

Approaches to Regenerative Transformation

Host & Partner Interview Transcripts

Table of Contents

<i>Table of Contents</i>	1
<i>Oleg Koefoed</i>	2
<i>Morten Rubæk and Henriette Bachmann</i>	13
<i>Thomas Buro</i>	25
<i>Nikolaj Noel Christensen</i>	36
<i>Patricia Csobánczi</i>	42
<i>Lars Engberg</i>	47
<i>Ulrika Jansson</i>	66
<i>Sofie Kempf</i>	73
<i>Oliver Maxwell</i>	91
<i>Bente Milton</i>	96
<i>Nana Francisca Schottländer</i>	105
<i>Matias Katejavaara Seidler</i>	111
<i>Becoming Species – Linh Le and Tanya Montan Rydell</i>	116
<i>Christina Staudlbauer</i>	124

Oleg Koefoed

Abby:

Would you mind if we record this interview?

Oleg:

Of course not.

Livia:

Okay. So, our first question is: describe your work and your goals.

Oleg:

Wow. Describe my work and my goals. Like, in what I do?

Livia:

Yeah.

Oleg:

Okay. So, I... I think about right now, probably around half of what I do is working as what you would call a thought leader. So, someone who tries to influence a more general agenda setting, but also more specifically the way that particular people in particular contexts think about something. So, trying to shift around paradigms, ways of thinking, modes of thought, how people work, how people interact, and how they interact with, say, nature, or environment, or places, cities, but also with each other. So, that's about, and normally I would say the other half would be dedicated to specific actions. Actually, doing things that also involve people, and ideally also other creatures. Actually, you always involve other creatures, one or another, right, but also on a more substantial level. Right now, I think about at least 30% of those normal 50% go with developing things, because I'm in the midst of starting up a center for regenerative transformation. So, about a third of my time is taken by pure development, talking to people, supporting others, figuring out how to make connections to the rest of the organization, how that can be brought into the process, and so on. And that leaves about 20%. Or probably, in a normal workday, that would be like 50, 40, and then 20% for writing, and 20%. Now, we're like on 130 or so. So, the last 20% are actually doing things. But right now, this past six months or so, I've mainly been doing things by proxy, by supporting other people, like the artists that you've been seeing. So, I've been doing a little bit myself, but mostly just sort of making it possible for others to do things, by channeling little bit of funds, or securing a dome, or whatever is necessary. So, that's administration, communication work, a little bit of project management, and just partnering, creating partnerships, and making sure that those partnerships are kept relatively alive and healthy. What are my goals? So, that would be like my everyday life. I'm looking forward to meeting with a friend of a friend that I see about once every fifth year, or so, because I only see him when my friend has his birthday. And if he does, and he remembers to invite me in for his annual dinner, then I see this other guy. And he's the guy who looked at me, and he said, but no, no. But what do you actually do? Because somehow in his world, what I just described just doesn't add up to a work life. It doesn't fit, it doesn't match. But what do you do? So, anyway, that's what I do. What are my goals? My goals are to achieve a reasonable degree of satisfaction with the effort that I can make, in terms of trying to contribute to what I

would describe as the need for paradigm shift. And a lot of other people as well. So, that's a very vague way to say things, but it's very hard to measure. So, I would say on a more specific level, I think, I don't necessarily have it as a goal, but I might want to do that actually. Now that I'm starting at the center to actually try and quantify some of these things as well, and say, how many people would I like to touch? Like, how many people would I like to support in their transformation process throughout a year? So, I don't know how many that will be. But that's something, that would be a goal actually to be able to do that. To set more accurate goals, because that way it also means that what I'm in the process of doing right now is to try and start to create a more systematic approach to this very wide range of very different people that somehow constitute the network that I'm part of, or the networks that I'm part of, and somehow make up my network, which is a strange thing to say, because nobody has a network. We're not spiders. We don't go out and eat the others. We're one of the webs of webs of webs. But in all those webs, there are a lot of different people, and I would like to be able to look at over the next six months or so who are actually the ones that we can attract closer, bring closer to us, apart from the obvious ones. The ones who are like ourselves. So this strange mix of people that you've already met has a category, more or less, which is a funny category, but they were described recently in an article in the newspaper as the losers. Because they lose in the political game these days, or we do. In order to be able to transform that, and transform that condition, that would also be a goal, to actually make it possible to, I'm trying to send you that article. It was written by a woman called Lotta Henson, who's been a political agenda center in a Danish context in the last 25, 30 years or so. She's a voice, and her message was actually, like, we should support these people because they are forgotten. They've had a rough time and so on. Anyway, interesting piece of journalism. So a goal would be to try and see who are the other groups that we might be able to attract closer and attract sufficiently, so that they would be open to opening little doors, making it possible for organizations to have a different kind of encounter with their environment than what they do now. That would be, and that would have to be quantified. But I don't know what the numbers are yet, and that would involve a number of people, and also, interestingly, try and see how could that be? How could you describe that as different groups within an organization outside of it? Just kind of make that mapping and see how large is that. I'm going to meet with a guy who's actually working on one of the domes places that I had found or that were identified to me. So luckily, things are actually moving, even though we didn't get the funding for that, particular action at that particular time, they are moving on with some things, and they hired a smaller architect company called Catapult to design how that area would be possible to structure as some kind of a strange mix of urban nature, spirituality, and recycling, and culture. So we're meeting about that project, and that would be a good example to see, if you take a place like that, how could you actually describe who do you need to have, what kind of stakeholders do you need to have, and how can you widen the normal group of stakeholders that you would expect and include more people from civil society, organizations, business, policy makers, and so on. Which are all quite difficult to attract. Okay.

Livia:

So our next question is, what made you enter this field?

Oleg:

I got an invitation. I got an email. There are two answers to that. The first answer was given to me by my not-very-good supervisor when I wrote my crazy thesis, which eventually became a PhD, more or less. But back then, he said, somewhere between two sips of coffee with a lot of whiskey in it, he said, you are an organic philosopher. He said, oh, great. So I'm like bio. So an organic philosopher is basically somebody who can't help it. So that's the one answer. I can't help it. The other is, I got an invitation back in 2006 from some people in Germany inviting me to create, co-create with them an international network for culture and sustainability. And so at that time, I was actually working somewhere. So I went to my floor and I said, I want money to go to this conference, which was very smart. It was framed as a conference. So they said, sure. You have to book your ticket through that agency. So I did, and I went to Hamburg, and I went to Ludaburg, and we formed that international network. And since then, I've been working with mainly cultural approaches, but also wide range of other approaches to sustainability, eventually regeneration.

Abby:

Awesome. That's interesting.

Livia:

Yeah, that is really cool. Our next question is, apart from what you're working on right now, have you done any other work relating to the environment or regenerative action?

Oleg:

Well, yeah, since 2006. So in the following, I'd say, well, mainly in the following years, up to and right after COP 15, which was in Copenhagen, we did a lot of different actions putting art and culture in the front line of a more politicizing agenda for around sustainability. So we did stuff like we went to the Venice Biennale and did different actions, like dressing up with what you call those safety vests and with long meter rods standing on the key in Venice saying, 'how do you feel about six meter water rise?' to whoever was approaching this. Generally, people would walk up to you and say, are you part of the Biennale, or are you an artwork? And you could say, well, I've got this. And some people say the water is going to go up my six meters. What do you feel? So we did a lot of that kind of actions and smaller events and larger events and residencies in China and other places. And then COP-15 came and was an extreme disappointment for a lot of people, especially sort of in the whole third sector civil society, including the artists. And the next couple of years was like trying to recover from that globally, internationally. And then I got a call from the Nordic Council of Ministers. It was sort of a revive, like bringing our hopes back to life in a way, by somebody saying, hey, we're supposed to do this. Could you help us do it? What? Okay. Sure. And this was connecting culture and sustainability. So, from 11 to 15, I was doing that, basically helping different organizations develop the way that they connect cultural activities and cultural policy to a sustainable agenda, which is quite difficult to do, I mean you can do it locally, you can do it pinpointed, but actually bring it together on a policy level is very difficult because of all the Silos. So, you'll have, like, the work that I've been doing for the European Union on the Baltic Sea region has been connected to a strategy that the European Union has for the Baltic Sea region, it's called a mega region, and the work that I was doing was part of something called priority area number 17, also known as culture, and as part of that priority area there were a series of actions around sustainability, but they would not actually, like the policy makers would not necessarily make the

connection to the other priority area called sustainability, so whenever you did something you would actually, I would have to, or the people that I was working with, would have to make those connections on our own, actually bringing people together in the field, making them realize that they're all working for the same thing, and then at some point trying to bring that back up to a policy level, which is probably the most difficult part. So, I've been doing a lot of that, and I've been doing a lot of, like throughout that also continuing the more artistic event-based, place-based actions, and then from 16 to almost now, or at least six months ago, I was involved in a lot of different projects and actions and processes, trying to bring people together, working with urban nature, local sustainability, citizen involvement, and creative, not innovative processes in Copenhagen, but also in other places, and that kind of got jeopardized, of course, by Corona, because a lot of the stuff that we were doing was on the ground, so that's what made it possible for practically two years, so we had to reinvent ourselves, so for two years, like everybody else, I was doing a lot of zoom meetings, and mirror boards, and online teaching, and trying to start up groups with people knowing that at some point it would stop, or it would transform again, and then around New Year I started here.

Livia:

Nice, so our next question is, how does your work relate to the bigger picture of climate change, sustainability, and regenerative action?

Oleg:

On a very specific level, I will occasionally go to places like a conference, especially the ones that are already transdisciplinary, so that they actually bring people together working with all of these issues, because climate change is not the same field, it's not the same group of people as regeneration, there are two different groups of people, so you have to actually find yourself or organize, but occasionally you can actually be lucky enough for other people to organize processes or conferences, where you will specifically be able to meet like Sebastian Merrill, who's one of the main experts in part of the IPCC people, the ones who write the big reports, so he's one of the local experts in Denmark, and listen to him and then say, but wait Sebastian, what is your theory of change, and he'll go like, okay, right, let's talk, so that's one of the ways in which I think, I find, I mean of course I read, right, I read, I study on this, the podcast, so I educate myself on the whole wider picture, the whole wider background, like everybody else should do, like all school kids should, all high school kids, all university students should, but that's quite a political agenda, but otherwise, apart from educating yourselves, I try to put myself in context where it's possible to have that kind of conversations across the different sectors of this very white question, and occasionally also try to set up things, like the conference that I'm working on setting up for this fall, where we actually bring people together who might all say they're involved, somehow something around regenerative processes, but at the same time they have very different ways of doing it, and then try also to bring some of the people who might not normally find themselves in that kind of context, like climate change experts, or policy makers. There are different people trying to do that in different ways, there's a festival that will take place in September, organized by, you know the Roskilde Festival? You've heard of that? It's a big rock festival, it's like a local WoodStock thing, it's been taking place since 1972, and when they reach 125,000 people, like of whom the 25,000 were volunteers and the rest were audience, back like 10 years ago, they reached that number, and they started shrinking deliberately, because it's too much, and they actually had someone die at the festival, so now I think it's only about

80,000, 90,000 people every summer, so they get a lot, they earn a lot of money, and they put all that money into, like all the profit goes into education, sustainability projects, they run a high school, like folk high school, and they recently started, last year they started a festival called Grasp, you can have a look at that, they have a program, they have different little videos from last year, so some of those events are super interesting in the way that they try to bring together art, thinking, activism, policy making to some extent at least, and try and shake the jar and put things together in a different way, and attract people to that, so that's one way of connecting things, and another maybe even more important way is then, okay when you do that kind of stuff like the conference, making that find a route and longer processes that you create partnerships around processes that can transform something locally, ideally because that's where you transform things, right? Yeah I think that that's like mainly the way that I bridge to some of those other things right now, we'll see.

Livia:

Awesome, well thank you for answering those questions, Abby is going to ask a few more.

Abby:

Yeah, so through all this amazing work you've done in the past and now, how have you made a difference in your community or Copenhagen and do you have any examples you'd like to share?

Oleg:

I mean the most tangible thing that you can do is, I'd say the most tangible result is when people tell you that you've made a difference, like for them, so I'd say there are a number of people that have expressed that, so that would be one way, that I've pushed people or drawn people or whatever it is across some kind of threshold, so that when you cross that threshold you can't go back, you can't do things the way that you did them before, like local paradises, on a more sort of organizational formal level, I think, it's funny right because I pretty much put together the strategy of the Nordic council and ministers for cultural sustainability back in 12, 13, so that in itself was an effect, it was an impact, but I'm not sure what the impact was of that impact, so like doing things like writing strategies for people is a weird thing, it's like writing so much, it's worse than writing so much business plan, if you write so much business plan, you can get back to the year later and you can say, because what are the first, you know, are you still there, are you still alive, have you hired anyone or did you just kill yourself, but when you write someone's strategy, especially on a political level, it's often it kind of just disappears, there's a kind of weird thing which is when I look at the when when when the municipality of Copenhagen came up with their framing for the way that they wanted to work during this UNESCO World Capital of Architecture, the year that we're in now, right, so when they when the municipality came up with their approach called Copenhagen in common, last year, I looked at it and I said, wow, I wrote that, but I didn't officially, I just knew that practically every single word in there was somehow smart came from something that I was part of, it's like, okay, so I remember I looked at it and I thought, all right, this means either that I will very actively be a part of that and and so I should sort of plan ahead until 24 and I say, all right, now what, like, that would be like a line in the sand, right, that would be a year, like the 1st of January 24 would be a year with a lot of looking back, evaluating how to 23 go or alternatively, I would not be very actively involved because the work was already done, you know, because the mindset was already there or the third thing, which I didn't think about at that point, but which is probably much closer to being the truth,

somewhere next to one and two, there's a third option, which is the decision makers who are behind that kind of strategy think that they can pull it off, so they write the strategy, they make the plan, they say, okay, cool, we're going, what they don't realize is that a lot of the different points that they're identifying are things that they're not capable of doing as an organization, it's like when this little shop says we're going to go regenerative, it will take them five years until they get to the point where they really understand what they're not capable of doing, so it's a bad, it's like, and in between they do a lot of stuff, right, so in between and this year it could mean that's probably if it could mean they're doing a lot of things and they're partnering with a lot of different organizations, but the organization itself is not capable of doing the work on the ground that they would, that would really prove that the high ambitions or the high ambitions that they have according to the strategy. So, that means that, on the other hand, when I talk to the people who are working with that spot in Osterport where there might be a dome, at least there might be a lot of processes that we had designed at the time, that is an impact and it's a result of work that we did, and it's also a proof that the strategy of the Municipality of Copenhagen is working, but it's not going to happen in 23. It's going to happen in 25 maybe. So that's probably the real truth. The things just happen slower, they always happen slower than you expect. And then we'll see what the impact is of the work that I've started here. We'll get back to that next year, hopefully.

Abby:

Awesome. So we've talked about art and culture a lot today, but how does your work relate art and culture to the regenerative paradigm and how important is art and culture in regenerative practice?

Oleg:

Well, I think Matias might talk to you about the concept of the “crisis of imagination”, which I owe him for highlighting. So I think it's a good way to frame things that, somehow, in the midst of all the other crises and in this strange overlap of a period of very rapid economic growth and overlapping with a major crisis. In some strange way, there's a “crisis of imagination” in the sense that, well, one way to explain it would be to say that we got so involved as a civilization in coming up with smart solutions, like a billion small smart solutions, that we lost the ability to collectively work on the larger ones. So democracy is threatened. The world is less democratic this year than it was last year. Less democratic last year than it was the year before. Autocracy is growing. So, there are a lot of signs that the big picture is not forming. And we need to find ways to work with that. It's not possible to do it on a global level. I mean, we're not there. We don't have that kind of consciousness as a species, right? We're all over the place. But you can do it locally, at least, regionally. And you can inspire across places. And I think the capacity of art to tell those stories, and frame those narratives and bring together, I mean, one of the things that I studied all the way back, when I was writing my thesis all the way back then, was that one of the most important things of, I was writing about literature at the time, but you could say that about a lot of different, more or less, narrativizing art forms, that what they can do is that they can bring together paradoxes and make them coexist in the same frame. Because it's completely normal if you listen to a story, or if you watch a movie, that there are paradoxes and contradictions and things that just don't fit. You can even have a movie taking place over two different ages, which doesn't happen in life otherwise, right? You don't get born in the Middle Ages and die in the 21st century. But you can do that in the movie. In three hours, you go through the history of a family, for instance, throughout 800 years, right? You can do that. And that's, so either you bring

together paradoxes, and you show how they actually interact, or you can bring together, here's a terrible word, "impossibilities". So, impossible developments are like, if you're in front of a fork, right, a pathway of, a forking pathways, and you say, well, like the classical example is the universe that happens when Adam took a bite of the apple. Versus the universe that would have happened if Adam hadn't taken a bite of the apple, right? Regardless of whether you believe the story or not, because if it's not about the real event, but about the Bible, then those are still two different worlds, right? So, "impossibilities" about the fact that either you take that bite or you don't, right? And everything that happens afterwards. So, what art can do is it can actually bring together impossible worlds, worlds that cannot coexist. Have you seen *Interstellar*? So, that's an example of it, right? I mean, you don't, you don't see that. We will never see that. I mean, maybe our grand grand grand grand and children will see that, right? But we won't see that. But we did. We saw it. And we could think it. We could grasp it. We had to watch it like a couple of times before we really got it. And then you get, "whoa", you get all wound up and you get fucked up in your brain for a month or so, right? And it keeps returning to that terrible moment with a bookshelf. And you can do that with art. And you can actually change people's mind with that. You can make people suddenly say, "Wow, after I had that thought, I'm not the same anymore. I want to live my life differently." And so, there's a reason why political propaganda, for instance, has been using the force of art always as a tool. So it's not necessarily a positive thing, right? It's just, it's a power, right?

Abby:

Thank you for sharing that. Our next question kind of shifts to the avian human programming. How does that contribute to the regenerative paradigm overall?

Oleg:

I'd say there's a very practical level, which is it adds a trickle, a droplet, of support to some people who are in a longer picture trying to use their capacities and talents to make people aware of things like our relation to other species. So people like Nikolaj or Nana Francisca or Maiken or other *Becoming Species* people and Lars and so on already do this work and it's just adding a little bit of support to that work. I think that's actually the most important thing. And in some cases, to some extent, it will hopefully also connect them more to some of the other people in the other countries in the project. That's probably more for the next phase because of the conditions of Corona and everything else that came in between. And then, so that's like behind the curtain part of it, right?

I think the other side of it, well, we went for the walk with a handful of people and some of those people had already been to the talk with Nikolaj for instance. They would express that something, they were realizing things that they had not thought of, even though they actually found this field interesting. So maybe if you can do that, you would achieve something. I wish it were possible to reach out to more people, to give more people that kind of an experience. But yeah, things are difficult sometimes. Ironically, we forced something through, which is nice because otherwise you wouldn't have been able to attend anything at all because normally you wouldn't do these things in the winter. And you do them in the spring and summer because that's when it's nice to do and it's easier to grow a crowd, right? But we were informed that we had to be done by the end of April, which it turned out at the end of the day to not be true, actually the end of the project is actually postponed. So it won't have to be done at all until October.

Anyway, so one way that we can expand in some of those things is by recording stuff, publishing stuff, by finding ways in which some of the artists can go on with what has now been sort of a prototype development of what they were doing and continuing to support the development of what they're doing so that it might live on in a different context and be used in other cases. I just got a message from one of the artists that's not part of that project, but there's also a very gifted artist working with our relations, especially to materials that the program that she created back in 2019, which was supposed to take this in 2020, then Corona came, then at the end of the day she did it in 2021, but they could only invite, I don't remember, 30 people or so into an old tower because of the rules and regulations. So I just got a mail from her saying that she just got support to actually do that project in a different context now. And that's over four or five years, right? So sometimes these things just take a long time both to mature content wise, but also then to find a form and a life and a context where they can be supported and become part of something else. So the work that Maiken is doing is part of the work that she did. Oh, those two were actually the artists I mentioned before, but it's called Tora, and Tora and Maiken were working together on the project. And the work that I'm doing with Maiken and now that she's going to continue doing as a longer walk, that is also continuation of the work that she did with Tora. In that sense, these things tend to connect and form a little web of their own.

I would really love to be able to say that, yeah, we're looking back at those two women, right? The way that they expressed joy and curiosity about like, "Wow, we didn't know that so many things were happening and so many relations between humans and birds", and so on. It would be fantastic to be able to extend that. But I also realize that for all the interests that I had in these things before this project, I also see that there are a lot of things that changed in my attitude or awareness of all the little details of the lives of birds, which is a prerequisite for changing the way that we relate to them. That's taken me about five years, right? There's a slow thing to change, right? So I'd say, yeah, I guess that's what we can hope to do, to sow those tiny little seeds of that kind of long change, which then requires that the kind of work that we've been doing this spring finds a format where it doesn't only. I live as a one-time event, it has to have formats that can somehow be used or distributed in a wider context.

Abby:

What direction do you see yourself moving in?

Oleg:

Well, the main target for this year is to be able to approach a different audience so a more an audience more based within organizations. I mean, I have been working with that kind of an audience, but to a greater degree than before. But doing that in a way where I actually manage – we manage to bring together all these different disciplines as part of the approach and the offer. So that something like the conference in the fall will be, in fact, a mix of science and art and politics and specific development projects in six different places and so on. So really insisting, and insisting in a way where we don't only talk about these different fields and make them tangible to people. And then continuing to be part of smaller projects, I want to keep doing that. That seems to be happening. I've been asking to be – I've been hoping or however you put that, depending on what kind of belief you have or that to happen and this happening. People are actually getting back to me saying, now we've got money to do this. We do like to be part of it. So I will go on doing that because for me that's a very rich source of understanding and knowledge. Actually working in places with people and other species. So hopefully in a year

from now we will be looking happily back, having our Friday beer with Kim and looking back and saying the two sails on the ship are moving in the wind and everything is going in the right direction with the little centers. Hopefully setting up a longer learning journey. Creating that, I've been looking at some of the stuff that's out there. They're super inspiring. We need more of that.

Abby:

We just have one question left anyways, if that's fine.

Oleg:

What's the meaning of life?

<everyone laughs>

Abby:

No, seriously. That'll get you thinking, right?

Abby:

And this one we don't need to focus on heavily, but we want to ask, what were some obstacles or limitations you have faced through your work?

Oleg:

It's almost what's the meaning of your life. Well, I can't help thinking of the first thing that comes to my mind is one of the things that's been mind-boggling, and especially in the past couple of years, that's also been very visible to me – us, with some of the work that I've been doing with Patricia. Because when we have these small design tools, it becomes very, very easy to see both what you can do, but also the limitations. Like, you give people a very specific task and a very specific tool, and they come back, and they show you what they've done, and you can see it, right? It's in your face. How are you thinking? Yeah, so the obstacle is something like most of the time, most people are not asked to work with more than one thing. So they don't even...I think Thomas, at some point, expressed it as the highest that you can expect is for people to work in packages. When you're doing – developing, for instance, so, IT development, you tend to work in packages. You have to solve those packages. You've got this goal, and you create a package, and you find ways to do it, and at some point that's dumb, and then you get a new package. So that's pretty high level of coordination, collaboration, and often some of those programming and developing teams are actually some of the dreams that some of all the other people working in all different kinds of organizations will look at it and say, well, look at the work that they work, or people building a bridge, for instance. Where, in a way, you actually do bring together a lot of different sciences and ways of thinking, but people don't actually do that. They show up and they do a tiny little piece of the puzzle. So the result, and the obstacle, is that the result is that most people are not used to doing more than that little tiny piece of the puzzle. And is that a problem? Well, I think it's a problem in this sense that they don't realize consequences of their actions. In any other way than, Newtonian physics, you push the ball into the ball, and the ball moves. Okay, great. So most of the time, and I don't think it's because we don't have the capacity to understand that as a species or that people are stupid or anything like that. I don't have that kind of thinking, but more than you do what you're used to doing. You develop your capacities according to the things that you actually practice every day. So if you

practice local Newtonian cause action, cause effect, way of working and acting in general, that will be your worldview. And that's the main problem that I face again and again and again. So when you're used to working laterally and used to working hopscotching from one context to another, or just used to seeing connections and relations and everything, and you try to explain that to people, they don't get it. You have to do it with them. You have to walk the whole journey in different ways which is also why his virtual reality work is so interesting. You can actually leapfrog some of these problems. So one side of that problem is the perceptual, like local, but it also has the other side, which is that the more you make, triumphs, contextual movements and work that you do. Like what you guys are doing now, this spring as opposed to what you were studying just before you came here. This changes the way that you think, the way that you see things. And it will even more when you get back and you start working on what you were working on before. And so you'll be, wow, some of you find yourselves seeing things in a different light because of what you did here. And the more you do that, the more you're able to work with more complex problems. So we need to have more people who have a capacity to work with complex problems. But at the same time, we need to have more people who are able to work in a way that is sensitized. So it's also about being able to work in a way where there's not a distinction or a total gap between emotions and senses on one side. And some idea of rationality and intellect on the other side. Like everything that's computable and quantifiable on one side and everything else on the other side is like, that's a part of the problem. So that particular gap has to be surmounted as well. And that can only be done in practice.

Oh, and then I do have a problem with the fact that there are only 24 hours in a day. And when I was 25, I used to think that I was invincible and that I would live forever. I mean, I didn't, of course, but I did through the actions. And now I kind of have an issue with the fact that it would probably don't. So it means 24 hours in a day that there's only one life also. That's a problem. That's an obstacle.

And then, of course, there's the... Are you saying that? I mean, the reason why people work the way that they do is that they are hired to work the way that they do by a system that does not... For decades, at least, has not cared about the consequences of what it did. And being able to reintroduce the willingness to go outside of the box and look at consequences. I mean, I hear our CEO saying people are really curious about learning more about the whole regenerative paradigm thing. And they feel that there's a lot of interesting stuff going on here and so on. But they would really like to know more about how they should do it. So there's this kind of... Some of the things are... I sometimes get impatient. I sometimes think, like, but hey, come on, Joe, just open the window, go for a walk, sit down in the forest and listen to what the hell is going on around you. Just sit down in the middle of the city and have a look and listen, talk to people, or count the bugs. And you'll realize that there aren't any at least. So a lot of these things are – like at some point, you find that they're pretty obvious. And they should be beyond the point where people keep saying, but it's not – how is it actually important for us as an organization? Well, it should be. That's the one thing. It's the first step, right? It should be important for everyone. So let's start there. It's not about you. It's about the rest of the world. So it's your job to learn how you can create a business about what is important for the rest of the world. And we're not there. So that's definitely what the obstacle is.

Abby:

Yeah. All right. I think that wraps up – that's all the questions we have.

Livia:
Yeah.

Oleg:
Great.

Abby:
Thank you so much for doing this with us.

Oleg:
I'll draw a flower now.

Morten Rubæk and Henriette Bachmann

Livia:

Okay, yeah, so you guys are okay with it being recorded, so I'm just going to put my recording closer. So yeah, we're just going to start with a few questions about the work you do, and some of the ideas relating to our project and your points of view on them, so I think we can probably get started.

Abby:

I can ask the first few questions, so I know this is a big question, but describe your work and your goals kind of overall.

Morten:

Yeah, our goals in our work. I think we know we are a culture house that is under the municipality, and it's important for, in all aspects of the, we call it the commune, to show that we take the challenges ahead very seriously. And Henriette and I have been working together for five years, and in 19, I think, 20, we decided to thematize our events into what you have presented in front of you. And our goal is to collaborate with a lot of people that works within the confines of the themes, like Oleg, like Extinction Rebellion, like Plasticless Amager and all kinds, and give them space to, to have their productions here, and their meetings here. And we try to make events that isn't just factual about climate change and sustainability and so forth, but also has, you know, the, the cultural aspect would be, be it in art or music, or nesting or movies or something to try to bring people closer to nature, and in that way, we had a talk once where, where we were talking about how, from my, my own personal view is, I don't feel very connected to nature. And, and we try to through our, our events to, to see if we can do that through technology and art and all kinds of stuff.

Abby:

Do you have anything to add?

Henriette:

Maybe that we have like this small, exhibition space out there. I don't know if you saw it. Yeah. And kind of the idea was to, like, merge a certain, like an aesthetic part with an activist part, with a, with a nature of science part. So that's kind of, sometimes it's more aesthetic, sometimes it's more like, we've had ants in there, like some more, like, the pure nature, let's say. And sometimes we've had, like, like right now it's actually Extinction with Rebellion or people from artists to sing green or how would you translate it. One of, one of the smaller groups from Extinction Rebellion. So right now it's actually a lot like activism and the aesthetic part. So it was also, it's a way to try and reach people within the different spheres and, and make this synergy. So that's, yeah, like three columns that we try to always have in mind when we make events or make these spaces.

Morten:

Yeah, and maybe we should add that it's also, we try to incorporate into our everyday, I don't know, the English word, you know, we have, instead of serving plastic bottles with water, we have paper, cardboard bottles and the cafe where you were sitting is private but we collaborate

with them, and they have put more green stuff on their, on their, what's it called, the menu and work with not wasting too much food and, and trying to incorporate more green options where before it was burger and fries. Now they have more different and consider vegan and vegetarian options also.

Abby:

Thank you for sharing that. So moving on to our next question. What made you enter this field as in like entering, working with the culture house and sustainability?

Henriette:

It was just a personal like motivation issue and then we had this, our boss. Our boss, yeah. We like she, she actually wanted the, the whole house to be more, move, move together like in one direction and then I was like, I have the direction so it was actually just, yeah, I think that's very common to a lot of the culture houses and go making that, that we have a lot of possibilities to just go forward with. I would like to say that it was kind of a big strategy but it wasn't because it was just, we just had the freedom to do it. And then after a while, then, like the municipality suddenly was like, then it was suddenly an important strategy. It was suddenly important for them and we're like, okay, perfect, we're, we're already doing it. And then it became, like, more formalized. But it was just us seeing the urgency and the importance of doing it. And I've been like for a year or two, I've been making events and activities for families that just, a lot of them were around sustainability and nature, and then suddenly it was just, okay, then we go, yeah.

Morten:

All in.

Henriette:

All in.

Abby:

So when you describe personal connection in the beginning of what you were talking about, could you describe that a little bit more? Like your personal motivation?

Henriette:

My personal motivation. I think we, what we, I think we kind of thought, how can we, how, I think for me it was like, okay, I'm, I'm here to make events and activities, first of all for children and families. And then I was like, okay, that could be anything. So what's the higher purpose of doing this? How can I actually like, give it, how can it make, yeah, sense in a more like, yeah, you know. And then I was like, we have no higher goal than making, creating, awareness of the climate catastrophe. And, and it's also like bringing, trying to reconnect people to nature, to ants, to whatever's alive, to other species. So we, I think we just, we just tried, we didn't have like an exact plan with like, okay, so some people have to like, go out in Amager Fælled and actually have some experience out there. And some have to see a story in VR. Some, some want to go to this lecture. I mean, we have to reach people in a lot of different ways. And we don't know, actually what's going to work. We don't know what we're going to read in what way. So we're just trying a lot of ways and it was, it was like a playground. And we were just free to do it. And yeah, that's not motivation. I know I'm running away from your question.

Abby:
That's okay.

Morten:
But it was a perfect, it was a really good time for Henriette to introduce the theme to the culture house. Of course we had a boss who was, I think this was her first place as being a boss. And she wanted to put her footsteps on what is this building and what does it contain.

Henriette:
She wanted an agenda.

Morten:
She wanted an agenda and really introduced it. And I, at that point, I didn't really have any, I didn't have any, what you call, upper goals or ways of making events. It was pretty random with hip hop festivals and all kinds of stuff that didn't have a focus or red line. And I had been missing that a lot in working. So, so when Henriette came with this, it was, for me, a possibility to, to have a red line, and a focus, and also to delve deeper into something that I had sort of thought of, "somebody will probably solve this before it gets too bad". So, so it's been, it's, it's been really interesting. And, as Henriette says, we've tried a shitload of formats. Everything from virtual reality to a book cookie and nesting, everything with Oleg and talks and lectures about social insects and plant concerts and we basically had, because our boss also had the vision to say, there's no point in talking target groups, in talking target groups, when it comes to a subject like this, this is for everybody. We need to just try a lot of stuff and see what happens. So, we've had things that we thought nobody's going to come to this, this is too narrow where a lot of people came and we've had some things where they thought "this is going to be a big seller" and nobody came. So, we've tried and we've found, we're still playing, we're still figuring out how to do it. It is kind of a playground as well. But we're beginning to find our way and have these concepts that we try to keep in mind every time we plan our program.

