Sound & Vision: A discussion on the role of artivism in the environmental movement

Convened for the Oral History of the Environmental Movement Project

This account of the meeting was based on a transcript that has been judiciously corrected, edited and some minor additions made to make it more concise and easy to read for general circulation. We have endeavoured to check name spellings, but it has not always been possible to contact every participant to confirm, so please be cautious in this regard, and note that the spoken word is not always grammatical.

The meeting was held on 29th January 2025 at Royal Holloway.s rooms at Stewart House,, Bloomsbury, London. We are extremely grateful to all those involved in organising and contributing to the meeting. The participants were asked for permission to make this document public.

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Key	
[inaud] - inaudible word or phrase [incomp] - incomprehensible word or phrase	[sp?] – spelling unclear/unknown [?] – substantial section where audio is inaudible

Participants (in alphabetical order):

Bergit Arends, Art Curator at The Courtauld

Bob Wilson, Special Events Manager for Greenpeace

Chris Garrard, Culture Unstained

Fay Milton, Drummer and Co-Founder of Music Declares Emergency

Jo Flanagan, Founder of the Climate Choir Movement

Maeve Bayton, Musician, author of *Frock Rock: Women Performing Popular Music*

Martin Goldschmidt, Music producer and founder of Cooking Vinyl Records

Victor Smith, XR Rhythms drummer

OHEM project team members in attendance from Royal Holloway, University of London

Chair session 1: Oli Mould

Chair session 2: Barbara Brayshay

Chair session 3: Saskia Papadakis

Also present: Toby Butler and Chris Church

1) Session 1: Tactics

[00:00:00]

Oli Mould: *On the role of Artivism in the environmental movement, now if you're not familiar with that neologism, it's essentially activism and art put together, that's it. I think it's a really interesting topic of discussion.*

[General introduction to OHEM project and housekeeping] …

[00:03:35]

Oli Mould: *So as far today goes, what we really wanted to do was just get a handle on just the experiences of doing art activism in the environmental movement, however that kind of broadens out, however that is involved in your life, and really there's not a huge amount more to today than that. It's really just an attempt to get your stories, get your experiences, talk through some of the themes that we've put together, so thinking about- We'll start off with thinking about the tactics of art, kind of what sort of ways in which it's used to make particular points in the world to interject into particular debates. We'll have some food and then we'll talk about some of the materials that we perhaps use in sound, particularly in terms of what our experiences are in sound and in vision and artistic practices more broadly. What's the role of technology, that's the kind of material that we use. And then obviously thinking about the genres as well, there's lots of different genres of music, lots of different genres of visual art as well, which some are sort of more related to environmentalism than others. But really it's a very informal day and, like I say, the aim of it is really just to get you guys to discuss your experiences and, yeah, be a witness to what has gone on in the past and how that will inform environmentalism in the future. There is no more of an agenda than that.*

[Housekeeping and ground rules] …

[00:08:47]

Oli Mould: *Shall we just go just quickly round the table and just give a very, very brief overview, I'm talking like a sentence or two of your name, yeah, just quickly go through- We'll start over here.*

Jo Flanagan: Okay, so I'm Jo Flannigan, apologies for being late I got lost-

Oli Mould: Don't worry, it's a rabbit warren here.

Jo Flanagan: I'm from Bristol, I'm the co-founder and actions co-ordinating designer of The Climate Choir Movement.

Maeve Bayton: Maeve Bayton, artist and musician, but I was involved in a lot of music and politics in the seventies, eighties.

Bob Wilson: I am Bob Wilson, I'm an environmentalist from the late sixties, early seventies, worked at *Time Out* for twenty years and then went to Greenpeace straight after that for thirty-two years and retired, so I've got my own life back last year. So, yeah, that's me.

Oli Mould: Congratulations.

Fay Milton: Hi I'm Fay Milton and I'm a musician and co-founder of Music Declares Emergency which is-

[00:10:00]

Maeve Bayton: Music what?

Fay Milton: Music Declares Emergency, which is an organisation bringing music into climate activism, I'm actually on sabbatical at the moment. I've just started, since the last couple of weeks, but, yeah, still here in that capacity.

Bergit Arends: I'm Bergit Arends, I'm a curator of contemporary art and I've always been interested in working with museums, institutions through which a sense of environmental history can be known, and so I've worked with a lot of international artists in this country and in Berlin, as well just to have a look at what European understandings of nature are and to critique that.

Chris Garrard: I'm Chris Garrard, he or they. I work for Culture Unstained trying to get oil companies to stop sponsoring art and culture, but I've been involved in a lot of art activist groups like BP or Not BP, Shell Out Sounds, the Stop Shopping Choir.

Victor Smith: Hi, I'm Victor, I use they/them or he/him pronouns. Currently doing a PhD on drumming in activism, like community bands and activism. Also part of the Rhythms of Resistance Movement and I'm the external co-ordinator of XR Rhythms. So if you see XR drummers, I've probably told them to do that at some point. [laughing]

Oli Mould: *I'm not going to lie, I think the drumming is possibly one of the best parts of this, they are very good, they get us all together. Okay, great, well thank you so much for that. I think what- We sent round a briefing document which had some very basic, very kind of open questions here. But really I think, just to kick it off, one of the ways which we can kind of think about this is, particularly the roles of tactics, is just basically what your first involvement was and what was it about your artistic skill, your artistic passion that you wanted that to be part of the environmental movement. So what was the first kind of initial thing I guess? I mean I don't want to go round the room again, but was there a particular moment that you thought, yes, I can use my creative skill to be part of this movement? Was there a particular moment. I'm talking about beginnings here. Anyone got any-?*

Maeve Bayton: I wasn't- I'm getting a bit wary of the term environmental…

Saskia Papadakis: *So this is Maeve Bayton speaking.*

Maeve Bayton: Yeah, Maeve Bayton, sorry- Yeah, because I was involved with feminist bands. I was in an all-women's band, we did 200 gigs around- But that was all *feminist* politics for ages, and then I had a band called Jane Goes Shopping where, I mean even in- you know, we were a feminist dance band, so we were doing massive women-only gigs, about 200 I think. But I was writing songs about nuclear death and atomic energy and stuff like that. And then another band, I was doing sort of political, in a broad sense, not specifically environmental. I suppose you're including cruise missiles and everything, are you?

Oli Mould: *Yeah, absolutely, yeah.*

Maeve Bayton: Okay, but it wasn't like green like now, because it was ages ago.

Oli Mould: *But how is that- So have you noticed there's a difference in the ways in which-*

Maeve Bayton: Sorry?

Oli Mould: *Have you noticed there's a difference then in terms of the artistic involvement today than it was back then? Not just environmental stuff, I mean activism more broadly?*

Maeve Bayton: No, I haven't been involved a lot. I'm sort of in XR but I'm not terribly active. You know, I haven't really been involved in it recently, except I'm aware of it.

Oli Mould: *Anyone else?*

Fay Milton: Fay Milton, from Music Declares Emergency. So when- I was part of XR, so I joined XR through friends, really near the start, and when the first Rebellion was on in April 2019, was it? We saw- I was actually overseas during that time, so I was still playing- I was playing as a session drummer, and I was playing Coachella at the same time as the Rebellion was happening in London. So I was looking around, I don't know if any of you have been to Coachella or seen pictures of it, but it's a music festival in the desert in California, in a polo field. So it was green grass everywhere, it's completely unnatural. The festival, it was just unbelievably unnatural, very commercial, very- Like it's an amazing festival but it's kind of gross at the same time. And on my phone, I was on all the WhatsApp groups seeing these amazing images of the protests coming through. People sort of sharing flowers on Waterloo Bridge and the pink boat, obviously. Obviously all the drummers, like all of that energy felt much more related to what music should be representing than what I was seeing around me at one of the biggest music festivals in the world, which was- I mean one of the bands had a car on stage as product placement, it was literally a car hanging at the back of the- I think it might have been an electric car but still it's just bizarre, and looking at that and then seeing the images coming through on my phone, and then also seeing- I think there's something about having been part of organising it and then not being able to be there was very frustrating. But also seeing all the images, I think Massive Attack played during that time in Marble Arch, and seeing the energy that that brought, the kind of realising the energy and the excitement of being at a protest is very similar to the energy and excitement of being at a gig. They both bring people together, people do similar things, they shout, they put their arms in the air, they talk to people they don't know. It's a very similar sort of space to be in as a human.

So realising that, when I got back, I actually spoke to a friend of mine called Kay Michael, who'd started Culture Declares Emergency, and she explained how that worked,

how they got all the institutions to declare an emergency, and I thought, ah-ha, music needs this as well, but it needs to be separate because the music industry has a huge ego and it needs its own thing. So that was sort of the foundation of starting Music Declares Emergency. Sort of realising on one hand the power that music could bring to the protest world and to that kind of, that activism space, but on the other hand realising that music is going to get out of touch if it doesn't recognise the world that's around it and doesn't recognise the climate emergency and doesn't reflect that, because music and the industry needs to reflect our current circumstances, otherwise what's going on? So, yeah, from that, Music Declares Emergency was born, so I think, yeah, that was my starting point in creating that space within the activism world.

Oli Mould: *Yeah, Jo?*

Jo Flanagan: Yeah, Jo Flannigan. So my daughter, my adopted daughter, Molly was about to have a baby and I was birthing partner, and it was April 2018, just before the big Rebellion in May. I couldn't go to that but I was so frustrated. I joined XR, I was so frustrated at the lack of media coverage and the lack of awareness. I mean we forget how things have changed now, but there would be maybe two or three articles about climate change in the nationals a week, I mean it was big news when something was covered. So I've always been involved in activism. So at sixteen or seventeen, I was in London marching against the hunting of whales which were being hunted to extinction. I've always made it a thing to, in any march, and I've been on many like all of you, on any march I've been on or any protest, I always, literally, physically take myself on the other side of the road and look as the marchers are going past or the speeches are going and think what would I make of this if I hadn't a clue what it was. And I'm so frustrated by activists doing a lot of talking to themselves, so if the messages, the banners and so on are always just facing inwards or they've got in very arty messages but they don't actually resonate with people outside, so they don't know what it's about. You know, dot, dot, dot-

So, it was just before my first granddaughter was born and in my frustration I thought, which had been used a lot by other activists around the world, about the metaphor the sinking Titanic. So in Bristol, right by the harbour steps, I designed and organised my first action, which was a massive painting of the sinking Titanic. We had actors from Invisible Circus came with the masks of leading world politicians, there was someone

holding a banner saying, 'Politicians stop rearranging the deckchairs.' We had classical musicians playing the music that was actually played as the Titanic sank, we had a message at the front of the ship which was, 'They said this couldn't happen' and then at the bow, 'We're heading towards climate disaster.' And then I had, down the steps, what was happening, messaging, and up the steps solutions and the last one was, 'Come to London on Saturday,' for that May one. So that was my gift to my almost-born granddaughter.

[00:20:11]

Shortly after that, I learnt quite a lot from it actually. I'd got a freelance photographer along and I said, 'Why didn't you use it?' and he said, 'There was too much messaging. It was just, you know, the actors comically rearranging the deckchairs, I got it that you use humour you get more shares. You had the musicians, you had about twenty banners saying, you know, what's happening and solutions. It was just too much.' So I learnt from that to sort of have two maybe key messages and really hammer it. I used that action again at G7, that got masses of coverage, so that's why things have changed, so that was two years later, whatever, in Falmouth I think it was. But I was then recruited for XR Money Rebellion for their strategy actions team, so I worked for years with them plotting what XR activists around the UK would do with-, you know, to target the people that will make the difference, people who are financing and insuring our disastrous demise.

Oli Mould: *And that was – sorry to interrupt – there's a video that you sent round that you wanted us to have a look at, that's of the HSBC-*

Jo Flanagan: No, that- There was another action which didn't use music which was outside Black Rock, where I glued myself to Black Rock's front and got twenty-four activists past all the security cameras – that was in October 2019. And we had to set off a dining room table, again theatre being important, with people comically sort of dressed as Black Rock employees but comically eating money which we'd designed with beautiful-, like the £10 note, with the waitress and the staff, right in front of Black Rock's office, and then we had me glued at the back, and we had a big banner which is, 'When you cut down the last tree, the last fish, poison the last river, you'll realise you cannot eat money' – which we all know that one. But it was like again using humour and pathos.

But that action – so after the one I did before – got worldwide coverage, and that was on the backs of all the activism that had gone, and the sort of XR activists being arrested and stuff. The one I was talking about is my first one, is the start of the Climate Choir movement that was-

Oli Mould: *Okay, that's really interesting, So Victor, you're the drummer, so that event that Fay was talking about, the rebellion on the bridge, so music's obviously an important part of the feeling or the kind of atmospheres that are generated, is that what drumming is to you as a kind of-?*

Victor Smith: So in terms of like getting involved in the first place, I actually just joined SOAS's little samba band at Freshers' Fair for fun. It was like, this is going to be ridiculous, I have no musical background, this is going to be ridiculous, I'm just going to have some fun, and it's probably just going to be a one off and bah, bah, bah, bah. You know? So I had like no intention at all of getting into activism whatsoever. I was just going in to do something different, do something weird, and it turned out that I could remember every single pattern that I'd learned. I'd learned other instruments' patterns as well, which I had not expected because I have no- Like I'm not a musician, no musical background whatsoever. And, yeah, so the activism kind of happened accidentally. I'd been involved in some queer rights stuff in my previous uni on the Queer Students' Society. Done a few marches, things like that but getting involved in the activism thing was like totally, totally unexpected [laughing]. And, yeah, and obviously now it's like, I don't think I realised what a huge part of protests it was at the time. And it's, yeah, very much been like a learning experience of figuring that out as I've gone along. [laughing]

Oli Mould: *Great, yes-?*

Bergit Arends: Yeah, it was so interesting, actually what I'm going to say probably in response to yours, and yours, comments because I think I have a quite different type of activism in a way, because I'm very much within institutions and it's a case, you know, wherever I talk about an event or a situation that sort of is the beginning of my activism, that was when I was at the Natural History Museum in London, and actually I started there as curator of content but with an exhibition space, and also that means that you have got an audience that comes through the Natural History Museum, that comes with it and who you've got to talk to. So you structure your communications, sort of according to that.

[00:25:10]

So the first project I- it was already committed to and I then curated is an exhibition with Cape Farewell, who sort of very much put itself forward as alerting to climate change and climate through paying attention to what's happening in the Arctic and- So they had done, by that time, about three journeys or so to the Arctic, had taken a number of people, so that involved some quite well-known artists, like Antony Gormley, and then musicians, I don't think so, but there was actually interestingly, and this is of my choir note which is sort of response as it is- there was an artist called Max Eastley, he went three times to the Arctic with Cape Farewell, and he created an incredibly choired sound-piece for the exhibition space, so it required a quite different skill of listening to an environment, which I think is quite interesting and maybe broadens out our understanding of what activism can be because this- So Cape Farewell had the ambition to be very activist and taking people-, there was this idea of, we're taking these experts as our artists, they took some scientists as well, to witness what was going on in the Arctic and to come back with their reports, be it auditory, so sound recordings were taken there, visual, lots of photographs were taken, there are films and so on- And then the ambition of the Natural History Museum was, well we then talk to our audiences and there was- it was then 2005/6, so there was a lot of economic changes around energy prices and so people were quite willing to come and see this exhibition because they knew they had to change their behaviour as well and, you know, because of energy uses that- So there was a lot of information around how you can adapt your living in order to lower your carbon footprint and so on. But to me, what always was problematic, and so it's coming back to my anecdote, is that I always thought it was kind of wrong just to go to the Arctic in order just to report back in a way. So we discussed that quite a lot actually, why did you have to go there? Why did people go for a week to the Arctic and put themselves on snow scooters in order to have, you know, what was ultimately also quite a lot of fun to go to the Arctic. Because that feels all wrong to me and, you know, you can't- So, you know, these kind of questions became quite interesting, what's the conundrum if you go to places, and then also what came out of that, which I know that some of criticisms as well to some of the environmental movement as well, it's very white, it was very middle-class and that also was the case in the Cape Farewell project in a way, but that then took me also to think, well how can we bring more diverse voices to environmental issues and climate change, this one in particular, and then so how can we open this up? And so that

was the moment where I also then looked into the collections, the work of the Natural History Museum more where- At this point, also it's important to understand that the Natural History Museum didn't necessarily have a take on climate change, they didn't really put themselves forward as campaigning just to ameliorate climate change, that was not their agenda at all, and in fact more environmental issues have come to fore only more recently, so they're adopting the idea of Anthropocene and what can be done about it, and so on. So in a way there was some environmental activism from within the institution that could be done, which was important for them to change how they have to position themselves in relation to climate change, biodiversity loss and so on, because museums are still fora in which these debates can take place, and then you have got an audience and you have got, you know, the infrastructures there to go into nuance of this.

So then my research started with, you know, there was still a very ahistorical understanding of what environmentalism or, you know, understanding the study of nature and the environment, so histories of Empire, histories of trade did not figure in the Natural History Museum work really, and so that's where then my work started, that I'm still doing, and so that was the moment of, you know, what kind of social justices can we bring into this, together with environmental justice, and what's the research that can be done and where, and who are we talking to, which was quite specific in this case.

[00:29:53]

Oli Mould: *Thank you, that was Bergit by the way. And then there's Bob, I guess one of the things obviously with going back to the seventies, I guess what I find fascinating is, I think as part of the movement, is all these events that we've talked about recently, over the last few years, and all these huge drummings and the big sounds and stuff. I mean it's a kind of case of like, we want everyone else to know about this. Was that the case, or was it more of an individual thing, saying I'm just doing it because I wanted to sort of express my own angst or-?*

Bob Wilson: I find myself saying 'back in the day' an awful lot these days. [laughing]

Oli Mould: *Well that's fine, that's fine.*

Bob Wilson: All the time, and I'm trying to stop doing it, but if I really go back in the days I was this kind of beatnik in Cheltenham, really, singing folk songs. And folk songs

were in a way protest songs, Woody Guthrie was singing those songs. If anyone's seen the Bob Dylan movie, go see it because it's just amazing. But anyway, and I guess then moving into London in the amazing days of the mid-sixties, I think the first things- I mean obviously Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, I was aware of that, and that was '62, and in a way that dates the environmental movement to some extent, that's when the word started to be used and understood, but people didn't really understand quite what was going on.

I think the first things I got involved with were, in a way, in terms of protest, I was kind of involved in what was called the underground press. And what it really meant was that you could produce a magazine from your kitchen table for the first time, with the development of offset printing and computers, basically. And they were a form of protest, but we were all living under a huge repression in those days. I mean you couldn't produce a play without having it signed off by the chancellor, you know, it was amazing. And around us people were- the pressure was building and it had to kind of, it had to bang, it had to pop, and it popped, in a way, through festivals. I mean, you know, the Reading Festival, the Windsor Free Festival, Fun City, they were prior to- they predate even Glastonbury, they were like the late sixties, and in a way that was a way that people could come out and kind of revolt, in a way, against like the fact that there was oppression around.

