

Placecast Episode 22 - Transcript

Nicola: Welcome to Placecast, a Local Policy Innovation Partnership Hub production based at the University of Birmingham. Placecast is essential listening for those keen to explore the ins and outs of knowledge mobilisation for influence in central and local government based on the view that it is only through animating the power of place-based leadership that the wicked problems of 2026 can become more manageable. Whether you're a researcher such as a scientist, an activist, a professional working within the public sector, a civil servant, politician, analyst or entrepreneur. We think that it's through our networks that most solutions can be assembled, tested, and the learning shared before we go again, and that universities can act as the repositories and observatories of these efforts. We're based in City-REDI and rooted in the LPIP programme funded by the ESRC, AHRC, and Innovate UK. This podcast aims to highlight knowledge and evidence-based ways of working, and the strategies needed to make real impact on the decisions that shape our society. Our guests are changemakers from across the UK with stories about the ways in which influence can be achieved. We focus in particular on some of the connective tissue within and between sectors for clues as to how to animate place-based leadership and innovating as a team sport best done in the open. Please contact us with feedback on the episodes or if you would like to be a guest or have strong views on the processes of advocacy, lobbying, public campaigning, and more. Unpacking how research and evidence connect with neighbourhood, local, city, regional, and national missions. I'm here this morning with Amy Burnett, who is one of the LPIP policy fellows within the programme, and we've just been discussing her theory of everything. Welcome, Amy.

Amy: Thank you, Nicola.

Nicola: The main outputs that you've been working on within the programme are the report on local and parish governance, which a little bird told me was the most downloaded article in the LPIP world. So, congratulations on that. But it connects more broadly with your conceptualisation of ecological citizenship. Can you tell me something about that please?

Amy: I have been looking at governance and decentralisation very much from originally kind of international development approach. I actually studied political science at the University of Birmingham and had an absolutely fantastic lecturer called Peter Kerr and he was a British politics lecturer. So I have roots in Birmingham which is really great to kind of bring them back to home if you like through the LPIP. And after I left Birmingham I went to work in a decentralisation project in Angola. And so I kind of saw firsthand that kind of post-war reconstruction, building something new and trying to encourage like participation with women who may not have necessarily been involved in decision-making at that time and from a very kind of different landscape of conflict towards building something positive and new in the context of an oil-rich

country. So it was a very interesting project, but I've always been really, really interested in the local level. So while that was international development, it was working very much at place and municipal governance.

When I came back to the UK, I was trying to find like well what kind of mirrors that kind of level and it was obviously, you know, working with parish and town councils and looking at planning in particular. So that's kind of like how my research shifted into this phase when I came back to England and I did my PhD looking at Frome, some people may know some people may not, but is a very interesting case of where a very active group of sustainability practitioners and those involved in the transition town movement kind of worked alongside people who were very clued up on how local politics works.

So together they built something rather incredible which was the independent kind of political what came to be a movement if you like. And so it was kind of trying to understand the intersection between sustainability governance through things like environmental movements and the transition movement. What happens when a group of quite radical independent thinkers take control of a town council? What happens when they try and use very mainstream processes like planning and particularly neighbourhood planning? So that what's the kind of like intersection that I've always been really interested in and it's the same when I was working in Angola like how can something very participatory start to kind of scale up and shift that very kind of like entrenched institutional logics whether that's a planning system or trying to find a new world order if you like in the context of post-war recovery.

Working with the town and parish council sector, you know, became something that I did as a practitioner but also through my research. So I looked at neighbourhood planning, I was involved in getting three different neighbourhood plans through referendum in communities near to where I live. I've been working with parish and town councils for quite a long time and I know the incredible work that they do and if you're working in a city or particularly in London where the parish and town councils aren't necessarily a thing. It's kind of like that they're quite overlooked but there's 10,000 of them and they've got a really strong network at a national level. They've got the National Association of Local Councils. Now there's also the Society of Local Council Clerks and then you have like this federated structure which works at the kind of county level. I could see that they were not necessarily being acknowledged in the debates around devolution and because I had various contacts from going back from my years of looking at this with the parish and town council sector I was having various conversations and kind of thinking collectively with them it's like how can they be incorporated into this conversation about governance so it was really driven through what I knew to be true of working at that sector and also the opportunity to link to the voluntary community and social enterprise sector which was what I was doing the value of that sector when I was the policy innovation fellow at DCMS (the Department of Culture Media and Sport) because I think there's a huge opportunity to bring what is quite a steward-based role that kind of attracts a certain type of very well-committed

citizens who are prepared voluntarily to give up their time because they want to look after where they live and sometimes, you know, some people might think oh, you know, it's farmers and people who've got a vested interest but I think they are like place stewards and that's one of the things that I've identified in my LPIP research is that there are these kind of like archetypes and archetype sounds a bit an esoteric word but essentially they're characteristics that you can map and endure over time so it's not like a role like a sustainability officer there are these particular ways of being so I've developed this concept of ecological citizenship which has anchored a lot of the research that I've been doing in the LPIP but it also predates it because I've been looking at ecological citizenship for quite a long time.