Henriette:
And also, I think that the people that come to this culture house, I was like, okay, I can just keep on calling in theaters and concerts and, you know, like, have mostly almost free culture to the upper middle class of Copenhagen that live around here. And I was like, okay, but what the, I know, I'm not going to say that it's not important. So, like, children meeting different, yeah, cultural, yeah. But again, I was like how can I actually like challenge who.

Abby end here, livia start

Henriette:
I suppose, yeah, my own job and the whole... it's exactly what I said in the beginning, yeah, that, it was too easy or too light, I don't know, yeah.

Abby:
Great, awesome, thank you. And have you done any other work in your life, relating to the environment or something like this before?

Morten:

I'm a librarian, I don't think.

Abby:

And that's okay.

Morten:

I've lent out some books about it, but I haven't done events or productions that relate to the subject. I've collaborated with other people, the film club, that had the social change through documentaries as a subject, but we just housed it, it wasn't a collaboration as such, so I haven't, no.

Henriette:

Have I? Maybe it's a... volunteer in some, I'm not sure. It's always been, like, important, it's always been, yeah, but I'm not sure that maybe, I'm not really, I'm not formalized.

Abby:

Okay, and then one last question before...

Henriette:

Yeah, I did, actually, back then in Vanlose as well. Yeah, I made these, also these, I had, like, I used to also make, but it was more like events, exhibitions within, like, a program like this, But not formalized in the same way. With one of the groups, the Parks Boulevard, we made this huge, yeah, we actually got a lot of money for that. This huge plant exchange, exhibition library thing, people could make this big... Yeah, so it's been, like, event-based, like, then I've done it for, yeah, like, 10-12 years, actually, but, I mean, yeah.

Abby:

So, through hosting these events at the Culture House, how do you think that relates to the bigger picture of climate change and sustainability and regenerative action?

Henriette:

I wish I could tell you the effect of what we're doing.

Morten:

I think one of the good effects that it has is that we, when we collaborate with different organizations and people that has these themes in mind, we meet each other, and collaborations occur from that. I think when it comes to productions, it's really hard to measure the effect on people, but we can see that, you know, when we show a movie about the post-Nazi time in Germany, where it came into the surveillance of East Germany, the same people that goes to that also has an interest in some of our other things. So, one of the things we can definitely see is that people start having us as an orientation mark for, they know that something is going on with sustainability, climate, and social change, just like a lot of people, I don't know if you know Absalon, it's called Absalon Church, it's not a church, it's a private, it used to be a church, it's in a church, and now it's this billionaire who has it, and he makes all these events and it's for people,

it's a place, it's called a people house, so you can meet people. And when you are in that house, you have no doubt that the people that are there use it as an orientation mark, it doesn't really happen, maybe what is going on, they just know that it's something they like because it's produced by them, and we're beginning to have the same sort of reputation in lack of a better word for people who sees this as important, and the fact that we do it, and so we have such a broad spectrum of cultural productions that range from the pretty obscure to the very factual, just that we hit a lot of people on the way, we shoot with a lot of bullets, and we hit people along the way, so we can see that people start coming back to things, and collaborate, yeah.

Abby:

That's awesome, that's great to hear.

Henriette:

Sorry?

Abby:

That's great to hear that.

Henriette:

Yeah, because we make a lot of, yeah, sometimes we're like, okay, we could do this, and we could also just not do it, and nobody would, I mean, no, it's really a struggle sometimes with our own motivation, because it's, you know, yeah, but then people come back and they're like, oh, someone told me that, it's so important what you're doing, and we're like, okay, I'll continue for a while, but also, what was, no, that, for instance, like the people we, the shows we book, or the concerts, you know, maybe, you know, we try also others, like they see what we're doing, and they copy, and I just think that if more, yeah, and some of the things that people don't show up, but they see it, and I think that just by being out there, just being visible, just like people seeing that, oh, this is happening, then that's what, I mean, okay, this is difficult, but what you see, like, kind of see, you begin to believe that it's, that, it wasn't the landscape, or, it feels in the landscape. No, what I'm trying to say that...

Morten:

Everything works.

Henriette:

Everything does something, no, that's not what I want to say. I'll go back to it in a while, but also, like, if I have to, to book a concert for families of children, then, like, then I prefer not to, like, take the typical band that, like, sings about elephants and crocodiles, why not take the one that I somehow found somewhere who sing about this, the local species from Amager Fælled, because it's there, I mean, you just have to look for it, because there are a lot of people really concerned about, yeah, the nature being, you know, all these species being extinct and things like that, so, I mean, people do sing about it, they do write about it, they do write poetry, and it's, there's so much out there, so I've always, like, still with, like, looking for quality, of course, but there's so much, also, like, really high quality, so that's what we book, and I think that, yeah, we give more, more power, presence, everything to these people that actually are concerned about, yeah, does it make sense?

All:
Yeah.

Henriette:
Okay.

Morten:

I just wanted to add that, that the program that we started making is such, it's such a good, what did you call, it's a good thing, we placed it around Copenhagen, and it's a physical object that everybody can see, okay, something is going on, it isn't just, you know, Facebook posts, and we tried to make a beautiful representation of what we do, and that has been noticed a lot of places, and we sent it out as a PDF, so this whole, when the municipality started saying, perhaps we should make a strategy for sustainability, so forth, we were already far ahead of them, and we're so far ahead of them that they're trying to kind of catch up with us because we work, we have a climate manifest that, this is what we work from, and we have proved it over years now that this is, because a lot of, when we talk with other libraries and culture houses, they can be kind of sort of conservative and say, but who's going to come to a lecture about ants or birds? But people will, and people do, as long as they know that it's there.

Henriette:

And even though they don't, they still see, okay, they have these anti-capitalistic nights, and then it's out there, I mean, then it's, then, yeah.

Morten:

Definitely, it gets out there, and even though, I mean, I have a friend who works in a culture house in Vanlose, and our two houses doesn't have, we don't have anything to do with each other, we are very different from them and vice versa, but he sees it and he goes, hey, maybe, that's a fucking good idea that you have there. And so, it kind of, it sort of spreads out and hopefully also inspires some colleagues because it is actually possible to do this and not just do it within, okay, we have a crisis, how do we solve it, let's get some, some scientists, people in here talking about data and how to do, but doing it in unusual circumstances and constellations and drag people out into nature and teach them there or have a concert there, and, you know, it's pretty much all in comparison, yeah.

Henriette:

And of course, I learned through the aesthetic element, like, reach people throughout and through, yeah, that kind of works.

Morten:
Yeah.

Abby:

Awesome. Well, thank you for answering my questions, I'm going to pass it off to KJ to ask some more.

KJ:

Yeah, a few more questions to ask. So, with all the work that you're doing with hosting these events, how do you feel that your work relates art and culture to the regenerative paradigm idea and how important do you see art and culture in regenerative practices?

Morten:

Oh, that's a, that's, okay, yeah, I don't know. We had, we tried, I think, when you have a subject like regeneration and regenerative processes can be incredibly boring to hear about for people, maybe most people don't even know exactly what it is. And I think when you take something that is hard to grasp or hard to understand the process of, and you put it into an artistic or cultural environment, you can have people come in and see it in a different way than just, you know, hear numbers on a paper or hear text on a paper, but maybe seeing it in a different way. And we've had everything from, we collaborated with a guy who was a forest, he was a forest regenerative forest, something in Brazil and Africa. And he was very much a green entrepreneur, and we had this big idea with him, we're going to make like, you know, a Friday afternoon and a bar, and we're going to have people come and talk about what regenerative products can be used for with concrete examples and a beer, and it's going to be awesome, and 12 people came. So it's just to say that you can have the best idea with the best intentions at all in the world, but if it doesn't really click within what a culture house is and what we represent, then nobody's going to show up. So our culture connected with science is, is, drags more people in than if it's just factual. If that makes sense,

KJ:

Yeah, that makes sense.

Morten:

Yeah, it's also hard because I'm not exactly sure what, when you say the regenerative paradigm, what exactly it is that it means from your point of view, yeah.

KJ:

So the regenerative paradigm is the idea that there's this sustainability is, the idea of sustainability is obviously not enough, and that creates this idea of there's a paradigm. We need to, it's, we have a problem that's, sorry, no, I'm stumbling on my words a bit. You have this paradigm that is, you have to solve before it gets too bad, too, too worse. Sustainability is not going to be enough, what we've learned enough to satisfy that. So this idea of regenerative action to help satisfy this paradigm that we have is our goal.

Morten:

Have you been to any, you know, as Oleg, you know, he's, what you call it, he's very much into the regenerative paradigm in arts and culture.

KJ:

Yes

Morten:

Do you, have you, does it make sense to you what he's doing sometimes, because to me, sometimes I go, what the fuck is that? And I'm sorry, Oleg, but I sometimes think, okay, you've got to make a nest out there, for what, three people and an egg, what, what is, sometimes it gets, it can get abstract, but it's, it's, you have to experience it to, to see it in order for it to make sense, but it can be really, really hard to, to, to translate the meaning of arts and culture in, in a regenerative paradigm into something we can present as, as something that people would come to, because sometimes it gets so philosophical or, or abstract, it's really hard to, it's, it's hard to, to, to connect the things for me personally, sometimes I'm much more factual and when you try to have this, when you try to mesh them, it, it can be,

Henriette:

But, but we try a lot to like race, we don't go like, we're not working like, we're not working like, working with the, I mean, we don't go out there talking about it a lot, but, but we really try to like, make things that, that can establish a connection and a reconnection to, to nature, like to the feeling that people have to like, wanting to give back into the earth and not just taking from it and like, as you said, it's, it's so much not enough to recycle and to blah, blah, blah, we, that's, I mean, it's, it's, so we make events that have like this, this kind of purpose and work with the, the know becoming species.

Abby:

We're going to that event this weekend. Yes.

Morten:

Is it this weekend?

KJ:

Next weekend.

Morten:

Next weekend. This weekend is the Rave event.

Henriette:

We've worked with a lot of people that work in this area and work with, in different ways with, within the regenerative paradigm, I guess, I think, but, but we don't like, yes, then we have, that's not, yeah, then we have a, that's more explicit. We have a regrowth festival in August. But a lot of the events are more like nudging and maybe some, maybe some event will, I mean, some people would, would like change overnight or with just one specific performance because they are, it gets to them and, and other people like need to see four programs and then they like begin. Ah Okay. Because that is the way, that's the concept of what they, yeah, they would go and see any kind of theater, but then we like, we take the, the themes that, did you see what I mean?\

All:

Yeah.

Henriette:

So we're not, we're not that into the, we are not that into the, the regenerative thing. It's one of the many subjects that, that we have, we have to study to like say something more qualified about, all right.

KJ:

So next question that we have to you is, what direction do you see moving the culture house with the themes that you're taking on and everything? What direction do you see you're taking the culture house in the future?

Morten:

Well, there's, there's what we hope and then there's what we think can happen because one of the things that, that we like here is, is we need room, we need space for our, for our work with this. We have, we have three that book in, in, in the house and it's hard to always get the good spaces and, and it's also, what I'm trying to say is, in the end, I have made this proposal for, for our boss who sent it further on to, to politicians, how we can take our, our outside area and make it into a more, an area that, that creates sustainability and climate, it works with climate change and, and hopefully we'll get some money for that because we'd love down here to have an area where, where the, where the audience can sit. It's right next to our, our disposal area but make it into kind of that it goes together, you can see what, how much we throw out as a municipality and, and so forth and we, we've made the suggestion that above, above these rooms, there's a space where we would like to, to put up, it's, it's just a hole in, but you can make it into a room and we, we've suggested that maybe you could use it as a laboratory for, for regenerative projects or ecological projects as a, as a, as a space we can, we can say to people that work with this, come and sit in here, have your meeting here, have your exhibition about or make your event here for free, as long as it's within a green mindset and we propose that we have the, the dome, that the dome is gone in the 1st of June, it goes somewhere else but we propose that we put up a bigger dome further down so it could both be a vertical, planned it and we, and we can have room for more events like concerts, talks, where they actually fit because there's not a lot of space in, in, in that one. So that's one of the things we really hope that, that one that, that some politicians see the, the possibility and the, and the vision of, of connecting climate change and, and art together and, and do it here, we, we would like to be, and I think we are on the verge of being called it as, as an official title, a forefront house for, for, for, for climate change related to activities within the culture houses and Copenhagen and another thing is that we really hope that it gets out there at that, that more, more places understand that they can, they can use it as a personal motivation to that, that it is a playground, there's no, there's no two plus two is four and then we solve this, it's much more, let's throw a lot up and see if, if not people make the dots connect themselves or meet somebody who they can talk to about no culture, a lot of it is, it's also that afterwards our productions, we, we encourage people to stay and we have a bar and talk to each other and, and, and relate and collaborate and, and see what happens, it, it, it, it has done good to, to us so I really hope that, that we can continue working with this, I think we will and I think we can, and find our concepts that isn't too narrow so people won't come but, you know, in between the narrow and the broad, so we can get a lot of people down there.

KJ:

All right, did you want to add anything?

Henriette:
I'm good.

KJ:
So yeah, one last question, um, you mentioned some minor obstacles that you go, um, that you have to deal with but are there any obstacles or limitations that you face through your work that you'd like to point out?

Morten:
Well, we do work in the municipality then, we don't like limitations or obstacles.

KJ:
Yeah.

Morten:
There's always economics, that's, that's always, I heard it can sometimes be difficult.

Henriette:
We have to stop XR and give him, hand the flyers when it says that they're gonna block the bridges, for instance.

Morten:
We can't. We can't.

Henriette:
Sometimes it's like, um, yeah. It, it can't be difficult to control and organization, like, extinction rebellion. Um, and then it sounds like, oh, and then, yeah.

Gabby:
Are you talking about them, they're kind of spreading propaganda?

Henriette:
Yeah. And it's, I mean, it's not a problem because it's a public house so they can actually leave, people can leave anything here and they can, like, put on, but, but at the moment that we have, like, events with them, hosting events and they, like, spread propaganda, which say on the 28th of April we're gonna make blah, blah, blah, blah. And then it says, including blocking the bridge, blah, blah, blah. Then it's like, okay, then we can't have it.
Because then it says,

Morten:
Yeah, we are co—,

Henriette:
Yeah.

Morten:

Then it looks like we suggest that.

Henriette:

And that – we can't do that.

Morten:

No.

Henriette:

So then with some of our colleagues or our boss, are like, “I just found this, and we're like, “okay, let's try to control it,” except we can't, and you can, for instance, you cannot send a mail and communicate because they're not one, they're like, they have this flat organization, yeah, that's just one.

Morten:

Yeah, but it's a good example of the collaboration, being a partner and certain stuff can be, you know, walking a thin line –

Henriette:

Yeah, it is.

Morten:

– because we as private person support everything they do, and I believe that civil disobedience is a must if we are going to go anywhere, but we can't, as a housing, as you can't say that, you can't, you can't on Saturday, XR (Extinction Rebellion) has something called Rave the Planet, it's a, this dance performance, dance performance, and they said, “we're going to give our flyers”, I had to say, “you can't”, they said, “why not?”, but because we are, this and that, and they said, “can we do it outside, it's a public area”, I said, “yeah, but it would just be really, really bad for me if you do”, and not a good signal to send to, to a partner.

Henriette:

Maybe if they remove that one sentence, then it's actually okay, but, so this, the thing about collaborating and then having these, “but that won't work”, but that, yeah, you have to, you have to control it in a way, I'll try to control it because we can – we don't want, I mean, right now we're really free to do what we want, and some of the people coming to some of our friends are like, “how can you make this anti-capitalistic–”, and then, it was a guy from a library in Frederiksberg, and he was like, “I would get fired”, it was like, but why? So we're not – I mean, we take it to the limit – no, we could take it further, but we, we go quite far sometimes, but we also like, we don't want to, we don't want to push it too much because, because, yeah, it could be like, they could ruin it for us, they could take away a lot of this freedom that we have, and we don't want that, so we prefer to like, make a lot of events and like be very explicit about our, not goals, but about our intentions, rather than to push it too far, if you – yeah, that was not at all the question. What did you ask me? I totally forgot the question.

Morten:

I want to add that, it's also something that is, that is difficult, has been, for instance, about regenerative paradigm, that's incredibly hard to say for a Dane, the regenerative paradigm. To know, when is something regenerative, and when is something not, when is something green, and when is something light blue or gray. Because we always talk about the green solutions, but we as, as, as cultural, culture people, whatever we call it, don't really have a chance to look at a given project of, of shoes made from fungi, are they really green? The whole process, is it regenerative, or is it just something that we say, but in actuality, it's not because one of the chains is, is black as coal, something. So, so that whole thing to, to have qualified, what is actually green and not blue or black, that's kind of fun, that's why we also, excuse me, also collaborate with a lot of people in order to have qualified for ourselves, because we, we could be very wrong, and it's just a really bad look to present something as the green, right, then somebody goes, “but they, they fire with coal when they do something like that”. Another thing that is, that can be hard is, I mentioned economics in the beginning, we have our budgets, and, and we have free, free hands to use it as we want, nearly, but we, we also need to apply for funds, for, for certain things, and there's a lot of funds that, that give money out to cultural productions, and there's a lot of, for art, and there's also for science, and, and, and climate change, but there's not a lot that overlaps and say, “oh, so you make cultural productions regarding this, this, then we have the right fund for you”, so you always have to look at these, every once in a while, there's these pop-up funds that for three months, “oh its to support biodiversity in, in Amager” – boom, hurry, hurry, and so, so it's, it's always a lot of, grabbing what, what is in front, and then, that pops up.

KJ:

Yeah, one of the concepts that you said, about like, it worrying about being green, it was actually something that we have been touched – that we touched upon with other interviews, its this concept of like greenwashing, where somebody will, it'll appear green, but in reality, it's, as you said before, like with the example you gave with the fungi shoes, is it actually sustainable, or is it a green wash? Yeah, so glad you talked about that –

Morten:

Okay.

KJ:

– because that resonates very much with what we've heard before with other interviews, and so yeah. I believe that is it for our questions.

Morten:

Okay.

Thomas Buro

Abby:

All right. Thank you so much. And I'll turn it off to Gabby and she can start with some of the questions.

Thomas:

Sure.

Gabby:

So I'm just going to ask a couple questions and you can answer them as long or as short as you need to. So the first one is: describe your work and your goals.

Thomas:

Currently, I am working as an assistant professor at DTU, the Technical University of Denmark. And I am working on a research project that's called Diversity in Technology. And we are looking at the ways in which people in the technology field in Denmark are creating change within the diversity field with regards to what we call diversity. And diversity can be so many things, but typically they use gender as the substance of diversity. But obviously, there can be other kinds of diversity at work, and we are studying how people create changes for more diversity in technology. And to do that, we use a mix of methods, observation studies and document analysis, but also ethnographic studies to basically try to understand how people do what they do and why they do it as well. So that's what I'm currently doing, at a slightly broader take on what I do, is, I work at the intersection between culture and organization, I would say. So I'm interested in the ways in which people organize culture, but also the ways in which culture affects organization and organizing. Which means that I'm not so interested in what you could call rational organization, which is like the typical take on what organization is – the classical, rational organizations going back to Taylor and Fayol and these figures. I'm more interested in what you could call anarchist or alternative or feminist or indigenous tribal other kinds of organization. Because I think it's interesting. I'm just curious to see how people organize for these purposes. And I would say that what's mainly interesting in that is, I'm interested in how people deal with the relationship between means and ends. And typically in rational organization you would say that means are a means to an end. And in most alternative kinds of organizing you would say that means are ends in themselves. So I think that's rather interesting. And that interest in culture and organization has led me to study – I did a study with the lake on spirit and a village, and sort of the connective nature of spirit. I've studied the communal aspects and safety aspects of CrossFit. I have studied the organization of culture in a province in Denmark. So that a more ecological type study and other kinds of studies that all sort of deal with the relationship between culture and organization. Yeah, I guess that kind of sums it up.

Gabby:

Yeah, great. That sounds really interesting. Thank you for sharing. So that kind of leads into our next question, which is what made you enter this field?

Thomas:

Follow the money. I guess I am – it's a good question. When I'm not doing the academic work, I am also an artist doing music. And I've been doing that since I was 15, so it's a long time by now. And for me, doing music was first and foremost about creativity and having fun. And at some point I started veering into the punk rock anarchist community. And I had some great experiences with what that community could offer and what it did and how it organized things. I didn't really have a word for organization back then when I started. But the experiences were genuine and I got to tour the world and release records and play a whole lot of music and meet really interesting and weird people. So I think for me doing music was a way to become more curious, but also to appreciate what I would later call alternative or anarchist organization. That was sort of like my practical experience with that. And I guess it, along the way, made me start to think about the relationship between organization as a practical thing, and those types of problems that we are faced with on an individual, on a communal, but also at a societal level. So the question of sustainability or justice, these major issues, how do we respond to them in an organized fashion, in a way that actually tries to grapple with it? And I guess that that's how I decided to actually try to work professionally as a researcher because I'm interested in the science aspect of it.

Gabby:

Okay, great. So you talk about these major issues, one of the main issues that we're trying to kind of see how people are solving is climate change, sustainability and regenerative action. How does your work relate to that bigger picture? If it does.

Thomas:

If it does. Yeah, that's a good question. Well, currently, just to start, one place with the current research project, we are fascinated by some of the initial findings in our data that suggest that people within technology have this *really wonderful* – please note the sarcasm – this *wonderful* tendency to represent themselves as a technological ecosystem, that's what they call it, that is capable of solving wicked problems, which is another version of you don't have to change behaviors – you just have to innovate the appropriate technology. And you can view that as ideology, pure and simple, but you can also view it as the way in which a particular kind of idea has gained momentum within the technology field, which is the idea of an ecosystem. And I'm fascinated by how ideas diffuse. So in my PhD, to jump to that, I traced how the concept of ecology has been part of social science since basically the term was coined back in the 19th century. And I can see, like, a tendency for the tech field to have been thinking about itself in ecological terms since the 90's. So the idea of an ecology, or an ecosystem, is a really interesting notion because it's either something that people use as a metaphor, in which case they basically just transfer properties from one system, like a natural system, to a technological system. Or it's actually taken literal, in which case they think about themselves as belonging to an ecosystem, whatever that means to them. And I think that's interesting because I am interested in trying to figure out what are people actually committing to, by using such an idea. What aspect of ecosystem are they committing to? Is it just a placeholder for network? Is it a placeholder for a collection of different organizations? Is it an idea about complexity? What's going on actually? And how does thinking about yourself as being part of an ecosystem afford you to do? What kind of legitimacy does it offer you? What kind of agency does it offer you? And also what kinds of responsibilities does it give you? And vice versa, what kinds of responsibility does it

alleviate? So I'm interested in how people use ideas to do things. So that's one thing. And the other one is, I think there is importance in, well, obviously building theory is interesting, but I also think it's really important that we, as researchers, continue to spend time in the field and describe concrete situations, practical organization, places where stuff happens, basically. I think it's really important to do that because it challenges what can easily become received wisdom, but it's also a way of becoming continuously surprised by what you find. And I think one of my worries regarding sustainability has been that, as with so many other progressive ideas, big business is really good at co-opting it. And that's easy to say because it happens all the time. But I just think it's really important that we continue to pay attention to people who are actually doing stuff that makes a difference or think they make a difference and not just listening to those people who say these things about themselves. And I think case studies in the graphic world can do that. And it's interesting for me at the Technical University of Denmark, before that, I was at CBS and there's so much lingo going on and so little practical action taken. So these kinds of questions are just interesting because it's not just about arguing that an organization is green washing or pink washing or whatever washing it is. It's actually more interesting to try to focus on what are people actually doing or what's going on. And that's where I'm interested, that's where I get going, is to try to basically just tune into and describe what people are doing. So I guess that's my kind of agency and this is to bear witness basically. You just stop me if I'm rambling on it.

Gabby:

Oh, no, this is great, thank you. So, going off of that, do you believe that you have made a difference in your community, or in Copenhagen, and do you have any examples of that? Or you just kind of, like, the observer and researcher.

Thomas:

Good question. I'm actually not sure I can answer it very well. I mean, definitely I am an observer. I think what my own personal struggle is often that I feel like I should be doing all kinds of things in my local community. For instance, every morning I wake up, and I live on the fifth floor, and I look down on my street and I see this part of grass. And I'm thinking that should be rewilded. Oh, I would wish that the municipality would just let it be instead of mowing the grass. And what they typically do, and every morning I'm like, oh, I should get organized. I should form like a committee and start arguing for that, and I never do. So in that sense, I'm not really good at going sort of activist on things. And at the same time, I can see that every time I have been doing research work, something happens. And that something is either because I connect with people that I'm doing the research with and offer them maybe concepts or ideas or a sense of mirroring themselves or offer them an opportunity to reflect on their own practice. So something happens when I engage in ethnographic work because people, it's not just me learning, it's also people learning. That's one thing. Another thing is that from time to time, I've had the opportunity to write stuff that have affected people. And sometimes they learn from it. And the most telling indicator is when people hire you to do a lecture and stuff like that. And you're like, oh, flattered, because someone actually wants to listen to you. But it's also an indicator that something must have struck them somewhere along the line. So I'm not sure it has made a change, I'm just noting that it happens from time to time. And I can tell that I think all the research that I've been doing has always led to some kind of engagement. And so when I was studying how young people become, young people, become inculturated to cultural production, I

was asked to do lectures and presentations and workshops on that. So when I was studying the CrossFit thing, I was also asked to do presentations about safe space and CrossFit environments. So there's always some kind of engagement or exchange going on. And I think that's where research can help because it offers knowledge and it offers concepts, ways of perceiving. And beyond that, I'm not really sure that I have the knowledge to say anything about that change if there is any.

Gabby:

Okay, well, thank you so much. Livia will take over.

Livia:

Hi, so the next question... I know we touched on you being an artist yourself and being able to make change in regenerative practice in different ways. So our question is how important would you say arts and culture are in regenerative paradigm?

Thomas:

I really... I sort of oscillate between being, it doesn't matter at all, the only thing that matters is concrete action and politics. And then I go in the other direction and I'm like, it's the basics. Because without arts and aesthetics, people have no idea what's going on in their community. So, I mean, striking a perfect balance would be something about... Well, to start another place, I get really annoyed when I see people who sort of claim that we need to train sensibilities and you should have, like, aesthetic experiences of nature and, you know, go into the field and really sense it. And I'm like, I want to kill someone when they... They're sending me with those kinds of images of how we could work. Because it seems like it's so much... So a middle class has nice experiences to do something nice for yourself and feel good about being in nature experiences. And I've really sincerely doubt that they actually do anything about people's dispositions towards what they're sensing. So in that sense, I'm skeptical about the whole arts. The whole arts and aesthetic approach to both sustainable change but also regeneration. But at the same time, there is something to be said about the ability to sense and understand and perceive things. Because I do think that something important happens to people who are exposed to other beings. So when you... I think something happens to you when you're exposed to, say, trees for a longer duration of time and you start attuning to them. When you start attuning to an environment and you start paying attention to it, then I do think something happens. So in that sense, I think arts and cultural can perhaps sustain us in our engagement with these things by creating circumstances and situations for ourselves where we are put in direct engagement with systems that we coexist with or should be coexisting with or could learn to coexist with. So in that sense, I think arts and culture is really interesting because, for instance, like fiction, literature, what it does, it can often provide us insights into ways of being alive that we do not necessarily have a direct approach to anyone. So something that I really like doing as a researcher is when I start a research project, I try to find fiction books about the fields that sort of get an idea of what it's like to be someone. Like when I did the Crossfit study, I started looking into YouTube videos but also read books about people who did Crossfit and I would be studying basically the aesthetics of Crossfit to get an idea of what kind of sensibility is at work here. So I have... do any of you do Crossfit? Have you ever tried lifting something really heavy? I mean, that sense of using your body to generate that kind of force is a very specific aesthetic experience. It's also like a very physical experience, but there's something aesthetic about it as well. I want to start appreciating that the aesthetics of

lifting something heavy and sweating in a particular kind of way is really important to this culture. Once you start appreciating that, you're much closer to understanding what's important in that setting. So once you start appreciating the aesthetics of a particular natural environment to the people who live there, but also perhaps to other beings, not just human actors. The sense of smell, stuff like that, the sense of sound. Once you start appreciating these things, I think there's something happening to your consciousness. Something happens to you, you're attuned and whatever you want to call it. I just think something like a basic fact about birds is like city birds, they sing in a higher pitch than birds in the countryside because they have to compete with the noise levels. I just think that's so fascinating in terms of how the birds adapt to their environment. That teaches me something about how malleable natural ecologies are and the point of all this is just that. That's an aesthetic argument. That's a way in which aesthetics can teach me something about a natural system, for instance. It might not teach me anything about what that system needs, but it will definitely tell me that this is not just a static system. It's a vibrant, adaptive, complex system that's composed of so many beings that have, in a sense, just as much right to be here as I am. That makes sense. In a sense, I do think that arts and culture can make a change. I think that they can do that by creating situations where people are exposed and engaged. I don't think writing a theatrical play about sustainability is going to make people any more sustainable. I don't think writing punk rock songs about people going vegan is going to make very many people go vegan, even though that was my own history. So I'm kind of contradicting myself. That's why I turned vegan. Because I liked all these vegan punk rock bands back in the day, so I was like, I want to be vegan, too, because they're cool. So I can influence people, but I don't think in the long run that arts and culture can convince people. I think it can create situations where people are affected, and then people will have to act from there. Does that make sense?

Abby:

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. Thank you for sharing that. I have a quick side question. You talked about how the way organizations organize and how you're interested in that, and that's what your work is about. Have you seen organizations, like the way they organize, does that have an impact directly on, do you think, the way they regenerate or sustainability in that type of bigger picture, like the way that they're organizing, is it better for the environment in different ways?

