

Searching for an island of calm in the storm that is us

Express your interest towards a free workshop!



AKI JÄRVINEN

MAR 27, 2026



I invite you to imagine a journey between two islands, the one you are inhabiting now, and another one across the sea. The weather in the current one is a constant storm, and when one looks out from the shore, there is more thunder and lighting close by. It is known as the Island of Relentless Storm. But, the island visible in the horizon seems calmer — not without rain and wind, not without fires to put out, but also with sunshine and joy. Let's call this place the Island of Hope and Beauty. That's where you want to arrive at.

Preamble: this is a post about an interactive, free workshop offering that I am developing. Over the years in my day job, I have designed and facilitated numerous workshops (both held in-person and online) where the participants reframe various problems and address them by making decisions. Those issues have had to do with technology, research, design, and business. Now I want to find ways to apply my workshoping expertise to the trouble we are in. There are various crises facing the planet but not enough ways for people to confront them on an individual level, to encourage behaviour change and to relieve overwhelm and anxiety. Below, you'll find the outline for an approach. It is a first iteration of a structure for a dialogue, to try to find ways through together. If the outline below resonates with you to the extent that you would consider joining a free online workshop about these topics and themes, please leave a comment or message me! I hope to attract open-minded people, both near and far, to give the introductory workshop a try. A simple heart for this post is enough, too — I'm just trying to gauge the scope of interest before taking this further. Many thanks! —Aki

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Message Aki Järvinen

The Workshop Plan

Last summer, I took a break from writing the newsletter to reflect on what I am attempting to achieve with it, apart from expressing and organising my thoughts and persuading willing readers about the mess we are in. As the title suggests, Unexamined Technology began as a project to critique technologies' grasp on our everyday lives, with the aspiration to draw insights from various wisdom traditions to inform how to negotiate our human-machine relationships. While that is still part of the project, it is only a thread among many interwoven ones. Long-time readers — thank you! — might have observed a slow shift from purely technology-related perspectives, but in 2026, I hope to be back to pursuing those, too, with the introduction to the notion of 'undesign thinking' being the first example.

But today, I want to share thoughts on a workshop and course format into which I have condensed several strands of thinking that I have referenced across the span of the newsletter: these include critical technical practice, the hemisphere hypothesis, work at the ruins, hospicing modernity, resistance of the machine, virtue ethics, energy blindness, techno-solutionism, emergent strategies of commoning, spiritual practices, and more. They will all play a part in the full course I am developing.

