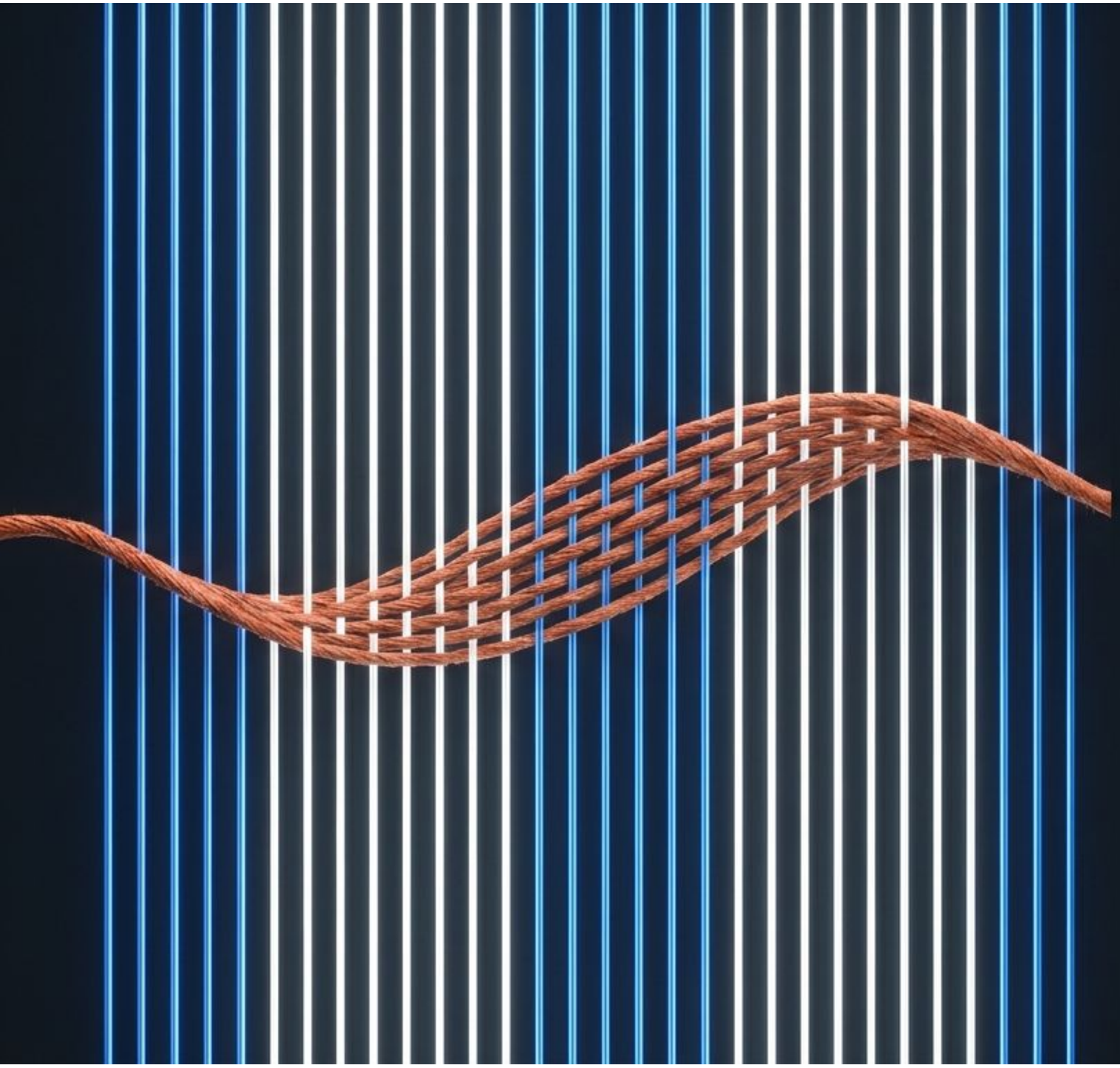


The Nature of Trust

Weaving identity, relationship, and place.

A Protocol Institute presentation based on the First Person Project & Project Weave.