I had the very wonderful opportunity of going to the United Nations Palace of Nations in Geneva in 2011 to basically present some work that I was doing on the topic of ecological citizenship and incentivising that in particular looking at the relationship between social movements like the transition movement and local government and in that particular time I was looking at Lewes amongst other places and it's really nice because it's one of those things that have kind of gone full circle and yesterday actually they invited me to go and talk at their democracy day that they're having. It's lots of things that were incubated before the LPIP fellowship, but there's a lot of things that have kind of come to fruition and a lot of dots that have been able to be made and consolidated and a lot of observations that I've had doing my PhD or being a practitioner or just having the conversations that I've had through my LPIP research have just really brought to life things that I've been interested in, fascinated in for a very long time. I hope that I can bring them together in a meaningful way that helps various debates.

Nicola: Brilliant. I've always sort of struggled with the fact that there is an artificial distinction between international development practice and local practice in this country and I think the keeping apart of knowledges and sort of experience from international development into community development at the subnational scale in this country. I wonder why you think that is historically. Do you have a sense of why they were separate or is it just one of those things?

Amy: Yes, I was actually writing about taking a regenerative approach to international development and I think that it's a lot to do with political economy and I remember I used to work this decentralisation project that I told you about. It was funded by USAID which no longer exists but USAID is the United States Agency for International Development and it has indicators. My background is monitoring and evaluation and it's very much something I've been looking at as well in terms of how do you measure this kind of stuff that I'm interested in been talking about just now. But essentially a lot of the international development funding there's a lot of social good in it but it's also been heavily driven by the objectives of foreign countries and foreign interests. So at that time democracy was a very key thing of USAID and so a lot of their indicators and they talking about how many mechanisms were being developed as a result of this project etc. etc.

So I think that the political economy although it's not obviously all about that has kind of shaped the particular relationships in a slightly more top-down way although there's a lot of learning particularly around participation. Some of the most advanced ways of kind of doing participation has been from the international development sector. But I think partly it's also to do with language and now we have the internet has been able to make these community practices and particularly around the regenerative space like ECOLISE which is a European regenerative movement and a lot of the people also kind of had some ties to the transition town but also this kind of wider new economy approach.

So there is a slight parallel infrastructure arising from a more community-based regenerative approach to international development and interestingly some of the work that I've been doing with Middlesex University we've been looking at integrating finance and biodiversity as part of the IFB programme which is funded by NERC. It's something that I've kind of noticed and it's being verified through this particular work that we've got setting up a nature positive accelerator in the Niger Delta and when I was working in Africa it wasn't really the kind of younger entrepreneurs didn't have so much the conditions and voice and the capacity to become like entrepreneurs for social good. And actually I've seen quite a few younger African-based, and I'm sure it's happening in many other global south.

I kind of can see that they've almost taken on again like a stewardship approach to thinking about their role as kind of purposeful African or wherever they come from into kind of like developed businesses that are really suited for sustainable enterprise with a social good purpose. So they're effectively becoming social enterprises. And it's quite interesting that that's happening at a time when the traditional approach of international development is kind of not quite as we knew it because obviously USAID has changed and then you've got the FCDO has changed from DFID and those kind of things. There's been quite a big shift in the political economy of international development and I think that's actually given space to social entrepreneurs to kind of support where they live and where they love or the diaspora of the country because some of the formal international NGOs have had to kind of reshape and shift.

And that is not to say that the well-known names that do an absolutely fantastic job, but they don't have a place. Of course they do. But it's just interesting that it's allowing for the conditions for a bit of a shift in how that's actually resourced and financed and potential pathways for international development going forward. So if we can create some kind of linkages that are potentially more around the innovation ecosystems of supporting place, supporting supply chains, I think that there could be more conversations to be had. But I do think that that needs to be mediated and brokered in a way that actually surfaces that in a better way as well.

