

Companion Guide

Why every reform gets rolled back, and what to build instead

MATERIAL. RED

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We need a plan

Stop waiting for things to get better on their own

I. It's not in your head

You are not imagining it.

The rent doubled, and the apartment did not improve. Your groceries cost more this month than last, and more last month than the one before, and the people in a position to change that have decided, every quarter, not to. Your wage covers less of your life each year, and the productivity figures say you are producing more than you ever have. You watched the largest fortunes on earth get larger during a pandemic that killed millions. You watched a genocide get funded out of public budgets while the institutions tasked with preventing it issued statements and kept signing the cheques. The forest burned. The river came up the road. The summer arrived early and stayed late, and the words for the weather - heat dome, atmospheric river - are words that did not exist in the forecast when you were a child.

The same extraction logic that takes more from your work than it returns to you takes more from the earth than the earth returns. An economy that must grow every quarter cannot continue taking from a planet that does not regenerate on a quarterly schedule. The atmosphere does not negotiate on those terms. The Soviet command economy destroyed the Aral Sea on a five-year-plan timeline; capitalism is destroying the coral reefs on a quarterly-earnings one. Different clocks, same mechanism: extract faster than the system can replenish, and call the depletion productivity. The ecological emergency is not a separate crisis sitting alongside the economic one - just the same mechanism applied to a larger substrate.

The phone in your pocket reports where you go. The platforms that were supposed to inform you keep you scrolling instead, because scrolling pays them and informing you does not. The court that was supposed to be impartial has been packed. The regulators who were supposed to protect you have been replaced, in many cases, by the people they

were regulating. Reforms that took decades to build are being rolled back within a single budget cycle by governments left and right, and faster each time. Sixty years of environmental law have produced the hottest planet in recorded history.

You watch the news and feel insane. Or you just ignore it entirely. That is not a glitch. The condition you are looking at is the condition the people around you are looking at. Your coworker, your neighbour, your sibling, the stranger on the bus, the driver beside you on the highway - every one of them is living inside the same arrangement, and most of them are tired in the same specific way you are tired. The exhaustion you feel is the exhaustion they feel, and the exhaustion is by design.

Not the same exhaustion. The same arrangement.

Not every part of the list above will match your specific ledger. Maybe your rent held this year. Maybe your wage went up. The mechanism does not require that everyone be ruined on the same day. It requires that the floor be withdrawable, at any moment, for anyone, and that you know it.

The specifics differ. The fear underneath does not. You are worried you will not find a job after school. You are worried your kid comes home from school with a black eye, not a diploma. You are worried the camp job ends and the mortgage does not. You are worried that if your marriage falls apart you are one paycheque from sleeping in the back seat. You are worried that if your employer finds out who you really are - who you love, what you believe, who you used to be - they will find a reason to let you go. None of those fears are imaginary. None of them should be the price of admission to a decent life. Whatever floor we are about to talk about, it is the same floor under all of them.

II. Every tool we were given has failed

Look at the list in the section above - the rent, the wage that no longer covers a life, the platform tuned to keep you scrolling, the regulator who used to work for the company they now regulate, the fortunes that keep growing through every crisis. Who, specifically, owns the things on that list? Not your boss, who answers to someone. Nor the homeowner two streets over with a mortgage. Not the person who saved through forty years of work. Whose balance sheet does your rent end up on? Whose quarterly earnings does the platform report? Whose portfolio holds the regulator's old job and their next one?

"*You will own nothing and be happy*" - then who will?

The answer in each is the same answer, and it has a name that has been ruined by a century of bankrupt or abstract argument, so it is worth being plain. *Capital*. Not money in a bank account, or the small business with three employees, and especially not the person who paid down a mortgage. Concentrated wealth and ownership of the economy - the firms that own the housing stock, the banks that own the firms, the funds that own the banks - and the class of people who live off what that ownership extracts from everyone else's work. Your boss is usually not capital. Your landlord might be, depending on how many buildings they hold. The institutional investor that owns your landlord almost certainly is. The argument that follows is not against people who have saved or earned. It is about a specific kind of ownership at a specific scale, and what that ownership does to everyone outside it who is governed by invisible forces.

This is not an abstraction. I've spent years building the infrastructure financial institutions use to track money laundering and the movement of wealth through systems engineered for opacity. The methods that worked were not exotic. Entity mapping, transaction

pattern analysis, the architecture of how money moves between people who do not want to be seen moving it together - the same methods reconstruct the network from any sufficiently public set of documents, every time. The conclusion across cases was not that the impunity was exceptional - it was ordinary. The headlines you remember - Epstein, Panama, FinCEN, Pandora - were the exception in that it became public. The pattern is the system, and the system is, by definition, not the exception.

The reflex against this analysis is usually some version of "but the alternative is big government." Notice what the reflex assumes - that you are not currently governed by something - but you are. Your housing costs are set by people you did not elect. The terms of your employment are set by people you did not elect. The platform that decides what you see is run by people you did not elect. The drug prices, insurance denials, layoffs, interest rates on your mortgage, the building code that did or did not protect your apartment - all of it is decided by a small group of unelected people whose only obligation is to an even smaller group of owners. The choice before you was never government or no government, but between governance you can vote out and governance you cannot. If you believe the second one is freedom, please, stop complaining.

The same reflex shows up about taxes. The 5 percent, the 15 percent, the 30 percent that the state takes off your cheque is the tax that gets argued about, because it is the only one that is itemized. There is another one, and it is much larger. In an eight-hour day, the value *your* work produces for whoever owns the place you work is several times the wage you take home - that is, the gap between what you earn and what your work is sold for, and it goes to the owner before the state ever sees it. A worker whose hour produces \$200 of value for the firm, paid \$35, with \$8 in visible deductions, is paying \$8 to the state and \$157 to the owner on the same hour - and only the first number appears on the pay stub. The multiple varies by industry. It is always a multiple. It is almost always larger than every government deduction on the same cheque combined.

The state taxes you visibly, and you can vote against the people who set the rate. The owner taxes you invisibly, and you cannot.

When the argument arrives that the government is taking too much from you, the honest version of that argument has to ask which government, because the one that takes the most is the one that does not appear on your ballot.

While the same logic is in front of you: when a bank, an airline, an insurer, or a chip manufacturer becomes critical enough that its collapse would drag the rest of the economy down with it, the current arrangement has a phrase for what happens next: *too big to fail*. The public absorbs the loss, the owners keep the upside, and the firm keeps operating exactly as it did. Ask yourself what that arrangement actually says. If a thing is critical enough that everyone has to pay for its failure, in what sense is it *private*? The honest reading is not that the firm was too big to fail, it was **too big to be private**. If everyone is on the hook for the floor, everyone should own the building.

When we say public ownership, we do not mean the DMV with a missile silo. We do not mean the worst day at Service Canada extended to every part of your life. We mean you and the people on your street deciding whether the local clinic stays open, instead of a private equity firm deciding based on a spreadsheet drawn up in a city you have never been to. We mean the power grid run by the engineers who maintain it, not by shareholders who have never seen it. We mean the building you live in answering to the people in-

side it. And when a public service fails - and some of them will - you can vote out the people responsible. Try voting out your landlord. Try voting out the fund that owns your landlord. Try voting out the fund that owns the fund.

Every tradition that gave an answer has run into a specific wall, and the walls are not the same wall.

