THE ABUNDANCE DECLARATION

A Framework for Reimagining Human Flourishing

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prometheus [dot] apeiron [at] protonmail [dot] com

ABSTRACT

In the bustling heart of Philadelphia, seven-year-old Marcus is going blind. The gene therapy that would restore his sight exists. The knowledge exists. The manufacturing capacity exists. The treatment costs $850,000 — some fifteen times its production cost. His parents have good insurance. Yet, it doesn't cover the treatment. Marcus will go blind.

This is not a failure of science or progress. It is artificial scarcity: the systematic production of deprivation amid abundance.

Humanity has crossed an unprecedented threshold that most of our institutions have not recognized. For the first time in history, our primary constraint on human flourishing is no longer production capacity but coordination capability. We produce enough food to feed ten billion people while 700 million go hungry. We generate knowledge at near-zero marginal cost while paywalls block doctors from accessing research that could save their patients. We have fourteen vacant homes for every homeless person in America.

These are not aberrations. They are the predictable outputs of institutions designed to ration genuinely scarce resources now applied to conditions capable of abundance. Millions suffer from demonstrably preventable deprivation because our systems struggle to coordinate deployment.

This Declaration advances three arguments. First, that artificial scarcity is the defining dysfunction of our age. It is not an inevitable force of nature as much as it is a complex design choice, and we can design differently. Second, that emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, make abundance-oriented coordination tractable today. Third, that the transition from scarcity-optimized to abundance-optimized systems requires specific institutional innovations: new ownership models, commons infrastructure for essential capabilities, polycentric governance frameworks, genuine partnership with AI systems, and economic principles that use markets as tools rather than treating them as masters.

The choice before us is not whether abundance is possible. We are already capable of it. The choice we face is whether we will redesign our institutions to coordinate what we can produce, or continue rationing what we need not ration while the window for graceful transition narrows.

History will remember what we chose.

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INTRODUCTION

A Child Left in the Dark

Seven-year-old Marcus is going blind from a very rare genetic disorder called Leber congenital amaurosis. LCA destroys the cells in the back of his eyes. Without treatment, his world will go dark by adolescence. His family knows exactly what could save him: a gene therapy called Luxturna that would restore his sight permanently. One injection per eye delivering corrected genes directly to his retina resulting in permanent restoration of his sight. The treatment costs $425,000 per eye — $850,000 total.[1] Physical products costs are estimated in the tens of thousands of dollars.[2] His parents have good insurance. Yet, it doesn't cover the treatment. Marcus will go blind.

Across the Atlantic, in a village outside Kampala, a twelve-year-old girl named Aisha does her homework by candlelight. Above her head, the sun poured down 173,000 terawatts of energy onto Earth today. More in a single hour than humanity will use all year.[3] Her eyes ache as she squints at a math textbook, dreaming of a life out of poverty for her parents and herself.

In Bombay, Dr. Bhatti has designed a breakthrough water purification system using solar-powered graphene filters.[4] He wants to share the designs freely so drought-stricken regions could build them inexpensively, including the community he came from. His company's lawyers explain that the intellectual property must be protected. The patents are filed. The knowledge is locked away. People will keep drinking contaminated water.

Three people. Three solvable problems. Three unnecessary tragedies. This is the most profound paradox of our age.

The Paradox of Our Age

Some time ago, a father in rural Nebraska lost his farm. The same land his grandfather had cleared with horses and hope in 1923. Not to drought or disease, but to algorithms that decided soybeans should cost seventeen cents less per bushel. His suicide note, written on the back of a foreclosure notice, contained a single question: "When did feeding people stop being enough?"

That same week, researchers found that solar photovoltaics and onshore wind combined could produce enough electricity to power roughly 1.3 million average U.S. homes — over 10x his town's population — and cut electricity bills by billions of dollars.[5,6] A vertical farm in Singapore produced 20 times the food output per square meter compared to his traditional field farm.[7] And somewhere in Silicon Valley, twenty-three-year-olds raised another billion dollars to help people share photos that disappear. The farmer didn't lose his land because the earth stopped yielding. He lost it because a system optimizing for abstract financial returns couldn't recognize that feeding people has value beyond price signals.

This is the madness of our moment: we've solved the equations but forgotten the purpose.

We've built miracles and chalked it up to market forces. We've replaced a love of intellectualism with the blind pursuit of acquisition.

We stand at history's most profound crossroads. Not between left and right, not between growth and degrowth, but between the world we've inherited and the one our tools make possible.

The Central Argument

This Declaration makes a simple but radical proposition: in an age where scarcity is increasingly a choice rather than a condition, our economic and political systems must evolve from rationing deprivation to coordinating abundance.

The defining question should no longer be "Who deserves to survive in our current system?" but instead "What systems best enable universal human flourishing within planetary boundaries?" The principles that guided us through millennia of scarcity have become actively harmful in an age where abundance is increasingly achievable. We are flying a fifth-gen jet with a horse and buggy's operating manual.

We stand at a unique historical inflection. We possess the technical capability to meet every person's basic needs — **energy, food, water, shelter, healthcare, and education**. The technology exists. The knowledge exists. The resources exist. Yet billions lack access to these fundamentals. Not because we can't do better nor because of hard technological limits. But because our economic and social systems were designed for a world of pervasive material scarcity, and those systems have not been updated to match what our current capabilities make possible.

Markets work, within their domains, because they distribute the computational burden of coordination across millions of price signals. But markets systematically fail to coordinate goods with near-zero marginal costs, goods requiring universal access, and good with extreme externalities. For these, we've lacked viable alternatives.

Artificial Intelligence is not merely another tool in the human toolkit; it represents a phase transition in our capacity to coordinate complex systems. For the first time, we possess technology capable of managing the information complexity required to distribute abundance efficiently at scale.

But technology alone solves nothing. The same AI systems can be deployed to optimize scarcity-based extraction or to coordinate abundance-based distribution. They can concentrate power or distribute it. They can surveil and control or empower and liberate. The architecture of these systems — their ownership, governance, and optimization criteria — will determine whether they amplify existing inequalities or enable genuine abundance and with it, the future we build.

This is why the political and economic questions are inseparable from the technological ones.

This Declaration articulates a path forward: from scarcity-based economics to abundance-based cooperation, from artificial gatekeeping to open access, from extraction to contribution. It is not

a blueprint for utopia. It's a framework for building a world where Marcus keeps his sight, where Aisha studies by light that costs nearly nothing, and where Dr. Bhatti's designs save millions of lives.

This is an invitation to build something fundamentally new that reaches beyond central state socialism or market fundamentalism. To imagine what becomes possible when we organize society around maximizing human flourishing, within our planetary boundaries, instead of organizing society around idolizing and maximizing profits.

The Path Forward: From Diagnosis to Design

This Declaration proceeds in three movements, each building toward a comprehensive framework for abundance-oriented systems:

First, we map the mechanisms of artificial scarcity. How current systems transform genuine abundance into experienced deprivation through examinations of intellectual property regimes, housing markets, healthcare systems, and food systems. The goal is precise diagnosis: identifying not "evil" actors but dysfunctional feedback loops, misaligned incentives, and coordination failures that produce irrational outcomes.

Second, we explore the technological and social innovations making new coordination possible. This includes AI's capacity to manage complexity, decentralized networks that distribute power rather than concentrating it, renewable energy systems with near-zero marginal costs, and emerging governance models that make new coordination possible that aligns with human flourishing. This includes grappling frankly with the various obstacles including entrenched power, free-rider problems, and the genuine difficulty of transition.

Third, we propose concrete principles for building abundance-oriented institutions. We offer frameworks that address questions of governance, ownership, distribution, innovation incentives, and power structures. Simply, how do we move from scarcity-optimized systems to abundance-optimized ones without catastrophic disruption?

Throughout, every claim is grounded in existing evidence and/or implementations. This is not speculative futurism but applied systems analysis of transformations already underway. Every technology discussed already exists. Every principle proposed already functions somewhere in the world. The question is not whether abundance-oriented systems are possible. It is whether we will choose to build them at scale or continue optimizing for scarcity in a world of potential plenty. This is a design problem, a political problem, and a moral problem. But it is a solvable problem.

The Declaration's Essence: Five Principles

What follows is the core architectural principles that would underpin any abundance-oriented society. These principles outline a novel alternative order beyond the tired free market corporatocracy capitalism versus doomed socialism debate — a new paradigm leveraging

openness, technology, and community. These are design primitives: the foundational building blocks from which various implementations could emerge.

I. Universal Capabilities & Dignity – Every human being deserves access to the basics of a flourishing life: energy, food, water, shelter, healthcare, and education. Empowering as many citizens as possible within ecological limits will be the foundation for freedom in the abundance age and arguably a historical catalyst in advancing widespread innovation.

II. Commons Infrastructure – Essential knowledge, foundational technologies, and coordination tools that could save lives, enable communities, or advance understanding should increasingly be treated as public goods.

III. Distributed Power & Polycentric Governance – Multiple centers of decision-making at multiple scales with clear rules for managing cross-boundary externalities. No single central system — market, state, or algorithm — should control all decisions.

IV. Technology as a Partner – We build guiding documents and institutions so that our tools serve our values: machines advise, humans decide.

V. Markets as Tools, Not Masters – Markets maintained as price mechanisms for rival goods under pressure instead of gatekeepers to dignity or survival.

These are architectural principles grounded in what empirical testing proves to work: from a capabilities approach, polycentric governance, and community cooperatives. This Declaration builds a coherent alternative to the existing crumbling world order. An alternative that respects both individual freedom and collective well-being within the ecological boundaries we cannot negotiate with.

We comprise the generations that decoded the genome and traveled to the cosmos. That connected eight billion minds and left one half hungry and the other half yearning for even more. That built artificial intelligence and natural stupidity into our governing systems.

In an era where abundance within planetary limits is technically achievable, persisting scarcity and insecurity are choices encoded in our institutions, not inevitable facts of nature.

History will ask one question of us: when humankind achieved unimaginable power, why did we choose to live like prisoners?

I. THE MIRACLES WE BUILT

In 2025, we live surrounded by miracles that would astound our ancestors, yet we organize society as if we still inhabit their world of scarcity. Consider what exists today:

Energy

The cost of utility-scale solar power has collapsed from about $0.46/kWh in 2010 to roughly $0.04/kWh today — a ~90% decline in 15 years.[8] In optimal locations like the UAE and Chile, new solar projects now clear auctions at under $0.02/kWh, making solar cheaper than the cheapest new fossil fuel generation available today and competitive with even the lowest fossil fuel costs in history.

Battery storage costs have fallen ~93% since 2010.[9] We even achieved net energy gain from fusion for the first time. Though future advances will likely face materials and physics constraints, the technologies for dramatically cheaper, clean energy already exist and are being deployed.

With each passing day, physics takes less of the spotlight as the limiting factor in the face of policy, coordination, and deployment.

Food

Current global agriculture produces roughly 1.5 times the calories needed to feed everyone alive — enough for about 10 billion people per the UN.[10] Yet based on recent findings, approximately 700 million people faced hunger.

The problem isn't production; it's poverty, conflict, waste, and distribution. Political choices, not physical limits.

Meanwhile, vertical farming systems achieve 15–25x higher yields per square meter for leafy greens compared to traditional field farming, using upward of 90% less water through closed-loop hydroponic and aeroponic systems.[11,12] However, a present bottleneck is that indoor vertical farms currently require 7x more energy than greenhouses due to artificial lighting and climate control, resulting in higher carbon emissions unless powered by renewable energy. Precision fermentation produces proteins molecularly identical to meat and dairy without involving animals.

Medicine

We designed mRNA vaccines against COVID-19 within 48 hours of receiving the virus's genetic sequence. Within weeks, we moved to clinical manufacturing. Less than a year later, those vaccines were protecting billions of people.

Gene therapies exemplify how abundance remains constrained even when markets function "fairly": manufacturing costs from $100,000 to $2 million per dose represent 40-70% of final prices, with markups of just 1.5–4x; far below traditional pharmaceutical markups of 30-100x. Yet $850,000 to $3.5 million price tags place these cures beyond reach for most of the world.[13,14]

Until recently, Americans with diabetes faced artificial scarcity in its starkest form: insulin, a century-old drug costing $2–10 per vial to manufacture, sold for $275–300 in U.S. pharmacies

— a markup of 30-100x production costs. Over 20 years, prices increased 1,200% not due to innovation but through coordinated pricing among three manufacturers controlling 90% of the global market. When faced with federal price caps in 2023, these same companies cut prices by 70–78% and publicly confirmed they remained profitable at the new lower prices.[15,16] The artificial scarcity had been maintained through market concentration and rebate schemes that enriched intermediaries while Americans rationed lifesaving medication.

The marginal cost of sharing these medical breakthroughs? *Effectively zero*. With enough investment into this Declaration's proposals, we could one day send the blueprint for life-saving treatments anywhere on Earth instantly, for free.

The artificial scarcity lies not in profit-seeking but in manufacturing systems designed for personalized, small-batch production. Technologies that could potentially treat these diseases at scale remain underdeveloped because the current economic paradigm assumes scarcity, not abundance, as the baseline.

Human Knowledge

A child in any rural town with a $50 smartphone can access more information than an Ivy League professor could in 1990. Educational content of extraordinary quality exists freely (Khan Academy, MIT OpenCourseWare, Wikipedia). AI systems can now tutor, translate, and explain concepts and are markedly improving. The sum of human understanding is no longer locked in ivory towers or expensive textbooks; it's available to anyone with an internet connection.

3D printers, CNC machines, and laser cutters that once cost millions now cost only thousands. Small communities can produce sophisticated goods locally — medical devices, tools, replacement parts — by downloading open-source designs. Open-source plans for essential technologies proliferate: solar panels, water purifiers, prosthetics, and even home building kits.

Life-saving research sits behind academic paywalls, inaccessible to the doctors who need it to protect the *2.1 billion people who lack access to safely managed drinking* water.[17] Brilliant minds spend their lives optimizing advertisement clicks instead of uplifting *735 million people suffering poverty* because one career pays $300,000 a year and the other doesn't.[18] We destabilize our planet's climate for quarterly profits while the technology to bring opportunity to over 650 million people who lack electricity gets cheaper every day.[19]

It's the system working exactly as designed: converting human need into private, *concentrated* profit, transforming abundance into scarcity, making survival contingent on payment.

