

# The Great Simplification

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Chris Smaje (00:00:00):

It's not about accumulating the most and being the best off. It's always about putting the produce into the larger life of your family, your household, your neighborhood, your community.

Pella Thiel (00:00:15):

Just this sense of abundance in a culture that is so focused on scarcity and it's actually also creating scarcity.

Dougald Hine (00:00:27):

There has been a deepening sense that things are astray. That the future doesn't work the way it used to. That the promises of modernity, the promises of modern society are not being fulfilled.

Nate Hagens (00:00:43):

Welcome to Reality Roundtable number five. Typically, we have former guests that have been on the podcast. This one are three new friends of mine. Firstly, Pella Thiel, a maverick Swedish ecologist, part-time farmer, full-time environmental activist, and a teacher in eco psychology. She's the co-founder of Swedish Hubs and the Swedish Transition Network, as well as something called End Ecocide. And I expect Pella and I will be fast friends going forward in the future. Second is Chris Smaje who is a writer, social scientist and small scale farmer in Somerset, England. He is the author of A Small Farm Future and Saying No to a Farm Free Future. And rounding out the roundtable is Dougald Hine who is a social thinker, writer, speaker, and co-founder of the Dark Mountain Project, as well as A School Called Home. His latest book is called At Work in the Ruins, which is actually how we organized this call thematically. How do people paying attention to this podcast, paying attention to the way that geopolitics and energy and culture is careening towards ruins, how do we take our first steps into living differently, doing things differently, specifically with respect to food and community? This is a great discussion. I hope you enjoy this roundtable.

(00:02:36):

Welcome to Reality Roundtable number five. With me today are Pella Thiel, Dougald Hine, and Chris ... Chris, how do you pronounce your last name?

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Chris Smaje (00:02:53):

Smaje.

Nate Hagens (00:02:54):

Chris Smaje. Chris, where are you joining us from?

Chris Smaje (00:02:59):

I am on my small farm in Somerset, southwest England, about 100 miles west of London.

Nate Hagens (00:03:07):

Well, it's great to meet you. I have a copy of your book, *Saying No to a Farm Free Future* and welcome to the program. Dougald and Pella, I know you were both in Sweden because I saw you both in person a couple of weeks ago. Dougald, good to see you again.

Dougald Hine (00:03:24):

Good to see you, Nate. Yeah. Joining from the old shoe shop in Östervåla just north of Uppsala.

Nate Hagens (00:03:31):

Excellent. And Pella, hello.

Pella Thiel (00:03:34):

Yes. Hi. Great to be at the table. I am from a small farm as well. 40 kilometers east of Stockholm.

Nate Hagens (00:03:44):

Excellent. And I just spent the night there and helped you with your sheep and other chores to pay for my supper.

Pella Thiel (00:03:53):

Yeah. We missed you a lot. When the lambs were making sounds here and waking me up in the morning, I wondered where you'd gone.

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Nate Hagens (00:04:06):

The reason that you are all on this podcast is because you are already, to borrow a phrase from Dougald, at work in the ruins, trying to midwife society and culture towards what comes beyond our current over consumptive, overshoot, environmentally damaging resource consumptive, fossil fuel-based situation. No one knows the future or what will happen, including me. But I do think that in the middle of the distribution, something like a Great Simplification where our lives will be more intensely local, we'll have less technology and consumption, and we're going to require more interaction with other humans in our local environments. But probably we won't get too much warning for such a future. And now the media and the government narratives are this cultural anesthesia that keep most people from feeling the urgency of this path of cultural change. So you three are already working on this future in your own ways, and I would like to have you each start with a five minute or so overview on how to think about this and what is the thrust of your personal work in this space of more local, more community, more food in your local area pathway. Dougald, can we start with you?

Dougald Hine (00:05:56):

Sure. Well, I guess maybe it's helpful to start by landing this at work in the ruins framing because there's two parts to it. First is there are ruins. And yeah, we might not be sitting in the ruins right now, but they are already written into the story to some extent. But the second part is acknowledging that isn't the end of the story because there's also work to do. And I guess one way or another, I've been trying to offer framings that make room for recognizing that for quite a long time. And that started publicly back in 2009 when Paul Kingsnorth and I wrote The Dark Mountain manifesto. And right at the end of that manifesto, we say the end of the world as we know it is not the end of the world full stop. So that distinction is trying to highlight that the danger that we mistake the one for the other because unless we can distinguish between losing the world as we know it and losing the world full stop, then we're going to throw everything at attempts to save or sustain the ways of living that have been taken for granted around here lately at all costs.

(00:07:11):

And I think that's actually how people end up with the best of intentions and with some awareness of the depth of the trouble we're in nonetheless advocating for and

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working for a path that I call the big path that I think leads to the thing that you describe as the mordor economy, Nate. And so in saying we could lose the world as we know it and we wouldn't have lost worlds worth living for, futures worth attempting to bring about, part of that is trying to just broaden the spectrum of things worth working for to include something more like a Great Simplification. So I guess my work has been finding these frames, perspectives and examples that help us out of the trap of mistaking the world as we know it for the only world worth having.

(00:07:59):

One of the people who took that framing that Paul and I put out in the manifesto and ran with it was an Italian philosopher called Federico Campania. And the way he tells it is like this. He says, "Sometimes you are born into the ending of a world. This is a thing that's happened. It's happened to others before in other times and places." And he says, "How do you tell that the world you were born into is ending?" Well, a world is held together by a story, and when the world is ending, its story is coming to an end. And so when people talk about the future within the logic of that world, it no longer sounds convincing. Politicians are no longer able to mobilize people by appealing to the future and the way that worked two or three generations ago. And instead, what's left politically within that world is that the political potency lies in turning to the past. So you get take back control, make America great again, these potent political slogans that appeal to the past.

(00:09:04):

And that's not a mistake. It's not because people aren't advocating for the future convincingly or powerfully enough or trying hard enough. That actually tells us something about the moment we're at, which is that the future in the normal sense, which is some kind of trajectory that can be extended from the recent past through the present and on into a field of promise and continuity, no longer seems plausible even within our mainstream culture. So then Campania's suggestion is what do you do if your diagnosis is that you were born into the ending of the world you were born into to? Two things. First stop worrying about trying to make sense according to the logic of the world that is ending. And second, look for ways to be making good ruins. Because when a world ends, it leaves things behind. And obviously we know that there are plenty of toxic legacies that this way of living is going to be leaving behind, but that doesn't exhaust what's going to be left behind.

