
I feel like this new generation that's coming up is saying I don't have to do what you guys are doing. We can create a system called our place and begin to nurture and bring value to our place in a whole different way

Gregor Barnum
Seventh Generation,
June 2, 2009

C. Otto Scharmer: Gregor, you're the director of corporate consciousness at Seventh Generation. *What are one or two or three important contexts or formative experiences of your life and your journey that brought you to where you are now?*

Gregor Barnum: So I think that the place I always go back to was being raised in a family. My grandfather started a company called Rockwell International. And during the '60s, Rockwell was building airplanes and materials for the Vietnam War. It was an interesting time in life when I began thinking that I was a part of a family that was building machinery for what I considered at that point an immoral war, that we were doing this not with a clear sense of consciousness.

And it disturbed me at such a level that I could do nothing more than join the resistance, the SDS or the radical hippie movement. It wasn't just sitting with flowers in our hair, it was, this is not right and what do you do to say to this world, "We can't keep doing this"?

The experience of going up against old paradigms is an interesting one from the standpoint that one needs to think about what to say to help people see the importance of shifting. I learned you have to be able to be so tolerant of the word "no" and also be on some level so humble that you can't just sit there and say, "I'm right." Because that doesn't help the conversation to move through, either.

And so I guess I learned—since my family was running this business I could yell "FU" at everybody.

COS: So that must have been a tense breakfast table in those days. What was that like?

Gregor Barnum: My father and I suffered a whole lot, because he worked for the company at that point. In fact, even today, **nobody in the Rockwell family really talks to me because of the disruption that I caused by saying I'm not willing to call this okay. I'm not willing to say that this is the right thing to do.**

And on an empathetic level, when I look back in reflection, I began to think about it from the standpoint that if people in their framework don't see the moral implications, it's not that they're bad. **It's just that their consciousness doesn't hold at that moment what's needed to move forward.**

The important thing—and this is what I keep wrestling with continuously—is to tell them that I know that is not beneficial, either. It's always to find out on some level—and I love the way you say this—**how do you develop a conversation where both egos begin to work together at a whole, more evolved level?** That's been an important piece of working with you, really trying to stage the conversation on a level where **everybody is being inspired to create something, to bring the future into being.**

One of the things I do here at Seventh Generation is to try to be a vehicle from which this new economy takes form. Business really, on some level, has a moral imperative to recreate itself in a whole different way. But the business mind doesn't know what that moral imperative means when it translates into meeting the bottom line. **It's an interesting tension knowing that you have to stay viable and so-called sustainable in the marketplace, while at the same time creating a whole new level of moral value.**

We've been trying to integrate systems thinking into the organization because, **if your mind can hold bigger frameworks or in some ways look at systems in a much different way, you begin to feel your moral value.** This is the one piece that I always come back to, after spending I guess seven years in an ethics program. You know, Seventh Generation's named after this Iroquois quote. And the quote goes, **“In your every deliberation, you consider the impact of every one of your decisions on the next seven generations.”**

To me, it's a design principle and it's also a moral imperative. **How do we think about bringing that level of morality into the marketplace so that everybody sees in their every deliberation the impact they have.** And not only the system we have now, but for the next seven generations.

COS: So you say, when the mind holds that large a framework, then you begin to feel that deeper dimension of morality, was that what you're saying?

Gregor Barnum: Yeah, yeah.

COS: So if that's the case, that would mean that coming up with an extended framework is the key leverage point, right?

Gregor Barnum: That's right.

COS: So living in that Seventh Generation story that you have been co-creating over the past years. How did that play out in extending the framework?

Gregor Barnum: The founder, Jeffrey, and I have known each other for a really long time. **Ultimately what we're trying to inject into this whole business idea is that people in designing products for humanity really take on both the environmental consequences and the social consequences of their actions. And how to design that into the normal frameworks for doing business...there are an amazing number of restraints on people. Ultimately the restraints keep going back to what you already know.** And what people know already is a fairly safe place for most people to live in. So how do you create a space internally where you can allow for that level of discomfort and in a sense experience something that may not yet be. It may not be new, but on some level your will is driving you to do it because you know it's right. Somewhere in your unconscious you're doing this because of the value you think it's going to bring.