The Architecture of Artificial Scarcity

Yet alongside these capabilities, the pattern repeats everywhere as we witness intolerable human failures:

Seeds: Four corporations — Bayer, Corteva, ChemChina's Syngenta, and BASF — control over 60% of the global seed market, up from 15% in the 1980s. Bayer, formerly Monsanto, alone

controls 23% of global seeds.[20,21] This concentration gives them unprecedented power over farmers' inputs, choices, and prices. Patent restrictions prohibit traditional seed saving practices, forcing farmers to repurchase seeds annually; turning what was once a freely renewable resource into a proprietary commodity.

Scholarly knowledge: Academic publishers like Elsevier achieve 38% profit margins — higher than Apple, Google, or Microsoft — by charging $30–40 per article for research that scientists wrote for free, peer-reviewed for free, and often paid $1,500–5,000 to publish.[22] On the order of over 50% of African universities cannot afford institutional subscriptions.[23] Thus leaving researchers unable to access knowledge essential for addressing malaria, food security, and climate adaptation even when that research was funded by international aid.

Clean water: Nestlé extracts millions of gallons from drought-stricken regions, paying token permits annually for water it sells for millions of dollars while local communities ration drinking water.

To illustrate, in 2018, Michigan granted Nestlé (now BlueTriton Brands) permission to pump up to 210 million gallons annually from public aquifers for under $800 per year — about $0.004 per gallon. That same water sells at retail for $1.23 to $12 per gallon depending on container size, a markup of 300 to 3,000x the extraction cost.[24] As of 2024, BlueTriton continues pumping Michigan groundwater at minimal cost while Americans spent $49 billion annually on bottled water — despite most having access to safe tap water costing $0.01 per gallon.[25]

Additionally, the same year, 80,000 Michigan residents opposed allowing Nestlé to pump 210 million gallons annually for under $800/year. Just 75 supported it. The state approved it anyway. Despite campaign promises and Democratic control since 2023, Michigan has passed zero reforms: a testament to industry lobbying power.[26]

Housing: Blackstone owns over 250,000 rental units across the U.S.[27] In January 2025, the Justice Department sued Blackstone alongside five other major landlords (collectively managing 1.3 million units) for using RealPage's algorithmic pricing software to coordinate rent increases, share competitors' data, and "maximize price increases."[28]

Meanwhile, American homelessness reached a record 771,000 people in 2024.[29] At the same time, 14.9 million homes sat vacant nationwide. Excluding 4.3 million seasonal or vacation properties, the remaining 10.6 million units — including homes for rent, for sale, and sitting empty for other reasons — still represent 14 vacant homes for every person experiencing homelessness.[30]

The disconnect is stark: Detroit has 116 vacant homes per homeless person; Syracuse has 110; Chicago has 50. We continue to enable a housing system that treats shelter as a financial asset rather than a human necessity.[31]

Our current capitalist market system *manufactures* scarcity. But simply turning to existing, and failed, top-down redistributive ideologies is not the answer. We must understand why those failed and what's fundamentally changed in our modern world.

This is not a failure of human capability. It is a failure of human organization.

II. WHY OUR SYSTEMS FAIL US

The World Our Systems Were Built For

Every economic system encodes assumptions about reality. Ours assumes scarcity is eternal, competition is natural, and price signals are truth.

Our current economic paradigm emerged from a world where:

- Energy was genuinely scarce and expensive
- Manufacturing required enormous capital
- Copying information cost real money (printing, shipping, storing)
- Coordinating large groups was nearly impossible
- Human and animal labor were the only engines of production

Markets evolved as elegant solutions to these constraints. As economists have long recognized, prices signal scarcity, competition drives efficiency, and profit motivates production. Property rights enable investment. For coordinating production and consumption across millions of strangers, it's genuinely remarkable. This system generated unprecedented prosperity and technological advancement, creating the modern world.

But the ground has shifted beneath us.

Where Markets Fail

Markets are powerful tools for allocating scarce rival goods — things where one person's use excludes another's. They work beautifully when costs are easily measured and externalities are small. They become awkward, even perverse, when:

- Marginal costs approach zero (information goods, digital services)
- Externalities are enormous (climate change, public health, systemic risks)
- Value is fundamentally relational (trust, care, community bonds)
- Survival itself is at stake (people will accept terrible conditions to avoid starving)

Distinguishing Three Forms of Scarcity

We must distinguish three forms of scarcity clearly to chart a path forward:

1. **Physical Scarcity** – Planetary boundaries are non-negotiable.

There are genuine limits on certain materials, biodiversity, freshwater in some regions, atmospheric carbon capacity, and livable land. Abundance thinking does not mean infinite

throughput or endless consumption. It means that within these biophysical limits, we can ensure everyone has a floor threshold to live a dignified life.

2. **Artificial Scarcity** – Created by human institutions: intellectual property regimes, monopolies, paywalls, and gatekeeping manufacture scarcity where none needs to exist.

Marcus's blindness is artificial scarcity. The knowledge to cure him exists, the manufacturing capacity exists, yet only the price mechanism prevents it. This is scarcity by design, not by nature.

We built our current IP systems in an era when books were expensive to print and distribution was physically limited. Now we spend enormous resources to stop people from accessing information that could save their lives because it undermines business models built on controlled access even when sharing would deplete nothing.

When the gap between manufacturing cost and access price reaches 10x, 100x, even 1,000x, something is deeply wrong. That's not market efficiency; it's human failure on a civilizational scale.

3. **Coordination Scarcity** – Historically, organizing action across large groups was hard.

Matching needs to capacities at scale, processing complex information, and mobilizing millions of participants were nearly impossible tasks. Today, coordination scarcity is disappearing: the internet makes previously impossible collaboration routine. We organize millions of people, model extremely complex scenarios, and distribute decision-making across vast networks.

Elinor Ostrom won a Nobel Prize showing empirically that communities can and do manage complex commons without top-down control or pure private property — through polycentric governance, clear rules, monitoring, graduated sanctions, and dispute resolution. Those solutions exist and work; we just haven't applied them systematically to modern challenges.

Technology has radically changed the second and third forms of scarcity while making the first more urgent and more manageable if we organize differently.

The following shifts have shattered the foundations of scarcity economics.

The Four Shifts Reshaping Possibility

The First Shift: Energy Abundance

The sun delivers 173,000 terawatts continuously to Earth. Human civilization uses 19 terawatts total. Humankind is fighting wars and compromising values over energy while drowning in it.

As the marginal cost of clean electricity trends toward zero in more places, institutions built on expensive fossil energy look increasingly maladapted.

Morocco's Noor Ouarzazate Solar Complex powers a million homes from desert sunlight.[32] China installed more solar in 2023 (216 GW) than America's total nuclear capacity (~100 GW).[33] Lazard's 2024 analysis shows new solar + storage beats existing coal on cost in most markets — not future coal, current operations.[34]

Wright's Law predicts costs fall 20% with each doubling of cumulative production. Since 2010, global solar capacity has grown 55-fold representing nearly six doublings.[35] Solar electricity in China and India already costs 3.3 to 3.8 cents per kilowatt-hour, cheaper than any fossil fuel. Industry projections show solar LCOE falling to 2.5 cents per kWh globally by 2035, and potentially reaching 2 cents by 2050 in sunny regions thus making solar electricity nearly free at the point of generation.[36,37]

When energy becomes nearly free in a given region, everything changes. The Energy Abundance Shift tackles our physical scarcity margin. Transportation costs plummet when clean energy-based infra is built; similarly for manufacturing and agriculture.

The geopolitical leverage of petrostates erodes; though we should expect new dependencies around critical minerals and energy technology IP to emerge, not a simple "end" of geopolitics. The question is: why do we still treat energy like it's 1970, organizing institutions as if fossil-era scarcity still applied, when the sun delivers abundance?

The artificial constraint we face is our willingness to further invest in building the infrastructure to capture the energy around us.

The Second Shift: Information Abundance

When knowledge costs nothing to copy, maintaining artificial scarcity requires active intervention through law and force. This is a statement of physics over ideology. Landauer and Bennett established a fundamental asymmetry: erasing information has an irreducible thermodynamic cost, but copying does not. Duplication can theoretically approach reversible processes (i.e., near-zero energy expenditure). Nature has exploited this for four billion years; DNA polymerase copies genetic information with an efficiency that outperforms our best semiconductors by orders of magnitude.[38,39] Optimized digital fiber systems transmit gigabytes for microjoules. The marginal cost of one more copy approaches zero. While real infrastructure certainly requires more network energy intensity than microjoules, it's within our capability to invest in technologies to bridge the delta.[40]

Yet we build elaborate systems to prevent exactly this: elaborate legal systems, DRM technologies, and paywalls to make artificially scarce what physics makes abundant. Every paywall, every access restriction, every copyright enforcement exists not because copying information is expensive, but because keeping it scarce requires constant intervention against the natural tendency toward free flow. Every paywall is a dam against thermodynamics.

There are legitimate reasons for some intellectual property protections: funding expensive clinical trials, incentivizing creation, and compensating artists. But the current regime is wildly misaligned with actual costs and moral stakes.

We've constructed legal frameworks that treat knowledge, infinitely copyable at virtually zero cost, as artificially scarce, governing how $7.8 trillion in economic activity can be accessed and used.[41] At least some portion is comprised of systematically restricted knowledge, medicines, and technologies with near-zero marginal reproduction costs that could save or improve lives.

Take key examples of Artificial Scarcity in our modern world:

- Academic publishers generate $28 billion annually from research created by unpaid academics, reviewed by unpaid academics, and funded by public grants. This is charging universities to access what their peers already paid to create[42]
- Pharmacy benefit managers limit access to certain medicines through their control over formularies

It's like charging for air: possible only through violence or law, never through universal nature. The Information Abundance Shift helps address both artificial scarcity and coordination scarcity.

The gap between manufacturing cost and access price for essential medicines — sometimes a thousand-fold difference — represents not market efficiency but **human failure** at scale.

The Third Shift: Coordination Abundance

The internet and emerging AI make previously impossible coordination achievable. We can organize millions of people and tackle problems of extraordinary complexity with collective intelligence.

Crucially, coordination abundance has a dark side: the same tools that can coordinate mutual aid at scale are also used to enable hate campaigns, disinformation, and exploitation. Values and design become of utmost importance.

The question isn't whether we can coordinate, but what our coordination architectures reward and amplify.

The Emerging Fourth Shift: Intelligence Abundance

We are building AI systems that already exceed human performance in narrow domains and are rapidly expanding in scope. It's possible we are indeed barreling down the path toward Artificial General Intelligence (AGI). Conservative estimates place its harkening past the 2040s, base estimates in the 2030s, and aggressive ones by the late 2020s. When and if Large Reasoning Models turn into AGI, whoever controls it likely controls the light cone of the universe — i.e., the future of humankind.

The timeline is uncertain, but the direction is clear. These tools could help us allocate resources, model long-term consequences, and solve challenges beyond any individual comprehension. Instead, we're mostly deploying them to manipulate attention, consolidate power, and optimize ad clicks because those are what our current economic system rewards. Even without some imagined "superintelligence," the current AI systems we are deploying are powerful enough to

reshape economies and institutions. The Intelligence Abundance Shift is an emerging wild card that can amplify any of the three forms of scarcity. The need for swift action remains constant.

Make no mistake, even current AI is a tremendous force multiplier for whatever values we encode within it. If we maintain extraction-oriented societal structures, AI will optimize extraction. Our generation's greatest task is to build new structures in which our force multipliers optimize human wellbeing.

Beyond Antiquated Ideologies

The Four Shifts mean that clinging to ideologies from command-and-control socialism to the belief that "the markets know best" and technocratic autocracy is maladaptive. We're in a new world that demands new thinking.

Traditional socialism didn't foresee information abundance and fell into bureaucratic coordination failures. Networks can do what monolithic states cannot because of the Coordination Abundance Shift.

Traditional capitalism can't cope with zero marginal cost goods; it has no plan for economies where information is free.

Both old models lack frameworks for AI: laissez-faire would concentrate AI in a few companies leading to a dangerous corporatocracy; old socialism might try to centralize it in government. Both pose dangers.

The pattern is clear: **we have the technological foundations for abundance in basic goods, but we maintain the economics and institutions of antiquated scarcity**.

III. THE DESIGN: FIVE PRINCIPLES OF ABUNDANCE

To build an abundance society, we must articulate the five core architectural principles. These are the foundational design primitives that underpin it from which various implementations could emerge.

Section III covers the foundation of each Principle of Abundance. Section IV dives into deeper detail to explain the how and why as well as potential impact.

I. Universal Capabilities & Dignity

Every person deserves guaranteed access to the basics of a flourishing life:

- Clean energy for their basic needs (heating, cooling, light, communication)
- Nutritious food

- Clean water
- Shelter that is safe and dignified
- Healthcare that prevents suffering and premature death
- Education and continuous learning
- Communication infrastructure to participate in society

Not through top-down redistribution alone, but through universal basic services (Universal Capabilities), commons infrastructure, and cooperative networks that make provision sustainable within ecological limits.

This builds on Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach: the goal is not just guaranteeing a minimum income but guaranteeing the actual ability for each person to live a flourishing life.[43] The moral claim is simple: in an age where we can provide these basics cheaply and sustainably, denying them is a political choice, not a true resource constraint.

How this works in practice:

Achieving these guarantees requires substantial fixed investments from solar grids, water systems, medical facilities, and educational platforms. These investments could be plausibly financed through some mix of progressive taxation on individuals, redirecting resources from rent extraction to provision of public goods, and a revamped tax code that closes business loopholes. Studies indicate providing these services *globally* would cost on the order of 4 trillion dollars per year, which is less than what we already spend on fossil fuel subsidies and externalities ($7 trillion) as well as defense ($2.6 trillion).

Crucially, these outlays should be seen as investments that appear on the public's balance sheet as real assets (energy systems, water infrastructure, healthcare facilities, etc.) generating long-term social returns, rather than as mere short-term expenditure. The abundance claim isn't that these basics come "free," but that their operating costs per capita can be so low — and their social value so high — that **universal provision is economically rational within planetary boundaries**.

We already see proof-of-concept: Luxembourg provides free nationwide public transit as essential infrastructure; over 1,000 community energy cooperatives in Germany and Denmark provide affordable renewable power to millions; community land trusts across North America and Europe preserve permanently affordable housing through community ownership.[44,45,46] In Denmark, data centers now channel waste heat to district heating networks: Meta's Odense facility alone warms 11,000 homes and Microsoft's datacenter in Høje-Taastrup will produce enough waste heat to warm around 6,000 local homes.[47,48] The challenge isn't imagining entirely new solutions; it's scaling and connecting the models that already work.

