

# The Great Simplification

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Nate Hagens (00:00:02):

You're listening to The Great Simplification with Nate Hagens, that's me. On this show, we try to explore and simplify what's happening with energy, the economy, the environment and our society. Together with scientists, experts, and leaders, this show is about understanding the bird's-eye view of how everything fits together, where we go from here and what we can do about it as a society and as individuals.

(00:00:33):

In the future, I imagine having only, or at least primarily guests on this program who are working on responses and solutions to the coming great simplification. But for now, I'm still trying to comprehensively connect the dots, how our energy, money, ecological situation fits together and will change everything in the future. But today's episode is about responses, specifically the importance of networks.

(00:01:03):

Today, I welcome Marty Kearns, a civic organizer and networking specialist to the show. Marty and I discuss why both networks and communities will be critical to the coming challenges we face. How will the social ties we form now influence the outcome of power, peace, and new social organization? How can we organize ourselves in order to best meet the future that is coming, which no individual can face on their own? Please welcome the director of Netcentric Campaigns, Marty Kearns. Marty, good to see you.

Marty Kearns (00:01:53):

Good to see you, Nate.

Nate Hagens (00:01:56):

Let me get right into it, Marty. The end goal of the work that my organization and this podcast are doing ahead of The Great Simplification is to build networks of reality-aware pro-social humans to avert and even better steer humanity away from the default paths that my analysis projects in coming decades, because I think it's going to be necessary. But your work takes this end goal that I foresee as the actual starting point, that to build these networks is the primary goal, irrespective of what future arrives. Can you unpack for me and for our listeners your philosophy about this and your work? Tell us what you do and why.

Marty Kearns (00:02:43):

I'm the executive director of Netcentric Campaigns, and for the last 22 years have been working on organizing networks of people to create social and policy change. We step into these spaces where there's not a single government, not a single group, not a single business can solve the problem, and that within all of these really large complex social problems, there's always network builders. Most movements can think immediately who are the network builders that you work with.

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The challenge and the opportunity where we focus is that those network builders need skills just like any other work. They need a framework, they need knowledge, and they need a set of tools that help them accelerate their work and do it well. Netcentric Campaigns, our organization, looks at these important social movements and tries to support the network builders in order to transform the strategy that they're working on.

Nate Hagens (00:03:42):

Real quick so that I can understand, what's the difference between a network builder and a community organizer or what's the difference between a network and a community? Start there.

Marty Kearns (00:03:52):

That's good. There are different lenses of looking at people. When you think about community, it's like this group of individuals with some common interest. They're coming from a particular area, a group of people with a common characteristic, a common profession. You can think of academic community or scientific community. There's a commonality and the commonness is the bond.

(00:04:20):

A network is slightly different. A network is, in a general sense, it's defined as a set of nodes connected by ties between them and among them. All the elements are not common in our context. You can have networks of people with ties along seven elements and some of them are communication grid, trust, common language, shared vision, shared resources, feedback mechanisms. We have a way that we tease apart one of those seven elements. Any of those can actually be strengthening, you know can have a network that's just built by trust or that's just built by communication grid and that's what we think about.

(00:05:00):

The difference for me between a community and a network is the way that they're connected and there are networks within communities and there are communities within networks. There're somewhat overlapping definitions in different ways.

Nate Hagens (00:05:13):

By your definition, it seems like a network is potentially, at least, at the onset, more flexible and able to overcome the polarization in our tribal conversations than maybe a geographically-centered or a topically-centered community?

Marty Kearns (00:05:31):

I don't know if that's why different. I think that there's a lot that network organizing teaches us about building power and building capacity and it's really about bringing that knowledge set, that skill set to those network organizers within movements. For me, it's not an either or. People can be in multiple communities at the same time. You can be a community of podcasters, a community of science psychologists, and your local community, and you can be in multiple networks at the same time.

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They're just different lens. I feel like a community organizer or an organizational builder might be someone who works with the bone structure and the network organizers work with the nervous tissue. It's still the same body, it's just different lenses and different interventions that we'd come up with.

Nate Hagens (00:06:21):

The first thing that comes to mind to me is we are part of a global energy dissipating network of an economic system pursuing economic growth. Yet, at the same time, we deeply lack community.

Marty Kearns (00:06:37):

You could lack community or you could say, okay, how many people in that community that you're talking about can actually talk with each other? What's the state of the communication grid among people within that community?

Nate Hagens (00:06:48):

But it's vast with the internet, it's potentially vast.

Marty Kearns (00:06:52):

Potentially vast, but potentially and actually are two different thing.

Nate Hagens (00:06:55):

Where's the rubber hit the road there, the difference between potentially and actually with the internet on your work?

Marty Kearns (00:07:01):

For us, networks are very concrete. We can think of a boundary, who's in this network and who's not. Then we can think what is the state of the ties between the people within that network. Can they communicate with each other one to one? Can they communicate with each other one to many? Can they communicate with each other many to many? Can they have those conversations? Do they have the common language when they say something like collapse? Do they all mean the exact same thing or do they mean something different? Do they trust each other? To what level do they trust each other? Each of those elements actually give us opportunities to intervene and manage the growth of the strength of that network so that it can do more.

Nate Hagens (00:07:39):

You said you've been doing this for 22 years. How did you get interested in the concept of networks and what was your aha moment on how important it is?

Marty Kearns (00:07:50):

Well, my whole life I had been a campaign person, a political organizer, issue organizer. I had started the Georgia River Network in Atlanta, protecting the rivers in Georgia before that I'd worked in politics.

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The trigger event for me was 9/11. My wife was nine months pregnant with our first kid and we were here in D.C. and 9/11 happened and I started to read everything I could on networks. Some early stuff by Rand, the book *Networks and Netwars*, stuff by Valdis Krebs, just really trying to look at what are we facing here.

(00:08:29):

What I realized was that the people who had been thinking a lot about networks had been thinking about how to pull them apart. That was actually, I think six months later I calmed down. My kids started sleeping through the night so I didn't have to read so much and I was like, wow, my whole movement, I live in networks and the things that they're pulling out is the start of a reverse engineering document for what we need to build in order to create network power for good.

(00:08:54):

Then I think I wrote my first paper then and this guy from the Marguerite Casey Foundation found it and was like, "You're onto something." Tom David, and he is like, "You're onto something but you don't have it figured out at all. Go push further." I've been pushing further for 20 some years and that's what got me started.

Nate Hagens (00:09:15):

At its core, what's the special sauce and why do you think it's so important that people listening to this in the United States or Europe or wherever start to understand and act, building networks in their life?

Marty Kearns (00:09:31):

Tons. When I run across your work and I think about the superorganism, the thing I think is it doesn't have a functional nervous system yet. It seems to have a diet and an exercise and an ability to consume, but I think one of your early interviews, Kiril talked about the human race had this nervous breakdown.

(00:09:55):

I worry about that because I was like, "I think we're just getting our nervous system sorted out." We do work in Ghana, in rural Ghana, and one of the things that hit me was on our field work, you could see people literally disconnecting the solar power that was set up to their water pumps in order to charge their cell phones. I think somewhere, your literature, you talk about the leap to becoming a superorganism and in part that might have been our diet, but I think somewhere in there is also, we're still evolving as a species. I think the evolution is this network connection. It's right there at the foundational base with Maslow's hierarchy is staying connected.

