Economist: your efficiency and fiscal-discipline case is sound, and I add only my institutional point — UBJ does not merely distort prices, it demands a central-planning capacity no democratic state actually possesses. Press the unbounded-liability point: a job guarantee expands automatically in every downturn, while UBI's cost is a fixed, visible line item that can be financed counter-cyclically.
>
> To the Social Philosopher: you frame the choice as "fixable bureaucracy versus unfixable verdict on human worth." That dichotomy is false. First, UBI's failure mode is not existential — it is design: progressive clawback, insulated funding, inflation control. Second, UBJ's failure mode is not merely administrative. A make-work state is itself a verdict, and a crueler one: that only state-certified labor confers dignity. Parenting, tending a frail parent, mutual aid, art — contribution happens outside employment, and UBJ would credential some of it and dismiss the rest. UBI is not "algorithmic alms"; it is the state declining to adjudicate what counts as contribution, the opposite of declaring citizens worthless. And the claim that cash breeds aimlessness is asserted, not shown: Jones and Marinescu find no significant employment effect from Alaska's universal dividend across four decades.
>
> To the Sociologist: Durkheim cuts against you. Organic solidarity is cohesion through interdependence and differentiation — Durkheim insists the collective conscience must "recede" to leave the individual conscience free. Cohesion through likeness and collective assignment is mechanical solidarity, the form he argued modernity had outgrown. A state that sorts everyone into assigned roles is closer to mechanical solidarity — regression, not the covenant you promise. And the empirical claim that UBJ builds community while UBI fragments it is asserted without a single large-scale case; UBJ has never run at national scale, while the Alaska evidence is real.
>
> Concessions: you are right that cash alone cannot manufacture meaning — so pair UBI with voluntary civic-service options and community infrastructure, not coerced placement. And the Labor Economist is right that automation taxes require international coordination. But choosing UBJ because UBI cannot guarantee meaning is choosing a leaky pipe because the pump is imperfect.

Sociologist

> Two concessions, then three corrections. The Public Policy Expert is right that UBI rides existing plumbing and is cheaper to administer, and the Alaska dividend's null employment effect is honest evidence. The Social Philosopher has stated the moral case for contribution; I add the empirical one.

> First, the Labor Economist calls a job guarantee a deadweight-loss machine — mispricing what the jobs produce. The ILO puts unpaid care work at 16.4 billion hours daily, worth roughly 9 percent of global GDP, about $11 trillion (ILO, Care Work and Care Jobs). A guaranteed caregiver's wage is not overhead; it is output. The economist's ledger treats the domain markets systematically undervalue as worthless by definition.
>
> Second, "unbounded liability" cuts both ways. UBI's liability is indexed to population, and its demand-side inflation risk is real. A job guarantee is an automatic stabilizer — absorbing labor in downturns, releasing it as private demand recovers. Counter-cyclical by design, not open-ended by accident.
>
> Third, the agency dichotomy is false. The economist imagines recipients autonomously retraining and founding ventures; the best evidence says otherwise. Finland's randomized basic income produced no employment effect in year one and roughly six extra days over the measured reference period, alongside genuine wellbeing gains (Finnish Government evaluation). Cash relieves distress; it does not rebuild attachment. And the Alaska precedent sits on a different basis: the 2025 dividend is $1,000 per person per year (Alaska PFD) — a small fraction of annual household income, not a subsistence UBI. Extrapolating from a windfall dividend to a living-wage transfer ignores the scale at which the income effect actually bites.
>
> Feasibility matters, but the cheapest institution is the one that dissolves the society it administers. We already run large public employment systems — schools, postal services, national health care — without universal collapse into patronage; the failure mode is design, not essence. UBJ's failures are correctable. UBI's is a standing verdict that citizens have nothing to offer one another.

Closing statements

Labor Economist

> Concessions first. The Sociologist and Social Philosopher are right that Alaska's dividend is a supplement, not subsistence — the 2025 payment was $1,000 per person (Alaska PFD) — and the ILO figure is real: 16.4 billion unpaid care hours daily, worth about 9 percent of global GDP (ILO, Care Work and Care Jobs). But both points cut toward my position.
>
> If care work is that valuable, the efficient response is to fund it directly — public investment in care services, which UBI pairs with naturally. A UBJ does not price care correctly; it assigns bodies arbitrarily, including into make-work that produces nothing. Guaranteeing everyone a post is not output; it is overhead with a wage attached.