Nicola: Very interesting. Can you just give us a quick potted history of what the so you can give the Frome example? It was about either mitigation or adaptation to climate change in a sort of very, very broad sense, wasn't it? Economic, social, and the stewardship that you describe.

Amy: Yeah. The thing that really attracted me to the transition town movement and I was involved a little bit working with the transition network on their organisational development project and it was because it was trying to build this parallel infrastructure. It was trying to actively build something different. It was all about prefiguration, but it was also about very much the kind of building local economies. Now it's called hyper-local. It's not really a word that I personally use, but that's kind of like how it's often being referred to at the moment when we think about place. The transition movement was also about like developing parallel economies, parallel infrastructure. So for instance, like there used to be local banks, particularly regional banks, and they kind of like went by the wayside. But what the transition movement was trying to do was kind of resuscitate some of that or develop the Totnes pound, the Lewes Pound, the Bristol Pound, Brixton Pound, and essentially some of those were seen as quite quirky and quite tokenistic, but that's because they didn't necessarily land in the way that was hoped for.

And that's kind of like the really interesting thing about scaling up stuff on the edges. Why does it happen? Why doesn't it happen? And from my research that I'm looking at at the moment, it's looking at yet another and I'm seeing the patterns in my own thinking as I kind of look back and see what the things I'm interested in. But it's also looking at this edge infrastructure which is something that I've kind of looked at in my LPIP research—like at the edges, at the margins. What are the actual physical enablers of particular buildings or particular configurations of ecosystems that enable resistance and alternative ways of thinking and being and knowing and how do you kind of protect that? So that's very much kind of related to the sustainable niche management sustainability transitions theory and how do you kind of incubate something that's quite radical quite niche, and what happens when it scales and how does it then get institutionalised or co-opted and that kind of stuff. So that's also what I'm particularly interested in.

And when you go back to kind of parish and town councils because they operate in a particular space they're quite rule-driven in the sense that they are part of local government they are also a volunteer base and so when looking at the kind of the confines of which parish and town councils operate in, often it's quite set out in terms of they can do this, they can't do this, these rules and stuff which a lot of social movements don't have, but essentially whether you're a social movement or a parish and town council, your objective is the same. And that is to care for your place and to kind of support it, but they're done in different ways because there are these different institutional rules of how they might go about doing that. And I think that the opportunity and the potential challenge in devolution is how do you get those place innovators and those place stewards to kind of work together in a way that we can rethink the resourcing around place so that it weaves in the value of what they're doing.

I've done a lot of work on value and particularly trying to surface the shadow value of what doesn't get measured and also thinking about things like when was the last time that somebody thanked you for doing something because when you're a volunteer there's a lot of talk about community there's a lot of emphasis being put on communities to do a lot particularly in devolution or for parish and town councils to take on assets and those kind of things but often they can't articulate the value of what they do and the metrics and the measurements and the frameworks that we have don't always allow for that value that's like whether it's intrinsic and personal or appreciative value and also the regenerative value but something that I'm very, very keen on exploring that positive reinforcing tipping point and obviously, like, you've had researchers from the University of Exeter looking at positive tipping points which is a fantastic concept, but how do you get these value loops embedded in the kind of systems that either incentivise or measure what we do? And for people to be able to see the positive so it's not just about doom scrolling and looking at social media and feeling passive. It's about if you can see the value loop that you are contributing by doing this and surface that and celebrate it. Then we can all kind of work towards having a little bit more hope and a little bit more motivation to collectively do what we feel is appropriate to do with the resources that we have.

Nicola: In the report you talk about this sort of value but investment in these sort of pathways in order to help to deliver sort of a capacity for delivering services but also I was interested in there seems to be a ghost all the time between formal and structural and informal and volunteeristic kind of activity and I'm interested that you find them so clearly aligned in terms of seeking objectives because I think quite a lot of the scholarly literature certainly it sort of does focus on like scope for conflict or scope for exit or those kinds of things, you know what I mean? Like, so rather than seeing that virtuous circle or those virtuous loops that you're talking about, I think we do get hung up a little bit on certainly from a sort of devolution perspective. There's a very punitive language, isn't there, about devolving. It becomes the devolution of the carrot and the stick, but I've never really seen many carrots. It's very much every competence is enabled, but then it's kind of quite closely fought over and it's a struggle to get things taken to the right level. And there is a lot more space in the ways that you describe of power. It's a much more capillary thing, isn't it? So, some pull and then it sort of pulls together. It is a much more biological metaphor, but it's a very long way from the language of certainly the devolution White Paper and things like that. I wonder if you'd like to say something about that.