(00:10:40):

When you see refugees in Syria or come out of war zones, among the first things they do, they grab food and water and they want to hook up to start talking to family. There is this network connection that we crave that is going to be there forever, it's going to make it through the collapse because it is part of our DNA.

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Nate Hagens (00:10:59):

Well, we're incredibly social species and when you're just sitting there in a day and you feel fine and you don't have dysentery or diarrhea, your impulse is to connect with your network, your friends, your community. Then if you do get sick, you're probably going to re-plug in those solar panels to the water purifier. But tell me more about your experience in Ghana.

Marty Kearns (00:11:22):

Yeah, we organized a conference back in 2004 about the use of cell phones and civic engagement. 2004, that was crazy talk. One of the guys that came was from the DRC and he had been working on using cell phones in the Congo to fight Ntaganda, the war criminal, about the abduction of children in the local militias. It struck us as like, "Wait, how is this working?" It was an incredible story and you start to realize there's this connectivity that people want and that they prioritize it, high up. World Bank did a study that there was a collapse in cigarette sales when cell phones hit new markets.

Nate Hagens (00:12:05):

Different mode of dopamine delivery.

Marty Kearns (00:12:08):

Well or just the value of that connection. It is really, really high and I don't think we figured out what to do with it. I mean, I know a lot of your guests look at the division around COVID as a failure. For me, that's like the entire world put the breaks on for a month, month and a half. Nobody predicted that was possible. Yes, it fell apart and it fell apart in some bad ways, but I think in the longer arc of history, we're going to look at COVID and be like, "Wow, that was pretty impressive."

(00:12:39):

In 2014, if you had talked to any scientist, any epidemiology virologist and said, "Okay, we're going to have an Ebola outbreak, it's going to go across three countries and there's going to be 24,000 people with it and it's going to have an R of 1.3, what's going to happen?" They're going to be like, "It's going to spread. It's going to kill everybody. It's all over. Game over." Cultures, all that. It didn't happen. There was no boss in charge of that. That network capacity is just starting to get tested, is starting to develop. I do feel like that's an important thing for us to think about when we think about what's happening and how we're going to steer towards some path that is more just.

Nate Hagens (00:13:22):

Let me ask you this. I don't know if you've listened to the podcast I've done with Tristan Harris and Aza Raskin and Daniel Schmachtenberger on algorithms and polarization and the YouTube and other things, upregulating certain viral things that are actually not good for building community, they're good for building animosity and outrage and things like that. How do you build the pro-social networks that you are working on in the face of this larger technology superorganism that's upregulating the wrong things as it were?

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Marty Kearns (00:14:00):

We're really intentional and I think that's the thing that... discipline and intentional around the process of network building and the skills of network building. There's real ways you can test. Is this network getting stronger or weaker? Are the quality of those seven elements, social ties, trusts, common language, common vision, shared resources, actors and feedback mechanisms, are they getting improving in quality and then spreading in access? Does everybody getting access to those? That's the way that we build networks.

(00:14:30):

I don't entirely buy all the narratives on how much more divided we've become. In a longer time span, we started off as a genocidal conquering mill-dominated mess in the North America. I mean, there's no place worse to have started than the early Americas. The rights and the work that we're doing, I feel like when you watch that stuff, we're in the last gasp of fire where that behavior is being snuffed out in so many ways. It flares up, but I do not feel like it's on a march towards power. I don't think that's in human nature. I think when technology fights with human nature, human nature wins. There might be this little blip in time where those algorithms are dangerous, but look at the next generation. Are they falling forward as quickly as the older generation? I don't think so.

Nate Hagens (00:15:32):

Oh, I'm not so sure about that. I think they're more prey to the potential addictions and constantly watching TikTok instead of going and meeting their neighbor and things like that than the older generation.

Marty Kearns (00:15:45):

True, but I think the power of those connections are just as real and just as valuable to their human experience as going to see your neighbor.

Nate Hagens (00:15:56):

But you're not really competing with the YouTube algorithm with your work with Netcentric Campaigns.

Marty Kearns (00:16:01):

No.

Nate Hagens (00:16:01):

It's actually using your own software or face to face or things like that, so you can build a network without the up or down regulation of the algorithms, yes?

Marty Kearns (00:16:13):

Yes. When you think about organizational capacity, organization, good board, good branding, smart intellectual capital, you've got all these things that you're building on, if you had somebody who's from

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a big company come in and talk about that, you could very say, "How do we build our organization?" Nobody's giving you free organizational capacity.

(00:16:33):

If you talk about building a network and you talk about communication grids, common language, common narratives, there's a lot of tools and services that are coming online for free as part of our culture becomes more networked. That's what the underdogs, the resistance are exploiting, is they're exploiting that network capacity to increase their power.

Nate Hagens (00:16:53):

I don't know a lot about this, Marty, so forgive some naive questions. Does Dunbar's number in our ability to only carry a certain number of real relationships in our brain, given it's 1,300 cc's, give or take 150 relationships, does that limit the number of networks? Is there a cap, and therefore, we have to be selective about which networks we're involved in?

Marty Kearns (00:17:16):

Oh, we're definitely selective about which networks we're involved in, because nobody wants to be in another network. Nobody. But they'll all join one that promises more value than the one that they've got. The lack of barriers of entry and the lack of barriers of exit make networks very, very powerful. I don't know about that. I've talked a little bit with people about that. Are we limited in the number of networks or can we continue to harness information from broader and broader sectors from people that we don't trust? I think that's an interesting question and that's not really what I do. I don't know the answer to that, I guess.

Nate Hagens (00:17:57):

Is a Google group a network?

Marty Kearns (00:18:00):

No, we have a quiz. The nodes in the network are not connected to each other, if they don't share any of those seven elements, then they're not a network. Just being on an email list is not a part of a network.

Nate Hagens (00:18:13):

Unless I organize the email list with 37 systems ecologists friends over the last decade, so it is kind of a-

Marty Kearns (00:18:21):

Common language.

Nate Hagens (00:18:22):

Common language, climate change, energy, trust.

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Marty Kearns (00:18:25):

Some trust, some vision. Yes, I would say just based on a cursory, yeah, that's a network. Do everybody else in there recognize that they're part of that network? That's another part of it. That would be a network.

Nate Hagens (00:18:39):

It's difficult, anxiety-producing, at times nasty and messy. Is that one of your criteria as well?

Marty Kearns (00:18:46):

No, no, no. I mean, just like community, there's healthy and unhealthy, there's functional and dysfunctional, there's networks and communities that are used by hate groups and terrorist cells and there's ones used by AA to deliver recovery to millions of people. It's a structure.

Nate Hagens (00:19:08):

Would you mind giving me an example from start to present or historically of an issue or a network that you or your organization were involved in starting from scratch and it was a success and what did that look like and how did it come about?

