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MBS ([00:00](#)):

"The map is not the territory." It's one of those obvious and yet profound insights. The thing we used to try and understand reality is not reality. I mean, it's true for maps and it's true for any model. I mean, it's true for org charts in companies, for instance. When I sketch out how Box of Crayons is structured, I draw a box where Shannon, the CEO, is and then I draw a diagram that puts her in one place and then the leadership team that reports to her is structured and connected in different places. And then, the people that they lead or perhaps influence, that goes elsewhere on the map.

([00:39](#)):

But it's a map. It tells me something. It tells me a lot, but it doesn't tell me everything. It doesn't, for instance, tell me the nuances of how resources get allocated and where money gets spent. It doesn't tell me about the health of the relationships and who's an ally and who's an enemy, to make it melodramatic. It doesn't tell me who's rising and who's falling. So what's your



map of the world? I mean, you have many. What if you picked one for me and what does that tell you and what does it not?

[\(01:16\)](#):

Welcome to 2 Pages with MBS, the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book, a book that has moved them, book that has shaped them. Tiziana Casciaro is Professor of Organizational Behavior at the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto and co-author of the book *Power, for All: How It Really Works and Why It's Everyone's Business*. But, like me, Tiziana is not a native Torontonionian.

Tiziana [\(01:44\)](#):

I grew up in Italy, on the Lake Como, just north of Milan, a beautiful spot that I appreciated only after I left. Upon returning to it, I was stunned at its spectacular sites from my bedroom window.

MBS [\(02:03\)](#):

So, leaving George Clooney and his family at Lake Como, Tiziana attended college to study economics and management in nearby Milan. It was there she got hooked.

Tiziana [\(02:14\)](#):

After a brief stint as a junior researcher, teaching assistant, servant that I had over at Bocconi, I decided to become good at this research thing. It became very fascinating to me to uncover answers to puzzles that the world presented.

MBS [\(02:38\)](#):

These aren't puzzles like crossword or a brain-teaser. These are bigger and messier and more complicated, more confusing, more human and more profound.



Tiziana ([02:50](#)):

Why is it that some people have a lot of influence and others not? Why is it that some people are very central to the action and others very peripheral? What are the connections to linking all these people and why do they matter?

MBS ([03:02](#)):

From Italy then to the United States?

Tiziana ([03:05](#)):

So, it was a big old jump from Milan to Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the '90s is not the Pittsburgh of today. That has become quite hip because all of those fancy computer science, robotics, AI people, they flock to Pittsburgh, to Carnegie Mellon, and demand a certain set of perks, because they're used to the luxury at this point in their lives. So, Pittsburgh has become different. But in my day, it wasn't like that. It was a lovely place for a graduate student to have a decent life and go to the symphony, even, and have wonderful music and jazz and such, but it was not as cosmopolitan as it is now.

([03:51](#)):

And then when I finished my PhD in organizational behavior, sociology, those topics, I got my first job at Harvard Business School where I learned a lot, I met fantastic people, but also found that there's some price to pay in working in an institution of that status and elitism and, in some ways, a place that doesn't necessarily bring out the best in a researcher. That was at least my way to interface with them. So after some level of adventures over there, I moved to University of Toronto. And here I research all the things that have to do with, let's say, the hidden side of what happens in life in organizations. Organizations all have certain designs. But basically what's behind the curtain in organizations.

([05:01](#)):

People are asked to work in certain ways with certain people. There are reporting lines, there are formal groups, there are divisions, functions, and all



the necessary interactions, but in reality, people also have discretion in who they talk to, who they work with, who they hang out with. And all of those networks that emerge out of people's choice, to some extent, have huge implications for how well people do, how well the organization functions or doesn't. And those are things that are very much my interest. And this book was really a reflection of that work and how it joins with the work of my wonderful co-author, Julie Battilana, in uncovering the inner workings of how things function or don't in organizational settings.

MBS ([05:58](#)):

Yeah, I've always thought there's the formal org chart and then there's the invisible org chart, and they're not the same.

Tiziana ([06:04](#)):

They're not the same. It turned out that the formal org chart explains about half of the types of interactions that people have. So the other half has a lot of action in it. And if we don't understand it, then you're really, really hard-pressed to push forward with your initiatives, with your projects, with your goals because you're missing half the action.

