Transition Roadmap

A cumulative, nonviolent pathway from mutual aid to a peer-coordinated society

World in Transition

Transition Roadmap

1. Transition Roadmap
    1. The Roadmap in Five Minutes
    2. The basic strategy
    3. Ten operating commitments
    4. What this is — and what it isn't
    5. This has been built before
    6. Starting from where you are
    7. PHASE 0 Establish the ethical and operational container
    8. PHASE 1 Listen, map, and choose the first problem
    9. PHASE 2 First pilot project
    10. WORKSTREAM Financial commons and economic independence
    11. WORKSTREAM Intentional communities: living the transition now
    12. WORKSTREAM Community land trusts: how to start one
    13. WORKSTREAM Democratic accountability of corporations
    14. WORKSTREAM Preventing capture: organization without domination
    15. WORKSTREAM Strength without violence: meeting resistance and repression
    16. WORKSTREAM The reverse strike: keep everything running, withdraw what feeds the old system
    17. PHASE 3 Build durable commons
    18. PHASE 4 Integrate into a local system
    19. PHASE 5 Federate
    20. PHASE 6 Establish public compacts
    21. PHASE 7 Guarantee essentials and reduce currency dependence
    22. PHASE 7B Convert extractive ownership into stewardship and universal access
    23. KEY How coordination works without currency
    24. PHASE 8 A mature peer-coordinated system
    25. A practical local-node manual
    26. Implementation index by role
    27. Common failure modes and countermeasures
    28. A living document
    29. Sources for the examples in this roadmap
    30. APPENDIX Phase 7B in full: Convert extractive ownership into stewardship and universal access

Transition Roadmap

Edition of 10 November 2026. The latest version is always at worldintransition.net/act/roadmap/.

A cumulative, nonviolent pathway from mutual aid to a peer-coordinated society. Each phase builds the foundation for the next. Every step improves life in the present.

The Roadmap in Five Minutes

This roadmap describes a cumulative, nonviolent pathway from mutual aid (neighbours helping each other directly, as equals) to a peer-coordinated society, one where people organize things among themselves as equals, without bosses giving orders. It has nine phases. Here is the essential arc:

Phases 0-2: Start where you are

Form a small group of committed people. Listen to your community. Identify one concrete problem — a food desert, unaffordable childcare, housing insecurity — and solve it together. A tool library, a care circle (a few families taking turns with childcare or eldercare), a community garden. Something people can experience directly, this week.

Phases 3-4: Build durable alternatives

Turn successful projects into permanent, democratically governed institutions — a community land trust (a non-profit that holds land for good, so homes on it stay affordable), a cooperative clinic (owned and run by its own members), a renewable energy cooperative. Link them together into a local system where people can meet more of their needs without depending on employers or markets.

Phases 5-6: Connect and formalize

Federate local systems across communities, so they work together and share resources while each keeps control of its own affairs, without concentrating authority. Establish lawful compacts (written public agreements) with municipalities. Build the administrative and logistical capacity to coordinate at regional scale while keeping governance distributed.

Phases 7-8: Guarantee essentials, mature the system

Expand unconditional access to housing, food, healthcare, education, and transportation. Reduce dependence on currency as non-market systems become reliable enough to carry the load. Preserve pluralism, rights, ecological limits, and distributed power as the system matures.

The decisive principle: do not abolish an old dependency before a safer alternative can actually carry its load. Every phase must earn the next. Every step improves life in the present — nothing is wasted even if the broader transition takes generations.

How will you experience it? At first, it looks like your neighborhood getting a free tool library, a community garden, or a childcare cooperative. Then it's your housing becoming permanently affordable through a community land trust. Then it's your healthcare covered without insurance. Each phase is something you can touch and use — not a theory you have to believe in.

The principle behind every phase: change close enough to touch

Each large goal in this roadmap is broken into stages that people can complete and see: things that can be done today, this week, this month, this year. Every stage should run the same loop — **problem → action → observable result → replication** — and ask three questions in turn:

1. What part of the better world can we make physically real now?

2. What would allow someone else to reproduce it?
3. What becomes possible when thousands of these working alternatives connect?

A pilot succeeds when its members can truthfully say: “Yesterday we depended on the existing system for this; today we provide it for one another.” Transition gains its strength not by defeating anyone, but by making the old system progressively unnecessary.

Every stage should also let people *feel* the altitude they have gained — like climbers who notice the trees thinning, the air getting cleaner, the view opening up. Make progress visible as it happens: count the meals shared, the households no longer paying for something, the needs now met without money (the roadmap’s Currency Dependency Ratio and Essential Provision Coverage measure exactly this), and mark each milestone together. People keep climbing when they can feel each thousand feet.

Each completed stage is a camp on the mountain, not the summit: a place to rest, take stock and resupply before the next stretch of the climb. Local successes are milestones toward the full transition — never a reason to stop short of it.

Below is the full roadmap in detail. You can also start with the one-page starter sheet or the community blueprint.

The basic strategy

The transition is not a single revolution, election, or technological installation. It is a long process of building institutions that meet human needs more reliably, more fairly, and more sustainably than the ones we have now. The strategy is cumulative:

1. Listen before prescribing.
2. Solve one concrete problem in a way people can experience directly.
3. Turn successful projects into durable, democratically governed commons.
4. Link complementary commons into local systems of provision.
5. Federate local systems without concentrating authority.
6. Establish lawful compacts with municipalities and public institutions.
7. Expand unconditional access to essentials while reducing dependence on money.
8. Preserve pluralism, rights, ecological limits, and distributed power as the system matures.

Every stage must improve life in the present. A tool library, care circle, food cooperative, repair network, community land trust, free clinic, or renewable-energy cooperative is valuable in itself — regardless of whether the broader transition succeeds. Nothing is wasted.

The decisive principle: **do not abolish an old dependency before a safer alternative can actually carry its load.** Currency dependence should recede only as nonmarket systems become dependable enough to replace what currency currently provides.

Ten operating commitments

Every project using the Transition name should be able to affirm these minimum commitments:

1. **Voluntary participation and meaningful exit.** No one is trapped by debt, threats, loss of necessities, or social retaliation.
2. **Universal human worth.** Access to essentials is not conditioned on productivity, ideology, identity, or social status.
3. **Nonviolence.** The project does not pursue domination through force or cultivate dehumanization.
4. **Distributed, recallable authority.** Roles are limited, transparent, and removable. No permanent ruling class is permitted to form.
5. **Subsidiarity.** Decisions are made by the people most affected, at the smallest level capable of handling them.
6. **Evidence and revision.** Claims are distinguished from findings. Failures are reported. Rules can change.
7. **Privacy and informational self-determination.** Collect the minimum data needed and never turn participation into surveillance.
8. **Accessibility and anti-discrimination.** Design for disability, language, caregiving, income, migration status, and other real barriers.
9. **Ecological responsibility.** Provision remains within regenerative limits rather than displacing costs onto other people or the future.
10. **Compatibility without capture.** Projects may use existing law, money, grants, and public institutions during transition, while preventing funders, parties, corporations, or founders from controlling the direction.

What this is — and what it isn't

The most common first reaction to a proposal to move beyond currency and hierarchy is: *this is communism*. The concern is legitimate and deserves a direct answer, because the differences are structural — not rhetorical.

The Soviet Union, Maoist China, Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, and their derivatives shared features this roadmap explicitly prohibits: a single ruling party with a monopoly on political power; central planning imposed from above without democratic input or correction; forced collectivization; suppression of dissent, independent media, and freedom of movement; and concentration of all economic and political authority in the same hands. These are not incidental failures. They are the predictable results of concentrating power — which is what this roadmap is designed to prevent.

The ten commitments, readiness gates, failure-mode countermeasures, and Phase 8 constitutional guarantees exist to block these outcomes structurally. Distributed authority with recall and rotation. Separation of incompatible powers. Freedom of association and meaningful exit. Independent journalism, research, and auditing. Enforceable individual rights independent of productivity or obedience. Automatic expiration of emergency powers. Any project that violates these is not implementing this roadmap, regardless of what it calls itself.

This is also not a return to pre-industrial life or a withdrawal from technology. It is not a demand that everyone agree. People will still disagree about priorities, beauty, risk, identity, effort, and how to allocate scarce resources. The goal is a society that handles disagreement without anyone losing access to essentials — and without anyone accumulating the power to impose their preferences on everyone else.

What the transition offers people who currently benefit

If you have wealth, a stable career, or a comfortable life, the transition asks something of you. It also offers something that the current system reliably fails to provide — even to its winners.

The documented costs of the current system fall on everyone: the anxiety of maintaining position in a competitive hierarchy; the knowledge that your children must win a contest to be secure; relationships eroded by financial stress at every level of income and net worth, where money arguments remain the strongest predictor of divorce among the common sources of marital conflict; the loneliness that economic segregation produces at every income level. A study using data from nearly 21 billion Facebook friendship pairs found that economic connectedness — friendships crossing socioeconomic lines — was strongly associated with upward income mobility and was the strongest predictor among the social-capital measures examined. In one study of Swedish lottery players, a windfall of about $140,000 was associated with an estimated 42% reduction in married men's ten-year divorce risk — an imprecise estimate, concentrated among lower-income men — consistent with financial stress acting as a persistent, often unrecognized pressure on relationships.

The transition offers security that does not depend on winning. Children who are not being positioned for competitive advantage. The freedom to do work that matters without the threat of destitution if it doesn't generate revenue. Communities where relationships form around shared purpose rather than shared income bracket. These are not consolation prizes. For many people who currently "benefit," they are what money has failed to buy.

This has been built before

The roadmap does not propose an untested idea. Its components — democratic governance of shared resources, cooperative production, participatory decision-making, commons-based provision — have been built, tested, and sustained across decades in conditions ranging from industrial Europe to rural Mexico. No single example implements the full transition. Every example demonstrates that the building blocks work.

- **Mondragon Corporation** (Basque Country, 1956–present): Around 70,000 people across 81 cooperatives in finance, industry, retail, and education; in its Spanish cooperatives most workers are member-owners (the Eroski retail chain is the main exception). Democratically governed — one member, one vote. The highest-paid manager earns no more than six times the lowest-paid full-time worker. Has survived recessions, political transitions, and global competition for seven decades.
- **Kerala's People's Planning Campaign** (India, 1996–present): The state government devolved 35–40% of its development spending to local governments, whose priorities for infrastructure, education, and healthcare are first set in ward-level assemblies (grama sabhas) open to every resident — 1.8 million people attended in each of the campaign's first two years. Kerala's literacy rate exceeds 96%. Its life expectancy (about 75 years) comes within a few years of the United States' (about 78) at a fraction of the per-capita income — in a state of roughly 35 million people.
- **Emilia-Romagna cooperative economy** (Italy): Cooperatives employ about one in five private-sector employees — 19 per 100, nearly double the Italian average and the highest of any Italian region. (The often-repeated figures of "30% of regional GDP" and "two-thirds of residents as members" have no traceable official source; official statistics put cooperative value added at roughly a tenth of that of all other private firms.) The region consistently ranks among Italy's wealthiest and most innovative, with lower inequality and higher social cohesion than comparable regions.
- **Porto Alegre participatory budgeting** (Brazil, 1989–2004): Tens of thousands of residents each year — about 40,000 in 1999, by official estimate — directly decided municipal investment priorities through neighborhood assemblies. Sewer and water connections rose from 75% of households in 1988 to 98% in 1997. By 2019, participatory budgeting had spread to more than 11,000 processes in over 70 countries.
- **Zapatista autonomous self-government** (Chiapas, Mexico, 1994–present): Three decades of self-governance across hundreds of communities, with rotating, unpaid leadership, community-run healthcare and education, and cooperative agriculture — under sustained external hostility. In 2023 the movement dissolved its autonomous municipalities and regional Good Government Councils and rebuilt self-government around smaller community-level Local Autonomous Governments — a self-governing system revising its own structure.
- **Open-source software** (global, 1983–present): Linux, Wikipedia, Firefox, OpenStreetMap, Meshtastic, and thousands of projects demonstrate that complex production can be coordinated through voluntary participation, transparent information, and consensus mechanisms — without prices, wages, or hierarchical management. Linux has run every one of the world's 500 fastest supercomputers since 2017 and the majority of the web's servers. Wikipedia contains over 60 million articles in more than 300 languages. These are not small experiments.
- **Nordic universal provision** (Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway): National-scale demonstration that universal healthcare, education, childcare, and social insurance produce superior outcomes to market-rationed alternatives — with higher life expectancy, lower infant mortality, lower inequality, and higher social trust. These systems operate within market economies; they demonstrate what universalization achieves even before a full transition.
- **Cooperation Jackson** (Mississippi, USA, 2014–present): Building a cooperative economy in one of America's poorest cities — community land trust, cooperative enterprises, people's assemblies — demonstrating that the roadmap's early phases are actionable in conditions of deep poverty and systemic exclusion.

These are not utopian experiments. They are functioning institutions — some operating for decades, measured by conventional metrics, surviving the pressures that destroy less robust alternatives. The question is not whether these approaches work. It is whether they can be connected into a coherent system. That is what the roadmap attempts.

Sources for these examples are listed at the end of this page.

Starting from where you are

The roadmap describes a general pathway, but no two starting points are the same. Your entry depends on what already exists where you live — and what constrains you.

If you live in a country with strong social safety nets

If you are in Scandinavia, Western Europe, or another country with universal healthcare, public education, cooperative law, and functioning democratic institutions — you already have pieces of this. Your universal services are the strongest existing precedent that nonmarket provision works at national scale. Your cooperative legal frameworks make Phase 3 straightforward.

Your entry point is **Phase 3–4**: deepening democratic control over what is already public, expanding commons into areas the welfare state does not cover — housing, food, energy, digital infrastructure — and building the federating capacity that connects local projects into a system. The welfare state is an ally, not the destination.

If you live in a country with weak or absent safety nets

If you are in the United States, much of Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, South or Southeast Asia, or another context where basic needs are not guaranteed — the first projects create the safety net that does not exist. This is not abstract preparation for a future transition. It is survival infrastructure that improves life immediately.

Your entry point is **Phase 1–2**: mutual aid, food cooperatives, tool libraries, care circles, community health workers, skill exchanges, community land trusts. These projects directly reduce the cost of living for participants while building the organizational capacity for later phases. A food cooperative that saves ten families $200 a month is worth building whether or not the broader transition ever happens.

If you live in a subsistence or informal economy

If your community already operates partly outside the formal monetary economy — through subsistence farming, shared labor, communal land use, barter, or extended family networks — much of what this roadmap describes already resembles how your community functions. You are not starting from zero. In many respects, you are ahead.

Your entry point may be **defending and formalizing existing commons** against extraction — land grabs, forced commercialization, debt traps, and the enclosure of shared resources by outside interests. Elinor Ostrom's Nobel Prize-winning research, drawing on hundreds of case studies, documented communities worldwide that have governed shared resources sustainably — some for centuries. The roadmap's principles — subsidiarity, distributed authority, democratic governance, ecological limits — are descriptions of what many traditional commons already do. The challenge is not building something new. It is protecting what exists and connecting it to a larger network.

If you live under a government that restricts independent organization

In some countries, forming an independent civic organization requires state approval that is routinely denied. Independent media is suppressed. Public gatherings are monitored. The legal space for the kind of open, documented organizing this roadmap describes does not exist.

This is a reality that affects billions of people, and pretending otherwise would make the roadmap dishonest. People living under these conditions are not obligated to wait for permission to help each other. Throughout history, communities under restrictive governments have found ways to practice mutual aid, share knowledge, and care for their neighbors — not as political acts, but as human ones.

Practical guidance for restrictive environments:

- Focus on Phase 0–2 activities that are indistinguishable from ordinary neighborliness: sharing food, lending tools, caring for each other's children, teaching skills, pooling resources for emergencies. These are things people do everywhere. They do not require a charter, a name, or a public presence.
- Work through existing social structures that already have legitimacy: extended families, religious communities, neighborhood associations, professional guilds, cultural organizations. The work *is* neighborly care. It does not need to be framed as anything else, because it is not anything else.
- Keep groups small and trust-based. Do not seek publicity. Do not use political language or align with any political faction. Let the work speak through its results — through people who are better fed, better supported, more connected — not through its rhetoric.
- Protect information about participants. Do not create membership lists, digital records, or organizational charts that could be used against people. Operate through personal relationships and oral agreements wherever possible.
- Build capacity and trust first. Legal and political space may open — as it did in Poland, Czechoslovakia, South Korea, Taiwan, South Africa, and dozens of other countries where civic movements emerged from years of quiet preparation. When the opening comes, communities that have already built trust, skills, and functional mutual aid are the ones that can move.

The history of democratic transition is substantially a history of people who organized, taught, and supported each other under conditions that forbade it — church networks in East Germany, solidarity circles in Poland, women's savings groups in countries that denied women property rights, underground schools in occupied territories. The work these people did was not wrong. It was human beings helping human beings. The governments that prohibited it have largely been judged by history — not the people who found ways to persist.

How the kind of government shapes the path

The roadmap's approach to government (build first, then work with local, regional and national government for legislation and legal clarity) assumes a constitutional democracy, however captured. Where the government itself blocks change, the path differs. The building work is the same everywhere. What changes is how openly it can be done, and what happens when an opening comes.

Constitutional democracies, captured to varying degrees (for example the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Western Europe and Costa Rica). The roadmap applies as written. Elections, courts, a free press and the right to organize are tools to use and to protect. Here the Transition does not seek regime change: as oligarchic influence fades, elected officials become more responsive to the people they serve.

Governments that hold elections but tilt them. Build quietly, as everywhere, and rely less on legislators and more on the resilience of what you have built. A tilted election can still become a turning point when it is monitored and a broad coalition is ready. In Serbia in 2000, an attempt to deny an election result was met by a miners' strike, a general strike and a mass march on Belgrade, and the president conceded within days (ICNC, Otpor case study).

Closed dictatorships (for example Russia, mainland China, Myanmar, North Korea and Turkmenistan). Approaching legislators is not a realistic path here, and the structure of government itself will likely have to open. The practical guidance above applies, and history adds four lessons:

- **Build a parallel society.** In 1978 the Czech playwright Václav Havel urged people to live "within the truth" (*The Power of the Powerless*), and his colleague Václav Benda proposed a "parallel polis": independent education, culture and mutual support alongside the official system. After martial law was imposed in Poland in December 1981, an underground society of publishing, education and mutual aid kept going for years. Solidarity was legal again by April 1989, and that June it won almost every seat it was allowed to contest (Institute of National Remembrance).
- **Work through what already has legitimacy.** East Germany's peaceful revolution grew out of weekly peace prayers in a Leipzig church, held since 1982. On 9 October 1989 about 70,000 people marched through the city, and the security forces did not fire (German History in Documents and Images).

- **Systems built from below can grow even under the tightest control.** In North Korea, after the famine of the 1990s, markets grew from below out of the state's failure to provide, and loosened its control over how people make a living (Haggard and Noland, PIIE).
- **Prepare quietly for openings, which come suddenly.** Few predicted 1989. When an opening comes, the institutions already working and the nonviolent discipline already practised decide whether it becomes self-government or a new dictatorship (see What lasts).

Theocracies (for example Iran and Afghanistan). Authority claims religious legitimacy, so the Transition's case is best made in values the tradition itself holds: compassion, justice, care for the poor and the stranger. Since the Taliban shut girls out of secondary school, women have run secret schools in homes across several provinces: mutual aid under the hardest conditions (RFE/RL; Irish Times, 2026). Iran's "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement, after the death of Mahsa (Jina) Amini in the custody of the morality police in 2022, showed how broad dispersed participation can become, and how high the cost: at least 551 protesters were killed, including 68 children (Iran Human Rights), and a UN fact-finding mission found crimes against humanity (UN News, 2024).

Under dictatorships and theocracies, the socioeconomic transition and the opening of government are likely to go together. That course is for the people living there to decide and lead, nonviolently, and they decide their own risks. Transition networks elsewhere offer knowledge, solidarity, amplification and documentation. They never direct people into danger from a place of safety, and they never call for foreign military intervention.

Straddling both systems: surviving the middle period

The transition does not ask anyone to abandon their livelihood on faith. No one should quit their job on day one, give up their savings, or stop participating in the monetary economy before real alternatives exist. The decisive principle — *do not abolish an old dependency before a safer alternative can carry its load* — applies to individuals as much as to systems.

Each phase is designed to reduce your dependence on the existing system gradually, through concrete benefit:

- A tool library means you stop buying tools you use twice a year.
- A member-labor food cooperative can cut grocery bills by 20–40%.
- A care circle replaces paid childcare for its members.
- A repair network extends the life of everything you own.
- Shared renewable energy reduces or eliminates utility bills.
- A community land trust removes housing from the speculative market.

None of these require leaving the monetary economy. Each one reduces how much money you need. As the network of commons expands, the fraction of your needs met through shared provision grows and the fraction dependent on wages shrinks. The transition is not a single leap. It is a long, incremental transfer of life support from institutions that require your money to institutions that require your participation. For people still employed in the old system, the reverse strike describes what they can do in the meantime.

PHASE 0 Establish the ethical and operational container

Prevent the predictable problems that destroy young movements: founder control, ambiguity, informal coercion, unsafe practice, mission drift, and burnout. Every step produces a specific document or decision. When you finish Phase 0, you will have a written foundation that protects everyone involved — including the founders — from the patterns that have destroyed movements far larger than yours.

Recommended scale: 4–12 initiators, deliberately not all from one household, profession, or social circle. Research on optimal group decision-making consistently finds that diverse groups of 5–9 people outperform larger or more homogeneous ones — large enough for genuine disagreement, small enough for trust.

Steps

Step 0.1 — Assemble the initiating circle

You need: At least four people willing to meet regularly for eight weeks. They should come from different parts of the community — different ages, occupations, housing situations, family structures, ethnic backgrounds if your community has diversity. The Mondragon cooperatives trace their success partly to founding circles that deliberately included people who disagreed about everything except the goal.

What to do: Invite people individually, not through a public announcement. Explain that you want to explore building a specific community project — a tool library, food cooperative, care circle, or whatever you think addresses a real local need — and that the first step is building the container, not launching the project. Hold a first meeting. Go around the room: what does each person care about, what experience do they bring, what worries them about this kind of effort?

Examples of who to include: A retired teacher who knows everyone on the street. A young parent who feels isolated. Someone who has worked in a cooperative or nonprofit and knows what goes wrong. Someone skeptical of organized groups — their objections will find problems before the public does. A person with accounting or legal knowledge. Someone who communicates well in writing.

Result: A named group of 4–12 people who have met face-to-face, understand the purpose, and are willing to commit eight weeks to building a foundation before launching anything public.

Step 0.2 — Write the provisional charter

You need: A copy of the ten operating commitments (above). Three focused hours. One person to draft, everyone to review.

What to do: The charter is one page — maximum two. It answers five questions:

1. *What concrete problem are we addressing?* — Not "building a better world" but "thirty families in this neighborhood have no affordable access to basic tools for home repair."
2. *What are we committing to?* — The ten operating commitments, stated in plain language.
3. *What will we not do?* — State the boundaries clearly. For example: "We will not offer medical advice. We will not take political positions. We will not collect personal data beyond what the project requires."
4. *How does someone leave?* — Walk away with no penalty, no guilt, no loss of access to services they need. If shared assets are involved, state the separation terms.
5. *When does this charter get reviewed?* — Set a date, no more than six months away.

Principle: Informality feels warm in the early days but becomes a weapon later. The Tyranny of Structurelessness — Jo Freeman's 1972 essay on feminist collectives — documents how supposedly structureless groups reliably produce hidden hierarchies — informal elites whose power is all the harder to check because no one acknowledges it exists. A written charter prevents this. It can be revised; it cannot be invisible.

Result: A one-page charter that any new person can read in five minutes and understand what this project is, what it promises, what it won't do, and how to leave.

Step 0.3 — Assign temporary roles with term limits

You need: The charter from Step 0.2. Agreement on which roles are needed.

What to do: Assign five core roles for an initial term of three months:

- **Facilitator:** Runs meetings, keeps discussion on track, ensures everyone speaks. Does *not* make decisions unilaterally.
- **Record keeper:** Takes notes, maintains the charter and any amendments, keeps a decision log accessible to all members.
- **Safety contact:** Someone a member can approach about problems without going through the facilitator. This person should not also be the facilitator — the independence is the point.
- **Treasurer** (if any money is handled): Keeps transparent accounts. Two-signature rule for expenditures above a small threshold.
- **Operations coordinator:** Manages scheduling, supplies, space logistics.

For each role, name a backup who can step in if the primary is unavailable. Set a rotation date. When it arrives, the role passes to the next person, with training and a handover. There are no extensions and no repeat terms.

Principle: Power concentrates by default. Elinor Ostrom's research on successful commons found that long-surviving institutions share common design features: the people affected by the rules take part in making them, and those who monitor are themselves users or accountable to the users. The Zapatista Good Government Councils pushed this further: members served unpaid, in rotating shifts of one to four weeks, so that no one held authority long enough to build a personal power base — three decades of continuity suggest this works.

Result: A role chart with names, backups, term dates, and a rotation schedule — posted where everyone can see it.

Step 0.4 — Create a conflict-of-interest register

You need: Honesty and a simple shared document.

What to do: Each initiator discloses: financial interests that could benefit from the project (a business that sells tools, land that could increase in value), family relationships with other members, political positions or affiliations, employment relationships, and any control over assets the project might use (a building, a vehicle, a bank account). This is not a purity test — it is transparency. A person who owns a hardware store can absolutely help run a tool library; the fact just needs to be visible.

Example: "Maria's husband manages the community center where we plan to store tools. We'll keep a separate decision process for space agreements so she doesn't have to be both advocate and landlord." This kind of simple disclosure prevents the slow-growing suspicion that destroys groups from inside.

Result: A register — it can be a shared document or even a notebook — where every initiator's potential conflicts are noted. Updated whenever circumstances change.

Step 0.5 — Adopt decision rules

You need: An honest conversation about how the group makes choices.

What to do: Adopt three tiers of decision-making:

1. **Everyday operational decisions** (scheduling, purchases under a threshold, task assignments): *Consent* — anyone can object, but the objection must identify a specific risk, not just discomfort. If no one objects, the proposal passes. This keeps things moving. The sociocratic governance model, used by hundreds of organizations worldwide, has refined this process over decades.
2. **Constitutional decisions** (changing the charter, admitting or removing members, spending over a threshold, entering a legal agreement): *Supermajority* — typically 75% of active members, with advance notice and time for absent members to weigh in.
3. **Emergency decisions** (safety threats, legal problems requiring immediate response): *Any two role-holders can act*, with mandatory full-group review within 72 hours and automatic expiration after 30 days.

Write these rules down. Post them alongside the charter.

Result: A one-page decision-making protocol that prevents both paralysis and unilateral action.

Step 0.6 — Create an independent complaint route

You need: One trusted person who is *not* the facilitator and ideally not in the initiating circle — a community elder, a person with mediation experience, a respected neighbor.

What to do: Establish a way for any member to report a problem — including a problem with the facilitator — without having to confront the person directly. This can be as simple as: "If something is wrong and you don't feel comfortable raising it in a meeting, contact [name] at [phone/email]. They will bring the concern to the group without identifying you unless you agree." For larger projects, consider a rotating ombudsperson role or a written complaint form with a defined response timeline.

Principle: Most abuse in volunteer organizations succeeds because the complaint channel runs through the person doing harm. The complaint route must be structurally independent, not just theoretically available. Research on organizational misconduct consistently shows that the single strongest predictor of whether people report problems is whether they believe reporting will lead to change without retaliation.

Result: A named, independent contact for complaints, known to all members, with a documented process for how concerns are addressed.

Step 0.7 — Set data and privacy rules

You need: A conversation about what information the project actually requires.

What to do: Decide what you need to know about participants and what you don't. A tool library needs to know who has which tool. It does not need people's income, immigration status, political views, or health conditions. Write a data policy that states: what information is collected, who can see it, where it is stored, when it is deleted, and what happens to it if the project shuts down. If you publish results (number of loans made, hours of care provided), use aggregated data — never individual stories without explicit consent.

Example minimums: A food cooperative might need: name, household size, dietary restrictions, and a contact method. A care circle might need: name, availability, relevant skills or certifications, and emergency contacts. A tool library might need: name, contact method, and a checkout record. In each case, the question is: what is the minimum needed for the project to function? Collect that and nothing else.

Result: A written data policy, no more than one page, stating what is collected, how it is protected, and when it is deleted.

Step 0.8 — Check legal requirements

You need: Someone willing to spend a few hours researching local law, or access to free legal advice through a law school clinic, community legal center, or cooperative development organization.

What to do: Before you offer anything to the public, check: liability insurance (what happens if someone is hurt using a borrowed tool?), food safety regulations (can you distribute homemade food? what certifications are needed?), tax implications (does pooled purchasing create a tax obligation?), employment law (are volunteers actually employees under local law?), safeguarding rules (are there mandatory reporting requirements if children are involved?), disability access (can people with mobility limitations access your space?), and any licensing or registration requirements for the type of service you plan to offer.

Principle: Moral purpose does not exempt you from law. But the law is usually more permissive than people assume. In most jurisdictions, informal mutual aid among neighbors does not require a business license. Food sharing often has specific exemptions. Tool lending can be structured to limit liability. Know what the law actually says before you either comply unnecessarily or break it accidentally.

Practical resources: Many countries have cooperative development centers that offer free guidance: the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives, the UK's Cooperatives UK, Spain's COCETA, Canada's Canadian Worker Co-op Federation, Germany's DGRV. University law clinics frequently handle community organization questions. Local cooperative banks (credit unions, Raiffeisen banks) often have staff who advise on cooperative formation.

Result: A checklist of legal requirements relevant to your specific project, with notes on what has been addressed and what still needs resolution.

Step 0.9 — Write the shutdown and asset-transfer clause

You need: The charter, the asset list, and a willingness to plan for failure.