And we're at this point right now where we're trying to encourage that level of innovation to really take hold here at Seventh Generation.

COS: *What are the symptoms of the transformation that you're experiencing?*

Gregor Barnum: The present U.S. has such a secular aspect built into it. The thinking doesn't have built into it a sense of moral responsibility. I'm trying to localize it all the way down to what would you do in a Seventh Generation? We produce products that clean the house. And so I think of that and then I think of GM. They make automobiles.

And then when I begin to think about the business world and these two strands of this world, if you really held a moral question to the product—would you come up with a whole lot of products to clean your house? Is that the right question?

In the car industry—what are you laughing at?

COS: No, it is a radical way to ask that question. You need some, definitely. If I look at our house, we need some.

Gregor Barnum: But what if you looked at the house from the standpoint that **the house is two and a half to five times more polluted than the outside air? Just buying our products doesn't change the pollution on the inside.**

And what if you shifted the whole business away from just making a better and more sustainable glass cleaner to looking at what we need to do to really create a healthy home? So there's a health crisis going on in this country right now. So what do you do? You get a better healthcare

system. Well, at the same time that you get a better healthcare system, you're producing an immense amount of toxic stuff. There's an immense amount of chemistry that we don't know the long-term impacts of.

And we keep looking at fixing the system through getting better healthcare without saying why we are producing all this shit to begin with. If we were really creating healthier and healthier homes that not only touched the system called **our house and the people that lived in the house, then ultimately you begin to see what impact that would have on the bigger system, which is the healthcare system.**

And so the idea of a spray can of glass cleaner, while it's relevant, isn't as relevant as whether we help create a system called a healthy home for you.

The same with the car industry. When you think about it, what's the moral implication of buying a car? You say, well, I've got to get around. But there's an immense amount of earth that goes into each one of these things. They don't last very long to begin with. They're getting better and better at demanufacturing them and putting them into this new demanufacturing economy. But why are we not thinking about the idea that the industry should probably change to something like people-moving? So what would the new design look like that had a much bigger question attached to it?

When I come back to the economy I keep thinking—so, Humpty, we're trying to put Humpty back together again. We're trying to take Humpty who fell off and has some cracks in him, and reform him so he's better again. **How do we stage the question on this massive level that says what we're really trying to create that's different for humanity at this point in our evolution? I don't know yet how to stage that ground, how to engage a much different mind in all of us, so that we're creating a conversation that begins to look at a different question.**

COS: Your job title, Director of Corporate Consciousness, what does that mean?

Gregor Barnum: What does it really look like? **So walk into a grocery store and know that every one of your decisions in that part of your life, consuming, has an impact on every system around you. Even in systems you don't even know about.** Some of this stuff you're buying from places, you don't even know where it comes from.

And when you begin to think about the moral implication, what is the right thing to do, how do you go about it in this process?

When I go into a store and I think, **'So, if I have to base every one of my decisions on a moral decision, I probably would walk out of there with very few products.'** Not because it's immoral, but because I don't know, with all the information that's in there, what the right thing is to do. And so I'm trying to stage it from that question: if we

really took on the responsibility that every one of our decisions mattered, what kind of society would we create, not only for us now, but for the next seven-plus generations?

Am I making sense?

COS: You are making sense. If we could see the impact that products have on the whole value chain to all people and other beings, that would have such a huge impact on our behavior, I'm sure. But the lack of transparency, the fact that we can't actually see that impact directly, keeps us in our old habits.

Gregor Barnum: And at the same time, every one of the people who put those products on that shelf made design decisions that didn't hold both the Earth's systems or social systems in mind. Sure, you can make a plastic and, sure, it's recyclable. But you just wonder at some level, are we really looking at the moral implication of everything that we're doing right now?