Marty Kearns (00:19:26):

We worked with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for four years to start a network to build their network around fighting the epidemic of childhood obesity. They had been doing a lot of grants. They had a community of people that had similar backgrounds and perspectives, but they often totally disagreed on what is the solution to childhood obesity. Some would say it's marketing. Some would say it is the size of the food. Some would say it was obesogens. Some would say it's the kids aren't moving enough, so NFL PLAY 60 would be in there. Others would say it's the marketing to the kids, so they would fight the NFL. You can't have Gatorade.

(00:20:07):

When you have a strategy like that where it's a complex wicked problem that's solving one part of it, it actually creates more problems than the other part. There is no top-down singular approach. We went in. We talked with them about that assessment and we said, "Look, you need an all of them strategy, and that's network building." We worked with them to provide, to organize, to interview people, to talk about how does leadership shift, who are we pushing power to in this network, how does that power move.

(00:20:36):

Then we designed the work with them that now grew to about 3,000 individuals from people working for hospitals to people working for food desert groups in Philly to the American Heart Association. In the end, it was working on 350,000 supporters. We worked with Let's Move! and the White House. We worked with all kinds of collaborators and pushed for policy change at the city levels around food deserts and transportation. At the state level, around school meals, funding for different programs,



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advancing science, providing public comment when their agencies worked on things, and then leaders within that movement.

(00:21:17):

Within each of these, it's not us designing, it's the network pulling people in, creating a space where they collaborate and then once they decide to collaborate, making sure that the network is more successful. You build a network because you want people in the network to do things and you want them to be more successful in their efforts because the network exists. It's not the same as directing it in a traditional campaign top-down model.

(00:21:43):

That network is still going on. I think American Heart Association works it. We've done it again in our work with climate and anti-fracking activists. We organized six years ago, starting in 2016. There's a lot of tension in the fracking space with leaders from across the country and across different states fighting, do we regulate it? Do we focus on pipelines? Do we focus on disposal wells or landfills? Do we do a ban like they did in New York? What do we do if they want a ban and we're in Pennsylvania and they're flaring stuff in our backyard? Halt the Harm is now about 4,000 grassroots leaders, 20,000 activists, and they are pushing for all kinds of change and reform around the country. Both of those networks we've set up from scratch and accelerated through that growth process.

Nate Hagens (00:22:30):

What does that mean exactly? You were able to see the common interest of this group of people and then you've provided scaffolding or technology or how did the network come into existence? What was the special sauce?

Marty Kearns (00:22:48):

We always start with listening. Try and figure out what's there. What are the networks that are there? One of the questions that we ask is, so we succeed. 10 years down the road, you've done it. You've stopped the harms from fracking. 10 years down the road, you stopped, you've reversed the epidemic of childhood obesity and everybody's getting healthier. 10 years down the road, something different has occurred. You're the governor. You're the President of the United States. You can throw a party. Tell us who you invite. That's where you start to get a sense of what's the boundaries of this network.

(00:23:22):

They start saying, "Oh, well. We'd want the people fighting pipelines and the landfill and all those people would be there at this party because all of us would have to have succeeded in order for us to have actually done what we want to do." Then we go and we look at that, all the names and the types of jobs that they've presented and say, "What's the state of that network today? Can they talk to each other? Can they get a message out to each other?"

(00:23:44):

When we did the early work with Robert Wood Johnson, we went back to him and said, "Look, the only way you can get a message out to this vast network of experts and other people is to get an article in

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the New York Times." Because that was the only source that 40% of the network listened to. In *Halt the Harm*, I think NPR was one of the higher rates. You can't get a message out. There's no way this network can actually swarm or do things or collaborate or that they were not all following the same Twitter, they're not all following the same whatever, there's no channel that they pay attention to.

(00:24:16):

That was our first option was how do we get a channel organized that's actually going to appeal to them and serve them in some way. That's what we do again and again is we try and look for where the communication or where do they build trust? What tools do they use? Who do they hire? What's their next hire? Where are they blindsided by things? Where are the turf wars? We try and discover that's things that are valuable and things that are governed poorly and that's why you get turf wars. That's a great opportunity for doing something around and organizing the network of the people who fight the turf wars.

Nate Hagens (00:24:49):

It sounds like it's a cross between civics and diplomacy and divorce counseling and PR/marketing that you're figuring out the channels and the pathways after you listen and assess the challenge.

Marty Kearns (00:25:06):

I think once we understand the boundary of who needs to be involved, it's really about trying to serve them. Trying to figure out what's the honey pot we have to put on the table to attract them to participate in the network, to go through that hassle and be like, "I don't want to join in that org, but that honey pot, that's good enough. I'm going to show up for that." Then once they're there, then you have the other strategy of now they're there, how do you connect them to each other? What are the kinds of things that you can do that gets them to trust each other, that makes them understand where each other might be reliable, where each other might be likable? That's how trust evolves. They're likable and reliable. It's the combination of those. We all have people there.

Nate Hagens (00:25:46):

We are lacking in trust in our nation, I mean, according to my purview of what's going on. You're saying that rather than building trust and then creating network, you're saying that building a network and that itself then creates trust over time?

Marty Kearns (00:26:05):

No, I think we have to be intentional about it. There's a lot of business models as you've seen that make money by ripping people apart, by putting people in smaller communities, in smaller tribes and making money off of them. Where are the big national programs to counterbalance that? The national service. You know can look at different places and we should be doing that at the city, state and national level. There should always be a how are we building consensus? How are we building consent to move forward? We can't move forward until we have consent. What does that mean? It means everything goes slower. Just means it.

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(00:26:39):

There's not a single fracking project that had they listened to the frontline communities, they would've moved forward with, because people would not accept, they would not give consent to be polluted or to expose their kids to cancer or to risk their water or their air. You might have gotten 50% of them, you might have gotten 80% of them, but 20% of them would know it's a bad idea.

(00:27:00):

Our model right now just ignores that. It ignores the impact on them, it ignores them because they're poor. It ignores them because they're different from whoever's making the decision. I think that approach, very practical, very how do we bring people together, build back better the new bills, the COVID. Where were the opportunities for everybody to be involved? Where was government leading the way and say, "Look, we've got to repatch this broken fabric that we've got." I'm not seeing those initiatives on any scale that we need in order to combat this other models that are pulling us apart.

Nate Hagens (00:27:38):

Well, here's a dark question. Before people get involved in networks in a pro-social way like you're discussing, don't they have to first want to be involved, because I see bright spots of people really caring about these issues, but I also see a lot of apathy, "I don't care, things are too far gone. I'm just going to focus on my own little thing."

Marty Kearns (00:28:00):

You've got every network that we say, we don't say, "Join the network because it's a network," never. It's, "We have this service that we think people like you who we're trying to support would find useful." It's a value proposition to the user for immediate satisfaction. You start with that. You always start with a lot of services.

(00:28:21):

In the beginning, it was Facebook was the only thing that enabled you to share photos or find your high school friend. They were rolling out new services all the time because they were trying to attract people. Now, once all the people are there, they don't have to... When's the last time they announced anything? They come for the people. In the beginning of our networks, we offer blogging tools, insights, campaign services, all kinds of things that people who are doing the work need and want. They'll join the network to get access to that. They don't want to be in another network. Then we very subtly introduce them to other people like them, introduce them to other people that are reliable, introduce them to the stories of other people and that's give them opportunities to connect, make the right thing the easy thing to do. I guess that's where it's different from a knowledge community or knowledge building. It's really got to be what is that person that you need talking points, you need advertising help, you need outreach assistance, you need access to polling and opinion research.

