

Newton Harrison. *Art and the Force Majeure*. February 10, 2021

Susan Clark: [0:21:00] Today's podcast is a mix of climate change and ecological art, and really how they both relate to dynamic competence. We're focusing on the experiential ecological and landscape art of Helen and Newton Harrison. Helen and Newton were part of only a handful of globally acclaimed artists known as ecopioneers in the 1960's and 70's. In these early days, Helen and Newton committed to only producing art that directly benefitted the ecosystems they were working in. This art is a combination of museum and gallery exhibits, paired with ecological restoration work on the ground through a wide range of global public and private partnerships. Over the years, they have built on their original environmental and ecological concerns in the 60's and 70's to reimagine how we interact with our surrounding landscapes to increase its energetic output in the midst of, and directly in response, to global climate change. Helen and Newton have received commissions from countries around the world, even corresponding with the Dalai Lama on the reimagining of the Tibetan Plateau as a water retention landscape. Their first major work, the Lagoon Cycle, commissioned in 1973 and 74, is still considered a foundational work for the Art and Ecology Movement. We'll talk about it more with Newton, as it illustrates how the narrative can be used to illustrate changes in our understanding of a problem.

Much of their work, preceding 2015, is summarized in their beautiful book, *The Time of the Force Majeure*. I first met Helen and Newton when they were commissioned by the Nevada Museum of Art to produce an exhibit on the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Our office building was converted from a large warehouse with a half court gym that was converted into an art studio for the Harrisons and their team to layout and produce huge maps as part of the exhibit. I was honored to facilitate some of the early meetings with the ecological scientists and got to know all of the Harrison family and team. We lost Helen last year, so this is my conversation with Newton. The sound is a bit off due to the room that Newton was in and the multiple recording we had to do; he was also having a bit of a time hearing me. As a result, we have uploaded a transcript of this interview as well.

Susan Clark: [02:48:59] Welcome to the Art of Dynamic Competence Newton.

Newton Harrison: [2:51:75] Why thank you Susan, I feel welcome.

Susan Clark: [02:54:66] I wanted to start by talking about how you and Helen got started.

Newton Harrison: [2:59:71] Sure. It should be understood that in the early 1960's, Helen and I teamed up in the Peace Movement. We actually worked with some of the people from the Chicago Seven and Helen was the first coordinator for the Women's Strike for Peace, the first New York Coordinator; Bella Abzug took over. That's when we both became activists. However, volunteer activism exhausted us after a couple of years. Although we learned a lot. And one of the things that we learned was that as a volunteer, you exhaust yourself and if you are into something for the long term you have to forget about the money so that for 10, 15, 20, 30 years you can think your way through something. By the time I was 32, I had gotten my BFA and MFA

from Yale and I had a professorship at University of New Mexico. Now it has to be understood that Helen, at 15, won the New York City Fellowship to Cornell.

And thereafter, she became a New York City Senior English Teacher, which back in the 1940's mind you, like 48, that was what a college professor was back then, the equivalent. She was a Chaucer Scholar and a Dewey Scholar and has her Masters in Education with Philosophy behind it. She was able to spread and I was able to go deep. So, I could do what she couldn't do and I did what she couldn't do.

By the late 60's, she was being groomed for a Vice-Chancellorship at the University of California where I was teaching, and I had decided to do no work that didn't benefit the ecology. I decided this for a strange reason; it was 1968, and I was in my undergraduate class, and I said, "Does anyone know how to make color hang in space?" That's what Rothko and Albers were trying to do, and they did it, but they didn't. So, a physicist kid says "Did you ever hear of how a glow discharge works?" And I proceed to make the largest glow discharge chamber ever made, put it in the American Exhibition in 1970. It was my first fame thing.

At the same time, Helen had been reading up on that wonderful lady, early 60's, who did the research on DDT?

Susan Clark: [05:22:53] Oh, Rachael Carson.

Newton Harrison: [05:23:69] Well, she was a Rachael Carson fan. So, any rate, Helen and I make the collective decision to do no work that doesn't benefit the ecosystem. By 1970, she abandons the job of Vice-Chancellor that was coming at her and we sell our house to downscale because we only have one salary, and she becomes an artist. Now, I expected her to go through a 4-to-5-year apprenticeship and then we would co-author work. But the agreement was that we would co-author work only when the work looked different from something she or I ever did. Lo and behold, 3 years after joining the studio, she shows up with 2 books on global warming. It changes completely our work, it changes the look of our work, introduces photography, I blow it up, the Lagoon Cycle happens and all of a sudden, the work is nothing like I ever did, nothing like Helen ever did, and the narrative sections are deepened because of Chaucer, thank you very much, and things of that sort.

Susan Clark: [06:18:64] Well was that in 1974?

Newton Harrison: [06:21:12] ...and 73.

Susan Clark: [06:22:27] So that was your pivotal year in your work?

Newton Harrison: [06:24:00] Yes, in late 73, I invented the Lagoon Cycle in principle, she elaborated it, she brought in global warming and my career took a right turn, as did Helen's.

Susan Clark: [06:35:58] Hang on Newton. Can you give an overview of the Lagoon Cycle from a high-level view?

Newton Harrison: [06:43:07] It defines Helen and my working relationship and its kind of a love story; and its kind of an ethical story because the Witness character is in awe of the Lagoon Marker's creative powers. But, as things go along, the witness begins to see that uncontrolled creativity is the destruction of everybody because of greed. And so, as the Lagoon Marker scales up, the Witness' ethical sense scales up and that becomes a subtext in the story until the Witness says that you want to do a giant fish farm for the Salton Sea and make 300,000 pounds of fish from the Salton Sea? But you want to kill the Gulf of Mexico to do it? That's when the Lagoon Maker understands that you cannot deal with the consequences or your actions when you operate at such a scale. That's why if you are operating at such a scale, you have to be prepared to lose and you have to be prepared to back off immediately if you start to see damages, asbestos and that kind of stuff. It's easy to see damage if you test in the beginning. It's hard to see if you drop a billion dollars and you are making 2 billion back in return, never mind a 100,00 people in India get poisoned.

Susan Clark: [08:00.17] Newton, you often talk about how Helen brought an influence of Chaucer and the narrative into your work, the deepening of the narrative in your work. You've also talked about how you have been influenced by Tolstoy and the complexity of Tolstoy. Would you like to talk a bit about how Tolstoy influenced the *Lagoon Cycle*?

Newton Harrison: [08:20:36] I like the complexity. I like my inability to grasp his ability to be complex. For the *Lagoon Cycle*, I wanted to have that level of complexity. Then I thought that I wanted to have the feeling of Piero's *Stations of the Cross*, that is to say that it's a full environment.

Susan Clark: [08:29:51] Can you describe how the cycles fit into the overall *Lagoon Cycle*?

Newton Harrison: [08:45:12] Well, it starts with Sri Lanka. That's a country that's almost at war and its out of that that the crab comes. The second lagoon asks if you can put a lagoon in a tank? That's when the Lagoon Maker and the Witness clarify. The Lagoon Maker says, "Sure" and the Witness says, "I don't think so." The Lagoon Maker says, "Why not?" "Well," says the Witness, "when you feed the crabs, already they look up. So, they know that they are not in their original ponds, even if the ponds are friendly. Helen and I talk it over again and we make a crab environment that crabs will want to mate in. Whereas the lobster people cut up a lobster to find out how it works.