And all the movements that the underground press were able to report on, whether it's gay liberation, women's liberation, black liberation, they were all beginning to start and they were protests. And although we kind of maybe didn't know what we were against, we certainly knew what we were for, and that was, in a way, for trying to break down this barrier, these walls, and it's through music and the festivals and through publications that we were able to kind of spread. There was magazines like *Friends*, like *IT*, like *Oz*, all those magazines in a way gave a voice to all these movements that were beginning to start. They weren't getting any publicity from the main media. I remember we held an event at the Roundhouse called Freedom and Repression in the Media, and it was well attended, and it was basically the straight press versus the underground press, and it was an amazing debate but it did show the huge kind of chasm between what was actually happening in the streets and what was happening in the mainstream press.

And out of things like-, even like I guess in Notting Hill, where I was living, Portobello Road, Carnival came up through that, and that to me was one of the ways- a great way of people going out on the streets saying, you know, we're going to show you our art, we're going to show you our culture, we're going to do it through music. And that's really where I came into it, in a major way, and stayed with it, it obviously changed, evolved, but that was my starting point, yeah, which was pretty amazing. I did live the life and I'm very pleased that I was around in those days, and I feel sorry for people who didn't have that experience because it was an amazing sort of comradeship and the arts, and the whole thing bursting free and loads of opportunities to go up against the motherfuckers, [everyone laughing] as we said.

Oli Mould: *Yeah, well we still do that now I think, we just don't use that language. Chris, just to sort of carry on with that, I mean are there are particular moments you can speak of? I mean, can I just say, the interesting thing here is the ways in which the tactics have sort of- I wouldn't say changed, but become more collective, perhaps. I mean is that something you've noticed? Or just give us a sense of your journey in this?*

Chris Garrard: Yeah, sorry my brain's sort of full of different thoughts. I think for me- So I studied music a bit and then was getting into activism at the same time, so there's- they were kind of existing separately and I didn't want them to exist separately, and I had the privilege and opportunity to get involved in going to things like COP, that was in 2011, and then to the Rio+20 Conference in 2012 with other youth activists, and that was really interesting from a kind of-, you know, I'm from the UK, I'm a white male, and encountering how other people were working within and using cultures. So there was an element of that, and that learning that happened.

[00:35:03]

Then I guess a result of coming back, and felt really like I wanted to bring these two things together or to find a way to bring them together, and I think something that's still an interest for me is having gone into a lot of spaces where they'll be a kind of- almost apologetic kind of attitude to art-making which is, in terms of like, 'We really need you artists, we really need you creative people'. And it's like, '*Thanks?*' [everyone laughing] And there's a notion that like 'Climate is really complicated and dry and boring, and it's just purely scientific and we need creative artist people to translate so people can engage

with it and understand it', and I find that really reductive as well because I think that ignores or downplays that it's a human crisis, as we all know it's intersectional, it's connected to questions of race and power and all of these things, and I don't really believe in that separation. That doesn't really work for me. So I was interested in like what if- And I think it's like an ongoing question, but what if the art-making is the doing, is the process, the ways in which we organise and collaborate, if we conceive of that as artistic, creative processes in the way that we would devise a theatre performance or compose a piece of music together, what if those are more along the ways that we organise. I think we see some of that in like, I guess the consensus decision-making which became popular through the Occupy Movement. Because that was the other thing around that time in 2011, Occupy being quite big. So those were the kinds of seeds for me, and then I remember I was in the Greenpeace group in Oxford, and then I saw this video and then I saw someone that was in that group, and what they'd done is they'd gone to Stratford-upon-Avon and they jumped up on stage before a play, at the Royal Shakespeare Company Theatre, because that play was sponsored by BP, and they did this like three or four minute performance in Shakespearean language but they'd rewritten it, I can't- I can remember some of it- And then they did more of these, and they were sort of over and done before the play would begin and then the audience was like, 'Oh, this is great, we hadn't realised'. So it was doing the doing because it was like disruptive, it was tactical, it was also conveying the message. They stood outside and asked people to rip the BP logo out their programmes, so it was a bit of like doing something active. So it was at least an attempt to like try and do something quite tactical and quite rounded. There were other things alongside it, and I was like, 'That's asking the questions that I'm interested in and I want to explore'. So I kind of talked to the person, obviously the Greenpeace group was, how did you get to do that, how do I join this underground club? And that was a small group then, which went on to become BP or Not BP, and became much bigger and think about much bigger, collective mobilisations, working with other groups. And then there's more that could be said about it, and maybe later on, but I think an interesting aspect for us as a group was having to confront, you know, who was in the group. We were predominantly a white, middle-class group, the fact that we then- Slightly going to the British Museum over there, and there were other issues in that space, Colonial histories, questions about restitution that we couldn't ignore, so we had to sort of grapple with some of that. And then I think the question that I'm also interested in then, how do we use that collaborative art-making to be a means for

solidarity, for working with others, and thinking about the power dynamics of that as well, that's it not just, 'This is our creative project and we're inviting you to be a part of it'; where are the opportunities for cocreation, and there may be some really strong examples of it, some less good ones, you know, and there was a learning process through that as well.

But it was always wanting to experiment, find different forms, different approaches, try different ways of doing it, and similarly with music and signing, is like, oh, are we just singing on the sidelines or can the singing get in the way, do the doing and be the disruption and, you know, like in other ways that other people have experimented with. But, even just to us, the question, how can it be tactical and interventionist as well as bringing us together as a group and feeling like we've got- that was the other word I wrote down is agency. I think there are ways in which we can use art in our activism which really activates us, cultivates a sense of agency, and then that thing I said earlier on about this kind of perception of, 'Oh, you can come and do the creative bit or the afterthought', where it's maybe not inviting a sense of agency in the same way. And I think that's where the power comes from, where you give that sense of agency, on a protest, on an action, on a demo, and who knows what might happen because you might keep improvising and suddenly you're breaking into a building or suddenly you're doing this, and I'm kind of interested in that revolutionary potential that could be unlocked as well.

Victor Smith: Yeah, Victor. Do I need to say my name before I speak?

Oli Mould: *I mean it would help but I mean we can-*

Victor Smith: Yes, I'll try to remember that. Yeah, it was really interesting what you were saying about art becoming the way of doing, doing the thing. Something that I have got super interested in, like especially, it didn't even begin to be the point of my PhD but over time it's became more of a thing, is that XR is getting smaller and more insular and it's more people yacking to each other in Zoom meetings. But XR Rhythms is getting bigger and bigger, and we're getting bigger and bigger to the point where we're basically independent from XR now, and I have been thinking, what is going on here, and like the Rhythms of Existence movement that began with a little samba-fusion band in London has now spread across the world and there's like a thousand people worldwide doing this,

playing drums at protests, and it's got me thinking, how can this movement have been going on for forty years and be growing now? We kind of have people in kind of leadershipy positions like me. I talk between XR and XR bands, and I chase the London band around and get them to demos and things. But really we don't have like the Zoomy- We've got a big Telegram chat, we've got a big Signal chat, we don't have like any kind of recognised hierarchy, you know, and these things going on. And I'm thinking like, how has this lasted for forty years and how is it still growing. I think that what we're doing that a lot of groups don't seem to be doing is that we aren't requiring a lot of discussion and a lot of theory and a lot of knowledge of politics. Like basically all you've got to be able to do to join the band is be interested in like vaguely left-wing stuff, and want to bang a drum and go to a protest. [laughing] And, yeah, I think this is possibly something that other groups are missing, and possibly something that pushed the movement of big protest groups in the sixties, in the seventies, and again in the nineties with the DIY culture stuff and the anti-roads protest is that it was a way for regular people to get involved and take action on something they care about without having to be able to quote Marx and god knows what else, and sit in meetings forever. So, yeah, I think community music, collaborative music, and probably any kind of collaborative, actiony thing that doesn't require a lot of talk could be a really important key to getting mass participation in protest movements.

Bergit Arends: Just to respond to Victor, I mean there are also- I mean culturally I think it's quite widespread that, you know- in Argentina for example during the dictatorship, they used their pots and pans and banged those, so I guess it's whatever you have available then and you just need to make a noise. Or I know, so next month, when there are the elections in Germany there are some screaming protests, so people just step out into the road and scream. So I guess it's just, you know, it's that collective sound making, not even noise making, I don't know, which is so attractive in the first instance, anybody can do it, yeah.

Oli Mould: *Yeah, screaming is pretty attractive at the moment. Fay, did you want to-?*

Fay Milton: Yeah, so I was going to say, thanks Victor, and I think at Music Declares Emergency we started a campaign called No Music on a Dead Planet, and that was really, really popular for exactly the same reason, because you can sort of use that slogan, wear the T-shirt to a music festival in the same way that you would wear a Metallica T-shirt to

a music festival to show that you're a Metallica fan, you can now wear like a No Music on a Dead Planet T-shirt to show you're 'the kind of person who cares about climate' – I'm doing air quotes. [laughing] And you don't need to know any more than that. You really just sort of need to plant your flag in the, 'I want things to get better' camp and show the world that's what you want to do without having to quote Marx, without having to use the word narrative a lot, without knowing what a stakeholder is. It's like, because a lot of that stuff makes people feel stupid, and if you feel stupid you're not going to go anywhere near that kind of thing.

[00:45:02]

So, yeah, I think it's very similar to what Victor was saying, that's why it's- A successful campaign can be something that requires no background knowledge, just a sense of who you want to be and where you want the world to be.

Barbara Brayshay: *I think that slogan got adopted as well, didn't it, into other things like No Snooker on a Dead Planet.*

Fay Milton: It was originally No Business on a Dead Planet, so we adopted it.

Barbara Brayshay: *I know the guys did the-, they threw the orange powder on the snooker table then was like, No Snooker on a Dead Planet.*

Fay Milton: Yeah, I've seen No Golf on a Dead Planet, there's a lot. But, yeah, it was No Business on a Dead Planet was the original-

Oli Mould: *I was watching the snooker live on TV and thought-*

Barbara Brayshay: *I bought the No Music on a Dead Planet T-shirts for Christmas stockings.*

Saskia Papadakis: *So that was Babara Brayshay-*

Barbara Brayshay: *It's Barbara Brayshay, yeah, sorry.*

Maeve Bayton: Well I wasn't sure what to say earlier because I'm confused about where this was going and to what extent I could contribute anything. I was there, Bob, I was

really there. But then I think what's missing for me here is one, punk, and two, the women's movement, including of course Greenham Common. I mean I'm talking about, the sort of- when you're talking about DIY, all that DIY stuff was there with punk, was there with the women's movement, zines and everything, all that stuff. People taking a great principled stand about not joining up with big record companies, doing it all yourself. Having a women-only PA which was like only two in the country at the time, or you wouldn't play. I mean very, very- I mean it's not environmental-

Saskia Papadakis: *What's a PA, sorry?*

Maeve Bayton: Sound system. I mean it was all male sound system engineers and only two women PAs in the entire country in the early eighties. And so, I mean I was in a very, very feminist women's band, and breaking all those conventions about – I don't know whether this relevant or not – but, you know, all the conventions of a gig. Whether there's, do you need a stage? No, let's not have a stage. And people can come up and join, they can sing on stage with you. And then Greenham Common of course with all the- everybody singing at the gates creating music together, apart from like big gigs and everything as well. But I mean I didn't get it because I was going to all these demos in Trafalgar Square and when we were told we were going to be on the first gig at Greenham Common, I thought 'why the hell are people going to this field in the middle of-' [laughing] I had no idea. Like what's this about? But then seeing it, and then challenging the kind of patriarchal military kind of complex, you know, and the knitting on the- the fabric on the fences. I mean one could on and on forever but I'm just thinking it kind of, if you're jumping through history, then that's really important.

Oli Mould: *Yeah, absolutely. Anyone else want to-?*

Bob Wilson: I was just saying it must be ten years ago, probably more, that we at Greenpeace actually brought a collective together and tried to form something called Artivists, and we had quite a lot of people there, and there were from various disciplines, various art forms, but I found it very hard to get them to break away out of their own particular kind of disciplines. I found it very hard for them to kind of do anything collectively, and it didn't really go anywhere, which is a shame because I thought, I mean it's funny seeing the word again but it's a- I think that was a very important, a very important tribe, but everybody went off and did their own thing and there was no feeling

that they came together. Whereas with environmental things and particularly when you're out doing serious protests- pretty serious, I mean there is that feel that it is, you've got everybody there, all the disciplines, all the sorts of people, all sort of different sort of walks of life, and I think the fact that then, you know, then you can take that a stage further. I remember, do you remember the great TED talks, I don't know if anybody ever sees TED talks, there's- I remember one was – I kept promoting it to everybody – saying, where do good ideas come from? And there was this feeling that obviously you don't just wake up in the morning, have a good idea and it takes off. Basically that idea goes to somebody else who adds a bit to it, those two people then add a little bit more to it, and then it comes back. And in fact the whole story was actually about coffee shops in Samuel Pepys' days, when the coffee shops were in fact places where people went to expand good ideas. That's where it all came from, and it was funny because it ended up being TED was sponsored by I think it was Costa or some coffee chain that basically said, coffee shops are still around, you can still go down there and discuss your good ideas. But it's funny that- I mean the one thing that I remember particularly at Greenpeace was you could come in in the morning with a good idea, you could talk about it amongst your friends and get it passed, signed off or paid for, whatever, at lunchtime, and you could go and do it that night, you know, which is amazing. I don't think it-, now there are so many things, roadblocks now that have been thrown in the way with the various laws and everything that's going on, it's very hard now to move in a quite a- So people have started to go off and do their own things again, in a way, and trying to do them with maximum impact, which is quite interesting. And I'm coming across, actually, more and more people that are now going out and saying, 'Well I'm just going to go and do my own things', whether it's graffiti art or whether it's somebody like Wolfgang Buttress building an amazing kind of sculpture to protect the bees or whatever. People are now going back to it, to doing their own thing and trying to make it, in a way, sensational, which it needs to be to get attention.

[00:50:32]

Oli Mould: *Chris, did you- You were looking like you wanted to say something more?*

Chris Garrard: Yeah- Phwoar. [everyone laughing] So many things. There was like, without any particular point in it, I guess, from Victor's point and others around this questions of entry points into the movement and gatekeeping as well in relation to that,

and the ways in which our kind of art activism, art-making can sort of challenge some of that, and one of the things- so with our kind of activism around fossil fuel sponsorship is part of the strategic thinking is, oh, we're taking the art that you find in that place – theatre, museum, whatever – and we're going to use what you find there and subvert it and use that as a way of critiquing. So that was theatre at the RSC, or singing in the Festival Hall, or doing like tours or alternative exhibitions and museums, and that kind of a thing. But then over time, and as the group grew and other people wanted to get involved, I was conscious- there's like this big P political thing, or this is how I thought of it, of like the campaign and the strategy and the sponsorship. Then there was like, there's all these people who've got involved in costume design, who've started acting, who've had a go at singing, who would have never done that in any other formal training space. There was one person, we did like a spoof of *Matilda* in Stratford-upon-Avon, and I was like, 'Oh, where did you study acting?' She was like, 'I've never acted before in my life.' And she was amazing. She was amazingly good and somehow just the fact of it being a protest where no one had said, 'Oh, can you do this, do you know what you're doing?' We didn't ask that question and she could just step into it, and that always feels really exciting. And that kind of approach is something we have in some of our choir stuff as well, like, no assumptions about what good singing is or isn't.

And I always had as a reference point in my mind, I just remember when the Idle No More movement in Canada, and First Nations People there, that they would do circle dances in shopping centres or where pipelines are, and I was just like, this kind of distinction of like art and activism, it's just like- you just do your art, making your culture in the space of resistance. It just is, it's just the means of doing it, and where there can be those kind of contrasts and differences, I was always like, that's an interesting kind of lens to break down the distinction of 'now I'm the activist and now I'm the art-maker', it's like 'now I'm just doing the thing in the space, I'm just making the art in, at the point of resistance'.

I mean maybe I was sort of sensing, without trying to lump things, of the more kind of planned and crafted and tailored intervention or action that takes thinking and planning, and then also these aspects of like skilling up, learning technique development, that equips people to just go out there and do that kind of a thing. We need to go now, okay, and, rather than us just going there, we could sing, we could think creatively, we could think theatrically, we could break into a song, we could start drumming. And so those

two kind of different sides of the coin, I guess, and working out when to opt for which one, which is the right approach.

Oli Mould: *Yeah, thank you. Just conscious of timing and we can always come back to it. But what I think is coming through, which is, I think, a really fascinating part of this is- and it kind of plays into this third point we were talking about which is an individual versus collective, but the sense of the professional versus – I don't want to say amateur because that sounds kind of derogatory to a certain degree – but like is there a space in the various sort of fields that you've come across of, like, a professional musician can still do the activism? Because all we've talked- it's like DIY, punk, getting together, which is obviously what's needed, and I think you're absolutely right, there's a part of that which gets that collective spirit, which presents a sort of more- it expands the present moment into something far more joyous and far more amazing, which is what drumming does, all those kinds of things does. But is there a place of like the professional musician?*

[00:55:12]

Maeve Bayton: Well they do it, don't they? Billie Eilish, that-

Bob Wilson: I think there's less of it these days than there used to be, to be honest, I mean, you know, we're trying to- I could give you a whole list now of people that have come out and done stuff with Greenpeace. It gets harder and harder to actually find anybody to come out and put their hand on their heart and do something. They might say they'll do it, but then you have to go deep inside them and say, 'Well let me just check, let me find out what you really care about.' It doesn't have to be massive, it could be sort of one of two things that they passionately feel that would get them out there. You know, I can remember Thom Yorke sitting on the back of truck and going down Park Lane in one of the big, big things doing a live DJ set, and I thought, well, that's the sort of level that you can find people to do things at, but it does get harder.

And just going back to the- Again, back in the day when, I guess it was things like the Vietnam War, but there were many, many more bands, they're still around some of them, that would do amazing protest songs. And even like Midnight Oil did that thing, '*How can we sleep when our beds are burning?'*, it's a great song about climate stuff, but- I'm just trying to search through and find more and more songs like that and they're getting harder and harder to find. And I think the elephant in the room, and it comes on to lots of things,

the printing thing I was talking about might have been like our industrial revolution but now social media has kind of taken over and changed things beyond recognition, and not always in a great way, and now we're looking at AI which is going to take it even further.

But the human contact, again, the kind of one-to-one, the face-to-face stuff, the choir stuff, and we've done- I mean I was thrilled when we did our first choir thing at Greenpeace, huge thing at Picadilly Circus when Coca-Cola were launching a huge great billboard there at Christmas, and we took a choir, the Greenpeace choir, who came out and completely bastardised it, the 'Coca-Cola's Coming' song, and to me that was joyous to use music in a way, direct action protest, just amazing what that did, you know, just for people around, it chilled everybody, you know, the mood changed. Fantastic, yeah, sorry it's a jumble of things there that-

Maeve Bayton: Don't all the XR group- I mean the Oxford one's always doing music and choirs, don't they all do it now?

Oli Mould: *They do, yes, I just want to have a quick wait because Martin has joined us-*

Martin Goldschmidt: Hi, everyone.

Oli Mould: *So, you take a seat. Thank you for joining us.*

Martin Goldschmidt: Pleasure.