Gemini Notebook

The failure was soft

```
Cryptographic Signing: [VERIFIED]
Version Control Integrity: [VERIFIED]
Hash Verification: [VERIFIED]
Reproducible Builds: [VERIFIED]
```

Who is Jia Tan?

You cannot govern what you cannot verify, and you cannot verify a relationship with hardness alone.

Gemini Notebook

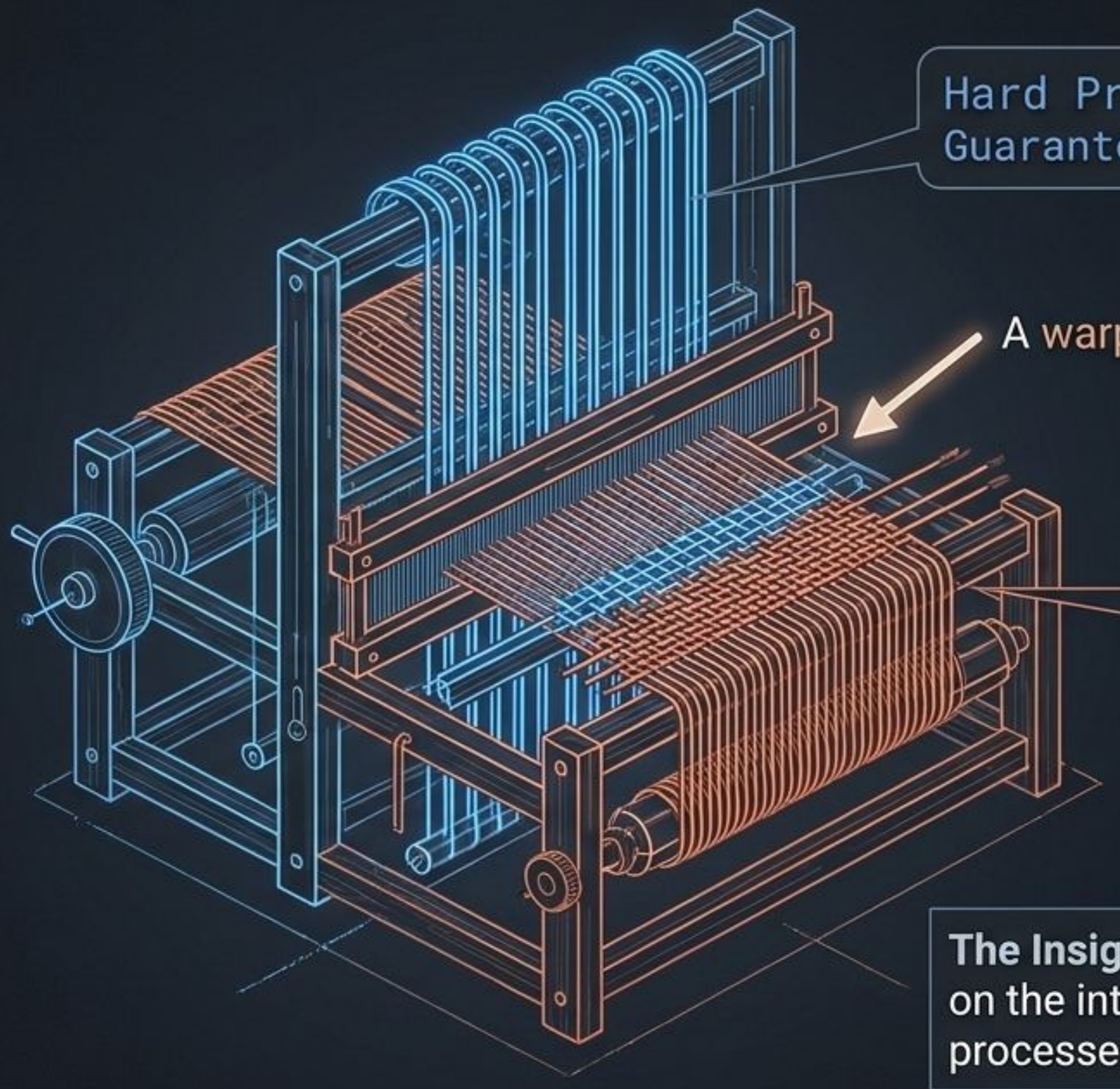
Hard protocols are the warp, soft protocols are the weft

The IETF Precedent:

The protocols that route the internet (TCP/IP, TLS, BGP) were not handed down by authority.

