

# CHRIS DEALS WITH IT

episode notes




## EP 71 - Our Modern Village

Status	Published ✨
Publication Date	@January 24, 2025

 [www.ChrisKreuter.com/CDWI](http://www.ChrisKreuter.com/CDWI)

© 2025 by Kreuter Studios - All rights reserved

 *AI Statement: All elements of this episode are products of the author, Chris Kreuter, and made without the use of any AI tools.*

Humanity needs community in order to thrive. Our modern society has grown to incredible levels of complexity and abstraction. Behaviors that would have gotten you kicked out of most ancient villages are now tolerated and in some cases rewarded. Today's episode explores this shift, and some ways we can rebalance our connection to community.

- Recorded human civilizations have existed for around 6,000 years.
  - This is a tiny blip compared to the history of the universe
  - It's also a tiny fraction of the estimated history for homo sapiens, with evidence of Stone Age tool use as old as 2.6 million years ago.

- So civilizations account for roughly 0.2% (2 tenths of a single percent) of our history as a species!
- And in that time we've gone from Sumerian inventions like writing, math and agriculture to worldwide communication networks and globalized supply chains
- There have been countless benefits to this mind-blowing expansion of human civilization.
  - Achievements in science & technology expanding human lifespans & capabilities.
  - Enhanced quality of life through medicines, surgical procedures, and improved diets.
  - Access to a beautiful diversity of cultures, thoughts, products, and experiences.
  - Reduction in the dangers of ancient life: Natural disasters, predatory wildlife, plagues.
  - Expansion in the variety and quantity of products available for our consumption.
  - Incredible & inspiring works of art, feats of engineering, and spiritual awakenings.
  - Greater stability in social & political structures: Globally we're far from perfect; But many humans enjoy fortunate lives not living in constant fear, repression, and poverty.
- Although many problems & inequalities remain in today's world, modern civilization provides us with a wonderful platform for cultural flourishing, technological development, and longer lifespans.
  - By many metrics, there's never been a better, safer time to be a Homo Sapien.

So all that to say: I'm a big fan of modern civilization.

But: Today's episode is about exploring what we've been losing in this bargain. And with this awareness, provide some insights into how we can be better participants in our communities.

- Consider the many diverse & complex layers of anonymity & abstraction in modern society
  - Who made my food? My clothes? My vehicle? My kids' toys?
  - The answer to most are likely brands, corporations, designer labels, or the nation states where they were made.
  - Sometimes we'll simply tell people the distributor who provided a thing ("I got it on Amazon", or mention the store we bought it from).
  - It would take incredible investigating & forensic powers to track down the actual people who harvested, designed, and manufactured something.
  - For those making things, it's possible to outsource undesirable or dangerous elements of material sourcing and production to places and populations who have less choice in how to make a living.
- Because of all these layers of complexity: Many of us have become far removed from the means of production.
  - Our local communities lack the knowledge and equipment to manufacture many of the products we rely on daily.
  - Many of our basic needs get met with little effort
  - Which can lead to people feeling entitled, alienated, or privileged
  - This widens the economic divide between rich & poor
  - People have become reliant on the decisions (and whims) of major economic & political powers
- It's become easier for bad actors to hide behind these layers of abstraction:
  - Hiding abuses & unethical behavior in order to maximize profits rather than human flourishing.

- Leads to massive accumulations of wealth by individuals that get utilized for their individual betterment, rather than support & improve broader society.
  - Those who are creating the actual value for companies tend to be furthest from the money generated from their efforts (consider the Amazon delivery driver in comparison to Jeff Bezos).
  - Creates powerful lobbies that lead to the alignment of laws & policies to the interests of corporations and the ultra-rich, rather than on what's best for the greater population. (An oligarchy).
  - Corporate interests are driven by the demands of investors: Who benefit personally only when the company profits - This can lead to disinterest in the means by which those profits are generated, or the social benefits of the corporation itself. All the companies' operations become abstracted down to a bottom-line profit calculation or stock price.
- The more complex civilization becomes, the harder it can be to pivot & react, since it requires far more momentum to change:
    - Access to global news can decrease our focus on what's important locally - Yet, it's impossible to worry about everything happening everywhere.
    - Our complex communication systems and algorithms have created a wide diversity of thoughts and opinions. And creates echo chambers that lead to entrenchment of opinions and attitudes.
    - It's become harder to agree on common goals. To build meaningful coalitions or inspire the masses towards policies and actions that can lead to better conditions overall, for as many people as possible.