Oli Mould: *We've been chatting for about an hour or so, we were going to have a quick break but perhaps if you just quickly introduce yourself, because we're recording this for posterity, the British Library, and we can talk about that later but for everyone else and the recording, if you just say your name and a very, very brief introduction.*

Martin Goldschmidt: Hi, Martin Goldschmidt, I run Cooking Vinyl record company and have done since 1986. I also am very involved in developing the whole music side of Palestine, which has been quite challenging over the last few years. And the main reason that I've been invited is that in the early eighties I first of all ran the student part of the anti-nuclear movement, and went on to do No Nukes music, which organised hundreds of anti-nuclear concerts up and down the country, from several big ones at Trafalgar

Square, and outside the Houses of Parliament etc, to Edinburgh, Devon, all up and down the country, so in a nutshell that's it.

Oli Mould: *Excellent, thank you-*

Martin Goldschmidt: Good to meet you all.

Oli Mould: *You can do rounds a bit later on but, sorry, Bob we were talking about the choir and the Coca-Cola choir.*

Saskia Papadakis: *I think Maeve had just come in sorry.*

Maeve Bayton: No, it's all right, no, it's all right, it's okay.

Oli Mould: *Yeah, so Jo?*

Jo Flanagan: Yeah, so just replying to some of what's been said. It's really interesting actually, all using our skills in different ways, and you asked about is there room for professional musicians, and I would say now, I mean there are seventeen climate choirs, one in Zimbabwe, the rest in the UK, and we've got well over 900, I say we've got 900 singers but actually it's well over that, but I think 900 sounds more than a thousand, so we have 900 singers plus, and they are mainly led by professional choir leaders. What's difficult is getting the names, and I think they were all happy to come along right at the beginning of XR when it was trendy. Less so now.

[00:59:59]

And this is one of the reasons I love Chris Packham, and he said at his book launch, his autobiography book launch, which I went to recently, that there's an advantage of being autistic. So he doesn't really give a fuck about social media rubbishing him, and I think most stars do. So, you know, sometimes, I despair- Even if they say they're going to sing at something, they're quite unreliable. But within the climate choir, so we have masses of skills and professionals, everything from Kim, American in marketing for alternative energy company who's our marketing person, and so on and so on. Kai who is our musical director who studied music and did her MA in climate choirs way back in

Amsterdam and then joined, said, 'Can I help?' and has helped us massively, and so on and so on. There's just a pool of massive amount of skill actually, you know, people who are strategic directors of NGOs, people who were heads of, I don't know, social services. They're all in there, and more than that the creatives, the graphic designers, the videographers, they're giving their time for free almost entirely, so there are professionals and they are doing it, the difficulty is getting the people with the names, and even getting to them through their agents is difficult.

Oli Mould: *I think it's a case of the actual, the skill of being a fantastic pianist or a drummer or, there's a using that for the movement, you're a professional insofar as you skill yourself up for however many years by using that skill. So I guess there is a sense that the professional still has a sense, has a utility. Sorry, Fay, do you want to-?*

Fay Milton: Yeah, there's so many things came into my head when Bob was speaking, one where you said there isn't so much climate music but I think you were also referring to the kind of protest song. So I think there's two things here, there's an unbelievable amount of musicians making music about climate and the environment, but a lot of it will be like ambient music or heavy metal music, and it's not- I think there's a gap in- Maeve mentioned Billie Eilish who's got songs about the environment as well, obviously hugely popular, but there's a gap in the centre of protest song, and I think it's because culturally and aesthetically we find it cringy, like popular culture finds it cringy in this era because of a prevailing sense of cynicism or kind of- I don't know, a lack of wanting to be earnest about things around. So I think there's a gap where an actual protest song- Protest songs exist, millions of them but they're not maybe touching audiences in the way they might otherwise have done because there's a sense of like, 'Oh, you're being earnest, I don't like it' in audiences.

Then in terms of famous musicians, professional, etc, getting involved. I mean that's what Music Declares Emergency does day in day out, it's try and get people involved in things. And there's two things, one, massive double-edged sword of social media, where on one side you can say anything you want to anybody, at any point, but on the other side, over the last decade, just more and more and more vicious, nasty, needling feedback from even your fans, from bots, from everybody. So the actual act of speaking out is so harsh for artists because that feedback comes immediately from people you don't know and without any barrier. And then there's also, where music is so stats based now, every

time you go on Spotify you can see the numbers, you can see the likes on a post. It means people are sort of whipped up into constantly having to feed that algorithm, which means, as I think Jo maybe said, when a topic like climate is trending, which is a hilarious concept but, you know, it does trend, then an artist posts, says something about climate and everyone applauds and says, 'Brilliant, thanks for joining in with that'. And then if the Ukraine war has just kicked off and someone says something about climate, they say 'Why aren't you speaking about Ukraine?', then currently it's like 'Why aren't you speaking about Palestine? Why are you speaking about this?' And it's just this kind of unbelievable whirlwind, plus artists are getting approached from ten different climate organisations. As soon as you put your head above parapet to say you want to do something or speak out on climate, you've got like ten organisations jumping on you saying, 'Can you do this, can you do that?', and it makes artists go, 'Oh, okay'. And as I think someone else said, people I think do their own thing. I know artists like Coldplay and Ellie Goulding, they just do their own thing and they don't as much interact with sort of lots of campaigns who approach them. But, yeah, so it's hard for artists but some- like plenty do still get involved but they have to be incredibly controlled about how they do it, I think, and it isn't quite as openhearted as maybe it was in that era where people could write a great climate- you know, an anthem and people would sing along and really-, yeah, there's a hole in the centre, almost the heart of it I think.

Maeve Bayton: If you haven't seen that Billie Eilish video, it is brilliant, because she's completely covered in black oil. Totally- It's really good.

Oli Mould: *Bergit did you want to-?*

Bergit Arends: Yeah, I just wanted- It's all really interesting, this particular aspect of this environmental activism, but I just wanted to see if we could broaden it out again a little bit because there's also different types of activism going on within the music world, and I can't quite remember her name I think is it Alison Tickell who runs-

Fay Milton: Oh, yeah.

Bergit Arends: Who runs an organisation for the music industry to become more sustainable. Julie's Bicycle is visual art but then there's also one specifically for the music industry.

Fay Milton: Julie's Bicycle's both, like all the creative cultural industries.

Bergit Arends: Also? So she's of a subset, but she didn't set up herself, no?, I just thought it was- Anyway, so it's that kind of activism to become, you know, to turn your concerns into something, you know, more- how can you be more sustainable in your music production? I just think one needs to be mindful of that different set of questions and how that maybe comes out of environmentalism in order to just to do something specific, I guess. And then also I'd quite like to remind of, you know, it's also the sound element and sonification, I think, that's kind of act as activism, I think, because it has for its purpose to pay attention to the natural environment, so it's not just song and composition and so on, but, you know, it's sort of sonification and listening events and so on which I think is also, more recently has become- or maybe before, maybe Bob or Maeve will sort of know about, you know, these sort of ambient environments which are also activists in spirit I think.

Maeve Bayton: Doesn't that come into this afternoon, like the two-

Oli Mould: *Yeah, I mean we can talk about- I think that's really interesting the sort of sounds and inspirations but I think Victor and Chris had their hands up, did you want to interject?*

Victor Smith: Yes, that's what I was going to say. I think, something that I have seen in students is that when – I mean I'm not teaching myself but I'm kind of like in the PhD phase of am I a student, am I an academic, I don't know, so I'm sort of seeing a bit of both worlds, and something I've seen in students is that, yeah, kids are really cynical and they will quickly say, 'Oh, yeah, so-and-so has talked about the climate but they're flying by private jet to whatever.' And I think- So recently I've been doing my work on my literature review, and read a paper about how some of the black Brazilian samba bands began as very much about black liberation, very much about bringing music to the people, creating a space where marginalised people can get involved in the massive Carnival stuff in Brazil, but then they get to a point where- I mean the Brazilian government is still quite right wing, it was very right wing up until pretty recently, and in order for these bands, the black bands to perform, they had to kind of dial back the black liberation message a little bit. So they're kind of in this place where to do what they want to do, which is to have black bodies, black faces, black voices in the centre of Carnival they need to dial back the message they're trying to send. So they kind of end up with

this double-edged sword of like, we have to be there but to be there we've got to weaken our politics and I think that that's probably why it's so hard to see like real activist representation in the music industry because in order to make money you've kind of got to be capitalist, and you've got to do things against your politics, you know?

Fay Milton: And I'd say artists are smart, they know they're part of the system, they can't stand up and- they don't want to be hypocrites and it would by hypocritical, you know?

Saskia Papadakis: *I think Chris has been waiting for a while, sorry.*

Chris Garrard: Do you want to go because you've not spoken yet?

Martin Goldschmidt: No, no.

Chris Garrard: So, yeah, Chris. I think that's sort of naming the backdrop of the kind of capitalist, consumerist thing, both in terms of the professional music industry and also the other context we work in, because a little bit earlier when we were talking about the role of professionals or people who are training and so on, that it- I've found in different places very quickly come up against the valuing of creative and artistic skills, and who are the people who get paid, how is money divided up, you know? And there's the sort of- as soon as money comes into organising and movements, there's all these kinds of questions about power and value judgements around skillsets that come in, and that is definitely a piece that comes up in a lot of movement spaces. And then also the kind of appropriation of activism by the fossil fuel industry and other kind of entities. So when we're talking about like singers, music, performers, kind of coming forward with their activism I just remember Jennifer Hudson and others doing a promotional film for Shell because it appeared to be about all of the progressive green things that Shell was doing. Similarly Kendall Jenner, so not so much music, but emulating that and both meeting the police in the US and handing over a can of Pepsi and they were reconciled and it was horrific, but also the- Sorry, I'm not being very articulate. And also wanting to like have some awareness of what it takes to speak out and put your head above the parapet, but at the same time the appropriation of that and where sometimes, when I think about the preoccupation with sustainability in some of the kind of cultural spaces as well, that's also kind of useful to the fossil fuel industry sometimes, 'Oh, great, they're all going to talk

about their recycling, so they're going to stop talking about the political analysis', and I feel a bit conflicted in some of those conversations being like, 'Great, we've talked about the recycling but can we talk about the politics, can we talk about the intersectionality and-'. And it's my own personal blind spot but when we think about the gaps in protest music, actually maybe that music does exist but maybe I've not found it and maybe I'm not in those spaces and I think of, like, grime and other genres where it's deeply political but maybe we're not connecting it with ecological, green, climate issues, but maybe that's not far from it, but we kind of need to go there a bit more rather than expecting it to come here.

Martin Goldschmidt: I, on this topic, harp back to the days of music mass movements, of Rock against Racism and No Nukes music, and others I was involved in- And, you know, I went to the Rock against Racism carnivals and I was very involved in that and then we organised the really big events in Trafalgar Square and the music for big marches and everything like that, and big music events. And it doesn't seem- I mean Band Aid was massive but it was a very different sort of politics, it was superstars on stage rather than a mass movement, and I'm not sure why that hasn't happened today. It was interesting that Rock against Racism wasn't organised by music industry professionals at all, and I certainly wasn't a music industry professional when I got involved in the whole No Nukes music thing, or Rock against Racism. That's how I ended up doing what I do really. So it's- I think that the work that, you know, loads of environmental groups do with music and outside of music is fantastic, and XR has been a mass movement, but music hasn't played such an important role in the way that it did then, and I wonder why that hasn't happened, you know? And I've been involved in the anti-racist music stuff and again it's-, you get some superstars wearing T-shirts but you don't get a mass movement and it's the idea of a mass movement, and really music connecting and being part of it, is what excites me and it feels like that has been missing, and maybe it's different times and that's why, but that's for me the question. It's interesting.

Oli Mould: *Well, I appreciate the time is, we've ticked over to lunch, so why don't we call it an end to that particular session if that's all right?*

Toby Butler: *That's absolutely fine.*

[Audio ends: 01:14:40]

2) Session 2: Materials

[00:00:00]

Barbara Brayshay: *I'll just start off I think- I'll just read this briefing note that we've got here so that, well apart from anything it'll go into the recording and we'll know what we're actually talking about. So in this session, the materials of sound activism, and I'm going to want you to help me here because I have to admit I'm not an expert on certain aspects of the materiality of sound activism, so [laughing] it will be really interesting to hear from you. So the raw materials of environmental artivism extend beyond mere inspiration. The natural world not only influences the content and themes of activist art, music and poetry, but also provides the physical resources such as wood for guitars, paint pigments, animal skins for drums and natural elements integrated into sound and visual compositions. This theme will explore how increased awareness of climate change and human impact on the environment has influenced the materiality and composition of the visual art and soundscapes created by environmental activists.*

So, really I think, this session's very much about the material culture of artivism, and we've got a couple of questions but I'm sure there will be a little more that will emerge. So the first one of these is, given that context, how have these changes reflected and responded to the growing urgency of environmental issues? So we're talking about change here. So, perhaps each one of you can reflect on, obviously a big span of time in the group, and reflect on the changes that have taken place across your time as an activist. So, anyone like to start? Perhaps just talk about the materiality of what you do, might be an easy place to begin with.

Jo Flanagan: I'm quite happy to start, so, yeah, bearing in mind that we all know the lack of time we've got and the urgency to this crisis, my focus is on singing truth to power. Occasionally we use trumpets and stuff when they're outside but if we're doing flashmob singing inside an AGM, for instance, Barclays AGM or whatever, we obviously can't bring in things that are going to be searched, you know, to the Houses of Parliament or whatever. So, our weapons are our voices, which no one can stop, and there's power to that in the sense that since the Police and Crime Bill, when things have gotten much, much heavier, and more and more likely to be arrested, that I'm deliberately asking activists to dress up smartly, not to be hippy dippy, and that's partly so we don't get dismissed as hippy other, you know, so our message isn't diluted in that way, but it's also obviously getting flashmobs into AGMs and so on as well. But the

Police and Crime Bill has meant that I'm having to be much, much cleverer about how we get away with singing, as I call it, truth to power. Singing truth to power, so getting right into those key people who can really make the difference, whether it's the insurers or the bankers or the politicians or whatever. So trying desperately to get to those who have the power to, in the short time we've got, to actually change things, get the trillions of dollars out of fossils fuels or what- I keep saying or whatever, sorry- [laughing] But it's also a way of, not just avoiding arrest, which is quite important because I think half the choir are XR, so background like myself, half are not activists. So singing in the way we sing, in four parts, rather beautifully with simple words that can be heard – messaging really important again, so we repeat things, and we have theatre and sort of banners and everything to go with it. I would like to use more instruments, sometimes it's okay but often it's not if we're trying to get into hidden places, to where the-

[00:05:12]

Barbara Brayshay: *Yeah, can't get a trombone or something into Houses of Parliament.*

Jo Flanagan: Not really. I mean we did, outside the Standard Chater we had a Star Wars theme with, you know, 'Standard Charter, here to destroy your planet', great big film-like banner, and we had trumpeters, professional trumpeters doing the Darth Vader theme and so on. So, but we couldn't obviously get them into the AGM as well.

Saskia Papadakis: *So that was Jo Flannigan.*

Barbara Brayshay: *And how about, I mean sort of inherent in this question, are change, and if we look at- have things changed very much in terms of the practice of- the themes that you use, the instruments that you use in your campaigning?*

Jo Flanagan: I think people, I mean you didn't used to get PA driven by someone on a bike or solo, and that's changed, people thinking about trying to avoid electricity at gigs – Maeve- [laughing]

Barbara Brayshay: *And this question speaks to how these changes have reflected and responded to the growing urgency of environmental issues, and I use that word 'narrative', that somebody said [laughing]. So, you know, the narrative has changed from say the seventies, where a lot of campaigns were*

single-issue campaigns perhaps, and now it's become much broader, thematic, theme of climate change and obviously intersects with social and climate justice. So, I'm curious about how that's reflected in the materiality of protest materials.

Chris Garrard: Chris. I just, I had the wording in my head but it's gone. Something around our concern with materialism and consumption and so on, and I can't take credit for this phrase but I just remember it being passed on, there's no ethical choices within a capitalist system, and I think has often come up within various groups that I've been in, what are the materials of our banners, and I guess the extent to which we feel that it's our responsibility to adopt a so-called prefigurative politics that our demonstrations, actions, interventions are also modelling the kind of world we want to see. Which to some extent, yes, that is true but then also being in sort of organising contexts and spaces where there's limited resource, limited time, and particularly if those are more climate justice orientated groups, and there might not be much resource, the amount of labour and energy and discussion you have around the materials you're using when the ethical choices available to it are quite limited already. That did kind of feed into some of the things we would do, for example with BP or Not BP, bringing it to the British Museum, trying to both identify like what's sustainable, what can be reused. We've got a store of props that are hibernating but could hopefully be brought out again, this kind of thing. But they're-, I think, related to what Jo was saying about the Policing Bill, that we also had security checks, so the art of smuggling and how that informs the types of props and types of materials are maybe, I don't know- Were you involved with the Trojan Horse as well?

Victor Smith: Yeah, I had plaster shoved under every part of my coat, that was hilarious.

Chris Garrard: But just-, I mean there's such an array of things but one was a Kraken sea monster that was broken down into the parts of a golf umbrella and tent poles and things that could be wrapped under clothes and then reassembled on the inside, and I think what I've noted down was the creative ingenuity that comes from working within the practical limitations, and again that thing of, if you took the kind of activism out of it it's like, this is some pretty imaginative thinking and art-making it in and of itself, and those limitations that the activism puts on it actually generates this kind of innovation as well.

[00:10:03]

Maeve Bayton: There was a big thing about lino cutting, I've no idea why, it's supposed to be more democratic, XR, did it hit everywhere or was it just Oxford?

Fay Milton: No, it was everywhere.

Maeve Bayton: I don't know why. I don't know why.

Saskia Papadakis: *Can you explain what lino cutting is, just for-*

Maeve Bayton: Well you'd get lino and draw on it and then cut it and then, you know, put ink on it and print it. I don't know why.

Fay Milton: Maybe because it's free and you don't use new materials.

Maeve Bayton: No, absolutely no idea. Use lino but- I just, it's a material practice that was of key importance in the XR group in Oxford, we were all walking round with the stuff, all over. People do ask me why is there a starling on your bag, so it's a conversation starter I suppose.

Barbara Brayshay: *And Bob, how do you think things have changed?*

Bob Wilson: I know, I was just thinking that. I mean when I came to Greenpeace I thought everything was a bit sober and serious and a bit heavy and people weren't paying too much attention, and yet we're always known for making like a noise and getting attention, and being seen and heard. So my job, in a way, to start with, was to actually lighten things up a bit. So I brought kind of humour and kind of visual impact effects into the actions, so that they were actually still noticeable but they were actually a lot kind of lighter and friendlier, and I think I remember- I mean you mentioned the samba and that, one of my previous things was sponsoring the arts programme for *Time Out* and so I actually worked with the London School of Samba, and when I went to Greenpeace I got them involved as well and we took our solar truck, our big Cyrus Solar Truck it was called, to the big processions and we powered up their sound system. And it's the only time they actually created- one year they created a whole theme with the Amazon, save

the Amazon, and another year they did, let's do Save the Whales. So that was a way of kind integrating that. And then to follow that up I was working with Mahogany Arts, Carnival Arts, and Clary there, wonderful woman who normally wins the Notting Hill Carnival with her fabulous costumes, and I thought, oh you can make props for Greenpeace, and she ended up making like orangutan costumes, polar bear costumes, giant fish costumes, missiles which people stood inside in the Stop the War stuff, plutonium barrels that people got inside, and it was great seeing the security people trying to arrest these barrels of plutonium running about.

