

# The Great Simplification

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Patrick Knodel (00:00:00):

Most people don't want explanations, they want easy messages. I would say the biggest challenge is that what's actually impactful and what actually makes a difference takes a lot of time, is complex to understand, and is almost impossible to sell to donors. Impact is always long-term. There's a huge discussion in the whole non-profit sector about impact measurement, and I can see why. We also try to measure it, we try to follow up, but the most important things, you cannot measure.

Nate Hagens (00:00:35):

My guest today is Patrick Knodel of the Knodel Foundation in Germany, an impact investing firm who focuses on projects that increase sustainability and autonomy for the Global South. Patrick and I discuss the unseen details that go into creating projects that have genuine impact for the long-term future for communities and for the planet. This conversation in many places was also a reflective one on what the value and goals of impact investing should be, and how Patrick's life experiences have shaped his philosophy on these issues and the subsequent work that he does.

Thoughtful and aware humans who have access to resources and capital are a critical resource for steering the direction of planetary futures, and Patrick and his work are playing a critical role on this path. Please enjoy this conversation with my friend Patrick Knodel.

(00:01:43):

So, my friend, we met last year in Europe at a conference of like-minded individuals and instantly became friends and hit it off, not only factually and what we're working on, but at a deeper spiritual level of what it means to be alive and engaged in these issues. So can you unpack for our audience, what has been your path to becoming aware of and educating yourself on the many converging crises that humanity and the planet face?

Patrick Knodel (00:02:22):

At first, I would like to point out that becoming aware is a process, so whenever you're at one point and you think you've figure stuff out, then you meet some other guy or read some other book, see some other documentary, and you're like, oh, I didn't know that. So I think the main profit I gained for myself was getting to that point, where

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you actually understand that it's not over and that you have to be open to question everything you think you know all the time, which I think is the path to progress. And in my case, I changed quite drastically the way I think about the world over the past 10 years, I guess.

(00:03:07):

So I studied business in Germany and in England, two different programs, an MBA and all of that. When I was in my early 20s, I wanted to become CEO of Porsche, the German sports car manufacturer. I thought about how much money to make, is 80,000 good, or 100,000, or 150? So I had defined my career plan, I'm German, based on cars, so I had car models figured out that I wanted to drive at a certain age, and from that, I said, "Okay, that's my measure of success," so that was my starting point. Also, my father is an entrepreneur, so I had that spirit and I saw the challenges, but also the greatness of doing something yourself. Well, after my studies, I started traveling the world with a backpack, starting to see other people and other cultures, and it somehow struck me by lightning that so many things that I had learned in school, in university, and also in Western media had nothing to do with the reality of most parts of the world. Well, maybe struck by lightning is a bit too harsh, I think it's a process over several journeys. But for example, at one point, I questioned myself, okay, I went to four different business universities where I had also economics, I have never heard one lecture in my whole life that involved the word sustainability, or impact, or nature, or biodiversity, or psychology, or any of that-

Nate Hagens (00:05:00):

Or energy.

Patrick Knodel (00:05:01):

Energy, surely not, yeah, energy surely not. And I was like, okay, why, how can that be? And so, I started questioning things more and more, and I found out that, in several aspects, I wasn't listening to other opinions, I wasn't reading articles or books that were from a different standpoint. I was quite skeptical about people who don't come from the business background, like sociological, psychological, environment, whatever. I was always like, okay, these guys, they might have a point, but they don't understand

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the big picture. So I was quite arrogant in the way I saw the world, and the traveling broke that up.

(00:05:52):

And so, I started getting into these things more and more. And I think I always tell that story on every podcast, so if you've listened to another one, sorry about that. The most drastic example was when I traveled to Malaysia in 2013, and we were four weeks there, so we flew to Singapore, drove by car to Kuala Lumpur, and you have 400 kilometers and all you see is palm oil. And then, you travel four weeks the country, and all you see is palm oil. And then, you do research and, okay, you see, okay, 2% is left of rainforest, in 1900, it was 100%. So then, in the morning, you look at the things you eat, you look at your Nescafe that you got from the 7/11 next door, convenience stuff, and you see, okay, there's palm oil in there. So basically, everything I'm using had palm oil in there.

(00:06:47):

Then I flew back to London, went to the Battersea Power Station, huge real estate project, huge shopping center, luxury apartments, and I googled who's the investor behind that, and it was that palm oil company from Malaysia. And so, that was the first time when I was like, okay, four universities, and that circle of my consuming, killing the rainforest, being invested into luxury apartments and shopping centers, why have I not heard one word about that in my whole education that is supposed to be so great?

Nate Hagens (00:07:20):

My background is very, very similar to yours, but on your point, every time I shop for peanut butter, the first thing I do is I look at to see if there's palm sugar or palm fruit oil in there, and I immediately have an emotional image of an orangutan, and I put it back every time. I may not be as conscious and looking at all the things, but yeah, it's profoundly sad what's happened to Indonesia, and it's happened little by little, so it's shifting baselines, but on a century level, it's a tragedy.

Patrick Knodel (00:07:57):

From there on, I got to the point where I always dreamed about working in sports. Again, to the German cliché, of course, I love football, I mean the football with the

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round ball that has been kicked, not the American one, the egg that's being thrown. And so, I wanted to work in that, and it didn't work out. And so, I ended up, at one point, funny enough, I ended out as the co-founder of a restaurant franchise, and it was a steakhouse. So I was already critical of meat at that time, but I was like, okay, you're not a student anymore, you can afford the good meat, so eat the good meat. So then I looked deeper into that and said, "Okay, there is no point." So I said, "Okay, I have to quit this job and I have to do something useful. I don't want to earn my money hurting people, hurting nature."

(00:08:55):

And that led, basically, to many, many discussions with people around me, and so that led to the start of a charitable foundation and to the start of an impact investment company, which is basically the two things, at least with regards to my LinkedIn profile, that I'm doing today. And apart from that, which is very much related to my business, my first real interest in questioning things wasn't necessarily environmental or health, which it is of course today, but it was a lot about war, about geopolitics, about selling the same stuff over and over again, always knowing why this war is good and this war is bad, and never just saying that all of them are just for power and we have to stop all of them, and questioning these things was my gateway into questioning society and economics in total.

Nate Hagens (00:09:57):

I have strong feelings about the ongoing wars in the world today, and I don't really focus on that on the podcast because I'm talking about energy and nature and the Great Simplification, and plus, to go counter-narrative, the media and the intelligence communities within former intelligence community people in the media, it's a pretty strong narrative that in every country there's a war narrative, but if you fly up high enough and look down, it's very scary and very profoundly disturbing situation. US and Europe versus Russia is one, what's going on in the Middle East is another, China is a longer term one. But it seems like the people in power, war is good for business, and I don't know how to get out of that loop, but I feel that we have, for the last 50 years or the last 80 years, a frog in boiling water sort of thing, we've gotten used to the fact that, oh, these wars will never end up in something catastrophic. But actually, I think

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they might, and I'm really hopeful that we can have some antidote to the building storm clouds on the geopolitical war horizon.

