UP
PROJECTS

Pushing for culture-based climate action
Transcript

0:10 Emma Underhill

Hello everyone. Good afternoon and welcome to our *Constellations º Assembly*, *Pushing for culture-based climate action*. I'm Emma Underhill, the Founder and Artistic Director at UP Projects, and for those that need a visual description, I'm a white woman with shoulder length blonde hair. I'm wearing brown glasses and a black and white jumper. I'm really excited for today's event, which builds on UP Projects previous *Assembly*, *Climate Empowerment*, that took place a year ago in November 2023. Our current *Assemblies* program reflects on the role that art can play in supporting advocacy and campaigning, as well as acknowledging the challenges and obstacles that need to be tackled along the way. Our speakers today will be exploring what culture-based climate action means, and how we can best advocate for a public art ecosystem that is locally rooted, non-extractive, and joined up to climate action. We're really thrilled to be joined today by three artists, Manon Awst, who is currently based in Wales, and who is also part of our *Constellations º Cohort* in 2022. Victoria Pratt, Creative Director of the artist collective, Invisible Flock and Anne Duk Hee Jordan, who is joining us from Berlin. The conversation will be moderated by Farah Ahmed, who is the Climate Justice Lead at Julie's Bicycle, the pioneering organisation that mobilizes the arts and culture sector to take action on the climate crisis. Farah will also be presenting an overview of culture-based climate action as a frame for the discussion, and you can find further information on their work and bios in the link, which we've just put into the chat. But before I hand over to Farah, I just need to quickly mention some virtual housekeeping. If you experience any technical issues, please use the chat button at the bottom of your screen to chat privately with our dedicated tech support. And if you would like to ask the speakers any questions during the discussion, please do so via the chat. And there will also be an opportunity for you to ask questions verbally at the end of the discussion. So at that point, if you could use your raise hand button, you'll be invited to unmute your microphone, but until then, could we just ask you to please keep microphones muted, but we'd love you to keep your cameras on, because it's great to see everyone in the room. We also have a BSL interpreter with us today. Sumayya Si-Tayeb, so if you require BSL, please pin them onto your screen. And as you heard at the very beginning, we are recording the discussion today, so I do hope you enjoy it. And without further ado, I am delighted to hand over to Farah for their presentation.

2:54 Farah Ahmed

Hi everyone. So I'm Farah. I my pronouns are she/they, and for anyone who needs a visual description, I am a South Asian person with some thin rimmed glasses on, dark blue and grey jumpers, and I've got a sort of purple coloured, sort of pixie cut. So I am the Climate Justice Lead at Julie's Bicycle. And for those of you who don't know us, we are a not-for-profit organisation that works to mobilize the arts and culture sector on the climate, nature and justice crisis. I'm going to talk a little bit for 10 minutes about some of the work that we're doing on connecting policy and cultural policy and climate policy. It's important to say that the - we're doing all of this work on a scale that is which is really global and international. But the conversation later will also be about how we do this in a really place based local way; how we do this as individuals. So I'm going to talk really about the real big picture, and then bring it back down into what we all can work towards as well. So I'll just get this going. I'd also encourage you yes to share your questions in the chat and to keep the conversation going in there, as we'll be coming back to them towards the end of the session. And if there's anything that you would like to offer verbally, just raise - use the raise hand function. Wo culture and climate and international policy. So Julie's Bicycle is really thinking about how the climate movement and the cultural movement work together. We're thinking about it as you know, how we move in constellations, coming back to the title of the season - the series. We're thinking about it as how we move together, how we work together to advance our shared political, social or artistic ideas. But also thinking about this as something that's porous, that's shifting and changing, that's sometimes hard to define, but that is ultimately about how we share our values and how we work together in one direction. And the reason why we're doing this work, and the reason why we're trying to connect cultural and climate policy, is because, firstly, culture, and we mean that in a very broadest sense of the word heritage, arts and the creative industries that have never been acknowledged within the UNFCCC. So that is the UN, the UN's climate body, basically, except as "accords". So these are voluntary commitments. They are part of the UNFCCC 's communications work, so they're not directly about policy. So there's an entertainment accord, there is a fashion accord. These are things that organisations can sign up to, institutions can sign up to, but it doesn't directly impact the policy work that happens. And this is really critical, because if we don't think about climate action, about as being about how people live, how they feel, about what's meaningful to them, we will fail. And this is central to what Julie's bicycle's mission is really about we have to think about our cultural values, and we have to think about how we put that into action. So we did this piece of research in ahead of COP26 which happened in Glasgow a few years ago, and we did this in collaboration with the British Council, and we were really looking at whether or not cultural policy around the world is in alignment with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement. And we found that it basically is not there in the cultural policies of countries all over the world. I think there was only one which had any that