Electoral reformism told you to vote, to march, to donate, to write your member of parliament. You did. The reforms were passed, then rolled back. The legislation got gutted by the industries it was supposed to regulate. The representatives you elected got bought, sidelined, or absorbed into the machine they had committed to change. The energy went somewhere; the returns went elsewhere. This is not a story about bad faith on the part of any one politician. It is a story about a treadmill: you run, the floor moves, but the room stays the same.

Karl Marx produced the sharpest diagnosis of the system anyone has produced. It has not been improved on as a description of how extraction works. Then every state that tried to act on the diagnosis built an apparatus that, inside a generation, started reproducing the disease - a new ruling class wearing different clothes, a security apparatus pointed at its own people, a single party that could no longer hear its own membership. **The diagnosis was correct, but the architecture was not built to keep the cure from becoming a new infection.**

Social democracy was the third option. For a few decades, in a few places, it worked, or appeared to. It worked because Cold War capital needed European protection against the Soviets and was willing to pay for it, and because the welfare states that funded the model were, in part, funded by continued extraction from the rest of the world. Both conditions are gone. The same governments that built the welfare states are dismantling them, and the dismantling moves faster each cycle. The Nordic countries the model points to most often have just elected the strongest far-right parties since World War Two, and slashed asylum acceptance to thirty-year lows. Social democracy works, and then capital decides it does not, and capital always decides eventually.

This is not a problem of one party in one country. In 2026, Mark Carney gave a speech at Davos committing Canada to standing against American economic pressure, defending the multilateral institutions Canada helped build, refusing the rightward drift of allied governments, and treating the climate file as non-negotiable. The policy record since has run in the other direction on every one of those commitments - deference on tariffs, alignment with the Middle East policy the speech criticized, capitulation on the regulatory architecture the speech said was non-negotiable, and a domestic budget with no structural daylight from the Conservative government it replaced. Starmer ran on public investment and extended austerity. The SPD governed Germany for three consecutive terms and handed power to the far right during the same period. Trump is the open version of what the rest of them do with better manners: govern for the ownership class and tell everyone else it is their fault. The centre-left party in every country - the Democrats, Labour, the SPD, the Liberals, the NDP - runs on the same donor base, the same consultancies, and the same red lines around what capital is allowed to be asked for. The party that was supposed to be the brake is, in office, indistinguishable from the party it was supposed to brake against on the questions that touch ownership.

These are not stupid traditions. The people who built them were not fools, and the people who still believe in them are not fools. Each of them has a definite structural gap that the current moment makes impossible to paper over. That is the point. The failure was architectural, and that is what we have to plan against - not a shared narrow band of morals that are applied to some but not to all.

There is a fourth failure mode the previous traditions ran into and the current one will too: a correct domestic programme without a defence against the people who do not want it to succeed. Allende's Chile in 1973 had passed every law this book is going to argue for - public ownership of copper, public banking, broad worker participation. The CIA spent three years and a small budget destabilising it, and the regime that replaced it killed thousands of the people who had built it. The policy was right. The architecture for keeping it alive was not built, and the wind took the building. **Build the floor without the roof, and the people who own the wind will come for both.**

There is one thing this book will say plainly, once, and the rest of it should be read with this in front of you. The crises are arriving together, not in turn. The water table that does not refill, the food system that runs on oil, the wage that no longer covers a life, the job that the machine just took, the trade route that closes, the war that starts where the trade route used to be, the rent that goes up anyway. These are not separate problems, politely queued for separate decades. They are one shockwave hitting different parts of the world at different speeds, and the parts with no floor underneath them are hitting first. People are going to die from this. Not a few. Not in one place. At a scale this part of the world has not seen in a hundred years - not from soldiers and bombs, though those are coming too, but from the slow, ordinary failure of the systems that currently keep people fed, watered, sheltered, and treated. Whether the people running the system planned it this way or simply arranged the incentives that made it inevitable is, by the time the count starts, the same question.

We can no longer assume this *might* happen. Assume it *will*. Everything that follows is built against that. Not to predict the collapse - to give you something to build towards on the other side of it, away from the version of the future the people creating the wreckage are already selling you.

III. The tool always turns

There is a reason every tradition runs into the same wall. Not bad luck. Not bad faith. Just a pattern consistent enough across enough independent cases, that it qualifies as a rule rather than a coincidence.

A surveillance system built to protect the revolution surveils the revolution. The party built to represent the workers becomes a new class that lives off the workers. The regulatory agency built to protect you from the industry gets staffed and then run by the industry. The platform built to connect people is optimized to keep people scrolling, because scrolling is revenue and connection is not. The colonial administration technique developed to govern people ten thousand miles away comes home and is applied to citizens. A weapon aimed at the enemy is eventually aimed at you.

You need to forget about the sense of these mechanisms acting in the distant future. Routinely. Within a generation, sometimes within a decade. The British built population surveillance and classification systems in India to govern 300 million people, whom they did not consider citizens. Every one of those techniques came home. The United States

devised counterinsurgency methods in Vietnam - aggressive patrol policing, intelligence-led targeting of community leaders, the treatment of civilian space as a battlefield - and applied them to American cities through the 1970s and 1980s. The NSA built a foreign intelligence apparatus under legal constraints, with oversight committees, judicial warrants and congressional reporting requirements. None of it mattered. The capacity was built and expanded to fill every available space. The party that abolished the bourgeoisie became the bourgeoisie.

The tool always turns.

Under identifiable conditions - when the institution persists, when the expertise is retained, when the budget continues, when no one designed a mechanism to prevent it - every apparatus ever built expands until it points at the people it was built to protect. This is a historical record, and it is the record this design is built to account for. The traditions that came before us failed architecturally rather than morally, and the architecture they lacked was precisely this: a design for how to keep the cure from becoming a new infection. How to give power back once you have had to concentrate it? How to build an institution that has to correct itself before it captures itself?

There is a temptation, when a pattern this consistent gets named, to look for the counterexample. The institution that didn't turn. The agency that wasn't captured. The party that stayed honest. Take the time to look. What you will find, in every case where the rot was slowed, is not the absence of the conditions but the presence of architecture - members who could remove leadership without leadership's permission, books open to anyone the institution served, charters that forbade the institution from doing the thing it would otherwise be captured to do, terms that ended whether the holder wanted them to or not, separation between the people who decide and the people who do. None of those are accidents. None of them are sufficient on their own. Where they were absent, the tool turned. Where they were present, it turned more slowly. The architecture is the difference, and the architecture is what every prior tradition either skipped, lost in transition, or never wrote down.

Now look at where you live. How does a premier govern for a decade? How does a senator hold the same seat for fifty years? How does an unelected layer below the cabinet write the policy your representatives vote on, with no door for you to walk through and no name on the ballot to remove? How does the candidate you were given get selected in a process you were not part of, by a party machine you cannot vote out? These are the same structural absences that ate every prior attempt - terms that do not end, competition that is not permitted to win, a layer between the deciders and the decided that has no exit. The walls are already standing where you live, in different paint. The welfare arrangement your parents lived under - the hospital they used, the rent they paid, the wage that used to be enough - was dismantled, line by line, because it was built without an organised base that could defend it. None of that is finished. None of it is far away.

That is the discussion we need to be having: **not whether the tool turns, but what the dam is made of.**

IV. The division is the product

The same machine raising your rent is telling you who to blame for it. That is not a coincidence; it is the mechanism.

A working class that is fighting itself cannot look up. It cannot see the people extracting from it, organize against them, or hold them accountable. So a working class that is fighting itself is the most useful thing the people at the top of the system can produce, and they produce it deliberately - with money, with media, with platforms tuned for outrage, with politicians paid to point sideways and downward instead of upward.