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And so maybe making good ruins includes from the moment in the story we're in, attempting to smuggle resources out of that existing story that is ending that can be fragments, that can be material to work with for building futures that are presently unimaginable as the end of that story becomes more undeniable. And I feel like that's one of the things that brings the four of us together. So if we say world's end, this is a thing that happens, people will say quite reasonably, "Yeah, but this time it's different." And so I think that's the last bit of the framing that's worth landing is what's the nature of the difference? And the obvious answer, people say, "Well, this time it's global." I actually don't think that's quite as important as we often make it because it always feels global in the world that is ending.

(00:10:53):

But even when a world ends, there are things left behind and that will be true too on this global scale. I think what's most different this time is that we've never had a situation in which so many of us were so far removed from having the skills necessary to meet each other's needs at the levels of communities and households. And I think that that's the real unique quality of the kind of ending that we are headed into here is that cushioned on this resource of fossil energy and on the global networks built up through colonialism, so many of us have been able to live oblivious to where our food comes from or any of the other things that meet our basic needs. And that's almost been a matter of pride. The fact that hardly anyone around here is involved in growing my food has been proof of progress until it begins to dawn on us that this story, which is the story of progress, is coming to an end.

(00:11:54):

And so now in terms of the work in the ruins or the work to prepare for the arrival of the ruins, I think a lot of that work has to do with rebuilding this capacity, both in practical terms and also at a cultural level. The capacity of being able to come together and meet our needs much closer to the ground than we've been doing around here lately. So I guess that's where I'd leave it for an opening.

Nate Hagens (00:12:18):

Thank you. I have written down lots of questions. My most visceral reaction is I wish all my podcast guests had British accents and were trained in British schools because you all are so articulate and crisp in how you explain things. I'm sure it's something cultural

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or in the water or whatever. Instead of interrupting each of you with questions, let's hear from each of you first. Let's move to another Brit. Chris, take it away,

Chris Smaje (00:12:55):

Right. No pressure on me now after that intro. Yeah. Well, I guess the first thing I'd say is I spend a lot of my time making this case for the need for a local future and the fact that local food production is going to be key. So it's great. Nate and Dougald, you've already done my job for me really. That's really key. But I suppose what I would say is ironically I came into this focused on the practicalities of farming, but I don't think that's the main problem. There's this myth that only with modern high-tech, high energy, high capital food production, can we feed the world. The reality is it's not that difficult for us to feed ourselves locally and we can look for inspiration. Most parts of the world have got pre-modern, pre-industrial, very ecologically sophisticated systems of food production that we can learn from. One of our big problems I think is we've got to get over ourselves in thinking that, oh, that's in the past. We can't learn anything from that. It's backward looking, it's turning the clock back. Basically we can learn from past agrarian systems and we can argue all day about different farming systems, different techniques and crops and so on. But basically it's not that difficult to produce them in principle locally. The problem I think is the political and economic frameworks. How do we get from where we are now to that local agrarian future?

(00:14:46):

And I'm going to leave that question aside for a moment and talk about what a small farm future looks like. I think we have a pretty good idea on the basis of what small farm societies of the past and present look like. And what they generally look like is small scale, household based production. We're talking about individuals and families largely producing for their own needs in households typically with a lot of defacto private property rights producing for own need. But that is held within a larger community, a moral economy. And maybe we'll get into the details of this in the discussion later. The question of commons and so forth. I write in some of my books about autonomy and community. I think that that two levels of households set within communities is important. And this I think is quite confusing to our modern political categories.

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People really struggle with this. On the left, people struggle with the idea of private property rights, families, household based farming, and people on the right struggle with the idea of quite how communal and collective that the larger local structures around that can be. But a really important ... So many directions that can go in. I think an important aspect from my point of view is the self limitation of local and household productions. So by producing for yourself or for your community, you get immediate ecological and social feedback about the consequences of your actions. How you farm affects known identifiable people locally and it affects the known identifiable ecology of the landscape you inhabit. And that's really important compared to the modern global industrial farming system, which is just pushing overproduction the whole time. Pushing us to buy products where we have no idea where what we're buying comes from, the social and the ecological consequences of it.

(00:17:21):

So I think that is where we're headed probably whether we like it or not. The big question is how we get there from where we are now. I don't have a lot of faith myself in modern gigantic bureaucratic nation state. The question I always stumble on is, so what do you think the government should do? What five policies would you suggest the Prime Minister implements? I think we're too caught in that old model that Dougald was talking about. I think where renewal is going to come from if it comes at all is from the margins, is from people innovating out of necessity. In my first book, *A Small Farm Future*, I used the analogy of supersedure in beehives. I talked about the supersedure state. So when the queen bee dies unexpectedly, the worker bees after their initial panic, they have to innovate, they have to create a new queen, they have to create a new politics, a new set of relationships with whatever they have to hand.

(00:18:26):

So the way I see this playing out is increasingly, large scale, centralized bureaucratic states are not going to be able to keep all the balls that we're accustomed to them keeping in the air. They're not going to be able to deliver the service that we expect. People are therefore going to have to innovate that for themselves. And that is a worrisome and a scary prospect. But also out of that I see the potential for new kinds of agrarian localism emerging. And I think where that may or may not work, I think we're going to be looking at a tough politics of access to land. Where that's going to work is the way that the class politics falls out in terms of distributed access to land.

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So in terms of my personal work that you asked about, I guess basically I'm on a small farm. I'm trying to figure that out as best I can within present limitations, both in terms of the farming and the community relationships. How that works socially. In terms of my writing, I think we need to recover some ... We've got wrapped up in very modernist political categories and there are older traditions like agrarian populism, distributism, civic republicanism. We need to look at those more marginalized types of politics that I think speak to present needs. There are organizations. La Via Campesina, I want to mention. The global peasant movement is doing great work worldwide. So getting into that politics of small scale farming. Here in the UK, the ecological land co-op, trying to decommodify access to land and enable new entrant suit maybe don't have huge amounts of money available to get established in farming.

(00:20:21):

And also, I know you don't like it, Nate, just stop oil. I've had a very bit part to play in climate protest here and a thing that interests me is trying to turn that moment of protest and that moment of civil disobedience into politics around food and land locally. And I think finally part of that is going to have to be about conflict resolution. A little bit involved locally in community mediation and that kind of stuff. We have become very accustomed to there being some larger organization or being able to walk away from local conflicts or being able to kick it upstairs to some bigger organization. I think it's important for us not to do that. To actually meet each other face-to-face and learn how to resolve difficulties on a individual and personal level. That's going to be a big part of the future. So yeah, that would be my opening gambit.

Nate Hagens (00:21:21):

Excellent. Thank you. Let us pass it over to the next upcoming queen bee, Pella Thiel.