II. Commons Infrastructure

Essential knowledge, foundational technologies, and coordination tools should be treated as public goods.

For example, open-source designs for solar panels, water purifiers, and essential medicines. Publicly accessible AI systems for planning and coordination. Shared data resources managed through democratic governance.

The logic is simple: foundational knowledge, the building blocks on which further innovation depends, becomes more valuable when widely shared, not artificially restricted. Jonas Salk, when asked who owned the patent for the polio vaccine, replied: “Well, the people, I would say. There is no patent. Could you patent the sun?” The elimination of polio through free access saved millions of lives and created far more real value than any temporary vaccine monopoly ever could.

This is certainly not about eliminating *all* intellectual property. Creative works like films, games, and novels — domains where scarcity does not create a moral emergency — can retain existing IP frameworks (ideally reformed to better serve creators).

But life-saving medical knowledge? Designs for basic infrastructure? These should default to openness, with narrow exceptions only where genuine security and safety risks exist.

III. Distributed Power & Polycentric Governance

No single system, be it market, state, or algorithm, should monopolize decision-making.

We need multiple centers of authority at different scales (community, city, state/province, nation, global) with clear rules for managing cross-boundary externalities. Not one global blueprint, but many experiments in understanding what living well means, bounded by meta-rules that prevent a race to the bottom and protect the planetary commons.

This was Ostrom’s great insight, validated across thousands of real-world cases: the commons can be governed successfully through polycentric arrangements which are neither pure markets nor a single centralized state. Different communities will experiment with different approaches. Some will maintain more traditional market economies. Some will try pure contribution networks. Some will develop hybrid models. Others will invent novel systems we haven’t imagined yet.

The keys are: freedom to exit systems that don’t serve you, transparency about outcomes, and meta-coordination for challenges that cross communities (like climate change, pollution, migration, or financial contagion). In other words: let diversity flourish, but coordinate to handle the externalities one community might impose on others.

IV. Technology as a Partner

AI systems should be built and governed as advisory infrastructure for human coordination, not as opaque autonomous agents or purely profit-maximizing black boxes. This requires disaggregating distinct challenges that current discourse conflates:

AI Alignment: Ensuring AI systems actually do what humans intend. This is an unsolved technical problem. Current deep neural networks resist interpretation. “Inspectable reasoning” is an ongoing problem with an active research frontier. This is an argument for more research and multiple layers of oversight. Humankind must not accept any excuse to accept opaque AI systems running critical infrastructure.

AI Governance: Who controls AI development and deployment. Democratic control of AI infrastructure is absolutely foundational. Humans disagree profoundly on values; any AI will tilt toward whoever configures it. This requires:

- Human override capability as fundamental architecture, not afterthought
- Constitutional limits on autonomous decision-making
- Democratic input into how major AI systems are deployed
- Rights to audit, contest, and opt out of algorithmic decisions

AI Safety: Preventing catastrophic misuse. Some AI capabilities — turn-by-turn bioweapon instructions, autonomous cyber-attacks, omnipresent surveillance — will be dangerous regardless of economic system. Decisions about these lines should not rest with private companies alone. We need proactive, democratic, and international governance for truly catastrophic-risk technologies.

AI Labor Displacement: The economic effects of automation. This requires labor protections, collective bargaining over AI deployment, portable benefits, and transition support (all addressed more fully in Section V).

Many near-term AI dangers come not from rogue *super*intelligence but from *ordinary* deployment: surveillance capitalism, workplace monitoring, biased algorithms, autonomous weapons. Partnership means protecting against these present harms while building architectures capable of safely managing more powerful systems in the future.

V. Markets as Tools, Not Masters

The Markets Principle of Abundance requires the most careful articulation, as it represents the most significant departure from current economic orthodoxy.

The Theoretical Foundation

The economist Karl Polanyi identified a crucial distinction between *embedded* and *disembedded* markets. For most of human history, markets were embedded within social relationships — subject to religious obligations, community norms, and political authority. The “self-regulating market” of classical economics, where price mechanisms govern all allocation, is historically anomalous.

Polanyi argued that attempts to create pure self-regulating markets necessarily fail, because treating labor, land, and money as ordinary commodities generates social devastation that

provokes protective counter-movements. The twentieth century's great conflicts between liberalism, fascism, and socialism were all responses to the dislocations of disembedded markets.

The abundance framework offers a different resolution: not re-embedding markets through state control, nor abandoning market coordination entirely, but recognizing markets as one tool among several, appropriate for some domains and inappropriate for others.

Where Markets Excel

Markets remain powerful mechanisms for:

- **Coordinating complex, preference-laden goods**: When people have diverse tastes and production involves many trade-offs, price signals convey information no central planner could aggregate. Fashion, cuisine, entertainment, specialized services all benefit from market coordination.
- **Driving innovation in competitive domains**: Profit incentives motivate entrepreneurs to identify unmet needs and develop solutions. Competition pressures continuous improvement.
- **Enabling voluntary exchange**: When parties have roughly equal bargaining power and alternatives, markets facilitate mutually beneficial trades.

Where Markets Fail

Markets systematically fail when:

- **Marginal costs approach zero**: For information goods, AI inference, and digital services, the cost of serving one more user is negligible. Price-based allocation in these domains creates artificial scarcity and deadweight loss. Charging for what costs nothing to provide prevents beneficial use.
- **Externalities dominate**: Climate change is history's largest market failure. When production costs don't include environmental damage, market prices systematically mislead. Similar dynamics apply to public health, systemic financial risk, and long-term ecological damage.
- **Power is radically unequal**: When workers face starvation without employment while employers face merely reduced profits, "voluntary" exchange is coerced. Markets in desperation aren't markets at all but domination with price tags.
- **Network effects create natural monopolies**: Platforms, utilities, and infrastructure often have winner-take-all dynamics. Pretending competition will discipline these markets produces extraction, not efficiency.
- **Information asymmetries are extreme**: Healthcare, complex financial products, used cars. When one party knows far more than another, caveat emptor produces exploitation.
- **The goods in question are constitutive of dignity**: Treating shelter, healthcare, food, and education primarily as commodities means access becomes contingent on market success rather than human need.

The Design Pattern: Stratified Allocation

Different goods require different allocation mechanisms:

For truly non-rival goods (knowledge, digital information, AI services where capacity exists): Open access through commons networks. No price mechanism needed since artificial scarcity serves no purpose except extracting rents.

For rival but relatively abundant basics (energy, food, water in most regions): Guarantee universal sufficiency. Price only to reflect genuine ecological constraints and system maintenance. Never to extract scarcity rents or ration access to dignity. For some goods in some circumstances, allocate via democratic rights or quotas rather than price.

For scarce resources under ecological pressure (water in arid regions, limited urban land, carbon budget): Use allocation mechanisms that reflect true scarcity — e.g., carbon prices, land value taxes, congestion pricing — but ensure revenues fund universal capabilities rather than enriching incumbents.

For complex, personalized, innovative goods (custom products, luxury services, creative endeavors, specialized expertise): Market coordination continues. But without the coercive backdrop of "work or starve," market participation becomes more genuinely voluntary. Workers can refuse exploitative conditions; consumers aren't desperate.

Preventing Market Re-Encroachment

A critical design challenge: markets tend to expand into new domains. What starts as a useful tool becomes a universal logic. How do we prevent markets from re-colonizing the protected spheres?

Constitutional boundaries: Legally establish that certain goods (healthcare, housing, basic education, food, water, energy) cannot be allocated purely by market mechanisms. Just as we prohibit markets in votes or kidneys, prohibit pure marketization of life's necessities.

Public options and exit rights: Always maintain public or cooperative alternatives to for-profit provision of essential services. When private markets must compete with viable non-market alternatives, their extractive capacity is constrained.

Democratic accountability: Price-setting for essential services must be subject to democratic input, not left to market power alone. Utilities, healthcare, education, and housing prices should reflect democratic choices about fair access, not just supply-demand equilibria.

Aggressive antitrust: Break up monopolies and prevent market concentration that enables extraction. When a market becomes dominated by a few players, it stops functioning as markets theoretically should.

Remove market logic from public governance: Policy decisions should not be evaluated solely through cost-benefit analysis or market efficiency. Democratic deliberation about values, rights, and the kind of society we want has priority over market-mimicking evaluation.

The Goal: Economic Pluralism

The abundance framework doesn't seek to abolish markets but to establish genuine economic pluralism: multiple allocation mechanisms, each used where appropriate, with democratic deliberation determining which applies where.

Markets for the varied; commons for the shared; guarantees for the essential; democratic allocation for the contested.

IV. A VISION OF POSSIBILITY: THE SHAPE OF LIBERATION

Close your eyes for a moment.

Imagine waking up knowing that no child will go blind from a curable disease because their parents cannot pay for treatment.

Imagine the next Einstein or Gandhi — born right now in some village you've never heard of — getting the nutrition and education to fulfill her potential instead of spending a life in subsistence.

Imagine building a tomorrow where our grandchildren look back and cannot fathom how we ever accepted needless suffering as "normal."

That world is technically possible. Below provides structure to illustrate how it could work.

The Foundation: Guaranteed Capabilities

Every person has reliable access to energy, food, water, shelter, healthcare, and education. This isn't charity dispensed by benevolent bureaucrats; it's infrastructure. It's the foundation of freedom.

Universal Basic Income asks the wrong question: "How much money do people need to be happy/fulfilled/any other metric?" Universal Capabilities asks: "What foundational capabilities lead to maximized happiness/fulfilment/contribution to innovation?"

The answer is empirical. Maslow was wrong — needs aren't hierarchical but interdependent.[49] Long term stimulus does not guarantee access to goods and services if said goods and services get priced out or go unavailable. This problem however is solved by ensuring the goods and

services which is increasingly possible in a world of ever-greater abundance. Research across 119 countries identifies consistent requirements for human flourishing:

1. **Energy**: 3,000 kWh/year for basic needs, 4,000 kWh/year for dignity, varying by region and climate[50,51]
2. **Food**: Between 2,000 kcal/day and 2,500 kcal/day minimum with nutritional diversity[52]
3. **Water**: 2.5 liters/day and 2 liters/day for men and women minimum, respectively for potable water; hygiene; and cooking[53]
4. **Shelter**: 10m² minimum per person for privacy and dignity[54]
5. **Healthcare**: Preventive, emergency, and basic chronic care
6. **Education**: Literacy, numeracy, and continuous learning access
7. **Communication**: Internet access and basic device
8. **Transportation**: Mobility access to work and community

For the farmer in Nebraska who lost his farm, he could have still been alive to watch over his family and see his children grow in an abundance world.

The resources exist. In 2022, global fossil fuel subsidies reached $7 trillion — a figure that includes direct payments, health damages, and environmental costs that fuel prices ignore while communities are left to absorb.[55] In 2024, we spent $2.6 trillion on military budgets globally.[56] Achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which are substantially aligned to this Declaration's Universal Capabilities Principle, would call for $4.2 trillion globally.[57]

But here's the paradigm shift: these aren't costs, but investments.

Every dollar in preventive healthcare saves $5.60 in treatment.[58] Every dollar in early education returns $7 to $13 in lifetime productivity.[59,60] Ironically, poverty is more expensive than programs combatting it. Child poverty alone costs the U.S. economy $1 trillion per annum, while each dollar spent reducing poverty saves at least $7.[61] Finland's universal healthcare costs approximately $5,000 per capita versus $14,000 in the U.S. with better outcomes: higher life expectancy and fewer preventable deaths.[62]

Amid one of the greatest fertility crises we've seen in recent history, almost no high-income country is producing enough offspring to counteract the replacement rate.

If not for immigration, countries such as the U.S. (1.60), Australia (1.48), and the UK (1.41) with fertility rates well below the replacement rate of 2.1 would find themselves in a similar predicament as Japan (1.15).[63,64,65,66] A population comprised of mostly elderly citizens and too few young people. A stagnating population should be considered a national security threat — bolstering the right kind of immigration and promoting a healthier culture that helps open doors for its citizens to start families.

To illustrate, France's universal childcare system helped maintain Europe's highest birth rate for decades while helping men and women who sought to contribute to the economy.[67] Without such policies, the French population would be between 5 to 10 million less and on the precipice of population growth stagnation.[68]

Estonia declared internet access a human right in 2000; today 99% of government services are online.[69]

Kerala, India achieved over 95% literacy through universal access to education — over 80% of students attend government or aided schools.[70]

Mondragon Corporation in Spain: over 70,000 employees with roughly one-third to one-half as worker-owners, €11+ billion revenue, executive to worker pay ratios averaging 5:1 (compared to Spain's 127:1 or America's 285:1).[71,72,73] During the 2008 crisis, workers voted for pay cuts and reduced hours over layoffs; when Fagor Appliances failed in 2013, Mondragon relocated 1,710 of 1,800 workers to other cooperatives.[74] Today they're globally competitive in industries from automotives to energy.

These aren't socialist fantasies. They're investments recognizing that universal access often creates more value than exclusive ownership.

From Jobs to Purpose

When survival is decoupled from employment, work transforms from necessity to choice.

Right now, brilliant people spend their lives optimizing ad algorithms or high-frequency trading — not often because they dream of it, but because those jobs pay extremely well and come with health insurance, while their student loans and rent aren't going to pay themselves. In an abundance system, those same people could work on what matters to them: poverty solutions, climate mitigation, education, community building, art, science, caregiving.

Sure, some will still choose corporate jobs similar in some form to what we find today, and that's fine. But many others will teach, create, organize, research, or build in their communities. People could mix it up: work a few years in a lucrative industry, then transition to lower-paid but more meaningful work without fearing destitution or ruin.

What about a society's most difficult jobs (e.g., sanitation, mining, dangerous construction, et cetera)? There are several high-level solutions:

- **Automation** for dangerous and repetitive tasks, wherever possible.
- **Higher compensation** for genuinely unpleasant or risky work (markets still function for labor that is not "basic" or guaranteed).
- **Rotation of civic duties** – essential jobs could be shared broadly as short-term service stints rather than lifelong burdens on a few.
- **Cultural recognition** – a cultural shift to esteem necessary labor, akin to how military or community service is honored.

The principle is clear: essential work will be valued and fairly shared, not left undone or foisted onto the desperate.

Decoupling Survival from Employment

Think about it: how free are you really if you'll take any job, no matter how degrading, because you're afraid of starving? How free is your speech when criticizing your employer could cost you your family's health insurance? How much can you innovate when all your energy goes to simply surviving?

