mediate and soften it. There are people who are doing this work, including your practice. Where I come in is operating within what you call a community: how do we make these two worlds, that have different systems, interact better?

OM So what makes a community?

EC It depends on the context. At the heart of community are the relationships between the people—how and why they've come together, what their motivations are. They can come together because they're suddenly in crisis and they're sharing support or they have long-term interests, and they've identified each other and are working together calmly. It's crises most of the time, but the key thing that makes it different from the institutional, organised world of work is that they have come together for personal reasons and there's nobody obliging them to be together.

OM There's now much more ability for peer-to-peer interactions to happen on a virtual scale. Has the dynamic or energy in those communities changed in respect of this shift?

EC The organised world divides and rules because the horizontal peer world is ineffective because of its bad information. My passion is to improve the information flow in the horizontal peer world and help develop organisational systems and methods to make that information more easily available, so the interventions from the horizontal peer world in the space of possibilities are more effective. I'm only interested in technology when it supplements face-to-face encounters. Indeed, the uprising in Cairo showed activists surfacing above the radar, describing human networks below the radar that had been developing conversations about their political and economic social system. It would have been different if there hadn't been people who had networked together on a human level.

OM Do you have methods for measuring a success over a period of time?

EC No. That is a very vertical, mechanical approach. The qualitative data is shoehorned into something that serves another conceptual model. I'm not in any way advocating that we drop our mechanical ways of thinking about organisation: it's the dominant mode and the default mode—it is the first thing anyone ever thinks about because it's all they've ever been taught. By definition you're predicting something and I operate on intuition and emergence. I call myself a social gardener—I've got some idea about how some things might evolve. I'm working consciously on how I nurture the conditions within which things might happen.

OM Are there vital ingredients for what that condition or context is?

EC Receptivity, listening, all the skills that are well understood in various categories of our society now, whether it's psychotherapy or good group management, facilitation–all over the vertical hierarchy world. But they're not the dominant mode. If it's going to work well, creating a viable space for people to operate is to be aware of what it is that makes people feel good about what they're offering freely, in their own spare time. If you don't do that, people will drift away quickly.

OM In terms of people coming together and something emerging in terms of a direction they may want to take, do you allow those things to develop as they do or do you intervene?

EC My method is to take it slowly. Things die when the wrong things are put together. Without the integration of the vertical hierarchical and horizontal peer systems perhaps it will all get worse. In Turkey and Syria the vertical hierarchy is incapable of handling the messages, the pleas from this other system. They don't know how to do it. In the West our equivalent is the global financial corporate world. Everyone, even the national government, is powerless to manage their own economies. They're different struggles, but we've got these two different kinds of human social systems now interacting with each other increasingly violently across the world. Unless we understand this and feed it into our analysis and into our growing methods of dealing with modern issues and problems, we're always going to trip—up whether we're in a dictatorship or a liberal democracy.

OM I believe the idea of progress is problematic: the battles are always the same but there's a different context, different methods and we're always having to work to have the smaller voices heard in the larger conversations.

EC I'm a great believer in the spiral view. They seem to go around but they're in a slightly different place the next time round. We're more complex than we were 100 years ago but we would be dealing with the some of the same issues in a different context. I understand that there's quite a debate that goes on about gradual evolution and whether or not there's a bifurcation—whether there can be a big jump in physical evolution. Maybe the same debate can be had in terms of social organisation. Things are changing all the time and if we nurture the conditions as we can with the information we have and we can shepherd things in the right direction, we can avoid some internal cataclysmic change. I suppose I believe in the pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the heart.

OM What are the different motivations behind community engagement?

EC It depends. What is your definition of community engagement? Whose motivations? A linguistic illustration of this is when vertical hierarchy talks about community engagement their language is peppered with the word "harness". A straitjacket. If you start trying to harness the horizontal peer world you will absorb it and change it. So how do we enable this world to get its organisational act together so that when it meets the vertical hierarchy world and the space of possibilities, people actually want to work together? The language should be: how do we tap into the horizontal peer world?

OM Do these two worlds need a third party or a conduit in order to communicate effectively?

EC It's not yet another body, it's that when the vertical hierarchy world and the horizontal peer try to interact, they are helped with new insights, training systems and management understanding. Evolution happens in what scientists call the "adjacent possible", which is by the next thing from where you're standing. Anyone