

The Great Simplification

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[00:00:00] Greetings. we talk a lot on this podcast about the future, about energy, about the economy, about money, about geopolitics, about the environment and, the planetary boundaries, mostly using facts and synthesis and description. we also talk about what we, what people care about. People have different value systems, but I think there's a, I, Different categories of the philosophical viewing of the future, and I've come up with seven categories and I'd briefly like to, describe these because I don't think we can assume that everyone else views the future in the same logical philosophical framework that we do.

[00:01:00] So firstly, in recent presentations, we don't all care about the same thing. Some people, a lot of people care about the rich, nations or the rich people in the nations. And that's their focus when they look at the future. there are others that care about materially, as opposed to spiritually or psychically poor countries and poor, people in countries.

[00:01:27] another group of people and, these groups overlap, care about other species and the ecosystems of our one blue green earth. And others, or at a deeper level, there are people who care about. other generations, the unborn of our species, and other species on this planet a hundred years from now, a thousand years from now, a million years from now.

[00:01:52] So when we think about what's going to happen in the future, we already care about different things. But how do we even think about the future? Here are, seven categories. The first category is They don't. a lot of people alive today and for most of our past are so busy focusing on, putting food on the table and having safety and warmth and shelter and basic needs that the future is basically tomorrow or even tonight.

[00:02:22] They can't, even conceive of five years from now or a hundred years from now because they're far too busy. fully focused on meeting the needs of the present. That's category one. Category two are people who are busy, or distracted and basically have never really thought about it and the future will be probably to them an extrapolation of the past.

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[00:02:47] Things are pretty good. this month looked like last month looked like October 2023. If I predict five years from now or 10 years from now or 50 years from now, it's just going to be an extrapolation, of, recent trends. The third group of people, are a little bit more, erudite and thoughtful than the second group.

[00:03:15] and they actually believe. At a deep level that, it is a preordained, truism that humans will grow indefinitely, expand beyond Earth, into the solar system, into the stars, and that growth is akin to a natural law, You all know I can think of lots of biophysical reasons that is implausible and unlikely, but there's a lot of people who believe that this is the human destiny to continue to grow and that even now at 8 billion people and approaching 2025 C.

[00:03:55] E. that we are just very young as a species. We're only 300, 000 years old and we've got hundreds of thousands or millions of years ahead of us in outer space. The fourth category is, broadly the Degrowth category, which is these people understand the negative aspects of, our material footprint on the planet.

[00:04:24] They know that growth has not been working for most people. They know that we are deteriorating. the sync capacities of the natural world, we're slowly, but with quickening speed, leaving the stability of the Holocene on all the different planetary boundaries. And so continued growth is what must be avoided.

[00:04:47] And therefore, degrowth is what must be targeted. We must degrow, and reduce our impact, reduce our consumption, reduce the scale of the human enterprise. And sure, we can get along with less stuff. We don't need all this stuff. We can share with others. There's plenty of resources to go around, but the total size and scale of the human enterprise needs to decline.

[00:05:14] So these people are purposefully not wanting growth and purposely choosing to the fifth category is an offshoot of that, which is, kind of like a turbocharged version of degrowth, which is collapse that, people are actually rooting for collapse for various psychological or deterministic reasons.

[00:05:41] They hear something bad about the future. And instead of that being part of a distribution. It is in 10 years, there's not going to be any humans or, something like that. It's, a fanatical version of degrowth and it's not even a

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purposeful thing. It's, there's nothing we can do. we're straight line red, straight red line down.

[00:06:02] The sixth category, is similar to the third category in that people advocate for continued growth. but these people are nuanced and have studied, biophysical limits and ecology and the environment, but they've also studied, the complexity and past civilizations and that degrowth is what absolutely must be avoided and they believe that possibly very correctly so because This system doesn't back up too well.

[00:06:43] And it's like having a rental car and backing into those one way spikes, all your tires pop. But the analogy in the world system is all of the letters of credit and just in time six continent supply chains unravel. And there's no medicines and no spare parts of random little things that we never even imagined.

[00:07:05] and that degrowth, would be an unmitigated disaster, including war and violence and Mad Max. And because of that, we have no alternative, but to continue to innovate and continue to grow both socially and with technology, and maybe that's not going to work out great either, but we have no choice because degrowth will be a disaster.

[00:07:30] Which leads us to the seventh group, which I believe many of you, are in. Your philosophy is in this group because it's what I believe, it's where I sit. is that, yes, degrowth could be a disaster if it's unplanned. I'm not rooting for that. In fact, I don't want that to happen in the near term because I want more time for people, and governments and communities to prepare on the bend versus break, portfolio.

[00:08:01] But that growth is no longer possible in the not too distant future, whether we want it or not, we will not continue to be able to grow the global, especially the Western economies. And this is for many, reasons, but the primary reason is we keep kicking the can of growth using financial credit. and the more financial claims we have, the sooner to the Wiley Coyote, swooshing sound downward that will happen led by bond markets and currency markets.

[00:08:34] And there are other reasons too, complexity, geopolitics, supply chains, even the stability of our ecosystems and climate. But I think the, the linchpin will be the financial system, but we won't be able to afford the scale and complexity that

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we've brought to this moment, and therefore the degrowth scenario will come involuntarily as opposed to voluntarily.

[00:09:03] So, I think we have to actively plan for this, which is all of the work that I'm doing here. So, these are the seven philosophical ways of viewing the future, according to me. You might have some, different ones. And the reason I lay this out is. When you have a conversation with someone about the future, please keep in mind you might be in that category seven and they might be in one of those other categories.

[00:09:33] And so the facts and the things you care about and the synthesis might land, on with someone with a different, worldview, a different lens with which to view the future. And this is all part of the discourse and learning and sharing and communicating, with other humans during this perilous, fascinating, and important time.

[00:09:58] that's all for now. I hope this was, helpful. If not interesting. I'll talk to you soon.