

Bonus Q&A: How to Make Library Socialism Now

Srsly Wrong Podcast



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This transcript is a work-in-progress, with formatting subject to change. There may still be minor transcription errors. Thank you to our listener, Ali V, for transcribing this for us and sending it in.

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Shawn: Hey man, did you hear that the SRSLY Wrong podcast has a new library socialism Q&A talking about transitionary steps towards a library society.

Aaron: Wow, really transition all the way from here to there? They have steps!? I love that! You got the goods? Can we listen?

Shawn: Oh, yeah. I just got this tape in the mail directly from SRSLY Wrong headquarters. They sent me... I'm an advanced tape subscriber so I get this, these tapes.

Aaron: Whoa! that's a beautiful tape! and the packaging it comes in... Wow, those Wrong Boys really care about what they're doing.

Shawn: I'll just slide this here into the tape player and pop that closed.

—☒ sound of tape player slot being closed—

Shawn: Are you ready to listen? This is going to be quite the little journey for us.

Aaron: I'm excited too.

Aaron: And thank you for listening to this with me for not just doing it by... Yeah! Thank you! please! I can't wait!

Shawn: Do you want to both like, put our pointer fingers together and then move our two pointer fingers, which are touching the whole time towards (chuckles) the play button then press it at exactly the same moment?

Aaron: Yeah, I Like to do that. Thank you for asking.

Shawn: Yeah, let's just put these fingers together and...

Aaron: touch. move.

Shawn: make sure that they're fully aligned, and no gaps and

Shawn & Aaron: towards the play button.

Aaron: And there we go!

Shawn: There we go!

—☒ sound of pressing play button on tape player—

—☒ SRSLY Wrong theme song plays— [Srsly Wrong Podcast Bumper (Bullae ad Libitum) by Traí Bo] (<https://soundcloud.com/traiboband/srsly-wrong-podcast-bumper-bullae-ad-libitum>)

—☒ theme song slowly fades—

00:01:35

Shawn: Hellooo everybody! and welcome to the SRSLY Wrong podcast!

Aaron: hi

Shawn: We are... (chuckles) That was Aaron and this is Shawn. As usual, Uh, You're in the zone.

Aaron: The SRSLY Wrong zone? The Wrong Boy zone?

Shawn: Yeah, i don't know, I think it was like a after school, Like hang out, Kind of like treehouse,

Aaron: oh okay.

Shawn: I was thinking of the zone on YTV, that's what I was thinking of.

Aaron: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah,

Shawn: childhood

Aaron: Like the little... between the shows they would have like

Shawn: cool people talking about,

Aaron: yeah. I don't even know what they would talk about but they had like a cool set with a lot of stuff in it, Like a TV covered in like goop or something.

Shawn: Totally. Yeah. Canadian childhood stuff...

Shawn: So this is the SRSly Wrong podcast. And today we are doing another library socialism, Q and A session. And this is tackling a sort of cluster of questions that I'd say, are probably our most common questions. So many people have asked variations of this. And the question is, how do you make Library Socialism? how do we take library socialism from a utopian idea to something that is actually a practical movement That is going to transform society?

Aaron: Yeah, the question of like had do you get there is something that i think political radicals of pretty much any group get asked a lot. Like, oh, you want to Marxist society? How you're going to get there? You want an anarchist society, how're you going to get.. you're a utopian?! How do you think you're going to get there?! Well, If you want to know how we think we're going to get there, keep listening because you're you're in the right place.

Shawn: But yeah. This is obviously a really complex question. That's got a lot of different possible contingencies. There's different scenarios that could arise, there's no one answer, but we are going to strive to answer every possible contingency in all parallel universes for all strategies to create a perfect complete answer to the question that will make it impossible for us to not create library socialism as a species as we release it out into the world.

Aaron: Yeah, a lot of the time when people get asked this question, they're like "oh we can't predict the future how could we possibly answer a question that has like so many contingent factors and we don't know what's going to happen tomorrow? Let alone map out the entire transition to an entirely new society that would probably take a minimum decade's maximum, you know, hundreds of years potentially". "How can you predict all that" "people don't know the future" and to that we say...

Shawn: cowards

Aaron & Shawn: ☒ (laughing)

Aaron: Yeah, cowards. uhh people... WE can predict the future. I don't know why you think you can't, but you probably could. All you have to do is prepare for every single possible contingency in a branching web of if this then that if that then this the lasts for, uh, however, long it takes,

Shawn: then you might be asking "what about black swan events".

"What about unexpected things" "would anyone have predicted the global coronavirus pandemic back in 2008?" "Can you really strategize over decades with black swan unexpected events? Things like wars breaking out pandemics?" And so on into that we say a simply, yes, we can.

Aaron: Yeah. All you have to do is say-' if global pandemic, then, do this.'

Shawn: Exactly. Yeah so obviously... I think probably obviously, we're joking about the possibility of naming every possible contingent scenario but we're going to do our best to make sure that people have the information that they need to see this as real possible and maybe even get started on it.

Aaron: Yeah, i think it's more important to talk about ways of approaching the transition or ideas for what transitional institutions or ideas might look like, or like, how to think about approaching the particular circumstances of where you are, or when you are, Or what the world situation is like, at the time, if there's a pandemic or not a pandemic, if there's wars or not wars, or how much those things are currently affecting you and the other activists, where you are. What's the political situation in your city like? All those things are going to change what you would actually need to do to start a transition or continue a transition or like push for these ideas in different situations. So there's like, you can give some amount of practical advice but yeah, obviously like i think the more important thing is thinking about different examples as a way of getting at like, a way of thinking about how to approach these different problems. because the way that you handle complexity isn't to make a roadmap with every single different possibility laid out it's a mindset of like, how to approach different problems from a particular perspective. So yeah. that's what we're trying to do.

Shawn: Yeah, and while our advice is aimed towards kind of our current inherited situations, so, you know, we assume about the present, the people listening, what the situation that we're facing is roughly more or less, you know: we have an imminent ongoing climate crisis, record global inequality, economic inequality, and widespread democratic disenfranchisement. We trace property rights extremism as a major source of all, three of these sort of major crises, which is why we propose usufructian property

relations as one of the answers and one of the solutions out of this mess. But we're also in a situation where people who want to resist the current order or under surveillance, they're outgunned, they're outspent, and in very practical terms are typically busy with keeping themselves alive. So, the deck is slanted against us as people who want to transform society into a library's society, but one of the things that's also unique to the present, unique to the last couple decades on this planet Earth is incredible Information Communications technology, the ability to share information online, to collaborate with people around the world, and so on. So our advice is tailored to that context, but i think a lot of our advice would also apply if, you know, we lived in a really radically different society, or unexpected things happen and stuff. But we're kind of, we've got that in mind. We've got that world in mind.

Shawn: Do ya wanna maybe, we could start with just defining, briefly, library socialism and help contextualize some of our vision of how this transition might happen.

Aaron: Library socialism is a utopian political movement that wants to take the logic of the lending library and apply it to society at large in order to create a democratic egalitarian society.

Aaron: So, one of the major components of that is usufructian property relations, which is like a very similar to what you would see at a library. Basically, that, items would be held in common and lend out to people to use when they need to use them and then returned to a library when they're not in use. The benefits of this are that you get access to a lot more stuff that you need when you need it. And we would need to produce far less stuff overall to meet all people's needs, because there's many things that you only use like a couple times per year. No need to have one of those stored and to produce an amount that everybody has one of them if we can share them broadly amongst the population, produce far fewer, and reduce the ecological cost. So, by engaging in usufructian property relationships, you make people more wealthy in the sense of having access to more strategies for meeting their needs, While at the same time, reducing production, Reducing environmental costs associated with production and overproduction and energy use.

