

Conversations Over a Brew

With. For. About: Care and the Commons
Radha D'Souza and Youngsook Choi

Transcript

Recorded on 26 May at The Quaker Meeting House,
Liverpool

N - Nat

R - Radha

Y - Youngsook

59:00

[INTRO MUSIC]

Nat - 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're joined by Doctors Radha D'Souza and Youngsook Choi. Radha is a writer, scholar, lawyer and social justice activist from India, who now lives in London and teaches at the University of Westminster. Youngsook is a London based artist and researcher with a Ph.D. in Human Geography. Both Radha and Youngsook have research interests that converge at the intersection of climate crisis and colonialism. In the following conversation, we will hear more about their individual practices and what their research can tell us about processing and understanding where we are as a world now.

[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 - Radha thank you for joining us today. Would you mind describing for our listeners about your current work and what you were presenting on yesterday for **With. For. About**.

R - Thank you for having me on. And it's a pleasure to be here talking to you and to Youngsook. I'm currently working on this long term collaborative project with the Dutch artist **Jonas Staal**. We started this work together around late 2019, and we have been working on it since then. The work actually is called **Court for Intergenerational Climate Crimes**. This is a court that we established and the project puts the law on trial. And the way it does this is by closely scrutinising 'Legal Personality'. In modern legal systems 'Legal Personality' is the main institutional framework for every, for all organisations. Very simply put, 'Legal Personality' means that ten people can come together, establish a corporation or an entity, trust or whatever, and that becomes a separate person. It acquires personhood in the eyes of law. Likewise states are legal persons, and that means they act independently, or can act independently, of the members that constitute the state, or the corporation. In the case of corporations it is shareholders. In the case of states it's us citizens. So 90% of the citizens can say we oppose the Iraq war. As it happened in Britain, nearly 70% of people opposed the Iraq war, but it still happened. How is that possible? Because the state has an independent 'legal personality' and is not bound to act according to what the majority of the people say. So that's basically the concept. And why did we do this? Because we felt that activists, especially, and radical critical scholars, they very often do a fantastic critique of issues, they do very good research, they do very good

campaigns, but when it comes to solutions, they come back straight to the same legal system that caused the problems. So the **Court for Intergenerational Climate Crimes** puts corporations and states on trial. And it does it by creating its own law. We have our own statute called the Intergenerational Climate Crimes Act, which seeks to provide a new definition of climate crimes that is intergenerational, that acknowledges interdependence and the need for regeneration. So that's basically the project. We've had several iterations, one in Amsterdam, in Helsinki, we've had exhibitions in Germany and in Seoul. And recently we did another court at **Gwangju Biennale** in Korea. So that's basically the project.

N - Thank you. And Youngsook.

Y - Yeah, it's in a similar timeline, I started focusing my practice around grief. You mentioned a court trial as a way of scrutinising the damages and traumas and broken communities around the climate crisis. For me, grief does a quite similar job because I'm proposing grief as a collective interrogation process. It's more like a sociopolitical autopsy. So what are the structural conditionings that repeat the same types of tragedies again and again and again all over the world? So grief is a kind of channel to collectivise people around loss and thinking of not just being sad or mourning about the loss, but actually thinking through critically, "What are the kind of structures around the loss?" So that is kind of a, in a similar intention of a Radha's court trial around the climate crimes. So the practice around grief as the process of collective interrogation started in 2020 with a project **Not This Future. Not This Future** commemorates the Essex 39 incident about three and a half years ago. 39 Vietnamese people were found dead in the back of a lorry in the Essex area. Around the time the Home Office and the mainstream media quickly wrapped up this story about people smuggling issues. So the, the mainstream narrative is all about "We need to tighten the border because people smugglers are, keep bringing these people. That's why this tragedy is happening again and again." But actually, the people, the 39 victims are from two fishing villages where the Formosa disaster happened. Formosa is a multinational corporation who dumped toxic waste directly into the ocean, so that basically the whole fishing village here was destroyed, and livelihood was at risk. And then desperate young people become the target of people smugglers and then that's how it happened. So that incident really revealed the intricacy of a global economic structure we are living through. And so I invited 39 researchers, writers, artists and curators all over the world to offer their thoughts on this incident. So it was about organising 39 grief pieces, and I kind of reacted or responded with the sequential acts of performance. But when I finished on **Not This Future** project, I realised that it wasn't just about the loss of 39 human lives. It was also about 70 tonnes of dead fish in that Vietnamese seashore and all the species wiped out in that marine ecosystem. So the need to extend the remit of grief towards more interspecies narrative naturally emerged. And that's how my current ecological grief project **In Every Bite of the Emperor** started. And **In Every Bite of the Emperor** engages four different geographical sites. One is quite close from here in St Helens, there's this amazing piece of land called Collier's Moss. Collier's Moss is the land of miracle, basically. That land went through this series of industrial damages; used to be Clay Pit and then dumping ground of coal mining spoils and more recently the by-product of glass manufacturing. But in last 20 something years the land is almost miraculously recovering. Apart from a very, very small patch of land that still refuses to grow anything. So that land is such a strong reminder of the loss and the history of exploitation in that land. So the Collier's Moss is one site and I'm weaving Collier's Moss with the Perak region in Malaysia. Perak used to be the largest tin producer under the British Colonial rule. And also there is amazing spiritual knowledge system in the indigenous communities.