What to do: Write a clause that answers: if the project ends, what happens to shared tools, funds, space agreements, and digital records? The clause should specify that shared assets cannot become any individual's private property. Common options: assets transfer to another community organization with compatible goals, are distributed equally among active participants, or are donated to a public institution. Digital records are either transferred or destroyed. Financial accounts are closed and any remaining funds distributed according to the charter.

Principle: This is the clause no one wants to write because it feels pessimistic. It is the most important clause in the charter. Without it, a founding member who burns out can walk away with the tools, the bank account, or the lease — and the community has no recourse. Habitat for Humanity, community land trusts, and credit unions all include asset-lock provisions for exactly this reason. Think of it as a prenuptial agreement: it protects everyone precisely because it was written while people still trusted each other.

Result: A written shutdown clause that is part of the charter, specifying what happens to every category of shared asset if the project ends.

Readiness gate

Do not invite broad participation until an ordinary person can read your charter and understand: how decisions are made, how to leave, how to complain, who can see their data, and what happens to shared assets. Test this: hand the charter to someone who was not involved in writing it and ask them to explain the project back to you. If they can't, revise until they can.

Warning signs

- The founder's interpretation overrides written rules.
- Urgency is used to bypass consent or safety.
- Criticism is treated as betrayal.
- Informal labor falls repeatedly on women, disabled people, or the least powerful.
- The group offers medical, legal, childcare, construction, or financial services without competence and safeguards.

What you've built is real. You have a named group, a written charter, assigned roles with term limits, decision rules, a complaint route, legal compliance, and a shutdown clause. This is more organizational infrastructure than most community efforts ever create. It is also not the destination — it is the foundation. A building's foundation is invisible once the structure stands, but everything above it depends on getting it right. Phase 1 is where you turn outward and listen.

PHASE 1 Listen, map, and choose the first problem

Begin with lived conditions rather than a preselected program. The initiating circle probably already has ideas about what the community needs. Set those aside. Listen first. The Transition Town movement, which has grown since 2006 to about 1,000 registered groups active in 70 countries, places broad community awareness-raising and conversation ahead of launching projects in its own start-up guidance — listening before prescribing.

Steps

Step 1.1 — Design the needs-and-assets survey

You need: The initiating circle from Phase 0. A blank survey template. Two to four weeks of time.

What to do: Create a short survey — one page, fifteen questions maximum — that asks two things: *What do you struggle with?* and *What do you have to offer?* The questions should be concrete:

- "What do you spend money on that feels like a waste or a burden?" (identifies needs)
- "What do you know how to do that your neighbors might need?" (identifies assets)
- "When was the last time you needed help and couldn't find it?" (identifies gaps)
- "What tools or equipment do you own that sit unused most of the time?" (identifies shareable resources)
- "What would make your daily life noticeably easier?" (identifies priorities)
- "What do you worry about most for your family's future?" (identifies deeper concerns)

Include space for people to describe things you didn't think to ask about. Offer multiple formats: paper, phone conversation, digital form, face-to-face interview. Translate into every language spoken in the community. A survey available only in English (or only in the dominant language) is a survey of the comfortable.

Result: A printed and digital survey, translated as needed, with questions that uncover both needs and assets.

Step 1.2 — Go to people

You need: The survey. Two or more people willing to knock on doors, visit workplaces, stand outside schools, sit in laundromats, attend religious services, visit senior centers.

What to do: Do not hold a town hall and wait for people to show up. The people who attend town halls are not a representative sample of any community — they skew older, wealthier, more educated, more politically engaged, and more likely to already agree with you. Go to people where they already are.

Specific approaches that have worked:

- **Door-to-door:** The most effective method, used by organizers from Saul Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation to modern mutual aid networks. Two people, ten minutes per household, listening more than talking. Take notes immediately afterward, not during — a clipboard makes people defensive.
- **Market and laundromat tables:** Set up in places where people already wait. Offer nothing in return except genuine interest.
- **Religious and cultural institutions:** Ask a pastor, imam, rabbi, or community leader to introduce the survey at a regular gathering. In many communities, these institutions are the most trusted organizations that exist.
- **Schools:** Send surveys home with children — one of the few channels that reliably reaches isolated parents. The parent who never attends PTA meetings may have the most urgent needs.
- **Existing mutual-aid networks:** If there are already informal sharing arrangements — a neighbor who watches kids, a WhatsApp group for carpooling — find them and learn from them. They are evidence of unmet need and existing capacity.

Target: Reach at least twice as many households as there are people in the initiating circle. If you have ten initiators, talk to at least twenty households. More is better. The goal is not statistical rigor but genuine exposure to perspectives you wouldn't otherwise hear.

Result: Completed surveys from a diverse cross-section of the community, including people who would never attend a meeting.

Step 1.3 — Map community assets

You need: The survey responses. A large sheet of paper or a shared digital document.

What to do: Create an inventory of what the community already has. Organize it into categories:

- **Skills:** Who can fix plumbing, rewire a lamp, sew, cook for large groups, teach math, translate, do first aid, repair electronics, maintain a garden, drive a truck?
- **Spaces:** Is there a community hall, a church basement, a garage, a yard, a vacant lot, a covered outdoor area? Who controls access?
- **Tools and equipment:** Power tools, ladders, sewing machines, food preservation equipment, large cooking pots, vehicles, trailers, wheelbarrows.
- **Organizations:** Existing cooperatives, clubs, churches, unions, sports teams, cultural groups, senior centers, school PTAs — any organized group that represents a functioning network.
- **Informal networks:** Carpool arrangements, babysitting swaps, bulk-buying groups, neighborhood watch systems. These are assets even if no one calls them that.
- **Surplus capacity:** A bakery that throws away bread at closing time. A farm with unsold produce. A retired carpenter with tools and time. A teenager who knows how to fix phones.

Principle: John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann's asset-based community development research (Northwestern University, since 1993) demonstrates that communities that start from their existing assets build more durable projects than those that start from their deficits. Deficit-based approaches attract outside help that leaves. Asset-based approaches mobilize internal capacity that stays.

Know your cultural starting point: As you listen and map, notice where your community sits between "look out for number one" and "we take care of our own." It shapes which first projects will feel natural — see Starting points for how to begin in each setting.

Result: A community asset map — a document or visual display showing the skills, spaces, tools, organizations, and surplus capacity available in your area.

Step 1.4 — Publish a needs-and-assets snapshot

You need: The survey data and asset map. One person to draft the summary.

What to do: Write a two-page summary of what you found. Use anonymous, aggregated data — "fourteen of thirty households reported difficulty affording home repairs" rather than "the Rodriguez family can't fix their roof." Name what surprised you. Name what was contradictory. Name what you still don't know. Post it in every place you conducted the survey — the community center, the laundromat, the school, the mosque — and invite corrections.

Why corrections matter: The snapshot is provisional. If someone says "you missed the whole east side of the street" or "nobody asked the night-shift workers at the factory," that is valuable information. The goal is accuracy, not authority.

Result: A published needs-and-assets snapshot, posted publicly and open to correction for at least two weeks.

Step 1.5 — Evaluate candidate projects

You need: The corrected snapshot. The initiating circle. An afternoon.

What to do: List every project idea that emerged from the survey — both the ones people requested and the ones the data suggests. Then score each one on a simple matrix:

- **Who benefits?** How many people, and how directly?
- **How large is the benefit?** Does it save money, save time, reduce isolation, improve safety, increase skills?
- **What are the risks?** Physical safety, legal exposure, financial loss, reputational damage, conflict within the group?
- **What competence is required?** Can your group do this with existing skills, or do you need expertise you don't have?
- **What does it cost?** Money, time, space, equipment?
- **Can it produce a visible result in six months?** This is critical. A project that takes two years to show results will lose participants before it proves itself.
- **Does it build toward the next phase?** A tool library teaches shared governance. A food cooperative teaches collective purchasing. A care circle teaches mutual obligation. Choose something that develops organizational capacity, not just a service.

Creative examples based on common findings: If the survey reveals that many families struggle with food costs, the first project might be a bulk-buying club (low complexity, fast results, teaches collective purchasing). If isolation is the dominant theme, a weekly skill-share evening might work (no money needed, builds trust, surfaces additional assets). If home repair costs are the burden, a tool library with volunteer repair days addresses it directly. If childcare is the gap, a care circle of five families rotating supervision creates immediate relief. If information overload and confusion are the concern, a community information-discernment group — modeled on Finland's national media literacy curriculum, which has made Finnish citizens among the most misinformation-resistant in Europe — builds a different kind of resilience.

Result: A ranked list of candidate projects with scores on each criterion.

Step 1.6 — Choose one project

You need: The ranked list. The full initiating circle.

What to do: Choose one project. Not two. Not three. One. The temptation to start multiple things at once is the most common early-stage failure. A single project that succeeds teaches the group everything it needs to know about governance, logistics, conflict resolution, and community trust. Two projects that struggle teach nothing except that the group overcommitted.

Use the decision rules from Step 0.5. If the group can't agree, choose the project that is smallest, cheapest, and most likely to succeed. You can always do the ambitious thing later, with proof behind you.

State the project clearly: "We will establish a tool library serving [this area], stocked through member donations and open to anyone in the neighborhood, operating from [location] on [days], with the goal of [number] active users within six months." This is the Heathkit principle: if you can't state exactly what you're building, you're not ready to build it.

Result: A one-paragraph project statement specifying what, where, when, for whom, and what success looks like at six months.

> **Readiness gate**
>
> The chosen project should address a real need identified by the community — not one assumed by the initiators. If the survey found something unexpected, that is usually more important than what the group expected to find. Before proceeding, ask: can we state in one sentence who this project helps and how? If not, go back to the survey data.

You've done something most community efforts never do: you listened before prescribing, mapped what exists before building something new, and chose a single achievable goal based on evidence rather than enthusiasm. This discipline is worth celebrating. It is also only the beginning. Listening without action is research; the next phase is where the work becomes visible to the people you're trying to serve. Phase 2 turns your chosen project into something people can use.

PHASE 2 First pilot project

Prove that the group can deliver tangible benefit, learn from experience, and operate transparently. This is the phase where theory becomes practice and where most of the real learning happens. Expect problems. That is the point — a pilot exists to discover what you didn't anticipate.

Steps

Step 2.1 — Write the operating sheet

You need: The project statement from Step 1.6. One focused hour.

What to do: Write a single page that answers every question a new user will have. This is not the charter (which governs the organization) — it is the user-facing guide to the service. It covers:

1. *What is this?* — One sentence. "The Elm Street Tool Library lends tools for home repair, gardening, and maintenance to anyone in the neighborhood, free of charge."
2. *How do I use it?* — Location, hours, how to borrow and return. "Visit the garage behind 47 Elm Street, Saturdays 9am–1pm. Browse the shelves, tell the volunteer what you need, and sign the checkout card. Return within one week."
3. *What is expected of me?* — Return tools clean and in working order. Report damage immediately. Don't sublend.
4. *What is not allowed?* — Selling borrowed items. Hoarding. Using tools for commercial jobs without discussing it first.
5. *What if something goes wrong?* — "If a tool breaks while you're using it, bring it back and tell us. No penalty. If you have a complaint about the service or a volunteer, contact [safety contact name and phone]."
6. *What information do we keep?* — Name and contact for the checkout record. Nothing else. Deleted after you return the item.
7. *When does this get reviewed?* — "We review how this is working on [date]. Your feedback helps."

Principle: The operating sheet tests your project's clarity. If you can't explain the service in one page, the service is probably too complicated for its current stage. The Toronto Tool Library, one of the best-known (running since 2012 across several branches), operates on a checkout system simpler than most public libraries.

Result: A one-page operating sheet, posted at the service location and available digitally, written in plain language and translated as needed.

Step 2.2 — Start small and record everything

You need: The operating sheet posted at the service location. A simple tracking system — a notebook, a spreadsheet, or a free tool like Airtable or a shared document.

What to do: Open the service. Then track reality, not aspirations. Record:

- **Demand:** How many people used the service each week? What did they request? What did you not have?
- **Failure:** Who asked for something you couldn't provide? Who tried to participate and couldn't — because of hours, location, language, disability, transportation, childcare? This is the most important data you will collect, because it tells you who the project is accidentally excluding.
- **Labor:** How many hours did each volunteer work? Who did the setup, the cleanup, the paperwork, the emotional labor of dealing with complaints? If the same person is doing everything, you have a bottleneck and a burnout risk.
- **Costs:** What did the project cost in money, space, and time? Are those costs sustainable for the next six months without heroic effort from any one person?

Creative adaptation: If you're running a care circle instead of a tool library, record: how many hours of care were exchanged, who gave more than they received (and whether that's sustainable), whether children's or elders' needs were actually met, and whether any participant felt obligated rather than willing. If you're running a food cooperative, record: the actual savings per household per month, food waste, whether the bulk items matched what people actually eat, and whether anyone couldn't get to the pickup location.

Result: A weekly record of usage, failures, labor distribution, and costs — honest enough to guide real decisions.

Step 2.3 — Review at 30, 60, and 90 days

You need: The tracking data from Step 2.2. The initiating circle and any new participants. One to two hours per review.

What to do: At each review point, the group makes one decision from five options:

1. **Continue as is** — the project is working and no changes are needed.
2. **Change** — adjust hours, location, policies, or scope based on what the data shows.
3. **Pause** — the group needs a break, a key person is unavailable, or a legal issue needs resolution.
4. **Transfer** — hand the project to a better-positioned group or institution.
5. **Stop** — the project isn't working and continuing would waste effort or cause harm.

Publish the decision and the reasons. "We changed Saturday hours from 9am–1pm to 10am–2pm because 60% of users arrived after 10:30" is more useful than "we adjusted our schedule." Stopping is not failure — it is evidence. The data from a project that stops honestly is more valuable than the data from a project that continues dishonestly.

30-day review focus: Is anyone actually using this? Are the logistics working? Is the labor distributed?

60-day review focus: Are we reaching people beyond the initiating circle? What are we missing? Who can't access the service and why?

90-day review focus: Is this sustainable? Could it survive the departure of the two most active people? What would it need to become permanent?

Result: A published review decision with supporting data at each 30-day interval.

Step 2.4 — Stabilize before expanding

You need: A project that has survived 90 days with positive reviews.

What to do: Before growing the project or starting a second one, pass four stability tests:

1. **Backup test:** Can the project run for two weeks without its most active person? If not, train at least two people who can do every essential task. Write down the procedures — not because people can't remember, but because written procedures can be taught to newcomers without the original person being present.
2. **Legal test:** Are all legal requirements resolved? Insurance in place? Food safety certifications obtained? Tax obligations understood? If any are still pending, resolve them before scaling.
3. **Financial test:** Can the project fund its own maintenance — replacement tools, space costs, printing, supplies — without depending on a single donor or grant? If not, build a sustainable funding model: member contributions (even small ones), in-kind donations, partnerships with local businesses, or application for small grants with exit plans.
4. **Founder independence test:** Have the founding members actually stepped back from a role and let someone else fill it? Not theoretically — actually? This is the hardest test and the most important. The founder who "steps back" but still makes every decision through back-channel conversations is worse than the founder who stays visibly in charge.

Result: A project that can continue operating, legally and practically, if any single person leaves.

Example pilot projects with specific deliverables

- **Tool library:** Start with 50–100 donated tools, a simple checkout system (cardboard cards work), and Saturday hours. The Little Free Library model — more than 200,000 registered book-sharing boxes in 128 countries, started by one person with one box — demonstrates that small, specific, well-branded sharing projects spread organically. A tool library adds a social dimension: the Saturday volunteer who helps someone use a circular saw becomes a neighbor, not a stranger.
- **Bulk-buying food club:** Five to fifteen families pooling weekly grocery orders through a wholesaler. No storefront needed — someone's garage or a church hall for distribution. Buying wholesale and replacing paid labor with member labor is what drives savings. At scale, the Park Slope Food Coop in Brooklyn — a member-run grocery founded in 1973 with nearly 17,000 members, each working one 2-hour-45-minute shift every six weeks — reports that members save 20–40% on their weekly grocery bill.
- **Repair cafe:** Monthly events where skilled volunteers fix electronics, clothing, bicycles, and small appliances. The Repair Cafe Foundation, started in Amsterdam in 2009, now has over 3,000 registered locations in more than 40 countries; in 2023 alone, Repair Cafés kept about 1.4 million pounds (roughly 635 tonnes) of broken goods out of landfill. Participants learn repair skills alongside having their items fixed.
- **Care circle:** Three to eight families rotating childcare, eldercare, or disability support. A written schedule, agreed expectations, and clear boundaries. MAIA Moms (Mothers' Access to Innovative Alternatives) in San Francisco provides a model: structured, skill-matched, and sustainability-focused. Even simpler: five families where each takes one afternoon per week, giving every parent four free afternoons they didn't have before.
- **Time bank:** Participants exchange hours of service — one hour of tutoring equals one hour of garden work equals one hour of driving. Over 1,000 time banks operate worldwide, with the largest networks in the U.S., UK, Japan, and Spain. TimeBanks USA provides free software. The key design principle: every person's hour is worth the same, regardless of the service — which challenges market valuations and builds equality into the structure.
- **Community advertising-resistance course:** A six-session course teaching recognition of persuasion tactics, emotional self-regulation before purchases, digital dark-pattern awareness, and household buying protocols. Based on thirty years of persuasion-knowledge research, this approach reduces impulsive spending and builds the critical thinking infrastructure that later phases depend on. Host at an existing community space, one evening per week.
- **Information discernment group:** Five sessions teaching SIFT/lateral reading, source verification, prebunking of manipulation tactics, and group norms for correcting misinformation without shaming. Finland, whose national media-literacy education begins in preschool, ranks first of 41 European countries in the Open Society Institute – Sofia's Media Literacy Index, which measures resilience to misinformation. This course adapts the same principles for adults, in any context.

Readiness gate

The project is ready to build upon when it has survived at least one leadership rotation, one significant problem (a breakdown, a conflict, a resource shortage), and one honest public review — and people outside the initiating circle are participating voluntarily. If any of these tests haven't been passed, keep operating until they are. Rushing past this gate is the single most common way community projects fail.

You have a working project. People in your community are using something you built. Their lives are measurably better in a specific, concrete way — cheaper groceries, access to tools, reliable childcare, fewer impulse purchases, better information hygiene. This is worth pausing to appreciate: most people who want to change the world never get this far. But a

single project, no matter how good, is not a commons. It is a service. Phase 3 is where you turn what works into something durable — something that belongs to the community, not to the people who started it.

WORKSTREAM Financial commons and economic independence

Make dependence on commercial banks — and ultimately on currency itself — progressively unnecessary, by building what replaces each function before anything is displaced. This workstream runs alongside the phases from Phase 0 onward; it does not wait for the end. It is a bridge, and its success is measured by its own disappearance.

A useful function is not the same as a necessary arrangement

On September 27, 2026, Apollo Global Management's chief economist, Torsten Slok, published a short note titled "Is an Agentic Bank Run Coming?" He observed that AI assistants could soon move household cash automatically out of checking accounts paying a national average of about 0.1% into accounts paying 3.3% to 5.0%. If every household did that, he wrote, banks could lose a large share of the cheap deposits they rely on to make loans, "a problem for the entire financial system." Writing in *The Lever*, David Sirota read this as evidence that the system depends on customers continuing to accept poor terms. That is his interpretation; Slok himself made the narrower point.

The narrower point is enough. A material part of conventional banking rests on people leaving money where it earns far less than it could. Credit and payments are useful functions; it does not follow that they require this arrangement. This workstream asks how a community can provide those functions itself, and then make most of them unnecessary.

The destination is not better money or democratic banking. It is a society where people obtain food, housing, care, energy, and transport without needing purchasing power at all. In the stages below, national currency is used only as an interface with the outside economy, and that interface shrinks as the commons grows. After the transition there is no currency of any kind — only provisioning and fair allocation of what remains scarce.

Unbundle "banking" into what people actually need

People do not need banks as such. They need functions that banks bundle together, and each already has a non-bank form:

- **Safekeeping and payments** — member-owned credit unions; a shared ledger for internal transfers.
- **Everyday credit** — zero-interest mutual credit between members (F.5).
- **Housing finance** — community land trusts and housing cooperatives.
- **Business capital** — community capital pools and cooperative lenders, as Mondragon built for itself.
- **Conversion with the outside economy** — a credit union or CDFI bridge (F.3).
- **Risk pooling and accounting** — mutual aid funds, shared reserves, and an open record of resources and needs.

Nothing requires a shareholder-owned bank to perform all of these. What has not yet been demonstrated is integrating them under community control.

The guiding measure: Currency Dependency Ratio

Currency Dependency Ratio (CDR) = the share of a household's necessities that still require currency to obtain. Track it for each participating household and for the network.

If a household needed 4,000 a month and now gets 800 of that through shared food, tools, and care, its CDR has fallen from 100% to 80%. The goal is not to swap national currency for a community token; it is **CDR → 0**. Whatever currency a household still needs is the network's development backlog.

The governing rule: never replace money faster than you replace the reason people need money. For each necessity: build the capacity, guarantee access, remove it from exchange, then retire its accounting.

A second measure: Essential Provision Coverage

The CDR asks *how much outside currency is still required?* Its companion, **Essential Provision Coverage**, asks *which actual needs are reliably met without exchange?* It is tracked in physical and service terms — meals, homes, hours of care,

kilowatt-hours, trips, clinic appointments — so that changing market prices can never masquerade as progress, and currency values never define what people need.

Privacy rule: household-level currency information is reported voluntarily, held locally, and collected only at the level of detail needed for planning. Individual figures are never published, never used to rank participants, never used to decide eligibility, and never used to condition access to necessities. The network reports only aggregates.

Main phases	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7 / 7B**	**8**
Financial Commons	Charter rules; simulate	Baseline CDR & coverage (voluntary)	First pilot	Material commons, credit-union bridge, resource ledger, limited mutual credit		Federation and clearing between commons		Provisioning replaces exchange	Currency no longer needed
Currency's role	Used as today			Shrinking: outside interface and remaining scarce goods				Retired	

The Financial Commons runs *alongside* the main phases — it is not a separate "Phase 2½".

How it maps onto the phases

- **Phase 0:** Write the financial rules into the founding charter (F.1). Model the plan in the Civ-Sim simulator before any money is involved.
- **Phase 1:** In the listening survey, invite households to share (voluntarily, held locally) what they still need currency for, and map which needs are already met in kind: the baseline CDR and Essential Provision Coverage.
- **Phase 2:** Run the first pilot (specification below).
- **Phase 3–4:** Formalize the material commons (F.2), open the credit union or CDFI bridge (F.3), start the contribution and resource ledger (F.4), and — only where needed — limited mutual credit (F.5).
- **Phase 5:** Federate commons and clear imbalances between them without a central bank (F.7).
- **Phase 7:** Replace exchange with provisioning, one necessity at a time (F.6).
- **Phase 7B and Phase 8:** Currency survives only as a shrinking interface with outside economies, then not at all.

These tracks overlap; what matters is that each step carries its load before the next depends on it.

Steps

Step F.1 — Form a Commons Association (Phases 0–1)

What to do: The first organization is not a bank or a currency. It is a membership association (a nonprofit or cooperative, with legal advice) that later projects join as separate, federated bodies. Write these rules into the charter from the start:

- One person, one vote. Votes cannot be bought, sold, or transferred.
- Supplying money or assets gives no ownership and no extra say.
- No interest-bearing claims; no balance grows just by existing.
- No one loses access to necessities for not contributing.
- Open accounts, independent audits, no sale of personal data.
- Elected, recallable coordinators with term limits; no permanent managerial class.
- Free entry and exit, with a guaranteed way to convert back to national currency during the transition (see F.8).

Joining must not require ideological agreement: people can join the food commons simply because groceries are cheaper.

Step F.2 — Build the material commons while still using national currency (Phases 2–4)

What to do: Before any new accounting system, provide through shared institutions the things people now buy. Each runs legally in ordinary currency:

- **Food:** a bulk-buying club, then a consumer cooperative, farm partnerships, gardens, a shared kitchen.
- **Housing:** start or join a community land trust, which holds land permanently and keeps homes on it resale-restricted and affordable. At the end of 2010, 1.3% of CLT homeowners' mortgages were seriously delinquent, against 8.6% in the conventional market.
- **Energy:** group purchasing of solar, batteries, and efficiency upgrades; later, community generation.
- **Tools, care, mobility:** a library of things; rotating childcare and eldercare (with professionals where safety requires); ride-sharing and shared vehicles.
- **Production:** worker cooperatives chosen to fill gaps — repair, construction, food, care.

Result: A measurable fall in each participating household's CDR, before any new financial instrument exists.

Step F.3 — Open a financial bridge through an existing credit union or CDFI (Phases 3–4)

Why not start your own: In the U.S., NCUA tells organizers of a new federal credit union to expect at least a year to complete the charter application and, as informal guidance, to plan for a minimum of $500,000 in start-up capital. A first pilot should not carry that burden.

What to do:

1. Find a sympathetic credit union or Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI — which includes community development banks, credit unions, and loan funds). U.S. federally insured credit unions are member-owned and held $2.31 trillion in assets in late 2024. Elsewhere, look for cooperative or mutual banks.
2. Open accounts for the association and each commons; negotiate low-cost member accounts with no overdraft traps.
3. Use the institution only for what must touch national currency: outside suppliers, reserves, grants, settlement. Instant payment rails make it a workable gateway (in the U.S., the Federal Reserve's FedNow service runs around the clock, every day).
4. Build the commons' own accounting separately (F.4) — open-source and auditable.
5. Consider chartering a dedicated cooperative institution only once several thousand participants and multiple cooperatives exist. Mondragon founded Caja Laboral in 1959 this way: its cooperatives held a majority on its governing bodies and backed it with part of their own capital.

Result: Members keep insured, regulated accounts while national currency becomes an external interface rather than the medium of community life.

Step F.4 — Keep a contribution and resource ledger — information, not money (Phase 4)

What to do: Record what exists and what is happening: "Maria: 8 hours of eldercare." "Food cooperative: 640 kg of vegetables available." "Energy commons: 430 kWh surplus forecast."

The decisive design choice: these entries are not purchasing power. Maria does not earn 8 tokens she must spend to eat; food is provided under the food commons' rules. Her record helps the community spot shortages, overload, and free-riding. A 90-year-old, a child, or a full-time carer who records nothing keeps full access to necessities. This stops the network from quietly reinventing wages. Collect minimal data, store it locally, and never use it to rank people.

Result: A shared picture of needs, resources, and capacity that later replaces prices as the main source of economic information.

Step F.5 — Use limited, zero-interest mutual credit only where scarcity still requires exchange (Phases 4–5)

What it is: Members extend purchasing power to one another instead of borrowing it from a bank. A plumber who needs groceries before being paid goes to −500 and the grocer to +500; later the plumber repairs a farmer's pipes and returns to zero. Trade happens without waiting for cash, and no one charges interest.

Precedents: Switzerland's WIR, founded in 1934 during the Depression's credit shortage, still clears trade between small businesses. Sardinia's Sardex, inspired by WIR and launched in 2010 after the financial crisis, pegs one credit to one euro and charges no interest on balances; in 2019 about 3,200 member firms traded roughly €31 million between businesses (€52 million in total volume).

How to set it up:

- Use it only for goods and services the commons cannot yet provide to everyone. Access to the guaranteed core of necessities never depends on a balance.
- Set credit limits by demonstrated ability to contribute — for example, a −500 floor and +2,000 ceiling for a new member, widened after a year of reliable participation — so no one can consume a lot and disappear.
- Balances earn no interest, cannot be lent at interest, cannot buy votes or governance power, and do not grow by being held.
- Start dollar- or euro-denominated so people understand it; start with businesses and producers (the Sardex and WIR model) before households.
- Retire each category as soon as it can be provisioned: bicycles, say, move from currency, to mutual credit, to "available according to need." Each category that leaves the ledger is currency being phased out, operationally.

Legal caution: renaming exchange does not remove tax obligations. In the U.S., the IRS treats the fair market value of goods or services received through barter as taxable income, and barter exchanges must file Form 1099-B. Pilots must comply with tax and financial law, with competent advice, and advocate openly for better law.

Result: A small, bounded exchange perimeter that shrinks as provisioning grows.

Step F.6 — Replace exchange with provisioning (Phase 7)

What to do: Each commons maintains three inventories: *needs*, *resources* (what exists), and *capacity* (what can be produced). If 8,400 kg of vegetables are needed and 7,900 kg expected, the question is not "who can afford vegetables?" but "how do we close a 500 kg gap?" — more greenhouse output, a trade with another commons, less waste, a larger planting.

Allocation without money depends on the kind of scarcity:

- **Abundant goods** (water, staple foods, information, electricity below capacity): take according to reasonable need.
- **Predictably scarce goods** (housing): published rules — accessibility needs, household size, proximity to care and work, waiting time.
- **Temporarily scarce goods:** queues, rotation, reservation, lotteries, or priority by need.
- **Uniquely scarce goods** (a donated organ, a house by the sea): democratic allocation with transparent criteria and appeal.

Post-currency does not mean post-allocation. It means scarcity is addressed directly instead of auctioning access by accumulated purchasing power. See How coordination works without currency.

The role of AI: a forecasting and matching tool, never a sovereign allocator. It forecasts demand, flags bottlenecks, and proposes options; people set the rules and can override any recommendation, and the models are open to inspection.

Result: Necessities provided by agreement, one sector at a time, following the Phase 7 sequence.

Step F.7 — Federate without a central bank (Phase 5 onward)

What to do: Link working commons; do not merge them. Each keeps clearing accounts with the others and only net imbalances are settled periodically; with many commons trading, most flows cancel out. Settlement moves from national currency, to mutual clearing, to direct reciprocal provisioning of goods and capacity.