These aren't charity. They're investments recognizing that universal access creates more value than exclusive ownership. When everyone can contribute, everyone benefits.

Decoupling survival from employment doesn't make people lazy — it makes them free.

Evidence is overwhelming that people contribute and thrive when freed from desperate survival anxiety:

- Open-source developers work without pay to build software that runs most of the internet.
- Wikipedia is maintained by volunteers, creating humanity's largest encyclopedia for free.
- Universal Basic Income experiments, from Kenya to Finland, show that work effort doesn't collapse when basic needs are guaranteed; in some cases it increases, as people start businesses or retrain for better jobs.
- Throughout history, whenever humans have had the freedom (time, resources) to pursue higher goals, they've devoted themselves to art, science, caregiving, exploration. The things we *say* we value.

The question isn't whether people are selfish or altruistic. It's which tendencies our institutions amplify.

Economy: Contribution, Recognition, Choice

Markets fail at public goods, zero marginal cost products, and managing externalities. States fail at innovation, individual preference, and rapid adaptation. We need a third way.

Instead of pure market allocation for everything, we develop new hybrid systems geared toward abundance:

- For **genuinely non-rival goods** (knowledge, digital services): provide them freely, as open commons.
- For **rival but abundant basics** (energy in sunny climates, food in most places, water in many regions): guarantee them universally, pricing solely reflects ecological costs and maintenance needs (not to gouge or exclude).
- For **complex, preference-driven goods** (custom products, luxury services, creative endeavors): let markets coordinate supply and demand but without the coercion of life-or-death stakes. In an abundance society, no one is forced to accept a terrible job or sale just to survive, so market exchanges become more genuinely voluntary.

We also broaden what we recognize as "value." In addition to money, people can contribute and exchange via time, skills, and care. Early versions of this exist: some time-bank networks let people earn credits by caregiving or community work and spend those credits on other services, without reducing everyone's contributions to one uniform metric. GitHub contribution graphs show who built what in open-source projects, giving reputation and credit without a dollar value. Local currencies and mutual credit systems allow communities to trade favors and services without relying on fiat money at all.

Any algorithmic system for tracking contribution must have hard constraints: strict limits against surveillance and abuse, transparent operation under democratic oversight, rights to exit and to contest any rankings, and crucially, multiple overlapping systems rather than one monolithic "social credit score." The goal isn't to numerically rate a person's worth but to support reciprocity and coordination in communities that choose to track contributions, while preserving freedom and privacy.

The point isn't to quantify human worth, but to make sure contributions are recognized and shared in systems where people want that accountability.

Governance: Distributed Experimentation

Different communities experiment with different approaches to organizing their economies and lives. As Ostrom and many others demonstrated, polycentric governance — multiple centers of decision-making — can effectively manage complex resources without either pure markets or a singular central authority.

Taiwan's vTaiwan platform (covered in greater detail in Appendix B) involves 200,000+ citizens directly in policymaking using AI-assisted deliberation.[75] The open-source, non-profit, volunteer-driven civic technology project works hand-in-hand with Taiwanese government agencies to foster inclusive, structured public dialogue and consensus-building. Thousands of citizens engage with government officials, companies, and experts resulting in concrete legislation that balances the interests of all involved parties before becoming official law.

We will need overarching rules for when local experiments create big externalities (like climate, pandemic risks, mass migration, or financial contagion). But within broad constraints (like "don't destroy the climate" or "don't violate human rights"), diversity of approach is a feature, not a bug. What works in a dense urban center may not work in a rural village. That's beneficial as the goal is to learn what works where over imposing one uniform solution everywhere.

V. HARD TRUTHS: THE TRANSITION PROBLEM & THE FREE-RIDER PROBLEM

Any serious proposal for systemic change must grapple with two fundamental challenges: how power actually operates, and how we realistically get from here to there. Treating these as

afterthoughts or dismissing them with platitudes about "building alternatives" is intellectually dishonest.

Power, Resistance, and the Path Through

Let's be clear: existing systems will fight back ferociously against an abundance transition. Specific interests that profit from engineered scarcity have names, faces, and strategies.

The Extraction Coalition

Fossil fuel companies spent over $1 billion on lobbying since the Paris Agreement, including funding broader climate denial, while the 104 oil and gas companies that sent lobbyists to COP climate summits have banked $2.6 trillion in profits since the signing.[76,77]

Big Pharma killed 800,000+ Americans with opioids since 1999 while aggressively opposing and threatening countries attempting to use compulsory patent licensing for essential medicines because they profit immensely from artificial scarcity in medicine.[78]

Agricultural giants control 60% of commercial seeds and ~65% of agrochemicals, creating farmer dependence through integrated seed-and-chemical systems.[79]

Tech monopolies generated $1.4 trillion in combined revenue in 2021 while the Silicon Six avoided up to $155 billion in global taxes from 2010 to 2019; additional analysis found that Fortune 500 companies held $2.4 trillion in profits offshore, with 58 companies owing an estimated $240 billion in additional U.S. taxes if those profits were repatriated.[80,81,82]

Financial institutions captured over $29 trillion from Federal Reserve commitments during the Global Financial Crisis; while most of these were short-term loans that were ultimately repaid, the actual subsidy cost to taxpayers, calculated on a fair-value basis, was approximately $498 billion.[83,84] This massive intervention saved the financial system while approximately 10 million American families lost their homes to foreclosure between 2006 and 2014.[85]

And, perhaps most critically: AI developers lobby against strict safety regulations or transparency requirements that might slow their race for dominance in the industry.

In today's democracies, these incumbent industries wield enormous influence through lobbying, campaign donations, and regulatory capture. Any serious transition strategy must assume organized, well-funded opposition and thusly design institutions that can withstand it.

The Mechanisms of Capture

How does a system obviously failing the majority persist? Through sophisticated capture, as detailed:

Cognitive Capture: We've internalized scarcity thinking so deeply that abundance seems naïve. Friedman's "there's no such thing as a free lunch" becomes gospel even as solar energy

demonstrates what happens when lunch is powered by a fusion reactor we don't have to build, fuel we never have to buy, and costs that have fallen 90% in fifteen years and keep halving. At some point, "no free lunch" becomes an excuse to ignore the buffet.

Institutional Capture: The FDA's revolving door routinely sends its staffers to companies whose drugs they previously approved, often within months of signing approvals. Over 1 in 4 hematology-oncology FDA drug reviewers were later found in industry positions.[86,87] The FCC is captured by telecoms, the SEC by Wall Street alumni. We don't merely have regulatory capture — we have regulatory identity loss.

Political Capture: Outside spending by non-party groups exploded from $296 million (2000-2009) to $4.26 billion (2010-2019) after Citizens United.[88] In the 2024 election alone, dark money — groups that don't disclose its donors — topped $1.9 billion, including over $175 million funneled through groups closely aligned with congressional leadership.[89,90] The average Senate winner spends $15.7 million[91]; upwards of 70 to 80% of races go to bigger spenders. Democracy becomes plutocracy with voting characteristics.

Media Capture: Internal researchers repeatedly found Instagram fueled mental struggles, including suicidal thoughts, in teenagers, especially girls.[92] Facebook's internal data scientists confirmed its algorithms disproportionately amplified "misinformation, toxicity and violent content."[93] Meanwhile, Sinclair Broadcasting reaches 40% of American households with local stations showing documented rightward shifts in significantly more conservative phrasing after an acquisition by Sinclair.[94,95,96] We're drowning in a tempest of information while starving for knowledge.

Academic Capture: In 1965, the sugar industry paid Harvard researchers to review the literature on sugar and heart disease. The researchers — published in the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine — concluded there was "no doubt" that fat, not sugar, caused heart disease. They cherry-picked studies favoring their conclusion while dismissing research implicating sugar. The funding source was never disclosed.[97,98,99] This industry-sponsored research shaped five decades of dietary guidelines and public health policy.

Breaking the Chains

The honest truth is that transitions of this magnitude are rare, disruptive, and contested. We should not pretend otherwise.

Path dependency: Trillions of dollars in existing infrastructure, established careers, institutional knowledge, and social arrangements depend on current systems. Even people who would benefit from change often resist it because transition costs fall on them personally while benefits are diffuse.

Collective action problems: Even when change would benefit everyone, no individual actor has sufficient incentive to move first. Companies that unilaterally adopt abundance principles get exploited by competitors who don't. Countries that move alone face capital flight.

Coordination dilemmas: The systems we want to replace serve real coordination functions, however imperfectly. We cannot simply delete current arrangements without replacements that actually work. Failed transitions — where old systems collapse before new ones mature — produce chaos that discredits the alternative vision.

Genuine uncertainty: We don't know exactly how abundance systems would function at scale. Pilot programs are promising but limited. Humility about what we don't know is essential.

Historical Lessons

History shows systemic change is possible but also reveals what it actually requires.

The New Deal didn't happen because robber baron capitalists became altruistic. It happened because the Great Depression discredited the existing order, labor militancy threatened elite interests, and political leadership channeled disruption into institutional reform rather than revolution. It required sustained political conflict, not just good ideas.

The Civil Rights Movement advanced despite violent resistance through decades of organizing, strategic litigation, direct action, moral witness, and ultimately legislative victory. It was a hard-fought struggle that only in hindsight may seem like smooth evolution.

Decolonization transformed global political geography but often through protracted conflict. The economic structures of dependency proved far harder to dislodge than formal political control.

The pattern: Major systemic transitions require some combination of:

- Crisis that discredits existing arrangements
- Alternative institutions that demonstrate viability
- Political movements with sufficient power to overcome resistance
- Leadership willing to navigate conflict strategically
- External conditions that weaken incumbent defenses

We should not expect an abundance transition to be easier or smoother than these precedents.

A Realistic Strategy

Given these constraints, what approaches actually make sense?

1. **Build Countervailing Power**

Change requires organized constituencies powerful enough to overcome entrenched opposition:

- **Labor organizing**: Workers collectively bargaining over AI deployment, benefit structures, and economic governance

- **Consumer movements**: Coordinated economic pressure through purchasing decisions and divestment
- **Community organizing**: Building local institutions that demonstrate alternatives while developing political capacity
- **Cross-class coalitions**: Uniting diverse groups who share interest in abundance — workers, caregivers, small business owners, forward-looking entrepreneurs, environmentalists

2. **Make Alternatives Materially Attractive**

If abundance systems significantly improve lives, even self-interested individuals will choose them:

- Every solar panel is a vote against utility monopolies
- Every cooperative refutes claims that worker ownership can't compete
- Every open-source project proves voluntary collaboration works
- Every mutual aid network demonstrates that humans naturally share

The strategy is substitution, not revolution: make old systems obsolete by building new ones that work better.

3. **Use Political Processes Strategically**

Democratic institutions remain available levers, despite capture:

- Mandate openness for publicly-funded research
- Enact compulsory licensing for life-saving technologies
- Enforce antitrust against gatekeeping monopolies
- Create legal "sandboxes" protecting communities that experiment
- Build "abundance caucuses" that cross traditional political divides

4. **Build International Coordination**

No country can transition alone without facing coordinated retaliation:

- Alliance-building among democracies pursuing abundance
- Trade agreements that reward rather than punish abundance policies
- Shared standards for AI safety and governance
- Climate cooperation that makes abundance deployment easier

5. **Accept Conflict as Necessary**

The most uncomfortable truth: graceful, consensus-based transition is unlikely. Those who profit from artificial scarcity will not graciously step aside. Political conflict — strikes, protests, electoral battles, legal fights — will likely and unfortunately be required.

This certainly does not mean seeking conflict for its own sake. It means not pretending that "building alternatives" alone suffices, or that good ideas automatically win. We need power, and building power means organizing people willing to fight for change.

6. **Manage Transition Thoughtfully**

Even successful transitions create losers. Managing this honestly is essential:

- **Retraining and support** for workers in declining industries
- **Transition timelines** that don't instantly destabilize communities
- **Buyouts and phase-outs** for some incumbent interests where cheaper than protracted conflict
- **Geographic targeting** that spreads transition costs rather than concentrating them

Why Free-Riding Is a Real Concern

A hard-nosed economist will ask: **what prevents free-riding?** If basics are guaranteed and contribution is voluntary, why would anyone work?

Incentives Without Coercion

Free-riding threatens any commons-based system. Ostrom's research showed that successful commons governance requires specific institutional features precisely because free-riding is a genuine human tendency:

- In laboratory settings, public goods games reliably show free-riding unless mechanisms punish defection
- Historical commons collapses often trace to free-rider dynamics overwhelming cooperative norms
- Even strong cooperators defect when they observe others free-riding persistently

To directly mitigate it, Ostrom identified eight design principles present in long-enduring commons institutions:

1. **Clearly defined boundaries**: who can access and who cannot.
2. P**roportional equivalence between benefits and costs**: those who contribute more receive more.
3. **Collective choice arrangements**: those affected participate in rule-making.
4. **Monitoring**: Ability to observe behavior.
5. **Graduated sanctions**: Penalties that escalate with repeated violations.
6. **Conflict resolution mechanisms**: Low-cost local arenas for dispute settlement.
7. **Minimal recognition of rights**: External authorities don't challenge community governance.
8. **Nested enterprises**: For larger systems, governance at multiple nested scales.

Note what's present: *monitoring and sanctions*. Successful commons are not based purely on trust or goodwill. They include mechanisms for detecting and punishing free-riding.

How Abundance Systems Address Free-Riding

Guaranteed Basics ≠ Unlimited Luxury

It's crucial to hammer the point that the abundance framework does not guarantee endless consumption but sufficiency — adequate food, shelter, healthcare, education.

Free-riding concerns assume that if basics are guaranteed, no one will work. Basics are deliberately modest. If you want more than the floor — i.e., travel, entertainment, luxury goods, larger homes, specialized services — you must contribute. The incentive to work remains for anything beyond sufficiency.

Universal Capabilities provide a floor but not a ceiling. Above the floor, contribution still brings rewards.

Social Proof Already Exists

People already contribute massively without financial incentives when:

- Basic needs are met
- They see direct connection between effort and impact
- They're part of communities that recognize contribution
- They find work meaningful

Open-source software, first responders, volunteer caregiving, mutual aid all demonstrate that survival pressure isn't the only motivation.

But they also reveal limits: these contributions are often supplementary to paid work, concentrated among those with existing security, and vulnerable to burnout. Extrapolating from hobby projects to societal scale requires institutional support that voluntary contributions alone don't provide.

