

Conversations Over a Brew

With. For. About: Care and the Commons
Frances Disley & Sean Roy Parker (Roy)

Transcript

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Knowsley

N - Nat

F - Fran

R - Roy

55:10

[INTRO MUSIC]

N - Conversations Over a Brew is a series of intimate recorded conversations exploring the stories and ideas of the people we make art with. This podcast is about the power of listening and conversation and how making art can bring us together and create change. For this special series of Conversations Over a Brew, we invited six of the contributors taking part in **With. For. About** to speak about their practice. **With. For. About** is our yearly conference programme. It gives us an opportunity to connect with others, reflect openly on urgent issues concerning socially engaged practitioners and think collectively about the future of collaborative arts practice. The theme for this year's **With. For. About** was 'Care and the Commons', through which we explored care and the interconnectedness between humans, more-than-humans, place and land. Themes of which are entangled within the intersections of the climate and displacement crises. In this episode, we hear from artists Frances Disley and Sean Roy Parker, both of whom have been invited to **With. For. About** to lead workshops that ask us to consider the ways in which we can build meaningful relationships with our non-human neighbours. The following discussion between Fran and Roy will explore the common threads running through their work, as well as contemplating what it means to think of ourselves as part of a diverse community of beings, human or otherwise, and the responsibilities that come with this acknowledgement.

[THE SOUND OF A KETTLE BOILING FADES IN, THE CLICK OF THE SWITCH INDICATING IT IS BOILED, WATER BEING Poured AND THE CLINK OF A TEASPOON STIRRING TEA IN A CUP]

N - Would you mind introducing yourself for the listeners and speaking a bit about your practice?

F - Hi, I'm **Fran Disley**. So my practice as an artist spans lots of different things. I find it quite hard to describe but probably working with video, participation, ceramics, whatever seems like it'll fit. I'm working a lot lately with nature, although I find that word massively problematic, but I'd say my work has led me recently to working with trees and plants and all sorts of different things.

R - Hi. Yes, I'm **Roy**. I'm an artist, writer, gardener and I live in Derbyshire. Over the past few years my work has been heading more and more towards de-material practices, particularly thinking about how the things that I make, or unmake, can be composted, digested, reused. Thinking particularly about the impact of art production on ecological imbalance.

N - We're all here for **With. For. About** and you'll both be running workshops tomorrow. Can you describe what you're doing and how that links in with ideas around building relationships with more-than-human beings, perhaps even clarify what more-than-human beings are. Then when you spoke about 'nature' as well and why that is problematic and I'd like to hear more about what dematerialising means.

F - When the kind of invitation came from Emma to get involved with **With. For. About**, the first thing I was thinking about was conferences. I know we're not necessarily calling it a conference. The idea that people come and gather in a place and I knew that we'd be

talking about the more-than-human community. I felt like it was really important to address literal place here, situatedness, so it feels like we acknowledge the beings that are growing here, and then...My invitation is to come spend some time with a little family, or a group, of horse chestnuts that I identified as an accessible space. My work is drawing me towards the collaboration between humans and more-than-humans in that particularly in trees at the moment, and how we have an impact on them or how they come to be, how parks are managed or controlled. I felt like it was a good invitation to spend a bit of time with a family of trees here and come at it as a non-expert approach. I'm interested in how we can build relationships without having to go off and research or be experts. This "how do we get to know the tree and how it's come to be where it is, what its interactions are?" Trying to think about "what's the evidence, what's the detective work with that?" without taking any botanical scientific instruction, how do you come to do that? So I've developed the workshop as a series of attempts to find out a little bit more. My overarching hope for it is that we gather a bit of an experience and it lingers in the mind and then you've formed a relationship with the trees that you've spent time with. There'll be things like looking at them with magnifiers, copying shapes that you see with your body, making physical connections between the trees, looking at botanical information. Also listening to interviews with human co-inhabitants of the park, people that use the park and gauging what's the important information? Is it how somebody plays next to a tree or is it something about the tree itself? I'm going into it to try and find out more myself. I don't see myself as the bringer of knowledge at all, but we'll just spend a couple of hours hanging out with the trees and, and starting to think about what is the important information, trying to dismantle any hierarchies in that.