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Dave Clark (1992): We reject: kings, presidents and voting. We believe in: rough consensus and running code.



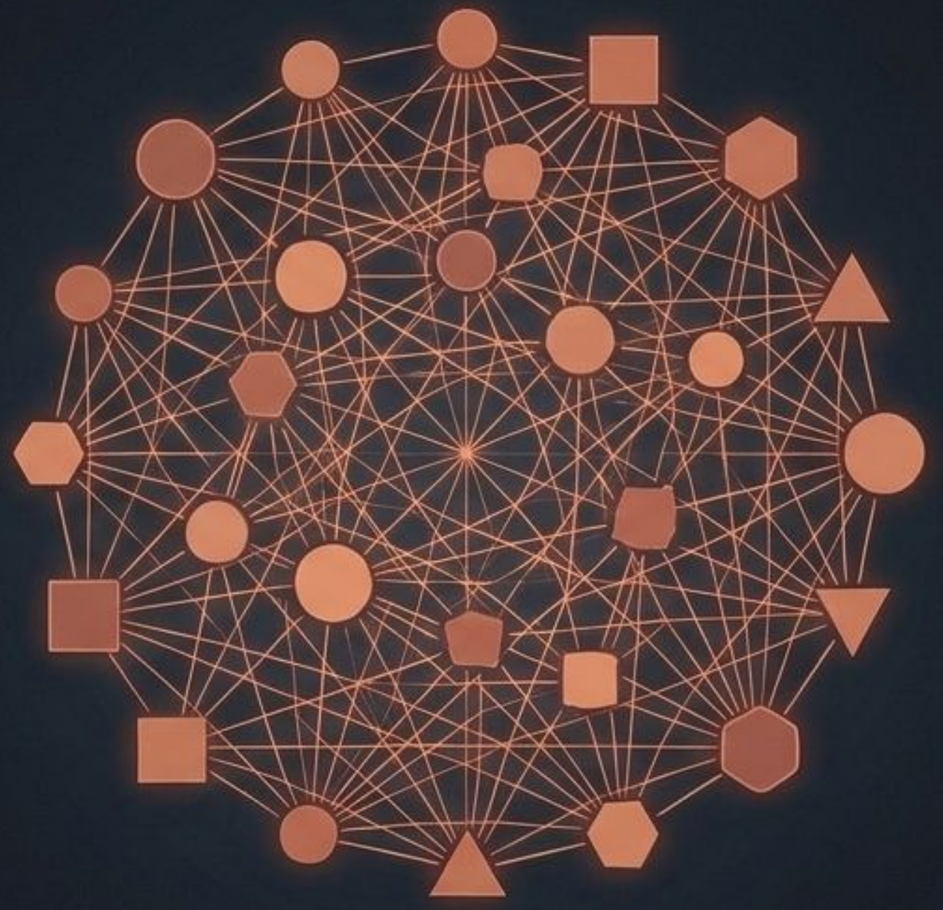
The Insight: The hardest specifications on the internet are congealed soft processes. The soft produces the hard.

Gemini Notebook

Tokens do not constitute membership



Bearer Instrument
Answers: Who holds this?
Reality: Anyone with capital can answer this at any time.



Relational Membership
Answers: Who belongs here?
Reality: Trust is irreducibly relational and contextual.

Gemini Notebook

The evolution of the trans-kin membrane

	Kinship	Religion/Guilds	Digital Protocols
The Membrane	Inherited, biological, self-maintaining.	Entered via practice (Western Church baptism, *ijāza* chains, Guild masterships).	Entered via cryptography (DIDs, VCs).
Trust Horizon	Local (village/clan).	Trans-local (trade networks/pilgrims).	Global.
Verification	Everybody knows.	A shared law & visible membership.	Portable, zero-knowledge proofs.

