



**John Petersen & Peter Merry – 13<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

*PM: What would do in a Global Transition Initiative?*

JP: It all depends on where you think the transition is going to, of course. And to my way of thinking, we're seeing a collapse of the old system that is much, much bigger than climate change. Climate change is a question mark in the whole equation rather than a certainty, as seems to be the case with many scientists in Europe, at least – and the United States.

I think we're at a fundamental punctuation in the evolution of the species. You can easily show that these kinds of things happen on a regular basis and now's the time for one of them to happen. Our whole way of living, driven by the financial system, but exacerbated by climate change - which I now believe is starting to indicate that it's going into a mini-ice age within about seven or eight years, not global warming - that, and the beginning of the end of petroleum, and food shortages and any number of other things are conspiring together to fundamentally change the way humans live on this planet.

The transition is going to be very, very painful for a lot of folks, because they've got their sense of self and their sense of values all tied up into the present system. And even for a lot of well-meaning folks, I don't believe that they understand that what happens in this kind of a transition – this is a transition to a new world that has a new human being.

The only reason why we all change the way we do things, is because we change the way we look at things. We change who we are and our outlook, our paradigm, our values, our system. And it isn't just values that are overlaid on top of the existing system, it's a new perspective that's related to inclusivity and interdependency and oneness, that makes us see ourselves and our relationships and everything in terms that are really quite different from the assumption that we're all different, we're all independent in any kind of way. And that is a profound, extraordinary, epochal kind of shift that is not in the general lexicon. It's not in the spectrum of things that most people in the futures business, or most of the well-meaning people thinking about sustainability or whatever, are thinking about. In my opinion what they're trying to do is... the underlying presumption is that the present system is going to continue to exist in one way or another, and their efforts are to try to change or shape that system.

I believe – not only because of the historical precedent, but also just from looking around and seeing how things are shaping up - that the present system is not going to continue. That the economic system is going to fail. And what we need to do is design a new world. Essentially. And it needs to be a new world that is built around this whole notion of oneness and interconnectivity. And that, by the way - which makes it even harder for most of the people that I know who are trying



to think about this - is that that new world is a multidimensional world. It has an exquisite spiritual as well as a physical component to it. And by spiritual I don't mean feeling good and meditating or anything like that, I'm talking about *spirits*, I'm talking about intelligence, entities that exist all around us and are an integral part of how this reality manifests itself. And so I believe that this transition into a new human being that engages actively, specifically, regularly with the greater intelligence in this reality and co-designs, co-invents, co-creates the new world – will get to the point where we can manifest physical reality in all kinds of ways. And that kind of outlook is really radically different – in my experience at least – from a conventional approach of folks who are trying to make change, because you can't bring a room full of the usual suspects together and have them talk about a world like this because they don't *know* about a world like this and *think* about a world like this. They're trying to change the existing world and modify it, make it better, all those good things. Rather than admitting that the distinct possibility exists that the present system is going to collapse around us and we're going to be in the business of designing a new one.

*PM: OK, so what would you say if the world's governments showed up on your doorstep and said "John, what should we do?"*

JP: The world governments would never do that, because the world governments wouldn't understand that... Governments are always last in the sequence of institutions to buy into change. Businesses are probably second, maybe education, universities and things are third, and governments are always last. They don't ask for change until everybody else gets up in arms and says 'let's change'. It's individuals – small groups of individuals – who initiate the change. I've sent messages to Claus Schwab – I'm in a working session with the World Economic Forum – I've said 'you'd better consider the possibility that this whole thing is collapsing and you can't re-inflate it, and that you can't make it better and reboot it like they keep talking about.' And these guys don't understand that. And more than that, they're going to want to change it in terms that are familiar to them. This is the mismatch here. It's the same problem of going to experts and asking them about the future. They're going to tell you about what they understand already. They're experts on the past. They're not experts on the future.

I mean, no one has ever experienced anything that even approaches the profound nature of what we're going to go through in the next couple to three years, it appears to me. And therefore, governments are going to fail before they quit trying to sustain themselves and to prop themselves up in some way. I hope that Barack Obama gets to the point somewhere in the fourth quarter this year, that everything that they've tried has so failed that he figures out – and hopefully he'll get some of the messages I'm trying to send up there too – that some group ought to be thinking about what a new world is built around.



