Finding pathways to transformative system change

Objective 8.1

To explore ways and means to strengthen our political capacity and effectiveness to achieve major systems change in the next 20 years.

8.0 Watch "System Crisis, System Change: A Talk with Gar Alperovitz," (40:57; watch the following excerpts, from 1:04 to 7:52, from 9:56 to 16:41, from 19:27 to 33:12, and from 36:00 to 40:33 - total time 32 minutes)

System Crisis, System Change: A Talk with Gar Alperovitz

Alperovitz, Gar. "System Crisis, Systems Change: A Talk with Gar Alperovitz," video, 40:57, posted by The Next System Project to YouTube, September 30, 2016.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvyLY2Vtai4   **(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvyLY2Vtai4)**

In this featured lecture Gar Alperovitz sets out the challenge "to forge a politics that is vibrant and strong enough to lay the irreversible foundation for transformative systems change." To move beyond projects, as important as they are, and towards leveraging all we do to advance system change.

Academic, historian, political economist, and author, Alperovitz is well known for his leadership, building model projects such as the Evergreen Cooperatives in Cleveland, and his movement building such as the Democracy Collaborative, The Next Systems Project, and the U.S. based New Economy Coalition.

In this talk, Alperovitz explores the factors supporting and thwarting progress towards "transformative system change." Many of the initiatives highlighted in this course, he would label "pre-figurative" that is, they represent organizational forms and social relationships that should form part of the architecture of "the Next System." In different words, they are signposts to guide us on the journey. Our job, he argues, is

to connect the dots across these diverse pathways, and to organize a politics that creates the conditions to secure irreversible systems change within 20 years.

Alperovitz predicts a challenging future ahead. Crises will deepen. Decay will continue, outstripping the control of managers and making the political system less and less manageable. Collapse is likely, and with it the consolidation of power under authoritarian rule. Countering this bleak future is a growing demand for systems change akin to Polanyi's double movement where resistance to the logic of current systems coupled with the building of alternatives can potentially occupy the space created by decay and sharpening contradictions.

Are we close to being able to articulate an architecture for the "Next System?" Not yet, in Alperovitz's view. Many positive values, practices and models underly the results being achieved in a various sectors. But, while important, they are not enough. For political impact we need to demonstrate how the best of our current initiatives are pre-figurative and become clearer about their implications regarding the architecture of the next system: a system we call the Co-operative Commonwealth.

For Alperovitz ownership of property is a key institutional issue. He identifies several models of ownership that extend democratic control at the enterprise, community, region, and state levels: ownership of property is central to real systems change.

He asks what we need to consider, practically and politically, if we are to to advance significant systems change. What are the pathways to strengthen our political capacity as change makers?