And I'm trying to stage it from the standpoint of not being good or bad. I'm trying to stage it as a design question. **What does the world most need right now with 6.5 billion people in it, to create a higher level of well-being for every single individual on the planet? How do you take on a question like that? In every one of our decisions, we are making a decision for those 6.5 billion. It's impacting the whole system on some level.**

The tension in having this level of conversation is that my head can see these things, but it doesn't translate into doable, pragmatic, grounded ideas that make sense in the marketplace. I'm stumped on that one.

COS: Most of us are very aware of that split. There's one thing that makes sense for you as a human being in your mind and in your heart, and then there's the rationality of the existing business machine that allows you to do certain things and makes it very difficult for you to do different things. I think we all have had many experiences of that.

So in the case of Seventh Generation, is that a story that at least to a certain degree has transcended this whole dichotomy?

Gregor Barnum: Here's how I see the tension right now. A lot of people have been hired in the company who have traditional CPG backgrounds, consumer product goods backgrounds. And in every which way they are looking through those eyeglasses, those lenses, to begin to see how to grow this company, to really be a much bigger, much more substantial force in the marketplace.

And they are using all of the knowledge that they have learned in the marketplace to make that happen. How we source products and how we think about recycled content and how we look at

all the different ways in which we make more and more environment into our products is geared up to happen here.

But are we actually transforming business? Are we moving business to be something so totally different in the marketplace that it adds in everything it does more value to the systems that touches, whether it's the Earth or whether it's the social systems?

We're living and we're doing more and more good, but have we made that bigger leap to actually creating what business can become? If the preferred state is actually to transform business, what does that actually look like? How do you begin to, in the everyday deliberation, build that level, layer that knowledge, into everything that we do? I don't know how to do that yet.

COS: So if you look at the larger situation today that we face, the economy and society as a whole, *what do you think are the most important root issues or the root causes that need to be addressed to accomplish what you just talked about, which is to transform the system?*

Gregor Barnum: I think one of the most important pieces of this is, **how do you make a conscious consumer?** So that every consumer is really conscious of their every deliberation. What's the level of education that all of business is responsible to give people?

I think it's important just from the standpoint that people don't know what they're doing. That's an interesting piece to me. Another piece of this whole thing is "innovation." **I just wish that on some level we began to look at innovation as having moral value built into it: that every innovation has a design principle that primarily has both Earth and social systems built into it;** that there wouldn't be a product out there with a chemical in it that we didn't know the long-term impacts of; that we would understand that our not knowing is a critical value. How do we begin to shift to that kind of mentality?

I see **five parts** of this system that need to be working together in a much more deliberate way. I begin to see it much more in a local situation, rather than in a federal situation. The **for-profit, the not-for-profit, in a sense the government and the academy, and the media**—how do all of these parts of the society work together in a way that actually provides more value to people?

When I walk through the world, I feel like they're separate entities. And I wish that there was a different dialogue between all of them. And I'm not sure what that looks like, so it sounds really heady. Government to me still doesn't, still hasn't allowed it—I'm watching this whole Obama thing right now and I keep wondering on some level **why people don't confront**

the role government really has in the next evolution. What does this 21st-century government really look like? We still keep looking at it from 18th-century mentality. I don't think that holds up right now.

I think of the academy, like what I've seen coming from you, and well, what does education really look like? Because the form that it's in right now somehow needs to have its own evolution, which I don't quite see yet. And the work you've been doing gives me the sense that, my god, somebody's thinking about that.

I watch internally this whole different dimension between the for-profit and the not-for-profit world. You have people making all this money and you have all these people who don't have any money but have all this heart. And why is there such a clash between those two?

And then I watch the role of the media, which is still to paint these bleak, horrible pictures of what the world's all about, as if that's reality.

And I see all these things working separately and I wish there was a different level of conversation going on between them.

COS: Well, they are separate, but what you described, some of the phenomena there also, structurally they seem to be the same, right?