**Consider if your world was condensed to a hypothetical village of 1,000 people.**

- It's feasible that you would know the majority of people in the village - and understand the connections & reliance you had on them for the continued functioning of your village.

- It would be very difficult for an individual or small group of people to have the time, energy, and resources to create enough on their own to build as successful a village.
  - *We really are reliant on our civilization.*
- Great things can be created through collaboration - and there are many viable forms that collaboration can take, and methods used to achieve success.
- Conflicts & disagreements have occurred throughout human civilization - and that would be no different in this hypothetical village:
  - But it would be challenging to stay anonymous. To hide behind a corporation or a policy that mandated you act in a certain way.
  - There would a more direct correlation between cause and effect.
  - Your actions would be held on account by the village. Knowledge of this reality would require us to be more aware of the potential impacts of our actions. Not just on ourselves, but our entire village.
  - There would be actions and behaviors detrimental enough that they would lead to condemnation or even banishment.
  - Each member of the village would understand the reliance they have on the majority of their fellow villagers: Working towards the success of the tribe rather than individual gain.
- Would it be possible for a Jeff Bezos to rise within such a village? Someone who ends up controlling nearly all of the transactions within it?
  - The village would become reliant on that singular person - becoming an extension of their goals, theories, and personality.
  - This would make it difficult for anyone outside this person's inner circle to resist or disagree with the way things are happening in the village.
  - There's an argument that this person would become the actual or de factor village chief or leader. (Refer to my oligarchy comment earlier...)
  - What if one percent (10 people) in the village contained more wealth than the bottom 500 combined? Would such a social dynamic be tolerated for

long in this hypothetical village?

- o I believe you'd start to quickly see layers of complexity and protection start to arise between the village elites and the rest of the village: Fearful the imbalance will erode their power & control.

With these thoughts in mind, how can we translate all this into concrete actions?

**Let's consider six attitudes that can help us better connect to our local communities:**

### 1. **Volunteer**

- a. Contributes towards the betterment of your local community.
- b. Improves your senses of place, purpose, and belonging.
- c. Reinforces your sense of reliance on the community and respect for the shared infrastructure that you all rely on for your personal livelihood.
- d. This can take many forms: Firefighting, EMS, soup kitchens, donating time & money to locally-focused charities, working at the local animal shelter, providing financial & material aid during weather or infrastructure disasters, and generally exerting your expertise, resources, and/or muscle to improve the lives of fellow community members when opportunities arise.

### 2. **Look out for your neighbors**

- a. Get to know them: Understand their needs, desires & perspective on things.
- b. Respect their differences and how that creates a diversity of experience and outlooks within your community.
- c. Improves your perspective of the health of your village: Understanding how a policy that you may personally believe in and/or benefit from could be hurting others in your community. This might lead to shifts in your

perspective regarding the overall benefit and perhaps even your support for that policy.

- d. These relationships can lead to more flexible mindsets within a community, and individually, ultimately strengthening it by improving its connectivity and resiliency.
- e. Be mindful that in a true crisis, the circle of people in a position to help you will shrink dramatically: Often it's only your neighbors and local volunteers that you'll be able to rely on until outside assistance (or civilization at large) can return to some sort of equilibrium.
  - i. Consider this shifts in community focus during the initial COVID lockdowns, or how communities come together during environmental disasters like Hurricane Sandy or the current Los Angeles wildfires.

### 3. **Be conscious of the media you consume**

- a. How many layers of abstraction lie between yourself and the creators of content you enjoy?
- b. If possible, directly support creators whose work inspires you: Buy directly from them if possible, sign up for their newsletter, contribute towards their crowd-funding campaigns, attend their events if they tour or visit locally, and spread word of mouth about their work.
  - i. If you buy one of my physical books on Amazon, I'll make less than fifty cents profit.
  - ii. If you buy direct from me via my website, I net about three dollars.
- c. Try to avoid distributors & middlemen who insist on DRM (Digital Rights Management) - These are digital locks on content: By insisting on these tools (Such as Audible, owned by Amazon), distributors take control of the art & businesses of creators & their investors. This results in creators becoming commodity suppliers for a distribution channel that calls all the shots.
- d. When we consume media, we're spending time and energy on it. If we insist on consuming much of it for free (or through subscription models),

we push creators toward something similar to the broadcast television model, where ads fund everything.