Pella Thiel (00:21:33):

Thank you. Yeah. I have a lot of practice in conflicts resolution on a personal level living on a family owned farm so I totally agree with that point. But I would like to start with the storyline of a recent film from last year. It got a lot of international awards, but it's a Swedish director, Ruben Östlund, the Triangle of Sadness. It's a group of very rich people on a yacht and the yacht is being sunk by pirates and the

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group of them are getting saved on a small island. Some billionaires and a couple of supermodels and one of the cleaning women, a Philippine woman who is called Abigail, and she's the only one who has any survival skills at all. So with her ability to fish and to make fire, she can feed the others and takes the lead. And previous relations, previous power relations become totally upside down. So she gets a lot of privileges for herself. She gets the best food and she gets to live in a lifeboat that they have also. So she keeps that as her space and she also takes one of the male supermodel as her lover.

(00:23:02):

And what I remember most from this film, which is horrible and great and I really recommend it, is that Carl, the supermodel, he says to Abigail, the cleaning lady, "I love you. You give me fish." And I think that speaks volumes. We will tolerate any regime, any authoritarian regime as long as it feeds us, which is what the fossil system is doing now. But when it breaks down what will happen? So that's where food sovereignty is a really huge thing. And where I come from is from the transition movement, which is very interesting because I met with that movement in the US but it's from the UK originally, and I have been active in it and been part of founding the Swedish branch for about exactly 15 years.

(00:24:07):

And food is often a starting point. So this network is focusing on local resilience or lately shifting into local regeneration. And of course food has so many layers in what we are trying to do so we often start there. And I want to tell you what we did at the outset of the pandemic, when the food on the shelves began to not be obvious that it would be there as we were used to and when global food security became a thing. It became a discussion and we were like, yes, how can we grab this opportunity to create some awareness that we have a very vulnerable food system with very low resilience? So we started something that we call The Potato Appeal where we urged everyone to plant potatoes in a small way or in a bigger way, any way that you could. And we built that on a movement or an uprising that was during the First World War in Sweden, The Potato Uprising, it was called, when a quarter of a million people, mostly women were marching to urge authorities to feed them because they couldn't feed their kids. And this is said to be maybe the closest that Sweden has been to a revolution.

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And at that time, authorities responded. Also they urged people to plant also in central Stockholm and they were giving out free seeds and potatoes and built on food security. And I have this very great picture. It's a great picture where it's these big placards in the central Stockholm and there are very nicely dressed men with hats and ties. And on one of the signs it says, "Plant potatoes or you will starve next winter." This is such a great case of communications. They were quite frank in their communication. Plant potatoes, you will starve next winter. And the other one is saying, "Everybody's planting potatoes except boring people." I love the communication from the authorities. And sadly this is not what we are seeing today.

(00:27:11):

So during the pandemic, the Swedish Minister of Rural Affairs, she said that, "Okay, yeah, there is a problem. Apparently the stocks in the supermarkets isn't enough, but you don't have to worry because there will always be food in the restaurants." And I'm like, okay, there's an abyss opening here. I knew that they don't lead, but the level of awareness is just very close to Maria Antoinette who said, "If people don't have bread, they can eat cookies." And so to me what the transition movement is doing in a very, very sophisticated way is to work on the responsibility that we have as people. How can we find our agency when it is like this? And what we did in the potato appeal is to tell people to plant potatoes, tell others and ask your local authorities what do they do?

(00:28:24):

And we got a huge overwhelming response. People were planting potatoes all over and in any way they could. And we are not interested in this prepper style every man for himself and feed your family response. But what we want to do is to build community, build relationships and you can say that, okay, facing what we face with planting potatoes is a small and insignificant response, but actually it isn't because it becomes a process in starting where you find your agency. It actually becomes very empowering when you plant some potatoes with your neighbors and in the autumn you get to harvest maybe hundreds of kilos which people have done even if they have never grown anything before in their lives. So to us it's a way of increasing not just the carrying capacity, but the caring capacity and relationships between just you and yourself and your agency and between people and also between people and land.

Nate Hagens (00:29:49):

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Thank you, Pella, and thank you all. I have so many questions. Let's just carry on with what you were saying, Pella. Can we prepare for what we envision might be coming by focusing on food or does the focus on community have to come first? Because as you pointed out, they're interrelated. I always thought that local currencies like in Bristol or in upstate New York weren't really to be for trade and commerce, but to build social capital. So can each of you offer your speculation on the relationship between community and food and how they interrelate as we approach a different cultural lower consumption future?

Dougald Hine (00:30:47):

Well, maybe I can bring in an example from something that I created around the same time that Paul and I started Dark Mountain. The same year I founded an agency called Space Makers. It started as meetups that were happening around London for people who were interested in making use of space that was sitting empty because of the global financial crisis in high streets and neighborhoods. And the best project we ended up doing during the era when I was running the agency was a thing called The West Norwood Feast, which is a monthly community owned and run street market, which is still going 12 years and one pandemic later in West Norwood in South London. And we would have at 6:00 on a Sunday morning, local people getting out of bed unpaid to come and put up market stalls up and down the streets of West Norwood.

(00:31:41):

And I used to think maybe these people always secretly had a burning desire to run a street market, but I don't think that's what it is. I think it's the street market is giving people an excuse to do something that gives them a great deal. And that has something to do with the fact that running this together as a community, it's outside of the logics that dominate the societies that most of us have grown up in. Because these societies are dominated by this twin logic of the state and the market. The logic of the state is people do things because they're told to by people who have power over them. The logic of the market is people do things because they're being paid money and if they don't gather enough money in the course of a month, then they're home homeless next month. And the only reason why human beings are here at all is because for almost all of our history, we had a greater range of reasons why we come

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together and do things than those two powerful rather brute simple logics that have come to dominate a vast area of the social terrain of modernity.

(00:32:49):

And so why was I at the same time as writing the Dark Mountain manifesto, running these projects to create community owned street markets? Because it was a way of learning about and practicing the skills of coming together to do things for reasons other than because we've been paid to or told to. And I think that there's a hidden capacity there that's just not on the market. Sorry, not on the map of either the market or the state policymaking world. If anything is going to make things turn out less badly than we mostly think that they're going to in the time to come, that hidden capacity of what happens when people come together and do the work of being human together, that's where it might come from.

(00:33:34):

And our motto when we were running those projects with Space Makers was people are good at being people. We've been doing it for a long time. And if we are finding ourselves in situations where everything seems to be really dysfunctional and really badly done, it's probably because of something we've not been doing for very long at all that's got in the way of our evolved and cultural capacity for being human together and finding solutions at a human scale. So that's the level at which I've tried to push the importance of community alongside of. It's not one or the other. But if we don't attend to that part of it, then our attention to food will end up falling down traps like the individualistic prepper mentality that Pella was describing.