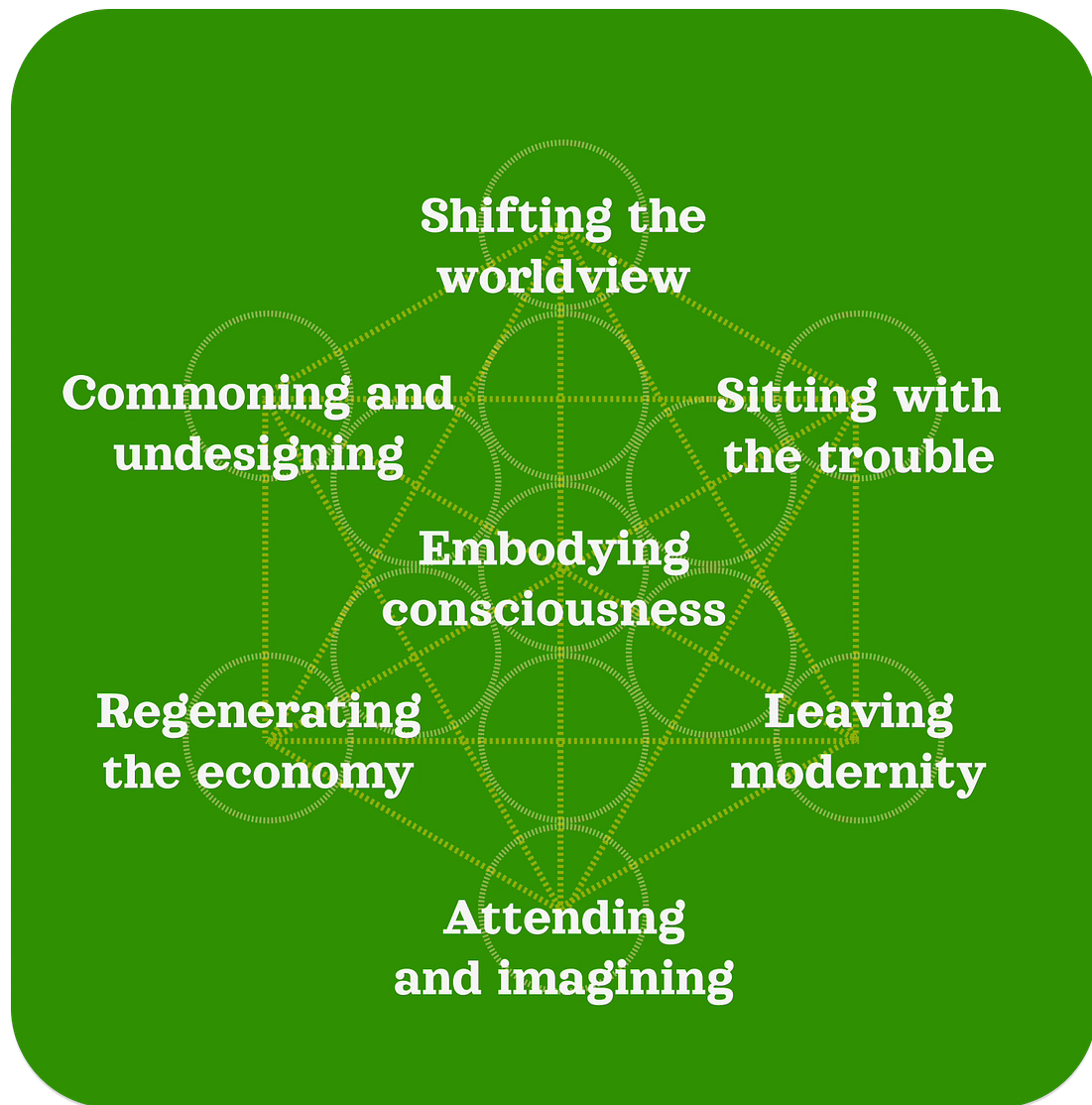
If there has been a shortcoming to my sharing of these perspectives, it has been the focus on 'just' summarising them, describing them, and pulling them together under specific topics but not going much beyond that. I have been explaining the landscape and the current predicament, but where these approaches might be able to take us, not so much. I have been wrestling with the map instead of the territory where the change happens. I don't have the answers, but I do want to put forward an approach where we could engage with the critical questions together, to relieve a sense of anxiety and dis-ease and to sketch pathways towards a more meaningful life than the grind that modernity has 'gifted' us. I aspire to move from talking to doing.

Share

The journey through workshops

To reiterate, I invite you to imagine the effort as a journey between two islands, the one you are inhabiting now, and the one where the workshops are aiming to take us. The weather in the current one is a constant storm, and when one looks out from the shore, there is more thunder and lightning close by. It is known as the Island of Relentless Storm. But, in the horizon there is some calm — not without rain and wind, not without fires to put out, but also with sunshine and joy. Let's call this place the Island of Hope and Beauty. That's where we want to arrive at.

Another metaphor to think about the journey is from the tips of leaves to the end of roots; from something impermanent, subject to the changing weather, to what holds us down and grounds us. The journey is coloured with many inspirations, some of which I have illustrated to the map below. I hope I can get across the humility with which my effort draws from a multitude of people whose trajectories span across centuries. Without their thinking, I couldn't have put any of this together. They include contemporaries, such as Iain McGilchrist, Vanessa Machado de Oliveira, Dougald Hine, Joanna Macy, Bill Plotkin, Paul Kingsnorth, Bayo Akomolafe, Adrienne Maree Brown, John Fullerton, Jeremy Lent, Martin Shaw, and David Bentley Hart, but also thinkers and activists from the past, ranging from Neoplatonist philosophers to Simone Weil and Hannah Arendt, and onwards to Lewis Mumford and Iris Murdoch.