And so if a government came and said they wanted you to start on this new world, you'd start with designing... the presumption would be that the old world is going to collapse and going to fail, and a new one would have to emerge. And so what you'd have is an emergent process that would be built around trying to – on a kind of a clean slate – think about what an integrated new world would look like, built upon a new set of principles. And the new principles are things like cooperation, sustainability and a handful of other kinds of things. I've got a whole project that I'm trying to get funded that's designed to do just this.

And then what you'd have to do is go out and do research on all the emergent... the presumption here is that the organism is trying to provide a solution to its problem. And what's happening is that popping up all over the place are new ideas. About economic systems, about governmental systems, education and so on. So what you'd need to do is run around and do a pretty extensive research project and find all these new emerging ideas. They are all ideas that are based upon a different set of principles, and for the most part they are enabled by the internet in some way, because the internet represents, in tangible terms, this oneness principle – this business of connecting us all together into one integrated whole.

And then what you'd have to do is get all these things together and then go through a couple of different kinds of processes – you can use gaming, a couple of different things – I've got some folks who want me to help build a new community based on some of these kinds of things – so you could just go out and do it yourself, or you could simulate it with games or some other mechanism. What you'd essentially need is some kind of emergent process where you began to surface – put all the economic ideas on the table, and put people into an environment where – and this is where it gets harder because people for the most part are thinking in the present, they're not thinking in the future – So you have to somehow see if you can shape the environment such that you can get them out of the present, which is very, very hard to do – to get them to where they can visualise how a world based on a new set of values and principles might operate – what it might look like.

And so then you'd try different kinds of economic systems, and you see what works and what doesn't work. And you mix them and match them and try them. And then you do another session and you throw in some stuff with the government, with new government ideas, and you see where they match and where they connect together, and where value is transferred between one part of the larger system and another one. And you start to integrate it and put in a new legal system, and then education and so on, and somehow – I think you can do this in about 50 different iterations – and then there might be ways to shorten it. But what you do is you essentially emerge a new model for a new world. And this new emergent model is an architecture, it's a framework, a rough cut, but the important thing is that it has internal consistency. You know that the big parts work, and the big parts work together. You can now hold this up, brand it. You



can call it 'new world', 'green world', 'blue world', I don't care what you want to call it – But you brand it and you hold it up and you say to people, here's the new world we can point to.

Because it seems to me this is the only mechanism that gives hope throughout this process, because as the old world collapses, most people are going to watch television at night and get invested in all this stuff that's happening around them and it's going to be very, very depressing and very painful. And it's only in being able to hold up a new model of a new world that makes sense, that people can look at and say 'yes, that might work!' and 'Yes, I can see where those ideas all come along, and I might change it a little, and we can add to it in this way', and they can invest some time and get engaged. But that's what has to happen. The model becomes the light at the end of the tunnel. It's a new focus, a new vision, it's a new thing that people can intentionalise – which is an important component – an idea that people can put their energies and their consciousness around.

And so I think it's something like that. There are variations and versions of that. You are probably familiar with the constellation process – family constellations and things like that. I've done some research and it seems to me that you can accelerate this whole process and you can do these things through constellations. The guys who do constellations tell me that you can do future constellations. So I can set up a given future that's based upon a certain set of principles and then do a bunch of constellations that tell me how the different parts of the economy would work, and how the different parts of the government would work, and so on. It's a whole lot less time-intensive and costly than if you did gaming, but the point is that there are a number of different kinds of approaches for getting to this. But in the end what you need to do is essentially find some way in which you can mix and match and try these things in an environment where appropriate and thoughtful people can start to design the essential nature of a new world.

After you get this to a certain level of detail or internal consistency, internal integrity as a model, then you could go to Second Life or something like that and start yourself in a whole new world that just worked on these principles and you could scale the thing and start to get many thousands of people playing in this context and refining it, of course, and becoming familiar with it then, so that when the old world collapses and there's a vacuum, and everybody's looking around for new ideas, this one becomes obvious and available.

There's another thing that's important, though. Every time there's one of these paradigm shifts – I'm quite certain that I talked about this with you when I was there in the Netherlands with the IBM people - there are these big stair-step punctuations in equilibrium that historically have always happened, and they're getting faster and faster, and they're getting closer and closer, and that's what I think we're in the middle of here. The last one that happened was perhaps the



printing press and the transition took a couple of hundred years, and it changed how we as human beings communicated with each other and how ideas changed, and so on. But it was a relatively gradual transition. In past transitions like this – you could think of it in terms of the printing press: before Gutenberg invented his moveable type, if you had gone to some monk somewhere who spent all of his life illuminating manuscripts and writing down and duplicating things, and you'd said 'we're going to go through a transition here and there's a new world going to show up, and I'd like your best ideas about how this might look', there's no way in the world, it would be impossible for the monk to work his way to any notion that there would be printing presses and ultimately electrical things that type by the thousands and that in an hour you could print documents and distribute them all over the place.