(00:11:33):

My own thing, and I know you at least temperamentally would agree with me, I think the antidote, and this is going to sound woo-woo, is kindness and love and almost a Gandhi-esque, what Gandhi did against colonialism and British rule, if we could apply that in a Gaia sense globally against war and power, I just don't know how to do that, but I hear you. Do you want to speak more about your thoughts there?

Patrick Knodel (00:12:09):

I agree with everything you said, I would maybe add consciousness to that. Basically, war is always about greedy old people telling the masses who to hate and telling young, mainly, guys who to kill, and so people end up killing people they've never met and they don't know why. So for me, it's always, on a personal level, if you look at the media and you have all those framed images about pure evil, always look behind, try to... There is no such thing as neutral media, but at least go to both sides. If they say Putin is like Hitler and he wants to overrun Europe, because that's what then CNN or the Guardian would write, that's a framed opinion, a Western-framed opinion, so if you want to read that, then also go to Russia Today or Al Jazeera. They're also framed, but at least you have the framing from both sides and then you can find your middle, that's what I would recommend. Just always, no matter which conflict, listen to both sides, and don't let anyone make yourself hate anyone else.

Nate Hagens (00:13:29):

That's very good advice. I do that. I learned, in the last two years, how little I really know about what's going on, so I'm super skeptical of things I read.

(00:13:41):

Just as an aside, Patrick, one of the deepest intense emotions that I've felt from a human perspective is when I go internationally to a conference or something, I was in Saudi Arabia a few years ago, and there were people in the audience from 50 countries, from Brazil and Pakistan and China and African nations, and they didn't care, they weren't caring about power or the war or status, they were worried about the environment and climate. And it was like when humans from multiple countries get

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together, and everyone's the same in most countries, the common people, they like music, and good food, and a boyfriend or a girlfriend, and security. And so, when I watch these science fiction movies where there's an International Space Station and there's collaboration between Russian cosmonauts and United States astronauts, it gives me this maybe a naive feel and pull of what might be possible.

Patrick Knodel (00:14:56):

It is, I agree. These huge differences, if you bring people out of context, out of the influence of their peer groups, out of the influence of their media, of where they work, you will always find much more things in common than things that separate you. I love the image of, there is a guy from Switzerland, in German, he calls it menschliche familie, so it means human family. All the borders we have today, they were created artificially. There's always fighting about which border is where. It only depends how long you want to go back. Do you want to go back before World War II, and then Germany is bigger and France is smaller, is that useful? Or do you go back 300 years or 800 years, or if you go to 800, there is not even France. France has the same origins as Germany. So just making people realize that these nationalist ideologies are really, really small-minded and that there is no point in hating others because you have much more in common than you think.

(00:16:22):

I wouldn't say it's necessarily everywhere, with my job, I see a lot of things on this earth, and I also travel a lot in personal terms, and there are huge differences between cultures, no doubt about it, so that's also the big topic of migration. How much is good, in what kind of tempo, what can actually work, and what are the expectations from both sides? So that's a huge other discussion, which is getting more relevant for politics these days.

(00:16:56):

But I feel that at least with, I don't know, 90% of the people of other countries, you can become very close, very soon, if there is the right setting and no framing around, so that's what gives me hope that we can somehow overcome these things. And that is why also, for example, why I'm not such a friend of the talking about, okay, people don't fly anymore because it's bad for the climate. Yeah, it's true, but there are other things that are in total much worse for the climate. But all the people I know that

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travel a lot, and by traveling, I don't mean going to a five star hotel and getting served at the pool, I mean traveling. Most people have huge respect for other countries, for social stuff, for environmental stuff, and this exchange is very, very healthy, whereas when I talk to people who basically always have been living in the same village and never met any other cultures outside, they are very, very close with regards to these topics. So there are two sides of the medal of flying, that's what I want to say maybe.

Nate Hagens (00:18:10):

Oh, there's a huge story there. I'm going to do an upcoming frankly, to fly or not to fly, because I have strong opinions on that, because there's what you said, but then there's also the framing of the Superorganism, which is this metabolism that's not going to change until it does, and my opinion is we have to use the time and the tools in order to prepare for the future that most people are not preparing for and change the initial conditions. And had I not flown to Europe once last year, I wouldn't have met you, we wouldn't have had this conversation, and about 20 other people as well, but that's a topic for another day.

(00:18:52):

So you come from a entrepreneurial family, you are an entrepreneur, were almost a professional athlete, you invested, as a young person, in restaurants, et cetera. What are you doing now? What is your job, and what are your goals and values and visions?

Patrick Knodel (00:19:14):

My mission is to be one bit of peace that is hopefully part of a bigger solution, and in terms of a job, that currently adds up to two things. So one is an impact investing company, where I basically borrow money from my father's real estate company in equity, and I take that and I invest that in purpose-driven, so-called impact startups. We can talk more about that and what's working and what's not working.

(00:19:52):

And the other part is charitable foundation, that currently, I was hoping it would be over by the recording of this podcast, but it's not, it currently is holding our family name, because when we founded it like seven years ago, we didn't know what to do, so we just took the family name, but we want to rename it, which is not so easy in

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German bureaucracy, but we're on it. And that foundation basically wants to fund systemic change. So basically, what I'm trying to do is I say, okay, philanthropy will never be the answer to everything, because philanthropy is only there, because, first of all, some people have too much money, and second of all, there are problems that the system, capitalism, and politics cannot solve. So there is currently a need for philanthropy if it's done in the right way. And the other part the for-profit world, you have to change that as well, so showcasing that another business mindset is possible and trying to accelerate that and make it normal. So I'm trying to tackle those things from both sides.

(00:21:07):

And with regards to the foundation, very briefly, we have five areas of funding where we are supporting other organizations. So it was a learning journey, when I started the foundation and the investment company, I didn't have any clue about investments or about philanthropy, to be honest. So I was running around for the first year just asking people questions, and found out that many things in so-called development aid, as it was called in earlier days, didn't really solve the problem, but were more likely to be part of the problem.

(00:21:49):

And so, it evolves over time, so we changed what we do several times. But the big picture is funding systems change, which for me means we have to empower people in the so-called Global South, I don't like the word, but I don't have a better one in English, at least. You could say less polluting countries, that would be the same. So empower people to actually solve their own problems, and find change makers who actually live there, who are in the problem, and who want to solve it, and usually have never any access to any power structures, to any capital. And so, we have four funding areas that target that area, the Global South.

(00:22:34):

So one is Reimagining Education, which is all about the general problem of education that, from my point of view, as outlined by my own story, is a huge part of the problem, maybe the main part of the problem, and not part of the solution. We can go to deeper into that if you want. The second one is called Sustainable Habitats, which is about, okay, development for people, and also for poor people, has to go



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hand in hand with environmental solutions, which I see in general in discussions also here, in Europe, it's always separated. One people talk about climate change, and the others talk about the social stuff, and then nobody talks about how bringing both of them together, and then they all wonder why there are right-wing parties getting stronger and why there are farmers protesting on the streets, it's because we don't bring these things together. So we're trying to think that when we do that.

