THE ATLAS

A NEWSPAPER

WATCHING YOU WATCHING ME

Your friendly neighbourhood guide to the surveillance state

P14

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Illustration: Yemsrach Yetneberk

Choose your fighter

The paradox of reporting on surveillance is that journalists use all the same weapons. Cameras. Recording devices. Documents in which we carefully record information. It is our job to look, listen and dig. Reveal secrets. And we do it because we believe that powerful people behave better when they are being watched – by us. But where great journalism brings darkness into light, modern surveillance networks do the opposite. They suck what is public – our faces, our routines, our conversations, our friendships – into vast, inaccessible, unaccountable databases. For the most part, we don't know who is watching us, or why, or what we can do about it. But journalists know where to start: by asking difficult questions – and doing a little surveillance of our own.

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▲ Poster design by Wynona Mutisi. Typeface: *The Colonial Bastard Rhodes* by Osmond Tshuma. Background image inspired by the San rock art collection at the Museum of Human Sciences in Harare, Zimbabwe.

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CURRENTS

The world is waking up, and making waves

The most significant election season in recent memory has begun, with voter turnout records tumbling.



▲ **Supporters of President Lula da Silva celebrate in Rio de Janeiro after he won Brazil's presidential runoff. (Photo: Lucas Landau/AP)**

▶ "'God watches over me!' declared President Lula, his voice weary, from atop a platform set up on Avenida Paulista, the largest avenue in São Paulo, in front of a euphoric crowd, amid firecrackers, red smoke flares and cameras from around the world. … He ended the last campaign of his life in style, thanks to a historic turnout in the streets and on social media by his supporters."– *Le Monde*

▶ "André Janones, a former bus fare collector who had spent three weeks issuing orders via WhatsApp to nearly 11-million Brazilians to tame the algorithm and help the left's digital communications make, in a few days, a leap they had not achieved in years. … The soldiers were tasked with posting hashtags in support of Lula, sharing videos, giving likes, ensuring record views on YouTube, and so on. There were also clear rules about what not to do: do not interact with Bolsonarista accounts, not even to defend Lula, so as not to give them more visibility."– *El Pais*

▶ "Once the celebrations settle down, it looks as if Serbia will manage a peaceful transfer of power to a democratically elected government. This was not inevitable. By mid-afternoon on election day, news outlets were reporting concentrations of armoured police vehicles. … If there is a single factor that is making a peaceful transfer of power possible, it can probably be expressed in one word: turnout. Nearly 70% of eligible voters participated in the election."– *The Conversation*

▶ "Israeli voters turned out in their highest numbers in more than two decades in a tense national election on Tuesday. … Enthusiasm was high among voters seeking to replace Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister. … Netanyahu voiced alarm throughout the day, in multiple social media posts, alerting followers to the high number of Arab citizens of Israel who were voting. He urged his right-wing supporters to get out and vote too."– *NPR*

▶ "Voter turnout is soaring compared with the last midterm election in many of the states that are expected to decide control of the US Senate, according to an *Associated Press* analysis of early voting two weeks before Election Day."– *AP*

▶ "Ahead of the 4 November local government elections, data reveals that most eligible South African voters are opting out entirely. Driven by youth disillusionment, distrust and broken political promises, non-voters may eclipse many, and probably even all, registered parties at the polls."– *Daily Maverick*

Coda's early-warning system, powered by human journalists tracking news across geographies, technologies and power structures, identifies the patterns behind the headlines – and helps us know what to watch next.



PANAMA CITY

The Cinta Costera is a 7km-long promenade that offers spectacular views over the skyline and the Gulf of Panama. Built on reclaimed land, it was completed in 2009 at a cost of $189-million. It costs just $1 to enjoy those views with a fresh raspado con todo – fruit-flavoured syrup and condensed milk drizzled over shaved ice. (Photo: Martin Bernetti/AFP)

CURRENTS



▲ Studentska Lista supporters in Belgrade celebrate their victory in Serbia's parliamentary elections, in the early hours of 26 October. (Photo: Milos Milanovic /AFP)

Democracy in flex: Serbia muscles out a strongman

The students have won. On election day, it wasn't even close. It sounds so simple, yet it's the greatest thing to have happened in Serbia's short, democratic history. Student List – a faceless, leaderless political group formed by protesting students – overthrew Serbian strongman Aleksandar Vučić, in power for a dozen years. They did this by speaking to citizens face to face, making demands that they knew most people agreed on and sticking to them. The student movement sacrificed days, weeks, months and years for this moment. They were beaten, they were arrested, they were targeted by pro-government tabloids. Still they persisted. And they celebrate now, the first student movement to ever win elections with their own party in European history. – *Božidar Milovac in Novi Sad*

France's status quo has nowhere left to hide

School blockades and protests in Paris – sparked by pupils in the suburbs, later joined by teachers, parents and college students across France – inspired a nationwide anti-government movement. The spectacle of violent clashes dominated international headlines. But the students won concessions, including class size limits, €5-billion for building repairs and 15,000 additional university placements. Still, unions have called for a general strike next week. With a polarised France going to the polls in April, the protests have boosted both Jean-Luc Melenchon's left-wing La France Insoumise party and Marine Le Pen's right-wing National Rally. – *Phineas Rueckert in Paris*



(Photo: Phineas Rueckert/Atlas)



(Photo: Ishan Tankha/The Atlas)

The bugs in the system decline to self-squash

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), with its Kafkaesque imagery and social media savvy, went from viral joke to arguably the government's most significant opposition in less than six months. What gave the CJP its physical presence on the streets was its alliance with India's left-wing student unions. The Modi government, with its heavy-handed deployment of police and paramilitary forces, tried to bully the students. But, led by the charismatic Neha Bora, president of the left-wing All India Students' Association, the students are not backing down. Unlike the three most prominent CJP leaders, Bora has refused to sign a bond to not breach the peace, arguing that it violates her constitutional right to protest. – *Ishan Tankha in Delhi*


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MID-terms
WELL, THEY ARE REUSABLE...!!

Love letter to Egypt's free press

The government is coming for independent media and arresting steadfast journalists.

Lina El Wardani in Cairo



▲ **Journalists and supporters wait outside court in Cairo after police took their press cards and refused them entry to Lina Attalah's trial.**

Last Saturday, at our solidarity event for *Mada Masr*, Lina Attalah, the independent outlet's co-founder and editor-in-chief, joined us at the Journalists Syndicate in downtown Cairo.

"Lina, you came in solidarity with yourself?" I asked. She laughed. "Yes. I came in solidarity with myself."

Two days earlier, prosecutors had charged her for running a website without a licence, after questioning her for more than six hours about *Mada Masr*'s coverage of protests in Egyptian prisons. It was the latest blow in a crackdown that, a month before, had seen the entire newsroom of the fact-checking platform Matsadaash arrested.

I first met Lina almost 20 years ago, when I was with the BBC in Cairo. In 2008, we worked together at the daily newspaper *Al-Masry Al-Youm*'s English edition. I left in 2010. She stayed, and later built *Mada Masr*, Egypt's most daring independent newsroom.

Three days after our event, we gathered outside a Cairo misdemeanour court for Lina's hearing. Almost no independent news site in Egypt has a licence, because the state rarely grants them. *Mada Masr* had previously applied for a licence in 2018, 2020 and 2023, and never received an answer.

A trial is supposed to be public. That is a basic right, but none of us were allowed in.