that work isn't happening. It means that it's not explicitly aligned, it's not explicitly expressed and that there is a lot of work to be done in making those connections really visible and really central to both climate and cultural policy, and it shouldn't be an uphill battle, because most of the priorities of what we're working towards are in alignment. So when we're talking about climate action. We're talking also about inclusion. We are talking about cultural rights and cultural heritage. We are talking about place. We are talking about creative economies. We are talking about access to culture and cultural infrastructure and civic transformation. So these are, these are things that we can connect on and that we can see as being mutually beneficial in culture and climate. And again, it is all about making those links really explicit and making them meaningful to our audiences and to policy makers as well. So I'll talk a little bit in a second about what our director Alison is up to at COP at this very moment. So we are really working towards the inclusion of culture in the cop process. So that's a repeated slide. So over COP26 and COP27 we worked really hard on building the foundations for this. So leading on from the research work on cultural policy, we partnered with the Climate Heritage Network and many others to work on building all of this bit by bit into the policy decisions that are made on this global scale. And so some of the wins from COP27 or that loss and damage was finally acknowledged. Changed in the decisions that happened, that wasn't us, that was, you know, it's a whole coalition of movements that have been working for years and years on this, but it's a real win for the climate justice movement. And in terms of cultural heritage, the wording around cultural heritage was included in the cover decision and in the global goal for adaptation. So the thing that I have learned about COP over the last couple of years is that every single tiny word makes a huge difference. The inclusion of cultural heritage means that there's a door open for us to bring in so much more, and it is also a door for us to access funding, to access spaces, to access the people in power that we need to be speaking to. So every single tiny word, every phrase that references cultural heritage, as small as it might seem to the outside eye, is super important. Last year, at COP28 which was held in Dubai, we launched the Group of Friends of Culture-based Climate Action. Acronyms and titles for things are a little bit intense. Sometimes. What is a group of friends? It is basically a group of ministers of culture from all around the world. So we had 35 to begin with, and 12 non-state actions who are now responsible. They've come together to support this work, to bring culture into climate action and into the COP process. So they'll be working on our behalf to talk to the UN to try and get this included. So the co-chairs are the Culture Minister from the UAE, Sultan Al Qasimi and the Culture Minister of Brazil, Margarethe Menezes, where COP will be held next year. And we have a special envoy, Princess Diana Firas of Jordan. So this is working at a really, really high level to make this happen. And there will be a meeting happening on December 8, this sorry, there was a meeting which happened last year, and there'll be another meeting that happens this year, which you'll be able to live stream. And what it also led to is the Emirates Declaration on Culture-based Climate Action. So again, we have these documents, these texts, that support

this work to happen. It doesn't end there. Having a group of friends is the first step. What this allows us to do is that we can advocate for something called for a Work Plan on Culture for the UNFCCC. This, again, lots of jargon and acronym acronyms, but this is, this is why we need to work across sector, and why we work with the Climate Heritage Network of experts who really, really understand the minutia of the legality of the wording and the language around this. So the mechanism that we need to do this through is called a joint work decision, and that launches a consultation, which lasts maybe a year or two. So then a work plan is drafted, and this so this all has to be supported by the ministerial group of friends. We have also had endorsements at the G7 and the G20 so there's real political movement and shift towards the recognition of culture in climate policy on a really high level. And we are also supported from within the UNFCCC, from the Entertainment and Culture Group that they support as well. And it's not all things that are happening in the realm of ministers and politicians and negotiators. We have also this public campaign, this call to action, to put culture at the heart of climate action. And this has, this was launched last year, and anyone in the anyone can sign this. So it's about also showing that there's a real public shift, that that this work is happening, and this also will go to go on to support the work plan development. So we can use - is the - this groundswell of action that is happening all over the world is proof of concept, really, of proof that this is really needed as proof that this is useful, that this is how people are really engaging with climate action and in a locally led way that the arts and culture are shaping, designing new thinking, designing neighbourhoods, designing community interaction, and that we're really leading the way. So please go ahead onto climate heritage.org/jwd, and add your name. I'll end this there. So this is what our director is currently in Baku in Azerbaijan, advocating for at COP29. It's constantly shifting and changing. What I showed you might have changed. By the end of the day, I'll get a phone call to say we've got this wording in here and then we shift and adapt. But that's, that's all happening, and it really shows the dynamism of what's going on that scale. But I want to bring it back to the here and out, and the people who are in this space with us as well, who are all working on different scales and across different spaces. And you know, really want to celebrate this, this work and to share the movement that is happening, which is not something that is made up by ministers, but it's made up by the artists, the organisations and the people who are in this call. So I'm going to give everyone an opportunity to introduce themselves first, and I'm going to start with Manon, and then we'll carry on.

17:02 Manon Awst

Hi, thank you for welcoming me here today. I'm Manon Awst. Pronouns, she/her, and I'm a white woman with short red hair wearing a dark top against a green landscape. Yeah, so I'm an artist based up in North West Wales, and I have a sculptural and research practice exploring how artworks can successfully stick to sites ecologically and culturally. I've became

become increasingly critical of the materials I use for my own work. So starting to look at what's close to hand and what's under foot, and that led me to work with local peatlands, and I've been doing that for the past two or three years, and it's just incredible, because peatlands are kind of subtle, quiet landscapes, so different from the coastlines and mountains that we usually associate with Wales, but the closer I look, the more there is to learn, and it's just fascinating. So I hope to be able to share some of my peatland work with you today.

18:16 Farah Ahmed

Fantastic. Thank you, Manon, we'll go to Duk Hee to introduce themselves.