Shawn: Yeah, so we take that, that core idea of usufructian library relations as a means of addressing social and ecological crisis, And to that, we expand to include also the idea of an irreducible minimum, which is a certain level of affluence that no one falls below. And also an end to coerced and unfree labor, which is tied directly to poverty because our society uses poverty to coerce people and to doing labor at a rate and in an amount for a price that they might not otherwise to negotiate. And we also advocate the ethic of complementarity. The idea that differences among humans are generative, that different people are types of people aren't better or worse than each other. It's not worse to be disabled than abled and so on. And that, actually, in fact, these differences are generative and we should structure society with that logic of complementarity in mind, rather than institutions of hierarchy of command, control, and punishment. From that, we also hold that a sufficiently adequate participatory democracy would take advantage of cooperative difference and swarm intelligence in a way that works better and outperforms our inherited legacies of rulership.

Shawn: I think it's a pretty good summary of...

Aaron: Yeah.

Shawn: ...what we're rattling on about.

Shawn: So without further ado, maybe let's open up the zinger of a first of a first question, you know omnibus.

Aaron: So the first group of questions I'm going to read out here are about the bigger picture of transition to library socialism here. This is, this is a smattering of stuff on a theme that we got: "How do we get to library socialism from here?", "What are some personal and societal level things that can be done?", "How do the wrong boys envision the transition from capitalism to library socialism?", "What will the first steps be, for example, in your country of Canada?", and "what would a library socialist movement look like in it's very early stages in a capitalist society."

Shawn: So these are great questions.

Aaron: Yeah, and there's a few different ways to answer this. one Important thing to note is that the idea of a transition to a library socialist society could take many forms and like, maybe there will be

a specific library Socialist political movement, of people who think in those terms and use those labels wanting to move towards that type of society, But i think it's also possible and it's also a win for us, for people who want this type of society, to see ways that these ideas can be integrated into existing social movements and existing political struggles. The idea of expanding the purview of libraries and using library-like property relations for more things in society is a goal that can come about in a lot of different ways. And also like, library socialist elements could be used as like support systems for activist movements for a variety of things: Black lives matter, LGBT activism, liberation movements, all kinds of ways that library socialism could be not specifically a movement in itself for that, but a way of thinking that can influence other types of political movements, other types of political engagements. If you're engaging in municipal politics, there's a lot of stuff you can do to expand what libraries are able to offer communities right now, either by starting to a libraries or other types of libraries or expanding the purview of currently existing libraries.

Aaron: I wanted to start off with making that sort of distinction because I think there's a lot here and there's a lot that I think you have down for what a specific library socialist movement first-steps could look like, but that's not the only way to push for library socialist ideas in society.

Shawn: Yeah, our win conditions here are like, the ideas are the win conditions. So no one needs to wave a library socialism flag for us to be successful. There's a variety of ways that these ideas can be implemented and if you reject some of them and take other ones, that's a win for us. And i think that's the way that library socialism is a movement should proceed also, as like: if you agree with us on these ideas, that's really what we're looking for. But if we want to talk about a capital L, capital S, capital M, Library Socialist Movement, I've been thinking about what first steps might be well suited to this context that we're in, this inherited situation that we have found ourselves in, and i'll give kind of a rough idea of, if not *the* first steps, a very very good first steps for a library of socialist movement. And i think it starts with information, knowledge, and uh information communications technology being utilized effectively. the first step really is satellite research collectives, or digital knowledge commons could be another way to describe it. Basically groups of people getting together to share information with each other, to analyze things together, to challenge each other's ideas, focused on specific things related to library socialism, like the climate crisis and inequality, and building everyone's knowledge and expertise up in a collaborative digital environment. I think this is basically what leftist use social media for currently. consciousness raising and so on. I would argue that we should consciously do this as library socialists. We should consciously create platforms, especially like open source, non-big tech platforms that are private. building up that knowledge is like the first-first step, something that anyone can do. Even if you're by yourself you can join a satellite research collective or you can get a few friends together and start a small one. And having a bunch of different satellite research collectives, at the end of the day, is going to benefit transitional, revolutionary, ecological, democratic politics, whether or not all of these different steps work out.

00:14:47

—☒ epic transition music—

Aaron: Transitional concept number one: Satellite research groups.

—☒ lo-fi background music—

Shawn: One of the major components of transformative politics is narrative and storytelling work. So that includes formal things like journalism, you know, media, podcast, books, etc. But it also includes the stories that we tell each other about politics. The narratives we have about our inherited situation and the transformation that's ahead of us that's required to escape these crises that we face, ecological and social crises.

Aaron: Our narratives should be fact-based. And because there's a lot of information to go through, there's a strong need to collaborate on the research necessary to get the facts right. and this can be done at multiple scales, with small, specialized groups on one end, or large, general purpose groups on the other, all feeding into one another. Some other research focuses could be: understanding the inherited situation, designing and comparing utopian policies, and sharing summaries from books and articles to help raise collective knowledge.

Shawn: Variations on the satellite research group concept or already happening in a lot of ways. All study groups, all reading groups, book club,, they're already a kind of satellite research group in a way. Even just group chats amongst aligned people sharing information about topics they all care about is a type of satellite research group. But we should work to refine the format of SRGs and refine the platforms we use for this type of action over time, because it's so essential. Better informed activists will do better work, be more persuasive with more convincing narratives, and in the end will be more successful.

Aaron: and this applies to any broad category of revolutionary agitation or activism whether it's library socialism, or not. some form of satellite research groups are a necessary component, and for people who are looking for the first steps they can take to do something, they're a good place to start.

—☒ lo-fi background music fades—

* * *

Shawn: And from there, I think the next... the main function... the main type of library socialist outreach that I think we should do is to form groups a various sizes, but small groups are fine. There's often a tendency to think that a bigger group is better but a small group of people can achieve a lot. And these groups are structured around the dual strategy of agitating for library socialism, providing information about library socialism, sharing information that comes from the research collectives with the public, but also doing outreach that's aimed—squarely aimed, and very intentionally aimed—at providing a benefit to people who are outside of your collective. So something like, you know, distributing food on the street corner like food, not bombs does, is a great example of that kind of thing. So you're handing out food someone comes up to you: "Hey, nice, free food. Thanks! Thanks for the ice cream sandwich. Hey, who are you guys?" "Oh, we're libraries socialists. here, read our pamphlet. It's made out of research that we've done in our satellite research collective. Do you want to get on our mailing list?"...and so on... but there's a huge amount of things that you can do in that spectrum. stuff like clothing swaps, community bulk food buys, gardening on people's lawns, like in the suburbs, where there's a lot of lawn space, people might want to have a garden but they don't have the time to do it and you could create a cooperative mechanism for adept gardeners to use all the gardening space in a community and split the fruits of it. There's also really like Library Socialisty library-library versions, like community libraries, systems or structures where people can put their goods into a shared circuit and have an accountable process for, you know, borrowing lawn mowers from each other and a local area, etc.

Shawn: Running a file sharing site, something like Anna's archive, and stuff like that. It'd be awesome to get a site like Anna's archive that was like agitating for library socialism also, I think it probably be the greatest propaganda operation and library socialist history If you could associate those things.

Shawn: And I think critically one of the things unique to the moment we're in with the climate crisis too, is an organization that's providing climate mitigation information and helps people to do things in their own community. like if you have a freak snowstorm having a list of people, a mailing list that you can ping to be like: "we're going to go salt these roads and shovel these roads because our city, our municipal government is not used to doing this sort of thing and they're not going to show up for

us and people are going to be stuck for the next couple days” That happened in Vancouver what was it last year or the year before. just people were stuck everywhere. I think the last two years.

Aaron: I mean it happens kind of every time it’s snows in Vancouver but yeah, it’s been a lot. last few years.