MBS ([06:33](#)):

Tiziana, do you remember the first moment you became interested in the stuff behind the obvious, the powers hidden research? But I'm wondering when that seed got planted.

Tiziana ([06:49](#)):

Yeah. It's a good question because when I was an undergraduate student at Bocconi, I thought that I would become one of those McKinsey consultants. Variety was always important. Those firms put you through projects that are in all kinds of industries and because very interesting. But I did get hooked reading about two topics that were treated as somewhat disconnected but I thought



really spoke to each other, which were management in a crisis, when everything falls apart and your points of reference are gone and you have to reinvent how you do things, and heuristics and biases in decision-making. So, individuals with their brain trying to process all the great amounts of information and data that come our way and we have to find shortcuts. We have to find ways to withstand the onslaught of data from the world and how people go about it. And I thought that the intersection of those two phenomena, when already we're under pressure as decision-makers to handle all of this abundance of information and, in a crisis, you'll have an emotional overload that makes it even harder.

[\(08:16\)](#):

And so that's when I think it was the first time that I thought, okay, what's been done in linking those two? What is the state of knowledge in those things? Because if we understand how they come together, we will be able to shed light on this particular problem a lot better. And that was the root, really, of my brand of looking at the non-obvious, which is joining disciplines. In my neck of the woods, academics don't talk to each other very much. We are all in our silo, which is true of many professionals. I mean, I was talking with a physiotherapist the other day who was bemoaning the great fragmentation of knowledge about the human body, because everybody specializes in one little bit and the other bits who happened to be interconnected are not treated as interconnected. So that has always been really hugely interesting to me, the interconnections of how problems that we face at work, in our lives are really related to many other things. And if you understand those linkages, boy, are we ever going to be able to shed light on things that are important to us that we miss sometimes, because we're too narrow in our point of view.

MBS [\(09:45\)](#):

As an undergraduate, I studied both literature and law and tried to write my law thesis, bringing the study of the power in language to law, and it was my attempt to be cross-disciplinary, interdisciplinary. Nobody knew what I was



trying to do, including me. This was in the '90s and I was just flapping around. But there is something about that cross-fertilization that's really interesting.

Tiziana ([10:11](#)):

Yeah. It's not easy to do, but there's a lot of bang for the buck when you manage to find those connections. Yeah.

MBS ([10:20](#)):

I wanted to ask you another question about your past and it's this. When do you remember first encountering power in a real way for you, either as you stepping into power or you feeling excluded from power?

Tiziana ([10:38](#)):

Well, it all starts with family, as it often does. I grew up in Italy at a time when, and it's still somewhat true, men wielded a lot more power than women. If you look at the gender equity index, which measures all kinds of ways in which men and women are engaged in sociopolitical economic life in their country, Italy does not fare all that well on their ranking. You have the usual Scandinavian countries up, up, up in the ranking. Then you come-

MBS ([10:38](#)):

Nordics. They always do well.

Tiziana ([11:17](#)):

They always do well in this respect and there are reasons for it. Then you come down a little bit and you find Canada around spot 20 or so. Then you come down a little bit more to 25-ish and you find the US. And then you come all the way down to 60 and you find Italy. And yes, there are more countries further down, certainly, but we don't shine in the sense of what does it mean for the sexes to have equal opportunity, equal standing, equal voice. And to this day, we could do better.



[\(11:53\)](#):

So, I grew up in a more traditional family from the point of view. My mother studied law like you, not inter-disciplinarily like you, but she had studied law but never practiced because she had my brother and then she had me and the decision was made that my father would work and she would stay at home. And I saw these dynamics and they instilled in me a deep sense of urgency in making myself independent, to not be subjected to others in terms of my ability to choose for myself, my autonomy, and my standing in the world. That became very urgent to me. And it was the first insight into a type of dislike that I've only been able to pinpoint recently, actually, after writing this book and after meditating on this book and thinking about what I learned in the process of writing it. I learned that I dislike being dominated and I dislike dominating equally. I find that not only my personal experience, because that is only informative to a point.