18:23 Duk Hee

Yeah, hi, thank you for having me. I'm Duk Hee. You can call me whatever you want, so I'm not going by any precise pronouns. I don't care about that. And I work as a visual artist in outside, in the space, inside the space and I'm trying to also like to collide, and to see how I can give something back to this planet, instead of just Always taking it, especially when it comes to art, because art, I think, is not very sustainable in a way, how we see it and how we also engage with it. Thanks.

19:14 Farah Ahmed

Thank you. And finally, Victoria.

19:19 Victoria Pratt

Hi, I am Victoria Pratt. My pronouns are she/her. Visually, I am a white woman. I've got medium length red hair and wearing a salmon pink jumper in front of a pink drawing board. And yeah, I'm an artist. I'm also the Creative Director of Invisible Flock, which is a collective of artists based at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park and also based at the Wellcome collection in London, where we currently are running the *Land Body Ecologies* project, which looks at the intersection of mental health and ecosystem health from the perspective of land dependent and indigenous communities across seven geographies. Thanks for having me.

20:03 Farah Ahmed

Thank you so much. I'm going to start with you all kind of work in this, in this way that is about supporting communities in places, in specific place. So I want to ask you how you

support resilience in a really long-term way, how you support adaptation to climate impact in a way that's just an inclusive and reparative and how that work extends beyond the human community and into the more than human that you're working with. I wonder if we start with Victoria.

20:51 Victoria Pratt

Yeah, thanks. I think through Invisible Flock's work, but maybe I can talk a bit about *Land Body Ecologies* as an example of this. So this project, *Land Body Ecologies*, it's a collective of 35 individuals spread across seven geographies. And we were lucky enough to be awarded a thing called the hub Award, which is a big health grant from the Wellcome Trust here in London. And traditionally, that grant goes to a UK-based organisation to be located in London, in the hub to research something around health. And what we proposed back as part of applying for this award was that we wanted to use a decentralised structure for this grant. So it was separating out the funds across the seven geographies to our partners, where everyone was financed equally, and that work was led by those communities on the ground. So although we were all exploring this, this concept together of mental health and ecosystem health, it was very much driven by individual agendas, concerns, objectives, and then as a very multi-disciplinary team, we then worked across each other's skills to try and help each other achieve what needed to be achieved. And I guess in terms of that, work is human focused. It is also non-human focused. Is looking at the dual traumas of the human body and also other species and the land as a body. And just to show one quick example of that, and so one of our hubs is based in Sápmi so with the Sámi community, with an artist there called Jenni Laiti, who leads that project hub for us. And one of the outcomes of the work that she has designed around mental health is a project called *Voyage*. So I think Jack had just got an image on the screen, if that's okay, to show so I can talk about it. So basically, she spent, it's a three year grant we've been working on. It's extending beyond, beyond this grant period. But she spent the two, three years understanding the mental health effects for her community who live along the Deatnu River in Sápmi, which is a border River between Finland and Norway and reaches out to the Barents Sea and culture, obviously, to us, I guess, is really integral, integral to understanding expressions of climate health, land trauma. But it's not that obvious currently in a health space. So a lot of what we've been doing is using cultural interventions and cultural actions and then artworks to emphasise the importance of culture in understanding the new the health impacts of the environmental and climate crisis. So she organised this 200-kilometre rowing voyage where all the families who lived along the river who've been banned from fishing that river since 2019 because of the decline in the Arctic salmon population. It's currently at 10,000 species where it was last measured. They're due to return next year, and it's going to be, it's predicted to be 5000 species left. So the community there really dealing with the extinction of a really, really vital, nutritional,

cultural, spiritual link to their homeland, to the point where the community had stopped accessing the river or going on the river. So this action she did ask them to repair their boats, to revisit the river, and spend, yes, three days, day and night, rowing a relay. And at each point, this is one of the families, they would pass on this traditional ring stick, and they would offer a prayer or knowledge around what the river meant to them. And so this is a, this is just a really, I think, beautiful example of a cultural app that was sort of a really important mental health intervention with the community. There's also something as a larger body and collective *Land Body Ecologies* is writing about and advocating for a culture being included in how we understand the climate crisis and the health crisis. So yeah, I'll stop there.

25:18 Farah Ahmed

Great. Thank you. We'll go to Manon to talk a little bit about their work and how they support resilience and community.

25:27 Manon Awst

Yeah. So what's extraordinary is that although a quarter of Wales is either protected as national park or areas of outstanding natural beauty, it is nature depleted, and people have lost connection to the land just in a few generations because of the way the economy has shifted. And I think resilience needs to start with a material connection. And Jack, if you could show the Waun Ddu workshop, Waun Ddu is a raised bog close to Crickhowell in South Wales, where I led a workshop for a group of young people for Peak in September. And this is a unique site. I'll wait until the image pops up so it's, it makes sense, because it has this intact lag stream, which is like a river, a halo around the raised bog. And this, this lag stream absorbs nutrients from the surrounding landscape, and it's surrounded by agricultural land. And as the water drains into the bog, this this stream rebalances the water in a way, and acts as a filter for the bog. And this is really important to allow the sphagnum moss to grow. And this is the kind of super moss which forms peat. And yeah, the next image shows examples of local sites before and after restoration work. A lot of restoration of peatlands is happening right now in Wales. This is Cors Erddreiniog in Anglesey and Cors Gyfelog in Eifionydd. And after decades of neglect and drainage, this restoration process requires a close collaboration between ecologists and wardens, local farmers and communities, and also ongoing monitoring of the wildlife by volunteers. So if they're managed well, they can be habitats for rare species like bog orchid, sundews and the threatened marsh fritillary butterfly. So a group of us went out in August to monitor the larvae, which I'll just show in the next photo, because this is their - the main food plant of this caterpillar is the devils-bit scabious, and they're found specifically on these small group of bogs. But with peatlands, the most extraordinary thing, as well as this richness of wildlife, is that they're the most efficient

