SY-05 The existing shelf and the gap

The corpus of modern political theory, institutional design, and evolutionary anthropology offers a vast repository of human experimentation in governance across deep time. However, to construct the foundational architecture for *Governing after the Fall*, this existing shelf of literature must be subjected to a rigorous filtration process. The core analytical problem is that nearly all contemporary political science and macroeconomic theory assume the permanent existence of an exogenous guarantor of order: the Westphalian nation-state backed by an uninterrupted industrial energy grid. When industrial supply chains and the reach of the state permanently evaporate, governance cannot be imposed from a central authority. It must scale endogenously from the household upward, generating systemic resilience while actively resisting capture by individuals exhibiting dark-triad traits—specifically narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy.

This report maps the existing literature on human governance, isolating the mechanisms of scale, the vectors of capture, and the empirical realities of self-governance. The dominant theorists and their respective paradigms have been categorized into six distinct models. For each paradigm, this analysis applies a standardized Scale Ledger to determine its viability across population rungs, a Capture Test to assess its vulnerability to dark-triad actors, and an epistemological separation comparing what the participants claimed, what the historical record shows, and what modern scholarship infers.

The Anthropological and Evolutionary Baseline

The baseline of human self-governance in stateless environments is rooted in the egalitarian band, a structure analyzed extensively by evolutionary anthropologists and historians. Christopher Boehm's *Hierarchy in the Forest: The Evolution of Egalitarian Behavior* (1999) fundamentally disrupts the romantic notion that prehistoric humans were naturally peaceful and egalitarian[1]. Boehm establishes that humans possess a primate inheritance of dominance instincts, making prehistoric egalitarianism a highly unnatural, actively enforced equilibrium[2]. He theorizes the "reverse dominance hierarchy," an arrangement where the weak consciously and intentionally combine forces to dominate the strong, thereby preventing any single alpha from seizing control[4]. This intentional leveling was maintained through a graduated scale of social friction, beginning with mockery and escalating to ostracism, and ultimately, lethal retaliation against overly assertive individuals[6].

David Graeber and David Wengrow, in *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (2021), expand this baseline by demonstrating that early human societies were not locked into rigid egalitarian bands. Archaeological evidence from sites like Göbekli Tepe or Poverty Point indicates that prehistoric populations engaged in seasonal fluidity. They frequently alternated between authoritarian, hierarchical structures during massive seasonal harvest or monumental construction projects, and dispersed, egalitarian foraging bands during the rest of the year. This demonstrates that early humans were conscious political actors capable of designing and dismantling complex institutions at will. Rutger Bregman's *Humankind: A Hopeful History* (2020) provides modern empirical validation of human cooperative baselines in extreme environments.

Bregman contrasts the fictional descent into savagery in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* with the historical reality of the 1965 Ata Island castaways. In this empirical case, six Tongan boys survived in total isolation for fifteen months by establishing strict rules for consensus, utilizing enforced time-outs to manage interpersonal conflict, and maintaining absolute cooperative resource pooling[7].

The epistemological perspectives on this evolutionary baseline reveal a sharp divergence between participant narratives and historical realities. Indigenous band societies frequently articulate their leveling mechanisms as spiritual or cosmic imperatives required to maintain universal harmony. However, the ethnographic and historical record—spanning the !Kung of the Kalahari to the Inuit—demonstrates that this harmony is maintained through continuous, high-friction social enforcement and the credible threat of violence against norm violators. Modern scholarship infers that this egalitarianism is not a state of nature, but a precarious, mathematically logical coalition of subordinates requiring constant, exhausting vigilance[3].

The strongest case against relying on this baseline for post-collapse governance is articulated by scholars like Steven Pinker in *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (2011) and primatologist Richard Wrangham. They criticize the romanticization of the foraging era, pointing to empirical data showing catastrophic per-capita prehistoric homicide rates and endemic inter-tribal warfare. They warn against the naturalistic fallacy, noting that small-scale life does not equate to fairness, and that the suppression of internal alphas often redirected violence outward toward neighboring out-groups.

Regarding the mechanics of capture, a dark-triad individual typically dismantles the reverse dominance hierarchy by exploiting a sudden influx of resources or by monopolizing a new technology of violence. A historical case of this capture occurred during the transition from egalitarian bands to chiefdoms in the Pacific Northwest among the Kwakiutl, where aggressive individuals utilized seasonal resource gluts (salmon runs) to host competitive feasts, creating debt-slavery and establishing strict, inherited hierarchies. The features that successfully resisted this capture in other groups centered on intentional, ritualized leveling. For example, the San people of the Kalahari utilized "insulting the meat," a practice where successful hunters were ruthlessly mocked to prevent them from developing a narcissistic superiority complex[2]. If mockery failed, the coalition of the weak seamlessly escalated to expulsion or execution[6].

