

Collaboration

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Welcome to the Ernst Strüngmann Forum podcasts—a series of discussions designed to explore how people collaborate under real-life settings. Joining us in the series are high-profile experts from diverse areas in society, whose experiences will lend insight to what collaboration is, what it requires, and why it might break down. This series is produced in collaboration with the Convergent Science Network.

- P. Verschure My name is Paul Verschure and together with my colleagues Jenna Bednar and Julia Lupp, we are speaking today with Margaret Levi, the Director of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences and Professor of Political Science at the Woods Institute for the Environment. Welcome, Margaret. Could you give a short description of your biographical trajectory that brought you to where you are today?
- M. Levi Well, it's been a long career. I mean, I've been around for a while. I've always been interested in conflict and cooperation: how people who often have countering interests manage to find a way to work together and develop a cooperative or collaborative strategy. As I've looked at unions, which I've done at multiple times over my career, labor unions, or whether I've been looking at the relationship between citizens and government, or members of an organization and their leadership and with others that they have to work with, the central questions that I have addressed are: How people cooperate and collaborate and what are reasons why they don't? One of the things to emphasize is that a large focus of mine has been on governance or institutional arrangements and the rules that manage an organization or group which make that easier or harder, which creates boundaries or openings to work with others.
- P. Verschure Have you always been at Stanford?
- M. Levi For 40 years I was at the University of Washington. In 2014, I retired from the University of Washington to take the job at Stanford as the director of the Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Sciences, an old and important organization that encourages collaboration. Jenna is now a fellow at the Center, and I'm also a professor of political science and a senior fellow in the Woods Institute for the Environment.
- P. Verschure Great. Now that we know a bit of your background, could you tell us what collaboration is, and what is it good for?
- J. Bednar We're starting small, really small.
- M. Levi So, I've focused a lot over the last couple of years on issues set forth in a book that I wrote with John Alquist, *In the Interest of Others* (2014), which describes the conditions under which one could build what we call a community of fate. Now I know that term has a certain meaning in German, which we weren't quite aware of when we started writing, but it has multiple meanings in German, so we can go with the positive one as opposed to the sort of Nazi variant. What we were really interested in is why it was that certain unions that we observed were able to build—and this is the answer to your question really—were able to build a collaborative process that allowed them and made them willing to actually make costly sacrifices if need be, sometimes giving up income, sometimes going to prison, possibly even losing their lives or their jobs, in order to act in ways that would assist far distant others who could never reciprocate. So, for me, collaboration is not only about the cooperation between people who know each other and have face-to-face, or the potential of face-to-face interactions. Increasingly, I am interested in how do you create collaboration across distances, and geographies, and differences, which are really much harder to surmount? If we want to answer, address, and make progress on issues like climate change or social justice, really big issues that matter to us as a world, then we have to think about collaboration in this much larger sense, not just in the ways in which small groups interact. How do you create

collaboration with those you'd never meet, you wouldn't interact with, you're not part of the same structure, as in a federated system?

P. Verschure What would you see as the defining features of collaboration? What are the necessary ingredients to be able to speak of a collaboration?

M. Levi Well, Paul, I'm not sure I'll answer your question quite the way you mean it, because I'm not part of or haven't unfortunately been part of this conversation, so I may not understand collaboration in the same way as you. But as I said, what I really emphasize is institutions both formal and informal: the rules of the game that govern a group, as well as the norms that govern the group; both formal and informal institutions are absolutely the critical ingredients of collaboration. And the issue is that we know a lot about what those formal rules and norms look like in a variety of settings, but we don't know how to scale them, or we have difficulty scaling them. As I said, my interest in collaboration is with those who you might never get to know, who can never reciprocate, but with whom you need to act in a cooperative way, as if their interests are your interests; because they ultimately are. How do you get people to recognize that it is the crucial to recognize common interests and then to be able to act on those common interests? Those are the two crucial ingredients for collaboration: recognizing common interest and acting on common interest.

P. Verschure One might argue that that is like a facilitator of the collaboration. We might have a common interest (e.g., to contribute to the discussions at our forum) but not collaborate in contributing to it becoming a success, because, e.g., I go out for a run even though I still share your interests. Similarly for institutions, I could argue that rules and norms are like mediums or procedures that shape the collaboration, but they don't generate the collaboration itself. Would that be correct?