(00:23:42):

The other part is called Wellbeing Economies, which is basically about social business and all of these things. So actually, people who are, again, solving their own problems with a business-driven mindset, so the organization can earn some money. But the purpose of the organization is not to become rich, the purpose is to solve a problem. Fourth one is called Self-determined Lives, which is a lot about human rights, about international trade, about slavery which is still a huge problem. Many people will say why is he talking about slavery? Because in an official sense slavery has been abolished in I think all countries, but it's a bigger problem than it actually ever was. So in this day and age right now there are different numbers between 40 and 60 million people globally actually live in slavery, which is more than in the whole history of mankind combined even taking into account the slave trading to the US.

Nate Hagens (00:24:54):

So there's more slaves today than in the mid 19th century?

Patrick Knodel (00:24:58):

Yes. There is more today than in all the human history combined added up until like 100 years ago.

Nate Hagens (00:25:05):

How do you define slavery?

Patrick Knodel (00:25:09):

Well, I'm not an expert on the definition but there are many different forms. I mean, if you talk about that then people are always like, "Okay, so supply chains are not okay. So that's not slavery people still earn some money." So the definition as I would point

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it out would be someone else is actually controlling your life in all aspects. There is no way to get out of that, so I'll give you a very easy example of how it can work. So in India you have the caste system, which is becoming stronger again as the conservative Modi is pushing it because that's where he's getting his voters from and it's a huge nation but it's a nation built by the Brits. But there are actually so many different tribes and languages and everything, so if you go to another state there's another language. So what usually happens for example is, okay, there is a poor family they need let's say 50... It's actually those numbers.

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They need \$50 for an investment for school for their kids or whatever. They borrow that from a guy, the guy tells them okay guys you cannot pay back but you can work it off. So he comes home, takes the guy and his family, puts them onto a truck or a train. Puts them into the next state where they don't know anyone and where they don't understand the language and puts them into a rice mill or a brick kiln or something like that and makes them work 16 hours a day. He gives them only crappy food, they sleep on the ground, if it gets horrible there is sexual violence as well against the women. You can have all sorts of things unfortunately. So they do that for four weeks and they go back and say, "Hey, you said four weeks we can work it off. So now we're good to go, right?" And he says, "No, no, no. I paid for the transfer and you have been sleeping in my brick kiln every day and I gave you food.

(00:27:26):

So that cost a lot of money, so your original debt was \$50 now you're at 52." And with that easy system you have actually families that have been living as slaves for four generations. That have born and died in these types of structures because their great-great-granddad got a \$50 loan and it's not a unique thing. It's not only India, it's happening across the world in very, very different areas. Prostitution is a huge thing, there are many, many different areas.

Nate Hagens (00:28:09):

But don't those people have any recourse to figure out what you just said and get out of it? Or is there just nowhere to go?

Patrick Knodel (00:28:19):

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Usually there's nowhere to go, they're from the lowest class so they have no classic education. They don't speak the local language, they don't speak English so even if they go out they cannot even... Even if one manages to get away for a half an hour he cannot even tell someone what's happening and then usually in these countries there is not a police station and a working system like next door. Where you just can go and say, "Look, my family is imprisoned and you don't know my language but you get someone from me who will translate." When I heard about it at first I was also like is this really possible? But it's actually crazy, it goes even beyond that I'll give you another example. When you go for prostitution and sex trading, there are actually gangs who send young girls around for example Europe. They send them to Ibiza, to London, to Paris, always where the big events are. They send them in an airplane, they go there, they have to sleep with 18, 20 men per day and they go through customs, they go through the airport, they're alone.

(00:29:29):

There's no one standing behind them and pointing a gun to their head, but they have their family at home. So they say, if you don't do what we want your family will never get back. So how do you define slavery? I mean, that person is... For me how is that different than when you work on a cotton farm and you have someone pointing a gun to your head? In that case, the gun is just pointing to my family's head. So there's no way out and so we're working on that as well as an example.

Nate Hagens (00:30:03):

You've made your point. So you just described these four categories, is that the charitable foundation or the for profit one? Okay, the charitable foundation.

Patrick Knodel (00:30:13):

The charitable foundation is four categories in the global south and one focusing on Germany, because systems change means also as you know better than I do that we have to change a lot of things in the global north. So the fifth part is focusing on as we're German and we're not a huge foundation. So we're focusing on Germany alternative education, alternative economic education, alternative media, so that's the fifth one.

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Nate Hagens (00:30:40):

And how is it going? And what have been some of your bright success moments and what are some of the challenges in attempting what I would describe as a very coherent but difficult path?

Patrick Knodel (00:30:57):

The question is always where to start and where to end. I mean, in the end if you are funding others who do you fund? So that's always the thing when you start off you don't know anybody, you're happy for any recommendation and you just try and see what happens and then you get more experience. Then you get some feedback on what works and doesn't work and all of a sudden you get emails every day from people who want money from you and you can't give it to them. So basically nine out of 10 you have to say no all the time, which is horrible and which is the worst part of the job to be honest and secondly you have to come up with... I mean we call it theory of change, but you can call it whatever you want. So what is actually driving change? What can you address if you address topics in certain areas who are the right people to address it? Do you want to work with big NGOs who have a lot of people and a lot of power and money and can influence things?

(00:32:08):

Or do you want to work with a local guy from some village who wants to solve a problem that is just there? Do you want to go the I would call it the American way and look for scaling all the time? Does everything have to scale? Is it good that everything has to scale or do you need local solutions? So we went back and forth on these things a lot, also in how to work together with people because there is no way around. There is a huge difference, a huge power imbalance. If there is some guy, a white dude from Germany giving money to people in Africa. I mean, that's the old cliché so that's not something you want to have. So I'm also working on that, I want to change that. But as long as this is the case you have to try to actually create relationships because we don't want to give organizations money in return for nice pictures that we can post on social media, which is the classical development aid.

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So you give money and those guys build a school and then you have a huge sign that says, thank you, X, Y, Z foundation and then you have a picture of the school and you

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show that around in Germany and say, "Yeah, the kids go to school." And then actually you see okay, if you dive deep you say first of all who's running the school? Nobody's having teachers. If there are teachers are they qualified? If they are qualified, what are they teaching? And is that of any use in that local community? So are those kids in that rural village in let's say Mali, are they benefiting from what they learn in school? And are they able to get out of poverty with the skills they have there? And if you're honest all of those questions you would have to say no. So then you say okay, what is different? What can we fund? What can work? And on the other hand, that's the challenge because if you then need funders in the west that finance that you have to explain all of that.

(00:34:25):

You have to explain to them why are we not funding schools because we all went to school, so education for us is always the same as school and in everybody's mind. So if you say schools are not a solution you have a long shot of explaining and most people don't want explanations, they want easy messages. Because you asked me about success and challenges I would say the biggest challenge is that what's actually impactful and what actually makes a difference takes a lot of time, is complex to understand and it's almost impossible to sell to donors.

Nate Hagens (00:35:05):

And can't necessarily be visualized or proven with pictures or whatever. It's something deeper and frankly the impact may be 10 or 20 years from now you're just not going to see it right now.

