

ENOUGH BY DESIGN · CHAPTER ONE

The Year on the Letter

Chapter One of Enough by Design

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Chapter One of Enough by Design. The whole book, with every chapter, is at business.hautelumiere.life/library/enough-by-design (DOI https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23989348).

A NOTE BEFORE YOU READ

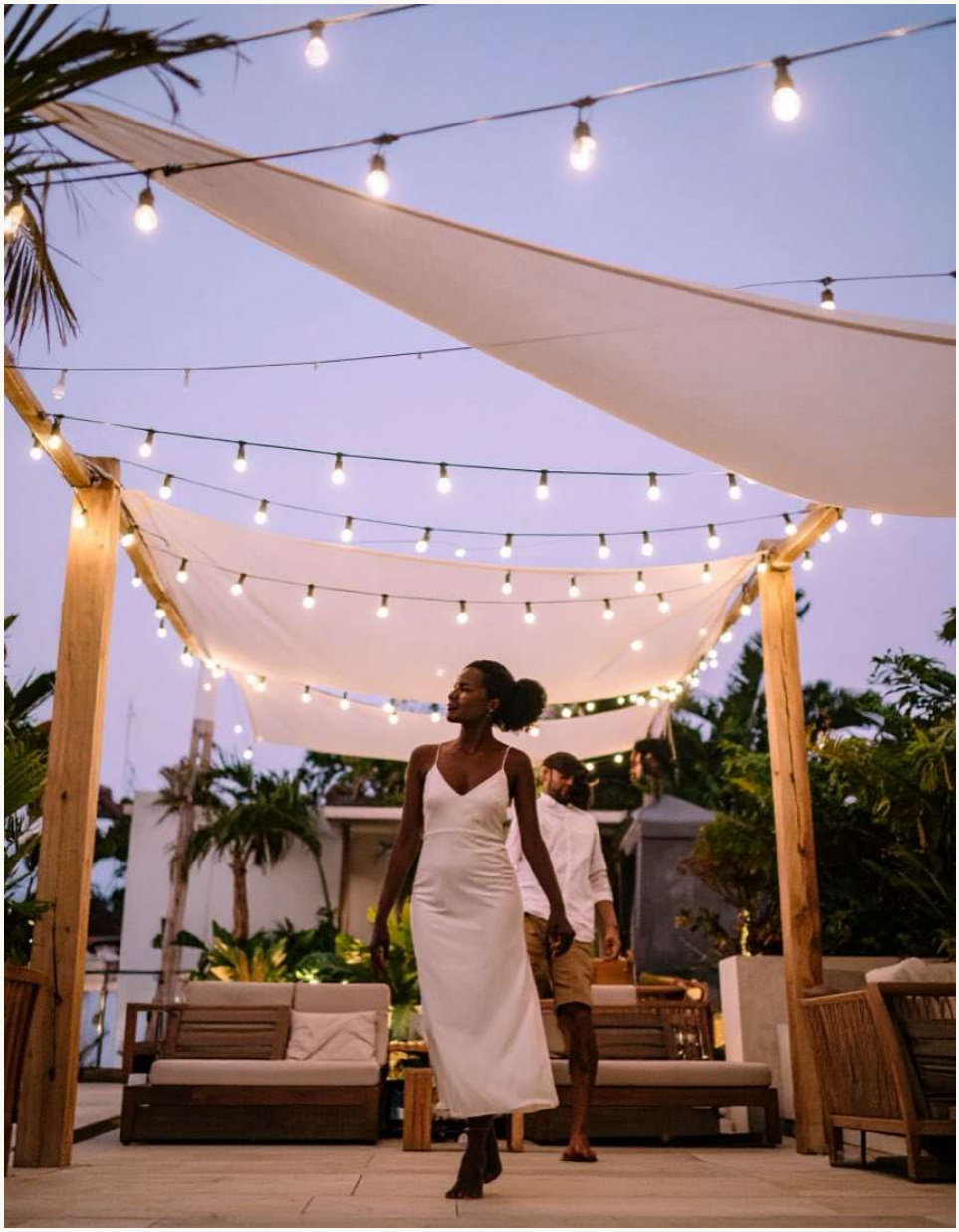
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ABSTRACT