Contribution Recognition Systems

Abundance systems can track contribution without commodifying it:

- Time banks record hours exchanged, creating reciprocity expectations
- Reputation systems (like GitHub profiles) show track records
- Community recognition provides social rewards for contribution

These systems must have hard constraints:

- **No universal score**: Multiple overlapping systems rather than one monolithic rating

- **Opt-out rights**: Ability to participate in communities without surveillance
- **Transparency**: Clear rules about what's tracked and how
- **Democratic governance**: Communities set their own norms
- **Privacy protections**: Contribution data cannot be sold or misused
- **Exit rights**: Ability to leave systems that don't serve you

The goal is enabling reciprocity for those who want it, not comprehensive social credit.

Graduated Sanctions

Following Ostrom, abundance systems should include escalating responses to persistent free-riding:

- **First violations**: Conversation and reminder of community norms
- **Repeated violations**: Reduced access to community benefits beyond basics
- **Persistent defection**: Potential exclusion from specific communities (while basics remain guaranteed)

The key distinction: sanctions affect access to community benefits above basics, not the basics themselves. No one starves for free-riding but persistent defectors may find community opportunities limited.

Cultural Transformation

Long-term, abundance systems should cultivate cultural norms supporting contribution:

- Honoring essential work as we honor military service
- Stigmatizing extraction as we stigmatize theft
- Celebrating contribution rather than consumption
- Building identity around what you give, not what you accumulate

It's a proven sociological finding that such norms drive how cultures actually function. Contemporary consumerism is itself a constructed culture; alternatives are possible.

But cultural change is slow and uncertain. Institutional design should not depend on cultural transformation occurring. It should create incentives compatible with existing human tendencies while enabling better norms to develop.

The Honest Answer

The honest answer to "what prevents free-riding?" is: multiple mechanisms operating simultaneously.

- Guaranteed basics are modest, preserving incentive for additional contribution
- Contribution recognition systems enable reciprocity
- Graduated sanctions exist for persistent defection

- Community norms develop over time
- Exit rights and pluralism allow different communities to find different equilibria

This won't prevent all free-riding. Some people will contribute less than they could. Some communities will struggle with defection problems. Some experiments will fail.

But current systems also tolerate massive "free-riding" by those who extract without producing — rentiers, speculators, monopolists, inheritors. The question isn't whether abundance systems eliminate free-riding (they won't) but whether they handle it better than alternatives.

VI. ANSWERING THE SKEPTICS

"This is naive. Corporations will never voluntarily open-source."

Correct. This isn't about persuading corporations to act against their interests. It's about:

1. **Building parallel systems** that make corporate gatekeeping increasingly irrelevant
2. **Using policy levers**: compulsory licensing for life-saving tech, mandated openness for publicly funded research, and antitrust enforcement against monopolies
3. **Employing historical precedent**: new forms of organization have always coexisted with and sometimes displaced earlier ones when they better served human needs

The New Deal didn't happen because big corporations suddenly became altruistic. It happened because people organized, demanded change, and used democratic power to force new rules. The same will be true of an abundance transition: it will happen because people choose to build it and to fight for it, not because incumbents graciously step aside.

"Human nature is selfish. People won't contribute without profit motive."

We are not saints, nor selfish automatons either. Institutions tilt the balance of human behavior. When survival is at stake, we should expect defensive, zero-sum behavior.

Evidence of massive contribution without pay already exists: open-source software, Wikipedia, volunteer work, mutual aid. People contribute when: basic needs are met, they see direct connection between effort and impact, they're recognized, and work is meaningful.

The design challenge isn't to assume everyone will become selfless saints. *The design challenge is this: to create institutions where even self-interested actors find that helping others and contributing to collective flourishing serves their interests better than hoarding and exploiting*.

This is exactly how the U.S. Founders approached constitutional design: "ambition must be made to counteract ambition." Instead of assuming everyone becomes altruistic, we design systems where cooperation beats defection.

In fact, freed from survival pressure, many forms of essential labor that we now call "care work" — raising children, supporting elders, improving community health — can finally be valued as central contributions rather than dismissed as invisible or unproductive labor.

"This is just communism."

No. 20th century communism tried to centrally plan entire economies and abolish private property through state control. This Declaration is fundamentally different:

- **Markets continuing** where useful for complex coordination, not abolished outright
- **Distributed decision-making**, not centralized, top-down planning
- **Multiple economic systems coexisting**, no single mandatory imposed model for all
- **Technology-enabled abundance**, not forced redistribution of scarcity
- **Voluntary participation** with freedom to exit, not state coercion trapping people

So long as genuine scarcity exists, socialism will fail: when half a population realizes they needn't work because the other half provides, those working soon stop striving. Abundance societies mitigate this by providing Universal Capabilities floors — providing human dignity — not lavish lifestyles.

Markets still exist, but are not exploitative nor under the thumb of corporatocracies. Healthy democratic governments absolutely still exist and are further empowered to represent people through improved transparency and guardrails. Goods, services, and property can still be privately purchased and owned through currency (e.g., the U.S. Dollar). The difference is that basics aren't contingent on market success, and markets serve society rather than ruling it.

"AI partnership sounds good until AI becomes smarter than us and takes over."

This is a serious concern requiring multiple responses:

First, many near-term AI dangers come from human misuse — mass surveillance, hyper-efficient algorithmic discrimination, unmitigated labor displacement, concentration of power — not autonomous AI hell-bent to conquer humankind. Partnership architecture, with transparency, oversight, and human-in-the-loop control helps protect against these present harms.

Second, if we are indeed on a path toward Artificial General Intelligence or Artificial Super Intelligence, *now* is the time to instill partnership principles and governance. Once super-powerful AI is ubiquitous, it's too late to redesign the paradigm. We need alignment architectures while we still have the ability to shape the development trajectory.

Third, that's why we emphasize constitutional constraints, distributed governance, and human override in AI design. We're honest that transparency in deep models (e.g., deep neural nets) is technically challenging. But that's an argument for investing in interpretability research and multiple oversight mechanisms, not for shrugging and handing control to black boxes.

Fourth, a critical part of the risk is *who* controls advanced AI. An all-powerful AI under the thumb of a single corporation or authoritarian state is far more dangerous than AI developed with strong safety cultures and distributed, democratic oversight. Concentrated power is a threat.

"You're ignoring limits to growth and ecological reality."

No. Planetary boundaries are real and central to this vision. The thesis is that ***within*** **biophysical limits**, we can ensure everyone has:

- Enough energy (through renewables and efficiency)
- Sufficient food (through sustainable agriculture and more efficient distribution)
- Adequate shelter (using efficient building practices and design)
- And basic care for dignified lives

In fact, abundance thinking helps preserve ecological limits by decoupling well-being from material throughput (you don't need ever-rising resource consumption for people to live well), enabling circular economy approaches that reduce waste and pollution, removing systemic pressure for endless GDP growth, and allowing us to focus on sustainability rather than on fighting over scraps.

Again, the technology exists for this. What prevents it is economic organization treating basics as commodities to ration through price rather than as public goods to guarantee within sustainable limits. Abundance is about better management of resources and distribution, not profligacy.

"This sounds utopian and impractical."

Some of this vision is utopian by design — meant to expand our sense of possibility. We are proud pragmatic utopians aiming high. But many elements of this Declaration already exist in the real world and have been proven effective:

- Community-owned energy cooperatives power millions of homes in Germany and Denmark
- Time banks operate in hundreds of cities, allowing people to swap services without money
- The Mondragon Corporation in Spain is a network of cooperatives with 80,000+ worker-owners competing successfully in global markets
- Open-source software projects (Linux, Apache, etc.) run huge swaths of the internet infrastructure on a non-profit basis
- Mutual aid networks, which blossomed during COVID-19, showed how quickly communities can self-organize to distribute food, healthcare, and support without traditional corporate or government structures
- Community land trusts provide affordable housing by taking land out of speculative markets and stewarding it for long-term community benefit
- Participatory budgeting in cities around the world lets citizens directly decide how to spend portions of public funds, with proven successes in fairness and engagement

The question isn't whether these are possible because they exist. The question is whether we can scale, connect, and normalize them in time to address the crises we face.

We aim to change that paradigm precisely because it's the best, and perhaps only, way to live within ecological means.

The pieces of human ingenuity lie within our grasp. These next years will simply be a test of whether we have the fortitude and resolve to piece them together on the path to a brighter future.

VII. GLOBAL JUSTICE: ABUNDANCE FOR ALL, NOT JUST THE FORTUNATE

This vision risks sounding like it was written for the Global North by the Global North. Section VII acknowledges that limitation and articulates the aspiration for genuine global justice while being honest about what this Declaration can and cannot offer.

For Most of Humanity, Abundance Means Finally Reaching Sufficiency

For much of the Global South, talk of "post-scarcity" sounds absurd.

Absurd when over 650 million people still lack electricity. Absurd when 2.1 billion people lack safely managed drinking water. Absurd when maternal mortality in sub-Saharan Africa is up to 40 times higher than in high-income countries solely because basic healthcare infrastructure doesn't exist.[100]

For these regions, abundance doesn't mean robot servants and holodecks. It means **dignified sufficiency** after centuries of extraction and inequality.

The promise of technological abundance for the Global South isn't hypothetical:

- Distributed solar can leapfrog over centralized coal grids entirely, just as mobile phones leapfrogged landlines
- Open-source medical knowledge enables local production to provide vaccines and essential medicines without dependence on monopolistic, price-gouging suppliers
- Vertical farming and precision agriculture can increase food security without waiting years for large-scale industrial systems to trickle down
- AI translation can make knowledge accessible in thousands of languages to empower presently under-resourced peoples

But realizing these possibilities requires addressing structural barriers:

- **Debt relief:** Many low-income countries spend more servicing debt than on infrastructure or healthcare. The new world order must address debilitating debt burdens that prevent investment.
- **IP regime reform:** Patents and IP rules should not prevent low-income nations from accessing and manufacturing life-saving technologies.
- **Fair trade:** Trade rules must stop forcing "structural adjustments" that strip public services and inhibit local development. Every nation should have the policy space to build basic industries and social support systems.

Some steps in this direction are underway. The new global "Loss and Damage" climate fund and the waivers on vaccine patents (TRIPS flexibilities) show that the international community recognizes these justice issues, even if action so far is inadequate.

Repair, Not Rescue: Colonial and Extractive Legacies

Much of today's extreme inequality and scarcity stems from past and present extraction systems: colonialism, unequal trade, and debt structures designed to perpetuate dependence.

An abundance transition should include elements of restorative justice:

- **Repair:** Acknowledge and address historical plunder. Support democratic allies with infrastructure assistance and improved debt payment schedules.
- **Global redistribution of opportunity:** Reform IP rules ensuring fair access to innovations. Invest in global public goods including open research, shared infrastructure, pandemic preparedness for everyone's benefit.
- **Plural pathways:** Different cultures will have different visions of the good life. An abundance order should support multiple ways of living well within ecological limits, rather than impose a single development model or consumerist lifestyle on everyone.

This is placing practical necessity over abstract morality. Pandemics, climate change, financial crises, and mass migration don't respect borders. Global problems demand global solutions that are perceived as legitimate and just by those most affected. If billions perceive "abundance" as just a new label for continued inequality, their justified resentment undermines any level of transition adoption.

South–South Cooperation and Local Innovation

We must be careful not to frame abundance as "the West saving the rest." Some of the most innovative abundance experiments are happening in regions labeled as "developing":

- Kenya's M-Pesa revolutionized mobile banking, bringing financial services to millions who never had bank accounts.[101]
- India's huge generic pharmaceutical industry provides affordable medicines worldwide (and saved countless lives by breaking monopolies on AIDS drugs in the 1990s).[102]
- Rwanda's community health worker programs have sharply reduced maternal and child mortality by empowering local caregivers.[103]

- Across Africa, off-grid solar adoption is soaring, with 55% of new electricity connections coming from off-grid systems bringing first-time electricity access to millions.[104,105]

The path forward isn't uni-directional aid but mutual learning, technology sharing, and recognizing that innovation happens everywhere. Often most creatively where resource constraints force cleverness.

The Limitation of This Declaration

This Declaration was written from a high-income democracy perspective. It cannot substitute for the voices and visions of those most affected by global inequality.

The aspiration is clear: abundance must be genuinely global or it fails its own principles. The path to that aspiration requires perspectives and leadership this Declaration cannot provide from movements, thinkers, and communities in the Global South itself.

VIII. PILLARS FOR THE TRANSITION

Certain foundational pillars should guide our elected officials, corporate leaders, and the general public through such an abundance transition:

1. Knowledge Liberation

Pillar 1: Information that could save lives, improve well-being, or enable community self-sufficiency should be freely accessible.

For dangerous dual-use domains (e.g., biological weapons design, offensive cyber techniques), openness must be carefully constrained under accountable governance. But those should be narrow exceptions, not the rule.

The default should be that life-saving and life-improving knowledge flows freely: medical research (especially when publicly funded), designs for basic infrastructure, educational content accessible without paywalls, AI models architectures made transparent when safety allows.

In practice: Mandate public access for publicly funded research. Institute compulsory licensing or patent pools for critical medicines and technologies. Policymakers should support open-source alternatives to proprietary systems, so that we're not reliant on corporate goodwill for tools that could benefit everyone.

2. Partnership Over Domination

Pillar 2: AI should be developed as a partner and advisor to humanity, not replacement or ruler.

Partnership means building AI in a way that aligns with human values and agency:

- Transparent operation to the fullest technical extent possible
- Constitutional limits on AI autonomy (certain decisions AI simply isn't allowed to make on its own)
- Democratic control of AI infrastructure (Elected oversight having a say in how major AI systems are deployed)
- Labor protections to ensure AI augments rather than simply displaces human workers (potentially includes collective bargaining over AI deployment and perhaps worker co-determination in firms using high-impact AI)
- Recognition that many harms come from *ordinary* AI deployment (bias, surveillance, exploitation), not just hypothetical future superintelligence

In practice: Favor auditable, regulated AI development. Treat certain compute and data as public infrastructure (like highways or universities) to democratize who can benefit from AI. Require safety cases and phased deployment for powerful AI systems (like how we do drug trials). Legally guarantee the right to audit algorithms and contest AI-driven decisions.

3. Abundance Within Limits

Pillar 3: Within planetary boundaries, we can ensure everyone has enough for a dignified life.