M. Levi Only partially, because what I hear you asking is two different things, and I said, I've not been part of the conversation on collaboration, so I had a suspicion that you meant something different than what I was talking about. Part of what you're talking about are free riders, and I do think the institutional rules can help with free riders. The norms and the rules. The other part concerns actually giving your full contribution. It's one thing to keep somebody in the room and not have them go out for a run and quite another to get their active participation and full contributions to the collective process. It's hard for me to talk about this in the total abstract. Can I resort to an example? I really would like to go back to the unions that John Alquist and I studied, and then talk a bit about the problems of scaling because we really did observe, I think, what creates collaboration in your sense, but then how to get that to a larger community, because it was based on the fact that people sort of knew each other who were collaborating, even though they weren't cooperating with people far distant than themselves.

J. Bednar So, Margaret, because I know we're going to want to talk a lot about your experience with the unions, I'd like to pause for a moment and make sure we're all understanding collaboration. How is this distinct from other kinds of human interaction toward a common goal with a shared interest? When you use the word collaboration, people understand different things. We want your definition. When you use the word collaboration, how does that distinguish an activity from other kinds of human interaction? And if you want to describe it in that union context, that would be terrific.

M. Levi Well, in all honesty, we never used the term collaboration. It wasn't the term of art for us. We use the term cooperation, if there was a term to be used in that way. But I hear what Paul is asking, about this additional sort of behavior and I think there's an additional ingredient beyond cooperation, which is simply that everybody sort of contributes money or time, or is in the same room, and isn't free riding. I do think there's another dimension. And if I think about our example, I can see, in that sense, that collaboration was created, but not with the far distant others who couldn't reciprocate. They weren't collaborating. They were receiving the effects of collaboration. I think it's a complicated question when you want to create a collaborative process that gets people to engage in actions that they might not otherwise

engage in. It's very hard. I can't even imagine how to scale the collaboration, to create the collaboration on the other side. I mean, I think that would be a very interesting thing to think about. So let me get concrete because this is sounding very abstract.

In our union case, which involved longshore workers on the West Coast of the U.S. and in Australia, we looked at unions in the transport sector. We also looked at longshore workers on the East Coast of the U.S., who were very different, very economic, narrowly focused only on economic interests, as well as U.S. teamsters (i.e., those who drive trucks). Longshore workers are the ones who load and unload ships. Out of the many that one could explore, these two unions were able to create an expanded community of fate where they saw beyond their immediate members or their immediate interests as union members. Several things created that. First, they had a constitution. When the unions were formed or reformed in the 1930s, they were formed around a constitution. The leadership, in a sort of Philadelphia moment as we say in the U.S., the founding created a constitution based on participatory democracy and a relatively easy recall of the leadership. There were a series of arrangements already in place, very different from the other unions, which were much more top-down. Second, the unions, the leadership recognized that if it was to achieve anything, it had to be effective as union leaders. Their work involved satisfying people's material needs. The union had to do that. It had to get the improved wages, working conditions, benefits that people join unions to get. Another thing I should point out about these unions is that even though they were all white, working-class men, they had very different political positions. It was a very heterogeneous group in that sense. Some were communists, some were very right wing, but they somehow managed to work together. How that happened involved not only the participatory democracy, but educational processes that existed in the union, which aimed to socialize members as well as provide the means for members to learning about the world around them. What it was really like to change their beliefs, if you will, about what the world: how the world actually worked, who was doing what to whom. This became very important when they were asked to stop loading ships that were taking scrap iron to Japan because of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. So, taking it to China because of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in the 1930s. Or the Australians refusing to load ships, Dutch ships, that were going to put down the uprising in Indonesia. The union members had to know about those things, enough about them. But equally important was that when any decision was made to engage in a costly action, there was real debate and discussion about it and challenges to the information that they were receiving. So the leadership or whoever was initiating the action may say, look, those ships are being loaded to go to Indonesia and they're going to put down the rebels. And somebody would say, how you know that? And they'd have to discuss it and provide sources; they'd have to convince each other of what the reality was so that when they decided to act, which they did by a vote, it wasn't just that the leadership told them what to do; most of them believed what it was that they were acting about, and they believed it was unjust, and unfair, and that they could—and this was the last part—they had some agency to do something about it. Now, whether they really were effective is another thing. I mean, I don't think the longshore workers stopped the Dutch attack on the Indonesian rebels, or stopped Japan from inhabiting Manchuria. But they felt that they could act on their feelings about what was unjust here and do something for people that were distant from them. Part of the motivation behind this was the feeling and belief that if it could happen to them, it could happen to us. If you don't stand up now, then this could come back to haunt us later. We need to do this because someone else will have to help us when we need help.