You have watched this happen in real time. Housing costs are up; the conversation you are routed into is about someone who arrived last year, not the firm that owns half the rentals on your street. The wage you are paid does not cover the life it used to; the conversation is about a coworker whose existence offends someone, not the spread between what you produce and what you take home. The schools, the hospitals, the transit are degraded; the conversation is about who gets to use them, not who is starving the budget. Every fight you are having about your neighbour is a fight you are not having about your landlord.

The right-populist version blames the immigrant. The liberal version blames the bigot. Both versions absorb the same anger, fear, and exhaustion, then aim it at someone with no power in the arrangement. Both leave the people who do have power untouched. They do the same job from opposite ends, and neither of them has ever cost a billionaire anything.

When you are not sure which version you are inside, ask one question. Not "is this true?" Ask: *who profits if I spend tonight on this?* The answer, every single time, is the same class of people the earlier sections pointed at - the firms that own the rentals, the funds that own the firms, the people who never appear on your ballot. The billionaire funding the anti-immigrant ads has a factory in another country paying workers three dollars a day; he does not want fewer immigrants, he wants cheaper ones, in places where the law cannot reach them. The wage suppression the worker is angry about is real - he is reading his own pay stub - but the firm that engineered the labour pool to produce it is the same firm now selling him the immigrant as the cause. The cheap labour is the first cut. The resentment that keeps him from organising with the worker beside him is the second. Capital collects both and pays for neither. The politician who campaigns on family values has a portfolio managed by the same firms that sponsor every Pride parade. The think tank pumping out the next moral panic is funded by the same donors as the one pumping out its mirror image. They are not your partners in a moral crusade. **Your anger is a commodity.** They are harvesting it to keep you from looking at their balance sheet.

The oil-rig worker who votes for the candidate you cannot stand is not your enemy. He has been told for forty years that you look down on him, and the only people who didn't look down on him were the ones who also told him the immigrant took his job. That is a trap with the door painted to look like a welcome. The trans teenager who makes you uncomfortable is not your enemy either; they are trying to survive a system that uses their existence as a wedge between people who would otherwise have noticed they pay the same rent to the same landlord. The person who owns the drilling company funds both sides of that fight and does not lose a minute of sleep over either outcome. You are not each other's problem. **You are each other's way out.**

The size of the group never mattered. What mattered was that half the working class could be pointed at the other half over it. A wedge does not need a large minority - it needs a fight that splits the people who pay the same rent.

To that extent, identity politics are not the vehicle of fragmentation. Co-optation is. The argument that there is "class politics" on one side and "identity politics" on the other is the argument the extraction needs you to have, because it separates fights that are the same fight, fought on the terrain capital chose, against the same set of owners. Every movement that turned on its own minorities fragmented its own base, weakened itself, and that weakness was eventually fatal. You do not have to change your mind about your neighbour's lifestyle. You have to notice that the person evicting both of you owns the building.

The division is the product. Once you can see it, do not remove it from view. The machine raising your rent is the same machine telling you who to blame. And it is lying to you every time.

V. A note for those who come from a living tradition

A great many people who will recognize themselves in the pages above did not arrive through Marx, and they are not going to. Their compass points to justice because a scripture, a teacher, or a tradition told them it had to. That is not a deficit to be corrected before the conversation can begin. It is, in most of the world, the conversation already in progress.

The preferential option for the poor is doctrine, and has been since long before any of the political traditions in II were named. The *ummah's* obligation of mutual provision is not metaphor; it is law, and it has fed people when the state did not. The Catholic Worker houses of hospitality, the Social Gospel that built half the hospitals in this country, the Sarvodaya movement's village-level shared labour, the Buddhist economics that measures an economy by whether it reduces suffering - none of these are decorative. They are working answers, arrived at independently, to the same structural question this book is trying to ask. The Catholic principle of subsidiarity - that decisions belong at the lowest competent level, and that any higher body taking what could be handled below has already failed - is the same architectural principle the third section was groping toward. The doctrine has been on the page for over a century. The architecture to enforce it is what was missing. Nothing in what follows requires you to abandon your cosmology. It asks you to look at who owns the grain silo and who decides when the granary opens.

These traditions have also been captured - prosperity gospel, state Buddhism, the bishop on the donor's board - by the same mechanism the third section described. The convergence is in the people who keep the doctrine honest, not in the institution that prints it.

If a golden calf is a calf, why paint it golden?

The reasoning differs. The prescriptions converge. That convergence is evidence the structural analysis is robust across epistemological frameworks - not that any one framework needs another's permission to act. If your faith brought you to the table, it brought you to the right table.

One refusal carries through the architecture from this section forward. The structural framework is precise about what it commits to. It is also precise about what it does not. The substantive terms a community holds about its sacred land, its inherited knowledge, the form its sanctuary takes, the relationship a custodian has with a bioregion that no map renders - these are not the framework's to write. The framework writes the structural conditions under which those substantive terms are legible, durable, and protected. The substantive terms themselves are the work of the people whose lives the work is. The

book carries this principle as the *refused-overreach* commitment, and it is what keeps the architecture from doing the thing every prior universalist project has done: filling the silences with its own substance and calling the filling solidarity.

VI. The scream is the product

There is a second absorption mechanism that runs through the device in your hand.

The internet is not suppressing your awareness of any of this. It is metabolizing it. The platform that shows you the rent statistic, the wildfire footage, the clip of the politician lying - that platform is paid per *millisecond* it can harvest from your attention. Outrage keeps you on the screen longer than information does, so the feed is tuned for outrage. You see the thing. You feel the thing. You post about the thing, or you argue with someone in the comments about the thing, and the small chemical reward you get for posting is close enough to the reward of actually doing something that, most of the time, it substitutes for it. You feel like you fought back. You did not, but you generated content to keep the next person scrolling.

The system does not need to censor you. **Your scream is engagement. Your engagement is revenue.** The ruling class has found something more effective than censorship: absorption. It lets you yell into the machine, and the machine sells the yelling to the highest bidder. This is the consciousness trap, and it is the biggest reason a generation that knows more about its own exploitation than any before it is the same generation that has done less to stop it.

You may be reading this on the device that does this to you. The act of reading is not the act of resisting, and the act of forwarding is not either. If this piece is doing anything for you, print it, hand it to someone, talk about it out loud. The platform will reward you for posting it - which is the trap. The room will not reward you for anything, and that absence is the point.

Capital can absorb almost anything. It can absorb the slogan, the symbol, the aesthetic of resistance, and the documentary about the resistance. The one thing it cannot absorb is disruption to its own operations. A supply chain that stops moving costs money in a way no amount of branding can recover. A tenant union that stops an eviction is not a post. A workplace that walks out is not a discourse. A professional documenting employers behaviour and becoming a whistleblower. The test, every time, is whether the action imposes a material cost on the people extracting from you: **if it imposes a material cost, it is resistance. If it does not, it is content.**

That is why the call at the end of this piece is in the same room. The room is where absorption stops.

VII. You do not set the terms

Once you organize, the next question is what to do, and that question has a wrong answer in two directions.

Too little, and you are absorbed. The march that ends at the rally and with a photo costs the system nothing, and the system has spent a long time learning how to host marches. Too much, and you are delegitimized. The act that gets ahead of the conditions hands the state the excuse it has been waiting for, gives it permission to crush everyone in your vicinity, and turns the people you needed on your side against you. Both failures end the same way: the energy is spent, and the room remains unchanged.