Nate Hagens (00:34:20):

Yeah. I'm increasingly thinking about calling it pro-social prepping, which is much along the lines of what you were just describing. Chris or Pella, do you have follow up thoughts to that?

Chris Smaje (00:34:37):

Maybe I could riff a little bit on what I was saying about moral economies and the relationship between household farming and commons. Agriculture is complicated because there's times when you need all hands on deck, but some of the time ordinary human nature being what it is, there's some things that people just get on with better on their own. There's all sorts of ... The more that you amplify relationships around

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certain tasks, the more people fall out over exactly which way should you eat these carrots or whatever. And if you look at a lot of traditional historic agrarian systems, they very, very cleverly find ways to give people autonomy when autonomy is what's needed. Create collective labor when that's what's needed, and share the harvest. So it's not about personal accumulation to grow as many carrots as you possibly can and sell them. It's more that you just don't need 30 people weeding a small patch of carrots and disagreeing about it. But you do sometimes need to bring people together.

(00:36:01):

One of my teachers, Paul Richards, he did his work in West Africa, Sierra Leone with Sweden farmers where you've got to burn the secondary forest to establish the crop. That's a big collective job of Scandinavia. Interesting stuff with Sweden farming historically. Maybe particularly in Finland as well. So you bring people together and the way that the farmers did it in Sierra Leone is by brewing beer and throwing a party. So the farmer that makes the best beer and throws the best party gets the people. They come do the work and then it's also pro-social. And you look at a lot of commons, they are about managing the larger aspects of the landscape. I've called it in some of my writing, the elemental commons. You can't manage fire risk, you can't manage watersheds and irrigation. You can't manage certain aspects of soil management as an individual farm so you have to come together as a community.

(00:37:06):

But then there's other aspects where everyone is different. Everybody wants to do their own thing. And then in terms of the harvest, we are intrinsically reliant upon one another. It's not about accumulating the most and being the best off. It's always about putting the produce into the larger life of your family, your household, your neighborhood, your community. And so we can really learn a lot from historic agrarian societies that they faced all of this very directly and if they got it wrong, it had very serious consequences in a way that we've insulated ourselves from in modern society. But the way that we've set up this conversation, we can't insulate ourselves from that long term so we really need to learn from this clever dance of household, community, commons, collective landscape management and so on. Everywhere is different, but that's the challenge before us.

Pella Thiel (00:38:09):

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Yeah. I would just add that I think the food and community, they are inseparable as Chris is saying. Why don't we have community? To have community, you have to need each other. And when you are trying to produce your own food ... And you will know this because we had a plan to do something when you came to my place and it totally didn't work out because of circumstances with these sheep. And that's what happens when you are directly working with living systems. If you are a gardener, if you have a farm, if you're interacting with living complex systems, you will become humble because it won't work out. You may have a plan, but it won't be like that because there is so many factors. As Chris is saying, that's when you really realize that I can't do this on my own. And that's where community starts.

(00:39:20):

And also, I mean both when you produce food and when you consume food. When we have community, we share a meal. A small meal or a big meal or a party. And to me at this time of the year, harvest time is when there is such abundance, I feel so rich, I can go out and I can just get a lot of food and I have so much food that I want to share it with people. And I think just this sense of abundance in a culture that is so focused on scarcity and it's actually also creating scarcity, that sense can teach us important things.

Nate Hagens (00:40:09):

Except for most people, the abundance is 24/7/365 because they just go to the grocery store and buy things imported from around the world, from New Zealand and other places. So my next question pertains to that. You all have been working in this space and dedicated to it for a very long time. I would've thought, and I was wrong about this, that as the years went by and the details of our predicament became more and more obvious that the cultural stories would change at the same time. But it almost seems like denial and that we're going to be planting potatoes on Mars with Matt Damon or in our flying cars with net zero and these other narratives that are very different from At Work in the Ruins are still incredibly popular. So how do you each find the work and the narrative that you're talking is landing with others? Is it still fringe or is it obvious to people once you have a little bit of a conversation and they're curious and they want to play a role? Have you noticed any change or what gives you optimism or lack thereof on this issue?

Pella Thiel (00:41:34):

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I think definitely the sense of urgency is increasing. It's more, you come more directly really adept in the conversation, but that is with people who are already caring about nature, for example. And these are the ones I often meet. I have found that when I started listening to you, and this is like 10 years ago, we were talking so much about peak oil. We had a peak oil film festival. And that we hired this huge venue and eight people came and wanted to talk about peak oil. So just to try to have this very, very difficult conversation that you have on The Great Simplification, that's too scary for most people I meet and they just close their ears. So what we try to do is to not have that. To skip that and just start doing something instead. So we have this saying in the transition movement that it's more a party than a protest. So yeah, we know about the meta crisis and everything, but let's plant the potatoes. Actually my best transition project is probably the pub in my barn. And I stole this idea. I think it was Paul Kingsnorth who was involved in this money free pub, The Happy Pig. Was it to Dougald? Yeah.

Dougald Hine (00:43:20):

It's one of his neighbors. It's Mark Boyle.

Pella Thiel (00:43:22):

Yeah. The penny free man? Moneyless man?

Dougald Hine (00:43:29):

Moneyless man.

Pella Thiel (00:43:30):

The Moneyless man. And he wrote about this thing with The Happy Pig and he said, "It's going to be the world's first money free pub. We just have to fundraise first." And I'm like, "I don't have to fundraise. I'll just open the door to the barn and I'll tell the neighbors now we're going to have a pub." So I think we actually were ... We got ahead of him. But that's been I don't know how many years. Maybe six years or something. And we have it a couple of times every year. And my neighbors, they are just common people, some quite rich people, and they don't want to hear about climate change. They don't want to hear about energy. But they want to meet each other at the pub so that's how we create community.

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Dougald Hine (00:44:18):

We're doing very similar things with the old shoe shop here in this little town of 1500 people where we live. And I completely agree that at the level of starting where you live, creating invitations that bring people through your door and into a space of practicing being human together that don't rely on them having to buy into the overarching analysis that is why you are doing it is part of how we get out of feeling trapped by the limits of how many people grasp this analysis. Zooming out a bit, the other thing that I have been tracking over the years is it's very clear that within the wider culture there has been a deepening sense that things are astray. That the future doesn't work the way it used to. That the promises of modernity, the promises of modern society are not being fulfilled, even if at a superficial level, some of the shiny surface of it for some of the people still looks like it's delivering and the supermarket shelves still look full a lot of the time. And that sense of things being astray is very widespread.