The judge passed his sentence that same morning – the harshest the law allows: a fine of three million Egyptian pounds (over $53,000), the shutting down of *Mada Masr*, and the confiscation of its equipment.

It had taken eight days from Lina's summons to her sentence: the fastest process I have ever seen. Policemen literally lifted her off the ground and carried her out of the courtroom.

She would stay in custody, and could not appeal, until the fine was paid. We, her colleagues, supporters and stubborn defenders of a free press, scattered across Cairo to banks and ATMs to help gather the money so she could be released.



◄ **Journalists at a solidarity event for *Mada Masr* in Cairo on Saturday, 24 October, under a banner reading 'Journalism is not a crime'.**

But it isn't over. While she was being processed for release, Lina learned that a court had sentenced her in absentia in 2024 to a year in prison for publishing false news and running an unlicensed website. Her retrial is set for 11 November.

They must think we'll always find the money. We will, not because we are rich, but because of the love so many people have for Lina and for *Mada*. But how many times can we do this? I expect more fines, more closures and more prison sentences, until the state silences every voice but its own.

Mada wrote last week that it would go to court, that it would in the meantime keep publishing and welcome love letters. This is mine. ●

This story was published in collaboration with Egab.



KARACHI

Pakistan's most populous city (21.4-million people and counting) has been averaging highs of 35°C (95° F) in September. It's not that much cooler in the early evenings, making a quick dip at the ever-popular Clifton Beach less of a recreational activity and more of a life-or-death necessity. (Anjum Naveed/AP)

From Kenya to Italy: the data centre cannot hold



NEWS ANALYSIS
Isobel Cockerell in Rome and Milan

On a wet, chilly evening in a former mafia-owned strip club – now reclaimed as a queer community space – in the industrial outskirts of southern Rome, a new movement against data centres was born.

Activists had invited Kenyan researcher Angela Chukunzira, an activist herself, to speak. She described the horrific human rights abuses faced by the Kenyan workers helping to build artificial intelligence, including spending their days watching and labelling extremely violent and pornographic content.

"I think that was one of the best comrade meetings I've attended," Chukunzira told *The Atlas*.



The conversation turned to how a global movement against data centre colonisation could be built. Chukunzira spoke about a vast data centre proposed near Lake Naivasha, a freshwater lake teeming with wildlife northwest of Nairobi. The region is also home to Maasai communities, who have long faced displacement and a deepening water crisis.

Where, she asked, would the data centre get its water? How would its energy needs, roughly equivalent to a third of Kenya's entire current electricity demand, be met? The data centre's development has stalled until these questions are answered.

The same firm behind the Kenyan project – UAE-based technology firm G42 – plans to build data centres in Italy: one near Milan and another major AI computing project proposed for the southern region of Puglia. The Italian projects have so far attracted little opposition.

In Rome, young activists spoke about Italy's anti-data centre movement, which is still in its infancy.

"I felt like the interconnectedness of the struggle was so intense," Chukunzira said.

In Milan the next day, 10 October, Saturday shopping crowds were met by protesters from the movement.

"Put data centres on pause!" read their placards. "We say stop!"

Enrico Duranti, who in September helped found a group opposed to data centres, said a new project planned near his home would consume as much electricity as half a million Italian families.

"If you crunch the numbers," he said, "the vast majority of the companies investing in data centres in Italy are American: all tied to global banks, US banks, American investment funds, and so on. So there's almost nothing Italian about it. And that's precisely why we talk about 'colonisation.'"

A week later, in the same Milanese shopping district, teenagers smashed shop windows and looted stores. The catalyst, as elsewhere in Europe, was the spiralling cost of living and deep-seated economic anxiety.

Chukunzira, who had returned to Kenya from Rome, watched the protests unfold from her home in Nairobi. "It's the billionaires against us," she said. "For real."



OTTAWA

Maple leaves underfoot in Canada mean one thing: winter is coming. This is the winning entry from the photo competition at the launch event for *The Atlas* on 28 October. (Winner: Themrise Khan) The competition continues: Get your photo published in the next edition! Send the best vertical photo on your camera roll to *simon@codastory.com*. The theme is ‘Life on Earth’. There are prizes.

The drones that follow journalists around

Batoul Yazbeck in Beirut

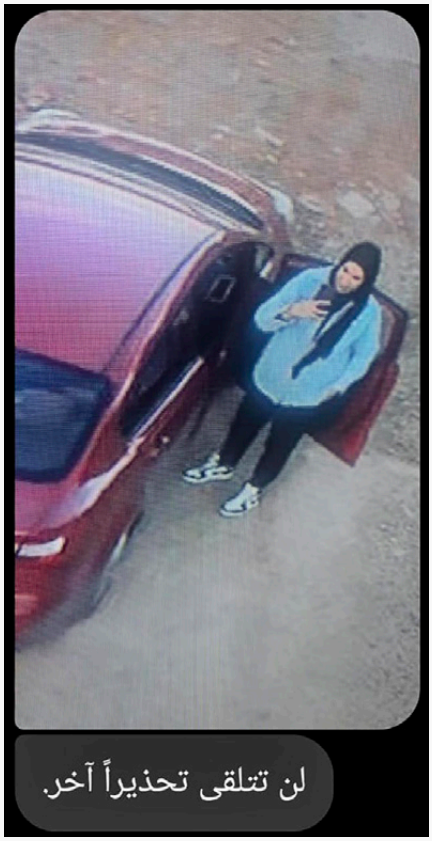
It was December 19, 2025. On that winter's day, the small town of Kfar Kila, along Lebanon's border with Israel, was nearly deserted. Most of its buildings had already been reduced to rubble after months of bombardment by Israeli forces.

The only sounds in its streets were the faint cries of hungry cats. But reporter Zeinab Faraj and her colleague, photographer Ahmed Hariri, were there, documenting the destruction and speaking with families who had returned to see what remained of their homes.

Faraj and Hariri came across several destroyed ambulances in the town square. As they raised their cameras, a drone emerged from behind a wall and descended to face level. For nearly 15 minutes it moved sharply toward and away from them before hovering in front of their faces and above their vehicle's licence plate.

That evening, a message arrived in Faraj's Facebook inbox: if she and Hariri returned to Kfar Kila, they would be killed. "You will not receive another warning," it read.

Sent from an anonymous account, the message included photographs of both journalists and details of where Faraj lived. She suspected the drone had taken the images, though neither their source nor how the sender obtained her information could be independently verified.



▲ After being stalked from above, these images were sent to Faraj, along with a threat.

Faraj and Hariri came across several destroyed ambulances in the town square. As they raised their cameras, a drone emerged from behind a wall and descended to face level. For nearly 15 minutes, it moved toward and away from them, hovering in front of their faces and above their vehicle's licence plate.

"I was more afraid for Ahmed and my family than for myself," she told *The Atlas*.

Since then, Faraj has forbidden relatives from driving her car, which she parks away from any nearby homes, and sometimes leaves her phone behind for fear of being tracked. Some in her home town are nervous to associate with her, calling her "the one under threat".

Hariri, who had also received a threatening message, was later killed in an Israeli strike on Deir Qanun al-Nahr on 22 May this year, while taking part in rescue efforts.

A pervasive fear of surveillance is already changing journalistic practices around phone use and location sharing. According to Reporters Without Borders, at least eight journalists have been killed while working in southern Lebanon since 2023.