Patrick Knodel (00:35:19):

That's the point. The impact is always long term, there's a huge discussion in the whole nonprofit sector about impact measurement and I can see why. We also try to measure it, we try to follow up, but the most important things you cannot measure. I mean, if you want to... I'll give you a very easy example, if you want to strengthen girl's self-esteem in a patriarchic society. How do you measure that? You can of course ask them questions and they give answers, and you can do that anonymous, you can try. But still, what's the starting point? What's the baseline? What's the target? And how do you define strengthening that self-esteem and that personality? Is it the western

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standard like, okay, that girl has got a job? Maybe in the local culture, the community and the family is better so maybe the job isn't necessarily the right measurement. So how do you do that? And that's very difficult. And so from my point of view the main thing is actually build relationships with the people you're working with so that they tell you about their failures. If you have that as a funder then from my point of view you're on track and when I talk to many organizations that we deal with. Most of them tell me that what they tell me they don't tell any other funder and then it's back to the power imbalance and that's a huge problem.

Nate Hagens (00:36:53):

So when we met last summer I learned a little bit not from you, but from some of the people you're funding about one of your projects in Africa on food systems. But could you either use that or any other example of specifically what you're doing on the ground in some of these less polluting countries as you said?

Patrick Knodel (00:37:16):

Well I'll give you two, three examples. I mean, one for example would be we support a social business in West Bengal in India. They work with local cooperatives of farmers, decision makers are usually the women and it's a perfect example of bringing together eradication of poverty while maintaining nature. So for example take rice, everybody in the world eats rice, you have basically three varieties of rice that are being eaten all over the world. You have in India alone hundreds of varieties, original varieties of rice so that's biodiversity. Of course it's not nature, but still and what they are trying to do is to say okay we reintroduce all those varieties of rice, of lentils, of spices, of whatsoever. We teach those farmers how to grow them. We keep the seeds there so you can have the next seed next year for free because you grow them yourselves. You don't need Monsanto or anyone else and then they say okay, we buy your products at a huge margin that you would never get at the local market.

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But just the addition, not everything because people should be self-sustained. But the addition they buy and then go to Calcutta and they distribute it in restaurants. They have an online shop, they do cooking courses to give people in the city the experience

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of what it's actually like to cook local ingredients that are on the edge of dying out. So it's like bringing the two worlds together, so that's one very easy example.

Nate Hagens (00:39:14):

And how does that protect nature? You said eradicate poverty and biodiversity of food and protect nature.

Patrick Knodel (00:39:22):

Well, the question is how do you protect nature? I mean, you have small holder farmers all over the world. So in empowering them to live a decent life without eliminating nature around them, so for example, one popular thing is agroforestry. So you plant trees in between your crops that you harvest. Most people don't know about it because they think okay, I need a field full of whatever, full of coffee or full of mango for whatever and trees are just disturbing. In reality it's the opposite, if you intercrop you get higher margins from that ground and you have trees in between that if you're clever enough you can also sell some carbon credits for it. And you have a different solution than how the carbon credit market usually works is huge fields of monocultures so that's not nature. I mean nature in its original sense is always do nothing, just let nature do. But I mean that ship has sailed. We cannot just go back to that because small holder farmers, they live and we have to live.

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So we have to find ways to combine both in the best way and so diverse crops combined with nature and no pesticides, all organic and then taking that to educate people in the city. Because also in India, people are much more related still, from my point of view, to nature than we are in Germany or in the US but also in cities it's the same thing. They're losing it.

Nate Hagens (00:41:13):

The people and the hill tribes and the rural people, they all have different animist religions of a real reverence for nature. I was surprised. So have you been to India? Do you directly fund these people or do you fund someone who then in turn funds these organizations?

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Patrick Knodel (00:41:35):

In that case, it's the guy who founded it is from India and he has a German wife.

Nate Hagens (00:41:40):

Okay.

Patrick Knodel (00:41:41):

So they run a German nonprofit and we give it to the German nonprofit and then they use it for their company in India and they do different things. So we do more things with them, also plastic and so on. So that's usually how it works, but there are also examples where we give it directly but usually that's just tax law. I mean, as a German foundation if I give it to a German nonprofit from my German foundation that has the stem for being tax-free, I'm always good. If I give it to someone in Mali who after maybe Mali legislation is nonprofit, I have to prove every little thing to the German government. So that's how you make sure that the big money doesn't really go to the people who need it, but goes to big organizations.

Nate Hagens (00:42:37):

Well, I wasn't so interested in the legalities though that was interesting. I was just wondering if you'd been to India and what your experience was.

Patrick Knodel (00:42:46):

Yes, actually I've been two times to India and also to Sri Lanka as they say locally as far as I learned. I mean, first of all India is not a country I mean it's a continent. It's very different depending on where you are, the southern part is very different than the northern part. I found it amazing also in Sri Lanka, how much people know about food and about health. It's like people here they go to the supermarket and then they get sick they go to a doctor and take a pill. I mean, it's changing in our generation but that's how I grew up basically and there they know every single variety of any vegetable or whatever. They know what it's good for and how to prepare it, that it does this and that in your body and I'm like wow. I mean, this is how the world used to be.

Nate Hagens (00:43:41):



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So you were going to give a couple other examples. You gave the one on the West Bengal farmers and other examples of what you're doing.

Patrick Knodel (00:43:50):

Yeah, maybe I give one about education because that's the main thing. I mean, let me just again clarify where I see the problem with classical school education and then go to what can be a solution. So the problem with classical school education is first of all in the Global South it is that the ruling elites during colonial times introduced school systems not to empower people, but to control people and that's still deeply rooted in systems. Apart from that, very generally the same in the US or in Germany when you are a child... I don't know if you have a sister or a brother, we never got into that. But if you have an older brother and he does things and your mother does things, you see them and you do them as well and then you make an experience and from that experience you learn. That's basically very easy how every human and every monkey and every elephant in the world learns and that's precisely what a school never does. At a school there's someone standing in front and telling you what to do.

(00:45:02):

He's telling you what to learn, when to learn, how to learn and he's judging you on the way you have learned. There is no room for exploration, there is no room for failure, there is no room for experience. There is no room for everything that has the possibility to make humanity actually great and to use your empathy and your brain. So classical education from my point of view is... And there are many studies confirming this, is designed to build conformity and not unique explorative people. So if you want to do it different, I mean there are tons of things you can do also within school. But for example, one example we fund the company is based in Mali or the social business company is based in Mali. They are using tutors from around the world to educate local youth on technological solutions. So they take what's... Very easy spoken, they take what's good in the west they take on technological progress and they combine that with local indigenous wisdom. So for example, people in the Sahara where it is quite warm they would use local materials because they don't heat up so much.

(00:46:38):

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Then western civilization popped in and they said, "Okay, we build from concrete." So that gets very, very hot so you need a lot more energy for the cooling and so they say, "Okay, let's combine those two." Let's go back to the original indigenous knowledge that we have here and let's combine that with IT skills and with 3D modeling and whatever, and just make it more efficient in the local context and let's empower people in that way to actually solve their own problem. And the interesting thing, I mean why do we fund that specific company? They're called Kabakoo Academies, if you want to look them up. The two founders one of them is Yanick, and he was born in Cameroon. He came as a refugee to Germany, so it was the classical thing that we always talk about. The old son educated yes, but classical education no chance for a job so they sent him to to Europe. So refugee made it all the way through God bless, learned the language, went to school here, went to university, made his degree, made his dissertation, went to France, became a professor at Sorbonne, one of the most prestigious universities in the world and from his own experience he said, "Okay guys, I've done all of this. Almost no African has the chance to go that way and the education they can get within their countries will not lead them anywhere, so I have to design something out of my own experience that helps people like me, that empowers people to actually solve their own stuff."