Nate Hagens (00:29:19):

Here's my angle on this, correct me if I'm wrong. I think massive energy surplus and complexity has allowed us to function without community relative to our ancestors and cultures of the past, so that our

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networks today are trying to get either novelty and distraction or information in order to make profit or an investment or a cryptocurrency or something like that, but the networks aren't really about social and human capital the way that they once were, the way that they are in tougher times or in the global south.

(00:30:02):

And so, my deep suspicion and prediction is that before too long and probably sooner rather than later, our country, the United States and many other countries are going to need this social and human capital again and it's going to be one of the most important assets that we have. And so, how do we start to build networks in communities that are still full of people that expect a George Jetson future of flying cars and super abundance and we're not going to need people so much because we can just stay in our house with our own loved ones and order stuff from Amazon, et cetera. What do you think about all that?

Marty Kearns (00:30:48):

I mean, I think one of your guests cited some research about a study that they did where he broke down his car. He brought a car that was broken down and he saw who stopped to help him and they were other people with crappy cars and that all the rich cars were flying by. I think we're all going to be in crappy cars so to speak in this. You see that. The thing that government really didn't do with Hurricane Katrina and the Cajun Navy did was activation of volunteers that work as an extension of the relief effort.

(00:31:24):

In 9/11 for everything that went out, it was people coming in and volunteering to do with the dig and look for survivors. We, as a species, really do well. I think some of the work around coronavirus and all the stuff that people came together to help each other out through that, that's going to scale as well. That's going to scale in proportion to the threat to us. Then, I'm sure it's going on right now in Pakistan. I'm sure that the government has collapsed, companies have collapsed, but the networks of people are the ones who are saving each other.

(00:32:01):

I do think that we are going to continue to invest in the social capital and the network capital necessary to deal with more complex and larger and larger problems. There is this energy collapse is coming at us and I think networks will take shape in much larger form.

Nate Hagens (00:32:20):

The question is how can we get those networks a little bit of life breathed in to them ahead of time so that there's more scaling and not just a sudden organization at the last moment?

Marty Kearns (00:32:32):

I think we can be intentional about it. We can start working it in, like I said, working it into all of our government programs, working it into the programs that companies use. Network building is a skill. It is repeatable, as we've shown. Process, you focus on the right things and you create network capacity.

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That's it. You focus on promoting the use of that network and you create network size. We've been able to repeat that again and again. When you look at organic networks, markets, farmers' markets, those kind of things, there are tons of networks that people invest in and create and those thrive.

Nate Hagens (00:33:13):

You've mentioned Pakistan and Ghana. Do networks work differently there than in the global north and why? What has been your experience and observation?

Marty Kearns (00:33:24):

They used different things. The work we're doing internationally got started when I was doing a presentation on our work on fracking or childhood health, I forget which one it was. One of the program officers came to us and said, "I've built water systems all over the world. We've built water systems. One of the fundamental differences between the projects that succeed and the projects that don't succeed is the engagement of the local network of leaders around the project." He is like, "I've never seen this methodology." He is like, "What'd you do?" I was like, "I've never worked international." I've worked there internationally when I was young, but I haven't really brought this model. A big part of it was going to test it in Ghana and say, "Hey look, I make no promises, but I'm really interested in bringing my A game to this challenge around developing capacity to advance water, sanitation and hygiene in these new settlements, and settlements, 65,000 people, 140 water wells, really low sanitation practices."

(00:34:27):

What we found was it was there. There was a need for a network and that the methodology that we've been doing has been growing. Right now, I think we're two years in on that project. We have the local government is who we're working with there. They are building a network to manage customer service around brand new water sanitation and hygiene initiatives. It's the same seven elements. It's totally different. Instead of internet, we're using radio and community information centers, which are these broadcast megaphones on a tower. Instead of campaign contests, we're doing things around sanitation contests. It's different. The methodology is solid though.

Nate Hagens (00:35:09):

In a situation like that with 65,000 people and 100 some wells you mentioned, doesn't a network happen organically? Doesn't it emerge naturally with all those humans or does it need some scaffolding and direction?

Marty Kearns (00:35:25):

I mean, I think people try all the time. Networks just like organizations or other government programs fail at an astonishingly high rate. In a role of the dice, I'm sure the market women are building networks, the traditional chiefs are building networks, the government health service is going around and talking to people and connecting to each other. I think if you want that to scale, you want it to be something that you can rely on and you want it to be something that focuses attention and build specific capacities to advance watch, you've got to be a little bit more intentional about it. That's what we're providing the training and support for.

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Nate Hagens (00:36:00):

I wonder if the emergent networks that naturally happen scale around power, both social power and energetic energy per unit time power and what you're talking about is a more democratic way of creating a network with your seven metrics, I'm just speculating.

Marty Kearns (00:36:21):

I don't know. I mean, I increasingly think that ours is just, it's just a way to artificially tease things out. It's an MRI. We come into a network that's weak or that somebody really wants to expand because they're putting more projects in because it's critical and we're able to look at it in a unique way and find those specific capacities and increase them. I think it's more a tool of analysis.

(00:36:45):

I think you build a network to shift who's got power and to shift who's got access to leadership. If we have done work in the past and stopped because the people who wanted to build the network were not really interested in having new voices and new people lead new initiatives within the network. What they wanted was a following. They wanted a broadcast. They wanted the power of the network without actually thinking about, I'm building a network so other people succeed.

Nate Hagens (00:37:17):

This is a tangential question, Marty, but based on your experience in Ghana and internationally, there's a large material throughput disparity between the global north and the global south. We could accurately say the global south is materially disadvantaged relative to the global north, but are they socially disadvantaged? I could argue that the global south has already been living The Great Simplification in many ways. First of all, why is it so hard to share life-learning across the global north-south divide and what can we materially rich people listening to this podcast learn about the social capital that is already very healthy in some of these materially poorer locations?

Marty Kearns (00:38:15):

First, I'd say ask them. Ask. Listen.

Nate Hagens (00:38:19):

I've been fortunate enough to travel to Ecuador and Zambia and Zimbabwe and the people there. Yes, they have to deal with HIV/AIDS and lots of uncertainties, but they're happy, healthy, and socially connected. Every time I go to a place like that and I come back to fly to Miami or whatever, I notice this huge social disconnect. I'm just wondering if you have any learnings or speculation on that dichotomy.

Marty Kearns (00:38:49):

I think people refine and build what they can. We're builders as part of our DNA just like we're growers. I think you asked that at one point. The thing that that's there, there's tons of wisdom and answers there. There have been people working on the very problem that most of the people who listen to this

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podcast are really worried about in some theoretical sense, be like the wisdom is out there. I think there's a saying, the future's here, it's just unevenly distributed.

Nate Hagens (00:39:20):

That's right.

