[MUSIC PLAYING]

INTERVIEWER: I'm interviewing Peter Bloom from The Open University. So Peter, tell us what you do here at The Open University.

PETER BLOOM: So what I do, primarily, is that I help to fund a-- or, found-- a global research centre called REEF, which is Research into Employment, Empowerment, and Futures. And what this looks like is a relationship between empowerment and new technologies that are coming out, and actually looking at the ways in which we can help those communities, individuals, and organisations be empowered to shape the future, as opposed to feeling that they're shaped by the future.

INTERVIEWER: Wow, that sounds very complex and abstract. Tell us, specifically, then, about some of the projects that you're involved in.

PETER BLOOM: Sure. So I think some of the projects that we're looking at is on a more philosophical level. What a, quote unquote, "transhuman society" may look like. So looking at the ways in which we might have a more integrated society between human intelligence and artificial intelligence.

I think, also, on a-- if you will-- more everyday level, looking at the ways in which we can make big data more inclusive, and also help people actually collect data so that they can make the kinds of analytics and people-first analytics that I think is so important. And also, the ways in which we can use things like virtual reality in order to help reinvigorate democracy.

So for instance, creating virtual scenarios about everyday people's lives that politicians and public service providers can experience, as well as other community members, to better understand their challenges and obstacles so that they can work together in real life to make huge differences.

INTERVIEWER: So you'll be no stranger to this idea of impact of your research . But tell me-- what one thing would you hope that some of these projects could achieve?

PETER BLOOM: What I hope these projects could achieve-- if I had one hope, and one defining hope-- is that people feel empowered, as I said, to have the freedom to shape their lives and future using technology.

So instead of feeling that things are determined or so inevitable or that they feel lost or disempowered, that actually, they feel-- both systematically, in terms of the type of economy we live in, or on their everyday levels of their interpersonal relationships and their communities-- that they actually feel they can use this technology and use organisations and institutions that are linked to these technologies in order to better their lives and actually have the almost existential freedom to experiment and shape society for how they think they would like it to look, as opposed to feeling as if-- again, they're just simply being shaped by society.

INTERVIEWER: Peter Bloom, thank you very much.

PETER BLOOM: OK, thank you.

[MUSIC PLAYING]