Susan Clark: [09:27:63] Hang on Newton, weren't these other lobster groups funded to raise lobsters while you had been funded to raise crabs?

Newton Harrison: [09:37:26] When the head of Scripps [Oceanographic Institute] came by and got us the Sea Grant, he said, "How much did you spend for this?" We said, "17 thousand Bucks." He said, "the lobsters, we gave them 300 thousand and they couldn't do it." I said, "tell the lobster people to put one of their lobsters back together and send us notes on how it works, we'd be interested in seeing that."

Susan Clark: [09:58:17] Newton, what did you think was the difference in your work on the crabs and their work on the lobsters?

Newton Harrison: [10:03:89] Those people didn't look for the benefit to the lobster. When only looked at what was for the benefit of people and for their profit and bottom line. Whereas Helen and I looked for the benefit of the lagoon, the benefit of the crab, and then the benefit of the people who eat the crab. But then also, the benefit of the whole environment in which the crab as a key species. That kind of seeing is so different than solving a scientific experiment that will let you make lobsters breed so you can capture a market.

Susan Clark: [10:34:61] Then what about the third lagoon?

Newton Harrison: [10:38:73] By the third lagoon, we find people who want to grow the crab, and some of them were criminals. One of them gets shot! So, we do a piece called *The House of Prayers*. We end up turning down a \$300,000 grant from Scripps Institute of Oceanography because they want us to grow the crabs like lobsters. We said that "We're not going to do that. We are finding our way out of monoculture thought and you are going to push us back in. Forget it!" And that's how the fourth lagoon happens. We grow the crab in the open. The fifth lagoon is about purifying the Salton Sea. The Lagoon Maker, his character is such that he is a megatechnologist. The Witness says, "To purify the Salton Sea you have to dump the Salton Sea's poisons into the Gulf of Mexico and get clean Gulf waters back. Well, are you going to poison the Gulf? So that's when we do the sixth lagoon which is an argument, basically, against megatechnology. The Lagoon Maker apologizes, and from the sixth lagoon on, the Lagoon Maker and the Witness speak one for one voice. The one voice ends up with the world ocean and the final map of the *Lagoon Cycle* is the outcome of the warming of the waters; that is the waters rise to almost 300 feet. So, we do a map of the 300-foot level and that is how we end the Lagoon Cycle. Everything is going to change. I will help you and you will help me; that's me and Helen talking to each other. Forty years pass, all our creativity is going to the subtraction of life from life itself. The Lagoon Cycle begins a lifelong argument, which is, "Let us enhance the life we live, and all lives with us."

Susan Clark: [12:25:33] That's a powerful argument that is still raging today.

Newton Harrison: [12:28:88] Exactly.

Susan Clark: [12:30:02] Newton, can I ask you: Since the Lagoon Cycle was yours and Helen's first foray into global recognition, who was your work different from our acclaimed artists of the day?

Newton Harrison: [12:41:68] Most people were seeking simplicity, but when I looked around a forest, I didn't see simplicity, I saw complexity. So, I ran exactly opposite, both of us did, from Warhol and all the others who were doing high impact, single image work.

Susan Clark: [12:55:97] Well, it was in the later part of your careers that you began to organize your work around the concept of the Force Majeure. How do you define the Force Majeure in your work?

Newton Harrison: [13:07:88] Ok, Helen and I used to have morning conversation and that would start the day. One of the things we started coming up with was what are the forces that are at work in the world that are wrecking things? Can we see them in the simplest of forms? And what we came up with, well, there is the extinctions, and the extinctions affect all living things, if something is extinct the niche its in goes away so others are affected too. And so, then we have the ocean rise which affects all surfaces that face the ocean, and the heat wave affects all surfaces on the planet living and non-living. Those three forces, all working together, are tsunami-like. They of our own invention, but you are helpless in the face of them. And that why we call all three of them together, the Force Majeure. That is the rising of the oceans, the rapid increasing of heat, and the extinctions, all together indicate that the web of life itself is well on the way to expelling the human race.

Susan Clark: [14:07:12] And yes, that's one of the interesting components of your work that I have been fascinated by. As you know this podcast is about this concept of Dynamic Competence that says how do we maintain competence in this rapidly changing world and what was so interesting to me about the work that you have done over years, is the fact that you go into each situation in a unique way and you always start with this ennobling problem. Can you talk about what an ennobling problem is?

Newton Harrison: [14:43:40] Yes, I have to begin elsewhere as usual. Helen and I, by the mid 70's we were getting invited to places. We began to see ourselves like a butterfly or something. We began to see ourselves as a random moving part in the environment. And that the random moving part, the energy to move and the energy to act was always an invitation from an institution of some kind or other. And we would always be invited to somewhere because people had looked at our work and liked the ecology in it and thought that we could benefit their environment, and do an interesting work of art. Well, the thing is, they always had ideas about what we should be doing. But what we would do is that we would land in a place and make the following agreements: First of all, we had only one intention and that was to question what was happening from an ecological and from a human point of view as they interwove and ask how we could benefit it. After all, the invitation benefitted us. We were *a priori* obligated from our own perspective to benefit the place that benefited us.

Susan Clark: [15:49:79] What does that mean?

Newton Harrison: [15:51:42] If we could not leave the place better off, way better off ecologically, and more integrated socially, we would leave because why waste our time. After doing this a few times, we understood that if you sat silent, like in Holland or in Scotland, all those works, we were dropped into a place when we posed a question of what is happening here, and then everyone would tell us their problems. If you grouped up 40-50 people's problems, the ennobling problem jumped out of all of their problems. Which generally were about producing enough abundance for the community one way or another and about scarcity.

All we had to do was to say, "Supposing we feared not scarcity, but worked for abundance? And supposing that abundance was the abundance that comes from the sun and the way that the green photosynthesis gives us oxygen and takes in CO₂? That's foundational and if you start there and you enhance, or work with, the growth systems that over produce, then that overproduction is redundancy which guarantees their survival that guarantees food for others. That over production is our potential wealth. It's not money. If you take energy from a forest and you cut down all the trees and you make money with it, the money you make has not near the energy that you have lost from cutting the forest, which effects the atmosphere, the CO₂, the topsoil, dozens of different species, and all that. And on top of all that, once you gone and made all this money, and lost energy in the consequence, although you feel good about it, then you take the money and make it work even less by transferring it into houses. So, the money loses value by transferring it into houses, although you have the illusion that value is created. So...how do you break that illusion? By shifting the mindset from scarcity to abundance. You stop looking for scarcity to make a profit and you start looking to abundance which is in support of a whole community. As so it shifts from me being rich to community type thinking. And that is where you will find your enobling problem. Your enobling problem doesn't show up easy, it just shows up and wacked you on the head one day.

Susan Clark: [18:30:35] So, can you give an example of finding an enobling problem?