[\(13:22\)](#):

In the research that we have, at all levels, from interpersonal relationships to groups in an organizations, to nations trying to cooperate or not, the best that humanity produces is a more mutually enhancing relationships where nobody has massive asymmetric power. When you have a lot of imbalance in power, in the long run, bad things tend to happen. And so, this instinct that I had already quite young that I didn't like to be bossed around, I didn't like the bullies that wanted to assert their dominance on the rest of us, I never took them well. And there's a version of me that comes out with those people that you don't want to see. I become a lot more determined and aggressive, even, in response to people like that. But at the same time, I never like to have others under my thumb.

[\(14:36\)](#):

It's a very uncomfortable feeling. And I think it's because, yeah, maybe I've always had this instinct that when you and I are dependent on each other such that the input I get from you and the input you get from me allows us to do



something together that we couldn't do alone, that's when dependence becomes a gift in its mutuality. And that has been really where power has entered my life from early on.

MBS ([15:11](#)):

Part of the ongoing challenge of organizational life is that it is, I'm not sure if it's inherently hierarchical, but most organizations have a default to hierarchy. And one of the reasons that I have my own business and do my own thing is I perhaps have a similar response to, look, I'm just not that good at having a boss. Because I love a mutually dependent, a mutually enhancing, a mutually flourishing relationship. But the very nature of organization tends to set up hierarchy and it tends to set up some people going, I have power over you or power with you. There's a big question here, which is probably worth writing a book about, but it's like what have you learned about trying to find the balance between structure and autonomy?

Tiziana ([16:12](#)):

It is the challenge of organizing. I mean there are two, really, two big challenges of organizing. One is to integrate specialized capabilities that you put under the same umbrella for a reason. Why do we have organizations in the first place? Because those individual skills alone cannot do this wonderful collective thing that we're trying to put together in this organized form. But the problem when you have very specialized skill sets is that people tend to gravitate toward people like themselves and work within their little group and have a real difficult time integrating. So that's challenge number one. And again, the mutuality of dependence is when you recognize how much you need one another that allows people to overcome those silos.

([17:08](#)):

And then the second challenge, the one you just described, the verticalization of organizations, because you do need some structure to your work because,



otherwise, it becomes so unwieldy and difficult to govern without some direction. So direction is important to keep everybody focused on this big old goal that we're trying to pursue together, but it creates a hierarchy where some people have more power and others have less. Now what do you do about it?

[\(17:44\)](#):

One thing that has become clear to me is that the manager who has a really hard time distributing power further down, or even horizontally, often is animated by fear. Fear of losing control over the situation. Sometimes, the fear is justified. So if I aim to give a lot of power to a subordinate or a peer that doesn't have the capabilities to execute, we could all get in trouble. So, there is something about empowerment in intelligent ways. So you don't empower randomly, you empower after you've given people the tools they need, the resources they require to get the job done, to be up to speed with what we're trying to accomplish.

[\(18:41\)](#):

But there are many times when it's really security about your position and how you are going to fare if you give a lot of credit to the people that work with you, if you let them shine, if you let them be on stage, while maybe you are behind the scenes orchestrating, making it possible, but there is a bit of concern that maybe I will lose. And it speaks to a fundamental misconception about power, that it's a zero-sum game. If I give you some of my power, automatically, I've lost power. But that is not how things really should be seen because we go back to the mutuality. Power is such that I could have something you need from me and therefore you depend on me and I can influence you, but the vice versa could also be true. I could also, at the same time, be dependent on you for something.

[\(19:45\)](#):

And in that case, we both have a degree of power over one another that allows us to be thoughtful about each other. Because one of the great big unwanted



consequences of power is that when you feel like you've got it, you are in control, you have the resources, you have the opportunities, you have access and you control them, you easily end up feeling that you don't need other people. And when you feel that you don't need them, you become inattentive to them. The research is quite clear that when I have power or feel like I have power, one of the more natural consequences will become a little bit self-focused, because why would I care about people on whom I don't depend? But maybe you do, darling, but you haven't realized it or that you are thinking short term, you're not thinking about long-term consequences of your interdependence with these people.