P. Verschure Margaret, is this actually not an important defining feature? The idea of a common goal. There is a commons at stake and a common value, in this case. Isn't the common goal of banding together around a common goal that which turns cooperation into collaboration? Because for cooperation, this might be also more opportunistic, right? We transiently work together, but we still pursue different goals, but there is sort of an alignment in the subgoals. But when

there's alignment on an overall, an overarching goal of the collective, we start to speak of a collaboration. Would you agree with that?

M. Levi Why not? I mean, I think people are learning from each other, it's more than simple cooperation, like we're all paying our taxes. That's more than compliant cooperation. I mean, there's an engagement here between the leadership, the members, and among the members themselves, which is an important ingredient in all of this, for sure.

P. Verschure Margaret, just a footnote, the forum is still in the future. So it's not that we are in any way representing some consensus view on anything. We're trying to find our way through the dark here, hoping to gain insight through our dialogue with you.

M. Levi Got it.

J. Bednar Margaret, in your work with John Alquist, you use this phrase and you've introduced it already into our conversation of "community of fate." I think it would be wonderful if you could share with us why you chose that particular phrase, rather than just say that they have a common interest. What is it about the phrase "community of fate"? What is it that you are observing in this collaborative process that caused you to want to use that phrase as opposed to just saying they share a common interest?

M. Levi The first time I used the term was in an earlier paper with David Olson on the protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle in 1999, in which we both were involved with the longshore workers. What we saw there had some very interesting developments; groups were coming together whose economic interests were divergent. Some of the industries and some of the unions around the common goal, if you will, were dealing with the environment. Some of the workers who worked for Kaiser, and Kaiser came together, driven by a recognition that on this larger set of questions, their fates and destinies were entwined. There was a larger set of issues about the world where a common destiny was at stake, and this was beyond their immediate economic interests of how do we distribute the profit? What's the share between the company and the workers? That's one set of interests. But this was something even bigger, where they could recognize that they had to ally in some way. What we saw at the protests were the people who were the environmentalists and some of the unions coming together around these kinds of common issues, as well as some of the unions working with some of the companies. So we reintroduced that term, John Alquist and I, when we started looking at these questions. Again, there are lots of questions you could study about unions, and we weren't studying the question, which many have and done well on: Under what conditions can you create collective action and therefore an effective union around winning wages, working conditions, and benefits from the employer? That's one kind of common interest. We were looking for things where there really was this larger sense of entwined destinies around big questions.

Jenna is involved with a program at the Center for Advanced Study on the Moral Political Economy, and you can see how these ideas become the moral political economy idea, because it really is about these big, socially significant questions and how we create, whether we call it cooperation or collaboration, around these larger issues. Martin Luther King would often exhort us to wrap ourselves in a single garment of destiny around social justice issues. It's really that kind of question where we're coming above the common interest, where we could create a collective action process, to really think about these larger sets of questions and how that could be achieved.

P. Verschure If you speak of a community of fate, fate might look very different, depending on your point of view. From a retrospective point of view, you can observe the convergence, the end point, and can interpret what came before as some complex, self-organizing process. But once that self-organizing process is still running, it might be more difficult to predict what it will converge toward, right? In that sense, isn't the community of fate creating an interpretational risk by necessity, a retrospective point of view?

M. Levi I think there's always a risk. You could get it badly wrong. We don't want to create fascism. So increasingly we've called it an expanded and inclusive community of fate to speak beyond the kinds of communities of fate that we all have with our families or with certain others. A community of fate can be negative or positive. Our interest is in creating one that has the potential, where we're really thinking about issues that engage and could hurt all of us as humans even if not everybody recognizes that, like climate change.

P. Verschure Earlier, you mentioned key psychological features, such as to reciprocate, to share interests, or to recognize the interests of others. In some sense, we have started to look also at the psychological side of collaboration. What do you see as the key psychological processes that make collaborations happen?

M. Levi Well, I want to parse that question a little bit because some of it is psychological, but some of it is informational, and some of it is just understanding, reaching a common understanding about facts. In our current world, that's a crucial thing to do. I think the mechanism for that, which may have a psychological piece to it, is really allowing challenge and discussion in a relatively civil way and structuring that so we can hear each other and hear what people's objections are to a particular set of truths, or facts, or interpretations of the world. The psychological piece of it really has to do with a couple of things:

1. Establish enough confidence among the group that is trying to collaborate—trust, if you will, among the various members. You must have confidence that you trust them to be telling you as close to the truth as they understand it, while allowing room for debate and challenge.
2. There must be civility in the process.
3. If you lose, you must have a chance to win in the future; the system is not all set up against you. This must be institutionally protected. It also depends on the people who are engaged, that they're not going to try to take advantage of the situation in that regard.