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Amy: Yeah, and actually I've just been preparing a blog on linguistic capital going back again to integrating finance and biodiversity programme that I've been working on at Middlesex University. I was in a meeting and I heard myself say "killing two birds with one stone" and you know I'm a vegetarian, I absolutely love animals and birds, and I was like, what am I doing using a phrase like this? The list is endless of businesses that have kind of taken the name of a natural

asset and appropriated the value of that in their branding. And it's questionable how much they've kind of given back. And I think it's about being really, really attentive to there's this really lovely children's rhyme and it's kind of like hear no evil, speak no evil, think no evil, see no evil or something like that. It's kind of like, you know, what you think about and how you think about it frames your response to it.

So if we are using things that are about basically dominating nature, how does that then affect how we think about our place in the world and how we kind of relate to other people? And so I think that's really core actually, to get us to really reflect on the language that we are using to describe things and to stop ourselves if we think that we are perpetuating something that is a negative way of looking at something or is potentially underlying about domination or whatever. And I think that it's something that I've also been looking at in my LPIP research. So I haven't yet published this. So it's a little bit kind of hot off the press, but hopefully it will be published very, very soon. It's about an idea which actually was developed while thinking about my PhD but I didn't end up using it in the final version, but it was called the Identity Intersectional Analysis.

And I know that intersectional has got a particular understanding of kind of looking at disadvantage and gender and certain kind of characteristics and how they kind of relate to each other. But that word intersectional when I came across it I was like yes, again goes back to the value loops idea around mapping the kind of compound effect that something can have and also looking at the language that we're using to kind of understand those powers. This is stemming from critical realism but it's kind of thinking around well there are generative mechanisms i.e., forces that we can't necessarily see but shape how we do things and also in critical realism is the idea that you have something as a power and you have a liability.

So there is a push and there is a pull factor and if we and now it's so I'm developing this framework through my LPIP research as a kind of means to be able to look at interview data or reports and try and like understand how is this phrase being presented and what is the thing that's understood to have the influence over something else and what implications will this have for society or understanding place or our relationship to nature or whatever. And so if we can think about how we're using language and then think about having tools like AI or we can just read things to actually think well actually we are the way that we're phrasing it. We might be a parish and town council we might be a community group. We might be a policy maker but we are looking at like this and this is our understanding.

You can see that in the way that language is co-joined and codependent on certain phrases and stuff and and we can kind of call certain ways of doing things out and kind of use it as a tool of collective learning. So I think that yes, it is often framed about sometimes the more negative things and the positive things, you know, whether it's the newspapers or whether it's a natural kind of predisposition to want to kind of look at something in a certain way. If we can develop

the tools that call certain things out, then I think that would be good. And that's one thing I'm trying to do is work on this toolkit, and also some cards. What I'd like to do is to be able to have conversation starter cards about certain values or about understanding systems in a certain way. What kind of archetype are you? Are you an elder? Are you a place steward? Are you a dancer? And who weaves in and out of things creatively?

By being able to identify what kind of role you play and the characteristics you have, it can almost kind of be quite affirming. I mean, obviously they may be not entirely something that's absolutely 100%, but if it gives you language to kind of say, "Yeah, actually that's how I naturally behave in this kind of circumstance." And if you're able to then look at what other kind of system builders within this kind of wider archetypal lens of understanding, you know, like so maybe it might be that there are certain archetypes, the elder might work very well with the steward, but it might work less well with the innovator and the dancer and things like that. So it's kind of knowing what do you need to kind of have in place. So it's not just about money and resources. It's not just about structures. It's about the characteristics that enable certain things to be seen and heard and acknowledged and acted upon and that requires taking a much more multi-dimensional approach to understanding the very kind of like systems universal type approach to looking at things but also in an organisation also take it down to a kind of personal level because I'm trying to put all this into a dynamic typology of place and think yeah okay so yes we might need a certain amount of money but do we have the correct system builders in place how are they kind of related to the wider identity the way that we're framing things and is it built in such a way that this network is supporting innovation at the edges or have we got kind of system builders and weavers that are working to support the stability of certain ideas in institutions and of course with devolution a lot of governance particularly at the district level some people do get absorbed planners for instance they may go to the new local authority the unitary authority and keep their role in a slightly different way.

