

ENOUGH BY DESIGN · CHAPTER TWELVE

The Art of Life Itself

Chapter Twelve of Enough by Design

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THE LICENCE

The Art of Life Itself
Chapter Twelve of Enough by Design

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Chapter Twelve 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

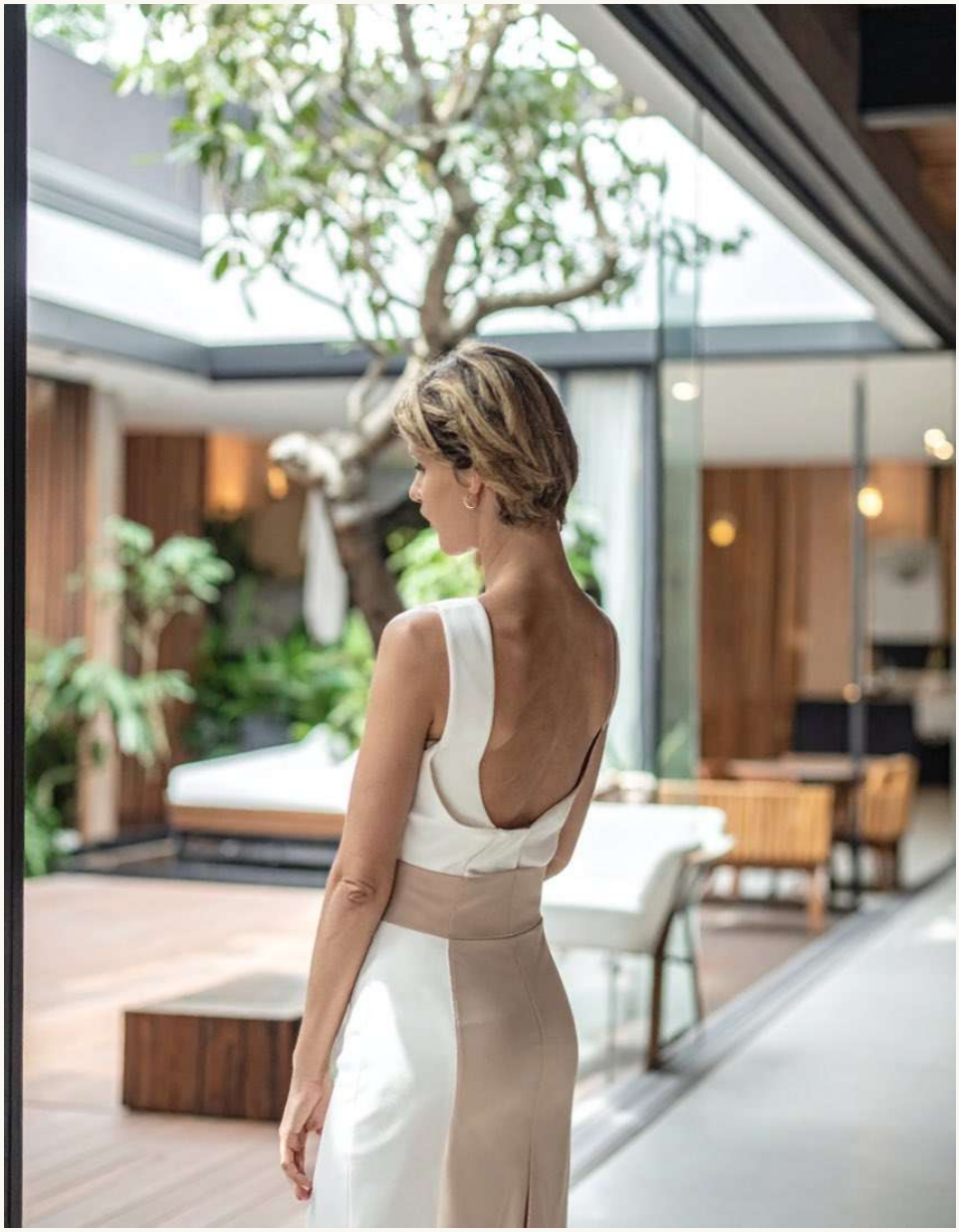
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ABSTRACT

Near the end of "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren", after he has forecast that the economic problem will be solved within a century, John Maynard Keynes turns to what comes after it. He calls it man's "real, his permanent problem": how to use his freedom from pressing economic cares, how to occupy the leisure, which science and compound interest will have won for him, to live wisely and agreeably and well. And then he says who will manage it. Not the money-makers, who "may carry all of us along with them into the lap of economic abundance", but "those peoples, who can keep alive, and cultivate into a fuller perfection, the art of life itself and do not sell themselves for the means of life".