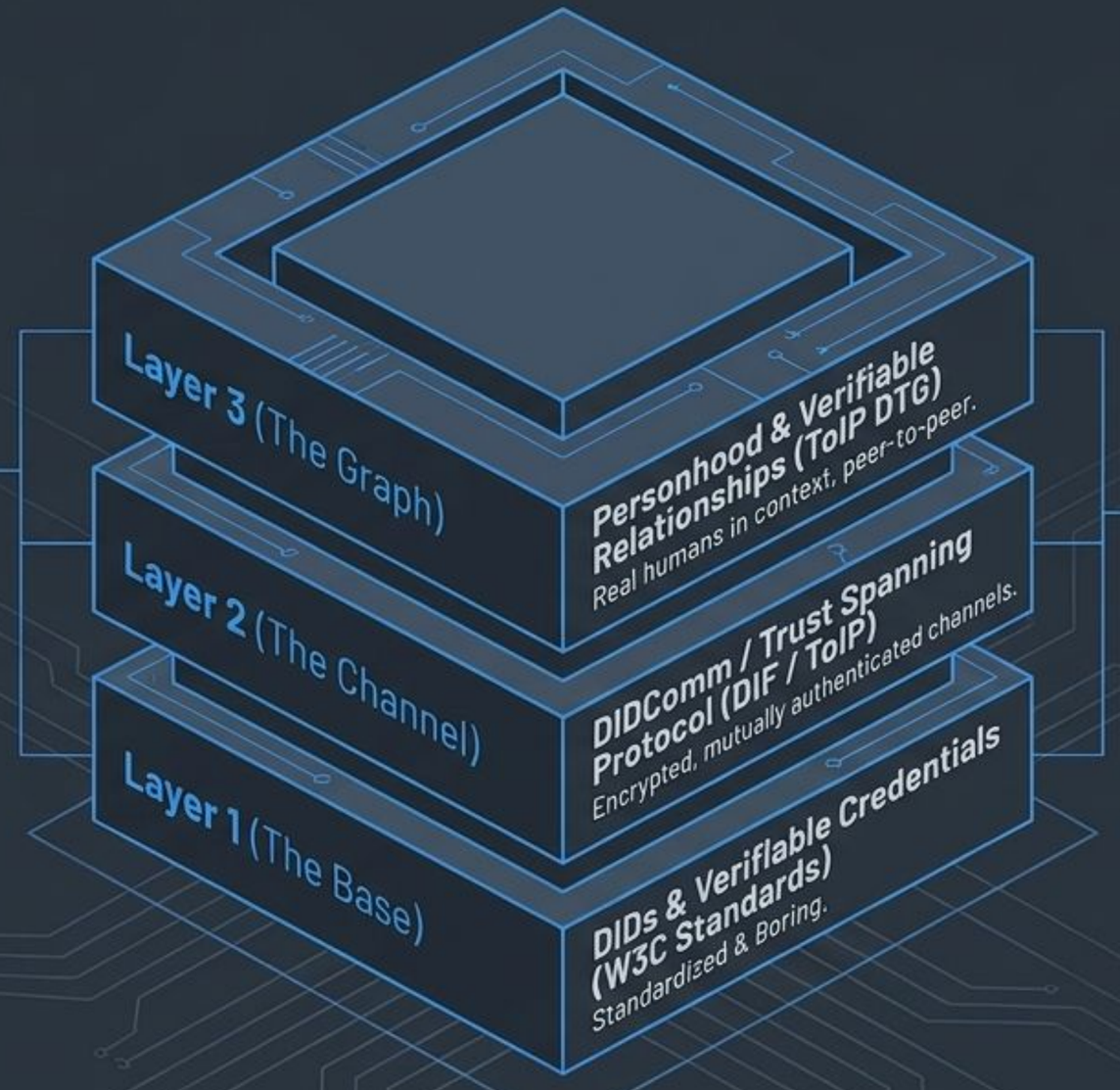
We only invent identity layers when belonging stops being inherited and starts being entered so strangers can transact.