The introductory workshop I am offering here is what tends to be called a 'signature' workshop. In it, I share a flavour of the approach and scratch the surface of the topics and methods to be covered in more detail in subsequent individual sessions of the full course. The sessions are not lectures but rather, myself facilitating an exchange of thoughts and feelings about the theme by using prompts and other workshop methodologies that are designed to lower the threshold for the participants to respond to. The plan at the moment is to deliver seven sessions, with working titles, as follows:

1. World view: from metaphysics to the world and back

Ultimately, I find that the change in oneself and the collectives one inhabits benefits from a metaphysical revelation. What I mean by that is a shift in how we tend to believe that reality is primarily constructed out of matter, the behaviour of which can be predicted according to the laws of physics. Such a materialist/physicalist worldview has dominated the West since the Enlightenment, but now it has run its course. We find recourse in metaphysics that relegate matter from its primary position and embrace consciousness; embrace the view that our brains do not generate consciousness, but they permit it. Integrating this worldview — consciousness as our ground of being — puts material wealth, and the numerous ways our current culture measures it, in their place. Matter provides some useful permanence and resistance, but ultimately, it is a projection of consciousness.

All that said, because experiencing this shift in how one perceives reality can often be quite dramatic on a personal level, I do not want to overshadow the journey to the Island of Hope and Beauty with a full metaphysical three-point turn. Rather, to ease us into the journey, we will quickly move on from the metaphysical implications and circle back to them once we have found some footing at the other shore. The turn makes more sense then and there, trust me.

2. Sitting with the trouble

The journey over needs to begin with a set of acknowledgments. They are acknowledgments about the predicament we are in, the multiple crises, and the societal collapse that is at risk of unfolding from their cascading effects. The fact that we have crossed multiple (most!) planetary boundaries is among the most critical facts to acknowledge. Facing such observations about the state of the world might lead you to various positions regarding the possibility of collapse, ranging from

skepticism to nihilism to existential anxiety. Regardless, I promote a view that becoming aware of collapse *as a possibility* is the first step towards action and behaviour change. And, as I've argued [in a recent essay](#), even the skeptics and their communities would benefit from attending to the situation as the 17th century polymath Blaise Pascal attended to believing in God: with a wager that acknowledges the possibility of God existing, and consequently, begin living as if it were likely because ultimately that path of actions is the more virtuous choice. In other words, whether you believe in the acuteness of the risk of collapse or not, the argument is that to begin shifting ways to more frugal and communal forms of living will bring more joy to your life and those around you. Besides that, it would be healing to the more-than-human-world. As the heading for this session indicates, we will acknowledge the trouble and seek ways to sit with it—staying calm while still inhabiting the island of relentless storm.

3. Leaving modernity and its excesses

This session is about starting points for hospicing, composting, and outgrowing modernity's trappings. It builds on the acknowledgments confronted in the previous sessions. It is also about reflecting one's trajectory in moving past adolescent desires, according to Bill Plotkin's framework of spiritual growth.

In *Hospicing Modernity*, Vanessa Machado de Oliveira presents an image of a dying olive tree that "evokes the structure of modernity as an ancient elder facing the prospect of death" but willing to admit their mistakes and share wisdom about how to live differently.

In the session, I employ the tree as a metaphor that structures reflection about the types of attachments to one's identity that would benefit from trimming and replanting. The elements of the olive tree shape the workshop activities (see an earlier example of the design for this session below), where I engage the participants with prompts that are designed to evoke reflection on one's identity in the current

1 The Brain and Behavior
the study of being, consciousness

Process

Questions

2 The Mind and Knowledge
the study of thinking, learning, and developing aptitude

Process

Questions

3 The Body and Health
the study of anatomy, physiology, and health

Process

Questions

Addressing each layer of the olive tree might appear an overwhelming task, but starting from the roots, one step, one day, at a time, helps us to reorient our internal metabolism to align with the planetary one. But again, the point is not to resuscitate the dying civilisation, but let it perish in a dignified way. For example, when we look at the electronic waste that the Machine is producing with us as willing participants, where is the dignity in that? Becoming more literate and mindful about

the metabolisms — or lack thereof — around us is a start. To return to the question from the beginning: how might we pay attention to the devices and techniques we use in ways that ‘see’ the natural resources they are made from, or emerge from, abiding to the laws of nature?