Faraj continues to report in southern Lebanon but has never returned to Kfar Kila. The dust from her last visit still clings to her car. "I haven't washed it since the day of the threat," she said.

Earlier this month, Lebanese and Israeli officials held talks in Florida. They were inconclusive. Parts of southern Lebanon remain under Israeli control, and Israeli bombing raids and artillery strikes continue. ●



Photo: Lisa Muchangi /The Atlas

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BACKGROUND CHECK: Where in the world is this poster? Find out if you're right on p33



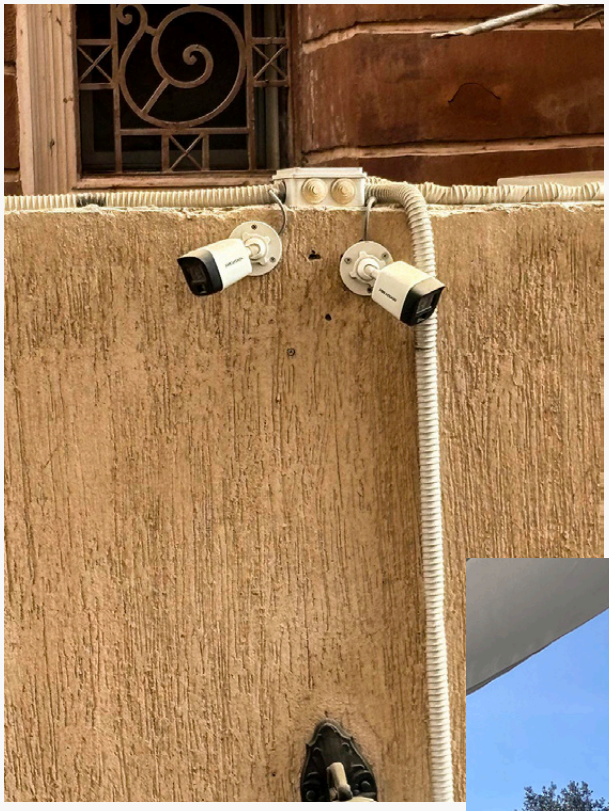
Neighbourhood watch

Our brief to correspondents was simple: Go outside. Take a stroll. Stop when you see the first surveillance camera. Then tell us: Who do you think is watching?

▲ Even in Johannesburg's spectacular Jacaranda season, Vumacam's bright pink flying saucers are hard to miss. (Photo: Paul Botes/*The Atlas*)

If you feel like you're being watched all the time, you're probably right. Video surveillance is far simpler than it used to be. Cameras are cheap and plentiful. So is storage for all the footage. And machine learning algorithms mean that no human has to sit around and watch a bank of screens all day. But if these cameras can see us, then we can see them, too. And this is what we are seeing.





▲ Corner shop in Taiz, Yemen (Photo: Osama Farhan)

◀ Private residence in Cairo, Egypt (Photo: Lina El Wardani)

▼ Outside a gym in Rome, Italy (Photo: Isobel Cockerell)



In the house where I grew up, we'd go down to the shops and leave the door wide open, with nothing to worry about except the flies. Now almost every house on my street is locked, with cameras on the walls, as if each one were guarding a golden statue. My neighbour has two, made by Hikvision, a company controlled by the Chinese state. They stare at my window, and I'm never sure whether they're pointed at my house or the street. I keep the blinds down. A few months ago, a motorcycle was stolen in front of the house. The cameras filmed the thief. The police still haven't caught him.
Lina El Wardani in Cairo, Egypt

In our neighbourhood's small grocery store, as the owner was counting cash, I noticed three cameras: one above the till and two in the corners, all pointing at the door. Three cameras for a corner shop? He told me they had not been there at first, but repeated thefts and harassment forced him to put them up. I hate the idea of cameras tracking passers-by and recording the details of their day, for whatever reason. But in this case, I liked them.
Osama Farhan in Taiz, Yemen

There is a camera outside my gym. I can see it from where I work out on the elliptical machine. There is another ten paces away. It's a Dahua camera – Chinese-made, by the same company that's a key part of the surveillance infrastructure that watches the Uyghurs and any enemies of the Chinese state. It's bog-standard CCTV, no facial recognition. I suppose Gabriele, the gym manager who's always trying to get me to take up Padel, can watch me; and the Chinese government too, if they want. **Isobel Cockerell in Rome, Italy**

From my window, looking over the corner of La Quebrada and Dr. Barragán, I see, hanging from a pole that also supports the city's earthquake siren, a camera enclosed within an inverted glass dome. It likely belongs to the C5 municipal surveillance system, feeding footage to Mexico City administrators, traffic monitors, and police in distant control rooms. But in a city where state power and shadow economies often overlap, access is rarely exclusive. Neighborhood spotters or cartel halcones might monitor who arrives, lingers, and departs. So, the inverted dome serves the state and the street, and may be monitoring me through my window, constantly. **Anjan Sundaram in Mexico City, Mexico**

Almost every house in my alley has a security camera, some cheap, some expensive. The one that matters is 50m away, above a highway: a single camera atop a 12m steel pole. Until January, a camera stood in the same spot on a 4m pole. At the height of the protests, demonstrators smashed it with stones. I remember the blood on the pavement and the tear gas. Three days later, the authorities put this one up, out of reach. Who is watching? Who are they watching? The state. All of us. All of the time. **Ariya Farahmand in Tehran, Iran**

Cameras are all over the city. Hikvision makes them in China. The software most likely used for the cameras is manufactured in Russia, according to some investigative reports. Like most people, I assume that intelligence agencies from Georgia, Russia and China are all able to access footage of me on my way to grab the first coffee of the day. **Masho Lomashvili in Tbilisi, Georgia**

In Johannesburg's leafy, upscale northern suburbs, residents pay for the privilege of being surveilled. Fees to private security companies have supported the installation of hundreds of pole-mounted pink disks in the area, bristling with cameras. Vumacam, the private company that operates them, has a network of more than 18,000 cameras across the country. It is part-owned – via several intermediary companies – by South Africa's richest man (if we're not counting Elon, which we'd rather not). Johann Rupert also owns luxury brands like Cartier and Van Cleef & Arpels, and his family made his money in the darkest days of the apartheid regime. This is relevant context given that the company's surveillance tech has been accused of reinforcing segregation along racial and economic lines. **Simon Allison in Johannesburg, South Africa**





▲ Street surveillance in Tbilisi, Georgia (Photo: Masho Lomashvili)

◄ Street surveillance outside a private residence in Mexico City (Photo: Anjan Sundaram)

The closest surveillance camera to home is at my local train station. This was one of four cameras I noticed within a 2m range. There are more than 10,000 CCTV cameras across the train network in New South Wales. Despite fears around surveillance, this is one instance where I feel my risk of being attacked – as a woman who regularly commutes past midnight on public transport – outweighs risks associated with being watched from a security control centre. I am grateful for this surveillance. Whether or not it can help identify a perpetrator, I would hope it acts as a deterrent. **Anushri Sood in Sydney, Australia**

After dinner in Hoboken, at a restaurant by the Hudson, I step outside. A camera is fixed to the brick wall of the last building before Frank Sinatra Park's soccer field. The camera is facing the waterfront path. I spot two more on the same block. People are walking, jogging or lingering beside the river, Manhattan glittering across the water. I don't know who is watching, exactly – there's no sign that tells me. **Tolu Olasoji in Jersey City, USA**