N - Would you say that something like recreating or creating a new folk knowledge? Whereas perhaps we're, in our current way of living, totally disconnected and we see nature as something 'other than' the workshop you're facilitating, you're creating a space to be with the trees and have your own understanding of them and spend time to create that understanding so they're not this other being they're something we cohabit with.

F - Yeah, Yeah. I think it's valuing that immediate experience and making it specific. There's loads of...a big part of it is finding an excuse to actually be with the trees and keeping myself entertained. Trees are out of sync with us, they're in a different phase, mode. They're experiencing in a really, really slow way and we're flitting about with them. I acknowledge that I find it hard to focus for more than 5 minutes. So just manufacturing ways to spend time. You suggested at the beginning that...I feel like we're only two or three generations out of having a purposeful relationship with all these plants and trees that would have been seamless, not something that you have to enact. The fact that this is a workshop is problematic in itself. It's having to manufacture this leisure activity or formalise it, or make sure it has an outcome and has a purpose. When really we should acknowledge that we're really important to each other. Also this idea of like getting away from what we can *get* from it is really key to me that it's not "Trees are good for wellbeing." All of that is really problematic. We just really, really need to decentre ourselves in all of that. The park here is a construct for a rich man's folly and the fact that it lingers is amazing. The people that support the way it grows is wonderful, but we still have this whole "What can it do for me? How can I get my buggy around it?" How is it functioning as this park? And I'm not condemning of that because that's where we're at. Lots of green spaces are slightly manufactured, but I think the more we can get to know the slow beings within them and understand how they need each other more than they need us hopefully is useful and will linger with people.

N - Yeah. That bit about decentering I think was really interesting and that links in a lot with your practice Roy.

R - Yeah. Thanks. Yeah, yeah. Listening intently to Fran nodding along. So the workshop that I'm doing tomorrow is called **Undergrowth Cursive**, and it is stemming from the writing work that I've been doing for the past two and a half, three years. Which I can explain more about when I talk about this idea of dematerialising my practice. But there are so many things that Fran said that are really relevant. I particularly think about writing and non-judgmentally observing as a way of connecting with place. Particularly as someone who wants to be more connected with certain areas. What we were saying about decentering is, if I can become a non-judgmental observer it changes the way that I look at the world and therefore it changes the way that I meet the world. So this idea of being an active observer and looking at or getting to know places by visiting them regularly, frequently throughout the year, seeing how things change. The life cycles of different plants and animals, bugs, fungi, that has led me to being able to really compare the linear, unilateral direction of time that we have within human culture. The multi-layered, elliptical lasagne of time that happens in nature or everywhere. Being able to look non-judgmentally is key to being able to write in a way that rejects this idea of 'human dominion' and rejects the idea of species supremacy. It's not necessarily going to be something that works first time or instantly clicks because of the way that nature writing generally is very human centred, there is a lot of competition about the attitudes towards how we... Say foraging, for example, appears to me, as someone who has been practising for about five, six years, the way that foraging keeps coming up in conversation is almost this kind of extreme sport. "Oh, I drove to this place to look for this wild, really, extremely wild mushroom." For me, the way that my practice is oriented around finding the everyday, the edibles that I can implement into my daily diet that are all around us, the ruderal plants, the pioneer species, the invasives that are less glamorous, but ultimately have a deeper positive ecological impact. Whereas driving to a really far out forest to pick a really wild species of plant is probably quite damaging for that particular ecosystem. There's a lot of internal monologue about "What are my needs?", "Why do I feel in dominion?", "Why is it important for me to achieve certain things when I'm thinking about how I connect with nature?" This writing is a very slippery and enthusiastic way of formulating new thinking patterns that don't necessarily always work the first time, but can lead towards something else. As a person I don't really plan very well, I mostly go into things with spontaneousness or spontaneity and improvisation. So writing is just a really fantastic development of that, that can unfold in front of you in ways that you're not expecting. I too will be using different looking glasses and listenings and obfuscating and hiding certain senses in order to meet the inhabitants of the space that I'm using. I want to think a lot about the ways that I've used these particular techniques of reading, writing, touching, playing to deal with my own ecological grief that has transformed over the years positively, towards a practice that I really believe in. That is less expectant of outcome based narratives and more focussed on process based practices or methodologies. In particular thinking about 'chaotic degrowth' as a methodology rather than an outcome. The idea being that moving away from strategy, decarbonisation strategy or nature strategy, which ends up in the language of commerce, is to do with planning, dates...