There would be nothing in the environment, nothing in the context, nothing anywhere that would give him any sense of what this new world was going to be. And conversely, if in fact he came up with some ideas, and they seemed to make sense, and you walked him round to all of the abbots and the archbishops and the experts of the time, and he said 'look, here's what we think the new world would be', and they all said: 'Hey, yeah, that's a good idea, we think that's probably right', then by definition you'd be wrong. Because if it made sense in the old context, it would not be a realistic representation of what might show up in the new one, because it works on a fundamentally different set of principles, in a new kind of way. And that's the problem with this process here. If you walk around to the usual suspects and the experts and you say 'Give me your best ideas about how we put this all together', and you all wrap something up in a nice bow, and it makes sense, and Barack Obama says 'What a great idea' – you know you'll be wrong!

This is so different from anything any of us has ever experienced before! This is so fundamentally different! I could build this for you in lots of different kinds of ways, but not the least of which is that if you have – I'm working with some folks in India, the Oneness University... If you believe him, Baghavan says he's going to jack this consciousness energy and this Deeksha business is going to make exponential increases as it goes towards 2012 and then the whole consciousness is going to flip on the whole planet, all of a sudden at one time. Shoot! How in the world do you do *that*?! What's a new world look like after everybody suddenly comes out of the fog and they see everything differently? That's what essentially is the variant of the magnitude of what we're up against.

And so a lot of the conventional approaches that we might take, or at least the overlay to the conventional approaches – we can only do things we know how to do – but the approach that you bring to those things, the mindset, the permeability, the openness to really consider radical alternatives, intrinsically – if we don't do that, we're lost in this whole process. It's just mental masturbation, we're all going around making feeling good – that's all we're all meaning, I've got no problem with that... but it's limited. It's the old paradigm, the old reality. What



I see is really quite different than that – I’ve gone through this, Peter. I’ve got a couple of groups who want me to build a new community, a new town, on these new principles and other kinds of things. But then when you get to them, they say ‘Well, I’ve got a farmer down here, and he really understands how to do farming, and he’s really great, so I want him to head up the agricultural thing’, and you say ‘No, the new world doesn’t work like that! You work with the *spirits* in the new world, you talk to them, like I do on my farm, and they tell me what to plant, and they tell me where to plant, and how to do it’. And you get around all this mechanical and chemical and other kinds of stuff. I don’t know. It’s the big deal.

*PM: OK, so the problem is that if we start talking about this kind of stuff, which I also see emerging, people are going to think we are loonies!*

JP: Well that’s of course the point! The point is that you can’t be evangelical about this. You can’t evangelise people. If they’re not there, you’re not going to get them there. There some kind of a – for me at least – I wouldn’t call it fatalistic, there’s another word that I’m not thinking of right now, but there’s an approach to this that says some people are ready for this and some people aren’t. And I’m not the guy that has the capability - nor do I think that it’s the right thing to do – just to convince a whole lot of folks who just do not see the world in these terms, that they *need* to see the world in these terms. It’s their life. They’re here, doing their own thing, whatever they’re supposed to be doing at this time, learning what they’re supposed to be learning, and it’s not my job to do that. My job – in terms that I use in some of my talks – is kind of a lighthouse. Fly a flag and see who comes and camps underneath your flag. Because it seems to me there is a relatively small number of people who are resonating. And I guess in practical terms, if you had to design it and you thought a new world was going to evolve, wouldn’t it be a small number of folks that would see this new vision in a different way and be the core, the seed group that would help to get it all going? I don’t know how you get large numbers of people convinced that this is a good idea. They want to drink beer and watch television, I don’t know how you get past that!

*PM: So how could we start convening the people who are sensing this and would be ready to build this picture of the new world together?*

I don’t think that’s hard. I think all you’ve got to do is go on the internet and put a page in What is Enlightenment or whatever, and you’ll get all kinds of people who’ll come to a conference or a process or some other kind of thing. Everybody will come with their own point of view, but the core will hear that message. They will know, and they will resonate. And by the way, I believe that it will work in ways that we don’t understand to communicate and make people familiar. They’ll run into people in a strange way and read things they’ve never read before, and all that kind of stuff, and the organism, the *universe* will facilitate the process. All you’ve got to do is articulate a clear message and put it out.