- e. Speaking of television (including streaming): It's better at broadcasting a sports game from across the country than it is at highlighting the achievements of your neighbors. Our media is built around creating simulations and approximations of human interaction from great distances, rather than fostering interactions between people in the same community.
- f. Be wary of algorithmic media, which can drive you towards narrowing perspectives. Or towards activities that distract from the challenges facing your community. Rather than activities that encourage us to find common ground and take action towards improving the potential outcomes of those challenges.

#### 4. **Get outside & away from the screens**

- a. No matter how detailed or interactive our maps and tools get, they can't replace the territory itself.
- b. It's vital that we have honest, real-world interactions in our community. There's a big difference between interacting via video-conferencing and social media, versus being in-person, having to look people in the eye. Being fully present with people.
- c. Reduce the layers of abstraction that exist between you and the world as it is, across all the contexts of your life: Work, family, spirituality, play, and of course: Community.
- d. Avoid anonymity. Whenever possible, own your words & actions. Stand behind your convictions. But also have an open mind to the convictions of others.
- e. Provide yourself with deeper, real-world context for your thoughts & decisions. If you rely on facts filtered or cherry-picked by others, devoid of personal context, it's possible to support falsely constructed arguments and social, political, or economic policies that cause greater harm to your community. Or in some cases, greater harm to yourself.



## 5. **Make wrong things right**

- a. Call out wrong-doings by encouraging those who erred to make right.
- b. Don't just complain: Identify the problem and potential solutions!
- c. This attitude can help keep us future-focused: If this wrong action or situation is allowed to continue; How might it negatively impact ourselves and others?
- d. Small acts of right-making can encourage others in your community to take similar action. Over time, this attitude can lead to large improvements within your village.
- e. This also helps realize our personal agency: That it's possible for our skills, energy, and resources to be put to work in bettering our communities. This leads to a greater sense of pride and belonging within our community.
- f. It can also help us realize differences in our value systems compared to others in our community - What feels wrong to us may feel justified by the majority. We become aware of the distances between perspectives, potentially helping us align to the shared cultural values and norms of our community - *"this is how things are done here"*. Or strengthen our resolve to change those norms.

## 6. **Shop local rather than through massive corporations**

- a. If you buy a toy on Amazon, you'll likely save a few bucks. But you'll lose the personal, curated touch your local retailer can provide.
- b. The local retailer relies less on a massive distribution infrastructure & the exploitation of its workforce to deliver that small savings.
- c. Local retailers certainly rely on distribution networks: But a local retailer has put down roots in your community. They stay in business by getting to know their customers better. They can save you time and energy by sifting through all of that globally-available variety → Curating products and solutions tailored to your needs, or the needs of your local community.
- d. Your local retailer offers opportunities to get a better feel for the products & services you're interested in. Their expertise can provide you with a

better fit, alternative options, and a more confident purchase. Well worth the extra money that you might spend.

- e. These local relationships honor our shared humanity: Making us feel like actual people rather than database records. The architecture of these databases requires programmers to pick the categories that matter, at a granularity that matters only to their employer's purpose: Maximizing profit & return for their shareholders.
- f. More of the money you spend will stay in your community:
  - i. The local store owner can buy goods and services with their profits from other local businesses (possibly even yours!).
  - ii. Their kids may go to the same schools as yours, or be members of the same spiritual or cultural organizations, or participate in similar activities.
  - iii. They pay similar local, state & federal taxes that support the maintenance & improvement of the infrastructure you mutually benefit from.
  - iv. They are far more likely to support local artists, manufacturers, organizations, and charities.
  - v. They provide community spaces that can become sources of information, inspiration, civic pride & local culture.

### **Episode 71 Quote:**

This quote is courtesy of Douglas Rushkoff, from his book [Program Or Be Programmed](#):

*We lose sight of the fact that our digital tools are modeling reality, not substituting for it, and mistake its oversimplified contours for the way things should be. By acknowledging the bias of the digital toward a reduction of complexity, we regain the ability to treat its simulations as models occurring in a vacuum rather than accurate depictions of our world.*