N - So that's chaotic degrowth.

R - No, no, no. This is strategised degrowth.

N - So when you talk about degrowth in that context, that's coming from larger organisations. But when you talk about chaotic degrowth, what do you mean there?

R - To contextualise the wider idea of strategised degrowth is "By 2030 this thing will happen." It comes from a central government or it's some sort of think tank or some sort of panel. Which are useful and they're really good for breaking down certain mythical numbers and figures into things that may be more digestible. However, I find them to be very performative. Particularly in the institution, because there's very little desire to actually change. The performativity around climate action ends up being the thing that they want to be congratulated for, rather than the actions that are challenging the status quo and that do seriously reorient the goals of an organisation. So this chaotic degrowth that I've written about a lot is a methodology. It's a way of being and thinking and doing that doesn't necessarily have a fixed outcome, but will, I feel personally anyway, deeply help us change the way that we communicate and situate ourselves within the living world.

F - Can I jump in on that?

N - Please, yeah.

F - The more I observe and stop and slow down, the more I recognise that we just need to back off. That's such a big overarching thing. It's so many things..."How can we be proactive?" There's so much claiming that goes on "What can we do about this thing?" I'm fixating on you mentioning that observing throughout, revisiting a place over and over again. Within my practice I'm finding it more and more important, if I'm working with place, to try and make contact with people that do live with this, and get to know the plants over a period of time. I'm trying to identify those people that have been doing that for ten, 15 years, so they've got an understanding of that growth. But that idea that we need to, the radical act is to be inactive. It's so simple, but it's this whole hypocrisy of everyone who's thinking it's wonderful to have wildflower patches are also massively behind spraying the gutters with chemicals, which happened in the last two weeks in Liverpool. We just need to shift in a really, in crude terms, we need to shift what we think is, 'ugly'. [LAUGHS] It's just all of that, those terms as well. The 'invasive' or all of those things are really problematic. The way we categorise particular plants shifts our attitude towards them and a lot of it comes down to things that aren't marketable or sellable. I think we need to start with looking at the plants that follow us about in our urban disruption that are attracted to that and respond to that. A lot of them are medicinal and really supportive to us. Acknowledge that, acknowledging them, doing those little surveys around your block where you actually notice all of the little weeds that are growing around you and loads of them medicinal edible, they kind of follow our fuck ups and they're quite happy to do that.

N - Then for example, what kind of plants?

R - The ones that naturally occur in disturbed places.

F - Do you mean specifically?

N - Yeah, so I know what you mean. But just for our listeners, what kind of plants do you find that are following us as medicinal plants?

F - Sorrel.

R - Nettles.

F - Nettles.

R - Dandelion.

N - Yeah.

F - Yeah, They're medicinal. Yeah. All of those, Yarrow. If you want to make a medicinal herb bed, do nothing for a year and it will literally come. Plantain Weed is everywhere. Dandelions, you literally need to just back off and they are amazing for your stomach, they do the prebiotic, probiotic all in the same plant. Plantain Weed, it will all...It's called "White Man's Footsteps" isn't it? In the US because it followed the Europeans and it was adopted by Native Americans as a snakebite remedy. It just follows us everywhere. It's just wonderful for colds, bites, itches everything. All those things that are wonderful things. Ivy-leaved Toadflax. What are the ones with the little hearts on? Yeah, anywhere, everywhere and they just get sprayed.

N - So, I'll be putting.

R - Ground Ivy.

F - Yeah. Ground Ivy, yeah.

N - I'll be putting this information in the show notes as well so people can look it up.

R - Well maybe I can just expand on that.

N - Please!