Shawn: So yeah, i think that kind of that kind of org could be really good. So you have to look at the context that you’re in and what you think people might respond to and what expertise and abilities exist within the networks that are related to these satellite research collectives. But the general through line is like, doing something for other people, in a public way, where you’re seeing being nice, you’re seeing being helpful. I think that is a powerful way to do good in the world, and also, at the same time, build library socialist consciousness, and the library socialist movement.

Aaron: Yeah, I think that doing things that benefit that community is like such a crucial way to think about how activist groups in general can engage with the public in a way that naturally creates goodwill and would naturally encourage others to want to participate and to see the ideas that you’re talking about as the source of something good and useful and beneficial to the community, because like, this proof is sort of in the pudding. It’s in what you’re actually doing. Because like, you can have all the like beautiful, nice ideas, interlocking sets of logical, philosophical, ideological beliefs, about the world, and what it should look like and how to get there and whatever. And like you could have your activist group that’s trying to spread awareness about whatever particular thing, just on the power of ideas alone and being like: “look, look at our pamphlet! isn’t this such a great idea!? It doesn’t, this sound nice!? doesn’t this seem like the right way to go about things!?”... and like you might get some people on board doing that, you might intrigue some people, but I think for the most part people aren’t going to care that much about your ideas unless they have some kind of hook. And if the community presence of an activist group is consistently providing things to people that they wouldn’t have otherwise, or that they’re providing it to them in a way that is more accessible than the sort of typical societal way those things are being provided currently, then your piquing people’s interest on a level other than just pure philosophical. “Oh, that’s an interesting idea.” “Yeah, it would be cool if the future was like that”, you’re like “Oh! These are people who are doing something like, actually useful, like rubber meets the road, concretely useful”, and “what’s causing them to do that”, “what’s behind that?”.

Aaron: When you get to the ideas through that route, there’s a sort of like, natural inclination to want to be like, “oh, like, who are you?” “What’s what’s behind, this?” “What kinds of people are out here doing these things?”.

Aaron: Using that as the main focus of your activism and having the ideas as being the thing that’s behind it, is a thing that’s sort of like social proof of what you’re talking about. That’s the sort of way to approach things that i think can work in basically any situation in the world, at any time in the world, because it just involves looking at your local community and what you can offer that you would offer if you have like the people that you need. like a group of five friends or whatever to make your affinity group to go out and like do these things. How can you help? be a helper. And then when people ask why you’re helping, you can say: “this is why: ”.

Aaron: I think we should do more things like this. This is what our group is about.

Shawn: And then you have people saying, “Oh, yeah, library socialists. Yeah, I met some of them. they were really nice.”

Aaron: right.

Shawn: Incredibly valuable. In geopolitics they call that soft power.

Aaron: and then if you keep getting people being like “oh how can we help I have like three other friends and we all want to help you” and you’re like “we got this little thing we’re doing here, why don’t you start your own little group and do something else?” And we can like communicate with each other and coordinate when we need to.

Shawn: Yeah,

Aaron: “you dont necessarily have to join our group. If you got like three other friends, you can start your own other group.”

Shawn: "We'll have some people who are experienced join you and your three friends, and the five of you are going to set up XYZ program that we're interested in doing but we haven't had capacity for, and we'll be confederated." and it what it creates in the end Ideally is a self-reinforcing system of free association, direct democracy, mutual aid, and public sentiment being positive towards you.

00:23:20

—☒ epic transition music—

Aaron: Transitional concept number two: The confederation of helpers.

—☒ lo-fi background music—

Shawn: The basic unit of mutual aid activism is helping people. We propose a confederated structure of small groups, doing complementary projects, that aims to aid people, members of the public as part of a strategy of agitation for social transformation.

Aaron: Projects could include: free food, distribution community tool libraries, community pantries, clothing swaps, and other strategies where coming together has a collective and individual benefit. And in places where these types of projects are already being pursued, those groups could be potentially integrated into the confederation.

Shawn: library socialists want to build a good reputation based on acts of service and effective coordination around community needs. And structure our work at its core, for free association, collaboration, direct democracy, and first and foremost, making a positive difference in people's lives.

Aaron: and confederation as an organizational structure allows for more smaller groups that can be lighter on their feet and more focused on the task at hand, collaborating together on larger projects when necessary.

Shawn: Sometimes we think of confederation as a step down the line after direct democracy, and I've got a subtly different perspective on that in that I think we should embed confederation at really early stages of organizing. So instead of having one big group of 40 people, I would have five groups of eight people. It just works well for everyone if you have agency over your own work and avoid a backseat driver culture, that doesn't respect volunteer effort. stuff like that is why we should practice the art of confederation earlier in the process, because basically the bigger and more powerful and more confederated, you are, the more power you have to throw around. and the more organized and engaged you are as a community, and the more organizing engaged, you are the better for everyone. the better the political outcomes.

Aaron: In any category of revolutionary agitation or activism, library socialism or not, groups focused on helping people materially and socially are a necessary component of any movement and when confederated into a free, associative, confederation of helpers, they have a sincere potential to challenge, the inherited situation and promote a deep social transformation.

—☒ lo-fi background music fades—

00:25:46

Shawn: I also imagine a kind of specialized role that exists when there's a bunch of infrastructure in place, that can provide beneficial things. There's kind of a specific outreach role that can arise in that context, which you could call like a "neighborhood connector", you could call it whatever you want. And I envision this is as role where someone is, either through phone calls or through doorknocking, being like, "hey, I'm with the library socialists. I'm here to help. Do you need any help? Do you need any food? Do you need warm socks?" or whatever. You know, like, whatever the spectrum of stuff that is provided

by this organization. Like think about how Amazon got so deep in our lives, I'm not lionizing Amazon as a whole, but they're basic premise of the soft power of giving people what they want and building a positive affinity with them, is exactly what an activist organization should seek to do in their own way, with their own resources, their own structures, and ethically of course. But so yeah, imagine that person coming to your door, it's this nice guy, he says he's part of this socialist organization, and he's just offering you like some stuff, that if you Need it, right? And he's like, "on Tuesday, we have dinner here that you can come to" or "there's this barbecue..." or whatever, and just like, "Anyways, well if you need anything, you know, use this contact form."

Aaron: Yeah, "If you ever need any lawn tools; hedge trimmer, leaf blower, I don't know if you got all that stuff, but, you know, we have a tool library here for like, these few blocks or this area of the city, you know, it's just, you won't have to go buy your own if you only use it every once in a while, like, we, we have that here just want to let you know."

Shawn: "And remember when it snowed like crazy last year, and no one could drive out of the neighborhood because there's hills in every direction and our city doesn't have any snow mitigation. But would you be interested in signing up on a list of people who would help shovel? We've got like 20 people but you know, you seem like a strong guy and it's helps the community. Are you interested in that kind of thing?" I bet you a lot of people who you ask that directly would be like "oh yeah sure, no that's a great idea." you know, and it's like that's the kind of spectrum that we want to be in organization. We're giving help, we're also asking for help. There's the was that Benjamin Franklin rule, that if you ask someone for help there, they like you more because you've like given them an opportunity to demonstrate themselves or something like that. It's totally true though. Like if you ask someone for a little favor, it makes them like you more for some weird quirk in psychology, because we're a helping species, we just love helping eachother.

Aaron: Yeah. And it builds rapport and it like, yeah. And building those, like core community engagements is necessary towards starting the process of like building actually democratic institutions at local community levels like that, where people can have more of a say in the things that affect their life. You know, theoretically, this goes really well, there's like organizations like this in communities all around the world more and more people are joining them, more and more things are being done by and offered through these community organizations. people are relying on them, they're becoming more convenient in a lot of ways than the the current capitalist institutions of society. Building that type of power of people participating in, and having an investment in these community institutions and the fact that they have an actual democratic say and how the community institutions are run, if they're participating in them, that's the like beginning's of kernels of things that can expand out to begin to replace the other capitalist institutions in society.