Marty Kearns (00:39:20):

We owe each other help. We can learn from those that are suffering from our bad choices and listen to what they want and what they asked for. I think that's really hard because they want different things. If they're given leadership, they're going to ask for different things than we're willing to give up. We need to come to terms with that.

(00:39:43):

I don't think there's any differences in making the transition for them versus us. I think emotionally, maybe for people who have had it and then lost it, but in reality on the ground, there's no difference in the end state. You could go to Appalachia, you go to where I grew up in Scranton. There's been places here that have collapsed and lost 50% of their revenues and 70% of their energy and all that kind of... It's happened in lots of places. I mean, Scranton used to be like Silicon Valley. They've taken money on the ground.

(00:40:15):

I guess that's it. It's just this idea that we're evolving to adapt like many species to lower energy, less food, and harder habitat. Evolution happens in generational transitions. There's I think the idea that we're going to evolve without that kind of giving up foods and behaviors and other types. It's not regression of evolution, it's not devolution, that doesn't happen. It is the process of adaption and evolution and-

Nate Hagens (00:40:44):

Cultural evolution.

Marty Kearns (00:40:45):

Cultural, even species. This whole idea of being networked or being less dependent on energy is going to be something our species... We've gotten taller, we're going to get shorter. I think there's a whole bunch of stuff's going to happen.

Nate Hagens (00:41:00):

Over time. We're going to get shorter.

Marty Kearns (00:41:02):

Yeah. I mean...

Nate Hagens (00:41:04):

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But I guess what I'm teasing out here is that the importance of networks and the examples that you've given Scranton and Ghana and other places is we are such a social species that we take for granted all this material stuff is correlated to our future wellbeing, when in reality, just the networks and building community and daily interaction with other humans, we've lost that in this late capitalistic society. That is a silver lining that we're going to need that again and it's going to be messy, but it's going to be possibly great because we're going to self-organize in the ways that we need to.

Marty Kearns (00:41:50):

Yeah, I think so. The other thing is you sit on this side of the opportunities that you have to connect with, especially you or some of the people that you... like the ultra wealthy, the people who think that they're insulated from this stuff. They're not in a better position. They've acquired shit, but it's not a better position. They haven't avoided the full ride on this ticket. If we were all at the top, and oh Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk are the happiest, most fulfilled, happiest luxury life ever. Those guys seem miserable. They seem miserable in their lives. They're like train wrecks.

Nate Hagens (00:42:31):

Well, I have personal experience with that. I used to manage money for high net worth individuals on Wall Street and most of them, not all of them, but most of them were more miserable than the clerks who were making 25 grand a year processing the trades. That realization in my job was one of the reasons I left. Because I was like, I thought the goal was to be rich and then you would be happy. It's just you have more digits and more worries and a lot of time, more compulsion to grow the amount of digits. We're built for simple things like empathy and community, but our current economic system is pulling us away from simple things.

(00:43:12):

In your experience, either just in your network building or in your own life, how do we as individuals resist this pull and plant seeds of community while this cultural media, Madison Avenue siren song of consumption and stimulation is still loudly singing? What are some first steps?

Marty Kearns (00:43:34):

Love the victims.

Nate Hagens (00:43:36):

Love the victims?

Marty Kearns (00:43:37):

Root for the little guy. Shift who you follow as leaders and you'll shift away from those leader mindsets. You can't admire what anybody who's making money in fracking's doing if you know victims of fracking and oil and gas. Be a cheerleader for the people who are trying to do impossible things. Be supportive. Give them your comments. Thank them for their work, who you celebrate. It's literally like a small shift in a mental attitude and all of a sudden, all the marketing and all that other stuff really starts to



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dissipate. Reality wins 100% of the time. If you look at the real thing and you root for the... make sure that the groups at the edge are being listened to and celebrated, that was enough for me to shift my orientation in a way that I'm proud of and I'm happy with. I like rooting for the little guy.

Nate Hagens (00:44:39):

That also dovetails with intrinsic motivation as opposed to external validation that if you are intrinsically motivated to root for the little guy on issues that you care about, that gives you this shield to repel the glitz and glamor that's on our advertisement and commercials and airwaves.

Marty Kearns (00:45:00):

If you fall in love with the activist, you fall in love with the people who are standing in front, who are so pissed off and frustrated that they're getting arrested, and you follow their stories, it's almost impossible to buy into the nonsense and that accumulation of capital matters because you see the victims. You see the people who are getting ignored because somebody wants to make a dollar.

Nate Hagens (00:45:30):

Go down that path. Tell us a story or two from your experience, what's happened along the way that's delighted you or inspired you about the human spirit and fed your natural optimism. Because despite what's going on in the world, every time I talk to you, you're just fired up and have a smile and a laugh despite the seriousness of our situation. Can you give me a couple examples of what's fed you in your experience?

Marty Kearns (00:45:58):

It's funny because I thought about this and I was thinking about, am I optimistic? I was like, "No, I'm not optimistic." I think that's a different thing. Things are going to turn out all right. I don't think that that's the case.

Nate Hagens (00:46:13):

You're committed with a smile on your face.

Marty Kearns (00:46:15):

I'm cheerful, you know what I mean? I used to go camping a lot with a troupe and there was always rain and nasty weather and there'd be somebody who would just have a grin on their face. Every movie that you look at, there's people in ridiculous circumstances that still remain cheerful. Transition happens. People pass. There's some people that face death cheerfully and there's some that aren't horrified by it. I think they both know they have cancer. They both know what's going on.

(00:46:49):

I think we slip from that, that's normal. I don't think it's consistent all the time. We get angry or rage or depression, but I think the answer is to commit to being cheerful. When I think of the good things and the things that give me hope, I do think of the progress that we've made as a species over a long

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period of time. Is it done? No. Will it be done in my lifetime? Maybe not, but a lot of the great works were not done in one lifetime. People worked on them and toiled away and handed it off to the second or third generation.

(00:47:26):

When you think about that, that makes me okay. For all of the worst of this, we're 500,000 votes away in Wyoming. A statehood in D.C. or a million people moving from New York and California to two states would drastically change the trajectory of the largest economy in the world. That's an organizing problem. That's not an insolvable problem. If people can go serve in the military for five years to go be a part of that complex and solving that problem and protect America, why not everybody do six years in Laramie, Wyoming. I mean, literally half a million votes drops two Senate seats and makes them competitive and all kinds of interesting things. I don't think these are unsolvable problems. The scientist doesn't tell us that they're unsolvable problems. There's big change that's needed and I don't think that that's out of reach.

Nate Hagens (00:48:20):

I think the answers are more community-based than political because whether Democrats win or Republicans win, we're still part of an energy dissipating hungry superorganism that is now past peak. I worry about which governance models in coming decades will work. I think we need a civic resolve and better community and better networks that are aware of these things. But a big difference between your work and mine is I'm trying to build awareness and it's factual and science-based and integrated, but it still is conceptual and you're doing practical things on the ground.