Gregor Barnum: Oh, that's interesting.

COS: The 18th century is looming out of all these examples in one way. There's an old way that is separate and that comes with its own problems that you described. Then there's an emerging new way that we see evolving in some of them, at least, but don't know exactly how to carry forward.

Gregor Barnum: So why not? That's interesting—how do we carry it forward, it's an interesting question. Don't know yet.

COS: If we just think about *the next three to five years, until 2012, 2014, what do you see? What do you feel? What are some of the possibilities that you have sensed are about to happen?*

Gregor Barnum: So the one big one is this **“we, the people-ness.”** I feel like that the marketplace and/or the world will change in a whole different way if there was a level of education or awareness in the consumer. It's funny, I keep thinking about how much TV gets away with stuff. Keeping people stuck in these same realities. And then people go out and keep acting out of these same realities. I don't know if there's a direct relationship, but all of the TV, all of the movies, there's not this level of inspiration. It's not tapping into who is “us.” Who are “we” in the true sense of our humanity.

And so, if you suddenly got a shift where you began to encourage that conversation, whether it was through TV or through movies, **where people really got a sense of what's under the hood of our humanity, would that on some level become the new force?** I mean, Bucky used to say that **one of the most lost aspects, the most wasted aspect, of resource on the Earth is human consciousness. And I don't think we really know what's under the hood.**

The second piece of this whole thing, there's such a **level of fear on the planet.** I walk around and I'm wondering why is there this anxiety thing? Why are people walking around with this sense of stress as their mantra? Day-in, day-out, people are so overloaded. And they don't think that they can on some level be free of it. Why is that?

I keep trying to find what inherently in the people, if it shifted, would shift all these systems?

COS: That's an intriguing question. But in terms of the next three to five years, so that would be one scenario, right? That this shift could actually happen. What are other scenarios that you sense are in the air that could possibly play out?

Gregor Barnum: I watch continuously, here in Vermont and in other places—this **local living economy.** I begin to see people really seeing the advantage of what it means to take hold of your life and work within this community-based world.

I feel like this new generation that's coming up is saying I don't have to do what you guys are doing. We can create a system called our place and begin to nurture and bring value to our place in a whole different way. And I think building that level of community is going to be on some level an important aspect of what we could do in the next three to five years.

I just had surgery on lymph nodes and I looked at the picture of the physician's wall of the lymph system. It was interesting to see all the nodes and how they're connected in the system called the body. Every one of those little nodes looks like little local systems to me. And you keep transmitting; the **localness keeps moving throughout the whole system. When you impact one part of the system, it impacts the other part of the system. If I were going to step back as an artist and paint the picture of what well-being looked like for every human on the Earth, I would paint a picture where everybody was tapping into the value of each one of these nodes.**

COS: That's a beautiful picture and that's like, more like a local-to-local global economy, right? Or local-to-local global politics. It seems to that what's missing partly is the connective infrastructure that would connect all these different little circles and dots.

Gregor Barnum: That's right. So the important thing about what you just said, which is always a hard one to state at this point in our evolution, is it would get rid of all of the nation-lines, that we would begin to see a non-nation. In the morning, you turn on the news. You hear about all of these factions—Egypt and Israel—you hear about all of the lines that we've drawn in the sand and how we're dealing with the lines in the sand. But when you look at the picture you just described, there are no lines. People are interconnected. Ultimately, it's what nature looks like. Nature doesn't have these lines in the sand—I mean, obviously, between a desert and a rainforest, it may look like it—but there's this interconnection piece that I feel like human consciousness can flow through.

COS: You used the word “consciousness,” and the other day when you attended a panel discussion here at MIT, one of the propositions you put forth was, well, what we really need to figure out in our age is how to build consciousness into our products. **How to build more consciousness into our products.**

I started thinking, well, what does that really mean? If I look at a product, how does consciousness show up? And you have used that term a couple of times again in this conversation. So, for you, working on that level, what is consciousness? And how is it possible, if at all, to build consciousness into products?