This is internal to the group in a sense. The other crucial component concerns passion and emotion that comes from feeling effective—that there is a real emotional benefit from feeling that you can act on what you think is the right thing to do. We see that in all kinds of social movements, as well as all types of actions. People need to feel like they can act and that that's a crucial part of trying to achieve a goal and getting them to move beyond their immediate self-interest.

P. Verschure Are you suggesting that there is an intrinsic motivation to collaborate beyond self-interest?

M. Levi Absolutely. But people don't necessarily know how to access that intrinsic motivation. I think the structure helps to create a setting in which it's comfortable to. You don't want to have people free riding around you; you don't want to be treated like the weird one. You need to feel comfortable to express your intrinsic motivation within a group like a union, which is focused; or a country, which is focused on the economic self-interest and well-being of its members and not necessarily on evoking those intrinsic motivations. A lot of my work has been on intrinsic motivation. Probably my best-known piece of work is *Of Rule and Revenue*, which talks about how citizens, how the state evokes from citizens compliance with extractive taxes and why different kinds of tax systems develop over time. What I learned from writing that book is a crucial part of the story: for states, motivating citizens to want to contribute to government and then putting them in situations where willing compliance was a good thing to do and not a stupid thing to do. So that their ethical motivation, or intrinsic motivation, or whatever you want to call it, perhaps also ethical commitment is allowed to be an important part of their behavior that is recognized and rewarded in some sense. I then went on to study how this happens—because in the tax thing I could only look really from the state's perspective, because it's hard to know who's really complying and who's not—and looked into compliance and patriotism at military service and the conditions under which citizens did actually comply with extractive demands of government (e.g., volunteering, conscripted into

military service), where a citizen would pay a very high cost. I was trying to show or understand the conditions under which it was simply a question of coercion or material benefits, as we know is true in some voluntary military circumstances and even in conscripted ones. When it was a commitment to the collective good and yes, I'm willing to sacrifice myself because we'll be protecting the country or whatever. As I wrote in the foreword to that book, my father willingly served in one war and my husband refused to serve in a different war, and both are among the most ethical and moral people that I know.

P. Verschure That's an interesting example, because in some sense there, willing compliance got shaped into opposite decisions. How do you explain that?

M. Levi Well, because it is a relationship between government and citizens, and if citizens believe that the war is just, the common, the goal, the entwined destiny is at stake, that's one thing. If they think it's violating that, that's another thing. Thus, context really matters in these cases. You could not get the longshore workers to close the ports for absolutely anything. It had to be something they were convinced that there was an actual community of fate involved—that it really mattered to the world.

P. Verschure Now we see two processes. On the one hand, there is an individual process of intrinsic motivation, of a willing compliance to identify with the collective and pursue a common good, however, that is defined by the government. On the other, we have institutions and rules that also try to shape that individual process. In some sense, these institutional mechanisms are also put in place if you want to shape the collective, to make the collective move in a certain direction that, if you want, a nation-state might choose as being a priority. To what extent do you see these processes as competitive or even conflicting?

M. Levi Well, I think they can be both. One of the things in the book on military service that I saw and documented had to do with conscientious objectors (CO). When the costs of being a CO are extremely high, which is an institutional decision, there are a lot fewer COs, even with the same ethical distribution in the society. For example, to take France as an example, in World War One, I believe I found one CO. It's not that the French aren't moral or ethical or weren't concerned about war, and it isn't that there wasn't a strong left wing that was arguing that this was a capitalist war, etc. It's simply that the costs of being a CO were unbelievably high. That CO wrote a book, because he was in prison for almost his whole life, until he was finally let out at some point. As societal rules changed, you saw more COs who were seriously committed, so I think the institutions take shape in two different ways: (a) through the cost of certain kinds of behaviors (as exemplified in unions or governments) and (b) through information and education (e.g., getting people aware of the world, of the social injustices, etc.). One of the reasons I admire the unions that I studied so much that is they did not impose things top-down imposition; decisions were shaped, and people really argued and engaged in decision making. And what the group thought changed over time, as the group changed. Leadership didn't always get its way on this; sometimes things were bottom-up. Now, our governments tend to be more top-down, and that's often been a problem; think about the Iraq War in the U.S. We were given terrible information upon which people thought they had to act. They thought that was the world. Not allowing a challenge of that information is also shaping.

