

# The Great Simplification

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[00:00:00] **Nate Hagens:** Good morning. What follows is as much, a personal rite of passage as it is a frankly, it's gonna be long. But if you have followed the evolution of my work and the story of this platform, I ask that you find the time to watch it or listen to it, even if it's in parts, as it's gonna be a springboard for much of the work.

[00:00:27] To follow on The Great Simplification.

[00:00:41] I have now spent over 20 years trying to articulate what I've come to call the more than human predicament. The core pillars of this story are now known to most of you, and yet still mostly unknown. To broader civil society. The central theme, as you all are aware, is that we are near the peak of a one-time carbon pulse defined by an army of some 500 billion human worker equivalents that we get for pennies, which combined with machines.

[00:01:15] Do the vast majority of physical work in our societies, and as we're burning them over a million times faster than they were created, we're also drawing down the main bank account that supports our lifestyles. As we burn this planetary endowment, as many of you are aware, the waste heat itself is not only trapped, but also increases earth's capacity to further trap heat resulting in a spike in global heating that is likely gonna take centuries to fully unfold and will be anywhere from civilization disrupting to civilization ending, and its impacts.

[00:01:56] Related, but separate from that are the other six of nine planetary boundaries now being crossed due to the impacts of human industrial activity, plastics, nitrogen, and phosphorus cycles, ocean acidification, fresh water

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depletion, biodiversity loss, ecosystem destruction, and all the interconnected impacts on the web of non-human and human life.

[00:02:23] We have an economic system that continues to grow, but the gains are more concentrated and are increasingly, enabled by accelerating financial claims on biophysical reality, in effect, transmuting wealth into income. At a faster pace, polarization, addiction, and I mean the institutional kind, not just the personal kind.

[00:02:50] Super normal stimuli hijacking our attention and our politics in group bias amplified to a civilization scale. real Old Testament stuff. And now AI suddenly on the scene to add a big wild card in all kinds of additional destabilizing risks. And perhaps some opportunities I could spend the rest of my life going deeper on any one of these issues.

[00:03:22] A lot of commentators and YouTubers are gonna do exactly that, and it is important work because our culture remains energy blind and systems blind. But here's where I find myself. At this moment, we are in week three of a war that has reduced the flow of hydrocarbons from the stray of hor moves to the rest of the world, or more accurately to the USA Israel and their allies.

[00:03:54] One global choke point that has until now been a mostly peaceful spigot to the rest of the world for hydrocarbons. The benefits of which are indistinguishable from magic on human timescales and looking at all 20 plus years of my research, some might label it an obsession. all those issues, all those interconnected systems, and it all kind of condenses into a simple statement.

[00:04:27] Our lives. Our institutions, our behaviors, our daily routines, and our expectations about the future are very likely going to have to change not someday, but soon and after two decades of telling, and unpacking this story.

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What I'm drawn to next, is this, if you accept the general shape of what I just described.

[00:04:57] Is probably true and I think an honest assessment of current events makes that pretty difficult to avoid. Then continuing to primarily shout and point at new novel events and new ancillary risks becomes a sort of category error. The shouting and pointing and describing has its place. I'm not saying we shouldn't keep doing diagnostic work, understanding our world, the science and our understanding of how things work will continue to march forward and it should.

[00:05:36] But if we accept the diagnosis as broadly true, the real conversation. The conversation that is actually proportionate to our moment in history isn't about news updates on the Strait of Horus. it's about what to do, a framework for action and response. In these times, not what we wish were happening or what we should have done in 1990, or what we want the world to look like in 25 years, but what to do right now given this and given all of it.

[00:06:17] And so this is a map, a way of organizing the meta question. What do we do so that different people with different resources in different places around the world working on different things with perhaps D, well, probably different values, can locate themselves and their work inside of a larger, coherent frame.

[00:06:42] So the framework that follows has been gestating in my mind, for a decade. And world events have forced me to organize it, this past weekend or so. so please treat it accordingly as a first public draft of something that we are going to be refining with our guests and my team, both vertically and horizontally on The Great Simplification.