Thomas:

That's the thing about means and ends. I think one of the cases that I'm most impressed with is a food co-op in Copenhagen, a Comanche-Philippa landscape, I don't know if you know them. I think they're an interesting case because they're a fairly simple organization that basically cuts out the middle person and provides people the opportunity to buy seasonal and local produce. And it's interesting because one thing, it provides people with cheap, organic produce. That's one thing, that's nice. But it does so by engaging people in a way of organizing around their own needs. They organize to meet their own needs, and one need is to buy cheap food, but another one is to buy a particular kind of cheap food. So I think what this organization does, it brings people closer to two things. It brings them closer to a realization of something they need, but it also brings them closer to a real opposition that that need is not going to come by itself. It requires organization. So it's a super simple example of how organizing enables people, but also exposes people to a requirement to organize and continue to organize. Because as soon

as this organization ceases to end, then people will no longer have these needs met in the same way. So that's one way in which I think organizations can be interesting in terms of, for instance, providing at least small steps in a sustainable transition or a transition towards more sustainable ways of living. I think there's something about being a musician and being an academic is really interesting because there are many ways in which these two systems, like the music system and the science system, are struggling with a particular problem, which is how to reproduce itself. So you should think that both systems would be interested in continuously reproducing itself because that's, you know, the workers of tomorrow will have to be trained today and so on and so forth. And in many ways, neither system is really doing that. It's a grand sweeping statement. I don't know, but just let me elaborate on what I mean. In the academic system, you have, when people are graduating with a candidate degree, they can apply for a PhD. And if they hand in their PhD and they have their degree, then the next logical statement step would be to look for a research assistant or an assistant professorship or whatever, based on the expectation that there is actually an organized space where you can be part of a community of people doing science. That would be like a reproduction logic that you continue to keep the space open for people to engage themselves and then find work. But it seems like that system is not really interested in doing that because if you look at its behavior, what it's doing is that it's educating more and more PhDs and having fewer and fewer associate and assistant professorship positions available. So the system is actively decoupling the what you could call it the food chain, you could call it whatever. It's basically not organizing a way in which the system keeps circulating resources. It's actually stopping itself. So in that sense, the academic system is really interesting because it's not really reproducing itself. It's very strong set in many ways. And if you look to the music system, it's different because then you have like music schools, you have community institutions that provide musical training, you have community-run venues and market-driven venues, so you have a slightly more complex system of avenues where you can do music and be exposed to music. So there it would seem like each actor is involved in a system that is reproducing the entire system. And there's something potentially it should be regenerative in a ways. It should continuously be where it should continue to be a situation where those organizations and individuals are part of healing whatever damage is done to the system. And I'm not sure that happens all the time, but it seems much more vibrant within the music system than it does within the academic system. So that's the way in which the social system is regenerated, but not necessarily how that social system regenerates a natural system, biological systems. So just to mention one example, for instance, within the music industry and within the academic industry, if you have a kid, and particularly if you're a woman, then there's a very, very high probability that you are thrown out of the system because the system favors people who work long hours and don't have sick kids to pick up and stuff like that. But also just the very fact that you become pregnant is sufficient means for many people in the music industry to consider you irrelevant. And the same goes for the academic system. As soon as you have a belly going on, then people will be like, okay, you're not relevant anymore. So in that sense, yes, the system might regenerate itself, but it might not regenerate the biological systems within it. So it might be a place that is actually not very attuned to the people living in it. So in that sense, I think there's something to be said for how a particular kind of social technical system is decoupled from other kinds of systems that it's actually engaged in, but does not regenerate. And I mean, the classic example would be work-life balance. That academic systems has a horrible balance between work and life. And the music industry would actually be the same. Did that make any sense? Otherwise, please let me know.

Abby:

Yeah, thank you for sharing that.

Livia:

Yeah, that was really interesting. Thank you for sharing. So our next question is kind of going to move back to your work. So what direction do you see yourself moving in, in the future?

Thomas:

Yeah, that's a good question. And I think that I would hope that I could be part of using organization studies and this particular kind of organization studies that I do, organization research to build a case for people, in the sense that I think it's important to continuously provide evidence that it matters that people get organized. I think it's important that we continuously remind ourselves and other people that if we have a problem, if we have a need, then we can organize to meet it. And it sounds really simple, but it's not necessarily simple to keep that in mind. And I would hope and wish for my research to be part of that endeavor to provide people with a sense of self-determination and a sense of communal solidarity as well, that you're basically part of a social system and that social system can be reorganized to fit your needs and not fit the needs of corporate interest and not necessarily the needs of state interest either. So in that sense, I hope to continue to be an anarchist in disguise within the academic system and to sort of provide that kind of research that is an argument for the value of people organizing. So I hope that can continue to be part of that kind of work. I think that's what puts oat in my cereal in the morning. I'm not particularly interested in and I'm not really in the academic system in order to be promoted to full professor eventually. I mean, I think it'd be fun to see what kind of experience that is, but it's not an end in itself. If anything, it's only a means. So I would say that the process is really important and that means that what matters to me is to continuously do basically cultural study, organization study, and graphic work and continue to produce this kind of work and not grow complacent and just to sort of stop doing that because now I've done the field work and I was just, you know, enjoy whatever. I'm not interested in that. I would rather be part of doing the nitty gritty for work and continue to do that for as long as I can.

Livia:

Yeah, it's really interesting. So just kind of asking more about your work. Can you talk more about your talking about organizing to solve a problem and just organization in general? Can you talk more about it in terms of your work of like, anarchical terms and that kind of thing, if that makes sense?

Thomas:

Yeah, sure. I mean, there's a fundamentally in anarchist organization, I would say you have you have three organizing principles and by calling them organizing principles, you mean that these are, I guess, things that you continuously observe when you look at how people organize in anarchist fashion or an arctic fashion and you could also just call them values that people hold on to. And the first principle of value is individual self-determination. So it's the idea that the individual person has a kind of, not necessarily sovereignty, but rather you should determine your own self and what you do with your life. And you're most times also the best one equipped to know what you need, what you feel and how you perceive the world. And an idea is that if you

do something, you should do it based on voluntary consent. It's like an anarchist basic principle. Sure, I can do the dishes because I've consented to do that. I'm not forced. I'm not coerced to it.

But this principle of self-determination is balanced by another principle, which is the principle of solidarity. And solidarity is the idea that everyone belongs to some kind of social system. You're part of some kind of community. And what a community does, it provides social solutions to individual needs. So the sort of the communitarian aspect of anarchist thinking is that everyone belongs to a community that enables the individual. So you have to find a way to balance individual self-determination with communal solidarity. And solidarity basically means that you suffer with or you empathize with or sympathize with or work on behalf of people who are not necessarily like yourself. So that's the basic idea of solidarity. And these two aspects are constantly balancing each other out. So that's why anarchist is a weird mix of being communists and right-wing basically in a weird way.

The third principle is a principle of responsibility or accountability. I don't know if you've read Donna Haraway's work, but she has this concept of response-ability. So it's the idea that you should make yourself response-able. You should be able to respond when people are calling you out on something. So it's a version of accountability. And what is meant by that is that you should make the way that you organize accountable to, for instance, how you use natural resources. You should make your way of organizing accountable to people asking you about the consequences of doing the kind of organizing you do. So another way to phrase it is to say that whenever we do something, we should have the courage to embrace the consequences of what we do. So if we do a major rock festival, we should also be willing to face the carbon footprint of that event. Or if we do an academic conference and it's a conference about sustainable transition, and then everyone is eating meat at the buffet, it's like, that's something that we should be accountable for because it's stupid or whatever. So the third principle is accountability or responsibility.

And just on a brief note, I think that one of the really interesting things about anarchist history is that something happened to the anarchist movement when it was no longer just a labor movement, which it started as a labor movement. But then it discovered along the way a feminist politics, environmental politics, and basically gender as well and sort of sexuality politics as well. And that did something to the anarchist community on a global level. Something happened in the way that it saw itself and thought about itself. It simply learned that it's not just about labor, it's also about other kinds of differences. So these are part of an archaic organizing is that you deal with individuals of determination, collective solidarity, and responsibility. And then you have to negotiate with yourself that there are multiple points within the system. It's very different to be an anarchist woman, and an anarchist indigenous woman, and an anarchist man, and an anarchist indigenous man, whatever, I mean, there are so many ways in which differences matter. And that's part of anarchist organizing in a sense, is that it's a complex thing. Yeah.

So just to sum up, I think the difference between anarchist organizing or anarchic organizing and rational organizing is that despite what HR management and people management in rational bureaucracy, some rational organizations say, they're still working on the assumption that everyone is the same. And I would say that an anarchic organization does not assume that everyone is the same, but that everyone has individual needs to some extent. That's a major difference.

Abby:

Do you see more organizations becoming anarchical or is it still very much not like that? Is it more rational?

Thomas:

No, I would say that, I mean, if you know the work of Pulzanski and Chapello, the sociologists who did a work called the New Spirit of Capitalism, they make a very strong argument and show evidence that the counter cultural movement of the 60s and the economic oppression of the 70s enabled a particular kind of new capitalism to emerge, to emerge one that showed very interesting isomorphic traits to left-wing politics. So the new kind of creative capitalism with flat hierarchies and sort of a creative vibe and all that stuff is a way in which contemporary capitalism has co-opted or been inspired by the counter cultural movement of the 60s. So, I mean, obviously part of that is also becoming more anarchic. You have a tendency towards more flat organization. There's a weird kind of ambivalence about management. I mean, you point to good leaders and you also blame leadership for organization and organizational problems. So there's something about leadership and management that's being pulled into question in new ways and anarchists have always done that. They've always held that authority is only acceptable when that authority is legitimate. Otherwise, authority should be resisted. And hierarchical organizations are based on the idea that authorities are obviously legitimate all the way through because that's how the organizational diagram is set up. So I do think that organizations have been inspired in many ways or adopted, especially in the creative industries. You would see much more tendency to go by flat hierarchies, many places, design industries in these places. You would see it much more like scrum management, and agile project management are all very much ways of anarchic organizing, at least partially. So I think it's the market driven organizations that have a tendency to become more organizationally flat in terms of hierarchies. You don't see public organizations become more flat. On the contrary, they actually become more hierarchical. Grassroots organizations, depending on which type it is, I don't know. I think they have this weird mix between having some kind of formal hierarchy, but at the same time, they've always been much more horizontal in how they organize themselves. So if you had these major types of organizing the grassroots or civil society and market driven ones and then public ones, they have their own approach to when it's appropriate to be hierarchical and when it's not. Yeah, but I mean, that's a grand sweeping statement.

Livia:

Thank you for explaining that. That's really interesting. I didn't know much about it before, but thank you. So we have one last question and it is, what are some obstacles or limitations that you've faced throughout your work?

Thomas:

There's a bunch. So a whole group actually, I think sufficient time is one. I mean, having enough time to do research in the tempo that it requires to do thorough rigid work. We're constantly running out of time. That's one obstacle.

A huge problem within academia is precariousness. It's difficult to find permanent positions. And a permanent position is on one hand, and it's nice because when your next paycheck is going to come, but it also provides stability. And stability is really important if you want to do, I think, thorough work. If you want to do really thorough work, you can't be bothered with thinking about where your next job is going to be. And it's also something about building

your capacity or building your toolbox or your skill set. And if you're constantly changing from one position to another, then you never really get the time to master these things. So I think another major obstacle in doing this kind of work is precarious labor, basically. Because then you spend more time looking for your next job than actually doing your job.

And I think a third one is... I mean, you come from the U.S., so I'm not sure how much you know about the Danish university system. But ever since the university reform in 2010, really, I think, in Denmark, universities have had professional boards governing them. And until then, the university discovered itself. And it's a super hierarchical system, but a weird system that had its own ways of doing things, and so much researcher autonomy and teacher autonomy. And what has happened with the professional boards at the university is that universities have been molded to look more like market corporations. And employees are managed as if they were in a market-driven company. So that also creates another kind of hierarchy that's not about a professional hierarchy. It's also just about a rational hierarchy in terms of key performance indicators and deliveries and this amount of hours of teaching and this amount of publications each year. And so you're quantified, basically. You're measured by a set of quantifiers, which is basically just new liberal governments at the universities. And the problem about that is that once you set targets in terms of measures, then that's what you're going to get. So you're going to get people who publish two articles a year because that's what they're supposed to do. And they try to publish them in publications that look good, have the right ranking, and it doesn't really matter if anyone reads them. Because in the end, what really matters is that you publish in these journals. So you're not measuring if academics are actually contributing somehow to creating new knowledge or contributing to implementing the implications of their knowledge for social change, for instance, or for betterment, or whatever, because you're not measuring that. What you're measuring is output. So a major obstacle as an academic is that you're actually measured on things that do not really contribute to doing anything really interesting in terms of societal change, for instance. So I think that's a major obstacle as well. I mean, and it's a general critique. I'm not the only one to make it. It's the new liberal in the university since the 70s has basically been all about this transition. And the Scandinavian countries are basically just the last in line of this change because it's been going on in the US and the UK and France and Germany for so long. Yeah.

KJ:

Great. Thank you so much for coming to this interview with us. We really appreciate it. Okay. Is there anything you would like to ask us?

Thomas:

Um, I'm curious about what, what has driven you to do this work?

KJ:

Um, I don't know about everybody else, but for me it kind of does relate to some of the points that you're saying about people like trying to reach the bar, just trying to satisfy and not trying to make a change. I'm trying and doing this going through all of these interviews and talking to people, it's making me realize that we should be, I should be taking a more change oriented stance rather than a result oriented stance, as you're saying. So somebody else wants to try them in about their experience.

Livia:

Yeah, sure. So we are all engineering majors back in the US. So for me, I wanted to do a project like this to kind of learn and expand my point of view and get exposed to something that I otherwise wouldn't be learning about in my classes. So that was mainly what it was for me. It's been really cool and we've learned a lot from all the different people that we've talked to.

Abby:

So I agree with what Livia said. It's been really awesome to get a broader sense of the world outside of all the math and technical aspects of things. Um, and I feel like this project has been a whole kind of self realization journey along with it, um, because a lot of the work that we're doing has to do a lot with, um, like spirituality and connecting to nature. Um, so it's definitely a different take than what I'm used to. And, um, so that's kind of what prompted me to, to join is to try something new.

Thomas:

Nice. Yeah, exactly.

Gabby:

Me too. I just wanted to kind of just explore to their aspects. Maybe this is something that I can go into in a career, but I don't know. Just curious to learn more about it.

Thomas:

Nice. All right. Thank you. Thanks for sharing. All right.

KJ:

Thank you so much.

Thomas:

Welcome.

Abby:

Thank you for your time.

Thomas:

Yeah.

Abby:

Well, definitely keep in touch. Well, thank you so much for joining us today. We appreciate it.

Thomas:

All right. Bye.

KJ:

See you.

Nikolaj Noel Christensen

Abby:

Is it okay if we record this interview?

Nikolaj:

Yes, it's okay.

Abby:

Okay, our first question. This one is a tough one, really.

Nikolaj:

Okay.

Abby:

Describe the work you do and your goals.

Nikolaj:

Oh, wow. Okay, yes. That's actually a real tough one. My work. I would describe it in, I mean, like, practice-wise, it is to restoring nature through citizen engagement. Again, I've done it for eight years. It's growing organically. It's done every Thursday from nine to twelve. So what we do is that, again, due to how the project has involved at mutual moves, what we do is that we go out – we ensure that local people enjoy the nature around themselves – they take a serious honest commitment in doing what they're doing. And furthermore, it's adding attention to the nature around them. It's not only doing something that actually changes something, it's also adding their own attention to the place. But on the other hand, I mean, with my educational background, my work is also philosophical. I mean, understood in the sense that, again, you have been on my work, so you know everything about it. That is also a philosophical practice. And trying to make people understand that everybody should basically have a relation to nature, I think. And it sounds like a really huge ambition, but in the best of all worlds, everybody should have an understanding and a sense that nature matters. We can't keep being on this same track we have been for so long. Because, again, there are so many places around the world who are developing at a really fast pace. We're destroying nature everywhere. But we need to take a break. We need to stop, take a break, I think. We need to rethink everything. We're learning to relate to those other creatures, habitats, wild places. And the best way to do that is to commit people to something, to say to them, “okay, this place might, again, this place might again be full of thorny bushes, tall trees, everything. Nothing is there.” But then let them know that if they know the history, the natural history of the place, they can actually change things.

Again, you can restore a place which is basically just thorny bushes and tall trees to a place with 200 more species of plants, one of the rarest birds in the country, eagles, hawks, everything. Of course, it takes commitment, it takes an understanding of your own community to say, “okay, yes, okay, I know you can do something, you can do something, or maybe you want to join, or you can add something to this”. But when you first talk with people, start to take that very personal one-on-one approach, then my experience is that people really love what they do. And it might grow slowly, it might take some time and some patience, it does. But the result would be beautiful.

Abby:

Great, thank you. And what made you enter this field?

Nikolaj:

It's actually because, I mean, I have lived three and a half minutes from the lakes brought up there. So it's like my childhood landscape. And when I was 12 years old, and I can still remember it, then my father told me, "do you actually know that these lakes are so polluted that it might be one of the most polluted places in the country?" And I was 12 years old, and I can remember that it was yesterday, because I was just like, so you're telling me that this place, I've been walking around my whole childhood, and playing down there with my friends, building all kinds of what you call, cottages?

Abby:

Forts?

Nikolaj:

Yeah, so fishing, everything. It's one of the most polluted places in the country, and we're literally, like, in the capital of the country. That distracted me, already I'm 12 years old. So I think I already back then that I actually made a commitment to myself, that the day I had the chance to make a difference, I want to make a difference. But the time in between that and where we are today is in itself a journey, I think. Because I've also just got such a much greater understanding of everything. I mean, because again, when you're an educational scientist, but you're on your hand as also just like so committed to your own backyard, as I call it, and you're so passionate about birds as I am, when you connect those three things, you just realize, okay, one thing is to get people, citizens committed to it, but it's so much bigger than that. It's about how we relate to nature itself, it's about how we relate to each other, and how we understand that those habitats, wildernesses around Copenhagen or everywhere else, is connected to each other, and how we all depend on that understanding to connecting to this, because we are so good at destroying it at the same time. As we're seeing it, I'm not feeling at all the international places. Yeah, that's my approach. That's what I'm thinking.

Abby:

Have you done any other work related to the environment or regenerative action?

Nikolaj:

I've been guiding for ten years. I've been guiding bird trips. But otherwise, no. This has been the lakes, and I'm off it. And then Nordhavn, actually, also. But that's more like, okay, I'm related to the Nordhavn project, but I don't feel I've done much, honestly, and that place is also just becoming more and more industrialized, urbanized. And it's getting harder and harder to get anything through, politically, nature-wise. So no, I stay here, and I stay and I'm off it. And then we'll see what the rest will bring. And it's enough in itself.

Abby:

How does your work relate to the overall bigger picture of climate change, sustainability, and regenerative action?

Nikolaj:

Wow. I think it relates in a lot of ways. Again, my speciality is nature formation. I'm working with young people, also adults, about how they relate to nature, so that in itself. And I also have an educational understanding about working with sustainability, especially working with education for sustainable development. So I can definitely relate to it. And I also see my own role as being cross-connected, actually. One part of what I do is getting young people and adults engaged in nature and understanding that nature means something. But on your hand, it's also getting them to understand that as much as we need sustainable development everywhere, because I really believe that, because otherwise, climate change is just going crazy. It's already just going crazy. So we need to have those two people. Again, we need to have those two things to cross. Like to say, okay, we need to understand that biodiversity means something. Sustainable development means something. But we need to have spaces for both. And I really, really, so yes, I definitely see my work relating to climate change. And also other ways.

Abby:

So how have you made a difference in your community, such as Copenhagen? Do you have any concrete examples?

Nikolaj:

I mean, going when you have started a citizen group starting from 120 people, which is now 5,000. Then I would say that itself is an achievement. What else? And of course, restoring the nature areas we have been around today. Not that I've been like the chair for that, but I've been like, I've controlled all the social media for that. I've been raising all the awareness of that, made all the communication more or less. So that's definitely something. Otherwise, I would say all my walks related to Amager Fælled. The last six years, a lot of walks concerning nightingales at Amager Fælled, waking up for in the morning, walking for three hours. And the rest of the city is basically sleeping. Nobody is alive. Then I've done some speeches at the demonstrations, manifestations. I can't even remember how many speeches I've done. It's probably around eight, maybe more. Honestly, I can't even remember. So that is definitely a big difference. And then I'm just, again, what I'm trying to do, and what I think is important is also just these citizen groups across Copenhagen start to talk together. I mean, if we say we combine Utterslev-Moses venner with Amager Fælled's venner, then we have like 40,000 people. Lots of people. So what I would really like to do and what I would love to see done is a connection between the groups, because there's so many people who care about it. So that was, yeah. But yes, I mean, again, speeches, walks, growing a community. What else have I done? Speaking about nature philosophy. So yeah, it's all across the field.

Abby:

What direction do you see yourself moving in?

Nikolaj:

Definitely moving more towards making speeches about nature philosophy, because you can get paid for it now. When you have worked voluntarily for eight years, then you can start to feel it. So getting paid for doing what you love is definitely what I would love to see done. And then basically just conveying more and more, also like an individual person, making more stories

about habitats, birds, places, how it's all connected to migration. I would still love to be like a part, a central part of both Amager Fælled and Uddusle-Moses Venner, of course. And again, I'm only using around 10-20 minutes per day on it now. So it's nothing. But still, when you've been voluntarily done something for eight years, then you just really want to see yourself moving in a direction where you get paid for what you love to do. And then I would love to write a book, yeah.

Abby:
Really?

Nikolaj:
Yeah.

Abby:
That would be awesome. What would the book be?

Nikolaj:
Nature philosophy. And everybody is saying to me, "when will the bird book come?" So I'll probably have to make a bird book too. So it's, I can, at least think of three books I have to make. The nature philosophy book, a bird book, and a photography book. Yeah. So it's a lot. But each one is, it's manageable. So we will see. It takes time. Patience. Well, I have that patience, so that's okay. Yeah.

Abby:
So how does your work relate art and culture to the regenerative kind of paradigm and how important is art and culture?

Nikolaj:
I mean, the project around the lakes have actually not been working with art at all until now, surprisingly enough. But I think it's something to do with the whole identity of what we have done. Because it's very like, it's a bit quirky in a way in how the identity is. But it's still extremely serious. It's kind of like a mixture. And then I just think that when you're engaged, so many people around something, you have a lot of opinions. And what art does is creating more opinions. So it's like a balance act. And I think we have been very cautious with that until now. But it's definitely something I could see being done more of. I also think that now we've done this bird experience together. I would say I also came out of my comfort zone that day. But even though you feel like you get out of your comfort zone, you might even feel that you're doing something rather odd, maybe even. It actually also allows for perspective to open in a sense. So what I'm thinking is that if those art projects are done thoughtful enough, and with... How can we say that with a really close relation to the places they are connected up to, then I actually think it would be a great success. Because again, a lot of people just love to be creative, right? So it's actually allowed a new realm, kind of like a way of relating to nature and how you want to relate to nature. And then people can think what they want basically. Because there's always some people thinking that you're doing something strange or odd or whatever. So I'm thinking it will be something which is in progress. How it's done, I will allow it to the artist. And then I will be the expert in trying to reflect upon human relation to nature and just...How can we

say like giving them the best sort of advice? Because I think artists are really like...they just have another way of thinking. Yeah, that's what I'm thinking.

Abby:

And then what are some obstacles or limitations you have faced?

Nikolaj:

Oh, that's a lot.

Abby:

We can keep this one short because we did want to focus more on, like, positive stuff.

Nikolaj:

Oh, that's a lot of stuff. I mean the thing is when you're doing nature restoration, you work with the municipality of Copenhagen. You work with the technical and environmental department of the municipality of Copenhagen. Some of the things they do, they don't do really well to be honest. But again, they're also humans, they make mistakes. But when you see a couple of – when you see a population of orchids buried under the ground, under mud – well done freely, then you're not happy. When you're seeing that they cut more trees or more bushes than they should – or that they simply don't understand the needs of what the local citizens want and what you're trying to convey to them – then you're not happy. With that said, I still think that it's a good partnership. They make mistakes sometimes. But otherwise we say that definitely the biggest challenge is Amager Fælled. And our politicians, the simple fact that they just don't understand the value of nature. That they can't understand that you have this wonderful area in the middle of Copenhagen. You have long-eared owls, you have lags flying around, you have nightingales, you have orchids blooming in different parts of Amager Fælled. And you have so, so many citizens in the inner part of Copenhagen loving that place – having a relation to that particular place. And just the fact that they can't understand that is crazy, I think. But it's also saying a lot about power. That power is basically just for ripping their head off, I guess, more or less twisting their mind. So that's definitely a bigger problem. That's the politicians themselves that they don't listen and they don't want to.

Abby:

So after all of that, what do you think about the potential for a regenerative paradigm in the future? Do you have hope?

Nikolaj:

I think it's definitely a really good vision. And I think it's a really good concept. And I believe in the idea. And the reason why I believe in the idea is that very often when we talk about sustainability, it becomes greenwashing. It really often becomes this idea that, oh, you can just do something sustainable, sustainable clothes, sustainable housing, whatever. And it's really easy to greenwash that subject. So what I think about regenerating is that it's not that easy to greenwash necessarily. And I think that the whole idea is wonderful. It's a really wonderful idea in the sense that you can put that into many things. You can regenerate places, you can regenerate places, you can regenerate leadership. So that whole idea of thinking in that sense of creating new energy around things, people, places is great. And I think it's not that easy to brush

off politically. And then I just think work-wise, I just think it's interesting, because it brings a new perspective into all this. And how, again, now I've been working so much with nature and so much with sustainability. So for me, I need to learn how to think in a new way. But I think that it's something in between, that maybe that regenerative kind of thinking can be like a middle way or at least bringing something new, a new angle to things. But how exactly I would do it myself? I don't know, to be honest. I think it will come over time. Maybe I'm already doing it.

Abby:

That's kind of all we have. Do you have anything else you want to add?

Nikolaj:

No, that's it.

Abby:

Thank you.

Email response:

How did both your Lecture and Walk events contribute to the regenerative paradigm overall?

I think that both my lecture on birds in crises and equinox walk is contributing to the regenerative paradigm in many ways, especially because birds is everywhere and they co-habit even the most dense of human impacted places. As Jonathan Franzen says “The radical otherness of birds is integral to their beauty and their value. They are always amongst us, but never of us. They’re the other world dominating animals that evolution has produced, and their indifference to us ought to serve as a chastening reminder that we’re not the measure of all things (Franzen, 2018, p.40). In Copenhagen that exact point can nature politically be illustrated with the skylarks and nightingales of Amagerfælled. That we as human need to rethinking of relation to nature and therefor to birds. That birds them self have a value and that their stories of migration and songs only adds value to human lives. Because birdwatching itself is meditation to the human mind and soul - healing. But also as a way of pointing attention to habitats and places to need to be regenerated and seen as a valuable in the future for both humans and birds as being living being co-existing everywhere

Patricia Csobánczi

Abby:

First, would you mind if we record the audio of this interview?

Patricia:

No, it's okay.

Abby:

Okay, perfect.

Livia:

Alright, so I'll get started with some of our questions. The first question is describe your work and your goals.

Patricia:

So I have a background in design, industrial design specifically. And in Denmark, I studied design for planet, which is a course working with sustainability and holistic systems. And I worked a lot with food, food systems, and nature in a sense of a more than human perspective, and also creating different experiments to bring people closer to nature through food. Bringing closer to these more than human perspectives. If it's either a plant or animal, whatever in the city. And with all that, we've worked on a Pollination Academy, which would develop some of these exercises and tools that would allow people to shift their mindset a little bit or with a not really invasive way. So I've been working on that. And recently, I've been working on a project that we developed in India. I was in an innovation lab there in December. And it's a pollination service to small scale farmers. So basically, working with the solitary bees to enhance the production and the crop output for small scale farmers through conservation and management. So basically, giving this space for more than humans. Yeah, my goal is, I would love to work more with ecology and applied ecology through a design perspective. And yeah, but it's still very fluffy for me too. Like what is my dream to work with, but also what is that, you know, you can get a job with this, two different perspectives like that. Yeah, it's clashing a little bit right now. But yeah, briefly, I think this is what I'm doing these days.

Livia:

Yeah, thank you for sharing that. So just going off of that, what made you enter this field and study design?

Patricia:

Oh, that was so long ago. I don't know, I always felt like close to creative field. I'm from Hungary from a quite small town, which art was very present in the city. And I don't know, I just I remember when I had to choose what to study and I was reading so many different studies and if would that fit me? And then I found in this real design, I was like, "Yeah, that sounds fun". So let's try that. And yeah, my bachelor's study was very Bauhaus approach, so very craft. And over time and doing my masters, I realized I really enjoy working with people and develop different ideas. And obviously I have a big thing for food and nature. So I'm trying to combine these things. And yeah, it's not as easy, but hopefully we will get there.

Livia:

Yeah, definitely. So our next question is how does your work relate to the bigger picture of climate change, sustainability, and regenerative action?

Patricia:

If I take the bee project that I'm currently working on, it's basically like an ecosystem service. So solitary bees and wild bees in general, are in decline. And farmers, usually when they need pollination services, they use honey bees. So they are pretty fragile in that sense as a hive, because there are a lot of different diseases. And I was just reading up, I forgot the name of them. Yeah, they can collapse like the hive collapse thing. It completely went out of my mind right now, anyway. So yeah, this would give a more stable farming practice, especially in countries like India where it's like a really big percentage of the population are in agriculture. And also would give a low cost and kind of low effort solution. And through that, it's also supporting the conservation of these native species, which is obviously good for the planet. So yeah, something like that. Yeah, it's pretty complex, I feel like too. Yeah. But yeah, solitary bees and bees in general, like one of the keystone species that needs to be worked with, because I'm sure you know, also how much of our food is dependent on pollination. And yeah, these diversifying pollination services, I think it's super important. Yeah.

Livia:

Yeah, thank you for sharing that too. So we have a few more questions and I think Gabby is going to take over.

Gabby:

Okay. So our next question for you is how have you made a difference in your community or in Copenhagen? And do you have any examples?

Patricia:

Yes. Well, I think I've done more when I was doing my master project, community wise, because my thesis project was very hands-on, even though it was like the middle of Corona. So one of the experiments was creating an urban garden with the local culture house. So in front of the culture house, we created some plant boxes and I organized a little planting day and after, one more event. And then I think it's still there. And the organization I work with, the food reformers, they took care of that. Yeah, I was also part of that food waste organization. And we arranged different, like, dump, we called them "dumpster dinners". We cooked from food that was supposed to end up in the trash from supermarkets. So we collected before they would throw it out. And we would create an interactive workshop kind of thing during the dinner. So I helped a lot with that. And yeah, the other experiment was in markets when I was doing some edible plant urban design kind of thing. In Copenhagen, I think it was a little bit harder for me because it's a bigger city and I'm an international so it was mostly through my work with Oleg, but I don't think we reached as many people at that time as we could have because of mostly COVID. We worked a lot in the collegium. I don't know if Oleg mentioned that place in Amager. But yeah, it was a bit hard time to actually connect with people at that time. But yeah, it was basically also creating some workshops and exercises around these topics of sustainability and regenerative practices and more than human world and like trying to switch that mindset a little bit or just

nudge people a little bit, think differently about the surroundings in the city. Yeah. I don't know if this answers your question.

Gabby:

Yeah, thank you. Thanks for sharing. So our next question would be how does your work relate art and culture to the regenerative paradigm that's kind of going on right now? And how important do you think art and culture is in regenerative practice?

Patricia:

Art and cultural regenerative practices. I mean, with food, it's a very easy connection in the sense to culture because yeah, it's very present in that. I worked with, actually, I had a project of future foods and one of them was insects and the other was seaweed. So we wanted to explore how these ingredients could be incorporated into Scandinavian food, which is seaweed is already kind of part of it, and it used to be very present. But then these days, people don't really eat it regularly because of taste issues or texture or how to cook with it and all those sorts of things. So I think working with food, which is very much cultural and art, all my methods that we work with and also my design practices using some sort of art based methods. I think it's for me it's more the methodological part of it, creating generative research design, research methods that doesn't feel like a task but more, like, okay, it's it's fun to do, and it's creative. Right yeah, I think that's how it would relate for me at least.

Gabby:

Okay yeah great. What direction do you see yourself moving in with your work?

Patricia:

Yeah, I mean the dream scenario would be working with more nature based things, and using design to to work with applied ecology or some sort of farming practices, and with people in general. Like any citizen involvement projects around urban resilience. We had a grant application in Malmo creating a resilient courtyard with nature based solutions. Unfortunately, it didn't go through, but maybe another applicant can submit it for something else to get funded. Yeah, for me I think it would be great to work with nature in a broad sense and then involving people in that process and make a change through that. Yeah, and obviously with the regenerative mindset. But I still also need to do some reading on that, and constantly trying to figure out what that actually means in practice because everyone talks about it, but it feels like when everyone has a little bit different idea I want this to how that look like in practice.

Gabby:

Yeah, that is a good point too because regenerative action is such a new concept it's only been in the works for a few years. So yeah, definitely. That's part of the project that we're working on, just trying to figure out who knows about it kind of thing so yeah.

Patricia:

Yeah.

Gabby:

Okay, so our last question for you is: What are some obstacles or limitations you have faced throughout your work?