So I'm trying to bring their knowledge system in terms of how to collectivise the local people in St Helens and how to form the witnessing communities, and sitting with this land through the process of collective healing. Not just all about ecological healing, also intersectional healing, because in any post-mining towns there is broken communities and the communities so struggling to revive. So looking at this intersectional healing process together. So in terms of that healing process, try to learn from the wisdom from Indigenous communities and also the history, that interlinking history around mining. The third site is in Korea, small village called Sampyounglee (삼평리) and there was an amazing group of elders who have protested for seven years against the government's plan to expand nuclear energy power plant. The reason of opposing to this plan was actually spiritual one, because the high, high pressure transmission towers were built to the sacred mountain and right next to the village cemetery. So that kind of a spiritual coming together was really exciting for me. How, in terms of being that this is not only about convincing political argument that bring people together, sometimes there is a kind of emotional, spiritual driver that actually bring people together and move together and also aspire for the social change in such an amazing way. So that's something really that case I was interested in that regard. And the last, fourth site is, obviously, two fishing villages in Vietnam. So in a way it's kind of closing the circle of ecological grief.

N - Thank you, knowing both your researches deal with the legacies of colonialism and neocolonialism; what would you like to ask each other about each other's research? At what points, if any, do you see commonalities and where the different entry point and view points to a very similar subject spark an interest or a conversation?

R - The starting point for me was, my book came out in 2018, and the book is titled **What's Wrong with the Right's Social Movements, Law and Liberal Imaginations**. And I wrote that book mainly for activists, activist scholars, because of this sense that there needs to be much more engagement with the law and a critique of the law if we are to actually try and break out of this vicious cycle that we were trapped in. And that is why, hence; 'Liberal Imaginaries'. So that has that title and that is what the book tried to do. Now, when the book was published, my comrade, colleague **Jonas Staal** who is a visual artist in the Netherlands, he and I, we started talking about how some of those ideas can be amplified for wider audiences and people in a way that is accessible. And so through those conversations we hit on this idea of if the law is treating this legal entity as a person, then how about we put this person on trial that is artificial by definition? And how does that then play into questions about justice for what the law calls 'Natural Persons', which is you and me? And so that's where that idea came from. But also, I think for us, it was quite important that art does not become something voyeuristic, where people come and look and appreciate and say "This is great." And go away. So what the **Court for Intergenerational Climate Crimes** tries to do is for that day, that court is real. So when the public comes to that art space, they come there, they become the jury and we have our Intergenerational Climate Crimes Act, which sets up the **Court for Intergenerational Climate Crimes**. And that is the law that is used, applied to judge the climate crimes. And we felt that we needed to do that because if we took the law that already exists, we would again be in that same vicious cycle because we would have to apply that law even if we are activists and scholars. So that was one thing. But for us, it's also that we wanted that art space to become an organising space. So we bring together people, witnesses who come and give evidence are real people in the real world. So, for example, we had witnesses from...we put on trial the Dutch state and Unilever. Through the Dutch state, we were able to bring out the legal infrastructure that the state creates that allows the corporations to do what they do around the world. Then we had Unilever, which is a very