Newton Harrison: [18:34:09] Let's say go to the Sava River in former Yugoslavia, its like 1989, very complex how we got there, but there we were, invited to help a nature reserve. The Sava River that runs from the Austrian Alps down through all of former Yugoslavia and drops into the Danube and give the Danube about half of its waters; the lower Danube as it moves towards the Black Sea. So we show up there and we are all ready to go to work and we are so pleased to finally be working with the village and we went around looking for problems and they had solved them all. They were so good at what they were doing it was breathtaking. So, all we could do was to write them a congratulatory letter, but then we find out something. The fertilizer plant that is nearby is sending pretty poisonous water right around the nature reserve and endangering it. And the river itself is endangered in various ways, but it's also clean in a lot of ways. We say, hey look, would you give us permission to work on the river instead of the nature reserve because we will benefit the nature reserve by working on the river. We can't benefit the nature reserve by doing better what you already did better than we can do. And so, they said fine. And so they put us with some inspired people and we did the Sava River work. Well now, the head of the water department of Croatia, the most powerful man in the country there, they had the biggest amount of the Sava, liked our work so much that when we had our opening, he said "Well, Harrisons, what would you like?" We said, "How about giving us one single swamp to work with?" He said, "What do you want a swamp for?" I said, "You know that you've got all the agricultural waste. If we ran it through the kind of swamp we have in mind, they would arrive back in the Sava River clean and therefore you would start getting rid of non-point source pollution." So, they were so pleased with what we were doing they said, "Go to the nature reserve, choose your swamp, in fact choose two swamps!"

Then all of a sudden, we were going to head off to Dubrovnik to give a talk on biodiversity with a whole group of biodiversity people and the German government gets in touch with us. And they say, "Look we're responsible for you. Milosevic is lining up troops near your nature reserve and they are shooting at your nature reserve. We want you to come back at least to Czechoslovakia and get out of there before you get killed and that's our responsibility. So that's how we left and couldn't come back.

Susan Clark: [20:57:96] Well, that's an incredible story. The ennobling problem then in that example would have been the fact that there wasn't one at the nature reserve; they had done such good work. But you went and found the fertilizer plant and what it was dumping in the river, as something to address and work with.

Newton Harrison: [21:14:30] Exactly. And behold, our photographs were brought to the world bank, and the fertilizer factory was going to do something, and the war stopped it. One last thing about ennobling problems; we got some. Rule One is be silent until the ennobling problem finds you.

Susan Clark: [21:33:00] Oh, and what does that look like?

Newton Harrison: [21:35:48] Well it discovered us when we were brought to meet the head of the fertilizer factory and we said, "See that white stuff coming out of your factory? It has heavy metals in it. What are you doing about it?" They said, "We can't do anything about it." But I said, "You have made a 2 square kilometer lake of battery acid here. It endangers the nature reserve. What are you going to do about that?" He says, "How come artists know about these things?" I said, "Don't worry about how artists know about these things." I said, "How come you're not doing anything about it." And he said, "Well, we have no money, we have no capacity. Why don't we send it to you guys in America? You could do something, you're very clever." That's what got us going.

Susan Clark: [22:12:85] Well, I think that is captured in your contracts that you always create.

Newton Harrison: [22:17:78] Yes.

Susan Clark: [22:18:53] As I was reading in our book, you only go to a location by invitation, the contract requires that you network with a larger community, and you always only go for a week or so, just to think and research before you accept the project.

Newton Harrison: [22:34:58] That, and one last thing. We also say, as we did with Holland; we met with Parliamentarians, people in Parliament, and they said, what makes you think that you can save the Green Heart of Holland? I said, "Well, you can't. You just gave us 10 books of all your experts, and you've turned them all down. And every one of them cost you 2-3 hundred thousand dollars.

Susan Clark: [22:52:65] Before you go into the answer, can you talk, Newton, about what the Green Heart is in Holland?

Newton Harrison: [22:58:34] Yes. The people from the Dutch Cultural Council keep calling us up and asking us for our work and they want to teach their students how to do what we do and so when they are finally finished, we say, "What's your real problem?" Our real problem is we have a great Green Heart, it's about 1,000 square kilometers and all the cities, the great cities, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag, Utrecht, Haarlem even, they are all in a big circle around the Green Heart. It's the whole history of Holland. It is their Central Park. It has the windmills. It's the history of democracy, and they want to put a 230-billion-dollar city there of 600,000 houses plus all the infrastructure, fire departments and all that. It'll wreck the Green Heart. I'll wreck their history. It'll wreck their ecology and will screw over the whole city of Rotterdam, all at once. And how could we save it? That when I said, "you've got all these books, you failed, Einstein was right. If you created a problem of this magnitude, your likelihood of solving this internally is low, and you just dropped a couple of million dollars proving it. We'll save your Green Heart for under \$200,000, so we're a cheap date, how about it?" And they said, "OK." And I think Helen said this, "One last thing, the Green Heart is our client. Not you. You can't call us up and tell us what to do, or we'll leave. The only thing that will instruct us is the Green Heart and we will leave it intact."

Susan Clark: [24:17:62] And so from that, what you were able to do under the requirements of your contract, is really to begin to discover what the ennobling problem was.

Newton Harrison: [24:27:26] Correct.

Susan Clark: [24:28:23] And I was fascinated by what you came up with in the Green Heart, what the ennobling problem was, actually.

Newton Harrison: [24:35:41] Well, what happened was this. Our first piece of analysis was that the Dutch planning system was myopic. Not only that, but they also had a planner per square kilometer. You know, they had a giant building full of planners. So, they were all planning all the time and what happens if you don't have something to plan? So, they decide they need a new city because they are over populated and they decide that the only place is the Green Heart because they have all that open space. And we thought, well, the ennobling problem is really to leave the Green Heart intact so that it can evolve as it is. The ecology increasing, the farming becoming more efficient, and the 13 small villages that would be destroyed, saved; that would be destroyed by urbanization. And so, the Heart itself was the problem. We got in some pretty challenging situations there. Strange things happened on our team. They made a beautiful team for us. And the Senior Ecologist/Landscape Architect decided that his job was to criticize me and to criticize the work. So after about 2 weeks of criticism, I said, "You're fired. You're not helping here. You're screwing things up. You can take your criticism and shove it. In fact, get out!" he said, "You can't fire someone in Holland." I said, "Maybe I can't fire you, but get out of here I don't want to see you anymore." The head of the Dutch Art Council calls me up and says, "Newton, you can't fire somebody." I said, "Why can't I? He's screwing me up." Rimmer, his name was Rimmer, says "I don't want to be fired!" And so, I said, "Then create! If you stop messing with me and you start creating for the Green Heart, I'll accept you." He said, "OK." Then his creation helped us work. He transformed completely. After he stopped bullying me, he

began to smile much more. Two of the most important drawings in it were his and he was also able to analyze the polders, the fields, and how far below sea level they were. Therefore, that would tell you how to make a great big biodiversity circle we are trying to do.

Susan Clark: [26:40:46] Was it more that he accepted the ennobling problem, or what do you think happened to cause that change in his behavior, other than you telling him to step up or get lost.

Newton Harrison: [26:52:20] Well, aside from that he was shocked that I would do what I would do, what changed Grimmer, was his love of his country. Once he understood that with his creativity, he could join with benefitting millions of people, benefitting the land, benefitting the history, all that his voice would have a voice in. He changed completely. That's way more interesting than bullying me.