Rung	Status	Reason for Success / Failure
Household (4 to 10)	Worked	High mutual dependence and perfect reputation tracking. Kin selection operates strongly, as seen in the Ata Island castaways (n=6, lasting 15 months)[7].

Band (30 to 50)	Worked	The optimal size for reverse dominance. Gossip diffuses symmetrically across the population, and lethal retaliation by the collective is easily organized against a single aspiring autocrat[6].
Village (150 to 500)	Strained	Dunbar's number (150) begins to break down. Factions form, gossip becomes fragmented, and reputation tracking is easily manipulated by proto-elites acting as information brokers.
District (1,500 to 5,000)	Failed	Face-to-face accountability is impossible. Reverse dominance collapses entirely due to coordination failures among the weak, allowing hierarchical dominance to reassert itself natively.
Town to Planet (15,000+)	Never Tried	The coordination costs of maintaining a reverse dominance coalition across millions of strangers are mathematically impossible without a centralized communication apparatus.

The Institutional Commons and the Trap of Structurelessness

When populations scale beyond the egalitarian band, the management of shared resources becomes the primary vector for either sustainable self-governance or hierarchical capture. Elinor Ostrom's Nobel-winning empirical analysis in *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (1990) dismantles the long-standing economic assumption that common-pool resources inevitably lead to a tragedy of overuse requiring either state

regulation or absolute privatization[8]. Drawing on a vast database of global cases, Ostrom proved that communities can sustainably manage shared resources—such as fisheries, groundwater basins, and forests—over centuries[10]. Ostrom identified eight core design principles shared by successful, long-enduring common-pool resource institutions. These principles include clearly defined boundaries, congruence between appropriation rules and local conditions, collective-choice arrangements allowing users to modify the rules, active monitoring by monitors accountable to the appropriators, graduated sanctions for rule violators, rapid and low-cost conflict-resolution mechanisms, minimal recognition of rights to organize by external authorities, and nested enterprises for larger systems[10].

David Bollier's *Think Like a Commoner* (2014) extends Ostrom's framework, arguing that the commons is not merely a resource, but a social practice of commoning that relies on specific cultural paradigms to resist capitalist enclosure. However, the reliance on informal culture over formal rules presents a lethal vulnerability, as demonstrated by Jo Freeman's *The Tyranny of Structurelessness* (1972). Analyzing the failures of the 1960s feminist movement, Freeman mathematically proved that there is no such thing as a structureless group[12]. When communities reject formal governance in the name of total equality, they simply mask the rapid emergence of a hidden, unaccountable hierarchy based on preexisting friendship networks, charisma, and elite capture[13].

Examining the three epistemological perspectives of the commons reveals significant nuance. Participants in common-pool resource arrangements, such as the villagers of Törbel, Switzerland, or the Zanjera irrigation communities in the Philippines, frequently claim their systems are ancient, immutable traditions reflecting organic communal harmony[10]. The historical record, however, shows that these systems were not harmonious; they were characterized by continuous, contentious litigation, institutional tinkering, and desperate adaptations to ecological crises, such as the competitive pumping races in California groundwater basins[11]. Modern scholarship infers a rational-choice framework beneath this friction. Actors in the commons are not operating on pure altruism; they are fallible individuals carefully balancing the transaction costs of monitoring their neighbors against the long-term benefits of resource preservation[10].

The strongest case against Ostrom's framework comes from scholars like Michael Cox, who conducted a 2010 meta-analysis of 91 common-pool resource cases, alongside critics like Degnbol. They argue that Ostrom's model implicitly assumes cultural homogeneity and stable populations[16]. The empirical data suggests that polycentric commons governance routinely fails when subjected to rapid demographic shifts, mass migration, or integration into global market economies that radically alter the financial incentives of resource extraction.

In the Capture Test, a Machiavellian faction takes over a commons by exploiting the "tyranny of structurelessness." By refusing to formalize rules, the dark-triad actor operates in the shadows, capturing the monitoring mechanism and selectively enforcing unwritten rules against rivals while exempting their own faction. This occurred frequently during the degeneration of 19th-century worker cooperatives. Initial democratic zeal faded, and technically skilled, charismatic subgroups slowly monopolized decision-making, eventually reverting the cooperative into a standard hierarchical firm[14]. The features that actively resisted this capture in

successful commons were Ostrom's Principle 4 (monitors must be directly accountable to the appropriators) and Principle 5 (graduated sanctions). By formalizing the rules and ensuring that the monitors could be fired by the community, the mathematical payoff for a dark-triad actor attempting to capture the system was reduced to zero[11].