CHAPTER TWELVE

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The permanent problem

Near the end of "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren", after he has forecast that the economic problem will be solved within a century, John Maynard Keynes turns to what comes after it. He calls it man's "real, his permanent problem":

> *how to use his freedom from pressing economic cares, how to occupy the leisure, which science and compound interest will have won for him, to live wisely and agreeably and well.*[104]

And then he says who will manage it. Not the money-makers, who "may carry all of us along with them into the lap of economic abundance", but "those peoples, who can keep alive, and cultivate into a fuller perfection, the art of life itself and do not sell themselves for the means of life".[104]

Chapter 2 quoted the sentence just before that passage and moved on. This chapter stays with it, because the whole book has been leading here. Chapter 1 made one claim: that much of the scarcity a well-resourced firm or household lives inside is designed, and that what is designed can be redrawn. Chapter 3 tested the claim against five fair objections and kept what survived. Chapters 4 and 5 read it through Amartya Sen's capabilities and the intangible economy. Chapters 6 and 7 found it at work in public cases, in firms that opened their patents and in the working-time trials. Chapters 8 to 11 turned it into practice for a leader and for a household. What remains is to read the whole as one thing, to set it beside its neighbours, to grade honestly what it has shown, and to say what Keynes's art of life asks of a reader who has finished the book.

Ammanuel Santa Anna's *Ecstatic Economics* frames Keynes's permanent problem in the body rather than in the calendar. Its most compact statement of the point comes in a passage on what Buddhist economics adds to the house's own:

> *An economy driven by craving will produce scarcity regardless of material abundance.*[105]

That sentence is the reason a book about budgets and ledgers ends with a chapter on the art of life. The tools in this book can find designed scarcity and remove it. They cannot, by themselves, make a person or a team feel that enough has arrived. That second thing is slower, and it is what Keynes meant.

The living-systems reading of the whole

The house reads economies, firms and households as living systems. The phrase is easy to say and easy to use loosely, so it is worth saying exactly what it adds to the argument of this book.

A machine has parts and a purpose given from outside. If a machine is short of something, the shortage is a fact about its inputs. A living system is different in one decisive way: much of what it has, it makes, and how much it makes depends on how well it circulates what it already holds. A forest that loses a tree does

not experience a shortage of trees. Santa Anna, writing on Elinor Ostrom's commons, puts the contrast in two sentences:

> *Living systems don't run on lack; they run on surplus management. A healthy forest doesn't panic when a tree falls; it composts the fall into soil.*[106]

Read that way, the four kinds of scarcity from chapter 1 look different. Material scarcity is a real limit at the boundary of the system, and no amount of good circulation removes it; the doughnut's ecological ceiling, discussed below, is a material limit of exactly this kind. Positional scarcity is competition inside the system for a place that only one organism can hold, and it is part of every ecology. But designed and habitual scarcity are something else. They are blockages in circulation: knowledge that does not move because the rule says it belongs to one team, hours that do not return because the habit was set in a leaner year, money that sits in an account nobody opens because looking at it feels dangerous. In a living system, those blockages are where the shortage comes from. Remove them, and the system makes more of what it needs.

That is the reading the book has used throughout, mostly without naming it. Chapter 5's intangible inventory is a map of what circulates and what is held. Chapter 6's patent releases are firms choosing to let one kind of knowledge circulate beyond their own walls, and the chapter was careful to say how little is yet known about what that did for them. Chapter 4's capability map is an account of which of a person's or a team's functions are alive and which are blocked. The Luminous 100, the house's set of upgrades to the standard management frameworks, reads the familiar SWOT analysis in the same spirit, describing the organisation as something other than a fixed object:

> *The organization is not a static object to be diagnosed, but a living system continuously disclosing itself*[107]

The practical difference is in the question a leader asks. A machine reading asks: what are we short of, and where do we get more? A living-systems reading asks first: what do we already hold that is not moving, and what stops it? The second question is not a substitute for the first. When the shortage is material, the first question is the right one. But for a well-resourced firm or household, the second question is usually the one that has not been asked, and it is the one this book has tried to equip.