Gemini Notebook

What currently runs at the protocol level

No global public ledgers: Pairwise DIDs mean your identifier with your neighbor is cryptographically unrelated to the one with your union.

A trust graph, not a surveillance graph.



Running Code:

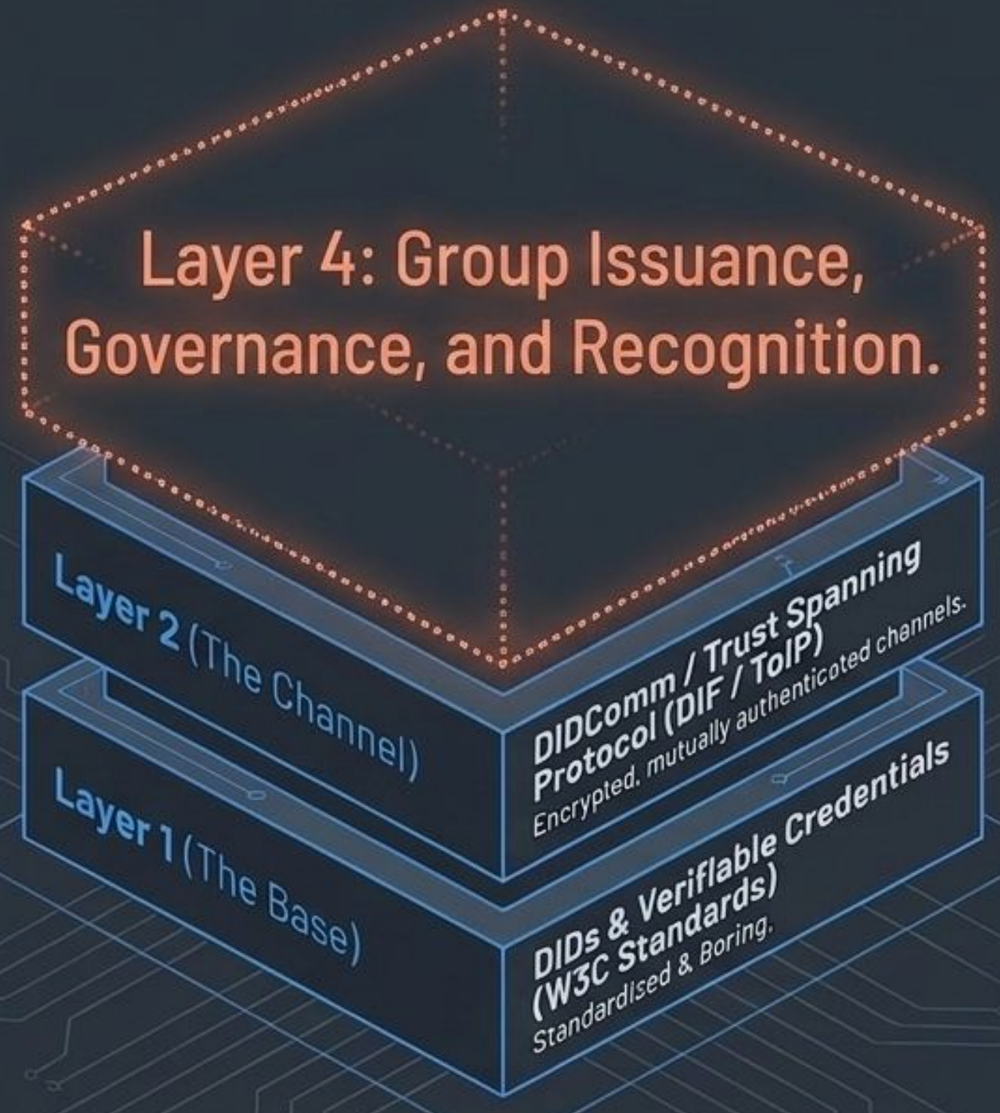
OpenVTC (active development, Linux kernel context).

p2pLib.