Shawn: Yeah, if you removed all the library socialism branding for it, I think that's also just a description of like, how to have a strong political left. But yeah, so I think that's where we start. I actually, I think there's a lot of different ways we could do it. That is a great pathway of how to start and a framework for how to build over time. Starting from first steps, to building up to being a serious political movement that can actually challenge centers of power, can change public opinion, and can build popular consensus of the need for a ecological and democratic transition on planet Earth.

00:29:44

—☒ epic transition music—

Shawn: Transitionary concept 3: Neighborhood connectors

Neighbor: (voiced by Aaron) Connector: (voiced by Shawn)

—☒ sound of knocking on a door— —☒ sound of door latch opening— —☒ soft sounds of neighborhood ambiance, wind rustling, birds—

Neighbor: Hi there.

Connector: Hi, I'm from the local utopian library collective. My name's Shawn. I'm just checking in to see if you want to sign up for our neighborhood tool library program. A number of your neighbors are already sharing tools for free, so if you like you can borrow a good drill if you need one from a neighbor, that kind of thing, or you can put your tools up for a loan too.

Neighbor: Oh that sounds kind of interesting. I don't have a lot of time right now though, I'm kind of watching the kids so...

Connector: No problem. Here, let me give you an information package and you can sign up at this link here. —☒ sound marker on paper— The page here will act er... —☒ sound of paper rustling— this page here on the back: It includes all the different communal services we're working on right now, so there's lots of cool stuff to take advantage of.

Neighbor: Oh wow, you guys do free meals at the park on Sundays that's cool.

Connector: soup on Sundays. We also have a bulk buying program, it can save you money by teaming up with your neighbors and buying in bulk. We got a program around shoveling snow when there's a snowstorm, you know, our city doesn't do a good job dealing with that. Actually, this might be a weird question, but I just spoke to a senior citizen a couple doors down—We like to try to connect people—she's been having trouble carrying her own groceries home from the store, she lives alone. she's on a pension. So we're trying to connect her with someone in this neighborhood who can help coordinate with her directly, kind of one-to-one, grab a few things for her on a regular basis. You think that's something that you might be interested in doing to like help a neighbor.

Neighbor: That sounds like really nice thing to do. I'll have to talk to my partner about it, but yeah, I think we might be interested in doing that.

Connector: Honestly, that would just be like, amazing. She's super sweet. Here, let me just, write this down that, uh, we'll follow up with you

Neighbor: Sorry and who are you again? You said utopian, something... Is that like a non-profit?

Connector: Yeah. So I'm a volunteer neighborhood connector. We're an activist group: the Vancouver Utopian Library Collective. We basically just try to help people in any way we can, uh and talk about you know, climate crisis and things like that, but my job is to go to people's doors, let them know about our projects, see if they want to receive help or give help in any way, and just help connect people.

Neighbor: Oh, well, you know, I have some extra cans of beans around, would that uh, maybe help out with the Sunday soup thing?

Connector: Yeah, no. That would be awesome! No, If you have a food donation like that, well we could definitely take it and use it for the project,

Neighbor: Here, let me just go get those for you.

Connector: Man people are so nice. This is such a fun thing to do, talking to people like this, seeing him help each other.

—☒ ambiance sounds fade—

—☒ epic transition music—

Shawn: Transitionary concept number three: Neighborhood connectors.

00:32:06

Shawn: So here's another bundle of questions, technical questions on the small scale: "How do you go about setting up a community library of everything?" "Who legally owns the collection given currently legal definitions?" "Is there software to help manage collection and loans?" and "Would it be good or bad to vet new borrowers while the library socialist culture is still getting established?". All really great interesting questions.

Aaron: On how do you go about setting up a community library of everything? One piece of advice that just came to mind is that it doesn't necessarily have to be a library of *everything* right away. You know, in a small community, you're probably going to only have specific resources. So, i, i know, they probably didn't mean, literally, everything, but, like focusing in on strategically what you think people in your community might need on a regular basis, by not want to own... picking items specifically that lend themselves to brief periods of use and then returning them in the way that like tools do... I think this is why a lot of people focus on tool libraries as a natural sort of extension of the current like book library thing, is that tools are just one of those things that people don't need all the time. Another one I like to point to a lot of the time is tents for camping. Probably only use that once or twice a year, so you probably don't need to own a tent. A bunch of different people could share the same tent over a summer. But it's another example. Like picking and choosing which things you're going to start with that you think people would actually use and would actually be a benefit to society I think would be a sort of key initial consideration and setting something like that up.

Shawn: Yeah, there's kind of multiple ways that we can approach it. There is the very bottom up non-institutional approach, which would be like, say you get... you doorknock; flyer drop, in your immediate neighborhood, and have a like meeting about establishing a tool library. So you inform everyone there's going to be this certain time. You prepare a little bit of punch, maybe some snacks. do a little presentation to everyone and say here's the plan. We all have these things, we have more things than we need. would you pledge tools that you have? And like, be prepared to be like "I've got the lawn mower, the tools, etc, that i would put in the library". "Are you guys interested in working out some sort of system, where we can all share these things in a dynamic way, and have people pledge, their shovels and stuff in a way?"

Shawn: So, that's like happening at the small level of among neighbors in a way, that's just practically helping them. It might be a good place to start. And in that context, like, who would own the stuff would be that everyone would continue to technically under the law own their own stuff, but there'd be sharing agreement about what the criteria is for the use of other people's materials, like how do they withdraw it, or put it in the system, and stuff. Some of those technical questions would that have to be hammered out, but they're not particularly hard.

Shawn: So that's one way that you could do it is, like the very organic people focused one. Or you could have like, a more institutional approach of like getting together some people and some money and establishing an institution or organization that is like a tool library or is another type of like lending library of things that serves a community. So this might be larger than a city block or two, the area that it serves. That sort of thing I think would make sense to be structured with some sort of buy-in, like having people be shareholders, or having their be a membership fee, and things like, you know... in the ideal version, we want to avoid all this stuff as much as possible, like, fees money... But as practical matters in setting up institutions in the current environment, I don't have a strong objection to those things insofar as they're helping build up these library socialist relations, and that they're not say uniformly controlled by one person who's like, profiting off of others, and so on. Like it needs to be approached in an ethical way.

Aaron: Yeah, they asked about like, who legally owns the collection given currently legal definitions and in a situation like that, where you're actually starting like a tool library, maybe with like actual space where like people come to the library, like a—I don't want to say storefront because it's not a store but like uh—a place where the things are housed

Shawn: commons front

Aaron: commons front. Yeah, there's a few different ways to do it but you would want some type of cooperatively owned structure where the people who are members of the library share ownership. Because you wouldn't want to have it just as like a sole-proprietorship business, obviously. I'm thinking more of like non-profit institution or just like co-op. Like a way in which you can have an organization that has rules governing it based on people who are participating in the institution, sharing account-

ability and ownership over the items within the institution would be like the sort of mid-scale thing there.

Aaron: I think it's also worth mentioning that like on like the sort of largest scale and like municipalities, there's also work that can be done of like expanding current library systems, or using municipal funds in other ways to encourage the creation of tool libraries or things like that on a municipal scale. And in those cases, they would be, I guess technically, owned by the municipality.

Aaron: So there's a lot of different possible ways that this could be set up from that sort of small scale to the larger scale thing.