carbon stores we have. So although peat only covers 4% of land area in Wales, it stores 1/3 of total soil carbon, which is extraordinary. And if you move to the next image, they're kind of, they're liminal spaces between water and land, and they're spaces where, well, they're examples of successful coexistence between humans and more than humans. So they're kind of mutual communities. But it's this really fine balance that that allow them to thrive. So I guess the challenge is to get our senses acquainted to this balance in order to create resilience in the long run. And so for me, with my projects, I've been looking at the sticky bonds that are there and kind of treading lightly to try and to try and bring them out and communicating them, providing, I guess, just a little bit of encouragement and recognising what's already there. So I'll stop there.

29:41 Farah Ahmed

Great. Thank you. And Duk Hee, if you want to share a little bit about your work?

29:48 Duk Hee

Yeah, I mean, if it comes to resilience, which is created in terms of communities and land, and humans, non-humans. I think it's rather that we have to look beyond this whole topic, like open up and creating a framework where we, what I already said, we can give something back to the planet, instead of just like taking everything. Because, as mentioned before, that that we as people, as humans and where we live, is it like, also, just like a society of economy and the society of indigenous communities? We are all depending on this planet. That means, like, we thrive on economic systems, and therefore there is basically no like, such a thing that a society reacts or is really sustainable in that way so, and I think like to give something back, meaning like but also, like giving the chance that the planet can heal. We have to not only react on crisis, but we also have to adapt to it. And also, like seeing, yeah, these issues from, like the non-human perspective, in order to give it like a chance, and also extending this resilience beyond human requires in also honouring the non-human agency, basically. And, yeah, I don't know it's something what I think we should create more in order to really create this kind of resilience.

31:57 Farah Ahmed

Amazing. Thank you. And you've touched on some of what I want to ask next is, you know, what are the - what are the guiding principles that you use for working in a community, whether that means geographically or across species, so that we don't end up replicating the same extractive systems, the sort of colonial thinking, the human centric thinking, the idea

that we can take without giving back. So what are the ways that you work in order to make sure that the work you do is reparative and regenerative?

32:40 Duk Hee

I mean, if I work in in the field, I work in different kind of fields, but I think everything is like for me, at least like a makes sense, because my work is building upon each other. So it's a circle of like ecology, so without interruptions, because this is what ecology does. It's a circle without interruptions. And so I see my work, but somehow these works can go like different path, especially the work I do, like in in the public art field, this is like, where I can give something back. So this is always where I'm trying to also, like, see where are, like this troubled fields of like, a troubled forest where, like the ecosystem is highly, yeah, disease by certain organisms, but we also like have to think it comes from us, because it's not from the trees or from the mycelium or for any bacteria and parasites, because this is also like where economic comes into the field, where we grow monocultures in order to thrive economically. And then it falls back to us basically. And then we are like, screaming, "oh, fuck. We are fucked basically". So, for instance, I did this project also together with Pauline Doutreluingne in Sweden, which was funded by Statens Konstråd in Sweden and the Baltic Art Center in Gotland. And this was basically an installation which zoomed into the symbiotic ecosystem of this troubled area, and it was diseased by the elm tree beetle. So we all know what happens. The disease cuts off the water stream which goes into the trees, and they die, basically. And what they are trying to do is like they chop off the trees, they hand glyphosate into it, and they're trying to rescue in this way, this forest, but it's very difficult to basically restore this kind of landscape. And I looked into it, and I thought, okay, I can give something back. So the dead wood is like for a swampy area. It's like one of the most important things. And I went to this storage where all the dead trees were, and I took them out one by one. I debarked it. I had to burn the whole bark and had to clean it up. And I chopped it open. And it was like basically a table, and I placed it in in the forest back where this whole pattern was laid out, as the bark beetle would do it, and I planted again, like the soil into it and everything, which was like growing close by, could recede in, into this tree bark. And it became like ecological circle back and the same time, I used this whole setup also as to make like a film about this area of where, like the insects and the worms, and the bacteria, mushrooms basically live, and it was based upon this film *La Grande Bouffe*, the big I don't know the German - the English name...

36:54 Video

[Nature sounds]

[People moving]

37:20 Duk Hee

Yeah. So it's all about, like, eaten, get eaten, sex, dying, party, whatever. So, but it's all from, like, from perspective of the insects and this was basically also like, calling out that that extinction. You see to the end, you see it's also like, yeah, based upon us human beings, and that this way of, like, giving something back was the only way how I could deal with it. And this is like, what I'm doing, or what I'm trying to do when I work in the public art fields, and then if I work in a white cube museum space, I use different techniques. So I use the narration, the storytelling, because we need new stories in order to also build a new world - building in order to change our thinking and not stay where we are and what's happening. So this is like this, like, yeah, parallel ways I go over the public art and the more institutional way.