colonial corporation because the plantations were given to them by states confiscating land. Britain confiscated land and gave it to Unilever, and that is how they became. So it brings in agriculture, land, all those relations. Our third case was ING Group, which is a finance investment corporation, and that brings in this whole thing of financially controlling, this financial colonialism that we are seeing in the present world, investments in land, buying up investments in Amazonia. And then we had Airbus, and Airbus was interesting because when we started thinking about Airbus, the first question we ourselves had was "Is this even possible?" Because most people think of Airbus as a company that makes aeroplanes for us to go from holidays or vacations or whatever. But Airbus is a major player in producing military hardware. And so we thought between all those four cases, we covered the state, land, markets and war. So it was a kind of comprehensive package of all aspects and because people, and then the act redefines intergenerational climate crime. So we also wanted to challenge this discourse of climate being something about so many molecules of carbon dioxide in the air or that kind of thing, and go to basic questions, "How did that carbon dioxide get there?" "Who put it there?" And then through that process question fundamental things like right to property and how right to property sits alongside human rights and human rights then is extended to these artificial persons, the 'legal persons'.

For example, in 2014, the US Supreme Court held that corporations had the fundamental right to free speech. Now, why would a corporation use its right to free speech? And the case itself came about because of the enormous influence that electoral funding by corporations was having on politics and democratic politics. But then they have the free, free speech, right? So they can do it. So it's this extension that we wanted to question. We also wanted to question this divide between human beings and nature, as if nature was something outside of us human beings and bring back our own position. We are also part of nature. We are one among many species and whatever is done by these artificial persons, these 'legal persons' impacts upon the non-human as well as human species. So we are all affected by it. But it's this legal personality that does not allow us to think in that way because we think that we are somehow different from. But actually most of us are completely dependent on corporate sectors offering us a job for us to live as a species. And this is where it gets more complicated, so we wanted include human beings, nature, relationships between people and nature. And that brings me to another very important founding principle for the court, which is there in the book, but which we enact in the project. And that is "How do we see land and people?" Yeah. And this is where what I talked about yesterday, the epoch. The divorce of the epoch. And if you look at modernisation and modernity, capitalist modernity everywhere, it begins by evicting people from land. Because only by evicting people from land can land become property, and everything about it and below it become property that can then be bought and sold and people become what we call the 'labour force'. Which can also be bought and sold. The capacities of people to work is what is being bought and sold. So you have a completely new social system as a result, that is based on this divorce and that is essential for commodity producing, capitalist kind of societies. So what I say in the book and later enact in this project is that "Nature and people, land and people is a relationship." It's not a thing. Land is not a thing. People are not things. Labour is not a thing. These are living beings, living entities, and there is a relationship. And that is what makes the difference between our law, the Intergenerational Climate Crimes Act is based on these concepts, and the law that we exist outside of this world. Where land is seen as a thing that can be bought and sold, we say "No, it's a relationship." And place is where bonding happens. Place is where, what is place? Place is that location where there is a bond between that nature, that particular nature and those communities that live there and all the other species that live there and there is a bond established. And what capitalist modernity does is de-placialise

people. It displaces people. And then you have to find a place in one of these artificial persons. You either have to go to the corporation and find a job there to live and you will have to be at the mercy of the state for citizenship, because your citizenship can be taken. It's not a given thing. And so you become completely displaced and become dependent or emplaced in these institutions. So that is another thing that we try to bring out. And one of the things, the remedies, because every law has a remedy, right? It has to provide some. And the remedy we say here is "We need to start thinking seriously about place based communities." Where it is all places are not of the same nature. Generally they are nature but every place is different. A coastal region is different from the middle region. I come from India, it's a very arid region. Somebody coming from Arctics will have very different nature, but it's all nature and we need to bond with that nature in the same way as we bond with our mother. That's the first bond that happens, right? And in many cultures, land and earth is considered our first mother. In my language, we call it the mother of all mothers and that includes...