[00:07:07] Okay, so this map has four levels, a very important personal foundation, a network and coordination layer. Then six broad fronts for interventions with sub subcategories and a timeline axis that runs across all of

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them. Okay. Before I get to that, just a brief preamble. Yesterday I saw that Ray Dalio, who's been posting a lot lately, had a piece out saying The Strait of Horus, was it that our existing world order has broken down and someone on X asked grok to summarize Dalio's Post.

[00:07:48] And the summary was, we are in late stage post-World War II order crumbling amid US China tensions, debt bubbles. Populism, risk of capital wars devaluation, hot conflicts, advice, sell debt assets by gold to hedge inflation and monetary chaos. I sat with that for a moment, and even standing at the edge of civilizational disruption, our cultural reflex is how do I position my portfolio?

[00:08:25] it's just the entire conversation is disconnected from most people's experience of life today. I do think Dalio is right. We have crossed the Rubicon. Now, even if there is a Trump taco or oil tankers have escorts, or the US China Summit next month is approximate success. What's happening now is a different scale of problem than the great financial crisis, or COVID.

[00:08:54] Those were centered around financial leverage, unwinding, and a pandemic that highlighted financial leverage. This is about the international pipeline and distribution system of fossil pixie dust and who are the recipients of it and who's on whose side in a rapidly dissolving world order. It is like you see a lightning strike in the distance and you count how many seconds before the sound of thunder arrives.

[00:09:27] The storm might still be a ways off, but it is a storm and a big one. Okay. to level zero of this framework, how do we prepare for this storm before anything else, before strategy, before interventions, before picking a front of concern and going to work. My experience and what I've learned over the past decades has led me to a conclusion.

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[00:09:57] I once would've told myself that, was woo. And I'm gonna call it, we already had part one, a guide to being human, right now, and I wanna be careful, because that framing might sound like self-help. Like I'm about to tell you to meditate and drink water and everything's gonna be okay. That is, that's not the direction of this.

[00:10:22] What I'm saying is that the inner work. For us as individual members of Homo Sapien sapiens, stabilizing our nervous systems, recapturing our sense of felt agency, stepping back from the addictions that are mediating our relationships to reality, doing the grief work that this moment actually calls for.

[00:10:50] All those things are actually a precondition. For effective action, I've learned this myself. A nervous system that is constantly in sympathetic mode cannot hold complexity, and a person in chronic fight or flight cannot build. Coalitions and a human mind that is addicted to things like outrage or doom scrolling or to the dopamine cycle of, Iran.

[00:11:22] Straight of MOUs updates or social media engagement is not a mind that is available for the kind of patient long horizon work that this unfolding moment of history is going to demand. So know yourself and your actual situation, not the situation you wish you were in or the situation that you fear you're in, but the real one, financially, physically, socially, geographically.

[00:11:50] Get your own house in order, both your actual house or living situation, but also your inner house. and begin to cultivate equanimity, not detachment, or resignation, but equanimity has the capacity to hold difficult things without being destroyed by them and to act without needing certainty. So the staying human inner work is step one.

[00:12:25] For me as well as a human, and I'm gonna have eight to 10 parts series on the stepping stones in this process. As I have said many times, I'm not an

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expert in any of these domains. I'm merely a curious novice, but I do have personal experience in recognizing how critical these building blocks are in this moment.

[00:12:52] So this is just a brief treatment here of this that, but this is the foundation, the launchpad for everything else. I'm gonna, discuss today to level one, finding the others. The second thing, and this also comes before the six fronts of intervention, is finding the others and building capacity.

[00:13:13] Because none of what we need to do can be done alone, and very little of it can be done by people who don't share a reasonably common language and framework. So one of the most effective things you can do right now, regardless of your, area of focus is to identify the people around you locally and, in your broader, International national networks who see the general shape of what's happening and are trying to respond to it seriously, even if they don't have specific plans and starting conversations in that community. To bring more people, to that framework and into that conversation. This means building trusted networks.