This Declaration consciously frames its claims understanding infinite consumption is not possible and instead highlights smart sufficiency:

- **Energy abundance** through renewables and efficiency (while acknowledging constraints on rare-earth minerals and storage materials).
- **Food abundance** through sustainable farming, reduced waste, and fair distribution.
- **Housing abundance** through efficient construction and fair allocation of land and homes.
- All of this constrained by ecological boundaries that are non-negotiable.

We are rapidly exhausting the remaining carbon budget for a 1.5°C climate limit. Staying within it requires transforming energy systems in years, not decades. Solar and wind are already the cheapest new electricity sources in most regions. The technology exists; what we lack is the speed of deployment — hampered by economic structures that still prioritize short-term profit over long-term survival.

In practice: Embrace circular economy principles. Deploy renewable energy infrastructure at wartime speed. Include measuring success through well-being and sustainability metrics instead of chasing endless GDP growth. Manage critical natural commons (forests, fisheries, aquifers, atmosphere) through democratic stewardship rather than open exploitation.

4. Graceful Transition

Pillar 4: Evolution, not revolution. Parallel systems can coexist during the transition.

Either we face revolution from the people, or we build evolution for the people.

The current economy employs billions; tearing it down overnight would be catastrophic. Instead:

- **Build alternatives in the margins.** Start new systems on a small scale where the risks of failure are low.
- **Prove concepts at small scale.** Validate before going all-in.
- **Let success spread organically.** Don't force adoption; allow people to choose better systems as they demonstrate value.
- **Protect communities that experiment.** Give legal and financial cover to cities or groups that want to try new approaches.

In practice: Launch pilot programs for contribution networks or Universal Capabilities. Create legal sandboxes or special economic zones where new cooperative or commons-based models can operate without running afoul of legacy regulations. Measure results honestly and share the data on what works and what doesn't. Make sure communities that choose to try something different aren't crushed by bureaucratic hurdles or incumbent lawsuits.

5. Start Where You Are

Pillar 5: Don't wait for permission. Build alternatives now.

Not everyone has equal resources or safety nets to experiment with new ideas — but almost everyone can do something at some scale.

In practice: Join or form mutual aid networks. Create a community tool library or makerspace. Set up a local energy cooperative to deploy solar panels in your neighborhood. Contribute to open-source projects. In your daily life, practice "abundance thinking." Question zero-sum assumptions and look for ways to share knowledge and tools. Small efforts can snowball, and connecting them multiplies their impact.

IX. WHAT YOU CAN DO & WHY NOW

What You Can Do

As of 2025, we have perhaps ten years. Not to achieve perfection, but to set trajectories. After that, path dependencies lock in. By 2035, it's plausible that either: (1) Abundance systems reach escape velocity, or (2) Extraction economics entrenches permanently through AI and automation. Whether AI that rivals human intelligence arrives in 5 years or 50, the need to instill partnership principles before it's ubiquitous is timeless.

This Declaration is an invitation. Knowing that we carry the **weight of tomorrow** on our shoulders today is not enough. The real question we face is: what will you do?

We propose the following entry points for people in various positions:

For Technologists and Researchers:

- **Build open alternatives**: work on public-interest technologies (e.g., AI for climate modeling, open-source medical diagnostics, cooperative platforms) instead of yet another adtech or proprietary widget.
- **Document and share:** we recognize open-sourcing everything is not possible. Write guides, publish papers, create educational resources so others can build on your efforts.
- **Design for empowerment**: when developing new tech, continually ask *"Could this strengthen communities?"* rather than just "How do we monetize this?"
- **Build partnership architectures**: dedicate time and allocate capital toward designing transparency and limitation into AI systems from the start.

For Organizers and Community Builders:

- **Experiment with contribution networks**: transform mutual aid groups into standing contribution networks with some way to recognize and reciprocate contributions.
- **Build *Liberation Labs***: community workshops or makerspaces where people share tools and create open-source solutions for local needs.
- **Create local resilience**: start community gardens, tool libraries, energy cooperatives, time banks to reduce dependence on extraction-for-profit systems.
- **Connect experiments**: link with other communities trying new models. Share what works and what doesn't. Build knowledge networks so experiments strengthen others.

For Policy Thinkers and Government:

- **Enable experimentation**: craft legal frameworks or "safe zones" that allow new economic models (cooperatives, commons-based firms, etc.) to operate without onerous barriers.
- **Study post-scarcity economics**: support research and data collection on metrics beyond GDP — like health, happiness, environmental balance — to guide policy in an abundance paradigm.
- **Pilot universal capabilities**: sponsor trials of Universal Capabilities in a city or region (e.g., guarantee energy, water, healthcare for all residents) and study the outcomes.
- **Frame AI as public infrastructure**: treat advanced AI development like a public good that requires democratic governance (akin to managing nuclear energy or the air traffic control system).
- Consider forming cross-party "abundance caucuses" focused on ensuring basic capabilities for all, moving beyond stale debates of welfare vs free markets.

For Everyone:

- **Question scarcity narratives**: when you hear "we can't afford that," ask *"*Is it truly impossible, or are the resources just misallocated or hoarded?" Often it's not a lack of means, but a lack of will.

- **Support open systems**: From open-source software to creative commons media. Contribute if you can (even if only by donating or advocating). Choose community-run or cooperative services when available.
- **Learn and share skills**: become a node of knowledge in your community — whether that's gardening, coding, carpentry, first aid, or any skill. Share what you know freely; ask others to teach you in turn.
- **Imagine purposefully**: ask yourself: what would I work on if I didn't have to worry about survival? Treat that as a design question for our economy. What innovations are we missing because people are working jobs solely because of the monetary value?
- **Build trust networks**: an abundance economy relies on communities and cooperation. Take time to build relationships, foster trust, and strengthen your social fabric. It's rewarding in its own right, and it's the groundwork for larger collective action.

Why Now

We live in an era defined by hyperpolarization, eroding trust, and numerous compounding crises. We are running out of time on multiple fronts: if we wish to avoid harmful path dependencies from AI surveillance regimes to oligopolistic corporatocracies, we must act decisively and steadfastly to ensure abundance structures reach escape velocity.

Inequality: the richest 1% own on the order of half of all wealth globally.[106] When inequality reaches these extremes, social systems fracture. Political polarization, institutional distrust, and social fragmentation are symptoms. The traditional answer, redistributive taxation, faces political deadlock. An abundance approach — ensuring basics through technology and cooperation — could sidestep that impasse and reduce the zero-sum perception of social policy.

AI Development: tens of billions of dollars are being poured annually into frontier AI models, with capabilities accelerating each quarter. The systems we deploy in the next decade will shape the next century. If we want AI partnership rather than AI dominance or catastrophic misalignment, we must establish those architectures and norms *now*, not hastily retrofitted. **These next few years will shape the next century**.

Institutional Trust: in many countries, less than half the population trusts their legislatures, media, or financial institutions. Without trust, society frays. We need new organizational forms people actually trust. Distributed, transparent, contribution-based systems could start to rebuild trust from the ground up by giving people direct agency and visibility in how things run.

Climate: Some experts argue that we have approximately one decade to fundamentally transform energy systems to stay within 1.5°C warming. Staying within it requires transforming energy systems in years, not decades. What we lack is ability to deploy fast enough within economic constraints that prioritize profit over human lives. Transformation isn't optional: it's a matter of survival. The only question is whether we navigate the transition through planning or through chaos and collapse. Abundance thinking rapidly deployed over profit optimization could be the difference.

The window for a graceful transition is finite. The longer we wait, the more likely we face either collapse or authoritarianism as desperate responses to mounting crises.

But urgency doesn't mean panic. We advocate thoughtful experimentation. The goal is expanding the space of possibility and building alternatives while we still have breathing room.

X. THE ABUNDANCE DECLARATION

This Declaration is not a final statement but an opening argument.

It is written from the perspective of a generalist and concerned citizen who can see the vast, unnecessary gap between what we could do and what we allow to happen.

For decades we've told ourselves stories about future societies where material security is taken for granted. Where human energy flows into exploration, creation, and understanding. Worlds where no child goes hungry, where no curable disease kills for lack of money, where brilliant minds born in forgotten villages get the chance to shine. We told ourselves these were fantasies. Utopian daydreams.

But what if we were wrong?

This Declaration asks: what if the only thing standing between us and those worlds is a failure of imagination — and of courage?

The Choice Before Us

Picture a day in the world we could build:

A young woman in rural Nebraska wakes in a home powered by community-owned solar panels; free electricity, abundant and clean. She logs into an AI tutor that helps her master engineering concepts at her own pace and finally learn her ancestral tongue. Internet access is guaranteed, like water. Education is free, like air.

After studying, she heads to the local makerspace, using 3D printers and CNC machines to design a better irrigation system for nearby farms. The designs are open-source. She's building on work shared freely by someone in India, and she'll post her own improvements for others to use. When she's done, she shares a meal from the community garden; she never worries about going hungry or losing her home. Those basics are guaranteed. She's free to focus on what matters: solving problems that interest her and help her community.

Her younger brother, who has diabetes, gets his insulin from a community health clinic; synthesized locally using open-source biotech designs. It costs a few dollars, not hundreds, per dose. The treatment that would bankrupt a modern American family is provided to him for

almost nothing. The knowledge that saves his life flows freely because someone, somewhere, decided that hoarding it behind patents was wrong.

Their mother, freed from the crushing anxiety of survival, has started teaching traditional crafts to young people in the town. She earns community credits and plenty of appreciation and does it because it matters. Culture matters. Passing down wisdom matters. Finally, she has the time and energy to care about more than just scraping through another day.

This isn't fantasy. Every technology that has been described exists today. The solar panels, the AI tutors, the makerspaces, the open-source medical designs, the community health networks are all real. And the fact all are *still in their nascent stages today just goes to show what can be possible*. What doesn't exist, yet, is the social and economic organization that makes this the norm rather than the rare exception.

The Declaration

Humankind stands at a crossroads.

The technical capacity for abundance within planetary limits now exists. Clean energy from renewables, food from sustainable agriculture, health from shared medical knowledge, education through open information, shelter through efficient building and fair allocation.

We declare that persisting scarcity amid potential plenty is not destiny but **choice** — a choice encoded in institutions built for a different world, maintained by those who profit from artificial constraints.

We declare that every human being deserves guaranteed access to the basics of a dignified life: energy, food, water, shelter, healthcare, and education. Not as charity, but as the bedrock of freedom. Not contingent on market success, but as the baseline of civilization.

We declare that knowledge that could save lives or liberate communities should flow freely; that power should be distributed, not concentrated; that technology should serve human judgment, not replace it; and that markets are tools to be used wisely, not idols to be worshiped blindly.

We declare that the question of our time is not whether abundance is technically possible — it is. The question is whether we have the imagination to envision it and the courage to build it.

We declare that change will not come from waiting for permission or hoping those profiting from scarcity voluntarily embrace abundance. Change will come from building alternatives, proving what works, and spreading what succeeds. It will come from communities that choose to experiment, from technologists who build for liberation instead of extraction, from policymakers who enable rather than obstruct, from ordinary people who refuse to accept needless suffering as normal.

We declare that this is not utopian fantasy but pragmatic necessity. AI's rise demands wise governance; obscene inequality threatens our social fabric; the climate crisis demands rapid transformation; and faith in institutions must be rebuilt from the ground up.

We declare that this transition will face fierce resistance from those whose power depends on scarcity. We must build coalitions strong enough to overcome that opposition — through democratic organizing, international cooperation, and by making the new systems so materially and culturally attractive that opting into abundance becomes rational self-interest even for the initially skeptical.

We declare that different communities will walk different paths toward abundance. Some via Universal Capabilities, some via contribution networks, some via reimagined markets, others via approaches we haven't yet conceived. This diversity is a strength. Let a thousand experiments bloom.

The Invitation

This Declaration will evolve. It should be challenged, improved, and expanded. Build on it. Translate it. Criticize it. Make it better.

This Declaration is penned under the pseudonym **Prometheus** — the mythological figure who defied the Gods' tyrannical cruelty and brought fire to humankind — because The Abundance Declaration is an idea. And ideas are more powerful than any one person.

This is fundamentally about liberating technologies and capacities that already exist from the artificial constraints that prevent their widespread use. About liberating humankind to achieve all that we've relegated to our science-fiction and fantasy escapisms. This is about a choice we all face.

Years from now, our children and grandchildren will ask about this moment. This brief window when we had the power to right our wrongs and chart a better path forward. When abundance became possible and could've been realized. They will ask what we did.

Will we tell them we saw the possibility but lacked the courage to reach for it?

Will we explain that we knew children were going blind from curable diseases, that people were dying of treatable conditions, that brilliant minds were wasted in survival struggles — and that we did nothing because changing systems felt too hard?

Or will we tell them something else?

Will we tell them about the communities that started experimenting with contribution networks; the technologists who built tools for liberation; the policymakers who protected the right to try something different; the ordinary people who refused to accept unnecessary suffering?

Will we tell them about the moment when enough people looked at the gap between what we *could* do and what we *were* doing — and decided that gap was intolerable?

This is not a prediction. It's an invitation.

An invitation to imagine differently. To build courageously. To connect generously. To experiment boldly.

An invitation to everyone who's ever felt the dissonance between the world as it is and the world as it could be. Who refuses to accept that billions must live in unnecessary poverty amid unprecedented plenty.

An invitation to everyone who's looked at a solvable problem and thought, "We have the technology to fix this. So why aren't we?"

We stand at perhaps the most pivotal hinge point in history.

Behind us: an economic system built for scarcity that created great wealth for some but now fragments our societies, destabilizes our climate, and fails billions of people.

Ahead: the technological capability for abundance within planetary limits. If we can organize ourselves to achieve it.

There is no greater duty than to be good parents for our children.

Markets, states, and commons are all tools. The question is where each belongs in a world of cheap information, powerful AI, and finite planetary boundaries.

Between us and that future stands only one question:

Can we imagine a better world boldly enough to build it?

I believe we can.
I believe we must.
I believe we will.

I am Prometheus. And so are you.

Join me.

Prometheus
December 2025

Appendix A: FURTHER READING & EVIDENCE

This appendix provides entry points into the intellectual foundations underlying The Abundance Declaration. These works span economics, ecology, technology, governance, and human nature reflecting the Declaration's conviction that abundance requires integrating insights across disciplines rather than optimizing within any single framework.

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On Energy Transition:

- 70M homes divided by 52 weeks in a year means solar PV and onshore wind combined currently produce enough electricity to power roughly 1.3M average U.S. homes in one week.
- Tony Seba, *Clean Disruption of Energy and Transportation* – on how exponential tech improvements are upending energy and transport systems.