J. Bednar This is so interesting. We're talking about institutions as things that shape incentives and the information that's flowing. But you also said that people need to be in a position where they believe the information, and part of believing that information, and I'm inviting you to tie together the extrinsic motivation with the intrinsic, in the sense that you need to believe, not the information guiding your action, your own action, but also that others are going to be in the same place. There is this sort of social element to it getting us back to the community of fate. What role do institutions play in building that community of fate?

M. Levi Well, that's where the scaling is hard for me because I can see how the unions did it. First, people were members of this organization because they had common economic interest, so

there was already a commitment to cooperate with each other around those common economic interests. That gives them a baseline of confidence in each other, trust in each other, working together with each other. Also, the work, at least in the 1930s before the containers came in, required cooperation. There were water coolers and a hiring hall, things that enabled the workers to engage with each other and to learn enough about each other to feel somewhat comfortable with each other and their leadership who was not removed from them. That's harder to achieve in government, and that's part of what the institution did was to shape those. All of those were institutions, the hiring hall is an institution, bargaining is an institution, the relationship between the government and the governed is an institution, in my terminology. All those things were there and shaping it and we can pay attention to those and think about how to scale that. The piece that I can't figure out how to scale is this social connective tissue that comes from being part of this other common enterprise and interacting with each other. I mean, the longshore union in most parts of the West Coast has refused to allow cell phones to be used to get their assignments; they want people to come to the hiring hall to get assignments because they want people to know each other. They see that as part of the glue. Well, we're living in a world where that's going to become harder to do. We really do have to find other ways of creating connective tissue. And that connective tissue then helps people come to at least listen to each other about the information that's being provided and about their disparate views about that information and encourages them to engage with each other until a way is mutually found about what's actually going on in the world.

J. Lupp All this information is very important because as you say, the unions don't allow hiring/job allocation via a telephone; they want people in the hall itself to engage with each other. How information is dispensed and received—be it through direct interactions, via social media, etc.—impacts the participatory process by which people make decisions, decide what is important. Not only for from a pragmatic point of view in terms of material gain, but also in terms of global identity, as in the example of the Dutch and the Indonesians. Given information flow in these settings, how is this being managed today?

M. Levi I can't really answer that for society as a whole. We focus a lot now, as we should, on the problems that social media is creating, but there are also some great advantages as well. It does make information much more accessible. What we haven't figured out is the right ways to curate and manage it so that we're actually encouraging the type of civil debate and challenge, as in the Dutch-Indonesian example. As we all know, a lot of people working on that problem right now, and we have to find a solution because social media provides a major source of information for a lot of us. We deal with it in the classroom. It drove me crazy when a student would say, "I don't believe what you're saying because I found information on this website," which is some weird piece of information that was totally wrong. I would try to get students to look back to see where that information came from. That was 10 years ago. Hopefully we're past that now, but still there are problems.

P. Verschure I feel there is something hidden in this discussion point that has not been sufficiently articulated. We speak about institutions and the structuring role of institutions in the end, as an information architecture. This is what we're implicitly talking about. But then we jump to very concrete implementation of examples: no telephones in the hiring hall. That's not really defining the protocols and the representational formats of information that actually is supporting and shaping this complex collaborative process. For instance, that means a union has rules and these rules must be obeyed to be a member. As a member, you have certain incentives that it benefits you being a member. These are all elements of an informational architecture that makes a union effective in allowing people to collaborate in that context. I'm not sure we have articulated this sufficiently from the perspective of the institutions that you have put in the foreground of shaping collaboration. What do you see as the key protocols for organizations and also governments in that sense?

M. Levi Well, as I said, but let me re-emphasize. I was throwing a lot of stuff at you and you're now asking it in a slightly different way. What is really crucial to these unions, that has to do with

the information flow that we're talking about, are a couple of things: First, they have all kinds of educational processes and socialization processes within the union, processes that are not necessarily required. Some of it comes from what's in the union newspaper. Who knows if everybody reads it, I doubt it, but a lot do. Some of it comes from various kinds of schools that they provide, which people can choose to be in or not. Some of it comes from...the Australian dockworkers had a film unit, which they produced all kinds of material, which told the history of the union, about certain struggles, about the world, and ultimately about the world around them. So there are various mechanisms of educating people and trying to figure out how they hear stuff, how they learn, and what's attractive to them. The issue is not that it's required; it's made available in an attractive form so that people want to consume that kind of information. The other critical piece is that of debate—a deliberative process where people challenge each other about the information that they have. That's a critical piece of it. We really do come to these questions with different sources of information that's even stronger now than it was in the 1930s through the 1980s or 1990s, or whenever social media became so big, right?