[00:14:02] It means mapping your own constituency. Who are the people whose cooperation you actually need? It means developing shared mental models and a shared vocabulary so that when something happens, a financial shock or a supply disruption, or a political crisis, you all aren't starting the conversation from scratch and explaining the background and the premises, but you're actually jumping into the response.

[00:14:31] It means scenario planning and examining shortfall risks. Not predictions. Nobody is predicting the future here. but thinking through the various branches of the probability tree of our more than human predicament, what if the financial system seizes up faster than expected? What if energy prices spike and don't recede, but stay there?

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[00:14:55] Kind of my base case at the moment. What if the political situation in your country moves sharply in one direction or another? What are the shortfalls in food and energy and prescriptions and supplies and social cohesion that you need to be prepared to navigate? So some of the staying human practices will help, but I think it'll be exponentially better if these are shared with others.

[00:15:24] So in action, this is building response capacity, constituency, and, trust infrastructure. And it creates space to transfer critical practical knowledge and skills. And I think this level is the connective tissue. It's neither glamorous nor dramatic. Actually quite the opposite, but it will make all the other things that I'm about to discuss much more possible.

[00:15:58] And again, for brevity, this is only a few minutes on it in today's video, but these first two levels are hella important and foundational and contribute to. Frequent, concepts on this platform, like rocks in the river and islands of coherence and seeding the cultural mitochondria. That is the core, ultimate goal of this channel.

[00:16:24] Okay? From that foundation, a stable self, a growing and trusted network. Who has a shared understanding of reality, we move into the actual domains of intervention, and I'm organizing these into six large umbrella categories, and within each umbrella, there are subdomains that, that deserve their own treatment.

[00:16:47] And we are going to return to these in depth on TGS, later this year. If you've been following my work, you're likely familiar with four scenarios I use to describe the future Green Growth Mortar Door. The Great Simplification and Mad Max, they form a simple two by two grid, and on one axis is whether the global economy keeps expanding or whether it begins to.

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[00:17:12] Contract from today's, aggregate level of throughput. But the other axis is whether that growth or contraction happens in a way that, stays closer to ecological limits or whether it stays in overshoot and remains fundamentally extractive as opposed to regenerative. I've used this framing because it gives people an immediate sense of direction.

[00:17:39] It is an oversimplification of things, but it helps us orient, but. Those four scenarios are mostly using an economic lens for future pathways, and over time I've recognized that I've been smuggling a lot of other concepts into them without naming them. Politics, social cohesion, technology, geopolitics.

[00:18:05] The state of the biosphere. And of course, all these things are running in parallel and they will shape what any economic scenario would actually feel like to live inside. So very briefly here, in addition to the economic two by two, in an upcoming, frankly, I plan to unpack several other two by two grids to help clarify the texture of possible futures.

[00:18:28] One of them has to be governance, whether institutions are broadly legitimate, meaning people will. Still consent to the rules versus whether they have capacity, meaning they can execute and maintain basic functions. Because an economic contraction under high legitimacy and high capacity would be a very different world to live in than contraction under low legitimacy and failing capacity.

[00:18:58] Even if. They had similar GDP charts. Another would be political economy. So the two by two grid ownership is about who has the legal claim on the productive base, land, energy, technology, finance, infrastructure, and then inequality is about how those structures show up in people's lived experiences.

[00:19:24] Whether most people can afford stability, whether status anxiety is a constant. And whether daily life feels more or less dignified or precarious. So this

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grid would also act as an indicator of how much say an average individual person has, or at least feels like we have in shaping the rules and incentives and outcomes for our human systems.

[00:19:53] And I think a lot of us feel like we don't have a lot of say now. And of course there's a two by two ecological backdrop itself. and the grid that I will propose is climate stress and biosphere integrity, each determining how forgiving, planet earth is to humans. Others, there's an overlap, but each of these is gonna shape how frequent environmental shocks arrive, like natural disasters and, food shortages.