How do I explain that there are no buildings left to hang a camera on, and no electricity to run one? Before the war, cameras filled the shops of Gaza City. Now many of the shops are gone, replaced by stalls and tents. But we are still watched. Israeli drones hover over us day and night. Among them is the quadcopter, a small, toy-like machine with four spinning rotors and a camera hanging beneath. Its buzzing fills us with fear. Sometimes we are afraid to look up, as if a single glance might displease whoever is watching us, and they decide to end our lives. **Ansam Al-Kitaa in Gaza City, Palestine**



▲ **Train station in Sydney, Australia (Photo: Anushri Sood)**

This particular camera is on a boulevard about five minute's drive from my neighbourhood. It looks like a traffic monitoring camera. Last week, some San Diego politicians criticised the city's contract with Flock Safety, which operates mass surveillance cameras across the country – including here. They are worried that Flock surveillance tech could trample on citizens' rights, and erode trust within communities. Reports that immigration enforcement can access footage is also raising concern. Other cities in California, including Silicon Valley municipalities such as Santa Clara, Mountain View and Cupertino, have already deactivated Flock; and there have been nationwide reports of Flock cameras being sabotaged in protest. **Daniel Ekonde in San Diego, USA**

Reporters from the Stringer Foundation, the San Diego Voice & Viewpoint, Egab and ETTE Media contributed to this story.

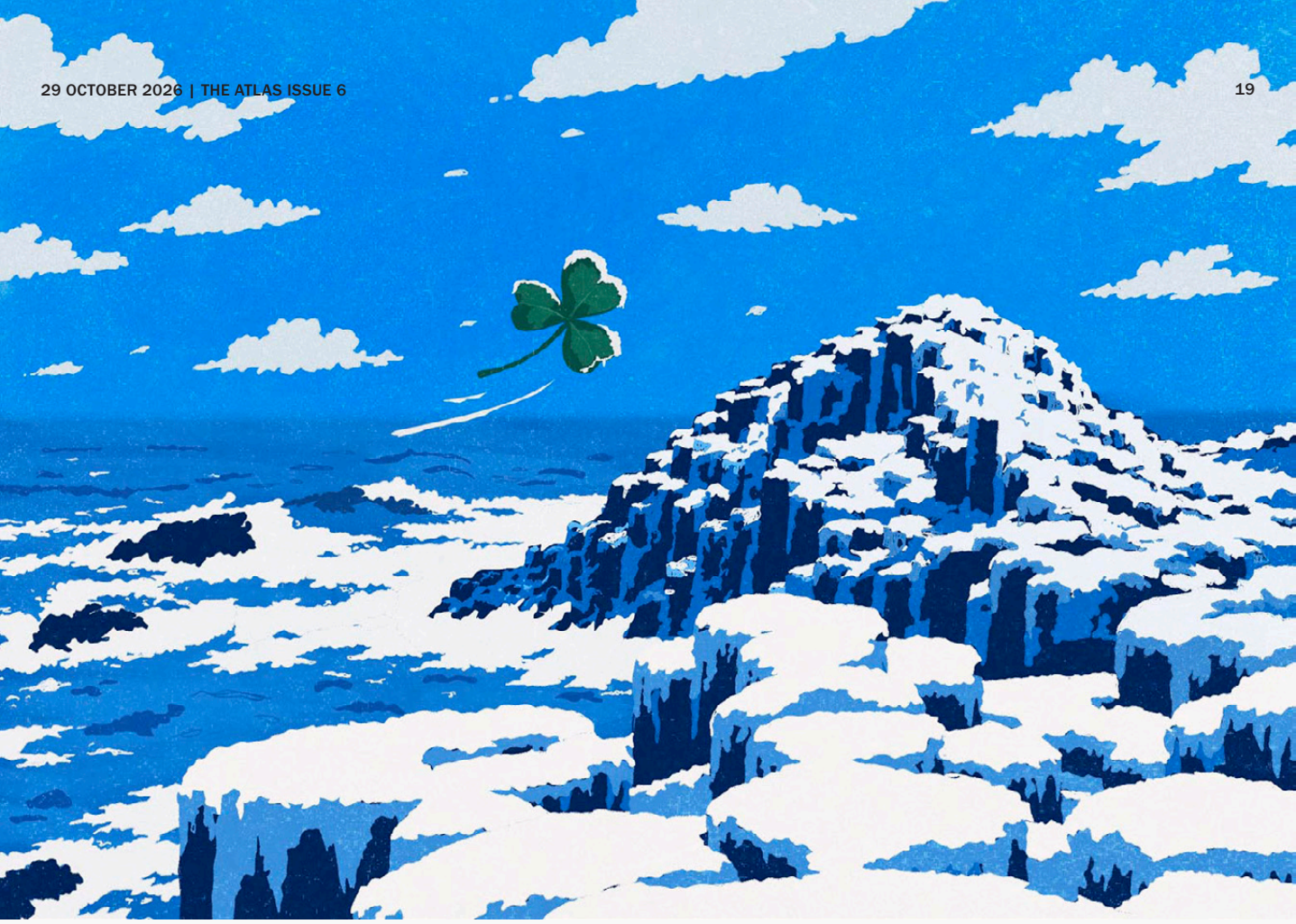
Editor's note: We're keeping a close eye on the shape of the modern surveillance state. Qadri Inzamam and Arunima Kar reported that 'In Modi's India, somebody is always watching' for *Coda Story* this month. In November, we'll look at South Africa's privatised surveillance. Tell us where your nearest surveillance camera is, and who's watching, and win a cover print (email *simon@codastory.com*)



Photo: Ryan O' Toole /The Atlas

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BACKGROUND CHECK: Where in the world is this poster? Find out if you're right on p33



Heat in the ocean, heads in the sand

Within most of our lifetimes, the ocean current that keeps Europe habitable, West Africa wet, North America warm, and the Amazon thriving, could collapse. No one is paying much attention.

Sipho Kings in Easkey, Ireland

Life on Europe's most westerly edge exists between ancient rock and the wild waters of the Atlantic. It's always raining. The wind has a bite and trees lean to one side, tired of fighting the howling gales. The surfing is spectacular. But it should be colder. Other places this far north, in Russia and Canada, are locked in ice. Ireland is famously green.

That's largely thanks to Amoc, or the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation.

Think of it as an ocean conveyor belt, taking hot water from the African coast, north-west to the Gulf of Mexico, then north-east to Ireland before it gets salty and cold off Greenland's coast. Then it drops deep and heads down to Argentina before starting again.

It's been circulating this way for 12,000 years, since the last ice age. It is the reason why agricultural societies have thrived all along the Atlantic. But now vast amounts of carbon dioxide are trapping more heat in the atmosphere.

The heat has to go somewhere. So it's going into the oceans.

This is the hottest-ever year on record for our oceans – and everywhere else. Droughts and floods on land are just one marker of an unstable climate. Amoc is one of 16 tipping points scientists have identified that would suddenly, violently make things worse.

What happens to life on Earth if Amoc slows down, or collapses? For Western Europe and North America, it could mean a 20°C drop in temperatures – and a new ice age. The last time that happened, this part of Ireland was under a kilometre

▲ (Illustration: Anna Jibladze)

of ice. In West Africa and Southeast Asia, life-giving monsoons would falter. No part of the world would be untouched.