The way through is not a rule about violence or nonviolence in the abstract. It is a rule about who writes the terms of engagement: the state does. **The form of resistance has to match the form of oppression. The state has already set the terms; pretending otherwise is a luxury paid for by someone else.** Where democratic channels are functional, you use them, not as a concession to liberalism - they are just the cheapest form of leverage available and reach the most people. Where the state has already escalated beyond democratic channels - against a population the state has decided to police rather than govern - the proportional response has already been set by the state, not by you.

This means a few things at once. It means the answer is not the same for everyone in the same country, between countries, at the same time; and, paradoxically, pretending otherwise costs the working class everywhere. It means nobody gets to set the terms from the safest seat in the room. You read what the state is doing, in your place, to your people, and you respond at that level. The discomfort you feel should be the analysis arriving honestly.

What this asks of you - when someone in worse conditions reads them differently - is to stand in solidarity. Don't just tolerate. Do not condemn the assessment of someone facing a state that is doing something to them that you have not had to face. Trust that they can see what is being done to them, and stand with them against the thing being done - the way you would want them to stand with you if the conditions were ever reversed. **Solidarity does not require you to match their response. It requires you not to undercut it from a safer seat.** The seat you read this from is not the seat everyone reads it from.

One boundary holds across all of it. **Action aimed at the structure of extraction is resistance. Action aimed at people is vengeance.** The state would prefer you not draw the line. Draw it.

One more thing the state would prefer you not see: the proportional-response argument does not stop at the border. A movement that wins domestically without a defence against external pressure has built a floor that someone else gets to remove. The next section is about what that defence has to look like, before the conversation about institutions can be honest.

VIII. The roof against the wind

Every honest analysis of the previous attempts ends at the same wall: the ones that were destroyed were destroyed by capital that did not respect borders, and the ones that survived survived by building a defence against it. The structural claim is simple - a movement that wins the domestic argument and loses the sovereignty argument has built a model home in a war zone.

Four domains, briefly. **Currency:** the dollar is enforced by the institutions that move oil, and a programme that depends on dollar settlement has handed the people it threatens an asymmetric tool. **Trade:** a country that cannot feed, fuel, or arm itself without the cooperation of a state that wants its government changed has not yet earned its sovereignty. **Borders:** not against people; against the offshoring of capital, capital flight, the laundering of ownership, the extraction of resources by firms that answer to no one inside the country. **Information:** the platform, the cable, the cloud - every layer the prior section described, owned by entities outside the jurisdiction the model claims to be.

A movement that wins domestically without a defence against external pressure has built a floor that someone else gets to remove.

The deterrent matters. A nuclear-armed adversary that has decided your government is a problem is not moved by a moral argument; it is moved by something it values more than its objective. The book's specification is uncomfortable, and it should be: a deterrent under nested governance - four bodies, no single key, constitutional ceiling on size, declared no-first-use, inspection obligations to anyone who reciprocates. Not a vocation. A fence.

The lesson Allende's killers wrote into the historical record is the one this book takes most seriously. The architecture assumes capital will try to kill it. The comforting versions, in which it does not, are the ones that get people killed.

The defence is the precondition. What the defence is *for* is what comes after, and the book is honest about it. The substance the sovereignty defends is the equal-exchange commitment - the recognition that labour, materials, and ecological throughput crossing borders should be exchanged at terms that do not systematically transfer value from periphery to metropole. The book carries the architecture: a labour-time-anchored unit at the trade interface, ecological-throughput accounting that surfaces the carrying-capacity envelope at the border, and an auditable-value-flow ledger the partner states and the population can read against. The substance is not abstract. It is what the architecture is built to protect, and naming it here is the difference between a multipolar world that preserves the metropolitan-extraction terms and one that does not.

IX. Across the line

The system has spent a great deal of money convincing each of the people in this section that the next one is the problem. The worker is told the engineer looks down on him. The engineer is told the worker resents her. The citizen is told the immigrant took the job. The cop is told the protester wants him dead. None of those statements survives five minutes in the same room. The next six addresses are each written to one person, and each one is also written to the person standing across from them, who was told this address was not for them.

A limit before the addresses begin: this text assumes a reader with stability enough to sit with a dozen pages, and not everyone has that right now. The work of this book is owed to the people in active crisis, not asked of them; the rest of the addresses get written so that, eventually, the seat is theirs to take.

To the worker who built it

You know how to make things work that would kill someone who didn't. You know which sound a pump makes the day before it fails. You know which weld will hold and which one is cosmetic. You know what a 2 a.m. callout in minus thirty-five actually costs a body over thirty years. That knowledge is real, it is rare, and nothing in what follows asks you to be ashamed of it.

You have also watched, more times than the people writing climate op-eds have, what happens when a government decides a town is no longer useful. The mine closes. The mill closes. The plant moves. The pension is renegotiated downward in a courtroom three provinces away. The retraining brochure pays sixty percent of what was lost. The school closes, the kids leave, and the people who promised the transition would be fair are already on a panel somewhere talking about the next one. You have every reason to believe

the next promise will be the same lie. So this one has to be different in kind: no worker displaced by the energy transition earns less than they did before. Wage continuity to retirement for those near it. Full-pay retraining for those not. Regional investment that lands in the towns the work used to land in, not in a consultancy in the capital. Funded from the surplus that currently goes to shareholders of the firms whose business model put the carbon there. **The pension is not up for negotiation; it's the floor.**

The climate-conscious reader on the other side of this address: stop blaming the man in the field. He did not build the business model. He kept your grid up and your kitchen warm while the people who wrote that model shorted his industry from a tower he has never been inside.

To the engineer who built the machine

You wrote the recommendation algorithm. You wrote the productivity-monitoring software that tracks the warehouse picker by the second. You wrote the scheduling code that routes the gig worker through their day. The tools you were paid to build are now being used to displace you - the same logic, applied one rung up. Capability expands into the space available to it, and the person who built the capability is not exempt from the space.

You are not above the worker your code displaced. You are one cycle ahead of them in the same machine. The professional class that thought it was inside the deal is finding out, in real time, that it was always one product cycle from being outside it. The instinct to look down at the warehouse and tell yourself you would never end up there is the instinct the system needs you to have. The honest read is that you have the same landlord, the same insurer, the same algorithm grading your output, and the same severance package waiting. If you have the technical capacity to build these systems, you have the technical capacity to audit them, to publish what they do, to refuse the contracts that make them worse. The question was never whether to build. Ask yourself instead, on whose behalf?

The trades worker on the other side of this address: the kid with the laptop is not your enemy either. He is being pushed through the same trapdoor you were, on a slightly longer fuse, by the same people. The contempt you were trained to have for him, and the contempt he was trained to have for you, are the same product.

To the one keeping someone alive

You are caring for a parent who is dying slowly, or a child who needs more than the system was ever going to give them, or a partner whose injury did not heal the way the brochure said it would. The work is unpaid, untimed, unended. It does not appear on any productivity statistic. It is the largest single category of labour in the economy, and it is the one the economy is least willing to admit exists.

The arrangement assumes someone will do this for free, indefinitely, mostly women, mostly behind a closed door, and that the cost will not appear on any balance sheet. It does appear: in your sleep, in your body, in the career that did not happen, in the savings that went. **Reproductive labour is the floor under the floor.** A system that does not count it has decided your time is the line item it can take.