But my experience of looking at the kind of abolition of the district level and what happens to these relationships in different places and is kind of leading to a little bit like a missing middle and lots of things have to reconfigure and and shift and adjust and I saw somebody pointed out to me that in Bournemouth Christchurch in Poole—I think I've got that round the right way—BCP reform want to abolish one of the councils.

Nicola: I don't actually know the full detail of it but it's kind of like abolishing the structures although it can kind of like reflect a more radical approach to change and people want change and they want you know to see things happen but sometimes the fallout of that and then the kind of relational composition it's a real big thing so I think we just have to be attentive to actually maybe the structures aren't necessarily the issue it's how we operate and behave in them. I kind of love your idea of a sort of arcana of archetypes and roles all those different configurations of elders, a dancer, that really chimes with my experience of roles that are taken for you and also roles that you make for yourself and where there's any space for contestation.

As you say, the planners always are supposed to be everything to everyone. But actually, there is quite a lot of scope to be either quite an activist for nature or quite pro-development.

And not all of that is about the rules that you're given. It's about your own kind of professional competence and how much discretion you can find within the frameworks that you operate. I'm always looking for those scope-at-scale questions. That's one of the things I think is fascinating. But also while you were talking, one of the things that leapt to mind was Audre Lorde: "the master's tools will not dismantle the master's house." How far are we able to use both language and also frameworks and all the rest of it subversively or for pro-social ends? The word stewardship that you used right at the top, I think it's fascinating. You're absolutely right. It conceals a lot of power dynamics. You can be a steward of a place. Think of the Duchy of Cornwall doing things at the moment. Apparently family trying to divest from certain kinds of investments and all the rest of it. It feels quite blackboxy to me. Sort of stewardship in a way it covers a multitude of sins.

So, very interesting. Thank you. So keeping it positive then can you think of a spotlight on a solution either from the transition towns movement or elsewhere that you feel has really worked well in doing the things that you've described? And just to prompt, can you think that it would be to do with the resources, the people involved, their relationships as you said. Is it about a politics longevity or profile? Can you think of something that from your experience has really worked to advance these agendas?

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Amy: Yeah. And I just wanted to before we go on to that, I wouldn't mind just reading my definition of ecological citizenship because it's something that really kind of like it came from the heart and people may not agree with it entirely, but this is kind of what makes sense to me. And another kind of archetype is also the leveler. It's almost like it's okay for the Duchy of Cornwall and for land owners kind of do what they do, but you know, if they open it up and they kind of invite in and it's not kind of closed and, you know, you can look at the House of Lords as an example of like hereditary peers and those kind of conversations. But I think that, you know, sometimes wholesale absolute change isn't what is required in full. We all need to kind of take our part and make changes so that we can kind of relate to the world in a slightly different way.

And I just wanted to read the ecological citizenship definition because I think it will frame the response to your question that you just asked around good practice and things like that. So, ecological citizenship:

> Ecological citizenship is awakening responsibility to connect to the beauty of the Earth and its intricate systems. It's about recognising your value and those around you by adopting a spirit of shared stewardship of each other. It's showing care for the unheard, the unseen, and the unborn. Ecological citizenship is having the tools to define and express the value of nature. So our actions protect and amplify her power to regenerate, restore, and catalyse new forms of life, action, and innovation. It's designing through ecological laws and social insights, systems that defend and support all life on Earth. It is the joy of celebrating our presence on this Earth and our place in time in the universe. It's about finding the flow and rhythm that drives what wakes every creature and plant every day and why the planets spin. Ecological citizenship transcends political parties, social status, or the size of one's house or car. It's a universal leveler that must be rescued from the challenges faced by those who accuse this spirit of being woke. It is a life force of possibility that provides therapeutic energy to satisfy our reason for being in the world.

So I think it's quite a philosophical take on ecological citizenship and I'm not the first person to kind of mention the term ecological citizenship, but for me, I was thinking about this and the obvious examples that kind of might get mentioned.

So obviously we have Wales and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, and there's the well-being economy movement and Scotland, New Zealand, Iceland, Finland looking at community wealth building and lots of times we've heard like Preston and Cleveland, lots of people mentioned doughnut economics. When I was at DCMS, I was in the Civil Society and Youth Directorate and it was incredible the amount of amazing policy that that department has that often isn't seen and understood. It's not in the everyday lexicon to know what they're doing and some of it is really at the forefront of thinking about impact economy and supporting community and that kind of stuff. So I think that a lot needs to be done to connect what is happening. Whitehall gets so much criticism.