[\(20:52\)](#):

And so, you need to always push back on power's tendency to make us a little bit self-absorbed, a little egomaniacal, and relate it to a little bit overconfident. And then the decision-making suffers. Because if I decided that I'm smart, I'm on it, I don't need your input anymore, I don't listen to you. And we see leaders who have been successful, who have been sometime fabulously successful at some point decline because they stop believing that others have something to say that they don't know already. They stop keeping an eye on the people around them, to truly hear what they have to say about what you're doing and be open to potentially being criticized, potentially receiving pushback. It takes a big person to be able to do that, but it also takes a structural recognition of interdependence. And I think that that's a solution, in my view, to the problem you raised.

[\(22:02\)](#):

You need two things to handle the natural tendency of organization to become vertical and hierarchical. You need design such that you allocate decision-making power, you create structures that allow people to talk to one another, share in the knowledge and all the beautiful things, and then you need personal development. You need the individual who ends up understanding who they are, what they can contribute, being confident in their ability to



contribute, and aware of their limitations all at the same time. The beautiful space between confidence and doubt that we all have to learn to inhabit, and that's very much you developing as a person. So structure, design, and development have to go hand in hand.

MBS ([22:55](#)):

And being a big person. This idea of how do you be confident and humble at the same time and how that paradox can exist is so essential.

Tiziana ([23:06](#)):

It is.

MBS ([23:11](#)):

So many questions I want to ask you, but I'm going to resist because I want to hear about the two pages that you've chosen for us. What have you picked for us, Tiziana?

Tiziana ([23:19](#)):

Well, I picked something that speaks to what we've just discussed. Because I think you're not going to really find that space between confidence and humility easily if you don't grasp the ideas that these two pages represent. So I've picked them from a book written by the Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje. This is a Buddhist who was guiding one of the groups in Buddhism. And the book he wrote is titled *The Heart Is Noble: Changing the World from the Inside Out*. And I felt a little bit of trepidation choosing these two pages because I'm not a Buddhist. I don't pretend to understand Buddhism because it requires a level of depth that, honestly, I don't think I can master. I'm a little too shallow to engage with Buddhism. But these two pages represent some fundamentals about how to understand power that I think are essential. And this Karmapa is not the only one to have pointed them out, but in this text, he does it pretty well, I thought.



MBS ([24:48](#)):

How did you come across this book? I mean, knowing that you're not a Buddhist, how did this come into your life?

Tiziana ([24:52](#)):

Well, in writing *Power, for All*, Julie and I read an inordinate amount, because a topic that we thought we had decent knowledge about ended up being sprawling, which we knew, but when you start to really get into it, everybody's written about power. Every social scientist, every philosopher has written about power. And so, in the philosophy side of the reading, some of these ideas about interdependence that animate much of the philosophy of this book and what I think it can give to people who read it, Buddhism does an exceptionally deep job of understanding the role of interdependence and it was picked up by thinkers along the way. Some of the ideas that I'm going to read can be found in texts and approaches from politicians, from activists, from writers, poets, and leaders of different kinds. So, I ended up ... It was like a click here and click there and click some more and read this book that references this other book and I ended up with this book. And I thought it condensed these ideas particularly well.

MBS ([26:21](#)):

I'm excited to hear these two pages. So, over to you.

Tiziana ([26:30](#)):

How do you relate to this infinite ground of possibility that your life is built on? How can you create a meaningful life within whatever shifting circumstances you find yourself? Buddhist thought devotes a great deal of attention to these questions. The view that life holds infinite possibility is explored using the concepts of interdependence and emptiness. When you first hear the term "emptiness," you might think this suggests nothingness or a void, but actually "emptiness" should remind us that nothing exists in a vacuum. Everything is



embedded within a context, a complex set of circumstances. These contexts themselves are endlessly shifting.

[\(27:19\)](#):

When we say that things are empty, we mean they lack any independent existence outside of those changing contexts. Because everything and everyone is empty in this sense, they are capable of endless adaptation. We ourselves have the basic flexibility to adapt to anything, and to become anything. Because of this, we should not mistake emptiness for nothingness. On the contrary, emptiness is full of potency. Understood correctly, emptiness inspires optimism, rather than pessimism, because it reminds us of the boundless range of possibilities of who we can become and how we can live.