Susan Clark: [27:17:84] And getting him to shift to that is very powerful for your project.

Newton Harrison: [27:21:53] Yes. Exactly.

Susan Clark: [27:22:98] Well, and the Green Heart also was interesting to me because at first your work wasn't accepted, and it took a while. Folks in Holland reached back out to you at a later date to reactivate it.

Newton Harrison: [27:39:34] We had interesting experiences. For instance, the Dutch were creative to work with and they were insurance policy people. They were putting a lot of money and energy into me and Helen and this team. After all they put together a half dozen people to work with us. They got us a 3,000 ft studio to do the work in and all sorts of other stuff. That's a lot of resources. That's what they did. OK, we got to show people what you are doing as you are doing it. So, we invented something called the open studio. And once a week they would invite people to come and I'm going to tell you a few stories from it. The Mayor from a small town very close to where we were working, comes in, looks at it, squat guy, maybe 55, and he said, "You've left my town out!" And I said, "yes you're right." Well, you know if they develop in my meadow, they'll have housing development, and all my town will be wrecked. So what does he do? He heads over to our paint table and mixes himself some green paint, runs over to our big image, and paints his town in. Well, and it worked!

Susan Clark: [28:50:65] And he was included?

Newton Harrison: [28:52:32] Of course. Conversely, a very arrogant, minor museum director comes in, looks at our work and says, "This work is not museum-ready, this work would never work in a museum. I'm not going to waste my time here," and walked out. So, we had that kind of stuff too.

Susan Clark: [29:08:47] Both kinds. Well, what was the final conclusion? Wasn't the Green Heart saved and the housing development was outside of it?

Newton Harrison: [29:15:74] Well now, here's what happened. Its 1994, we've won. The Green Party has adopted us, we're in their Parliament, we're everywhere. They have an election. The Right-Wing wins, we're told to go home; we're shelved, all in 2 weeks. So we give up and we do all this other work. Five years later, we get a call. The bad guys are out, the good guys are in, your plan is the best, come on back. I show the Green Heart again and then our line around the map, which was a biodiversity line at first, is simply a line, because they figure out how to do their biodiversity better than we did, and that line is still on the map and you can't develop over it, and its under assault all the time.

Susan Clark: [29:55:57] And so the development happened outside of the Green Heart; the developers still got to develop, but it was outside of the Green Heart.

Newton Harrison: [30:00:91] Oh well, I forgot to tell you something. One of our images showed how to develop. And one of our images demonstrated that there was plenty of room to put 600,000 houses, external to the Green Heart in overlooked spaces. It was a kind of spiritual infill around the whole perimeter. But I'll tell you a second story. We had a very brilliant, landscape architect student working in our studio. And so, Helen and I sent her out and said come back when you figure out where you can put 600,000 houses in the perimeter, if you can. And you can spend any amount of money, any amount of money meant up to \$500, which was for her a lot of money. So, three weeks later she comes back with this drawing and it shows where you can put 600,000 houses, with even bigger backyards, around all of the other cities that have vast open spaces. The remarkable thing was the new development that we proposed has all these houses up against parkland. They would have gone to the poorest people, our proposal made the refugees, and the poorer people, who came to these houses late, have the best land. And so, that was an intention of ours as well. It all worked out until they decided to develop in other places, as well as the ones we suggested. But the Green Heart was saved. We got the Groeneveld Prize for doing it, doing the most for the country.

Susan Clark: [31:27:72] And what is that prize? Is that given by Holland?

Newton Harrison: [31:30:12] It was given by the Geographic Society of the country.

Susan Clark: [31:33:30] That's a wonderful honor for both of you.

Newton Harrison: [31:35:50] One funny story, the Mayor of a neighboring small town has us come to dinner. So, us and our team show up. We're all happy, we're all drinking, and the mayor says to me, "How much money did you save?" I said, "We're talking about 230 billion dollars." He said, "Well, how much did you make from it?" And I said, "We can't make any money from this. If we did, we would be stealing. We've been paid for what we do, we've been paid well enough and we don't do this kind of thing. You don't rip people off." I saw it as a conflict of interest.

Susan Clark: [32:05:33] Yes, I know that's how you have always approached your work. So, one more question about enobling problems. You've talked before about how our own fear keeps us from listening to and addressing enobling problems. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Newton Harrison: [32:23:70] Something in our culture, I think I know what it is, begins with male dominance somewhere...but something encourages us to make fear determined decisions, so we won't be hurt, so we fear physical loss, we fear something. We take action to keep that fear from happening and us from being hurt. But the enabling problem cannot be seen if there is a fuzz of fear around you. So, it's not about courage, which like our work seems to people to be courageous. It's not courageous, we don't do anything that isn't obvious. Yes, it may seem courageous to other people but, if the Russian Plain is going to heat up, what else are you going to think about? And is the rainfall is not going to change too much because the wind patterns suggest that it won't too much. When you think that, its easy to ask the next question. "Well, where does the rain fall?" Then you ask the next question, "Who does what there?" And then you ask the next question, "What does the topsoil look like?" And then you ask the next question, "Do you want to enhance your ecosystem?" Because that the way the two are co-enhancing if you handle it right. A lot of the stuff we are talking about cannot be predicted. You have to proceed along the way and improvise like all other species. The improvise their existence with the energy at hand. And the energy keeps changing. That's what improvisation is about. Improvisation is about your ability to instantly change with something else that is changing before you. Basketball is a great example. Somebody is going for your basket and you go one way and another and another and you are improvising your movements in every split second. And then you either make it or you don't. So its not about courage, at all, it's really about the absence of fear which then clarifies perception and once perception is fully clear then I as an ethical being am obliged to act. Now, most of the time my action is not good enough, sometimes it is.

Susan Clark: [34:33:47] Can we switch now to another one of your projects, the Peninsula Europe that was done for the Nobel Museum in Sweden in the late 1990's?

Newton Harrison: [34:41:92] Yes.

Susan Clark: [34:42:51] I believe this project was to look at the watersheds of Europe in the face of global climate change. It seemed like this project has great potential for the European Union to look at itself differently and to help European countries better prepare for the coming drought associated with climate change. Can you describe how the Peninsula Europe project came about and what you think its impacts were?