In the autumn of 1930 John Maynard Keynes put a date on a letter to people he would never meet. He told them that the economic problem of the human race, the old struggle for subsistence, might be solved within a hundred years. "I would predict that the standard of life in progressive countries one hundred years hence will be between four and eight times as high as it is to-day." He was writing a year into the worst slump the industrial world had yet known, and he wrote it anyway. The hundred years end in 2030. That is the first reason for this book, and the plainest. The letter Keynes wrote is nearly at its date, and the people it was addressed to are the readers of this page: leaders of teams and firms, and the adults of households, living in the richest societies that have ever existed. Some of what Keynes forecast has arrived. Some of it has not, and the part that has not is not mainly a matter of output. It is a matter of hours, of habit and of a feeling about money that the output did not change.

CHAPTER ONE

The Year on the Letter



The Year on the Letter

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A date that is nearly here

In the autumn of 1930 John Maynard Keynes put a date on a letter to people he would never meet. He told them that the economic problem of the human race, the old struggle for subsistence, might be solved within a hundred years. "I would predict that the standard of life in progressive countries one hundred years hence will be between four and eight times as high as it is to-day."[1] He was writing a year into the worst slump the industrial world had yet known, and he wrote it anyway.

The hundred years end in 2030. That is the first reason for this book, and the plainest. The letter Keynes wrote is nearly at its date, and the people it was addressed to are the readers of this page: leaders of teams and firms, and the adults of households, living in the richest societies that have ever existed. Some of what Keynes forecast has arrived. Some of it has not, and the part that has not is not mainly a matter of output. It is a matter of hours, of habit and of a feeling about money that the output did not change.

In 2008 a group of economists gathered by Lorenzo Pecchi and Gustavo Piga answered the essay chapter by chapter. The editors wrote that a reader "will be surprised both at how accurate some of his predictions on income levels turned out to be and at how off the mark he was when speculating about working hours and future lifestyles."[2] Lee Ohanian, in the same volume, judged the four-to-eight-fold forecast realised, with "an eerily accurate average growth rate of between 1.4 to 2.1 percent per capita across the industrialized countries".[2] The output came. The hours, as the record assembled by Michael Huberman and Chris Minns shows, fell for decades and then fell much more slowly.[3]

So a careful reader in 2026 holds two facts at once. There is far more than there was. And a great many well-resourced people, and a great many well-capitalised organisations, still live and decide as though there were not enough. This book is about the space between those two facts.

The one claim

The book makes one claim, and the rest of it is the work of testing and using that claim.

Much of the scarcity a well-resourced firm or household lives inside is designed, and what is designed can be redrawn.

Every word in that sentence is doing work, and three of them deserve a note before anything else.

Much, not all. Water in a dry valley is scarce. A nurse's hours on a winter ward are scarce. A household whose rent takes two incomes is not imagining its constraint. Ammanuel Santa Anna, whose book *Ecstatic Economics* is the source this series is drawn from, is blunter about this than most writers on abundance. People in genuine material deprivation, he writes, need material resources, not a change of outlook, and any argument that forgets this has stopped being economics. That sentence is quoted in full in chapter 2, and chapter 3 is built around keeping it.

Well-resourced. The argument is addressed to a particular reader: a person or an organisation whose absolute needs are met, or nearly met, and who still feels the pressure of not enough. That is a large population in the rich countries, and an awkward one to talk about, because its scarcity is real to it and invisible in the figures.

Designed. A designed scarcity is one that someone drew: a rule, a measure, a definition, a habit of budgeting, a way of holding knowledge so that only one person has it. Santa Anna puts the claim in a sentence that does not hedge:

> *scarcity feels like physics. It isn't. It's architecture.*[4]

He is careful elsewhere to say what that does and does not mean. In the chapter of *Ecstatic Economics* that describes how scarcity is felt in the body, he refuses the easy villain:

> *No one designed this trap. But understanding its somatic mechanism is essential to escaping it.*[5]

Those two sentences sit together comfortably once the word *designed* is read as an engineer reads it. Most designed scarcity was not planned by anyone with that intention. It accumulated, one reasonable rule at a time, until the rules produced a shortage that nobody chose and everybody obeys. Santa Anna says as much of the pressure people feel to earn and produce more: "This isn't a conspiracy—it's an emergent property of a system built on scarcity assumptions."[5] The practical consequence is a hopeful one. A shortage that emerged from rules can be traced back to the rules, and rules can be rewritten by the people who hold authority over them.