[00:20:25] How fast our systems can recover and how difficult or even possible it becomes for us to rebuild when things break. I bring these, Complicated two by two grids up ahead of the six fronts for intervention, not to multiply all the scenarios, and make things super dense and complex. But the point is for us to avoid treating the future as a single storyline, real futures are going to arrive as bundles.

[00:21:03] And these scenarios are a way to name those bundles clearly enough that we can then plan without having to pretend that we can predict what's gonna happen. Okay? So we have a range of economic scenarios and of institutional ones, and of political ones and of ecological ones. Many overlapping possibilities.

[00:21:29] And here's why this matters. The six interventions I'm about to describe. Are not contingent on which of these flavors of scenarios arrive. they are the things that are worth doing in green growth and worth doing in the mortar economy and worth doing on route to The Great Simplification. The scenarios change the texture, the timeline and the difficulty of our work, but they don't change the nature of it.

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[00:21:59] Okay. Long preamble to the six fronts, of intervention. The first one is infrastructure and physical, stock and flow planning. This is the most material and most tangible, domain. It's about physical systems that move energy, food, water, and people. And what happens to those systems as the assumptions underlying their design become increasingly unreliable?

[00:22:28] Most of our physical infrastructure was designed for a world of cheap, abundant, globally sourced energy and materials, and that world is ending. Possibly rapidly, hopefully not. The response is to redesign or MacGyver our systems at a scale that's affordable to use and maintain without ultra cheap fossil pixie dust would be local, redundant, proximity based, resilient to disruption.

[00:22:59] And importantly, this has as much or more to do with reducing our throughput requirements than with swapping in the latest alternative energy tech. Localization and re regionalization are more than slogans. They're actually design principles themselves, and I see at least six subdomains within this front.

[00:23:25] and. Each of these is gonna get its own treatment on this channel. This is just first pass. I want to get these ideas and the framework out there. The first is energy systems, so generation storage, distribution, and as I mentioned, perhaps most critically, demand reduction. How do communities fulfill basic energy needs when centralized grids become less reliable or less affordable, or both?

[00:23:54] Food and water systems, local inputs and production, regional distribution, soil health, watershed management, real nutrition. The industrial food system is one of the most fragile Rube Goldberg things we've ever built. Also one of the most essential to replace, and we could add sanitation under this category as well.

[00:24:19] Something the carbon pulse in the developed world has made mostly invisible. Third is housing and the built environment, retrofitting weatherization,

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density patterns, and the question of what happens. To suburban sprawl in our world where all of a sudden we have expensive transport fuel. Next would be medical and pharmaceutical supply chains.

[00:24:47] Something we really take for granted. Modern medicine is dependent on globalized manufacturing, and this is a vulnerability that becomes acute very quickly. How do we support the health and wellbeing of people on a more local and regional scale? Transportation and logistics, how food and goods and people move within and between regions when fuel costs rise or become intermittent.

[00:25:14] And lastly, digital commons and communication infrastructure because whether critical information systems can function independently of the large D currently centralized platforms and how communities maintain the ability to coordinate when those platforms fail. Very important. Okay. Front to poverty and displacement.

[00:25:42] I decided to put this second, and here's why. The people who have the luxury of thinking about frameworks and timelines and six front maps are by definition, not the people who are most at risk and any framework that doesn't center the people who already have very little now and the people who will be dispossessed relatively soon.

[00:26:08] Isn't a real response to the more than human predicament. It's a strategy for the comfortable. And this front is about people who have close to nothing today and people who will lose their means of livelihood in the relatively near future As financial systems contract, as jobs are automated or disrupted and as global supply chains, gradually or suddenly recede.

[00:26:36] I will use the term dignity infrastructure deliberately here because there's a massive difference between systems that keep people alive and systems that treat people as agents with capacity and dignity. So within this front, I, am.