Photo by [Eugenia Pan'kiv](#) on [Unsplash](#)

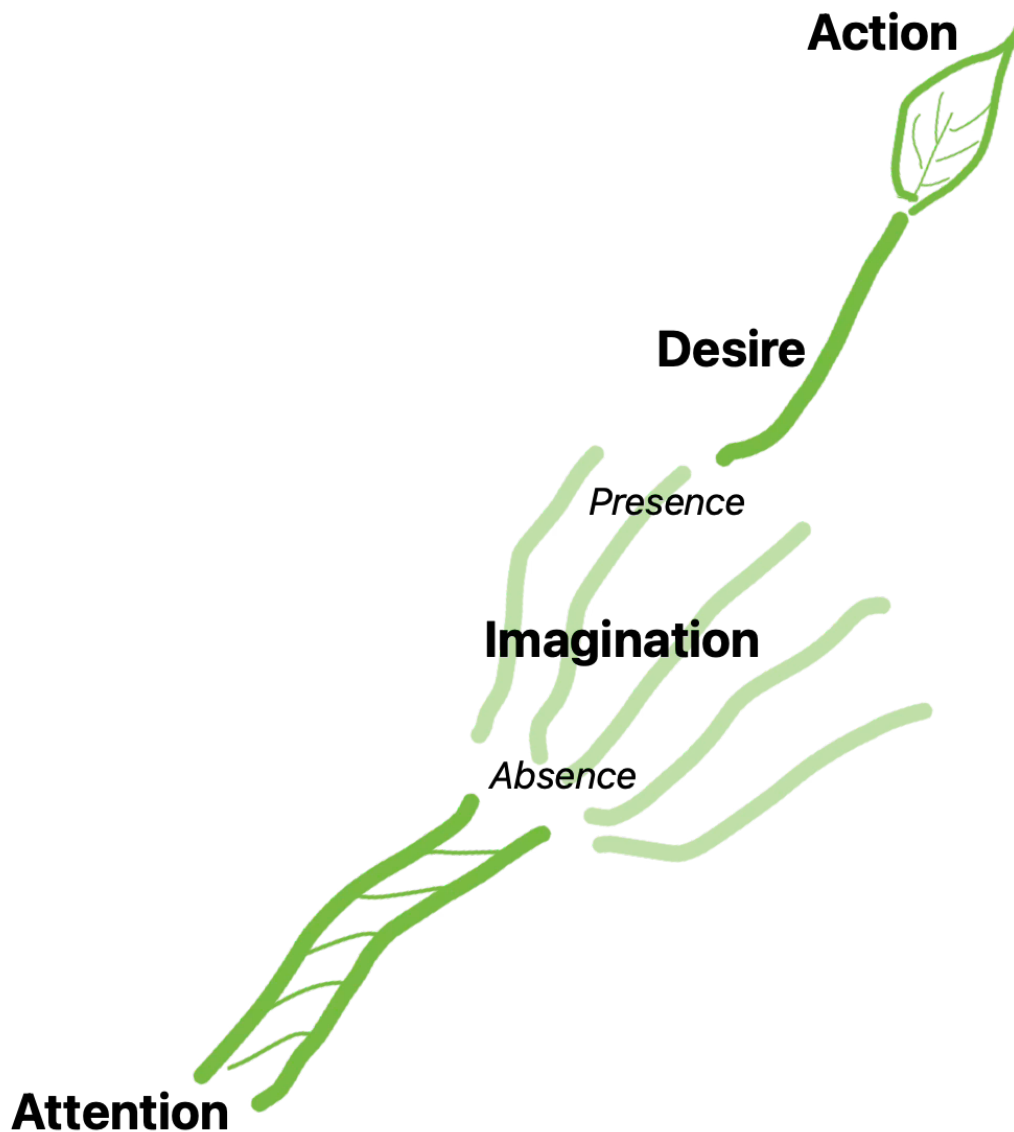
4. Attending and imagining

We are involved now in a profound failure of imagination. Most of us cannot imagine the wheat beyond the bread, or the farmer beyond the wheat, or the farm beyond the farmer, or the history (human or natural) beyond the farm. Most people cannot imagine the forest and the forest economy that produced their houses and furniture and paper; or the landscapes, the streams, and the weather that fill their pitchers and bathtubs and swimming pools with water. — Wendell Berry, *In Distrust of Movements* (1998)

The current impasse in dealing with the predicaments we are in is exacerbated by an inability to imagine ways of living otherwise, both individually and collectively. In many ways, the current predicament is a crisis of imagination. Most of us are so steeped in the machinations of The Machine that we are unable to imagine ways out of it. For example, as someone has said, it is easier to imagine the end of the world rather than the end of capitalism — hell, today it might be easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of supermarkets. Lack of imagining ourselves out of the current systems is the thesis behind Vanessa de Machado Oliveira's call to hospicing modernity as well. Unconditioning our imagination is therefore critical.