Patricia:

Yeah I feel like working in a city, with at least with my time with Oleg, it was a lot about land issues, who's owning what and also working with the municipality was extremely slow, so we had difficulties setting up differently, just like having a plot of land to set up. For example, one of the Domes of Life, which now is set up, but, we started working on that like they started working in 2020, and it took so long to actually say, "Yeah you can put it here" just like I think that's insane how slow that could be. Yeah, I know, so I just feel like a lot of times there is fear from municipalities or top people. I feel like there is not a lot of room for experimentation, because they just like worrying about what's going to happen. I feel like sometimes, for them, it's even too much to talk about sustainability, so talking about regenerative practices is another level, it feels like that's a step forward but they still are not even comfortable with the step that we are in or the sustainable thing itself. So yeah, but it's not easy to work with municipalities anywhere I would assume. Like in the Netherlands, I feel like that's a very experimental country and cities like Rotterdam where you can have all these weird experiments in the city and it gets funded. I think that's the other thing, getting funding for these things are pretty hard. It's not so clear how it's commercialized and I think that's also a barrier like if it cannot be profitable then they think that maybe that there is no point, but obviously there's the thinking that got us here, so yeah, I think that's kind of the obstacle. I feel like in the city, all funding for these projects and this scared mindset also and bureaucratic slowness, like incredibly slow.

KJ:

Yeah, well, great, thank you so much for giving your time to help us and having this interview. Do you have any questions you might have for us?

Patricia:

Yeah I mean, are you guys gonna just write a report? Are you gonna write a report or is there anything practical that you're gonna do?

Abby:

Yeah, so Oleg is working under Promentum now and he's the Head of the Center for Regenerative Transformation, and we're working with them to kind of develop a tool to help them understand an organization's practices baseline whether they're regenerative or not. Just where they stand to help them transform to be regenerative. We're also interviewing some participants of programs that Oleg runs we're hoping to help Promentum kind of find ways that they can help these organizations transform better. So that's along with our report that's another thing that we're it all ties together in that way.

Patricia:

Yep okay sounds great, I would love to read it if you would like to share it.

KJ:

Yeah, definitely, yeah. Any other questions you might have?

Patricia:

No I don't think so, I mean like yeah, maybe I will think of anything or something. I probably not know not now but the great work it sounds super exciting and very important I feel like to gather these things and you have a better understanding because it's been talked about this a lot especially here in Copenhagen there are different events on it and talks. I don't know I feel like I still don't understand completely what it means in practice I like how we can implement this in a meaningful way. Yeah, well, thanks again.

KJ:

I think that wraps it up.

Patricia:

Yeah it was great talking to you guys.

Abby:

Thanks so much, have a good weekend, bye.

Lars Engberg

Lars:

So I'm just sharing with you conditions, what comes from me, the stuff that I like so you just take what you can use and let the rest be. But no, but please thank you for being here. So as an academic for like about 30 years I was following a little bit this topic of the Tragedy of the Commons, which is that in the current cultural modality or way of perceiving oneself as people, there is this tendency that we see ourselves as like individuals that are competing for a scarce resource. So it's a competitive game where everyone is sort of trying their best to get a slice of the value chain and to appropriate, instrumentalize, and capitalize on common goods. It's like all the farmers around the green pasture or like a green area, they have sheep and cows or whatever, and the ones who get there first with their livestock gets to eat all the grass and they will earn the money and all the suckers who maybe had a nice morning but forgot to check the animals out there they are losing in the game, and that is sort of a metaphor for the current planetary situation. Also, that all the interests organized through the market and also in the state apparatus sort of is a competitive game, where everyone is losing out. It's a, it's a minus sum game, it's not a not even a zero sum or not a plus sum. It's not creating abundance and surplus situations, it's sort of sucking out the energy and the resources of common tool resources. Be it whatever land or different energy forms or the resources, resources of nature. So that situation where everybody competes and the cake is shrinking and it's also collapsing and there is a biodiversity crisis.

We live in the sixth mass extinction era and that's a heavy situation we have climate impacts that are fundamentally changing the habitats for species and people in the current planetary situation. In that feeling that Tragedy of the Commons as it plays out in so many ways in society, my inspiration was to say, 'Okay how can I sort of accept that, be with that, and also sort of maybe feel into a different path or different modality of societal organization and connectedness with nature in that? What would that be? How can I feel into that different place?' Because if I cannot do that, how would I then assume that other people would engage like that to care for the common tool to care for a shared space, a shared habitat, a shared planet. And that was sort of 'whoa Lars wake up, you can't just reproduce your analytical categories and just read the books and you know, do the math of analyzing societal processes and maybe give advice to local governments on co-creation processes and urban renewal. Maybe also you have to sort of feel it from the inside and out, who are you in that as a person living here. How does that awareness sort of inspire you to let go of some of the old thought patterns and mindsets, and maybe feeling to another type of vibrational reality.' I would call it like a different vibe or a different attitude to life; a different worldview or just awareness of something that could be sweet basically. Like cool, like really sweet because that's I think also part of the human condition that we can be generous, sweet, caring. We don't have to be these, you know, competitive egos that fight for a piece of a land that is deteriorating and collapsing and disappearing essentially. So for me, that's part of the process.

So sort of not only then talk about rewinding and how to care for wild nature and maybe not maybe, but create much more space for wild nature, it's also like on the inside of me as a person in an exploration of the human condition as I experience it on a daily basis as myself as a case in that scenario of a pretty hardcore struggle in the world economy and then maybe find another path in my life for me with friends and connecting into something that is so much more

relaxing and nice to be with, and in that awakening situation for me I woke up from the old. It doesn't have to be like this it can be different it can be much cooler than what's going on.

I discovered also like the regenerative mindset or approach or culture what have you but that was actually before I tapped into another cultural trend which comes from Burning Man that you guys probably know of. There's a European association and movement of people that are I think I wouldn't want to go to Burning Man today because I think it's a circus, like it doesn't appeal to me at all. But what I connect with here in Copenhagen but also lots of friends from all over the world is sort of like a different vibe, a different type of and there's a lot of nature and orientation and that and a lot of wow, and also there's also spirituality in different ways and that is what it is to whoever feels it. For me, it's about shadow work to feel into my own human condition basically who am I and what are my shadows, and also heal up as a person basically because when I do that then it's much easier for me not to be sort of unconsciously conditioned by behavioral patterns and old stuff that was just the outcome of the old culture in a sense what happens is maybe not serving me maybe not serving my kids or the larger you know society.

If we just assume that we are the conquerors of of the land and we just want and we just take and it's just bap bap bap bap bap and in that it doesn't really balance out and work out for for all of us so I was trying to sort of internalize the general topic, and in that I discovered the Burner community and the Burners and really sweet experience to me and in that vibrational awareness in the sense that when we then wake up and stop up a little bit, a bit stressed out because it's a hard game we don't have time to our families we can just see it's collapsing it's not working, what's going on here, it's a it's like a constant stress and we have a nervous system and this nervous system is sort of the bodies we are regulating this flow between the inside and outside in, in the in the body and therefore to go down in speed to meditate, to do yoga, and to feel my nervous system was sort of what came to me in that general analytical starting point. But also because I had been doing yoga for a while that was sort of wow it's cool to relax it's cool to breathe and it's cool to be without this chatter box of intentionality that just wants and wants and wants and in that image.

So, and in that the bed over there I can show it afterwards it's like a bass the bass units underneath the bed it's called the basic day bed and it's a friend of mine he's not here he was this morning it's his start-up process and I'm helping him by allocating my living room to his start-up process. So he's sort of developing his dream which is to work with vibrations and this space of exploring the human condition so if you walk in, lie down, your nervous system will relax and the deep bass sounds some of them you can't even hear will sort of relax your body and your nervous system and take you into a deeper vibration so that you get out of the buzz and enjoy very deep relaxation so it's really part of the whole transition the regenerative care for the body and the person in the societal form, what's going on here, so I sort of opened up my home to that vibe with people. Let's do it and we do and it's really sweet because they're so cool and they're my friends and we just hang and then we co-create.

So that's the other part of what I'm trying to share with you. When I sort of look at the big picture, I think well wouldn't it be nice if we all sort of lift it up one another instead of fighting over something that is diminishing? How to lift up others so they thrive and we co-create at the higher level that positive in a sense ascension spiral, how would that affect my life and me in my life? And then I just found out 'Okay Lars, you start with you before you can do that because if you're heavy or if you're hurt or whatever is inside of you when you heal up and let go of that you can much better feel others and hang with them without conditions and without projecting your own needs and limitations and maybe shadows' into that shared dance I call it. So it's a

dance practice I'm having a dance practice in my life every day it's like that it's pretty cool like I really love it and that's sort of a co-creation modality, a co-creation awareness. So we can co-create with limited invested and eco-taste like how can say ecocentric interests or you know short term very in a sense violent competition, violent game, who can get the returns out of the cake in a limited amount of time in three four five years, and a lot of suckers and losers around that game.

Or you can sort of feel something more and care for that and maybe also look up and see where will all of this take us in the long term process how do we seed abundance, how to be careful mechanisms of abundance in the way we care for ourselves caring for nature caring for friends and family and everyone else in essence. And it's not, I'm not a religious guy like that I don't believe in religion or I'm not like I'm not a value like I'm not a knight on the horse saying we should do this and this and this. It's not like that, it's more like from the inside what do. I like to do and hang with that and do that so that's a lot of freedom in that life experience and you're nodding so I know you can feel what I'm talking about. You can, that's sweet, thank you for that.

So that's the that's a general introduction to who I am and how the larger picture of a world not doing very well sort of inspired me to open up my life and to care for me in this abundance vibration, which is manifest in the beds but also in the food forest topics, which is an abundance systems, and in the green hub approach, which is an abundance modality also. And also in my personal life, in the community with friends. And it's just amazing I have so many friends just like every it's just like whoa so it's possible I'm just sharing with you in essence it's no big deal, it is not, that's how it is.

KJ:

One of the points that you made really resonated with me bringing other people up that's like for me with my coaching. I had been in the program that I coached for for skiing, it's for freestyle skiing like hitting jumps, rails, that kind of stuff and I used to be in the point where I was like scared unsure of hitting something and my coach was better to help encourage me bring me up and do that. And now I'm in the position where I'm bringing I'm having to coach these kids get build their confidence so that they can have the ability to have fun on these features and it's just that that point resonated with me a lot.

Lars:

Yeah yeah yeah there's a joy and a relaxation and a freedom to be generous to just allow your own generous nature to shine through to come through you don't have to be up in this rational, a bit strategic mindset you can just go with the flow so that's also maybe a good conclusion and summary. There's a book called "Stealing Fire" that I can recommend do you know that book? Cutler and Wheel, "Stealing Fire" and it sort of also taps into the same flow conversation that I'm sharing with you guys so that when we feel our own flow and mojo also a little bit is sweet to be that yeah this is something I really care for, I love it, and I'm also building my skill set in that activity, so we grow positively grow in that. To be able to feel that in others is a gift that I possess. I can feel you guys very well I invite you to show yourself and I care for you in this conversation so it's like a sharing. I'm not teaching you I'm just sharing from my own place. Maybe you feel taught or like yeah yeah but it's not my point here it is we are all sort of in our own mortality of being and what we find is relevant is what is what it is and then we can listen and share from there. I don't have the blueprints, it's not like that. Because once we feel that somebody has the blueprints then okay how can I get them or how can I sort of

yeah yeah a little bit. It's a hard learning environment to not be the absolute authority and the sort of your own learning and your own exploration is an adventure that's the vibe.

Abby:

I think going off of your whole talk just then I noticed myself a few months ago like I was very much like go to class do so much work I'm very involved on campus so it was like a constant every day it seemed like a struggle for me almost and I was like I'm losing like myself in that so I started to like take more time for myself because I ended up like kind of combusting at one point because I was like I can't I can't keep going and going like this anymore. So I started to go to yoga and I would go like almost every single day and I like kind of felt myself like come back to life almost because I needed to like take at least like an hour each day for myself to kind of like like be with myself and like grow like that and now I feel so much more like grounded I guess? So I completely kind of like resonated with that whole.

Lars:

Thank you for sharing yeah yeah how do you feel that practice what does it do, think about it how do you feel

Abby:

Yeah I feel so much more connected to myself and like a purpose and I know like sometimes talking about it with people who don't like understand that type of thing is like different like some friends at home if I'm like oh I'm gonna go to yoga I have to go maybe like okay like go ahead like whatever and but for me it was like a big deal in my life and it's something I've never experienced before feeling more like okay I'm gonna take time for myself to learn and grow so that I can like be a better person for the people around me and myself included in that, so. Because before I started like I see a whole shift like a few months ago to where I am now like I was very like wound up and kind of like go go go all the time.

Lars:

In your mind probably yeah thinking a lot overactivated yeah in your cognitive process would you say that?

Abby: Yeah

Lars:

Because you navigate so many things, yeah.

Abby:

Yeah.

Lars:

Yeah yeah so yeah we have like a mental body and a very active mind and in my experience I'm not that flow of consciousness these inner thoughts, that's not who I am, but that's a point for another maybe another conversation. But there's something there and people when they feel like relax and connect and root themselves then the mind relaxes and something else happens in that process and that's I would say it's a healing practice. Yeah to heal is to

care for me and to open positive energies inside, and let go of what does not serve me.

So what is it that I, without thinking about it, taking copy maybe, I took patterns from my parents or whoever, and I don't know that I'm sort of playing that game but it's there, stuff. And I sort of so finding out who am I what is the truth from the inside and out instead of just checking everything in and trying to go. That's sort of the yoga liberation process in a sense yeah so that's how it is for me in that experience.

And why would it be interesting to talk about that? Because sort of if we cannot care for ourselves and really you know feel good and just relax and be in a sweet spot if we can't feel the sweet spot inside of us why would we expect it to be out there somewhere and my experience is that I am that sweet spot like I maybe sound stupid but I, I feel that when I when I feel good and I have this I dance in a sense this is a metaphor for being in the flow mortality like a cool energy then people feel that and we connection that energy, and then we sort of just dedicate ourselves to whatever feels right, and true, and heartfelt, and joyful, and sweet so we co-create the sweet spot and that's sort of to me the essence of the regenerative practice like that. So, and how far does that take us or me in whatever is going on that's just the adventure of this because we thought I don't know I don't have to know I can just trust in me in that because I know it's true, it feels good, when I know it feels good and there like that like you when you are in on the mountainside and going with your you just know.

KJ:

Yes it's just feeling

Lars:

You know precisely so that's sort of a very empowering resonance and that's what I'm sharing with you here as a very tangible, very tangible and very deep connect with the human condition that's who we are in my experience. We are so beautiful gifted creatures, species in a situation that is a bit juggernaut issue you know? The juggernaut what that is? Do you know what the juggernaut is, like a big [noise] and there's like yeah. So right now I think that people generally speaking are, yeah there's a lot of pain, and there's a lot of, you know, children are born and die in shit basically in so many places. It's like there's so many places on the earth where living conditions are just unbelievable and and and we can do better in that I just know. Anyways that's not to be like, it is what it is, and I'm here, and that's what I focus on.

So, maybe I can share, and I will love to share that project with you. I can share a project that I'm currently co-creating with people in Karachi in Pakistan and you can just tap into that and see how we do that. So the baseline here is that we I'm inspired by a guy called Ernst Güch, he works with Eco Forestry and he has grown a food forest on 500 hectares in Brazil for 40 years so it's a long-term process he bought the land the mountain sides they were all timber that was nothing left and then it only takes about 30 to 40 years maybe less already in a few years it starts to, yeah, regenerate and produce but right now it's a very abundant food forest system and also indigenous species, indigenous forests within you know so it's a mix of care for nature and care for people. And I think that's sort of a really cool mix when we do both. Not to be like holy warriors saying, "hands off nature, you don't touch nature, now shame on you" and all of that. I'm not down with that, sort of we just do our best to to regenerate and care for what is and one step at a time basically that's how I feel the process.

So in this project in Karachi, we have Yesia who's a friend of mine, he's the founder of Green Pakistan Coalition which is a network of people who are fighting through courtrooms to

protect remaining nature. Karachi, that's like 25 million people, and there's no sewage system. That's quite intense, so it is, when you think about it, what's going on here, and it's very polluted, there's no like the smart situation, it's just not a habitat for people like that it's not and it's one of the biggest and most polluted cities on the planet and imagine to live there like imagine to. And so anyways it still just is what it is we can't you know it's not magic it's still possible that's my point.

You know Yesia and his network of people he's creating a climate center, also then it's a tree planting alliance people who are inspired by the Miyake method which is a way of fast-growing urban forests and forests so so reforestation and afforestation. I think you say that these are things, but you know like to grow forest in a place where I know forest were before and or to re-grow indigenous forests that have been cut down in the urban context. So this tree planting alliance is a partner. Then there is a private school with very cool people that are very engaged in nature activism and also really have a high, high, they see they see the pupils as as I've just tried to share with you like it's the individual who can develop their own thing and we shouldn't have been too aggressive about squeezing them into like a clear like learning topics, they can they should discover also their own qualities what they bring to the table so to speak so they are I think it's really a cool school. Then there's an organization that works with all the schools in Karachi, most of them anyways, more than 2,000 schools. And then there is the K Electric, which is the utility that delivers fossil fuel based electricity to the city region and has been doing so for a long time. And then PT which is me, and then combining strategy where we plant small pilots with food forests and then look at this as co-benefit the case, and when you look at the planetary conversations it's about biodiversity crisis and climate crisis.

And the joint conversation there is how to have natural climate solutions that care for biodiversity and people in the same land area. When you look at that what delivers on most SDGs, sustainability development goals, and biodiversity goals is agroforestry, that's the most cool solution because it it clicks in with all the targets all the goals so why not do that and then when we grow a food forest system then the particular the specific approach we, we are inspired by is Guch who has made this centropic version, where he has he sort of he creates a layered forest with a lot of pruning cutting down so that all the species at different layers have access to some which increases the photosynthesis process in the system and also the positive stress of the species in the system will induce assets into the roots and the soil of the system so the growth is accelerated. So it's sort of like a food forest system accelerated food forest system and by chopping down biomass. You also rebuild the soil and love for soil is part of this because the soil is sort of it's a bio it's a it's a system in itself it's a habitat in itself and it's sort of the basis for all the food chains and and when you deplete and destroy and kill the soil, nothing can grow and it's not cool because it's, you know, you don't have to do that. Like the agricultural sector right now is harvesting and harvesting and harvesting and turning around the soil and it it burns out and the microorganisms die out and the food chains are are cut down and that is not the way forward.

So to flip that situation you can do that in a food forest system you can there's a carbon capture effect there there's a healthier produce potential because the soil is healthier with more nutritious. You can grow particular plants for particular market niches you can have it as an open-classroom open-air classroom where pupils can go out and learn about natural processes and biology and what have you know you can use it to produce timber. You can also regenerate natural water flows the hydrology. I didn't know i'm not that but a forest will seed the cloud i thought that clouds were raining down the forest would grow up like that but in fact it's not like that the forest system seeds the clouds and they can suck in humidity. It's yeah i'm i'm not getting

carried away but i'm i feel my heart in this because the meaner region from Morocco and all the way over they look into. 50 degrees up to three months a year and there's a very, very critical situation for hundreds of millions of people on the planet right now because of climate change and the point here is that you can actually restore natural waterfalls by planting forests and you can regenerate soil and you can create habitats for wildlife, care for the birds, and the different species and so on and it's not a biggie, it's quite hands-on type of activity.

So, planting these small pilots in three schools on maybe a hectare or not a large piece of land, just a small one but then because they have access to the park, authority parks and it's not parks and recreation, but it's a park and something else, it's like regulating parks in Karachi. These guys, when they fall in love with this, we can sort of proliferate, pollinate, upscale and also all the schools, when they find out, well this is cool, that's it, let's try to create more of that and the tree-planting alliance is already growing up in forests, so they're at it already. So, the food forest system has a co-benefit system and an educational space and an innovative laboratory for regenerative approaches and learnings because we learn from mimicking nature, we see the abundance of that system and this is the metaphor and then I tap back to the tragedy of the commons where the cake is collapsing and people are competing for less and less and they hurt themselves in that process, whereas a food forest is an abundant system because it grows by its own means and over time it becomes more and more productive, you don't have to put fertilizers or pesticides or anything into the system, it's more manpower intensive, yes, yet it becomes more and more abundant because there's a multi-species biodiversity type of, so you can just add and add and birds will, the droppings will introduce more species and it will become a more go towards a more plant, the context into a more varied and multi-species type of open food forest, so in that, you can still say yeah but you can't feed a lot of people in these systems, please look at, we need these rows of monocultural agriculture, basically producing enough food for people and then I would answer, yeah but considering the fact that land, right now 60% of available land is taken up by agricultural practices and that's a lot and if you pollute this and if you kill off the soil there it's an end game to it, so maybe you should look up and feel it 10, 20, 50, 100 years from now in what you do in the specifics right now, so let's plant the seeds for something better.

That's what we plan to do in this Karachi culture and when we do that in these small pilots then we will upscale it and also we will connect a green hub process to that, meaning that we have a number of regenerative economic activities, say a natural way to clean grey water or composting to fertilize also food production and to deal with the waste problem and so on different maybe solar power or new technologies that will sort of merge. That's where solar power comes in because that's sort of taking the best from the technological and innovatory explosion now, I don't know about AI let's not talk about that today but but take the best from the technological progress of you know we take the best and we integrate it with careful nature in a positive abundance strategy and then all the young people who come and say wow I want to maybe clean up or I want to engage then we can make an incubator process in the green hub to help people do like this and teach them that they can do that with each other and that's very cool because they can also be inspired by caring for nature and also cleaning the air with these systems and so on and so forth so it's sort of like a really cool thing that's it like that's the PG project in Karachi in Pakistan yeah that's it yeah so yeah sorry for the words I know I speak a lot but now you have them also on the tape recorder all like they're recording. Yeah and I can share the project with you it's not it's not funded fully yet we only got through the first phase one and

we're still competing with 41 other projects. We had a population of 300 from the from all over the world and now we are 42 in the race and 10 of us will get the funding but if this program does not want to fund us then we have the project and the partners and we will do this because they're all this is what we're going to do so it will happen it is happening so it's cool.

Abby:

So, will you be going out to Pakistan at some point?

Lars:

Yes at some point, yes, definitely, yeah yeah yeah for sure it's not like my my thing is not to travel the planet like that per se it is to plant the seeds and to vibe with the cool stuff.

Abby:

Yeah.

Lars:

And we live in a very open world and it's so easy to co-create through digital media in ways that are still really whoa you can sit and look the other person in the eyes even though it's on the other side of the planet and in that you can find out should we play should we dance in that is it cool and then it happens so it's really cool yeah yeah it is and you guys have all that power also you have that's also why share it yeah.

Abby:

When is that, that's happening right now, you said? When do you think the funding...?

Lars:

Yeah, we know 1st of May.

Abby:

Okay.

Lars:

The deadline is 17 April and I am sort of because I was a scholar, I'm the guy with the writing and I talk a lot so okay but that's yeah that's the process.

Gabby:

I hope you get the funding.

Lars:

Yeah, me too, me too, but we will one way or the other, and also I can share one more thing which is also very cool for you to know so that you know. Have you heard about the 12 planetary boundaries? No? So the planet is one ecosystem it's a living planet we are part of a living ecosystem and in that, you can scientifically identify balances in the natural processes of that entirety of of a living system and this boundary that these balances if you exceed the balance or until it comes off somehow then the that's you can conceptualize it in a boundary framework. what are the planetary boundaries like before it sort of collapses and comes into the red we don't

want to go into the red and when we can scientifically prove that we are in the yellow maybe maybe people will wake up and say no let's not go into the red let's try to do the right thing before switching to a bad even worse negative feedback type of situation with tipping points and all-alishness you know we are sort of going through towards hot house the hot house scenario with the mean temperature going to four and plus degrees and the poles are melting and it's a it's a shit show when you look at it scientifically and and the climate scientists are warning us that we would like to for humanity to wake up to the current situation please let's let's do something positive together to to find the right balance for the natural processes to to rebalance themselves and there we can hang with nature in ways that are cool that would be my translation so Johan Hochstam is a professor that is sort of head of this framework analyzing the planetary boundaries and his his friend Richard Branson do you know this guy with the virgin airlines and flying rockets into space?

Livia:

I've heard of Branson, I think so.

Lars:

Yeah, his dear friends Branson is a billionaire that wants to make a difference while he's here so they are teaming up also with another network called the Elders that was initiated by Nelsen Mandela and this one two and others and now they are dead but there are new people who were one was Mary Robinson who was a president in Ireland and now she's a retired person but she's also in that network and with some others and they the elders network and Richard Branson and Johan Hochstam and his science people they have teamed up to make a PG initiative so they wrote me last we've seen that you have a PG thing and I started in 19 and and they said okay with you that we use that name I said yes please do because it's a shout out to people anyway we just want to share that so please do that and he said I think it's cool what you do so we can also sort of coexist and find a way maybe to collaborate them so I'm just I'm detached in that yeah yeah it's cool like I'm not sucking up to a billionaire or trying to get my because the vibe is different it's more it's more detached in that let's see what happens and because what we are doing in PG is sort of building the small bricks and making the puzzle from the bottom up feeling into what would be the coolest thing to do and when these guys find out that we're already doing that let's hang with that let's co-create something there and that's the upscaling in a sense you know I'm so I'm but I'm just sitting in a yoga pose like this waiting for it to happen I don't care it happens when it happens when it happens that's the energy because I know that the Karachi thing is so cool and I just love that and that's fine and yet of course a part of me is also wow that would be cool if they... I'm not in the old mindset I'm not in that game anymore therefore let's see what happens do you get that?

Abby:

Yeah.

Lars:

You get that?

Livia:

Yeah.

Lars:

No, I'm not forcing it and I'm not instrumentalizing the fact that they are feeling the same thing that they want to care for the planet and I'm so happy they are grateful they they gave the same shout out of course I am so cool so but but they will they will step up come forward towards the end of this year with their initiative and you might want to follow that also and I can share the stuff that we do in Fiji so you can just follow it and see.

Abby:

Yeah.

Gabby:

Yeah, we'd love to follow along.

Lars:

Please do. Yeah, I would love to connect with you guys.

Abby:

If we can help out anyway, we'd be so excited to do that.

Lars:

Yeah please okay then we are in the dance together

Abby:

Yeah.

Livia:

Yeah.

Abby:

I'd love to get more involved in something like that.

Lars:

Thank you for saying that.

Abby:

That would be great.

Lars:

That makes me very happy to say that please like yeah for sure you can sort of it's an open source situation which we share the recipe so when you feel your own recipe what who are you in that what do you want to do in your own life situation in your own I call it maybe a trajectory or path or way or where you try to your sort of maybe you go in circles and totally confused and look down and up and what's like to be honest like that a little bit you know oh how can I so but gradually slowly you find a way which is your way and in that whatever it is we can connect and you can just sort of say this is cool and I want this resonates with me and we can share the recipe

and maybe co-create something there for sure for sure yeah definitely definitely and I can't offer anything specifically right now I'm I have another job to support myself and I'm still feeling it so I've been sort of I've been the midwife for this starter without giving birth to anything like that I'll just pull a lot like I'm giving birth and I'm also the midwife and I'm also sort of what is going on here like it has been a bit confusing and yet it's just what it is you know so I'm trying to share with you that I'm very grateful that if you want to connect and we just take one day at a time and see what happens in that okay yeah okay cool cool cool.

Gabby:
Yeah.

Lars:
Yeah, yeah. So there's a lot of words here and I know I push you back into your own places also to digest a little bit so do you want to break what do you want how should I have to know what would you like do you want to take a dip? You can take a dip, I don't care.

Abby:
Oh, I could listen all day.

Livia:
Yeah, honestly me too.

KJ:
Is it okay if I take a quick bathroom break?

Lars:
Please, let's have a break and I can okay okay so I'll share more from the wilderness yeah yeah okay so let's have a break and then reconvene.

KJ:
Definitely yeah.

Lars:
His name is Terrence McKenna the two guys like Ellen Watts. Ellen Watts and Terrence McKenna and nature medicines and psychoactive nature medicines I have experience with that and that this is like it's how can I say this it's a very private thing I share with you and it's also a bit you know people normally with shame and blame psychoactive medicines and yet in Shamanism there is an activation of the potential of people which is really interesting to me and very beautiful and it when it's done with care and this sort of like the yoga attitude it's very very healing and very very important I'm just saying that for you guys to understand the part of my background which is that I also in the burner community I experienced psychoactive medicines and you know about maybe I was I have not personally tried that but there are like retreats where people go into the jungle and sit with shamans and try sacred plant medicines this exists and it's part of indigenous culture and it's part of the history of humanity in a long term perspective so what I do is also to unlearn my cultural conditioning stop listening to my and then to to feel into that domain a little bit also so that's part of it part of the journey. it is what it is. I'm not saying

you should do one or the other or anything I'm not suggesting that it's good or bad I'm just sharing from my own life experience that shamanism is really interesting and there's a lot there for me to connect with and to yeah it's pretty cool so many ways so that's part of it so you could say that when you look at a person. If you first instance look at the chakra system as a sort of a roadmap for the human condition if you know about the chakras have you ever heard about them?

Livia:
Yeah.

Lars:
So there are like energy layers in the person and what is going on inside of me in my life is that I'm sort of growing the energy at the different levels and healing up in that and not attaching to but just going with the flow so it's a flow investigation and healing process and it's a flow culture so I would describe what I've shared with you to now as sort of a flow flow culture. What is flow? It's like feeling it no I just know I don't have to explain or rationalize or argue or I just know it's like inner wisdom or feeling it and I can feel it in the energy because I've trained my body and relaxed and healed up and so on so I can feel and people are in a shared field of energy and you can't see it I can feel it is there so I can feel if you guys are relaxing and opening and feeling good or if you're closing down and like that and that's the basic mentality either it's closed or it's open either I hold on to or I open and let go and this to open and let go is the flow of energy yeah that's how it is and that's cool because then when I meet other people I know are they truthful are they like this and having agendas and all are like are they like dancing free detached without conditions and that's the abundance vibe I don't have to have anything out of this I am here because I enjoy it I love it it's cool and it opens from there that's that's sort of the dance in that situation and you don't teach that at universities you don't know about that in classrooms people are like all are like all are fighting it all the time when they could just go and dance with it and it's quite peculiar I need some conditioning in culture that I believe that humanity now is waking up to feeling that flow I've never said this to any like it's a new thing for me to share this but I feel it it's like that yeah so it's also in a sense the principle of resonance is cool you guys are engineers you know what the what the vibration and resonance and hertz and whatever I I'm not an engineer I just know but to resonate with something means that we you know tune in to that resonance and when we feel it and give attention to that resonance it is energized it's like a radio which station to me and then up does and then listen and turn up the volume so tune in tapping and turn on that resonance is sort of the modality of the flow practice and that means that when I give my attention and my energy to something I can nourish it and I can make it thrive and it grows and I can be part of that process if I see a wicked game I I grow wicked games all over that support the whole point of letting go of the wicked game and just going with it the cool stuff that sort of it's very very basic but that's how I feel so where do we invest ourselves what our attention span is limited you guys have been listening a long time now and you're still there but sort of is still a bit taxing and yet you feel that's something that's quite like whoa that is sort of the flow practice so I'm going meter now I'm teaching you to be your own flow expert feeling your own energy is it going down okay maybe it's not for me or if it goes up why not that so in a sense we are dancing even though we sit.

KJ:

In a dance of words.

Lars:

Yes, it is yeah it is like that. So some of the people that I hang with we dance like it is that important life experience to feel that flow of the body in the world like that. so yeah so flow regenerative culture to care for something in that if you do it without conditions without an expectation of a return magic happens because you're not sort of waiting when to get this back or you know and you can feel that from relationships to family patterns to work-life businesses and so on if people are invested in reciprocity games that are failing we use a lot of energy a lot of joy when they are unconditional and just share that's sort of and that's also why we have this start up here because this bed is an abundance place when you feel that relaxation and letting go and it is what it's don't worry, Lars, like you can feel the vibes and you can just care for your nervous system and distress and just that part of the whole thing yeah yeah I feel I've talked a lot so maybe you have questions or something you would like to share or I don't know I know it's a bit much a lot of words and yeah only if you feel comfortable about something I don't know.

