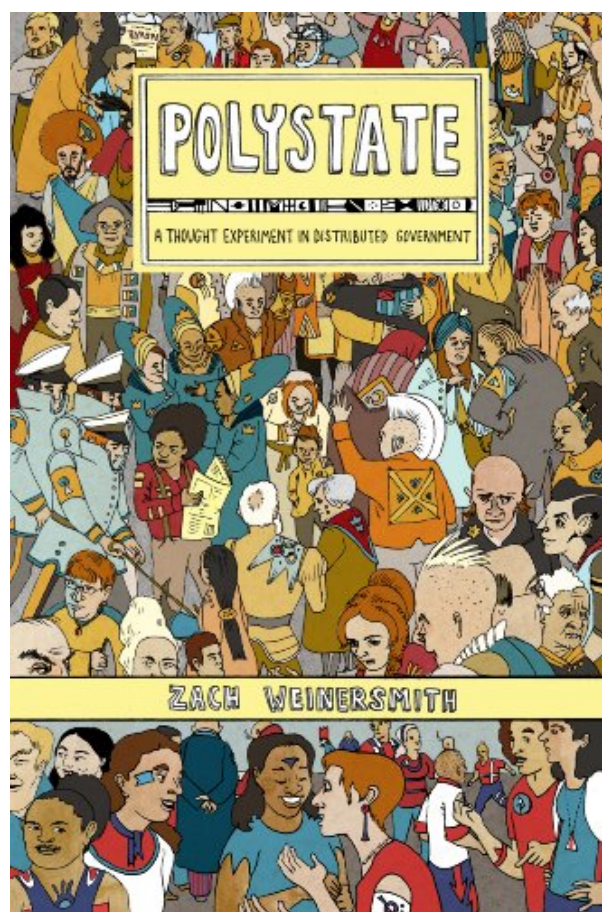


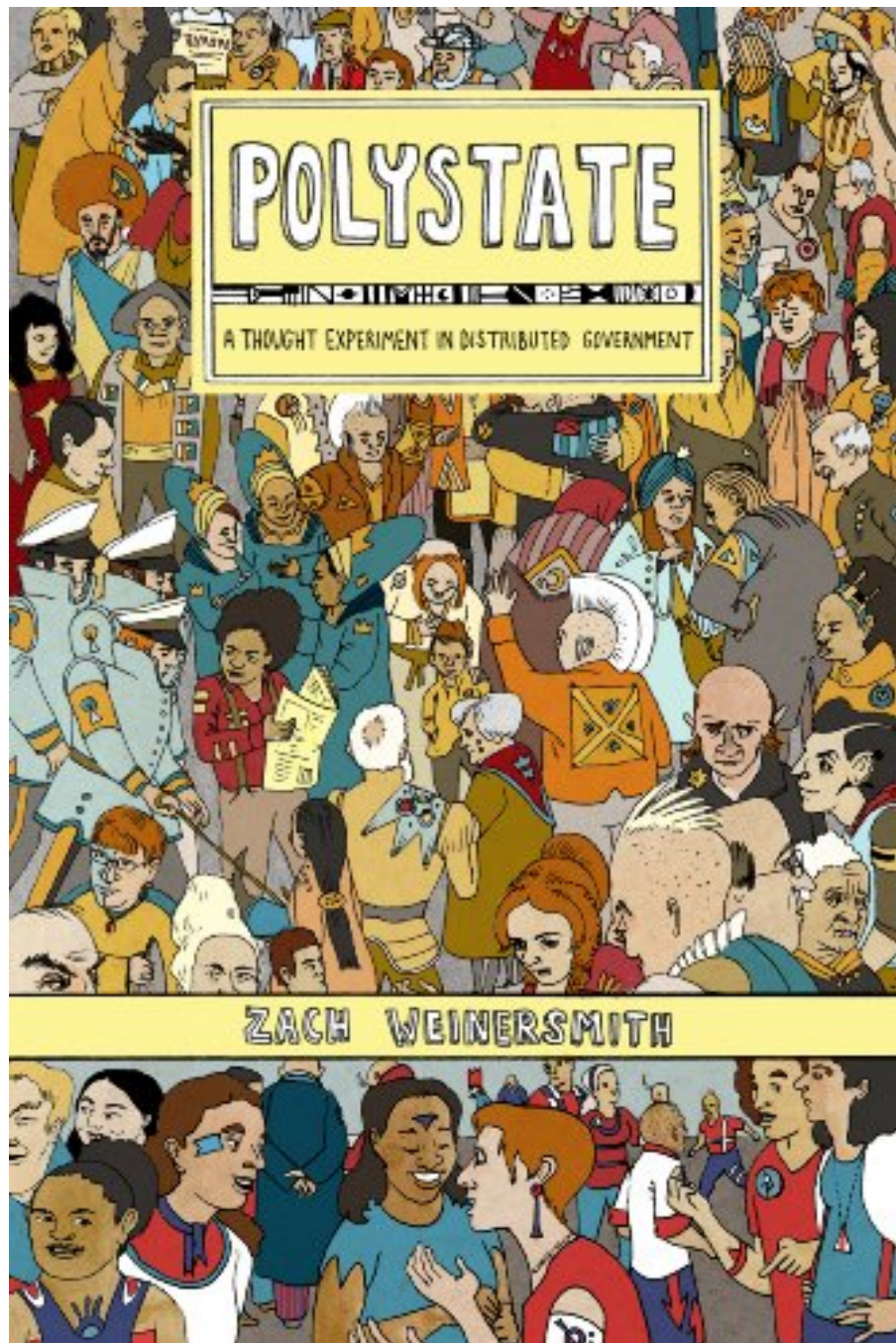
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# **POLYSTATE: A THOUGHT EXPERIMENT IN DISTRIBUTED GOVERNMENT BY ZACH WEINERSMITH PDF**

What if governments didn't rule locations, but instead ruled minds? That is the question explored in this eBook.

