

Another piece that we might look at about what makes innovation transformative is a much more kind of the human side of it. When we look at something like Barefoot College or we look at what they're attempting to do around the Registered Disability Savings Plan, or what they were attempting to do around the Great Bear Rainforest. We've look at all those things at the earlier stages before we could see what the impact was.

One of the other things we might ask is: *who's at the table?* This is the human side of it. We talked about what kind of ideas and what kind of values is the innovation trying to reconcile? And then: *who's there?* Are the right people to be there in order for this thing to be a really generative change?

This is the idea—again coming from Brenda Zimmerman, which you can find out more about in a work called *Edgework*—of generative relationships. Most innovations which have gone outside of the idea being just in the person's head demand that you'd build relationships with other people, with other organizations, and with other ideas. This is part of the *bricolage*, a part of what we often call the *adjacent possible* in complexity theory.

You try to draw other ideas to you in order to, in a sense, build the capacity of that good idea. As a system entrepreneur, you probably arrive at something that looks innovative like Barefoot College or the RDSP or Great Bear Rainforest after it's already done and there are already multiple actors involved and working together or having conflict.

One of the ways you can assess the promise of it is by looking at: who are those people? And should they be working together? This is what Brenda calls generative relationships. There is no clear path in the zone of complexity. Therefore, you do need to generate these ideas and actions where no precedents exist.

Generative relationships are not just *productive*. They are generative. They are the ones that will create novelty. But what makes them generative? Generative relationship produces new sources of value which cannot be foreseen in advance. They are part of the innovative process to bring the right people together.

If you were evaluating the promise of an innovation to be transformative, in addition to looking of what the actual elements were, you would really want to look at who the people were. Brenda developed this thing

she called the *Generative STAR*, which is a good way to measure the general potential of a collaboration—which all innovations are, ultimately. If there are social innovations that get beyond the original idea, she said there were four elements (which makes it a star, like for arms of the star).

First, separateness or difference, to allow for facts to be seen as interpretation. You really actually do want to be getting together with people who are quite unlike yourself if you're going to really generate something different. and you can see why, because we are dealing with situations that are defined by paradox. We're dealing with passions that are defined by nemesis and shadow. If you aren't prepared to engage people who are quite different from yourself, the likelihood of the transformation happening is quite low.

Second, you have to have the capacity to work with those people. You have to be able to get beyond your shadow to own your own shadow, so that you can talk and listen to those people, to work with them; and they need to be able to talk and listen to you. In the case of the Great Bear Rainforest they invoked what they called their "*love strategy*," their refusal to react."

Then, third, there need to be action opportunities. It's not enough just to get it and be separate and to talk; but you need to be able to be finding the resources, the synergies, the support and the opportunity in the current situation to create something that's really new.

And, fourth, there has to be a sustained reason to work together. Although this is going to be something new, it needs to be something that's going to resolve the paradoxes and provide mutual benefits for everyone who's there. They continue to be people who'd care about it. They hold values, which may be opposite, into really promising innovations but also integrative in a sense of integrating those kind of values.

There are ways in which these things can be quite wrong. Here's a perfectly balanced star, and that's what you would hope to find when you're looking closer at a promising innovation; but there might be huge separate differentness, a lot of willingness to talk and tune, but actually, in that moment in time, they are lacking real opportunities. The opportunity context isn't there and partly because of that, there's not a sustained reason to work together. Then, you have a

strong S and a strong T but a very weak A and R.

Or, you could have a situation where you have lots of action opportunities and a good reason to work together but, in fact, there isn't enough difference to create something that is really innovative and there may be very poor skills in listening and talking. Even what difference is there, won't be used to generate something which is really different than what's gone before.

Or, you could have all those things in balance but none of them very strong. There isn't enough difference. There isn't enough listening. There aren't enough action opportunities. It's a kind of a stunted star, not really, really generative in that way.

Or you could have just one thing: a separateness, difference being huge, but the others being quite weak. And what do you have there? Well, you have the shadow repeating itself all over again. It's very likely to just disintegrate into argument and conflict that never goes anywhere.

A second way in which you look at any innovation and say whether it's promising or not, is whether or not it has this kind of generativity in terms of the human actors

who are working together and sometimes, as a system entrepreneur, you can improve that. You can say, "*This is an innovation. It's got a lot of good going in it but it needs some additional elements or it needs some additional support in order for it to be a well-balanced and generative STAR.*"

Again, the relationships are key, in summary. Lessons from complex system in nature say that relationships and connections are key. You can't generate all of the innovation without these relationships and connections. No matter how many programs, products, and good ideas there are, ultimately, it's going to go through human actors. The success of those relationships is ultimately going to be the success of that innovation. It's something that needs to be attended to in recognizing a promising innovation.

In sum, in terms of identifying promising innovations: promising innovations will be a mix of things. It will be *bricolage*, like we saw in Barefoot College. You need to deconstruct that innovation like we've tried to do in our exercises to really understand it—and here I'm harking back to your system maps. When you go back to your system map or your journey map, they should be located at the

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points in this system where, if you created a change—a real system change—it would have this cascade effect.

It should also, in terms of a value proposition, reconcile the horns of a dilemma. It would be a much more highly sustainable, high impact, transformative solution if it does that.

And it will also contain this element of generativity—that it will have people engaged and associated with it who truly are involved in generative relationships.