And in a way that was a way of getting both the music and the arts and the creativity and the visual thing into- to get more attention in a way that was kind of a bit softer, lighter, but did get amazing attention. And I was really pleased with the way that was going and I thought that was something I kind of built on, and we kept doing that in a way and a lot of the Greenpeace actions that you saw, not the really heavy duty, climbing the rigs, the ships, all that, but a lot of the kind of home-based ones, whether it was Unilever or Shell or BP, whatever, we tried to bring into it like the choir for instance, or the giant sort of huge great polar bears, all these things were like, it's kind of art-based in a way. And I think to me it almost reached a pinnacle at Glastonbury, where we were given a whole field to do that sort of communication stuff, then realising that people were there to have a good time, so you have to find a way of not interrupting their entertainment but drawing them in, in a way, visually. So we were given the opportunity to theme the field each year with some amazing sort of huge great props, and climbing things, action things. I think it reached a pinnacle when Wolfgang Buttress, the artist who built- I don't know if anyone's been to Kew and seen the amazing sort of bee sculpture that you- he's got this thing where you put a lollipop stick into this thing and it sends the sounds of bees, the active bees that are there that are into there. So we reproduced that on the field at Glastonbury and it was because Michael decided he had some black bees and he said, 'What can you do to help save the bees?' And he built this amazing thing there, and again when it kicked off it had- it actually was- and through anemometry it linked Michael's beehives and in the morning, huge great video displays, you could see the bees waking up and you could hear them, and then through the day it got busier and busier and busier and, if you know, bees sing in the key of C I think it is, so the music which was tasted across from people inspired and spiritualised. Then they created a soundscape that basically was so in tune with what was happening at the rest of- all the outdoor music,

that it actually deadened all the sounds outside, that all you were hearing were the bees, and to me that was like, we, we'd cracked it in a way, we had everything going there. We had the visuals, the aural, the story, the campaign, all in one and the thing called The Hive, which is still here, all built out of wood, was just to me was like a modern day way of bringing all those people there to have a good time to come in and have an even better time but also learn something and go away thinking, 'Bees, they're really important', you know, like eight forkfuls of your food are actually pollinated by the bees, you wouldn't have it without them, and being able to make those simple connections and again stimulate all the senses was just to me, was, we'd made it, you know? It was brilliant. Did anybody else see it?

[00:15:26]

Fay Milton: What kind of year was that?

Barbara Brayshay: *I did, I saw that.*

Bob Wilson: That was about three years ago.

Maeve Bayton: Amazing, amazing.

Barbara Brayshay: *It was towards the back of the field, wasn't it?*

Bob Wilson: Yeah, yeah, and it's still there now, and it kind of was a wooden thing that went up and up and up, and had eight different entrances, and is still there now in fact, I think, yeah. Thom Yorke did a gig there with Smile, which was really nice, with his band. So did Chris Martin actually.

Barbara Brayshay: *I've read something recently, and it was someone who had done some work on XR actually, what they described as the sort of re-emergence of performative action, which they described as contemporary paganism and, you know, the changing iconography of protest. So it said, polar bears being retired, you know, the rainbow and polar bear had been retired and they'd been replaced with images of extinction. So, you know, I think that's an interesting- Perhaps you might have some thoughts about that, you know, the change in the symbols, if you like, of representation, of the environmental crisis,*

has sort of changed- Well, specifically thinking about XR *and the funeral processions, and then the focus on extinction and no more rainbows, you know?*

Fay Milton: Can I?

Barbara Brayshay: *Yeah, yeah, please.*

Fay Milton: It's Fay. When I first started working alongside XR, I was doing video editing because that's sort of what I used to do as well, and I made this sort of YouTube ad that they put out for the first Rebellion, and it was very, very- a stark thing to say, they were saying, no polar bears. You've got to represent climate change without anything of icesheets and nothing of polar bears. So the reason being is that people assume- No one's got a pet polar bear, right? Polar bears, it's almost like unicorns, like they only exist in our mind really, unless you've actually been to the Arctic- Wherever they live, I don't know. See I don't even know where they actually reside.

Bob Wilson: The Arctic.

Fay Milton: The Arctic, thank you. I didn't want to get it wrong. So that was one of the key things of the media team were saying, okay, you've got to do this but you've got to use images that are different to what people have seen before. So one of the key images we used was people whose houses had flooded and sort of being up to their waists in water because everyone- well, most people have got a home, and you can picture how awful it would be if it flooded or burnt down. So it was using images that made it seem much closer to home and less fantastical and more- tried to make it feel like it is more *our* problem and not just a problem that's affecting something that super, super far away and only exists in our imagination.

Barbara Brayshay: *That was part of the exhibition in the Greenpeace field, Gideon Mendel's photographs of flooding, that was not last year, the year before.*

Bob Wilson: Yeah, that was it.

Fay Milton: It's quite hard to make flooding look scary because it's not- like fire looks scary no matter what, but a picture of a flood, you can't really- I'd be interested to see those images.

Jo Flanagan: Well you see enough of them on the news don't we, though? People's houses completely flooded out, you see a lot of that now.

Fay Milton: There's something about the imagery doesn't- It doesn't quite picture how horrible it would actually be, somehow, I don't know.

Barbara Brayshay: *Floating down the river-*

Maeve Bayton: Oh, people talk about poo and stuff, don't they, in the kitchens?

Fay Milton: Oh, god, I hadn't heard that.

Maeve Bayton: Yeah, people on the radio and-

Bob Wilson: Yeah.

Fay Milton: Wow.

Barbara Brayshay: *Chris, did you want to say something?*

[00:19:40]

Chris Garrard: Again I haven't quite got like a perfectly, fully-formed thought. Just around this question of imagery and messaging, there is this kind of complexity that I think would come up in a lot of conversations we'd have in BP or Not BP about planning of like, whose image, representing them how, how is it being used and in what context. And I think I'm remembering this correctly, but I might be misremembering, but those Gideon Mendel images, I think have been used on several occasions. And one of the first occasions, I think, but it might have been different images, were to try and centre people being impacted by climate change at the Kingsnorth Climate Camp. But they were then being- Someone had the idea, and it's not to disparage them, but of holding them as the police came to try and clear the field. So the visual image was then

the police hitting these images of people, which was not at all the kind of, what wanted to be conveyed. And I think there's, you know, the polar bear, the panda bear, WWF, would argue plays into this kind of othering of, and almost exoticizing of, environment crisis, rather than it being also a human crisis. And so I think there was some positive aspects in the shifting of the imagery to what are those impacts and how is there a kind of direct personal relationship to that. I guess the question I'm interested in is where does that shift into genuine empathy and solidarity, and also then thinking about the critiques of like Comic Relief and some of those bigger organisations about how people across the Global South are presented to us in the Global North, in those contexts as, you know, as victimhood kind of type images as opposed to showing them as leaders in positions of power, acting from a position of strength defending their land and resources, and so I think there's still- I think there's still kind of learning to be done around that bit and how we do the international solidarity piece and connect around more of that framing rather than the victimhood one as well. Which is difficult given the intensity and the urgency of the crisis as well.

Barbara Brayshay: *One of the most significant sort of shifts in recent years as well has been the turn towards sustainability, can you just think back at what point did that actually become quite critical in your campaign, in your planning of campaigning materials?*

Bob Wilson: I think when we put a rocket up in, on the field, it said, There's No Planet B, I think that was a kind of [laughing] realisation to tell people that- There's only one Earth and we'd better look after it, and that sustainability came from that in a way. Anyway-

Barbara Brayshay: *Or thinking about say the Greenpeace stage, you know, you think back to the beginnings of it, at what point did all the practicalities of sustainability become instrumental in the setup?*

Bob Wilson: I guess we just tried to, well I mean not stay ahead of the game, but we did try to pioneer it to a certain extent. I mean our showers, our free showers area, which is kind of famous and everybody uses it, clearly lots of the crew, started off as solar showers and then the sun didn't shine and everybody had cold showers so that didn't quite work [laughing] so we went to kind of LPG stuff and everybody went, 'Oh, you're using gas'. And we said, 'Yeah, but you're getting a hot shower and we know it's going to be reliable and it's not quite as good as what it should be but it's not as bad as like some

of the other things'. Then we went to, well wood pellets in a way, and they said, 'Oh, that's not sustainable'. And Greenpeace were one of the organisations that started the FSC organisation and the trademark and worked to kind of get that off the ground. It's kind of got slightly diluted now but then we went- So we went to wood and said it's sustainable and kind of, apart from rubbing two sticks together, I mean it's kind of that's where- But all along the line we were walking on eggshells, in a way, because it was right along the line in terms of what is sustainable and what isn't, and then trying to take it and sort of pioneer it or actually promote it, is like, it's always been one of the things that we've tried to do. And it gets difficult but, you know, you have to keep at it and you've got to be clever, I think. The word clever keeps coming into my brain saying, with all these things you've got to be clever as well as innovation, you've got to be clever about it. Whatever you're using, whether it's your body you're using or whether it's bringing somebody else in or, you know, third dimension or whatever, you just have to be clever, and it's got harder.

[00:24:41]

Martin Goldschmidt: Martin. I think there's two sides to this sustainability thing, and on the one hand I think it's good to do everything you can reasonably, but I also think that there's an undercurrent of, you know, 'You're the problem and you've got to change your lifestyle and, you know, it's down to you to solve', which ignores the impetus of the impact of the oil industry on climate change compared to my impact on climate change. And the impact of global capitalism on climate change, and it kind of takes the blame onto you and the individual and it takes the focus off global capitalism and the oil industries etc, etc.

And I think that we should do what we can, you know, I love riding my bicycle but on the other hand we should really look at who is causing most of the problem and focus on that, and not lose our focus on that. So I think that sustainability is good to adopt in the context of, but you also need to look at actually who is causing most of the environmental problem.

Oli Mould: *In fact the carbon footprint calculator, that was a creation of BP was it or Shell?*

Chris Church: *There were several before that, I mean it was actually done by some very right-on researchers, sorry back to Chris Church. But you're right. I mean I think that balance, but sorry if I can just butt in, is there not an issue here that the music industry in many ways is a massively consumerist- I mean the way we used to-, what's Top of the Pops this week, as opposed to last week. Things come and go really fast and it's not just the sound, it's actually all the video, all the consumerist images that go with a lot of it. I mean we're all involved in very right-on music, in most ways, but you don't have to look very far down MTV or whatever it is these days-*

Bob Wilson: It's not MTV. [laughing] No one looks at MTV.

Chris Church: *Well the whole idea then of, you know, of the consumerist push, and the bling going with it, was something that kind of the music almost kind of was encouraging people to look for totally non-sustainable lifestyles. Is there a tension still between, you know, the idea of we've got to find the thing that people will buy next week or stream tomorrow, and the idea of long-term consumerism, sustainability?*

Barbara Brayshay: *Jo?*

Jo Flanagan: Yeah, I mean going back to what Martin was saying and, you know, the concerted effort by the fossil fuel industry to push the individual carbon footprint idea, and I think us and the left have swallowed that wholeheartedly, and we've run out of time, we have actually run out of time for some of nature's tipping points already. And it's like Avon Pension Fund, I was saying earlier, who are one of the leading ones for divesting from fossil fuels but actually twenty-one per cent of pensions with Avon Pension Fund, which is one of the biggest pension funds, are with Black Rock who are the biggest funders of deforestation and fossil fuels in the world, and it's like gesture environmentalism, in a way, that people say, they talk about recycling, well depending on what level, 'Oh I do my recycling'. And then it'll be 'I've got an electric car' or 'I've clad my house'. And, yes, I've done that personally because I feel like personally it's important, but I absolutely know it'll make diddly squat difference in the time we've got. We've got very little time. So that's why, you know, I live by the Serenity Prayer: 'God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.' So each action I'm plotting, I'm thinking, where can I have the most impact? Where's the sort of strategic sort of weak point here, and the main one is getting the billions and trillions out of the funding and insuring of

these fossil fuel industries. So it's much less glamorous for people to say, 'I've swapped banking with Barclays to Triodos', but actually it's far more effective, you know? Or checking who their pension is with. But if we're talking about being tactical and actually useful in the short amount of time – because this archive will be listened to by future generations who I'm thinking will think, well no wonder we failed. You know?

Barbara Brayshay: *I think what we're hoping is that they'll see that people did do something before.*

Jo Flanagan: But it's being tactical and being, as Bob said, clever with what we do.

[00:29:52]

Bob Wilson: Yeah, but also I think sustainability, in my mind anyway, shifted fairly rapidly to adaptation, which everybody's kind of not really talking enough about in a way. It kind of means- it can mean different things to different people, but the fact that we kind of try and, like you were saying, we try and adapt to things that we can do rather than sort of- Because we're running out of time fast, if we haven't already run out of time. But, you know, it needs- kind of all the things about climate emergency or, you know, action, action, action, action. I mean I think we have to go for some of the things now that have major impact fairly rapidly, and whether we can do that with mass movements or people power or whatever, I'm not sure. I'm not sure we can. But we do need to go fairly rapidly to try and find things that we can kind of adapt to with keeping sustainability but looking at that as possibly on the menu quite high up now. I think.

Saskia Papadakis: *I think Fay was waiting for while.*

Fay Milton: I just had another point on sustainability, which sort of goes with what everyone's been saying really, is that there's- sustainability's obviously incredibly important but it's also like such a, like a thorn in the side of trying to do anything at a mass scale, and I think if you're running a campaign, say, you know, Chose Love campaign, which is a brilliant campaign, and no one's batting eyelid that they're selling hundreds of thousands of T-shirts because they're not a sustainability campaign. But as soon as you're doing something within climate world, we're also in a culture now where people are obsessed with pointing the finger at each other, calling each other out, obviously cancel culture. And I've seen, working at Music Declares in the last six years

we've seen- Everyone always says, 'Where the next climate Live Aid? Why isn't there a climate Live Aid?' And we've seen about ten of them come ago and I think-

Martin Goldschmidt: Why was there a Live Aid in the first fucking place? [Everyone laughing] It's shit.

Fay Milton: I know, but people want that big moment-

Martin Goldschmidt: Sorry- Martin.

Fay Milton: People want that big moment of coming together, and it's like, well how do you do that when every venue has got a tie-in with Pepsi or Coca-Cola and you can't get there- Glastonbury's great but you can't get there sustainably, you have to drive or you have to take coaches so that's, everything's got- It's brilliant but none of these options are perfect. So if you're trying to do something that has got that massive media appeal, you can't do it in a way that's not going to be shot down, and it's impossible and every single one of those attempts to do something massive has fallen apart probably because of sustainability.

Barbara Brayshay: *And that's a big factor in trolling, especially on Twitter, X. I mean I follow lots of threads and the Just Stop Oil one is classic. As soon as they post anything they're just kind of bombarded with, 'What are your jackets made out of?' etc, etc, you know?*

Fay Milton: Exactly.

Chris Church: *Martin-?*

Barbara Brayshay: *Yes, sorry, Martin?*

Martin Goldschmidt: I was just going to go back your point about basically hitting them in the wallet, you know, because the billions invested in pensions in fossil fuels etc, and oil and stuff like that is- It is very effective to hit them. It's also a nightmare. Because I've been involved in launching a ten-county campaign against Brunel Pension Fund to disinvest in Arms to Israel, and the way-, it's so fucking hard. But, you know, a few years ago at Glastonbury I was really pushing the environmental movement to do this, and it

didn't- people were doing some things but there wasn't that much happening, and it is, you know, hitting companies in the wallet is very effective, it's not the only tactic you should use but most people have got a pension. Most people can write to their employer and say, you know, is my pension invested in fossil fuels or Arms to Israel? And, you know, the answer may come back, 'yes, tough shit', or 'no, it's not because we're very careful' or, 'yes, but we're going to look into it and try to-'. But just raising the discussion is the starting point and I think it's a campaign that should get a lot more support inside the environmental movement and it has been- You know, I know Devon County Council claim to be ethically invested, they don't care about Arms to Israel but they do care about climate change and the people on the pension board have no idea that they've increased their investment in fossil fuel, because the accountability is very hard to control because it goes to pension fund- It's like you said about twenty-one per cent investment in Black Rock, and it's so hard to follow the food chain, and it's going to be made harder when the government change the pension policy.

[00:35:09]

Maeve Bayton: Sorry, I'm just wondering, this idea that came to my head, you know, about switching banks. There's loads of it on Facebook, you know, just don't bank with the bank etc. But I don't think people do- I'm wondering, you know Martin Lewis and the Money Show, it's all about people, it's about like saving money and stuff. But at Christmas in the last few years he's done this thing about, don't buy anything. So maybe he has got some kind of morality and I'm thinking, Martin Lewis, can't you do a green thing about banks, I don't know. Do you think it's possible?

Fay Milton: It's a great idea.

Martin Goldschmidt: It's a great idea.

Maeve Bayton: I'll write to him.

Fay Milton: You should.

Martin Goldschmidt: But the worst thing that can happen is he says no and the best is he does it.

Maeve Bayton: I'll send it off-

Martin Goldschmidt: It's a great idea.

Maeve Bayton: I'll bombard him.

Martin Goldschmidt: Brilliant idea.

Maeve Bayton: Yeah, thank you. I have the odd one. [laughing]

Jo Flanagan: In almost every one our videos it goes out, and some of them go viral as well, we will end with a call for action, and it will often be, switch your bank account. And there's a wonderful-, so Switch dot Green is a brilliant website but also Make my Money Matter. If anyone comes to me, talking about individuality, you know, individual carbon footprint and so on. I will quote them, Make my Money Matter's quote, it's twenty-one times, if you're with the worst pension fund, it can be twenty-one times more effective to switch your pension fund to a better one, one of the better ones than going veggie, stopping flying and switching your energy supply combined. Combined.

Bob Wilson: It's a fairly recent thing actually and it was a bit of, kind of good news and it started actually with Chris Packham, I think, was involved in the early days when Barclays were sponsoring Wimbledon and then they suddenly got their teeth into Live Nation and the festivals. Latitude I remember, I was at and said to Melvin who runs it, he was going to get into awful trouble by getting into bed with the devil. And the bands actually is what created it, the bands started pulling out left, right and centre, and in the end they had to drop Live Nation. He said it was a decision that had come from America, from Live Nation in America who actually ran it, and they actually dropped the sponsorship as a result of the bands pulling out one by one, which I thought was a really good move actually. That was really-, really warmed my heart to think that, you know, there was some positive action.

Fay Milton: That was started by some really grassroot activists as well, really, really small band who would be the tiniest writing on the lineup and they got infiltrated upwards.

Bob Wilson: Yeah, that was really good.

Martin Goldschmidt: When you say drop out, do you mean the Barclays one or-? Is that Barclays or something different?

Bob Wilson: Barclays, yeah. Barclays were sponsoring Live Nation and Latitude Festival in particular and the bands started to pull out and the American, or owners, people who run it had to drop the sponsorship.