On Food Systems:

- UN FAO data showing current agriculture produces ~1.5× the calories needed for everyone (yet 735 million people went hungry in 2023).
- Research on vertical farming yields (indoor farms can achieve 10–20× higher yields for some crops with 70–95% less water).
- Studies on precision fermentation and cellular agriculture for alternative proteins (meat and dairy without livestock).

On Healthcare:

- Case studies on gene therapy pricing vs. costs – e.g. Luxturna ($425k per eye) have manufacturing costs estimated under 10% of their price.
    - Luxturna (voretigene neparvovec) is priced at $425,000 per eye, or $850,000 for a bilateral, one-time treatment in the United States. Spark Therapeutics' 2019 10-Q reported cost of product sales of about 7.6% of Luxturna revenue, implying roughly $65,000 in manufacturing/royalty/shipping costs and a ~92% gross margin on an $850,000 course. This suggests a unit price on the order of **10–15×** the narrow manufacturing cost per patient, before accounting for fixed R&D and platform costs. By contrast, ICER's cost-effectiveness modeling estimated that Luxturna would need an approximate 75–82% price reduction to meet standard $100–150k/QALY thresholds, corresponding to a "value-based" price of about $153,000–$217,000 per patient, so the $850,000 list price is roughly **4–5.5×** higher than those benchmarks.
- mRNA vaccine development timelines (Moderna and BioNTech designed COVID-19 vaccines within days of the genome release in 2020).
- WHO reports on access to medicines and how generic drug manufacturing could meet global needs if not for IP and pricing barriers.
- Human Rights Watch found that off 116 low/middle-income countries in World Bank data, 48 had per capita external debt service greater than public healthcare spending (e.g., Mongolia: $631/person debt vs. $158 health).

For those interested in exploring these ideas further:

On Energy Abundance & Technological Transition:

- Tony Seba & RethinkX, *Rethinking Energy*, *Rethinking Humanity*, and related reports – data-driven analysis of solar, battery, and EV disruption curves demonstrating how exponential adoption patterns consistently outpace linear forecasts.
- Ramez Naam, essays and analyses on solar learning curves – rigorous examination of why energy cost projections have systematically underestimated solar's decline.
- Vaclav Smil, *Energy and Civilization: A History* and *Energy Transitions* – essential counterweight providing rigorous skepticism about transition speeds. Smil's work steelmans objections to rapid energy transition timelines.
- Saul Griffith, *Electrify: An Optimist's Playbook for Our Clean Energy Future* – practical plans for transitioning to 100% renewables quickly.

- IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) reports – authoritative summaries of climate science, carbon budgets for 1.5°C/2°C, and the needed speed of energy transition.
- *Our World in Data* (online resource) – comprehensive global data on energy, emissions, development indicators, etc., showing both progress and remaining challenges.

On Information Commons & Knowledge Sharing:

- Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom* – foundational work on commons-based peer production.
- Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity* – documents how intellectual property law has expanded far beyond its original purpose of incentivizing creation.
- Cory Doctorow, *Information Doesn't Want to Be Free* and *Chokepoint Capitalism* (with Rebecca Giblin) – contemporary analysis of how digital distribution could enable creator abundance but is instead captured by intermediaries.

On Post-Scarcity Economics:

- Paul Mason, *Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future* – argues that infotech is fundamentally incompatible with markets as information goods have zero marginal cost.
- Peter H. Diamandis & Steven Kotler, *Abundance: The Future Is Better Than You Think*.
- Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* and related works on the capabilities approach – Nobel-winning framework shifting focus from income to what people can do and be.
- Martha Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* – extends Sen's framework with a specific list of central human capabilities.

On Cooperative Economics & Commons Governance:

- Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons* and *Understanding Institutional Diversity* – Nobel-winning research on how communities successfully manage shared resources.
- Case studies of the Mondragon Corporation (cooperative network in Spain with 80,000+ employees) and other large-scale co-ops.
- Trebor Scholz, *Platform Cooperativism: Challenging the Corporate Sharing Economy* – framework for cooperative ownership of digital platforms.
- Gar Alperovitz, *What Then Must We Do?* and *Principles of a Pluralist Commonwealth* – practical strategies for building cooperative and community-owned enterprises within existing systems.
- Research on complementary currencies – studies on time banks (Edgar Cahn's *No More Throw-Away People*), mutual credit systems (Thomas Greco's *The End of Money and the Future of Civilization*), and mutual aid societies demonstrate alternatives and complements to traditional money economies.

On Ecological Economics & Planetary Boundaries

- Kate Raworth, *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist* – visually powerful framework showing how humanity can thrive between a

social foundation (below which people lack essentials) and an ecological ceiling (beyond which Earth systems destabilize).
- Johan Rockström et al., planetary boundaries research – the scientific framework identifying nine Earth system processes with boundaries that define a "safe operating space for humanity."
- Tim Jackson, *Prosperity Without Growth: Foundations for the Economy of Tomorrow* – rigorous analysis of how economies can provide good lives without perpetual GDP growth.

On AI Partnership & Governance:

- Stuart Russell, *Human Compatible: Artificial Intelligence and the Problem of Control* – on aligning AI with human values.
- Research on Constitutional AI and AI alignment – technical work from Anthropic, DeepMind, OpenAI, and independent researchers on making AI systems safer and more controllable. Key concepts include RLHF (reinforcement learning from human feedback), interpretability research, and scalable oversight.
- Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression* – documents how search algorithms and AI systems can perpetuate racial and gender bias.
- Ruha Benjamin, *Race After Technology* – examines how technology can encode and amplify discrimination.
- Virginia Eubanks, *Automating Inequality* – case studies of how algorithmic systems harm poor and working-class Americans.
- Kate Crawford, *Atlas of AI* – maps the material, labor, and environmental costs of AI systems. Crawford's work grounds abstract AI discussions in physical reality.

On Human Nature & Cooperation:

- David Graeber & David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* – challenges scarcity-based narratives about human history.
- Rutger Bregman, *Humankind: A Hopeful History* – accessible synthesis of evidence that humans are fundamentally cooperative.
- Samuel Bowles & Herbert Gintis, *A Cooperative Species: Human Reciprocity and Its Evolution* – rigorous evolutionary economics demonstrating that prosocial behavior is deeply rooted in human biology and culture.

On Global Justice & Development:

- Jason Hickel, *The Divide: Global Inequality from Conquest to Free Markets* – history and critique of global economic inequality.
- Thomas Piketty, *Capital and Ideology* – deep dive into the politics of inequality.
- Ha-Joon Chang, *Kicking Away the Ladder* – how today's rich countries used protection and subsidies in the past, and what that implies for development policy.
- Branko Milanović, *Global Inequality: A New Approach for the Age of Globalization* – nuanced analysis of who has gained and lost from globalization. Milanović's data on the

"elephant curve" illuminates which global populations have seen gains and which have stagnated.

On Institutions & Democracy:

- Daron Acemoglu & James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail and The Narrow Corridor* – analysis of how inclusive versus extractive institutions determine national prosperity. Their framework helps explain why some societies achieve broad-based flourishing while others concentrate wealth.
- Francis Fukuyama, *Political Order and Political Decay* – on how institutions develop and sometimes fail.
- Yascha Mounk, *The People vs. Democracy* – on threats to liberal democracy and potential solutions.
- Yanis Varoufakis, *Technofeudalism* – on how Big Tech platforms have supplanted traditional capitalism with a feudal-like system where "cloudalists" extract rents from users' data and behaviors via algorithmic fiefdoms, turning consumers into digital serfs.
- Mariana Mazzucato, *The Entrepreneurial State* and *The Value of Everything* – documents how public investment, not private enterprise alone, drove major innovations from the internet to mRNA vaccines.

On Universal Basic Services & Social Provision:

- Anna Coote & Andrew Percy, *The Case for Universal Basic Services* – the definitive policy framework for UBS. Coote and Percy argue for universal provision of housing, food, transport, information, and care services rather than cash transfers.
- Guy Standing, *Basic Income: And How We Can Make It Happen* – the case for UBI, included for completeness.
- Research on "Decent Living Standards" – academic work by Narasimha Rao, Jihoon Min, and others quantifying the material requirements for wellbeing across countries.

This list is intentionally comprehensive for deeper exploration and verification.

Appendix B: CASE STUDY — AN AMERICAN PATH TO ABUNDANCE

While the principles in this Declaration are universal, their implementation will vary by nation and context. The following outlines one possible path for the United States — a large, wealthy democracy with the capacity to lead, but one in need of concrete policy ideas to realize abundance.

These proposals are intentionally high-level sketches. Implementation would require detailed design by many more experts including economists, technologists, lawyers, organizers, community leaders.

This is just one pathway among many, offered as illustration, not prescription.

Why the U.S. Should Lead

Artificial Intelligence technology is advancing at a pace equal parts awe-inspiring and dread-inducing. The current trajectory leads to one of three outcomes:

1. **Corporate capture**: A few companies become gods
2. **Authoritarian capture**: China's model wins globally
3. **Catastrophic failure**: Misaligned AI ends civilization

But, there's a fourth option: Democratic abundance. For a world this Declaration has described, it requires America act now with a sense of urgency never before witnessed.

America faces a choice: lead the transition to abundance, or watch it happen elsewhere while dealing with the consequences. The country that defines ethical AI development, that proves universal basic capabilities are economically viable, that shows how to decouple prosperity from extraction — that country will set the norms for the next century.

The United States is uniquely positioned to prototype an abundance-oriented order, not because of arbitrary morally superiority, but because of how its institutions and culture function at scale. From land-grant universities to the Interstate Highway System and NASA, the U.S. has repeatedly used public investment and open science to expand the frontier of possibility.

The U.S. combines:

- **World-leading knowledge infrastructure**: Dense networks of research universities, national labs, and public R&D funding that have historically produced general-purpose technologies (the internet, GPS, mRNA vaccines, transistors, nuclear energy). This infrastructure took decades and hundreds of billions of dollars to build thus cannot be easily replicated elsewhere.
- **Deep capital markets and entrepreneurial culture**: Venture capital ecosystems, robust public markets, and large philanthropic foundations that can mobilize vast sums for new industries when a clear thesis emerges. The U.S. has an unmatched ability to finance infrastructure-scale projects through hybrid public-private mechanisms.
- **A constitutional and federalist framework**: Rule of law, independent judiciary, and multi-level governance that allows states and cities to serve as "laboratories of democracy." This enables the kind of polycentric experimentation that abundance governance calls for.
- **A diverse, plural society**: Hundreds of millions of people across countless communities with different values, needs, and priorities. This pluralism is ideal for testing multiple models of abundance in parallel. What works in rural Wyoming may differ from what works in urban California, and that diversity is a feature, not a bug.
- **Significant soft power and alliances**: Cultural influence, scientific prestige, and a web of international alliances. If the U.S. pioneers successful abundance models, it can help

spread those ideas globally and build coalitions for cooperative governance of shared challenges.

These strengths map directly onto the design primitives of this Declaration. They give the U.S. unique leverage to build **commons infrastructure** (knowledge systems), guarantee **universal capabilities** (ample capital and political capacity), experiment with **polycentric governance** (federalism encouraging local innovation), deploy **partner AI** (world-class research + democratic norms), and keep **markets** where they work (entrepreneurial culture). The question is whether American institutions will organize to use these advantages.

Of course, none of this means the U.S. is currently living up to its potential. America is where capitalism's contradictions climax. Institutions are strained: extreme inequality, deep polarization, eroding trust. Infrastructure is aging. Millions were left out of past prosperity. Health outcomes lag peer nations despite higher spending. We have both the most billionaires and the most medical bankruptcies. The highest GDP and the lowest life expectancy among developed nations. The most Nobel prizes and among the most citizens who believe Earth is flat.

We're the patient zero of late capitalism's pathologies which makes us the necessary birthplace of what comes next.

Our elected officials missed the mark entirely with social media. Inaction that resulted in epidemics of loneliness, issues of child development, and horrific, destabilizing dis- and misinformation.

A severe increase in the market power of corporations is largely to blame for the reduced prosperity modern Americans face. Economist Joseph Stiglitz found that corporatocracy — including U.S. antitrust laws being weakened by neoliberal reforms in the name of, as Big Tech likes to call it, "progress" — has led to a generally underperforming economy.

The world watches as American foreign policy lurches between extremes every four years. From championing democratic values to embracing autocrats, from defending human rights to making deals with dictators. This whiplash doesn't just confuse our allies. It demolishes the very foundation of American moral authority. How can we credibly advocate for abundance, dignity, and universal capabilities globally when our own commitments shift with each election cycle? If the United States wants to lead a transition toward abundance, it cannot do so through raw power or transactional relationships. It must earn that leadership through demonstrated commitment to the principles it espouses — consistently, persistently, regardless of who holds office.

If America truly cares about both its own people and leading the free world toward abundance, it must make that choice inspiring rather than coercive. Other nations should want to follow not because of military pressure or economic leverage, but because the American model demonstrably delivers: longer lives, greater security, more opportunity, genuine freedom. When Universal Capabilities become reality in American cities — when energy is abundant, healthcare is accessible, education is guaranteed — the question other nations will ask isn't "Should we do this?" but "How can we do this too?" Leadership in an abundance transition must be earned through proof, built on benefits that are visible and undeniable, sustained by institutions resilient

enough to outlast any single administration. Anything less isn't leadership. It's just another empire demanding tribute while offering little in return.

But precisely because the gap between what the U.S. could do and what it is doing is so stark, the country is an ideal testing ground for whether an abundance agenda can renew a large, diverse democracy, not just work in theory or in small, homogeneous societies.

Democratic Advantage

Authoritarian regimes can mobilize resources quickly and suppress dissent, but those same traits make them brittle for tasks that require openness, critique, and broad trust. Cutting-edge AI research and global AI governance, for instance, benefit enormously from:

- Open scrutiny of methods and failures.
- Candid public discussion of ethical trade-offs.
- Genuine international collaboration built on trust rather than coercion.
- Protected spaces for civil society and independent oversight.

These flourish best in environments with free speech, rule of law, and vibrant civil society; features that, despite recent strains, remain comparative strengths of the American system. For issues like advanced AI alignment or climate innovation, democratic systems have structural advantages if we choose to leverage them.

Perhaps one of the best existing examples of a democracy delivering for its people is vTaiwan. As previously described in Section IV, vTaiwan is an open-source, non-profit, volunteer-driven civic technology platform to drive legislation that works for policymakers, businesses, and the people. One striking example of its efficacy was in the win-win regulation of Uber.