KJ:

It was interesting. It's interesting you talking about like the you said before about the like wavelengths hertz stuff like that I study a lot in that because in electrical engineering you that's like one of the things you have to study like signals and how do you generate sound from electricity well it's through these wavelengths through all this stuff and I don't know I felt like very very how do I say this I felt very much interested in what you were saying because I saw both the technical aspect of it and the like feeling aspect of it especially because I don't know I've related to it on both aspects of a technical side and my nature side I guess you could say of or I guess community side of giving that to others and giving that how I say I'm like at a loss for words of what I'm trying to say.

Lars:

And yet you know what you feel is true.

KJ:

Yes.

Lars:

So in that position it's just relaxing and then it comes that's the whole point the whole trick is just to let go of that I want to and then and it's there and I can feel what you're saying before you verbalize it and what I feel you're saying without knowing is that it's sort of an integration and alignment process.

KJ:

Yes, yeah.

Lars:

Yeah.

KJ:

it it feels all intertwined together

Lars:

Yes, yeah.

KJ:

So yeah.

Lars:

Yeah and and that is the same for me. So that one of we have a men's circle, we're four guys now and I've been in different circles and I can definitely recommend to enter I wouldn't go into a women's circle but I would go into a men's circle like but still you know to be in that it's so cool like to be in a circle is just amazing, anyways one of them, Mathias, here is starting bio neural I can't even but like the the inter the boundary investigation between like the at the neurological and physiological level and the vibrational and the emotional and the technical so it's an intermodality type of thing and that's the same with the bed the bed because it also you have sound and there's the light and your best vibrations and that's co-creation so Benjamin who's running it he will sit and play and also talk to you and be like co-creating at multiple levels in different modalities light sound vibration emotion awareness so it's sort of healing in a sense to feel the entirety of the human condition in you with your mental body your emotional body your energy body and your physiological body and in that more open world to empower the relaxation and experience of that self-opening up of whatever is in the human condition in me and that's sort of also a flow thing because we can then feel the vibe and it's an exploration of who am I in that and am I hurting or am I happy or where is my energy and what's going on in that vibrational field of shared intermodality technologies so it's sort of also a business area.

KJ:

Yeah.

Lars:

And maybe you'll turn on a little bit in that yes

KJ:

Yeah 100 percent like with the with the business aspect

Lars:

yeah so what you do is you tune in you tap in and you turn on it's the same vibrational awareness that when I feel that this is for me to to stay there and care for that and then it grows and this you can learn by relaxing your nervous system and feeling your inner process okay that's my thing this is not but this is getting that self-empowered feel that's not from the mind that's not the mind judging saying I want this or my parents think I should do that or like mentalize this is cooler way cooler if you ask me because it's sort of my intuitive and advanced situations to stay in that metaphor of feeling that yeah yeah you get it.

KJ:

Yeah, I get it.

Lars:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, and you already do it that's the point also because you know it from the processes with the ones you hang with on the mountainside and slopes and all of that you can feel when they thrive and you're sort of caring for that process inside of you and sharing that and suddenly whoa to pass on the gift is sort of very very cool.

KJ:

Yeah, it's really funny because I'm on the sidelines it's like I can only do so much as to like coach them they have to do like the final thing and I feel I feel like I'm their number one like cheer at times cuz I'll see them get like so close.

Lars:

Yeah.

KJ:

And then they'll like either like fail or fall and I'm just like, He had it and it's just like I don't know that feeling of cheering for them.

Lars:

And that there I teach myself constantly to let go and let go and let go to detach myself So I'm sovereign and you're sovereign. Absolutely, so I can inspire – I can give you a shoulder. I can hang with you, I can share with you, but I can't essentially teach you anything that you're not ready to take in and you are your own absolute sovereign person in whatever is going on and That sometimes it can be hard to let go of the person you want to help, but, what is help? You know like I can't fix you I can't help you like that. You can help you and I can be here while you do it and share my own vibe and my own experience. And maybe it resonates and if it does, then it's sort of empowering like that, but we'll have to see and take one day at a time. So we're not saviors. We're not in my personal experience. I'm not can't fix anything like that. It's not small from the inside and out. You know, yeah.

Lars:

Also had something?

Abby:

So I've worked on a few projects at school that are to help lesser privileged communities with health care. So I don't just throw a whole kind of talk and listening. I feel like that's a lot where I resonate with my education. I can help lesser privileged communities with their health care and get access to health care in different ways than just making something for them to use.

More like, more so seeing their culture and how they use things and what they do in their communities that can help them better, then just kind of coming in saying you're gonna do use this this way to help you. So I thought that was something I could use in my professional life.

Yeah, that very much resonated with me.

Lars:

I fully get it. Do you know about epistemology? Have you heard about ontology and epistemology? Epistemology, that's also a thing to find out. How do we know what we know? It's a sociology of knowledge. How is knowledge? Co-create in society between people what are the perspectives and – what are the criteria for truth? And how are these criteria negotiated and how is it possible to negotiate something if it's true? So it's sort of like the embeddedness of objective truth type of conversation in epistemology. How do we know what we know and ontology is? When we know what we know when we share it and talk about it, then the world must be like this for us to know what we know. So ontology is sort of assuming about which is in a world view that allows us to know what we know in the more specifics, and this is also a philosophical process and we live in a positive vibe. What we can measure and document and calculate is, and what we cannot. We don't know so we can't really talk about it in a sense and in my view that's a very limiting very stupid scientific shadow. Talking about shadow work, I think social science and that like all the sciences should look at their own blind spots and go deeper and accept that there's something there on the boundaries of what is in their own view their own methodology in their own practices that is on the other side of the known. So to appreciate the unknown in the scientific method is a very cool thing if you ask me, and therefore this is also a personal, empowering capacity to look at how do I assume and judge and conceptualize. Maybe explicitly but most times implicitly without knowing, reproducing my own inner assumptions in the ways I ask questions and research and apply methods and navigate my learning process, because of course I am biased I'm in a position where I invent a toolbox – categories ways of integrating professional methodologies and tools. How does that less than color what I experience in the investigation of the object of – what I want to get to know about and elaborate closer to which one so there's always a translation going on, and the way we think colors what we then find out which in turn inspires how we think and that process is, sort of the – it's a very beautiful process in a sense, but it's also limited because it can be so like – how can I say – abstract and theoretical that it loses out on something on the other side of the category itself. The reason why I say all of this is to invite to like to share what I felt use it so that how would I start to engage with people who have an entirely different life situation? Life experience? Social context whatever culture whatever, and what I will do is I will start by acknowledging my own position and go deep in that and and feel into my own prejudice, pre conceptualizations, what do I I am I am and I am brought up like this. I'm conditioned by these beliefs and how can I sort of get to know me better and put that to the surface so that I am not... without knowing it caught in my own prejudice approach to the conversation with the other which is the radical unknown. You get that? Because then I would sort of impose my own thing, project my own thing and that would be utterly uninteresting. And you're nodding and I like that and you guys feel that a lot.

Abby:
Yeah.

Lars:
And that's very liberating to me to feel that you feel that to me. Thank you for that. I am very like seriously happy when I can feel you guys in this because there's so much cultural appropriation and so much cultural judgment and so much. It's a shit show. It's just a shit show everyone is throwing their own projections and their own categories and their own stuff and this is shadows also like the deep shadows, which are the you know what shadow work is

Have you ever come across that notion? Shadow work?

Livia:

I've heard of it.

Lars:

That's all another like solar punk and shadow work that we're in the dance, you know. That's a joke for further contemplation. I'm sort of teaching you a little bit here. But it's true in my view that the shadows of the person is sort of the the deeper like maybe I'm very arrogant on jealous or I'm being or I'm lying or I might you know be hateful or very judgmental or I'm the victim, whatever modality of whatever pattern whatever drama that came to me from my upbringing from my parents patterns and their parents parents parents and all. But I feel just down in the generations and suddenly, I'm here. Why do I like it's all of this, you know. It's also inside of me even though on the surface on in the light in the shadow in the light that would be so and so cool and projecting who I want to be and try not to project too much. But just being who I am and in that I would also be sort of oh la la yeah it's true. When I feel it when I think about it. Yeah, this is also me and accepting that and then letting go of some of that also it's called shadow work and it's really deep personal cool thing to do when you do that then you realize that you have judgment and pre conceptualizations, which are embedded in the value system that you're maybe brought off with or where you come from and how you see people and everything that's going on. It's sort of yeah. Yeah, I know what you guys are about. So to look inside me allows me to let go of that more and more and just to be in the flow the vibe the feel without the categories that would potentially be really judgmental and not caring for that exchange of whatever life experience it is that we want to share. Yeah, so that's a very cool epistemology of the human condition. Setting myself free from judgment in that and just hanging and feeling into and exchanging and finding out what is sort of your take your experience your place in all of this what is. What is true to you? What is real to you? What do you hang with in life in there? And when I have that practice then I can go into the community and I can just sit there. And that's why I wanted us to sit like this. Eye to Eye, I Share you share. That's it. Let's find out. Yeah. It's a detour but it sort of feeds into what your heart is vibrating with in that care for these people in this community. So what do they want? Let's find out and let's make a fire and maybe sit around it like as a metaphor. But also in practical terms we do that a lot here. We make fires in the forest. To take people out of their normal social conditions bring them out into nature. With bare feet to feel the ground and just to... let go and then burn the fire and then just... So this sort of also taps into the regenerative so the kingfisher. There's a platform out here and in 19 when all of this PT came the kingfisher sort of... It's just blew my mind because in five specific events where I was sort of feeling it the new thing, it came flew by and it's just like... What's going on? Yeah, I don't know so the statistic speaking was just really magical than it happened and one of the times it came. We were sitting on the floating platform talking about bringing decision makers into nature. And you know for them to feel nature and maybe reconfigure a little bit. Like sort of the corporate approach to capitalizing and in the neoliberal sort of situation. How could we sweeten up that a little bit? And then the kingfisher landed from the set and flew off there. Like that in that exact moment where we talked about that and that was like, okay, like so and it did and it happened five times in 19 on exact key moments in this PT thing, so I felt that it was sort of mine. Like the bird that cares for me in that and you call it animism which is a different way of being a nature where you're inspired by sort of. Something

that is hard to explain but still touches you. And I've connected with that a lot and I don't know because I can't prove it. It's just what it is and yet it. Like it's like that. So that's sort of like There's a magic to nature. There's sort of a deeper thing going on and also inside of me.

Gabby:

Yeah, some people have the same thing with like cardinals after someone dies they see a cardinal, its like that.

Lars:

Yeah. And I'm not saying I know I'm just saying that for me. I like to be in a world that has this component of magic and connectedness with, yeah, with nature and my inner nature also, so it's like a reviving process in a sense even though that's also a category. What is that then we discussed that but still a more freeflow state feeling nature also in there and caring for it. Yeah, and this energy we can take into the communities and co-create and find out what they do already and then stuff happens in that open and inviting non-hierarchical. Of course, we have differences and we are but in the current societal form in my view the hierarchy is not serving people like that because it's like... Everyone is competing and also shutting down processes inside of themselves and in the hierarchy to get up the ladder and it's sort of a very heavy head situation very heavy. All the major banks all the loans were to fossil fuel industry like that sort of the situation all the major banks they the main bulk of available liquidity goes into fuel industries. What does that say about the couple culture in this situation where the world community is sort of saying let's hold the horses a little bit. So once you're in that hierarchical organized condition like hierarchically conditioned a command structure then you tend to identify with that vibrate with that and the identification with the sort of the whole worldview of that hierarchy is can be a very closed-off resonance chamber with only one tonality. Which is the corporate tonality in the largest scheme of things in competition with other corporate tonality in silos of of aggressive competition and in that I don't thrive. And I was sort of serving the silo for 20 years and I'm not anymore and therefore when I go out into the community I want to hang with people and just connect and find out. I don't know, I don't know But let's find out And that's co-creation in my view like co-creation is cool. Because when we find our own balance and our own thing then we can do stuff together. Which is so much more powerful because we respect each other and listen and hold space I hold space for me. I take- I stay in this here for a long time and whatever comes up. I Am just sitting with it. That's the shadow of power and in that there's a more spacious feel and when I can feel me, in that balance, I know this is my ground and my direction. I am here, right here the power grows and I'm very rooted. And when I can feel that root in me, I can feel it in other people also and I don't have to push around. I don't have to it's like everybody just goes into the same co-creation. That's sort of what I'm sharing with you today. That's the essence of my sharing is that you are already there. That's what you do by checking in and accepting and just integrating. Whatever's going on and finding out your own place. So you're already in that care for you in the larger scheme if you ask me. That's how I feel. And then we just take one day at a time. Because it is a quite intense situation by all means of standards. And from now, we can just connect with whatever feels cool in the situation of true. Is it okay that I share all of this?

Gabby:

Of course. Yeah.

Lars:

Yeah. Yeah. No, but good. Yeah, it is personal in sense. It is like to the core of the existence in a sense like it is like that. Yeah, and yet, you know, I think I feel the planet is on fire somehow like why not just be truthful and open and. Blade out there and then see what happens. That's sort of me presenting me to you in that. Yeah. How many days are you here for a long time?

Gabby:

We're here till May 3rd.

Lars:

That's a long time. Yeah. Did you connect with Benjamin?

Abby:

We Yeah, we contacted we haven't connected yet.

Lars:

But he invited you? Did he get back to you?

Abby:

I Contacted a lot of people yeah, he hasn't he hasn't answered yet.

Lars:

Okay, but he said that you have contacted him

Abby:

Benjamin?

Lars:

Yeah, yeah, I mean prokulea. Yeah, and he's the guy with the basically. Yeah, so you should then you would potentially come back to the boat house again. Okay? And hang with him and he will give you a tour on the bed. I think a small appetizer... Do that. Yeah, you should just be open and just say what you would like and he will definitely enjoy that. It's like normally it takes about like between half and a full hour for one person. But you can also get a really cool experience in 15-20 minutes when you're a group like that or whatever so just... Feel it with him and come back in the boathouse. And we can also take more meetings. We can meet again. We can share on the same thing. When you find your own flow and your experience here, you know who I am, and we have shared a lot. And you can sort of just say, Lars, let's reconnect and explore something more, or whatever. I hereby invite you to do that if you want to. And the sort of also, like, my pleasure is to feel that you are sort of a bit... I call it the juice box. Like, when I feel the juice of this... It's like, yeah, that kind of feel. Sort of what I try to share with you today, because it's sort of the essence of everything, in a sense. Like, when I can be my own juice box, I'm sort of feeling it. And that's also about coming to Copenhagen. That experience of owning it. Yeah, doing it. It's very cool.

Ulrika Jansson

Livia:

Yeah. So we just have a few questions and you can answer them as vaguely or as much detail as you would like. So the first question is: describe your work and your goals. Yeah, you can just get into it.

Ulrika:

Yeah, okay. Well, as you know, I'm an artist and I've been interested in different environmental issues and relation to animals and plants and places for a long time in my work. And I think that I have like a pedagogical point of view when I make my work. So I guess I have some – I have a goal to make, contribute, to some kind of change. And during the way I've been going quite a lot towards transdisciplinary collaborations. So that's where I've been part of the EU project, for example, when I work together with other disciplines in different places. And then I think that now I have steered more towards working with exhibitions and a bit more, maybe you could say traditional. I believe that you need to have an inner change to make an outer change. And I think that's what I might be best at as an artist to make people reflect and find their inner connection to the outer environment. And the art gallery or the art space could be a good place for that, for reflection and getting connections to the inner space. I've touched on –

<Ulrika's video freezes>

Livia:

I'm sorry, I think it froze for a little bit, if you could just repeat what you last said.

Ulrika:

Sorry. Yeah, there seems to be some kind of gap in the connection here sometimes. Yeah, well, I guess I just asked if there was another question that I might not have touched upon.

Livia:

Yeah, so we have a few other questions. We can move on to the next one.

Ulrika:

Okay.

Livia:

So the next question is, I know you touched on why you're in this field, but what made you enter this field and work with art, and in relating to the environment and environmental issues?

Ulrika:

Well, I think I had an interest in animal rights from the beginning. And then I was, by coincidence, I got interested in the arts when I studied English in England. And there was an art college next to it, so I found out that that was something you could do as well. And then I think during the way I went through most going into the arts. And then I also started, like, human ecology and different courses in the university about the environment. Yeah, so I guess that I've been going. I mean, what I've started to try to do after a while was, because, in the maybe, 15

years ago, the environmental issues weren't very present in the art scene as it is now. So I think that since I had these two interests, I really tried to make them come closer, both in a few different research projects with arts and science, like in the Stockholm Resilience Center, for example. And I always felt that either it was kind of too much science or it was too much art. And so that was my goal to try to make them merge together better. And I think it was just I had this interest in creating, but also very much in trying to make some change in environmental issues.

Livia:

Yeah, that's awesome. So kind of going off of that, the next question we had was: have you done any other work relating to the environment or regenerative action? And if there are any specific projects that you've worked on that you'd like to touch on?

<Ulrika's video freezes>

Ulrika:

So I turned off my Wi-Fi and I will see if this connection is better.

Livia:

Okay, so the question was, have you done any other work relating to the environment or regenerative action? Or if there are any specific projects that you'd like to share?

Ulrika

Well, I was very interested in permaculture and I went to different places to study, like in Germany, in an ecovillage called Sibelinden and also in Australia. And so I've been very much influenced by permaculture and its view upon how we as humans can collaborate with nature. And so I was involved with some people to try to build some kind of community, like eco social community and so on. So I guess that's what I've been doing, like, on the side, like from organic growing vegetables and city gardening and so on. But I think mainly since I've been working as an artist, I did most of my work inside my professional role and with all these different collaborations.

Livia:

Yeah. Yeah, awesome. So our next question is, sorry, one moment. How would you say that your work relates to kind of like the bigger picture with climate change and – our project focuses on regenerative action a lot, so climate change and regenerative action.

Ulrika:

Could you give some examples of what you mean with regenerative actions? I mean, I think I know what you mean, but it would be nice just to hear you elaborate a bit on that.

KJ:

So for regenerative action, I feel like the biggest way to think about it is sustainability is more of, like, maintaining a level versus regenerative action is like trying to push farther ahead than sustainability. Trying to think of a good example to give for what, like, a step above sustainability. I think you get what I'm saying, though.

Ulrika:

Yeah, I think I understand what you mean. So the question, what if I did – no, what was the question, if I have some examples of that or?

KJ:

Question was, how does your work relate to the like the bigger picture of climate change, sustainability, regenerative action, how do you fit into all of this, all these big ideas?

Ulrika:

Yeah, well, I mean, I have some, well, I was always very interested in trying to make some kind of good examples, even if it was a very small example, and then maybe hope that this example would lead to contribution to the bigger change, or at least a bigger awareness. So when I did some public artworks, I did some plantings along a sculpture with perennials for bees and solitary bees, for example, and then there was always some kind of sign where people could read more about it. But my main goal was, of course, to try to influence the people in the municipality to broaden this idea and not have a more lawn around the park, but to make this planting with perennials bigger. And I did one project in this EU project called Cultural Adaptation, and there I was part of a process group that was rebuilding a yard with some rental housing, and they were taking care of the stormwater system. So it's a place where there was a lot of flooding, so they tried to make some kind of new way to catch the water, the rainwater, and I made a sculpture for rainwater, but also an idea of how when you make something in the city that you always think about the ecology and the social aspects at the same time. So why not make this place regenerative? So it's in all ways that when you choose the plants, for example, and when you choose to take care of the water, so it can also water the plants. So I think that through this kind of project, I very much try to be pedagogical with the people taking part in the project. So these people were working for a housing agent, and they do business as usual, but maybe I can, when I come and work with them for six months, maybe I can influence them with some actions that they can make also in their other work. So I think that by taking part of projects that work with regenerative actions, or at least try to make an awareness about it, that's probably been my biggest link in my work. And since I'm, I mean, I think permaculture is all about regenerative actions, how to make things a better place, not just good enough. So how can we actually make the place where we live more thriving than it was before? And I think that is very much the base of my work. You have to think, why not think a bit further while you anyway do something? I mean, if you just bring along the right group of people, the right group of disciplines from the beginning when you make a project, if it has something to do with you, you have to make a renovation, you have to make something in the city, why not make it, you have to fulfill the UN sustainability goals anyway. So why not do it while you anyway do something else? For example, if you rebuild the road, why not do the other things at the same time? So that's what I've been, when I worked in collaborations, I always tried to talk in that way to people. There are a lot of obstacles because people have their ways of doing things, but also costs and so on. But if we start to think like this from the beginning, then we will get further than if we try to do some band aid at the end of a project, for example.

Gabby:

Yeah. Great. Thank you for sharing. Our next question we have for you is, what direction do you see yourself moving in with your work and do you have any future projects you would like to share with us?

Ulrika:

Yeah, sure. Well, I think that so I'm involved in the project, the Conference of the Birds that you know about, with Oleg. And so we are looking at trying to find a way to make it public in a larger exhibition. So that's what me and Eva Bakkesle are working on now. And to make it as much publicity as possible to make people think and learn more about the bird situation. And then I'm working on some exhibitions with my work where I look at a specific place in Yotaboy. It's an old harbor which used to be marshlands with lots of reeds. And this place used to be very thriving with birds, but now it's like concrete and a harbor. So I make work about this place, and – I'm trying to find a word – the entanglement of plants and animals. So for example, if you look at the bird, I mean it can move and fly, but it's totally dependent on a certain type of plants and habitat. And in a sculptural way, I try to express this in an installation with sound and with working with materials such as reeds and plants that are in the place. So the last exhibitions I had, I worked with kind of hypnosis, like a meditation, a sound meditation. So people could kind of, yeah, as I said in the beginning, they could try to find their inner space in connection with the place. And I think that's what I'm going to do with this installation as well. So it's kind of inner connection, trying to make people get an inner connection and understanding of the relation to the space. And I think that, well, I've been working very much place specifically. So I've been working out in different places and doing things just for one place at one time. But now I'm trying to develop it a bit so I can actually exhibit my work in different places, even if it's about one place, but try to see how – I had a very hard time to work with the gallery space, like working inside the gallery, because I thought it was much more interesting to work outside. But now I'm trying to get back into the gallery space, because I see it as some kind of a – it is a possible room for transformation, as I see it. It doesn't at all times work as that, but it's a place where people come and can have some focus and concentration. So that's why I think, again, that this might be a good place to meet people. And I think it is a little bit because I felt that working in these transdisciplinary projects, it's very easy to get into the role of a project leader. You sit with the budgets and you sit with trying to make people cooperate and so on. And I think that's very, it's fun, but it's not really maybe my strongest side. And also, I think that I really, really want to work with sculpture and materials and so on. That's why I got into the artist's way in the beginning, so I think that now I'm trying to steer more towards that. I can just show you some of my reed here that I have been collecting. Let's see if you can see it. Here is the reed.

<Ulrika shows us a sculpture made out of reeds>

KJ:

Interesting.

Ulrika:

And here are some of my sculptures that I'm building now.

KJ:

It's so cool.

Ulrika:
Thank you. It's a willow. A willow.

KJ:
How long have you been working on that?

Ulrika:
Sorry?

KJ:
How long have you been working on that specific thing you've been building so far?

Ulrika:
Oh, I did it in one day. This little sculpture here, so it's like a weave – a woven, willow, willow sculpture.

KJ:
Cool.

Ulrika:
But I did it. I was in Denmark last weekend. So I went to this super willow master who lives outside Copenhagen. So I went to like two provisions at the plate.

KJ:
Nice.

Ulrika:
So how long are you in Denmark?

KJ:
We are here for about four more weeks. Is that right? Yeah, we've been here, for, basically, four weeks as well. We're basically like our halfway point for us.

Ulrika:
So are you mainly working with Oleg?

KJ:
Yeah, Oleg is our like, point man, essentially. He's the main sponsor we're working through.

Ulrika:
Hmm. That's super. He's super, super nice.

KJ:
Yeah, he is.

Ulrika:

Yeah, he is – I really admire his work. He's doing very good things, I think, with good people, and he's taught them to influence people. It's really great, I think.

KJ:

Definitely.

Gabby:

Yeah. Okay, so we have one more question for you.

Ulrika:

Yeah.

Gabby:

And it is: what are some obstacles or limitations you have faced through your work?

Ulrika:

Yeah, as I said before, I think that to work, I have felt it very necessary to work with other disciplines and trying to build knowledge and connections with other disciplines and also with the scientists and so on. And I think that that is so inspiring and really, really fun, but it's also quite demanding to work with – when you are, like, thrown into another discipline's way of working and speaking and doing things. And sometimes as an artist, when you come alone, you can feel quite odd. So, so it's, I think it's very useful if you are in some kind of context. Maybe there is some – yeah, like the EU program I went working in, or maybe if there's some kind of org space who arranges some kind of collaboration. Now, Eva and I, we are trying to arrange collaborations ourselves in the Conference of the Birds, and that is definitely fine to do that, but it's also, as I said, it's a huge work to try to get funding and make these different collaborations work. So, so I think that's maybe the main obstacles, if you want to work with transdisciplinary work, and maybe you want to influence municipalities or researchers, so on, that it can be very difficult to find, find your way, because I mean, now there are more options where you can go into collaborations. But when I started out, I had to invent a lot of the wheel myself. And, and that maybe sometimes these – just trying to find out how to do it took so much time that maybe there was not so much time to make art about it. So, I think that that's what I found a bit difficult and time consuming. And also to try to find your way, how to work, when you, when you don't work so traditionally, like if you, if you have a galleries that work with art the traditional way, or if you, I mean there are a lot of different collectives, for example, work as artists, designers, architectures, and so on. And, and that can also be fine. But if you're kind of in between, it's – you want to work as an, as a single artist in a way but still work with collaborations, then it's – for me, it has been a bit more difficult. And also, of course, the frustration on trying to make change and maybe there is not so much happening, sometimes, or you feel that you, you do so much work and that might be not so much people – so many people listening or being interested in it. But, but what I find supportive is, of course, that there are so many people working in different ways. And you, I guess it's the best thing is to feel that you are one person contributing. And when you are a lot of people contributing in different ways, there, there is change being made, but maybe not so fast, not so visible as you would hope for, I think.

KJ:

So yeah, that kind of wraps it up for any questions, all of our questions that we have for you.

Sofie Kempf

KJ:

I'm going to ask this again so it gets recorded. You're okay with us recording you?

Sofie:

I'm okay with you recording me. And my name is Sofie Kempf and I'm still okay.

KJ:

Thank you.

Abby:

Perfect, okay. So our first question is kind of just describe the work you do and your goals. I know it's a very open-ended question.

Sofie:

It's very big. But I work with embodiment in all, everything I do. And I have done it for plus 25 years now, I think. And very often people, 'embodiment?'. What? Is it yoga or mindfulness? No, it's not. It's everything you do, you do with your body. Every time you go into a relation, your body influences the quality of the relationship and your senses with your body. So you have your body with you all over and it influences in everything you do and the way you think and the way you connect. And it's a really big topic. So for me, like, I started to be working with this full-time in 2008. And why was because I wanted to increase peace in the world. So that was my goal at that time. And still, I find that quite important. But what I see is that our embodiment is our body and our senses. It's really a challenge today because we are so busy. And I will make an exercise with you in a moment so you can sense what happens to you when we are really busy. And also because of all the technology. So it is like that that what you use is what you and the brain get really clever at and what you're not using little by little disappears. And today in the way we live, even from the school, it starts there. A lot of connection goes through the screen. Even when the teacher is standing and checking out who is in the room, the teacher is looking at the screen instead of actually connecting with the children. So from small, they learn how to not connect. They learn how to work through the screen and not be where they end up using their body and their senses. And just imagine a world without people being able to really connect and being present with each other, being able to sense. I don't know what you would think about that picture.

Abby:

Yeah.

Sofie:

Because then it would be a world only driven by what we think is right and wrong. And what we think is just an idea. You can have an idea of what is right and wrong or which way to go. But it's a thought. Maybe you need to be connected with yourself to really sense into what is the importance in which ways you actually go. Does it make sense?

KJ:

It does.

Sofie:

Because it's really a big topic we are checking. I'm trying to explain in a few words. So now when we are talking about stress, we are talking about the climate, we are talking about a time when we really need to have the courage to change habits. There we can have an idea of, we can talk about it, but what happens? Not much. Because we also need to be able to change in our habits. And for that, our habits is carried in our body. So for that, we need to also be present with each other and ourselves. So when you are really tired, like you are really tired,

Gabby:

I'm always tired.

Sofie:

Then it's difficult to learn. And when you are stressed, the brain helps you to choose the action which the brain thinks is the action which way will spare the most energy. And that will always be something you have done many times before. So when you are stressed, then you will automatically choose what you have done before. So when we look at a world where we have no connection to the body to be present is really something maybe you are lucky to have it in an occasion. If you are lucky, if you are not totally stressed because you are so tired. So then we see a world where we just keep on doing the same and the same. And we will not have the capacity to have courage to change habits. Does it make sense?

KJ:

Yeah.

Sofie:

Should we try now?

Abby:

Yeah.

Livia:

Yeah.

Sofie:

Good. So come on, stand up. So just do you have an assignment or something you are working on so I can bring it into your mind?

KJ:

Just the proposal.

Sofie:

Great, okay. So just put it away right now. So when you are, when you are not so stressed right now, are you okay?

Abby:
Actually better than usual.

Livia:
Yeah.

KJ:
Yeah.

Sofie:
All right. But just let's make a few sighs just to relax the nervous system. So if you inhale through your nose and just let go. Right hand to the left. And inhale and let go down in one leg. Just wait one leg. Just stand here. Just bumping a little bit of a down. And then inhale up. And the other leg. Down on this one. Because in the moment I'm going to put your nervous system into stress. So I want to make sure that you are not beginning in stress. And inhale. To the other side. Now just center yourself. Now just center if you can feel it better now maybe. How's that? Yeah. So just do a little stretch also. So you take your right arm up and put all the weight in the right leg. So you can actually let go of this one. But you're still touching the ground. And then you just reach up to the left. Lift your hands. And then exhale. So you're going to stretch the other side. So inhale. So you make like a boat, like a banana. And then you whip your fingers a little bit. Slowly, slowly, slowly. So if something is, it's like trying to swim up there. Like a fish swimming up. And you do it to the other side. And inhale now. Exhale now. So you have your weight on the left now. So you have this banana here. And inhale and exhale out. So you thought you were going to sit and talk instead of exercises.

KJ:
It's good.

Sofie:
Yeah. You take your shoulder back and we'll try to just make a breath. And if something has changed, also. Okay, a little bit better, a bit more. Okay. So when we are under pressure, the first place we normally tense up is in the jaws. So try to make tension in the jaw. Yes. And then try to sense it what happens to your whole body and your breath when you tense up in your jaws. Do you tense up? And then try to let go again. And then you tense up again. So maybe you can sense what happens. When you've registered anything, let's share it. So the other can feel it.

Gabby:
Tightness in the chest.

Sofie:
Yeah.

Abby:
Shortness of breath.

Sofie:

Shortness of breath, yeah.

Livia:

Yeah, my whole body feels more stiff.

Sofie:

More stiff in the body.

KJ:

It feels like my head gets more, how do I describe the feeling? It's like more ready, I guess you could say. But it's like something's about to happen.

Sofie:

Yes, I'm going to focus here.

KJ:

Yes.

Sofie:

Yeah, so make an exhale again. So the next thing which often happens is that the connective tissues in the body, they tense up. So we try to copy that by just lifting the shoulder two millimeters. Just two millimeters above. And then sense in again what effect does it have on your body and your breath?

KJ:

I feel like I'm standing in line, like I'm a soldier and I have to stay stiff, ready to go.

Sofie:

What else?

Gabby:

Harder to breathe.

Sofie:

Yes.

Livia:

Shorter breaths.

Sofie:

Shorter breaths.

Abby:

Like my whole mind and body feels like tense.

Sofie:

Can you just sense which feeling it arises in this.

Abby:

I'm like, like, I don't know...

Sofie:

Anxious?

Abby:

Yeah.