Barbara Brayshay: *Chris?*

Chris Church: *Yeah, I mean just on that and how we have made big impacts, musicians, TikTokers, all these other influencers, have a huge amount of influence, and in some cases they can have that kind of impact. But when you get to challenging, the keystones of big money, like pension, is there not a problem that large bands tied to large companies tied to large shareholders are going to be very reserved or even come under pressure? We heard all the pressure there was on Taylor Swift not to endorse Kamala Harris, and kind of pushing musicians- I don't know, Martin, I mean it probably doesn't happen, with Cooking Vinyl as much as it does with Sony or whoever, but are there political pressures on bands not to actually push for radical solutions?*

Martin Goldschmidt: Well it depends what radical solutions you're talking about. I mean Taylor Swift is really active, a really strong advocate of woman's rights and has done fantastic work in that area, and there's loads of supporters of the environmental movement inside the music industry, and for big bands it's hard not to pay lip service to it, which is different from doing a lot but- You know, the issue I'm involved in, Palestine, is a lot harder inside the music industry and, you know, the Barclays campaign I know all about because like Live Nation rang me to sort of say, what the fuck do we do? And you're right, it's the Americans who support Israel, and Melvin and Dennis are sympathetic to Palestine but like the money from Barclays more, and, yeah, it's- It's interesting but it depends on, you know, different people support different issues. Different things mean different things to different people, and Taylor Swift has been amazing on women's rights. She also did- I think the thing is when you're the most popular artist in the world, you know, you do care about what your audience, and you don't want to alienate it. I don't think it's about being beholden to big business. I think there's element to that. The Dixy Chicks got killed for supporting Trump, it's a good example of how, you know, they got taken off the radio and they were never on the radio again after they opposed Trump, sorry, yeah. So it does happen and Trump is very

vindictive and more powerful than he's ever been. So, yeah, you're going to see more and more of it but, you know, it's interesting, I think some artists will suffer from standing up, others have got complete integrity and will.

Barbara Brayshay: *Chris?*

Chris Garrard: I guess it's like my sort of area of interest, like sponsorship, partnership, peace, but I do think it's a really powerful point of leverage because it sort of cuts across sport, live music and a whole range of cultural forms, and it sort of goes back to that thing of that's- and in particular countries and cultural context has become the norm that- it's becomes like a marketplace, our culture-making has kind of contained within it these ideas of consumption, but that social licence piece that fossil fuel produces, Barclays etc, investing in, is incredibly valuable, and there is a kind of Achillies' heel or weak point where artists, musicians, culture-makers can intervene there and it sort of can hack, disrupt, subvert these kind of massive budgets of millions of dollars to spend on PR and they are quite- I've sort of found this in a coalition of groups working on this kind of question of fossil fuel advertising and sponsorship, and they all do really great things but there's only a small pool of us using creative tactics, which I think, well could you get a big bang for your buck in terms of using the creative tactics, and I think there's a reason for it. I think a couple of things that go with it, we were talking in the break with Martin about strategy and being discerning about which target, when, with which people, and there's a case of being more joined-up and collaborative so that we don't give the sense that we just chase down every possible target, that we can think strategically as well as trying to embody our ethics, and there's something about the extent to which we're still a bit siloed. And this I think has been one of the challenges in the environmental movement is the relationship between Palestine and climate and environment, and they are deeply connected but so, you know, it comes back to that question of solidarity. Maybe we all don't sort of literally put climate to the side but let's all go after Barclays. All right, now, we're going to take on this sponsor, or this partnership, and maybe there's some more joining of the dots across the space that means we could have more of a strategic impact.

Barbara Brayshay: *How are we doing for time?*

Saskia Papadakis: *We've got about twenty minutes.*

Barbara Brayshay: *Twenty minutes, that's good. I wasn't quite sure we'd overrun or not. So, I suppose, I mean we've already- I was just thinking we could move on to a second question, which we've kind of touched on already actually, but the second question that we have here is, is there a way to square the increasing use of technology with this material consumption with artivism?*

Maeve Bayton: A big worry is databanks, isn't it really? I mean, you know, the enormous amount of energy that is used by these databanks, which with AI is going to get- I don't know what you can do about it but it's going to be absolutely massive, isn't it?

Fay Milton: Mmm, I think it's like data is the next plastic. It's like when people invented plastic, they didn't really think it through and I think we're doing that with data and every single- I've got something like fifty thousand pictures on my phone that are stored in the cloud and I don't need any of them really, like maybe a handful, and yet it's just adding and adding and adding, and that's everyone's phones. Like on Snapchat where people send a daily selfie to their friends, it's just adding and adding and adding, and it all still exists and it's- what's that going to look like in fifty years? Like it's mind-boggling.

Maeve Bayton: People don't seem to make the connection, on the whole, between what they're doing, and these actual material things hidden inside mountains and stuff.

[00:45:00]

Fay Milton: But also why should people make the connections? No one understands how their phone works really, really there should be legislation around it.

Barbara Brayshay: *And those installations are invisible, I mean they're not plonked right in the middle-*

Fay Milton: No, exactly.

Barbara Brayshay: *-of Islington, there's this great big thing in the middle of Islington or wherever you live.*

Maeve Bayton: And they're about to expand incredibly fast.

Barbara Brayshay: *Martin-?*

Martin Goldschmidt: I mean the thing is that Google and Facebook/Meta, are two of the biggest corporations in the world, and we've become the product, you know? And they make their money out of monetising our data and, you know, it's one thing about what you've got in the cloud but if you look at what they've got in the cloud, which is- If we stopped doing all this stuff they wouldn't have a business, and they're the most successful businesses on the planet, and it is all about monetising you as the product, and selling you and what you think and what you do and everything, you know, where you go on Google maps and what you do in your email- Email's free, maps are free- All this stuff's free because you're the product and all that data about you is stored in the cloud.

Barbara Brayshay: *But thinking about it more in the context of activism, you know, the barriers, organisations and campaigns rather than, you know, personal, are those issues that you're aware of in relation to the way that you deliver campaigns generally?*

Jo Flanagan: So, yeah, Jo. And I would say that one of our raisons d' être is to go viral on some of the actions because we're trying to hit the buggers, and that's one way of doing it, but of course there is an impact with that. So it's sort of weighing it up. I think the three bank AGMs that I've helped disrupt, Barclays, HSBC, and Standard Chartered Bank, they were particularly effective because they are, particularly since Covid, a lot more went online. So they would be live AGMs, as our flashmob would stand up and sing, that was being beamed not just to the people in power, or the executives and the real shareholders, it was also being beamed to thousands live, to thousands of HSBC, Barclays staff and shareholders worldwide. So it's one way of bypassing the, you know, the right wing media really, is get right in there, go to where the power is and you ensure it goes out. Even better with the Barclays one, as an aside, we hadn't realised, so obviously there's always signers for these live broadcasts and then the last one, we always use popular songs because that's more likely to get more coverage. The one, sorry, not the last one, the Barclays one, the one before last, Barclays AGM, the signer, we kept in the Spice Girls song chorus, 'Stop right now, no more oil and gas' – we phrased the singing and did it in four parts, but where we kept in the chorus [humming] – and I give this as a gift for any of you – the signing for that is singing, which looks like you're putting two fingers up to the board, which is one of the reasons it got millions of views, so that was an inadvertent one. But, yeah, keep the chorus in.

Chris Garrard: This might be sort of a niche one, and again it was not something that I personally did, I was involved in a project when we were hosting workshops from different, like theatre and actors and groups, but we had one from Reel News, R-E-E-L, and I guess because, so the evolution of BP or Not BP as a group, I think we were- I don't know when Twitter first came round, but it sort of felt like we were in the early days and this felt like such a valuable resource in terms of communicating, and the creative tactics we were using, I think in a similar way really translated well to it, and there was a period of trying to share some of our learnings and doing workshops and we'd often say, just think about what we mean by content, and it's like that's our bread and butter, that's our kind of original ideas and creative things, that's going to stand out, and so let's not get too preoccupied with kind of playing the game with the social media, let's focus on being original and imaginative and so on. But with the evolution of the social media platforms and the dominance of the algorithms I think that's become much more difficult and it's become a much more toxic environment politically. But what this workshop from Reel News reminded me was that for us, and they'd work with union branches and so on, and, it was Shaun and he said, it's not necessarily about us getting the thousands and thousands of views of anyone and everyone or about going viral. He said it's about that group and who do they need to get it in front of, and he said, and that particular union branch got it in front of their bosses who were having a meeting that day. And it's-, I think there's room for both of those things but I found it a really useful reminder to think about making sure the technology is actually serving your aim, who you want to reach and your strategy rather- And I think, with the kind of growth of social media, I think particularly in larger campaigning organisations, there was a sense of 'Oh, we just need to be big and dominant in social media spaces', and it was a useful reminder at least to me of like, sometimes actually it's the right people to have the influence and the lever of power and sometimes we need the big movements as well, and it's discerning which lever and which groups of allies we need for the particular moment or particular target, I think.

Martin Goldschmidt: I mean I think the right are much better at social media than the left in 2025, and it's, you know, the number of times I've had discussions with groups about, you know, do you use TikTok – and when say I groups, I could be talking about Billy Bragg, or I could be talking about our local Lib Dem MP. And I've tried to persuade both of them to go on TikTok because I've said that's where all the kids are.

You know, that is where they live, that is where they learn their politics, get their ideas from and if you're not there, you're not there. And, you know, apparently at the last election the best party on TikTok in terms of using it was Reform, which what does that say?

Chris Church: *Is it not a problem that the right has basically got cellars full of sad people doing nothing but generating TikTok and user bots and so on, putting out huge amounts of social media, whereas people broadly on what you describe as the left or the progressive, are busy doing progressive stuff and occasionally Tweeting about it or X-ing or whatever. There isn't that same concerted, properly funded-. I mean we know that the far right is putting huge amounts of money into those, you know, live factories, and we are completely out balanced.*

Barbara Brayshay: *I think they've migrated to Blue Sky now.*

Chris Church: *Yeah, but so we can talk to ourselves. I mean should we not be looking for the sources of funding to actually start to meet the right-wing social media on their own level? And at the moment we are completely, as you've said, out gunned, out classed. Is that something that comes into sound and vision?*

Barbara Brayshay: *It's a bit tricky that. What do other people think?*

Fay Milton: I was going to say that I ran the social media accounts for Music Declares for five years and I got to, my low point was when I started posting things that I knew were a bit wrong because people would comment on them in their hundred and go, 'oh, you got that wrong', and then you get millions, like loads of people see your post and you started trending and then- I only did that once to be fair, and it was only slightly wrong, but it was on purpose, and it was because I realised your post only gets seen by people if it winds people up, which is why everything is as it is in this like horrible social media space at the moment. So it's how- It just breeds all of those. It doesn't breed any kind of nuance and I wonder if there's maybe campaigning needs to be done about the algorithm, we're all feeding this algorithm that's supporting things that are untrue and sensationalist and very sort of bottom of the cesspool, and that's what works on social media, and who gets to decide that and how is it decided?

Martin Goldschmidt: Elon Musk.

Fay Milton: Yeah, and do we know- Are there enough people who understand it to even be able to campaign against how algorithms are?

[00:54:42]

Barbara Brayshay: *Although I mean we are talking about Artivism this afternoon, so are there sort of creative- I mean, you know, we talked about creativity as the foil to those, some of those things. Is there any opportunities do you think for, rather than trying to meet them on their own terms but actually to sort of, you know, outdo them with creativity and originality? I mean people like Led By Donkeys spring to mind, for instance. I don't know, what do you think?*

Chris Garrard: Chris. It's not normally something I'd say, I just can hear someone else saying, these people have names-

Maeve Bayton: I can't hear you very well- Sorry.

Chris Garrard: Sorry, it's not normally something I'd say but I can hear someone saying, these people have names and addresses, and there is often, sometimes again it's thinking about where our weak spot is and I guess with our choir of like, we've been to Amazon and as soon as you go into their office they don't like it. And I haven't thought through what else, what's the next step or what's the next move beyond that, but there are, yeah, I guess there are Achillies' heels to be found or ways in which them being pulled into the spotlight does become uncomfortable in a way.

And a question that I've got, I don't have the answer to, but I wanted to like message my friend who was in the climate strike movement, is- I am curious what happened there, because that was a very active, vibrant outspoken movement led by young people, taking to the street – in much the way that XR was sort of after it, I think, and they sort of interwove a little bit. And they were very- understood how to use social media effectively and then, you know, other things happened and that movement's kind of been taken up in other ways. But there was a kind of moment where it felt like that was a real kind of coming together, that wasn't kind of getting swamped by kind of far right-

Bob Wilson: Which movement, sorry?

Chris Garrard: Youth Climate Strikers.

Bob Wilson: Oh, yeah, they were great.

Chris Garrard: Yeah, and-

Bob Wilson: They were tomorrow's hope.

Chris Garrard: Mmm.

Oli Mould: *It's funny, just on that. I find it very interesting that as soon as Greta Thunberg started talking about Free Palestine, she just got completely shut down. She got told there was no-, there was book tours and all the- The moment she started to link climate justice to capitalism and racial justice and Palestinian justice she was just cut out of the loop. So I think-, so the Youth Movement, the Friday strikes and all that, there was a real sense of inertia about that. But as soon as she kind of, you know, stuck her head up against the Israel parapet as it were, she got cut right out.*

Maeve Bayton: Cut out by whom, sorry?

Oli Mould: *Just the media in general. She just sort of got blacklisted. She was always going on BBC1 show, talk shows and, you know, she was on ITV and Channel 4 and all these different places, but the moment she wears the kaffir she just- Yeah.*

Chris Garrard: With that, really quickly, I think there's the one side which is the institutional power of the media and the social media industry and so on, and their ability to control narratives, and then the more optimistic side of who is, is the intersectionality piece, is the more we kind of- it's threatening once our different movements start coming together and say we're going to work together and we're going to show up with you to Barclays and shut that down, or go to this- And I guess coming back to the creative question is what capacity do we have to sort of foster solidarity between movements and also articulate a more complex and intersectional narrative, which once we start working- So our campaign at the Science Museum is India Solidarity groups, Palestine Solidarity groups and climate scientists and environmentalists, and we've all kind of come together around that sponsorship. But that makes a much broader movement and a much more complex one, and I think that becomes threatening at a certain point-

Maeve Bayton: The environmental impact of the war and the environmental cement reconstruction is absolutely massive, isn't it? I mean that's a link, a huge link. I mean the environmental movement should be, you know, we should be talking about that.

Bob Wilson: I was just going, sorry, going back and forwards, but going back to something that I thought was good, I kind of think more of it should happen and it's like getting the staff who work with these organisations realising that they're actually working for some pretty shit companies, and we did it way back with ESSO and we did it with Shell, is you actually start to try and get to the people, the staff, and then they start thinking this place isn't a really great place to work. But also it goes into the organisation, into their company and they start to sort of have a direct impact on the people that are their bosses, and I found that we've had some success with that, and I think that's a really good thing to work even harder at. And the second thing you were saying is, I went out on various campaigns with the kids, you know, I remember at one campaign they all played truant from school to come out and campaign – I think it was a war thing but I can't remember. I remember we blocked Whitehall and I had kids like either side of me and this car was coming through with his hand on the horn the whole time and he got nearer and nearer and then he got up to us and I remember the guy wound his window down and he looked at these people next to me and he said, 'Why don't you get a fucking job?' And she said, 'Because we're still at school.' [everyone laughing] And I just thought that was such a great moment. It was worth going out for the day. But I don't know what happened because I went out to a few things with them and you didn't want to tell them what to do because they didn't want that, they wanted to do it for themselves. But what you could do is you could tell them a few of the pitfalls, a few of the things that they could fall down and just help them not fall down them, you know? And it was kind of-, it was happening and it was working well and I thought- to me they were the great white hope, you know? And I went out, I remember Jeremey Corbyn did a huge thing with them in Whitehall, Westminster and it was a great day out and I thought, wow, we're going to- they're going to come out, and Greta Thunberg, they're going to come out and change the world. And I don't know what's happened, where they've all gone-? They've all gone on to their phones and they're all completely absorbed with social media now, what's happened to them?

Fay Milton: The pandemic.

Bob Wilson: Where are they? [laughing]

Jo Flanagan: Yeah, I think that partly it's not trendy anymore but also they've had 'blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah' for how many years and actually emissions have gone up. So it's like what's the point? We've done everything we possibly could. I mean I work with young people, I've worked with young people for thirty-two years, that's my day job, and it's just- you know, both it's not trendy but 'blah, blah, blah'. You know?

And going back to the trying to get to the staff within, my husband set up the Sharklays website, which was part of the Money Rebellion thing with XR that I was in. And during Covid we had another dilemma of how do we keep activism and pressure on the financial sector, including Barclays, during the Covid epidemic. So we had a small-, and there are only about six of us, seven of us that would meet every Tuesday and sort of plan what was going to go on, you know, across the UK with the financial sector. But one of the things we did do under the cover of the pandemic masks and nightfall is every month we designed a new sticker that would- and we'd have about four hundred plus activists across from Scotland down to Wales who would go and sticker the Barclays with these ones.

And going back to the earlier thing from this morning, sometimes we'd use the messaging, you know, the image of the man traipsing through a northern street through masses of flood water type of thing. But the idea of that was then to link them into the website and the idea of that was that the staff would see those stickers and see what the real truth, real facts about Barclays were. Because you get change- And there is an NGO who does exactly that, they go and work within the financial sector and try and encourage staff to come over to the good side and work within.

But, yeah, there's- The importance of actually reaching those people is that people who are the cashiers in Barclays will then have supervision with their line manager and say, 'We're fed up with the people outside every Saturday, you know, chanting and singing and all of that. We've seen this sticker and it's got the thing. We don't like the fact that Barclays are saying they're doing-'. And then it goes up and up and up, and that's how you get change often in big organisations.

Bob Wilson: Yeah, it's like the same with plastics in supermarkets, it's beginning to have an effect, yeah. Can I have a minute? Can I just go back to you and your devaluing sponsors, which I think is really important but somewhere up there, the other chain is like trying to get to lobbyists because I think that horrible thing at COP this year where there were more lobbyists there than delegates. And I mean to me that is like, that's beyond like, you know, I mean you've just got to do something about lobbyists because they are everywhere, whether it's Barclays, financial, whether it's the oil company, I mean the fact that there were more lobbyists there than delegates is just too much, you know? I mean it is just too much now and somehow you've got to turn that tap off because it's just insane, you know? I mean [sighing] it's so aw- That is dreadful, that keeps me awake.

[01:05:06]

Barbara Brayshay: *I think we'll just about close this thread down but Martin do you want to just say something, and Victor, we've not heard from you?*

Martin Goldschmidt: It seems to me that COP, from afar and I'm not that close to it, has run out of steam. I mean the one before was basically run by the oil companies.

Bob Wilson: Yeah, this one was as well.

Martin Goldschmidt: And, but it was chaired by, you know, one of the most powerful people in oil, and I just think some things, you know, are just a way of paying lip- It's like handing it to a committee, you know? I mean there's always going to be more lobbyists there now because the oil companies have cottoned on and have got far more money, and it's hard to compete.

Maeve Bayton: Waste of time.