Each level handles only what cannot be handled below it. There is no "Bank of Transition" and no authority able to switch off anyone's economic life — shared protocols, like the internet's, rather than a center.

Step F.8 — Keep the standing rules: no oligarchy, no stranding (all phases)

- **Anti-oligarchy:** Conventional money lets balances grow into assets, rents, and more balances. Here, large contributions are recognized but confer no extra power and no financial return.
- **Exit:** During the transition, anyone can leave with their currency, their property, and a fair settlement of balances. An alternative that works only because people cannot leave has reproduced the coercion it set out to replace.

First pilot specification

- **Size:** 50–100 households and 10–20 local producers or businesses.
- **Duration:** 12 months, with the 30/60/90-day reviews from Phase 2.
- **No currency is created.** No credits, tokens, or mutual credit in the first pilot.
- **Month 1:** Form the Commons Association (F.1). Map each household's needs, skills, equipment, and available time; households that wish to may also share recurring spending, held privately under the privacy rule above. Record the baseline CDR and Essential Provision Coverage.
- **Months 2–6:** Answer one question: *which five things do participants now buy individually that we could provide collectively?* Typical answers: groceries, tools, childcare, household repair, transport. Build those five commons.
- **Months 6 and 12:** Measure again. A fall in average required monthly spending — say, from 3,200 to 2,700 — is a concrete result. What remains is the backlog: food production, energy, housing, health. Publish everything, including what did not work.

Failure modes and safeguards

- **Fraud:** open double-entry ledgers, independent audits, two-person sign-off on inventory and reserves, rotation of anyone handling accounts.
- **Hoarding:** capped balances that earn nothing; scarce goods allocated by rule, not by balance.
- **Free-riding and overload:** make imbalance visible; respond by redesigning work and recruiting, never by cutting off necessities.
- **Defaults:** conservative credit limits raised only with track record, a shared loss reserve, a fair process for members who leave in deficit.
- **Runs and shocks:** a national-currency reserve for outside costs; never promise conversion faster than reserves allow.
- **Governance capture:** one person, one vote; recall; no link between balances and power.
- **Regulatory and tax non-compliance:** legal advice before any internal accounting unit exists; report taxable transactions; stay within deposit-taking, lending, and money-transmission law. Members' savings stay in insured accounts.

What is demonstrated and what is extrapolation

Demonstrated: member-owned credit unions at trillion-dollar scale, Mondragon's cooperative bank, WIR's ninety-year record, Sardex's regional mutual credit, and land trusts that kept homeowners stable through a housing crash.
Extrapolated: combining them into one federated architecture, replacing exchange with provisioning across a whole economy, and a society with no currency at all. These are reasoned extrapolations, not proven results — which is why each step is tested before the next.

Readiness gate

Before any internal accounting unit or mutual credit is used with real goods, model the design in Civ-Sim and attack it: 20% of participants stop contributing; a crop fails; energy output falls 40%; a coordinator falsifies inventory; a faction captures governance; the outside currency loses value; one commons hoards. Track CDR, needs met, concentration of resources and power, free-rider load, care burden, and recovery time. Expand only when the design recovers credibly from these cases — and only after the first pilot has lowered currency needs without leaving anyone worse off.

Currency is not defeated; it becomes obsolete. Food stops requiring money, then energy, transport, housing, healthcare, education, and manufactured goods, until nothing important is left that people need money for. That starts with the first shared purchase. Phase 3 is where the first of these commons becomes a durable institution.

WORKSTREAM Intentional communities: living the transition now

The phases build the new system one shared service at a time, across a whole community and eventually a whole society. This workstream lets people go further sooner: live together, now, by the principles of the Transition, with democratic and egalitarian decision-making, shared resources and, where members choose, shared finances. It does not depend on the transition of a country or even a neighbourhood, only on the people who take part, so it can begin at any stage: at the very start, in the middle, or late in the transition.

What they can look like

Think of them as intentional extended families, or kibbutz-like communities, in the city or in the country, at any scale:

- A few friends or families sharing a large house, a duplex or neighbouring apartments, pooling costs, cooking, childcare and tools.
- A cohousing group, with private homes around shared space and shared meals. Cohousing began in Denmark in the 1970s and is now found worldwide.
- A larger community on land further out, growing food, sharing work and income, and governing itself democratically. Twin Oaks in Virginia has shared its income and governed itself democratically since 1967; the kibbutzim sustained shared economies for generations, and many still do.

Why it matters

- **No one is left alone with their problems.** Isolation is one of the system's quiet costs. In a shared household or community, no one faces illness, job loss or old age alone.
- **Living costs fall,** because houses, vehicles, tools and land are shared. That frees time and money, and reduces the currency dependence this roadmap measures.
- **Each community becomes a working example** of an advanced stage of the Transition, one that others can visit, learn from and copy.

What it looks like in the real world

None of these is perfect, and none depends on a charismatic leader. Each shows a part of what is possible.

- **Twin Oaks** (Virginia, since 1967): about 100 people share their income. The community provides housing, food, health care and spending money, members share the work across its businesses and households, and decisions are made democratically (Twin Oaks).
- **Kommune Niederkaufungen** (Germany, since 1986): full sharing of income and assets, decisions by consensus at a weekly meeting, and its own collective workplaces, from carpentry and organic farming to a kindergarten and a day-care centre for older people (overview).
- **Sieben Linden** and **Dancing Rabbit** (Germany and Missouri, both since the 1990s): ecovillages whose members keep their own incomes but hold land and housing in common. Both changed how they govern themselves as they grew, from whole-group consensus to elected circles, to prevent burnout (Global Ecovillage Network).
- **Lilac** (Leeds, England): 20 homes around a shared common house, owned through a mutual society. Residents pay about 35% of their income towards their homes, and resale gains are capped so the homes stay affordable for the next family (UK Cohousing Network).
- **Danish cohousing:** more than 400 communities since the first in 1972, with private homes around shared spaces and shared meals. Research links them to stronger social support, though the evidence is still limited (Carrere and colleagues, 2020).
- **Zurich's housing cooperatives:** about a quarter of the city's homes are non-profit, many of them cooperatives such as Kalkbreite and mehr als wohnen, and the city's voters have set a target of one third (Housing International).
- **Mietshäuser Syndikat** (Germany): about 190 houses taken off the speculative market for good, through a simple legal design in which each house governs itself but none can be sold (overview).

- **FUCVAM** (Uruguay, since 1970): low-income families build their homes together through mutual aid and own them collectively. The movement survived a dictatorship and won a World Habitat Award (World Habitat).
- **Tenants who bought their buildings** (New York and Washington, DC): when landlords abandoned buildings in New York in the 1970s and 1980s, low-income tenants took them over and turned more than a thousand into resident-owned cooperatives (UHAB). On the Lower East Side, residents fought for decades and now run 21 buildings on land held by the Cooper Square Community Land Trust. In Washington, a 1980 law gives tenants the first right to buy their building when it is sold; it has produced 96 limited-equity cooperatives with more than 4,300 homes (CNHED, 2020).
- **Families pooling homes without any ideology at all:** 18% of Americans already live in multigenerational households, often for financial reasons, and most say the experience is mostly positive (Pew Research Center).

Lessons from the record

Many attempts fail, usually over money, decision-making and unresolved conflict rather than over ideals. One experienced founder estimates that only about one forming group in ten succeeds (Christian, *Creating a Life Together*). Research on nineteenth-century communes found that those built on strong shared commitments lasted far longer (Sosis, 2000); a study of 454 modern American communes found that the strongest predictors of survival were owning the land, being larger, and getting through the first years (Bader, Mencken and Parker, 2006). Lighter forms of sharing, such as cohousing and mutual home ownership, have proved among the most durable starting points. What works:

- **Agree in writing first:** how decisions are made, how money and property are shared, how people join, and how people leave, including what they take with them. Use the charter and asset-lock tools from Phase 0 and Phase 3.
- **Secure the land and the legal structure,** through a cooperative, mutual society or land trust, so the community cannot be sold out from under its members.
- **Start small, and grow by agreement.**
- **Let governance grow with the group,** delegating to elected circles as numbers rise, while keeping the whole community in charge of the big decisions.
- **Make the shared commitments clear and real,** and revisit them together.
- **Learn conflict resolution early,** using the care-circle and mediation practices in this roadmap.
- **Respect privacy and each member's freedom to leave.** Joining is voluntary, staying is voluntary, and no one is pressured.

Stay connected

These communities must not wall themselves off. History is full of communities that turned inward and lost touch with the world they hoped to change. Intentional communities in the Transition engage with their neighbours, share their knowledge openly, take part in the local node and the wider federation, and link with each other, through the Transition network and through networks such as the Foundation for Intentional Community. Their purpose is not to escape the world, but to show it what is possible.

WORKSTREAM Community land trusts: how to start one

Housing is the largest expense for most households, and land is the part of it that speculation drives up. A community land trust takes land off the speculative market for good, so homes on it stay within reach of ordinary people, generation after generation. Few people know how to start one. This workstream explains how they work and gives step-by-step routes for six common situations, including communities with very little money.

How a community land trust works

- **The trust owns the land.** A community nonprofit holds it permanently and does not sell it.
- **Residents own or rent the homes.** They lease the land underneath, typically for 99 years, renewable and inheritable (Center for CLT Innovation).
- **A resale formula keeps homes affordable.** When owners sell, they keep a fair share of the gain, and the next family buys at an affordable price. Help given once keeps working, and never has to be given twice.
- **The community governs it.** In the classic model, the board is one third residents, one third neighbours from the surrounding area, and one third public members such as local officials or specialists. Not every trust follows it exactly; the Transition recommends it.
- **The trust stands behind its residents.** After the 2008 crash, at the end of 2010, 1.3 percent of land trust homeowners' mortgages were seriously delinquent, against 8.6 percent in the conventional market (Thaden, Lincoln Institute, 2011).

New Communities, founded in Georgia in 1969 by Black farmers and civil-rights organizers including Charles and Shirley Sherrod, is often called the first (Center for CLT Innovation). Today about 300 land trusts and similar shared-equity organizations operate in the United States (Lincoln Institute, 2022 census), about 360 in England and Wales (Community Land Trust Network, 2024), and the model has spread to Belgium, France, Puerto Rico, Kenya and Brazil.

The hard part is the land, and there are ways around money

Communities with little money have acquired land in six main ways: land given by cities, land banks, congregations or landowners; public start-up support; collective title to land people already live on; legal powers won through organizing; many small contributions pooled together; and homeowners placing their own land in the trust. In keeping with the roadmap's approach to government, what to ask public bodies for is mainly land and legal clarity.

Six routes, step by step

Every route shares a basic sequence: agree a shared vision; decide whom and where the trust will serve; choose a legal structure (with local legal advice; see Phase 3); make a 12-month and a five-year plan; draw up a budget; and prepare the first project, with the lease, the resale formula and willing lenders in place (Grounded Solutions Network, Start-up CLT Hub). Free guides are also available from the Community Land Trust Network for England and Wales.

Route 1 — A neighbourhood with vacant or abandoned land

1. Map the land: vacant lots, abandoned buildings, tax-foreclosed and publicly owned parcels, who owns them and what is owed on them.
2. Organize residents around a plan for the neighbourhood, so the trust is the community's own idea, not an outside project.
3. Form the trust, or start as a program of an existing community organization while you build capacity.
4. Ask the city or its land bank for a written policy rather than one-off favours: transfers for a nominal sum, discounts, or a right of first refusal on tax-foreclosed land. Some land banks and land trusts already work this way (Lincoln Institute, 2020).
5. Start with one small site and seed support for building or repair.
6. Use whatever legal powers exist locally.

7. Build or repair the homes, sell or rent them, keep the land, and stay in touch with residents afterwards.

Where it has worked: In 1984 the city of Burlington, Vermont, gave a $200,000 start-up grant to a new land trust (The Tyee, 2016). Today, as the Champlain Housing Trust, it holds about 2,700 apartments and about 700 shared-equity homes, and it won a World Habitat Award in 2008 (Champlain Housing Trust). In Boston, the Dudley Street residents' organization won the power of eminent domain over 64 acres of vacant land in 1988 (some sources say 1989), widely described as a first for a community group; about 225 permanently affordable homes followed (Center for CLT Innovation; Loyola University Chicago).

Watch for: Clearing legal title to abandoned land is slow. Free land still needs money to build on. One-off deals do not grow into a system; a standing policy does.

Route 2 — People who already live on the land, or tenants facing displacement

1. Come together around the shared threat: eviction, redevelopment, rising rents.
2. Make a plan together, with everyone affected, over one to three years.
3. Form a legal residents' organization.
4. Win recognition: a special law, a place in the city's master plan, a zoning designation for social housing, or a national land-regularization program.
5. Have the land transferred to the trust collectively. Individual titles alone can be bought up one by one, and the community dispersed.
6. Give each family secure, inheritable rights to its own home.
7. Stay organized, so the community can defend what it has won.
8. For tenants in a city building: buy the building with or through a land trust, and run it as a residents' cooperative.

Where it has worked: In San Juan, Puerto Rico, about 2,000 families living in informal settlements along the Caño Martín Peña channel won a 2004 law that placed their land in a collective trust. When a 2009 law threatened it, they kept it through organizing and a lawsuit, and they won a World Habitat Award in 2016 (Lincoln Institute; World Habitat, 2016). In Rio de Janeiro, favela communities have been building the same model since 2018 (RioOnWatch). In Voi, Kenya, residents of about 530 houses formed a land trust in the 1990s (Habitat International Coalition). In London, a land trust delivered 23 homes priced on local earnings on a former hospital site (London CLT).

Watch for: Weak legal frameworks, fading participation over the years, political reversal, and outside organizations taking control of what residents built. Voi shows how participation and trust can weaken once the first struggle is won.

Route 3 — Farmland or community gardens

1. Find the land and willing landowners: retiring farmers, congregations, estates, and cities with vacant lots already used as gardens.
2. Acquire it by donation, by a sale below market value, or by buying only the development rights, which brings the price down to farm value. Add a right to buy at farm value, so the land stays affordable to the next farmer, not merely undeveloped.
3. Lease it long term to farmers or gardeners, with a board on land-trust lines.
4. Secure the title early. Gardens on unclaimed land can be lost at a tax sale.

Where it has worked: Local "Agrarian Commons" hold farms with boards in thirds and 99-year leases (Agrarian Trust). New Communities, the first land trust, bought a 1,600-acre plantation in 2011, 26 years after losing its first farm (Equity Trust).

Watch for: Heavy debt. New Communities lost its first land to foreclosure in 1985, after droughts and discriminatory federal farm lending.

Route 4 — Homeowners who place their land in the trust

1. Get independent legal and tax advice, and your mortgage lender's consent.
2. Choose the form: give the land to the trust now and keep the house on a 99-year renewable lease; keep the right to live there for life; or leave the land to the trust in your will.
3. Agree what the trust offers in return. Some trusts have paid off debts or funded major repairs, so that families at risk of losing their homes could stay.
4. Encourage neighbours to do the same. A street of homes in one trust is far harder to break up.

Where it has worked: In Minneapolis, the City of Lakes Community Land Trust has helped about 15 households at risk of losing their homes to stay, in exchange for the land (City of Lakes CLT). In the 1950s, India's land-gift movement persuaded landowners to give land to their villages (Center for CLT Innovation).

Watch for: This route is still rare, and no whole block has yet joined together, so it is pioneering ground. Make sure every homeowner understands what they are giving: future gains in the land's market value, in exchange for permanence and security.

Route 5 — An expensive city with no public support

1. Join or partner with an existing land trust rather than starting alone.
2. Build a broad alliance: congregations, unions, schools, tenant groups.
3. Look for patient landowners: congregations, universities, and developers with obligations to provide affordable housing. In California, a 2023 law lets religious and nonprofit colleges build affordable housing on their land by right (California HCD).
4. Raise money from many people. In the UK, cooperatives and community benefit societies can issue community shares: each member has one vote, however much they put in (Plunkett Foundation). Oxfordshire Community Land Trust raised over £580,000 this way in 2023 (Ethex), and Stokes Croft Land Trust in Bristol raised £325,000 from about 400 members (Co-operatives UK).
5. Start with one building.

Where it has worked: London Community Land Trust grew from a broad citizens' alliance founded in 2007 (People Powered Homes).

Watch for: Time. London's first residents moved in about ten years after the trust was founded. Plan for a long road, and celebrate each step.

Route 6 — Countries without land trust law

1. Find the local legal tool that separates land from buildings, such as surface rights or very long leases.
2. Use two linked bodies: a foundation that holds the land, and an association that runs it.
3. Write the land trust's rules, including the resale formula and community governance, into statutes and contracts before any land trust law exists.
4. Seek legal recognition step by step, using the results as evidence.

Where it has worked: The Brussels Community Land Trust, founded in 2012, had 107 occupied homes by 2023 and won a World Habitat gold award in 2021 (Center for CLT Innovation). In France, 155 land-holding organizations were approved by the end of 2024 under a dedicated law, though many are run by social landlords or councils rather than communities (French Ministry of Ecological Transition, 2025).

Watch for: Legal limits on lease length, dependence on donors, and state-led versions in which the community loses control.

What is established and what is hypothesis

Established: land trusts keep homes affordable across generations, they kept owners in their homes through a housing crash, and low-income communities have founded them on donated, public or occupied land. Hypothesis: that the model can grow from hundreds of trusts to a large share of housing and farmland, and that homeowners will place their land in trusts in large numbers once the benefits of permanence and security are widely understood.

WORKSTREAM Democratic accountability of corporations

This workstream improves people's lives now, inside the present economy, while the Transition proceeds. It gives the people who work for a corporation, and the people who depend on what it provides, binding authority over its leadership. It is one step on the way, not a destination: it does not make ownership-based economics acceptable or permanent, and nothing in it may be used to slow or block the later stages of the Transition. It would be a significant advance, and it is a milestone on the road, not the end of it.

The problem it addresses

Today, authority over a corporation comes from owning it. Executives answer to shareholders. So a company can collect payments month after month while making it nearly impossible for customers to reach a person who can fix a problem, and the cost of that neglect lands on customers' time and employees' well-being, not on the people who made the decision. An employee can lose a job over a disagreement with a supervisor and carry the record for years; an executive responsible for mistreating thousands of employees or customers can leave with a severance package and step into another senior post. The principle of this workstream is simple: **authority over an institution must be inseparable from accountability to the people whose lives it affects.**

Until the Transition is complete, and currency and the need for it have been left behind, the guiding intention is this: **a company must do right by its workers, do right by its customers, and do right by its shareholders, but its responsibility to the people who produce its goods and services, and to the public whose money makes its profits, outweighs its profitability.** The aim is not to destroy profit. Where doing right by workers and customers reduces it, that is an acceptable trade-off.

What the reform would establish

- **It applies to every business.** All businesses become accountable to their employees and customers, with procedures in proportion to their size, and the full structure applies to large corporations.
- **Employees and customers have binding authority, and shareholders cannot override them.** Both groups can demand corrective action and recall executives, without needing permission from the board or the shareholders.
- **Choosing leaders requires both employees and customers.** Employees, customers and shareholders each hold one third of the vote on new leadership, but an appointment needs the separate consent of employees *and* customers. Together, employees and customers are enough even if shareholders oppose. Shareholders joined by one of the two groups can never override the other.
- **Protected floors for both groups, set in law.** For employees: limits on working hours, a living wage and safe conditions. For customers: standards of quality, responsiveness and timely resolution of problems, and fair pricing. No vote by anyone can trade these away.
- **Open pricing, and no gouging.** A company must always show, plainly, what goes into its prices: costs, wages, overheads, and the profit it takes. If an independent review finds it is taking more than can be justified, that is a breach of the customers' floor, and it can trigger a challenge or a recall like any other. The principle is not new. Most U.S. states already prohibit price gouging during emergencies (National Conference of State Legislatures), and regulated utilities have long been allowed to charge only their costs plus a reasonable return (Regulatory Assistance Project). This floor applies it at all times.
- **No group can shield an executive who harms the other.** If an independent investigation verifies that an executive breached one group's floor, that group alone can complete the removal, with full due process. A company should not be able to please its customers by forcing employees into punishing hours, or reward its employees while service collapses.
- **Everything else is settled by agreement.** When both groups' floors are breached, both have been harmed by the same leadership and agreement is likely. When no floor is breached, their interests usually align too. Real trade-offs go to a structured reconciliation process, drawing on council practice and nonviolent communication, with an

independent mediator and deadlines. A deadlock is resolved by mediation and interim arrangements that keep the service running, and never by handing the decision to shareholders.

- **Problems get fixed on a deadline.** A failure that is readily correctable must be corrected within ten days. A complex one requires a credible plan within ten days, with binding milestones.
- **How people are treated outweighs profit.** A removal for bad faith, incompetence or unresponsiveness is recorded prominently in a public record of executive conduct, however profitable the company was. A financially successful executive can still be found unfit to lead. An executive removed for cause is barred from leadership, and the bar does not expire on its own. There is a path back, but it must be earned: consistently demonstrated change, over a minimum period set in law, verified independently. Remediation training or counselling is available to anyone who needs help understanding what is required of them.
- **Plain-language histories of every candidate.** Before anyone is appointed, their full professional record, including how they treated employees and customers, is published in language anyone can understand, not only in financial terms. Verified findings are kept separate from allegations.
- **Fair process for everyone, executives included.** Notice, access to the evidence, a chance to respond, and an independent appeal. False accusations and retaliation are both prohibited.

It builds on what already exists

- **Germany:** since 1976, employees of companies with more than 2,000 workers elect half of the supervisory board, and since 2004 employees of companies with 500 to 2,000 workers elect a third. Shareholders keep the final say, through the chair's casting vote (overview). A careful study of German board representation found that it did not reduce investment; if anything, investment rose (Jäger, Schoefer and Heining, *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 2021).
- **Cooperatives and credit unions** are already governed by their members, one member, one vote (International Cooperative Alliance).
- **In the United States,** the Accountable Capitalism Act, first introduced in 2018 and reintroduced in 2024, would have employees elect at least 40 percent of the board of every company with more than $1 billion in annual revenue (the proposal).

This reform goes further than any of them: customers take part too, and shareholders lose the final say.

When to move

Different parts of this reform are ready at different stages:

- **Voluntary adoption can begin at any stage.** Any cooperative, employee-owned firm or Transition enterprise can govern itself this way from Phase 2 onward, and every year of documented results strengthens the case.
- **Conditions on public money and public licences** belong with the public compacts of Phase 6, when local networks have shown they can deliver and public institutions are already partners.
- **Binding law for all large corporations** should be attempted only when the readiness gate below is met. A law attempted too early, and defeated, can set the cause back by years.

Readiness gate for a binding law

- Working examples exist, with several years of independently documented results for employees and customers.
- A broad coalition is organised and committed: employee and customer organisations, small businesses, and people across the political spectrum, not one faction.
- Support holds after people have heard the opposition's strongest arguments, not only before.
- The legal text has been independently reviewed, and a litigation plan and legal team are ready.
- Volunteers and resources exist to sustain a campaign for years, not months.

- An opening has appeared. Public anger at unaccountable corporations peaks after visible failures and scandals; reforms that are fully prepared before such a moment can move quickly when it comes.

Overcoming the resistance

Those who benefit from the present arrangement will resist, and they can spend heavily. In 2020, app-based companies spent more than $200 million on a single California ballot measure, Proposition 22, to keep their drivers classified as contractors, and it passed with about 58 percent of the vote (CalMatters). Every serious attempt to regulate large corporations or hold them accountable has met a concerted, well-funded campaign to block it, and this one will too. A campaign that waits to be attacked will lose. It must be robust, proactive and pre-emptive from the first day: ready for the opposition's arguments, its lawsuits and its spending before they arrive. The strategy is not to outspend the opposition, which is impossible, but to outbuild, outlast and outcreate it.

- **Build it first, without asking permission.** Cooperatives, credit unions, employee-owned firms, benefit corporations and the Transition's own enterprises can adopt this model voluntarily, today. Each one that works answers the claim that it cannot work, and gives people a real choice of whom to buy from and work for. Test the hardest parts in practice and in simulation first: contested appointments, deadlocks, manipulated customer registrations.
- **Start where the public already holds the leverage.** Companies that receive public contracts, subsidies or rescues, and those that provide essential services such as utilities, insurance, hospitals and telecommunications, can be required to accept employee and customer governance as a condition of public money or a public licence. That is easier to win, and much harder to attack as taking anyone's property.
- **Build a coalition no single interest can split.** Employees and customers together are nearly everyone. Small businesses, squeezed by the power of large ones, have reasons to join. Speak in terms people across the political spectrum already share: accountability, fairness, and answering to the people you serve.
- **Choose the legal route with care.** In the United States, a company's internal governance is mostly set by the state where it is incorporated, often Delaware, so a law in one state cannot reach most large companies. Pursue several routes at once: state measures where they are enforceable, a federal model law, and conditions on public money. Obtain an independent legal review before filing anything, and prepare for court challenges in advance rather than improvising after them.
- **Change the laws that shield executives and put shareholders first.** Existing law protects corporate leaders from the people their decisions affect, and treats the corporation as answerable to its shareholders alone. Under the "business judgment rule", courts generally defer to directors' decisions. Delaware lets companies excuse directors, and since 2022 their senior officers too, from personal liability for careless decisions (Cleary Gottlieb, 2022). Companies can pay their executives' legal costs and insure them at the company's expense. And court decisions such as *eBay v. Newmark* (2010) have been read as making shareholder value the directors' central duty (case summary). Where these rules entrench the lack of accountability, they must be rewritten or repealed by legislation, and challenged in court where they conflict with the rights this reform establishes. The law must then be expanded so that every business, and above all every large corporation, is accountable to its employees and customers. This is a fundamental change to the legal structure of business, and it is necessary: without it, the other measures can be overturned. It needs a standing legal team and carefully chosen test cases, prepared from the start.
- **Prepare people for the opposition's arguments before they hear them.** Research shows that showing people the manipulation techniques they are about to meet makes them better at recognising them (Roozenbeek and colleagues, *Science Advances* 2022). Publish the full text, a plain explanation, the honest costs and the open questions. Answer false claims with evidence, and answer genuine objections by improving the proposal.
- **Make the money visible.** Publish, continuously and plainly, who is funding each side.
- **Win with people, not advertising.** Personal conversations, trusted local voices, and the people already living under unaccountable corporate leadership telling their own stories.
- **Stay lawful, open and nonviolent,** in keeping with the operating commitments, and protect everyone who takes part from retaliation.

- **Keep the destination in view.** Set milestones and measure what changes for employees and customers. A reform that makes corporations less harmful must not become a reason to stop; a non-entrenchment clause ensures it cannot be used to block the next stages.

WORKSTREAM Preventing capture: organization without domination

No abstraction may override human, social and environmental well-being: not economics, ideology, theology, technology or institutional tradition. These exist to serve living people and the living world, never the reverse. This workstream applies that principle to power itself. The Roadmap focuses on capitalism because it is by far the dominant route to capture today. It is one route among several: vanguard parties and theocracies feudalize too, and so could the Transition. The goal is not better rulers. It is to replace hierarchical structure with interoperating peer-based structures that structurally resist hierarchy. What follows are candidate design requirements for voluntary pilots, not proven solutions.

The design target

An institution facing concentrated power can do three things. It can remove a person. It can transfer the authority elsewhere. Or it can restructure, so that concentrated authority is less necessary, less available and less able to regenerate. Only the third is the design target. **Every intervention is judged by whether it reduces the system's capacity to regenerate concentration.**

Three levels of protection

- **Accountability.** Those who hold power answer for how they use it.
- **Rotation and distribution.** Power cannot become permanent or exclusive.
- **Structural prevention.** Concentrated power becomes unnecessary and hard to accumulate: no standing leadership positions, coordination without command, expertise without sovereignty. An engineer's assessment carries weight on the bridge, and gives the engineer no authority over anyone's life.

The third level is the distinctive aim. The first two remain as defenses for when it fails. A peer-based society must not depend on exceptionally virtuous people. It does depend on many ordinary people being willing to use it. People will go on differing in ambition and appetite for recognition, and the structure has to hold anyway.

Preventive, non-punitive rotation

Rotation is universal. No position or function is exempt, at any level, and those who hold a function do not decide who holds it next. The record is the reason. Where the top is exempt and unchecked, where those who stay control the next post, or where the eligible pool is closed, rotation reliably fails to reduce oligarchy, and it can strengthen it. Athens exempted its generals from the limit on repeat terms but kept them checked, and its system held (Aristotle, Constitution of the Athenians, 62). That does not make exemption safe, just as someone who survives a crash without a seatbelt does not disprove the wisdom of wearing one. In many other cases, exemption has been the point of failure.

Every position is a function. It is not a source of prestige, power or perks. This month Joe organizes the meetings and prepares the materials everyone suggested; next month it is Jessica, then you, then me. Whoever currently holds access to the shared account has no more and no less standing than whoever is harvesting the crops, working with the children or driving a truck. People will go on appreciating one another's contributions, and that is healthy. Appreciation is mutual, and it buys no power over anyone.

No one holds a function alone. Part of every handover is bringing the next person up to speed, with training as needed. People differ in aptitude, and that is a reason for teamwork, not a bar to taking part. If Joe is still learning the ropes, or this is not Joe's strongest work, no one says the function is beyond Joe. Joe serves as part of a team, and together the team performs the function. This strengthens the collaborative character of the work, and with it the resistance to oligarchy. Team membership rotates too, on staggered turns, so that no experienced member becomes the real holder behind a changing name.

Choosing who serves next. Elections can be vulnerable to interpersonal dynamics: popularity, charisma and alliances can become a route to unintentional capture. Aristotle recorded the view that assigning offices by lot is democratic, and

electing them oligarchic (Politics, 1294b). So one option, beside a fixed turn order, is random selection, with allowance for extenuating circumstances: someone who is ill, caring for a family member or otherwise unable to serve steps aside and stays in the pool. Lot is no guarantee. In Florence it ran for decades, and the Medici captured the system through control of who was eligible (Belloc and colleagues, 2022). So the pool stays open, and the rules for stepping aside are set in advance by the group, not by anyone in it. This is an option to test.