P. Verschure Well, in your example of the French conscientious objector in the World War I, that was not the case of education and joining in the education program or not, that was also very strongly directed top-down propaganda to create a common national identity and objective from which it was very difficult to escape. I would assume that's why you only found one example.

M. Levi No, it wasn't difficult to escape at all. There were so many debates during World War I. I mean, Rosa Luxemburg ended up in the canal after World War I because the Germans had been arguing about World War I. That was true in the West, in the other countries as well that were engaged in that struggle. There were debates going on, but there were rules the government had. So let's separate out the incentive rules from the informational process. The incentives of governments were very tough on COs. They did not accept that as a reasonable reaction to citizens. That took a campaign to change that. And it changed in all the countries that were engaged in World War I, which ultimately changed their rules about conscientious objection and made it a little easier for people who were of a dissenting religion, and ultimately people who just really hated a war to try to become COs. So, the difficulty of becoming a CO was not the informational structure or architecture, it had to do with rules that punished people who were COs informational structure is a different problem, and it's hard to figure out how to do that with a country or world with multiple sources of information coming at us and no adequate deliberative forum to challenge that information and allow alternative perspectives to emerge. In principle, parliaments and legislatures are supposed to do that, but we've seen them fail tremendously.

P. Verschure I understand.

J. Bednar I'd like to follow up on this because I'm hearing two things. (1) In building the community of fate, information plays a role in coming to a shared understanding, so we would want to highlight elements of the institutional structure that would build common knowledge. That is not just the personal receipt of information but witnessing the receipt by others and their agreement. You say you have a shared understanding. (2) You're talking right now about the importance of divergence of perspectives. To what extent do divergent perspectives, diversity, play a role in helping to build a community of fate?

M. Levi I'm not sure I've thought that well enough through to give a very good response. I think it's a really important question, and I'm thinking about it. So even though the unions that we studied were heterogeneous, politically, they weren't. The members were not so different from each other that, you know, there were fisticuffs at times, just as there have been in other settings. They were also bound by the cooperation around winning good contracts, so there was already a baseline there. What happens when there isn't a baseline, but there is a lot of diversity and divergence of views? How do you bring that together? This was incredibly important even in the union setting, that there was diversity of views, that not everybody felt exactly the same way. But where they agreed was on some fundamental principles. I'm not

sure. I'm talking, trying to figure it out as I go. That there were some fundamental principles that were appealed to. Is there something big at stake here that really goes above our differences? That was one. Two, is what's being done fair? Is it just? And do we all agree that it isn't? I think those two things really were what ultimately people relied on to make a decision. The kind of information they needed was, you know, they weren't debating over whether this particular piece of the infrastructure bill would actually work, or would cost too much, or I mean, it wasn't at that level. It was, is this really an instance of injustice and is this really something that matters to the world? That you better take a stand here because God forbid, it could happen to us.

P. Verschure But now Margaret I also feel that you're pushing toward your current challenge—at scaling. How do we scale in a more complex, large-scale form of collaboration? But before we get there, it's also relevant to understand why the kinds of collaborations that we know today (e.g., unions) fail, and under what conditions. Do we know the limiters in that process that are really the critical nodes in the process that can disrupt it?

M. Levi So sorry, Paul, so where the unions would fail or where the larger...?

P. Verschure Well, as an example, you could take the union, but just collaboration as such: Where are the brittle breaking points? When does it fail?

M. Levi I think there are a couple of brittle breaking points. Thinking about the union example, one is that the constitution can change, so leadership could decide to be more authoritarian, less participatory. This happens; in governments, says a member, a citizen of the United States. So we know that that's a real danger. No matter how you set up the constitution, people, there can be leaders and cadres that counter the norms that we thought we had established about how you govern and are fundamentally changing the constitution. So that's a place of brittleness. Another has to do with the information and how we actually create a process where people can come to share some common views about what reality is, and what truth is, and what's really going on in the world. And that's proved to be very difficult in this current world because of the multiple sources of information, and the ways in which people create echo chambers and other kinds of things. It's always been a problem and it's always been a point of tension in creating collaboration, but it's gotten, if anything, worse, and that if we don't solve that one, it's going to eat us. I think another point of brittleness is that for collaboration to work, I think you have to feel that your engagement with each other can actually lead to an action that could possibly make a difference. And I think that's another thing that is very hard to achieve in our world, in all worlds. I mean, we didn't study the longshore workers because they had an effective way to act; it became apparent that actually these transport workers have a way of stopping trade. And that gives them a kind of an effectiveness, or a sense of effectiveness and efficacy that lots of people don't have, so finding those ways for people to feel efficacious, I think is another place where we really have to think hard and it can be a brittle place and a place of fragility.