Martin Goldschmidt: COP's just, and Trump's anyway left the Paris Agreement- I think it's hard to affect it on that international- It's hard to play on that international level. I think it's about grassroots mass movements. But it's probably good to be-

Bob Wilson: Sometimes that's all you've got-

Martin Goldschmidt: It's probably good to be getting publicity, yeah-

Bob Wilson: -you know, otherwise you're going to be outside the tent shouting rather than inside, you know, and then- A lot of the delegates there were good people and important people and had a lot to say and a lot to do and it's their life, you know? So, I mean it's sometimes it's, you've got to- I don't know. It's like social media, I mean it can start wars but it can also stop wars, you know, we've seen that happening and you've kind of got to go with what you've got sometimes. But, anyway not good.

Victor Smith: Yeah, I don't really have much to say on materiality because really the goal of everything that we're doing is trying to make the barrier as low to entry as possible. So all the instruments we have are second hand or things that can be made. Like, every teenage boy goes through a drum phase, so they've all got these drum kids in the attic somewhere and then the parent sells them on Ebay for twenty quid, and we buy them and we turn them into lots of little drums that people can carry and play. So, yeah, this has not really been a- the whole thing of like the sustainability of our materials has not really been a consideration at all. We really try and, we don't buy things new just because it's like would create a higher barrier to entry if people had to buy their own stuff. So, yeah, a lot about our material culture has been about what we can make.

It was interesting that you mentioned the lino cuts, because block printing in XR, I think it serves a similar purpose to the samba-fusion bands, in that you can set up a block printing stall basically anywhere, and have like a pile of T-shirts bought cheap from a- I mean like walking around London it's amazing, you can just find these bags full of clothes that people are throwing out and take them all. And, yeah, so you can set up a block printing stall and people can print a T-shirt or print a bit of fabric and they've done a little thing that they maybe didn't think they'd be able to do and it just kind of breaks the mindset a bit of people as consumers.

I think one of the things that empowers people when they join samba-fusion bands is that it's changing the relationship from being a listener and a consumer to being a creator. And, yeah, I was talking to some people earlier on, and I never got round to the story about- So Red Rebels in XR, there's these people who dress like this in floaty robes of red and they paint their faces white and they swan around and that sort of thing. The person who is coordinating the Red Rebels in London, I think possibly the Red Rebels-

no, not the Red Rebels in the UK, definitely the London group which is one of the biggest groups, came into activism through joining my band about three years ago and he was just like the most timid, passive, shy person ever, and he was like, 'I'm not an activist, I'm so scared of getting arrested. I'm scared of the police, I'd never do anything like this. I just want to like hide at the back and bang a drum.' And so for a bit he hid at the back and he banged the drum, and then he went, 'I kind of want to learn how to, maybe play some instruments.' Okay, it's cool, we helped him with that. Then he wanted to learn how to direct the band, so that's brilliant, up the front whistling, that sort of thing. And then, yeah, a few years ago he messaged me to say, 'what can you tell me about coordinating a group?' And I was like, okay, well [claps hands] and it turned out that what he done is he'd stepped up to be the coordinator for the Red Rebels in London. So if there's ever actions in London with like Rebels swanning around in red robes and that sort of thing, he's coordinating it. And he got into that through just joining the band and wanting to bang a drum. And, yeah, it's like this way in through having the lowest barrier to entry possible really empowers people and my- there's been a lot of people talking about media and attracting the media, and that sort of thing, and I think my – and I'm definitely not speaking for the entirety of XR Rhythms, my politics are kind of more of a- I guess more of a politics of the end times now and what my focus on is creating strong community groups that can support each other. It's great if the media sees an action, I would much rather people go 'How can I, myself, stop things from happening', and I think that joining a band can be the first step into that, and then they may only ever do that, but they also may go on to glueing themselves onto things or, yeah, locking themselves on to things, camping in front of things- [laughing]

Barbara Brayshay: *I think that's similar to the climate choir, you don't have to audition to sing in the climate choir.*

Jo Flanagan: Yeah, in fact some of them come from one of the core group, there's seven of us that sort of organise the climate choir movement, one's a choir for people who think they can't sing, and then they graduate to us, to our choir, and sometimes they still can't sing though [laughing] but all are welcome, all are welcome, and if you've got hundreds of voices, you know, it's magic, that moment when we get the full parts of this newly composed really powerful song and it all comes together, it's just like magic, isn't it? And then knowing that we're going to be using that in a powerful place, you know, to try and get change, it's really lovely and I think the power of music is, and singing is- You

talk about sort of nurturing in these tough, tough times, the power of singing together for purpose is just, just as with the samba, it's beautiful, isn't it? So it's creating emotional resilience as well but it's also growing the movement. So, you know, we've grown really quickly, really rapidly, and I can imagine there'd be a climate choir in every village, in every town and us having a marching singing song, you know, army coming on to the Houses of Parliament or whatever. But do you know what I mean, it's something that anyone can do. It's really inclusive but it's quite radical what we do because I think singing has always been, throughout- you know, whether it was through the civil rights movements or whatever, there's always been singing as protest singing. This is slightly different because it's choreographed, theatrical and in where the power is rather than just singing in a big march, if you know what I mean? So it's a slightly different way of doing it, but singing's always been one way we come together and feel like we're not alone, because we're not alone.

Barbara Brayshay: *Lovely everyone, thank you.*

[Audio ends: 01:13:11]

3) Session 3: Genres

Saskia Papadakis: *Thank you for coming today. I just want to remind everyone that it's about kind of like what we're interested in today, it's a witness seminar, we're interested in your experiences. So when you're answering questions and stuff, that's what's really valuable for the archive is kind of what you've done in your activism. So, in this last session we're going to talk about genres of environmental activism music and sound, and I'll just read out the little blurb so that we have kind of context for our discussion.*

So environmental activism has often been critiqued for lacking diversity and this critique extends to the genres employed in protest. Given the histories of appropriation and colonialism in music, for example rock music's roots in rhythm and blues, and the professionalisation and therefore increasing whiteness of official art, this theme will explore how the choice of genres influences both the internal dynamics of activist communities and their external political impact.

So, yeah, the first question is how do different genres of music and visual art reflect or challenge the politics of environmental activism. So, I don't know if any of you have some thoughts on that?

Victor Smith: Kind of, kind of, kind of. One of the questions I set out to answer when I was beginning my PhD is why are we using drumming inspired by samba, and part of that is because of Reclaim the Streets, and a guy called Chris Knight who was a professor at the University of East London at the time. He was involved in Reclaim the Streets and one of his goals was to try and get Reclaim the Streets involved with the trade unions and doing more trade union stuff, and helping them with strikes and then, you know? So you'd have like young, hip, cool people and also traditional trade union activists working together, and that will cause a revolution [laughing], was Chris's theory. And he went to support-, he got people from Reclaim the Streets to go up to support the Liverpool docker's strike in this day of all kinds of community fun stuff, and one of the things that happened was the Liverpool School of Samba was playing on the picket line.

He thought, this is super cool, and when he came back to London he had a chat with the London School of Samba, and it turned out the London School of Samba was already doing this kind of stuff because it was founded by people from Latin America who were basically political refugees, who had been fleeing from some pretty horrible stuff going on in their home countries. And, yeah, so they were already into this stuff, they were already involved in a picket outside of the South African Embassy against apartheid.

They actually made their own little band to go out and do that. So there was already this history of samba and drumming and resistance, and of course in Brazil samba is a music created by black Brazilians who were previously enslaved. So it's always had this kind of, yeah, naughty, community element to it. The other thing that I think is super interesting is the links to Carnival, and although we kind of have carnival-y sort of things in Britain, it's really more of a bigger thing in countries that are more Catholic. But what we do have is carnival-ish occasions like Bonfire Night, and like seasonal festivals and things, when people go and run around their towns in costume and do weird stuff. So, it's- There's kind of we have this tradition of there's certain times of the year that you can go and run around and be naughty and be a bit rebellious and dress up and do things you shouldn't. And also this form of music that's very heavily associated with Carnival, with marginalised people, with community. And, yeah, these things kind of came together in Reclaim the Streets and Chris Knight and the London School of Samba. I think that's part of it. I think that's part of why it is samba that we chose rather than – or rather that chose us – rather than something else. So, yeah.

Bob Wilson: I remember clearly when samba first came into the Caribbean Carnival, Notting Hill Carnival. There was like, 'Oh my god', there was a real 'No, no, no, this is our Carnival, this is our music, no, no, no, no, no'. And it took quite a while actually for the two of them to kind of come together. It was almost like the football, there was definitely an 'Oh, no, no, no, no'. And it's quite amazing watching the samba people go through until they finally got the- actually won, you know, they won one year and that was it, they'd broken through and they lived happily ever after. But when it first was introduced it was like really, really, erm, strange days but it was interesting.

Saskia Papadakis: *And when you say the samba people, are you talking about the activist groups or are you talking about the samba school-?*

[00:05:05]

Bob Wilson: The London School of Samba, yeah, and all their followers and things, yeah, and it was like, it was the two of them and there was a culture clash for a while, you know? The music was different, and the Caribbean Carnival they'd been doing it for a long time, since the sixties, you know, and they felt like they were being, it was kind of you know- But then it worked, it was really interesting, it worked and now they get along

fine. And I think also they were judged by the amounts of clothes that people wore and I think the Samba School have always outdid them in terms of [laughing] how few clothes they can get away with, mainly kind of things stuck on with a bit of glue over the important bits. Yeah, it's quite funny. Yeah, and definitely while we were there they were definitely campaigning.

Victor Smith: Oh, yeah, definitely. We've also had some really interesting discussions around the politics of cultural appropriation where- so obviously what we are playing as like mostly white, middle-class British people is music created by working-class black Brazilians, so yeah, it's a bit like, urgh, there's some uncomfortable stuff happening. And there's really- so something that I have done as part of my PhD and also like as part of my activism is talking to Brazilian musicians in London and asking these kind of questions. And there's really two schools of thought, and it's either there's some people I've spoke to who have said 'Absolutely not, we should not be doing this at all'. Other people who are like, 'Yeah, it's absolutely fine, just don't sell it'. And what is really interesting is the people who are telling me that it's really not something we should be doing, some of them are Brazilian musicians but they tend to be wealthier, tend to be white Brazilians. On the other end of the spectrum people from lower income background, black Brazilians have been like, 'Actually it's fine, just don't sell it.'

Saskia Papadakis: *What do you mean by sell it?*

Victor Smith: Not to charge money for practices, not to do paid gigs, and if anybody asks us can we learn samba from us, to say, no, what we do is samba fusion, it's not samba, if you want to learn samba you've got to go to- [laughing] And I think part of this attitude is there is a tendency to assume that all non-white music is equally marginalised, I guess, in comparison to what we would identify as white music, which is not really white music, because of reasons which I'm sure everyone knows. I've learned a lot about the subtleties in like how different music is marketed across the world, and in terms of samba the stuff that we usually think of when a white person hears of samba, they think of like skimpy dances and, yeah, like nipple pasties and feathers and Carnival in Rio and stuff like that, is not really considered to be authentic samba by a lot of black and brown Brazilians. So the kind of-, yeah, what I've heard from one guy who actually came to London to teach samba but ended up working as a taxi driver because he was relying on it to make money basically and then Covid happened and couldn't do anything face to

face. He said, it's actually really cool that we are reclaiming samba from this kind of capitalist tradition of tiny nipple pasties and sexy dancing ladies and things like that. I was like, I mean, urgh [laughing]. So I think it's taught me the subtly of the argument and the range of arguments and that really what we need to be doing is talking to people from the cultures where the music came from rather than just assuming, 'I'm white, I'm middle-class, I'm British, like I should not be touching this music because it's all exotic and-' Like that itself is really exoticizing and essentialising and it's not putting the voices of the people from the cultures first, you know?

Saskia Papadakis: *Just to repeat the question, sorry, Chris I'll come back to you in a second. But Martin who came in late, so we're talking about different genres of music and visual art kind of challenge political activism and, yeah, so we got into a discussion about samba and about how- that question about kind of like appropriation of music, cultural appropriation and- Yeah, that's what we were talking about. Yeah, hi, Jo, oh, you're back as well.*

[00:09:54]

Jo Flanagan: Yeah, Jo, and, yeah, I've got two angles here. I can remember XR was getting massive, negative publicity, it still does for being white, middle-class. I can remember Gail Bradbrook, co-founder of XR coming to Bristol. We had a pink boat on Bristol bridge, and it was in the middle of the worst, sort of, when we were quite powerful, XR, so what can we- The media can attack us because we're white middle-class, and what she said is that, you know, 'I'm working-class,' she said. 'I'm a working-class single mom,' duh, duh, duh, 'and I'm fed up with this.' If you look at just about every movement they've been led, whether it's Nelson Mandela, whether it was Gandhi, whether it, you know, the Suffragettes, it was often the middle-class would be the ones who had the power and the voice, it doesn't mean that you shouldn't feel like- You know, you use that voice, and that's the difference is it, you recognise you've got a voice in the way that others may not have but you use it. And I can remember the feeling of discomfort when I realised that one of the songs that we'd been learning, which I thought had come from Marcus, you know, who's in prison, but he'd got it- it was a Zimbabwean, adaptation of this Zimbabwean song and it's, 'the climate's changing what are you doing about it, the seas are rising, what are you doing about it,' so on and so on. It's really powerful, really simple, really beautiful and we've used it a lot, and that song we used first in the Science Museum when we did a thing against them taking toxic

sponsorship. And it was seen by one of the singers from the Portsmouth Climate Choir, who then sent it to her friend, she's from Zimbabwe, this Portsmouth Climate Choir singer's from Zimbabwe, she sent it to her friend who set up an orphanage in Zimbabwe, and she shared it with the school and the orphanage and all the teachers, and they absolutely loved it because they have got a real- I mean there's been months of water shortage, *months* of water shortage, so that the upper dam that feeds, you know, the whole area and the school and the orphanage is completely dried out and it's- you know, serious risk to survival. And they got the connection that we were trying to target the fossil fuel companies that were causing the damage, they got that connection, so they have then become a Zimbabwe Climate Choir, and it's just gorgeous. So, yeah, they love the fact that we're using our white, middle-class voices, if you like, against the powerful here, where we can, and our choir has got just three black singers in the Bristol Climate Choir. There's a few in the London one, but a handful and actually if we don't have more diversity we will eventually die. So it's been a big, big sort of push. And with one of the singers who's black, I do say 'What do you feel comfortable with?', you know? So, 'Yes, I'm happy to hold a banner but I don't want to speak' or like- you know what I mean? So it's being sensitive that it is harder for her, potentially she's more at risk, but the battle goes on to embrace more diversity and to make those links with those on the frontline, that's hugely important.

Bob Wilson: I think the same debate about diversity spills into the festival circuit as well, particularly, I mean something I remember when- Greenpeace are still talking about that, and we talked about it a lot in that black people don't come to the festivals as much as what they should do, or would like to, based sometimes on cost, and I think when that spilled into like action stuff, activities, they were like too afraid of being kind of marked straightaway within a crowd taking action, and felt kind of disadvantaged before they even sort of got involved, and that kind of tended to keep people away. So we were working quite hard at trying to get through that and trying to engage people more, and at festivals, I mean sometimes they can't afford to go to them, they haven't even got a sleeping bag or a tent. So there's more and more festivals making that available to people so that they've got the chance to come, and help them to sort of get there and give them things to- Not treating them like refugees because that would be awful, but just trying to break that sort of thing where it kind of is white-middle class, and trying to kind of get people to actually feel that, you know, to belong and be part of it.

[00:14:57]

But in terms of actions, that was always a problem, they were too afraid of- they would stand out, they would be kind of victimised, they would be jumped upon, and they were basically too scared to kind of join, although in the background they would help in other ways but they wouldn't come out, and that needs to change really, definitely.

And the other musical genre I think is quite important is reggae, because to me some of those songs are actually amazing and obviously there's songs back through the ages, you know, reggae songs, that whole genre of music is still sending out messages, still important. And in fact it's funny when working with those people from Notting Hill, Mahogony from the Carnival, made our props, there was this sign up next to their workshop which is where Trojan Records started, sort of the whole movement started there with the first reggae record. So I think tracing that whole line there right the way through, which is still going strong, thank goodness, is an important genre as well.

Saskia Papadakis: *Chris, do you want-?*

Chris Church: *Yeah, let me just- I mean about how the different genres of music challenge the politics in environmental activism. I'm interested, and I think maybe Sam Lee or Theo Simon might have raised this were they here, which is what music hasn't been appropriated? And the answer is possibly English, dare I say, folk music, which has a strong tradition of protest, strong rooting in local place, and one of the things that's come out from our interviews is an awful lot of people who are environmental activists have got a very strong sense of place. I think a lot of Theo's songs are very much rooted in that tradition. Steve Knightly of Show of Hands has pointed out that, rather stereotypically, if you go to a wedding, say an Asian family or an African family or even a Welsh or a Scottish, they're likely to be singing and dancing until two o'clock in the morning, whereas the English might manage to get drunk and sing Sweet Caroline. We don't have, we are not very strong on our traditions, our own traditions, which are actually rooted in our environment. Go back and look at all the stuff about broadsheet sellers in the nineteenth century, you know, stuff like the Peterloo Massacre, was only popularised by people writing songs about it and selling the ballad sheets. There's a strong history there which seems to-, and of course an awful lot of the early protest songs around the environment, 'What Have they done to the Rain', 'Masters of War', 'Hard Rain', are all started by someone strumming a guitar. Is there something in there that we maybe need to not neglect?*

Barbara Brayshay: *Disco's pretty big at weddings. [laughing]*

Chris Church: *Thank you for that.*

Saskia Papadakis: *Sorry, Chris Garrard, do you want to-?*

Chris Garrard: [laughing] I went to a show once where he brought in the politics of disco into it but that's a different topic, but maybe I'll share that later. With such a rich question, but with such a nuanced and complex one, it's really hard to kind of try and work out what was a useful thing to add to it. So maybe like a couple of broad things and then like a reflection from some of the stuff we did within BP or Not BP. But I guess I've got the sort of a little bit of experience within music and some of these questions feel very live, and then in the theatre space.