Rung	Status	Reason for Success / Failure
Household to Band (4 to 50)	Worked	Transaction costs for monitoring and enforcement are near zero. The tyranny of structurelessness is mitigated by absolute face-to-face intimacy.
Village to District (150 to 5,000)	Worked	Endured for centuries (e.g., the Spanish Huertas of Valencia and Alicante) because rule-making was heavily formalized. Local councils handled daily operations, while district syndicates handled inter-village disputes[11].
Watershed (15,000 to 50,000)	Worked (Conditionally)	Requires highly complex nested polycentricity and usually necessitates at least minimal recognition by a higher state authority to enforce judgments against well-armed defectors[11].
Region to Continent (0.5M to 500M)	Failed	Graduated sanctions and defined boundaries become impossible to enforce without a massive, coercive bureaucratic state apparatus.

Planet (8 Billion)	Failed	The tragedy of the commons holds true at the global scale (e.g., atmospheric carbon, oceanic fisheries) because there is no overarching sovereign to compel compliance or enforce boundaries among competing superpowers.

State-Building, Red Queens, and Civilizational Cycles

When governance arrangements move from local watersheds to massive territorial regions, the literature shifts toward the mechanics of state formation and collapse. Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, in *The Narrow Corridor: States, Societies, and the Fate of Liberty* (2019), posit that stable liberty is not a natural historical arc but an incredibly fragile equilibrium. This equilibrium exists in a "narrow corridor" where the extractive capacity of the state and the mobilized power of society perfectly balance each other. This balance is maintained via the "Red Queen Effect"—a continuous, exhausting institutional arms race where neither the state nor society is permitted to gain permanent dominance[18]. If the state accumulates power faster than society can mobilize, a Despotic Leviathan emerges; if society dominates and prevents state formation, a Paper Leviathan emerges, resulting in warlordism and anarchy[18].

Francis Fukuyama traces this macro-evolution in *The Origins of Political Order* (2011) and *Political Order and Political Decay* (2014). He argues that successful states require three pillars: state capacity, the rule of law, and democratic accountability. Decay occurs through "repatrimonialization," where elites capture state institutions to extract rents for their kin and cronies, reverting the modern state back to a tribal framework. James C. Scott's *Seeing Like a State* (1998) offers a devastating critique of this state capacity. Scott argues that states mandate "legibility"—imposing standardized taxes, grid cities, and permanent surnames—to make populations easier to conscript and tax. In doing so, the state inherently destroys local *metis* (practical, localized knowledge), often resulting in catastrophic high-modernist failures.

Peter Turchin's *Ages of Discord* (2016) provides the quantitative demographic mechanism for this decay. Turchin models "Secular Cycles," demonstrating that prolonged periods of peace and prosperity inevitably lead to elite overproduction. As the population grows, the elite class expands until there are not enough positions of power or wealth to satisfy them. Elite competition turns zero-sum, leading to the immiseration of the masses, state bankruptcy, and inevitable collapse.

Analyzing the three perspectives of macro-state governance highlights the ideological fiction of the sovereign. States and their participants routinely claim that the central government exists to provide universal justice, rational administration, and defense of the common good. The historical record, however, shows that states function primarily as engines of legibility for taxation and conscription, frequently imposing lethal schemas that wipe out local resilience

(e.g., Soviet collectivization, Tanzanian Ujamaa villages). Modern scholarship infers that the state is an inherently extractive machine that can only be harnessed for the public good through the intense, continuous, and highly organized friction of societal pushback (the Red Queen equilibrium)[18].

The strongest case against this paradigm is leveled by scholars of colonial capitalism, such as Rahul Sirohi, who critique Acemoglu and Robinson for treating European imperialism as a mere external shock. They argue that the "inclusive institutions" and the Red Queen equilibrium of Western democracies were directly subsidized by the hyper-extractive institutions and slave-plantation capitalism imposed on the global periphery[20]. By ignoring this, the Narrow Corridor theory enshrines Anglo-American institutions as a universal ideal while masking the horrific external caloric and economic extraction required to maintain them.

In the Capture Test at the macro-scale, elite overproduction generates a surplus of ambitious counter-elites. A narcissist or psychopath from this frustrated elite class acts as a demagogue, mobilizing the immiserated masses to dismantle the Red Queen balance. They promise to destroy the corrupt establishment, but upon taking power, they immediately replace inclusive institutions with extractive, patrimonial ones to reward their specific loyalists. Historical cases of this capture include the fall of the Roman Republic to Caesar, the breakdown of the French Ancien Régime, and the contemporary democratic backsliding in Hungary and Venezuela[21]. The features that temporarily resisted this capture in successful eras included an aggressively independent judiciary, policies that enforced broad wealth distribution to prevent mass immiseration, and a highly mobilized civil society that continually forced the state to expand its inclusion metrics[18].