38:37 Farah Ahmed

It's great to think about those, those different audiences, and actually what your position is as an artist in those different spaces. And I wonder, Manon and Victoria, when you're working with the audiences that you work, how do you make sure you're not also sort of coming in and replicating those same, those same systems? Victoria, you do a lot of work in across different continents and Manon, working in these really rural spaces in Wales.

39:08 Victoria Pratt

Yeah, I think it's something you have to constantly be aware of and talk about. So I mean, we're constantly talking about each other's worldviews, our positionality, our philosophies, why we do what we do. And I guess on a personal level, I'm always asking, have I been invited? How do I know I've been invited? Am I useful? You know, am I the person that should be there? And I think those are important personal reflections I try and approach everything with. Yeah, I mean, it's, it's a really good question. Seven - four out of seven of our *Land Body Ecologies* hubs are in ex-British colonies, and you can see a lot of the colonial legacies. And. Impacted the situation that the communities now live in. So a lot of them were evicted from their ancestral forests because big kind of conservation national parks were set up by international actors, including here in the UK. And I guess where we're based here in London, on Euston Road, is very close to where the start of this whole conversation began, so it's really embedded in our work as the - as a collective, and it's something we're really keen to talk and write about. Yeah, in terms of the non-human, we've done a lot of practice listening as well, so sound recording and sound art is a huge part of our practice. So we spent a long time with recording different species in relation to these territories, whether that be elephants or reindeers or honey bees or gorillas. They're kind of these key, key

species relationships in each of these locations we're working so as much as possible, we've tried to pay attention to that perspective and, yeah, spend time listening and see what that can guide us and where that can take us as well.

41:11 Farah Ahmed

Amazing. Yeah, I like the idea of questioning. Have I been invited? And how do I know? And I wonder how I'm going to be percolating on this is, how do I know that the more than human has invited me as well? Manon, how do you sort of think about this work and this approach?

41:30 Manon Awst

Yeah, well, I always try to work from the ground upwards. If I'm working with a site, I'm also collaborating with those materials and those timescales that I find there. And since starting to work with peatlands, I've had to slow down because peat, it's it takes a long time to form. Only a millimetre of peat forms in a year. So, you know, materials take time. So botanical time, ecological time, these are very different timescales to commission turnarounds. So that's been a kind of learning curve for me to embrace the time of a specific site in the work. And also, yeah, maybe if you could show the image of the material samples. So on some of these peatland sites, the grasses that grow have to be cut back annually, or they have to be grazed, otherwise they would just start taking over and drying out the land. So large sacks of these grasses are on the edges of some of the peatlands. So I've been trying to use this grass in different ways, cutting it down, turning it into pulp, mixing it with different composites, like lime, biochar, crushed mussel shells right from the coast nearby, and seeing how they stick together. And it's a work in progress, and the results are not immediately visible and accessible, but I almost see them like sculptural seeds. So I'm planting these seeds as I work and, and they might take their time and that's fine, rather than seeing the results of the work immediately, because these landscapes take years and years to restore. And how can that influence the way we as artists work? You know, I find that really a kind of a challenge.

43:42 Farah Ahmed

So it kind of leads to my next question, which is like, how do we do this work in a way that is also reflective of the fact that we need economic resilience, that artists can't necessarily do things in a way that is always the most sustainable when there are economic constraints, or when we think about other factors, like our system being built on the need to move things on, touring things in a certain way. How do you engage with this? I'm going to come to you,

Manon. I'm just talking about this really long process that you have to that goes against the sort of hyper production way of working.

44:30 Manon Awst

Yeah, I guess again, starting from the material, you can make networks that are broader through the work with materials. So like, for example, a material bringing - creating a kind of bridge between geographies and across political boundaries. So, for example, there's incredible peatland research going on in Yorkshire, in Ireland, in Denmark, in Germany. And the idea that you can create a material map and share that knowledge and share the kind of technologies that are being developed. Because I recently went to the Cairngorms in Abernethy, and there is an image, and they're transforming these landscapes. It's part of peatland restoration, but they're using a geo textile to kind of sculpt the landscape and creating pools where water collects, which encourages the formation of peat and also encourages sphagnum moss to grow. And it was just incredible to see how they're doing it compared to how they're doing it here in Wales. So through these kinds of processes and learning from each other, I think there's this, there's a lot to be done. Yeah, so just kind of zooming out and seeing work across bigger distances. And also, there's this peat camera that we installed on a local site here with the Centre of Ecology and Hydrology at Bangor University. And the peat camera is, again, it's technology. It's not high tech, but it monitors peat breathing. The German term that the scientists use is "moratmung" and moratmung is the fluctuating water levels in in the land and in a healthy peatland. It kind of rises and falls with the season, and the data is collected by the peat camera and then shared, you know, shared across countries and across projects. So again, there's ways of being really materially connected, but then creating wider networks and wider maps.