(00:45:28):

If you look at population surveys, by the beginning of last decade, so by 2010, you have majorities of two, three or four to one across the western countries saying that today's young people are going to have it harder than their parents rather than have a better standard of living than their parents. That reflects this diffuse awareness of something having gone badly wrong. It's a lot of steps from that diffuse awareness to an analysis that might fit with what you're putting forward in The Great Simplification and in between that often gets hijacked by clever, cynical politicians who are very good at pointing at an other whose fault it is.

(00:46:10):

Vanessa Machado de Oliveira, the Brazilian scholar who I've worked with a lot, who wrote a fantastic book called Hospicing Modernity, she said to me when we were in Paris in 2018, at the time of the gilets jaunes protests there. We were walking through the streets of Paris and she said, "It really matters a lot whether people think that the promises have been betrayed, that they could have been fulfilled, but they were cheated, or whether people realized that these promises could never have been fulfilled, that they were never even a good idea in the first place." And a lot hinges on that difference. But it's a big journey.

(00:46:48):

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You have to walk a long way with someone else's worldview that dissents from the background reality that we've all been born into. To walk a long way with that before you get far enough to see how much help it is. Whether it really allows you to understand your situation better. It's a really big ask. And therefore we have to find ways of sketching on the back of an envelope, one little corner of what we're seeing and seeing if that helps someone make sense of something they're experiencing and working from there, rather than having a 300 slide PowerPoint that explains how we got here and what we need to do that we have to talk people through before we can come into doing anything together. That's where I find myself circling back from this big zoomed out analysis to agreeing a lot with what you're saying, Pella, about how we start in the places where we find ourselves.

Nate Hagens (00:47:40):

I usually only have 200 slides, but I get your point. But yet I think you need both, right? Because The Great Simplification podcast is a bat signal to people like you around the world that are aware of these things and fluent in them and trying to learn more. But then locally it's more of a diffuse strategy to just build social capital without all these scary details. That rings true to me. Chris, did you want to add anything?

Chris Smaje (00:48:14):

Yeah. I think your question, the way you set it up I think is right. In some ways the 24/7 global food commodification system is dominant and alternatives and niche. And I spend a lot of my time, my recent book, *Saying No to a Farm Free Future*, arguing with that techno fix eco modernist mentality. But beneath that, I think there is change. And looking for positive signs I think a lot of young people are much more knowledgeable and energized about local food. When I started in this sphere, you didn't become a farmer or a grower unless either you inherited it from your family or you did really badly at school. Whereas now a lot of young, thoughtful people are occupying this space because they're aware. I think there is this narrative among older people, it's like nobody wants to farm anymore and there's almost this cultural memory of being a peasant under the thumb of the aristocracy or being screwed. The Great Depression, being screwed by the banks or whatever. So that's why this has to be a collective movement and not a response to present times. Not a harking back.

(00:49:36):

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But in some ways it's a hill to climb. The whole notion of seasonal food has almost disappeared. Here we have a narrative about the food miles narrative. People say, "Oh, it turns out if you run the numbers, it's more carbon effective to import tomatoes from Spain than to produce them in heated tunnels in the UK if you want to eat tomatoes in March or April." And I'm like, "Why would we be eating tomatoes in March or April?" No small scale grower I know does that. You eat something else in March and April and you wait until the tomatoes come through without using fossil fuels to produce them. And that leads into, I guess, Carnival and Lent. I don't know. Is this just a British thing? But we have Shrove Tuesday. You eat pancakes and then you fast until Easter. Whereas now we eat pancakes on Shrove Tuesday and then continue stuffing our faces until Easter. We have this narrative that that's a great achievement of modernity, but it isn't really. If you look at the health indicators, ultra processed food, obesity, lack of knowledge about local seasonal whole foods. So we need to get out of that narrative.

(00:51:00):

It's not about being hungry or starving. I've written a bit about this in some of my writing. We need to know how to party. We need to know how and when to have carnivals. Like Pella was saying, this time of year the harvest is in, let's have fun and party, but we also need to know when to tighten the belt and to husband and marshal our resources. And that's not intrinsically a bad thing. Being physically hungry is a bad thing, but this is about avoiding that. So I think there are sources of hope, but there is a big ideological onslaught that we have to argue against, which is techno fix more and more. In a way, the whole idea of Lent is to burn capital. That accumulating too much capital, which you've shown in a lot of your work, Nate, is not a good thing. And so we need to get that cultural narrative out there about capital, but also about food. It's not easy, but there are signs. There are possibilities to do that.

Nate Hagens (00:52:08):

Thank you. I want to definitely save time for each of you to give advice to our listeners on how to get started in this direction. But building on your tomato example-

Chris Smaje (00:52:23):

Tomato, sorry.

Nate Hagens (00:52:28):

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No, no, no. You say tomato, I'll say tomato in this case. It's an example of relative versus absolute wealth and also addiction and convenience and also status. This is all wrapped into one. And I'm queuing up Pella because I know you just got back from a trip to Nairobi last week. But so much of our consumption doesn't make us happier or healthier. It's just the cultural baseline that we look around and this is what the other people are consuming. And it's this dopamine treadmill where we're turning billions of barrels of ancient sunlight into microliters of dopamine and getting status in the process. So two part question for each of you. How much of our consumption is really frivolous and we could be happier with significantly less without realizing it? And also, is it possible to have people living smaller, more agrarian, more local lifestyles, start to actually get status for that instead of being looked at as weirdos or fringe like, oh my gosh, look at how happy and healthy and what they're doing makes total sense. Maybe I should try something like that. Do each of you have any thoughts on all that?

Dougald Hine (00:54:01):

Well, I could build on what Chris was saying just now about noticing differences amongst younger people in a way that maybe speaks to that as well because I've seen something similar. If I think about the international networks that we have around our school, we have this thing, A School Called Home, and one side of it is very local here, the other side of it is very scattered around the world, gathered in screens like this. And amongst that network, I'm thinking of a young woman who was studying in New York when she first came on one of our courses and has now moved to Malaysia where one side of her family comes from. This is Ayaka Fuji, and she's part of a project where they have taken over a palm oil plantation. So an incredibly destroyed landscape that was previously to it being turned into a plantation, a very ecologically rich landscape. And they're now bringing it back into use as this agroforestry project, returning it to a condition of far greater diversity and abundance.