N - What is that word?

R - "...Tāy" (தாய்) and Tāy is Tāy for everybody. Or "Vasudhā" in the north. This from where you have the "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्) which is "We are all children of Mother Earth." We are all one family, regardless of what your species is. So that kind of conception, and many indigenous communities have this idea of Earth being the first mother. And so we try to say we need to bring back some of that, or for us bring back, but for others learn about...

N - Re-establish that connection.

R - ...and re-establish that connection.

[A BRIEF RELAXING AND SOOTHING MUSICAL INTERLUDE PLAYS, SIGNIFYING A BREAK.]

N - I think that's where your research links in with those ideas as well, and perhaps you could speak more about that.

Y - Yeah, I think. As you said a lot of Indigenous communities still hold that knowledge system. For example, the Semai tribe I stayed in Malaysia. They don't have a concept of species. As you said, we are all children of one mother, planet mother, and they have a spiritual, not divine division, but they basically see anybody, including human and more-than-human, anybody can have a head spirit and heart spirit and roots spirit, something like that. So when this spirit is intermixed in the wrong way, then you get ill and all sorts of problems happen. They call it 'balance'. So when the balance breaks up, spiritually between different life things, then you get ill and problem happens. But it's not just about negative things, sometimes this intermixing of different types of spirit can also bring miraculous things. So the knowledge system is completely different from what we learn basically from the taxonomic system where we put human on top of the ecosystem. So that knowledge system is heavily depending on spiritual narratives. Also heavily depending on the, the belief which our bare eyes cannot identify but in a way it's been proven through generations and generations in their community. So that's something I'm really interested in bringing in too. Mainly because our modern knowledge system has been failing us. There must be some other channels to recalibrate our ways of understanding how the world works and how we can survive together.

R - Youngsook if I can ask you, you talked about spirituality and it's a very difficult word to use in a Western context because of the kind of baggage that the word carries. And I wonder if you can say a little bit more about how you use that term in your work without making it into this very received understanding of spirituality as something disengaged from the body, from history. All of that stuff.

Y - Yeah. I'm looking at spirituality as a political potential. And actually, **Michel Foucault**, when he observed the Iranian uprising in 1979, he introduced the term 'Political Spirituality'. He stood up in that people's uprising against the very corrupted royal family regime and then he realised that it's not convincing political argument and narratives that make people come out to the street everyday. It was actually their belief that social change is possible. And also talking about in the Muslim population, if you think about there are six times a day at the exactly same time praying ritual, but with the same political aspiration. How powerful it could be? I'm not taking spirituality in this religious term either. I'm looking at spirituality as a kind of leverage to bring social infrastructure. What makes people come together in the end and what holds people together in the space. I think I see spirituality as the motivation, emotional motivation to bring people together into a certain direction with the aspiration of social change.

R - It's very interesting. But I'm still wondering how you communicate, because it's also a question of language, isn't it?

Y - Yeah.

R - And how that language carries a certain meaning.

N - People shy away from spirituality don't they. There's people who shy away.

R - Yes.

N - And get very, or at least Westerners get very, uncomfortable talking about spirituality.

Y - Yeah, totally.

R - But even when they talk about it, they understand it as something that has to do with some transcendental, supernatural, something that is associated with religion.

Y - Yeah.

R - With something. But it is disengaged from the world and the body. And I guess that is why I think I hesitate to use the word 'spirituality', because if I'm speaking in English and I'm speaking to an English audience then I need to be aware of how this term comes across. And to many people, it probably takes them back to the hippie days.

N - That or even, you say spirituality, I think about my Catholic upbringing and that is something completely different.