One thing from some work in museums that I was involved in, and there was someone from Museum Detox, which was the sort of black and minority ethnic kind of group within the museum sector, and she always was trying to get us to change the language and not talk about diversity or making things more diverse, and she was sort of, 'Who is a more diverse person?' She's like, 'That doesn't mean anything.' But she wanted us to talk about making things more representative and who was represented by the activism or the institution or the organisation, and that switch I found quite helpful when thinking about how we would position ourselves, in the case of BP or Not BP as a majority white, middle-class group, who was being represented and who are we accountable to? I found the word accountability really useful. So maybe to sort of speak to that. We began with that origin of doing these subversions of Shakespeare and the jumping up on stage and critiquing BP, and that would kind of reference the impacts of BP on environment and communities. But then with the shift to being in the British Museum, and BP would sponsor these temporary exhibitions, and one of them, I think it was around 2014 was called, *Indigenous Australia Enduring Civilisation*, and it was sponsored by BP. Obviously the relationship between the extractive industries and indigenous communities in Australia is, you know, massively problematic and at that time BP was trying to drill off the south coast of Australia. But that prompted us to have to do a lot of kind of learning and self-reflection about who is it that we are in this, and so the first kind of theatrical intervention we did, we sort of consulted with some people and we went into the museum dressed as robbers because we were like, we are the kind of impacted people in

this dynamic, we've got more of a closer connection to the white colonialist, so we're going to go in and play the role of the white coloniser. That was something that was carefully kind of consulted with, and then when that got shared online there were a lot of people in the sort of movements in Australia who saw that and responded positively to it. And so there was a lot of like, kind of in the way Victor was describing, a lot of learning and listening, and thinking what is the appropriate aesthetics, genre of theatre and mode to use. And a really curious one, is that it was very much a part of the group's approach to use like humour and satire to critique things and that was kind of the staple for a long time. And then we had an opportunity to work with the Columbian trade unionist who was taking BP to court over its alleged role in his kidnap and torture, and he was prepared, he was like, 'I want to come in and tell my testimony in the museum with you.' And we said, 'Here's an example of what we would normally do.' And he said, 'No, that's great I used to study theatre.' So, it became a sort of satirical, playful, tongue in cheek kind of thing, but he was in the conversation, he was a collaborator- Because the outwards appearance of it, had we not gone through the kind of devising process together could have landed entirely wrongly, and then there was a recognition that actually- and it added a whole other layer of work and labour I think to each intervention we were doing, but it was like, we can't just be like 'we're a theatrical activist group', we have to reinvent every time on the basis of who it is that we're working with and who we're bringing to this. I'm trying to finish a bit of writing at the moment about what are the kind of open structures or templates of our interventions that can uplift other people. So acknowledging that people do have a voice, but they're not always given the opportunity for it to be heard, and what are the kind of forms, genres, aesthetics that reflect them, make sense to them, that we can use kind of sensitively.

So in that case it was things like exhibitions where people could loan an object that represents them or take part in a tour, where we'll organise the tour but they'll be the speakers. So really thinking about those formats and, yeah, starting to maybe be curious about that in some writing as well. Like whose words, how are they used and what are the particular styles. Is this the moment where we can borrow musical genre and style, is this actually the moment where that's not something that is ours to work with.

Saskia Papadakis: *Yeah, Martin, I wanted actually to ask you about kind of, given that you were involved in Rock against Racism and this kind of like multiracial, anti-racist movement, if that's something you've thought about much in your work?*

Martin Goldschmidt: If what is?

Saskia Papadakis: *I guess like the politics, the racial politics of music and how different musical genres are political or not and who gets to perform or write different kinds of music or be listened to?*

Martin Goldschmidt: I think-

Saskia Papadakis: *Actually, it's relevant to the Palestine work, as well.*

Martin Goldschmidt: I think all musical genres are political to an extent. Some of them are right-wing political or left-wing political. You know, music reflects what's going on in people's lives, so most Palestinian music is very political because it's just what's going on in their lives. Most country music isn't because, you know, when your refrigerator is fully stocked and you're just going to parties, that's what the music reflects. And I think that it depends what's going on out there. I mean in the whole sort of Palestinian movement is far more diverse, I think, than the environmental movement and the- You know, you've got diverse Palestinian- well Palestinian music is loads of Middle-Eastern, I mean the Middle-East is a mess for most people's lives, you know, in a lot of countries they're a mess and the music reflects that in various ways. But it's not- It's interesting that the biggest music in the world in every country, just about, is rap music, which isn't a white genre. And it doesn't travel, you know? Not many people know about French rap or German rap or Korean rap or, you know, but it's normal- I mean Korea's actually the probably big exception because K-Pop's bigger there. But, yeah, it's often the biggest genre in the world. So it's- music is very diverse. I think there's certain times, and they're quite rare, where music comes together with activism and really communicates. I think that's the key thing, is about suddenly music can communicate in a way that someone like Victor Jara in Chile did and became a symbol of the whole revolution, or Amandla did in the whole sort of anti-apartheid campaign in South Africa. And sort of to a far, far, far lesser extent Billy Bragg does, you know? And Steve Knightly does. But it's always, you know, there's whole different-, you know it reflects society and what people are going on about, and if there's a mass wave of environmentalism, music will reflect that and some people come forward that are really good at communicating it and some will come forward that are really bad, and some people don't give a fuck, you know? That's how it is. I think. But I think music doesn't lead but it can play a big role in struggles and, you know, music in general reflects what's going on in the society.

Saskia Papadakis: *Yeah, I'm kind of wondering if we've- Sorry?*

Chris Church: *Hang on but that's reflecting, the question there is how far does it shape?*

Saskia Papadakis: *Yeah, I was about say that.*

Chris Church: *Sorry?*

Saskia Papadakis: *I was about to say that, thank Chris. [laughing]*

Chris Church: *Oh, sorry.*

Saskia Papadakis: *Yeah, so I'm kind of wondering like if these genres-*

Martin Goldschmidt: I think it communicates and motivates, I don't think it shapes anything. I think it reflects, communicates and motivates. So, you know, Victor Jara didn't shape anything but he really motivated people and he really communicated what- You know, a great song takes what a lot of people are thinking and turns it into something that communicates and gets through to loads more people but it doesn't- it starts with what people are thinking.

Saskia Papadakis: *Victor, do you want to?*

Victor Smith: So in XR's current strategy release, which I don't think has been publicly released yet but is coming soon, they've specifically said that the movement needs to be more like XR Rhythms.

Chris Church: *More like XR-?*

Victor Smith: More like XR Rhythms, more like my bands, because they're struggling to recruit in lots of areas of XR, whereas the bands are just getting bigger and bigger and bigger. Yeah, so they're doing this thing of like 'Now we're going to look more at community building rather than at having great, big massive protests in central London' and, yeah, they're specifically saying like look at the bands as an example of community building. So I think in this case, at least, I'm not sure if it's the music though, I think it's more the model of being a participatory, community of practice with a low barrier to

entry. So I, yeah, I'm not sure how much the sound and the music has facilitated that. I think it's more of what we do. But, yeah, that's totally interesting and I'm sure like with the example of the choirs I would bet that's also probably something people look up to because if you can get 300 activists together to sing, like- So I think this sort of thing can probably be shaping.

[00:29:46]

Jo Flanagan: Yeah, I mean one of the things that we do is I sort of plot six big actions which are singing truth to power through the year, and then in between the choirs will use the songs that they learn in their own local areas and find their own places to protest in environmental- against Barclays or whoever it is but what we do is we, Kai in particular, is pretty brilliant at composting songs for particular actions, so I'll say like, for the Houses of Parliament for instance, when we were going in and we were supporting the Stop Rosebank campaign, we were going to be in St Stephen's Hall, Westminster Hall and we needed something appropriate with the MPs wandering around and so on. So we did a bastardisation of the *Hallelujah* chorus, so it was [singing] 'Stop Rosebank' – so instead of 'Hallelujah'. But that in four parts. So it was partly humour but it was partly trying to find a setting. The next big action after tomorrow's small one outside the Royal Courts of Justice, will be sort of church-based. So that's going to have an ecclesiastical sort of type of genre, if you like. So it's finding the words and the songs appropriate for the events. If it was a bank AGM, then it's using bastardisation of a popular tune, and there's- what we do, and the only money we've got is from crowd funding and a concert, and half that money went to Zimbabwe as well for the well, so the only person who gets any funding is two days a week is Kai, who's a musical director. None of us, any of us get any funding. So, but it's not about, you know, empire building. Everyone does what they can in their own way and I've never seen such- people do their very best, I don't know about you but I've seen the best of people doing the best they possibly can within the climate movement, absolutely brilliant.

All the songs that we use, and they don't just come from Kai, they come from all over the different choirs and inspiration stuff, go on our Climate Choir movement website. So I've been contacted from people all over the world who are using our songs and some of the ways we are doing things. So it's a sort of open resource, a free resource, and the songs that we use which are other people's we get permission to use them. I would love

to have more gospel and all of that, but I don't think with the makeup of the choir at the moment it would just be a bit naff, and that would feel like appropriation at the moment, almost appropriation. So we'll see how we- But, yes, it is a way of growing the movement and also educating people along the way.

Martin Goldschmidt: I think appropriation is a concept that's double-edged. So, you know, on the one hand there's been a massive appropriation by Israel of Palestinian culture that's clearly, you know, I mean they claim- there's a whole fashion line of goods from the kaffir which is just clear appropriation, but on the other hand I think appropriation is often used to destroy people with good intentions, and I think it's really terrible when that happens. You know, so I think that it's- if people are doing good stuff, you've got to be very careful with the whole appropriation thing. I mean there's sometimes when it's obvious that it's wrong, but people can be quick to- you know, it's like saying you went in a car to a demo or something and therefore you're not environmental, it can be that sort of thing as well.

Saskia Papadakis: *Chris, I think I saw a hand-?*

Chris Garrard: Yeah, not in a strong way, I just, I feel like I disagree a little bit, because I feel like they are quite distinct, and I think where I do agree is about discerning between musical borrowing and sharing, and that being of a different quality to the appropriation question. But I think that same, kind of the same thing in a slightly different way and I- Maybe it's a broader point about the role of our groups within the movement, is I think it's being open to learning from the mistakes when we are called out or challenged on it, and then I think that- There's probably like a common experience but that's kind of insight and information which we then take on board and fold into the next thing. So I think, yeah, like some of the concerns I've had has not so much been the mistakes, but is then the response to the mistakes and the defensiveness and white fragility and those things that I think as a movement, there's a lot more to be done around.

[00:35:12]

The thing I was going to say, because I can't quite articulate it, but it was point about shaping, and there's part of me that, maybe in light of what you were saying Victor about the community-making, I kind of feel like that is part and parcel of the- we might see the

performance, the song, the intervention but all of the devising, creating, rehearsing, practising, is part of the process and I guess I'm thinking of like when I did a bit of studying music therapy, is like the process of improvising together is how relationships have formed and expressed and made in public, and we spend a good chunk of the time in our choir like, still learning, but it's trying to get people to just be able to make chants on the fly and just improvise them, so that they've kind of got the agency to write the music rather than me writing it or someone else. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't but trying to like go through these steps of, what is it you want to say and how to start translating that into- to give you a kind of mode of expression almost, and-

Martin Goldschmidt: Can I ask a question Chris?

Chris Garrard: Sure.

Martin Goldschmidt: I mean all music is derivative, what's the difference between derivative and appropriation?

Chris Garrard: That's a tough question. I don't think there's a simple answer. I think it's about the intersection with power and where power comes into it, and obviously there are going to probably always be those kinds of power imbalances but where there's a kind of, things like asserting ownership over it, trying to wear that culture as if it were your own, and you know, it's quite subtle and it's quite nuanced, I think as we've acknowledged over a context where people might have different responses to it but I think, yeah, so it's kind of being alert and agile to that.

Martin Goldschmidt: But if you look at The Rolling Stones, Led Zepplin, you know, they all- You know, in that definition it's all appropriation.

Saskia Papadakis: *I think I might steer it away, this is an interesting discussion but I might steer it away from this as a- Yeah, Bob, do you want to come in?*

Bob Wilson: Yeah, and kind of lighten the mood a bit. I'm not entirely sure- I think I do understand the question but when I see the word vision and then I see the word visual art, I don't think we've talked enough about that unless we've talked about it in terms of how people appear when they do things. But I have to mention that one of the things

that was clever, I think, and simple and it still happens is projection is a huge thing really. I mean I started doing projections when it was glass slides and we projected on to the French Embassy, against nuclear. And then it's gone right the way through to like maybe the first people who projected on to the House of Parliament, with Chernobyl when the clock was at the right time, or five minutes to midnight with Massive Attack and Damon Albarn on the Thames, or like even now it's still being used. I think it was a clever, simple, effective powerful way to actually get messages across, and it still happens.

And the other one is, I have to mention it, is somebody I think has done amazing things and continues to do it is Banksy. I think Banksy's work, and I love street art and I've promoted it, and I love graff art, and I've got an amazing book- one of my favourite books is a book from America way, way back, the first guy who ever tagged all the Underground, all the Tubes, and it's called *Watching My Name Go By,* that really famous guy. And I think those sort of things are sometimes forgotten. But I think particularly Banksy with one image, which has lasted and just, just where a picture's a thousand, a thousand, thousand words, one picture, you know? And he's done it consistently and still doing it.

Saskia Papadakis: *Can I ask a question, how would you make a glass slide to make a projection on the Houses of Parliament, like what did that involve?*

Bob Wilson: You have to get- It's a photographic image, you get a round glass thing and then you project onto it, and it turns it into a negative, and you put it into like a straightforward single lens projector and you whack it up and-

Saskia Papadakis: *And would you have been making them?*

[00:39:47]

Bob Wilson: We were doing it, yeah, for a long time, and I think the guy who used to light all the stages – I've forgotten his name now – he was the guy who invented Optikinetics, that was it. It was kind of move it, or the guy who did all the lighting stuff. He was a supporter of Greenpeace and he used to make all the slides for us and loan us the projectors and off we'd trundle to places like, you know, where you couldn't really get to. I remember at the French Embassy I got arrested for- I forget what the charge

was, I think it was something about- I can't remember, defacing or- No, degrading, degrading a foreign embassy and that was apparently- shining a light was illegal but I got away with but that was I remember quite a strange charge at the time. [laughing]

Saskia Papadakis: *Sorry, did you want to come in, Victor?*

Victor Smith: Yes, I was going to make a point about appropriation. I think it can be more helpful to think of it in terms of theft and what is being taken from people, and in the case of samba and one of my case studies, a guy who came from northern Brazil to London to teach samba because he wanted to make some money, make a better life for his family, and he said to me that he's not bothered that white people are playing something that sounds kind of like what he's playing, but what he would be concerned about is, like, he is living in a two-bedroom flat with his wife and three kids and it's horrible, and he'd hoped to come to London to make some money. And if people are coming to us instead to learn something that's kind of samba-ish, but it's not, you know? And they think they're being taught the authentic thing and because they're coming to me, they're not coming to him and not helping him support his family, then he would very much see that as theft. And I think that's the kind of way that I'm thinking of appropriation. It's less about who has the right to an image and who has the right to some words and piece of music or whatever, and I think it's more about what is taken away from people. In the case of something like The Rolling Stones, it's like is there any? I mean it's so commercialised there's probably not something tangible that's being taken away from anyone.

Martin Goldschmidt: Yeah, blues music.

Victor Smith: But if it's like-

Martin Goldschmidt: The Rolling Stones is based on blues music. Presley, you know, it's all about white people popularising black people and making the money. I mean it's total theft, on that basis.

Chris Church: *But you could argue that a lot of the black people made more money as a result of The Rolling Stones popularising their music, than they ever did before that.*

Martin Goldschmidt: That's why I asked the question.

Chris Church: *Indeed, no, I was very aware- Yeah.*

Saskia Papadakis: *Yeah- I just, we have one more question and I think it's worth-*

Chris Church: *Can I just-? One more thing on this thing about shaping and reach. I mean I'm thinking back to an Irish civil rights march, where a choir starts singing 'Only our Rivers', well known Irish nationalist song. The entire audience joins in, which is something you would never really see over here. The choir then follows with a song written, 'Only our Rivers' what, written in 1916 then with a song written three months before about the hunger strikers and Bobby Sands who'd just died. And it seemed to me at that point, the music is shaping the message quite significantly because it's being used for something that is very current, that is reliant on a shared history that is in the tradition. So I think there is something there. On a similar note, someone pointed out to me that they thought the Labour Party lost its soul when it stopped singing 'The Red Flag', at the end of national conferences. There was no unifying factor. People just left at the end of the conference feeling mildly peeved. And, yeah, people don't sing. That story about the government minister saying his vision of hell was three folk singers in a pub in Wales. Someone else pointing out that their vision of hell was a pub where no one ever sings at all.*

Bob Wilson: What did you think about when they sang YMCA at Trump's rally? [laughing]

Jo Flanagan: Oh god. [laughing]

Chris Church: *Well now there you have cultural appropriation, slapped down on the table.*

Bob Wilson: I mean did he ever know what that song was about for god's sake?

Saskia Papadakis: *Oli, I'm going to ask you what you mean by the individualised and collective artistic forms because I'm not sure what that means?*

Oli Mould: *Well I think there's- we've talked a little bit about this in the first session insofar as we've talked about the collective production or coproduction of music is often, you know, for want of a better phrase, amateurish or at least, you know, there's a sense that everyone is welcome, the barriers are low, the professionalisation of music often tends to lead to individualisation of music, perhaps. You know,*

there's often genres where that isn't the case at all. But I sense therefore, then, does a politics of, a sort of genre of music which is highly individualised, such as pop music for example, you know, Taylor Swift and that ilk, does that have a different kind of political engagement, political traction to say rock music, which is band-based, or choirs or a collective form of music which has that sort of de-professionalisation ethics to it. So the question is really about trying to bring these things together really and sort of say, look what kinds of genres- a collective genre of music acquires or, you know, even like singing hymns is a good- or a crowd of football supporters, you know, that sort of collective- I was about to say sort of psychedelia, you know, so this sort of excess of the now, is that an important part of the politics or can you get that in an individualised form of genre music such as a soloist, classical musical soloist or a singer or something. So that's what we're aiming at.

Saskia Papadakis: *Any thoughts?*

Victor Smith: I think that, I find it interesting that the music, the kinds of music that seem to be at the moment getting the most capitalist support are the very individualised things, like the white woman with the big boobs singing on stage, being adored by lots of teenage girls who are going to buy her makeup brand or something. And, yeah, I find that really interesting that it does seem that music is kind of going through a phase of like hyper-individualisation and it's becoming more about the big face, and- Yeah, I'm not sure whether one leads to the other or how it's working but it seems to me that the more radical forms of music have been more about things that people do collectively as bands.