In 2016, the United Nations' climate agency said there was "high confidence" a collapse wouldn't happen this century. In 2021 that dropped to "medium confidence".

Stefan Rahmstorf, an oceanographer who has been researching Amoc for 35 years, said in March that collapse was now "more likely than not".

Last August, researchers in the Netherlands ran 25 different climate models and concluded Amoc could start collapsing from 2063. This August, research in Nature Climate Change said the rate the world is heating is key, and that a collapse could start with a 2°C hotter world.

If every country reduces emissions at the rate they have promised on paper, heating will be at least 2.7°C.

What happens to life on Earth if Amoc slows down, or collapses? For Western Europe and North America, it could mean a 20°C drop in temperatures – and a new ice age.

To strengthen their predictions – so that we can all start to plan accordingly – scientists need data. For Amoc that comes from satellites, samples of ancient ice and, since 2001, buoys bobbing in the Atlantic. These tell scientists everything about that spot on Earth, like the air and sea temperature, wind direction, and noise from volcanoes.

The current US administration, backed by billions in donations from the industries driving global heating, started pulling those buoys out of the water. It has also tried to force through deep cuts to climate monitoring units, like the Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii, one of the four key global datasets for carbon emissions. In June, scientists warned of the impacts of this, noting that the entirety of Amoc research gets just €25-million a year. (*Editor's note: instead of surveilling the oceans that sustain us, superpowers spend billions of dollars every year surveilling their own people*).

So, the core driver of civilisation around the Atlantic might start collapsing in 36 years. The models increasingly show that this scenario is more likely than not. But the data to help countries and people prepare is being systematically removed, or doesn't get the funding to get collected in the first place.



▼ **Surfer Al Mennie surveys the icy waves of the north Atlantic in Portrush, Northern Ireland. (Photo: Charles McQuillan/Getty Images)**



Shepherds of the north

In the summer months, sheep roam freely across the volcanic wilderness of Landmannaafréttur, in the rugged highlands of southern Iceland. As temperatures drop and days grow shorter, local farmers set off on foot and on horseback to round up the herd for the winter. This centuries-old communal practice requires immense stamina and an intimate knowledge of the area passed down through generations. Photographer Ragnar Axelsson has spent over 45 years documenting these farmers, culminating in his recent book, *Behind Mountains*.





















MATCH REPORT



On grace and god-forsaken borsch

Georgia 0 – 0 Ukraine

Dinamo Arena, Tbilisi

Irina Machavariani in Tbilisi

Spectators throng outside Dinamo Arena, Tbilisi's biggest football stadium. As always, the turnstiles turn too slowly. Children, with PSG superstar Khvicha Kvaratskhelia's number seven on their backs, squirm on their fathers' shoulders, necks craning towards the buzzing stadium.

Bassiani, the iconic techno club, is in an abandoned swimming pool in the basement of the stadium. Tonight, though, the air vibrates with a different frequency as supporters spur on the home team, hoping to keep Georgia's Euro 2028 qualification dreams alive.

Standing in the way tonight is a familiar rival: Ukraine.

Since the Russian invasion, thousands of Ukrainians have found a home in Tbilisi and other Georgian cities. Georgians, no strangers to Russia's imperial ambitions, have welcomed them.

Russia's most recent invasion of Georgia was in 2008. But tonight, Ukraine's fan club is invoking the memory of an earlier conflict: the war with Russian-backed separatists in Abkhazia, in western Georgia, in the early 1990s. They've come prepared, unfurling a giant flag and a banner that reads: "Sokhumi is Sakartvelo. 7,634 lives saved by Ukraine. WE REMEMBER."

Sokhumi is Abkhazia's capital: the anniversary of its fall was commemorated just a few days before the match. Sakartvelo is what Georgians call their own country. And 7,634 is the number of people evacuated from Abkhazia by Ukrainian troops.

Georgian fans stand up to applaud the message.

But what's friendship got to do with it, when there is a game to win?

"Khvicha, you golden boy!" we shout. When he is fouled, a chorus of creative profanity is aimed at the Ukrainian players, their supporters, their god-forsaken borsch, the referee, and the referee's distant relatives. And then, when Georges Mikautadze misses a clear chance to put Georgia ahead, we groan in collective anguish.

Hundreds of Georgian volunteers have gone to the front line in Ukraine, despite Georgia's pro-Russian government attempting to ignore Kyiv. Dozens were killed on the battlefield.

In an address broadcast at a protest in 2022, Volodymyr Zelenskyy thanked Georgians for fighting alongside Ukrainians.

The match ends in a disappointing, goalless draw. The next morning, we go about our business, wondering if we would stand a chance against Hungary that Friday (we would not, losing 1-0 in Budapest).

In the absence of anything memorable happening on the pitch itself, it's that banner, and the simple grace behind it, that lingers as the defining image of the match.

"Khvicha, you golden boy!" we shout. When he is fouled, a chorus of creative profanity is aimed at the Ukrainian players, their supporters, their god-forsaken borsch, the referee, and the referee's distant relatives.

▲ Photo: Tamuna Kulumbegashvili/AP

THE ATLAS SUBSCRIBES TO...

In every edition, *The Atlas* takes out a subscription, donation or advert in two new independent news outlets – publications that we love and trust, and think you should know about too. We'll then keep you posted on what they're publishing. The slush fund that lets us do this comes from you, our readers, via individual donations. We'd love to add more outlets to our growing list: donation details on theatlasnewspaper.org.

Already on the list:

Egab editor Lina El Wardani reported for *Coda* from the sit-in at the Egyptian Journalists Syndicate building in Cairo, after an entire fact-checking newsroom was arrested on spurious charges.

Himal Southasian reviewed *If All the World Were Paper: A History Of Writing In Hindi* by Tyler Williams. India's current rulers use the language as "a tool by centralised power to impose its mandates on a diverse population" – but it's more complicated than that.

HumAngle investigated the deadly use of Turkish drones by Mali's armed forces. "The heavy fog of dictatorship" hangs over the country, Ibrahim Adeyemi writes.

The Republic explores how ordinary Ethiopians financed the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, the country's most ambitious infrastructure project. It's a model that other African countries may copy.

ATAR

For 61 editions – there's a new one every two weeks – *Atar* magazine has been telling the stories of Sudan at war. Published in both English and Arabic, and distributed as a PDF (much like *The Atlas*), the magazine combines powerful on-the-ground reporting with high-end editing, design and beautiful illustrations.

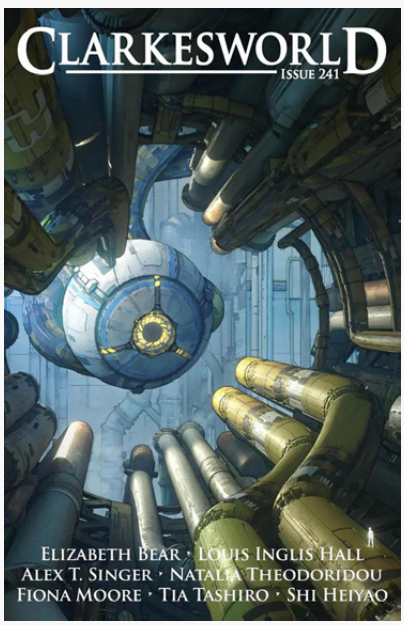
• *The Atlas* donated $100 to Atar's reader contribution fund. Read the magazine's latest issue here.