[\(28:03\)](#):

Interdependence and emptiness show us that there are no fixed starting points. We can start from nothing. Whatever we have, wherever we are, that is the place we can start from. Many people have the idea that they lack what they need in order to start working toward their dreams. They feel they do not have enough power or they do not have enough money, but they should know that at any point is the right point. This is the perspective that emptiness opens up. We can start from zero.

[\(28:37\)](#):

Anything can come into being because there is no fixed way for things to be. It all depends on the conditions that come together. But this fact that anything is possible does not imply that life is random or haphazard. We can make anything happen, but we can only do so by bringing together the necessary conditions. This is where the concept of emptiness and interdependence come together.

[\(29:04\)](#):

Every person, place, and thing is entirely dependent on others, other people and other things, as a necessary condition for its existence. For example, we are



alive now because we are enjoying the right conditions for our survival. We are alive because of the countless meals we have eaten during our life. Because the sun shines on the earth and the clouds bring rain, crops can grow. Someone tends to the crops and harvests them, someone else brings them to market, and yet another person makes a meal from them that we can eat. Each time this process is repeated, the interdependence of our lives links us with more and more people, and with more and more rays of sun and drops of rain.

[\(29:55\)](#):

Ultimately, there is nothing and no one with whom we cannot connect. The Buddha coined the term interdependence to describe the state of profound connectedness. Interdependence is the nature of reality. It is the nature of human life, of all things and of all situations. We are all linked, and we all serve as conditions affecting each other.

[\(30:21\)](#):

Amid all the conditions that affect us, in fact, the choices we ourselves make and the steps we take are among the most important conditions that affect what arises from our actions. If we act constructively, what comes into being is constructive. If we act destructively, what results is destructive and harmful. Everything is possible, but also everything we do matters, because the effects of our actions reach far beyond ourselves. For that reason, living in a world of interdependence has very specific implications for us. It means our actions affect others. It makes us all responsible for one another.

MBS [\(31:12\)](#):

That was lovely. Thank you.

Tiziana [\(31:14\)](#):

Thank you.

MBS [\(31:17\)](#):



What feels like the deep truth at the heart of this text?

Tiziana ([31:23](#)):

There are a few. One is that when people like Julie and me dare say "Power, for all," we tap into one of the ideas from this text that we can do a lot even when we start from very little or nothing at all. And the encouragement of this text is for people to recognize that even when we face really difficult circumstances, we can take steps and make choices that lead us in a certain direction. We are not completely aimless even when we feel very disadvantaged. This is not to deny the fact that power is unevenly distributed. This is not to deny that some people have way more than we might. But it is to say that if you recognize how power functions and your role in it, you can take steps that allow your condition to lead us in the direction you find constructive. That's the truth number one.

([32:58](#)):

The second one that I think is absolutely essential is this notion that the world will be infinitely better if we were all more aware of how interdependent we are, not only on each other but on every element of our environment. During the pandemic, we had glimpses of a greater awareness of interdependence where people were saying, well, we cannot just vaccinate people in one country or the wealthy countries. If we don't vaccinate everyone, this will come back to haunt us for a long time as opposed to being managed to not only ensure the survival of many more, but also to avoid consequences for us. So there's a selfish and an altruistic component to this, and this is true in organizations.

([33:59](#)):

All of those people that we were mentioning before, they have a hard time collaborating horizontally, they have a hard time crossing vertical boundaries, would do so way better if they recognized how much they need each other and how much my contributions affect you and yours affect me. And I found this text representative of a logic with which we could conduct ourselves that inspires many. I could add to this what Martin Luther King said about the same



basic idea. He said, "All life is interrelated. We are all caught in inescapable network of mutuality tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly." And he said this in the context of civil rights. This notion that you think as a member of the white community that maybe you'll be better off if you keep the Black community down. Again, if I hoard the power and I dangle it over your head.

[\(35:31\)](#):

But an awareness of interdependence would tell you that that is just not true. Because in the long run, a system in which all who have contributions to make are allowed to make them, have a chance to make them, will be a more prosperous system, will be a system with greater wellbeing of all involved. So, the long-term rewards, a more interdependent reality.