The reach of rotation is universal; its pace follows risk. Functions that set agendas, allocate essentials, keep records or link communities rotate with the most care.

- Rotation happens on schedule, and earlier when power is observably concentrating: decisions wait on one person, or a function cannot run without them. Earlier rotation implies no wrongdoing.
- It moves effective authority, not just titles. A successor whose predecessor keeps the knowledge, relationships and access has inherited a name.
- No one loses standing. Handovers are structured, knowledge stays available, and dignity is protected.
- Allegations of abuse go to a separate fair process. Rotation is never disguised punishment.
- Power moves to whatever stays still. The roster, the keys, the logins and the contacts each need shared access or an answerable holder, and the turn order is a rule of the group, not a decision by anyone in it.
- Bank accounts and passwords to key systems are artifacts of the current oligarchic system, imposed by having to function within it, and they will no longer be needed in this form in post-Transition societies. While they last, access transfers to the next person who serves the function, and the previous holder no longer has it. It never stays permanently with any person or persons.

Function	Starting hypothesis, to be tested
Meeting facilitation	Each meeting to 3 months
Allocation of essentials	3 to 6 months
Records and information	3 to 12 months, with shared access
Coordination between communities	6 to 12 months
Specialized technical work	Keep the expertise; rotate oversight and authority

Universal rotation applies to authority, not to skill. Some skills cannot be taught to the next person in a handover. A surgeon is still a surgeon, and gains no authority or higher standing from it; oversight of the work rotates. Surgeons save lives, and they depend on paramedics to bring people to them, on drivers to deliver supplies, on the workers who make surgical instruments, and on those who keep the facility clean. If nobody takes out the trash, everything and everyone suffers. That person is valued no less than the surgeon or the engineer, and no more.

This is where the incremental approach carries its strength. As the Transition progresses, a culture of appreciation for each person's contribution can evolve, one that does not privilege one role above another. People will still appreciate some individuals more than others; that is human. Culture, institutions, norms and mechanisms can keep it from hardening into entrenched capture.

These intervals are rough guesses to test, not findings, and they may vary depending on the situation. The evidence is thin and mixed. In about 60 kibbutz production branches, managers' median time in office was two to three years, and rotating branches were no less effective, perhaps more (Leviatan, 1978). At higher levels, though, Shapira, himself a kibbutz member and a critic of its leadership, found that rotation enhanced oligarchy: officers rotated while many federation heads stayed for many years, some of them for decades, and decided who got the next post (Shapira, 2001; Shapira, *Transforming Kibbutz Research*, New World Publishing, 2008; Shapira, 2010). He concludes that democratic culture depends on trusted, high-moral leaders. We read the same evidence as showing that rotation reliably fails when the top is exempt and unchecked and those who stay control what comes next. His own remedy is structural: rising majorities for each further term, in place of rotation. We do not concur. There are no such majorities and no further terms, and rotation continues, with the modifications set out here. Among US governors, term limits made corruption more frequent in later terms and smaller in

scale (Tsur, 2026). A meta-analysis of workplace rotation did not test frequency at all (Mlekus and Maier, 2021). Across the cases, accountability has firmer support than rotation itself, so rotation is one part of a set, never the whole defense.

Informal power

Removing titles does not remove power. As Jo Freeman wrote, "there is no such thing as a structureless group" (Freeman, 1972). In 683 of the largest wikis on one commercial host, new administrators became rarer as wikis grew, and administrators took a slightly larger share of governance work (Shaw and Hill, 2014). These wikis had few protections: under the host's rules, founders received administrator rights automatically (Wikia, 2010), and its help page on founders describes no terms and no required removal process. We read those defaults as design flaws. Anyone receiving power automatically is a red flag. There should be no such power to receive, and where any power remains, it needs term limits and an automatic mitigation process that prevents accumulation. Governance work is distributed impartially, favoring no one. When concentration appears, it is detected as it happens and remedied through restructuring, without blame, because the cause is systemic. The study does not test what we propose, or examine the mechanisms of these defaults, but it shows what happened under them. We report it plainly as a failure mode we have identified, and as a frontier: a vulnerability we still need to understand and address, and an opportunity to research, learn and find ways to reduce it.

Power travels through charisma, expertise, information and network position. Functional influence (people listen because someone knows) and social influence (friendship, admiration) are healthy, and suppressing them would itself be domination. Dominating influence is the problem: one person's preferences override others' agency, and dissent carries a penalty. Research on real groups finds prestige and dominance to be separate routes to influence (Brand and Mesoudi, 2019). A teacher's contribution can be honored without giving their interpretations permanent authority.

Picture a nominally leaderless system run by the three technicians who control its algorithm. Nobody holds a title, and they govern. So: **no indispensable function may depend on an individual, exclusive group or system that cannot be independently understood, challenged and corrected.**

Symmetric safeguards and protected dissent

Safeguards apply equally to established coordinators and to challengers; otherwise they become a way to silence critics. **A corrective procedure must never be more powerful, less accountable or more permanent than the problem it addresses.** One candidate is review by people chosen by lot, given narrow oversight tasks: an argument, not yet a tested result (Bagg, 2024).

Emergency authority has automatic expiry and independent review. In four organizations that centralized during COVID-19, decentralization commitments held where leaders and workers authorized it together and leaders acted openly, and were undermined by opaque fiat (Lee and Young-Hyman, 2026).

There are no scapegoats. A person can occupy a dangerous position without having done anything wrong. Repair the structure; do not condemn the person. Where someone has committed misconduct, they are held responsible, matter-of-factly, through the separate fair process.

Practical independence

Independent access to essentials protects autonomy better than declarations. No party may use an indispensable dependency to compel obedience. Being able to leave and being able to govern are different powers, and both are needed. Legal separation does not prove real independence: ask who in practice controls appointments, records and resources.

What the record teaches

- **San.** Among the Ju/'hoansi, those who use status to dominate are leveled by others, and hxaro gift partnerships reaching up to 200 km gave access to sharing and refuge. Hxaro faded as cash arrived, and formal posts in a conservancy have turned over too fast for managers to gain experience (Wiessner and Huang, 2022). Leveling restrains domination; it does not by itself supply coordination at scale.

- **Haudenosaunee.** A Clan Mother chooses a chief, warns him, and can remove him (Haudenosaunee Confederacy). Titles are held for life, so this is accountability from outside the office, not rotation.
- **Commons.** The design principles (Ostrom, 2009) are well supported across 91 studies, read as probabilities and incomplete (Cox and colleagues, 2010).
- **Libya.** The Green Book called popular conferences "the only means to achieve popular democracy" (Gaddafi). In practice the executive set the national agenda and Gaddafi, with no formal post, commanded the armed forces (Carnegie Endowment, 2010), while Revolutionary Committees supplied coercion and defense, oil and foreign policy stayed beyond the people's committees (Fanack, 2022). An assembly does not govern if agendas and force sit outside it.
- **Kibbutz industry.** In one unprivatized kibbutz industry, economic success let management consolidate authority and withhold information until democracy was nominal (Moskovich, 2021). Collective ownership did not guarantee collective control.
- **Nichiren Shoshu and Soka Gakkai.** In 1991 the priesthood excommunicated the lay organization and urged members to resign; by late 1992 there was no sign of large losses (Métraux, 1992). The movement then took over conferring the Gohonzon, a function priests had held (Melton, 2024). The priesthood could expel the organization but not compel its members. We take no side on doctrine, and neither body is a peer structure. The lesson concerns dependency.

Three stress tests

- **The charismatic contributor.** Decisions begin to wait for one admired person who holds no role. Can dependence end while friendship and gratitude remain?
- **The indispensable coordinator.** One trusted person becomes essential to several systems. Can the work be redistributed before they become a single point of failure, without implying fault?
- **The anti-capture intervention that becomes a takeover.** A group calls someone a threat, then uses the corrective procedure to gain authority over everyone. Does the design stop them?

What this can and cannot promise

No design catches everything. Aircraft go through stress testing and adversarial testing, and engineers catch as many vulnerabilities as they can, yet some surface only in service. A society is more complex, and it adapts. It is no failure of Transition principles that not every failure mode can be foreseen. Expecting otherwise would be unrealistic. Yet whenever a vulnerability is identified and a mitigation engineered, vulnerability falls, in medicine, in engineering and in politics alike. Each remedy is then tested in its turn, because remedies can bring side effects of their own.

What changes is the terrain. Today's dominant paradigm is built on oligarchic capture, and it accelerates, reinforces and entrenches it. The Transition aims at a system whose default resists capture, and a culture that grows up resisting it. Capture would then face the uphill battle, in place of egalitarian functioning. We expect a quantum reduction, on a scale analogous to going from Himalayas to foothills: remaining vulnerabilities far smaller in scope, depth and permanence. That is a metaphor, not a metric. No one can put a number on it, since it includes what we cannot yet anticipate, and any reduction is meaningful, whether 10%, 50% or 90%. People will still differ in skill and contribution. What shrinks is power over others.

Medicine offers the closest comparison. In the US Civil War about two-thirds of soldiers' deaths came from disease, and many of those who died of wounds died of infection rather than blood loss (Klein, Hektoen International, 2022). Antibiotics did not end infectious disease, and they made a quantum improvement in health outcomes. Then resistant bacteria arose, and an estimated 1.27 million deaths in 2019 were attributable to them (Antimicrobial Resistance Collaborators, 2022). The improvement was real, and so is the cat-and-mouse game that followed. We may never reach complete immunity to oligarchic capture. We should never assume the problem is solved for good.

In any system, perfect resolution is unrealistic. The aim is to be prepared and robust: able to identify, research and solve new vulnerabilities as they come up. So we stay alert, and when a failure appears the first question is not whom to blame but which mechanism produced it. Aviation shows this can work. The purpose of an accident investigation is prevention, not

apportioning blame (ICAO Annex 13, para. 3.1, as set out in Doc 9756), while gross negligence and willful violations are still not tolerated (SKYbrary, Just Culture). Removing a person and leaving the mechanism in place is painkillers for a broken leg. Set the leg.

Because the next mechanism may be one no one has named, we watch outcomes as well as known routes: how often new people enter each function, what share of decisions a few people make, whether newcomers stay, how many people a function depends on, whether decisions happen off the record, and whether removal procedures exist and have been used.

In democracies, the Transition does not seek regime change. As the socioeconomic transition advances, the influence of oligarchs on government diminishes until there is no oligarchy, though the people remain, and elected officials become more responsive to their constituents. Under dictatorships and theocracies, the socioeconomic transition and the opening of government are likely to go together. That course is for the people living there to decide and lead, nonviolently. See How the kind of government shapes the path.

What is established and what is hypothesis

Established: informal hierarchy forms, formal democracy can be hollowed out, and commons design features are associated with durability. Hypothesis: that these requirements work together, that small-scale practices transfer to large networks, and that a complex society can run without standing leadership. Pilots will measure concentration of effective decisions, continuity of essentials, safety in disagreeing, and well-being. The Transition's own institutions are not exempt from correction. If one begins to harm people or accumulate power, its origins excuse nothing.

WORKSTREAM Strength without violence: meeting resistance and repression

As Transition systems grow, resistance is likely from those who stand to lose power and special privilege. This workstream prepares for that, including the hardest case: an adversary willing to use force. The Transition will not become brutal to win, and it will not let a brutal adversary use its nonviolence to force it into submission. Both commitments hold together, and the evidence supports holding them together.

Power depends on cooperation

Every social system, however powerful it looks, works only because enough people take part in it: workers, officials, police, soldiers, suppliers, customers. When enough of them stop, its ability to coerce weakens. This is the central insight of the study of nonviolent action (Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, 1993), and it is the Transition's own strategy at its core. The Transition does not need to defeat anyone. It builds systems that give people a better quality of life, and when it matters, people choose them. A choice made freely by many people is hard to reverse.

There are probably tipping points, though no one knows exactly where they lie. Uprisings are more likely to succeed when a larger share of the population takes part (Chenoweth, Journal of Democracy, 2020). In laboratory experiments, a committed minority of about a quarter of a group was enough to overturn an established social convention (Centola and colleagues, Science, 2018). These are guides, not laws. The practical lesson is the same: broad, voluntary participation is the Transition's main source of strength.

Nonviolence is not submission

Refusal is the opposite of submission. The stance is simple: *we will not harm you, and we will not obey you*. Strikes, boycotts, and simply continuing to run our own systems are forms of refusal that hurt no one and are very hard to suppress.

Some who share the Transition's goals will doubt that nonviolence is strong enough. The record answers them:

- **It succeeds more often.** Across 323 resistance campaigns from 1900 to 2006, major nonviolent campaigns succeeded 53 percent of the time, violent ones 26 percent (Stephan and Chenoweth, International Security, 2008).
- **It holds up better under repression.** In the same study, nonviolent campaigns facing crackdowns were more than six times likelier to achieve full success than violent campaigns that also faced repression (Stephan and Chenoweth, International Security, 2008).
- **It divides the opponent's forces.** Security forces are more reluctant to use violence against unarmed people. Defections occurred in about 52 percent of successful nonviolent campaigns and about 32 percent of successful violent ones (Stephan and Chenoweth, International Security, 2008). Whether troops defect also depends on what they gain from the existing order and whether they believe it will last (Nepstad, Journal of Peace Research, 2013).
- **Violence on the side does not help.** Armed groups operating alongside nonviolent campaigns showed no positive effect on their outcomes, and were associated with lower participation and, through it, lower chances of success (Chenoweth and Schock, Mobilization, 2015). Violence also gives an adversary the justification it wants for harsher repression (Chenoweth, Journal of Democracy, 2020).
- **How a movement wins shapes what it becomes.** Studies have found a strong link between nonviolent resistance and lasting democracy (Karatnycky and Ackerman, cited in Stephan and Chenoweth, International Security, 2008). A movement that wins by force has trained itself in force, and that habit tends to outlast the victory. See What lasts below.

The record also carries a warning. Since 2010, fewer than 34 percent of nonviolent revolutions have succeeded, though violent ones did far worse, at 8 percent. The decline is linked to smaller participation, heavy reliance on street demonstrations, organizing that is quick to gather crowds but weak at building lasting organizations, and a rise in violent fringes (Chenoweth, Journal of Democracy, 2020). The Transition's approach answers most of these directly: it builds lasting organizations, it does not depend on mass protest, and it grows participation through what it delivers.

What lasts: the record years later

Winning is only the beginning. The harder question is whether a change holds, and whether it stays true to what it set out to do. No study measures faithfulness to original intentions directly, but researchers track close proxies: whether democracy emerges and lasts, and whether violence returns. On each of them, nonviolent change does markedly better.

- **Democracy afterwards.** Five years after a successful campaign, 57 percent of countries where a nonviolent campaign had won were democracies, against about 6 percent where a violent one had won (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011, summarised by ICNC). Counting failed campaigns as well, the figures are over 40 percent and under 5 percent (Chenoweth, Waging Nonviolence, 2012).
- **Less civil war.** Within ten years, about 28 percent of countries fell into civil war after nonviolent campaigns, against 43 percent after violent ones (Chenoweth, Waging Nonviolence, 2012).
- **Democracies that last longer.** Of 112 democracies that replaced autocracies between 1955 and 2006, those born of nonviolent resistance survived substantially longer. The authors trace this to the movement's organizational culture carrying over into the new system (Bayer, Bethke and Lambach, Journal of Peace Research, 2016).
- **More freedom from change that starts at the base.** Nonviolent civic resistance was a key force in 50 of 67 transitions from authoritarian rule. Of those 50 countries, 32 were rated free when the study was done, against 2 of 14 transitions led from the top by elites, and 4 of 20 in which the opposition used violence (Karatnycky and Ackerman, Freedom House, 2005).
- **Violence makes a new autocracy likelier.** Nonviolent protest raises the odds of a transition to democracy, while violent challenges make transitions to new autocracies relatively more likely (Rivera Celestino and Gleditsch, Journal of Peace Research, 2013).
- **Violent revolutions entrench their own rulers.** Revolutions won by force, in Russia, China, Cuba, Iran and Vietnam among others, produced unusually durable dictatorships. The armed struggle forged a cohesive ruling elite and a loyal security apparatus, and destroyed rival centres of power (Levitsky and Way, *Revolution and Dictatorship*, 2022). Whatever their founders intended, the means shaped the result.

The most useful finding for the Transition concerns what turns a nonviolent victory into lasting democracy: people stay mobilized after the victory, and move away from all-or-nothing demands toward building and supporting new institutions (Pinckney, *From Dissent to Democracy*, 2020). The Transition is built the other way round. It builds the institutions first, so they are already working when any opening comes.

Nonviolence is not a guarantee. Egypt's nonviolent uprising removed its president in 2011, and in 2013 the army removed his elected successor (AP, 2013). Sudan's removed its ruler in 2019, and the military seized power in October 2021 (Carnegie Endowment, 2021). In both countries, the strong, independent institutions that could have carried the change were thin. That is the gap the Transition's building work is meant to fill.

The right to protect yourself and others

The Transition does not ask anyone to stand by while they or others are physically attacked. Every person keeps the right to protect themselves and others from immediate physical harm, using no more force than is needed to stop it, and only for as long as it is needed.

That is different in kind from organizing force to achieve social, economic or political change, which the Transition never does. There are no armed groups, no reprisals, no punishment of opponents, no lists, and no purges, whether aimed at opponents or at our own members. Self-protection in the moment is a human right. Violence as strategy is a road the evidence and the Transition's principles both rule out.

Meeting repression

- **Offer no single target.** Gradual change through many voluntary choices leaves no single moment, leader or building whose loss ends it. Leadership and assets are distributed, as the preventing capture workstream requires, so no single seizure is fatal.

- **Disperse when the risk is high.** Large crowds are easy to attack. Strikes, boycotts, stay-at-homes and quietly continuing our own systems are much harder to break.
- **Build relationships across every group,** including police, soldiers and officials. They are neighbours, relatives and coworkers, and people are far less willing to use violence against those they know.
- **Document and witness.** Record every confrontation, from many hands at once. See Record it, from many hands below.
- **Protect people without weapons.** Trained unarmed protection, such as accompaniment and civilian observers, has been documented in case studies as reducing violence against communities, though it has not yet been rigorously evaluated (Furnari and colleagues, 2016).
- **Care for those harmed,** and never answer harm with retaliation.

Record it, from many hands

When a confrontation is thrust on us, a camera may be the most important nonviolent tool there is. Violence against peaceful people can turn public opinion against those who use it, but only when it is seen and communicated (Martin, Justice Ignited, 2007). Repression does not backfire on its own; in a large study, neither nonviolent nor violent campaigns benefited from repression itself (Stephan and Chenoweth, 2008). Being seen is much of what makes the difference. In 2020, a 17-year-old bystander, Darnella Frazier, filmed the killing of George Floyd; her video set off protests across the United States and around the world, and she received a Pulitzer Prize special citation (Pulitzer Prizes, 2021).

- **Many cameras, not one.** Everyone who safely can should record, and several people should livestream, on different platforms. No single arrest, deletion or platform block can then suppress what happened.
- **Get it off the phone at once.** Livestreams and automatic backups preserve footage even if a phone is seized or broken.
- **Plan for shutdowns.** Governments increasingly cut the internet during unrest; in 2025 there were a record 313 shutdowns in 52 countries, and 14 of them targeted satellite internet as well (Access Now, 2026). Keep offline copies, and have trusted people outside the area ready to receive and republish. See Getting the record out when communications are cut.
- **Keep the originals.** Preserve the unedited files with their date and location, so the footage can serve as evidence and cannot easily be dismissed as altered or fabricated.
- **Protect the people on screen.** The same footage can be used to identify and target participants, and digital tools make surveillance easier (Chenoweth, 2020). Focus on the incident and those using force, and blur the faces of participants and bystanders before republishing where you can.
- **Record, don't provoke.** The footage is powerful because it shows the contrast between calm, peaceful people and those using force. Know the local law on recording in public; it is protected in many countries, but not everywhere.

Getting the record out when communications are cut

Shutdowns are increasingly how confrontations are hidden. In 2025 there were 313 of them in 52 countries (Access Now, 2026). The aim is simple: whatever happens, the world gets to see it. No single tool can guarantee that, so the answer is many routes at once, prepared in advance, with no dependence on any one company, country or person.

A note on what belongs on a public page. Those who order shutdowns read public pages too. This section sets out principles and openly available tools. Detailed security practice is best learned privately, through trusted networks and specialist organizations such as WITNESS, which trains people to capture and preserve footage as evidence, and the Access Now Digital Security Helpline, which gives free help around the clock to activists and journalists (help@accessnow.org).

1. Prepare before any shutdown

- **Install and practise now.** Most tools cannot be downloaded once the network is down. A good overview is the Electronic Frontier Foundation's guide (EFF, 2026).

- **Know which tools fit which situation.** Under censorship, when sites are blocked but the network still runs, tools such as Tor help (Tor Project). Under a full shutdown, they fail, and only local networks, radio, satellites or physical carriage still work.
- **Record in a way that holds up as evidence.** The International Bar Association's eyeWitness app (Android only) works offline, stores footage encrypted with proof that it has not been altered, and sends it to a secure archive once a connection returns (eyeWitness to Atrocities).

2. Choose messaging tools with care

- **Signal** encrypts every message and call end to end by default and keeps almost no data about its users; when served with legal demands, it could hand over only when an account was created and last connected (Signal). It is run by a nonprofit foundation.
- **Telegram** is widely used, but its group chats and ordinary chats are not end-to-end encrypted; only one-to-one "secret chats" are (Telegram FAQ). Since 2024 its privacy policy allows it to disclose users' IP addresses and phone numbers in response to valid court orders (Telegram privacy policy). Use it to publish, not to coordinate.
- **Delta Chat** carries encrypted chat over email, and works through the barest email access and through servers a community runs itself (Delta Chat). It was widely used in Iran's 2026 shutdown.
- **Briar** (Android) sends encrypted messages directly between nearby phones over Bluetooth or Wi-Fi, with no internet and no central server (Briar).
- **Tails** is an operating system that starts from a USB stick, sends all internet traffic through Tor, and leaves no trace on the computer when shut down (Tails). It suits people who receive and republish material, especially outside the affected country.

3. Local radio networks: Meshtastic

Meshtastic is a free, open-source project that turns small, inexpensive radios into a text network that needs no internet, no phone network and no central server (Meshtastic). Each radio pairs with a phone over Bluetooth and relays messages for the others, so a message can hop across a neighbourhood or a town.

- **Getting a radio.** Ready-made devices cost roughly US$20–70 from electronics retailers and online marketplaces: for example the Heltec V3 or V4 (cheapest, needs a case and battery), the LILYGO T-Echo or T-Beam, the RAK WisBlock starter kit, and the Seeed SenseCAP T1000-E, a sealed card-sized unit. Reset a new device to factory settings before use: some vendor-flashed units shipped with duplicate keys (Meshtastic security advisory, 2025).
- **Setting it up.** Install the Meshtastic firmware from the web flasher if the device needs it, install the Meshtastic app on Android or iPhone, pair over Bluetooth, set your region, and create a private channel with its own key. The default channel is public (Meshtastic, initial configuration).
- **Regions and law.** The radios use licence-free bands, such as 868 MHz in Europe and 915 MHz in the Americas, but the exact rules differ by country (Meshtastic, LoRa settings). Some governments restrict or confiscate radios; know the local law.
- **Range.** A message hops through up to three radios by default, and up to seven. Range depends heavily on height and terrain: a few kilometres between hand-held radios in a city, much more from rooftops and hills. The record is 331 km (Meshtastic, range tests). Radios placed high up, as relays, make the whole network work.
- **What it carries.** Short text messages of about 200 characters, and locations. It cannot carry photos or video. Use it to coordinate, report what is happening and arrange for footage to travel by other routes. Over any narrow link, a tiny compressed still can go first, to show what happened, while the full-quality original travels by another route.
- **Security.** Messages on a private channel are encrypted, and direct messages use public-key encryption. But the radio headers and device IDs are not encrypted, and a transmitting radio can be located (Meshtastic, encryption). A separate project, MeshCore, uses the same kind of radios but cannot talk to Meshtastic.
- **Linking out.** One radio connected to the internet anywhere, by satellite or across a border, can bridge the whole local network to the wider world (Meshtastic, MQTT). Configure it with care, because a bridge can also expose messages.

4. Across borders

Borders are where a shutdown ends. Mobile networks in neighbouring countries often reach some distance across the frontier; North Koreans near the Chinese border have long used smuggled Chinese phones to call out, despite growing efforts to detect them (Amnesty International, 2016; RFA, 2025). A chain of radios can, in principle, carry short messages to someone near the border, who forwards them to trusted contacts beyond it by Signal or another secure route. This is technically possible; we have not found a documented case yet. Footage itself travels best by hand, or through a satellite link where one exists.

- **Foreign SIM cards and border hotspots.** During Iran's 2026 blackout, people near the Iraqi border used Iraqi SIM cards and a shared connection point to get online. Police raided the spot, arrested more than 50 people and searched their phones (Euronews, 2026). The route works, and so do the arrests. Governments are also closing it: since 2025 Russia blocks mobile data and texts on foreign SIM cards for their first 24 hours in the country (The Record, 2025).
- **Donated eSIMs.** During the war in Gaza, a volunteer initiative, Connecting Humanity, gave people digital SIM cards from foreign networks so they could reach the outside world (Connecting Humanity). It is one of the clearest ways people outside can lawfully help.
- **Long-range Wi-Fi.** With directional antennas, Wi-Fi links of 10 to 50 kilometres are routine, and community-built networks such as Guifi.net in Catalonia have tens of thousands of nodes (Guifi.net). A link to a connected area or across a border is technically possible, but we have found no documented case during a shutdown, and fixed antennas are easy to spot.

5. Satellites: useful, but never a single dependency

- **Satellite texting on ordinary phones** (on recent iPhones, Pixels and some networks) works through each country's licensed phone network, so a government shutdown order generally cuts it too. It is valuable in democracies and during disasters, but does not work inside Iran, Russia or China.
- **Starlink** was one of the few ways video left Iran during its 2026 blackout, at great cost: Iran jammed the satellite positioning signals the terminals depend on (CircleID, 2026), and a 2025 law set prison terms for using them (bne IntelliNews, 2025). It is also controlled by one company and, in the end, one owner. He declined to extend coverage to Crimea for a Ukrainian operation in 2022 (CNBC, 2023), and in 2025 said publicly that Ukraine's front line would collapse if he turned the service off (Al Jazeera, 2025). Reuters has also reported, from unnamed sources, that he ordered coverage cut over Kherson during Ukraine's 2022 counteroffensive; SpaceX has not confirmed this (Kyiv Independent, 2025). The owner is also a major political figure: he spent at least $277 million in the 2024 US elections (CBS News, 2024) and served in the US government until May 2025 (NPR, 2025). In fairness, he also switched the service on for people in Iran in 2022, once US sanctions allowed it (Al Jazeera, 2022). Whatever any owner intends, a network that one person can switch off cannot be relied on alone, and the Transition's own rule against single points of failure applies here too. Use it where it is lawful and available, as one route among several, never as the only one.
- **Satellite messengers** such as Garmin inReach and ZOLEO connect straight to satellites, without any national network. Most carry short text; some newer models send small photos and short voice clips (Panbo, 2024). Some countries prohibit them, and travellers have been arrested for carrying one (Garmin).
- **Other operators based in democracies**, such as Iridium and Eutelsat OneWeb, follow each country's licensing rules. Satellite phones and terminals are banned or tightly controlled in many authoritarian states, and possession can mean arrest.

6. Carried out by hand

The oldest route still works. Footage of the 1989 crackdown in Beijing left China on tapes carried by journalists (Hong Kong Free Press, 2019). In 2007, video journalists in Burma got footage of the monks' protests out of the country by hand and over the internet, until the network was cut (Democracy Now, 2009). In the Soviet Union, writing that could not be

published circulated in copies made by hand, and some was carried abroad for publication (University of Toronto, Samizdat project).

- **Carriers must know and agree.** Never place anything in the belongings of someone who has not chosen to carry it. If it is found, they bear the consequences.
- **Encrypt what is carried,** so a card that is found reveals nothing, and keep copies on more than one route.
- **Keep originals verifiable** (see eyeWitness above), and protect the people who appear in the footage.
- **Mail is riskier than it looks.** Authoritarian states have a long record of inspecting international mail, and some give security services legal access to it (Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group).

7. Voice still gets through

Shutdowns often cut the internet but leave some calls working. During Iran's 2026 blackout, people abroad still received landline calls from inside the country (Al-Monitor, 2026). When Egypt cut the internet in 2011, foreign providers published international dial-up numbers (NPR, 2011), and a service called Speak2Tweet turned phoned-in voice messages into public posts, later also used for Syria (Google, 2012). Relatives and friends abroad can act as relays: take the call, note what is said, and pass it on. Assume calls are monitored.

8. Amateur radio

Licensed radio amateurs can send text across continents on shortwave, and have carried emergency traffic after disasters, such as Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico in 2017 (ARRL, 2017). But it requires a licence, international rules forbid encryption on amateur bands, so everything sent is public, and transmitters can be located. In Belarus, radio amateurs were charged with espionage and treason in 2026 (404 Media, 2026). Suitable for open, public reports where it is lawful, not for anything that could identify people.

9. Where footage should go

Footage that reaches the outside world needs to be preserved, verified and used. Organizations that do this include Mnemonic, which archives documentation of human rights violations (Mnemonic, contact); the Berkeley Human Rights Center's Investigations Lab, which verifies open-source evidence (UC Berkeley); the International Criminal Court prosecutor's secure submission portal (OTPLink); and, for Myanmar, the UN's Independent Investigative Mechanism (IIMM). Contact them first, follow their instructions, and do not send footage to strangers.