Newton Harrison: [35:07:91] Here's what happened. So, its 1999, 98, I get a call from the Schweisfurth Stiftung. That's a mini-Rockefeller foundation that deals with farming and the well being of animals in Germany. They are very good people, they do very good work. The head of it is Franz-Theo Gottwald, he's seen a lot of our work. And he calls us up and he says, "We would like for you to do a book." So, Helen and I are on the same phone and we blink at we other and one of us says, "We don't do books, we make art." And he says, "We want you to write a book, you're going to want to write this book." So, I say, "What is this book about?" And he said, "Turns out that they, and 10 other people of some importance, had founded the Hanover World's Fair. And the Hanover World's Fair was going to be about the environment. The banking company took over from Brussels. And all of a sudden, McDonald's was the green

food, and it was \$300 square meter to rent something. And, about the environment, they didn't give a damn. So, this group says we are going to do 10 books in protest. And there's a Nobel in it and everything else. We get the call because Helen and I had just finished Peninsula Europe and we know more about the watersheds of Europe than anyone alive because everyone did their watershed, but nobody did all of them. We, actually, made the first Trans-European Watershed Map ever made. We got it into the public domain almost immediately. So, that's what was going on with that. So, when we got to Peninsula Europe, this happened ten years later, or eight years later. We were invited by a group in this country to make a work for the Nobel Museum in Sweden. And they said, "Would we do something for the Peninsula of Europe?" We said, "Yeah." And that's when we did Peninsula Europe, the High Ground, the one where we said that you are going to get in this drought and here's what we're going to do about it. It was shown and nobody liked it. Nobody responded to it. So, it's been shown about 6 or 7 times, and it's been almost entirely ignored. And if they don't do something like this, with their million or two kilometers with drought hitting, they're going to have starvation. The oceans are rising, the land is shrinking, the drought is increasing, and the population is increasing from 450 million to 500 million. And the drought is going to knock off a fourth of the food supply. So, you're going to have increasing population, radical decrease in food supply, decrease in land supply, increase in the needing to leave inundated lands and you have a whole bunch of countries working together at the EU, and any single country can cancel the work of the whole bunch if they want to vote "No". So, democracy, as the EU people told us, isn't workin'.

Susan Clark: [37:47:75] OK, so I think what you are saying is that art hasn't had the impact that you wanted so far... But what about the Lagoon Cycle? What do you think the Lagoon Cycle accomplished?

Newton Harrison: [38:00:16] So I was talking to Tolstoy the other day and I said, "Hey Tols babe, what do you think your revolutionary works accomplished?" What do you think we would say?"

Susan Clark: [38:09:25] I have no idea.

Newton Harrison: [38:10:36] That's what I have to say to you. Only a fool would ever think they could calculate the full consequences of their actions. You can only calculate some of the consequences and then you can bet that you are half right.

Susan Clark: [38:26:67] Well then Newton, in a perfect world, if today the Lagoon Cycle was commissioned again and put up again, what would you hope to accomplish with it?

Newton Harrison: [38:37:48] It literally the foundational work for the Art and Ecology movement. OK? And the Lagoon Cycle being shown now would argue that the whole movement needs to become much more ambitious. The Lagoon Cycle initially sets out to be a critique of our field at one level. That its too simple. That the social contracts are all human to human and much to little is being focused on the forests. They are dying the oxygen dropping in the water, dropping in the air content. The oceans are minimally productive and on and on.

Instead, we are talking about how we can help people. What do we do about the refugees? But what are we going to do with that which causes the refugees? And that's us [Helen and Newton].

Susan Clark: [39:32:95] And so what you're working on as you have said over and over is that the solutions you propose have to be as large...

Newton Harrison: [39:40:73] Larger

Susan Clark: [39:41:34] ...than the problems that are now arising.

Newton Harrison: [39:44:54] Because if they are as large that implies a co-equal balance. I'm not interested in co-equal balance; I'm interested in winning. Because losing is to lose everything.

Susan Clark: [39:56:72] So what I hear is that if we don't want to lose everything, we have to work at addressing problems at a scale that is larger than the problem itself.

Newton Harrison: [40:05:95] Yes.

Susan Clark: [40:06:40] OK then, let's go back to the Pemsula Europe project and take a deeper dive into your creative process.

Newton Harrison: [40:12:62] OK.

Susan Clark: [40:13:11] In your book, *The Time of the Force Majeure*, you use this chapter to talk about your creative process. I'm real intrigued with that because it so much fits into the Dynamic Competence conversation we are having with a lot of other folks, in very different disciplines. But there is a commonality that I see in the work that you do were you start with a proto-icon, it's an image that has never been seen before, and it doesn't have an existing narratives. You then add the text to it. And in that text, you are able to access and image. We are able to understand what that image might mean to us and in doing so, it becomes part of our understanding. And I am very intrigued for you to talk a little bit about this creative process that you and Helen developed.

Newton Harrison: [41:06:93] Here's what happened. First, we got a big map of Europe, all the way to the Urals. OK? And we eliminated all streets, backed them off and emphasized all rivers. What that first showed us, that from the Moldavia, and parts of Poland, across the Carpathians, and all the way to Portugal, the mountains and a great bunch of the watersheds, and all these watersheds had sort of different cultures in them. Different sub-cultures, different growth of things, different recipes. They had incredible cultural diversity. Whereas, if you look beyond that to the Russian Plain, the Russian Plain was totally different and so that's how come, when we were asked to do Europe, but this group, we had to find out what Europe is. Yes, I'd lived in Florence for three years. And yes, we were pretty sophisticated and way beyond the average American. We're still Californians and they're Europeans. We said, "OK, where the watersheds are operative from the Carpathians forward and backward into Poland, that's what we are

going to declare what Europe is. Once we define Europe, then we can say what we want to do about it.”

Susan Clark: [42:16:05] OK, now, you’ve created this new map of Europe as a starting point and you’ve added a new narrative based on what you have learned. But wasn’t that narrative also expanded in your book?

Newton Harrison: [42:29:64] The book was called, *The World as a Garden* and it was in German, which could be translated. But we posed a problem. We’d been reading Fritjof Capra and others like him. And we had been reading the Santiago Theory, and it was clear to us, and I really done since they had defined life as a “You could know something was living because it was a dissipative structure, it took stuff into itself and spit it out and used at both ends. Another way of saying all life takes energy into itself, transforms it and dissipates it, obviously for the use of other species. And not only was it dissipative structure, you could tell it was intelligent, even if it was a paramecium because it knew what was good for itself, and did it. And it knew what was bad for itself and tried not to do it. If that was a good enough definition of intelligence, I liked it a lot. So, we said, “Well, the European Union, it’s a coherent place, the watersheds define it. Well, hmmm, do you think we could get Europe to behave like a paramecium? Do you think we could get the whole subcontinent to get to know what’s good for itself, and do it, and know what’s bad for itself and not do it?” And the whole book we wrote was about how to think your way through this. I think the book was flawed because it was written about 22 years ago. But we were right to do it.

Susan Clark: [43:47:40] Well, how was it received?

Newton Harrison: [43:49:09] Poorly.

Susan Clark: [43:49:53] And why do you think that’s the case?

Newton Harrison: [43:51:71] There were not enough people in Europe who were willing to think this way. We found later that a number of planners in the city had read the book and were proposing that the cities could behave like that, like a paramecium. That it could know what is good for itself. But that was it.

Susan Clark: [44:06:77] Originally, you said you felt the book was flawed with the fact that it was written 22 years ago. Looking back, what would you have done differently? Is there anything you would have done differently in that project to make it more accessible, more engaging?

Newton Harrison: [44:23:55] What we have done is make a 5-image set which has a new text in it. And which proves Europe can survive if it transforms itself, and it drops about 1 trillion in developing water retention landscapes over a million square kilometers. And that way they will only lose a small percentage of the food supply and it can regenerate its biodiversity. And so that’s what that’s about.

Susan Clark: [44:48:75] And so that's a new project that you have done?