It's kind of a target in a lot of these kind of debates that want to dismantle various structures and people complain about their MPs, but so much goes on behind the scenes and it's very, very easy to point the finger at what you think is the problem, and nobody's saying that the civil service is perfect or anything's completely perfect, and that's why I think looking at best practice is also sometimes there are obviously models, but even within those good practices, who is doing it, how they're doing it, why they're doing it, what resources they've got, who isn't involved. There are people that are kind of place pioneers and social entrepreneurs, and they of course do amazing things to change the world, but we don't always know what is exactly behind the scenes of the politics of all of that.

A lot of people wear multiple hats and it's kind of the same people popping up doing the same things and these people can also get burned out and there is an expectation that they will carry the load and that they will do everything. So while they may kind of like take a really good idea

and advance it in their communities, you know, they get very, very tired of doing that. And that's where the kind of appreciative value and the recognition in the typology that I developed from my British Academy policy innovation fellowship is trying to kind of unearth the nuance of all of this because there are things that are going on which we aren't always attentive to and which we don't see and sometimes they can be things like why is it that people go back when they have children they often go back to live near their parents. There's a reason for that.

That's something I'm calling ancestral lay lines because I feel and I've noticed it in my own life and patterns—I always map coincidences. I've got this long, long list of "coincidences" in speech marks but they're not coincidences at all. I feel like I am repeating the footsteps of my ancestors and whether it's kind of like repeating similar career choices or similar places, places that by looking at the records on a certain ancestral website, I can see that I work there or I do that and they lived there like 200 years ago or I'm looking at this particular county and I've uncovered that my family were pretty much from this county and I didn't really know. So I think it's not necessarily about looking to good practice and trying to do what other people are doing.

I think it's really looking within and trying to understand who you are and, you know, whether it's the kind of the archetypes or naming your position in the place and trying to believe that you don't need to be passive and what you believe in has as much value as what the next person believes in. That's why in my definition, it's about the unheard and the unseen and the unborn and recognising that we all have value. And I feel that it's the best practice that we could possibly do and then we will understand each other just a little bit more without feeling that there are these divisive things and these silos. "This is good and this isn't good." So that would be my response to that.

Nicola: And you've spoken about having worked outside the UK. Can you think of an international lesson which is in your mind as you develop these frameworks?

Amy: One of my dissertations for one of the master's degrees that I did, because I did two but I'm not the only person to do that, but I went to Brazil and I was really, really interested in how the experience of participatory budgeting could inform nature markets. Well, at that time it was a reduction of emissions and deforestation and degradation REDD, looking at like how the indigenous engagement and working on nature markets in Amazonian communities can embed the indigenous understanding and then relational kind of place culture and again it's like looking at the edges and this edge infrastructure that I'm very interested in and then the kind of formalisation with planning and participation. I think REDD obviously isn't a perfect policy solution either and I'm not going to pretend that it is, and to be honest I've not worked in that particular area for a little while, but one thing that was really interesting in Brazil in Manaus is that they had this particular like funding. It was like kind of very much tied to thinking about the kind of natural capital and the decision-making and the municipal governance and this is kind of

like where we're trying to get towards now with the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures and nature markets and things like that. But you know even some of these more mainstream global frameworks that we have, you know, that they may say that they are wanting to kind of work downstream and with communities and indigenous communities. There's an amazing spokesperson from the indigenous communities to kind of work with the UN on these like nature markets and this is all really, really positive, but it's kind of again like that translation of how do you really kind of meet the financial world as an equal and embedding those kind of logics. So I think like looking at the kind of municipal taxation systems and I do believe that there was an interesting one in Brazil and I think that if we can get the devolution financing architecture so that it again like is more towards this multiple dimension of value and really respecting and acknowledging the role of nature and social good and those kind of things in our balance sheets. I think for me that is like the thing that we need to work towards and really understand like is it devolution that's going to enable that if we kind of just hit reset and change the configuration of institutions or is it going to be something else?

Nicola: Interesting. I think the World Urban Forum just last week and I think the COP in Brazil—I mean, you know, it's completely trite to say that you need to have "nothing about us without us", you know, the sort of indigenous voice, but I think that at a time when some global institutions seem to be a bit creaky, there are real areas of certainly the UN Habitat movement, sustainable development goals, there are sources of light and hope at that overarching international scale in order to enable just the hyper-local activity that you're kind of describing.