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No expert, but I came up with four sub-domains and local philanthropist or just citizens, take heed because these are going to sorely be needed in your community soon.

[00:27:08] The first, dignity infrastructure and mutual aid, decentralized community led networks of support for basic needs, meaning food, shelter, water medicine. Heat and cooling. This is fundamentally different from charity delivered from above, and I think this scales horizontally rather than vertically.

[00:27:32] The second category is the care economy, elder care, childcare, disability support, and the recognition that this work is one of the invisible backbones of every functioning community, even though our economic system treats it as invisible. Skills and livelihoods for a contracting economy. Practical, local, adaptive capacities.

[00:28:00] We need to be equipping people for the economy that is actually arriving, not retraining them for the one that is ending. Lastly. Violence prevention and social cohesion. When economic disruption moves fast and people have no explanation or narrative for why their lives are falling apart, the most dangerous thing that can happen is scapegoating.

[00:28:28] And then the things downstream from that. And this feels like one of the most important elements for the. Preservation of our social fabric, but also furthest from my expertise. So I'll mention it here and I plan on bringing in some experts to shed light on this, in the future. Okay. Front three ecological interventions.

[00:28:55] I'll say something here I think is important and underappreciated and that I expect will be controversial. Most of the positive climate outcomes we are likely to see in the next 20 years will not come from technology. There'll. Likely

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come from curtailed economic expansion driven by the very forces I described at the beginning of this video war and debt and energy depletion.

[00:29:22] We already got a preview of this during the pandemic as economic activity stalled. Industrial activity Contracting is not a climate policy, but it is a climate outcome. This doesn't mean technology is irrelevant. It means we need to be honest about what technology can and cannot do, and allocate our scarce time and resources accordingly.

[00:29:47] Adaptation technology, yes, urgently carbon drawdown and global cooling where it is genuinely viable at scale and based on ecological and energetic reality, but the fantasy that we're gonna tech our way through global heating while maintaining our current economic throughput. is a psychological crutch, and not a plan.

[00:30:15] So what does ecological intervention actually look like in practice? I've come up with five subdomains here, and as anyone who has come across this channel over the last. Decade or has followed my work for the last 20 years. This is my personal North Star, and I'm gonna have a lot more to say on each of these in coming months, and I'm likely to add some categories.

[00:30:40] the first is biodiversity, defense and corridor creation, intensely defending what remains locally and globally, and protecting the rare, untouched ecosystems. And connecting fragmented habitats so that species have a chance of adapting to what's coming. Soil, land and water regeneration, local food systems that rebuild soil rather than deplete it and work with watershed flows to preserve the aquifers.

[00:31:12] This is where food security, water access, and ecology converge. And it's one of the most actionable things at a community scale. And that scales the web of life, from the microbial communities to insects, to birds and all the way up.

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I think these three factors will increasingly define limits, in the next several decades.

[00:31:39] plastic and chemical hazards. We are, as evidenced in two days ago, episode with Sean Sutherland and Shauna Swan actively experimenting with our health via the emergent consequences of endocrine disruptors and other trace chemicals that are everywhere in our industrial processes. Not only that, but we're seeing the same impacts ripple across the natural world.

[00:32:04] So whether we can replace them or how to learn to live without them. In my opinion is perhaps as important as any energy transition. next, the non climate planetary boundaries, the nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, ocean acidification land system change. These receive far less attention than CO<sub>2</sub>, but they're just as real, and in some cases more immediately threatening to the web of life.

[00:32:36] And lastly, protecting ecological gains from economic contraction. And this may be the most important idea in this front. As economic activity contracts, there's gonna be passive ecological benefits. Forests are gonna regrow and fisheries are gonna recover. Emissions are gonna fall. The danger at those gains is gonna be immediately erased by a desperate hunger for more resource extraction.