[\(35:59\)](#):

So we find these ideas in many different places. One that I ran into recently is a great poet, Jane Hirshfield, that I didn't really know very well. And I heard her in an interview and she says something along these lines, she said, "It isn't in the very bone marrow of poetry and all art to work through a vocabulary of connection and recognition of the profound interdependence and interconnection of everything." These are people that think very well about the human condition, and the fact that they all converge around these ideas. And then, in my work as an organizational behavior researcher, I find the repercussions in how we run organizations, in how managers conduct themselves, in how leaders lead, I find it quite compelling that we should pay more attention.

MBS [\(37:00\)](#):

I find myself violently agreeing with all of this because who am I to disagree with Martin Luther King, amongst others, or the Buddha? And I also experience a biological imperative that makes this feel hard. You have Dunbar's number saying we've got about 150 people who we can hold as friends. That's our tribe.



And after that, and there's something deeply in our bones around it's us and them. I've got my 150 people as my tribe and I've got those other people. And connected to that or related to it in some way is what does it mean to give up power?

[\(37:47\)](#):

For somebody like me who holds a lot of power because I've been dealt all sorts of cards and I've played all sorts of games and won enough of them that I now have power in many ways, and if I ask myself, so how do I give that up? How do I learn how to give that up? I've got a bunch of things that go, look, in theory, I am all for interdependence and mutuality and connection, and in practice, I'm a little more selfish about that and I'm a little bit me versus them. Can you speak to some of that?

Tiziana [\(38:25\)](#):

Yes, no, I'm glad you raised this other side. We do all have a dark side. Even I bring these texts to you and do so with trepidation, partly because I know I'm not that good and I fall into those traps as much as anyone. But here's what I would say. You never give up power. Never. Sharing power doesn't mean giving up power. It means empowering others. Toni Morrison said it best, "When you have some power, your job is to empower someone else." She didn't say give your power away to someone. She said, "Empower someone." Why would you want to do that? Because the evidence we have is that when you are trying to accomplish a goal that requires collective contributions ... So if I'm on my own and all I want to do is an individual contribution type task, it doesn't matter. Power doesn't matter because I'm not interdependent. I am doing my thing. Okay?

[\(39:47\)](#):

I'm talking about all the other situations in which you just cannot do it alone, no matter what. No matter how confident, how competent you are, you just can't. So what happens in those contexts, which are 95% of all tasks that we try to



accomplish, is that the secret to collective performance, and therefore leadership performance, because if you are leading me and I do well, you do well also. The evidence is that the leader who expresses enough humility and distribute a speaking time and is alert to the emotions that the people around them are feeling is the leader that has the highest team performance, and team engagement, and a sense of satisfaction in the work, and desire to stay instead of leaving, and economic, financial performance. I mean, all the things that we supposedly want tend to come along with a style of power sharing that makes it possible for all these people to contribute their best because that's the whole idea.

[\(41:15\)](#):

If I cannot do it alone and I need the inputs of all these other folks, don't I want them to be able to contribute it? Of course I do. But the fear of losing control, losing power is what prevents many from doing this kind of power sharing that eventually, down the line, benefits them as well.

MBS [\(41:39\)](#):

I'm, if known for anything, known for a book called The Coaching Habit, and it's about how do you un-weird coaching so managers and leaders can stay curious longer. And part of what I'm proud about with that book is I think it is a bit subversive because it actually disrupts hierarchy. It moves people away from "I'm telling you what to do" to "I'm asking you a question and handing you responsibility for figuring this out and coming up with ideas." And I do feel that part of the resistance to coaching or being more coach-like as a manager or a leader or as anybody in an organization isn't the "I don't know what questions to ask," it's "I'm losing control, I'm losing status, I'm losing authority, I'm losing power." Who do I need to become to be able to move from certainty to ambiguity?

Tiziana [\(42:48\)](#):



You need to become very aware and proud of the competencies you do have and the values you live up to, to remind you that you are a good person despite the dark side. That does creep up sometimes with a vengeance and makes us really small, really small people. When we cling on our group in opposition to the others, when the only way that we can feel good about ourselves is to put other people down, that's when the dark side takes over. But you can push the dark side away when you acquire competencies that allow you to make contributions. You have to have something to offer. Otherwise, you don't feel good about yourself. And then, you really have to take refuge in all these other twisted ways to lift yourself up that are a disaster for everybody including you, because they're not sustainable, they're not real. It's all a superficial approach to protect yourself. But deep inside you, you don't feel that you have goodness.