Keyring (Berkman Klein).

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We have no structural primitive for groups



Current identity generation: Authorities issue downwards (States -> Passports).

The missing generation: Groups with no authority above them issuing credentials to themselves, holding their own memory, and revoking standing.

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Groups without central authority cannot self-govern digitally



Acquire
Gathering info

Correlate
Associating attributes

Reason
Deriving new attributes

Apply
Moderating interaction

Govern

The Governance Gap:

When stewards with nobody above them issue membership to their own members, govern **must sit with the group**. There is no specification for this anywhere in the stack.

Gemini Notebook

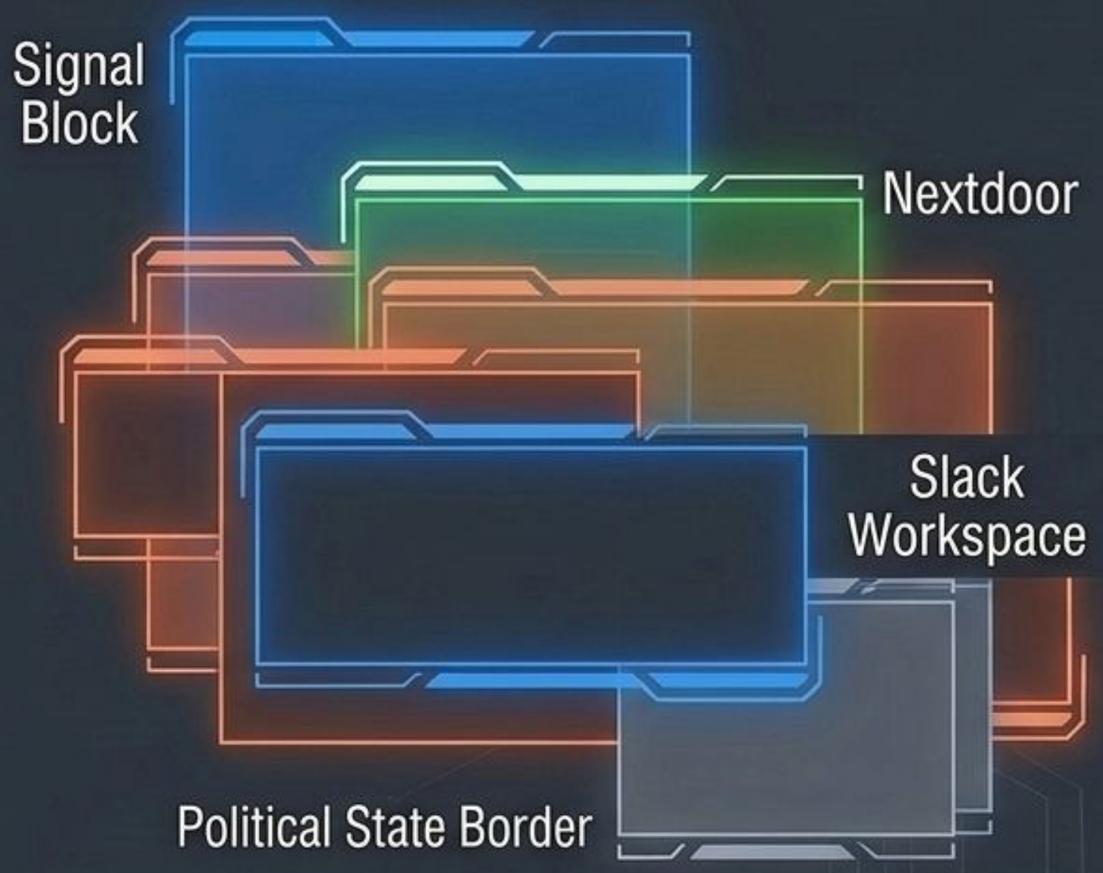
Groups cannot grant agent authority without a registrar