Rung	**Status**	**Reason for Success / Failure**
Household to Village (4 to 500)	Failed	The bureaucratic mechanism of the state is too blunt and heavy-handed for local *metis*. State legibility destroys the nuanced, informal knowledge required for micro-survival.
Parish to Watershed (1,500 to 50,000)	Strained	Can operate as a municipality, but constantly struggles against the centralizing gravity of the capital, resulting in a continuous loss of local autonomy.

Region to Nation (0.5M to 500M)	Worked	This is the only rung where the vast bureaucratic and agricultural surplus required to maintain a standing army, a legal apparatus, and an industrial grid can be economically sustained.
Planet (8 Billion)	Never Tried	A planetary Shackled Leviathan lacks an external geopolitical competitor to enforce unity or trigger the Red Queen effect, risking immediate decay into an inescapable global Despotic Leviathan.

The Logic of Survival and Democratic Decay

The decay of the Shackled Leviathan is occurring in real-time, heavily documented by contemporary political science. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita's *The Logic of Political Survival* (2003) provides the mathematical architecture for this decay through Selectorate Theory. He posits that every political leader answers to two groups: the Selectorate (S), the pool of people who have a legal say in choosing the leader; and the Winning Coalition (W), the subset of the Selectorate whose support is absolutely essential for the leader to remain in power[22]. The ratio of W to S dictates the loyalty norm. Autocrats survive by keeping their Winning Coalition tiny and their Selectorate vast. This allows them to distribute highly concentrated private goods (bribes, monopolies) to their small coalition, ensuring absolute loyalty, because any defector risks being cast out into the massive, impoverished Selectorate[24].

Yascha Mounk's *The People vs Democracy* (2018) identifies a fatal bifurcation in Western governance caused by these shifting incentives. Mounk notes that liberal democracy is splitting into "undemocratic liberalism" (where technocrats and courts protect rights but ignore the popular will) and "illiberal democracy" (where populists enact the popular will while destroying minority rights)[26]. Mounk's statistical analysis is alarming: 34% of American youth aged 18-24 believe a strong leader who does not have to bother with Congress or elections is "good or very good," indicating a catastrophic collapse in institutional faith[28]. Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt's *How Democracies Die* (2018) tracks the behavioral mechanics of this collapse. They note that modern capture rarely requires violent military coups; it occurs legally when demagogues exploit the erosion of two unwritten, foundational norms: *mutual toleration* (accepting that political rivals are legitimate actors, not existential enemies) and *institutional forbearance* (refraining from exercising one's legal rights to the absolute maximum to destroy

the system)[21]. Anne Applebaum's *Twilight of Democracy* (2020) explores the psychological seduction of authoritarianism, noting how elites proliferate a "Medium-Size Lie" to manipulate facts, polarize the public into warring camps, and justify the dismantling of meritocracy in favor of absolute loyalty to the ruling party[30]. David Runciman's *How Democracy Ends* (2018) frames this as a midlife crisis, where the institutional arteries have hardened, leaving democracy unable to address existential threats.

The epistemological separation here exposes the mechanics of demagoguery. Participants and populist leaders claim they are patriotically defending the nation from corrupt elites and existential threats, utilizing the Medium-Size Lie to generate moral urgency[30]. The historical record shows that these leaders systematically weaponize the judiciary, the press, and the civil service to permanently alter the electoral rules in their favor. Modern scholarship infers that this behavior is a rational calculation to manipulate the W/S ratio; by purging the bureaucracy and stacking the courts, the leader is actively shrinking their necessary Winning Coalition, replacing public goods provision with private goods distribution to loyalists[22].

The strongest case against this framework comes from scholars like Gallagher and Hanson (2015), who critique Bueno de Mesquita's Selectorate Theory as a blunt instrument. They argue that assuming the Selectorate is a homogeneous mass of "interchangeables" ignores the complex cultural, ideological, and military factions that actually drive policy changes in authoritarian and hybrid regimes[24].

In the Capture Test, a demagogue with dark-triad traits takes over the state by identifying wedge issues that permanently shatter mutual toleration. They paint the opposition as traitors, which justifies abandoning institutional forbearance. Once in office, they shrink the Winning Coalition by firing independent civil servants and replacing them with sycophants. Historical cases of this happening include the consolidation of power by Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and Viktor Orbán in Hungary[21]. The features that historically resisted this capture were strong gatekeeping by traditional political parties (refusing to platform extremists) and robust, unwritten civic norms that punished politicians for maximizing their legal authority to subvert the spirit of the law[21].