CLARKESWORLD

Tech bros are obsessed with science fiction. Too often, they miss the point entirely. Some, explicitly, want to turn science fiction into reality – building the Torment Nexus of the cautionary tale *Do Not Build the Torment Nexus*, as *The Onion* writer Alex Blechman put it. Some of the best science fiction is published monthly by *Clarkesworld*. In October, the lead story by Alex T. Singer imagines a pair of robots exploring the world, and each other.

• *The Atlas* is taking out a $47.88 annual subscription via Clarkesworld's website; monthly Patreon tiers are also available.



LIVE MUSIC

Rock between hard places

Rock al Parque, 10 - 12 October

Lauren Franco in Bogotá

From the bus station, thousands upon thousands of people walk into Simón Bolívar Park: friends, families, kids, aging rockers and everyone in between. Security confiscates food and drinks, but inside informal vendors sell pola (beer), aguardiente (spirits) and some drugs.

The park, named for the revolutionary who fought for the independence of six South American countries, is usually a weekend refuge for families. They stroll around the lake, camp on the wide green spaces, or simply relax to the sound of native birds like the copetón.

But this weekend, 290,000 people are gathering for the 30th edition of South America's biggest rock festival.

The saxophone hits first, then the trumpet, now the guitar. Near the stage, the circle starts to spin. Sixty people run in a ring at full speed: jumping, shoving, the occasional punch, the occasional kick. Bogotá calls it the pogo. El Punto Ska, a local band, feeds it, piano and horns pushing the beat faster.

Out of the pogo bounces Alexandra Camargo, hair in tangles, black shirt plastered to her body, sweat running down her forehead. "Like the first time!" she screams. She is 70, and says she has not missed a single Rock al Parque since it began three decades ago. She's here with her daughter.

Out of the pogo bounces Alexandra Camargo, hair in tangles, sweat running down her forehead. "Like the first time!" she screams. She is 70, and says she has not missed a single Rock al Parque since it opened.



"Rock has to be felt here," she told *The Atlas*, pointing to her chest. "You have to pogo it."

This year, there are 83 bands with a total of 584 musicians playing over three days. Entry, as always, is free.

Between songs, the crowd finds its own voice. Thousands of voices rise in a chant at Colombia's new president: "*Abelardo, gonorrea, el pueblo no copea!*" Roughly: Abelardo, you scumbag, the people won't play along.

Abelardo de la Espriella, a right-wing lawyer endorsed by Donald Trump, took office in August after winning the runoff election by less than one percentage point – the narrowest margin in Colombian history. Here, nobody is in the mood to give him a honeymoon.

Away from the stages, the environmental group Censat Agua Viva has hung a banner from the trees: "*No al fracking*," it reads. The message has gained urgency since the new president promised to revive Colombia's oil and gas industry.

Politics has always been part of Rock al Parque. The rock bands that gave birth to the festival in the 1990s sang about the streets, about love and, above all, in anger at the country's leaders.

The songs that move the crowd are

◀ Mon Laferte helps keep the home fires burning. (Photo: Rock al Parque)

the ones that belong to it. Before Los Prisioneros step onstage – perhaps the most influential Latin American rock band of all time – people in the entrance line are already belting out their lyrics, which have soundtracked many of Colombia's recent protests.

By night, the park overflows. Marijuana smoke hangs thick, mixed with the sharp smell of urine from those who couldn't find one of the park's few toilets. The food court has run out of food, but stalls outside the park sell burgers and hot dogs for less than $2.

Night falls, but Bogotá's famous cold never quite arrives. Packed shoulder to shoulder, the crowd keeps itself warm.

Then Mon Laferte enters the main stage, and the screaming starts. The Chilean-Mexican singer is visibly stunned by the sea of people in front of her. Someone in the front row hands her a joint. She takes a drag and keeps singing, and the crowd sings every word back to her.

Somewhere in that crowd is Ana Puerto, 23, who has come to Rock al Parque with her mother every year since she was 18. "She has been with my mom and me through hard times," she says of Mon Laferte.

When Mon begins "*Tu falta de querer*," her iconic heartbreak ballad, the audience sings so loudly that her voice disappears beneath theirs. Mon cries.

Long past midnight, the exodus begins: slow processions of tired, sweaty bodies inching towards the exits. Someone starts singing "*Nadaremos, nadaremos*," the Spanish version of *Just Keep Swimming* from *Finding Nemo*. Soon we're all singing it as we shuffle through the park.

Thirty years on, Rock al Parque is as much a part of Bogotá as changua or ajiaco, the city's breakfast soup and chicken stew.

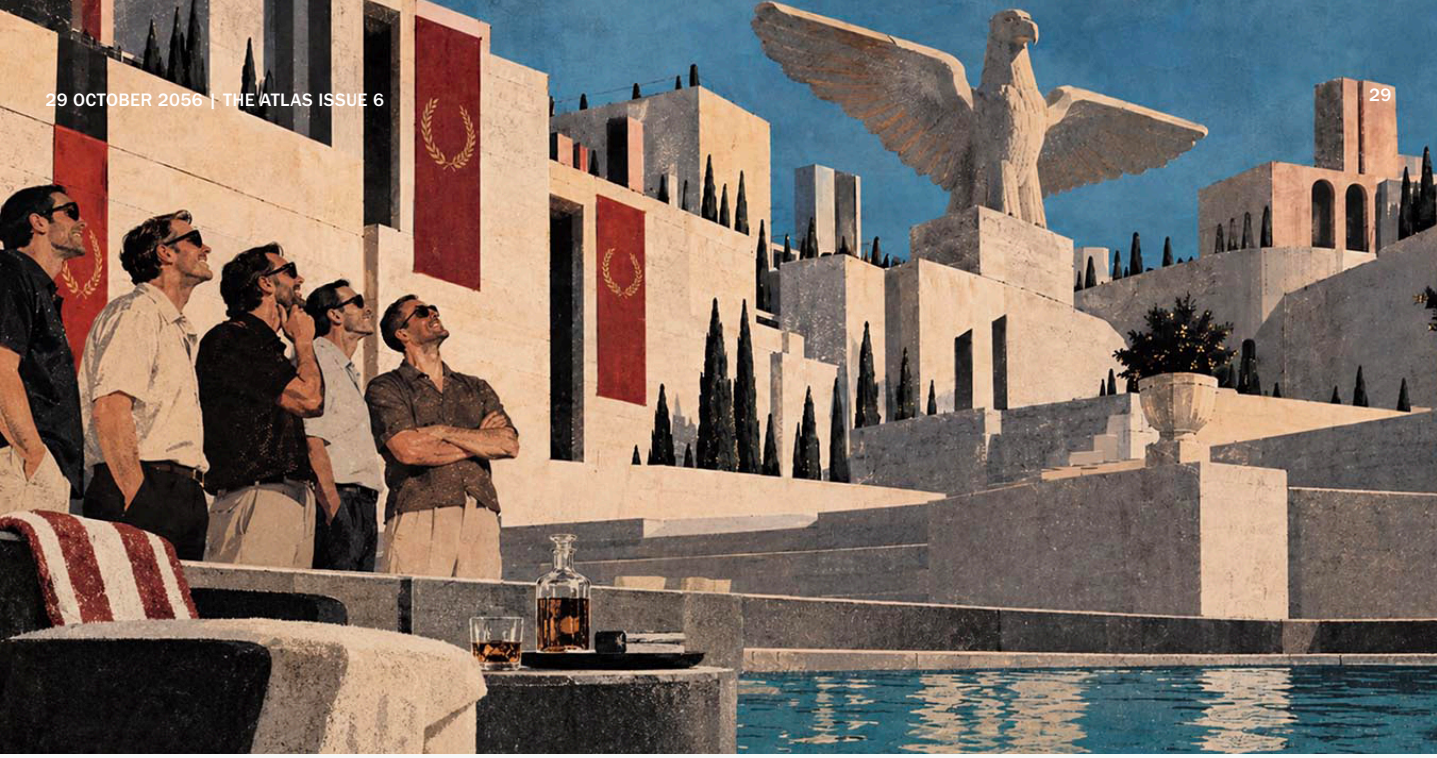
"As long as I have life and I'm able, I'll keep coming to Rock al Parque," Alexandra says on her way out.