Instead of generating ideas that power 'innovation' within the existing systems, we need to discern which ideas are regenerative and resistant to The Machine and cherish them. Often this requires embracing the past; finding things in the ruins that have been forgotten or thoughtlessly left behind. This shift is also about the realisation that thoughts and intellect only get us so far; in many senses it is about tilting the balance back to the right hemisphere of our brains, to the unmeasurable and metaphoric rather than the literal, quantifiable, and purely rational.

So, in the course structure, after starting to distance ourselves from modernity's shortcomings (previous sessions), we can begin to imagine alternatives to it. Reimagining begins from changing how we divide our attention. "From the root of attention grows imagination and the desire for change", I titled a recent post.



5. Regenerating the economy and planetary metabolism

Typically, as with myself, these impasses come down to what pays the bills and how many mouths there are to feed. To economical questions, in other words, and therefore, we move on to those in the next session.

What if we would not see technology as a set of man-made inventions, separate from nature? How might we pay attention to the devices and techniques we use in ways that 'see' the natural resources they are made from, or emerge from, abiding to the laws of nature?

This session brings together the thinking of authors such as E.F. Schumacher, John Michael Greer, Chris Smaje, John Fullerton, and Machado de Oliveira, for the participants to engage with the basics of regenerative economy and the notion of planetary metabolism.

If we attended to the world through the metaphor of metabolism that encloses us to nature, we would be on a brink of regeneration instead of collapse. When Machado de Oliveira calls for experiencing the world and ourselves as metabolism, she talks about "recalibrating our existence away from separability and toward entanglement" (*Hospicing Modernity*, p. 224). Instead of imagining societies through individualism or collectivism, she argues for imagining them through metabolism:

(m)etabolism evokes nested systems and entities that operate in rhythms and cycles and that are constantly exchanging and processing energy and matter. ... The metaphor of metabolism is an invitation to seeing everyone and everything (human, nonhuman, seen, unseen, known, unknown, and unknowable) as *nested* in living entities engaged in nonlinear movement, in nonlinear time. (P. 215.)

In raising my children, personally I am wrestling with how to balance the conflicting demands for the literacies between what modernity wants — for children to be educated for the service of the global markets and to begin amassing individual wealth — and what the metabolic stance requires: volunteering to work in the ruins and rehoming oneself into relationality with the more-than-human-world on a local scale. I mention this because in the session I'm intending to facilitate discussion among other parents. How can we prepare our children to holarchy instead of hierarchy, to post-growth instead of growth?

6. Commoning through 'undesign' thinking

The regenerative economist John Fullerton says that we have to literally "*re-member* ourselves with nature". He implies that we have dismembered a connection that is as critical on a planetary scale as an artery would be on the level of an individual living being.

In this session, we will put outputs and reflections from the earlier sessions into practice. I invite and help the participants to identify a concrete, local issue, and then collaboratively we will work through what 'undesigning' them would mean, with regenerative drivers, such as commoning and biomimicry.

The outputs of undesign aim to regenerate by acknowledging the complex planetary metabolisms. A particular way to strive for this is adopting biomimicry as a reference point (something I am keen to learn more and write about in the future). Yet, the specific method of biomimicry as regenerative means functions in the wider context of regenerative economics. Fortunately, the degrowth/post-growth movement and thinkers such as John Fullerton have done a lot of the groundwork. For instance, they have pointed out that true innovation lies in how to break from the shackles of predatory capitalism and the illusion of infinite growth, and direct innovation towards what would make the living planet thrive. That is a more difficult task than innovating another online service or an agentic AI whatever.

Given the climate emergency we are in, undesigning would need to address acute issues here and now to seek self-sustaining balance, similar to what Fullerton sees as the quality of regenerative systems:

A regenerative system is self-organizing and self-sustaining. It does not “kick the can down the road” as our modern political economy does with respect to inequality, poverty, natural resource limits, pollution, health, deficits, pension plans, retirement, education, and regulatory reform.

The notions of self-nourishing and self-regulating are key to such a system, as is the need to not exhaust the critical inputs (such as natural resources) while maintaining healthy outputs for the more-than-human-world. [Adrienne Maree Brown](#) talks about emergent strategies, “how we intentionally change in ways that grow our capacity to embody the just and liberated worlds we long for”. She suggests such strategies can take the form of relatively simple everyday interactions. Such as growing food in your windowsill, your balcony, or your garden — if you have one, you really have no excuses.