The issue was contentious as the government viewed Uber as a transportation company subject to taxi laws, while Uber claimed to be a technology company needing fewer regulations. Using the vTaiwan platform, thousands of citizens, experts, stakeholders, Uber representatives, and taxi drivers participated in a structured dialogue to map build consensus. The process led to government officials, Uber, taxi associations, and ministries agreeing on regulatory adjustments around registration and platform use. This consensus-driven approach resulted in concrete legislation that balanced the interests of all parties and became official law. Unlike the courts or legislators, vTaiwan had the capacity to resolve deadlocked policy disputes through inclusive public participation and deliberation.

The American Story

At its best, the American story has been about expanding the circle of who gets to enjoy freedom, opportunity, and security: from the abolition of slavery, to the New Deal and the GI Bill, to the civil rights movement. An abundance agenda is a next chapter in that story: extending the promise of basic material security and creative opportunity to everyone, within the ecological limits we face.

This is not about replacing free enterprise with central planning. It's about making sure markets remain tools to coordinate complex preferences and spur innovation, while the fundamentals of a dignified life are guaranteed as rights rather than left to chance. Done right, this strengthens true competition and entrepreneurship because it prevents a small number of incumbent firms or petrostates from holding everyone else hostage to artificially scarce necessities.

Five Pillars for a U.S. Policy Framework

1. **National AI Research Commons**

Establish a U.S.-hosted, AI research network accessible to allies and democracies — essentially a "CERN for AI." Key components include:

- Shared public computing infrastructure for the U.S. and its citizens (high-performance computing available to researchers)
- Pre-registration and publication of large-scale AI experiments (for transparency)
- Standardized safety testing and evaluation protocols open to public review
- Public releases of advanced models where appropriate (so no single company exclusively controls crucial models)
- International collaboration with democratic allies to pool talent and resources

This would be the AI equivalent of commons infrastructure: shared, open, and safety-focused by design. It frames advanced AI as critical infrastructure (like the Interstate Highway System or NASA's Apollo program), not just a private product **while ensuring the U.S. remains a leader and sets the standards**.

2. **Sovereign Public Compute**

Treat computing infrastructure as critical national infrastructure, similar to the power grid or highways:

- Government-run data centers providing tiered compute access for public projects and smaller players
- Audit rights for any AI models trained using public infrastructure (to ensure accountability)
- Clear data provenance and training logs for models developed with public resources
- Guaranteed support (compute grants, etc.) for public-interest AI research and for startups/academics, so innovation isn't limited to tech giants

This wouldn't replace private cloud providers, but it ensures that essential AI capacity exists outside the control of any single corporation. Think of it like land-grant universities (e.g., Cornell University) or public utilities. (Analogies: the government's role in creating GPS or the internet, which then enabled private innovation.)

3. **AI Safety and Accountability Framework**

Require that AI systems above certain capability or deployment thresholds adhere to common-sense safety and ethics standards:

- Public disclosure of a safety case before deploying powerful AI (show you've tested and mitigated risks)
- Third-party audits and red-teaming of high-impact AI models
- Staged deployments (gradually scaling up user access as safety is proven)
- Mandatory incident reporting to an AI Safety Board (similar to how airplane incidents are reported to the NTSB)
- Clear legal liability for harms caused by AI, so companies can't hide behind "the algorithm did it"
- Constitutional and legal limits on truly autonomous operation (certain decisions must remain under human control)

The exact thresholds for these requirements (what counts as "frontier" AI that triggers strict oversight) should be set through **democratic processes and expert input**, not left to industry self-regulation.

And proportionality is key: only the most capable or widely deployed systems face the full regimen of requirements. Smaller projects, especially in the public AI commons, might get support to meet safety needs, not just burdens.

4. **Systemically Important AI Institutions**

Designate the largest and most powerful AI firms and projects **as analogous to Systemically Important Financial Institutions (SIFIs)**, with heightened obligations to society. For example:

Governance Requirements:

- Include more formal stakeholder interest inclusion on boards (e.g., introducing stakeholder advisory panels or committees to provide relevant perspectives without direct board membership)
- Establish external ethics review panels. Increase transparency in decision-making processes

Safety Budget Requirements:

- Major AI providers must spend a fixed proportion of their revenue on safety research and infrastructure
- For instance, regulators might require that a certain percentage of AI-related revenue (or a ratio relative to R&D) be devoted to independent safety and audit efforts
- *As a model's reach and revenue grow, so must the verifiable investment in keeping it safe*. (This is similar in spirit to banks having capital requirements i.e., as you get bigger and riskier, you need bigger safety reserves)

Public Contribution Requirements:

- Rather than attempting crude profit caps (which could stifle innovation and create national security concerns), require that beyond a certain top line margin, *a percentage of AI revenues is funneled to public interest causes*
- Funding the AI safety net infrastructure mentioned above, supporting universal basic services or retraining programs for workers displaced by AI, contributing to community revival projects in areas disrupted by automation, and financing international AI governance efforts
- This way, AI-driven wealth directly contributes to the public good, while companies still have plenty of incentive to innovate and profit

Implementation details:

- These obligations would only kick in *above clear, high thresholds* (e.g., a company serving ≥100 million users, deploying frontier-level models, or controlling outsized compute resources — much like designating "too big to fail" banks)
- There could be phase-in periods to smooth the adjustments and multiple compliance pathways (a firm might meet its safety spending requirement by funding independent research or open-sourcing safety tools, for example)
- The guiding idea is to make sure that as AI firms grow in power, they are bound by commensurate responsibility to invest in safety and share the benefits.

5. **International AI Safety Standards**

The U.S. leads (in partnership with other allies and democracies) the creation of an **International AI Safety Organization**:

- Develop global standards for AI safety and evaluation, so everyone's playing by at least a baseline set of rules when deploying advanced AI
- Establish norms (and eventually treaties) against AI weaponization and mass surveillance applications
- Coordinate research and governance for catastrophic risks (like AI used in bioweapons or autonomous battlefield systems)
- Use tools like trade agreements and export controls to enforce these norms (e.g. countries or companies that violate basic AI safety practices might face coordinated restrictions)

This would build on existing efforts (the Bletchley Park Declaration, the G7 Hiroshima AI process, OECD AI principles), but with real teeth and with a focus on broad inclusion of civil society. The goal is to avoid an AI governance future that's just a tug-of-war between great powers or dominated by corporate influence. Democracies aligning on AI safety can set the tone and make it costly for bad actors to ignore safety.

We also have to balance openness with security: not every AI capability should be open-sourced globally. Clearly dangerous dual-use tech (like an AI that could design a pathogen) needs careful control. But the default should favor transparency and international cooperation for beneficial uses, with only narrow, accountable exceptions for security risks.

Additional Policy Tools

Beyond the Declaration's five pillars, here are some supporting policy ideas that complement an abundance agenda:

Data Trusts & Digital Dividends

- Treat citizens' data (training data) as a collective asset. For instance, create data trusts or cooperatives so people can bargain collectively over how their data is used by AI companies.
- Consider a "digital dividend" where companies profiting off aggregated personal data pay a share into a public fund that pays out to citizens (likely modest per person, but symbolically asserting that data generators deserve compensation; much like Alaska's oil dividend)
- Ensure strong opt-out and privacy rights so participation is truly voluntary. The principle is that the raw material of the AI economy (data) is often generated by the public and should yield public benefits.

Liberation Labs Program

- Provide federal grants ($500 million to $2 billion annually) for cities and communities to experiment with AI and automation in delivering public services (with a strict caveat: *not* for surveillance or punitive policing)
- Fund open-source "public interest AI" projects. For example, AI for climate modeling accessible to all, or AI to improve public healthcare logistics, or educational AI tutors in the public domain.
- Sponsor demonstration projects for new economic arrangements (like contribution networks, time-bank economies, platform co-ops) and ensure rigorous evaluation and sharing of lessons. Essentially, create a DARPA or NSF for socio-technical experimentation in building abundant communities.
- And importantly, legally *protect* communities that want to try novel economic arrangements (like a town deciding to guarantee housing for all or create a local basic income) so that fear of lawsuits or state pre-emption doesn't stop innovation.

Universal Capabilities Pilots

- Fund pilot programs that guarantee key services in select regions. E.g., choose a few cities or rural counties to receive universal energy access (through community solar + battery projects ensuring every household has baseline power)
- Or create community healthcare cooperatives where primary care is guaranteed to all local residents
- Or treat broadband and education as public utilities (free high-speed internet and vocational training for all in the pilot area)
- Compare outcomes to similar areas using traditional means-tested welfare. These pilots can build the evidence base (and political case) for scaling up universal basic services nationwide if they succeed

Worker Transition Infrastructure

- Massive technological shifts always displace some jobs. Plan for it. Set up well-funded retraining and education programs focusing on jobs we *want* to grow (teachers, elder care, renewable energy, infrastructure, community-building roles)
- Create portable benefits systems and strengthen unions so that when people do move jobs, they don't lose healthcare or retirement security
- Guarantee the right to collective bargaining over introduction of AI in workplaces (so workers have a say in *how* automation is used, not just having it imposed)
- Consider a federal job guarantee for anyone who truly can't find work but is able to work, focusing on work that markets under-provide (climate mitigation, care work, public art and culture)
- And frankly acknowledge that many workers dislocated by automation might never find stable traditional jobs again — plan safety nets and dignified livelihood options for that reality

Framing for Political Viability

How do we sell this agenda across the political spectrum? By framing it in terms that resonate with different values.

This is a pragmatic, new ideology based on humanism and problem-solving. Modeled on the American can-do spirit applied to new challenges in order to fulfill the promise that technology serves human needs instead of corporate bottom lines. We believe this Declaration can increase freedoms by breaking monopolies and barriers because effective public investment enables private innovation. It's about removing the coercion in our current system (where you're not truly free if you have no choice but to work for a corporation to survive). Decentralized power, open knowledge, and the ability to opt out of oppressive systems all align with a certain strand of libertarian thinking.

As stated across numerous occasions, the country that builds AI highways and energy internets will lead the 21st century. This Declaration actively keeps America and its allies at the forefront of technology in a way that respects values and ideals optimized for human flourishing. Further, we believe it's the best shot at preventing authoritarian regimes, both foreign external and cultivated internal, from dominating AI and/or setting dystopian norms. By taking the ethical high ground and building international alliances, the U.S. can achieve a position of strength that heavy-handed surveillance states cannot easily match.

There are cross-cutting selling points too: local decision-making (letting cities try their own solutions); emphasizing freedom from bureaucracy (by simplifying and universalizing programs instead of complex means-testing); reducing dependency on foreign oil and critical minerals through energy abundance and AI sovereignty. And protecting genuine free enterprise — by curbing monopolistic gatekeepers — should appeal to anyone who claims to support competitive markets.

The goal is evolution, not sudden disruption. Each step proves value before scaling to the next. Failures will happen in some pilots — that's okay, as long as we learn and adapt. The point of this sequencing is to make the transition as smooth and non-threatening as possible: you demonstrate, empirically, that these things work (or figure out how to make them work) before going fully national.

First Next Steps for Those in Position to Act

Finally, for Americans reading this who are in positions to help make it happen — here are concrete actions:

If you're a Congressional staffer or lawmaker:

- Start drafting a **National AI Research Commons Act** (think: a modern Morrill Act for AI)
- And a **Universal Capabilities Pilot Act** to fund city-level experiments
- Form a cross-party "Abundance Caucus" focusing on investments in capability, not just transfers and taxes. Even small initial bills authorizing pilot programs or establishing an AI safety agency can get the ball rolling.

If you're a mayor or local official:

- Don't wait for federal permission — seek philanthropy or state grants to apply for a *Liberation Labs* grant (once that exists) or start your own local equivalents
- Partner with nearby universities or community colleges to pilot contribution networks or cooperative business incubators
- Initiate a community solar farm or energy cooperative to guarantee power to your residents
- Show on the city level what's possible, and be ready to scale up when more support comes

If you're a federal agency official:

- Within OSTP, NSF, DOE, etc., champion the idea of **public compute infrastructure** and commons-based research
- Develop AI procurement guidelines that prioritize open models and safety.
- At agencies like NIST or FDA, consider how evaluation and oversight frameworks for AI could work (perhaps model it on drug trials or aircraft certification).
- Lay the bureaucratic groundwork for treating AI, data, and basic services as infrastructure.

If you're a foundation officer or impact investor:

- Fund "abundance experiments" that governments aren't yet willing to touch. This could be supporting the first contribution network pilots, or a universal basic services demo in a

small city, or open-source tech projects that enable communities (e.g. open-source medical hardware or educational AI tools)
- Also support legal funds and advocacy for communities trying these new approaches (they may face legal challenges under old laws)

If you're a researcher or technologist:

- Contribute your skills to public-interest projects. For example, work on open climate modeling, or better open-source medical AI diagnostics, or build platforms that help communities self-organize (while respecting privacy and autonomy)
- Document and share the results of any local abundance initiatives you're part of — data and case studies will be vital to persuading policymakers
- Perhaps create tools that track contributions in a community without commodifying them, or develop transparency tech for AI systems to make them safer

If you're an organizer or community leader:

- Start where you are, even if small. Turn a mutual aid effort into a longer-term cooperative — maybe create a local time bank or skill exchange and keep records so people who give help can get help
- Connect with like-minded projects in other towns or online to swap ideas and moral support
- And crucially, document your work: your practical experience is evidence that others (academics, journalists, policymakers) can use to advocate for bigger changes

The path from here to abundance will not be one grand leap. It will be a million small steps taken by people in their own spheres — experiments, projects, conversations, new alliances. **Start where you are. Build with who you have. Share what you learn.** Every piece matters, and there's no time to waste.

Contact & Contribution

Email: prometheus [dot] apeiron [at] protonmail [dot] com
Document Repository: github.com/Prometheus-Apeiron/The-Abundance-Declaration

To contribute improvements, critiques, translations, or case studies of abundance experiments in practice, please visit the repository or email.

To those eager to build Liberation Labs, energy cooperatives, contribution networks, or other abundance experiments: let your passion echo as you shout from the rooftops. Your practical work is what will test and refine these ideas.

The future is not something that happens to us. It's something we build together — if we can imagine it first.

The Abundance Declaration was authored by live human beings over tireless hours who only employed AI for augmentation through editing and fact-checking.

END OF DECLARATION