The wage worker on the other side of this address: the reason your rent went up while the household next door was holding itself together on one income is the same reason. Care got squeezed out of the public ledger and onto a kitchen table, and the squeezing is

what made the rest of the arrangement balance.

The architecture's answer is constitutional. A defined share of the productive surplus is pre-allocated to care provision before the rest is allocated, on the same constitutional standing as the ecological share, administered under the same firewall the rest of the floor sits behind. The kitchen table stops being the line item the arrangement balances on.

To the settler at the table

If your family arrived on a different continent in the last four hundred years - mine did - this address is for you. You are not the capitalist class. You are also not Indigenous. Both of those things stay true at the same time, and the second one is a structural fact that does not dissolve once you realize you are also being extracted from.

The deal that was supposed to be signed, across North America, was a treaty - shared use of the land, on terms negotiated between sovereigns. The deal that got delivered was something else. The argument in this book does not ask you to give up your house. It asks you to recognise that the table the planning happens at includes nations that were here before the table was built, on terms they set, and that this is not a concession but the only version of the architecture that does not reproduce the failure modes the previous sections diagnosed. A floor laid on a foundation someone else was never asked about will turn the same way every other one has - **you need the foundation before you lay the floor.**

The Indigenous reader on the other side of this address: nothing in this book speaks for you. The seat is yours, on terms you set. The settler who reads this and thinks the floor under their feet is uncomplicated is exactly the reader who needed to hear that it is not.

To the politician

Whether you sit in a council chamber, a provincial legislature, a parliament, or a senate - whether the rosette on your sign is red, orange, blue, green, or some new colour the consultants drew up last cycle - you did not run on the platform you are now governing under. You ran on a housing crisis, a wage that no longer covered a life, a regulator that had been hollowed out, a planet on fire. The campaign spoke the language the first sections of this companion just spoke, because that was the language the room you needed already used. You exploited the gap, and you won the room. The legislation that followed was not the speech.

That gap has a structure, and it is not your personal failure of nerve. The donor that funded the riding association, the consultancy that placed your chief of staff, the regulator-in-waiting drafting the amendments your office tabled, the lobby that wrote the carve-out you signed off on at clause forty-seven of a bill no one in caucus had read - the same network this companion has been describing all along, applied to your office. The question *Â§IV* told the reader to ask of any feed - *who profits if I spend tonight on this?* - applies to any vote that did not match the speech that won it. The answer, every single time, is the same class of people. Your constituents already know you knew. Their illusion is that knowing was supposed to be enough.

This book is written under the assumption that you are not going to do anything about it. The architecture exists because that work has not been done across decades of mandates won on the promise it would be, and it does not require your participation. **With or**

without you, abandoning your constituency for the needs of the donor means we are planning for a world that you capitulated us into.

The seat is also a place to stand with the work, and the work is more than a vote. Build a floor - decommodified essentials, a wage that holds, a pension that is not up for renegotiation in a courtroom three provinces away. Write the policies that implement what the **anti-ossification chapter** calls a *political-functional firewall* - the structural separation between the people who rotate through office and the operational apparatus the donor class would otherwise capture through them. And, before any of that, do the one thing the channel still permits and the algorithm cannot absorb: put the gap on the record, out loud, in the chamber, before the chamber's record-keeping is what gets dismantled next. It looks like this:

I am going to read into the record the opening diagnostic of a document I believe predicts the end of the political order we are sitting in. I am not asking my colleagues to agree with it. I am asking them to put on the record, today, why it is wrong. If we cannot, we have no business adjourning.

Name the fire.

The discussion of resistance, and of armed resistance, that runs through the **transition**, **self-critique**, and **action** chapters follows from the capitulation that refuses the move above - from the implosion of value created by the gap between your speeches and your track record, and the extraordinary crises that gap leaves for everyone else to handle. Every channel you sit inside was built on the premise the legislation would, eventually, catch up to the language. It has not. The longer it does not, the more of the work the channel was supposed to do has to be done by architecture the channel cannot reach. Your constituents are already building it, because the seat you sit in stopped.

Refuse the move and you will find out whose side the arrangement was ever on the same way the worker, the engineer, and the person sent to enforce are finding out. The party will move on without you when the next safer seat opens up. The board appointment lands or it doesn't; either way, you find out what it costs of you. The pension calculation will be quieter than the one you voted to renegotiate for somebody else, but it runs on the same logic. Better to know now, and to write at least one bill the room you came from would still recognise.

To the party staffer, advisor, or consultant on the other side of this address: you know the gap better than the principal does, because pricing it in is your job. The polling memo that says the base will swallow this one too, the line edit that turns a commitment into a direction, the schedule that keeps the minister out of the room where the question would be asked - none of that is invisible to you. It is the craft. The address above is the second time the principal has been told what their record actually says; it is the hundredth time you have. The instruments of capture are run by people who could, on any given Tuesday, decline. They take the next contract instead. The arrangement that uses your competence to launder the gap is not on your side either. The donor will hire your replacement out of the same firm.

To the person sent to enforce

Whether you wear a badge, a border patch, bailiff's papers, prison greens, or a uniform that came with a rifle - you did not take the job to evict a grandmother, or to walk a family back to a country that will kill them. You took it because someone you respected told you the work was about protecting people, and in small moments it still is. You also already know the difference between a call where you stood between someone and harm, and a call where you were the instrument of it. You know which orders came from a sergeant or a supervisor, and which came, three steps removed, from a developer, an insurer, a minister who has never been in the building. You have stood on a line and looked across at someone who, in any other arrangement, would have been your neighbour. That instinct is not weakness; it is the protective reflex that put the uniform on you, pointed in the direction it was always supposed to point.

The people most able to harm the public you swore to look after are not in front of the shield. They are above it. They write the eviction order, set the budget that closes the shelter, lobby for the bail schedule that fills the cells, decide which neighbourhood gets policed and which one gets audited. **The oath was to the people, not to the chain of command that claims to speak for them** - the people on the other side of the riot shield, the line, the wire. Looking up means the rule you know is not just is a rule you do not enforce with enthusiasm. It means the order that crosses a line is an order you find a way not to complete. It means the colleague reaching across the line for an ally finds one. It means the document that should not have been buried makes it to someone who can read it. None of that requires a speech, and most of it takes more courage than the version that does.

You don't have to be the enemy in this book. The arrangement that uses you as a shield for people who would not lift a finger for you is. When the pension gets renegotiated in a different city, when the detachment is closed because the budget moved, when the injury settlement is fought down to nothing by the same firms whose property you spent twenty years protecting - you will find out, the same way the oil-field worker is finding out, whose side the arrangement was ever on. Better to know now, and to have a seat at the table.

To the one this same instrument brutalised: no one is asking you to forgive what was done to you under the words *I was following orders*. The question is harder than forgiveness. When the arrangement changes - and it will, on a timeline none of us set - what stops the apparatus that was used on you from being used on the people you organised with? You cannot answer that from outside the line. The instruments of control do not dismantle themselves, and the instruments of Empire do not stand still while you try. Revolution moves from two sides at once: the side of the brutalised, and the side of the tool with the standing to refuse from within. The address above is the second side. It is not absolutism. It is the only architecture under which the first side survives the transition.

To the one without papers

Every previous section has talked about you in the third person. The migrant. The undocumented worker. The wedge other people get pitted against. This address is to you, in the second person, because the rest of the book does not work if it is not.