Rung	Status	Reason for Success / Failure
Household to Village (4 to 500)	Failed	Selectorate theory mechanics (W/S ratio manipulation) require a massive population to create a wide disparity between the selectorate and the winning coalition. At n=300, face-to-face accountability prevents the

		hoarding of private goods.
Parish to Region (1,500 to 5M)	Strained	Can operate as a localized political machine (e.g., Tammany Hall), but is usually constrained by the oversight of the larger national government.
Nation (50M to 500M)	Worked (for the Autocrat)	The optimal scale for democratic decay. The leader can extract immense wealth from a massive population (S) to enrich a tiny military/corporate elite (W), securing decades of survival at the cost of societal stagnation[24].
Planet (8 Billion)	Never Tried	Global democratic institutions do not possess a formal global selectorate, operating instead as a loose confederation of national elites.

Sortition and the Deliberative Microcosm

To bypass the electoral decay outlined by Levitsky, Ziblatt, and Mounk, a growing cohort of political theorists proposes replacing elections entirely with sortition—the random selection of citizens by lottery. Hélène Landemore's *Open Democracy* (2020) and David Van Reybrouck's *Against Elections* (2016) argue that elections are inherently oligarchic, systematically elevating wealthy, narcissistic elites while suffering from "democratic fatigue syndrome" among the voting public[33]. Sortition bypasses campaign finance, affective polarization, and the necessity of dark-triad self-promotion, creating a legislature that is a true statistical microcosm of the population[35].

James Fishkin's *Democracy when the People are Thinking* (2009) provides the empirical backbone for this movement through Deliberative Polling. In a deliberative poll, a random sample of citizens (e.g., n=306 or n=352) is polled on an issue, then brought together to study briefing materials, question competing experts, and deliberate in moderated small groups (8-15 people) before being polled again[37]. The empirical results across dozens of countries consistently show massive depolarization. Participants routinely abandon extreme partisan

positions and move toward nuanced, considered judgments, demonstrating that ordinary citizens are highly capable of complex policy synthesis when freed from the performative arena of electoral politics[39]. Landemore highlights the 2019-2020 French Citizens' Convention for Climate, where 150 randomly selected citizens generated 149 highly detailed, structural policy proposals, serving as a modern proof-of-concept for citizen lawmaking[40].

The three perspectives on sortition expose a critical vulnerability regarding macro-legitimacy. Participants and advocates claim that sortition guarantees true proportionality, eliminates corruption, and generates a genuinely egalitarian Congress ruled by regular people[35]. The historical record shows that sortition worked exceptionally well in ancient Athens for centuries, though it was strictly constrained by a heavily exclusionary selectorate (free, land-owning males only)[36]. Modern scholarship infers that while deliberative mini-publics are incredibly effective at internally reducing affective polarization and generating high-quality policy, they suffer from a severe "linkage problem." The 99.9% of the population not selected by the lottery did not experience the intense educational deliberation; therefore, they feel zero democratic mandate or psychological connection to the assembly's output[41].

The strongest case against lottocracy is articulated by Cristina Lafont, who argues that transferring hard legislative power to a randomly selected mini-public requires "blind deference" from the rest of the citizenry. She asserts that this empowers ignorance and severs the mechanism of democratic accountability, as lottocratic representatives cannot be voted out or held accountable by the public for the long-term consequences of their decisions[43].

In the Capture Test, the vulnerability of sortition lies in the bureaucratic apparatus that manages it. A Machiavellian faction acting as the "expert facilitators" can capture the assembly by strictly controlling the information diet, framing the briefing materials, and dictating the agenda. The random citizens, lacking independent technical staffs, become overwhelmed and ultimately rubber-stamp the technocratic goals of the facilitators[40]. The historical case of this capture was the French Citizens' Convention for Climate. While successful internally, the assembly was functionally captured and neutered post-facto by President Emmanuel Macron, who utilized the executive bureaucracy to filter out or ignore the assembly's most structurally threatening mandates[40]. The features that can resist this capture include rotating, adversarial facilitation teams, granting the randomly selected citizens the absolute right to set their own agenda via blind voting, and constitutionally enshrining the assembly with hard legislative power rather than merely consultative status[36].

Rung	Status	Reason for Success / Failure
Household to Band (4 to 50)	Never Tried	Sortition requires a large enough statistical pool to generate a demographic microcosm. Drawing lots among 10 or 30 people is

		mathematically pointless and destroys the necessity of direct participation.
Village to District (150 to 5,000)	Worked	Highly effective. Citizens can physically meet, deliberate face-to-face, and the selected representatives remain intimately connected to the community, solving the linkage problem.
Region to Nation (0.5M to 500M)	Strained	The statistical microcosm (e.g., n=500) works internally to deliberate, but the unselected millions feel zero mandate, viewing the assembly as just another disconnected elite[42].
Planet (8 Billion)	Never Tried	The logistical and linguistic barriers to a planetary deliberative poll are insurmountable without a unified global translation and moderation architecture[44].