Marty Kearns (00:49:04):

I mean, I'm sure you feel this in your work, but how do you move away from worry as you take action? Worry is just when I sit with the science, when I sit with the comprehensive science from across fields that you do, you get worried. The only way to get out of that is action. There's no mental way out of that. I think we're consistently being traumatized. I think the youth are being traumatized by all this stuff.

Nate Hagens (00:49:27):

I totally agree. I mean, my coping is I go for a bike ride or I hang out with my dogs or chickens or go in the forest. But when you say action, what do you mean by that?

Marty Kearns (00:49:36):

I think it's those personal action at the local level, being a cheerleader, providing support, looking for who's the victim and how are you helping them out? Who's the new voice? There's no seed money... you know you can be an angel investor and not have cash. Who are the people that are working on impossible things and how do you support them? How do you support them in giving them connections, giving them access to things? I think those are what you can do to shift who's in charge or who's a leader is really important.

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Nate Hagens (00:50:07):

Maybe we start a network that would be scalable at different levels in the United States called impossible things that need to happen. No, but seriously though, so this is a complex question. Perhaps you can offer your expertise. I'm a teacher and an analyst, not a community organizer. I know very little about that. Given my organization's work, what advice would you have about the development of seeing what's happening, what's likely to happen? We're going to have to deal with a lower energy material throughput future in the not too distant number of years. How would you think about developing a network of like-minded people in Topeka, Kansas, in Rockville, Maryland, in Red Wing, Minnesota, in Fairbanks, Alaska that would be a network that would be self-sustaining and self-governing. Let's start there. Would you have suggestions?

Marty Kearns (00:51:06):

Well, I mean, I don't know enough about all the nuances of your work, but when I think about models that work in that way, they're all focused on helping yourself by helping the new person. When you think about churches, the 12-step programs, Shack Dwellers International, mutual aid programs, microfinance programs that you help yourself by getting together to help somebody else, the newest person. Those are the kinds of loose distributed networks that grow and spread because it's baked into their core operating piece.

(00:51:44):

I think really trying to think through who's it going to attract. When you look at transition networks or you look at those others, it's like how do we find the model of ritual, the model of behavior where we're building it in that the first thing you've got to do is help somebody else, and that in helping them, you're improving your skill, you're improving your life, you're getting the value that you need out of this process.

Nate Hagens (00:52:11):

Churches, especially local churches, are a prime definition of networks, yes?

Marty Kearns (00:52:18):

In many ways, yeah. I mean, some are functional, some are dysfunctional, but they clearly build social ties, they build communications, they have shared resources. In my neighborhood, my mother built a network and she could pull together tomorrow if you're like, "We're going to have 60 people over," she can make phone calls and there'd be lasagna, there'd be entrees, everything would show up, drinks, you could pull that together. Why? Because she's invested in that network over 40 years in the same house and neighborhood.

Nate Hagens (00:52:48):

Let me ask you this. We do those things now, but we do them for Green Bay Packer, Minnesota Viking football games, but we're going to need to do them on much more serious issues in the not too distant future. How do we build networks? I mean, my work is based on awareness and sharing information and

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knowledge, but very soon, we're going to need to be action and change-oriented. But given what I've learned from you on this short conversation, people don't really need to know about oil depletion statistics or the climate scenarios or these things. They just need to start building networks. The networks themselves, if they exist, will pay dividends in the future no matter what future transpires. What blanket advice do you have for listeners right now, well you said, root for the underdog, get started on a network locally to help people that are the victims or in need? I mean, what else can you suggest or do I have that mistaken?

Marty Kearns (00:53:51):

No, I think you're right. I mean, I think my perspective is cultural capital is worth more than financial capital.

Nate Hagens (00:53:57):

Agree.

Marty Kearns (00:53:58):

Because social capital is worth more than energy capital

Nate Hagens (00:54:01):

As long as basic needs are met.

Marty Kearns (00:54:03):

I think those network capitals are a basic need. I've seen it in examples. They've unhooked water to stay connected. The second or third thing people ask for when they get off of a boat is the ability to let people know that they're safe, find out what's going on. Look at any refugee camp, there's Wi-Fi spots or other pieces and they're crowded. In the Congo, they would go to mass for three hours just to sit next to the generator to plug in a phone so they can see what the prices are on the fish. Connection, we need to stop thinking that that's an extra. It is part of our superorganism now.

Nate Hagens (00:54:43):

Well and it's also that we live in a culture right now that if you have enough electrons in the bank or linen bills in your wallet, you can pay for the things that networks normally would give you in our historical tribal environment for free, but that era may be ending relatively quickly.

Marty Kearns (00:55:06):

The shift is how do we take that to a strategy level? How do we see the office of civic engagement in the White House actually leading every initiative around how does this program, this investment that we're making, whether it's a tax break or an incentive program or a field program, how is this building social ties among people? How are the programs crafted to capture positive network effects? Because they're not. That doesn't happen. Cities start with it. I think there's some countries in Europe that are

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doing some of this stuff, but I think this idea of creating network power and network capacity and network resiliency among the people in the country is a strategic investment as much as our roads. It's actually more important given the size and the nature of the threats facing us.

Nate Hagens (00:55:57):

We had a community organizer as the president of our nation for eight years. Wouldn't you have thought that some of this network knowledge and scaling it in our nation would've transpired?

Marty Kearns (00:56:10):

Yeah, I mean I think I'm very curious around the thinking on that. You can go to Washington D.C. I live here. You can go down the Capitol, which is one of the largest tourist spots in the world. There's no place for people to facilitate discussions with each other. Actually, we don't use our greatest place to bring people together to talk directly with each other. That seems like a lost opportunity to me.

Nate Hagens (00:56:38):

Is part of that due to the just sheer size of 320 million people in our country and the type of things that you are discussing work better at smaller scales?

Marty Kearns (00:56:49):

I don't think so. But if it's a core problem, if it's as core as the collapse of energy, if it's as core as the overinflation, why are we not spending more resource? Why are we not listening to the people who are working on at scale, who are keeping peace? What are the best examples? That may be India's greatest export. They know how to live alongside wildlife in a non-destructive way. That cultural knowledge is invaluable.

(00:57:20):

I think there are places where we can look at it and say, "Does this scale?" I think democracy in its truest form is supposed to be that, was an attempt at that. My A game, what did 20 years of career enable me to see that I can share with people? It's that these networks are not fuzzy, they're not amorphous. It's not let 1,000 people, 1,000 things bloom that you can actually be very intentional and with skills, share the knowledge and apply technique to build an effective network to create social change. I think that's the thing that I feel like my career and work has opened me to understand. We want to have more network managers. We have a free field guide for network managers. We have that stuff. We give it away. We try and get involved in more projects and helping people build these networks and build the skills that they need to manage networks.

Nate Hagens (00:58:22):

Wait, you have a free field guide for network managers?

Marty Kearns (00:58:26):

Yeah, it's online.

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Nate Hagens (00:58:27):

And so, if we had tens of thousands of people around the nation read that and apply it to start networks and their communities, I mean, this was always why I favored local currencies because it wasn't as a replacement to the US dollar and it may not have been the most economically efficient thing. But what local currencies did is the proximate goal was, hey, we can pay a little bit of our utility bill or buy these tomatoes. But the ultimate benefit of the local currencies is it created ways of people to meet each other and exchange something and look in the face instead of just this disembodied electronic transfer of digits.