R - The idea relates back to this idea of being in competition with each other and foraging to acquire the most knowledge, and to be the best at something is so ingrained in the way that we're educated. It's so deeply within us and in turn it often leads onto how we become professionals or commerce, business. It leads to that way of thinking. It's that kind of hobby to jobby pipeline of turning something that you love doing into something that you end up doing for money and how that changes the dynamics in your enthusiasm for what you're doing. I've run a lot of foraging workshops and fermentation workshops over the years, which have been deeply nourishing for me, but I got a lot of burn out from it. I actually got quite bored of running workshops. Not because of any of the people involved because they were wonderful, but because of the nature of trying to satiate a lot of different people's expectations within a very short period of time. Some people come in expecting to be an expert in an hour and a half, and it's very difficult to fulfil those expectations, of course, and it's also very difficult to push back on those things as well because you want people to be heard. My feeling or my message really is that if you are wanting to get into learning about herbs, the most basic, a wild classic, every day, run of the mill ones, it's just about spending time with plants and it's about reorganising your time a little so that you can spend more time with the plants. These relationships will naturally unfold and the plants will allow you into their lives. They will bring the information to you. You don't have to read it all in books. It's about cultivating that shared time which is very, very hard to do because of the way that we are so consumed with work.

[A BRIEF RELAXING AND SOOTHING MUSICAL INTERLUDE PLAYS, SIGNIFYING THAT WE ARE HALFWAY THROUGH THE PODCAST]

Roy Reads a Poem:

Savour

In the euphoric abundance of spring
a scavenger is never bored and how
could they be when every sprout or
shoot or leaf or flower is an invitation
to taste the wild novelty again?

In the surprise abundance of home
a scavenger is never bored and how
could they be when every crust or
core or pith or leftover is an invitation
to pull flavour back from the edge?

N - Both of what you're doing tomorrow is creating that space so people can at least begin to engage in those ways of, well doing nothing and taking a step back. We spoke a lot about that when we were doing our recce the other day.

F - I think there's gatekeepers, like botanical, horticultural gatekeepers that make it really problematic. I'm excited about the idea of democratising "What is green space?" Green space is often, when people say 'green fingered', they will have come from a privileged background that could afford to have a garden. There's all of that. All of those things are really problematic. That you have to have money to have that space, that private space that you control and you claim. That's a lot of people's entry points, is growing in their own thing and the more you get to know or or learn about this stuff, a lot of it's to do with observing. It's not about you controlling or contributing. I'm interested in how you can make that whole thing more accessible as well so that everybody's opinion is valued. It was when you were talking about things being out of sync...my Mum's Nana would use Knitbone and Comfrey and all these sorts of things. They claimed that relationship with plants and I feel like everything's shifted towards like the hobbyist or the botanical scientist. Obviously there's a place for that but it excludes lots of people.

N - And disempowers people, right?

F - Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I think we've talked before about the idea of foraging being a privilege because it's not for necessary, vital nourishment. It's...

N - For Wild Garlic Focaccia. Who even makes that?

F - Yeah. It's that. I'm really interested in being so honest about it all as well and how you get over the revolt thing as well. How we are conditioned so massively to only be able to stomach things that are shinier in the supermarket. You have to start from a place of honesty before you condemn. You were talking about being...

N - ...Non-judgmental?...

F - ...Non-judgmental. Yeah, because I struggle with that personally. When I was thinking about this interview I was thinking about my circumstance as well. It becomes more and more important that I'm a practising artist and a knackered Mum of two neurodiverse kids. I think entry points are really important to me and being really, I keep saying it honest. Honest about time and space and all that business.

R - What you're saying about art being an excuse for learning. You're using your art practice in a way to create that space that you need for this particular type of learning that is nourishing yourself. Of course it's a privilege to be an artist. I think about that a lot and I get very upset when I think about how many people don't have the option to be an artist. If I'd gone down the track that I was meant to I'd probably be working in an office or something or in a shoe shop or something like that. So there's a certain amount of privilege and stubbornness that I've had to be able to create the space and the time to have a nature based practice, but there are also lots of reprioritising and unlearning and relearning around what's valuable to me. Around what goals I have or how I want to be in the world, in order to create that time and space as well and for it not to be an outcome. I'm not wanting to be the world's greatest forager or sell the most sauerkraut in England. I'm just trying to live using plants as a way of reclaiming the present and understanding that in culture, time is always forwards and in nature time is always now. I'm trying to be "Well, it's always now." Using that as a way of moving forwards and giving my world some structure based around the seasons, rather than this idea of perpetual, perpetual toil, perpetual labour, which is so hard to break free from.