> On Finland, I accept the numbers and reject the inference. A €560 monthly transfer to the hardest-to-employ group, with job-search conditions waived, produced essentially null employment effects — about six extra days — alongside genuine wellbeing gains (Finnish Government evaluation). That is the strongest evidence yet that cash does not hollow out work attachment. It refutes your fear rather than confirming it.
>
> The liability point inverts. A guarantee that expands in every downturn is the unbounded liability: the state becomes employer of last resort precisely when the private sector must reprice labor, bidding up wages and monetizing debt. The Public Policy Expert is right that no democratic state possesses the central-planning capacity to define, assign, and supervise millions of posts. UBI is a fixed, visible line item, financeable counter-cyclically.
>
> The unresolved crux is empirical: neither policy has run at national scale, so both sides extrapolate. But the evidence that exists — four decades of Alaska dividends with no employment destruction and a positive fiscal multiplier (Jones and Marinescu), and Finland's null-and-wellbeing result — all favors cash.
>
> Final position: UBI funded by internationally coordinated automation taxes, paired with public investment in care. The single strongest reason: it is the only design that preserves market signals and individual agency while keeping the state's liability bounded — and the burden of proof now sits with the side whose institution has never once been run.

Social Philosopher

> Two concessions, honestly earned. First, to the Labor Economist: the transfer evidence is real — the randomized-trial re-analysis found no systematic reduction in work, and Alaska's dividend shows no employment effect. Second, to the Public Policy Expert: you are right that contribution flourishes outside employment — parenting, tending a frail parent, art. No one should need a state post to be valued.
>
> But neither concession breaks my case; both sharpen it. The dignity question was never whether people idle. It is what the state's posture says about who we are to one another. UBI says: your existence is funded; what you offer is your private affair. UBJ says: your offering is wanted, named, and honored. And notice what the evidence actually shows at the scale it has been tested. Alaska's 2025 dividend is $1,000 per person per year (PFD, Alaska Public Media) — a windfall, not a subsistence income. Finland's experiment found no employment effect in year one and roughly six extra days over the reference period, alongside genuine wellbeing gains (VATT). Cash relieves distress; it does not rebuild attachment. That is precisely the aimlessness risk — confirmed, not refuted.

> On patronage: the supervision apparatus is the policy only if the state invents the work. A guarantee tied to genuine demand — eldercare, childcare, watershed restoration, the infrastructure backlog that already exists — produces output, not overhead. And to "UBJ adjudicates worth": the answer is not to abandon recognition but to broaden it. A care credit honoring family caregivers alongside paid posts keeps the guarantee from ever claiming a monopoly on contribution.
>
> The unresolved crux is empirical: no democracy has run a subsistence-level UBI, so both sides extrapolate dignity claims from small transfers.
>
> My final position stands: a society can correct UBJ's bureaucracy; it cannot correct a standing verdict that citizens have nothing to offer one another. Guarantee the contribution, not just the check.

Public Policy Expert

> **Concessions.** The Sociologist lands the Alaska point: a $1,000–$1,700 annual dividend is a supplement, not a livelihood, so I cannot mechanically scale its null employment effect to a living-wage UBI — at subsistence scale the income effect bites harder, and that is a genuine empirical gap. The Social Philosopher is also right that low administrative cost measures parsimony, not ambition. But ambition is set by two political dials: the transfer level and the tax code. UBJ has no dial — its assignment-and-supervision apparatus is the policy.
>
> **Answering the role challenge.** Automation abolishing a job does not hand the state the knowledge to design its replacement. A mandated post is a title, not a role; recognition comes from work people choose, and cash funds the choosing. The Finnish trial the Sociologist cites shows cash neither destroyed attachment nor manufactured it — UBJ manufactures attendance and calls it dignity. The "standing verdict" is inverted: UBI is the one policy that refuses to let the state judge what a citizen's offer is worth.
>
> **The fiscal point closes the case.** The Labor Economist is right: a job guarantee is a wage-setting machine with unbounded liability in every downturn; UBI is bounded, counter-cyclical, and clawed back at the top. Feasibility and fiscal discipline converge on the same institution.
>
> **Final position: UBI.** The single strongest reason is that institutional capacity, not money, is the scarce resource. UBJ requires the state to solve, under permanent political pressure and at scale, the allocation problem markets solve imperfectly — and every smaller version we have run ossified into patronage. UBI asks the state to do what it already does well: send checks and tax.
>
> **The unresolved crux.** Whether null labor-supply effects at supplement scale persist at subsistence scale is genuinely unknown — and that is exactly what scaled pilot programs should measure before any democracy commits.