[00:33:07] Like Easter Island, the sequel. Someone has to be deliberately protecting these places if we want them and us to survive into the future. I've called it in service of life underground and where you live. more, on that later this year. Okay. Front four, civic resilience and governance. This front is about the decision making architecture of societies under stress.

[00:33:39] And the central challenge is this, the decisions we will have to make in the coming decade about energy, about land, about who bears the cost of

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economic contraction, about what gets maintained and what gets triaged and let go. These are decisions that require legitimate adaptive participatory governance.

[00:34:05] And we're heading into that period with governance institutions that are in most places deeply eroded, and the power has become incredibly concentrated. So here's some subcategories, deliberative and participatory democracy, citizens assemblies. Sortition based processes. The kind of structured public participation that Audrey Tang and the Taiwan project have demonstrated is actually possible.

[00:34:37] And if you haven't watched her episode on this, platform, please do. It was hella inspiring. This stuff has been practiced, it has worked and has produced better decisions than election driven alternatives. Second subsidiarity and local governance capacity. I've talked about this before, decisions made at the lowest appropriate level, which is in many cases, probably much more local than we currently Assume.

[00:35:06] Communities need the ability to govern their own resource allocation when higher level institutions can't or won't. Anti-corruption and accountability infrastructure. So mechanisms for accountability that survive crisis conditions and circumvent blame. This matters even more during contraction because the temptation to capture and loot during disruption will be large.

[00:35:37] and without systems in place, decision making capacity will quickly erode. Long-term mandate institutions. We need things like ombudsman for the future or intergenerational governance bodies and institutions locally and at various scales designed to hold the long view when political cycles shorten under, stress.

[00:36:06] And lastly, trust rebuilding and the information commons. And I think this is possibly the most underrated item on this list, social trust. The basic belief

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that fellow citizens are reliable and good, at least mostly, is the lubricant of collective action. It's one of the things that I've been most heartened and encouraged by, the community at TGS and the comments in the emails.

[00:36:35] 'cause without this trust, coordination, fails and trust depends on a shared information environment where facts still matter. And that itself is also under severe threat. Okay. Front five, culture meaning, and the stories that we live inside. This category is the hardest to talk about in a framework because to label it as an intervention is kind of against its own grain.

[00:37:07] We cannot build culture the way you would build a, water system, but we also can't build a water system or sustain any of the other five fronts without some. Cultural substrate that makes collective effort feel meaningful rather than futile. This gets back to Marvin Harris, cultural materialism, Daniel Schmuck.

[00:37:30] Berger and I, often bring this up about superstructure. It's about the stories we tell about who we are, what a good life looks like, what we owe each other as citizens, and our relationship to the non-human world. And most of the stories currently running in our heads were written during and by a growth economy that needed us to be consumers first and citizen second.

[00:38:01] And so those stories are now actively working against us. So I've come up with five subcategories here. First education redesign, not just curriculum, but the fundamental question of what are we preparing young people for? And the current system is still training people for a growth economy that will not exist in the form that they expect.

[00:38:26] Second is the arts and grief work and collective sensemaking the role of creative work in helping communities grieve and adapt and imagine, and ultimately thrive. This is not a luxury. It's how human groups have always

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metabolized disruption to continue working together. Reconnection to place and ecology is teaching.

[00:38:52] The difference between living somewhere and being from somewhere, knowing its ecology, its seasons, its vulnerabilities and its gifts, and I'm channeling my friend Wes Jackson and Wendell Berry here, communities that are rooted in place will navigate what's coming very differently from communities that are not.

[00:39:16] Ritual ceremony and belonging, shared connective experiences that market and economies have systematically stripped away. What that human beings basically cannot do without, when the consumer substitutes for belonging fall away, in the shelves, communities are gonna need real ones. lastly, our.

[00:39:45] Narrative sovereignty, the capacity of communities to tell their own story rather than have it told for them by algorithms or demagogues or strangers with large online followings in a period of disruption. The communities that hold together will be the ones with a strong enough shared story. To metabolize their hardship without breaking apart.