(00:55:04):

And listening to her in her 20s speak about this. Firstly the power of the way that she speaks. I remember her saying, "We've realized that the land is dreaming of being forest and the people are dreaming of being community. And that journey is one that we have to go on together back from this desolated place that we've ended up in, which is absolutely that kind of place that looks a lot like addiction. Even if superficially it might be abundance when you see how full the supermarket shelves

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are." And she was talking about how some friends of hers who haven't made that leap express a longing to her. And it's also a longing that often involves a bit of a projection of imagining that it's a total break. And so part of the message she's feeding back to them is it's not that total. I still move backwards and forwards between the city and the farm because we're not yet in a place where we can live on the farm. But it's a journey that I see people in that generation going on.

(00:56:06):

The other part of that is because of how deeply aware and shaken up by climate change so many young people in that generation are. I think maybe you had to be in Europe during that moment in 2018, 2019, to experience quite how different those climate movements in their first eruption of extinction rebellion and Fridays for the future were. And part of that was because it was large numbers of people, many of whom had no background in activism, of all ages getting pulled across almost an initiatory threshold out of the reality they thought they were living in into a wake-up call to we're not going to stop the ruins. We're going to have to find some way of making life work in a very different world.

(00:56:56):

And when that narrows into just being about climate, then it leads to a whole set of risks, which you've unpacked very well, Nate, in your just stop oil sequence. But a couple of things that really struck me this summer. One was I was invited to speak to a group of journalists from across the Arab world. These were investigative journalists, and they had asked for this summer school that was being created for their network to be themed around telling different stories around climate. Because they said, "The whole story that we're telling journalistically around climate change doesn't work."

(00:57:27):

And the most interesting thing I heard in that session was a journalist from Jordan who was almost apologizing for the fact that they couldn't do climate movements that went out on the streets and demanded that the politicians just do something because of the restrictions in lots of these countries. She said, "We don't live in a free country like you guys do." She said, "But the closest thing I can think of in Jordan is this food sovereignty movement where people started organizing to grow wheat in the gaps between houses in towns and villages. And now when you go to a bakery in Jordan, you can choose to buy this thing that's called the people's bread, which is made from the wheat that's being grown by people taking part in this movement." And I said to

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her, "You shouldn't be apologizing for that. You should be teaching workshops to climate activists in Europe."

(00:58:17):

But then the next week I was talking to someone who's deeply involved in XR who was telling me that they're starting to see local groups that have gone back from the big stunts in capital cities and gone, no, actually we have to get into the poor communities we're in the north of England where I grew up, where I used to work as a journalist and get involved with the fact that people are struggling to feed themselves and heat their homes and that the government isn't going to come and sort that out. And so at that point, you start to see something like Chris' description of the supersedure state arising out of the dawning recognition of just how messed up the system is already in many of our countries, even as that system continues to deliver for the top whatever proportion of the population it is who still get to experience the full shelves in the supermarket and aren't having trouble paying for it. So to me, that's how this is starting to play out, but I'd be really curious what things others are picking up on that match up to that or complicate it.

Pella Thiel (00:59:22):

Can I build on that? Because I thought it was so interesting with what you said Dougald on this. That what's different this time is that we don't have any skills. We are so helpless and we have the state, especially maybe in Sweden, we have this total trust in the state to deliver what we need. And in the transition movement, we're talking about re-skilling and food production is a huge part of that, but it's not the only part. And you mentioned, Nate, that I came back actually yesterday from Kenya, and I had so many conversation with all kinds of people like guards and taxi drivers and whatnot, and they were all ... Everybody I spoke to knew how to grow their own food because they did that when they were children. And that's three, four generations for many of us. And I think this climate framing has actually ... It puts us also into helplessness because we are talking about it as a huge global thing. And then what can I do? I'm very small. It must be the state or the market that delivers on this huge crisis.

(01:00:42):

And so I want to show you, because I have this group in Kenya that I'm supporting. It's the Mabinju Power House Youth Group. And these are people who they dropped out

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of primary school in their little village, and yet they have started this initiative. It says mitigating climate crisis through afforestation. So in their village in western Kenya, they are developing permaculture systems, they're restoring lands, planting trees, and mitigating climate crisis. And to me, it's so humbling. If they can do that with their very small means, then what can we do if we actually start taking our responsibility and our agency seriously?

Chris Smaje (01:01:30):

Yeah. To the first part of your question, it's probably worth just noting this logic of overproduction in the global agricultural system where we've got this massive production of grains beyond what we know what to do with them agriculturally. So we're force-feeding them to livestock, turning them into biofuels, and basically there's a logic of comparative advantage where every part of the world has a complex mix, diverse agricultural tradition, but tends to get forced into producing the single crop or the handful of crops that it can most advantageously sell into global markets in a commodified way. So my answer to your question is if we could drop that overproduction dynamic and that monocultural comparative advantage dynamic, it's actually relatively easy to produce a healthy, wholesome, sufficient good diet through small scale local producers.

(01:02:40):

The second part of your question is the status that attaches to that. I think it's changing. I quit my very nicely paid job as a young college professor to grow vegetables and people of my generation and my parents' generation thought I was crazy. And to be honest, I thought I was crazy some of the time. But when I was a college professor, nobody ever said, "Oh, can I come to your lecture hall and spend a day working with you?" Whereas we get requests, "Can I come to your farm? Can I stay there? Can I help?" And so I wouldn't say we're at the point yet where being a small holder or a grower, a homesteader, what have you is regarded as a high status occupation. But I think in relation to your preamble, I think that will change quickly when as you said, it's unpredictable how the great simplification is going to happen. But I think people who know how to produce food, I think it will quickly become high status and people who know how to tighten the belt, who know how to get through, who know how to make due and mend is suddenly going to be ... That's going to be impressive.

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(01:03:56):

But there's also an educational dimension to this. We have a forest school, community school thing that happens on our land where kids who are getting into trouble at school who basically can't cope with being in the classroom all day, they come out here and spend time just interacting with the wildlife and the trees and the plants and doing practical hands-on stuff. And it's transformative to them. And we see them and we're like, these are supposed to be the naughty kids. They're good as gold. They're having a great time. So I think we need to connect with that need that people have to be in nature and not just to be in nature in this wandering, admiring the natural world, but being a protagonist in it. Thinking about food. We need to be creatures in nature producing food for ourselves and getting that feedback.

(01:04:57):

So I think it is changing. Whether it's changing fast enough and whether when the curveballs that are coming down the line hit us, are we prepared? Probably not. But there is change. And I think, again, it's that generational thing where I think younger people get it, and we've got the overproduction and less good conditions in mainstream work now. So a lot of young people are like, "Why would I toil away in this mainstream job and be miserable?" And people are looking to connect to community and food production. Again, a lot of it comes back to the politics of access to land though, which I think is a really crunchy issue. The economics of land ownership and inflation in land values and just finding ways to access that for more people and for local communities. But there are positive signs, but we've got some way to go.