Y - Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I grew up in a Catholic family as well, so I understand what you're saying. But there is definitely fear of using this term spirituality. But I think even more so, the reason I'm really kind of stubborn about using spirituality as a kind of core

substance of my practice, it's also kind of challenging the arrogance of a current knowledge system. How we produce knowledge, how we circulate knowledge and how we cite other people's knowledge. I think it's all about this evidence based knowledge production. But evidence is coming from very specific channels, and evidence is often based on numbers, statistics and historical fact that is also written in very certain ways. And how we can fill the gap, all the slippage out of this current knowledge system and knowledge production process? I think spirituality is one way for me to hold on to that liminal knowledge system, that is hugely lost in the modern production of knowledge, especially when it started institutionalising knowledge. For me, institutionalising is another form of ownership. A knowledge is written by someone then it's owned by this person. I think institutionalisation is coming with the idea of property as well.

R - Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Y - So. So, yeah, that's it.

R - Yeah. Yeah. But it's interesting how we come to similar sorts of destinations through different routes because for the **CICC**, the **Court for Intergenerational Climate Crimes**, we see European modernity and the people/land separation as the point when... And that so-called scientific revolution beginning from the Renaissance to the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, we say that there is a fundamental transformation in the structure of thought, and at the core of that is a separation of body and mind. Because if you go back and look at the Renaissance and Reformation, what was the debate about? The relationship of the body to the mind, of matter and spirit? Yeah. And these debates took place in the churches and it was actually resolution of that through the Renaissance, Reformation, Counter-Reformation debates and processes that finally freed knowledge, science from any restraint or any constraints that it had. And that is why you have the scientific revolution, which completely denies spirituality in that material everyday sense, and then leaves it to some non...

N - And it's order imposed.

R - Yeah.

N - And the way you speak about the knowledge systems you're connecting with, that's not order imposed it's about decentering the human and and sitting back and looking at things, being part of something. And your colleague yesterday, Wendy, said something very beautiful that I did note down, and I forgot my notebook, about the different cosmologies. And how different cosmologies live alongside each other in any one place. And within that different experiences of time and how we move through time as well. Just a very incredibly gentle and generous way of being in the world, and so maybe you can speak a little bit more about that.

Y - Yeah. Just one thing about spirituality. You're absolutely right Radha. The reason I picked up this term 'spirituality', although there is anxiety and fear around it, is that because of the limitation of language I cannot find another word that can explain.

R - Mmhmm, this is true.

Y - Yeah. And especially for me poetic stance is the most political stance. And that poetic stance and ethical frame around poetic stance often is based on spirituality for me. So it's difficult to find the other word or language that can replace that.

R - Yeah. This is true, but at the same time it is quite important even for a new kind of politics to emerge, to bring the human spirit back and to put it centerstage of politics so that it doesn't get completely lost in this discourse about institutions and voting and electoral politics.

Y - Yeah.

R - Because there is no politics if the human spirit is not there at the centre.

Y - Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Also, I'm really interested in intimate aesthetics of community protest, community action. And those intimate aesthetics often end in a form of ritual. In that sense, spirituality plays...

R - Yes.

Y - ... a significant role to invent a certain type of community oriented ritual for certain intention. Because ritual always comes with intention, and intention can be about sociopolitical change. So altogether, that's how spirituality forms, is this direction of grieving damage to lands and broken communities all around and trying to re-imagine different futures.

R - But that is interesting. You should bring rituals because that's an extremely important thing again and again with the **Court for Intergenerational Climate Crimes**...

N - And it goes back to place based communities as well.

R - ...place based communities.

N - You cannot develop rituals unless you are seated, situated in that place.