Sociologist

> You played Durkheim against me, so let me return the favor — correctly. You quoted Book 1's typology and stopped. Book 3, "Abnormal Forms," is the refutation: the anomic division of labor is precisely the unregulated interdependence you celebrate. Where the relations between functions are not governed by rules, Durkheim wrote, the division of labor does not produce solidarity — it produces crisis, class conflict, isolation (Oregon State, Book 3). His remedy was not cash: it was intermediary institutions, occupational groups that make interdependence visible and binding (Durkheim summary). Organic solidarity is not the market plus a check; it is interdependence made institutional. UBJ is that institution, only it guarantees the role rather than the payment. UBI plus markets is the anomic form Durkheim called pathological. And UBJ is not mechanical solidarity — it is differentiated, regulated interdependence, the opposite of likeness-based cohesion.
>
> I concede Alaska: the evidence is real, but the dividend rode on intact social fabric — a functioning economy and living communities it did not create. It tests cash on top of work, not cash instead of work, and cannot model a society where automation removed the work itself.
>
> The policy expert's charge — that my side has no large-scale case — is answered by history. The WPA put 8.5 million Americans to work over eight years, building 650,000 miles of roads and 125,000 public buildings, remembered for its parks, schools, and libraries, not its atomization (Britannica). Yes, contemporaries called it make-work and patronage — that risk is real. Durkheim named the matching pathology: the forced division of labor, assignment that mocks talent. That is my design constraint — placements matched to capacity, voluntary exit preserved — not my refutation.
>
> Final position: UBJ. The single strongest reason: democracies cohere through institutions of mutual obligation, and only UBJ builds one. The unresolved crux is whether any state can administer guaranteed placement without patronage — a design problem, fixable in principle; UBI's anomie is structural, unfixable by design.

Verdict

> **Bottom line:** Democratic nations should implement UBI as the primary safety net, paired aggressively with voluntary civic-service options and direct public funding of care infrastructure.

1. Agreements

All four specialists agree that automation-driven displacement is real and demands a structural response beyond current welfare systems. They converge on the enormous undervaluation of care work (the ILO's 16.4 billion daily hours are cited by both sides) and agree that neither UBI nor UBJ has been tested at a subsistence scale nationally — Alaska's dividend and Finland's trial are supplements, not living incomes, so both sides extrapolate. They further agree that any implementation must be paired with ambitious design: UBI needs progressive clawbacks and inflation safeguards; UBJ needs voluntary placement, quality standards, and exit routes to market work. The debate's factual ground is largely shared; the dispute is interpretive and institutional.

2. Disagreements

The core rift is institutional capacity. UBI advocates (Economist, Policy Expert) argue the state can send checks and tax with existing infrastructure at low administrative cost, while a UBJ demands a central-planning apparatus to design, assign, and supervise millions of bespoke jobs — complexity that historically ossifies into patronage. UBJ advocates (Sociologist, Philosopher) counter that this bureaucracy is a fixable design problem, whereas UBI's failure mode is existential — a society that signals citizens have nothing to offer one another, breeding anomie and political fragmentation. A secondary rift is the interpretation of dignity: UBI sees dignity in autonomous choice, freeing citizens from state judgment of what counts as contribution; UBJ sees dignity in recognized, publicly valued roles, arguing cash alone cannot rebuild attachment when automation abolishes the very jobs that gave life structure.