You picked the crops, you cleaned the building, you built the addition, you delivered the order. You did it under threat - of the call to immigration, of the wage that disappears, of the foreman who knows you cannot file the complaint. You produced surplus that ended up in the same hands the rest of the addresses keep pointing at, with one extra layer of leverage applied to keep you from organising. You are not a victim of the system. You are inside it, doing work without which it would not run. The fix is not your removal; the fix is the removal of the conditions that made the threat profitable.

The citizen on the other side of this address - the one told the job left because of you - is wrong about the direction, not the diagnosis. The wage did fall. The job did go. The firm engineered both, in sequence: it paid this worker less under the threat of deportation than it could have paid the citizen under any contract, then used the gap to push the citizen's wage down to meet it. The cheap labour was the first extraction. The suppressed wage was the second. The wedge between the two of you is the third, and it is the only one of the three that does not appear on a balance sheet, which is why it is the most profitable of them. **A floor that does not include the person without papers is not a floor. It is a trapdoor with someone else under it,** and the firm that engineered it is already drawing up plans for the trapdoor under you.

X. What would it mean

If we are all sitting at the table, then we need to know what the floor is.

What would it mean if the surplus your work produces came back to you - not as charity, not as a raise your employer decides whether to grant, but as your share of what you built? What if the enterprise you worked in were legally required to be owned by the people who worked in it, with at least one vote per person on how the surplus is allocated, regardless of seniority? What about giving the experienced blue collar worker additional voting power to reward his 30 years of experience?

What if the floor - housing, healthcare, food, education, clean water - was guaranteed below you regardless of your employment status? Not as a benefit that disappears the month you are laid off, not as a programme that gets cut in the next budget cycle, but as a constitutional commitment that no government can touch, funded out of collectively generated wealth rather than charity?

The state will not care what you believe about God, sex, or the afterlife. It will care whether the roof over your head is paid for.

What if the wage you were paid had a floor below which it could not fall, and a ceiling above which no role in the economy could go - not because the goal is identical outcomes, but because the accumulation of economic power past a certain point always converts into political power that cannot be voted out, and that conversion is the mechanism the last four sections have been describing?

What if the platform that mediates your access to news, to community, to work, was prohibited by law from operating the surveillance architecture it currently uses to determine what you see and what you are shown about yourself?

What if a thing critical enough that everyone has to pay for its failure could no longer be private? A standing commission tests every concentrated firm against three questions - is its output systemically critical, is the market it operates in commodified, would its failure cascade - and a citizen petition can force the test where the commission won't run it.

Commodification plus systemic integration. The default on a failed test is conversion to public governance, on a known timeline, with a transparent compensation schedule. **The argument over "where to draw the line" is replaced by a procedure that draws it.**

What if the money you spend at the grocery store could not be used to buy a port? The book's answer is that there is no such thing as one currency. A consumer layer for the people who use money to live. A productive-allocation layer for inter-enterprise settlement that cannot leave the productive system. An international layer, convertible, for the trade that has to cross the border. The denominator separation is what prevents capital re-forming under another name. Personal savings stay personal. Productive surplus stays collective. Neither becomes a position from which to buy the rest.

What if the person who makes policy and the person who implements it were different people, with different accountability structures, so that the expertise required to run a system and the authority to decide what that system does could not fuse into a single class that answers to neither?

These are all legitimate policy proposals with mechanisms, implementation sequences, and transition architectures. The book that follows specifies what each of them actually requires. Read it as a working draft. It will be wrong in places. The point is to make the discussion and planning possible.

XI. What we never build

One floor. One ceiling. The sections above describe a floor that holds for everyone; this is the ceiling that holds against everyone.

Some capabilities cannot be acquired without being used. A general-purpose surveillance apparatus pointed at a domestic population is one - the British, the Americans, the Soviets each demonstrated the rule. An autonomous lethal system that selects its own targets is another. A general intelligence with no containment specified is a third. Identity persecution at the level of state apparatus is the fourth. The question with each is not whether the institution operating it has good intentions today. The question is whether the gap between holding the capability and using it is small enough that history says it will close - and for these four, history says it always closes.

The architecture treats these as transgressions. Not policy choices subject to majority vote. Constitutional prohibitions, technically or physically enforced where possible - public code, sealed parameters, cryptographic separation, automatic dissolution triggers - and structurally enforced everywhere else, by the same federated network the rest of the book describes.

Some capabilities cannot be acquired without being used.

A worker-owned firm with the world's best surveillance stack is the next ruling class on a delay timer, already holding the receipts of everyone who will eventually disagree with it. The ceiling is what stops the timer from running.

XII. The day after

A diagnosis without a livable picture of what comes next is just permission to despair. So, briefly, what actually changes.

Your house. If you have a mortgage, it converts. The terms get rewritten so the building you live in pays itself off to a public lender at a rate that does not consume a third of your life. You keep the keys, the garden, the wall your kid drew on. No one moves your

grandmother. If you rent, the building you live in eventually answers to the people inside it - cooperatively, on a long lease, on terms that cannot be sold out from under you to a fund in another country.

Your job. If your work is automated, the productivity gain belongs to you, not to the firm that bought the software. Your hours go down, not your income. If your sector is sun-setting, you do not eat the cost of the transition; you are paid through it, at the wage you had, not at the wage someone is willing to negotiate you down to. If your work continues, the firm you work in is owned in part by the people who work in it, and the surplus is allocated by people whose names you know.

Your business. The bakery stays open. The garage stays open. The three-person shop stays open. If you employ people, they become co-owners of what you and they built together; you are compensated for what you built, on a defined schedule, and the place keeps running. The argument was never against the person who runs a small business. It was against the fund that buys the small business, fires the staff, sells the building, and writes the loss off on someone else's tax return.

Your debt. Medical debt is gone. Educational debt is gone. Predatory consumer debt is restructured to principal at a rate the lender does not get to set after the fact. Mortgages are renegotiated, not erased - the distinction matters and the book takes it seriously.

The things that do not change. The pub. The team you watch on Saturday. The garden you fight with every spring. The cousin you cannot stand at Christmas. The argument about the rota. The sound of the kettle. The dog. **Most of life, in fact, looks recognisably like life. The point of the exercise is that it gets to** - but reading does not deliver this, and neither does posting about it. The room does, or nothing does.

The picture above does not run on good intentions. It runs on the architecture two sections from now names.

XIII. So we plan

The honest question, after all of that, is the one this kind of writing usually flinches from. Then what.

Anger is not a plan, and rage is not a blueprint. A diagnosis you can recite from memory is not the same as a plan you can act on, and the last sixty years of politics have been dense with diagnoses and thin on plans. The traditions reviewed earlier were not stupid; they ran into specific walls. Saying that out loud is not a dismissal of them. It is what honesty looks like before the next attempt - building against the gaps they left, instead of repeating them with more conviction.

The book that follows is one attempt at a plan: a working draft, written by one person who got tired of waiting for someone better-credentialed to do it, and who knows perfectly well that some of what is in there will turn out to be wrong, but some of it may start the right discussion. It engages every tradition it draws from in good faith, and against itself - keeping the parts that hold up under the force of the last century and cutting the parts that do not. If a piece of it does not hold up to your reading, the book is asking something specific from you in return: say why, against the same evidence the rest of the argument was tested on, and put a version that holds up better in its place. Disagreement that names what is wrong and proposes what does better is the engine the book runs on.

Disagreement that only deletes is the failure mode every prior tradition called "discipline" until it became the rot. The moment a tool like this becomes sacred, it ceases to be a tool; the moment it cannot tolerate a sharper version of itself, it has already stagnated.