Shawn: Yeah, and on the heavy institutional front that you're just talking about with municipalities and stuff: Like at the end of the day, we do need—no matter what political organizing we do—we need to be doing it in a legal and political context that doesn't criminalize us for doing what we're doing. And so that implies, to me, at least some degree of trying to, over time, lobby for that political context to be beneficial towards these sort of property relationships. And there's some drawbacks that we can think of when, say that you have a really great municipal, lending library, and you like achieve that, you convince parties that are in power and your city to like put resources into this kind of thing and it's all set up in a way that community volunteers, that have a hard time doing. That's great, obviously, on one level... But then the challenge is: the fate of those institutions is caught up in the election system, is caught up and who the party in power their budgets and stuff like that. And that's a drawback and it's something that needs to be mitigated and grappled with, in that context. But overall I find proposals like that that are implemented through a legal framework, I think are beneficial part of the overall. Like, when we imagine a societal transformation from the current world to a library socialist, world down the line, we imagine that happening partially through existing institutions as a matter of like practicality and urgency, and also like stability for regular people.

Shawn: So, any place where we can fund, prefigure, build, or legally encodify library socialists relations, like that's, it's probably a good thing. But it needs to be rooted in a democracy that's outside the state, like not party politics, not a library socialist party, but, you know, confederated helpers, public opinion, research collectives, and mass political action that's helping shift the norms within institutions, that's pushing from the outside—and also, i mean, individuals pushing on the inside is also part of that—until the institutions become unrecognizable and radically different.

Shawn: So like one example of a legal formulation that we could fight for and win on the road to library socialism is a legal status for a decommodified property that can no longer be bought and sold. Moving items out of the marketplace and into a common realm, legally, is something that could be structured in policy. Similarly, you know, legal structures around democratic usufructian ownership.

Shawn: So, to answer the question of "who owns what down the line?" I think we could collectively own it, in new ways, that could be encoded and law. And also legal formulations around like, is the question of, is it a co-op? Is it a non-profit? Is it municipal? etc. There could be legal formulations around democratic institutions that are none of those things that are new categories.

Shawn: So we we have a willingness to use institutional resources and we draft utopian policy in our research collectives. The realm of law and policy is a place of utopian contention for us, it's part of our overall strategy, but again, it's rooted in this democracy outside the state, the Confederation of Helpers, satellite research collectives, etc. These things can be made complimentary.

Shawn: So back on the original question of, like, how we deal with this potential reliance on the state to keep our municipal library open, I think there's a few possibilities. One of them is a bit more technical but we could draft policy that limits the conditions that such a project could be defunded or privatized etc. You can also draft policy that ensures legally that the libraries are distributed to democratic community groups, specific ones, or ones set according to criteria, in the event that it's defunded like, that sort of thing.

Shawn: But there's another principle that might also kind of help us to protect wins like that, and that's that: if you set up a library of everything in your community, people will like it. People like libraries. And if you set up a system that prevents the waste of things by having there be a library pick

up for things like old furniture and stuff like that, people are going to like that. And if people like things, they're going to fight to keep them. So when thinking about the municipal legal political kind of stuff like that, we want to ensure that we're getting policies and institutions in place, that once they're set up, people are really going to like and they're going to fight to keep.

Aaron: right in terms of software to manage collections and loans, it really depends again on the scale of what you're doing. If you're doing that two blocks, knocking on doors, seeing who wants to share items amongst themselves in your little like close-knit neighborhood community, maybe all you need is a group excel spreadsheet, or google sheet, or whatever that people have a link to, that you keep track of who has which item, and that's maybe all you need for something on that scale.

Aaron: If you're talking about larger scale things, I think there's potential for adapting different library softwares or... There's a lot of different sort of project-management software that exists that could potentially be adapted to things like this. There's also things that are like spreadsheets but have a bit more flexibility. Like there's Coda and Notion are two like things you can play with, to track things like that in projects. And also, I did a google search, I was trying to find if there was library software that already existed that wasn't focused on books. And at first, it was kind of hard to find, but the google search that got me some results that looked promising was "library of things software" and I saw I think at least three or four different ones that seem to exist there. I didn't research any of them in specific but that's the google search I would use to begin the sort of journey there if you're looking for something that's like a really purpose-built already existing software. But yeah I don't think you would need that to start. I think in Excel spreadsheet would work for a lot of more community use cases.

Shawn: Yeah. And if we're talking about the capital L capital S capital M, Library Socialist Movement, and we are trying to create kind of like a global library socialist consensus towards transforming society, then we'll definitely have to have people engaged in the developing of our own tools based on, you know, the uses that come out in practice. And, you know, we're going to have to have probably international working groups, working in open source software and stuff like that. That would be part of the vision.

Shawn: And there's just something I want to emphasize here because it's come up before: it's not library socialist, unless it's being used to agitate for political transformation. A lot of these ideas like community to a libraries tool, libraries that are set up as cooperatives and stuff, they can be influenced by library socialism without being Library Socialists in the capital L capital S sense, and I think in order to be in the capital L capital S sense, Library Socialist, just to be clear, we appreciate and like, any... there's no need to be capital L capital S, in most circumstances... but if you want to be, like a community library, isn't enough to be Library Socialist *unless it's specifically, explicitly, endorsing a Library Socialist vision of transforming society to an ecological and democratic society with usufructian property relations*. And that distinction is subtle, but important, because I just want to emphasize, like, not every library thing, not every tool library thing, is Library Socialism. It's part of the same spectrum, there could be influences back and forth, but unless it's using these tools to agitate for that social transformation that it's not capital L capital S.

Aaron: Yeah and the "would it be good to vent new borrowers while the library socialist culture is still getting established". I don't really know how you would vet new borrowers. To me, It would be more of a thing of like, if people abuse the system, they would lose privileges over time.

Shawn: and you can have like the buy-in shareholder kind of model for co-ops. A municipal model would have systems to... library ban people who repeatedly deface books and cause a scene, etc,

Aaron: right

Shawn: And at the local community level, It's a little more awkward, but like, if someone is fucking up your community library, then people need to have a plan for like how to dissuade them. What's it called... escalating?...

Aaron: graduated sanctions.

Shawn: graduated sanctions.

Shawn: Yeah. So, at first, there's like a little, there's like a warning, you know, they lose some privileges, they're cut out for a week, etc. And then eventually you're banned. And that sort of system works, for, in a friendly way, getting everyone on the same page about following the charter, following the rules that are set up, and so on.

Shawn: So, yeah, there's no one-size-fits-all answer, but to some degree, yes, like people... yeah, less vetting but more like, vetting afterwards.

Aaron: And yeah, while it's still getting esta-... I imagine in a fully realized library socialist future, obviously if like everything that people need is encompassed under a library system, you wouldn't be banning people from accessing it if they're abusing the system in some way, but there would be ways of community outreach, and if someone's constantly like breaking items or whatever there would be, you know, you'd want to know why that's happening. What can we do as a community to stop it? Like, what help do you need? Can these things be easily repaired? is it, is it happening? Because, you know, you have particular needs that the items only kind-of meet and you're using them sort of in the wrong way but because it's the only thing you have available? like, what's the reason this is happening? That would be a sort of like, ideal in a library socialist future, way of dealing with breaches of good community use of these resources. There could be graduated sanctions in that situation too, but obviously, there wouldn't be like a cutting people off thing. But I think in terms of smaller scale things in the current society, we don't necessarily have the resources to do that for every single person who might breach the etiquette or the rules of the library. So there is a difference there between an ideal and goal and like a current society thing.

Shawn: Yeah. And I think in terms of the ideal goal I trust the people of the future to be able to... these are surmountable problems, and it'll take experimentation and thought, and it will take more people than just us to figure out how all these things are structured, how do you make sure that people don't abuse the system while also ensuring that they have an inalienable right to the irreducible minimum and so on. But I have total confidence that these are surmountable.

00:47:33

—☒ epic transition music—

Aaron: Transitional concepts number four: Utopian policy from below.

—☒ lo-fi background music—

Shawn: Our political project is rooted in democratic counterpower. Starting with satellite research groups, building into helper groups, and building into a confederation of helpers. We don't seek public office or power, but we do consider policy debates and the reforms and legislation of states to be a site of utopian contestation and a place to develop our shared political imagination.