Why the definition matters

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Why the definition matters

The claim pushes against the first page of the textbook, and it is worth knowing where that page came from.

Two years after Keynes's essay, in 1932, Lionel Robbins of the London School of Economics published *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*. On page 15 of the first edition he gave the definition that became the discipline's front door: "Economics is the science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses."[6]

It is a good definition. It gave economics a method that did not depend on what was being bought or sold, and it is still the clearest single sentence about what economists study. It also did something quieter. It made scarcity not one subject among several, but the condition without which there is no subject. Chapter 2 tells that story in full, beside Keynes's essay, because the two texts, written two years and a few miles apart, set down opposite first principles.

Santa Anna states the inherited view in a sentence of his own, set in bold in his book:

> *there is not enough, there will never be enough, and the fundamental economic problem is the allocation of scarce resources among competing wants.*[5]

He calls this a metaphysics, which is a strong word, and the book that follows does not ask the reader to accept it. It asks something smaller and more useful. It asks the reader to notice when a constraint is being treated as a fact of nature, and to check.



Why now

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Why now

Three things make the check more urgent in 2026 than it was in 1930, and none of them is a forecast.

The first is the date itself. Keynes's century is nearly up, and a century is long enough to judge a forecast fairly. The output part of his letter has been judged, by economists who disagreed about much else, as broadly right. The part about how people would live with the output has not been. That makes this a good moment to ask what went differently, and the answer this book gives is that the scarcity was carried forward in design and habit after it had shrunk in material terms.

The second is the shape of what firms now own. Carol Corrado, Charles Hulten and Daniel Sichel estimated that American business investment in intangibles, in software, data, research, design, training and organisation, was "approximately one trillion dollars in 1999, an amount that is roughly the same as investment in tangible capital at that time", and that as much as $800 billion of it was still excluded from published United States data as of 2003.[7] Intangible assets behave differently from machines. Knowledge can be used by many people at once without being used up. That means a firm's most valuable stock is, by its nature, the kind that can be made abundant inside the firm, and it also means that most of the scarcity around it is designed: who can find it, who is allowed to use it, who is the only person who knows it. Chapters 5 and 6 work this through.

The third is the body. Santa Anna's book spends long chapters on what scarcity does to a nervous system, and one sentence from that material describes a pattern many leaders will recognise from their own calendars:

> *Long-term thinking feels like a luxury you can't afford.*[5]

He is describing an inner state, and the book does not treat that description as a scientific finding. The research on scarcity and cognition is contested, and chapter 3 sets out the dispute fairly. But the pattern it names, the shrinking of the horizon under pressure, is a familiar one in budgets and boardrooms as well as in kitchens. A firm that plans one quarter at a time because it feels short, while holding intangible capital it cannot see, is paying for its feeling in the one currency it most needs: time to invest in what compounds.

Who this book is for

It is written for two readers who are more alike than they look.

The first is a person who runs something: a team, a department, a practice, a firm. You have a budget, a headcount and a calendar, and you have a list of things that cannot be done because one of those three is short. This book asks you to grade that list. Some of the shortages are material, and the book will say so. Some are positional, the result of competing for a rank that only one party can hold. Some are designed, written into your own rules. Some are habitual, carried forward from a leaner year. The work is to tell them apart and to change the ones you drew.

The second is the adult of a household. You keep accounts, or mean to. You may feel the pressure of not enough at an income that, on any reasonable measure, is enough. This book asks you to find the line where enough lies for your own household, to write it down, and to see which of the pressures above it are positional and which are habits you could set down.

Both readers will find chapters written primarily for the other, and both should read them. A leader learns more about designed scarcity from the household chapter than from most management books, because a

household is a firm small enough to see whole. A household learns from the field manual how a change is run with discipline rather than resolve.