10. An open satellite of our own: a longer-term project

An open-source movement can put a satellite in orbit. The cheapest real path is a very small satellite launched on a shared rocket, at roughly US$300,000 to $1 million over two to four years for a capable one, or less for a small demonstrator. Crowdfunded satellites have been launched before. But be realistic about what it could do: a single satellite in low orbit passes overhead for a few minutes at a time, so it could carry only short text messages with hours of delay, and never live video. Continuous coverage would take dozens. Radio licensing also has to go through a national government.

The natural partner is the Libre Space Foundation, a nonprofit registered in Greece since 2015 that builds open-source satellites, including the QUBIK pocket-sized satellites, and runs SatNOGS, a worldwide network of volunteer ground stations. It has built satellites for outside groups. It can be reached through its contact form, its community forum, or its Matrix chat. A Transition network could begin by joining its community, running a ground station, and exploring with it a small satellite for short-message relay in emergencies.

People in free countries can help today: run a Tor Snowflake proxy in a browser, host a Delta Chat server, donate to eSIM initiatives, volunteer with verification projects, measure and document shutdowns with OONI Probe (OONI), or join an open-source project above. Each extends the routes available to people under shutdowns, and documenting the shutdown itself is part of the record.

Why not just hide it in ordinary traffic?

Two appealing ideas come up often, and both are more limited than they sound, because hiding a message needs a working channel to hide it in. When the network is simply off, there is nothing to hide it inside; these help only when the network is up but watched.

- **Piggybacking on other traffic** (slipping data into cellular traffic, news feeds or telemetry) mostly fails for getting information *out*. During a shutdown there is no traffic to ride on, and feeds and telemetry are things a phone downloads, not an upload path. Tunnelling out through still-allowed services is exactly what censors now detect and block. The one place this works is the reverse direction: one-way satellite broadcast can smuggle information *in*, hidden inside ordinary satellite-TV signal, as the Toosheh service has done in Iran (Toosheh).
- **Steganography** hides a message inside an innocent-looking photo, so it does not look like a message and does not trip a filter. Its weakness is capacity. A selfie can conceal a short text or a single tiny image, never a video, which is thousands of times too large. Social platforms also re-compress every upload, which erases fragile hidden data; versions built to survive that carry even less. So it is a real tool for a short, vital *text* through a channel that is watched but open, and not a way to move footage. One caution: it protects a message from a filter, but if the device is later seized and the tool or the original files are found, that can expose the sender.

Ideas weighed and set aside, for now

- **Balloons carrying devices.** South Korean activists have floated USB sticks and leaflets into North Korea; in June 2024, one launch carried 5,000 USB sticks. North Korea answered with thousands of balloons carrying refuse, and South Korea has since restricted launches again (Korea Times, 2025). Recipients have not chosen the risk, and in North Korea possessing foreign media can carry the heaviest penalties (Amnesty International, 2026). Not recommended.
- **Drones.** A drone crossing a border breaks airspace law and can be read as a military act, which runs against the Transition's commitment to nonviolence and could give a pretext for escalation. Not recommended.
- **Homing pigeons.** They carried about 115,000 messages on microfilm out of besieged Paris in 1870–71 (History of Information), and a memory card weighs less. But pigeons fly only to their home loft, so they must be raised outside and carried in beforehand. Possible in a long siege; impractical in most cases.

Preventing a violent turn within

The greatest danger may come from inside. People who have suffered real injustice are often angry and resentful, and anger before discipline has been learned can turn toward crusades, armed struggle, revenge, reprisals or purges, sometimes in the Transition's own name. History offers many movements that won and then turned on their opponents and on their own members, from the Terror that followed the French Revolution to the purges that followed the Russian one. Preventing this is the Transition's own responsibility.

- **Prepare before the pressure comes.** Repression consistently tends to provoke violence, and so, perhaps surprisingly, do government concessions (Pinckney, ICNC, 2016). Both are predictable moments; train for them in advance.
- **Organize inclusively.** Movements organized in an inclusive, non-hierarchical way keep nonviolent discipline better (Pinckney, ICNC, 2016). The Transition's structure is itself a protection.
- **Watch for warning signs:** language that treats opponents as less than human, talk of enemies, lists, revenge or purity tests, glorification of armed struggle, and secrecy about plans.
- **Speak promptly and publicly.** No one who organizes violence, reprisals or purges speaks for the Transition, and such projects are not part of it. Anyone urging violence may be sincere, or may be trying to discredit the movement; the answer is the same either way.
- **Bring people back rather than casting them out.** Anger at injustice is understandable. Meet it with conversation and with the evidence on what works, and offer real roles in building. People who organize violence cannot hold any Transition function, but the door back stays open.

- **Apply the same standards inward.** The non-punitive approach of the preventing capture workstream applies here too: no humiliation, no mob expulsions, and no punishment beyond what responsibility requires.

Preparing those who come after

No one can foresee every situation. What can be passed on is preparation: training in nonviolent discipline, written guidance, rehearsed responses to crackdowns and to provocation, and the habit of asking, in any new situation, which response keeps faith with Transition principles. The approach will be refined as experience grows.

What is established and what is hypothesis

Established: across the historical record, nonviolent campaigns have succeeded more often than violent ones, violent flanks have not helped them, and participation and defections matter greatly. Hypothesis: that a constructive, gradual transition faces less concentrated repression than a campaign for sudden change, and that its practices of nonviolent discipline will hold under severe pressure. These can only be tested in practice, and no approach can guarantee safety.

WORKSTREAM The reverse strike: keep everything running, withdraw what feeds the old system

A conventional strike stops work to put pressure on an employer, and the public often bears the cost. The reverse strike does the opposite. People keep every essential service running and keep doing their jobs well, while withdrawing what the old system actually depends on. It is fully distributed, it needs no leader to give a signal, and in its main forms it is entirely lawful: people are simply doing their jobs and choosing how to live. To stop it, authorities would have to act against a large share of the population for going to work.

Where the term comes from

In February 1956, in western Sicily, the social reformer Danilo Dolci and about 150 unemployed men repaired an abandoned public road without pay, to show that useful work was waiting to be done and that people had a right to do it. They called it a *sciopero alla rovescia*, a reverse strike. Dolci and his companions were arrested and put on trial (Centro Danilo Dolci). Even work that harms no one can draw repression, which is why the reverse strike goes together with recording from many hands.

A trap to avoid

Working without accepting pay is not a reverse strike. If employees keep working but refuse their wages, the owner keeps the full value of their work, and the old system grows stronger. Withdrawal concerns what people do with their pay, their time, their skills, and their willingness to do harm.

What the old system depends on

- People needing a wage to survive, which is the lever that makes them obey.
- Money flowing through spending, debt, rent and investment back to the top.
- People's willingness to carry out every order, including harmful ones.

The reverse strike leaves the work in place and withdraws these, step by step, in three tiers.

Tier 1: fully lawful, with little or no personal risk

- **Redirect the wage.** Keep earning, and move what you can into the Transition's own institutions: credit unions or cooperative banks, cooperatives, community land trusts and mutual aid pools. Paying down debt also cuts the interest flowing upward. Each wage then passes through the old system once and ends up building the new one.
- **Let essentials come from the commons.** As Transition food, housing, repair and care systems grow, people need less from the market. Nobody is targeted, so this is not a boycott. Dependence simply falls.
- **Give your skills off the clock.** The truck driver helps plan the food network's logistics. The motor-vehicle clerk helps a community set up its own records. The nurse trains first-aid teams. Respect your contract's rules on confidentiality and outside work. Public employees should also know the rules on political activity that apply to them, such as the Hatch Act in the United States (Congressional Research Service, 2020) or the Civil Service Code in the United Kingdom (Civil Service Code).
- **Learn how the system runs.** Supply chains, power grids, hospital logistics: learn what any skilled worker lawfully knows, never confidential data. When the time comes, people who know how to keep things running are already in place.
- **Work to care.** Work-to-rule is a protest in which employees do only the bare minimum their rules require. Work-to-care is its opposite. Do the job well, treat every customer as a person, and help your coworkers. In a public agency, keep charging the fees the law sets, and make sure every person receives every waiver and benefit they are lawfully entitled to. No manager can object, and the Transition's culture spreads inside the old institutions.
- **Let people know what exists, by word of mouth.** People trust recommendations from those they know far more than advertising: 88 percent did in one global survey of internet users (Nielsen, 2021). New behaviour spreads best through repeated contact with several people who have adopted it, not through a single message (Centola,

Science, 2010). A bus driver, a cashier or a clerk meets the same people again and again. Mention what exists when it solves the person's actual problem: "If your washer's broken, there's a repair group at the library on Saturdays." That is help, not a pitch, and since nothing is handed out, there is nothing to seize or object to. In private companies, keep it conversational; scripted pitching on the job can break conduct rules. In public service, stay neutral: answer when asked, point to plain facts, and do not promote anything from behind the counter. Under dictatorships and theocracies, speak only with people you already trust.

Tier 2: lawful but visible, with some risk to your job

Workplace organizing is protected by law in many democracies, though the protection is uneven in practice.

- **Move ownership to the employees.** Many owners are nearing retirement without a successor. In the United States, members of the post-war baby boom own about 2.3 million businesses with employees, which employ about 25 million people (Project Equity, 2017). Employee ownership or conversion to a cooperative keeps those businesses and jobs in the community. In the United Kingdom, about 2,800 businesses are now employee-owned, with about 548,000 employee owners (Employee Ownership Association, 2026). Unions, works councils and pension-fund votes are other lawful levers.
- **Talk openly with coworkers** about what the Transition offers. Because it is an invitation and makes no demand on the employer, it is hard to present as sabotage.

Tier 3: civil disobedience, chosen knowingly and never urged by others

These steps can break the law or an employment contract. Each person decides for themselves whether to take them, and no one in the Transition pushes anyone into them.

- **Refuse to harm, not refuse to work.** Keep doing every part of the job except the part that injures people: evicting families, cutting off a household's water or heat, carrying out repression. This is *we will not harm you, and we will not obey you* at work. In December 2012, the locksmiths of Pamplona, Spain, voted unanimously to stop helping with evictions from homes (Noticias de Navarra, 2012). In 2013, a firefighter in A Coruña refused to break down the door of an 85-year-old woman facing eviction, and was fined €600 (Diario de Pontevedra, 2014, p. 26). At the far end of this tier are police and soldiers who refuse to use force against peaceful people. Such defections have made nonviolent campaigns far more likely to succeed (Stephan and Chenoweth, 2008). In 1920, an attempted coup in Germany collapsed within days when workers struck and civil servants refused to carry out its orders (Britannica, Kapp Putsch).

Keep running what the owners abandon

The strongest economic weapon against change is to stop things: close workplaces, lock workers out, cut off supply, and let the public blame the disruption on the change. The answer is to keep working. If owners abandon a workplace, the people who know how to run it keep running it, openly and carefully, with the public's needs first. Anyone shutting things down then has to do it in plain view.

- **Upper Clyde, Scotland, 1971–72.** When the government refused a loan and about 8,000 shipyard jobs were threatened, the workers chose a work-in instead of a strike and kept the yards working. Their spokesman, Jimmy Reid, told them there would be no hooliganism, no vandalism and no drinking, because the world was watching. In February 1972 the government reversed course, and the Govan, Linthouse and Scotstoun yards were saved (Scottish Labour History Society, 2023).
- **Lip, Besançon, France, 1973.** Facing closure, watch workers took over their factory, kept producing, and paid themselves from sales. Selling the stock was not lawful, since it belonged to the company under court administration, and in the 1974 settlement the workers returned much of it in exchange for everyone being rehired (La Vie des idées).
- **Argentina, after 2001.** When owners abandoned hundreds of failing businesses during the economic collapse, workers took them over under the slogan "Occupy, resist, produce." Some were later made legal through

expropriation laws, such as the Zanon ceramics plant in 2009, and a 2011 bankruptcy reform gave workers a path to keep firms going. As of August 2025, 398 such firms employed about 13,800 workers (La Capital, 2025).

The legal ground varies. Running a workplace its owners have abandoned is different from taking one they still run, which the Transition does not do. Where the Transition already owns or runs a system, such as a cooperative's trucks, a community clinic or a land trust, keeping it running is plainly lawful. Elsewhere it may become civil disobedience, chosen knowingly. Seek legal advice and explain publicly what you are doing and why. Keep careful records, so that questions of ownership can be settled fairly later.

The reverse strike grows with the building work

The reverse strike gains strength as Transition systems grow. A worker who still depends on a wage for food and rent can be made to obey by the threat of dismissal. A worker whose essentials are met by the commons can refuse to do harm. That is why the reverse strike follows the building work rather than preceding it, and why its later tiers belong to the more advanced phases. Under dictatorships and theocracies, only quiet, informal Tier 1 activity is likely to be reasonably safe, and even that is not certain; people there decide for themselves (see How the kind of government shapes the path).

What is established and what is hypothesis

Established: noncooperation and defections have repeatedly decided nonviolent struggles; work-ins and worker takeovers have kept workplaces running and sometimes saved them; and recommendations from people we know are among the most trusted sources of information. Hypothesis: that a reverse strike can work at the scale of a whole economy, and that keeping essentials running will keep public sympathy with the Transition when others try to shut things down. Experience will tell.

PHASE 3 Build durable commons

Turn successful pilot projects into permanent, democratically governed community institutions — organizations that belong to their members, not to their founders, and that persist beyond any individual's involvement. This is the transition from "our project" to "our institution."

Steps

Step 3.1 — Add one complementary function

You need: A stabilized pilot project from Phase 2. Your needs-and-assets snapshot. Evidence of a gap that your existing capacity can address.

What to do: Look at your tracking data from Phase 2 and ask: what need keeps appearing that your current project doesn't address? Add *one* function that uses capacity you already have or closes a gap the first project revealed.

Examples of natural pairings:

- A **tool library** naturally leads to **repair workshops** — you already have the tools and the space. Saturday morning tool lending, Saturday afternoon repair cafe. The tools and the skills converge.
- A **food cooperative** naturally leads to **community gardening** — the co-op showed which produce is most in demand; the garden produces it. Or it leads to **food preservation workshops** — when the cooperative buys in bulk, members learn to can, dry, ferment, and freeze the surplus.
- A **care circle** naturally leads to a **skills exchange** — the parents who rotate childcare discover that one can fix bikes and another can tutor algebra. The trust already exists; the exchange formalizes it.
- An **advertising-resistance course** leads naturally to a **household economics cooperative** — participants who've learned to resist manipulative spending can pool that awareness into shared purchasing protocols, no-buy challenges, and collective deglamorization of status consumption.
- An **information-discernment group** leads naturally to a **community media project** — a simple newsletter, a local fact-checking group, or a regular community conversation about what's actually happening locally (as opposed to what social media says is happening).

What not to do: Do not add a function because it sounds impressive or because another community has it. Do not add two functions at once. Every addition is a governance challenge, a labor demand, and a potential point of failure. The Rochdale Pioneers — the original consumer cooperative, founded in 1844 in England — began with a single shop selling butter and flour. They added functions one at a time over years, eventually building housing, education, a library, and a textile mill. They were still operating 150 years later.

Result: One new function operating alongside the original pilot, sharing infrastructure and governance.

Step 3.2 — Create formal governance

You need: The provisional charter from Phase 0 (which has probably been amended several times by now). Examples of cooperative constitutions. Legal advice if available.

What to do: Draft a formal constitution that upgrades the provisional charter into a durable governing document. It should include:

1. **Membership rules:** Who can join? How? What are the obligations? What are the rights? Is there a minimum participation expectation? A waiting period? A probationary period?
2. **Governance structure:** Decision-making rules (upgraded from Step 0.5), election procedures, term limits, recall mechanisms, and the scope of authority for each role. Mondragon cooperatives use a tiered system: a general

assembly of all worker-owners for major decisions, an elected governing council for strategy, and a management team for operations — with the assembly empowered to overrule the council and the council empowered to replace the management.

3. **Dispute resolution:** A three-step escalation: direct conversation between parties, mediation by a neutral third party (which can be an internal ombudsperson or an external community mediation service), and binding arbitration or a membership vote as a last resort. The key: the process must be written, known to all members, and accessible without requiring confrontation with the person doing harm.
4. **Asset locks:** A clause preventing any individual or subgroup from converting shared assets to private use. Community land trusts use a specific legal mechanism for this — a covenant that runs with the land — but the principle applies to any shared resource: the tools, the treasury, the digital accounts, the space lease. If someone leaves, they leave with what they brought, not with what the community built.
5. **Regular rotation:** Every governance function passes to the next person at defined intervals, with no exemptions. Random selection is one option for choosing who serves next (see Preventing capture). Where a group uses elections at this stage, they are a step on the way to rotating functions, not a route to further terms. Even if the current facilitator is excellent, rotation builds capacity and prevents entrenchment. The sociocratic governance model recommends re-selection every six to twelve months, with the explicit expectation that most people will serve one term in a given role before moving to another.

Result: A formal constitution, ratified by members, replacing the provisional charter.

Step 3.3 — Establish legal structure

You need: The constitution from Step 3.2. Legal advice appropriate to your jurisdiction.

What to do: Choose and register a legal form that matches your project's purpose:

- **Consumer cooperative:** Owned by the people who use its services. Best for: food cooperatives, bulk-buying clubs, housing cooperatives. Legal frameworks exist in virtually every country. In the U.S., cooperative incorporation is handled at the state level; Colorado, Minnesota, and Wisconsin have particularly supportive cooperative statutes.
- **Worker cooperative:** Owned by the people who work in it. Best for: repair enterprises, community workshops, care services. The International Cooperative Alliance provides model bylaws adaptable to any jurisdiction.
- **Community land trust (CLT):** Owns land on behalf of the community in perpetuity, preventing speculation. Best for: community gardens, shared workshop spaces, affordable housing. About 300 land trusts and similar shared-equity organizations operate in the U.S., about 360 in England and Wales, and the model is spreading to Belgium, France and beyond. How to start one.
- **Mutual benefit society / mutual aid association:** A legal form specifically designed for organizations that exist to benefit their members collectively. Common in Europe, Latin America, and parts of Asia.
- **Charitable trust or foundation:** Appropriate when the project serves the general public rather than a defined membership. Provides tax benefits in many jurisdictions but may restrict political activity.
- **Informal association with fiscal sponsor:** If formal incorporation is too complex or expensive at this stage, an existing nonprofit can serve as a fiscal sponsor — holding funds and providing legal cover while the project builds toward independence. Many cooperative development centers offer this service.

Principle: The legal form is a container for the governance, not a replacement for it. A cooperative that is legally incorporated but informally run by one person is worse than an informal group with genuine democratic practice — because the legal form creates the illusion of accountability without the substance.

Result: A registered legal entity whose structure matches the constitution and protects shared assets.

Step 3.4 — Build shared physical infrastructure

You need: Operating projects that have outgrown home garages and borrowed spaces. Evidence of what infrastructure would make the most difference.

What to do: Identify the physical infrastructure that would make your projects significantly more effective, and pursue it through the lowest-risk path available:

- **Shared workshop space:** A garage, a basement, a storage unit, or a commercial space. Prioritize space with electricity, running water, and disability access. Many communities have found success negotiating below-market leases from churches, schools, or municipal buildings that have unused space.
- **Community kitchen:** Essential for food cooperatives and community meal programs. In many jurisdictions, a certified community kitchen — meeting health and safety standards — allows members to produce food legally that they couldn't produce from home kitchens. Several U.S. states have Cottage Food Laws that allow home-produced food for direct sale; check your jurisdiction.
- **Shared vehicles:** A van or truck shared among members for transporting bulk purchases, tools, or materials. Car-sharing cooperatives exist in cities worldwide — Modo in Vancouver, Community CarShare in various Canadian cities — and the model scales down to a neighborhood level with a simple booking system and shared insurance.
- **Renewable energy systems:** Community solar projects, shared battery storage, or microgrids. Germany's Energiegenossenschaften (energy cooperatives) — over 900 registered cooperatives producing renewable energy — demonstrate that community-owned energy is technically and financially viable. In the U.S., community solar programs are expanding rapidly; participants subscribe to a share of a solar installation and receive credits on their utility bill.
- **Digital infrastructure:** A shared server for communication, scheduling, and document storage. Not hosted on corporate platforms. Consider Nextcloud (file sharing), Matrix/Element (messaging), or other self-hosted or federated tools. Collectively Intelligent in Barcelona provides a model: community-owned digital infrastructure with local data sovereignty.

Principle: Infrastructure should follow demonstrated need, not anticipated need. Don't build a community kitchen because you think you might start a food program — build it because 30 families are already bulk-buying food and need somewhere to process it. The infrastructure that lasts is infrastructure that is already being used before it's built.

Result: At least one piece of shared physical infrastructure — space, equipment, vehicles, or energy — that the community controls.

Step 3.5 — Document everything publicly

You need: All records from Phases 0–2 and the new governance documents. A person willing to maintain the documentation.

What to do: Create a publicly accessible record of:

- Operating procedures for every project (updated versions of the operating sheets from Phase 2).
- Governance documents: constitution, decision log, election results, dispute outcomes (anonymized where appropriate).
- Financial records: income, expenditures, asset inventory, outstanding obligations. Transparency here prevents the suspicion that destroys more cooperatives than actual financial misconduct does.
- Lessons learned: what worked, what didn't, what you changed and why. This is the most valuable documentation you will produce — not for your own project, but for the next community that tries something similar.

The documentation can be a physical binder in the workshop, a website, a shared digital folder, or all three. The format matters less than the principle: anyone who participates should be able to see how decisions are made, where the money goes, and what the project has learned.

Example: The Evergreen Cooperatives in Cleveland, Ohio — a network of worker-owned cooperatives linked to anchor institutions — have opened their books to independent case studies documenting jobs created (around 110 by 2015), revenue generated, worker ownership, and the challenges faced, including frank admissions of what fell short. That candor has made Evergreen one of the most useful models for others to learn from.

Result: A public documentation system — physical or digital — accessible to all members, containing operating procedures, governance records, financial accounts, and lessons learned.

Readiness gate

A commons is durable when it passes four tests: it can survive the departure of any single person; it can fund its own maintenance without depending on a single grant or donor; it can resolve internal disputes through its own governance process without external intervention; and it can demonstrate measurable, documented benefit to its participants. Test each one by looking at your records. If you have to guess, you haven't documented enough.

You now have something that belongs to the community. Not a project that depends on the goodwill of its founders — a governed institution, legally protected, publicly documented, and capable of outlasting any individual's involvement. People in your area have access to tools, food, care, skills, or knowledge they didn't have before. Their monthly expenses may have dropped. Their neighbors know their names. This is real and substantial. It is also one node in what needs to become a network. A single commons improves lives in one domain — food, or tools, or care. Phase 4 connects complementary commons into a system where the whole provides more than the sum of its parts, and each additional piece reduces dependence on the market for another dimension of life.

PHASE 4 Integrate into a local system

Link complementary commons so that they begin to function as a local system of provision — reducing dependence on external markets for an expanding range of needs. When a tool library, a food cooperative, a care circle, and a skills exchange operate independently, each solves one problem. When they are linked — the food co-op uses the tool library's van, the care circle watches children during repair workshops, the skills exchange records hours across all projects — they begin to function as an economy.

Steps

Step 4.1 — Form a local node

You need: Two or more durable commons from Phase 3, each with its own governance. A willingness to coordinate without merging.

What to do: Create a coordination body — a "node council" — composed of delegates from each participating commons. The node council does *not* govern the individual projects; each retains its own constitution and decision-making authority. The council coordinates what the projects share:

- **Administrative support:** Shared accounting, insurance, legal compliance, grant writing. One person doing bookkeeping for three projects is more efficient than three people each doing it alone.
- **Referrals:** When someone comes to the food cooperative and mentions they can't afford a plumber, the co-op can connect them to the tool library and the skills exchange. When the tool library notices a pattern of tool requests for garden projects, it can suggest a link with the community garden. Referrals should be consent-based — "would you like me to connect you with...?" rather than automatic data sharing.
- **Shared space and logistics:** If the food cooperative and the tool library both use the community center on Saturdays, the council can coordinate schedules, share setup labor, and combine transportation.

Governance model for the node: The Emilia-Romagna cooperative network in Italy uses a "consortium" model — each cooperative is sovereign, but the consortium provides shared services (finance, marketing, legal, training) and coordinates inter-cooperative trade. The consortium's board is elected by member cooperatives, each with one vote regardless of size. This model has sustained thousands of cooperatives for decades.

Result: A functioning node council with clear authority boundaries — it coordinates shared services but does not override individual project governance.

Step 4.2 — Map remaining gaps

You need: An updated version of the needs-and-assets snapshot from Phase 1 (which should now reflect what your existing projects have changed). One afternoon with the node council.

What to do: For each major domain of daily life, ask: how much of this need is currently met through the commons network, and how much still depends on market purchase?

- **Food:** The co-op covers staples. What about fresh produce, dairy, protein? Could a community garden or a relationship with a local farm close the gap?
- **Shelter:** Housing is the largest expense for most households. Is there a community land trust? Could one be started (see the six routes)? Could shared housing arrangements reduce costs, from practical agreements like shared utilities, shared childcare space or co-housing, to fully shared households and intentional communities?
- **Energy:** Are electricity and heating still fully market-dependent? Could a community solar project, a shared heat-pump installation, or a cooperative energy purchasing agreement reduce this?

- **Health:** Preventive care, first aid, mental health support, elder care — which of these could be partially met through expanded care circles, community health workers, or partnerships with local clinics?
- **Education and skills:** The skills exchange covers some of this. What about children's education support? After-school tutoring? Adult literacy? Digital skills? Language classes? Each of these can be organized through the same mutual-aid model that built the first projects.
- **Transport:** Shared vehicles, carpool coordination, bike repair, or even a community-owned electric vehicle fleet for essential errands.
- **Clothing:** Repair and alteration services, community clothing swaps, bulk fabric purchasing for people who sew.
- **Information and communication:** Community-controlled messaging, a local newsletter, community broadband.

Result: A gap analysis showing which needs are covered, which are partially covered, and which are still fully market-dependent — with an assessment of which gaps could realistically be addressed next.

Step 4.3 — Develop local production for priority gaps

You need: The gap analysis from Step 4.2. A realistic assessment of your community's capacity.

What to do: For the highest-priority gap, develop local productive capacity. Apply the same Phase 2 methodology: start with a pilot, track reality, review at 30/60/90 days, stabilize before expanding.

Concrete examples of gap-filling production:

- **Food preservation hub:** A shared kitchen equipped for canning, drying, freezing, and fermenting. Extends the food cooperative's impact by turning seasonal abundance into year-round supply. The USDA's Cooperative Extension Service publishes free food-preservation guides tested for safety. A community kitchen that can process 500 pounds of tomatoes in a weekend can stock a pantry for months.
- **Community energy cooperative:** A jointly owned solar installation, battery bank, or micro-wind system. Germany's roughly 950 Bürgerenergiegenossenschaften (citizen energy cooperatives), with some 220,000 members, have invested about €3.6 billion in renewable energy and generated around 8 terawatt-hours of electricity in 2023 — mostly small-scale, locally owned, democratically governed. A typical community solar project for 20–50 households costs $100,000–$250,000 and pays for itself in 7–12 years, after which the energy is effectively free.
- **Repair and fabrication workshop:** Beyond the repair cafe, a permanent workshop where community members can learn and practice woodworking, metalworking, electronics repair, sewing, and small-scale fabrication. Hackerspaces and makerspaces — over 2,500 worldwide — provide a model. The difference here is that the workshop is embedded in a commons network, not a standalone hobbyist space.
- **Community health capacity:** Training community health workers in first aid, preventive care, chronic disease management, and mental health first aid. Community health worker programs are used in over 70 countries; Brazil's Programa Agentes Comunitários de Saúde deploys over 260,000 community health agents who provide basic care, health education, and referral services in underserved areas. This model can be adapted to any context, starting with basic first aid and expanding based on local needs and available training.
- **Education cooperative:** A structured mutual-education program where community members teach what they know — not as a school but as a learning network. The Danish folkehøjskole (folk high school) tradition, started in the 1840s and still thriving with over 70 active schools, provides a model for adult education that combines practical skills with civic engagement and critical thinking. At the neighborhood scale, this could be a weekly evening program with rotating topics: one week plumbing, the next week budgeting, the next week first aid, the next week local history.

Result: At least one new productive capacity addressing a gap identified in the analysis, operating as a governed commons and integrated into the node network.

Step 4.4 — Build internal coordination systems

You need: Multiple operating projects that need to share resources, schedules, and information.

What to do: Build the systems that allow your network of projects to function as a coherent whole:

- **Shared scheduling:** A calendar visible to all projects showing when shared spaces and equipment are in use, when events are happening, when volunteers are needed. This can be a physical whiteboard in the shared space, a shared digital calendar, or both.
- **Resource inventory:** A single place where all shared assets are tracked — tools, vehicles, kitchen equipment, stored food, energy reserves, available volunteer hours. The system should show what is available, where it is, and how to access it.
- **Needs-and-surplus matching:** When the food co-op has surplus potatoes and the community kitchen needs potatoes, the connection should happen automatically — not by accident. A simple bulletin board (physical or digital) where projects post what they have and what they need. Over time, this becomes the seed of non-market coordination.
- **Communication channels the network controls:** Messaging, document sharing, and discussion forums on platforms you control — not Facebook groups or WhatsApp, which can be censored, monetized, or shut down. Matrix/Element for real-time messaging. Nextcloud for file sharing. A community website for public information. If the technical capacity exists, self-host; if not, use privacy-respecting hosted services and plan to migrate when you can.
- **Inter-project governance:** How does the node council make decisions that affect multiple projects? How are shared resources allocated when two projects need the same thing at the same time? These rules should be written into the node governance charter — an extension of the individual project constitutions.