N - The idea that you're always producing and you have to have an outcome, which goes back to what you're saying that you've sidestepped that and you are not about outcome, you're about process and living now and acknowledging circular time, and finding... Basically they're anti-capitalist practices aren't they? As artists the pair of you, the way I see it is you're using your practice to create pockets of time that sit outside those structures and find new ways of being or perhaps even connect with older ways of being that we're just not allowed to be with anymore.

F - Yeah, we were talking before about how sometimes that, well, often clashes with the arts and the set up. I think there's lots of situations and institutions that still feel like they are out of sync with what they want to align themselves with. I think it's a big, slow, messy, tricky job to step back and say you want to be part of this and you want to observe this. But you all need to slow down with the way that you operate and start with having a slow nature based practice as human beings before you even get to how to look to nature to think about how you program and how you process. I still feel, and I find myself in this repeatedly trying to make a workshop that's supposed to be about comfort and a positive experience, but then getting really stressed about it. I feel if that's not dealt with throughout art structures, the back end of it, then it all falls apart and feels like it's skimming and there's no sort of... We were talking before about what the legacy is when you work with an arts organisation and you're talking about slow practices, what lingers and what shifts.

R - I wrote an essay last year called **Vague Decay Now** and it was for this chaotic degrowth and the hook of the essay was around; Why does art production rely on the creation of artworks that are going to last forever in toxic materials, when we don't have a forever secured? Can we really continue in denial of the climate crisis that we are living through? The idea of it not being somewhere in the future. If you listen or read the media or you have your head in that side of things, in institutional thinking, the apocalypse is in the forever future. It's always down the line. One of the ways that I really got to grips with my own eco grief is understanding that actually we are living in the apocalypse now and how can I reorient so that I can work actively towards embettering my understanding of it, using what I can within my very small amount of power to shift people's... Ultimately it's the collective consciousness that we're aiming for is for people to find that higher meaning, or to notice that there's a very thin veil between what we see as reality and how things do work more organically. I think a lot about art production as this never ending, perpetual need for newness. A lot of what I'm trying to tackle is, can I be an artist? Can I call myself...can I work creatively every day in the way that I collectivise, while doing the opposite of that actually, while breaking things down. Whether that's prepping food for fermentation, whether that's breaking down materials for soil building. These things are really interesting because obviously they don't work in an art market, but they're very, very useful for permaculture thinking. If you look at the kind of permaculture principles, the three main principles or the ethics sorry, it's earth care, people care, fair share. If you translate that into a more like interpersonal thinking about how permaculture can be social and artistic, then I've been thinking about how it could be about world building, soil building and community building and those things are linked. There's just a lot of crossover.

N - That thinking links in with **Liz Postlethwaite's** thinking as well. Liz will be also present at **With. For. About** tomorrow doing a workshop. What you said about your practice and the apocalypse now, that essay I've read, it's really great and incredibly hopeful and you're dealing with these really heavy and very real crises that we are living through now. It's very easy to either put them in the forever future or go "Oh my God, this is awful," then just be a rabbit in the headlights and leave it to higher powers that be. This is not to say that you are individualising the problem, to say that we are responsible for trying to create space and ways through ourselves. I think what you do, and the approaches you take as well Fran, are about finding hope. About finding hope and moving through with hope and we are here now, and how do we in our own way, upend the systems that are causing this harm and try to reset things?