Marty Kearns (00:59:11):

That's the exact same thing that's going on with voting. When we grew up voting was you stood in a line, there was a little neighbor who had volunteered for \$2 and she checked you in and then you got over to the thing and there was an old guy there who checked out your thing and you stepped in. It was all manual. It was all manual process run by people that you know and you could go down and grab them by the shoulder and say, "What are you doing?" It created trust in the process, but it was inconvenient. It was slow. The networks couldn't get their votes tallied the same night because it was people counting stuff.

Nate Hagens (00:59:46):

Technological networks have suppressed our natural social networks.

Marty Kearns (00:59:51):

No, I'm not saying that at all. I mean, I don't think it's in either or. I also know marginalized people who the technological networks are the bread and butter, they're the thing keeping them sane and they're the thing keeping them safe. It's not an either or.

Nate Hagens (01:00:06):

Got it.

Marty Kearns (01:00:06):

If you live in a hostile community, your technological network is your network.

Nate Hagens (01:00:12):

Marty, I have some closing questions for you that are a little bit more on the personal side, although there's been quite a bit of this conversation's been personal. Given your experience and your cheerful disposition despite the difficult work you do, do you have any suggestions for people listening to this on how they can prepare themselves in their community for what I refer to as a great simplification or an economically more disruptive and challenging time than our recent decades of experience? How do we meet the future halfway in your opinion?

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Marty Kearns (01:00:52):

I think focus on loving others. We're in a state where it's easy to see how self-destructive the superorganism is and focus on hating it, the separating. I think that hating the other group, and I think that's the wrong instinct. I think this idea that you could withdraw, build your own thing, isolate, cut off your connection to people is not the answer, and that we're facing the end of an era. This, and eras end and move on. Sometimes it's hard to accept that transition, but if we just mourn the loss and then look ahead to what's next and say this is inevitable, I think that's key to not being traumatized. This is traumatizing and immobilizing for a lot of people and it's happening to a lot.

(01:01:45):

When you're traumatized, it requires incredible support to move ahead in healthy ways. What do they say? Hurt people hurt people. We're seeing that at a scale we haven't seen. We are the energy to fix that in our communities, in our social groups, in our families, with our children. I think we really need to realize that's not just nice words, that's the pathway. I think that's how we meet this future halfway is focus on that.

Nate Hagens (01:02:17):

I agree with that. I don't know how to do it per se, but I agree with what you just said. What about young people? You've mentioned, and I agree with you that young people hearing all of this, especially with climate and the longer term thing because they're going to be, life expectancy 80 years, there's a lot going to happen in that timeline. What specific recommendations would you have for young humans who become aware of our energy, environmental, and biophysical constraints of our situation?

Marty Kearns (01:02:48):

Be cheerful.

Nate Hagens (01:02:50):

If you tell someone to be cheerful, what's the mechanism by which they can be cheerful?

Marty Kearns (01:02:55):

For me it's like knowing that the world is big. You visit any of the vast spaces like Wyoming or the ocean. The world is going to continue to spin and the world shifts all the time. That's not going away. Know what's not going away. Change is a lot easier to accept when you also understand what's not going away. Know that where we are is not good, we don't want this and what's next? You probably don't want it either. Wishing for stability is not what you want either as a young person. This is a nightmare. This change is your friend. Something different is coming. The question is, can it be more just? Can it be better? I think that's key.

(01:03:45):

The other thing that I would say to younger people is power never moves voluntarily. Organize. We have a lot of big issues. We have the science. We know what needs to be done and organize, organize, speak up. That's really important. I think when young people find this whole, you run into it something

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like, you're not alone and you're not the first. It's really important. They feel like, "Oh, I'm the first person to see this." Be like, you're not alone. You're not the first. Old folks like us have struggled with this and we're eager to hand it off because like I said, I think it's an old Jewish thing. It's not up to you to finish the task, but you're not free to avoid it. This came upon us in our lifetime, which is almost unbelievable that since 1960s or '70s is when this really emerged. We've been working on it. We can't avoid it, but we can't solve it in our lifetime and it's just got to be part of their work.

Nate Hagens (01:04:47):

In addition to the oceans and Wyoming not going away, there are probably a lot of other things in our current economy and social structure that are not going away that are actually good things, some of which you've mentioned on this conversation about social networks and human capital, et cetera. There are a lot of good things that will probably remain about our daily lives.

Marty Kearns (01:05:18):

Yeah, for sure. I mean, the things that are not energy capital, the things that are not financial capital, the things that are not propped up by either financial capital or energy capital, that's easy. Art, culture, history, books, tons of great stuff are going to, they're going to be here, they're not going anywhere, families.

Nate Hagens (01:05:36):

I don't know you too well, Marty. We've spoken several times on the phone, but a personal question, what do you care most about in the world?

Marty Kearns (01:05:44):

My wife, my kids, my family, my friends, being helpful, serving others. I think that's what I care about in the world. I think on the broader sense, it's that other people have the opportunity to do that as well with equality, like that's-

Nate Hagens (01:06:02):

Well said. Of all the things that we've talked about on this call and on other calls, what are you most concerned about in the coming 10 years or so?

Marty Kearns (01:06:09):

I'm concerned about that thing about hurt people hurt people, that we might see that rise at scale and that we need to head on and address that challenge as soon as possible.

Nate Hagens (01:06:20):

How do you address that challenge? Do you heal the hurt people before they hurt people?

Marty Kearns (01:06:25):



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I think you avoid hurting people. You start investing in the things that help people deal with what's coming on all kinds of levels and you set up programs and business models and things to address those challenges. I think telehealth is wonderful. I think scaling out Grandma Hands programs like they have in Philadelphia, there's so many really interesting things about-

Nate Hagens (01:06:55):

I don't know what that is.

Marty Kearns (01:06:57):

Oh, this connection that you talked about. There's a program in Philly that community health workers, where they hire older, wiser women to answer non-emergency room questions for other women in the community. If you become stuck with a kid at 15 years old and whether you're a babysitter or it's yours and the baby gets roseola and if you were part of a large extended functional family, you would be able to be like, "Hey, my baby has roseola and that's why their cheeks are red." But instead, they rush in emergency rooms and clog emergency rooms. These community health workers are there to act like grandmothers.

(01:07:30):

There's a program in North Carolina where they pay the elder wiser people with some training to sit on a bench outside psychologists offers to actually stop people from needing to go through the whole psychology. They just sit there and listen. I mean, there are much more ways that we can use the network of people that we have to solve our problems and I think we just need to be much more creative about that and follow these good examples and scale them.

Nate Hagens (01:07:53):

Is there a list of all these things that are going on these networks and maybe, I mean I read somewhere that when people see acts of altruism, they are 300% more likely to be altruistic themselves. Maybe we need examples of these grandma networks in Philly and to highlight them nationally so other people know that these things exist and they might think of something that could apply in their own community. I'm just throwing that out there because I'd never heard of these things.