Nate Hagens (01:06:01):

So on a wishlist would be that people of means, philanthropists, et cetera, would set aside a parcel of land in every community or city in my country or in your country to act as a pilot and a community proven ground for more social capital, more food, more skills. I don't know how likely that is, but I don't think that's impossible to do. And I think that would be leverageable.

(01:06:35):

Let me get to the meat of this conversation for the people listening to this who are already aware of ... They're part of the walking worried, to coin a phrase, on what we face. What would be first steps? Because we are hearing the siren song of business as

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usual and technology will solve it, but people intuitively feel that at work in the ruins is a nice phrase that encapsulates what we face.

(01:07:11):

What are some practical steps for people listening to this program, maybe in a semi-rural area or even in a city? How do people get started on planning, building a network and looking two or three steps ahead from what we face? Because sometimes it's daunting to get started. Can each of you offer a couple bits of advice to the listeners?

Dougald Hine (01:07:41):

The way we often frame it here at the school is we talk about people come to our school because they're drawn to the work of regrowing a living culture. And one of the first challenges is not to construct that work as a big massive project, but to find the small steps. And that can be in one way or another, practicing being human together. Looking for the kinds of activities that humans have done in almost all times and places where there have been settled groups of humans. And one way or another, that starting point might be that you start doing something different with your garden because if you live an area where people walk past, then there's nothing better than starting doing things in the garden for people stopping and talking to you. That was how we started to get to know people when we moved to this town, was because people stopped to look at what we were doing and then came and chatted to us or we went and chatted to them. But it can also be just getting people together around the table at a very human scale.

(01:08:46):

Ivan Illich, who's one of the thinkers who's really deeply shaped my life and work, he used to say towards the end of his life, "The limit of political possibility today is the number of people who can get around a table and share a meal together." Which sounds very, very pessimistic the first time you hear it. But then there's nothing that says that everyone needs to be sitting at the same table at every mealtime. And you can actually start to think about a whole layer of political agency, which is below the radar of what we normally think we're talking about when we talk about politics from the perspective of modern institutions and ideologies in which we meet around sharing food, which is one of the things that unites us.

(01:09:32):

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I've yet to meet a human being who doesn't need to eat once or twice a day most days. So in terms of finding common ground from which we can start. And part of what that's about is it's making sure that you've met your neighbors before the crisis comes. You're not having to build the relationships at the moment you're needing to send the message, asking for help or offering help within your neighborhood. And the last bit of that I would say is people who've been in the online courses or following your podcast or The Great Humbling that I do with Ed Gillespie or the other conversations going on in these networks, they'll often get in touch with me and say, "I want to start a book group around hospice and modernity or around *At Work in the Ruins* where I live, but I'm having trouble finding people to come." And I go, "Maybe don't start from there. Maybe don't start from a big book about something or having a conversation about climate change or peak oil. Maybe start from trying to create something beautiful that would be worth doing."

(01:10:37):

I love that quote that's attributed to Martin Luther. It was actually made up by someone during the second World War, but if they told me the world was going to end tomorrow, I'd still plant my apple tree. We need to be doing things that have that quality where even if they fail, they will have been worth doing because we were being human together. We were remembering what it was that got our ancestors through hard times. Practicing it in a way that has a chance of contributing to us and our descendants coming through hard times. But they also have that quality of the party that Pella and Chris were talking about. They have that quality of conviviality. Of the company of meeting around the table and remembering what it's like to be human together. Start from there.

Nate Hagens (01:11:21):

I love that, Dougald. And as you were talking, I just felt this feeling that this is what this whole podcast should be about. And I spend so much time trying to articulate the problems of what's happening in the oceans and with human brain and behavior and energy and money, but what you just articulated is exactly what we should be talking about and catalyzing and trying to pass the baton to others. And it's a monumental challenge but I think your last three minutes just encapsulated it really well. Pella, Chris, hard act to follow there but do you have recommendations on how people get started?

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Chris Smaje (01:12:07):

In terms of getting started with practical local food growing, what I would say is just do it. Start learning how to do it, how to produce food. What I would say is there's a big difference between doing it commercially and doing it for self for community food production. So allotments, community gardens, that kind of stuff is great and you get drawn into the big system if you're trying to do it commercially. But there's still scope for small scale local growers and so on. What I would say there is be cautious of gurus. I guess humanity we've got this great tendency to ... It's almost like these agricultural stories about the giant beanstalk and so on. People think that someone's got this great news, whiz, that's going to make it really easy to make a lot of money. There are these books, how to make a hundred thousand dollars off a quarter of an acre or whatever. You can do that. Well, I don't know if you can do that. You can work on efficiency and work on your marketing and all of that but as I was saying earlier, connect to the older tradition.

(01:13:26):

There's nothing new under the sun. There are no real shortcuts in agriculture. We've got solar energy coming in. We've got plants or animals. You tend them, you produce food. So don't get too excited about the latest, the latest whiz new technology. And you get that in the alternative farming movement as well as in the techno fix, eco modernist space. But the other thing I'd say, obviously it depends on where you are, but I think the category of existing traditional family farmers ... People on the medium scale. Maybe there's not many of those left in many places. People who own land, people who are farming a couple of hundred acres or whatever are going to be really critical in terms of access to land and drawing them into this narrative.

(01:14:19):

They're often worried about succession. Don't necessarily have someone to leave the farm to interested in new ideas. And it can be very possible to develop a new small enterprise that you stack on an existing farm and build relationships with existing farm communities. Not the big corporate agribusiness stuff, but people who are like you, like young people, urban people, that are invested in their community. And how that plays out, the politics of access to land is going to be really critical. And a lot of farmers are really interested in new entrants, stacking enterprises, doing new things with their land. Sometimes making it available for non-commercial community allotments or what have you. But yeah. Don't just connect with the usual suspects and

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like-minded people in your immediate neighborhood, but reach out into the agricultural space. And that can be challenging. Might not always work along the lines of what Dougald was saying, but it can do. And actually getting into that space of rural land ownership and connecting with good people there I think is going to be really critical.

Pella Thiel (01:15:47):

So as you said, the ruins are inbuilt already, but actually flowers can also grow from the ruins. And I think maybe the greatest responsibility that we have is to find out what we long for. Find our vision. Find the most beautiful that we can create together and start moving towards that. If we can't even envision a beautiful world, we will not build it. I find that this is actually something very, very difficult to do and maybe impossible to do on your own. So to do that, I think you have to find the others in some way. And maybe they are not in your place. They can be somewhere else. But to find your tribe that you can hold each other in this potential, in this vision has been very, very important for me.