Sofie:

Because this is also when we, like this, the breath gets a very, a higher stroke. So it's like, when we do this, and this is the anxiousness breath we have. So imagine a thief coming into the door and you're standing here in it. So it invites the stress all right away like this. So let's go again. Then another place where we often tense up is here in the thighs. And it's a little bit more difficult to tense up here. But try to tense up. And very often about people they go, like, oh, stretch the knee. So try to sense maybe it's known for you or what stretches your knees. Then try to do it so you can expand with curiosity about what it actually does to you. So tense up in the thighs and see what happens to your body now. It's different, yeah? What do you sense?

KJ:

I am used to board sports where this needs to be loose and ready to go. And this is just, for me, that I never do it.

Sofie:

And when you tense us tense up in your thighs, then what?

KJ:

When it's super tense in the thighs, it's just like...

Sofie:

Not like this, but like this.

KJ:

Yeah, both like this is just like...

Sofie:

What happens to you? What does it do to you?

KJ:

I'm just uncomfortable like this. I don't like this.

Sofie:

And what else? What do you sense?

Gabby:
Loss of control.

Sofie:
Loss of control, and why do you think that?

Gabby:
Because I'm not able to like jump out if I needed to.

Sofie:
You what?

Gabby:
I'm not able to jump out.

Sofie:
You're not able to jump out?

Gabby:
Yeah.

Sofie:
And why is that you're not able to jump out?

Gabby:
You're stuck in one position.

Sofie:
You're stuck in one position, yeah.

Abby:
Like stiff. Like the fight or flight, but like frozen type.

Sofie:
Yeah.

Livia:
Yeah, I was going to say it just like immediately made me feel anxious.

Sofie:
Anxiousness also. What about the balance? Do you sense it into the balance? What happens here?

KJ:
I feel like when you're loose, you can easily shift. When you're here, you stay. You can't move. It has to be one point.

Abby:
Yeah, I feel like if someone were to like tap me like this...

Sofie:
You would just be turning over.

Abby:
Yeah.

Sofie:
And what about the breath? Let's explore the breath a little bit. What happens here?

Gabby:
It's hard to take like deeper breaths.

Sofie:
Yeah and why?

Gabby:
Because you can't like go with your whole body. You can just...

Sofie:
Can you sense it in a way that tenses up? Why is it you cannot breathe deeper here? Because it's different than the other body.

Abby:
I feel like with my thighs like also kind of like my stomach a little bit.

Sofie:
Yeah, exactly.
Because when it tenses up in the thighs, then we also tense up in the lower back. And then it tenses up in the stomach. So the breath goes to here. The diaphragm, the biggest breath muscle have kind of worked. There's that moment of work to do so it gets more stiff. And very often when people have to, they say they have a pain in their lower back. Because it goes to, it's not so easy to show in this dress, but it goes like this. Or it goes like this. So it tenses up here and these people walking like this. And what happens also when it tenses up here is because you are stiff in your ankles and your knees, this is where you hold your balance. This is from your ankle and knees. So when they are stiff, your balance point moves upward and this one here, the center is here, but it is also stiff. So actually your balance point moves all the way up to your shoulders and your head. And your head is very heavy. So you know from physics, then when the head point is on top, then it's so easy to turn over. You cannot breathe. So you do not have the contact to the floor from which you should say no or yes or we go this direction. You cannot set off. Does it make sense?

All:

Mm-hmm.

Sofie:

Okay. So next thing I got, please, because now you put it all together. So now you, and take care of yourself. If you get too anxious, let go and exhale right away. But if you can be curious and keep going. So it tenses up in your jaws. Lift up a little bit in the shoulders, tense up in your thighs, and then try to stand opposite each other. Try to stand opposite each other. And just, just sense then how is the relation here? How is it able to connect?

Abby:

Like not...

Livia:

Not at all, yeah.

Sofie:

Yeah. Just try to get, just be curious about it.

KJ:

I just feel like I'm, I don't know. Yeah, this is.

Sofie:

So just close your eyes for a minute and then imagine this assignment you asked for. Just look at it and imagine that you have to go work on it. How is your intuition and your creativity and stuff right?

Abby:

I sense like avoiding.

KJ:

Yeah.

Sofie:

And then the last thing. Try to imagine that you're stepping into a room with a lot of people you're going into a meeting. Just see from your inner picture. What is it you're bringing into the meeting? Because we face each other. And then let go. We go and let them go, let them ease, go move these. Let them just one here. Blah blah blah blah blah blah blah. Yeah, come on. Young people, you can do this. Blah blah blah blah. Faster, should we do it faster? Blah blah blah blah blah. Okay, alright. So, how was it to go to be creative in this state? How was that?

Abby:

I've never done something like that before. Like I've always tried to like relax and practice like relaxing, but not practicing the stress that you actually feel at moments where you don't really recognize it. So I thought that was very kind of good.

Sofie:

Yeah, and this is, of course, it, the spots I showed you here is just the most common. So it's different from people to people where you have your alarm clocks in your body or your friends, as I call them. No one will get irritated of oh, it's you. No, no. Thank you for making me aware that I didn't have a break.

Abby:

Yeah.

Sofie:

And what about, how was it to step into a meeting? Could you sense that? No, it took you through very fast. How was it?

Abby:

I recognized a lot of, like, what I would actually feel when I'm stressed or nervous about something, like in my body, I can kind of recognize that more, with, like, the physical aspects.

KJ:

The biggest thing for me was the, it relates to the feeling of fear a lot of the times, and just not knowing, relating to that fear, and just, I would always have that feeling of fear whenever, like, whenever I felt fear in a certain situation, that's the symptoms of, like, my body out of the field.

Sofie:

Yeah.

KJ:

Yeah, so.

Sofie:

So imagine a whole population like that, because that is what we are reaching what I see. Thank God there's a lot of people trying to take people to nature and working with breath and yoga and stuff like that, but it's, it's separated from the work life and the family life. So you go to the yoga class and then you go out and, and you keep running out there, but it needs to be connected, and so we need to relearn as a though how to be connected with our bodies, because as children, we knew how. But the case is now, because I'm living in Copenhagen, just born here, normally I live in the countryside, and what I've noticed is so many small kids sitting in the, in the baby wagon right on record with the telephone in front of them, looking at the phone instead of being connected, with the phone. So small kids that will not learn children how to be connected with their bodies. So it's kind of, kind of, really scary.

Gabby:

Yeah, we call them iPad kids.

Sofie:

Yeah.

Gabby:

People kind of make fun of the parents. It's just like, I don't know, just be outside.

Sofie:

Yeah, yeah.

Abby:

So I actually saw that yesterday. This kid in a stroller. It was like a double stroller. He was like this, his phone. And, but he was really young. I was like, how can you be so young already with the phone to your face like that?

Sofie:

One and a half years sometimes, yeah.

Abby:

And I was just like surprised.

Sofie:

Yeah, so it's just, we see it, and you know, we call them the iPad and the babysitter. But you don't see kids in the street playing around because they are inside on the computer. So we really need to, this embodiment. The body, we need to get it back in. Because if not, I don't think we will be able to change the world situation, I don't think so. Because we will be just copying what we have done all the time. I mean, yeah, then we see under Corona. Things could happen like that. Now, because of the war suddenly they see how we can be faster with the green energy. But it's because of the war, because of the money, not because of the climate and safety of the world. So it's still just, yeah. So that is what I'm working with. And I'm working with it, just client to client, I'm working with groups, and I'm also training, training the trainers, teachers, go out and teach others how to bring embodiment into that teaching. So that is also a way people can be more aware. So they don't learn just with their minds, but also with their bodies so that they are going to be more confident. That's a lot, so it was not a short answer.

Abby:

Yeah, so do you do classes or do you just go with clients?

Sofie:

I do clients. I have clients and I have just half year program for our leaders, which is just on pause because something needs to be changed with it. But then I have one-year education for teachers and facilitators, how to use the body. And then I go out and do workshops and facilitate processes. Because when we also use the body in our development work, we get more present with each other. We increase the courage and of course we get connected instead of you just thinking. So more ideas we get on the table. And when we work with embodiment too, if a case is complicated and we investigate it with our bodies, the new perspectives will arise because it comes from the unknown, you can say. So that's also right. So how does that land in you? Maybe just to sit for just a close eyes. Put your feet to the floor. And just close your eyes a little bit. And just see what we have done now, what I have shared with you, what comes to your questions. Maybe new perspectives.

Sofie:

Yeah, it's fine. Your nervous system is in action. And also what I just showed you just in the assignment you are working with. How does that connect or does it connect?

Gabby: We are discovering this theme where it's like in order to better the world, to better yourself first. And we talked to somebody who was very adamant on, I can't change myself first. Change starts with you. So if you want to make the world a better place, you have to make yourself better first. And be connected with yourself. That's interesting to us.

Sofie:

I can add something to that, but let's just hear what comes to you. What we just did, how it landed in you.

KJ:

For me, it very much relates to, so it very much relates to the work that I do. I'm a ski instructor, freestyle ski instructor. And a lot of kids that I coach are trying to build up confidence to hit rails or jumps. And I see this tenseness in fear whenever they go into it, because they obviously have never done something like this before, and they're afraid, they don't know. And for me, as basically, basically their role model would try and show them, hey, you guys can do this. It's not that hard, just don't be afraid. It's fun. I myself have those, like, when we were having that tenseness, I'll have that tenseness build up every now and then. And so, a lot of times, I'll just, like, when I'm waiting at the top, I'll just be like, yeah, shake it out, I got this. And just, like, mentally, like, mentally prepare my body and be like, we're one. You don't, there's no disconnect, we're, can do this easily. So, it very much reminded me of the feeling that I have when doing that stuff, so.

Sofie:

Yeah.

Livia:

Yeah, I think for me, like, the feeling of being tense and uncomfortable and anxious is, like, honestly, a pretty common feeling. And I think I need to take more time to kind of, like, decompress and shake it out. Because, like, I feel like I'm just, like, tense a lot, you know, but it's fine.

Sofie:

And notice that you say, don't be anxious and I need to shake it off. And the thing is that it isn't in a state in you which is there right now. And if you tell it to go away, then it will stay. Instead of, if you tell it, if you look at it and say, hey, I noticed you're a tense, why not? It's okay. Then it will relax. Because tense gives pressure back. If you press, you will get pressure back. So it's all, how I work is that you meet it with the compassion zone now. And just, like, if you have your friend here and your shoulder, instead of being angry with your shoulder, just say, oh, thank you for letting me know. Because then it's so much easier to change habit. It's not easy to change habit when you hit yourself in the head. So much easier if you say thank you because I noticed. So much easier. But what you said, in some way, I agree, but you need to start with

yourself. But the thing is that we are, we are, we are, we're the same days, you know, animals who lives together, what you call that. And there's animals who lives on their own, and their animals who lives in a big group.

KJ:

A pack.

Sofie:

In a pack?

Abby:

A collective.

Sofie:

A collective?

Abby:

A herd.

Sofie: A herd, yeah. We people, we also are herd people. So it's, it's so much more difficult to change when you are on your own. Because when you, we are connected without our brains, so we are connected just by our senses. And you can, if you step into meeting your people, they speak really fast. What happens to your most nervous system and how you speak?

Abby:

You try to match that?

Sofie:

Yeah. And if you step into a room where there's a lot of, yeah, I have a lesson. Hey, we feel a relaxation and so then you will sense it right away. So we are connected, we respond to each other all the time with our knowing. So if you, one people in an organization, one person in an organization, you have trained about leadership, which are trained people in, and you want to, and you keep working with it on your own, but the rest of the team is really just running busy. Then it's really, really, really hard. Because you will, without you wanting it or not, you will be affected by this stress in the social system. So I talk about, we have an individual body and we have a social body, which in fact influences. So yes, you have to do it yourself, but you have to do it together. This is how we go. But of course you can see one person who is really strong can start, and then people can follow. Does it make sense?

All:

Yes.

Sofie:

How does this, what we have done now, how does it fit in with your assignment or what we're going to find out? Just so I know if we are in which way we should move.

Abby:

So I think we're on the right path, like seeing people's perspectives.

KJ:

Yeah, very much seeing your perspective. Yeah.

Abby:

And I guess like one other question was, we kind of touched on it a lot, but just to answer the question like explicitly, how does this relate to climate change, sustainability, or regenerative action, like the bigger picture, like your work? Because it's very important work and I'd love to hear more about that.

Sofie:

So let's start just in the nervous system. I'm going to start there. And I have these models. Just show them to all actually. It's in Danish, sorry. Do we know? The autonomic system? Do you know that one?

KJ:

The... Sorry?

Sofie:

The autonomic system?

KJ:

Yeah, no, not properly.

Sofie:

But I'll just take you through anyway. Here. So here in the center is where we are in balance. And this one here is our sympathetic nervous system. Sympathetic nervous system. It's the one which goes with action. So when you inhale, it's sympathetic. And here we have the parasympathetic nervous system, which is the relaxation when you relax. So when you exhale, it's your parasympathetic nervous system. And here we have the... It's called the ventral vagus, you know that one? Just say it's okay if you don't know.

KJ:

I do not know.

Sofie:

The ventral vagus, it's like a social nervous system. With nerves going around your face, down to your lung and your heart. So it's the system you meet yourself with through your breath. You also meet the surroundings through your face. So it's a social nervous system. This one here, if it's really strong, it means if you're really good at breathing, then you can balance your inhale and your exhale. You can balance your nerve system if this one is strong. And this one gets strong by your breath and also by connecting, being in relationship. So now we go back to what you experience when I began to talk about what we are up against. We are up against that. We are so busy. We are working on the screen, so we do not breathe. So we get into the stress body, which

you just experienced. And at the same time, we are a lack of connection, presence together. So the two things which actually keep us in balance are really threatened today in the world we are living in. So that means that we get out in this stress in a stress when we are not able to have a strong menstrual vagus. So we get into fight or flight. So here you can be aggressive. You can go into anxiousness. And here, this one is not a lot of people talking about it. This one is not free. This is collapse. This is lying dead. This is the most anxious condition you can be in. So on the Corona, this was what a lot of people experienced. I don't know if you experienced that. But being at home lying down, not being able to do anything like just totally silent, not much tension. Can you recognize that one? Lying dead. So when we are really busy, what happens is we go to work and we have action. And then we go home and collapse. So we go from one point of the anxious nervous system to the other. So there's no place where we can get us into balance. Because we are not breathing here. This is what we just experienced. But we are either breathing here and collapse. It's really shallow and it's really slow. And we need the breath or the connection to get back in mind. Okay. Is it okay? It's a bit rough. But this is the individual. But we can also see the same in an organization. An organization where they just work no breaks, no breathing in here. Just work and work and work and work and work. And here, the other part down here could be people who are nagging, complaining all the time. It's also something. It's an activity. So we can also see that in an organization who are under pressure. We show under pressure. And then over here, we have the other part who have just a... it's meanings led. They have no meaning with their work. They just go silent. They are being invisible in the organization. A part here. And up here, we have... When we get under pressure in an organization, the connection disappears. And you see people working more. And they are coming with silos. So we work together. We work together. We work together. There's no connection. You can see that in a bigger picture. But also inside a team. People begin to work just on their own things. Instead of cooperating together. So this individual nervous system, you can also see in the social system. And so this is what we're up against. So we need breath. We need body. We need to be connected. We need to be able to stop and just stop the action all the time. To be curious. To get the world back on track. That's what I think. Individual and for sure together. Because this is where we move when we do it together. But it takes courage because when we are out here, we do what we know is the best. And that is very often to keep going or to disappear or to be anxious and complain. So then we do a safe one. So it's like an evil going downward. Somehow. You know that? Do you understand it?

Us:

Yes.

Sofie:

It's a... I haven't spoke English for a while, so my sister thinks it's a little bit better. So what do you think?

KJ:

I feel like I definitely can see it in school life as well. Very much like... Especially with some classes that you might take and you might be in a group. It might just be like... How do I explain this? I don't know. You can have that feeling of just like, you're going to go to class. I got to take notes. I got to do all this stuff. I got to do all this. And then class enters. You're just like, I don't have to worry about that anymore. And then if you're in a group and you just separate,

a lot of times you'll, like as you said, each person works on their own thing instead of actively brainstorming or collaborating with each other. Because our school can feel very results-oriented and just getting it done. First is trying to... Uniquely like... It's basically trying to reach the bar versus trying to do the best. And I feel that... I actually feel that a lot in some of my classes. It's just like, I just need to get this done and over with.

Sofie:

And how's your learning there?

KJ:

Personally, for me, I'm not a great... I learned best on my own at times. The classroom setting, just sitting down, looking at a lecture, not the best for me. I don't know how you guys feel. But for me, it's very much I learn better out of curiosity versus something being told to me.

Sofie:

And up doing, because your body is a part of your learning. When you activate your body, you activate more to different places in your brain. And your body, because it carries your story, then you build on your story. So when you work with your body, you learn with your body, then you actually learn better. I had a person here yesterday back when I started at the university. I started... How do you say in English? You know, leadership based on values, which was really hard at that time. And she just... She said, hey, we're going to work with this in our organization. And I said, hey, I wrote about it at the university. And maybe you can tell us something, maybe we can get something new to it. And the funny thing is, because we were out working with it in an organization, then even though it's really many years ago, then I can really clear, oh, this is the most important things because I learned with my body and my brain together. So yeah, I've followed you there.

Abby:

I think I've noticed that in my learning patterns too, early college was a lot of lecture and a lot of on your own taking notes and watching videos and stuff. But I feel like this year I've done a lot of group work and project work, especially with these three people and another project at the same time with a more of an engineering project. And we'd be writing on whiteboards, diagrams, physically moving around, jumping ideas off of each other across the table in person work. And we'd make sure that we'd be in person to talk about all the stuff that we were doing, because Zoom is so easy to just hop on a Zoom call or online. And I feel like even through this project journey, I feel like we've grown a lot together in our learning experience and physically doing everything, versus just learning about it by participating in the programs that Oleg hosts. We actually participate in them and we self reflect after and share stuff. And it's made a big difference. I think I'm more curious and I like want to learn more and I want to do things more than I was before I got here, which is cool.

Sofie:

And you need this curiosity. Imagine the line on the field, lying down in the sun. The brain goes down and it's not there, it goes out hunting. It's the same when you're sitting in a classroom, just sitting and listening without your curiosity as a way. Then the brain says it goes to sleep. It's not a learning, learning stage. Yeah, but let me see here. Because something shoots us the same, but

for me it helps me. What to do is actually the important thing, isn't it? What to do. And of course in the individual system, we need to, as I said before, we need to have these ventral vagus. We need to have it really awakened. So we need to be able to breathe, to sense ourselves. But also we need to have this parasympathetic activated. So it is the breaks, it is curiosity, it is being able to rest, not collapse but rest. And in the social system, also this part here, because to get that alive, we need curiosity in the social system. So instead of having focus on the goal, I will say we need to be more curious on the process, to be actually present in the process, and invite curiosity in, invite asking questions, invite experimenting, invite failures in. But it lies over here in this part of the system. It doesn't lie in this, now we have to execute, to just get to the goal as fast as possible. So it takes a lot of courage to invite this part into the organization. Also because here, curiosity, experimenting, failure, you are not in control. You are not in control, but you are alive, and you are connected. So when you are not in control and you really need to get this goal, the leaders should really be able to still leave a direction without the control. Does it make sense? And for that, you need to be able to stand with stability but flexibility in yourself, like skiing. And it is not what happens when we are out here and we are too fast. So you see, that we can't do it alone, we have to do it together. We have to invite experiments into experimenting but being more present together with asking questions, with actually just looking at each other. And of course nature is so important in this world also, but it is another case. Yeah. Just need some water. So what is your left foot? It is really a big topic because you cannot understand it. That is why I did the exercise with you, so you could get a sense of it. You want to know that exercise? Sure. You might as well. Yeah. All right. Just don't change your body. Just keep sitting like you are sitting now. And then close your eyes again. And look at your assignment again. And you see how it comes to your mind, how is the motivation? I don't see that again. All right. And over your eyes again. And then sit up a little bit. So put your feet to the floor. Just as really can you get. If you move a little bit forward on this chair, then you can... If you sit a bit, instead of sitting back, your feet on the floor, and your sitting bones down on the chair, and from the sitting bone, your spine is rising up. So just move your spine a little bit. So it should not be like with the tension here, the lower back, but like lean into your lower back. So your table, imagine your table bone is heavy, so it breaks you a little bit into yourself into the back. And then you put your hands on the tight. And just take your shoulders back over. Close your eyes and just make a breath again. And be curious about every time you exhale, maybe you can feel you get a little more heavy against the chair. A little bit more heavy without collapsing in the spine. And make a big sigh. Move your spine a little bit like build up the spine from down and all the way up to the neck. Just keep your eyes closed, just building up your spine. And it's a breath I whisper. And the top of the head is releasing. And then your jaws is hanging on your... your cranium. Relaxes in your jaws. And your shoulders, they are hanging on your spine. Just let your shoulder be heavy. And do an exhale again. Sense it. Look from here, look at your spine. And see how that is. And ask yourself, what is important? Ask yourself, what is it I haven't seen? And when you're ready, you're just exhale again. Make a sign and come back. So how is that? If you're really tired, then you will just disappear away when you're sitting more centered. But what's the difference between you sitting here and coming up sitting here?

Abby:

I felt more centered and more like a clarity kind of when I was more focused, and like sitting like confidently. Yeah.

Gabby:
I felt more aware.

KJ:
I felt like a calming focus, I guess you would say.

Livia:
Yeah, more focus.

Sofie:
So you're glad that when you're like this, this is really, I call it the default body. It's how you have a body that has been built in the way you were, the way you were. So when you change your body, they are sending new signals to the brain. So the brain is saying, "huh, it's not as it used to be, so I have to give it away." So this is what we call it. So just by noting here, when you are anxious, if you're busy, you can't be curious about how you carry your body. Because then you will invite the computer action, but if you change your body, just be curious about it. And just be aware that, yeah, "now I can actually breathe better." You need to have this awareness with you, and then look at the thing. Then you will have a different perspective. So imagine that in a team. So you can do it with your assignment here. Instead of just talking, talking, talking, sometimes you can just say, "okay, let's close our eyes and just sit for a while and sit up." And then together see what is important here, you can ask yourself questions. And then share it, because then you will get new perspectives. You can try out how it works. So this is what we need also in the organization. And we needed even more in the political system, where they just really work until late and they keep going and they sit the same places. So maybe that is why nothing happens. They need more body and more nature and more curiosity. Yeah, I can keep going, so you have to ask questions, instead of me, just talking, talking. Alright, okay, do you have enough?

Abby:
I think we do have enough.

Sofie:
And the thing is, if you do not, if you do not take these breaks, or breath, or whatever how you work with it. Then you will repeat your thinking and you will not be very smart. So for you together, what I can invite you to do is, because to experiment with this part of the nerve system together. Because it's so difficult to do it by yourself. And in the beginning, it will be weird stopping up, sitting with close eyes and four minutes and maybe do some breathing, or let's just dance together, or let's take a break line on the floor. And that's just what I did with your work with our assignment together with bringing in the closeness from the body awareness we just did. So experiment with it because you cannot think how it works, you have to experience.

Sofie:
So if you need more of a concept to make it for something like, oh, what's this just said there? Because it's really a big topic, this – about environment. And it's quite complex. Because just to make a side with awareness, if you're busy, you have to bring your awareness from out here, to

yourself. And if you have a default body where you just keep your train and being out here, then it takes a lot of course just to take your awareness to yourself. So a lot of people it can be, "I can't, I'm not allowed to do that". Without them knowing they have this default body where you're acting.

Abby:

Perfect. All right. Well, thank you so much for meeting with us. This was awesome.

Sofie:

Yeah. Thank you.

Oliver Maxwell

Livia:

If you just want to confirm that you're okay with us recording.

Oliver:

Yeah, of course.

Livia:

Okay, I'm just going to leave this here.

Oliver:

Yeah.

Livia:

And yeah, Gabby will get started with the questions.

Gabby:

So the first question you have for you is: describe your work and your goals.

Oliver:

The thing that we're interested in in this project generally is the relationship between people and the environment. What is it that's going on when humans, plants and animals meet? How is it that we can live together in a way in which we can all thrive and be healthy? And that's been something that I've been interested in all my life and has taken all sorts of interesting directions here, particularly in the last few years. Bees are for us a container for these sorts of questions. And they're a really, really good one because bees are a metaphor, a mirror for how we understand both each other and nature and have been for tens of thousands of years throughout human history. When we started working with a more regenerative approach, which we've been doing now for five or six years, the kind of thing that really stimulated the shift was the realization that we're not producers. We're not honey producers. We're not here to kind of take something from the bees and turn it into products, but that we are a community that's more than human, bees and flowers and people. And the question for us is what would it take for that community to thrive?

Gabby:

Yeah, great. And what made you enter this field?

Oliver:

I'm an anthropologist originally. So I have always been interested in how people and the environment meet. I started off as a monkey researcher in Madagascar. So I spent, you know, when I was a bit younger than you, I spent some time running around the jungle looking at monkeys and learning about this relationship between humans and monkeys. And that emerged into interest in development. I lived in Africa and Vietnam for several years. Got very involved in conservation and forest protection. But always from this point of view is like, where are the people in this? Like, how do you balance the needs of nature, the interests of kind of Western

money and the perspectives of both animals and plants, but also local people?

Gabby:

Oh, that's really interesting. Have you done any other work besides Bybi relating to the environment or regenerative action? I know you just described the jungle, but anything else?

Oliver:

Well, I mean regeneration as a kind of concept is something that's only been emerging more recently. When I was starting out, it was a question of development and a question of conservation. And regeneration wasn't really a word. People who talked a little bit more about sustainability and that language has shifted quite a lot since then. But the work that I originally did, well, you know, when I was doing my research in Vietnam as an anthropologist, it was all about how to involve local communities and local tribes in forest protection and forest sustainability. So I worked a lot with both conservation organizations and local municipalities. And actually later also with, you know, these are the more commercial interests. Like I did a big report for a big mining company that was looking at creating a toast in mind in Northern Vietnam and an impact assessment around that. Like, how do these things influence each other in these areas? I did some of the first anthropological surveys and social reports about the communities in the Cambodian jungle, after Pol Pot, was eventually died. And the Cambodian authorities began to re-establish contact to villages in the Cambodian island. Sorry, Cambodian Laushan border areas.

Gabby:

And the last question for me is how does your work relate to the bigger picture of climate change, sustainability, and regenerative action? And I know you touched upon that a little bit.

Oliver:

Well, the thing that's really fascinating about this that we're sitting here in middle city of Copenhagen and working with bees on rooftops is that all of the world's big problems and big issues, they end up here in somewhere or another. And it's not just because climate change is one dimension of something that is happening in so many different sorts of ways. Like migration, technology, refugee issues, climate change, we have to sit and negotiate all of those different sorts of problems every day. It might be the bees dying and getting sick because of the way in which industrial agriculture has bred us to a position where they're no longer surviving. It might be a situation of new technologies emerging where you can put artificial intelligence into the bees that can monitor their health in a way that's more effective than humans. All of this idea about what is consciousness? Are the bees alive? Can artificial intelligence sit between us and the bees when we build that connection? What happens when we start working with beekeepers who are both from Syria like a riff but also from Ukraine like we did last year? And their experiences of being in Denmark and how those are different and how we have to negotiate that situation? How do we deal with issues of tolerance and diversity in political and social tolerance in that context when we're working with different languages, different experiences, different religions, trying to get those things to work? We were sitting here two months ago with, on the one hand, a devastating winter for the bees, lots of them getting sick. On another level, our riff's local community in Syria is just absolutely destroyed by this earthquake a couple of months ago. On a third level, a question of how we create space for wild bees and other insects in our work

here in Copenhagen? All of these things intersect and relate. So this question of how do you stay with the trouble? How do you create a path through all of those different issues is just absolutely fascinating and important?

Gabby:

Thank you for sharing. KJ, can you take it from here?

KJ:

Yeah, a few more questions for you. So next question we have for you is how have you made a difference in your community or in Copenhagen? And do you have any concrete examples you'd like to share?

Oliver:

I mean, I think the way I would answer that question is that the most important thing that we can do in these times is to find ways of asking new kinds of questions and to encourage people to engage with them in different sorts of ways. For us, this way in which we've all been brought up as consumers of products and everything we touch and everything we do has been really damaging. It's damaging to our sense of self, our sense of freedom, our connection with the living world around us. I think we've been sold this idea that freedom comes from choice and that choice is represented by products. I don't think that's the case. I think people are finding themselves less and less free in that context. The big question that we're asking at the moment is what happens if we turn our relationship with the world from being one based on products to one based on invitations? One based on a dialogue where we can try to ask ourselves what is expected of us of the animals and plants that we taste, interact with, touch, wear, put on our bodies, put in our bodies. And that's kind of part of what we were doing the other day when you guys came. So trying to say, well, honey's an invitation. What is it asking us to do? How do we stage that in a different sort of way? In terms of your question, what impact has that had? What has it changed? I think it's hard to say what it has changed precisely. I think that the philosophy that we work with is that it's easier to act your way into a new way of thinking than to think your way into a new way of acting. So maybe a better way of asking that question for us would be like, how are you acting differently? What are we acting differently? And where's that leading? And that's something that we constantly can reflect on.

KJ:

Yeah, definitely. So, next question. How does your work relate art and culture to the regenerative paradigm? And how important would you say art and culture is in this regenerative practice?

Oliver:

As an anthropologist, I think it's very interesting the way in which we've in our culture tended to separate art and culture from other kinds of everyday practices. So we think of art and culture over here, but it's got nothing to do with things like work and shopping and consumption and cooking and getting up in the morning and going to work and coming home again with the practices that we do every day, holding meetings, conducting interviews. I think all of these things are also cultural rituals that we perform for each other, but we think of them as just kind of normal stuff that we have to do. And in our particular way of seeing the world, then we put art

and culture in a different space, a more playful, experimental place that we can use to develop new ways of doing things. If that's the way it is, then I think we should embrace it and use it. I think that a lot of the new ways of thinking can come from that. If art and culture are a more accessible way for people to enter new ways of thinking, then that's the direction that we need to take it. They do art and culture. These ways of looking at the world can engage with us emotionally or with our senses or with another part of our brains or bodies that tend not to be very active when we're doing the normal stuff like working and sleeping and spending money.

KJ:

All right, so next question. What direction do you see yourself moving with or moving with Bybi? Is that how you say it?

Oliver:

I think these questions that are so present in our lives at the moment, and so present in parts of our lives. These questions about climate and work and being together and nature, they tend to be present in some areas and not others. And I think the responsibility of our time for all of us is to bring these questions into new spaces, bring these practices into new spaces. So these for us are a container for some of these questions that are a way of approaching them. I'd like to be able to use that to maybe introduce similar sorts of ways of working with other species, other plants, creating a new language around how we think of building businesses, trading businesses, learning from each other. So that's the direction that I'd like to take this in, really.

KJ:

Definitely, yeah. All right, so last question I have for you. What are some obstacles or limitations that you face through your work?

Oliver:

I think there's two ways of looking at that as well. I think quite often when students come and interview me or talk about this, there's this idea that there's a kind of obstacle limitation that can be resolved or solved, that there's a barrier, and how do we remove those barriers? They're like what kind of new policies or a new kind of grant. I don't really see it in that way. I think there's some really interesting situations to explore and to explore from different kind of perspectives. And I think exploring those situations is what needs to be done or to consider maybe like what voice is a present or what is actually going on when you hit a limitation or a barrier. So one of the things that's been very significant for us is that in the first many years that we were operating, we just followed this idea that we were advised to do, which was to build up a big production, make as much money as possible, come out to the supermarkets, sell as much as possible, make a profit, and then use that profit to do some kind of good works over here.

And that's basically the format in which things were structured, that all the advisors, all the legal advice, all the board members, all the people we work with, we're suggesting that that's what we need to do. So they'd look at the whole organization, they'd say well, which of your products is the most successful and how can you make more of that in order to make more money?