Awakening to the locality and its capacity for meaning, then, is another purposeful gain from embracing collapse awareness. Chris Smaje’s questions from *Finding Lights in the Dark Age: Sharing Land, Work, and Craft* will inspire us:

(I)t’s likely that all of this — our visions of the future, our sense of community, our sense of love, our sense of the transcendent — will be rigorously stress tested in the meta-crisis that’s upon us. People will be obliged to ask themselves afresh — who are my people? Who is my community? What do I worship? Where is home?

7. Embodying consciousness and entangling with the more-than-human-world

This is where we come back to the question of metaphysics and worldview, and how embracing a different conception of reality than the one that most of us have been conditioned to through years of

education and career-ism, and the grind of the 'death cult of predatory capitalism', as Manda Scott of the Accidental Gods podcast calls it.

I have wondered why people who I have worked with in the past or old acquaintances, even close friends, do not see what I see when I look at the state of the world. I get a sense that they feel the unease, but they don't let it rise to the surface, or certainly not speak about it aloud. Without sounding self-aggrandising, it seems to me that one needs to go through a flip, or an ego-death of sorts, to truly access the pain that the world is wrestling with. That is one thing, but it's a completely another thing to break out of the slumber and try to do something about it. I have processed waking from the slumber for a few years now, the last two by deliberating on the awakening in the writings here. Therefore, I don't have the answers, but I'd like to think I have a set of questions the arc of which bends towards regeneration, reorientation, perhaps even salvation and peace. In the final session of the course, we will ponder together those questions and complement them with yours, to arrive at concrete steps to stay with the trouble while doing something about it.

An aspect of such inquiry is to own our embodied and entangled being with nature. David Abram's work is hugely inspirational here, spanning the phenomenological 'animalness' of our entangled being and seeking a renewed appreciation of our embodiment and place in the cosmos, in the midst of The Machine hegemony that attempts to make things ephemeral and remote:

In fact it is difficult to imagine how a pure, immaterial mind could know even the simplest truth about a chestnut oak or a chunk of marble, since without any body—without any dense or fluid presence, without any eyes or skin or subtle surface it could never come into contact with that rock. Lacking corporeal sensations, it could neither taste the leaves of the oak nor hear the wind pouring through them, could not feel the tension in the bouncing branches nor indeed “feel” anything at all. We can feel the trees and the rocks

underfoot, because we are not so unlike them, because we have our own forking limbs and our own mineral composition, because—contrary to our inherited conceptions — we are not pure mind-stuff, but are tangible bodies of thickness and weight, and so have a great deal in common with the palpable things that we encounter. — David Abram, *Becoming Animal* (2010)

In *The Spell of the Sensuous*, he writes about individuals who align with their footing in the present and see beyond the glittering allure of progress:

Such persons ally themselves not with the ever-expanding human monoculture, nor with the abstract vision of a global economy, but with the far more sustainable prospect of a regionally diverse and interdependent web of largely self-sufficient communities—a multiplicity of technologically sophisticated, vernacular cultures tuned to the structure and pulse of particular places. They know well that if humankind is to flourish without destroying the living world that sustains us, then we must grow out of our adolescent aspiration to encompass and control all that is. Sooner or later they suspect, our technological ambition must begin to scale its down, allowing itself to be oriented by the distinct needs of specific bioregions. Sooner or later, that is, technological civilization must accept the invitation of gravity and settle back into the land, its political and economic structures diversifying into the varied contours and rhythms of a more-than-human earth.

For me, seeking gradual detachment from energy-hungry and globally produced attention grabs and idolisation of material wealth have represented baby steps in hospicing my own past attachments. I aspire to face the impending material changes in the quality of life (by today's standards) for myself and my loved ones with dignity. At its best, collapse awareness can trigger a renewed sense of urgency and purpose, e.g., to cultivate capabilities in producing food and in other regenerative activities — with humility and gratitude, even in the face of

impending dark times. That's what life might look like on the island of hope and beauty.

Are you interested?

This structure is a distillation of the many things I have read, attended, and contemplated over two years or so, combined with over a decade of workshop design and facilitation experience. I hope to attract like-minded people, both near and far, to give it a try. In future posts, I will delve deeper into each session and the facilitation methods. If you read this far, your expression of interest for a taster workshop would be a great signal of support.

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With love and kindness,

Aki

[Message Aki Järvinen](#)



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