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The Rusting Gun Belt
Socio-Environmental Remains of Permanent War in the Southern Tier

FRI MAR 2
1:00 pm
40 Schaeffer Hall

The Military Industrial Complex is often depicted as a clandestine and abstract set of political interests and networks that guarantee defense spending in perpetuity. In New York's State's Southern Tier, the remnants of military buildup are everywhere in evidence, from the rusting factories that are perpetually slated for demolition to the unemployed and precarious work force, all leftover from the heyday of big military contracts decades ago. Geographers have noted a regional shift in defense industry over the course of the Cold War, away from previous industrial centers into the south, southwest, and coastal areas, constituting what has been called a new "Gun Belt." What has typically been left out of these discussions is how such reorganization leaves behind traces, some recoverable, some toxic, in the labor and landscapes of formerly militarized communities. In this paper, I discuss the troublesome remnants of permanent war preparation, especially how people in the Southern Tier reuse and reimagine possible futures amidst the forgotten wastes of the American war machine.

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