And we, I mean, I found that to be really difficult to understand in the end and really damaging. I realize more and more that it's a kind of, it's a fantasy, it's a fetish, it's like, it's like this weird, I'm not religious myself. But it's this, no, it's this kind of embedded cultural Christianity, almost that if you behave in this particular way and do this kind of thing, that whatever you suffer in this

life will be rewarded in the next. And it's always somewhere, somewhere ahead. It's a way of seeing the world that allows you to justify the things that you do now in order to achieve something better in the future. And I think that's damaging, I think that's a mistake. And I think it's so embedded in our culture for one reason or another, both :kind of historical and cultural reasons. But it's difficult to see beyond that. And the kind of solutions and problems that we see within that area tend to always fall in the same kind of stuff like it's always bad. Well, you know, if it was more access to finance or better investment or that it was easier to borrow money or the interest rates were lower or whatever, then we would be able to solve that. Rather than actually looking at the bigger situation. And the bigger situation is that maybe we don't need to do that. Maybe there's a different set of questions we need to ask ourselves, a different set of relationships we need to build. And maybe the money and the financial resources would flow in a different way if we were able to create that. And that, you know, that's a problem in one sense, but it's also an opportunity and an interesting question to say, well, how might that happen? Like, how would we explore that in different sorts of ways? What language would we use? What institutions would we contact in what sorts of ways? How might we, you know, play with that situation more creatively or more artistically or using different kinds of tools or inspiration from different cultures? And that's quite a different approach to saying, well, how can we make more money? Or how can we solve this? Does that make sense?

KJ:

Yeah, that makes sense.

Gabby:

Yeah.

KJ:

Well, that was all the questions we had.

Bente Milton

Bente:

Okay, so, good to see you! All of you!

Abby:

Yeah, you too, thanks for coming. I'm glad we could get this scheduled.

Bente:

Yeah, and I'm happy I could make it, it was only barely, but. And, and, where are you, are you in the US? No? You are in Europe, because otherwise it would be bad timing, wouldn't it?

Gabby:

Yeah, we're in Copenhagen right now.

Bente:

Yeah, I kinda thought so. And how did you get in touch with Oleg?

Gabby:

Oleg is our sponsor for a project that we're doing as part of our degree requirement, so yeah.

Bente:

Fantastic, yeah, so, and I'm very happy to collaborate with Oleg on different projects so fire away, I mean, you had some questions prepared, so I'll be ready to answer to the best of my ability.

Gabby:

That's great so I guess the first question to get out of the way is: are you okay with us recording this session?

Bente:

Sure, yeah, no problem

Gabby:

Thank you. Okay so the first question we have for you is: describe your work and goals.

Bente:

Oh, gosh, that's going to take next two hours, haha. Yeah, no, I've been working with, I guess I would call myself a change-maker, or change-leader, but originally I, my background is as a filmmaker. So, I started out producing and directing documentary films, and have done that for many years, and I'm still doing that. But then, I think about ten years ago, I produced a documentary that unfolded inside of a virtual world called Second Life, which was very new, and strange at that time. So, I discovered the power of immersive media through the making of that film, and then I've moved more into cross-platform, and trans-media storytelling, creating virtual worlds and communities online in different forms. And then I was co-founder of an initiative called the Peace Day Youth Assembly, which is an annual gathering on Youth Island,

which is a former sea fortress outside of Copenhagen, very close to the UN city of Copenhagen, so we've had events there for three years now, and are planning the next one for September 21st, the International Day of Peace. And a big one, for next year, where the UN will be meeting with all the world leaders to have this summit of the future, to discuss what's the state of the world and how, how can we get the cities implemented within the narrow timeframe available, etcetera. So, and that's very much a focus with all of my work, is sustainability and transformation into a more regenerative and thriving planet. And then of course engaging youth is also very important because it's your future that's at stake, right? Which is why I became involved in the Peace Day Youth Assembly. And now, I'm a wee busy preparing the launch of a big initiative called The New World Game, and it's inspired by an architect and futurist inventor called Buckminster Fuller, who, way back, in 1967 actually, proposed this audacious idea of engaging students and change-makers worldwide in this game where he envisioned that they would be having like a simulation of the entire planet and then you could make them collaborate and co-create with the purpose of creating a world that world for everyone, for 100% of humanity, and all of life on the planet in the shortest possible time without ecological offensive or the disadvantage of anyone, that was like his vision statement. So we're picking that up again and taking the world game into virtual reality, so we want to build, we want to visualize what the future could look like once we like implement it, the sustainable development goals and our living in a thriving future. So, it's not just a utopian fantasy, we're collaborating with a team of excellent scientists and futurists so it's based on the research of twenty-five specialists, and we also collaborated with some really cool front-running people who are building the new internet, the web through the spacial web, and they're very thrilled about this idea of also building a city of the future and inviting people to move in and become co-creators and architects of the future that we really want to see become reality. So, that's what I'm very passionate about, right now. And, just to add that's also a documentary. We are filming the whole, how this, movement evolves and we are producing, not me, but I have a producer that I am the writer and creator of this documentary portraying the birth of The New World Game. And when that's premiered we'll invite everyone, the audience, to cross the threshold to the virtual world and become co-creators of the new world. So, it's kind of a trans-media storyworld initiative.

Gabby:

Wow, that sounds really exciting, and I can't wait to see what you do.

Bente:

Yeah it's really, and I'm really passionate about everything that I do, so yeah, hmm.

Gabby:

So I guess the next question would be: why did you go into filmmaking initially?

Bente:

Oh gosh, that's also another long story, but it, it actually started with a theater project. I started out as a teacher in music and arts, and I had a group of students and we wanted to put up this theater piece about the rescue of the Danish jews, which was this dramatic story back in 1943, and in my local village here there was a very dramatic event where the Gestapo captured a group of jews who were hiding in the attic above the church, so we prepared this theater piece and played it in the church with local, with the local school kids that I was the teacher of, and with

local, sort of, non-professional actors, and then we got the best stage director in Scandinavia, some would call back then, to do the actual set-up of the play and then some actors from the Royal Theater in Denmark. So, it ended up really really like, full-house, twenty-five performances and a lot of media attention, and out of that came these people started to call me, and share their stories because they were survivors who had been in the church, or been involved with the rescue, and then I saw, “oh my gosh, we have to document these stories while these, already then, elderly people are still alive”. So, I went to Danish broadcasting and proposed a documentary about this and was lucky enough to get it funded, and that was my – And I didn’t know anything about filmmaking, but, so it was learning by doing, but of course I had a very strong story and some great characters to put in the film. That was successful, and from then on, I started my professional career as a filmmaker actually, yeah.

Gabby:

Wow, that’s great, thank you for sharing.

Bente:

Haha, yeah you’re welcome.

Gabby:

Have you done any other relating to the environment or regenerative action?

Bente:

Yeah, we had this, there’s a group of people, also local up here, who had this vision that maybe we could transform our local community. It’s a good idea to start where you are, where you live in your local community, so we actually gathered with the intention of creating a center for regenerative transformation here in Kilolei, and not just as a local center, also as like a global hub for innovation and regenerative solutions. And that kind of, it got a little bit stuck because of lack of funding, but now, and actually that’s also something I want to pull Oleg into the idea of, trying to, because it’s so important that you combine all the theories about how we want to create a new world to, with real action on land and on-site, locally. So, we’ve got a great contact who came in through the film project, because I reach out to him, he’s called Mark Buckley, because he was, I thought he was a cool guy who’s giving talks about regenerative development, and very aligned with my thoughts and ideas so I invited him to be part of, a character in the documentary, but he has then stayed and become very engaged in the whole idea of, not only the documentary and The New World Game, but also the idea of creating this center for regenerative development and, he’s got some resources to invest because he’s founder of a foundation called the Alohas Foundation for Regenerative Development and he’s co-founding of a UN initiative called Reseen’s Frontiers, it is really like a new attempt to try and collaborate across disciplines and sectors to implement solutions on a global scale. So, we are right now looking into the possibility of making that center a reality with the support of a very old first-mover in this field called Ross Jackson, who’s founder of Gia Trust, which is another big foundation, and they funded the Global Ecovillage Network, I don’t know if you’re familiar but that’s like a global network of ecovillages, really it being first-movers and not only talking bout regenerative farming and living but actually living it, and there are thousands of villages across the planet, so Ross was co-founder and founder of this network and also of Gia Education, which is an educational initiative that wants to support this, that we create this center. And, preferably in Denmark, preferably

around the farm he already have in North Zealand, there's, where they want to create a permit culture, land for new solutions. So Mark and I will be working with Ross and a circle of people that we are going to inviting, including Oleg, to have a brainstorm about how can we put our hearts and minds and resources together and make this a reality. So, yeah, sure, oh and I'm also a member of a think tank called The Club of Budapest which has been existing since 1992 focused also on transformation but more on what's the mind-shift, and the mental transformation that we also need to go through as humanity. And that's a cool club. It was founded by Ervin Laslo, who's been nominated for the world, for the peace prize, twice, so he's really, a Nobel – what do you, I don't know what you call it when you didn't win the prize but twice he's been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, and he's also fathered a fantastic group of frontrunners and co-founded a manifesto with the Dalai Lama so it's a really cool setup of people who are of sort of in the more about spiritual and psychological transformation. So, it's a very nice mixture of science and spirituality and real action on the ground, and I think it's kind of an intersection between these different entry points that the big change will happen, so yeah, I'm a busy woman! Which is why I'm running around like this and always late at meetings, but when I'm here I very much appreciate being with you guys, so yeah.

Abby:

I have, like, a side question: you said you've been running events with an organization for three years now, is that only the yearly event, or do you have events that we could, like, come to?

Bente:

Oh, and this is actually, and also what Oleg may have said about it, because I would it because this is going to grow like crazy between now and this event in 21st of September 2024, so we have, like, I don't know how many months, but a little more than year to prepare this, and we want to have regular meetings, and to pull in team of co-creators, and since you're in Copenhagen that's absolutely amazing because I thought you were, maybe in the US. So, to pull in your youth leaders from different youth organizations, we already have ISIC, which is this big big global student network, and other student organizations have been represented on the island, but we need to pull in more people, and people who have the resources education-wise and otherwise to really help us pull this together. So yeah, there's plenty of, they'll be meetings, and we're going to come together for regular meetings and have like a big planning event on 21st of September this year, that will be like sitting around the bonfire with the leaders from the different organizations and deciding ok how we can make this huge, big event happen in, in one year, in exactly one year. And what we do have is the commitment from high-level people from the UN that support the idea that the youth get, not only a voice, but like actual, actual impact on the decisions that the world leaders will make, and because it will be critical now, and with the war and with the, you know, the pandemic is over, luckily in most places, but there's also the big conflict building up, and so people almost tend to forget that the climate crisis is our biggest challenge and we need to put our resources into the transformation towards the regenerative future. So we want to put focus on that in the midst of chaos and dystopian world-views we want to be like a beam of light saying "hey, we believe in the future, and we believe in we can actually create it ourselves and that it can be bright and prosperous for all of us". So that's the whole idea with the world game, with The New World Game, to send out that message loud and clear, and then celebrate instead of having– what's going to happen in New York is all the world leaders from all the nations in the world will sit and talk, as they usually do, and then they'll, probably

Goterras, make a declaration and will stress that this is really like, “okay, we are in code red for humanity now, big changes need to happen soon”. But it will, it won’t make – change won’t happen through that. They don’t even believe it themselves, the people who are on high levels in the UN, so it's crucial that we find a new way of not only communicating the message but also engaging people in direct action in different places in the world.

So, that’s on the agenda, and we want to have this parallel thing on Youth Island, which is a small place but its kind of a beautiful epicenter, and then in the UN city, which is just a short sailing trip from Youth Island, and the UN city houses eleven different UN agencies under the same roof, so it's really like hot for the UN. And in New York City where Goterras will ring the peace bell in front of the UN building in New York, and then, in virtual reality, if we can get the funding and if everything develops the way we hope and believe then we will have – we’ll kind of open the gates to this parallel world and say, “Look, we’re already building the future, its already happening inside this game, which is not just a Utopian vision, its actually based on the collaboration of all of these scientists and people who know what are the future trends and possibilities”. So that’s the plan, that we will open the gates to the virtual world on September 21st next year. So yeah we have a constellation of partners in Copenhagen, in and around Copenhagen, and of course, the City of Copenhagen is a very important partner, and they are ambitious, they do want to achieve the goal of carbon neutrality by 2025 –they gave that up, but at least 2030, and there’s a whole initiative called Mission One Hundred Cities, which is, the EU wants to have one hundred cities in Europe becoming carbon neutral by 2030, and they’re putting a lot of money and effort and focus into that so we’ve established – oh we are in the process of establishing consortium collaboration with Copenhagen city, as an important partner, and DTU, which is the technical university in Denmark, and something called Copenhagen Solutions Lab, which is part of Copenhagen but its also like an innovation hub for using new technologies like big data and AI and how to create a smart city, and then something called Energy lab Nordhavn, its a cool collaboration between different companies trying to make the most of how you build energy, intelligent energy supply. So with this consortium of partners we also have a good chance to get the funding we need from EU, they have a program called Horizon. Its a very long process to apply, but there are, we have a strategy office in Brussels Copenhagen, an office in Brussels helping us with strategies, so I hope and trust that we’ll be able to present something fantastic next year. So, and we have the company, big now, the architect Bjarke Ingles, if you know him, if you do not, you should look him up because they’re so cool, they make all kinds of buildings around the world but Bjarke has this audacious project that he calls Plan for the Planet, and its very inspired by Buckminster Fuller’s World Game and its inspired by the idea of creating a plan for the hole planet because that’s really what we need. And then, the EU has a plan also, called the Destination Earth, and its similar. They want to make a simulation of the whole earth and find out how do we make the most of – how do we cure energy supply and how do we deal with all the challenges in a systemic – from a whole-systems perspective and how can we use new technologies like AI and big data in a constructive way and ensure security and all of that. So there’s this like – and Micauge Veste, the Danish commissioner that’s really a front-runner in this, so its funny that we have people in this – an energy around Copenhagen and Denmark right now, a momentum that we can hope – that we can make the most of right now. And especially with the help of young youngsters like yourselves, so I’m hoping that we can, that I can, pull you in and say, “great, we can – what could you possibly bring to the table?” And Oleg, with his Center for Regenerative Transformation and they’re also involved with the guy called David Gashaun, who has a really

cool initiative called Cool City Challenge and its all about, sort of, inspiring and engaging people to become change-makers on very very local and tangible levels, so how – what can we do in Denmark and, there's a whole system how you knock on doors and you get the neighbors all engaged and then it extends to be the whole street, and then maybe the whole city district and then the whole city and then all of the cities and the whole world, which is the ambition David Gashaun has for this initiative. So you can look it up, he's also a cool guy with great connections and very, very, very dedicated to this mission. So Cool City Challenge will also be in Copenhagen and Oleg and Krista from the Action University are taking lead on, you know, implementing – finding some city districts, some streets and blocks in and around Copenhagen, we can run this, or test, and start this implementation.

KJ:

Alright, okay, so, for our next question: how would you say you specifically have made a difference in your community or in Copenhagen and do you have any specific examples you would like to share?

Bente:

Yeah, actually, in my local community here, its the library that has become the – where we – so we have something called Climate Cafe at the local library, the library down here, and what we're planning now is, not only that they're gathering garbage, that's been going on for some years, but we're also creating artworks and exhibitions focused on transformation. And now, there's the old – the tree at the train station that's like a club for youngsters, but the whole ground has been polluted because of the, you know, trains coming in and out, so now there's like a community project – how can we transform this area around the train station and how can we engage the youngsters from young – the clubs in this work, and with the support from the municipality and some foundations. We hope that we can turn it into a green park, clean enough to grow our own vegetables there, so that's one initiative. And then there's another initiative at a farm where we're trying to implement like a community farming setup so that you can go there and help with the big stuff, you know, there will be a farmer with all the right tools and supplies there but otherwise its the community members support each other in maintaining and growing the vegetables and the food there, and then you can just go and harvest if you are a member of that club, you pay something, but its much less than what you have to pay buying the vegetables in the local supermarket. And the local supermarket, which is super important, is also involved in this idea of taking stuff that's been grown locally instead of – yeah, so they are also slowly, but surely, shifting into this idea of more sustainable – and using the communities typically. So I'm going to have a big party there, maybe this week, to meet with the head of this department of supermarkets and members of the community – what's going to be the future of how we run this supermarket, because its actually owned by them, and I'm also an owner; I have a share in Poonsim, co-op, that's also the name, actually, co-op, because its a cooperative and we are all owners so we can all decide to make more regenerative, and that's definitely on the agenda. And yeah, I'm also active in my local community where I live with my youngest son and my little dog and then I have four young adult children who are – and some grandchildren, and my mother, and we all kind of live nearby each other – my sister, and my cousin as well. Its kind of a family – its a very lovely village up here, in Kilolei.

KJ:

Sounds great. So, next question: how would you say your work relates to art and culture regarding, like, this idea of a regenerative paradigm, and how important do you see your art and culture in an idea of regenerative practice?

Bente:

Like, really really important. Because – and that kind of actually, you know, the traditional approach is to – its all about, you know, giving speeches and putting out data and PCC reports, its not getting through this barrier people have with this. So I very much believe in story-telling of course, but in many different forms. So, music and art and creative expressions, and also this idea of creating something – creating the vision, if you could see it and believe it then you can make it happen. Right. So it's about visualizing in different forms. So there are two interesting collaborations around that. One is there's a music initiative called no music on a dead planet. I don't know if you're familiar with that. But it's 1000s of musicians and some very high profile ones among them, who are stepping up now to use music as a tool for transformation and their peak creatives, you know, many different and that's part of, we call it the solar punk movement. So if you're unfamiliar with what solar punk is, it's – I didn't know about it until recently, but I realized that I've been a solar punk I think, for the past decades, but it's Cyberpunk is very sort of, it's the type of dystopian vision of of take what technology can do to humanity in nature. So kind of as an alternative to the cyber punk idea. There's the solar punk idea, which is solar, and wind, and the design science and creativity, if you're actually able, if you use it, if you use all of the tools we have for the greater good you can create the future you want. And it's a lot of artists, and cultural creatives from different creative corners who are coming together. And yeah, then I can give you a whole list of people. I have a list that I want to reach out to these artists and get them engaged in this event next year. And we have to invite them now because some of them are really, really sought after but I do believe that they will respond to the call that we want to send out. One example and I can speak forever but beyond view and actually use Oh, look at this concert. It's happening tonight Danish time in a place called Vana to where because the United Nations are meeting to discuss a climate plan for this area that's been hoped there was a big typhoon. And it's been struck by a hurricane, it's really under pressure because of climate change. And beyond delivery, who was on youth Island last year, to give a concert there for the small group of youngsters, we had 250 Youngsters on the island, but he gave a concert called music in space with connected to a weather balloon. And then you can look at Planet Earth, seen from space. And there are statements by astronauts who have been out there and experience what this overview effect is all about. So beyond that one is one of the sort of fellows in the planning group. And he's right now giving this concert. So usually I can see a link and if not you, you look at the loo on Facebook and everywhere else is trying to make it visible, which is hard. But Jane Fonda stepped in to help and support him. So they again fund them right now trying to call to the attention of the world. And I am with people like that, because Jane Fonda, although she's a very old lady, now I think 85. She was the Hollywood actress and very well connected to loads of celebrities that we could pull in. Yeah, so that's the plan to pull in as many celebrities and high profile change leaders as we can and invite them to the party next year. So that we can make it a big bang, loud enough for people to hear and react to it. Right. So yeah, so my answer to your question is, it's crucial. It's important. I mean, art and culture, it's a language that crosses borders in a way that nothing else can. And hopefully, we can overcome our differences through music and art and cultural expressions.

Abby:

Yeah, definitely.

Bente:

I wanted something actually sorry, because mentioned here is that we will collaborate or are collaborating with an organization called Masterpiece, like Master, and then please like in P AC masterpiece, and it's youth organization with clubs and I think 45 countries across the planet. And what they organized in connection with our youth Peace Day Youth Assembly celebration last year was rooftop concerts, and I think they had around 200 bands and music groups and choirs in different parts of the planet playing simultaneously, to again, mark this day of international peace. So they are also very much tuned into how can we empower and engage people through music and art and culture. And they're very involved in this whole world game thing because the main character in the documentary is Ragdale Halloweenie, who's hitting masterpiece and she will be, she will be embarking on a journey from the pyramids in Giza where as he was born to a mountain in Texas where a huge clock is under construction, create it's like it's called the clock of the long now that was Brian Eno, the musician who coined that name. It was the brainchild of a friend of mine called Danny Hillis, who's a computer scientist, inventor of the first supercomputers and loads of cool stuff. But now he's building this a monumental size mechanical clock that's designed to keep time for the next 10,000 years and designed to make us think about, you know, the future and are we being good ancestors? Or will we be here? Or will it just be the clock still ticking in 10,000 years? So it's really designed to sort of create awareness of long term responsibility. And the funny thing in the story is that the guy who stepped in to fund this project because it was like a crazy idea for years, but that's the thesis who's like the, I guess the richest guy on the planet. So we've designed the documentary like a hero's journey, where rather than embarks on the, on this journey, see collects fellows like a fellowship. And Mark Buckley was the first one to step up and now we have we have a whole group of influence to people who are supporting references like the puppet, taking on like in Lord of the Rings, and then she's gonna go to the cave to the mountain inside the cave where the clock is is the dragon with the, you know, with all the goals. And he is the target, he wants to approach the Deaf pieces and invite him to support this initiative. And to make sure that all the young digital natives get the funding they need to build the game. So. So that's the documentary. It's kind of just following whether she will succeed or not, we don't know. But in any case, it's an exciting story and a fascinating journey. Right? So. So that's masterpiece and rakta, and the US is all of these youngsters, and then there's Steve pieces, and the guys from Silicon Valley. And they also want to save the planet. I mean, I can really, they are also human beings and fathers with children and some a few mothers, but most of them are men. But so they are also serious about doing something about it. Maybe they just don't know how. So I trust that we can create a very strong alliance with the technology, front running scientists and artists and cultural creatives in their – in a beautiful, strong alliance together to save the planet or no, no, the planet will be fine. It's actually to save humanity. And the future, right?

KJ:

Yeah. So what direction do you see yourself moving? And you're definitely part of like, a lot of like, it seems like you're part of a lot of different organizations, where do you see yourself? Where do you where do you see yourself moving? I guess you could say, yeah.

Bente:

Yeah, no, it's a very good question. Because there is a lot of initiatives. And when I tried to describe what I'm, you know, I usually say I'm like a Spider Woman with eight legs, one in different and there's this whole spider web. But there's also another actually, the theory of change that I'm very inspired by, is inspired by what happens with a caterpillar. At a certain point, when it's been eating and eating and growing to the limit, it can't grow any further. And then it starts to kind of detour it. But inside the tolerating body of the caterpillar is small, new and different kinds of cells called imaginal cells. And this is really true, nobody, it's a big mystery how, how it happens, but they somehow have the signal or the idea that they want to build something else not you know, continue business as usual with the caterpillar, they want to create something new, and in the beginning, they are few in numbers and vulnerable, so they get kick killed by the immune system of the caterpillar, but they keep popping up and then they start to form little clusters where they they stick together. And at some point, the clusters start to communicate with each other sending signals so you know, I imagine you're like hey, we're going to build something else do you can you envision this animal with wings and colors and, and they can see it, they are the imaginal cells and because they can see they start to build it and then they use the sort of the juice from the old Caterpillar so it's not like killing the caterpillar, they're actually taking the juice from the and the nutrition from the caterpillar to build the new creature. And out of this chrysalis out of this process comes a whole new animal. It I mean, there's nothing similar between a caterpillar and a butterfly. And it also it's also able to move into a new dimension, the caterpillar can only crawl in, you know, four directions on the floor or maybe crawl up in a plant, but it doesn't have the ability to fly. But the butterfly has. So like Buckminster Fuller, my great source of inspiration once said, There's nothing and a caterpillar that knows it's going to be a butterfly, but there is this, something strange that happens. And I feel that I'm part of this network. And that the internet is helping us to communicate and talk to other, you know, imaginal cells across the planet, and to organize, to design actually, what is it that we want to build and then to start building it in real reality? So that's the theory of change. So if you can imagine this huge network and very much helped by the new technology, the internet, and now we can step through the screen and meet up in virtual reality where we have a three dimensional space to move and co-create and soon and I believe sooner than we, we tend to trust and believe I think the change is going to happen very quickly, you can see it now with artificial intelligence and everything else, it's speeding up. And it's this Moore's law with, you know, that way, it's the, it evolves in with an exponential speed. So when you arrive at the knee of the curve, things start to speed up really, really quickly. And we are right at this knee of the curve now, according to all of these clever hit sites, futurists. Yeah, so and just for fun, as a final remark, it's all about learning, getting back to nature, reconnecting with nature, understanding that we are part of this interconnected, natural system. So if we fight with each other, it's like an organ not missing being, you know, at war with itself. It's doomed to die, right? It's so we have to understand that we are part of this living system and start to cooperate, and in a symbiosis with the living nature, we have which we are apart. And as a solar punk, I believe that technology, if we use it wisely, is our best chance. Like, when we got the first knife, out of a stone, you could use it to stamp your enemy or or you could use it to chop woods and create fire and start to build a village. So it's all about how we use technology. And we do it in a conscious and responsible way. Which is what the whole Solar punk idea is about, right?

Nana Francisca Schottländer

Abby:

Would you mind if we record the zoom?

Nana Francisca:

Okay.

Abby:

We could just record the audio if that works better.

Nana Francisca:

Okay that's great.

Abby:

Yeah. I'll just record the audio. All right. Perfect. So, yeah. Thank you again for meeting with us today. I'll let Gabby start with some, some questions that we have.

Nana Francisca:

Sure.

Gabby:

So we just have a couple of questions and you can answer them as short or as long as you need to. So our first question would be: describe your work and your goals.

Nana Francisca:

Haha. Okay. My work exists in a cross section or an intersection between performance, choreography, installation. And it has a lot of hybrid formats or outcomes depending on the project, and depending on the sort of the iteration. I usually work in long term research processes with quite a few manifestations along the way. And each manifestation is both the outcome of previous research and a sort of laboratory for conducting new research within a certain field. So, yeah, I show my work in installations and performances in exhibitions and video work in text, and photography, and objects, and sculptures.

And one thing that connects it all is that my beginning point is the body, my own body. I come from a background in dance. So, my own body is a tool for exploring and, and gathering new knowledge. Embodied knowledge. So my research is often theoretical or academic. And then accompanied with embodied research, which fills out the more intellectual insights or knowledge with physically experienced insights that then feed back into the theoretical or intellectual. So, it's sort of a feedback loop between theoretic research and embodied research and how these two develop new knowledge and anchors that knowledge in other ways of being in the world.

Gabby:

Great, thank you for sharing. Our next question is: what made you enter this field?

Nana Francisca:

Well, I think you asked me about my goals and I think my goals develop alongside my own realizations as I work in this way. So I guess, like, deep down, I'm driven by a goal to change the world, but in which form comes out of my own explorations and discoveries as I work. And my way into this field came from working quite extensively with the collaborative, participatory, immersive formats of performance that involved other humans. And I was very interested in and intrigued by creating situations that explored human conditions from different angles.

And then at one point, I felt a bit fed up with focusing so much on the human condition and human emotions and human stories and human interactions, and I had this intuitive need to try and use some of these co-creative approaches or ways of creating in dialogue with something other than human. So this was a very intuitive journey into first exploring collaborations with rocks and how meeting them as a human body and trying to understand them as mineral bodies, how that changed my ways of moving or of understanding choreography, or intimacy, or dialogue even.

And then from there, my focus sort of also through quite haphazard coincidences, became, trying to work with, like, larger geographical areas and to try and find ways to co-create with these areas in their inherent phenomena and beings. In a, how do you say, egalitarian way or in a, in a mutual dialogue. So I wanted to make it not about me as a human being doing something in these landscapes or with these materials or entities, but I wanted to see how I as a human being and a human body could *meet* these places and what was there, and then for something to arise from that meeting that was not about me, that was not only about the landscape, but was something coming together from our encounter. And that's kind of been my focus point ever since, but in each project, this is developed in new ways depending on where, and with what, and working and with what themes of this particular place, or material, or dynamic calls for, yeah.

Gabby:

Have you done any other work relating to the environment or regenerative action?

Nana Francisca:

Besides what we did together?

Gabby:

Yeah.

Nana Francisca:

Yes, a lot. This has been the focus of my work for the past seven years. So, yeah. I've done a lot of work circling around this and also formulating this for myself, getting closer and closer to formulating that. What I'm curious about is mutually restorative and caring encounters between humans, and more than humans, or, the more than human.

Gabby:

How does your work relate to the bigger picture of climate change, sustainability and regenerative action?

Nana Francisca:

Well, I think it relates quite strongly to it, but it even started developing before, that was such, how do you say, present discussions as it is now. So I think it's sort of developed alongside the discourse that we have now. And it didn't start from that point of view. It didn't start from a, how do you say, like a conceptual point of view wanting to relate to these things. It started from a deeply personal, intuitive urge to try and address what it means to be a human existing on equal terms with something other than human.

Gabby:

Okay, great. I think KJ can just take it from here. Thank you so much.

KJ:

Yeah, definitely. Sorry, my computer was about to die, so I had to plug it in. Anyways, how have you made a difference in your community, local community, or in Copenhagen? And do you have any concrete examples you want to share?

Nana Francisca:

Well, yeah, I mean, I hope that each time I meet people or my work meets people that it will reverberate or resonate within them and create other ways, maybe even just in small ways, but other ways of experiencing oneself in and with the world. I know for a fact that my work has inspired a lot of artists and a sort of artistic, how do you say trajectory, within the time now in Denmark. I hope that my work also resonates within the place, the places where I work. I guess one example I can give is last year in May, I did a performance project for the festival Bloom, which happens in Copenhagen every May. And if you're here, you should definitely go to it. The festival is for science and nature, and they have a quite strong music and arts program as well. And they invited me to do a performance, based on a project I did two years ago, which involved taking people out into this very particular landscape, which is the soil repository, which is a man made landscape. So based on their experience with this work, they wanted me to do a work for the festival. The festival takes place in a park in Copenhagen, which is a very domesticated area full of people and festival tents and talks and concerts. And I found it quite challenging to figure out how to create an immersive experience of really communicating with the land and the

entities living there in the midst of this festival craziness. But, in the park in Sonomag, there is one place where they have left a very big stinging nettle shrub, I guess it's called, a large area where the stinging nettles are free to grow, which is quite extraordinary when you think of this park being very well organized and taken care of and meticulously shaped. But these nettles sort of have their own habitat there. Luckily, I was allowed to do the performance in this nettle shrub, so the whole performance became a journey into intimate encounters with the nettles, based on research that I had done with the other performers and the video photographer and the composer during two months leading up to the performance.

My deep determination for this project was that it would be restorative for me, because I was on the verge of a stress meltdown as I entered it, but also for everybody involved with it. So my two assistants, the two other performers, the composer, the photographer, but also I wanted it to be restorative for all the people who would experience it, and for the area where we were working, the nettle shrub. So a big part of the performance also became: How do we meet these nettles? How do we learn from them? How do we allow them to choreograph our bodies? How do we understand their way of being in the world? How do we communicate with them? And how do we get back to them? So one part of the performance was also that the participants had to donate their own urine to mix together with water to become this gold water that we would then give back to the nettles. But we would also give it in little 100 milliliter bottles alongside a little envelope with nettle seeds that each participant would take with them after going through this journey, so that they could plant the nettle seeds and feed them the gold water in a place where they saw fit the nettles to grow. So this was also a way of sort of saying how can the performance as a format become a way of regenerating or restoring the relationship to this plant and their onward life from there.

KJ:

So considering all the amazing work you do, how important would you say that art and culture is overall in regenerative practice?

Nana Francisca:

Well, I think it depends on what kind of art and culture, and how art and culture tries to address these topics, because I don't think art and culture in themselves are necessarily very conducive to restoring our way of being in the world. If they just go along the same production logics and consumption logics and basic capitalist structures of the society that we know, then they will not be able to do that.

But I think arts and culture have a strong potential in creating platforms for new ways of experiencing ourselves and our surroundings. And I think that these embodied experiences sometimes have a bigger impact in changing our ways of being in the world than just intellectual or information input which sometimes we know it all but it leaves us unable to act in different ways, and frustrated, and depressed. And I think these embodied experiences of connectedness

and of understanding the life of other than humans calibrates our way of understanding ourselves and our place in the world.