Radical Municipalism and Democratic Confederalism

For a governance model tested under conditions approximating civilizational collapse, the literature turns to radical decentralization. Murray Bookchin's *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982) laid the theoretical groundwork for libertarian municipalism—a system rejecting the centralized nation-state in favor of confederated, directly democratic local councils. This framework was heavily adapted by Abdullah Öcalan while in a Turkish prison, resulting in the ideology of *Democratic Confederalism* (2011)[45]. This is the only modern paradigm tested in a stateless, post-collapse, active-warzone environment: the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, commonly known as Rojava (established in 2014)[46].

The structural architecture of Rojava is obsessively nested to prevent the re-emergence of state hierarchy. The foundational unit is the *komîn* (commune), which comprises 30 to 200 households in rural areas and up to 500 households in major cities[45]. Every commune holds a

general assembly every two weeks to manage local resources, conflict resolution, and defense, and operates a *Mala Gel* (House of the People) and a *Mala Jin* (Women's House)[47]. Communes send recallable delegates to neighborhood assemblies, which then send delegates to district councils, and finally to regional cantons[46]. To structurally prevent patriarchal capture, every single administrative position in the society demands dual co-chairs (one male, one female), and a strict 40% gender quota is enforced across all voting bodies[50].

Analyzing the three perspectives reveals the extreme tension between ideology and wartime reality. The participants and architects claim to have built a stateless, feminist, ecological democracy entirely from the bottom up, successfully eradicating capitalist exploitation and ethnic division[47]. The historical record shows that the system achieved miraculous administrative feats: it survived genocidal invasions by ISIS and the Turkish military, managed a complex embargoed economy to provide basic services (bread, oil, healthcare) to 4 to 5 million people, and successfully integrated multi-ethnic populations (Kurds, Arabs, Syriacs, Armenians) into local councils[46]. Modern scholarship, however, infers that Rojava is essentially a hybrid quasi-state. While local governance at the commune level is genuinely participatory and democratic, macro-policy and regional resource allocation are heavily dominated by the centralized military wings (YPG/YPJ) and the vanguard political party (PYD) out of stark wartime necessity[47].

The strongest case against Democratic Confederalism in practice is articulated by regional political analysts and human rights observers who argue that the system is a one-party state disguised as radical decentralization. They point out that true power resides with the armed, ideologically rigid cadres of the PYD, who routinely override the civilian councils and have suppressed rival Kurdish political parties.

In the Capture Test, the vulnerability of this system is Ideological Vanguardism. A disciplined, highly armed faction operating outside the formal council structure overrides the bottom-up delegates, justifying their centralization of power as a "security emergency." The historical case is the Syrian Civil War itself, where the PYD utilized the existential threat of ISIS to consolidate absolute military control, rendering the higher-level civilian cantons functionally subordinate to military commanders. The features engineered to resist this capture include the absolute mandate for dual co-chairs (diluting executive power), the establishment of local civilian defense forces (HPC) that operate independently of the main army to protect the communes, and the retention of primary physical resources (wheat, local generators) at the commune level rather than in a central state treasury[47].

Rung	Status	Reason for Success / Failure
Household to Band (4 to 50)	Worked	Below the level of formal organization; operates on mutual aid and familial

		pooling.
Hamlet to Village (30 to 500)	Worked	The *komîn* successfully operates at this scale, managing direct democracy, localized conflict resolution, and basic cooperative economics with high participation rates[45].
Parish to District (1,500 to 5,000)	Worked	Neighborhood assemblies effectively aggregate commune delegates to manage localized infrastructure, retaining tight linkage to the grassroots.
Region (0.5M to 5M)	Strained	At the cantonal level, bottom-up delegation becomes mathematically bottlenecked. Top-down vanguardist military control frequently overrides local civilian consensus out of logistical necessity[47].
Nation to Planet (50M+)	Never Tried	The coordination required to confederate tens of thousands of autonomous communes across a massive geographic space without resorting to a centralized bureaucratic state has never been successfully modeled.

Metamodern, Corporate, and Technocratic Utopias

The final cluster of literature attempts to bypass institutional decay not through structural reform, but through cognitive development, corporate restructuring, or civic technology.

Frederic Laloux's *Reinventing Organizations* (2014) maps the evolution of human collaboration, advocating for "Teal organizations" that operate on evolutionary purpose, wholeness, and decentralized self-management without traditional bosses[52]. Kate Raworth's *Doughnut Economics* (2017) maps governance strictly to ecological planetary boundaries and social foundations, an economic model that has been successfully tested in downscaling metrics for municipal governance in Amsterdam[54]. Hanzi Freinacht's *The Listening Society* (2017) argues for "Political Metamodernism," proposing a welfare state that actively develops the psychological depth and cognitive complexity of its citizens, combining rigorous empirical politics with deep existential care[56]. Glen Weyl and Audrey Tang's *Plurality* (2024) rely on digital infrastructure—cryptography, digital identity, and quadratic voting—to harness collective intelligence. Similarly, Daniel Schmachtenberger and the "Game B" movement advocate for omnipresent digital sensemaking to overcome the rivalrous, zero-sum dynamics of late-stage capitalism.