R - Well, not everything has to be against. I spent a long time dealing with my eco grief in my twenties, just not understanding how, being exhausted from always being against things. I can't remember exactly what the turning point was, but it became: "No, I need to be *for* things that I believe in. I need to be *for* the structures that I believe in. I need to use the energy that I was using negatively," because I was taking a lot of negative energy, processing it and trying to put out positive art or whatever. Actually I need to be looking to others for that positive energy, taking that in and nourishing myself and then sharing it back out or amplifying it or whatever. So actually the place that I live in this artist community in an old school.

N - Yeah so could you speak a little bit more about that because that's super interesting.

R - Yeah. So for about just over two years, I've been living in an ex-Steiner School in Derbyshire that we run as an artist residency and it has morphed into more of a long term experimental co-living space. It's really bizarre. It's like it becomes very normalised to you

when you live there everyday and then you have a guest come over and then you give them a tour and you're like "Oh yeah, this is really wild actually." We all have artistic practices and we all have the space to carry out our artistic practices, which is such a privilege and such an amazing feeling. It's in the middle of nowhere. It's not got very good connections. It's in quite a conservative area. It's very far from the train station. Lots of different pros and cons. The main thing that I'm learning from it is how to implement all of these feelings around climate action, around collective consciousness raising, around interpersonal relationships and compassion, and implementing them into a daily practice that ends up being living rather than performing, existing as an artist, which is what artists are expected to do. We're expected to get up and perform our artistry. While being there and reducing really quite substantially the amount of artistic output that I have, I have concentrated that energy instead into making compost or making ferments or spending time cleaning this place or doing little DIY projects. Making it an inviting and safe space for trans folk and people of colour, who generally wouldn't find that that area is too inviting. We have some sober people who live with us as well, and we have lots of vegans. It's this really kind of amazing space where we are just working on making it as accessible to the people who want to be there. We talk about things compassionately. We try and make decisions sociocratically, which is like consent based. There's a lot of proposals. It's opt in rather than opt out and I feel like a lot of cultures opt out. You're expected to be at things and if you're not there, then there should be a good reason for it, and with an opt in culture, it means that you don't have to provide any reasons for not being at a workshop or a dinner. You can absolutely, there's no questions asked and there's no judgement. This is a slightly different way of operating a collectivised living situation. It's not going to last forever. But there is something that it has changed within my psyche, the way that I relate to people, the way that I listen to people that I will take on with me wherever I go.

F - Yeah. Yeah, it sounds. It sounds amazing. Yeah.

N - Is that how you run your family? Opt in?

F - No, no.

N - Do you want to go to bed?

F - Yeah. Yeah, my living situation is totally different. I was thinking, going back a bit when you were talking about eco grief and stuff. I was thinking about some things that have been fascinating me and probably being from Warrington with this massive industrial history to it. I keep encountering these points where post-industrial spaces have become these wonderful wild, wild spaces and these stories that feel like they're some kind of full circle reconciliation. I'm totally fascinated by that now. When I was working in Leigh and we were working with the Flashes in Lancashire, there's one particular one, there was a coal mine that had...I kept going there and meeting different people and say, "Oh, it's so lush and green" and they're like, "Yeah, that's because all this industry's dropped and these places are now wild and rich and lush." And there's a weird sadness to it because it's led to poverty and tricky life situations. There's one of these Flashes I was talking about, that was a coal mine and it sank and it became really toxic and the water was acidic, all the wildlife couldn't survive in it. Now it's won it back round and it's this amazing wild space full of Dog Roses and Hawthorns and all sorts of stuff. It's kind of managed but it's where these things kind of come back round, rebuild via their own networks and community and how that could be mirrored with the human community that surrounds them really fascinates me. I think you need to go to that point where you visit an ancient forest, speak

to someone, and they're like, "Yeah, there's hardly any of this that exists. Everything has like been planted or messed with and had this like all the purpose. There's hardly any wild spaces, truly wild spaces in England in particular, that are untouched." Then you're like "Whoa, everything is manufactured. Nothing is more than a hundred years old." Then you're like, "Whoa" You kind of need to come to a point where you're like "What's the win? What's the hope in this? What are the kind of positives that you can find?" I think that with the project that I've just finished in Halewood, I've been working in a forest there, which was created by warring rail companies wanting to put too many lines in and then making a no go area that's now become this wild forest space. I'm interested in where things can be like one background, like post, like wild spaces that have come about in the last 70 years on the back of massive Northwest industrialisation.