Gregor Barnum: Consciousness is this sense of **what you need to do to not live in the past and begin to set the stage for the future. How do you begin to see that the reality around you is always in transformation?** It's not steady, it's changing.

When you really get to the sense of presencing, when you really hold in that moment, when you're sitting in the midst of a whole “system,” you become the stage in which this future begins to take form. How do you let it take form inside of you? How do these new forms that are coming in begin to prototype? How does it begin to land in the pragmatic?

And then, in the middle of this presencing thing I begin to hold what's coming in on some level and begin to work with that. **I understand consciousness at that point. That it is at some level the thinking world, the feeling world, and the will world all coming together in one breath.**

Ultimately I needed to get better and better at being sensitive to that so that on some level I became an advocate for allowing the new to keep coming in. How do you keep allowing it to keep evolving?

I'm sure I haven't even come close to knowing what's under the hood at this point. But when I think about the possibility of what is under the hood and how we begin to work together in this community to build this—that's a wonderful thought on some level.

How do I then translate that into the idea of consciousness in a product? Ultimately, it gets down to the whole value-adding chain. Take a laundry detergent. I need to know that the people who grew the palm oil that went into this were treated fairly. I need to know on some level that, even though we're just purchasing, that we are helping that community breathe and live at a higher level of well-being, because we're connected to it on some level.

We need to know that the agriculture that went into that palm oil was an agriculture good for the Earth. That is it is, on some level, building a regenerative place.

And then, when you take that all the way through the different resources and people that touch our product until it goes into the water or into the landfill or into the recycling bin, how do you keep getting better and better at asking what the moral question, what is the impact this product has on the next seven generations at this point along the way? **You want what ends up going back into the Earth to make it a better place, even the bottle.**

That to me is the consciousness piece, that you're building more and more of a regenerative system.

COS: So if we take that and apply that to the social transformation challenge that we have as a whole society, what would that look like? What could, if you just dream forward, what would some of the design elements look like that could make that process that you just described, practical and pragmatic in the various systems we are dealing with?

Gregor Barnum: Oddly, I'm writing this odd script at this point about the power of the marketing mind. I know that on some level that this incredible strong desire that we all have in us to want "stuff" is extremely strong. We all look to things and our wanting is so strong. It's amazing how much, when I walk out there, how much my "wanting" thing is on.

Everywhere you go, you want. **If I turned down the volume on the wanting I wonder what would begin to appear. I think a little bit of that is happening right now,** that people are deciding not to want more. And I only can say that I hear this—but people are beginning to see that there's a different picture.

And when that begins to come down a bit, I wonder what would begin to emerge.

COS: So here's what I heard you describing earlier. I thought when you described the Seventh Gen example, what I saw in my mind was almost like a rigorous, scientific process or inquiry with everyone in the value chain investigating, inquiring into the product's economic and social impact, and improving the process, so that the transparency but also the well-being along the whole value chain is enhanced continuously.

That's how you translated consciousness, right? **Consciousness in a product means that the product reflects these qualities in its process of coming into being.** And so applying that to other levels of society, I think what's really interesting on an infrastructure or process level is people coming together, looking at the overall process across the whole system and improving stuff and reinventing stuff as needed so that the well-being of all is enhanced.

That's what I heard you describing in the Seventh Gen example. Do you see that applicable to the other sectors of society?

Gregor Barnum: Yes, I do. I saw where you were going with this. So I got on this wanting thing. I always wonder what will happen if you turn down the wanting. So would all of the stuff that's in the marketplace right now actually be there? **So that you're looking along the whole value chain and you're looking at every aspect of everything that—every system that's being touched along the way. And you're looking at it from a design consciousness space where everybody asks, "Am I doing the right thing to bring this product to market?" I mean, to me, that's phenomenal. But we have to get rid of I would say 90% of the stuff that's in the marketplace right now.**

I keep hearing that everything that's out there represents somebody's paycheck. So you eliminate all this stuff, what, then, do you do? I mean, you still have to come up with this idea—and this is where I wonder where things begin to go—**this idea of having a job seems a bit antiquated to me.**

COS: Say more. Why is that?