[\(44:18\)](#):

I'll give an example that I love when I say just remind yourself of the good in you so that you will be able to appreciate the good in others without fearing that they're going to take over because they're better than you. This is a study that was run at INSEAD, which is a business school outside of Paris, where, for a long time, the MBA class had a great gap between male and female students. This was an environment with more men than women, a little more macho culturally. And the women were not doing as well, even though they were selected in very similar ways compared to the guys. And they tried a bunch of things, nothing worked. And until one of the researchers there ran an experiment, really, where they randomly assigned the students to participate in a self-affirmation exercise in which you're given a list of personal values that might be relevant to you, not professional, personal, and pick two and describe an example of how you have lived up to those values. And they did this intervention twice in the 12-month MBA and the great gap disappeared.

[\(45:43\)](#):

Why? Well, you have not told these women that they are great at finance, that they can run ops like there's no tomorrow, none of that. You just reminded



them of the depth of their values and how they live their life accordingly, and that was enough to give them that confidence to raise their hand in class and say, "I have a comment to make," and I'm not going to second-guess my competence, I'm not going to second-guess whether I have the standing to be able to participate. I'm just going to do it. And you liberate yourself from this insecurity, this doubt. So that, I think, is what needs to happen. That you grow to that level of confidence that allows you to do the things that we just discussed, to share the power.

MBS ([46:41](#)):

I absolutely agree about this. Build your capacity, be a bigger person, connect to your values. And I'm also curious about the tension between our own individual responsibility to become that bigger person, to avoid the smaller person, and the influence of our organizational structures and rhythms around us. That quote from Churchill, "We shape our buildings, thereafter they shape us." So, often, our behavior is deeply influenced by the visible and invisible structures around us. It's not always possible just to go how do I want to behave in this moment? You're swimming in water, and that water has a current to it. How do you find that balance between what the organization nudges you towards and, at the same time, who you're striving to be as an individual?

Tiziana ([47:44](#)):

We are all the result of context as the two pages told us very, very clearly, and in many ways, the context has much more impact on our behavior than our individual choices. We lean on the individual choices because those are the choices we have, right? So, they feel like they're within our control. But the structures around us, both the organizational structures and the systemic, the system of government, the education system, the taxation system, all of those things shape us, shape all the people around us. And so, you had to be, one, very aware of how those inferences manifest themselves, and we do that in the book. Power, for All was really written with the idea of linking individual



behavior, individual choice, individual psychology to the big macro forces that really determine who we are. But I would say that if you become aware of them, then you become the type of enlightened citizen that makes choices about what kind of system do I want to be in? What kind of organization do I want to work for that collectively have impact?

[\(49:11\)](#):

The Scandinavian countries are not at the top of the gender equity index randomly. This was not a particularly advanced society up until the mid-1800s. But very radical choices about primarily education of the masses, so to speak, of all the people that have been excluded from a certain way of understanding the world, really changed people's connection with what does it mean to participate in our governing of ourselves and our communities? What does it mean to be engaged as a citizen? What does it mean to maybe contribute to the system in more hefty ways? It might feel annoying in the moment when you're paying the taxes, but then, down the line, they create a society where more people can thrive, where more people can participate and contribute, and people are happier and less threatened, and they can play music and they can do all the things.

[\(50:19\)](#):

Now, this is not to say that those societies are perfect because they're not, no society is. And they have their share of trouble with us and them, and what does it mean to be interdependent with people that look like me versus people that don't? Of course, you'd always have the dark side interfering with our goodness, so to speak. But you are right that we have to understand the whole of the organization where we are. And I would just take a moment to encourage any person who works in a larger organization where they don't determine the cultural values, they don't determine the structural choices, but they have the little sphere of influence. And you can start in that sphere of influence, which could be as simple as how do you treat the folks that work for you? How do you treat people that work with you? What kind of voice do you allow them? Are



you able to take criticism? Do you create what my friend Amy Edmondson calls psychological safety?

MBS ([51:35](#)):

That's right.