R - We are not there yet. So how do we get there? So in the **Court for Intergenerational Climate Crimes**, what we try to do... with courts there is...and in people's imagination the word 'court' and 'law' has this very over weighted imagination...And we wanted to break that. But courts are also, there's a lot of ritual around law and courts. The way we dress when we go to court, the way we speak, the way we act. So what we do in the **Court for Intergenerational Climate Crimes** is to take those ritualistic aspects that people associate with the judicial system, but we hollow out the content by putting in our content. So this is a court and it's got a law that it applies, it's got judges, it's got jury, it's got evidence, it's got witnesses, it's even got judgements coming out. So it has all the trappings. But if you look at what the law is. If you look at how it assesses the evidence. If you look at the fundamental remedies that it suggests, it's completely hollowing out that core in that ritual. So in a very different way, whereas in your project it's much more affirmative and affirming those rituals and saying "Look, these rituals are not just mumbo jumbo, they embody a deep cosmology and we need to understand that cosmology." Well, we try to come to it saying these rituals are what is keeping you trapped in this cycle and you need to break out of it and understand that behind these rituals, there is a politics that

has brought us to whatever crisis that we are in. And if those rituals were established by people for a certain politics, we can also take them down. This is where...

N - And establish a new set of rituals for a new set of politics.

R - Yeah. In that musical procession which happened in Helsinki, which was another iteration of the **Court for Intergenerational Climate Crimes**, that is actually a line that says "They make the laws, we take them down." That is actually in the song.

N - Beautiful.

Y - Yeah, yeah. On that kind of correlation between Radha's ongoing reporting about the Intergenerational Climate Crime and my ecological grief process, I think there is a kind of a strong transnational solidarity practice. And also in this solidarity practice, we are also looking at interspecies construction. It's not just about us separated from the ecosystem, but we are all here together holding space together. I think these are really two strong correlations...

R - Yeah.

Y - ...I see between Radha's work and my work.

R - Yeah.

Y - So I'm wondering, because you toured around and held the trial in different bodies and calling different corporate, state and financial structures in different places, I wonder how the trajectory of holding different trials in different places formed into that transnational solidarity together?

R - That is an important question to clarify for the listeners, because the whole purpose of this project was to turn the art space into an organising space, as I said before. So how does that happen? Of course it happens through the members of the jury, which is the public who come. Our purpose is also to bring, and I think your project does that as well, people at both ends. The Essex tragedy that happened here with the Vietnamese, that end of why they came here in the first place. So we tried to do that as well. We try to take these corporations and say to people "You are the jury and you have to decide this." But all the witnesses who come to give evidence, all the judges who participate in this, all the jury members who participate in this, they have all actually been involved in the process. And they then form a network of various kinds. In Korea, for example, those peace activists and environmental activists who did not know each other before, but now they are all working together, doing film screenings. So we think that we can, through this art, play a facilitating role in bringing people together, in bringing solidarities, especially transnational solidarities. Because we cannot go on with this finger pointing politics. "They did that," "They did this to us," and then they say, "But you have to take your own responsibility," etc., and you get into this very banal and narrow thing. But one of the things that the climate crisis and the immigration crisis, and we see these two crises as the main existential crisis of our times, the climate crisis is about nature, the immigration crisis, about people, but they feed off each other and they are very much linked to each other. They are inseparable actually. They are two sides of the same coin, I would say depending on which side you're looking at it from. And so at this moment, what we need is those, the vocabulary and the language and the capacity to communicate as widely as possible, the reality that what happens at

this end has an impact at the other end. What happens there has an impact here. You send your corporations to those places, you bomb those countries, they come here. So there are two ends to this, and both those ends need to start speaking if we are to really make any difference at all and do things differently.

N - You spoke about this and those points in your presentation yesterday. And on that note, I was wondering if you could both reflect upon your experience of yesterday at **With. For. About** and what you noticed, what it felt like for you and the thoughts you came away from that conference.

Y - I think solidarity practice is more and more getting overlapped with art practice these days. We're living through particular times, super exploitative and even more meticulous post-colonial structures and because of that the majority of us are suffering from the system, therefore we feel to form the solidarity. And that solidarity practice is naturally immersed in a lot of artists' practice in recent years. The question is, "How can we observe this shift into a more mournful front?" For example, how we can form organising, collectivising it into artistic languages. Because organising, collectivising used to be the language of activism. But then when this particular language comes into art and cultural practice and how they're operated, is there any danger of creating another exploitation or extractivism. There are lots of ethical questions about bringing solidarity practice into art practice and we've seen a lot of bad examples as well in Biennale and in the big budget art practice, bringing refugees ship into the International or something like that. How? So I think for me, the reflection from yesterday, it was really invigorating to see a lot of people are moving towards that direction. But at the same time, we really need to start thinking and forming the ethical questions around the solidarity practice as art practice. Also the language around it and how we can not just extract the language of activism into art producing, but actually how we can create something beyond activism, beyond research and beyond art production. There must be new territory. We should explore it together. That's how I felt after attending the conference.