"Polystate" refers to the idea of a geographic entity in which multiple overlapping states exist, each consisting of citizens who have agreed to the laws of a single non-geographic state. In this sense, the book is a discussion not of a particular form of government, but a meta-government in which each person is free to choose a new constitution on a yearly basis without the encumbrance of relocation.

It is not clear whether such an institution as a Polystate is possible or desirable, but the author sets out to discuss ways in which it might conceivably work, and why it might be desirable.

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Too large a subject to tackle in such a short book.

By Ronald S. Khare

The concept of polystates is nothing more than that - a concept, and unfortunately one that seems to rely almost completely on universal, semi-futuristic technological access. While the logic presented is fairly solid, the foundation it builds itself on is so full of holes that I found it hard to take seriously.

I have great respect for the author and everything he's done (I'm a big fan of SMBC), and I applaud this work in its willingness to explore new ideas. It is, for better or worse, the inevitable product of our digital age - that is, the product of a generation so utterly divorced from the immediacy of place that it could conceive of a world where a person doesn't belong to the here and now, to these trees and the people around them, but rather owe their allegiance to a full abstraction. A stranger among friends, a foreigner in the park down the street, but at home online, with a scattering of people across the planet.

The book itself is well-written and clearly laid out, and Mr. Weinersmith does what he can to avoid too much complexity, so the layperson should be able to follow along. Fans of "what if" and logic/math problems will most likely enjoy it.

13 of 16 people found the following review helpful.

Zach Weinersmith is a genius. Period.

By Matthew W. Conn

This is said with no hyperbole - look at the 10 years plus of SMBC comics - the fact that he has been able to

make relevant and funny social commentary while still appealing to the scientific mindset is nothing short of baffling. This book may be a departure from that and games like Trial of The Clone, but is no less brilliant.

Really amazing book to pick up for less than 5 bucks.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Interesting ideas which deserve a bit more systematic approach

By Tibor Mach

Zach Weinersmith sketches out a hypothetical system where there are many so called "anthrostates" embedded within a larger framework of a "polystate". A polystate is (presumably) a legal institution covering a geographical area (possibly the whole world, but not necessarily so) which lays out a framework of rules within which "anthrostates" function as sort of governments which are not constrained by geography and between which its "citizens" switch freely - that fosters competition and therefore pushes the anthrostates to do a good job in the sense of providing laws that its citizens want (constrained by the existence of other anthrostates and its citizens).

I find the book full of good ideas and arguments, but very sketchy (the author admits that several times himself). One thing that I think is actually missing however, is a discussion of how you actually set up the polystate, enforce its rules and possibly change them (which may not be necessary if they are very basic, such as in his "WS-1" polystate, but still - rarely anything lasts forever in reality).

If you find Polystate ideas interesting you might enjoy a book called "Machinery of freedom" (in particular part III of it) by David D. Friedman (D. is rather important, there are many David Friedmans around). It is available here on Amazon and also legally downloadable for free from his website (easy to google) in a digital version. The system imagined by Friedman, (who is a physicist turned economist), is very similar to that of Weinersmith's - sans the polystate framework - although his word for an "anthrostate" is a "protective agency". He also goes to much more detail in describing how and why laws could be created and maintained and how rules between different agencies/anthrostates could be set up and enforced. While Friedman is of a libertarian persuasion, he does not argue with moral philosophy (as a lot of other libertarians do) but with utilitarian and economic arguments (as does Weinersmith) and in his system a communitarian or any other exotic agency/anthrostate could work as well as long as there are people willing enough to live under such rule - again, much like in a Weinersmith's polystate. He also discusses the issue of defense in more detail than Weinersmith - particularly against foreign nations who do not live in such a system - which indeed might be one of the most challenging issues of these kinds of societies (while wars within that system itself are probably less likely). One can find solutions to some problems raised by Weinersmith and also some additional possible problems (and mostly solutions) that Weinersmith does not mention.

If this were my first confrontation with similar ideas I would probably give it five stars. Since I've read the Machinery first, there was nothing new for me here, but I think it is still a very good book and if you have never thought about a system Zach is imagining, add a star to my rating.

Also, there is an initiative called the Seasteading Institute whose goal is to allow for experimentation with different forms of government by making it possible for people to colonize seas and setting up rules for themselves without the necessity of persuading everyone else in the country. Plus, as the floating cities are designed to be modular, the costs of moving from set of laws (even if assuming the city is not polylegal but has a single law system) to another are lower since you can move with your house (based on the current design proposals also necessarily with a couple of neighbouring houses, because too small platforms are unstable on sea, but still better than nothing). So again, if you like the ideas in Polystate, you might like the Seasteading institute as well. It might be good to note that while some people are fast to label that as a

"libertarian scam to create tax havens", there is nothing inherently "libertarian" about the institute and some of the floating cities could run on a communitarian basis or something perhaps even more exotic as well. The idea is to allow for experimentation and observe what works best...which could then perhaps be applied on land as well.

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