The book does not offer investment advice, and it does not promise any reader more money, a shorter week or less worry. What it offers is a method for seeing which constraints are fixed and which were drawn by someone, and a set of tools for redrawing the ones that were.

The four kinds

The whole book rests on one sorting, and it is introduced here so that every later chapter can use it without stopping to explain. When something is short, it is short in one of four ways.

Material scarcity is a real limit in the world. There is only so much water in the valley, so many hours before the shift ends, so much money in the account this month. It is met with resources: more of the thing, or a better use of what there is. It is never met with a change of attitude, and the book's ethical line, which chapter 3 calls the bypass test, is drawn exactly here.

Positional scarcity is the scarcity of rank. Only one firm can be first in its market, only so many families can live in the best-regarded school's catchment, only one person can hold the corner office. The economist Fred Hirsch named these positional goods in 1976, and Keynes had seen the same thing in 1930 when he divided needs into absolute and relative.[8] Positional scarcity cannot be met by producing more, because the good is the position. It is met by a choice: to compete for the rank, or to step out of that particular race.

Designed scarcity is a shortage produced by rules. A budget that rewards each department for spending its allocation by year-end. A promotion system that makes sharing knowledge a loss of standing. A procurement process that makes the firm pay twice for what one division already owns. A household rule that only one adult ever looks at the accounts. These shortages are real in their effects and artificial in their origin. They are met with redesign, by the people who hold authority over the rule.

Habitual scarcity is a shortage that has outlived its cause. The budget line cut in a bad year and never restored. The family that still eats as though money were as tight as it was a decade ago. The firm that still treats its training budget as discretionary because it was, once. Habitual scarcity is the hardest to see, because it feels like prudence. It is met with review: an honest look at whether the original reason still holds.

The four are not ranks. None is shameful, and most real constraints are a mixture. A household's rent is material; the fact that it takes two full-time incomes to meet it may be partly designed by zoning and partly positional, because of the school it sits beside. The point of the sorting is not to classify a constraint once and for all. It is to stop treating every constraint as the first kind, because only the first kind is met with resources, and a leader or a household that answers every shortage by asking for more will keep asking long after more has arrived.



The map of the book

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The map of the book

The book has twelve chapters and a workbook appendix. It moves from the idea and its origins, through its fair critique, to the evidence and the cases, and then to the practice.

Chapter 2 · A Letter to the Grandchildren reads Keynes's 1930 essay closely, beside Robbins's definition, and corrects the myth of the fifteen-hour week. It introduces Keynes's two kinds of need and the book's first tool, *the Two-Column Ledger*, for telling absolute from relative in a household's or a team's own accounts.

Chapter 3 · Where Abundance Overreaches sets out five fair objections to the argument: positional competition, the disputed research on scarcity and cognition, the income and well-being debate, the rising cost of new ideas, and the danger of abundance language being used against the people it describes. It keeps what survives and introduces *the Abundance Claim Grader*.

Chapter 4 · What a Person Is Able to Be reads Amartya Sen's capability approach beside the house's living-systems lens. Wealth is read as what a person or a team is able to do and to be, and *the Capability Map* marks each gap as chosen or blocked.

Chapter 5 · The Balance Sheet Cannot See works the intangible economy, using the research of Corrado, Hulten and Sichel and of Jonathan Haskel and Stian Westlake, through a labelled composite studio and a household. Its tool is *the Intangible Inventory*.

Chapter 6 · Opening the Library is the first case chapter. It reads two firms that made their own knowledge abundant on purpose, by releasing patents for others to use, and says plainly what is and is not known about the results. Its tool is *the Open-Library Test*.

Chapter 7 · The Hours Keynes Promised is the second case chapter. It reads the public working-time trials in Iceland and the United Kingdom against Keynes's essay and the long record of hours, figure by figure from the reports, with their limits named. Its tool is *the Hours Ledger*.

Chapter 8 · The Field Manual is the implementation chapter for a leader: twelve weeks, end to end, with roles, gates, decisions, meetings and what to do when the work stalls, and then the year after. Its tool is *the Twelve-Week Charter*.