Santa Anna's field guide states the standard a living system is held to:

> *It means systems generate more than they consume.*[108]

A firm that trains its people, keeps its knowledge searchable and lets its teams use what other teams have already built is generating more than it consumes in exactly the sense that matters here. A firm that makes each team rebuild what another team has is consuming its own stock. Neither has to be large or small, rich or poor, for the description to hold.

The neighbouring books

No single idea in economics stands alone, and this book is one of ten in the Ecstatic Economics series. Five of its neighbours meet it closely, and each adds something this book needs and corrects something it might overstate.

The commons. Elinor Ostrom's work, read in *The Commons*, is the long empirical answer to the most common argument for scarcity: that any shared resource will be overused unless it is privatised or controlled by the state. Ostrom found communities that had governed fisheries, forests and irrigation for generations by rules they designed themselves. What that book adds here is a warning this one needs. Abundance in a shared resource is kept by rules, boundaries and monitoring, not by goodwill. Designed scarcity can be redesigned, but so can designed abundance be lost, and the rules that keep it have to be written, enforced and revised.

The gift. The book on gift, reciprocity and trust reads Marcel Mauss on the obligations a gift creates, George Akerlof on wages paid above the market as a gift returned with effort, and Ernst Fehr's experiments on reciprocity. It supplies the mechanism by which the intangible economy of chapter 5 actually circulates. Knowledge is shared in a firm, or not, according to whether people trust that sharing will be returned. An open library inside a firm stays closed in practice if people fear that what they share makes them replaceable. Designed abundance in knowledge depends on reciprocity, and reciprocity is a culture before it is a system.

The doughnut. Kate Raworth's doughnut, read in the book on the economy inside the biosphere, sets two boundaries: a social foundation below which no one should fall, and an ecological ceiling above which the economy should not rise. It is the clearest corrective to everything this book says. The argument about designed scarcity applies to the space between the two rings. Below the foundation, people need material resources. Above the ceiling, some scarcities are real and growing, and calling them designed would be false. Santa Anna's book takes the doughnut as given and adds a question to it, how alive people feel in the economy, which is the question this book has tried to make answerable in a household's or a team's own records.

Complexity. The book on complexity economics reads W. Brian Arthur's increasing returns, which is the technical account of why intangible capital, once accumulated, tends to compound, and why small early choices about how knowledge circulates can lock in for years. It explains why the designed blocks of chapter 5 are worth removing early.

Patient capital. The book on purpose and patient capital reads Colin Mayer's case that a firm's purpose should govern its finance, rather than the reverse. That is the governance a firm needs if it is to invest in intangibles whose returns take years, and it is the governance that the shrinking horizon described in chapter 1 makes hardest to keep.

A reader who wants to go on from this book will find each of those five a natural next step, and each begins where a chapter here ends: the commons from chapter 3, the gift from chapter 5, the doughnut from chapter 4, complexity from chapter 6 and patient capital from chapter 8.



What abundance does not mean

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What abundance does not mean

Before the grading, one clarification that the whole book has been circling, and that Santa Anna states more crisply than this book could:

> *Abundance doesn't mean everything is free. It means nothing essential is financially out of reach.*[108]

The sentence refuses the naïve version of abundance, in which prices disappear and work is optional, which chapter 3 showed does not survive contact with positional goods, the rising cost of new ideas or the economics of making things. And it sets a test that is both demanding and checkable. For a household, the essentials are the absolute needs of chapter 2's ledger, and the enough line of chapter 11. For a firm, they are the capabilities of chapter 4 without which its people cannot do their work well. For a society, they are the social foundation of the doughnut. In each case, abundance means those things are within reach, and the rest can be priced, chosen and enjoyed.

The practices that put this to work are in chapter 8 for a leader and chapter 11 for a household. They are not repeated here. What follows is the one practice that holds them together across a year, and before it, the honest account of what the book has and has not shown.