P. Verschure I feel tension in the way you describe the two processes because as you said...

M. Levi Can I add one more? And then come back, which goes back to Jenna's point about diversity. I think that divergent views can be both healthy and unhealthy. We have not figured out mechanisms for turning those divergent, extremely held views, often for good reasons. We had an argument the other day at lunch with one of our fellows who wanted to frame racial and the racial structure issues as white supremacy. I took exception to that because I was willing to admit I was a racist in the United States because we all are, because of the nature of the racial structure. But white supremacist has a whole other meaning to me. And it wasn't clear she and I, though we were very civil and friendly, were going to ever come to an agreement about this. That was a divergence that could be productive, but it also could block us from talking. So, you know how to deal with those things. I don't think there are really good reasons why people have divergent views, that's what I was trying to say.

- P. Verschure I think you gave the answer to that earlier by saying, there's two parallel structures: an information process and an incentive process. The incentive process can also be used to shape the collaboration information process, because it starts to put boundaries, it starts to move the collective in one direction or the other. Would that not be the way to solve these kinds of conflicts by saying...
- M. Levi No, I don't think so, because I think what we're confronting... here's the big difference between the unions and a society. The unions have the same basic social class, the members, they're fighting for the same economic things, they have a mechanism to do that. When we're looking at a society, we have people with different social classes, different levels of poverty, different life experiences, which represent really hard boundaries, particularly in a country like the United States and perhaps in Germany, I just don't know the data, where people are geographically segregated. They know what their neighbors are like, but they don't understand the kinds of conditions that other people are living in (e.g., coal miners in Appalachia or poor Blacks in Chicago).
- P. Verschure Do you see social media companies (e.g., Google, Facebook, Twitter) as being at loggerheads with these non-negotiables?
- J. Lupp Earlier, you said mentioned a key aspect of this participatory process discussion: If it could happen to them, it could happen to us. Unions were interested in making decisions that would reinforce the well-being of other people because they could see a connection even at long distances across the world. Looking at the situation of how to manage diverging views, is one of the problems tied up with understanding identity? Individual versus the collective, us as a regional person versus us in a global context. Does information flow or divergent views hinder how we connect to other people?
- M. Levi So one of the things that the longshore workers were able to do was to overcome racial divides. And it was in part because some of the white leadership in the unions would say, like Harry Bridges, who is the president of the longshore workers in the West Coast said, "if after containerization, there are only two workers left working for loading and unloading ships, one of them will be black." The leadership of the union refused to put into trusteeship, believe it or not, Portland, which we think of as a liberal city, because of its racist practices within the union and its refusal to hire black workers. Leadership showed in a variety of ways, and the black workers really appreciated it, commitment to racial justice and the president of the union right now is black. So it continues, and their constitution continues. In Australia, the leadership there made that kind of commitment to Aborigines, which was unheard of, as well as to Asians, which if we're thinking of the 1930s and 1940s, you can just imagine how extreme that was. In those kinds of situations, with those kinds of arrangements, where you're seeing actual workers who are affected by this on both sides and where you're having to deal with those, that's where there was not clearly homogeneity in the views. There were some very racist workers and there were people with very different views. They managed to pull it together because of strong leadership, strong membership commitment, for the most part, willingness to go along with this or even encouraging it, this kind of racial integration and understanding, and engagement. It's harder to figure out how to do that, as I said, in a country. Because this somewhat depends on a quality of leadership, something we haven't really addressed, but which I think is quite important in creating cooperative and even collaborative arrangements, different mechanisms of leadership, but the quality of leadership matters and its commitments. And that's been a problem. We also have no means of getting people to really confront each other's differences in a way that can lead to a constructive outcome. It seems to lead to hatred, more riots, reactive politics, or overly noblesse oblige politics, which is equally bad in some ways.
- J. Bednar And then when we're talking about at a global scale, building a global community of fate to manage, you know, our two huge crises: the pandemic and climate change. So let me ask you this, what hope do you see for that, Margret?