Nate Hagens (00:48:25):

How might you term this? Like inverse colonialism or something like that where we're taking the energy surplus of Western society and after opening our eyes and our hearts, realizing what's going on in the world and trying to help in other places, but there's an interesting thing. There's like you just said, oh, let's build a structure made out of concrete. So that's what the surplus goes towards when in actuality, the local methods that had been stable for a long time were fit for the environmental circumstances in that place. How do you merge all those threads? Because I would guess that in a lot of less polluting countries in the Global South, they are aspiring to the same what you and I would say as kind of a dead end path of materialism, culture of the West. Is that changing or are those cultures starting to recognize that they don't need to match the West, they can have their own version of it and be prosperous? I don't know enough about it to say, but what are your thoughts?

Patrick Knodel (00:49:44):

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I also don't know enough about it, but from what I see, I think it very much again depends on the context, it depends on your peer group. So I visited a rather classical development project last year. I was in Ghana. I visited several different things and one of them, they were making the classical stuff like, okay, we give them the possibility in the village to become either a hairdresser or fashion clothes making. So I was walking around and when they didn't listen, I asked all of those girls. I mean, it sounds great because they have kids, the guy is gone, so they don't know how to feed their family. So they say, okay, we give them an opportunity to have vocational training and to have your own little business. And the question is now, because that's what most people would tell you what the great thing is, go away from education, go to vocational training, and then they will stay where they are and have a decent income.

(00:50:56):

So the question is how many hairdressers and fashion people do you need in that village? The market will be saturated pretty soon. I asked all of the girls and they all said, "Yes, at the moment my situation is better than before." So that's good. That's an impact. But they all said, I asked them, "What is your purpose? What do you want to do? Do you want to stay here? Do you want to go to the next town? What do you want to do?" I asked seven of them. Six of them told me they want to go to Europe or the US and the seventh told me she wants to go to the next big city because there she has more customers for her hairdressing. So it depends on the context. I believe that we can create environments where people can live in cities and in the countryside, but the incentives have to change.

(00:51:52):

As long as we give incentives that only work for the big cities and only for the richer cities and the rest is just nonsense, and as long as we take every projection for granted, I mean people always thought... On these panels, I'm sure you have heard before several times, you always have these projections how many people there will be in 2100. So it reaches between 8.5 and 11 billion I think in three scenarios. But all the scenarios say the same. They all say that amount will be living in cities and that's why we have to make cities green and cities efficient and whatever. Nobody's even suggesting to just create a world where people don't have to move to cities. How can we empower people living in the countryside? They don't even ask the question.

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(00:52:42):

And so from that standpoint, I would say if you are talking to people in Accra who funded their own startup or whatever, you can have very, very self-confident people who say, "I don't want to go anywhere else. I am African. I identify with this continent and with my country and I want to stay here and build something." But you have many, many others who will follow the other path and also with the ones inside the city, I mean you have television, you have the internet, like everyone has a smartphone these days. So you can see the way we live and that is attaching. I always think about... You know the show King of Queens?

Nate Hagens (00:53:35):

I've heard of it.

Patrick Knodel (00:53:35):

Yeah, I mean basically what it's about, it's a very overweight driver of a parcel service with his rather good-looking wife and they are horrible with each other and it's funny. But what's the main thing? I love the show because it was funny, but when I grow older I was like, "Okay, that guy is complaining all the time how bad his life is." He's not doing anything, he's just eating junk food and sitting in a truck for seven hours a day. He drives a huge SUV and he has his own house and he considers himself kind of poor in the US. I mean if you send that image to someone who is living in a countryside in an African nation where you can... there are places where you have to walk for water for two hours. It's still there. I mean of course that creates a reality where people think, "Wow, how crazy is this? I want that as well."

Nate Hagens (00:54:34):

The concept of downward comparison is an important one. The problem is that we upward compare to the people that live on golf courses and whatever, but we lack the ability to have visions of people elsewhere in the world and in the future and in the past and non-humans for that matter. Let me ask you a personal question. So I know you a decent amount, we're friends. I know your personality and your work on social media. You are quite outspoken on sensitive issues and confident and you say what you think, but how do you merge that with the necessity of listening? I'm sure when

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you go to the global south, I expect that you are a very good listener and absorbing and taking time to hear other people's perspectives. How do you navigate those two areas of your personality and your work?

Patrick Knodel (00:55:38):

Well, Nate, that's why you're the host. You ask great questions. I'm not always sure if I have great answers. I don't know. I mean learning to listen is also a constant process. I think I was really bad at this for a long time. I'm trying to do that more. I mean let's go away from the Global South. Just within what I'm doing, I have access and I do that on purpose to very, very different bubbles like my father's company with real estate, a very classical business mindset. I have the nonprofit world, I have with the impact investing like the dudes who at least try or believe that they are part of the solution. A lot of this, it's a separate topic woke stuff that I criticize a lot because I think it's the devil in disguise and I cannot have that-

Nate Hagens (00:56:41):

Why is it the devil in disguise?

Patrick Knodel (00:56:44):

I'll give you a few examples on that last sentence on the last one. Actually I'm forcing myself to go to places where I know that people will disagree with my view. If I'm a good listener, I don't know, I'm trying to be. Maybe some other people will say I'm not, I don't know. You have to ask the people who tell me stuff.

Nate Hagens (00:57:13):

You are consciously waking up in the morning and on your to-do list is going places where you expect people will disagree with you. That is something that you put in your routine. That's quite something.

Patrick Knodel (00:57:25):

Not in my routine, but I mean you can go to different events, you can go to different sorts of things. You can go to the family office event where the billionaire is all about my money and you try to convince him to invest it with impact. Then you can go to the retreat where people all talk about old white men and racism and whatever, and then

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you go to the startup conference with you in Stockholm. I mean what you did in Stockholm in the conference, like telling people who are in the impact VC world that they're actually also not solving the problem, I mean those people who went there, I'm not sure if they actually were aware of the fact that their reality would get shredded, but it got. So the question is for them now, will they do it again or will they next time just go to some place where everybody's preaching to the believers. And from my point of view, that's the main problem in the world. Inequality and people living in their bubbles, not willing to talk to people who break their worldview and that's the woke thing. We can also discuss that.

Nate Hagens (00:58:39):

Yeah, do that in a second. I just wanted to follow up and say I've gotten a ton of invites and follow up from people in the audience there who were in that situation that you're describing that want me to come and speak at their event or whatever. I'm saying no to all of them, but still the world is converging on this reality, Patrick. So you wanted to give a few points on why you're critical of the woke narrative?

Patrick Knodel (00:59:13):

Well, I guess I shouldn't do that because that will cost me a lot of sympathy. But I mean in economical terms, the dominant force right now is the whole left liberalism thing, which from my point of view is nothing else than neoliberalism with a green touch. I mean that's your topic, that's energy blindness, that's just painting something up that has been there forever.