Principle: Coordination systems are the nervous system of the emerging local economy. They replace the price system's information function with direct, transparent signaling of needs and capacities. Every working coordination system you build here is a small proof that the coordination mechanisms described in the "How coordination works without currency" section above can actually function. Start simple. A shared spreadsheet that tracks tool inventory and food supplies is a micro-version of the transparent demand signaling and open capacity tracking described later in the roadmap.

Result: Working coordination systems for scheduling, resource tracking, needs matching, communication, and inter-project governance.

Step 4.5 — Begin reducing monetary transactions within the network

You need: A node with multiple functioning projects and working coordination systems. Evidence that real capacity exists to replace market purchases in specific domains.

What to do: Identify places where money currently changes hands between projects or members for things the network can provide directly, and replace the monetary transaction with a direct provision:

- If the community kitchen currently charges for preserved food to cover costs, and the food cooperative provides the raw ingredients at no cost, the preserved food becomes available without charge — the cost has already been covered by the cooperative's collective purchasing.
- If members currently pay for tool rental from a commercial rental service, and the tool library stocks the same items, the rental cost disappears — replaced by the commons.
- If members currently pay for childcare, and the care circle covers the same hours, the childcare cost disappears.
- If the repair workshop fixes a member's appliance that would otherwise require a paid repairperson, that monetary expense is replaced by community capacity.

Important principle: Do not declare things "free" before the capacity exists to provide them reliably. A tool library that runs out of drills is worse than a commercial rental that always has them. The monetary dependence should recede naturally as the commons capacity grows — not be abolished by declaration. Keep track of the monetary value of what the commons

provides. "Last quarter, the network replaced $47,000 in market purchases for its members" is a powerful statement — and it helps members understand what the commons is actually worth.

Where money flows in, not out: The network still operates within the monetary economy. Members still earn wages, pay taxes, buy things the network can't provide. The shift is gradual: the fraction of each household's needs met through the commons grows, and the fraction dependent on wages shrinks. A household that used to spend $3,000/month might find that food co-op membership saves $400, the tool library saves $100, the care circle replaces $800 in childcare, and the energy cooperative cuts $150 from utility bills — reducing the monthly monetary need by almost half. Each reduction is a concrete step toward the point where monetary income becomes less urgent and community participation becomes more valuable.

Result: A documented reduction in monetary transactions within the network, tracked by category and by household impact, with evidence that commons-based provision is meeting the needs that market purchases previously served.

Readiness gate

The local system is ready for federation when it provides demonstrable benefit across multiple domains (food, tools, care, education, energy), is governed by its participants rather than a founding group, has working coordination systems, has begun measurably reducing monetary dependence, and has tested its resilience through at least one significant disruption — a supply shortage, a leadership transition, a conflict between projects, or a legal challenge. If you haven't been tested, you haven't been proven.

This is the most dangerous moment in the transition. Not dangerous in the sense of risk — dangerous in the sense of complacency. Life for your members has improved measurably. Monthly costs are down. Community is stronger. Skills are growing. The temptation to stop here is powerful, because what you've built is genuinely good. It is a better campsite than the one you left — warmer, safer, more connected. But it is not the destination. A single node, however well-functioning, is vulnerable: to local political change, to economic shocks that overwhelm local capacity, to the simple fact that the broader system still sets the rules your community operates within. The transition from "a good local project" to "an alternative system" requires connection — not centralization, but federation. Phase 5 is where isolated nodes become a network, and a network begins to develop the redundancy and scale that makes it resilient against forces larger than any single community.

PHASE 5 Federate

Connect local systems into regional networks that share capacity without concentrating authority. Federation is not merger — each node retains its governance, its assets, and its right to withdraw. What federation adds is resilience, specialization, and scale.

Approaching government, from this phase on

From here onward, Transition systems will increasingly deal with government at every level, from town councils to national legislatures. How they present themselves matters. These are communities solving their own problems. They are not asking government to pay for them. What they ask for is mainly supportive legislation and legal clarity: recognition of cooperative governance, permission to use idle public land, and fair rules for community energy and non-monetary exchange. For many officials, that can be welcome news: one less burden on stretched budgets, and one less point of potential resistance. If public money is offered for specific, measured outcomes, it can be accepted on terms that keep the community independent.

This is not an offer to replace public services. Community provision adds to public responsibilities; it is not a reason to cut them.

Not everyone in power will welcome this. As Transition systems grow, resistance is likely from those who stand to lose power and special privilege. The strongest answer is widespread public support: when people are free to choose what gives them a better quality of life, many will choose it, and a choice made by many people is hard to reverse. How the Transition meets that resistance will need to be refined as it grows. See Strength without violence and Overcoming the resistance.

Steps

Step 5.1 — Start with one bounded cooperation

You need: Contact with at least one other functioning node. A specific, limited task that would benefit from cooperation.

What to do: Don't federate abstractly. Begin with a single, concrete joint project: a shared bulk-purchasing agreement for food staples that gives both nodes better prices. A tool-sharing arrangement where Node A lends Node B its concrete mixer on alternate weeks. A joint training program where one node's experienced food-preservation instructor teaches the other node's members. Write a compact — a simple agreement — stating exactly what each node provides, what each receives, how long the arrangement lasts, and how either party can withdraw. Run it for three months and evaluate: did federation actually add value, or did the coordination overhead outweigh the benefit?

Principle: The Swiss cantonal system — one of the world's oldest and most stable federations — was built precisely this way: individual cantons formed limited agreements for specific purposes (trade routes, mutual defense) over centuries before consolidating into a federal structure. The specificity is the point. Abstract federation produces abstract governance; bounded cooperation produces proven relationships.

Result: One functioning inter-node cooperation, with a written compact and an evaluation at three months.

Step 5.2 — Build inter-node governance

You need: Two or more nodes with at least one successful bounded cooperation between them.

What to do: Establish a federation council — delegates from each participating node — with a charter that answers:

- **What decisions does the federation make?** Only those that no single node can make alone: inter-node resource sharing, regional infrastructure, shared standards, mutual aid during crises. Everything else stays local.
- **How are disputes between nodes resolved?** A mediation process involving delegates from uninvolved nodes. If mediation fails, the nodes can simply stop cooperating on the disputed matter — the exit is always available.

- **How are shared resources allocated?** Proportional contribution, proportional access — but with a solidarity floor: no node should be excluded from essential shared resources because it is poorer or smaller. The Mondragon principle of inter-cooperative solidarity — where profitable cooperatives support struggling ones — provides a model.
- **How does a node leave?** Clean exit with reasonable notice, taking its own assets and fulfilling outstanding commitments. Federation should never become a trap.

Result: A federation charter specifying scope, decision-making, dispute resolution, resource allocation, and exit procedures.

Step 5.3 — Share specialized capacity across nodes

You need: Nodes with complementary strengths.

What to do: Map what each node does well and create exchange arrangements:

- A node in agricultural land produces food; an urban node with a workshop produces repaired tools and fabricated parts. They exchange directly.
- A node with medical professionals offers health training across the federation; a node with strong digital skills provides tech support and coordination tools to others.
- A node that has built a successful community energy cooperative shares its technical knowledge and legal templates with nodes that want to replicate it.
- A node with experienced mediators provides dispute-resolution services to others — traveling mediators who can intervene in conflicts that a single node's internal processes can't resolve.

Real-world parallel: The Emilia-Romagna cooperative network operates precisely this way — specialized cooperatives exchange goods and services through the consortium at cost, without market pricing. A construction cooperative sources materials from a logistics cooperative and hires workers through a labor cooperative. The network effect makes each cooperative more capable than it would be alone.

Result: Active inter-node exchange of specialized capacity, tracked and documented.

Step 5.4 — Develop regional infrastructure

You need: A federation of several nodes with functioning governance. Infrastructure needs that exceed any single node's capacity.

What to do: Identify and build infrastructure that serves the federation as a whole:

- **Energy:** A regional renewable energy grid connecting community solar, wind, and battery installations. Germany's energy cooperatives already interconnect at the regional level through virtual power plant arrangements.
- **Food distribution:** A network connecting agricultural nodes with urban consumption nodes — regular delivery routes, shared cold storage, seasonal coordination. Cuba's organoponics system — urban organic farms that emerged during the Special Period after 1991 — demonstrates that urban food production, linked to regional agriculture, can feed cities even under severe resource constraints.
- **Transportation:** Shared vehicle fleets, coordinated carpooling across nodes, or even small-scale transit systems for essential travel between nodes.
- **Communication:** A federated digital infrastructure — community-owned internet service, mesh networking where commercial internet is unavailable or unreliable, shared servers for coordination tools. Guifi.net in Catalonia is a community-owned telecommunications network serving over 35,000 active nodes — proof that community-controlled internet infrastructure is technically and organizationally viable.
- **Training and education:** A shared curriculum for the skills the federation needs most — governance facilitation, conflict mediation, cooperative management, food preservation, renewable energy maintenance, basic healthcare,

digital security. Rotating training sessions hosted by different nodes, with instructors drawn from across the federation.

Result: At least one piece of regional infrastructure serving multiple nodes, governed by the federation council.

Step 5.5 — Develop shared standards

You need: Active inter-node exchange that would benefit from consistency.

What to do: Create shared standards for:

- **Quality and safety:** Food safety standards for inter-node food exchange. Safety standards for shared tools and equipment. Building standards for shared infrastructure.
- **Accessibility:** Every shared service must be accessible to people with disabilities, language barriers, transportation limitations, and caregiving responsibilities. This is not an afterthought — it is a core operating commitment.
- **Environmental impact:** Shared standards for ecological sustainability — waste reduction, energy efficiency, regenerative agriculture, materials sourcing. These standards should be evidence-based and regularly revised.
- **Data and privacy:** Federation-wide standards for what data is collected, how it is stored, who can access it, and how long it is retained. Each node stores its own data; the federation layer sees only aggregated, anonymized summaries needed for coordination.

Principle: Standards should be developed by the people who have to meet them, not imposed by a central body. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) develops technical standards through committees of practitioners — the people who actually use the standards have the strongest voice in setting them. Apply the same principle: food safety standards should be developed by the people who grow and process the food, not by federation administrators who don't.

Result: Written, shared standards for quality, safety, accessibility, environmental impact, and data handling — developed by practitioners and ratified by the federation council.

Step 5.6 — Build federated digital coordination

You need: Multiple nodes with working local coordination systems (from Phase 4) that need to interoperate.

What to do: Build or adopt tools that let nodes share information without centralizing control:

- **Federated resource tracking:** Each node publishes what it has available and what it needs; a federation-level dashboard aggregates this data so that surplus in one node can meet shortage in another. The underlying data stays on local servers; the federation layer only sees summaries.
- **Inter-regional needs matching:** When Node A has surplus grain and Node C needs grain, the system identifies the match, calculates transportation logistics, and proposes the exchange. This is the federation-scale version of the bulletin board from Phase 4.
- **Communication:** A federated messaging system (Matrix/Element protocol, or equivalent) where each node runs its own server but messages flow between them. This is how email already works — no single entity controls it, but messages get delivered.

Principle: Local data sovereignty is non-negotiable. A centralized database of every node's resources, needs, and participants is a surveillance tool waiting to be misused. The federated model — local storage, shared protocols, aggregated summaries — preserves coordination capacity without creating a panopticon. ActivityPub (the protocol behind Mastodon and the fediverse) demonstrates this architecture at scale: millions of users, thousands of independent servers, no single point of control.

Result: Working federated digital tools for resource tracking, needs matching, and communication — with each node controlling its own data.

Readiness gate

Federation should expand access without hollowing out local control. Before proceeding to Phase 6, the federation must demonstrate: enforceable local sovereignty (nodes can refuse federation decisions and withdraw), transparent performance tracking, stable coordination capacity that doesn't depend on any single person or node, independent audit of shared resources and decisions, and tested procedures for handling political hostility, supply-chain disruption, and internal conflict between nodes.

The network you've built is genuinely remarkable. Multiple communities, governing themselves, sharing resources, producing goods and services, reducing monetary dependence, resolving disputes through their own processes. This is no longer a collection of projects — it is the infrastructure of an alternative economy, small but functioning. Savor this: most movements that set out to build alternatives never get within sight of this campsite. But look at the landscape honestly. Your federation operates within a legal and economic framework set by institutions you don't control. Your members still depend on wage employment for what the commons can't yet provide. Your coordination tools are tested at the scale of dozens or hundreds, not thousands. Phase 6 is where you begin to negotiate with the larger system — not from weakness or ideology, but from demonstrated proof that what you've built works.

PHASE 6 Establish public compacts

Partner with municipalities and public institutions — from a position of demonstrated operational proof, not ideological advocacy. You are not asking for permission to exist; you already exist. You are proposing a partnership between a public institution and a community network that has proven it can deliver outcomes.

Steps

Step 6.1 — Build the case from your own data

You need: The tracking data from every phase — usage numbers, cost savings for members, labor hours contributed, services delivered, disputes resolved, community health improvements.

What to do: Prepare a community impact report — a concise document showing what the federation has accomplished in concrete terms. Not ideology, not theory: numbers. "The network served 340 households last year. Members saved an average of $4,800 annually through shared resources. The food cooperative distributed 12,000 kg of produce. The repair workshops kept 8 tons of electronics and appliances out of landfill. Zero safety incidents. 94% member satisfaction." Municipal officials respond to evidence. Many are looking for proven programs to support because they know from experience that top-down interventions often fail. You are offering a program that already works.

Real-world parallel: The Preston Model in Lancashire, England, demonstrates this approach. The Preston city council, facing severe austerity cuts, worked with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies and five other anchor institutions — the county council, two colleges, the police, and a housing association — to redirect their purchasing toward local businesses, social enterprises, and new worker cooperatives. Between 2012/13 and 2016/17, spending retained in Preston rose from 5% to 18% of the anchors' procurement — about £74 million more a year — and a 2018 Demos–PwC index named Preston the UK's most improved city. The lesson for a federation: institutions redirect money toward what is concretely shown to exist and work, so arrive with what you have already built and a specific proposal.

Result: A data-driven community impact report suitable for presenting to municipal officials, institutional leaders, and potential public-sector partners.

Step 6.2 — Negotiate mutual obligations

You need: The impact report. An identified public institution — a municipal government, a school district, a public hospital, a housing authority — whose mandate aligns with what your federation provides.

What to do: Propose a compact — a formal agreement with reciprocal obligations:

- **What the institution provides:** Land (a vacant lot for the community garden, a building for the workshop), procurement (buying from the food cooperative for school lunches), recognition (legally recognizing the cooperative's governance), infrastructure (connecting the community energy system to the municipal grid), or funding (grants for specific, measured outcomes).
- **What the federation delivers:** Measurable outcomes — households served, food distributed, waste diverted, skills trained, costs saved, health improvements — reported transparently and audited independently.
- **What protects independence:** The compact includes sunset clauses (automatic renewal only if both parties agree), the right to criticize (the federation can publicly disagree with the institution without losing the partnership), and an exit plan (what happens to shared assets if the compact ends).

Examples of compacts that have worked:

- Barcelona's Pla BUITS program (launched 2012) lent vacant municipal lots, free of charge, to non-profit community organizations selected through open calls, under one-to-three-year agreements for uses of public interest — most

became community gardens, alongside cultural and educational spaces.
- Bologna's Regulation on Collaboration between Citizens and the City — adopted in 2014 and since replicated by over 200 Italian municipalities — creates a legal framework for "pacts of collaboration" between citizen groups and the municipality for the care of urban commons.
- Cleveland's Evergreen Cooperatives partnered with anchor institutions — the Cleveland Clinic, Case Western Reserve University, University Hospitals — to create worker-owned cooperatives that provide laundry, solar installation, and urban farming services to the institutions. Anchor purchasing reached only about 15% of revenue — less than planned — and Evergreen's leaders later concluded that the cooperatives should have had contracts in hand before launching. The lesson for compacts: secure written procurement commitments, not goodwill.

Result: A signed compact with at least one public institution, specifying mutual obligations, independence protections, and measurable outcomes.

Step 6.3 — Advocate for legal frameworks

You need: Working compacts that reveal where the legal framework falls short. Legal expertise — which may come from law school clinics, cooperative law organizations, or sympathetic legislators.

What to do: Identify specific legal barriers and advocate for specific changes:

- **Cooperative incorporation:** In many jurisdictions, cooperative formation requires legal work that is more expensive and complex than forming a corporation. Advocate for simplified cooperative formation statutes — Colorado's Uniform Limited Cooperative Association Act is a model.
- **Community land trusts:** In some jurisdictions, CLTs face tax treatment that disadvantages them relative to private ownership. Advocate for property tax exemptions for community-owned land held in perpetuity for community benefit — Brussels, England, and several U.S. states provide models.
- **Non-monetary exchange:** Time banks and barter networks face tax ambiguity in many countries. Advocate for clear exemptions for non-commercial mutual aid — Japan's "fureai kippu" (caring relationship tickets) system, which facilitates eldercare time-banking with government recognition, provides a model.
- **Community energy:** Feed-in tariffs, community solar legislation, and net metering rules that allow community energy cooperatives to connect to the grid and be fairly compensated. Germany's Erneuerbare-Energien-Gesetz (Renewable Energy Act) — which enabled the citizen energy cooperative movement — is the benchmark.
- **Community food systems:** Cottage food laws that allow community food production, Good Samaritan food-donation protections, and exemptions for community-scale food processing from industrial food-safety regulations designed for factories.

Principle: Advocate for specific, technical legal changes — not sweeping ideological reforms. "We need Senate Bill 1247 to include community land trusts in the property tax exemption for nonprofits" is more likely to succeed than "we need to end property speculation." The second may be true; the first is actionable.

Result: Active advocacy for specific legal changes, with identified legislative vehicles, institutional allies, and measurable progress.

Readiness gate

Public compacts should expand access without hollowing out community control. Before proceeding, verify: the federation can survive the loss of any single public partnership (no single-source dependency); the compact includes enforceable independence protections; performance is transparently reported and independently audited; and the federation has contingency plans for political change — what happens if the current administration is replaced by one hostile to cooperatives?

The transition now has institutional partners. Public land, public procurement, legal recognition, infrastructure access. The federation is no longer operating in the margins — it is a recognized part of how the community functions. For the people involved, the quality of daily life has changed substantially: food is more affordable and better, tools and repair are accessible, childcare and eldercare are shared, energy costs are lower, skills are growing, and community bonds are real. This campsite is genuinely comfortable. Which is precisely why the next phase — extending these benefits universally, not just to network members — is the hardest to motivate. Phase 7 is where the question shifts from "how do we help ourselves?" to "how do we ensure that no one in this community lacks what they need to live?" That is a different kind of ambition, and it requires the proven capacity of everything you've built so far.

PHASE 7 Guarantee essentials and reduce currency dependence

Make survival progressively less dependent on wages, wealth, debt, and market access — not by declaring things free but by building the capacity to provide them reliably without charge.

This stage must be defined by capacity, not rhetoric. Declaring housing or food "free" does not produce land, labor, materials, care, or energy. The system must measure demand, maintain resources, train workers, and prove reliability before expanding guarantees. Every public healthcare system in the world went through this same process — building hospital capacity, training staff, and establishing supply chains before guaranteeing universal access. The difference here is that the guarantee extends beyond healthcare to all essentials, and the governance is democratic rather than state-administered.

For each essential sector, follow this sequence

Step 7.1 — Define the guarantee in concrete terms

What to do: For each essential — food, housing, healthcare, education, energy, water, communication, transport — state exactly what the minimum provision looks like. Not "everyone gets food" but "every person in the network has access to 2,200 calories per day of nutritious food, including fresh produce, protein, and culturally appropriate staples, within 30 minutes of their home." Not "everyone gets housing" but "every person has access to safe, heated/cooled, structurally sound shelter with running water, sanitation, electricity, and adequate space — a minimum of 15 square meters per person."

Why specificity matters: Vague guarantees cannot be measured, audited, or enforced. The NHS defines specific waiting-time targets and treatment standards. Finland's universal housing policy defines specific habitability standards. These definitions are what make the guarantee real rather than aspirational.

Result: A written definition of the minimum essential service level for each sector, concrete enough to measure.

Step 7.2 — Measure capacity against need

What to do: For each sector, measure: current demand (how many people need this?), current capacity (how much can the network provide?), external dependencies (what inputs must still be purchased?), ecological cost (what environmental impact does provision create?), and failure risk (what happens if a key component breaks?). Be honest. If the food cooperative can feed 200 households but the area contains 2,000, the gap is 90%. Name it.

Example: "Current food capacity: 12,000 kg of produce per growing season from community gardens and partner farms. Current demand: approximately 45,000 kg based on network population. Gap: 33,000 kg, currently purchased from commercial suppliers. External dependencies: seeds, fertilizer, fuel for distribution vehicles. Ecological cost: approximately 2.3 tons CO_2 equivalent per year from distribution transport. Failure risk: a single-season crop failure would create a 60% shortfall without commercial backup."

Result: A capacity assessment for each essential sector, with gap analysis and risk identification.

Step 7.3 — Guarantee a limited core first

What to do: Start with the sector where capacity is strongest relative to demand. Guarantee a limited but completely reliable core before promising comprehensive provision. A food network that can reliably provide staples (grains, legumes, preserved vegetables) to all members should guarantee that first, even if fresh produce and protein require additional development. A housing network that can guarantee safe shelter for all current members — even if the shelter is modest — should make that guarantee before promising spacious, modern housing.

Principle: Under-promise and over-deliver. A guaranteed floor that never fails is worth more than a generous promise that sometimes does. Costa Rica provides universal healthcare through its Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social — not the most

advanced system in the world, but one that covers 95% of the population reliably and has produced health outcomes comparable to countries spending five times as much per capita. The guarantee is basic but unbreakable. Build that first.

Result: A formal guarantee of minimum essential provision in at least one sector, backed by demonstrated capacity.

Step 7.4 — Make the core free at the point of use

What to do: Where the capacity exists to provide the guaranteed core reliably, remove the monetary transaction. The food cooperative's staple basket is available to every member without charge. The community energy system provides a base allocation of electricity to every connected household without billing. The care circle provides a defined level of childcare and eldercare without payment.

How it's funded during transition: While the federation still operates within the monetary economy, the costs of free-at-point-of-use services are covered through: shared productivity (the food cooperative's labor grows food that members would otherwise buy), cost avoidance (the repair workshop saves members money that can be contributed to the commons), public compact funding (municipal grants tied to outcomes), and voluntary contributions from members whose monetary income exceeds their needs.

Result: Essential provision in at least one sector available without charge to all network members.

Step 7.5 — Maintain transitional accounting

What to do: Even as internal monetary transactions disappear, maintain accounting for external costs. The food cooperative may provide food without charge to members, but it still needs to buy seeds, fuel, and equipment from outside the network. Track these external monetary costs transparently: what the network spends, where the money comes from, and how long current reserves would last if income stopped.

Principle: The goal is to shrink the monetary boundary — the line between what the network provides and what the market provides — but to be precise about where that boundary currently sits. Pretending external costs don't exist is the fastest way to bankrupt the commons.

Result: A transparent accounting system showing both internal (non-monetary) provision and external (monetary) costs.

Step 7.6 — Expand capacity through prevention and efficiency

What to do: The most cost-effective way to expand guarantees is to reduce demand through prevention, repair, and efficiency — not just to increase production:

- **Health:** Preventive care, community health workers, nutrition education, mental health support, and environmental improvements reduce the demand for acute healthcare. Cuba's polyclinic model — community-based preventive health centers serving defined neighborhoods — produces health outcomes that rival wealthy nations at a fraction of the cost.
- **Food:** Reducing food waste, improving preservation and storage, diversifying crops for resilience, and composting to build soil fertility all increase effective food capacity without additional land or labor.
- **Housing:** Insulation, passive heating and cooling, shared infrastructure maintenance, and community design that reduces per-person resource use all extend housing capacity.
- **Energy:** Efficiency improvements — LED lighting, insulation, heat pumps, shared laundry facilities — can reduce energy demand by 30–50% before any additional generation is needed.
- **Goods:** Repair, sharing, and durable design reduce demand for new production. The repair movement — repair cafes, right-to-repair legislation, modular product design — extends the useful life of existing goods by years.

Result: Documented reduction in demand through prevention and efficiency, expanding the effective reach of existing capacity.

Step 7.7 — Stress-test and expand

What to do: Before expanding a guarantee to a new sector, stress-test existing guarantees: What happens if the food supply is disrupted for two weeks? What if the energy system fails in winter? What if a key facility is damaged? What if a hostile administration cuts off public compact funding? Conduct tabletop exercises — walk through the scenario, identify weaknesses, build buffers and contingency plans.

Then expand the guarantee to the next sector only when: the existing guarantee has survived at least one real disruption (not just a tabletop exercise), capacity exceeds demand by a safety margin (not by 0.5% but by 15–20%), maintenance and training pipelines are functioning, and the governance system has demonstrated it can allocate scarce resources fairly during a shortage.

Result: Stress-tested guarantees in established sectors, and expansion to new sectors only when capacity and governance are proven.

Readiness gate

A sector is ready for reduced monetary dependence when it can meet a defined essential service level reliably, has adequate maintainers and trained backups, knows its material and energy inputs with precision, has lawful stewardship and independent audit, has been stress-tested against supply disruption, climate events, infrastructure failure, and political hostility, and has demonstrated fair allocation during at least one period of genuine scarcity.

People in your network now have guaranteed access to essentials. Food, shelter, healthcare, energy, education — provided by a community they govern, without dependence on wages or market access for survival. The significance of this cannot be overstated: for the first time in most participants' lives, losing a job does not mean losing the ability to eat, live safely, or see a doctor. That security changes everything — how people think, what risks they can take, what work they choose to do, how they relate to each other. It is an extraordinary achievement. And it is still operating within a legal framework that permits the concentration of wealth, the private ownership of common resources, and the use of economic power to compel obedience. Phase 7B addresses that framework — carefully, lawfully, and only when the alternative system is strong enough that conversion does not leave anyone without what they need.

PHASE 7B Convert extractive ownership into stewardship and universal access

When proven alternative capacity is strong enough, change the legal structures that permit absentee ownership, rent extraction, speculative withholding, and private monopolization of socially consequential assets.

Phase 7B does not begin merely because a political majority desires it. It begins when people can lose an old source of income without losing food, housing, healthcare, mobility, education, communication, meaningful participation, or personal security. The purpose is not to punish former owners — it is to end legal powers that allow one person to control another person's home, workplace, access to necessities, or use of socially consequential resources.

Changes to property rights, corporate governance, tenancy, inheritance, intellectual property, and public trusts will occur through publicly enacted law, constitutional procedures, due process, and independently reviewable decisions. The decisive rule: **do not remove an existing dependency until a safer and more equitable system has demonstrated that it can carry the load.**

The full Phase 7B plan includes eight entry conditions that must be satisfied before compulsory conversion begins, real-world precedents from community land trusts, worker cooperatives, and open-knowledge systems, and a detailed 34-step conversion protocol organized in seven parts:

1. Establish the lawful conversion framework
2. Convert housing and land
3. Convert enterprises and productive assets
4. Reallocate concentrated luxury and high-impact assets
5. Legislative and policymaking strategy
6. Responding to resistance with compassion and firmness
7. Pathways through different governmental systems

It concludes with a controlled currency-retirement sequence and a final readiness gate before Phase 8.

Read the full Phase 7B plan

This is the most profound structural change in the entire roadmap. The legal framework that permits the concentration of wealth and the private control of common resources is being replaced — lawfully, through democratic process, with full due process protections — by a framework designed to prevent those concentrations from re-forming. The people who previously derived income or security from ownership of land, enterprises, or essential infrastructure now derive it from the commons — the same commons that guarantees essentials to everyone. Nothing has been taken without replacement; what has changed is the legal power to use ownership as leverage over other people's survival. Phase 8 is no longer about building. It is about sustaining — ensuring that what has been built does not drift, calcify, or re-concentrate into a new hierarchy under new names.

KEY How coordination works without currency

The question everyone asks: without prices, how do you decide who gets what? This is the hardest question in the entire proposal. It deserves a direct answer.

What prices actually do

In market economies, prices serve as compressed information signals: they communicate scarcity, coordinate supply and demand, and distribute goods. The classical argument for prices is that no central authority could process the vast amount of information needed to make these decisions. This argument, associated with Friedrich Hayek in 1945, is the strongest case for the price system, and it should be stated at full strength: much of the knowledge an economy runs on is local, tacit and dispersed, prices gather it into a single number no planner has to understand, and they do so while also discovering what people want and rewarding those who find out (Hayek, *The Use of Knowledge in Society*, 1945). Two things have changed since. The computational barrier Hayek assumed was permanent has largely fallen, and the largest organizations on earth now plan enormous flows of goods internally without charging themselves prices. Neither change refutes him outright. They narrow his objection to its hardest core: not calculation, which machines now do, but the discovery of changing wants and the direction of innovation, treated honestly below.

What already coordinates without prices

Large organizations already coordinate complex production and distribution without internal prices:

- **Corporate logistics:** Amazon, Walmart, and comparable firms use computational logistics to coordinate millions of products across thousands of locations in real time. Internally, these are planned economies — no Amazon warehouse charges another Amazon warehouse a market price for transferring inventory. The coordination is computational, not monetary.
- **Military logistics:** Modern militaries supply millions of personnel across global operations without internal market transactions. The U.S. Defense Logistics Agency manages over 5 million distinct items through nine supply chains, with operations in 48 states and 28 countries, using real-time inventory management and demand forecasting.
- **Open-source production:** Linux, Wikipedia, and thousands of projects coordinate the work of millions of contributors through transparent task tracking, peer review, and consensus — without wages, prices, or hierarchical management. The resulting products dominate their fields.
- **Public libraries:** Over 300,000 public libraries worldwide manage lending, acquisition, and inter-library sharing for billions of items — allocating access based on need, not ability to pay.
- **Public healthcare systems:** The NHS, Finland's terveyskeskus network, and comparable systems allocate medical resources — including scarce ones like organ transplants, ICU beds, and specialist time — through clinical priority, not price. No one seriously argues that emergency rooms should auction treatment to the highest bidder.