Gregor Barnum: Fuller used to say, what **if we paid 80% of the people or everybody in this world who realized that what they were doing, their job, had no significance whatsoever for the evolution of humanity, to stay home?**

Probably 80 to 85 percent of all of these jobs are making things that are worthless for the well-being of humanity from this point on. And Bucky said it with a sort of wakeup call, why are we doing this? We're doing it just to survive. Most people live by this idea of 9 to 5 and five days a week and they look forward to the weekend.

And the question really becomes that, on some level, if you really had to question what your moral value is or if what you're doing is adding moral value to your life and those around you, would you be doing the thing that you're doing?

COS: So what I—just to play it back, I heard you describing almost like four systems conditions. Or you could also say four key transformational strategies for the way forward that you touched upon.

The first one was what you termed **Earth to Earth**, which means that whatever you touch, you make it...

Gregor Barnum: Regenerative.

COS: Regenerative. And then the second one is on the consumer side. What would happen to the economy if we **toned down the want?** Which really is on the consumption side, a way to a higher level of awareness, right?

The third one is, on the value chain, how to put in processes that allow the whole **system to see itself and to regenerate itself** accordingly.

And the fourth one is the **income question**, right? That to some degree, we won't transform the system or address this survival question if we all think we have to do a lot of useless stuff just in order to survive.

So that's a key question, that's like a systems condition. The systems condition would be income for everyone, a basic income for everyone so that this survival question in some ways has been addressed and then allows a higher degree of freedom for individuals to pursue what they really want to create and their own morality.

Gregor Barnum: You just said something that's so absolutely important. When I listen to people stressed out by doing their job, the level at which they're doing it, I feel like the essence of this human being is not coming to fruition.

Think about what you just said. In some ways, the system on some level has created us to live in boxes. And **we really don't know not only what's under the hood**, but we don't know the essence of who each one of us can really be. I think about this question of essence continuously. **What if you really got a chance to know who you are, that the value of who you are is so absolutely important to the survival of this world right now? How do we help grow that?**

Now, you have to understand, I'm the father of a severely autistic kid. After 15 years of analysis, I've learned more in being the father of this kid than through the thousands of hours of therapy I've gone through to figure out who the hell I am. I don't want to forget what you just said, the importance of how we all on some level have not taken up the question of **Who Am I?** And the importance of who I am to others. We can keep putting Humpty back together again, but that has been a total blind spot in all of our lives.

COS: Well, you articulated a key missing dimension of the current economic theory. That dimension of self-knowing and of consciousness is missing in economic theory. And you could say everything—so all the current economic institutions that we have are designed to keep us away from that question. How to address challenges in a way that we address this deeper question, that's what's not reflected in current economic theory.

If you were to advise Barack Obama on two or three things that he could do that would help to advance the transformation to a more regenerative economy and society, what would you say?

Gregor Barnum: I think we need to put together a committee of people and really look at what the founders put together. On some level it needs to be totally rethought.

We are working within a system that was good for 200, 300 years ago. And we for some reason still hold that these white men—and I'm not putting the founders down on any level—but we still hold that they understood what the demands are for what the world needs now. **And I really think if the Revolution happened now, you wouldn't come up with what they came up with.**

I don't know how to put that question into people's heads, because it's almost sacrilege to say that the present form of government should be challenged.

But ultimately I wonder, if we don't do that, if we're just still going to be in the putting Humpty back together again phase. So I would say **how do we dare you to be that innovative? To really question the foundation of what government is. And what's the next evolution for the 21st century.**

Second, **what does an economic system that doesn't focus on GDP, that has well-being values built into it, what form does that take?**

In his book, Gus Speth really questions this GDP mentality, and a lot of people do. I don't know why we keep trying to tell everybody that that's the only indicator that really needs to be thought through.

