

The Great Simplification - Frankly 19

Nate Hagens (00:00):

Hello. Time for another Frankly. It is freaking cold here, going to be negative 18 Celsius, which is around zero Fahrenheit. But I am in my cozy, partially wood, partially propane, heated office. I was going to talk about a probabilistic view of the future, but someone showed me how to look at YouTube analytics this past weekend. So I've become a bit interested in the followers of this channel. And I had a discovery, which I'm going to reflect on today.

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If you add up the podcast, iTunes and Spotify and YouTube, there's been about a million views or downloads of this channel this year, which isn't too bad for something just starting out and something with a threatening and complex and uncommon view versus the cultural narrative. One of my hardest challenges is not understanding and integrating the story. It's finding individuals and communities of people willing to take this spot, on board, and discuss it. So I was surprised to see the geography of the followers of this podcast. Of course, the details are different on each podcast, and on each month, and the whole year, and the different playlist. But generally, of the top 15 cities in the world with people following this podcast, seven of them are in New Zealand and Australia, Wellington, Christchurch, Auckland, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth. And New Zealand has a smaller population than Wisconsin or Minnesota. If you expand that to the top 25 cities, a town called Nelson, New Zealand has more followers of this podcast than Chicago, or Atlanta, or Dallas, or Paris.

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What's up with that? I wondered, maybe it's because I remind people of Jason Momoa, girlfriend gave an emphatic no to that. Maybe it's because I know people in New Zealand and Australia, not really, not relative to people in Europe or San Francisco, et cetera. And I thought about it, and I think the reason that the great simplification is consumed, and discussed, and followed is because these places are island nations. And anyone listening to this can follow the cognitive intellectual arc of energy, human behavior, money, climate change, and the systems ecology of it. But emotionally, I think people living in islands recognize this is their lives. They see the ships offloading products. They know they're at the end of the supply chain. And so the concepts discussed on this podcast about the coming unwind of complexity due to higher cost energy and decomplexification of our global system are acutely felt by people living in islands.

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It could be some other reason, but I just found it fascinating. If you look at the graph, the two countries in the Middle East are Riyadh and Jeddah. I have no idea why that would be. The number one city in the world is London for following this podcast. But anyways, I'm going to keep considering that because living on an island and being aware of the coming great simplification, I would hypothesize that some people living on islands or remote places will want to leave. They'll want to be closer to the source of goods and services and the benefits of modern civilization. But I think unexpectedly, some people are going to move purposefully to these places from the center of complexity towards a simple life, towards communities that focus on people and not stuff and belonging rather than belongings. And I think you're going to see some very interesting phase shifts in demographics in coming decade.

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So what does this all mean? I think this is a clue that certain communities and regions are discussing this stuff ahead of the wave, so to speak. I think it suggests an opportunity to create your own islands, metaphorically, that islands of people, even if they're 10 or 20 people having conversations about the biological and physical realities that we face, then act as attractors to have other people looking, asking questions, being curious. I wish I could have some Oprah book club toolkit to get cultural islands across this country, the United States, and have people discussing these things more urgently than they are.

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And then lastly, I think about the delta between what someone knows and how they're living. And I talked to this guru yesterday, one of Daniel Schmachtenberger's friends, and I may have him on a podcast in the future. And he told me, "In some ways, Nate, you're doing a disservice to humanity." Because if the delta of what someone knows and how they're living their life is too wide, which someone just coming across my podcast, that may be the case, it creates this internal dissonance and possible for adverse behavior like drinking, or self-medicating, or anxiety, or depression. I never thought about it that way before. But that's one reason I don't go on television or the large podcasts. People who want to hear this story and a wider and deeper unpacking of the human predicament, self-select to listen to this program. So I'm not foisting this on other people. I'm trying to set the table so that more people are at the table having this conversation.

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So my last point is, I think I'm trying to explain the human predicament to a lot more people. How energy, oil depletion, money and all that fits together. And then of course, what do we do with the infrastructure, the more local and regional supply chains, a focus on basic needs like water, and infrastructure, and food, and local manufacturing, and waste, and heat and those things. And that's all important. There's a middle piece that is inner development. We live in a dopamine centered society, and the other neurotransmitters have become ignored, stepchildren relative to the grand master dopamine. And I think we need to focus more on inner development and how to be alive at these times. So I'm thinking next year I'll have more psychologists and people that are expert on changing human behavior because we have to start at islands of one.

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And so I'm hitchhiking a ride along on the inner development, how to be alive during these times, knowing all this stuff, talking about this stuff and having the community of you all and having my listservs of 40 systems ecologists is like ongoing psychotherapy, that it's all manageable because we're talking about it together and learning together. I have a lot to learn on the psychological, how do we consume less? But society's never going to consume less and live differently and prioritize oxytocin and serotonin over dopamine unless there are pilots, unless there are islands, real islands, islands of community, and individual islands of behavior. So that's something I think about. Lastly, I do think this makes me more interested in helping New Zealand, Australia in acting as pilots for what's to come, because I don't think giant countries like China or the United States, this story is to counter to the national goal of consumption and growth.

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Also, there's a cultural island in Scandinavia with Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, which is also quite interesting. So that's all that I had on this little reflection. Lots more to come. I did also notice that 81% of the viewers of this program are male, which I have to think about that as well. And I would love to have more female viewers and participants in this. I have a lot of women guests coming up, but it'll probably still be one in three, one in four, because a lot of people in my biophysical network happen to be men. In any case, wherever you are on an island, or a continent, or a city, have a good week, and I will talk to you soon. Thanks.