At the moment I'm really interested in the nineties rave movement, the free parties, because that led to like a lot of the road protests, where quite a few of those were people who had been basically kicked out of their raves by the- Oh, god that Bill, that- the repetitive beats Bill- [laughing] And, yeah, to me it looks like a lot of what Maggie Thatcher was scared of was like the collective power of people coming together to have parties in the wilderness. And, yeah, it seems to me, like I don't necessarily think individualism is always bad and I think finding our power as individuals is one of the things that capitalism also kind of prevents us from doing. But I do think the cult of the individual and the cult of 'you have to aspire to be like this individual' is one of the hallmarks of really capitalist, contemporary music, and maybe is a way to kind of stop people being in solidarity with one another, if I was being a conspiracy theorist. [laughing]

Oli Mould: *Just to sort of follow-up, that's a really good point and one which I think has a lot of resonance in political movements. I guess one of the sort of ways to think that through is when you have- I guess you could argue that there are certain acts of individual creativity, it's like to perform, you know, you're playing the drums for a particularly long period of time or you're getting so in depth to a particular piece of music as solo cellist or whatever it might be that you become- you gain a sense of awareness or you gain a sense of what your purpose perhaps or- You know, there are certain individual acts we all can do where we experience a sense of actually, yeah, this is what I'm aiming for, this is what I'm doing and so, you know- I mean, I don't know, a glib example is the runner's high. You know, I do a lot of running and sometimes you get the runner's high and you reach this stage of kind of like, holy shit, this is kind of- you get a sort of sense of clarity. And so the individual act of creativity, of making music, can that have a similar kind of politics in terms of, yes, I want to do this, I want to change the world, I want to act in this way, that can also come through a collective creative act as well.*

Saskia Papadakis: *Chris, do you want to follow on?*

Chris Garrard: Yeah, the thing that was coming- I'm trying to think how much I can share about it. So our choir in London, we're the Stop Shopping Choir UK, and we're like a spin-off of the Stop Shopping Choir which began in New York and they're both like anti-consumerist choirs and we'll go into shops and sing about anti-consumerism. The New York choir has a director who makes all the decisions and Reverand Billy, who's a kind of performer, who plays the role of a kind of radical preacher but he's actually preaching anti-consumerism, so that's part of their concept. But they're very much the people who make the decisions. Our choir, they were like, we want to be democratic and inclusive and it feels like we've had three years of negotiation, figuring out what are the limits and what's the extent of that democratic aspiration, I guess, and wanting to organise an ensemble collectively in terms of skilling up, learning music, and so on. And then maybe as it relates to that question about that individual moment is, I've written songs for the choir and it's very much come from me and my own weird way of wanting to write words. And they're like, what does it mean, and I don't know fully what it means but maybe- and then when we sing it together we're like, oh, okay, this is what it means to me. And my favourite sweet spot from a kind aesthetic point of view is, this is pressing into and an issue or a topic, maybe to be specific about it, there's a song called 'Work' and it touches upon like queer rights, worker rights, environmental justice, and it's kind of all in there and it feels- and when we get the chorus it's got this real energy about it, so we all feel like we're saying and singing the same thing but if someone were to ask

any member of the choir what the song is about they'd probably give a very different answer because they've all got a different way into it. But I also know that that song began with me having something that I wanted to capture and reflect, but I also knew I needed to keep it loose enough and flexible enough that they could have a sense of ownership of it as well. So I think, and it may probably in a different way, but there's that sense of someone having to take something into themselves and then share it with the wider group and- but again maybe around the power question is that, if I'm like, 'I'm the only one who can write the songs', and some people have given feedback and said, 'I think the word should be this here or, or actually let's make this a longer vamp because we love this bit'. And I'm like, 'Okay, this is not mine now it's ours and now I have to relinquish control'. So there's something about who owns, controls, has power and now it belongs to all of us, and when is that moment of handing it over.

Saskia Papadakis: *Bob?*

Bob Wilson: Yeah, I'm just a bit worried that if the word procedural means what I think it means, it's the fact that now there is so much music. The fact that you can make an album sat in your own bedroom now and people actually do it, and the fact that we're actually swamped now with so much music there's just- you know, with Spotify and Amazon music and things, people are just kind of- it's transitory, you know? They're going on to the next, the next, the next, the next. Some of it isn't very good music, and a lot of it isn't good music, and I think it might be getting so diluted now that we're actually missing some of the gems of the really good music that takes time and study, and it's taken a long time to put together and the band's kind of good and they actually can play guitars or they can actually sing. And there's, and to me I'm just like, I listen to music 24/7, I am totally addicted. But I hear so much bad music and it's like there is so much of it. I just think we're in danger now of actually, you know, throwing out the baby with the bath water and there is so much trashy music, I just can't believe it. It's like, it's dreadful and it hurts my ears, it hurts my soul that actually some of the really good stuff is just getting buried, you know, they won't play it even.

Barbara Brayshay: *My mum used to say that.*

Chris Church: *Yeah, I think there's always been a lot of bad-*

Barbara Brayshay: *She used to say that to me when I a teenager.*

Chris Church: *A friend of mine heard thirteen different version of 'Smoke on the Water' played by amateurish bands at the Watch Hill Free Festival in one day. I mean there were awful lot of very, very bad bands in the seventies as well. I mean there always has, so I don't think-*

Martin Goldschmidt: But the barriers of entry have come down.

Bob Wilson: But if there wasn't a quantity-

Martin Goldschmidt: And there's far, far, far more bad music now and they've come down again very recently and you haven't seen the impact. But AI means that, you know, there was 100,000 new tracks a day being uploaded to Spotify. It's now going to be like a million new tracks a day, and actually from an environmental point of view, you know, the amount of energy that that data takes is quite frightening.

Bob Wilson: Frightening, it's terrifying.

Chris Church: *So is that individualised or collective or is it automatic?*

Martin Goldschmidt: Well, the thing is, there's a horrible thing but it actually just is, and it's like complaining- King Canute trying to hold back the waves, that's how it is today. The barriers of entry have come down and it is, I think on that note the key point is about the environmental impact of the data.

Bob Wilson: And the sea levels are rising so King Canute is going to get washed away as well, so worry about that- [laughing]

Saskia Papadakis: *Do you want to come in Toby?*

Toby Butler: *This is fascinating. Well I just wanted to, unless there's other, something else to say on this particular topic, but I'd just like to bring it right back to the beginning because Martin missed out right at the beginning on saying your journey, you know, how was it that you kind of got into (a) music but also, you know, applying it to the ground level movement. And I was just wondering first of all if you could just fill in that missing bit of the puzzle, and then the second thing which I'd like you all to think*

about is if you were kind of the age you were when you got into it, what advice would you give someone of that age now coming in? What advice would you give someone perhaps a bit younger, perhaps in their late teens, early twenties, I don't know what age you were when you came into it, some of you might have been a bit later. So Martin, let's just start with you and your entry point.

Martin Goldschmidt: I started off an environmental activist. Well I started off as an activist and, god, doing stuff really at college in Wales and doing many different things including- Well I was the political officer for the union and when I got there it was quite a sleepy college, when I left it had organised two waves of national occupations, and it'd sent twenty-five coaches of fifty people up to Rock against Racism marches and, you know, it'd really changed.

Toby Butler: *Which college Martin?*

Martin Goldschmidt: It was, at that time called Poly of Wales, and then I started Students Against Nuclear Energy as part of the anti-nuclear movement and was very involved in the ANC and CND and doing- Well, no, I did that- I had to make a decision on how to have the biggest political impact and I remember debating about whether going into trade union politics or music, and I decided music. I've always loved music, and so out of that I got involved in No Nukes music and set that up and we were doing all the music for CND and Anti-Nuclear Campaign, and stuff like that. And then we organised national tours of bands doing anti-nuclear benefits up and down the country, so we did the first Thompson Twins tour, which is quite ironic. And I did tours with a band called Poison Girls, and they in the end asked me to manage them and that was my first proper job. I never got paid but it's my [everyone laughing] first proper job, because they had no money, and we made no money but it was really interesting, and that's how- And then in terms of The Labour Lads, it was a band I loved and I was trying to get them a record deal and no one put the record out, so I put it out myself. I mean nothing was planned, it was all opportunistic by fluke really. I just found myself doing a record label, I never planned to do it, it was just never my ambition.

Toby Butler: *Yes, thank you, and what about the environmental movement, you know, you mentioned nuclear, and clearly there is a cross over particularly against nuclear power and so on. We had to make a decision in the project, by the way, about whether to include nuclear and we decided that Greenham had actually already been done very well in terms of oral histories, so we kind of decided not to*

cover it because others had. But just to say that of course there's a massive cross over, but did it, did the environment- was that a later kind of thing that kind of- Or did it just merge into a similar set of-

Martin Goldschmidt: Sorry, I don't understand.

Toby Butler: *I just wondered about the environment particularly, kind of your-*

Chris Church: *I think the split is between nuclear power and nuclear weapons. Because SANE was really about nuclear power and at that point a lot of people in CND kind of were still gung-ho for atoms for peace.*

Martin Goldschmidt: Yeah, SANE was about that. But I mean I was also involved in things like the miners' strike and lots of stuff, everything really, you know? I was involved then in Chile solidarity campaign, Palestine solidarity campaign, anything that moved I was involved in in those days but I ended up, the anti-nuclear movement became my key focus and for me, you know, there was no difference between nuclear weapons and nuclear power, they were completely interlinked. But for many people there was. And I was actually, you know, a member of the Socialist Workers Party and I left over the whole environmental movement because they weren't very good on it. They were sort of- I think they've become better since then, I don't know but at that time they didn't really- It was a bit scary anti-nuclear and environmental politics for the traditional left. So that was why I moved on.

[01:00:14]

Toby Butler: *Thank you, that's great. Right, I'm going to come back to the other question then, which is advice for the next generations. So imagine someone perhaps might come to this in ten, twenty years' time or next year even, what advice would you give them, someone starting out, wanting to change the world? Perhaps using music or art to do it?*

Martin Goldschmidt: Just do it. You know, just to do it. If you want to do something just get on and do it, and try and make mistakes and learn from them. Don't be frightened to fail, you know, if you believe strongly in something, just get on and fucking do it.

Saskia Papadakis: *So that's Martin, I don't know if anyone else wants to comment on that, Victor?*

Victor Smith: This actually comes into what I wanted to say a little while ago, about bad music. I think that we have in, like the way society is at the moment, western industrialised, capitalised society, goodness knows what, I think we have really gotten afraid of making mistakes and doing the wrong thing and being silly; and I think we really need to reclaim the human power of messing up sometimes and being a bit silly. [laughing] I think, I'd even say AI, I think the reason why people are turning to AI and getting AI to write a song rather than doing it themselves is because they're worried that they're not going to be able to do it well enough, so like trust the computer to do it for them, and I make logos for people sometimes and it's the same thing where people are going like, here's an AI logo because it must be much better than any idea I could possibly have.

And I think if I had been talking to myself like only four years ago when I first got involved in this, I probably would say that really what was holding me back was being afraid of being silly and being afraid of making a mistake and being afraid of looking like someone who can make mistakes. Like I had it in my head that no one could ever see me fail ever, ever, ever, and I think through doing samba fusion it's given me a space where I can make mistakes and be silly and be performative, and- It's like one of the things I do on purpose sometimes when I'm teaching people how to direct is like I will do the sign wrong, and I'll go, oh, no. Or I'll get the band to do something I know they absolutely will not be able to do, and everyone will collapse into laughter and I'll be like, oh, no, it went wrong, oh dear, well everything's okay now and we can keep going. So I think probably just that, like the power of being able to make mistakes and say it's okay to do that sometimes, you can always apologise and try again.

Toby Butler: *Lovely, thank you.*

Saskia Papadakis: *Anyone else want to? Jo?*

Jo Flanagan: Yeah, I mean I'll turn it around actually. The birth of the Climate Choir movement was me watching a video of young people doing their thing. It was, I'd agreed to, with Money Rebellion, we divvied up the baddies and I said I'd disrupt HSBC's AGM and then asked an NGO to send me ideas from around the world from how activists

have disrupted sustainability conferences, and he forgot he sent me this little twenty second clip of about thirty young activists who got into a sustainability conference and in the middle of an oil executive's slimy, greenwashed speech, as one they stood up and they sang in four parts, beautifully – it does matter the quality of the singing – in four parts, beautifully they sang a version of God Bless America, with different words. And they sang it as one and then they got out before they were arrested, they carried on singing and out they went, and it just made the hair stand up. And I thought, that's how I'm going to disrupt HSBC's AGM, and that was the birth of when I approached a singer, a doctor actually in Bristol and said, 'Look you're in five choirs, if I get thirty good singers and I plan this action and design it, would you help with rewriting *Money, Money, Money*,' you know the Abba song. And that was the beginning of the whole thing. So it was actually young people who taught me. But what I would say is it can be an incredibly powerful moving way, it's like moving hearts and minds in a way that shouting just does not, it just alienates, and you can get away with blue murder as well. You really can, you can be really cheeky if you're singing beautifully. That's it here-

[01:05:07]

Toby Butler: *Thank you.*

Barbara Brayshay: *We figured you can't be arrested yet.*

Jo Flanagan: I know.

Barbara Brayshay: *For singing.*

Saskia Papadakis: *Chris and then Bob, if you want to go.*

Chris Garrard: I wanted to second the making mistakes and then learning or trying to learn from the mistakes, sometimes it takes a few goes. But, and that's also like a really radical thing as well because that whole like perfectionism thing is part of the consumerist productivity mindset that we're also trying to fight against, so that feels really important. The things I wrote, like one was just the value of your allies who get it, and will also tell you if your idea is a bit shit. But they're telling your idea's a bit shit because they know you're good and that you'll figure it out together and you'll find the

thing. But sometimes that's quite a small group of people who feel it, have internalised it, and you're going to go on a bit of a journey together and you're going to back each other long term. That's just really invaluable for like again getting away from the individualised thing of how do I stay in this, it's like how do we stay in this and how are we like part of a mutual support group. And related to that is take holidays. Take breaks because that's how- Really like crucial.

Martin Goldschmidt: Can I just emphasis the point you made about the mutual support group, because one of the things when we did Totnes Friends of Palestine that's been really great is that we support each other. So if someone wants to do something, they get loads of support for that idea, they're not on their own, and they get a load of help because they've got a vision. They get a load of help to make it happen. So to be part of a group that enables is fantastic and it gives room for other people. It doesn't have to all be you or me, it can be anyone in the group but everyone supports them and some people want to do direct action, some people don't, some people want to do – and it's so good to be part of a group that share values and enables everyone to do stuff and get- And it's so great to be part of a group that you get support from. So I just want to emphasis what you've said.

***Saskia Papadakis**: Thanks. Bob, do you want to-?*

Bob Wilson: Yeah, well I was brought up in a choir school, so music has always been part of my life and music has probably saved my life actually, if I was honest, and I'd pass that on to my children but I'm a child-free zone so I can't really do that, but I have lots of nephews and nieces and things. But anyway, so what I'd give them, I would give them my T-shirt, it's got two sides to it. On the front it says, 'We are the people our parents warned us of', which I've always loved- And on the back it says, it says, 'Actions speak louder, whatever it takes'. That's what I'd give them, and I hope they'd wear it and turn it round and just love it. Anyway- [laughing]

***Toby Butler:** That's great. Just one thing Chris I wanted to come back to, it was the holidays. That sounds to me like, and in our interviews this comes up quite a lot, but some of this work does take an emotional toll and I'm just wondering if that's been the case around this table at all?*

Bob Wilson: Can you go again with that?

Toby Butler: *Just many people in the movement tell me that it can lead to an emotional or psychological toll working in this area.*

Bob Wilson: Absolutely, therapy, therapy is needed. I don't know how you do it, but I wondered sometimes walking into Greenpeace every day and seeing, you know, 150, more, people working every day on subjects that were pretty grim, and then looking at the website around the world, even at Greenpeace offices and just seeing some of the terrible, terrible, terrible things that are happening, it does make you wonder where the optimism and the hope's going to come from. But that's really, you've really got to do that otherwise you would definitely go down, and supporting each other at moments like that, and being able to fail and being supported, if you fail, is like one of the key things as well. But, yeah, pretty grim, and it's not looking any more hopeful right now with the way the world is. So I think even more now we need to try and bring back a spirit of collective togetherness and support, and I think through music in particular that, as you say- I mean I belong to a choir now that can muster 30,000 people and I'm waiting to get in there with 30,000 people singing and I can tell you that it will bring me to tears.

Saskia Papadakis: *Victor- Oh, sorry.*

[01:09:53]

Chris Church: *I just think there is a counterpoint to that, which is what some people have called the joy of activism. The first successful stunt. The first time you hit the media. The first time you come away from an action thinking, wow, that went really well. I mean there is a huge- I mean there's an awful lot of grind and a lot of failure but the occasional flashes of success are, I think, in some cases, what keep people going. But that does slightly open you to the idea that this is all a bit narcissistic, in that we're doing it to get those kind of flashes of success. But I think they are there, and an awful lot of people I know would certainly say they can really remember the first time they felt they had the power to change.*

Saskia Papadakis: *Victor and then Chris.*

Victor Smith: I think there's a shift that I've seen in, I mean probably maybe starting around my kind of age, like slightly under forty, but definitely in the very youngest activists, is that they've never had the hope that everything's going to be okay. It's more like we know everything is fucked, what can we do to get back against the people who

are doing this to us. And it's more of mindset of prevention and amelioration, I guess, rather than 'we're going to save the world'. And that's kind of an interesting shift, and I think that is something that even XR, I think can sometimes not be recognising that and not be recognising that like a lot of kids really don't have any hope, and the message is not 'Hey, wake up there's a climate crisis'. It's more like, we know you feel depressed and we know you feel that everything's going to god knows what, here is what we can do to look after each other in the meantime and-

Chris Church: *And it's self-preservation.*

Victor Smith: -make things a little better.

Chris Church: *Yeah, I think that's good.*

Saskia Papadakis: *Chris.*

Chris Garrard: I think, yeah, therapy is important, for particular places and people in the movement. But the thing I scribbled down and I, maybe it's like coming to all our groups in different ways, is being able to allow for different emotional places and states, and there was a point where we realised with some of our BP or Not BP interventions, they're all kind of like, not exactly one note but like striking one kind of mood or something. And it was like, actually we need a moment for grief and reflection, we need a moment for anger, we need- And because the sad thing is if someone's like, 'I've done too much, I've burnt out, I need to step back,' and it's like actually, how can you feel like you can stay involved and maybe you need to do less but you're still with us, because that sense of solidarity that you're seeing, that you're part of something, I know is part of the thinking about how we can address some of those sort of mental health impacts is that you stay part of the community and we give you the room to let it out.

I borrowed a warm-up exercise from a choreographer once, where you just stand around and chant, 'fuck you, fuck you, fuck you', together and she's like, 'You're not saying it to each other, you're not angry with each other, you're just sustaining each other,' and by the end of it you're like, so much has been like going on, we're so fired up, so- Maybe we need to build that into the practice more of like when we start we need to bring that into

our check ins, bring it into the room and not pretend it's not there and that we're fine because we might not be fine.

Martin Goldschmidt: That's brilliant. I get bored of the two minutes of silence at the beginning of the meeting, two minutes of fuck you is going to be great. [everyone laughing]

Bob Wilson: There's actually a shop called Fuckoffee, in Bethnal Green, Fuckoffee, love it.

Saskia Papadakis: *On that note, we're sort of coming towards the end of the session, so I guess I wanted to leave space for anything else that people want to raise that you wanted to say, maybe didn't get the chance to or something you think is important to be kind of on the record. This is your kind of moment, so I'll just let people speak if they want to.*

Jo Flanagan: It's Jo, and it's just I was holding out, I organised a vigil for Gaie Delap outside the prison a few weeks ago, three weeks ago I think it was, and we had the Climate Choir there and we had a Quaker meeting for worship, and I was holding up a sound system with Gaie's voice of why she'd done what she'd done. And one of the things which we've all heard is the antidote to despair is activism, so the burnout thing is real and I wish I had more money to go on retreats occasionally because I'm having to work alongside this and I've been working twenty to forty hours a week now for five, six years on top of my job. But the thought of, we haven't got much time, you know, nature's ticking away and it has its own timescales, so again it's sussing out where we can make the most the difference, the old Serenity Prayer, and doing it, because, you know, my grandchildren, my child, my grandchildren, they'll have years to look back and think, 'We've got to pick up the pieces here, we're fucked.' But we actually have got a little glimmer of hope now, little- And that's what keeps me going. But, yeah, I do worry about burnout sometimes too. Yeah.

Chris Church: *There's a crack in everything, that's where the light gets in, yes.*

Toby Butler: *Well, in that case, thank you all. I'm going to stop the recording now.*

[Audio ends: 01:15:48]