Marty Kearns (01:08:25):

No, I mean I don't know if you watched watched I think, what was it, the guy from The Office of course, because I'm from Scranton, I got to mention The Office. The guy from The Office did a program, I think it was called Some Good News and it started during the pandemic and he just covered these stories of healthcare workers going above and beyond and those kind of things. I don't know if there's a central place, but they're there. They get award volunteer heroes and a lot of communities go to your local volunteers awards dinner.

Nate Hagens (01:08:56):

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Well, you've kind of answered this next question, but in contrast to what you're most worried about, what are you most hopeful about in the coming decade or so, given what you see in your work?

Marty Kearns (01:09:08):

I thought about it. I listened to some of your podcasts like traffic jams and you say why?

Nate Hagens (01:09:13):

Why? Why traffic jams?

Marty Kearns (01:09:15):

In the superorganism, they don't understand that. It's predictable chaos, guaranteed uncertainty. The traffic jams move around. I live in Washington and there's a beltway. It's literally a circle and traffic jams move like an organism. It's literally the cars leaving the traffic jam are going slower than the cars coming in. There's not an accident, there's nothing that actually happened. It's just this mass dynamic that shifts, that scientists really try and figure out and cannot.

(01:09:44):

I think when you think about the U.S., you can think about Black Lives Matter, Say Her Name, Women's Rights, we started as this crazy culture and I think America feels really shaky right now, but good people have been and continue to work to make this the last gasp of hate. They're fighting for their survival under all criteria. The internet kind of screwed things up a little bit, but the long view is there's less of that shit going on. I think that makes me hopeful in the next decade.

(01:10:20):

We may not win on my watch, but we will win. I think internationally, you look at things that happen. I had a friend once who gave a speech in Atlanta and he said, "Culture change happens." Everybody's looking, I'm like, culture change. People are the same. He's like, "Whoever made an ashtray in school, raise your hand." Everybody over 56 years old raised their hands. Everybody. Everybody made ashtrays in pottery class when they were a child. Everybody below that age didn't.

(01:10:50):

When you think about growing up, people used to pour oil down the drain in their local storm drain when they change the oil in their cars, that doesn't happen. Culture shift happens and that gives me hope. Internationally, the end of foot binding, the end of slavery. Bury the Chains was a book that gave me a lot of confidence. The whole idea that human rights was only invented in 1948. 1948 is the first time that term starts to show up. There's a book, I think it's by a Stanford professor who talked about the evolution of human rights. That's where I'm hopeful, but again, I'm not always sure that hope is the right word for me on the environment or energy. I think it's too tied to optimism.

Nate Hagens (01:11:34):

Yeah, it's more resolve and it's an outlook. I appreciate your sentiment on that. I usually close with a question. If you were a benevolent dictator and there was no personal recourse to your decision, what is

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one thing you would do to improve human and planetary futures? You can answer that, but also, I'll give you an alternative option. If you were the advisor to the government agency, you mentioned the council on civic engagement or something like that, either one of those, if you had that authority to make changes, what sort of things would you recommend or do?

Marty Kearns (01:12:17):

I would require consent and consensus with those that are impacted. They demand it. So many of our problems would've been prevented or avoided if we listened to all and worked towards consent before we proceeded. We work on Halt the Harm, and like I said, there's not a project anywhere going on hydrogen, carbon, piping, all these things that people are raising the flags right now. The science isn't done. There's people getting doused potentially sick, that would slow everything down. It would just slow everything down and give us a chance, raise flags about environmental justice, raise flags about pollution. I would definitely require consent. You can't just move ahead without consent of those impacted.

Nate Hagens (01:12:59):

Did you see what was announced yesterday? The UK announced that they were repealing their ban on fracking and whether there's consent or not, they need the energy because their prices are skyrocketing. At some point, will we even have consent when our economies are demanding X, Y and Z? I don't know. It's an open question.

Marty Kearns (01:13:25):

I mean, I think, well, you said no recourse.

Nate Hagens (01:13:29):

No, you're right.

Marty Kearns (01:13:31):

The UK would not be able to do that. War would not happen. Things that injure too many people would not. Some people would understand like, "Hey, I got to take some risk in order to save other people." That happens all the time. We are a colony species. That happens, but I think it would force us to think about education and invest different ways about where leadership comes from.

(01:13:57):

I mean, you gave Joan \$100 million to spend on her questions. When you asked Joan this thing at the end of it, you're like, "Hey, what would you do with \$100 million?" It's like, "Oh, I'd move a million midwives and yoga and cooks and high school teachers and programmers from New York and California to Laramie, Wyoming and Alaska and then the rest could go to Florida." With those six Senate votes, I'd give D.C. a state and then I'd finally watch America fix itself. I think it would be very doable to win quite a few just by moving some pawns around.

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Nate Hagens (01:14:37):

You're much more optimistic than I am that a democratic leadership would solve our problems. I think our problems go deeper than left or right, and I think there's a lot of ideas that I philosophically completely agree with the left on, but our problems are biophysical in nature and ultimately that's political, yes.

Marty Kearns (01:14:59):

I'm not sure it's a right or left, it's that by remixing populations, World War II, the great migration, it's remixing populations, you get more sane decision-making if that sanity just right now happens to be maybe Democratic given the behavior and track record of the Republicans for the last six months. On the other hand, there's no way we get on a better path unless we gain some sanity in our decision-making process.

Nate Hagens (01:15:28):

Fully agree with that, and I don't know how to do that. Maybe building networks is exactly how we do that. Building networks and mixing populations, is that what you just said?

Marty Kearns (01:15:39):

Yeah. I think that's a really big part of it. You look at the fall out of the WPA program or even service in World War II, the millions of people that served. They made civil rights movement, that was a really important point in their organizing. The Bus Boycotts where we remixed how people transported was really key in Montgomery to kick it off to civil rights. It created the much stronger networks among the people working on the issue because they were now in small cars and figuring out how to get across town and then also doing civil rights organizing during the thing. It just brought in tons of power, tons of capacity to be able to create change. We need to do that on a national level, on an international level.

Nate Hagens (01:16:22):

Is there anything else you'd like to offer our listeners, closing thoughts, advice, wisdom?

Marty Kearns (01:16:28):

It comes from my mother who had tough kids and at times probably a tougher husband. She advises us to focus on what you love. If you focus on what you hate about someone every day, you will surely fall apart. If you focus on what you love about someone, you fall more in love every day. I think her advice has been the strength for her happy lifetime marriage with my dad. It's been mine as well for 26 years. I think it's just as true for our neighborhood, our country, for humanity. It's hard when things get so bad, but I think it is important to focus on what you love about your fellow people.

Nate Hagens (01:17:11):

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And the natural world because I love the natural world deeply and that is what I try to focus on and it does help me. Thank you my friend, to be continued and we'll put all your information in the show notes and I will talk to you soon.

Marty Kearns (01:17:26):

Nate, thank you so much for having me. It's a real honor to be here, especially given all the amazing other guests that you've had. I really appreciate the opportunity to talk with you.

Nate Hagens (01:17:34):

May your work scale and be impactful, Marty.

Marty Kearns (01:17:38):

Thanks again.

Nate Hagens (01:17:39):

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