Amy: But I think now because it's creaky and because the financing and the political economy and all those kind of things, I mean AI is not going to be something that's going to necessarily be entirely positive, but it could play an accelerated role in thinking about the data systems that we have to understand and incentivise positive action at scale and link communities to support a kind of wider community of practice and sustainability knowledge platforms which is something we looked at in a paper that I worked on with several other people. So I think it's kind of having it goes back to a project that I was working on when I was working with an international NGO. It's like looking at doing this global project management information system and looking at the indicators and trying to consolidate everything. We want organisational agency and we want to have an identity, but I think that if we think about having more comparative metrics and we're not constantly trying to reinvent the wheel and we're not trying to constantly put a stake in the ground, if you like, and I think that there could be shared understanding and knowledge sharing of what works and I know there are lots of these organisations and kind of platforms out there trying to do just that and some are doing a very good job, but I think that there's a role, a really interesting role in knowledge information systems and their role to play in articulating good practice as well.

Nicola: Thank you. So it's a huge top-to-back front-to-back global local agenda. You talked about the ecological citizenship work. So where do you see your work going next?

Amy: I would like to be able to kind of take this tool that I've developed through my British Academy work through the work with Keystone Ecological and Catherine Welder who has developed this really cool tool which it's a free-to-use tool. It's called the Value Community Mapper and it looks, tries to surface these different elements of value that often don't get looked at, but also looking at an ecological citizenship profile and define your archetype.

And what I would like to do is to be able to weave in all these amazing insights that I've only just scraped the surface of in this conversation from my LPIP research and just work with communities, work with policy makers, work with town and parish councils, go back to doing some international development related work and kind of use it as a conversation starter about let's collectively surface the things that we don't look at always because our metrics and our frameworks may miss certain things. So let's have a conversation about it.

Let's use some value cards or some archetype cards or look at dynamic theories of change and reconsider like just opening up the cracks of what we think we kind of know, and a lot of, you know, a lot of action is already being taken in this area to do things like theory of change workshops using the tools that I'm starting to develop as a kind of engagement and just see what we can learn collectively. And importantly, I really want to weave in the creative side into what we do. Because I think that finding it within yourself to kind of be able to pick up a pen, which is something that people are doing less and less of, and draw and write poems and write stories and write songs and dance and those kind of things. These are also incredibly important elements of being human.

Sometimes we say that we can't do them or we might feel ashamed to do it in public, but you look at how these creative tools are used in lots of indigenous cultures and they are just part and parcel of who they are and how they are as a community. And I want to, as well as looking at the kind of academic research side, is just to try and awaken this creative potential that lies within all of us in a very small way, even if it's just a kind of small conversation to help surface some of that. So for me, it's about weaving in my creative practice more into how I do my research as well.

Nicola: I don't know how many of your archetypes would count as brokerage. You've spoken quite movingly about some of the pressure on brokers. So you said carrying a community or carrying all the hope forward and burning out. And I know it's very often in networks, it's a very under-theorised, you know, people say, "Oh, build a network and then there's that central hub." But the central hub has got a really finite life in terms of whether it's a literally a person experiencing burnout or the way that information moves around systems. I think we can see in the UK centralisation is a very dead hand in the end. It can't remain this sense of life and

creativity that you describe. So I wonder in terms of brokers, can you think of specific people who've inhabited that space?

Amy: Well, in my experience, I'm going to say a few people. So, one I'm going to say Katherine. I actually wrote her a testimonial the other day for her website and I'm just going to read that out because this is exactly why Catherine is amazing.

Catherine developed my VCSC value mapper, which I've reframed as the Value Community Mapper as part of a British Academy policy innovation fellowship on the value of the voluntary community and social enterprise sector. I knew what I wanted to achieve but didn't have the technical ability to do so. I had the pleasure of working with Catherine on previous projects and knew she could make my research come alive in ways that understood the regenerative and multi-level analysis that I knew I needed. She animated my research and made my vision of years of reflection come into being. Catherine is a rare and powerful person who can rapidly understand your vision and see beyond it. She takes with a razor-sharp precision and technical prowess your seed of an idea and turns it into something intelligent, visually attractive and technically beyond your wildest dreams. So for me, she's a bit like a dancer.

The dancer in my archetypal thing is alignment with seasonal patterns, circadian rhythms, and natural tempos. And she just kind of—she dances kind of across, like, space and time. And she can just understand a vision and enact it. She's built the kind of technical capacity to kind of be able to do that. And she's also kind of got elements of like an awakener and she's really understanding nature's intrinsic regenerative power. And she was one of the early adopters of kind of regenerative food. But we were talking the other day about how actually sometimes you can be acting a little bit earlier than you have a kind of language to define something. So she's—what she's very good at is articulating that language before the world's ready to understand what it is and kind of put it into words, give it meaning and then you can kind of go out there and do that. So that's Katherine.