I am not asking for your agreement. I am asking for your willingness to plan in public, in good faith, with people who can argue back. **Knowledge is only power when it is shared, contested, and put to work by people who can disagree without giving up on each other.**

Read it. Take it slowly. Argue with it as you go.

Then find a handful of people you trust, in the same room, and start there. Not as a structured chat message. Not in a discourse. Speaking out loud, with people whose faces you know. Bring what you took from the book. Bring what you did not. Bring the parts that made you uncomfortable, because the discomfort is usually the honest analysis, and where it isn't you may find something others lack perspective to see.

The first hour in that room is not what to do. It is one question, asked plainly: what is happening to us, in our shared circumstances, and who benefits from us not noticing it together? Before tactics, the people the system pitted against each other have to hear each other. The worker and the engineer who lives next door. The settler and the Indigenous neighbour. The cop and the kid who ran from him. The citizen and the person without papers. Shared struggle has to become visible before shared action is possible. Skip that step, and you rebuild the wedge inside the room you came to dismantle.

Three people, then. One of them probably votes differently than you do. One of them probably prays differently, or doesn't pray at all. One of them probably loves differently, or grew up somewhere you have never been. The question is not whether you would share a pulpit with them. The question is whether you would share a shift. The room where you argue about the rota and then make the rota anyway is the room the algorithm cannot reach. That is where solidarity starts. Not in agreement. In shared work.

"*We don't have any power.*" You have it. You spend it alone, fragmented, arguing before the table is set - because sitting down means being wrong in front of someone and changing your mind out loud, and that is the one move the arrangement was built to prevent.

Capital has planning. They have offices full of it, paid for out of the gap on your cheque. **We have not had ours yet** - not seriously, not in this generation, or as something built to last rather than absorbed. The point of writing any of this down is to make the planning possible.

The objection is usually phrased as a knockdown: nobody can compute what an economy needs in advance, so the planner cannot beat the market. That argument was made in 1920 and again in 1945, and it was right about the planners of 1920 and 1945. The substrate has changed. Walmart already runs an internal command economy larger than the Soviet Union ever did, in real time, on standard enterprise hardware. The labour-time accounting unit Cockshott and Cottrell specified is sparse-matrix arithmetic on the same machinery, federated to councils that set the targets and adjust the constraints, with most *decisions* kept local because most decisions are local. **The councils choose. The substrate computes.** The reason this is not already running on essential commodities is political, not technical - and the people who keep insisting it is technical are usually the ones the political answer would cost something.

That is where this starts.

XIV. The architecture, named

Diagnosis without architecture is permission. The previous traditions had the diagnosis. The architecture is what was missing, and the architecture is what the rest of the book specifies. Five mechanisms, briefly. Each one fails on its own. Together they do something none of them does alone.

One: the bodies that decide are not one body. Sortition - selection by lot, with rotation, from the people who will live with the decision - is one of the oldest answers, and the book disaggregates it into five distinct bodies with distinct functions: a chamber that adjudicates whether a capability counts as transgression, a commission that tests systemic criticality, a body that authorises competing parties, one that selects judges, one that hears citizen petition. They check each other because they are not the same room.

Two: the people who set policy are not the people who run it. A political-functional firewall - policymakers chosen one way, implementers another, with a published boundary between them - is the structural answer to the way every prior single-party state collapsed expertise and authority into a single class. The class re-formed at the layer where the two had merged. The merger is what the firewall prevents.

Three: nothing that holds power holds it forever. Term limits inside a 4-8 year band, an absolute career ceiling of 8 years on any one role with a 12-year break before re-entry, glass walls on every decision the public is paying for, and an independently funded Monitoring Commission whose findings carry automatic consequences rather than recommendations. The Commission itself dissolves on a 12-year clock with a 6-year offset audit body that takes its place. The architecture has to apply to its own custodians, or it is not architecture.

Diagnosis without architecture is permission.

Four: the rules enforce themselves where the rules permit it. Cryptographic separation of keys, sealed-before-transition specifications, public code, two-key custodianship for any capability dangerous enough to require it, automatic dissolution triggers when the architecture is breached. A constitution that depends entirely on the people in power respecting it has already failed; it just doesn't know yet.

Five: the transition ends. Not "we'll see how it goes." A constitutional unconditional expiration after five years, extendable once by two years on a supermajority, with anchor triggers - pre-committed disruptive responses by the federated network - that fire automatically if the transitional state attempts to extend its own life beyond the ceiling. Day 1825 is the day the architecture above is supposed to be running on its own. The ceiling is what makes the rest of it credible.

None of this is utopia. Each piece can fail. The point is that they fail in directions that can be named in advance, and the architecture is built to absorb each named failure without rotting from the inside. That is the most any prior tradition can honestly claim, and almost none of them did.

XV. Six things to carry into the room

If you only remember a few sentences from any of this, remember these:

The floor. Housing, food, healthcare, education, water, guaranteed. Not charity, not a programme that gets cut in the next budget. The bottom that is always there, regardless of whether you have a job that week.

The tool always turns. Every institution we build will eventually point at the people it was built to protect, unless the architecture to prevent that is built in from the start. Surveillance, the party, the platform, the agency, the union, the charity. No exceptions, including the ones we build next.

The division is the product. The same machine raising your rent is telling you who to blame for it. Your neighbour is not your enemy. The person who owns the building is, and the people who own the fund that owns the building are above them.

The room. The platform absorbs posts. It cannot absorb three people in a kitchen who share a shift, an argument about the rota, and a meal they cooked together. Start there.

The blueprint is a draft. This text is wrong in places. Where it is, say why, against the same evidence - and put something sharper in its place. The moment any of this becomes sacred, it has already been captured; the moment it cannot survive a better version of itself, it was never the right tool.

The architecture or the rot. Term limits, separated bodies, glass walls, automatic enforcement, a sunset that the transition cannot vote itself past. Not flourishes. The difference between this attempt and the ones that turned.

XVI. The first hour

If you have never sat in a room like this, here is one shape. Not the only shape. One that works.

Twenty minutes - listen. Each person speaks, uninterrupted, for five minutes or so. What brought you here. What you are afraid of. What the last year has cost you. No debate yet. No fixing. The other people in the room are not there to respond, only to hear it.

Twenty minutes - overlap. What was shared in what you just heard. Where the fear pointed the same direction. Where the anger had the same shape. Not "we all agree" - most of you will not - but "we are all describing the same arrangement." This is the step the algorithm was built to prevent.

Twenty minutes - one thing. What is one material thing, in your immediate shared life, that the people in this room could change or build together in the next month. Not a march. Not a post. A meal cooked for someone who needs it. A repair done for free. A shift covered. A debt pooled. A landlord written to together. Something that imposes a real cost on the arrangement, or builds a small piece of the floor where there isn't one. Pick the one. Decide who does what before anyone leaves the room.

That is the first hour. The second hour is the one after you do the thing - **learn by doing, and bring what you learn back to the room.**

XVII. If you cannot find the room yet

Some of you will read this in places where no one you know will read it back. The town is small, the people around you are tired in a different way, the conversation has not started yet on your street. That is real, and the rest of this guide does not yet speak to it.

If you cannot find three people, start with one. The cousin you actually like. The co-worker who once said something honest. The neighbour you nod at. One conversation, out loud, about one thing on the list above.