What this book cannot show

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What this book cannot show

A book that asks its readers to grade evidence should grade its own. Here is the grading, in the same four bands that chapter 3's Abundance Claim Grader uses.

Grade A: well supported by primary sources read for this book. Keynes's essay says what this book quotes it as saying; the text was read for it. Robbins's definition is on page 15 of his first edition. The long record of working hours assembled by Huberman and Minns supports the claim that hours fell for decades and then fell much more slowly.[109] The intangible-economy research supports the claim that firms invest heavily in

what their balance sheets cannot see. The figures in the case chapters are taken from the organisations' own reports, and the case chapters say where those reports stop.

Grade B: carefully argued frameworks, not measurements. Sen's capability approach is a framework for what to measure, argued over decades and widely used; it does not by itself show that any practice works. The four kinds of scarcity are this book's own sorting, built from Keynes, Hirsch and Santa Anna. They are a working frame. They are useful if they change what a reader decides, and the only evidence for that is the reader's own record.

Grade C: contested research. The research on scarcity and cognition, beginning with Mani, Mullainathan, Shafir and Zhao in 2013, found that financial pressure appeared to reduce cognitive performance.[110] Its laboratory analyses were challenged on methodological grounds by Wicherts and Scholten the same year,[111] and later work has found smaller or no effects in some settings. The book relies on it only to describe a pattern people recognise, not to prove one. The research on income and well-being is now more settled than it was, and it does not support a natural ceiling on enough. The 2023 reanalysis by Killingsworth, Kahneman and Mellers confirmed a flattening pattern "only for the least happy people", and found that happiness "increases steadily with log(income) among happier people, and even accelerates in the happiest group".[112] That is a reason for the book's insistence that each household sets its own enough line rather than borrowing one from a study.

Grade D: not shown at all. No study cited in this book shows that a household which keeps a two-column ledger becomes happier, or that a firm which opens its knowledge library becomes more profitable. The case chapters show that firms released patents and that working-time trials reported their results; they do not show what would have happened otherwise, and the trials had self-selected participants, the British pilot ran six months with no control group, and Iceland's control workplaces were few. The composite studio and the composite household in chapters 5 and 11 illustrate a method; they are not evidence that it works. Santa Anna's descriptions of how scarcity is felt in the body are an author's account of an inner pattern, offered from long practice, not findings of a trial.

What the book does claim is narrower than its title might suggest. It claims that the distinction between material, positional, designed and habitual scarcity is real and can be drawn by anyone with a page of figures and an honest hour. It claims that drawing it changes what a person or a team decides to do next, because a designed constraint invites redesign where a material one invites resources and a positional one invites a choice. And it claims, with Santa Anna's book, that this work has an inner side: that a person whose body has not registered sufficiency will tend to reproduce scarcity whatever the figures say. His sentence on this is short: "Your body is an archive."[105] The archive is what a quarterly review slowly rewrites.

Those claims are offered to be tested, and chapter 9's Prediction Register is how. Over a year, a household's or a team's own record, predictions written before and results checked after, is better evidence about that household or team than any study cited here, because it is about the only case its keepers can change.



For those who run something larger

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For those who run something larger

Most of this book has been written at the scale of a household or a team. Its argument scales, and so do its cautions.

A leader of a large organisation will find designed scarcity in larger forms: a budgeting process that rewards departments for spending their allocation by year-end, a promotion system that makes knowledge-sharing a loss of standing, a procurement rule that makes the organisation pay twice for what one division already owns. Each of these is a policy, and each can be redrawn by the people with authority over it. The

Alpha Stakeholder Map is the house's instrument for seeing who holds that authority and who bears the cost of the current design.

The caution scales too. In a large organisation the language of abundance is easily borrowed to justify asking more of the same people, and chapter 3's bypass test applies with full force. If acting on an abundance claim requires anyone to accept less material support because their attitude is expected to change, the claim has been misused. Chapter 10 gave the scripts for saying so in the rooms where it matters. The work is to remove designed blocks, not to rename shortages.