Aaron: In satellite research groups, we should be continually developing interesting, novel, and life enriching policies that increase the realm of freedom. We can push for these policies as part of a new common sense. Our attempts at a counter hegemony.

Shawn: Some examples of the types of policies which are utopian and enrich, human freedom, include: decreased workweeks, increased paid holidays, paid sabbaticals for everyone would be a great one,

Aaron: municipal libraries of things,

Shawn: programs like cut food waste by mandating nearly expired food wasted from restaurants and grocery stores are put into municipally funded community kitchen programs,

Aaron: programs that reduce the amount of useful commodities being sent to the dump by allowing community members to have useful items picked up and repaired or redistributed through community libraries,

Shawn: and a big reforms like legal constructs that allow for democratic and communal property in new ways, structures which make it undesirable to hoard property or money, legal constructs that decommodify some property making it illegal to buy or sell communal goods.

Aaron: There's some policies which are more liberatory and fully Library Socialist, and there are also policies that we think are good but are less particular to our movement. We should never miss an opportunity to criticize inadequate policies or to celebrate places where policies have made life better for people.

Shawn: As utopians, we draft more policies than will ever be implemented. The utopian policy space, it's a rich place to debate and refine our ideas, even in the context where many of these specific ideas are doomed to remain that: ideas, things to debate about. But even that serves a dual purpose. On one hand, it enriches the utopian imagination of society as a whole, by providing new options, meaning in the future, when crises happen, there are solutions lying around, and on a personal level, it enriches our own utopian imaginations to work through these ideas together, to refine them, and to define together what might make a better future for everyone.

—☒ lo-fi background music fades—

00:50:06

Shawn: So on the economics of library socialism, we've got a few questions on this: "What are the economics of library socialism and how do they play into transition?" "Question: in your vision, will there be something that looks like a modified version of today's economic understanding, for example, Keynes, Varoufakis, etc, or will it look more like a complex network of personal relationships and formal and informal systems of debt i.e Graeber?"

Aaron: Yeah. So basically, like, the economics of library socialism, we kind of intro'd, we kind of talked about usufructian economics. Just really basically what that means is that property rights in some systems can be thought of as broken into *usus*, *fructus*, and *abusus*. So basically the right to use something, the right to benefit from something, and the right to destroy something. And the idea of usufructian economics and the way we use it, is talking about commonly held property where people have the right to use, and enjoy things that are owned by everyone in theory, owned by society, they're granted usufructian property rights for something, but not *abusus* rights. You don't fully own something, you can't destroy things that other people can use, they should be returned to the library and used again by someone else. So the, the easy way to think about usufructian property relationships is the library.

Shawn: Yeah. And so, our current economic understanding, including the counter economics of someone like Varoufakis, who i admire greatly, and I just generally, like in general, endorse wonkish counter economic, radical stuff people like Matt Bruenig and stuff, doing great work and they're totally welcome within the library of tactics and analysis that library socialism is bringing forward. But a lot of economics is based on the assumption of private property as something that is static and negotiated and finished. And we're bringing to the table that, you know, this is one of the, the unique key aspects of library socialism, as we're saying we need to renegotiate that. And like, Aaron was just saying, there are property relationships which are possible that aren't the current incarnation of private property that we inherited from ancient Rome that's rooted in slave law. So on the question of, will it be more like the wonkish counter economics of Varoufakis, or will it be more like the communal counter economics of someone like Graeber? I think the answer is, to certain degrees, both, as we are trying to transition in a way that is responsible and appealing to people and like... Our vision of revolution is not a thunder clap revolution, you know, like a moment of insurrection and uprising where there's chaos for some period and then it settles down. We want to have the process be something that is evolutionary, that people have a buy-in to, that people aren't afraid of, that you know, we can be the serious kind of—sort of

inverting the way that verifocus uses it—be the adults in the room that people can trust that we have a serious plan for how to transition and they don't have to worry about their children being harmed, for example. So I think part of doing that is having a serious counter economic analysis of the current system, and I think that eroding property rights sort of necessarily requires that sort of thing.

Aaron: In terms of how it plays into transition, I mean, partially, it really fits neatly into what we've already talked about which is like, talking about starting to build these types of economic relations among people in community, in municipalities, in various ways, and then attempting to grow that so that more and more people begin participating in these types of economic relations, as opposed to the current capitalist abuses property right relations of our current society. There's a lot of different ways this can happen, but, basically what you want to do in a transition from one type of economic outlook to another is to increase the amount of our relations that are structured this way, the way that we're talking about, usufructian way, as opposed to the current way.

Shawn: Yeah. So on a society wide level, we want to be doing interventions and the economic systems that are moving us towards more egalitarian, ecological, and democratic economic relations that are challenging and changing property rights.

Shawn: But then also at the a smaller level, there's building up of common spaces spaces that are sort of not economic in the relationships that are happening with them like Commons management like Eleanor Ostrum talks about which is, you know, it's economics. It is economics in a sense but it's not like the trading of things for money and stuff. It's kind of a social relation and not an economic relation in a way, but it's also kind of an economic relation.

Aaron: I mean, yeah. All economic relations are a type of social relation in a way. I think economics like in its best form is like kind of the study of how we distribute and generate the things that people need, to people who need them. To sort of maximize that. Like how do we get people the things that they need and the study of how to do that, and I think Elinor Ostrum's Principles for Commons Management are like a really good starting place for thinking about how this actually works.

Aaron: Yeah. I think there's like a lot of economic principles that lend support to the type of society and the type of transition we're talking about. Like we've talked about before the idea of a group of people cooking one large pot of soup has an economic benefit of what's that scale? What's the...

Shawn: economy of scale

Aaron: It's an economy of scale benefit to make one large pot of soup for a large group of people versus everybody making their own pot of soup, because there's a benefit to saving on labor costs there. Like, you just have one person or two people making soup for 32 people rather than 32 people all individually making soup for themselves and spending with the time to do that. There's an economy of scale benefit there.

Shawn: Yeah, it takes less labor hours and probably and would use less resources, have less waste and so on. So there's an economic benefit there. And the same goes for library lending in general. It's like you're getting more value out of the sort of cost the environmental cost of a product by sharing it. So, instead of producing a book for everyone in the community, you're producing one book that people take turns with, or a handful of books that everyone takes turns with, and as a results you're getting more value for less input. That's an economic calculation that library socialism has a big advantage. And both of those advantages can be used in the process of helping people, like we talked about before, with this type of outreach strategy of doing things for the community, is that one of the advantages that library socialism has is that we genuinely have an sort of economic force on our side which is that communal relationships, sharing relationships, are economically cheaper than atomized relationships.

Aaron: Yeah, there's also the idea of marginal utility, which is basically the idea that the value of a dollar is different depending on how much you need it. If you're a billionaire, you need a dollar a lot less than somebody who's living paycheck to paycheck. The value of money or resources is different, depending on how much you have. And so, hoarding wealth, individuals having tons of hoarded wealth decreases the value of the things that they're hoarding because they aren't being used by people. They're not... If economics is a study of how to get things people need to people, as a billionaire, you don't

need most of the things you have, you're just preventing people who do need them from accessing them, thus like decreasing value overall in society. So redistributing wealth in general is a proposition that increases value in society because those resources can be put to use for the people who actually need them, Increasing the sort of like value you get out of the stuff.

Shawn: Yeah. And the typical application of marginal utility, the question I think was like: why does someone who has 100 cows willing to sell a cow for cheaper than someone who has only one cow or something like that in the pattern grid world stuff? And we take that same logic and apply it to money, like a thousand dollars to someone who's homeless is life-changing, a thousand dollars to Jeff Bezos is nothing. It's a flick in the nuts to him... well it's better than a flick in the nuts, but not much better...