This article was produced in collaboration with *Egab*.

▲ **Presidents come and go, but the throng remains the same.**
◀ **Ana Puerto, 23, has attended the festival with her mother without fail since she was 18.**
(Photos: Jeimi Villamizar/*The Atlas*)



A SHORT SHORT STORY

The City of Heroes

Dispatches from the future in 400 words or less

The city had been built on strict architectural principles.

"Heroic Roman," Colin explained to the visitors. "That's my term. It's a city for men not afraid to be heroes."

The visitors, men, nodded and looked around at one another, as if to say: Is it okay to be as stoked about this as we are?

Colin and Brent had nodded back: yes it is, dude.

"We borrowed quite a bit from the Germans, actually," Brent said. "The Nazis built some cool stuff."

The visit was a success. Four signed up, and three ordered women – as good a business as the cities themselves.

But Colin was annoyed. "How many times have I told you not to bring up the Nazis?" he said, later, by the pool. "What's the matter with you?"

There'd been trouble at the beginning; an early investor a little too publicly enthusiastic about der Führer. Colin was sensitive about it. His mom – a real stick in the mud when it came to progress – had cried and called him a fool.

"No one cares anymore," Brent muttered.

This is exactly what Colin had told his mom. But, to Brent: "Get your shit together, dude."

The pool was still, designed not to ripple. Colin had a horror of moving water. In fact, he hated to be wet at all, except in a very clean shower, with new soap. When the architects had suggested erecting the City of Heroes so it faced the beach – "it is beachfront property," they'd said – Colin had said no way. Instead, the smooth stone walls of the city curved away, so you could pretend the ocean wasn't there. Colin looked around him. All flat stone, unbroken by window or ornament. A stone eagle with outspread wings the only decoration. It was fucking awesome. Very soothing. Very mighty.

And his instincts had been right. None of the heroes liked the beach. One of had them admitted to recurring nightmares – being subsumed by waves he couldn't control. Colin related to this. It had made him think of his mom, with her unreasonable expectations and unruly emotions.

They'd had to get rid of the guy with the recurring nightmare, which was a shame; he'd been cool, and his woman's threats to call "the authorities" ridiculous. Colin always used scare quotes when he spoke of it, like, who did she even mean? In this city, they, the heroes, were the authorities. And out there? Who even knew anymore.

Heather Chaplin is the founding director of Journalism + Design at the New School in New York City and author, most recently, of *Reckless Years, A Diary of Love and Madness*

The Historical Record

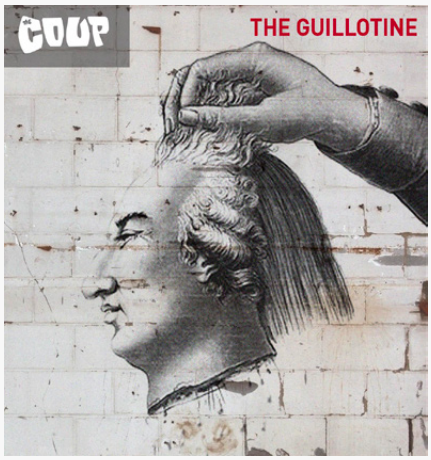
with **CLARISSA REDWINE**



Illustration: Wynona Mutisi

Employees at the crowdfunding platform Kickstarter formed a union in 2020. This was, according to *Wired*, "the first white-collar technology workforce to unionise in US history". Clarissa Redwine was not just in the room when it happened – she helped organise it. Now, along with JS Tan, Redwine has published a book that details the resistance within Silicon Valley to the imperial ambitions of its ruling elites. For The Historical Record, Redwine tells *The Atlas* what fragments of history she would preserve for posterity, if it were up to her. Historians of the very distant future, human or otherwise, you can thank us later.





A RECORD

A few months ago, I was whirling around a small barn in the middle of Vermont, setting up for a theatrical mock trial of Jeff Bezos, a tech oligarch who came to power over the past few decades. As I was setting up chairs for a small audience of locals, my neighbor turned the music up. *The Guillotine* by The Coup (pictured left) blasted on high from her small portable speakers. The euphoric irreverence captured in this song is a window into the revolutionary spirit of our time.

A BOOK

A friend told me I would love this book, that I needed this book, and they were right. *On The Line* by Daisy Pitkin is a beautiful memoir of a young organiser dropped into a fierce battle between industrial laundry workers and their bosses. So

▲ (Photo: Clarissa Redwine)

many of us who are organising today have experienced the transformative nature of solidarity and class struggle. This book captures what it feels like to resist together.

AN ARCHIVE

I had only a few hours left in Brooklyn but I had to see the Interference Archive before my train arrived and whisked me out of town. When I got to this skinny building, with white walls lined with movement lit – thousands of handmade or small batch zines lining the walls – I was transfixed. I found zines from workers who were writing about boss fights in the 60s, 70s, and 80s that sounded just like the ones I fight today.

A MEAL

The room filled with smoke, the fire alarms were screaming, the dogs were scrambling, but we had to save the meal. On the eve of our book tour, my coauthor and his wife decided to make a nourishing and delicious bowl of veg, absolutely drowning in olive oil. The garlic confit had bubbled over and caught the oven on fire. Smoke billowed from the oven but they both kept their cool, squatting inches from the oven door, waiting for the flames to burn out in the hopes that we didn't need to use the extinguisher and ruin the meal. It was delicious.

A PLACE

Just a few days after my dear friend and favourite neighbour passed away, I noticed something new in her garden. As I walked across the street to get a closer look, I realised another neighbour had carried her gardening tools from her home down the street to plant tomatoes in our friend's yard. I told her Catrina would have loved these tomatoes. We smiled softly and told each other, "See you tomorrow."

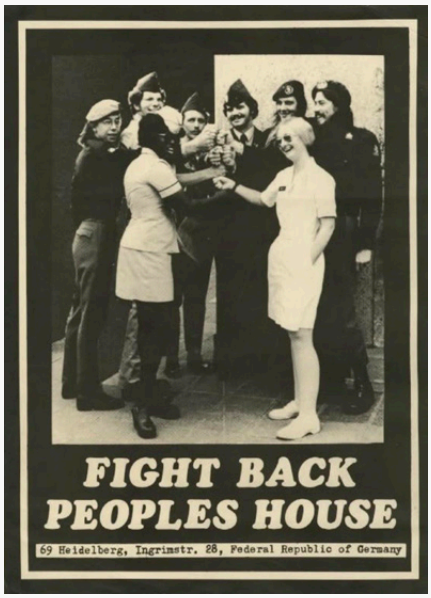


When I got to this skinny building, with white walls lined with movement lit – thousands of handmade or small batch zines lining the walls – I was transfixed.