The claim that coordination without prices is impossible is contradicted by the daily operations of the largest organizations in existence. The question is not whether non-price coordination works. It is whether it can be made democratic rather than hierarchical.

Coordination without prices is older, and broader, than markets

Treating the price-coordinated market as the natural state of the economy, with everything else a deviation, gets the history backwards. For most of the human past, large-scale production and distribution were organized by reciprocity and redistribution, not by market exchange; self-regulating markets became the organizing principle of whole societies only in the nineteenth century (Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 1944). The anthropological record finds no society that ran on barter and then invented money to lubricate it; everyday life ran on credit, obligation and gift (Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*; Mauss, *The Gift*). This matters because it shows non-price coordination is not an untried hope but the ground much of human history stood on.

- **The Inca state** ran a population in the millions, across thousands of kilometres, substantially without money or markets. It coordinated through labour service (*mit'a*), reciprocity between kin groups (*ayni*), a continental road and storehouse (*qollqa*) network, and accounting kept on knotted-cord *khipu* (economy of the Inca empire; D'Altroy, *The Incas*). It is the clearest large case, and an honest one: its coordination was commanded from above, not organized among equals. It proves the scale is possible; the Transition's task is to reach it democratically.
- **The Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy** coordinated six nations by consensus under the Great Law of Peace, with communal longhouse stores that the clan mothers held and allocated by need (Brown, 'Economic Organization and the Position of Women Among the Iroquois,' *Ethnohistory*, 1970). Here non-price coordination and distributed, non-dominating authority went together, which is closer to what the Transition aims at.
- **Cahokia,** the largest pre-Columbian city north of Mexico, organized the hand-built construction of enormous earthen monuments and a regional web of exchange and redistributive feasting, without money or markets (UNESCO, Cahokia Mounds).
- **Potlatch** societies of the Pacific Northwest distributed goods and set status through ceremonial giving, the inverse of accumulation through sale (The Canadian Encyclopedia).

These are not models to copy; they belong to their own peoples and times, and some rested on command or hierarchy the Transition rejects. They are evidence, drawn from anthropology, archaeology and history rather than economics alone, that coordinating a complex society without prices is a demonstrated human capacity, not a fantasy. Modern intentional communities carry the same lesson into industrial conditions: Israeli kibbutzim allocated labour for decades without internal wages, at their 1989 peak about 129,000 people across some 270 communities, though many later took on market features, a history the movement debates openly (Russell et al., *The Renewal of the Kibbutz*); Hutterite colonies have held property in common and coordinated work for five centuries, and scale not by enlarging one community but by splitting into new ones at around 150 people (2024 Hutterite census: 58,392 people in 544 colonies). Durable non-market coordination tends to grow by federating small units, not by building one large hierarchy, which is exactly the roadmap's own design.

The coordination mechanism

The roadmap does not prescribe a single rigid planning system. It proposes a set of principles that any coordination system must satisfy, along with components that existing systems have demonstrated:

1. **Transparent demand signaling.** People and communities register what they need — food, housing, medical supplies, educational materials, energy, transport — aggregated and anonymized to protect privacy. This replaces the price system's demand signal with a direct, visible accounting of what is actually needed, where, and in what quantities.
2. **Open capacity tracking.** Each community or production unit publishes what it can produce, what resources it holds, what inputs it requires, and what surplus is available. This is the supply-side counterpart: a transparent picture of productive capacity across the network.
3. **Computational matching.** Open-source software matches supply to demand, optimizes distribution for distance and energy cost, identifies shortfalls before they become crises, and proposes production adjustments. This is what corporate logistics already does — made transparent and publicly governed rather than proprietary and extractive.
4. **Democratic priority-setting.** When demand exceeds capacity — which will happen for some goods in some periods — the allocation decision is made through democratic deliberation at the appropriate level, not through price rationing. A community with one MRI machine does not auction scans to the highest bidder. It allocates them by medical need — as every public healthcare system already does. The same principle extends to other domains where scarcity requires prioritization.
5. **Iterative adjustment.** The system operates on continuous feedback, not five-year plans. If a region needs more grain and less cotton, the adjustment is made in the next production cycle — informed by real-time data, not by a distant ministry's projection. The speed of adjustment should be faster than market cycles, not slower, because the information is direct and unmediated by speculation.
6. **Redundancy and buffers.** Strategic reserves are maintained for essential goods — food, energy, medical supplies, building materials. Surplus is stored and distributed, not destroyed. The current system deliberately creates scarcity

to maintain prices; a rational system maintains buffers to prevent shortages.

The two kinds of coordination, side by side

Prices do several jobs at once. A post-currency system does not abolish those jobs; it assigns each to a different, visible mechanism.

Each thing a price quietly does can be named, and matched to a mechanism that real systems already use for it:

- **Carrying information** → an open, shared picture of needs and capacity, as open-source and Wikipedia coordinate work, and as the Inca did with *khipu* and storehouses.
- **Allocating goods** → transparent matching across nested, federated units, as Ostrom documented for commons and as corporate logistics already does internally (Phillips and Rozworski, *The People's Republic of Walmart*).
- **Motivating effort** → reciprocity, reputation, recognition and a real share in the outcome, the motives behind the potlatch, open-source and worker cooperatives.
- **Rationing scarcity** → priority by need, transparent queues and ecological limits, as public health systems allocate scarce care (NHS Constitution).
- **Correcting error** → fast, measured feedback loops, the aim of Chile's early-1970s Project Cybersyn and of modern in-kind planning proposals (Cockshott and Cottrell).
- **Growing without central control** → federating small units rather than enlarging one, as the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Hutterite colonies and the internet's own standards process all do (IETF, 'On Consensus and Humming,' RFC 7282).

Every one of these mechanisms is demonstrated somewhere, usually at partial scale or for one kind of good. None has yet been combined with all the others across a whole economy while matching the market's pace of innovation and preference discovery. The diagram is therefore a synthesis of working parts and a research agenda, not a finished machine, which is why the roadmap builds and tests it in stages rather than declaring it solved.

What is unproven — and how the roadmap addresses it

Honesty requires conceding a real limit, and conceding it precisely. That Amazon, Walmart or an army plans vast flows internally does not by itself prove a whole economy can run without prices: each of those planned islands still floats in a market, buys its inputs at market prices, and keeps its own score in money, which quietly tells it whether its plan is working (Simon, 'Organizations and Markets,' 1991). Internal planning proves that coordination at scale does not require prices. It does not prove that the market's remaining jobs can all be done another way. No existing system coordinates a full modern economy — millions of distinct products, global supply chains, real-time logistics — through democratic non-market mechanisms. The components have each been demonstrated; their integration at full scale has not.

Three of the market's jobs are genuinely hard to replace, and are the honest frontier of this question. **Discovering what people want** as it changes, when no one states it in advance; **directing innovation,** deciding which of countless possible new things to try; and **correcting error** quickly, since a planned system can persist in a mistake that a loss would have stopped. The clearest cautionary record is the shortage economies of the Soviet bloc, where soft budget constraints let enterprises run on without correction (Maskin and Roland on Kornai's soft budget constraint, 2003). These problems are not solved here. What has changed is that they are now approachable: shared, transparent information systems answer much of the calculation problem, and fast feedback loops, piloted and measured, are how the roadmap means to attack the rest. The most rigorous evidence that communities can govern shared resources well, at many scales and over long periods, comes from Elinor Ostrom's study of thousands of cases, later tested across dozens of studies (Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*; Cox, Arnold and Villamayor-Tomás, 2010).

This is precisely why the roadmap is structured as a gradual, tested transition rather than an abrupt replacement. Each phase expands the domain of non-market coordination incrementally, building proof at each stage. A community that coordinates food and tools learns the lessons needed to coordinate housing and energy. A federation that coordinates across ten communities learns what is needed to coordinate across a hundred. The readiness gates ensure that each expansion is grounded in demonstrated capacity, not ideology.

If, at any stage, the evidence shows that a particular domain resists effective non-market coordination, the system can retain transitional mechanisms for that domain while continuing to expand commons-based provision in others. The roadmap is a pathway, not a dogma. What matters is that human needs are met reliably, equitably, and sustainably — not that every form of exchange conforms to a single model.

PHASE 8 A mature peer-coordinated system

Make access primarily needs-based while preventing a new administrative, technical, or moral elite from replacing owners and financiers.

A mature system is not the end of politics. People will still disagree about priorities, risk, beauty, effort, identity, ecological limits, and the use of uncommon resources. The goal is not unanimity but a society that can handle disagreement without anyone losing access to food, shelter, care, or dignity.

Minimum constitutional guarantees

1. Guaranteed access to defined essentials independent of productivity or obedience.
2. Bodily autonomy, freedom of conscience, intimate and family autonomy, expression, association, movement, and meaningful privacy.
3. Equal protection and active accessibility.
4. Due process, understandable rules, independent appeal, and proportionate responses to harm.
5. Meaningful exit from associations and freedom to form alternatives, subject to others' rights and ecological constraints.
6. Distributed authority with recall, universal rotation, and separation of incompatible powers.
7. Transparent allocation of scarce resources and auditable system models.
8. Ecological ceilings grounded in the best available evidence and revised openly.
9. Independent journalism, research, auditing, and whistleblower protection.
10. Emergency powers that are narrow, reviewable, and automatically expire.
11. Regular constitutional review and sunset clauses for unproven institutions.
12. Protection against hereditary privilege and private conversion of common assets.

What "mature" does not mean

A mature system is not finished. It is a system that has built the capacity to continue developing without losing its core commitments. The constitutional guarantees above exist precisely because maturity brings its own dangers: the coordinators who understand the allocation system become a de facto governing class; the communities that built the earliest nodes accumulate social authority over newer ones; the urgent compromises of the transition period calcify into permanent exemptions. Every generation will face the same fundamental challenge — preventing the concentration of power — in new forms. The constitutional guarantees are not a destination. They are the framework within which that permanent work continues.

The campsite metaphor reaches its limit here. Phase 8 is not a campsite and not a destination. It is a way of traveling — a society that has learned to meet human needs without concentrating the power to deny them, and that has built the institutions to keep learning. The constitutional guarantees, the readiness gates, the failure-mode countermeasures, the stress tests — these are not the walls of a fortress. They are the navigational instruments of a society that intends to keep moving, to keep correcting, to keep becoming more just, more sustainable, and more humane — without ever declaring the work complete.

A practical local-node manual

This compact manual can be used by a neighborhood or small community without waiting for a national organization. Twelve steps, each building on the last.

1

Form a diverse initiating circle

Aim for 4-12 people with different relationships to the community. Disclose conflicts, adopt the ten commitments, and decide how to stop safely if the effort fails.

2

Listen to at least twice as many people as are in the circle

Seek out those least likely to attend a meeting. Offer telephone, paper, translated, asynchronous, and accessible ways to respond.

3

Publish a needs-and-assets snapshot

Keep it short, anonymous, and correctable. Name uncertainty and disagreement.

4

Choose one six-month-or-shorter pilot

State who benefits, the expected benefit, risks, required competence, total labor, external costs, and stop conditions.

5

Write the operating sheet

One page should tell a new person: how to access the service, who operates it, what is expected, what is prohibited, how to report harm, how information is used, and when the pilot will be reviewed.

6

Start small and record reality

Count demand and failure, not just success. Record the work performed by every role. Ask who tried and could not participate.

7

Review after 30, 60, and 90 days

At each review choose: continue, change, pause, transfer, or stop. Publish the reasons.

8

Stabilize before expanding

Train backups, resolve legal issues, fund maintenance, and prove that the project survives absence of the founder.

9

Add one complementary function

Choose an addition that uses existing capacity or closes a demonstrated gap. Do not add unrelated programs merely to appear comprehensive.

10

Form a local node

When two or more durable projects exist, share administrative support and create consent-based referrals while keeping operational responsibilities clear.

11

Federate around a bounded need

Cooperate with another node on one specific task. Use a written compact and evaluate whether federation actually adds value.

12

Seek public compact only after operational proof

Ask public institutions for land, procurement, recognition, infrastructure, or funding tied to rights and transparent outcomes — not political loyalty.

Implementation index by role

The roadmap above describes a sequence. This index reorganizes the same actions by the role you occupy — what you can do from where you already stand.

Resident

You live in a community and want to participate without founding or leading anything.

- **Phases 0-1:** Respond to community listening exercises. Share what you actually need — childcare, transportation, affordable groceries — not what you think sounds political enough. Attend one meeting and say what you see.
- **Phase 2:** Use the pilot project. Borrow from the tool library. Join the care circle. Give honest feedback about what works and what doesn't — the project needs your complaints more than your praise.
- **Phases 3-4:** Become a member of the cooperative, land trust, or clinic. Vote in its governance. Volunteer for one shift or one role. Report problems through the established channel rather than social media.
- **Financial commons:** Move everyday accounts to a member-owned credit union. Join the shared food, tool, or care commons and let the pilot record how your monthly currency needs change. See the workstream.
- **Any stage:** Form or join an intentional community or intentional extended family: a shared house, a cohousing group, or a community on the land. See the workstream.
- **Phases 5+:** Participate in federated assemblies or delegate selection. Hold representatives accountable through recall and review processes. Use the systems as they expand — your sustained participation is what proves they work.

Organizer

You are forming a group, launching a project, or coordinating people who have already started.

- **Phase 0:** Recruit 4-12 people with different relationships to the community. Adopt the ten commitments. Decide how to stop safely if the effort fails. Disclose conflicts of interest.
- **Phase 1:** Listen to at least twice as many people as are in your circle. Seek out people who never attend meetings. Publish a needs-and-assets snapshot that names uncertainty and disagreement.
- **Phase 2:** Choose one six-month-or-shorter pilot. State who benefits, expected benefit, risks, required competence, and stop conditions. Write the operating sheet. Count demand and failure, not just success.
- **Phases 3-4:** Stabilize before expanding. Train backups. Resolve legal issues. Prove the project survives absence of the founder. Form a local node when two or more durable projects exist.
- **Financial commons:** Write the anti-oligarchy and exit rules into the charter. Measure baseline currency dependence in the listening survey. Run the five-commons pilot with no new currency, then open a credit union or CDFI bridge. See the workstream.
- **Phases 5-6:** Federate around a bounded need with another node. Use a written compact. Seek public compacts only after operational proof.

Professional

You have specific expertise — medical, legal, technical, financial, educational, agricultural — and want to contribute it.

- **Healthcare workers:** Staff or advise a cooperative clinic. Help design triage and referral protocols. Train community health workers. Contribute to the evidence base for what non-market healthcare delivery actually requires.
- **Lawyers:** Structure cooperatives, land trusts, and mutual aid organizations. Draft compacts between community projects and municipalities. Navigate zoning, licensing, and tax-exemption requirements. Advise on liability.
- **Engineers and technicians:** Build and maintain shared infrastructure — renewable energy systems, water treatment, communications, logistics software. Design for repair, not planned obsolescence. Document everything so others can maintain it.
- **Educators:** Develop curricula for democratic governance, conflict resolution, ecological literacy, and technical skills the community needs. Teach in community settings, not only institutions. Mentor apprentices.
- **Accountants and financial professionals:** Set up transparent accounting systems for cooperatives. Help communities manage the transition period when they still operate partly in currency. Audit shared resources. Credit union and CDFI staff can host the financial bridge, design mutual-credit limits, and keep pilots tax-compliant.
- **Farmers and food professionals:** Establish community-supported agriculture. Share knowledge about soil health, crop rotation, and preservation. Help design local food systems that work year-round, not just in growing season.

Policymaker

You hold or influence public office at the municipal, regional, or national level.

- **Municipal:** Lease public land to community land trusts at nominal cost. Adjust zoning to permit cooperative housing, urban agriculture, and community workshops. Direct procurement to local cooperatives. Establish participatory budgeting for a portion of discretionary spending. Grant right-of-way for community energy infrastructure. Bank municipal funds with local credit unions or CDFIs that serve commons projects.
- **Regional:** Create enabling legislation for cooperative federations, community land trusts, and mutual aid networks. Fund pilot programs with outcomes-based evaluation and publish the results regardless of whether they succeeded. Recognize community governance structures in administrative law.
- **National:** Establish legal frameworks for unconditional access to essentials. Protect cooperative and commons-based institutions from hostile acquisition. Fund research into non-market coordination at scale. Clarify the tax and regulatory treatment of non-commercial mutual credit and contribution ledgers so lawful pilots are not penalized. Ensure that public compacts with transition communities do not require political loyalty or ideological conformity.
- **At every level:** Resist the temptation to control direction in exchange for support. The role of the state in this framework is to create enabling conditions, protect rights, and audit outcomes — not to manage the transition from above. Compacts should specify obligations and standards, not operational details.

These roles are not exclusive. A nurse who also gardens and attends assemblies acts in all four categories. The point is to show that every position in the existing social structure has a concrete way to contribute — and that no single role carries the transition alone.

Common failure modes and countermeasures

These are not hypothetical dangers. They are patterns that have destroyed real movements. Knowing them in advance is the best defense.

Founder capture

One person becomes indispensable, controls the story and relationships, and treats accountability as persecution.

Counter: Limited mandates, shared credentials, documented procedures, trained successors, independent complaints, asset locks, routine leadership turnover.

Ideological purity

Agreement with language or theory becomes more important than useful participation.

Counter: Open services, plain language, freedom of belief, behavior-based safety rules, roles for constructive skeptics.

Premature scale

Publicity and replication outrun operational reliability.

Counter: Readiness gates, limited pilots, replication manuals that include failures, a right to pause growth.

Invisible care labor

Meetings celebrate visible projects while a few people absorb scheduling, cleaning, mediation, and emotional work.

Counter: Measure all labor, rotate it, redesign it, compensate it where possible, treat maintenance as core capacity.

Grant dependency

The funder's categories replace local priorities; the project collapses when funding ends.

Counter: Diversified support, low fixed costs, shared assets, staged commitments, exit plan for every grant.

Legal romanticism

Participants assume moral purpose exempts them from labor, tax, safety, licensing, disability, or safeguarding law.

Counter: Competent advice, documented compliance, advocacy to change harmful law, no secret evasion presented as liberation.

Data centralization

Integration produces a comprehensive profile of everyone's needs, behavior, and relationships.

Counter: Data minimization, local storage, separation of datasets, short retention, consent, offline access, independent security review.

Majority domination

Local democracy becomes permission for exclusion or abuse.

Counter: Enforceable rights floor, independent appeal, protected minority participation, federation-level review limited to rights violations.

Burnout and permanent emergency

Chronic urgency erases boundaries and makes abuse seem necessary.

Counter: Workload ceilings, rest, backups, paid coordination, planned closures, incident review, automatic expiration of emergency authority.

Build a culture in which people can work intensely when it matters, step away when they need to, and return without shame — and design structures that keep standing while they rest. A movement meant to create a society where people flourish cannot demand that its participants give up their own flourishing to build it. The measure of commitment is not suffering; it is what gets built, which needs get met, which dependencies are removed, and whether others can reproduce what works. Rest is part of the climb, not the end of it.

External capture

A party, corporation, state, or security service supplies resources in exchange for control, data, or exclusion of critics.

Counter: Funding firewalls, transparency, no single-source dependency, narrow contracts, conflict disclosure, right to terminate partnerships.

State repression

A government views the project as a political threat and uses legal, economic, or security tools to shut it down, criminalize participants, or force dissolution.

Counter: Legal compliance where possible, documented public benefit, political diversity among participants, international solidarity networks, recording and livestreaming of any confrontation from many sources at once, distributed leadership and assets so no single seizure is fatal, contingency plans for hostile legal environments, continuation of mutual aid through existing social structures when open organization is impossible.

Violent drift

Anger at injustice, provocation or repression pushes some participants toward armed struggle, reprisals or purges, sometimes in the Transition's name.

Counter: Training in nonviolent discipline before high-pressure moments, inclusive organization, prompt public disavowal, conversation and real roles for those drawn toward violence, no Transition function for anyone who organizes it. See Strength without violence.

Technocratic drift

The coordination system's complexity makes it opaque to participants. Administrators, programmers, or data analysts become a de facto governing class because they are the only ones who understand how allocation decisions are made.

Counter: Legible interfaces and plain-language explanations for all allocation logic, rotation of oversight and authority over technical work, mandatory public audit of algorithms, separation of system administration from policy authority, training programs that distribute technical literacy broadly.

A living document

This roadmap is a working draft. It will be revised as research advances, as communities test its proposals, and as evidence accumulates about what works and what doesn't. The commitment is not to be right about everything but to learn openly and correct course when the evidence demands it.

The destination is ambitious. The next action should be small enough to perform, valuable enough to matter, and honest enough to learn from.

Sources for the examples in this roadmap

Each entry names the claim it supports and links to the specific study, report, or document behind it. Figures change; where a source is dated, the year is given.

Why the current system costs its winners too

- Money arguments are the strongest disagreement-type predictor of divorce; financial well-being itself was not, once disagreements were accounted for. Dew, Britt & Huston (2012), "Examining the Relationship Between Financial Issues and Divorce," *Family Relations* 61(4); on the result holding regardless of income or net worth, Kansas State University summary of Britt's research (2013).
- 21 billion Facebook friendships; economic connectedness strongly predicts upward income mobility, while other social-capital measures do not. Chetty et al. (2022), "Social capital I: measurement and associations with economic mobility," *Nature* 608.
- Swedish lottery windfalls and divorce: 1M SEK (≈$140,000) reduces married men's ten-year divorce probability by 6.42 percentage points (≈42% relative risk), not robust to multiple-testing correction; stabilizing effect concentrated among lower-income men. Cesarini, Lindqvist, Östling & Terskaya, "Fortunate Families? The Effects of Wealth on Marriage and Fertility," *Journal of Human Resources* (2026); earlier version: NBER Working Paper 31039.

This has been built before

- Mondragon: 81 cooperatives, around 70,000 people (71,400 employed in 2025). Mondragon Annual Report, letter from the Chair; Shelterforce, "World's Largest Worker Cooperative Network Seeks New Allies" (2026) — 81 member co-ops, worker-ownership share (including the Eroski exception), and the 6:1 pay cap.
- Kerala: 35–40% of state development spending devolved; ward-level grama sabhas; 1.8 million attendees in each of the first two years. Heller, Harilal & Chaudhuri (2007), "Building Local Democracy: Evaluating the Impact of Decentralization in Kerala, India," *World Development* 35(4) (author's PDF).
- Kerala literacy 96.2% (age 7+), highest in India. National Statistical Office, Key Indicators of Household Social Consumption on Education in India, NSS 75th Round (2017–18).
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- Emilia-Romagna: 19 cooperative employees per 100 private-sector employees (Italy: 10); cooperative value added equal to 10.4% of that of other private firms (2015). Istat–Euricse, regional tables from the Istat–Euricse report on cooperatives in Italy (2019, data for 2015). The popular "30% of GDP / two-thirds of residents" figures appear unsourced, e.g. in Duda, Shareable/YES! (2016).
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- Zapatista Good Government Councils: unpaid members rotating every 7, 15 or 30 days depending on region; community-run health and education. SIPAZ (International Service for Peace), "The Path of the Caracol Towards Autonomy" (2005); shifts of 10–14 days in a 2014 account: Forbis, interviewed by Brenner, "The Zapatistas at 20" (2014).
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expectancy at birth, Gini index.

- Nordic countries report among the highest shares of people saying "most people can be trusted." Our World in Data, from the World Values Survey: "Share of people agreeing with the statement 'most people can be trusted'".
- Cooperation Jackson: founded 2014; Fannie Lou Hamer Community Land Trust stewarding 45+ properties in West Jackson; six cooperative enterprises; people's assemblies. Kali Akuno, "Building a Solidarity Economy in the South (and Beyond)," *Nonprofit Quarterly* (2024).

Coordination without prices

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- Linux on the majority of web servers (62.7% of sites whose operating system is known, Oct. 2026). W3Techs, "Usage statistics of Linux for websites".
- Wikipedia: over 60 million articles across more than 300 language editions. Wikimedia Meta-Wiki, List of Wikipedias (348 active editions; ≈68 million content articles summed, Oct. 2026).
- Defense Logistics Agency: 5.3 million line items, nine supply chains, 48 states and 28 countries. DLA, "Doing Business with DLA" briefing (2018).
- About 320,000 public libraries worldwide. IFLA, "Access and Opportunity for All: How Libraries Contribute to the United Nations 2030 Agenda".

Pilot projects and local infrastructure

- Informal, "structureless" groups develop hidden, unaccountable elites. Jo Freeman, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" (talk 1970; published in *The Second Wave*, 1972).
- Transition movement: about 1,000 registered groups, active in 70 countries. Transition Network, Transition Groups map and statistics.
- Little Free Library: more than 200,000 registered boxes in 128 countries. Little Free Library, "How many Little Free Libraries are there?"
- Park Slope Food Coop: founded 1973; nearly 17,000 members; one shift per six-week cycle; members report saving 20–40% (the coop's own price survey). Park Slope Food Coop, FAQ (price comparison survey) and Membership Manual (work cycle); membership count: Wikipedia, citing the coop (July 2025).
- Repair Café: founded Amsterdam 2009; nearly 3,200 cafés in 40+ countries; 1.4 million pounds of goods kept from landfill in 2023. *Christian Science Monitor*, "The 'Repair Café' movement has become a powerful force for a fix-it culture" (Jan. 2025).
- Finland ranks first of 41 European countries for resilience to misinformation. Open Society Institute – Sofia, Media Literacy Index 2023.
- More than 300 community land trusts in the U.S. (308 as of January 2024, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy data). Schneid, *Time*, "A Look at Community Land Trusts and How They Combat the Affordable Housing Crisis" (Feb. 2025).
- German energy cooperatives: 951 cooperatives, 220,000 members, €3.6 billion invested, about 8 TWh generated in 2023. DGRV, "Energiegenossenschaften 2024" survey results.
- Brazil: about 265,000 community health agents. Agência Brasil, "Lei transforma agentes comunitários em profissionais de saúde" (Jan. 2023).
- Bologna's 2014 regulation on collaboration for urban commons, since adopted in some form by about 280 Italian municipalities. Salati, "Shared administration of the commons," Eurac Research (2023).

Commons governance

- Long-surviving commons share design principles, including collective-choice arrangements (those affected help make the rules) and monitors who are users or accountable to them; self-organized governance succeeded far more often than theory predicted. Elinor Ostrom, "Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems," Nobel Prize lecture (2009), published in *American Economic Review* 100(3), 2010.

- Communities governing shared resources sustainably over centuries (Swiss alpine meadows, Japanese village commons, Spanish huertas, Philippine irrigation). Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), chapters 3–4.

Public compacts and anchor institutions

- Evergreen Cooperatives: founded 2009 with the Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals and Case Western Reserve; about 110 employees; anchor purchases ≈15% of revenue, below plan; leaders say contracts should have been secured before launch. REDF, "Impact to Last: Evergreen Cooperatives" case study (2015); see also The Democracy Collaborative, "Correcting the Record on the Evergreen Cooperatives" (2016).
- Preston: six anchor institutions; spending retained in Preston rose from 5% to 18.2% of procurement (£38.3m to £112.3m, 2012/13–2016/17); pipeline of new worker co-ops. CLES & Preston City Council, "How we built community wealth in Preston: Achievements and lessons" (2019); summary figures at CLES, "Community Wealth Building in Preston".
- Preston named the UK's most improved city in the Demos–PwC Good Growth for Cities index (2018). Lancashire Post, "Preston has been named the most improved city in the UK" (Nov. 2018).
- Barcelona Pla BUITS: open call 2012–13, 19 municipal lots, one-to-three-year agreements with non-profits; 10 of 14 approved projects were community gardens. Orduña-Giró & Jacquot, "The participatory production of temporary public spaces in times of crisis," *Metropolitics* (2015).

Financial commons and economic independence

- AI agents could sweep household cash from checking accounts averaging 0.1% into accounts paying 3.3%–5.0%; banks could then lose a large share of the cheap deposits they rely on, "a problem for the entire financial system." Torsten Slok, "Is an Agentic Bank Run Coming?," Apollo Global Management, The Daily Spark (Sept. 27, 2026).
- Interpretation of Slok's note as showing the system depends on customers accepting unfair terms. David Sirota, "The Financial System Can't Afford To Treat You Fairly," *The Lever* (Sept. 29, 2026).
- New federal credit unions: organizers should expect a minimum of one year to complete the charter application; plan for at least $500,000 in start-up capital (informal guidance). NCUA, Federal Credit Union Charter Application Guide, Frequently Asked Questions (last modified April 2022; archived December 2024); process overview: NCUA, "Starting a New Federal Credit Union" (archived November 2024).
- Federally insured credit unions: $2.31 trillion in assets, $1.63 trillion in loans, 142.0 million members (2024 Q3). NCUA, Quarterly Credit Union Data Summary, 2024 Q3.
- CDFIs include regulated community development banks and credit unions and non-regulated loan and venture capital funds. U.S. Treasury CDFI Fund, "CDFI Certification".
- FedNow: instant interbank clearing and settlement for U.S. depository institutions, 24x7x365. Federal Reserve Board, "About the FedNow Service".
- Sardex: operating in Sardinia since 2010, inspired by WIR; WIR set up in Switzerland in 1934 in response to the Depression-era lack of credit. Littera, Sartori, Dini & Antoniadis, "From an Idea to a Scalable Working Model: Merging Economic Benefits with Social Values in Sardex," *International Journal of Community Currency Research* 21 (2017).
- Sardex: 1 credit = 1 euro, zero interest on all balances; 2019 business-to-business data covering 3,199 firms and €31.0 million; total 2019 volume €52 million. Fleischman, Dini & Littera, "Liquidity-Saving through Obligation-Clearing and Mutual Credit: An Effective Monetary Innovation for SMEs in Times of Crisis," *Journal of Risk and Financial Management* 13(12):295 (2020).
- Caja Laboral Popular founded 1959; associated cooperatives held the majority on its governing bodies and guaranteed its operations with 25% of their share capital. Mondragon Corporation, History timeline, 1959.
- CLT homeowners at end of 2010: 1.30% of mortgages seriously delinquent vs. 8.57% in the conventional market; 0.46% vs. 4.63% in foreclosure. Emily Thaden, "Stable Home Ownership in a Turbulent Economy," Lincoln Institute of Land Policy Working Paper (2011).