Chapter 9 · How to Know It Worked is about measurement: predictions written before the change, what to count, how to set a baseline, how to read a small sample honestly, and how a measure stops measuring when it becomes a target. Its tool is *the Prediction Register*.

Chapter 10 · The Hard Conversations takes the argument into the rooms where it is most easily misheard: the board, the finance committee, the staff and their representatives, partners, families and sceptics. Each conversation has what the other party fears, what they need to hear and a short script. Its tool is *the Conversation Card*.

Chapter 11 · Enough at Home is the household chapter: the enough line, two adults with different money histories, children, ageing parents, debt and a weekly money hour, worked across a year through a labelled composite household. Its tool is *the Household Enough Line*.

Chapter 12 · The Art of Life Itself closes the book. It gives the living-systems reading of the whole, joins the argument to the neighbouring books in the Ecstatic Economics series, grades honestly what the book can and cannot show, and gathers the tools into *the Quarterly Enough Review*.

The Workbook, at the back, collects every tool from every chapter in full, with a ninety-day plan in day-ranges for a leader and for a household.

A reader in a hurry can read this chapter, chapter 2, chapter 8 or chapter 11 according to which reader they are, and the workbook. A reader with time should go in order, because chapter 3 is the one that keeps the rest honest.



A note on method

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A note on method

The book is drawn from Santa Anna's *Ecstatic Economics* and from shorter works in his library, and every quotation of his is given as he wrote it. The research it cites is cited to the original papers and books, and each note says what that source cannot show. Where a case uses figures, they are taken from the organisation's own report or a peer-reviewed paper. Where an illustration is a composite, a household or a firm built to show a method, it is labelled as a composite in the same paragraph. No composite is evidence that the method works. It is a picture of how the method is done.

The book also keeps one boundary that a reader should know about from the start. It is an argument about design, not about effort. At no point does it suggest that a person or a team should accept less material support because their outlook is expected to change. That use of abundance language is the one the book most wants to prevent, and chapter 3 gives it a test.

The Tool: The Four Kinds

One page. Ten minutes. For a leader, a team or a household. Use it on any constraint you have cited more than once this month as a reason something cannot be done.

The constraint, in one sentence:

Who first said it was short, and when?

Sort it. Tick every kind that applies, and estimate the share of each. Most constraints are a mixture.

KIND	THE QUESTION THAT IDENTIFIES IT	APPLIES?	ROUGH SHARE
Material	Is there a real limit in the world: a quantity, a deadline, a sum in the account?	☐	__%
Positional	Is the value in a rank that only some can hold? Would it matter if everyone had it?	☐	__%
Designed		☐	__%

KIND	THE QUESTION THAT IDENTIFIES IT	APPLIES?	ROUGH SHARE
	Is the shortage produced by a rule, a measure, a process or a definition that someone could change?		
Habitual	Was it set in different conditions? Would it be set the same way today?	☐	__%

What each kind asks of you.

- Material: resources, or a better use of what there is. Never a change of attitude.
- Positional: a choice. Compete for the rank, or step out of this race.

Designed: redesign. Who holds authority over the rule?

Habitual: review. What was the original reason, and does it still hold?

The one move this week, on the largest designed or habitual share:

Check it against the bypass line. Does the move ask anyone to accept less material support because their attitude is expected to change? If yes, it is not a move this book recommends. Rewrite it.

Keep the page. Chapter 2's Two-Column Ledger and chapter 3's Abundance Claim Grader both begin where this one ends.

A note on method

The four kinds of scarcity are this book's sorting, built from Keynes's two classes of need, Hirsch's positional goods and Santa Anna's distinction between material constraint and designed scarcity; the sorting is a working frame, not a finding of any study.

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5. Santa Anna, A. *Ecstatic Economics*. Luminous Prosperity Inc. The sentence beginning "there is not enough" is from chapter 1, "The Metaphysics of Scarcity"; the sentence on emergent property is from the same chapter's somatic section; "No one designed this trap" and "Long-term thinking" are from the chapter on the nervous system and money. These are the author's descriptions of an inner pattern, not findings of a study.
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