Nate Hagens (00:59:42):

It's like funding a school in a less polluting country to take a picture of it.

Patrick Knodel (00:59:46):

Exactly. So you have that. So left liberalism means extreme inequality, centralization of power and democracies evaporating. So that's the platform economy. That's Amazon. You start with the cheap books and then in the end you control the whole thing and then you can do some carbon credits and then you're green and then you do philanthropy and then it's okay. So the woke paradigm is like the social part of it. That's the cultural part of it. What I find very sad, and I see that a lot on my LinkedIn

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feed, is that many people who follow that paradigm are actually good people. They actually have seen problems such as climate change, biodiversity loss, usually it's ecological stuff. And they say, we cannot keep going this way, we have to change something. A lot of them are taking stuff in their personal life, decisions in their business, founding ventures, working on those problems and you can see that they're good people, but they don't question paradigms. I'll give you some examples maybe on that.

(01:01:04):

So this whole divide and conquer thing has been a popular method of keeping people under control for a long time. Now we have technology that makes it much more easy. You can easily create those bubbles and keep people in those bubbles. For example, what they address are in theory points that need to be addressed. So I've been talking a lot about these strange pictures of how we portray people like in Brussels, you still have a statue of King Leopold who killed 20 million people in Congo. So people say, "How can we have that? It's a war criminal. You wouldn't put Hitler into Berlin." Of course. Why not? Because Hitler killed mostly white people; they killed Africans. So the discussion about that is absolutely right and we need that and we need to question our privileges and we need to understand our roles that we have.

(01:02:12):

I would never deny that. But the problem is how it is being done will lead to further division between people and not uniting people. So if you create the concept of the old white man, I understand what they're talking about because I am having a problem with what I say with old white men all the time. But is it helpful to create an image and where actually basically all white men, no matter how old, get the feeling that they cannot talk about certain things anymore just because they have the skin color. That's the opposite of tolerance. And what's even worse, that denies empathy. The woke paradigm is you can only play the role of a disabled person if you are disabled. You can only wear a Rastafari if you are from Jamaica. You can only play the victim of the Holocaust if your mom is Jewish, whatever.

(01:03:15):

That is horribly wrong because from my point of view, one part of the success story of civilization is that we have empathy and we can feel, we can try to feel how other

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people feel in a certain situation that we have not lived ourselves before. We can never be a hundred percent there of course, but where do you draw the line? I mean, if you have a car accident and you broke your leg and your ribs are broken and the doctor tells you, "Oh, one centimeter up and you're dead." And I come to your hospital, I know how you feel and I can be sad for you and empower you. I don't have to have a car accident on my own. So where do you draw the line? At what point do you allow people to have empathy and to be in somebody else's chair and where is the draw where you cannot do it? And that's what they do very, very extreme.

(01:04:16):

I'll give you two examples. I mean another one is the equality thing. So when you listen to my... As your colleague had to listen to my podcast to get her preparation for this podcast, I mean I talk about equality all the time because the inequality on a global scale between the people who accumulate money capital and by that accumulate power or others, that's for me the main problem in the world. That's the source of everything that's going wrong. So address that, I would never say no. But how is it addressed in the woke paradigm? They say, "Okay, there is a difference between women and men and we have to have equality." So they would say, for example, in terms of maths, we need as many women to do maths as men.

(01:05:11):

That's just nonsense. Equality is something totally different. Equality is okay, you have different strengths and by nature, men and women are not the same. It's not only culture. They are different. Men are much more interested in things; women are much more interested in people and in relationships. You can see that in every TV program who watches what. So when you talk about equality, equality would be if for example, in that example, a woman wants to become a mathematician, we provide circumstances that she can do it, not that as many women are mathematicians than guys. And you can do it the other way around with other jobs.

(01:05:59):

I'll give another example that usually that's very extreme from my point of view and that shows that parts of the discussion from my point of view don't address the right problem. So let's stick with the boys versus girls thing and go to the payment gap. We all agree that if you and I... We're both guys. If Nadine and I do the same job, we



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should get paid the same if we do it in the same good way. When you look about the discussion that ended up with football, Megan Rapinoe, the US football player, she's always like, "Okay, we have to earn the same as the guys, the national football team."  
(01:06:58):

So there are two things very, very strange with that. The first thing is why is anyone being paid to play football? That's the actual question. I play football, nobody pays me to play football. So in the current system, there are people who are being paid to play football. Why is that so? Because football creates a platform where people pay money to watch the game and corporations pay money to advertise their stories, and then media companies pay for the viewing rights. So that's platform, that's our business model that we're live in. That's the platform economies, so that value is the platform. So I don't know, if Sky pays 2 billion to show the men's football, the men who play that football can get more from what's in there. That's why they get paid more than women. So if they go to the same size, they will earn the same size. But the main question behind this, how do we define value? Currently, we define value with that platform. The real question is the pay gap, many, many women do jobs that are much more necessary and healthy for society and the planet and they don't-

Nate Hagens (01:08:24):

And don't get paid at all.

Patrick Knodel (01:08:26):

The social care and all of these things, why do they earn less than the investment banker? That's the real question. How do we define value as a society? Not why does a female football player in a platform model earn less? You can explain that with two sentences. For me, this is a perfect, because there are discussions that sound good and that are totally wrong and that don't even address the question because they're asking the right questions.

Nate Hagens (01:08:56):

This is why we're friends, because you are really authentic and honest and don't say things just because they sound good. You speak from the heart and I really value that. How are you managing with all this? How are you coping because you are taking it

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upon yourself as you've been doing on this conversation to tell uncomfortable truths and to invest in your time and the foundation's assets into projects that aren't mainstream. And yet, like me, you're following along the progress or the negative progress of the world in geopolitical, climate, all sorts of arenas. How do you personally cope with this burden of all this?

Patrick Knodel (01:09:51):

Well, that's the big challenge for all of us. When I look into the founders I invest in with my company, when I look into the founders of the NGOs that we donate with the foundation, the main problem is that they all burn out. They're running for money all the time, they're working day and night. They have families, they struggle. So apart from the financing gap, we have a huge gap in terms of mental health, which will be the main problem in this transitional times that we live in and that will accelerate. And also for me personally, I'll be very honest here, I've been struggling a lot with that. I mean, during the whole COVID thing, I got nuts. Now with the media with regards to Palestine. I've been to Palestine last year. I mean, what mainstream media is showcasing and framing couldn't be further away from truth; Russia-US conflict.

(01:11:02):

What I personally do is I've actually stopped completely to follow mainstream media. That helps a lot. I sometimes scroll through it so that I know what other people talk about today. But it's funny, it actually happens so then there was a huge earthquake somewhere, so it's three days later, I don't know it. And people are really afraid that they cannot keep up with the daily conversation, but the daily conversation usually is very superficial. It's okay for me not to be part in that, and if I miss an earthquake, it doesn't change my life and it doesn't change the life of the people who were living in the earthquake. So just chill, dude. That's one thing and I'm trying to work a lot on my mental health, on consciousness with different things, breathing techniques and all of that, and trying to keep distance, trying to have friends that you just talk normal stuff with. Not only the big stuff. Try to have fun. still watch football, although football is a ugly business, but it's your sports. So watch it and enjoy it and just ignore the rest. Go play, do sports. So finding that balance is essential, and I've not always been good with that. I'm getting better over the last two years.