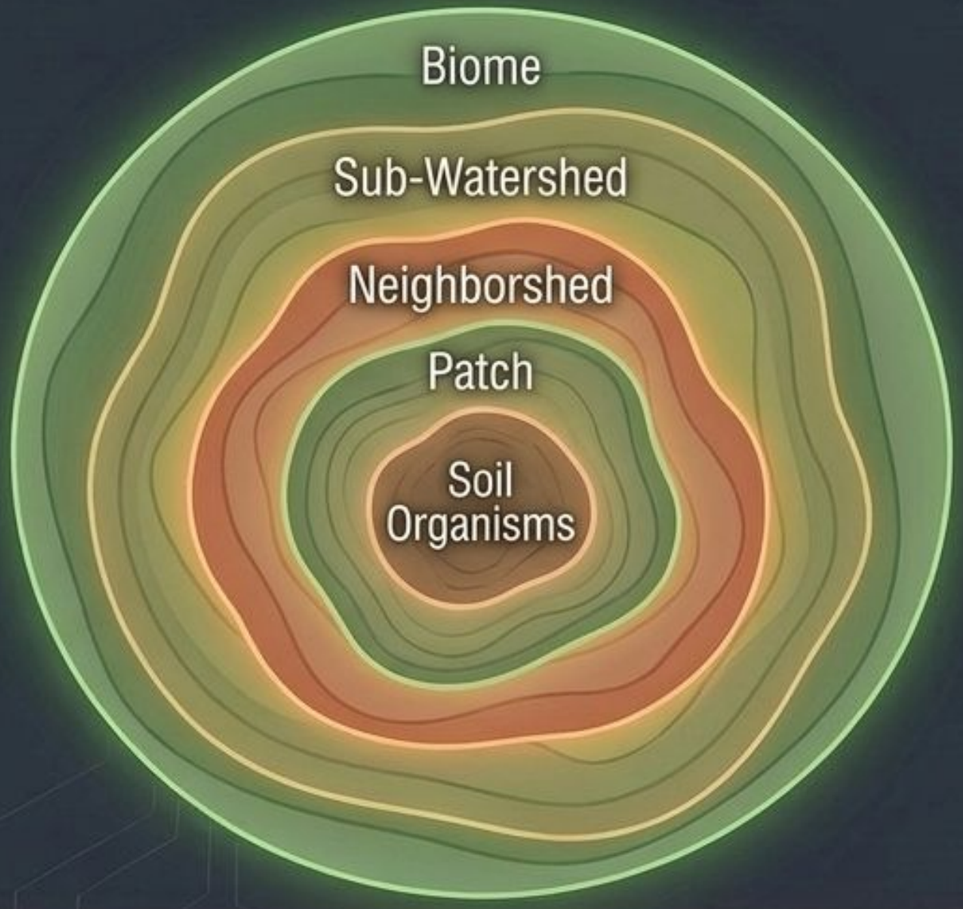


Current agent protocols (JLINC, FedID) don’t establish that a group exists; they ask a corporate registrar if it exists. A neighborhood cannot be a principal on its own authority.

Gemini Notebook

Human digital nesting breaks at the boundary of place





Nature already nests perfectly. We do not need to organize it. Our coordination problem: We are the ones whose nesting does not line up. Murray Bookchin noted this gap in 1990—coordination breaks exactly where face-to-face visibility ends.

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Capital can only count what it can observe

The Legibility Trap:
Standardized reporting destroys local context.



You can count a building by observing it from space.
You can only count a community if it declares itself.

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Place-based legibility requires a tripartite architecture



The Local AI Agent

Rooted in the group, reading across scales

The Group Brain

Locally held memory, decisions, soil history—owned by the group

The Membership Layer

Who belongs, portable, no intermediary

Digital accountability carrying soft group accountability. The AI is rooted in the place, serving it. An agent that is not rooted is not serving that place; it is operating on it.

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The open problem is enclosure from within

Protocols cannot be bought (you cannot purchase SMTP).