[00:40:11] This is not a soft, fluffy category. I think it's essential and has the ability to bear weight. I'm looking for academic researchers to help, explain what has happened in history here. Okay, front six, economic transition, ownership, the commons and post growth models. So the previous. Category was about the stories we live inside.

[00:40:38] This one is about the structures that those stories are embedded in and which structures we need to build as the current ones fail or contract. The economic transition front starts from a simple observation that we aren't going to grow our way out of ecological overshoot. That means the institutions incentives and ownership structures that were designed to facilitate growth.

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[00:41:03] We'll increasingly become liabilities rather than assets. And the question is what replaces them and whether we build the replacements deliberately or whether we stumble into them under crisis conditions. So here I offer five sub-domains, for this front first, cooperative and commons based ownership.

[00:41:24] Forms of ownership and governance that are neither state run nor privately extractive, and that have a long track record of maintaining community assets across generations. These models already exist, but they need to be understood and scaled and adapted. local and regional exchange systems, local currencies, barter networks, time banks.

[00:41:50] These are resilience infrastructure for communities whose connection to global supply chains becomes increasingly unreliable and as traditional job markets and jobs, contract post growth, institutional design. Building institutions that can sustain human wellbeing without requiring expansion for them to function.

[00:42:16] And this is more of a social engineering problem than a political preference, and it's arriving on its own schedule soon. Land and housing reform. Who owns the land? Who has access to shelter? And on what terms? And as financial systems contract, the ownership structures around land and housing are gonna become some of the most politically charged questions in every society, including and especially the United States Finance and credit redesign.

[00:42:49] How do communities manage debt? And savings and investment in a world where the current financial system is producing more claims than can be honored. Okay, A word on sequencing here. Many people in this space believe the types of transformation I just outlined. Are the precondition for everything else that we can't do ecology or governance or infrastructure without first dismantling extractive ownership and growth-based capitalism.

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[00:43:23] I understand the argument and the sentiment, but I think ongoing events and the accelerating timeline are going to demand parallel construction. We build the new structures while the old ones are still standing, not after they've collapsed. 'cause waiting for the precondition would mean waiting forever.

[00:43:48] Lastly, and not to further complicate, this draft framework, but each of these six fronts can be approached at different scales, community and local, by regional, national, and global. And yes, we're gonna need people working at all of the levels. And these six fronts are not offered as a menu. We don't pick one and ignore the rest.

[00:44:13] They are as The Great Simplification community is undoubtedly aware, interdependent. Okay. before I turn to timelines, yes, there's still more that, has to be said here. I wanna say something with sensitivity because I hold a lot of sympathy for the people that it's aimed at, but also, Without softening it.

[00:44:40] Many of the people who are most awake to the seriousness of what's happening in our world are people who are opposed to ecological destruction and opposed to capitalism and to colonialism and to patriarchy and the like. Who want humans to reconnect to nature and to respect the web of life, who want justice, genuine, deep, structural justice before anything else.

[00:45:06] And I hold a lot of these values. I believe there's much in those critiques. That's correct. But with that said. These political ideologies are not a plan. Naming the system, even naming it correctly without a viable intervention strategy is at this scale and speed of overshoot, financial and ecological, often a distraction and often counterproductive.

[00:45:33] I am not arguing that people abandon their values. I'm arguing that we move from critique to intervention. Which brings me to the timeline. Okay. here is

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the perhaps most important orienting idea in this whole, draft framework. We are not in one moment, per se, we are in three overlapping moments simultaneously.

[00:45:58] I'm calling them here, phase A, B, and C, and the interventions that are appropriate and possible. Necessary differ dramatically across them. So Phase A, the stability window. Right now, we are still in many parts of the world in a period of relative stability. Systems are still connected, surplus still exists.

[00:46:23] International coordination is still mostly possible though the USA is losing friends fast. The institutions, however, eroded are still mostly functioning. This window is finite, and many of us, especially in the last few weeks, are increasingly aware that it is closing. We just don't know exactly how fast, but everything that can only be built in stability, institutional trust, and physical infrastructure and knowledge transfer and relationships has to be built now.