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Nate Hagens (01:12:31):

Good. It seems like those of us working deeply in this space want to reside in the, as Mark Gaffney would say, and Zach Stein, the post-tragic, but reality keeps sucking us back to the tragic, and we have to have self-care and some routines to go back into the post-tragic, which is, "Okay, this is our reality, let's roll up our sleeves and do some good." So by many definitions, Patrick, your life might be considered a privileged one, from social and economic terms, growing up as you did in Germany. How do you think that shaped your worldview and life path? But more importantly, what would you say to others out there who might have grown up and are in similar positions to yours now?

Patrick Knodel (01:13:28):

I think the worldview is heavily, it's heavily shaped by the way you grow up, and the older you get, if you are a reflective person, the more you realize how much it actually was. And I can only go back to what I said before, go to people who disagree with you and listen to them and talk to them, and also learn. And I'm also not good at this, but I'm actually trying to learn, learn to have a discussion that you don't necessarily need to win just for the sake of the discussion and for the argument. I would say accept that you cannot change everything in the world, which was very hard for me. Don't give up, keep trying. And if you haven't started, then start. Many, many people are in their comfort zones. I'm not saying to judge those.

(01:14:48):

If you have a family, if you have a job, I mean cost of living, especially in major western cities, is getting crazy. So you're struggling all the time, and you want to be a super mom and a super dad who's taking care of your kids and work the forty-five-hour job and whatever, and do sports and eat healthy and organic. I know it's overwhelming, and I get a lot of feedback from people. It's a strong feeling that many, many people are not satisfied with what they're doing, and that they would like to be more purpose driven, but they just don't know how to start. They don't know where the starting point is, apart from maybe in personal life, not using a plastic straw or whatever. And I think this is also why I think it's important. A podcast like yours is inspiring people because it shows people who just started doing it different. I'm actually planning to do the same in Germany. I'm planning to set up a podcast in

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German because I think there's lots of content in English, but not everybody is good to go in English with these topics.

Nate Hagens (01:16:04):

I'll be happy to come on. But there would have to be subtitles.

Patrick Knodel (01:16:09):

Of course, you're on the list. In a later stage, when I have 50,000, 50 million followers, then we'll do it in English with Nate Hagens.

Nate Hagens (01:16:18):

You'll never have 50 million followers.

Patrick Knodel (01:16:19):

I know.

Nate Hagens (01:16:20):

There's a cap to people that want to learn at this level about this. So one of my upcoming Franklys is going to be a framework for philanthropy. What philanthropy is doing right and what it's doing, not only wrong but unbelievably wrong with respect to the meta-crisis and what we really face. You swim in that world. Do you have any pointers, now that you have the microphone here on this show, how might you transform the entire field of foundations and philanthropy to be more aligned with the real crisis that we face, that's not on the mainstream media?

Patrick Knodel (01:17:08):

First of all, I think philanthropy works different when you talk about foundations like US and Germany are very, very different when it comes to the structure. Germany is very, very conservative and people do what they know. And if you want to propose something new, then "Oh no, that's too risky. We don't do that." I always ask myself, "Okay, you give away capital, you already have it. You don't need it back. You have the money. If you don't take the risk, who is supposed to be taking the risk?"

Nate Hagens (01:17:42):

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Right. Right.

Patrick Knodel (01:17:44):

So that's what I don't understand in Germany at all. The US is much more, or also Britain, they're much more risk-taking because the whole system is much more built in that mentality with universities investing in venture capital funds and all of this, so it's more in the system. They, from my point of view, do the mistake that they always think from a technological point of view. They're educated in a way that technology will solve everything. It's the typical Silicon Valley thing. So we can mess up the world, so let's just fly to Mars. You had a guest on your show recently, which I liked him a lot, but I had to smile in the last part where he said that technology will, and space and exploring that will save the planet. For me, this is a typical mindset, and this also goes into philanthropy. Okay, we have technology, we will save that.

(01:18:42):

There is malaria in Africa. Okay, what's the most effective thing to do? Get malaria nets out there. There are many, many things why I would not do that because it's not working. But it sounds as an easy, scalable solution. So if you want to do philanthropy, then it's hard work in a sense that you have to actually, again, talk and listen to people that are, so-called, below your power, and you have to try to get on the same level to get honest feedback. And I don't think that the huge scalable program that can be rolled out all over whatever Africa or South America or whatever is the solution. You have to question your own worldview.

(01:19:35):

Because if you come from the western worldview, that essentially is killing the world, as we know, with the energy and climate and everything. So if you come with that mindset of the successful person who shows others how it's done, then you will fail. And then you will be even worse. You will be part of the problem, you won't be even neutral. You will be part of the problem that makes things worse. And that is what's happened a lot over the past 40 years. Where also state development aid went to other states which funneled corruption in those states in order to then empower your own country to build a factory there, to get the resources very cheaply out of the country. So there are statistics to that.

(01:20:24):

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How many billion dollars go into Africa each year and how many go in development aid, and how much resources go out. So it's a huge profit for the west. It's not at all aid, it's the complete opposite. So if you want to do it different, then I would always suggest work with locals, go deep. You don't have to go to Africa or to South America, you can also do it in your home country. Then do the analysis of what is wrong. Before you build a school, ask the question what is wrong with education, and what would good education look like, and who should benefit from that? And I think this step is not taken by many people who have been doing this for a long time.

Nate Hagens (01:21:07):

Your home country or your hometown. Thank you for that. This has been great, Patrick. I want to have you back and take a deeper dive on some things, but if... You watch my podcast, so you know I have some closing questions for you. For the average person who listens to this podcast, probably shares a lot of your same values and thoughts, what kind of personal recommendations would you have for someone who's aware of all these things and trying to live a good life and make a difference at this time of wonder and peril?

Patrick Knodel (01:21:48):

I would have to a little bit repeat what I said two questions before, because that's like just get started, and if you haven't started yet, get started. And if you have started, take care of yourself. Love yourself. I mean, honestly, five years ago I would have never said something like that. I think that's an experience thing. Maybe there is something into it. I understood why people say it. Now that I've experienced it, I'm understanding it even better. This taking care of yourself when you deal with complex issues all day and you always get the feeling that things are getting worse every day, no matter what you do, the big picture as of today is getting worse every day. Hans Rosling, Gapminder Foundation, he's pointing out that everything is getting better. It's just because he's taking single things, and you can find a lot of single things that gets better. But the interconnected-

Nate Hagens (01:22:52):

And he has a 10-foot pointer stick.

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Patrick Knodel (01:22:54):

And he has 10-foot pointer stick. I would love that, to be honest. So the big picture is getting worse every day. And if you see that every day, don't spend all your time on it, and take care about yourself. Because if you burn out yourself, then you cannot change anything for the better.