Newton Harrison: [44:51:41] The first one that the book is about was done in 1998/9, first shown in 2001 in Achen, I believe, yes. The first one took up 3,000 square feet. It was a big, humungous installation. This one takes up 30 ft of wall space. And it can be grasped in 15 minutes if you read it.

Susan Clark: [45:09:52] And how was it received?

Newton Harrison: [45:11:15] With utter indifference, wherever I showed it.

Susan Clark: [45:12:23] Well, that's interesting.

Newton Harrison: [45:15:68] It tells us that people are not mentally equipped to take this material up.

Susan Clark: [45:20:83] Well, that provokes a whole bunch of questions.

Newton Harrison: [45:23:51] I have one answer. I think the life web is in the process of expelling us and 2 or 3 moves toward expulsion, particularly like 100 degrees on the North Pole and a couple more COVID-like viruses and understandings will start to take place.

Susan Clark: [45:38:63] Well, it's really interesting. I want to go to a quotation from Eleanor Heartney, the New York Art Critic.

Newton Harrison: [45:45:12] Yes, I know Eleanor quite well.

Susan Clark: [45:46:83] And in your book, she states "With bracing realism, Harrisons address the destructive potential of humans as described in the concept of entropy but challenge its inevitability."

Newton Harrison: [46:01:61] That's right, we do.

Susan Clark: [46:02:78] And so, talk a bit about that. That's a nice segue way from the expulsion of humans and that as it gets worse, people will begin to wake up. Talk about that in terms of your work, where are you going now?

Newton Harrison: [46:15:52] OK. Turns out, I'm interested in transgenerational discourse. I'm 88 and I'm having a wonderful conversation with a 45-year-old Finnish artist who is a lovely human and a good artist, a strong thinker. And I'm starting a conversation with a 26-year-old, I hope, who is utterly against capitalism. I'm against capitalism, but I think trade is the imperative. If capitalism can work itself back to trade as it once was, we'll be OK. And if it can't, we won't. What happens is, find a little kid, 7 years old, chopping worms in half, and laughing. And the father, who is an ecologist comes by and says to his 7-year-old, "Why are you chopping those worms in half?" Kid says, "But Daddy, they're dancing. I'm making them dance." And the father says, "You're chopping them off, that's not dance, that's pain. If you got chopped in half,

how would you feel?" And the kid begins to cry, becomes a vegetarian and 5 years later, he's an ecologist. Now, that happened to my son Josh and something like that happened to me back in 1967. I remember it well. Helen and I are driving to LA from UC San Diego, where we were, and I see a giant earth moving machine scraping the earth and suddenly I hear the earth screaming. I've made earth even since.

Susan Clark: [47:34:16] And how does that scream manifest itself in you over the years? How have you addressed it or worked with it?

Newton Harrison: [47:42:98] Our most recent work is what do you do, and how do you cope with 11 million square miles of farmland that have been debased? When you make 11 million square miles of farmland, you get rid of all the other species but about a half a dozen. And you wreck the topsoil, and the carbon goes up into the air, and the topsoil loses its viability and compacts, and all these problems happen. If you read Helenestad, you would find that the kind of thing we propose, that can't happen to the earth. The reverse happens. If you follow the Helenestad model, the earth gets richer and richer.

Susan Clark: [48:18:57] Talk a little bit about the Helenestad model.

Newton Harrison: [48:20:99] Our OK. So, we are invited to Sweden to go and think. It's about 3 years ago. And we show up and they ask us can we help the harbor go green? And isn't it wonderful that they are putting billions into their harbor. And you will be the first artists to cope and we don't know anyone else who could cope. So we show up there for a week with their senior planners and refuse their commission. And they said, "Why have you refused it?" we said, "Look this is green washing, finding out how many apartments they can build and they're saving their parks a little bit. This is not what we are talking about if you want to transform a city, which we don't want to do anyway since we think that the urban form is a mistake anyway in the long term. The argument we give of course is if you have 10 million people stuck in one single place and if it takes 2 or 3 acres to feed a person then you need 30 million acres around the place, just to grow enough food, let alone process the waste. Whereas in Helenestad, take 20,000 people, take 15-20,000 acres. Your great wealth comes from the redundancy of the productivity of nature. You don't need money. Helenestad suggests a new kind of communities we will need that will operate by trade and where nature will overproduce and where money is not an issue, and where trade is the core and Helenestad is our model for that. Helen's Town.

Susan Clark: [49:47:08] Helen's Town. Yes, and I am hoping you will read the introductory essay to your proposal for Helen's Town for us.

Newton Harrison: [49:55:06] *Essay Reading*

Susan Clark: [53:08:40] Thank you.

Newton Harrison: [53:09:63] You see how important self-criticism is. And we have built a culture that is terrified of self-criticism.

Susan Clark: [53:16:60] Do you think your art can help us engage in more productive self-criticism?

Newton Harrison: [53:23:99] Well, the art schools do it. But, by the time people get out, I don't know. I know that Helen and I do it. Did it, while she was alive. And I still do.

Susan Clark: [53:34:75] Let's talk briefly, as we are finishing this up, Helen's Town really represents that small scale, the ability to think on scales that one can touch and see and feel. On the other hand, you are working on the world ocean problem. Could you talk briefly about the scope of what you are trying to accomplish by looking at the health of the oceans.

Newton Harrison: [54:04:25] I begin with a metaphor. The world ocean is the mother of us all. If the mother dies, so do we. We're not mature enough, knowledgeable enough, heartfelt enough to live without our mother. So, to have the thought, carries with it, in my mind because of who I am, and because of how Helen and I were, the responsibility for acting on the thought. Therefore, why would I have a thought? Just for fun? Sometimes, but not often. So, if I am going to act on it, how can I? So, the first thing I do is what we always do. Which is get my assistants and we do a big search. And we find out what everybody is doing. And then I realize that the problem might well be epistemological. It might well be that how we believe and how we think and how we tell each other stories and the languages that we use and the thoughts we form when we solve the problems of the world ocean, that we have created, that manifestly we are creating faster than we can solve them. So, this all adds to why I think the web of life is expelling us. Suppose that the ocean stops producing anything we can eat. You think the fish farms will do their job and they pollute the ocean more? I don't either. And I was a fish farmer for a while, that's why I know.

Susan Clark: [55:36:97] That's an incredible ending to the podcast. I do believe that your work, and the work that you and Helen have done over the years, is going to become more important as our world becomes harder and harder to survive and live in. People will be looking for models and for concepts that help them, as we say, to become more dynamically competent and to be able to take self-criticism and to be able to use that to address these issues in ways that may help those who are left to, not to completely expel all humans from the life web.

Newton Harrison: [56:17:68] I thought that you would like it. One time I asked myself, about 20 years ago, how come I was getting smarter, when I knew damn well by then, I was about 65 then? And my answer came back to me, "Well, you are not getting smarter, you can't get smarter you are gaining brain cells." What you are doing is the erosion process is that you are getting less neurotic. You're dropping things that stay in the way of your creativity. You're getting dumber but you're getting dumber in a smarter way. So that's what I concluded.

Susan Clark: [56:53:54] Well, that's a great ending to our interview, Newton. Thank you so much for joining us.

Newton Harrison: [56:58:99] You're welcome.

