The Great Simplification

The Human Predicament: What Would Change My Mind

with Nate Hagens | Frankly #158

Show Notes and Links to Learn More

The TGS team puts together these brief references and show notes for the learning and convenience of our listeners. However, most of the points made in episodes hold more nuance than one link can address, and we encourage you to dig deeper into any of these topics and come to your own informed conclusions.

Grab-and-Go Resources:

Start here: *The Great Simplification* (the 32-minute film), Nate's Framework for Action
From the archive: Frankly #132 | What to Do as the World Falls Apart, Frankly #115 | Inflation, Deflation and Simplification
Foundations: Planetary boundaries, EROI and society's hierarchy of energy needs, Circularity Gap Report 2025
Take action: The Essential Guide to Doing Transition, Mutual Aid Hub, Energy Literacy

Resources by Timestamp:

00:28 – Metacrisis
00:34 – *The Great Simplification* thesis
01:02 – Steel man argument
01:20 – Energy use per person vs. GDP per capita, Debt thresholds and economic growth
02:27 – Deflationary depression (debt deflation) (Frankly #115), Sovereign bond and currency market stress, Financial claims on future energy
02:47 – Phase shift (regime shift) to a relocalized world
03:12 – Fossil fuel consumption falling while global GDP grows, Absolute decoupling
03:30 – *Energy intensity of GDP improving 1.3% a year since 2019
03:45 – Society's minimum EROI hierarchy (Frankly on the perils of EROI), Standard versus extended EROI boundaries
04:09 – Ships and heavy industry running on renewables rather than diesel
04:18 – Long-duration storage needed to ride out a European Dunkelflaute
04:35 – Energy per tonne of refined copper rising as ore grades decline
04:45 – Aluminum substitution for copper
04:54 – *Critical mineral recycled input rates far below 90%: Lithium, Cobalt, Nickel
05:18 – *Global circularity rate fell to 6.9% (Circularity Gap Report 2025)
05:32 – *Global debt at ~235% of GDP, stabilizing rather than falling
05:42 – Emissions 55% below 2019 levels by 2035, *Atmospheric CO2 rising ~2.7 ppm a year over 2015–2024 (Mauna Loa CO2 record)

06:00 – Seven of nine planetary boundaries breached
06:24 – Ecological overshoot
06:48 – Material flow accounting, Carbon Pulse, Decades-long decline in petroleum field EROI, Humanity's footprint above Earth's regenerative capacity
07:41 – Paradigm as a leverage point in a system, Donella Meadows
08:04 – Circular economy untethered from conspicuous consumption (Nate and DJ's book on keeping up with the Joneses)
08:22 – Leading versus lagging indicators
08:50 – Critical mass for social change, Social tipping points
09:00 – Moving away from apathy, Fear, Grievance politics, Self-righteousness and blame
09:10 – Bill Plotkin on ecological adulthood
09:24 – Affluent consumption as the strongest driver of environmental impact
09:52 – Status symbols, *Living space per person in new U.S. homes nearly doubled since 1973
10:07 – Economic superorganism (Frankly #97) powered by positional goods
10:16 – Right to repair and product durability as status markers
10:31 – Greenwashing, Material footprint per capita
10:55 – Median voter theorem
11:12 – Consumption tax, Easterlin paradox
11:28 – Web of life
11:46 – Popular film as a record of shifting mass values
12:00 – Two flavors of screen future: growing potatoes on Mars in *The Martian* or the zombie apocalypse
12:13 – An admired character who needs less (solarpunk), Solarpunk fiction against dystopian doomerism, Spaciousness over novelty
12:30 – Nate's four future quadrants, well short of *Mad Max*
12:44 – The apocalypse boom in an age of anxiety
13:11 – American Time Use Survey
13:16 – Fossil labor, Energy slaves
13:27 – Time spent in home production over the 20th century, Carbon Pulse
13:36 – *UK adults average ~4.5 hours a day online, most of it on a smartphone
13:50 – Household maintenance: Cooking, Repair cafés, Gardening
13:56 – Care work, Volunteering (Find opportunities), *Daily in-person socializing fell from 45 to 35 minutes in 20 years
14:04 – Involuntary simplicity
14:14 – Scapegoating during crises
14:30 – Unlikely collaborators in the radical center: Farmer-led soil health networks, Collaborative conservation in the Blackfoot watershed
15:10 – Regenerative agriculture, Paying farmers for soil and water outcomes
15:25 – Local provisioning before supply chains crack: The Essential Guide to Doing Transition: Local food systems, Community energy, Mutual aid networks, Caring for watersheds

15:33 – Supply chain fragility (Nate and DJ's book on supply chains)
15:36 – Remaining fossil energy as a one-time endowment: The Energy Trap, Rebuildables
15:50 – Energy literacy and ecological literacy for every schoolchild
16:03 – Well-being of Future Generations Act
16:13 – Watershed planning, Subsidiarity in Catholic social teaching
16:21 – Seventh generation principle, Political short-termism
16:58 – Prosocial behavior (David Sloan Wilson's Prosocial World, *The Great Simplification* appearance) over transactional relationships
17:36 – *The Great Simplification* on YouTube and on Substack
18:13 – Falsifiability