46:53 Farah Ahmed

Duk Hee, do you want to share any of your thoughts? Or Victoria about how you do this work in a way that that builds resilience locally, but also builds resilience for you as artists?

47:08 Duk Hee

Yeah, I think, like, it's, it should be more based in where you where you actually live, instead of, like constantly traveling around. So it makes totally sense also what Manon does, and which is also like super nice to work in this kind of fields. I think there you can also create a more stable resilience in like, like, like, locally rooted, you know, instead of like, always, like traveling around, because this is also like, against everything, what we are talking about, right? And, yeah, so me, I'm trying the best to do so, but it's always in that case, the others

who want me to come to do something in like different places. And what I'm trying to do is also like to do it from here, from the studio, in order to get, like, floor plans or plans from the area in then I can think of like, how to locally produce in the best way. So it's like it makes sense in the economic way, you know. So, and then I think like artists can engage, like with local issues when they do like more, the mobile, adaptable frameworks within what they do in in each environment.

48:57 Farah Ahmed

We've been working with the Arts Council in Denmark and in in Norway as well to and with Arts Council England to explore new ways of thinking about how we tour and move art in a way that isn't necessarily about, you know, always flying a whole production across the world, and then going to somewhere else, and then going to somewhere else, and then coming, coming back, and doing it in this, this way. But unfortunately, this is how so much of the you know, funding structures work, and so much how these systems work. And Victoria, I wonder if there's anything that you want to add to that?

49:42 Victoria Pratt

Yeah, it's, it's a constant, I would say, negotiation of priorities, of your priorities, but your partner's priorities. So again, a lot of the places we work, the kind of larger, global statements around kind of carbon capture, measuring, CO2 conservation have had ended in real violence for those very hyper local communities where what their - the kind of downstream impacts of that for them are not seen, or they feel are not seen. So I think we're constantly weighing up again, like it goes back to that, am I useful? Are my skills useful? Can I help have an impact? If we're asked to go and I'm weighing up a flight versus the potential pipeline from the hyper local for policy space, and we can deliver that, then it's kind of a no brainer, but I agree that I think from in terms of, like, touring artworks or more, kind of production end of things, it is really important for us to consider how much we are shipping and traveling. But I think for me, it's always about, what can we do? What do we need to do on the ground? What do we not need to do on the grounds? And I think long partnerships have been really instrumental in how we work. So yes, you are you do need to be in that site, with that place, with that person, to understand their lived reality, to work together going forwards. But that relationship should be lasting five to ten years. You know, if it's valuable, and there's a lot of work to be done. So we definitely don't have these kind of, I guess, satellite relationships; we sort of never have. And I think that's, yeah, it's really important part of what we do and why we do it.

51:34 Farah Ahmed

Amazing. Thank you. We've got one or two questions that are starting to come through in the chat, and we'll come to those in just a sec, but please do add more. I want to sort of think about the sort of communities or the themes that we work with and thinking about heritage like Manon. You - we spoke a lot when we met last week about the Welsh language, and you all sort of work with heritage in different ways, and that can often be sort of framed as like a way of looking at the past. But actually, how can that be potentially a guide for thinking about how we imagine the future? Who wants to jump in? Should we? Should we go to Manon, actually?

52:28 Manon Awst

Yeah, I think the word heritage is weighted for a lot of indigenous cultures. Definitely in Wales, it is. And the word can be translated to either "chertaddiaeth" or "etifeddiaeth", and the heritage has been shaped politically across many generations, which has led to fragility, fragility of lands, landscape, language, livelihoods and ecologies. But I think that from this fragility, there's a certain strength and robustness and a determination that's also emerged from that. And I love what Anne Allison writes, "precarity is a condition of our time". And I really see that fragility and precarity, we shouldn't shy away from it, it, they're keys, almost to grasping and shaping how we move forwards. Because we know these landscapes are fragile, these habit - these habitats are fragile, and their habitats for people as well as wildlife - the more than human. So I agree with what was said earlier, that this kind of extractive, broad brush solution that ignores long standing tradition and intimate connections that come from this indigenous understanding that just won't work. So we do need to find different ways of listening and kind of fine tuning to places in order, in order to make a difference in the transformation process.

54:17 Farah Ahmed

Great. Thank you. Duk Hee or Victoria, do you want to jump in with anything on how heritage can guide us?

54:26 Victoria Pratt

I can jump in Duk Hee unless you want to? So what you shared Farah at the beginning around culture and cultures place in policy. Yeah, it didn't surprise me at all. I think there's a lot of work to do on how culture and heritage is overlooked, and actually what tangible and intangible heritage holds, in terms of some of the knowledge that we might have lost or

overlooked, but also kind of the answers that we might. Quite find to the solution that we're in Invisible Flock have been working in Pakistan for three years now, and just recently we're working in the Sindh region to document sound. So documenting like traditional stories and folklores real diversity of musicians there. And you know, on a surface level, you're like, well, how does this relate to climate? But of course, all of those, each of those communities, most of their music and most of their songs is in relation to the place that they live in, the mountains, and how we shouldn't mine the mountain for granite, because it's the only it's the only way that water stays in that desert region, because those pools are created from the rocks. So there are 1000-year-old pieces of music that have these messages encoded in them. And I'll just show a short clip, actually, if that's alright Jack of one of the communities, the Thakur, they're called, who are known for their storytelling through music.