Aaron: ☒

Shawn: Um...

Aaron: taking a thousand dollars?... anyways who cares?

Shawn: ☒ (laughing)

Aaron: ☒ (laughing)

Aaron: So moving on to another question: "What is this strategic benefit to being a library socialist, rather than an anarchist or a marxist, etc? Do we really need more ways to split people up?"

Aaron: So I think there is strategic benefit to using the label of library socialism and to the ideas sets of the library socialism kind of brings to the radical politics table in general. But I also wanted to say that i don't think having different labels necessarily means that people have to be split up. I think it's a tendency people have when dealing with labels like, "oh, I'm an Anarchist and not a Marxist" or that "Anarchism and Marxism have to be inherently opposed". But there's also people—and i would count myself among them—who think that both Anarchism and Marxism have useful stuff in them in some sense, I consider myself both an Anarchist and a Marxist and a Library Socialist. I think you can be all three. I think the problem of people like, splitting themselves up by labels and opposing themselves to other people is more of a problem with how people deal with labels and factionalism than it is that creating another label is going to multiply this problem, that we just have too many labels and if we paired it down just to the most essential labels and there would only be like three fractions or something and...

Shawn: If only we just realized that one of these labels was right about their enemies being bad, and right about themselves being good, and all the rest of them are wrong about those things, and everyone joined that one label, we'd have enough people to finally pull something off... I don't really think that's how it works. And we, yeah, we have these tendencies, there's these social tendencies that we have to, like, turn our own side into angels, downplay the things that are associated with our own ideas that are negative, and play up the things that we find not... like just look on twitter for 10 minutes with the types of quote-unquote "debates"—which I think actually fall far below what I'd consider real debate—where just people are just ripping on each other and insulting each other in these broad groups and stuff. I don't really want to add Library Socialism to that dynamic and be like: "oh yeah, start ripping on everyone from the Library Socialist perspective instead. that's really going to make everything work".

Shawn: Library Socialism with our metaphor of the library, you know, this group of things that's bigger than the sum of its parts, that can also be applied to the left in some sense. Like, i know Marxists who I admire the action and analysis of greatly. I know Anarchists who admire the action and analysis of greatly. My tendency in terms of identification is more like Social Ecology than either of those, but there's influence all around in these spheres. Like these, these factional groups on the left, I really do consider them part of a single continuum in some ways that people don't really act like that's the case when they're playing like, kind of the partisan games, and they have their partisan armor on and they're...

Aaron: yeah, and it's like "read theory", and they mean like read a specific kind of theory so that you identify with a specific label and a specific fixed set of answers to the questions that the left asks. I don't, yeah, I don't want to turn library socialism into that. I would rather library socialism take an approach of: there's a whole library of different ideologies and tactics on the left, from Marxism to Anarchism to

Libertarian Municipalism to—you know, get as detailed as you want—council communists, democratic socialism... We have this library of labels and idea-sets with things associated with them that all have beneficial kernels to them. And to me the library socialism position is yes-and to the parts of those that are beneficial to the given analysis of a particular time and place.

Shawn: on the subject of the strategic benefit, which I actually think that really is one with library socialism as a title is pretty approachable, I think.

Aaron: Yeah, think there's a benefit of just, people get it immediately, like, oh yeah, libraries,

Shawn: Yeah. And you could call it like a library society. Like if you wanted to depoliticize it further you could say like, you know, "the movement for a library society" and even cut out the socialism stuff. But I think socialism is associated right now probably most-strongly in public imagination with Democratic Socialism and Bernie Sanders. Whether, and I'm sorry to people listening who might prefer that's not the case, but i think that is the case. So library socialism has this kind of thing that's like friendly and approachable and pushes further than democratic socialism in it's radicalism, but has that kind of association of this is friendly, this is something you could talk to your neighbor about, this is something you can talk to your mom about, there's no bloodthirst to it, that's not the associations people have. And like yeah, Marxism and anarchism, and again I'm sorry if this isn't what people prefer to be the case, but like go and talk to people at the mall or go talk to people on the street corner about Marxism and anarchism and you can get some pretty familiar and predictable responses about you know, failures and brutality within the Soviet union, the

Aaron: the dangerous anarchists on the streets.

Shawn: Yeah, chaotic bomb throwing anarchists associated...

Aaron: yeah

Shawn: And whether you think that's fair or not or whether you prefer that to be the case or not, let's just be real, like we're going to do all that work to re-litigate all these enormous historical disputes, *before we get started* on addressing the climate crisis, *that's already here*.

Aaron: Yeah, having the association be, rather than with the Soviet Union, or bomb throwing anarchists on the streets, but instead the library, one of the public institutions that has like, the highest approval rating of all public institutions.

Shawn: yeah, It's basically, the only public institution that hasn't suffered in public opinion over the last couple decades.

Aaron: I think associating radical politics with that is a really smart move, just from a public relations perspective, but it's also just like, really really honest. It's not like, "oh let's just take the cloud of libraries because people love libraries", it's like actually foundational to what we think the path forward is to a better society and the way that a better society would look, is to expand those library relations. So it like both gets really deeply to the core of what the actual political argument is and is associated with something that people really like, for good reason, because it's a great institution in general. Like libraries public libraries could be better in various ways but like, yeah they're pretty great.

Shawn: Yeah and I think in order to have a successful political movement you need to have a strong brand identity that's associated with the things that you want it to be associated with. And I think there's an opportunity to build up library socialism's association in people's minds as something that's positive, friendly, that proposes a serious transition to deal with things that everyone is worried about in our society, that people know the way that things are currently going cannot stand without social and environmental disaster. That's a fact that people know in every community. And being able to engage on that issue with a positive connotation, a nice thing, that proposes a transition that people can see themselves being a part of, that they're not afraid of, that they know takes the crisis seriously, and ideally is actively helping them in their life by the time this is happening... I think that really is how you create a social revolution. And when I say social revolution, I mean a *non-violent revolution of conscience* that happens around the world where people participate in the transformation of our institutions for the purposes of democracy, ecology, egalitarianism, and creating a free library society.

I think that's possible. I understand that there'll be challenges along the way, but I think it is damn worth pursuing, because like I said, everyone knows we're in crisis, everyone knows there's a threat to them and their children, but they don't know who the good guy is, and for good reason. It's a very confusing time, and we can build that association and be that good guy, with libraries.

01:06:35

—☒ music, sparkly psychedelic rock with casual electric guitar and drum beats, plays in the background—

Shawn: **Transitional concept number five: revolution of conscience.**

Aaron: There are a huge number of people who recognize that our world is in a serious, multi-faceted crisis with entwined ecological, economic, political, and social crises that require us to change course as a civilization. But most people don't have an idea of how that transition would happen, and are sometimes afraid that attempting a transition could end up being harmful to them and their communities.

Shawn: We propose a path to societal transformation that is maximally ethical, and which gives people a maximum chance at sincere buy-in. So our counter hegemony and new common sense is a vision of a future worth living in, a world which has room for everyone, where everyone has a better life. Our politics are motivated by this deep sense of respect for everyone.

Aaron: Transition does not need to be defined by harsh conflict, instability, or danger. We can aim sincerely for a relatively smooth, iterative, evolutionary process that has the shortest, most direct, and most peaceful path towards world transformation. This means utilizing the power of existing institutions, when appropriate, and building counterpower outside of those institutions, when appropriate.

Shawn: We're aiming to build this consensus so powerfully that the institutional world will be forced to transform. We can get there by persuasion, collaboration, good ideas, eventually tectonic shifts in our politics, built on the base of strong, democratic, and participatory organizing outside of institutions. As our work shifts humanity's collective conscience we will inevitably have sympathizers within institutions without any particular need for entryism or electoralism. At the same time we intend to fully utilize all of the opportunities for social transformation, including the power of those institutions, by the power of influence, democratic organizing, and appeals to conscience.