If you cannot find one, sit with the question alone and write your answer down. What is happening to me, in my circumstances, and who benefits from me not noticing it with anyone else? Keep the page. Come back and write another in a week. Bring the notes for

when the room arrives.

If you cannot write, hold the question through a shift. Notice once, today, who profits from the thing you were about to be angry about.

Noticing is not nothing. Noticing shared is the beginning of power. The room will find you when you are ready to find it, and some of the people who will eventually be in it are, right now, holding the same question on their own street.

XVIII. A note on what this was

This was not a manifesto. A manifesto tells you what to believe; this asked what is happening to you and who benefits.

Nor was this a plan. A plan has steps, sequencing, contingencies, and named institutions. The book that follows has attempts at those, and submits itself to the same scepticism it brings to the traditions in **II** - when it expands, which it will, where do the dams go? This was the conversation you needed to have before that book would be readable.

This was not the book. It is a companion to a longer argument that you may, in the end, never read. If you stop here, you have a beginning. The pocket key, the room, the first hour, the question - those travel without the rest of it, but the rest of it is there to structure the bigger discussion whenever you are ready.

What this was, was **an agenda for a planning meeting that has not happened yet.** The people the system pitted against each other have not yet been in the same room, focused on what they materially share rather than what was used to divide them. This was written so they could walk in.

What this was, was a door into the harder text. The book on the other side of it specifies five mechanisms in detail, walks each of them through the cases where prior attempts failed, and submits the specification to the same scepticism the diagnosis brings to capital. If you are going to argue with any of it - and you should - the architecture is where to argue, because the architecture is where the prior traditions stopped writing.

XIX. Naivety is not a plan either

If the last section was honest about what this guide is not, this one has to be honest about what waiting is not. **Naivety is not a plan.** *We're all going to figure it out together* is not a plan. *Things will correct themselves once enough people see it* is not a plan. Those are the sentences the people who designed the current arrangement most want you to keep saying, because every year you say them is another year the floor moves down.

You are already inside this. The question was never whether you participate. The question is whether your participation is shaped by you and the people next to you, or shaped by the firm, the platform, the landlord, and the state - which is the default, which is what is already happening, which is the reason your hour produces \$200 and returns you \$35.

A room is the beginning, not the end. The room has to know other rooms. The cousin you invited and the neighbour who came once and the coworker who finally asked - that group, on its own, can hold each other through a bad month. It cannot hold a port. It cannot hold a strike. It cannot answer when the state arrives at one of its members' doors and decides to make an example.

What can do those things is a **federated network**: rooms that know other rooms, by name, by trust, by prior contact, on their own infrastructure, with a **pre-arranged solidarity response** when one of them is hit. Not a statement of support. Not a hashtag. A re-

sponse that was decided before the call came, by people who had already met in person, with a plan for who does what when the call comes - the dockworkers' room, the tenants' room, the engineers' room, each contributing the leverage they actually have, simultaneously, because the protocol is shared.

The federation also retains the right to part. Rooms that find their conditions diverge, or their analysis diverge, can leave on terms specified before the dispute, through a federation-level body whose only job is to adjudicate the terms of separation - resource share, infrastructure custody, members' standing - so that the parting does not become the rupture. The right to schism is what keeps the federation honest: a federation that cannot be left is a federation that has stopped representing the rooms inside it.

That is the second piece of architecture the book contains, alongside the structural answer to why every prior tradition rotted from the inside. This guide will not specify it for you. The specification is what the book is for, and the book is harder reading than this one - more technical, more demanding, with claims you will want to test against your own conditions before you adopt them. That is the correct order. You start with the room. You read the architecture once the room is real. You build the network once the architecture is something you and the people next to you have actually argued about, in the same place, out loud.

What this guide owes you, before it ends, is the truthful version of the sequence: recognise it, find each other, build the room, read the harder text, build the network, and **refuse - together, on a schedule, with a protocol - to be picked off one at a time.** None of those steps are optional. The first one is the one you can do this week.

XX. Hand it to someone

You are holding a tool. It is not yours. It belongs to whoever needs it next.

This is not recruitment. It is the smaller, plainer thing: giving one person a chance at the conversation you have.

Ask one question. Who in your life needs this? Not who would agree with it. Who needs it. The cousin who has been quiet at the table since the layoffs. The coworker who said the wrong thing about the strike and looked, for a second, like they wanted to be argued with. The neighbour you have never spoken to but whose rent went up the same month yours did. The parent who has been deep in culture wars for the last decade.

Print it for them. Hand it to them. Do not email it if you can walk it over. Do not post it if you can speak it. The medium is part of the message, and the message is that we are doing this in the open, face to face, one hand to another.

This guide is not property. Copy it, translate it, mirror it, remix it. The original lives at material.red - link back to it where you can, because it is a living document, and what is current there will be more current than what is in the copy you are holding. If you improve a section, send it: write@material.red. If you find a weakness, send the correction. If you have written your own version, send that too - I would rather read it than not. The moment any of this becomes a commodity - sold, branded, gated, tracked - it has been captured. The test is whether the next person can obtain it without paying, without registering, without being counted.

A submission that contests or extends a prescription carries the same standard the rest of the framework holds itself to: name the conditions the alternative targets, ground it in material consequence rather than principle, bring the case material if the existing claim is

what is being contested, show the alternative produces a different trajectory rather than a renamed one, and - the meta-criterion above the rest - include the submission's own self-critique. The book carries a chapter that names where its own prescriptions are most exposed; a submission that prescribes without naming where it is most exposed returns with the gap named. The standing the protocol gives is the standing the discipline earns.

The room is what the algorithm cannot reach. So is the page in someone's hand.

Hand it to someone.

Pocket Glossary

Words that carry weight - the essentials

Activation conditions - The four conditions under which institutional expansion becomes near-universal: persistence, retained expertise, continued budget, and no designed containment.

Adversarial reciprocity - A sovereignty strategy: counter-sanctions, currency competition, and bloc formation that impose reciprocal costs on imperial powers.

Boomerang (the) - The visible return of a tool against the population it was supposed to serve; the central diagnostic of reciprocal materialism.

Chapter - The basic organizational unit: 5–15 people with a shared purpose, internal discipline, and no central command.

Chapter dissolution - The healthy end of a chapter that has completed its purpose; treated as a normal cycle, not a failure.

Containment materialism - The prescriptive practice of building structural “dams” to prevent expansion before it starts.

Dictatorship of the proletariat - Marx's original term for working-class rule as a class, not rule by a single party or leader.

Dual power - Building parallel institutions (cooperatives, mutual aid, tenant unions) that serve people better than existing structures.

Federated vanguard - A network of autonomous, disciplined chapters coordinating through shared analysis rather than a command hierarchy.

Kill switch - A graduated protocol (inquiry, heightened posture, full activation) that enables rapid, coordinated defence when the state attacks one part of the network.

Professional-managerial class (PMC) - The top buffer layer of the working class, granted enough comfort to identify with owners and enough precarity to fear falling.

Proportional praxis - The rule that the form of resistance must match the specific form of oppression, calibrated to local conditions and state behaviour.

Reciprocal materialism - The foundational observation: every tool, institution, and apparatus expands into available space and will eventually turn against its creators unless structurally contained.

Safeguard floor - The non-negotiable constitutional guarantee of housing, healthcare, food, education, water, and basic transport - provided outside the market.

Surplus value - The gap between what a worker produces and what they are paid, captured by the owner.

These are the essentials. The full architectural glossary of 100+ terms is in Architecture Against Empire (free at [material.red](#)).