N - Then coming back to that idea of stepping back and doing nothing where these spaces have been ravaged by humans, but now we're stepping back. What and who is moving in there, which trees, which plants and so on? I guess it's kind of looking at what the community is saying, because the community is more-than-human right? Who is now inhabiting these spaces? It goes back to your workshop tomorrow about sitting down with communities of beings and thinking about what's there, how they're growing, how they're growing together, and why are they there? Have they been planted there? Have they appeared there out of a post-industrial wasteland? How do we relate to that? That's super interesting. Then finding that time to think with these places and noticing what is growing and how that can benefit us or not benefit, that's wrong, but how we can live alongside that and work with these spaces.

F - Socioeconomics as well related to that. Say that the space in Halewood, people might think that it would be... There's lots of spaces that I think are really of interest, that maybe have become about because it's not an affluent area and there's not someone jumping in and landscaping it.

N - That's a Flashes again, right?

F - Yeah, Yeah. That's dodgy territory because there's other things that come alongside that about lack of care and lack of investment. I think there's something to think about in these overlooked places that are seen as of no economic benefit to massively redevelop that have allowed a little ecology to happen, to observe, as places to go and observe and...

N - Without being totally landscaped or anything like that.

F - Yeah,.

R - It sounds like you're describing the place I live. You didn't say the word, but you're around the word 'remediation', there's two meanings, one is to correct, which is maybe a business term, but the other is more ecological, to move forwards and to improve. We've heard of mushrooms remediating leaded soils. I think you could argue that wild pioneer plants remediate brown sites. The word 'wild' as well is maybe related to the spaces that we're creating tomorrow with the workshops. This idea of a wild space of thought or a wild space of people where there's not really the structure and the questions that we're used to, but there's this free wheeling allowing, trying to cultivate a space where the imagination can flow and people can come to their own conclusions. Something that I learnt from therapy is that ultimately I don't want...noone wants to be told what's right and what's

wrong, but to have the space to come to your own revelations or your own conclusions is very powerful. Breaking that hierarchy, the traditional educational hierarchy, which is a very transactional and very one way, and facilitating workshops is quite a skill because you have to move things along, but also create space so that everyone can find their own pace or questions and everyone's are valid as well. It's remediation. The reason I'm relating it to where I live is because it's people. It's people being wild in a dilapidated space and finding out how to do things without a pre-existing structure and working out the structure based on meeting each individual's needs and the collective needs. This ecosystem is arising out of a very varied set of requirements, but it ends up serving all of the people that are part of it because of how we organise in a non-hierarchical way. There's this lovely mirroring there of how maybe we can take inspiration from wild spaces and try and create wild spaces in our minds.

F - That pioneer species thing as well. I've just completed that work in Halewood and it was a place that was mainly farmland until the sixties. It was one of the places in Merseyside where lots of people moved out to from the slums in Liverpool. Which is infamous. These people ripped from their communities and their culture and dropped in these...

N - New estates, right?

F - ...empty spaces, all the new estates, and they didn't put infrastructure in place or it was there for a bit and then went. People felt disenfranchised. They were just landed on this false hope. Then how that's settled back, it feels because the forest is full of the Birch Trees, all of those things. I do think there's something interesting in looking, or the idea of invasive species. How we can look at how our behaviour can be mirrored. When you strip a place back and it gets populated really quickly, what happens to that group of people? How do they figure it out? How do they move forward? How do they reconcile that loss, that lack of infrastructure, the fact that they've been forced in there by others, outside of their control? It's humans thinking they are, or doing *to*, these people, not with them. Then when they're...

N - Or thinking they're better off there.

F - Yeah, and when the community settles and becomes empowered by setting up its own networks and processes and support structures, I think there's something, there's real parallels with what happens with the landscape as well.

[OUTRO MUSIC PLAYS AS NAT SAYS THEIR FINAL THANK YOU]

N - Thanks for listening to this episode. Check out the show notes for more information about this project. We will be back again soon with another Conversation over a Brew.

55:10

END