Tiziana ([51:36](#)):

You can start with your own little team. It could be two people, it could be 20. You don't have to wait around for the entire organization to become enlightened because you may never do that. And then you can choose organization-

MBS ([51:36](#)):

Every organization has subcultures. Yeah.

Tiziana ([51:51](#)):

You can choose. I was working with a company that produces plastics, and what I heard from the leadership of this company is that they're having a nontrivial amount of trouble attracting young people who want to see what is the sustainability strategy of this company. Before I put my talent and my potential into you, I want to know what it's going to be used for. That's an individual choice. Now, you may not be super easy to find environments that make you proud of the work you do, but if you have all of these people that keep pushing a certain direction, at some point, it becomes harder for organizations, governments to ignore all of the above.

([52:44](#)):

And that's my hope. That people will learn that they can take action. Power for all means not that you can rule the world. It means that you can maybe join forces with others to make a dent, and not accept it thoughtlessly, even if you recognize that the system, the structure is way more impactful than your own



individual choices. Absolutely, it is. There are those powers out there that really outweigh ours, but we are not completely helpless.

MBS ([53:23](#)):

Tiziana, it's been a wonderful conversation. Thank you. I have a final question for you. What needs to be said that hasn't yet been said in this conversation between you and me?

Tiziana ([53:34](#)):

Probably acknowledging that power has a bad rep, and sometimes it makes people very uncomfortable to even admit that they want it, and they're right. Power can become manipulative, coercive, all the bad things.

MBS ([53:58](#)):

Power corrupts absolutely.

Tiziana ([53:59](#)):

Indeed. The Lord Acton had it right from the get-go. And there's a reason why folks recoil sometimes. And it speaks also to this dark side that you brought up, rightfully, that is always within us. But what we need to say very explicitly is that a more complete view of power understands it as energy, and energy can be used to build or to destroy. It always has, always will. And so, it is really very much up to us to make choices accordingly, even while you recognize that you're just one person, but that interdependence with others and the fact that we start from zero, we start empty and it doesn't matter the starting point, we can still build from there, should give us optimism as the Karmapa told us at the start of our conversation.

MBS ([55:02](#)):



A friend of mine in Oxford was doing a PhD on palimpsest. I know, I didn't know what that was either, but it's a term for manuscripts and other things that have been reused, but where you can still see there are visible traces of an earlier form. So, for a manuscript, it's a piece of parchment reused so that you can still make out what was written on it before. Or a city like London, say, it's the traces of Roman Londinium under the modern urban plan. A palimpsest. I'm not even sure how to pronounce it properly. The last letters are S-E-S-T, sest. I guess palimpsest.

[\(55:50\)](#):

Anyway, enough of pronunciation. This idea reminds me of Tiziana looking for and then linking the non-obvious. I mean that's helpful in uncovering insights about how power works, as we heard in the conversation, but there's also something here for me about how we might show up for one another at a human level in this quest we have for, and again, words from the interview, interconnectedness and mutuality, linking the non-obvious.

[\(56:21\)](#):

I'm trying to do it right now, so I'm grasping a little bit. It's just a faint idea rather than a certain one. But if you show up, both of you, you and that other person both show up with your expertise and your certainty and your control, you're both holding status, you're two-walled castles. If you're curious about the other, then you're finding links between the non-obvious, you are building bridges. One of my favorite icebreaker games is to pair people up and ask, what's the least likely thing that you have in common? It's asking them to link the non-obvious, and when they make that connection, magic can happen.

[\(57:05\)](#):

There are two interviews that I'd like to suggest that go very nicely with this one. One with Matthew Barzun, number 82, What To Do With Power, for obvious reasons. And then, number 36, with my friend, Pamay Bassey, Chief Learning Officer at Kraft Heinz, How to Practice Understanding. You can see how those



two will fit really nicely with this conversation with Tiziana. If you want to connect with her, well, honestly, the simplest way to do it is Google her name. You'll see that in the show notes. Or Google the name of her book, Power, for All. You'll certainly find her on LinkedIn.

[\(57:43\)](#):

Thank you for loving the show and listening to the show and listening all the way to an episode and reviewing it and starring it and referring it to people who might enjoy the interview. I appreciate your support and encouragement. You're awesome and you're doing great.