*PM: So how about we look to gather a small group either side of, for example, the annual State of the World Forums, as part of this emerging Global Transition Initiative?*

See, that's a good idea! What I suggested to Schwab at the World Economic Forum is that they ought to have some little back-pocket group – they ought to entertain the possibility that this present system is not revivable. That it is terminal, it is dying, it's going to collapse. Right now they're doing what all of modern medicine does, and they're just trying as far as they can to keep the dumb corpse alive. And somebody somewhere ought to have some little programme that's starting to say 'wait a second, if there's a new world that's showing up here, let's start thinking about how we do this'. That's what I'm going to try to get the White House to think about a little bit. So I think that the idea that you're thinking about is a good one. There are some people – I've got a dozen, 15 or so that are really ready to do this kind of thing, and want to get together this summer, and in the terms of one of my designer friends, we're going to design world 3.0. We're going to design the whole new world, and it's all based upon new things. But like I said, it's a small, relatively quiet, low-key kind of thing. Because I don't think most people... They'll see the words in their own way and they'll be attracted by it all, but they're not ready to give up, convert. They just won't see it in these big terms.

*PM: And what's the role that **you** want to be playing at this time?*

JP: Well I'm trying to build a big model of what this new world is about in any number of ways. What I think I know how to do is do integration and visualise alternative futures, and how things might work together. I've got a wonderful network of really bright and relatively enlightened folks, so that's what I'm trying to do. I'm trying to get a little critical mass around building a model for what this new reality is.

*PM: To what extent could this initiative be integrated into an existing initiative?*

JP: The initiative would have to have some significant degree of autonomy. If you go back to the notion that all the conventional wisdom is wrong, then the dynamic that would be produced if you started a small outfit that was doing this is that the conventional wisdom would try to co-opt the thing. And not the people *inside* the group - because you'd want to choose them very, very carefully, because I promise you, if you don't get the right people in there, then all you need is one or two of them and they'll screw the whole thing up. You just have to have people who can park their egos at the door and they are just absolutely curious and permeable and they'll listen to any questions, and any ideas, and they'll consider any kind of possibility – I mean there aren't very many folks like that! And the second you start to put something together in that kind of a context, if it were part of a larger movement, to the extent that some of these ideas started to become public – and I'm not suggesting that they *shouldn't*



become public – they start getting sniped at. The Ken Wilbers of the world, or somebody like that, would suddenly take off after you because you're not talking about something that they've talked about, and this isn't consistent with *their* model of integral, or whatever, and so the principle is no different than how you do innovation in a large organisation like the government. You build a skunk works, you build this insulated function that reports straight to the CEO, you guarantee that these guys are going to get themselves promoted, you pay them well and you give them full latitude to work on anything – in the direction that you want to get done - but they do not interface directly with any of the rest of the organisation, because the rest of the organisation has got a fundamentally different mindset and they'll try to kill them. Because it's an invasive new idea that's working its way in. And all the white corpuscles are going to come after it and try to kill it.

And that's exactly what would happen here – these ideas that the small group would generate are going to be so radical that, just like science goes after any new ideas that come out, or politics, geopolitics, or anything else – they'll try to kill it. And let me tell you, the spiritual community is no different or better than anybody else in that regard. They have all their ideas about what they know and what they think is true. And all I suggest is that this would be some kind of quiet and relatively insulated thing, and that you'd spend a whole lot of time thinking about what you made public and when you made it public and what you were prepared to do in terms of making sure you had integrity in the whole system and process.

*PM: And I guess we could use some of the new web technology to support this group in between meetings...*

Yes, absolutely! And you know, obviously with some of this social networking stuff you can start to put a dedicated group together, like minds who would start to think about or share information about some of this stuff. One of my friends who is very interested in this, Nova Spivak – Peter Drucker's grandson, an entrepreneur building a new web 3.0 semantic web capability called Twine. Nova will easily do a dedicated space on Twine and we can all share information and other kinds of things. There's obviously ways to leverage the internet technology to help make this kind of thing happen.

*PM: Thanks John. I'm going to brood on those ideas and see what action wants to emerge.*

For more on John Petersen's work see <http://www.arlingtoninstitute.org>

For more on Peter Merry's work see [www.petermerry.org](http://www.petermerry.org); [www.engagency.nl](http://www.engagency.nl); [www.humanemergence.nl](http://www.humanemergence.nl) and [www.thehaguecenter.org](http://www.thehaguecenter.org)

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