Susan Clark: [57:01:11] So, Tom, thanks for coming back to talk about Newton and Helen's work.

Thomas May: [57:04:53] Thanks for having me back. This is definitely one of the more Mind-Expanding podcasts that I've heard.

Susan Clark: [57:11:03] Well, the reason I wanted to reach out to talk to Newton is that both his and Helen's work in the 1970s really has become the foundational work for the art and ecology movement.

And since that time, they've continued to expand into these globally renowned artists who are talking to folks right now. They're actually reaching out to Russia to talk about the Russian Plateau and what could be done with all this climate change that's coming. So, part of reaching out to them is to really understand how they're coming up with solutions, how are they generating solutions to deal with this very significant climate change that is upon us.

So, Tom, you got a copy of the book, *The Time of the Force Majeure*. What did you think about it?

Thomas May: [58:01:52] Incredible book. There are different ways in which you can read this book and being the person who likes to know the results at the beginning, [Newton] says, this is how you read the book and you go right to the end and you read the summary and it helps encapsulate how the book is put together and then how they worked through it. So, I thought that was very interesting.

Susan Clark: [58:24:32] Well, and I think what Newton was doing, both he and Helen were doing, in putting this book together is really showing that there's a multitude of stories around all of these problems and each one of us will approach them differently.

Thomas May: [58:37:52] I agree. It almost captures the different modalities in which people learn and take information. So, very well crafted.

Susan Clark: [58:46:90] What I wanted to do now, before we start talking about the solutions that they came up with, I want to make sure we're defining what the problem is, because I think that's an important part to share with our listeners. And one of the first issues behind this Force Majeure that Newton and Helen are defining, is really the rise of the oceans. And when we talk about the rise of the oceans, we're really talking about this incredible impact on coastal communities. And as the ocean rises, that's going to impact so many, many people and what's going to happen when those people begin to have to migrate. So that's the first piece of the Force Majeure that Newton was talking about. The second one was the increase in the overall temperature of the earth. One of the things that's important is, yes, it will get much, much hotter. But as it's getting much, much hotter, what we're going to be seeing is all of these meteorological extremes. And that's going to have a real impact because it's that fast change, that inconsistency of the weather on a local basis is driving a lot of these extinctions of species and the inability of species to adapt fast enough. And as that happens, we're going to continue

to get collapse in the food chains. And since humans are really an apex animal, they're at the top of the food chain. We're in a pretty uncomfortable position if all these food chains start falling apart. So what Newton is really getting at is he talks about this Force Majeure are those three elements that he keeps weaving in and out. And this is the focus of his art, is how do you build ecological solutions that help us adapt and adjust to these three forces? Is that what you heard as well in his work?

Thomas May: [1:00:33:61] Absolutely, Susan. It's bringing those three components together of the ocean rising, the temperature rising and driving the extinction of species that's even occurring now and will continue to occur. Those type of things put together really sums up of what he calls the ejection of the human race from the Life Web. The question then comes back to us is then how do you manage this type of information? This was the kind of the mind-blowing piece that hit me when I was listening to Newton's work and reading through the book. It's his understanding of, "This is big." And the question then becomes in a very Dynamic Competence way, how do we handle this type of information? How do we prepare ourselves to see and understand this and not to cower in fear from something that could be inevitable and right in front of us? But how do we prepare ourselves if this is going to happen? How do we get ready for it?

Susan Clark: [1:01:29:98] Right. And I think that, again, is where Dynamic Competence is so important. It's the response to these huge things coming at us. We'll build our skill set, whether we're sitting at work or being with our families or trying something new. And each case we need that same skill set if we're going to be addressing something as major as climate change.

Thomas May: [1:01:54:34] Absolutely. And the other again, I'm always amazed by all the podcasts that we're continuing to do and folks that we're talking to is to hear those components keep coming up over and over again, those components of Dynamic Competence that are really just the steppingstones and the tools we need to help confront whatever issue is in front of us. I find it very interesting how the commonality continues to flow with each podcast we do.

Susan Clark: [1:02:23:51] Well, that's a bit of why we're doing this interview, is to really explore how the Harrison's approach solutions in their work so that we could learn from that and possibly be inspired by that. One of the things that I was struck by reading in Newton's book, as well as talking to him, is this concept of an ennobling problem. Tom, did you get a sense of what an ennobling problem was from what you heard?

Thomas May: [1:02:50:54] Yes, I've used it a lot of times in our prior podcasts. It's the ability to become very quiet, very calm and conscious of what our environment is. What are we seeing in front of us, not drawing from just old maps, but drawing from our backgrounds, but also looking for what we may not have even seen before? And when you do that, you then are able to see problems that a lot of folks may have overlooked for years and years.

Susan Clark: [1:03:25:66] Well, and it goes back to what Michael Hogan was talking about, his work in ecological restoration. It's really going back and being ready and finding first principles.

Thomas May: [1:03:3] Exactly, the true causes. Why are we where we are today? Not because of the symptoms or the final results, but what we're all those things that led us to what this result was.

Susan Clark: [1:03:47:95] One of the things that came up from Newton's conversation was when we work with others and we get to talk to them about the problems they see. Individually, it may not be the larger, ennobling problem, but when everyone comes together and has that conversation, often the ennobling problem arises from everybody else's perspectives coming together. And, as he said often, you know, when you get an ennobling problem because it simply hits you over the head, it's so obvious when it's there.

Thomas May: [1:04:22:66] It's the rising of the answer that comes. And when you try to force it to say, I can find the answer, it's hard to see. But when you allow everybody to express to everybody to put out, it's amazing how it does just rise in itself.

Susan Clark: [1:04:40:12] And one of the examples that Newton gave in his conversation is the scale of ennobling problems is often much larger than you would expect. He gave the example of you're not looking at what you can do to help immigrants necessarily. The ennobling problem is really getting at what caused people to become immigrants. And that only arises when you get a lot of information together to understand the interconnectedness between all of the factors.

Thomas May: [1:05:11:13] Correct. This is where we talk about maps. If the map is, somebody is in distress, I need to rescue them. The map says let's go help that individual. Well, the real question then becomes is maybe the person needs to be helped immediately. But the real question becomes, how did they get themselves in the situation? And is there something that we can go upstream and do that would just eliminate them even being in the circumstance they are now?

Susan Clark: [1:05:39:98] Right. And I know Newton also had talked about fear and greed as to things that keep us from seeing the ennobling problem. Did you hear that as well, Tom?

Thomas May: [1:05:50:87] I agree, Susan. From my perspective, safety is such a critical component of Dynamic Competence. And feeling safe in your environment, feeling safe with your own thoughts, and feeling safe with others is so foundational to be able to be conscious and see things for what they really are. When you're in fear, it erodes that. It puts you down to that instinctual level and you're unable to rise up and see what's happening because your thoughts in your mind are worrying about a certain outcome that may or may not occur.

Susan Clark: [1:06:28:18] Well, what about greed, then?

Thomas May: [1:06:29:62] It's kind of funny. Greed is almost the same component. It is where you're so focused on an outcome of what you want to have happen. And that could be a greed of money. It could be a greed of fame and status. That greed actually prevents you from being

able to be conscious and see the problems for what they are and developing robust solutions that are the best for all.