(01:16:59):

I also think that in a way this is an existential turn that we are in when it comes to how we see each other as human beings. Because from the sustainability lens, we are often destructive and damaging. And then what we try to do is to diminish ourselves. We try to diminish our footprints and become smaller and do as little as we can. And when I meet young people, it's often that it would be better if there were fewer of us or it would be better if there were no people. I love people. So I think that's a very sad outlook. And a friend of mine in the regenerative farmers community, he's always saying that the landscapes are calling on their people now. So as Chris also mentioned, how do we become a productive part of the landscapes? How do we become those who make the world rich and alive again? And that's what the group in Kenya is doing and a lot of people are also doing that. And I think that's no small thing. That's creating beauty on a place, but it's also creating a beautiful humanity.

Nate Hagens (01:18:35):

I'll have to have you back another time because I know this is only one of your many hats and you're working on rights of nature and ecocide and things like that. But I think that's a beautiful ... The land is calling the humans. I feel that on the small bit of

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land behind the office here. There's a vibrance and something that I feel connected to. So final question before I ask each of you for closing thoughts, how would you change that advice to young humans listening to this podcast? All of you either currently or in the past have been teachers of young humans around the world. What advice do you have to 18 to 25 year olds who are listening to this, who are aware of what we face? What would you say to them?

Dougald Hine (01:19:34):

I'd say don't let anyone tell you that they know how the story ends. That's not to say that there aren't lots of things written into it already. Lots of possibilities that were there that have gone away. But one of the things you'll notice among the people who are 10 or 20 or 30 or 40 years older than you is that some of them have fallen into a place where when it finally broke in on them that the future they were promised wasn't going to happen. They flipped into thinking that they know exactly how and sometimes even when it will all be over. That's not the kind of world we're living in. That's not the kind of story that any of us were born into. The other thing I would say is I have a lot of people who come to me because they know that I write about these things and that I'm a father. I have an eight-year-old boy, Alfie, and they come to me to talk quietly about decisions around becoming parents in a time like this.

(01:20:40):

And I respect the different decisions that people arrive at and those conversations are always so thoughtful. One thing that I do say to people is there are many things that are unique about the times that we find ourselves in. But that parents are bringing children into the world without being sure about or having a sense of being able to secure their future, that bit isn't unique. You are the descendant of many people who brought children into the world under conditions that felt very similar in that respect. So yeah, I think those are the two things that I would want to say to young people who are often being asked to bear more than their fair share of the weight of knowing the trouble that the world is in and providing leadership in how we respond to it. And I guess that's the last bit is just so much respect to those who are doing that.

Chris Smaje (01:21:38):

I think young people are perhaps more receptive to some of the stuff we've been talking about. And Pella's lovely point about the land is calling. I think what I would

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want to do is just find whatever way that works, talking to young people to enable them to answer that call. And I think part of it is there's a whole debate about rewilding and people often say, if we're going to rewild, we need to rewild ourselves. And people often agree with that. We don't really do it because so much of a modern society is about being unwild. It's not about taking risks. It's not about putting yourself out as a protagonist into wild nature, which can be a pretty scary and dangerous place. But I think young people, more than any, are prepared to take risks and particularly as they see the future that was promised crumbling a little bit before them. So I guess what I would want to do is help however I can for them to answer that call of the land and to be really wild about it and grab that opportunity in all its danger, but also its promise.

Pella Thiel (01:22:54):

That's great. Yeah. I don't have so much to build actually, apart from just saying that you are significant. We can feel small. And when we view the world as consisting of separate parts, which we often grew up with, we can think that we are insignificant, but we aren't. So that when we find our longing, when we find out what we really, really want to do, regardless of if we succeed or not, then we will create ripples. So maybe that's the first thing to find out. What is important to you? What you want to do? Because you long for it to happen. And then see what happens and know that you're going to fail. But there is no such thing as failure. Failure is always learning.

Nate Hagens (01:24:01):

In many ways I feel like we should just keep talking for three hours because we've just scratched the surface of this. This is the work. This is the conversation. So for now, can you each share where people can find out more about your individual work on these issues? Chris, you've got a couple books out there. Where can people find you?

Chris Smaje (01:24:30):

Right. So yeah, I've written two recent books about this, *A Small Farm Future* and *Saying No to a Farm Free Future*, both published by Chelsea Green. I also write a blog, which has quite a lively bunch of commentators from all over the place. Yeah. You can get my book in all the normal outlets. But yeah, if you come to my website, [chrissmaje.com](http://chrissmaje.com) have a look at the blog, there's a lot of material and a lot of lively discussion on there. And yeah, you can contact me through there.

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Pella Thiel (01:25:05):

Yes. I have a problem because a lot of the things I do is in Swedish, but I have a website [pellathiel.se](http://pellathiel.se). But I don't think ... Don't follow me. That's also an advice. Create your own initiative. So go to [transitionnetwork.org](http://transitionnetwork.org) and look at the resources there.

Nate Hagens (01:25:31):

Dougald, I'll let you advertise your own work and also end us on a closing British articulate pithy phrase.

Dougald Hine (01:25:42):

Oh, wow. So yeah, I also have a book which is also published by Chelsea Green. So big shout out to Chelsea Green for creating space for books in this area. And my book is called *At Work in the Ruins*. I have a podcast that I started in 2020 with my friend Ed Gillespie, who describes himself as a recovering futurist and sustainability consultant. And we call that *The Great Humbling*. So we've been plowing a similar furrow to you, Nate. And then my new writing and new episodes of the podcast and all of the rest of it I put out on Substack. My Substack is called *Writing Home*. The school here is [aschoolcalledhome.org](http://aschoolcalledhome.org). And yeah, as I say, we call it a school for those who are drawn to the work of regrowing a living culture. And I guess that's the bit that I would add to what Chris was saying about rewilding ourselves. Rewilding ourselves, done properly is not going feral. It is going cultural. It's reculturing ourselves. It's remembering a human culture is a way of living within limits, making sense of and making meaning within limits and living in an awareness of the costs and consequences of our living. And so to me, that's the journey that we're being invited back into by the land, by the times, by the trouble that's around and ahead of us.

Nate Hagens (01:27:16):

Thank you all. You are my people. I feel at home in conversations like this. And thank you all for your continued work, preparing others and passing the baton to like-minded humans around the world. I am sure this will not be our last conversation. To be continued, my friends. Thank you.

Chris Smaje (01:27:39):

Thank you.

# The Great Simplification

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Pella Thiel (01:27:41):

Thank you.

Dougald Hine (01:27:41):

Thank you.

Nate Hagens (01:27:42):

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