- Shared-equity homes remained affordable to lower-income buyers over time while owners earned competitive returns (seven programs). Temkin, Theodos & Price, "Balancing Affordability and Opportunity," Urban Institute (2010).
- The fair market value of goods or services received through barter is taxable income; barter exchanges file Form 1099-B. IRS, Topic No. 420, Bartering Income.

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APPENDIX Phase 7B in full: Convert extractive ownership into stewardship and universal access

When proven alternative capacity is strong enough, change the legal structures that permit absentee ownership, rent extraction, speculative withholding, and private monopolization of socially consequential assets.

Is this still voluntary? Joining any part of the Transition is always voluntary, and anyone may leave. Laws, once democratically enacted, apply to everyone who lives under them, as the abolition of slavery and the end of feudal land tenure did. For generations most people have had no choice but to live under a system they never opted into; this phase replaces it with one decided openly and democratically. Those who now own a great deal lose only the power to stand between others and what they need. They keep their personal possessions, a secure home, any farm or small business they work themselves, and every right everyone else has, and the law protects them exactly as it protects anyone else. The full answer.

Phase 7B does not begin merely because a political majority desires it. It begins when people can lose an old source of income without losing food, housing, healthcare, mobility, education, communication, meaningful participation, or personal security.

The purpose is not to punish former owners. It is to end legal powers that allow one person to control another person's home, workplace, access to necessities, or use of socially consequential resources.

No local group, ideological organization, or self-appointed transition authority will undertake this conversion by itself. Changes to property rights, corporate governance, tenancy, inheritance, intellectual property, and public trusts will occur through publicly enacted law, constitutional procedures, due process, and independently reviewable decisions. The decisive rule from the earlier roadmap continues to apply: **do not remove an existing dependency until a safer and more equitable system has demonstrated that it can carry the load.**

Voluntariness and the rights floor

Participation in any particular cooperative, community, association, or cultural group remains voluntary. Compliance with the universal rights floor does not. No person will possess a right to charge rent after housing has become universally guaranteed, pollute another community, monopolize essential infrastructure, exclude people from publicly stewarded resources, or restore command over other people's work. Freedom of association protects the right to form alternatives — not to recreate deprivation, involuntary hierarchy, or extractive control.

This distinction already exists in democratic societies: joining an organization is voluntary, while compliance with laws protecting bodily safety, civil rights, workers, and the environment is not.

Entry gate

All of the following conditions must be satisfied before compulsory legal conversion begins:

1. Essential guarantees are operating — food, housing, healthcare, energy, water, education, communication, and transportation are reliably available.
2. Former income dependence is replaceable — people who previously lived from rent, dividends, interest, or capital gains will not face deprivation when those streams end.
3. Transition institutions have survived stress tests — continuity through leadership turnover, supply disruption, infrastructure failure, political opposition, and at least one actual emergency.
4. A democratic mandate exists — adopted through constitutional and legislative processes including public deliberation, independent review, minority-rights protection, and judicial challenge.
5. Definitions are published before enforcement — the law distinguishes personal possessions, primary residences, social entities such as owner-worked farms and small businesses, congregations, clubs and institutions (which

hold what they use), productive assets, common infrastructure, and concentrated luxury assets.
6. Independent adjudication is operating — with advocates, interpreters, written decisions, appeal, disability accommodation, and protection from retaliation.
7. Conversion institutions are staffed and audited — no asset enters a trust until that trust has competent workers, published governance, and independent oversight.
8. Offline alternatives exist — no person loses rights or access merely because they lack digital skill or connectivity.

If any condition fails, compulsory conversion pauses. Voluntary conversions continue while the failed condition is repaired.

Real-world precedents

No country has completed the entire conversion described here. Several components, however, have substantial real-world precedents — many at considerable scale:

- **Housing removed from speculation:** The Champlain Housing Trust in Vermont — the largest community land trust in the United States (archive) — stewards some 2,500 apartments and 670 shared-equity homes as permanently affordable, non-speculative housing (testimony to the Vermont House Appropriations Committee, April 2023 (archived copy)). Uruguay's FUCVAM mutual-aid cooperatives now number about 760 cooperatives serving some 35,000 families, and the model has expanded to 90 cooperatives internationally. Berlin's Vorkaufsrecht (district right of first refusal) allows municipalities to intercept property sales in designated neighborhoods, and a condominium conversion ban under Section 250 BauGB prevents landlords from splitting rental buildings into individually sold units without official approval. Barcelona's council has used its right of first refusal to acquire 1,600 residential properties for permanent affordable use.
- **Enterprises converted to worker governance:** Italy's Marcora Law (1985) has enabled 257 new employee-owned firms and preserved 9,300 jobs through cooperative conversion — a model the European Parliament endorsed in 2013. In Argentina, after the 2001 collapse, workers reopened hundreds of abandoned factories and businesses as cooperatives; a 2025 University of Buenos Aires survey counted 398 such recovered enterprises employing 13,812 people (see Argentina). Spain's Mondragón Corporation comprises 81 self-governing cooperatives with about 70,000 people and maintains a wage ratio between 3:1 and 9:1 (compared to 281:1 in conventional U.S. firms). The UK's Employee Ownership Trust framework has grown to around 2,470 businesses employing 358,000 people by mid-2025. Patagonia's 2022 transfer to a perpetual purpose trust demonstrates that control and economic ownership can be placed in purpose-oriented trust and nonprofit structures intended to protect a company's mission from conventional shareholder extraction.
- **Transportation reserved for public use:** The U.S. Civil Reserve Air Fleet demonstrates that private aircraft can be contractually organized for activation during public need.
- **Assets held in public trust:** Community land trusts, the public-trust doctrine, and the UK National Trust establish long-term, legally protected stewardship.
- **Knowledge shared through open licensing:** The Medicines Patent Pool, backed by the WHO, expanded its mandate to essential medicines in 2018 and to COVID vaccines in 2021, demonstrating that patent-pooling can operate at global scale under public-health pressure. The EU's Right to Repair framework (2024) establishes legal obligations to facilitate repair for covered products, demonstrating that manufacturers' control over repair access can be limited in the public interest.
- **Democratic allocation:** Participatory budgeting and procedural-justice research support voice, neutrality, and appeal as foundations of legitimate resource distribution.

These precedents validate components, not the complete system. Every novel mechanism will begin with bounded pilots, independent evaluation, public review, and explicit stop conditions.

Part I: Establish the lawful conversion framework

Step 1: Publish a conversion-readiness report. Transition federations, public agencies, universities, and independent auditors will publish a common report showing which essential guarantees already operate, how many people they serve, reliability and failure rates, unmet needs, material and ecological requirements, stress-test results, and unresolved risks. The report will include failures and negative findings — it will not serve as promotional literature.

Step 2: Convene public constitutional deliberation. A representative deliberative process will examine the proposed changes before binding legislation begins. Participants will include randomly selected residents, tenants and homeowners, small and large property holders, cooperative and conventional enterprises, disabled people, caregivers, Indigenous nations, migrants, environmental experts, human-rights advocates, and principled opponents of Transition. Participants will receive accessible evidence both supporting and criticizing each proposal. This process will not give concentrated wealth a veto — it will give every affected person a meaningful opportunity to be heard.

Step 3: Enact a Property, Stewardship, and Universal Access Framework. The enabling law will distinguish four legal categories:

1. **Personal possessions** — clothing, furnishings, keepsakes, ordinary vehicles, creative materials, and other items principally used by a person or household.
2. **Secure residential possession** — a protected and inheritable right to occupy, personalize, maintain, and peacefully enjoy a suitable home without rent, mortgage, or speculative resale.
3. **Productive stewardship** — democratic governance rights held by the people who actively operate an enterprise, with bounded standing for users, communities, and ecological interests.
4. **Public-interest or common assets** — scarce, high-impact assets whose exclusionary control materially restricts others' access or imposes substantial social or ecological costs.

The law will also establish asset locks, non-discrimination, due process and appeal, protection of personal possessions, continuity of essential services, ecological duties, transparent allocation standards, privacy requirements, and sunset provisions for new institutions.

Step 4: Establish conversion institutions. Each jurisdiction will establish Residential Stewardship Trusts, Productive Commons Trusts, Public-Interest Asset Trusts, Conversion Tribunals, Public Conversion Advocates, Independent Audit Offices, Ecological and Community Impact Councils, and Rights Ombuds Offices. Members will serve limited, staggered terms. No body will simultaneously inventory assets, decide contested claims, hear appeals, and enforce its own rulings.

The five-question capture test. A reviewer of this roadmap observed that these bodies must not quietly become the permanent governing class the Transition exists to prevent. The safeguards are already built in — limited terms, separated powers, external review, appeals — but each one should be made explicit and answered in public at the moment any institution is created, and re-answered on a fixed schedule thereafter. Every proposed body, including the ones that administer conversion, must answer:

1. What power does this body actually hold, and what is it forbidden to do?
2. Can the people it affects replace, divide, or abolish it, and by what procedure?
3. Who controls its records, budget, appointments, and technical infrastructure?
4. Which of its functions are carried out by temporary, rotating role-holders rather than permanent offices?
5. What stops it and the bodies meant to oversee it from capturing one another?

An institution that cannot give clear, public answers is not ready to be created. These questions apply with full force to the Transition's own institutions, whose origins excuse nothing. This test extends the preventing capture workstream to the formal institutions of this phase.

Step 5: Prevent evasion without imposing collective suspicion. Courts will issue narrowly tailored preservation orders when credible evidence shows an asset faces concealment, export, stripping, or destruction. There will be no indiscriminate search of homes. Asset declarations will concentrate on property already documented through land, corporate, securities, and tax registries. Anyone affected will receive notice, representation, and expedited appeal.

Step 6: Run bounded conversion pilots. Pilot jurisdictions will test residential title conversion, worker-governed enterprise conversion, public-interest transportation pools, allocation lotteries, appeals, privacy protections, and ecological assessments. Independent evaluators will publish results before wider implementation. A pilot that produces exclusion, corruption, or reduced essential access will stop or change.

Part II: Convert housing and land

Step 7: Protect every current resident before changing titles. A legal continuity order will prohibit eviction merely because ownership law is changing. The system will first establish who lives in each residence, whether it is safe and suitable, accessibility and caregiving requirements, and which properties are vacant. Occupancy records will not become general surveillance files.

Step 8: Establish one secure primary residence for every household. Every person and household will obtain secure residential possession of a suitable primary home. A person controlling several residences will select one as primary without displacing an established resident. Legitimate needs for accommodation in more than one place — caregiving, disability, seasonal work, education — will be met through guaranteed secondary-use accommodation rather than permanent exclusionary ownership of several homes.

Step 9: Convert landlord-tenant relationships. When housing guarantees become reliable: rent obligations end, mortgage obligations are resolved through the transitional settlement system, residents receive secure stewardship titles, former landlords retain their own primary homes and universal guarantees, the land enters protected community stewardship. Residents gain security and control of their living space — not a right to hoard housing, charge rent, or speculate.

Step 10: Resolve competing housing claims. Allocation considers safety, disability, household size, caregiving, proximity to family and community, cultural and Indigenous relationships to place, displacement history, waiting time, and stated preferences. A lottery decides between materially equal claims. Every unsuccessful claimant retains access to other suitable housing.

Step 11: Establish maintenance federations. Housing trusts will coordinate structural repairs, accessibility modifications, energy upgrades, disaster resilience, shared tools, and inspection of serious hazards. The resident governs ordinary domestic life. The trust intervenes only when neglect creates substantial danger.

Part III: Convert enterprises and productive assets

Step 12: Publish a sector conversion schedule. Conversion will proceed sector by sector, beginning where Transition capacity is strongest. Each schedule will identify enterprises covered, employees and users affected, essential functions that must continue, physical and digital assets, environmental liabilities, and dependencies on sectors not yet converted. Small owner-operated enterprises will not be treated as equivalent to absentee-owned conglomerates. A family farm or small business is a social entity, like a congregation, a club or a factory, and like every social entity it can hold and control what it uses, run democratically by the people who take part in it. A farm worked by the family that lives from it, or a business run by the people who work in it, is therefore not taken from them. Where such a farm or business employs people from outside the household, it becomes a peer partnership in which everyone who works there shares in running it as equals.

For an owner weighing this, two things are worth saying plainly. The losses are real: investment income, sole control, and the freedom to sell the enterprise as an asset do change, and the Transition owes people a straight account of that rather than minimising it. But two of the sharpest fears ease on a closer look. The first is income. Under today's system an owner needs currency for everything, as everyone does; by the time a sector's provision no longer runs on currency, the need to earn it has gone with it, because the essentials it used to buy are met directly. No one is asked to give up what they live on before a dependable replacement is in place. The second is control. An owner does not so much lose employees as gain partners. Sharing responsibility also shares its weight. The owner who now carries every dispute between employer and employee, who is always the one called when something breaks, and who stays late because the business rests on them more than on anyone they employ, no longer carries that alone. Disagreements arise under either arrangement; what changes is

that commitment to the enterprise is now clearly shared by everyone in it, rather than resting on the owner while employees give only what they are paid for. As stakeholders with a real say and a real share, former employees are, in most cases, more engaged and more contributive than employees ever were. So what is given up in sole command is returned in a lighter load, more committed partners, and a more resilient enterprise.

A social entity is not a corporation under another name. An individual is a person; a family is a social entity made up of two or more adults, any children they have, and other relatives or people living with them as extended family; a club, a house of worship, a factory, a shared farm, a software development team or a distribution centre is a social entity owned and run in common by all the people who run it, operate it and work in it, on a peership basis. Its ownership rests on that shared nature. Corporate personhood, by contrast, treats a legal fiction as a person in its own right, owned by shareholders who may never set foot in it and run through a chain of command that the people working there do not control. Social entities bear no resemblance to it.

Step 13: Form interim enterprise transition councils. Every converting enterprise will establish a temporary council containing elected workers, technical and safety personnel, user representatives, community representatives, ecological specialists, and a conversion facilitator without unilateral authority. Former executives will provide operational knowledge — they will hold no automatic veto or permanent superior status.

A worked example: a five-person bakery. Mara has run a bakery for fifteen years and employs five people. She owns the ovens, holds the lease, invested her savings, and carries every risk. Here is what conversion does, and does not, do.

- **What she keeps.** Her home, her savings, her possessions, and recognition of what she built. She does not lose the bakery; she stops being its sole owner and becomes one of six equal partners in it. Nothing is confiscated.
- **The investment she put in.** Her past contribution is recorded and honoured, settled on fair terms over time rather than written off. What ends is the claim to profit from others' work indefinitely because the ovens were once hers alone, not the recognition of what she contributed.
- **Who decides what.** Day-to-day craft decisions stay with whoever has the skill: the head baker still owns the recipes in practice because they know them best. Big decisions, such as hours, pay shares, and whether to open a second location, are made together, one person one vote.
- **When they disagree.** Suppose Mara wants to expand and three partners want to stay small and protect their evenings. Under the old arrangement Mara decides and resentment festers quietly. As partners, they decide by their agreed process, and whoever is outvoted has had a real say and a real stake in the result. Disagreements do not vanish; they are settled openly instead of by one person's authority, and the written operating agreement set in advance says how.
- **Training and responsibility.** Competence still matters. Partners take on roles by skill and willingness, mentor new members, and hold agreed responsibilities. Equality of ownership is not sameness of task.
- **What Mara gains.** She no longer carries every dispute, every late night and every risk alone. Five employees who did what they were paid for become five partners with a reason to care whether the bakery thrives. That is the trade: less unilateral command, a lighter load and more committed colleagues.

Step 14: Transfer governance to active participants. On the legal conversion date: voting shares and absentee command rights end; productive assets enter an asset-locked Productive Commons Trust; regular workers become co-governors; governance rights arise from active participation rather than purchased shares and cannot be sold, accumulated, or inherited. Users and affected communities obtain standing on matters that directly affect them.

Step 15: Settle financial claims before retiring currency. A public conversion fund will resolve legitimate pensions, small-investor dependence, supplier obligations, and legally protected claims. Settlement will prioritize people whose survival still depends upon those claims. In jurisdictions whose constitutions require compensation, conversion legislation will comply or follow the lawful amendment process.

Step 16: Replace commercial supply chains with provision federations. Producer, logistics, repair, distribution, and user organizations will create sector federations that publish capacity, aggregate demand without personal profiles,

coordinate production with actual use, maintain resilience margins, prioritize repair and reuse, and maintain offline fallback systems.

Step 17: Convert commercial outlets into distribution and service centers. Stores, malls, and warehouses will gradually become distribution centers, repair workshops, tool libraries, fitting and customization services, recycling centers, public meeting spaces, and local logistics hubs — ending sales pressure while preserving useful workers and knowledge.

Step 18: Convert intellectual property into a knowledge commons. Inventors and creators retain permanent attribution. Socially consequential patents, processes, knowledge, software, and standards enter openly accessible pools, with safeguards for personal privacy, Indigenous knowledge, dual-use information, biosecurity, and cybersecurity. Contributors receive public recognition and resources for continued work — not permanent political power, inherited prestige, or privileged access.

Step 18A: Establish a Standards Commons and modular design system. A democratically governed Standards Commons will develop open, universal technical standards for interoperability. Vehicles, appliances, computers, machinery, buildings, and medical equipment will be designed so that a failed or obsolete component can be replaced without discarding the entire product. Standards will be openly published, developed by workers, engineers, repairers, and users, tested before adoption, and protected against control by any particular faction.

Step 18B: Establish enforceable community-impact covenants. Every enterprise whose activities materially affect people outside it will operate under a publicly reviewable covenant covering emissions, waste, safety, water and energy use, and ecological effects. Workers govern internal operations but do not possess an unrestricted right to impose costs on surrounding communities. Responses are proportionate: technical assistance for minor failures, binding orders for persistent harm, and pause for imminent danger.

Step 18C: Replace monetary civil damages with restorative remedies. As currency recedes, civil justice will use remedies directed toward the actual harm: stopping ongoing harm, restoring what was damaged, providing healthcare, redesigning unsafe processes, removing abusive officeholders, and establishing protective separation. Restorative participation is never forced. No remedy will impose forced labor, humiliation, or collective punishment.

Part IV: Reallocate concentrated luxury and high-impact assets

Step 19: Define covered assets objectively. An asset enters review based on measurable characteristics: scarcity, land area, energy and resource use, environmental impact, dependence on public infrastructure, number of people excluded, emergency usefulness, and maintenance burden. Coverage will not depend upon dislike of the owner. Ordinary clothing, jewelry, furnishings, keepsakes, and personal effects remain outside this process.

Step 20: Place covered assets in interim preservation trusts. Large yachts, private jets, helicopters, extensive recreational estates, and private golf courses will enter preservation trusts. Existing crews, mechanics, groundskeepers, and safety personnel will maintain operations and help design future use.

Step 21: Apply a transparent order of use. Access follows four priorities: (1) emergency and lifesaving use; (2) time-critical personal or civic need; (3) educational, scientific, ecological, and community use; (4) recreation through lotteries and rotating reservations. Former owners receive access under the same rules as everyone else.

Step 22: Review land-intensive luxury facilities. Communities will assess golf courses, country clubs, and private estates according to housing needs, water availability, ecological restoration, recreation demand, food production, and cultural value. A site will remain a golf course when that use serves a defensible public purpose within ecological limits. Another site will become a park, housing, wetlands, community agriculture, or mixed use. Publicly stewarded land will not exclude people through wealth, ancestry, race, religion, sex, disability, or political patronage.

Step 23: Retire assets whose costs exceed their benefits. Aircraft, yachts, or facilities whose ecological and maintenance costs outweigh their public value will be converted to lower-impact uses, used for training, dismantled for reusable components, or responsibly retired.

Part V: Legislative and policymaking strategy

By this phase, Transition institutions will approach legislators with functioning systems and verifiable results — not promises. The central message: *these institutions already perform necessary public functions; the proposed laws will recognize, protect, connect, and carefully extend demonstrated capacity*.

Step 24: Approach government with demonstrated capacity. Every legislative delegation will bring audited performance data, independent evaluations, participant testimony, documented failures, comparative costs, legal and constitutional analysis, workforce and environmental effects, draft statutory language, implementation schedules, measurable readiness gates, sunset clauses, and appeal procedures.

Step 25: Map the actual decision pathway. Advocates will separately identify legislators, committee staff, civil servants, regulators, budget offices, local governments, courts, unions, cooperative institutions, Indigenous governments, and skeptical experts. Career staff and technical specialists will be involved from the beginning — elected officials alone do not design or implement complex structural change.

Step 26: Use an ascending legislative ladder. Rather than seeking the final post-currency system in a single bill, the sequence will be: legal recognition of commons and cooperatives; public procurement access; land and infrastructure compacts; asset-lock laws; worker first-refusal rights; housing and productive trust expansion; universal-service guarantees; secure residential stewardship; sector conversion statutes; public-interest asset legislation; retirement of monetary obligations sector by sector; constitutional amendments where required. Each law makes the next less disruptive because the required institutions already exist.

Step 27: Motivate through legitimate public purposes. Relevant purposes include lower emergency costs, housing stability, reduced homelessness, supply-chain resilience, local control, disaster preparedness, reduced ecological damage, greater worker retention, less dependency on volatile global finance, and reduced corruption. Advocates will not misrepresent Transition as minor reform in private while describing structural transformation elsewhere.

Steps 28-31: Systematic policymaker engagement. First meetings will follow a disciplined structure: state the problem in two minutes, present the functioning alternative with verified results, introduce directly affected people, identify the precise legal barrier, request one specific action, provide draft language, anticipate objections, and request a staff contact and follow-up date. Support will be sought across factions — no party will own Transition. Legislative hearings will include workers, users, skeptics, researchers, constitutional experts, former owners who participated constructively, and people who experienced failure. All lobbying will be logged publicly, conflicts of interest disclosed, private donors excluded from controlling priorities, and emergency exceptions set to expire automatically.

Part VI: Responding to resistance with compassion and firmness

Former owners, executives, financiers, and status holders will experience real losses of control, rank, and exclusivity. Transition representatives will acknowledge the psychological significance of the loss while distinguishing it from deprivation.

The response: *you will retain your home, personal possessions, relationships, freedom, dignity, safety, and access to everything required for a good life. You will not retain the power to extract rent, command an enterprise you do not work in, monopolize socially consequential assets, or prevent others from accessing what they need.*

Honorable roles without restored domination. Former leaders will be invited to contribute technical knowledge, institutional memory, mentoring, professional skill, and operational experience — as peers under transparent rules.

Safe exits for professional enablers. Lawyers, managers, lobbyists, security personnel, and political staff who implemented concentrated power will receive employment guarantees, retraining, whistleblower protection, and paths into socially useful work. Cooperation reduces conflict; serious abuses still receive due process.

Voice, not veto. Former power-holders will have notice, evidence access, testimony, representation, appeal, and protection against humiliation. They will not have a veto based on previous ownership, privileged access to decision-makers, purchased exemptions, or authority to delay conversion indefinitely.

Graduated response to different forms of resistance. Dissent is protected speech. Personal nonparticipation is respected when it does not violate others' rights. Administrative noncooperation is addressed through mediation and replacement. Asset concealment or sabotage is addressed through preservation orders and proportionate legal sanctions. Threats or violence are addressed through de-escalation and the minimum force necessary. **Opposition to Transition will never, by itself, constitute criminality or mental illness.**

No vindictiveness and no capitulation. Transition will not stage public confessions, punish families, seize personal possessions, deny care, create inferior zones for former elites, or treat wealth as proof of evil. Equally, it will not preserve landlordism to avoid offending landlords, preserve absentee shareholder control to reassure shareholders, or permit officials to trade equal rights for temporary political calm. Compassion governs how people are treated; equal rights determine what no person will continue controlling.

Part VII: Pathways through different governmental systems

United States. The U.S. pathway begins locally and at the state level, since land use, housing, property, cooperatives, and much corporate law fall within state jurisdiction. Cities, counties, tribal governments, and states will first enact community land-trust expansion, cooperative frameworks, worker first-refusal rights, and housing-guarantee pilots. Interstate compacts will coordinate energy, transportation, and logistics. Federal legislation will address bankruptcy, interstate commerce, intellectual property, civil rights, and nationwide guarantees. The Fifth Amendment and state property protections will require careful treatment — early conversions will use negotiated transfers, worker buyouts, and voluntary compacts; later conversion will proceed through legislation satisfying constitutional standards or through amendment. Courts will review due process, equal protection, and takings as design constraints and safeguards, not merely obstacles.

European parliamentary democracies. In parliamentary systems, a governing coalition can move coordinated legislation more directly. The work will occur through coalition agreements, ministry white papers, parliamentary committees, municipal pilots, cooperative federations, and constitutional courts. European institutions will build upon existing legal recognition of cooperatives, mutuals, social enterprises, and the EU Social Economy Action Plan. Conversion legislation will maintain fair balance under national constitutions and European human-rights law. Where treaties prevent necessary reforms, member states will pursue revision openly rather than evasion.

Federal European systems (e.g. Germany). Coordinated legislation at multiple levels. Municipalities and Länder will demonstrate housing, energy, and cooperative systems. Federal law will harmonize conversion, guarantees, and cross-regional standards. Bundesrat participation will prevent a purely central program from disregarding implementation capacity in the Länder.

United Kingdom. Parliament remains the supreme legislative authority. The practical sequence includes local-authority and devolved-nation pilots, cooperative legislation, community land ownership, worker conversion rights, a government white paper, and parliamentary scrutiny. Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland will not be treated as administrative branches — devolution is respected. The monarch will not become a political target; Royal Assent remains formal; substantive work occurs through elected institutions.

Australia. A federal, state, territory, and local pathway. Local councils develop community infrastructure. States address housing, land, cooperatives, and service delivery. The Commonwealth addresses corporations, taxation, interstate systems, and constitutional responsibilities. The "just terms" requirement will shape acquisition laws. Transition will use negotiated conversion and state pilots first, then national harmonization after evidence and legitimacy are established.

Constitutional monarchies generally. A constitutional monarch remains ceremonial. Transition advocates direct political engagement toward elected parliaments, responsible ministers, local governments, courts, and civil society. They

will not turn a ceremonial institution into a symbolic enemy. Where the Crown controls extensive property, those assets will be reviewed under the same transparent public-interest principles as comparable assets.

Unitary parliamentary systems. National law establishes the rights floor and conversion framework. Municipalities administer housing, distribution, and community participation. The principal danger is excessive centralization, so legislation will protect subsidiarity, local experimentation, independent appeal, and the right of communities to choose among compliant institutional forms.

Controlled retirement of currency

Currency will not disappear everywhere on a predetermined date. Each sector will pass through a dual-system period during which essential access is guaranteed without payment, monetary accounts continue for obligations involving unconverted regions, and people learn how to request, allocate, and share resources without market transactions. This dual system will not become permanent — each sector will publish its conditions for currency retirement and progress toward them.

Sector-by-sector retirement. Currency ceases operating within a sector only after independent review confirms that the essential service level is universally available, productive capacity is adequate, allocation rules function, appeals work, supply-chain dependencies are understood, reserves withstand disruption, workers no longer depend on wages for survival, and former investors no longer depend on payments for essentials.

Accounting without money. The system will continue tracking physical inventories, energy and material flows, ecological costs, labor requirements, production capacity, maintenance intervals, and resilience reserves. These measurements inform planning — they will not become individually accumulated exchange claims, transferable status tokens, or a disguised currency.

Preventing cross-boundary extraction. As long as currency-based regions remain, safeguards will prevent bulk diversion of universally provided goods for personal enrichment elsewhere — through reasonable quantity limits, cooperative agreements with neighboring jurisdictions, and material-flow auditing directed at bulk diversion rather than personal surveillance.

Responding to failure without restoring extraction. If a converted sector experiences serious failure, emergency procedures will restore provision — not landlordism, wage coercion, or speculative pricing. Responses include mutual assistance from other federations, temporary rationing, emergency production, and independent investigation. A failed implementation will be corrected or replaced; the failure of one mechanism will not automatically validate the extractive relationship it replaced.

Recurring constitutional review. At predetermined intervals, independent conventions will examine whether guarantees remain reliable, whether administrative elites have emerged, whether allocation rules remain fair, whether privacy has eroded, whether ecological limits are defensible, whether emergency powers have expired, and whether currency-like systems are reappearing under other names. Every institution will remain subject to revision, division, replacement, or abolition. No transition mechanism will become sacred merely because it was created in the name of equality.

Final readiness gate before Phase 8

The system enters Phase 8 only after independent evaluation confirms: everyone has dependable access to essentials; converted housing is secure and maintained; enterprises continue operating safely; workers, users, and communities can govern without a replacement managerial class; allocation does not privilege insiders; appeals function; ecological limits are enforced; former elites retain full civil and human rights; sabotage and corruption are controlled through lawful means; currency has been retired only where dependable alternatives exist; no conversion institution has accumulated unreviewable power; and the public can still revise or abolish institutions that fail.

This phase will not mark the conquest of one class by another. It will mark the lawful termination of social relationships that allow one person's security, freedom, or participation to depend upon another person's wealth and permission. The transition will preserve persons and transform relationships — protect dignity while ending domination, hear opposition without granting domination a veto, acknowledge uncertainty without allowing it to become an excuse for permanent injustice.

Read the two-page policymaker brief
Back to the full Transition Roadmap