Nate Hagens (01:23:15):

You and I haven't spoken in a while. You sound like you're one of my coaches. That's what they're telling me. Exactly. And I've come some way in the direction of what you're just saying. How would you change that advice to a young human, early 20s, late teens who's becoming aware of all this stuff in Germany or in the United States or in India or Australia, whoever's listening to this show?

Patrick Knodel (01:23:40):

First advice would be learn how to cooperate. I didn't learn that. It's not being taught at school and it's not something in the classical world where that is always telling you that competition is the answer. So I think cooperation is the answer. And I think cooperation was a much better tool, and was much more valuable to mankind's evolution all over the world than we acknowledge. So learn that and build things in a cooperative way from the beginning. I didn't do that. Also, my things I'm doing now, I'm trying to improve that. Second thing is, again, going back to traveling, I think it's absolutely important to travel to other countries and cultures and learn different perspectives. You will never understand... You will never understand that you have no idea whether what you're doing is actually good or bad if you haven't experienced it from different angles. And from that comes accept the fact that a solution that sounds really good, and that maybe also it's really good in Stuttgart, where I live, in Germany, might be horribly wrong in, I don't know, Udaipur. The world is not unipolar, although people tend to believe that, and media tells us that every day, that there's only one worldview. There are different ones, and you have to understand that. And you have to understand that with your way of doing things, forcing it upon others, you will not change anything. I learned that the hard way, to be honest.

Nate Hagens (01:25:17):

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What do you care most about in the world, Patrick?

Patrick Knodel (01:25:20):

I think this might sound a bit like the answer of one of those beauty contests, where they give the microphone to the girl and she has to say world peace, because it sounds good. But to be honest, it's actually that, peace and love. It's stupid, but that's the basis for everything. We will not solve any crisis in the world if we don't get peace inside, and from the inside gets to the outside. If we keep going to war, no matter on what headline, we will go down as a species.

(01:25:57):

We have to learn to love people that we don't know, and that on first page are very different than us, and we don't understand where they're coming from. And the third thing I would say, we have to go back to the understanding that we are, as mankind, we are part of nature. We always talk about we are mankind and then there is nature and then there are animals, and we also have to take care about them. We are part of that. We are not here without all of that. We're part of the system. And I think everybody would say, "Yes, you are right," if he listens to me. But if you look deep down into yourself, who is actually feeling as part of nature, and how disconnected are we? So peace, love, and be a part of nature.

Nate Hagens (01:26:48):

It's not stupid at all, my friend. Thank you for that. If you had a magic wand and could do one thing to change the trajectory of the future for people and the planet earth, is there one thing that you could do if your status and everything else was not at risk?

Patrick Knodel (01:27:11):

So you mean I could snip and it's happening like really magic?

Nate Hagens (01:27:15):

Well, I used to ask, "If you were benevolent dictator," and some people didn't like that. The thrust of the question is what's one thing that would be leverageable, even if it were physically impossible or politically impossible at the moment, that actually would result in a better future if we could do it, hypothetically?



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Patrick Knodel (01:27:41):

Might be boring for the listeners, but I go back to peace again. If you have peace all over the world, then you have people who have it much more easy to have peace inside themselves. In the reality it has to be the other way around. We have to find peace inside yourself, then it will happen on the outside. But if I can dictate it, or with a magic stick, I would say, "Okay, from today, no more weapons, no more violence, nothing, none, all of that." And I think that would change drastically the way we deal with each other. And it would empower solutions that cannot be done right now.

Nate Hagens (01:28:22):

I fully agree with that, with the exception of violence and out group, war is part of human history. So I don't think we can exorcise that from our phenotype, but what we can do is change the software that our human culture is using now to minimize that aspect of our nature. And I don't know how to do that, but I agree with you, it's important.

Patrick Knodel (01:28:51):

Yes. Totally fine. It just has so many... It has so many implications on other fields. I've once... Give you an example. When you go to a Fridays for Future, whatever, climate protest, you always hear the same things. You hear the bashing for the SUV drivers and the meat eaters. And that's all fine. And the planes. Have you ever heard anyone protesting against military? We are raising military budgets all over the world like crazy. And I've once read a statistic where they asked, "What is the biggest single organization in the world to emit carbon?" It's the Pentagon. It's war.

Nate Hagens (01:29:42):

For sure.

Patrick Knodel (01:29:43):

It's war. And nobody's talking about it. And so that's what I mean. It's not only don't kill people anymore, it has so many implications on so many other areas.

Nate Hagens (01:29:53):

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So the United States and the allies in NATO versus Russia account for 80% of the military spending in the entire world, out of all the 180 countries or whatever. That's a whole other podcast. So this has been great. If you were to come back, my friend, is there one topic that you feel extra passionate about, that you would be willing to take a deep dive that is relevant to the human predicament and the coming decade?

Patrick Knodel (01:30:27):

Well, I feel what we haven't covered so much today is the other part that I do, is the impact investing part. And that goes back into how do we finance change in a for-profit world with the incentives that we have. That's where you are a much bigger expert than I am with your background. But talking about those structures, talking about those like, okay, the green companies financing with venture capital and exits that are then being bought by billionaires or corporations in order to change them.

(01:31:04):

That whole dynamic, I think, is also a Trojan horse. I'm part of that, and I'm trying to figure out alternatives such as steward ownership. So all of these things, because they are really, really relevant. We talked about Stockholm, about the event. There are so many people, God bless, there are more and more people who want to finance transition. And most people only look at the what and not on the how. And the how might be the one that's actually deciding if that transition is going to happen. And to quote you, "If we bend or break." So that's maybe something we have to go deeper into.

Nate Hagens (01:31:48):

Maybe. Well, let's do a roundtable on that. Thank you so much for your time and for your work, Patrick. Do you have any closing words of wisdom or reflection or advice or anything for the viewers?

Patrick Knodel (01:32:05):

I would say don't be scared. If you see a problem, raise your voice. People will hate you, but many of them, two years later, will see that there was a point. Just go through it. Zoom out if you want to look at things. Don't get irritated by the whole expert discussion that we're having. Only experts can talk on any topic? No. The real brains

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of our lifetime, like Da Vinci and Einstein and all of this, they were interested in all sorts of things, and they were brilliant in one specific area.

(01:32:43):

If you want to understand things, you have to zoom out, and not more and more zoom in and block everything. That's not progress. And the third thing would be, unite. Don't get separated from other people. Most people are better than you think and they are just victims of the propaganda and the education we live in. So don't look for the differences. Look for what unites you and what you can do together that brings you forward. And if there are two other topics that you don't agree with, because he's pro-vaccination and you're against or whatever, don't let that separate you. There is still a lot in common.

Nate Hagens (01:33:26):

Thanks, Patrick. I really appreciate this conversation. To be continued, my friend.

Patrick Knodel (01:33:31):

Thank you, Nate. See you soon.

Nate Hagens (01:33:33):

If you enjoyed or learned from this episode of the Great Simplification, please follow us on your favorite podcast platform and visit [thegreatsimplification.com](http://thegreatsimplification.com) for more information on future releases. This show is hosted by Nate Hagens, edited by No Troublemakers Media, and curated by Leslie Batt-Lutz and Lizzy Sirianni.