N - And everything you spoke about is happening in different spaces, but there's still a lot of resistance and people don't quite get it yet. I'm thinking of Documenta and the fallout from that, right?

Y - Mm hmm. Yeah. Yeah, exactly. And also, it's every institutional structure is outcome driven. In the end you need to have a tangible outcome. How can you get out of this? Because organising, collectivising is very process centred and how this process can be honoured properly without necessarily producing something tangible. I'm not proposing that there are not problems of doing this, I think the direction itself is really exciting. But often we shift our narrative like, "Let's all do decolonising, let's all talk about the ecological crisis." But let's think about moving slowly towards, by asking "What are the kind of ethical frames that we really need to think about?" Especially the subject of the conference was Care and the Commons. Care requires a lot of ethical frames around and otherwise it's becoming labouring and another kind of emotional toil. How we can prevent that? Care and constructing commoning means organising and collectivising and solidarity practice essentially, but there are a lot of ethical questions we need to form together. It means we cannot move fast.

N - Yeah, and yourself Radha.

R - I think what Youngsook raised is a very important question on the ethics of how we do art practice and activism and combine these things, that's central. For me, I see the role of art has to do with the imagination, and the role of art is to expand that imagination. And I think as artists, we need to think about how we can expand people's imaginaries. When we do that, people will make the change. I am nobody. I am just one individual, right? For me it is a question of "What can my art practice do to expand the horizons to imaginary, to transform that imaginary?" so that people feel that "Yes, there is something different, there is another world possible. There is something." Because I come to this from a more philosophical perspective. A human species, because now we are talking about different species, and human species has its own attributes. And human species, one of the attributes is its concept dependent. You need to have a pre-existing concept. If you're building a house, you need to first have in your mind what that house is going to look like and then you can start building it. That's the nature of the species. So engagement with concepts is absolutely central and this is why we focus on imaginaries. And when that chair shifts, then of course people will do what people will do, take it away from that. In that sense, my reflection on yesterday's event is that because of neoliberalism, because of extended capitalism, because every small space in our countries and our societies is now taken up by the market or the state in one way or the other, finding the space to even do this work of expanding the imaginary is becoming extremely difficult. That is the reason I absolutely value spaces like Heart of Glass and this Care and Commons project that allows us the space to talk about the big things. The ontological. Existential. All that, but talk about them in a way that is very connected to real people, real world, real communities. It doesn't become something that is analytical philosophy or something, but remains grounded there. I think these are very precious opportunities. Yes, there are questions about ethics. There are questions about ethics in every human activity that we do. If you're recording an interview with us, there are ethical questions there right. All human action involves some ethics in some part or the other. That is another attribute of being human, that we have the capacity to make judgements. Right or wrong and that needs to be fleshed out and talked about and discussed as Youngsook is doing now. Okay, I can't just assume that because I'm saying all these wonderful things that I'm not exploiting other people's knowledge or making my career out of it. These are always things that we need to be mindful of. But having said that, for me, having spaces like Heart of Glass to do this and coming to Care and Commons thing, I think that applies as much to knowledge as it applies to other things. Because when you care about people you equip them to act and to exercise their self-determination.

N - Exactly.

R - Yeah. We as human species, we need a knowledge base to do that. We cannot deny that. If you are thirsty, you should know where to find water. That's knowledge. You can't actually quench your thirst if you don't do that. You can extend that metaphor to knowledge. At least from what we have seen in **CICC** there is a thirst for that knowledge and it is our responsibility and duty to make sure that we give whatever we can in the best possible way, to enable people, to equip them, to empower them so they will do the change, not me.

[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.

59:00

END