The perspectives on this cluster highlight a profound disconnect from physical scarcity. Participants claim that hierarchies are obsolete and that conscious leadership, combined with civic technology, can perfectly align human incentives for a post-scarcity world. The historical record shows that Teal organizations and egalitarian intentional communities routinely fail during economic downturns or crises because they lack formal, rapid-response conflict-resolution mechanisms, leading to organizational paralysis[53]. Modern scholarship infers that these systems suffer from severe selection bias. They operate successfully only among highly educated, ideologically aligned WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) populations whose existence is heavily subsidized by the caloric and financial surpluses of the industrial state.

The strongest case against these utopias is leveled by structural realists who point out that these models completely ignore the mechanics of violence, physical resource scarcity, and the eventual collapse of the energy grid. They fail Jo Freeman's "Tyranny of Structurelessness" test entirely, as they often mask the immense, unaccountable power of the charismatic founders behind progressive human-resources jargon and technological obfuscation[58].

In the Capture Test, a charismatic narcissist exploits the lack of formal managerial structure to build a cult of personality, enforcing ideological purity and emotional manipulation over competence. The historical cases of this capture include the frequent, chaotic implosions of digital DAOs (Decentralized Autonomous Organizations) and the collapse of alternative corporate communities, where "soft power" cliques utilize public shaming to run off dissidents[59]. The resistance feature necessary to prevent this is paradoxically regressive: formalizing the informal by documenting hard property and decision rights clearly (e.g., the Holacracy constitution), though this often devolves into paralyzing, unreadable bureaucracy.

Rung	**Status**	**Reason for Success / Failure**
Household to Band (4 to 50)	Worked	Intentional communities and startups operate well at

		this scale, buoyed by the shared enthusiasm of the founders.
Village to Corporate (150 to 5,000)	Strained	Works only in high-margin, low-physical-risk sectors (software development, specialized care) where entry and exit are entirely voluntary and well-funded.
Town to Planet (15,000+)	Failed	Fails as a totalizing system because it cannot handle violently uncooperative actors, physical crime, or deep resource scarcity without immediately appealing to the traditional coercive state for protection.
After the Fall (No Grid)	**Total Failure**	Game B, Plurality, and Teal rely completely on the internet, global digital ledgers, and massive caloric surpluses. Without the industrial grid, these governance models vanish instantly.

The Gap and the Nearest Existing Title

Mapping the existing shelf reveals four distinct analytical traps that a foundational document for *Governing after the Fall* must actively avoid:

1. **The Polemic Trap:** Reducing complex governance to a moral binary. This is seen in Bregman's assumption that humans are inherently cooperative and only corrupted by civilization, versus Applebaum's framing of democratic decay as primarily a moral failing of specific political elites rather than a structural mathematical inevitability.
2. **The Utopian/Tech Trap:** The assumption by Laloux, Weyl, and the Game B writers that digital networks, quadratic voting, or elevated "conscious leadership" can replace the

messy, physical friction of human conflict resolution.

3. **The Level-of-Analysis Trap:** Attempting to scale Boehm's band-level reverse dominance directly to the nation-state, or applying Ostrom's watershed irrigation rules to planetary climate change without accounting for the mathematical breakdown of accountability.
4. **The Mechanism Without the Capture Test:** Advocating for sortition (Landemore) or structurelessness (1960s feminist collectives) without rigorously modeling how a highly intelligent, patient psychopath will map the new rules and maneuver to game them.

The Gap: The existing literature is strictly bifurcated. On one side is literature that operates safely *under the umbrella of the modern state* (Ostrom, Landemore, Raworth, Levitsky). On the other side is literature studying *pre-state humanity* (Boehm, Graeber, Scott). **There is virtually no robust, empirical framework for *re-scaling* nested governance endogenously from the household upward in a permanent post-collapse environment.** In a scenario where the state umbrella and the industrial grid are gone forever, but a descent into absolute warlordism is not inevitable, a new paradigm is required. A book filling this gap must combine Ostrom's rigorous, formalized institutional design with Boehm's lethal realism regarding dark-triad capture, and Öcalan's nested confederation.

Nearest Existing Title: If forced to combine the existing literature to approximate the book that would fill this gap, the nearest title would be a theoretical synthesis: *Governing the Commons* meets *Hierarchy in the Forest*.

Implementability after the Fall

Operating in a permanent post-collapse environment with no state, no industrial grid, and no internet, the survival of governance depends entirely on physical legibility, strict boundaries, and the proactive suppression of dark-triad actors.