Shawn: We hold that a revolution of conscience is possible, desirable, and the primary means in which the social transformation can happen.

Shawn: a democratic, and ecological society, the requirement to survive the near future.

—☒ background music fades—

01:08:50

Aaron: All right, the next transition related question: "what caused you to believe that people are ready for library socialism rather than despairing and deciding that we just need a temporary authoritarian government to take over until the proletariat really wakes up?" and whoa, it's a, it's a doozy of a question. It's a... there's a lot there.

Shawn: Yeah. So, this project of transforming society into an ecological and democratic society is fundamentally about respecting people creating a world that has room for everyone. Our politics are motivated by this deep sense of respect, for everyone. There's no amount of despair that will make me endorse a strategy that treats the vast majority of people with disrespect, which this suggestion in my opinion, does. It's about decency, humility, and respect for humanity and people. So I don't think that the idea of an imposed temporary authoritarian government would even work. I don't think it's

plausible that such an arrangement would ever be temporary. And I think that attempting that process from the position that we're at instead of working through steps that we've spoken about today, is something that would actually actively work against the process of waking people up as we say, like, it could actively generate resistance to our good ideas that people would support. So I think in order to treat the question of social revolution seriously and with due respect, humility and conscience, we should try to do things in a good way. This proposal of like an authoritarian imposition, sometimes treated as an easy solution to problems we face, but it's not. It's not even a solution at all. It wouldn't work. And, it's more complicated to try to do that, than to try to do things in a good way. Respecting everyone, working together towards a world that respects everyone, has space for everyone, value is every voice. So I reject some of the premises of the question here.

Aaron: Yeah. I think even the idea at the beginning of the question of, like, "what caused you to believe that people are ready for library socialism" is like, it's it's a way that a lot of people think about social transformation that I think is wrong. The idea that like the public is either ready or not ready for a particular changes. To some extent I think people are ready for whatever works and whatever is convenient and whatever is useful, whatever other people around them are doing. Uh like, do you think people are ready for someone to knock on their and say, hey maybe let's start a tool library in our neighborhood. Like I feel like anybody could be ready for that. Or maybe specific individuals would be like, "no, I hate that idea" and they're not quote-unquote "ready" for it or they just don't want to do it or they're not interested in it.

Aaron: I think that social change happens when inflection points and crisis has come about, and there's ideas laying around that end up being materially useful to people. So if there's library socialist movements that exist, that are providing benefit to people, people are ready to accept benefit pretty much wherever you're willing to offer it to people. So like the idea that the public isn't ready, but needs to be made ready... I just think it's the wrong way to go about it, and that the right way to go about it is through activism that provides people with things that are useful to them and offers them ideas and ways to think about how society can be organized that are beneficial and in line with what we suggest. For the most part, I don't think we need to worry about whether people are ready or not. We need to worry about how we can organize in such a way that brings usufructian property relations to more people, while promoting these ideas.

Shawn: Yeah. And if we accept the premise of like the readiness thing, like the steel man, that it'd be is like, "do people support the transition to an ecological and democratic society mediated by libraries right now?". Well, we don't really have any polling information, but I'd guess that it's a minority currently that supports that probably by a wide margin, because it's a unique idea in some ways.

Aaron: If you ask people only who know that idea and understand it, it would probably be a pretty high percent.

Shawn: Yeah, that's true. No. And i think the, the, our job in politics is to convince people of the right things; to engage with people about the world that we want to create. To hear them too, to not just broadcast to them, and accept them to just receive it, but to hear what they're saying and have dialogue with them, and bring them on board with us. And we don't need to convince 100% of people to pull off literally like a world historic world revolution of conscience towards library socialism. You just need to convince a big chunk of people.

Aaron: And a lot of people don't need to be convinced. Like I just know people who like don't care that much about politics. And if I started like explaining to them the big ideas of library socialism, and property, and like how sharing things makes it... they don't give a fuck. But if I told them "hey, there's this community organization where you can take out this thing so you don't have to buy it and that's useful to you", then they're all down, they're like, oh that's great. That's like... Some people I know I've talked to about radical politics are like "yeah yeah yeah, whatever, like it's just ideas or whatever, like what are people actually doing?" So like there's a mixture of thing, but it's like, people don't need to necessarily even support a transition to this, ideologically, in order for them to support organizations that are like helping people.

Shawn: If you tell this random person, well I've got this great idea, these abstract ideas and we're sort of thinking that we're going to impose it by force on the population because we don't tru-...

Aaron: just until they're ready

Shawn: just until they're ready

Shawn: Do you think your friend who wants to use the lending library is going to be like "oh great i trust you guys. Well, nice to meet you."

Aaron: Yeah. Or they'll be like well maybe I'll just buy my own drill.

Shawn:☒ (laughing)

Aaron:☒ (laughing)

Shawn: Okay. s- Um... yeah there's so much more to say here and another things it but we're, we are out of time. We went overtime. We've got more questions that we wanted to tackle, so we're going to do a part two.

Aaron: Yeah, specifically a lot along these lines of authoritarian transitions, and means and ends, and like...

Shawn: We want to talk about elections and insurrections. These are questions that we've gotten. these are all the, the, yeah. There's going to be lots of good stuff next bonus episode. So stay tuned next month.

Aaron: Yeah. We're gonna do transition to Library socialism part two. More more Q & A on this topic, because there's actually, yeah a lot, a lot to get into.

Shawn: And if you're interested, you're like, "kind of this idea is of internet research community sounds pretty cool to me". Well, I've got great news, which is that we have set up a BBS forum, which is currently, it's open to the public but we're not promoting it yet. So we're just slowly bringing in spheres of people. So, you'll see there's some activity there when you sign up. librarysocialism.com, it's a forum that includes discussions on library socialism, current events, there's a wiki. the vision here is that we're going to try out some of these ideas around research collectives on the internet, give people some experience with it, and basically try it out. It's an experiment. And you're invited to join us. If you're interested in continuing these discussions, or you have questions that you like us to consider in future things, you can put in the comments on Patreon or join us at librarysocialism.com. We look forward to talking about more of this later and I appreciate you taking the time and energy to listen in and think along with us whether you agree or disagree.

Aaron: Yeah, thanks. Thanks for listening. Thank you for being part of our donor community. If, uhh... Unless this is some time in the future and we've released it outside of the paywall, then, thank you for considering being part of our donor community. But, you know, for yeah, we, we appreciate it.

Shawn: So, that's all and I hope you all have a wonderful wonderful week and that all your dreams come true, and, that-special-someone that you have a crush on, has a crush on you too. Wouldn't that be sweet.

Shawn: talk to you soon.

Aaron: Bye.

01:16:48

—☒ SRSly Wrong theme song—

—☒ cassette player eject sound—

Aaron: And we'll just pop that out, our fingers still touching on the stop button, and hey! that was great!

Shawn: Yeah, really good.

Aaron: I feel ready to go...

Shawn: That might be my favorite episode

Aaron: ...go start doing some of these things.

Aaron: Yeah it might... they're all so good. All their episodes are so good like it's definitely over a nine point five out of 10, but, they all are so...

Shawn: oh absolutely.

Aaron: Is this at the top or the bottom?

Shawn: Yeah this is either my favorite episode or it could also be my least favorite episode because they're all so good and so close to each other.

Aaron: Well hey, we don't have to lock in our ratings right now. We can think about it. Let the episode settle in and... we, all we know is that it's somewhere on that favorite list and it was amazing.

Shawn: Hey I'm just borrowing... I got these full samurai outfits. I got two. One that would probably fit you, and one that would probably fit me. And I've also been lent some jet skis, so I was thinking we could dress up in traditional samurai wear, and then go jet skiing. What do you think?

Aaron: Yes. I would love to.

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