56:21 Video

[Speaking in Sindhi]

56:21 Victoria Pratt

They all have storytelling roles and have done for like, hundreds of years. And a lot of those songs will list every plant species that grows around the mountain there, every bird. There's a really lovely line around a welcome song that's, "I invite you as a human by also invite you as a bird". So again, like encoded in all these traditions, some, some really important like ecological information, but also messages. And, yeah, this, this tribe said to us, you know that there's a 1000-year-old story about the mountain has been telling us the answer to the climate crisis all along. It's just at some point we stopped telling it or at some point people stopped listening to it. So, yeah, I think it is about, it is about looking back, but it's actually looking at like what's carried forwards and who's carrying it forward and listening to these different perspectives from different places.

57:23 Farah Ahmed

And Duk Hee, do you want to add anything onto that before we go into the audience question?

57:27 Duk Hee

Yeah, this question is a hard one. When I received that prompt beforehand, was like, thinking, wow, okay. And therefore, because it was really like, I did not think about that, but, but yeah, so to use heritage as to guide new futures in a way. So I wrote something down when I

thought about it. And that is like that heritage can serve basically as both as map and memory and in a way and that it provides grounding in cultural and ecological history, which basically can help artists and non-artists also to shape and to imagine futures which respects, basically lessons and the loss of the past. And basically by acknowledging and integrating these principles where the heritage is embedded, means such as, like a collective steward - stewardship, respect for natural cycles. It would also mean to basically honouring such ancestral futures and that knowledge can basically shape futures, or new futures, which can be envisioned in a way that it sustains rather than to destroy.

59:13 Farah Ahmed

Thank you. Yeah, I think you know that that knowledge has, as you've all sort of said, has always been there. We've, we've survived as a species for tens of thousands of years. You know, the issue has only come about in the last few centuries. So it's, it's pretty clear, it's not humanity is as a concept that is the problem, that it's the way that we approach systems. We have a question from Bridget in the chat, so in Culture Declares, we're exploring how response to the emergency has to be increasingly about safety and survival in the face of impacts in acceptance of the breached planetary boundaries. The current trajectory is for three degrees Celsius of warming, which will leave no refuge for biodiversity. The climate movement is starting to shift in this direction of survival, ecology and islands of sanity. Do you feel public and participatory art has a role in this and if so, where does its potential lie? So really thinking about the fact that we're we are going to see impacts. It's not necessarily about mitigating the amount of carbon that goes into the atmosphere. That has to happen, but it's also about adapting to the impacts we're already seeing. It's about knowing that it's not necessarily going to be a 1.5-degree Celsius future. So what is the role that that we can play in that? Who wants to jump in first?

1:01:00 Manon Awst

Okay, I'm happy to go. Yeah, I mean, I think it because the scale of the climate crisis and the ecological crisis is so overwhelming, I think that the rootedness can create pathways. So, for example, with the peatland work, the restoration does create pockets of carbon stores. And there's really contested sites. You know, what are we going to do with this? Is there the money there to do the restoration work? And then there's kind of schemes coming from the other side saying, oh, my God, these, these vast areas of landscape, are the perfect sites for wind farms. So let's pack this ground with wind farms, which is a good thing, but not on peatlands, because all of the restoration work would be destroyed in an instant. So I think kind of having people rooting themselves in their local environments and getting to know their local environments, whether, when it not necessarily rural, it might be you know your

cycle route to work along the river, or your local park or the forest or a landfill site, it's about that reconnection that makes people care and that makes people passionate and willing to fight, fight for it. I don't know if that answers any part of the question, but that's...

1:02:35 Farah Ahmed

Thank you, Manon.

1:02:37 Manon Awst

...where the role of art and community engagement can come in.

1:02:41 Farah Ahmed

Thank you. There are a couple of examples that I can share from organisations in different places. So in in the UK, in Birmingham, Civic Square have been working on a sort of a plan around what a three-degree Celsius neighbourhood looks like. So what does it mean for the community? What does it mean for the local ecology, and how do you build a neighbourhood with that in mind and how do we start thinking about that now? So how do we adapt our spaces? How do we how do we adapt our homes in a way that isn't just about the impacts that we're seeing today, but really thinking about what that means in in decades time. And in Australia, Melbourne Arts House did a whole program called *Refuge*, where the organisation worked with artists to think about, to essentially trial, what disaster relief for different kinds of natural disasters would look like when we think about the creative response in collaboration with artists. So like, how, how could an artist design a response in collaboration with the local emergency relief services to respond to wildfires, to respond to floods, to respond to all of these different things that Australia is already seeing? So there's lots of ways that we can think about participatory art as a practice and a way of practicing responses as well, in a really tangible way. And thank you for Jack to putting those links in the chat. Victoria or Duk Hee, do you have anything that you want to include on that before we go into some other questions. No, great. I'll move on to a question from Viv, is heritage equally as harmful as it may be helpful? Right this minute, I'm looking out of a Dartmoor where a vast poll of smoke is rising from the traditional burning of the moor to encourage habitat for game birds. Does anyone want to...?