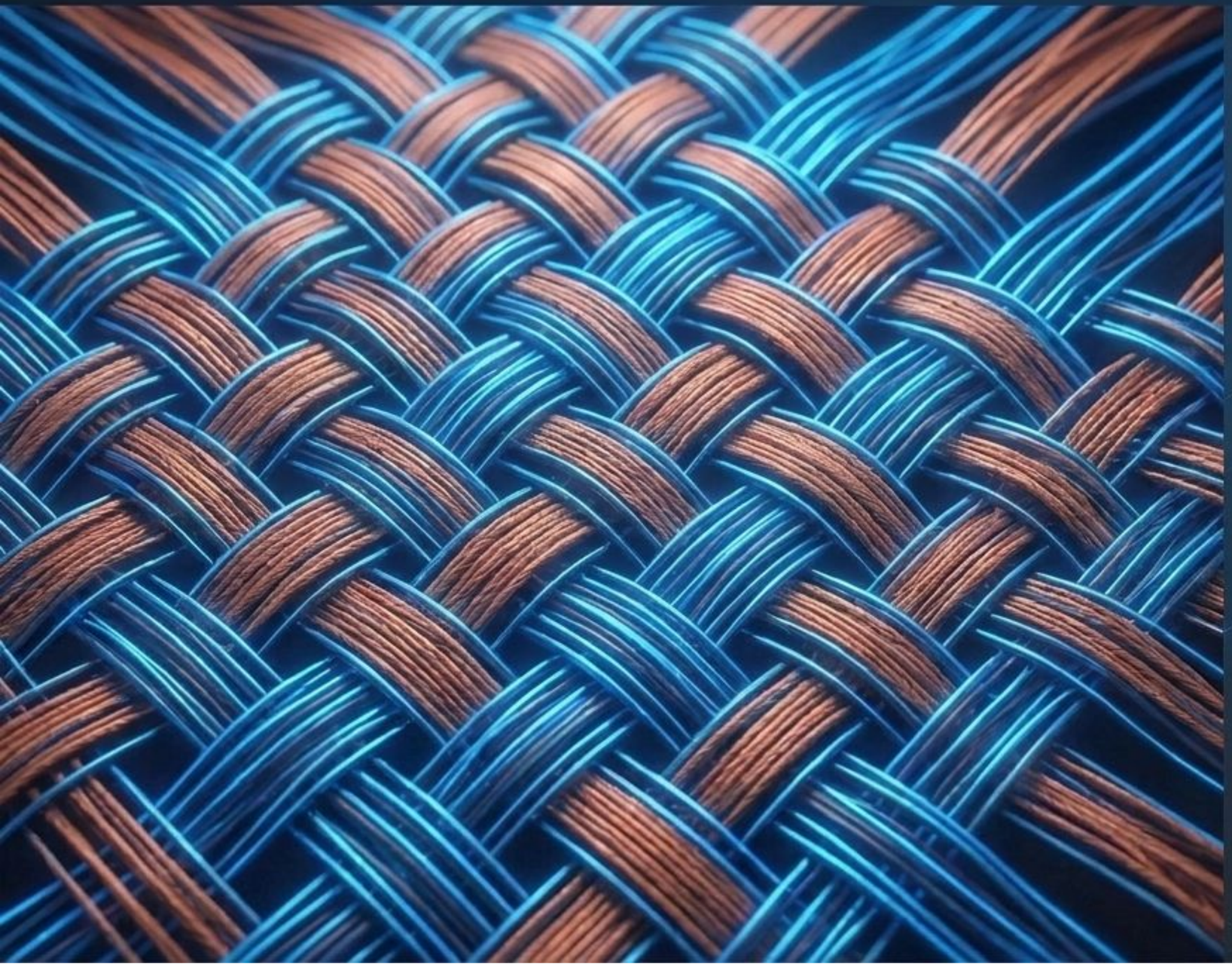
But what stops a commons from being enclosed by its own stewards? Not by a corporation, but by the people entrusted to hold it.

We have no mechanism for this. This is the real open problem.



Gemini Notebook

The soft layer is a hard requirement



Nature is already nested.
We are the ones whose nesting does not line up.

The tools are in hand.
It is time to build Layer 4.

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