Susan Clark: [1:06:57:31] It sounds like if we're really dealing. With ennobling problems and trying to listen for them, being in these instinctual reactive phases probably is not the best place to be, is that what you're saying?

Thomas May: [1:07:08:70] Even being in Intentional may not even be enough to help drive the ennobling problems. It's good to be conscious about it, but you have to then rise up even further and recognize that there may be answers out there you've never even seen before. And you have to allow that to rise up from the situation and from other people and within yourself.

Susan Clark: [1:07:31:37] And I think we're going to hear that, especially in our next podcast with Will Roger, when he talks about what it is to be in an Integral Phase. And the idea of being silent is so important, you begin to hear your connectedness to other things in this quiet, calm way.

Thomas May: [1:07:50:33] And what arises during that quiet time is absolutely amazing. And he describes it well.

Susan Clark: [1:07:56:19] Great. Well, there's a couple other components that I also picked up out of Newton's conversation. One is this focusing on abundance versus scarcity. And I think that ties in a bit with the greed component that you talked about. What did you hear when he was talking about that?

Thomas May: [1:08:12:92] This was a concept that I had never really thought about, because when you think about the word abundance, you think that you're overproducing and thus that's inefficient and what are you doing there? But what he really was saying in my mind is that overabundance comes from things that are actually performing well, especially in nature. I guess I've always had a negative connotation about the term overabundance. But then when you balance that between are we driving for abundance or are we driving for scarcity, then it kind of puts it into to light.

Susan Clark: [1:08:51:30] Right. And remember, when he's talking about abundance, they're also coming from an energy state and that as something is more diverse as it begins to produce more so, in other words, not a monoculture. The diversity within an ecosystem raises the energetic level and increases the abundance so that what you have coming off of that, is a great deal more resources.

Thomas May: [1:09:16:99] And I like then what he said is that overabundance is actually your profit. It is what you would consider the money, but that's now what you work on because that's the Life-Giving component and the higher energy component. So, it's like the smarter decision to make, not that you take a tree and make it into a house, but that you can take a tree and leave the tree and let the tree provides more resource than maybe is needed for some other purpose.

Susan Clark: [1:09:48:41] Right. And it is a challenging concept and I'm looking forward to finding more people who can speak about this, because it is a very different way of looking at our capitalistic culture. Nothing is described that I know of in what Newton was talking about, and yet it seems to make so much sense.

Thomas May: [1:10:08:50] Yeah, it's just understanding what your fundamental basis is. Are you looking for the balance of energy and the best place to put energy? Are you looking for the balance of money? And it's just interesting. Maybe our currency is the wrong type of currency.

Susan Clark: [1:10:25:25] Right. One of the things I also found incredibly interesting and I've always known about Newton and Hellen is they work at multiple scales. On one end, they have to work on a scale that their solution is larger than the problem they're addressing. So often they work at the level of countries and even continents. So that you're beginning to address this bigger picture. He currently has a very large world ocean project that he didn't even talk about in this interview. But that's a huge scale of a problem. And at the same time, he also works on that much smaller scale, that human scale, as you saw in his final reading on Helenstad, Helen's Town, that he has developed and has proposals out. What's so fascinating to me is that's a lot of the work that I feel we're doing in Dynamic Competence where we have to understand these huge, large scale problems and begin to see how we can get our hands around that. And at the same time, we have to work at the individual human level to allow people to begin to understand and not be afraid of or intimidated by these huge problems. Do you agree, Tom?

Thomas May: [1:11:42:59] Yeah, absolutely. And I think that's a good way of putting that.

Susan Clark: [1:11:46:08] And I think the final thing that Newton talked about, which I loved at the very end, and I kept it in there because it's just so fun. He talked about growing old and he's 88 years old. He's still doing lots of active work. But in thinking about growing older, he felt that he was not getting smarter anymore, right? His neurons are not working the way they used to, but he's getting dumber in smarter ways. We are getting smarter, not because we are grabbing on to something new and we're taking it in, but we're beginning to process things differently. We're not as neurotic. We're able to see things for the wholeness of what they are. We're moving from Instinctual/Reactive to Intentional and then spending some time at Integral. And that growing old has that calmness to it that I think Newton was talking about.

Thomas May: [1:12:39:42] I agree, Susan. It's interesting that in Dynamic Competence it's always about constantly learning. No matter how old you get and how much experience you have, you always come to realize that there's more to learn and that this is more peace. So even Dynamic Competence itself, constantly is evolving, constantly is getting new pieces added to it and getting more refined. Because the more people we talk to and the more interactions we have, the more understanding of how vast this whole concept is and that we can continue to keep building and refining.

Susan Clark: [1:13:21:26] Very good. I agree with that. The last thing I want to talk about is something that matters to Newton greatly, and that is we have developed a culture that is terrified of self-criticism. What did you hear in that statement, Tom?

Thomas May: [1:13:36:94] That statement really resonated with me. As soon as you said it, I was like spot on, because from my perspective, having the ability to look inwards and say, what am I thinking and what is the situation and what are my reactions? And looking at that level of detail and then being able to admit it, is unbelievably hard, but absolutely critical and Dynamic Competence you must have self-reflection and self-criticism and being able to speak with others about where you stand to help you grow. And I am right with him. Over and over again, I see people are absolutely terrified of looking at themselves.

Susan Clark: [1:14:24:16] And I think that's an important point as we go through this, because if we don't have that self-reflection, we really can't move very easily through what we call the Instinctual, Intentional and Integral Phases. It's extremely difficult to move through those without some kind of self-criticism and to be able to engage others in that conversation of self-criticism.

Thomas May: [1:14:47:77] I agree.

Susan Clark: [1:14:48:97] So, I hope what we've been able to do and this little summary is take someone who is addressing huge, globally consequential problems and is really looking at the world very honestly and openly about where we are and where we're currently going. And in that, instead of feeling overwhelmed, what we've been practicing and what we've committed to in our lives and in this podcast, is grabbing on to this, diving into it and pulling out what we can learn individually and how to make ourselves more resilient to engage in all this strife and trouble that we're in the middle of. Do you agree with that, Tom?

Thomas May: [1:15:37:66] I agree Susan. I know personally listening to Newton Harrison's podcast, it can be overwhelming. He is bringing up issues that are right in front of us and are big. And you can feel overwhelmed. And because of our background, you and I have chosen to explore this. We're looking into the details; we're looking about is something as big as what Harrison brings up. Where does Dynamic Competence fit into this? How can we apply this to help prepare ourselves and draw in the audience and hopefully provide them with a way to have these types of issues put in front of you and be able to cope with them and be able to work through them and feel enriched by the process that we're doing something good, that we are helping humanity, we are helping each other and we are building something better?

Susan Clark: [1:16:38:09] Well, it's an honor, Tom, for me to be able to spend time with you exploring this with you. And I hope our listeners find this interesting and beneficial as well, because I know I'm loving it and it is helping me every day as we struggle with bad news and good news and crazy news and everything that's going on. I'm feeling that there's a lot that I'm gaining from these interviews and from our conversation. So, thank you very much.

Thomas May: [1:17:08:13] Thanks, Susan. Really appreciate it.