KJ:

I see. So how did your Going Visiting event contribute to the regenerative paradigm overall?

Nana Francisca:

So going visiting is a workshop that I've conducted quite many times. In very different settings and with different people. My experience is that this very, I guess, meditative and sensitive or sensuous way of exploring our surroundings opens for new perceptions, or new perspectives and layers them in the bodies of the participants. So in my experience, not all sessions, sometimes it doesn't work and I'm still trying to understand why that is. But when it does work, I find that people are energized, they are curious, and they have profound insights into these relations between us as humans and our surroundings through these workshops. I think that makes a difference and I think also like when I work with other artists in these workshops, they always come up with something that inspires them greatly to do work revolving around what they experienced during the workshop.

KJ:

Interesting. So with all this being said, what direction do you see yourself moving in?

Nana Francisca:

Direction? I mean, that's a good question. I think, yeah, I mean, it's definitely a question I'm asking myself, also. I think with the fact that this is something we, as a big part of the world, are addressing and discussing now, this is definitely what I wanted. I also sometimes feel that there are so many people addressing it now that it almost feels redundant, what I do. So I'm definitely questioning how I can keep deepening my roots into the soil of my own, what I find urgent to address, and then to see what formats and what ways of working come from that. And I'm not quite sure, but I do see that my work is getting more and more popular, and that's a great thing, but I also see that I'm at risk of falling into the trap of consumption production modes that I actually do not agree with. So, I really try to stay alert as to how I can stay true to these values or beliefs in the ways I create and produce my own work.

KJ:

All right, so our last question we have for you is, what are some obstacles or limitations that you face through your work?

Nana Francisca:

I think time is a big obstacle. The kind of work I do actually requires a lot of time and often a lot of time doesn't mean the same thing to institutions and to people who would like to present my work as it does to me.

I prefer to stay a long time in a place to understand it and to understand what is at stake here and what is meaningful to address here, and how can I be part of doing that. But I find that the ways I'm invited to work, it doesn't work like that. And also with time comes the question of money, because if I want to spend one year just focusing on one particular place, then who is going to finance that?

And, another obstacle that comes is family and close relations because I often travel with my work and now I travel around Europe quite a lot, which is super interesting and I feel very fortunate to be able to do this. But at the same time the obstacle of being connected to other people, and children, and partner here in Denmark means that I cannot just take all the time in the world in another place to truly immerse myself for a long period of time. I think time, money and relations are the biggest obstacles.

KJ:

So that's all the questions we have. Thank you so much.

Matias Katejavaara Seidler

KJ:

We do have permission to record this, correct?

Matias:

Yes.

KJ:

Awesome. Thank you so much. All right. So do you mind if we get started with our questions?

Matias:

No.

KJ:

All right. So, for the first question we have for you is: describe your work and goals.

Matias:

Well, I'm a partner at Khora. So we work with VR and AR. So exciting technologies. And I think what's really important to us is to recognize that we're in the midst of a media revolution, you could say, you know, at some point we had Gutenberg's press so that we could make books and we had photography, which means we could take still pictures. And then we had moving pictures, which meant that we could make movies. And what characterizes the rise of virtual reality is that suddenly, media can become spaces. It becomes spatial, right? So media or piece of content is actually spatial and it's something that you can walk around inside, right? And the fact that media becomes three dimensional has a massive impact on our – on media's ability to move people, to affect people, and to become experiences that people can take stuff away from. So it has a big impact on our ability to learn, and our ability to retain whatever we are exposed to. And so those are kind of the fundamentals of what we are working with. And that has a massive transfer effect, you know, environmental education on any type of education, our cultural experiences and so on. And so my focus is broadly and humbly to explore the potential of what virtual reality and augmented reality can do for a broad range of sectors. And I specifically work primarily with education on culture. So my goal is, I mean, my, what I really care about and what motivates me is to, is to create collaborations that can create again experiences that affect people deeply, especially about things that matter, such as the ecological collapse, such as our heritage, you know, where we come from, where, where are we heading? And how do we, how do we care about the world, right? So my goal is to create media and that enables us to care about stuff and stuff that's important, of course, is ourselves, our relationships to each other. And then again, our relationship to the world that inhabit.

KJ:

Great. Awesome to hear. Next question: what made you enter this field?

Matias:

I studied philosophy and graduated 10 years ago. And I've always been interested in the intersection between perception and the big philosophical questions and then the way that

technologies can enable new ways of experiencing and being in the world. And so working with a lot of radio, community building, and for me, it was totally natural to start working with immersion, because I think VR is one of the most powerful technological means we have of all touring perceptions and ways of experiencing the world.

KJ:

That's great to hear. Next question: have you done any other work relating to the environment or this idea of regenerative action?

Matias:

I've done several things. All I can I made are learning prototype where we combine what you call site sensitization, so the ability to go somewhere and actually open your awareness to what's happening in a certain site and combining that modality, which you could call the most analog immersion in the real world with digital virtual immersion in different where we show people, you know, the consequences of environmental catastrophe could be famine, could be glaciers melting, could be pollution in an Indian city, and then we try to find out how that how those two exposure modalities affect our ability to understand complexity and our ability to again care about the world. So yes, I haven't started but more in the terms of trying to understand how VR fundamentally can enable learning about climate change and the climate situation that we face.

KJ:

All right, great to hear. So going off of that, how does your work relate to the bigger picture of climate change, sustainability, and regenerative action?

Matias:

What does regenerative action mean in your vocabulary?

KJ:

So in our vocabulary, regenerative action is seen as a step above sustainability. Instead of trying to meet the baseline with sustainability, it's trying to go above and beyond and trying to push these sustainable ideas so that instead of just being equal, they're creating more regenerative situations.

Matias:

And so what was the question?

KJ:

The question was: going off of what you said beforehand, how does your work relate to the bigger picture of climate change, sustainability, and regenerative action?

Matias:

I think it's, you know, when you look at sustainability, there are a lot of organizations and people and actors and actions out there seeking to reduce emissions, right? The emissions impact of activities, of travel, of what we bring, how we have meetings and so on. But I think what I'm interested in is more working on the effective layers, right? So enabling people to fundamentally care about the surroundings in the world, which I think is a step above and beyond sustainability.

I think this sustainability paradigm suffers from not very necessary, but also very engineerish and experimental way of approaching the matter. So you have scientists measuring stuff, right? But fundamentally we are, I think if you have to characterize what it means to be a person, something fundamental is that we care about the world, right? We understand ourselves as beings who have relationship to other beings who like and dislike stuff about the world. And so I think this, you know, being able to, you know, to transport people to places using virtual reality to meet a flora and fauna that they're not used to meeting, that can enable a care far and above the world, which again can trigger sustainable and regenerative transformative actions, right? So exposing someone to – a bad example could be a rainforest, full of beautiful flora and fauna. If we can expose them to that and deploy a narrative that makes them care about it in certain ways, then my hypothesis would be that that caring form that has been enabled translates into lots of downstream sustainable actions. And I think working in that layer is more interesting than working out purely engineering emissions focused way.

KJ:

Great to hear. So I'm going to pass this off to Gabby who's going to ask you a few more questions.

Gabby:

So our next question is, how have you made a difference in your community or in Copenhagen and do you have any examples of this?

Matias:

Not really. I think one of the learning prototype and all the participants we had had an effect was very obvious to me that people were pretty mind-blown and wanted to keep having meetings and discuss the different possibilities. Again, the problem is that we're not really an educationally oriented organization at core. We are very much focused on media production and content production. So we do large one-off experiences and we're not through the process oriented, which means that we don't necessarily have the time needed that we can dedicate in house towards large learning programs. People who can sit one-on-one with students with learning designers to drive those processes. Ideally, we would need funding to create content for other people to use in educational contexts around virtual immersion and what you could call regenerative awareness. But not many concrete examples. We've done various ecologically focused projects with the Danish Conservation Society, Denmark's natural funding spending, where we took a container and inside the container there was a VR headset and in the VR headset you were trying to pop it back in time to a pristine forest environment and then we took that container and put it in various cities and towns in Denmark to enable again this kind of transition where you can have virtual nature in and open landscape.

Gabby:

So I know you talked about a lot about the VR virtual immersion and that can kind of be considered an art in itself, but how does your work relate art and culture to sustainable or regenerative paradigm, and how important do you think art and culture is in this regenerative practice?

Matias:

I think it's – I think art and culture is completely fundamental, right? Because now we have – I think you could say that we have suffered from kind of a crisis of the imagination, a crisis of culture. Very few people have the ability to anticipate and to imagine the various future scenarios that we are headed towards given our ecological collapse and I think it's the purpose of art and culture to give us meaning, right? To give us ideologies to enable us to understand our heritage and our heritage is basically – our future heritage is what's disappearing right so art and culture should infuse us with new abilities and new feelings about what it means to be heading towards these various futures that we might be heading towards and I think it's not it's the you know you could say that the politicians should be doing so as well but politicians today ordinarily work more as managers, right, as bureaucrats then you have the engineers who who talked about this before they will be doing the minutiae, the forecasting, the measuring but it's really the artists and the people working within the cultural industry who has both the job and the wherewithal to shape our feelings and shape our visions and ideas about who we are and where we're heading so I think the relationship between art and culture and then the regenerative paradigm is absolutely fundamental.

Gabby:

Okay great. What direction do you see yourself moving in in your work?

Matias:

I'm not sure but more more of the good stuff that I'm outlining to you I hope but I hope that I know something I'm really interested in as you know thinking about the role of art and culture I try to find discover or create myself more transnational collaborative projects where the focus is to have artists and cultural people in residencies together with scientists and engineers, scientists and engineers who understand a lot about a certain problem but they necessarily have their own creative skills and then to couple them with creators with artists who actually have the ability to creatively storytelling to have a sense of aesthetics and then to combine the various capacities in such a residency to produce new artworks for example. I think that's something I'm very interested in seeing more of.

Gabby:

Great, thank you. Our last question we have for you is: what are some obstacles or limitations you have faced for your work?

Matias:

So I work with virtual reality and digital immersion primarily so one massive obstacle is that no not everyone has a virtual headset or VR headset that more and more people do but it's not gonna take three years it's probably gonna take ten years until at least the western population has a sufficient number of of headsets to talk about the same type of distribution as you do with you know mobile phones or on Netflix and so on. I think another obstacle is that for the same reason not many institutions and organizations have a lot of experience in, you know, installing VR experiences in their institution at their organization so it's not necessarily something that the majority of employees are very comfortable doing yet so those are just fundamental obstacles to working with new media.

Gabby:

Great, thank you so much.

Livia:

So thank you for taking this time to meet with us. It's always really interesting to hear about what people do and it'll be really helpful for our report.

Becoming Species – Linh Le and Tanya Montan Rydell

Abby:

Would you mind if we record this interview, just the audio?

Linh

No, it's okay.

Tanya:

That's okay.

Abby:

Okay, perfect. Great, thank you.

Gabby:

Okay, so our first question we have for you is describe your work and your goals.

Linh:

And our goals?

Tanya:

Hmm, yeah, go for it.

Linh:

So we work with Becoming Species as a way to amplify the multitude of life. And we think that this is important. We are motivated to do this kind of work because we are in a climate and biodiversity crisis where the human species is dominating the world. And that's why we think it's important to our goal is also to amplify.

Tanya:

Yeah, and kind of to... Or I believe I think it's also very Becoming Species philosophy that's like changing your perspective to that of other species can give you a different way of looking at the world in a way and actually also create empathy. So it's a lot about also creating empathy with other species, right?

Linh:

Yes, exactly.

Tanya:

Yeah. So that's what I feel like...

Gabby:

Our next question is what made you enter this field?

Linh:

Hmm, yeah. Well, for me it was doing Corona times where I spent so much time in nature and also like when everything was closed, like, okay, what actually brings value to my life. And then I contacted a friend of mine who was working in Extinction Rebellion and said that what I can do is because I'm also a performance artist and dancer besides being in Becoming Species. So for me to contribute is... I can make art or I can dance. And so I asked her if she wanted to combine these two fields? Activism and performance? So it's actually because of... Yeah, it just made me think of what brings value in my life. When business as usual has stopped everything has stopped and what do we then do? And what do we like to do. To me it was definitely finding peace and fun and life quality in being with nature and...

Tanya:

Yeah, I'm a quite new member of becoming species. I became interested in kind of working – I am a dance artist as well. So I got this interest in working with places and nature and things in that area two or three years ago. And then I think I saw something with Becoming Species. I asked if I could join. It was not possible at that time. But then I went into Extinction Rebellion instead and became an activist or started doing activist work if you can call it that. And then at some point it was like, okay, now we need more species or we need more members in Becoming Species. So then I also joined that.

Linh:

And also you already had that interest in more than human...

Tanya:

Exactly. Also, yeah.

Gabby:

Thank you for sharing. Have you done any other work besides becoming species? I don't know, Extinction Rebellion, maybe that falls into the category. Any other work relating to sustainability or the environment or regenerative action?

Linh and Tanya:

Yeah, yeah.

Tanya:

Yeah, I think you said as well for me. It also makes a lot of sense to work with what I know as an activist. And also for me, artistic elements in direct action. It gives a different perspective and it gives people who are passing by and this is just my experience. It creates a different atmosphere around whatever is going on. So for me, it just made very much sense to continue working with artistic elements in direct actions. And it's also now influencing what I do as a dance artist. Was that answer to the question?

Gabby:

Okay, have you done any other work relating to environmentalism?

Linh:

It depends on also what we see as work. For me, it's also an everyday practice. For instance, I like to meditate. I like to go for walks. I like to collect things. I like to just spend time with concrete materials. And can also just be now feeling the wind. So it's more like a way of being instead of having a goal that I have to go there. I open my senses, awareness, you can say, towards these kinds of elements that are always with us, in us, surrounding us. So in that way, it's more an everyday practice of being aware to the ecosystems. And I also really think that the word sustainability can also be very used in a way that can be commercialized. It can be like a buzzword. What does it even mean? It's sustainable. To me, it's actually sustaining life. Like we have time. So also just being to be. And how do we have time to just be in this world? To me that there's fresh air. There's clean water. There's all these basic things. We have some peace, not too much noise, because otherwise maybe we can get a stir, we can't sleep or not have too much stress. Like how can you sustain life actually? Not just all life, human life, but also other species life.

Gabby:

Great. How does your work in becoming species relate to the bigger picture of climate change, sustainability and regenerative action? How does it kind of play a role?

Tanya:

With the risk of repeating myself, but it is really this, like Linh was saying in the beginning, we have a very human centered perspective in our society at the moment. And to start switching our perspectives and considering us as part of a much larger ecosystem, for me, makes a lot of sense and contributes in a very local way to try to change our way of building the society, maybe you could say.

Linh:

Also I think that we have reached to the point where it's no more a choice. It's actually a necessity. Because what are the living criteria for us to sustain ourselves or to live in this world? It is to have a healthy planet and we haven't had that for many, many years now. So it is a necessity to act. And I think that we combined art, because art can give you a greater sensibility. It opens up the senses. It opens up the heart also like you become more vulnerable, but in a strong way. Because you are sensitive towards all these impressions, but also because you open yourself towards it. And that's what art can do. It can also challenge some ideas. It can open up the ideas for discussions. And then combining with direct action is like demanding some things. We have reached a point where we need to demand some things otherwise it won't happen. Because if it were happening then the politician would already have made some drastic solutions that actually we actually see the missions going down, but it's not. So direct action is necessary. At the same time working with, you can say, a soft activism. So it's not like using their methods where it's always like pushing, pushing, but maybe more like we think this way and we sit down or we are soft in a way of expressions. But I also believe that that's also where we need to strive towards more too. A more mothering, more what can you say caring. Also kind of way of practice. And to us doing this kind of craft work, which is very related to the women, feminine work, it's something that it's a gentle and peaceful way of building and constructing where the space for dialogue can talk about you doing this thing so many people can do it together. I think there's a need for that.

Tanya:

Also in terms of Becoming Species is very based. If you can call it methods that are used, it's very based on play, games. Of course I don't have the anatomy of a frog, but I can pretend that I'm a frog. And of course it looks like a little kid playing, but why is that reserved for kids? So this playful and being together, having fun together is in itself very regenerative as well.

Linh:

And imagining also, like always how can you say practice in imagining. Because through imagination, this is also where we can change things. And you don't need to be say an artist to do it. Everyone who has that great imagination, then you can also visualize another kind of world. I think it's also that we need to see the possibilities in other kinds of worlds.

Livia:

Awesome. Thank you. Our next question, so I know you talked a bit about the work that you're doing and how it's contributing. Do you have any specific programs or events that you believe made an impact in your community that you'd like to share?

Tanya:

In which way, events?

Livia:

Like any programs through Becoming Species, any performances or anything that made an impact.

Linh:

The one in the city hall after that, we got so good feedback on this.

Tanya:

Yeah, we invaded, it was in October 2021. We invaded the municipality building here in Copenhagen as different species. And taking over the office of environments and technique. Yeah.

Linh: Mia. The Mia. Exactly.

Tanya:

So just to kind of, because there has been a big cause in a nature area close to here, actually. Which has a really rich biodiversity that they know.

Abby:

Amager Fælled. We've walked through there and learned about that.

Tanya:

Exactly. So as a kind of protest against this construction that they want to do there, we invaded the municipality building as different species. Asking out loud also. Like, can we live here? Is there space for us here? And then.

Linh:

We were wearing masks.

Abby:

Yeah. We saw that in your book. Yeah, it was really interesting.

Linh:

So it was like, I had banners saying stop building on wild nature. And we just had our masks. And then you could see a frog or a bird sitting on an office typing on the keyboard and us crawling around and flying around. And then we also had an owl playing the violin. So it also created atmosphere. Deescalating atmosphere because there was some classical music. So at the same time it seems it was very humoristic and absurd. But also very serious. Because that made a great impact on many people and it came all over the news.

Tanya:

And there were also very dramatic pictures. I mean, you have these species where basically we were refusing then in the end. When the police came and asked us to leave, we refused. So we stayed just sitting there. So of course it became some very dramatic images of police dragging away flowers and frogs and birds. So those images were very strong as well. Yeah.

Linh:

And also because it also shows what's actually happening for us is always to show what is actually happening. And this that is the authority in destroying wild nature. We're just amplifying what is already happening through our performances.

Livia:

Thank you for sharing that. So our next question is about the nesting event specifically. Can you just talk a little bit more about the event, the motivations behind it and what it's contributing?

Tanya:

Do you want to?

Linh:

Yeah. I always have something to say. I don't want to do all the talking, please. Okay. So the idea is that first what we talked about was, okay, what do we think about a bird? What are the first associations. And it's something about building an nest, but also the wings. Like they can fly. And flying is also associated with freedom. So we work with that. So it's not like how can you say very rational to begin with. And also we want to create a space where now it's also located in this area. We want to create a space where we actually invite the local people to create something and not having too much... clear ideas on how to make a nest. But it's something we find out together. And we say we have some...

[Linh talks to someone else in Danish]

That was also one of the climate justice fighters on Amager Faelled. We know each other from that area. So it's not to have clear ideas on how to plan this, but it's something we find out

together. Because all of us have some clear ideas. And then what happened then? There could be a commoning nest. So let's see what it will be. But there's something about creating a space for a language, an image of all of us, all of our ideas together in some kind of commoning. I think that's important to investigate.

Tanya:

Yeah, just meeting and talking.

Linh:

Yeah.

Tanya:

Right?

Linh:

Yes.

Tanya:

Also, I mean, for a long time now that Becoming Species have been doing workshops for kids and others, I guess. So to invite parents and their kids to come and also become birds, I guess is very much kind of traditional Becoming Species work in a way. Doing with others to also experience this, of becoming other species. And then connect that to performance work where we ourselves will make a small performance in the end. And that's what will happen tomorrow. So, yeah.

Livia:

Awesome. Our next question is, what direction do you see yourself moving in with your work in a different space?

Linh:

What other directions?

Tanya:

I mean, it's kind of part of the regenerative culture as well, not to force things. And I mean, that's how Becoming Species became a thing as well in a way, no? That it was not you who started trying to do workshops or asking people, hey, can we come and do this? There was actually people who came to becoming species asking like, hey, could you come and share this with us? So I think there's a lot of, it feels like it's a lot of like, okay, now there's this opportunity. Should we go for it or not? And then there's a discussion about, okay, those people feel like doing this, then they will go for it. Yeah. But it feels like it is going in a direction of like wanting to explore more artistically.

Linh:

Yes. Yeah.

Tanya:

The possibilities of this.

Linh:

Yes. And also like, we tend to also say yes to many projects. So we have times where we're like, okay, we are doing too much management work. Like we forget to also just have time to be together and investigate and be poetic together. But it is hard because we do live in a structure that is very system that is in us and around us and that we need to navigate within. But we are aware of it and try to say, okay, we need time to just have time to check in and check out. Have time to also just say that now we don't have any plans and just hang out. But we also, just like anyone else, sometimes we also tend to not prioritize them. Because there is an economy, there's deadlines. So, yeah. But I feel that when we are then all together, but it's so cozy. And we are good at just saying that it's alright if you didn't have time to do that or blah, blah, blah. Yeah, we figure it out. I think that it's important to not be hard on each other. Even though we have a mission, then we all have some things we struggle with each and the days are different. But then say that we'll make it. And if we don't make it, then it's not you, it's the system! It's not the best. Like it's really stressful. And it's just so important to also have this regenerative culture within the group itself. Because otherwise it would be judgment, judgment, blame and shame. And we don't want that. And then you feel like, oh, there's something wrong with me and blah, blah, blah. And it's actually more that we are pressured from so many angles. I think it's good to have more like a, we see what comes out of it. We all try our best. And that's also a big thing of the regenerative. That being relaxed towards each other.

Livia:

So our last question is, what are some obstacles or limitations you have been facing in your work?

Tanya:

I think it is the time and energy thing. When and where do you have energy to do what?

Linh:

Yeah.

Tanya:

But it's also a practice I think of daring to say no to things. You know, like, okay, this sounds fantastic. But there's, everyone is because this is also not our, it's not our main profession. This is not a full time thing. Sometimes it's for free. Sometimes we get a little bit of payment for what we do. But all of us have other things and other jobs, other works and other things to care about in our lives. So I think do to stop like you were talking about the economy. The economy is kind of requiring this flexibility and like work is your life. And to like consciously work against this idea of you have to say yes to everything. So rather than seeing it as an obstacle to try to work with it.

Linh:

And that's like those obstacles within our group, like our practice, but from society. I feel that also from the media which carries such a huge responsibility. They're like waiting for us to be more inventive. They don't want to see the same thing. And I would say that's also a huge

obstacle that we really need to always think of how can we do something else next time we do an action. Like we spend so much time on brainstorming. Because to us it's really important to get in the media. And because so we can keep on talking about this time in a biodiversity crisis. But they are waiting for us to be more extreme. And so that's an obstacle that gets the balance between like we still want to. How can you stay connecting with the average person? Because we are also the average person. And then you also portray the media as someone doing like you always interrupting the city. Or you always taking space and doing civil disobedience. We don't always do that. We also do workshops. But of course they don't want to think about those things. So it's hard to find this balance between still getting empathy. Like people feel empathy for the work we do and why we do it. By our mission and at the same time still challenge the structures and try to get into the media. So having those actions where it's just like now we nailed it. It's hard to find. It takes some time to –

Tanya:

– also when we are mentioned in the media. It's often as these young activists. It's always like as if it's only the younger generations that are fighting for a better future. Whereas in Extinction Rebellion especially and also in Becoming Species. We have a range of I mean I don't know how old the oldest is but it's really every kind of person.

Linh:

But they just write young in the media.

Tanya:

So it's also like when the media chooses to portray what we are doing. How are we being portrayed which is an obstacle in a way. Because it prevents the realistic image of it's all of us needing to fight for the future. And all of us are interested and worried about the future.

Gabby:

Thank you so much for your time.

Christina Staudlbauer

Abby:

First, we're wondering if it's okay if we record the audio of this interview?

Christina:

Yes.

Abby:

So, we could start by just introducing ourselves. So, I'm Abby, so we connected on email.

KJ:

I'm KJ.

Livia:

I'm Livia. Nice to meet you.

Gabby:

I'm Gabby.

Christina:

Are you all in Denmark?

Abby:

Yeah, so we're in Copenhagen right now. We were here in March and we're leaving in May 2nd. So, coming up on our last few weeks.

Christina:

Are you here for an internship or what because you mentioned a project but I'm not exactly sure what project you're talking about?

Abby:

Yeah, so as a part of a degree requirement, our school back in the U.S. has all their students do a social science project. We're all engineering majors, so it kind of broadens our mindset. And so Oleg is our sponsor for our project. It basically is an internship, but it's just through our school instead, which is really awesome. So, yeah, that's kind of the gist of what we're doing.

Christina:

Okay.

Abby:

Yeah. Any other questions before we begin?

Christina:

No, I'll have many questions for everyone.

Abby:

Alright, awesome. Alright, so I'll hand it over to KJ and he can ask you some questions.

KJ:

Alright, so our first question we have for you today is describe your work and goals.

Christina:

So, I don't know if you have done research about what I'm doing, but I'm working with other than human entities. I started out working with honeybees, and I worked for a while with plants, mollusks, and at the moment I'm working with bacteria and my cereal. And I'm working as an artist, so these are kind of my, I see them as my collaborators or entities that I'm also trying to understand on a deeper level in order to really, yeah, not exploit them, but try to work with them somehow. And I think my working goals are to find ways to give these other than human life forms, somehow agency or voice. And I do this via artistic practices.

KJ:

I see.

Christina:

If you have more questions, then just ask.

KJ:

Alright, so, next question. What made you enter this field?

Christina:

I have a background in chemistry, so I have a PhD in chemistry. And for a while I was working in laboratories and at the university, and I always felt that this scientific jacket is somehow too tight. So then I left entirely, I did something totally different. And then somehow I came back through arts and culture into this. Now at the moment I'm working at the university again, it's the first time in many, many years. But with this heart of an artist, I managed to somehow find a different way of being in this quite stringent academic world. So yeah, I would say that my background is always informing somehow what I'm doing. But I'm trying to work much more transdisciplinary and actually expand a little bit further than just this very result oriented scientific engineering life.

KJ:

I see, interesting to hear. So, next question. Have you done any other work relating to the environment or this idea of regenerative action?

Christina:

I have to say that for me regenerative action is not something that is very close. I mean, I'm not so familiar with this term. I was reading a little bit about it before now and I think it describes actually quite well what I'm doing. I think we have maneuvered ourselves in a very strange position as humankind. And it's quite difficult with small interventions to find a way out of this. And I think in that sense, the regenerative action is something that could help because you really have to shift and kind of get rid of everything and restart from scratch. And in that sense, I think

this is very much what I'm doing. By inviting these non-humans to somehow be taken seriously to being taken. Yeah, as more than just something that has to be exploited. Does this answer the question?

KJ:

Yeah, that answers the question.

Christina:

Okay.

KJ:

All right. One other question. How does your work relate to the bigger picture of climate change, sustainability and regenerative action?

Christina:

Yeah, as I already explained, I think it relates in the sense that I'm trying to find ways to think differently about the problems that we're having. And instead of trying to find a solution to actually reposition ourselves in this whole manga. I think repositioning is quite difficult because we're so stuck and so used to how we're doing things. And in that sense, I think this artistic or this, because I'm often working also with kind of absurd proposals. I don't know if you have read my work, but, for example, I did a work around a mollusk where I'm proposing the mollusk to relocate because the place where it's living is not so healthy for it. But a mollusk cannot relocate, of course. And then I was doing this by a video that I was showing underwater, the mollusk doesn't have eyes, underwater, you couldn't see anything. So there's an absurdity to this whole thing. And I think with this absurdity, maybe it's possible to really shift our view. It's a bit like, yeah, if you ask a question, you're trying to answer it logically, you might not be able to find the answer. But if you try to, I don't know, to look at it from different sides and not take it so serious, maybe, or really be quite strange about it, maybe then something will come, but it's not an answer, but it maybe allows you to post a question in a different way. Does this make any sense?

Abby:

Yes, your answer did make a lot of sense, thank you for sharing.

Gabby:

So my question for you is, how have you made a difference in your community or in Copenhagen and do you have any examples?

Christina:

So that's the thing. I have never been to Copenhagen in my life, so I cannot answer. But I also don't really know, Oleg, I know him only from a conference. And then we talk, we try to make a project together, but then we didn't manage. And we know each other from social media. We know of each other, but we don't really know each other. So I'm a member in his Pollination Academy. That's about it. So I cannot answer this question.

Gabby:

All right. How does your work relate our culture to the regenerative paradigm and how important

is art and culture and regenerative practice? So sort of the sustainability idea.

Christina:

Yeah. Well, I think partly I have answered this question already before, but. Yeah, like I said, I think with our straightforward question answer or problem without, we're not getting anywhere. So I think we need this. We need to shift our moral understanding. And I think this takes a lot of effort, but not kind of the classic effort. You know, it takes an effort in thinking or in rethinking. And for that, I think for rethinking, arts and culture is perfect. Because it's not trying to find a direct solution, but it's trying to make people open their minds and kind of see things from a different angle.

Gabby:

Okay. Great. What direction do you see yourself moving in?

Christina:

Yeah, like I said, I just started to work at a university, which is now totally new for me. I find it quite challenging because I'm encountering a lot of rigidity there. A lot of people snore under administration laws and really having good ideas and good intentions but not being able to move forward because of all these institutional restrictions. So I see my role a little bit also there to, to be like an earthquake and to try and shake a bit these walls. But in general, I think I'm moving a bit towards a philosophical direction or ethical direction because I think ethics is one way to help us to redefine our position. So I think it's a bit disdirection that I'm moving towards. And also, the project that I'm having now is a collaboration with the philosophy department. So it's between biotechnology and philosophy. And just one other thing. I think in general what we have to really understand that this trans-disciplinarity is the only way forward. I mean, to stay in our kind of little chamber and our little department is not going to lead anywhere.

Gabby:

Agreed. Could you talk a little bit more about the project that you're currently working on? It sounds really interesting.

Christina:

Yeah, it was inspired by Kintsugi, which is this Japanese art form where you fix ceramics with gold. So you put on the crack, you put gold or silver. And I've been practicing this for a while and I thought that there is really a transformative healing activity going on. And so I propose to use instead of, yeah, mending with material, to use living materials or bacteria or fungus to roll like a scar over the crack. And so this is the starting point. And so we're trying to find microbiological glues or adhesives for ceramic. But at the same time, and this is where the ethicists come in, we're trying to see how we're actually using, yeah, microbiological life forms in the laboratory. Because very often they're grown and they're, yeah, they have to do whatever they have to do and then they're just washed down with bleach. And I think we should also reconsider how we relate to these very abstract or very simple life forms because in the end they're not that simple at all. So together with the ethicists, we're trying to find a toolbox of how we can give those entities also agency and how we can take them somehow a bit more serious

than just materials that we can discard or what we're done with. So there's this, yeah, decolonizing aspect also to the project, decolonizing the labs somehow.

Gabby:

So I know that you will talk a little bit about your obstacles in your work at the university and people may be against the administration. I know that's challenging. That's a huge issue. But have you faced any other obstacles in your work? Maybe people don't understand your artwork, or could you tell us a little more about that?

Christina:

You know, I think I am facing, sometimes, the obstacle of being taken as a naive thinker because I want to take these animals and these plants seriously. So I want to go a bit away from this efficiency and this kind of human center. And people, they haven't had time taking this serious. They take me as a little child that has this little dream and wants. And I find it quite difficult to encounter this and what to do with this. I don't have enough arguments sometimes or I get quite discouraged with this. And I think, of course, now when I'm talking with you, I mean, I think you're very open and there's many, many people that are encouraging that are very open. But if I have to present this in front of a very kind of conservative crowd, I find it so difficult. And although they might find it cute or sweet or kind of funny, but they don't get the point, then I have a very difficult time to actually make this point important enough that they give this attention.

Gabby:

Well, thank you for sharing. I think that's all we have for you.