The kitchen

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The kitchen

Santa Anna's best image for abundance is not a harvest or a vault. It is a room where something is being made:

> *Abundance is not a buffet where everyone grabs the last roll before it disappears. It is a kitchen that learns to bake while you are still eating.*[113]

It is a modest image, and that is its strength. A kitchen has real limits: the size of the oven, the flour in the bin, the hours before people are hungry. Nobody pretends those away; they are the material scarcity of chapter 1, and they are met with flour. But a kitchen is also a place of method, practice and accumulated knowledge, of recipes that improve and skills passed from one cook to the next. How much it can feed depends less on the size of the bin than on how well it is run and how freely its knowledge moves. A kitchen where only one person knows the bread has designed its own shortage. A kitchen that still cooks for a lean winter in a good spring is living inside a habit.

The image is also, quietly, the living-systems reading of this whole book. A buffet is a machine: a fixed stock, drawn down. A kitchen is a living system: it makes, it learns, it circulates, and on a good night it has more at the end than it seemed to have at the start.

For readers who want to do this work with a guide rather than alone, Santa Anna works with a small number of leaders and households one to one on the practice this book describes, and the first conversation begins at the house.

Keynes thought the art of life itself would be the hardest thing his grandchildren had to learn. He may have been right. It is a slow art, practised one quarter at a time, with a page of figures and an honest hour. Some of it can be planned. Some of it happens late, at a table, when a household notices that it has enough and the evening is its own.

The letter Keynes wrote in 1930 is nearly at its date. What remains of it is the question it was always asking, and a kitchen at the end of the day, the oven still warm, bread cooling on the board.

The Tool: The Quarterly Enough Review

One page that holds the book's tools together. For a household or a team. Ninety minutes, once a quarter. Keep every page; after four quarters the pages are the record chapter 9 asks for.

Date: · Present:

1 · Sufficiency (five minutes, before any figures). Each person writes one moment from the last quarter when they had what they needed and wanted nothing more. Read them aloud.

2 · The ledger (fifteen minutes). From the Two-Column Ledger (chapter 2) and the Household Enough Line (chapter 11):

	LAST QUARTER	THIS QUARTER
Absolute, material		
Absolute, designed		
Relative		
The enough line		

Did the enough line hold still? yes / no. If it moved, why?

3 · One claim sorted and graded (ten minutes). From the Four Kinds (chapter 1) and the Abundance Claim Grader (chapter 3). The scarcity most often cited this quarter: · Material / positional / designed / habitual · Evidence grade A–D: · Bypass check passed? yes / no

4 · The capability map (twenty minutes). From the Capability Map (chapter 4). Domains where a blocked gap closed this quarter: · New blocked gaps: · The one designed block to change next: · Owner:

5 · The intangible stock (ten minutes). From the Intangible Inventory (chapter 5) and the Open-Library Test (chapter 6). The most valuable intangible held by only one person: · What was done this quarter to share it: · Ratio of intangible to tangible investment this quarter (teams):

6 · The hours (five minutes). From the Hours Ledger (chapter 7). Hours given to work this quarter, and hours returned: · Did any returned hours go back to work by habit?

7 · Last quarter's prediction (ten minutes). From the Prediction Register (chapter 9). What was predicted, written before: · What happened: · Keep / grow / stop:

8 · One conversation (five minutes). From the Conversation Card (chapter 10). The conversation this quarter's change needs, and with whom:

9 · One seed (ten minutes). Small enough to start this week. If it is a team's change, enter it on the Twelve-Week Charter (chapter 8). The change: · Owner: · Prediction:

The workbook at the back of the book holds every tool named here in full.

A note on method

The descriptions of the neighbouring books summarise their subjects as the series sets them; the scholarly claims attributed to Ostrom, Mauss, Akerlof, Fehr, Raworth, Arthur and Mayer are developed and cited in those books. The statement that later work found smaller or no scarcity-cognition effects in some settings is a summary of the dispute set out and cited in chapter 3.

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2. Santa Anna, A. *Ecstatic Economics*. Luminous Prosperity Inc. "An economy driven by craving" is from the chapter on Buddhist and contemplative economics; "Your body is an archive" is from the chapter on the body and money. The author's account of an inner pattern, not a finding of a study.
3. Santa Anna, A. *The Commons as a Living System: Elinor Ostrom Was Right About Everything*. Luminous Prosperity Inc., Ava's library. An interpretive essay on Ostrom's work; Ostrom's own findings are cited and developed in *The Commons* in this series.
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