- M. Levi Well, you know, I hoped that during the pandemic, a community of fate would develop. And here's why I did emphasize leadership in part because if you have leadership (e.g., as in the U.S., U.K., but not in Germany so much) that undermines the community of fate, that creates divisions not commonalities. So we weren't all in it together. Different groups were in it in different ways; differences and interests were emphasized rather than the difference in a common and entwined destiny. Leadership does matter here. That was very disappointing, and we're still suffering the consequences of a series of very problematic actions by not just our president, but by other political leaders as well in this country and in other countries. The climate crisis, I'm a little more...am I optimistic or pessimistic? I am hopeful that we can find a way and I certainly see it happening with the young people, so hopefully they can get us, us older guys to act fast enough to save them. So I think there's an intergenerational, expanded community of fate that we really need to keep in mind: we're working for your grandchildren, not just for yourself. That's where the hope is—to try and create an understanding that our world is about the future, not just about whatever present injustices there are. That's the flipside to the expanded inclusive community of faith that we need to think through. But looking at young people, I am somewhat optimistic. We may all need to get out of the way, but that's OK. I'm ready for the next generation to try to move this forward.
- P. Verschure But Margaret, before we finish, I feel there are two opposing models of the human agent involved, and I cannot reconcile the two. Perhaps you can help me with that. On one hand, you were very firm about saying that institutions with their rules and norms are shapers of the process of collaboration; if that's true (this behaviorist perspective on how human behavior can be formed through external incentives and information), then the intrinsic features of the human agent don't really matter. On the other hand, you also put a lot of weight on this notion of discussion, debate, interaction, which is a more enlightened, informed view on how human progress might be instilled. I cannot see how I can bring these two together.
- M. Levi I need to clarify something because I don't think institutions totally shape behavior. I'm not at all arguing that. I would never argue that, but they make it easier to act in some ways; they make it easier or harder to act on your intrinsic motivations and your ethical commitments. One of the things that I have argued for a long time is that to evoke willing compliance or quasi voluntary compliance with extractive demands of government requires not only some kind of promise keeping in contract, if you will, between the government and the citizens and that is shown to be actually operating. There's actual delivery by the government on its side of the bargain, and therefore some trust and confidence in the institutional arrangements. But that also means that government will punish the free riders. So that makes it easier for me to act on my commitments, my ethical commitments, if I know that those who will be trying to take advantage of me will likely be caught, punished, and restrained from engaging in that, then it is much easier for me to act on my ethical commitments. So I see institutions not so much as shaping, enabling, or blocking, which is a little bit different than shaping. I think that they make it possible for certain kinds of norms to arise within an organization, a government, a larger polity maybe, that are shaping. I think the norms are shaping because they come from a social set of interactions among people, not just a top-down set of rules telling people to walk this way or not walk that way. I'm not just talking about institutions that tell us to drive on the right or the left side of the road, those do shape our behavior. Yes. That's very behaviorist, and for very good reasons. But we don't really have commitments one way or the other there. I mean, that's just regulates the way the society functions, making sure we don't bump into each other with our cars and kill each other. That kind of institution is very different to the ones I'm talking about.
- P. Verschure Sure. But in the meantime, with your own example, I could also say look, Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction, and it's terrible, and everybody believes that. And with that, you've shaped our behavior to support a certain course of action, right?
- M. Levi But that's the information flow, not the institutions, right? I'm not seeing a total conflict between the two. What I see as what humans are, is that all of us have some self-interest,

that's self-preserving. That often involves our children, not just ourselves, but it's still self-preserving, and all of us have some ethical commitments, and some passions, and other things that we care intensely about, which will be enabled or disabled. And some of those we want to disable. Some of the really nasty things. I mean, we don't want young men running around with guns, shooting others because they decide they don't like their tattoos, or their politics, or their color.

P. Verschure Following up on that last question, Margaret, if you had the ability to change one thing in humans to make them more effective in collaborating and solving these crises that are right in front of us, what would this one thing be that you would change?

M. Levi I don't think I can change anything in humans. Frankly, I think we have to we have to learn what humans are like and create arrangements that enable them to be the best of themselves, rather than the worst of themselves.

P. Verschure All right, Margaret Levi, thank you very much for this conversation.

M. Levi You're very welcome, it was enlightening to me. Now I know a lot more about collaboration. You've got me thinking in all new ways that I think will give me a headache all day.

P. Verschure I apologize.

J. Lupp Are you certain you don't want to come to Frankfurt next year?

M. Levi I'm certain I do. I'm certain I can't.

J. Lupp I know.

P. Verschure Margaret, I really enjoyed this. It was great. So thank you very much.

M. Levi Thank you, I did, too. I learned a lot and it's making me much sorrier that I can't come to Frankfurt.

P. Verschure And I wish you would have more time because we just scratched the surface. There's a lot to learn from you so thank you very much.