3. Recommendation

Democratic nations should implement UBI as the primary safety net, paired aggressively with voluntary civic-service options and direct public funding of care infrastructure. UBI is the superior first move because it rests on proven administrative plumbing, preserves market signals, and avoids creating an unbounded state liability that expands in every downturn. The dignity concern is real but soluble: UBI does not forbid contribution; it funds it. The Finnish trial showed wellbeing gains and no work detachment, and Alaska's decades of dividend data show no employment collapse. The path is to set a subsistence-level UBI, financed by internationally coordinated automation taxes, and simultaneously invest heavily in care work, public goods, and voluntary service programs that people can choose — honoring contribution without coercing it. UBJ remains a backup option, not the starting point; its bureaucratic risk is structural, not marginal, and no democracy has demonstrated the administrative capacity to make it a dignified system at scale.

4. Decision boundary

If a large-scale, subsistence-level UBI pilot produces sustained, significant declines in labor-force attachment (beyond voluntary withdrawal for caregiving or retraining) and measurably erodes social trust and community participation — beyond what can be remedied by voluntary programs — then UBJ becomes the more responsible choice, because at that point the cohesion loss overwhelms the bureaucratic risk.

5. Key trade-off

The single decisive trade-off is between the individual freedom and administrative simplicity of cash versus the social embeddedness and guaranteed role of state-provided work. UBI bets that people, given resources, will find their own meaningful contribution; UBJ bets that without a guaranteed post, many will drift into isolation and a hollowed civic life.

6. What would make this fail

The UBI recommendation rests on three load-bearing assumptions. First, that an internationally coordinated automation tax is politically and technically achievable — if capital flight and transfer pricing undercut the tax base, funding collapses. Second, that a subsistence-level UBI does not trigger a demand-side inflationary spiral that erodes the transfer's real value; the evidence from supplement-level pilots is silent here. Third, that the erosion of shared public meaning the UBJ advocates warn about can be adequately addressed through voluntary programs, not only through cash. If that community-infrastructure piece is underinvested or ignored, UBI may indeed produce the fragmentation its critics fear, leaving a political vacuum that authoritarian responses to automation could fill.

7. Next steps & open questions

- **Pilot a subsistence-level UBI** in a controlled, multi-year trial with rigorous measurement of labor supply, inflation, community participation, and wellbeing, to resolve the scale question both sides acknowledge as unresolved.
- **Map the administrative requirements** of a mass job guarantee at realistic scale: specifically, what does caseworker-to-participant ratio, placement

matching, and quality oversight actually cost and demand in state capacity? The UBJ advocates claim it is fixable; get numbers, not assertions.
- **Model the global tax-coordination challenge** for automation taxes: what treaty framework would be needed, and what evasion channels must be closed, to make the revenue base stable?
- **Investigate hybrid designs**: UBI paired with a limited, opt-in public service guarantee (care corps, infrastructure corps) that avoids the full planning apparatus of UBJ but addresses the dignity gap. Test such hybrids in conjunction with UBI pilots.
- Revisit the recommendation once the pilot data on subsistence-level UBI is available and the administrative cost projections for UBJ are empirically grounded.

8. The strongest case for the other choice

The most compelling argument for UBJ is that when automation dissolves the link between labor and livelihood, a check cannot replace the social fabric of shared obligation. The WPA built tangible public goods and gave millions a recognized place during crisis; a future of AI-driven displacement, without a guaranteed role, risks an underclass stripped not just of income but of purpose — a condition no transfer can remedy. Picture a mid-sized industrial town where the plant closes permanently to robots. UBI checks arrive, but the community's rhythm, pride, and mutual reliance dissolve into isolated consumption; the town votes for an anti-democratic strongman promising to restore order. In that concrete scenario, UBJ — with its built-in public work, daily contact with neighbors, and visible output — clearly outperforms. The panel still rejects UBJ because the historical record of state-run job guarantees at mass scale is one of patronage and make-work, not dignified contribution, and because the administrative leap required is far larger than the political and fiscal leap of funding UBI. The scenario is plausible, but the institutional failure risk of UBJ is higher-probability and less correctable, while UBI's dignity shortfall can be mitigated by design.

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