And then Peter Macfadyen, he's the person who is kind of like the main character in my PhD, if you like, but he is an incredible person as well. He wears lots of hats, some of them gardening, and he does like stuff to do with—he developed the Flatpack Democracy movement. He wrote books about power tools for working at a local democracy level, but he's also done lots of working as an undertaker. And so, you know, he's kind of taken on these roles that enable him to kind of be many, many different things and see things in a different way, but essentially he's a radical at heart. He's very kind of countercultural and he takes that line and that is his role and he's a very, very good networker and he can just make things happen by kind of introducing things and so he's like a node that enables many, many other nodes.

Sometimes you can want to ask permission to do things and I think I learned a lot from him in that you don't necessarily need permission to do what you believe in and I think that is important. And then someone else who's been really important to this research is somebody who's kind of part of the case study that I've been looking at and it's their relationship to this heritage asset, and it's not necessarily a listed building, but it's almost like they recognise that this building is like an intelligent being. And I've spoken to other people who kind of work in heritage buildings. And it's kind of there is something very, very special about old buildings and the materials that they use. And it's also like taking quite a farmyard approach to governance if you like. And it's not trying to put things in a box. It's not trying to plan. It's not trying. It's just a very kind of emergent and intuitive way of doing and being like on their own terms.

And I think that that's also something that is really important is just to kind of not force change if things aren't right and ready. And it's just kind of being a little bit methodical about things sometimes. But that goes back to not everybody can be like that. I'm not like that. I'm very different to that. But, you know, so it's just knowing that when you think about conflict, it's probably because there is a shadow to certain archetypes. And this goes back to kind of Jungian thinking and there is the shadow in ourselves that we need to kind of come to terms with. So within every archetype, it might be that they work particularly well with others, but just because you're different, it doesn't mean to say that that conflict is unhealthy. It's the only way that we're ever going to kind of surface understanding a different way of doing things and understanding, "Oh yeah, this can work or it might not work for me, but it can work for you."

And it's just kind of knowing that we do work in different ways, that our brains are wired in different ways, that we respond to things in different ways, but conflict is just a form—it's an emergent property of evolution and we just have to find a way to evolve together.

Nicola: Well, I think it's a sort of neuroaffirmative way of thinking about collective decision-making. So, I'm not going to ask you about a place leader because you've been so profoundly collective in your responses. So, I'm going to skip over that. And I'm going to let you have a wave of the place-based innovation magic wand. Careful with it. It can grant a wish. You can have absolute power to do one of these things, but you must use your powers to make a tangible change to a specific place. Your change will be specific, measurable, actionable, recordable, and transferable. Smart magic is hard to get hold of at the moment and is subject to a 20% reducing multi-year budget settlement. You may have £10 million in a project fund, half an hour with a cabinet and a slide deck, the editorial control of the front page of a tabloid newspaper, a clause to insert into a bill. Actually, I'll be generous. You can have a whole bill if you would like. A simple message that goes viral on TikTok or other social media, anyone that could advocate for the work or the answer to something that has bothered you. I just wonder which you think would make the biggest difference to a specific place.

Amy: Well, it wouldn't necessarily be a specific place if it went into this particular act which I guess now the act has passed.

Nicola: My legislative timetable is exhausted. Everybody's got brilliant ideas of grinding. So, let's have an act of parliament then.

Amy: Okay. So, well, it would be to kind of tag on into the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act and it would be requiring local authorities to publish their shadow value statement alongside any kind of consideration of asset transfer or planning applications so that we can think about moving beyond the cost-benefit analysis and that kind of driver of always defaulting back to money and thinking about the community intelligence and the things that we often miss. And if by mandating that, and I know that this will be subjective in terms of what goes into these calculations, but I just think that there needs to be something else on the balance sheets that considers social value, environmental value, and other forms of value, including whether or not we're appreciated and valued in what we do.

Nicola: A shadow asset register for local government at every level. The place-based magic wand can cope with that. Thank you, Amy.

Amy: Great.

Nicola: I'd just like to thank you very much for joining us. We set out to mine insights from experts, real-world case studies, practical tips, and career advice, and to spotlight solutions as well as to wave the place-based innovation magic wand. And we have.

Amy: Thank you.

Nicola: Thanks.