1. The Household (4 to 10 people)

- *Minimum Viable Version:* The Autarchic Unit. Governance operates on direct daily consensus and the absolute pooling of resources.
- *What it needs to start:* A physical ledger of stored calories, a shared calendar (lunar/solar tracking) to manage agricultural cycles, and a strictly defined division of labor.
- *First failure to expect:* Chore evasion and free-riding by a charismatic or manipulative member, leading to rapidly compounding factional resentment and caloric deficits.

2. The Village (300 people)

- *Minimum Viable Version:* A synthesis of Ostrom's CPR principles and Boehm's Reverse Dominance. A bicameral system: a general assembly (functioning like a *Mala Gel*) meeting bi-weekly for major disputes and resource allocation, paired with a rotating council of 7 to 9 managers chosen by lot (sortition) to execute daily administrative tasks.
- *What it needs to start:* A physical, defensible meeting place capable of holding 300 people; basic literacy to maintain land, water, and resource records; and a centralized armory secured under a dual-key control system to prevent unilateral monopolization of violence.
- *First failure to expect:* The "Tyranny of Structurelessness." If the assembly relies on informal consensus rather than strict time-limits and voting procedures, a loud, narcissistic faction will dominate speaking time, exhausting the moderate majority into

submission and capturing the agenda.

3. The District (3,000 people / ~10 Villages)

- *Minimum Viable Version:* Nested Polycentricity via Democratic Confederalism. Local villages absolutely manage their own internal resources. A district syndicate, composed of two recallable, gender-balanced delegates per village (20 people total), meets monthly. This syndicate has no standing army and exists solely to manage inter-village conflict, trade disputes, and shared watershed or timber rights.
- *What it needs to start:* Secure physical messenger routes, written legal codes explicitly agreed upon by all 10 villages, and a standardized physical weights and measures system to facilitate trade without fiat currency.
- *First failure to expect:* Elite capture and the birth of a new state. The 20 delegates will inevitably begin intermarrying, hoarding strategic information, and aligning their personal interests with each other against their home villages, birthing a new, extractive proto-bureaucracy.

Summary, Open Questions, and Required Reading

10-Line Summary of Robust Findings: Governance is an eternal evolutionary arms race between collective survival and individual capture. Equality is not a natural default state; it requires the continuous, active suppression of dominant individuals by a coalition of the weak. At scales from 150 to 5,000 people, common-pool resources can be managed sustainably for centuries if boundaries are formalized, sanctions are graduated, and monitors are directly accountable to the users. Without formal rules, hidden and unaccountable hierarchies rapidly emerge, empowering narcissists. As populations scale, political leaders will inevitably prioritize their own survival by shrinking the size of the coalition required to keep them in power, substituting public goods for private bribes. Random sortition mathematically eliminates affective polarization and corruption within the selected body, but struggles to maintain legitimacy with the unselected masses. In a post-collapse environment, governance must be aggressively formalized, strictly polycentric, and deeply paranoid about elite collusion.

Contested or Open Questions:

1. Can sortition (citizens' assemblies) wield hard, binding legislative power at scale without eventually being captured by the technocratic class that facilitates the information diet?
2. Does Democratic Confederalism actually scale peacefully through decentralized councils, or is its survival in Rojava entirely dependent on the continuous external threat of war and the enforcement of an armed vanguard party?
3. Is it mathematically possible to maintain the "Red Queen effect"—where societal mobilization continuously balances central state power—without the immense economic and caloric surplus generated by carbon-intensive industrialization?

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Principles

- Equality is not a natural default state; it is an artificial equilibrium maintained only through the active, continuous suppression of dominant individuals by a coalition of subordinates.
- Any governance arrangement that attempts to rely exclusively on informal relationships and unspoken norms will inevitably generate a hidden, unaccountable hierarchy.
- Common-pool resources will survive indefinitely if, and only if, the appropriators of the resource have the right to modify the rules and actively hire or fire the monitors.
- Political leaders will inherently prioritize their own survival over systemic health by reducing the size of the coalition required to keep them in power.
- The legitimacy of a representative system decays in direct proportion to the size of the unengaged population relative to the active selectorate.
- Replacing electoral competition with random sortition mathematically eliminates affective polarization and campaign-finance corruption within the selected body.
- Institutions designed without a specific, formalized mechanism for identifying and ejecting dark-triad actors will eventually be captured by them.
- The centralization of military or dispute-resolution authority above the village level permanently shifts the balance of power away from the local constituency and toward the bureaucracy.
- A stable state-society balance requires a continuous institutional arms race; if society ceases to mobilize, the central authority will automatically expand its extractive capacity.
- Governance models reliant on high-trust ideological alignment or technological abundance fail catastrophically when subjected to sudden resource scarcity or grid collapse.

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