[00:46:58] In this window before conditions materially change. Phase B, I've long referred to as bends, not break. And Phase B is already beginning in many places and will arrive with increasing clarity everywhere. Financial shocks, supply disruption, social fracture, geopolitical, reorganizations, more and more people falling off the economic treadmill and struggling to meet basic needs.

[00:47:28] The work in Phase B is fundamentally of a different type from the work in Phase A. In Phase A, we're building and preparing. In Phase B, we're largely triaging. We're maintaining critical functions, bridging communities through various ruptures, preventing cascades from becoming. Collapses, holding deliberative space open when authoritarian shortcuts are gonna look appealing to a lot of people.

[00:47:59] So this is the bend not break moment. That I've long referenced on this channel and the error of this phase B is either freezing, unable to act because the situation is so far outside our previous experience or capitulating to the shortcuts

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and the abandonment of the long view because the short view becomes so overwhelming.

[00:48:23] Phase C, the stable attractor. Phase C is not a place that we arrive at by skipping past A and B, because I'm sorry to say those periods cannot be skipped. Phase C is the destination that gives meaning and direction to the work of A and B. What does it look like? Regenerative, resilient. Human scale embedded in local ecology, equitable in a way that does not depend on infinite growth to fund, the redistribution rich in meaning and social connection, and the things that actually make human life good.

[00:49:05] This is the world where the values that animate the opposition to capitalism and ecological destruction and patriarchy actually have a home. Not because someone declared them into existence. Because of the structures that produce the opposite have failed and been replaced by something better built painstakingly from inside.

[00:49:29] The chaos of phase A and phase B, the long game is real. The stable attractor idea is real, but it's built from inside the disruption, not after it. And I put the timeline here after all this information and the six fronts for a reason. 'cause each of those fronts has phase A work, phase B work, and phase C work.

[00:49:55] The three phases are not independent of each other. What we build in Phase A sets the initial conditions for how phase B might unfold and how Phase B unfolds determines what Phase C. It could ultimately become, and this is path dependence at Civilization Scale. The implication is the relationships we build now, the infrastructure we put in place now, the governance capacity and trust and ecological protections we fight for now while there's still surplus and coordination capacity.

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[00:50:31] All of that shapes the initial conditions for everything that follows all of the big and small moves we make in Phase A, add up and accumulate to broaden the potential futures in the next phases.

[00:50:51] The diagnosis that we have been articulating is now rapidly converging. And the window in Phase A is finite. I don't know how long, but no matter what happens in the Middle East, I do not think we're going back to the conditions of 2025 ever. And the stable attractor of Phase C is worth working towards.

[00:51:17] and perhaps the, draft framework I've put forward here can give us a place to start. What are we doing with the time that we have? And I'll resist a a Lord of the Rings quote. In our current system, it is becoming evident to more of us that modern leadership has become mostly about how well one can win at the game of power and how well one can learn and leverage dark triad traits.

[00:51:48] And this has created adverse selection in our leadership. And those who want to be leaders probably shouldn't be. And our future calls for a new type of leadership, one that can hold complexity, can focus on the living systems that sustain life, and be able to build constituency and relationships across human demographics.

[00:52:14] And if you're watching this and you feel reluctant about leading today, it might be a good indication that you could be a good leader tomorrow. Lastly, and this is one of the themes that I plan to highlight in the Guide to Staying Human Series, is that there are so many people now looking for someone to tell them what to do, and this episode was a framework to consider, but part of leadership, even reluctant leadership, is recognizing that what to do can only be answered by us as individuals.

[00:52:51] Each of you. Out in this wide, beautiful blue-green Earth at this time can step up to your own inner voice of what needs to be done and what first

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steps need to be taken. What are we doing with the time that we have? Thanks for listening. I'll see you soon.