A TURNING POINT IN HISTORY

Shortly after Trump assumed power in 2016, many tech industry leaders agreed to meet with him. This gathering was captured in photos and circulated widely across the general public. This was a moment when the workers within the empires of big tech started to question how their leadership would react to the pressures of the new far right administration. This photo planted a seed of doubt that fuelled worker rebellions across the industry and accelerated class consciousness – not just in tech workers but also in their bosses. ●

▲ Interference Archive
▼ Examples from Interference Archive's impressive zine collection



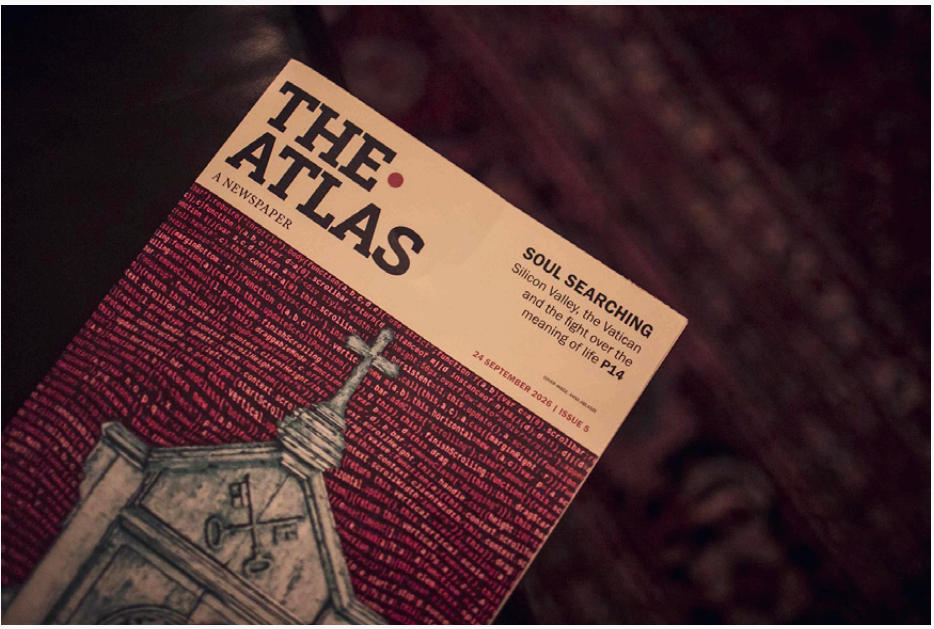


Clarissa Redwine is the author, with J S Tan, of *Against Tech Oligarchy: Worker Resistance in the World's Most Powerful Industry* (Published September 2026)

Some day your prints will come

A few days after publishing last month's edition of *The Atlas*, we sent a print-ready file to a printer in Tbilisi. The printer performed what, in most other centuries, would be considered a miracle: binding coloured ink to white paper to create patterns and meaning and beauty. And then repeating that miracle another 99 times. *The Atlas* is now a print publication.

From Tbilisi, the newspapers travelled by plane to New York City, buried in someone's suitcase. One was left in a Brooklyn coffee shop. Another on the subway. Exactly 60 copies were distributed in branded tote bags at the first-ever iteration of the ZEG off-the-record salon – we don't know what happened to them from there. We left a dozen in the offices of various potential funders, and, when no one was looking, snuck two onto the newspaper table at the CUNY journalism school in Manhattan, between *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Cut*.



Ten copies went to various team members, leaving 16 to go on another transcontinental journey: this time on the 15-hour direct flight to Johannesburg, South Africa.

From there, 11 newspapers boarded a bus heading north, negotiated the notoriously slow Beit Bridge border crossing, and were delivered by hand to a reader in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, who distributed them in turn to elderly members of his community who "are still stuck reading newspapers in print form".

Maybe they have the right idea.

Do you want a print edition? We'll see what we can do. Email simon@codastory.com

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About *Coda Story*

Coda Story is an award-winning journalism studio that investigates the forces shaping the world. Through deep reporting, pattern-recognition journalism and storytelling innovation, *Coda* connects stories across borders and over time, revealing the systems beneath the headlines.

About *The Continent*

The Continent is an award-winning pan-African newspaper that began publishing in April 2020. Distributed as a PDF on encrypted messaging platforms, it is Africa's most widely read newspaper, with subscribers in more than 140 countries.

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Refiloe Seiboko
Sipho Kings
Theresa Mallinson
Wynona Mutisi
Yemsrach Yetneberk
Yusuf Omotayo

BACKGROUND CHECK:

1. The Continent is in Nairobi, Kenya, in the CBD. The poster was affixed to the pole by a friendly boda driver, balancing precariously on his motorcycle.

2. Coda Story & ZEG are near King's Cross in London, UK – once the city in the world with more CCTV cameras than anywhere else.

.coda
The Continent

The Coda

Who will get to define the danger?

Natalia Antelava in New York City



▲ AI 'doomers' fret about human extinction. The People's AI Assembly focused on more immediate threats. (Photo: AI Now Institute)

Webster Hall in Manhattan has a long history of rebellion. A century ago, garment workers organised strikes here, socialists debated the future, and New York's radicals gathered to demand change.

On October 19, the grand ballroom was packed again. The crowd, spilling onto the balconies, laughed at Mayor Zohran Mamdani's jokes, cheered former antitrust chief Lina Khan, and hung on the every word of writers Arundhati Roy, Karen Hao and Naomi Klein. The cause that brought them together? Artificial intelligence.

At Coda, we've spent years tracing how AI is transforming societies, from the way governments and corporations exercise power to how people live and work. The effects of this transformation were also the subject of "The People's AI Assembly"at Webster Hall. Organisers from Memphis, El Paso and upstate described how data centres threatened land, water and electricity. Labour leaders spoke of the risk to jobs. Writers worried about the threat to language and thought.

Mamdani warned against treating as inevitable the idea of AI as "almost divine". Naomi Klein told the crowd she had rarely seen a resistance movement emerge so quickly, with so little foundation funding.

But as this grassroots movement gathers strength, so does another movement: Effective Altruism, also known as EA.

A philosophical and philanthropic movement with deep ties to Silicon Valley, EA has become a powerful force in defining the risks of AI. Some of its most influential proponents warn that advanced AI could one day cause human extinction – yet also have close ties to frontier AI companies. Holden Karnofsky, who founded one of EA's leading philanthropic institutions, Coefficient Giving, now works at Anthropic, whose co-founder and president, Daniela Amodei, is his wife.

Coefficient Giving committed $351-million to AI safety, security and field-building in 2025. This year it expects to commit over $1-billion. It funds research, creates organisations, recruits experts and backs the Tarbell Center for AI Journalism, which this month announced a $10-million programme to expand AI reporting, including at NPR.

Over the coming years, EA money will help determine which institutions are built, which experts are heard and which AI risks command attention – and policy responses. At Webster Hall, speaker after speaker warned about the concentration of power in the technology industry. That power increasingly extends into the institutions through which we examine its consequences. ●

We live in the same world. Let's read from the same page.



Our next edition is due at the end of November... get it delivered!

Sign up on email or send us a message on Signal (link below). We'll be in touch.
www.theatlasnewspaper.org