Third, **what role does government and business have in creating sustainable, regenerative business? How do you begin to understand, truly—what is an economic system built on well-being? And what does the corporation really look like if it's designing Earth to Earth?**

I don't know what to do with the immense tensions that are going on in the globe right now. Obama has this way in which he's creating relationships, conversations with other people out there. And what is our role in creating the real conversation that says, Look, we've all held to our systems of looking at ourselves as nation-states for a long time. How do we come together as a full group and redefine? I mean, really, really think about whether this is the right setup.

So I'm going to say one last thing and the reason I liked your whole idea of an education. I feel like that question is only going to be entertained at the level of educating the youth, because at least they would be open to questioning the global system as it looks, the global social system.

But I think you've got to start right now preparing people for 50 years from now to ask that question or be open to having that question asked. That was why I loved what you were doing in proposing a new type of global action learning school.

COS: If you could pick *two or three places that maybe would help us discover and observe some of the new principles, processes and transformation mechanisms at work, where would you go? So where can we go and observe and study this new regenerative economy and society in the making?*

Gregor Barnum: Well, the BALLE world was an interesting world, it's all of these nodes. People are building local living economies which are all about how we think locally, providing for the well-being of all the people in our local area. In the Mad River Valley here in Vermont, people understand the people in the Valley and want to work together at a whole different level. They provide food for each other. There's not this sense of exchange only through money. They really are looking at the well-being of the Valley for the next 15, 20 years. They really—the farmers market—I mean, these are all things that people have heard again and again. But when you stand in the midst of it, you feel like, oh, my god, there's real humanity here.

COS: And it's a real movement here in the U.S., right?

Gregor Barnum: It's huge.

COS: So that's the first one. What else? You mentioned Nicanor Perlas?

Gregor Barnum: Nicanor. Everything I know of what he's trying to do in the Philippines. He's worked pretty hard over the years so I think of that.

There are not a lot of places I know. Is it Sweden that's got this zero waste by 2020? I always think it'd be interesting to go look at what they're doing.

COS: As usual, the Scandinavians, a couple of years ahead, right?

Gregor Barnum: Yeah. But I'd love to see how that's translating into their social systems. Is it creating something? I must say, I don't know of many places of people really road-testing brand-new ways of doing things.

COS: Well, that in itself is an interesting observation, because you're pretty much out there and connected to many of these related initiatives. In spite of all of these conversations we have had about these issues, there probably aren't that many developed living examples that exemplify and prototype new ways of operating. But it's in the making in many places, certainly.

Now, going forward, what do you personally think are the most important research questions that we should be focusing on?

Gregor Barnum: Okay, so I think there's just one I would like to focus on. In a system that is so set and the people who are in power in the system are so set on seeing the system from only one direction—in other words, the economic mind or the political mind or the business mind only see that system from where they sit—**how do you stage the conversation that says we need to shift that?** I'm going to use a Bucky word—we have to create a new **preferred state**. And we need to build a critical path that we all can buy into that really has a whole different set of principles.

You know, when somebody all of a sudden realizes that they have cancer or gets a divorce, when something cataclysmic goes on in their domain, something changes in them. Their armor breaks or something. And I don't know how to stage the conversation so that I'm seen as someone who's just in the business world looking at it, or you're seen as just someone from the academy looking at it from that angle. **How do you touch people's humanity and let that level of deep conversation happen so that we actually get the shift to take place?**

I don't know how to do it yet.

COS: That's a great question.

Gregor Barnum: I just feel like, until I get that one, I don't know what else to focus on.

COS: Yeah. Thank you, Gregor. Is there anything else that you wanted to share with us that we didn't touch upon yet?

Gregor Barnum: No, I think that was it, I think we did all right.

COS: We did, Gregor, it was really great reconnecting with you. And I look forward to continuing this conversation next week when we will meet here at MIT.