1:05:10 Victoria Pratt

I think this is such a fascinating question. I work with them, a lot of different communities who use fire and burning as a practice as in terms of how it revives the soil and how it's

interpreted or misinterpreted depending on the context. Yeah, I guess it's who is deciding what the harm is always in these in these conversations, because depending on what perspective you're looking at it, using fire to burn and revive soils is a really ancient practice, and is, yeah, good for soil health and biodiversity. I guess the mass burning that we see in terms of large-scale monoculture is what is the bad practice? So I don't have a direct answer to that example. But I think, yeah, it's all trying to understand why these practices happen, or these traditional practices happen from many different perspectives is how I tend to try and approach it.

1:06:18 Farah Ahmed

Yeah, this is something that we saw again when I was in Australia last year, we did a creative Climate Leadership Program. I can see a few alumni from our UK cohorts in the in the chat, but we met with some indigenous locals who do practice traditional fire rituals to manage and mitigate wildfires. So there was a real deep knowledge of how that works that went into it. But also because that that knowledge hadn't been used, and the government has sort of been trying to manage things in a way where they don't use fire, where fire is seen as the enemy that that they realised that they were kind of inadvertently making it worse. So were bringing in these indigenous practitioners who had all of these like, you know, centuries of knowledge of how to do that in a way that is safe, and where you can work with the fire instead of kind of against it or seeing it as an enemy. And I think we have to think about everything in that way. There is nothing that exists in nature that is inherently a bad thing. You know, things can be useful, and things can be unhelpful, but it depends on how the knowledge that we have of it. Should we go on to another one? So a final sort of question from Kairavi, how difficult is it to work with the government agencies as an artist, and how you do or combat if there is backlash from government bodies or hierarchies? Who wants to talk about this, how we engage with authority or with power, I guess, and what we're trying to achieve?

1:08:27 Victoria Pratt

I can maybe jump in. Again, I guess it depends on the - it depends on the government you're working with, this sounds really obvious. Sorry, the government you're working with. I've had some really good examples, so let's use Kenya as an example. Some really good experiences on a project that was attempting to take a really busy street in central Nairobi and make it residential. So it was a project with ten local artists where we did interventions on that street and worked with local planners to eventually change that that street into a residential area, and that was a really successful example and good relationships with the government. I worked there with the Ogiek, indigenous community, were two hours outside of Nairobi, who

have a relationship with the government, but have been granted by the High African Court that they should be given their land back. It's like a landmark case. It's worth looking up. So they're the first, one of the first winning indigenous organisations, certainly in the Africa region, to be said that, yeah, you should be your forest should be returned to you, and you should have reparations, and you should be paid for it. But that process has been going on like over five, five years plus. Now actually longer, since 2008 and you can win at the highest level, but the local government will find every loophole and possibility to not actually implement that on the ground. And that's incredibly frustrating for that, that team, you know, who have relationships with their local government. So I think there are these, there are these tiers of power, kind of, as you say, you know, Farah, you know, it's, it's, I think, I think local government, that for me, is where it it's the implementation of local government is where it gets stuck quite often within our work. We can see that in a lot of the locations we work in that I don't have time to give loads of examples right now, but I'd say it's relentless, frustrating and yeah, long, but worth doing. You know, it's like chipping away at a rock. You've got to kind of do it to get somewhere.

1:10:45 Farah Ahmed

Thank you. Thanks for that insight. Victoria and we're just wrapping up. So I want to offer Duk Hee, and Manon and Victoria 30 seconds each to sort of have any final, final words or anything you want to sort of share. Should we go to Duk Hee?

1:11:10 Duk Hee

I have nothing to share anymore. [*Laughter*]. I want to thank you all for Yeah, for being here. Thank you.

1:11:19 Farah Ahmed

Thank you. Duk Hee. Manon?

1:11:27 Manon Awst

I guess this kind of relates to the government thing. I think we talked about it in our preparation, that the Welsh Government does have the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, which I think is one of its kind globally, and that has really helped to shape a few things and the way things are done here. So there's the creative nature partnership between the Arts Council of Wales and Natural Resources Wales, and that's led to Future Wales Fellowship and a group of artists, it's their fellowships to look at specific situations, but it's not outcome

driven. It's about the networks and the learning and artists are looking at transport, food production, upland farming methods, post-industrial transformation. So it's this kind of, you know, when we're looking towards the future and trying to shape things for future generations, I think it's so essential to have something like that in place and that we can feed in to this work and this ambition as creatives. So that's all I wanted to say. But thank you as well for.

1:12:44 Farah Ahmed

Thank you Manon and yeah, the Arts Council of Wales released their Climate Justice Strategy for the Arts yesterday, so that report you can find on online. And Victoria, any sort of last words?

1:12:58 Victoria Pratt

Just to say thank you. But also, for anyone who is really interested, please pay attention to the carbon credit situation at COP29 currently, the policy that was rushed through on day one. And if anyone's interested, please look up the Karen Pgak'yau community in Northern Thailand, where it's really horribly that policy in particular is really horribly impacting them on the ground, so I just wanted to put that out there on their behalf, as a yeah, as an example of yeah, the harms I'm kind of talking about, but it's yeah. Thank you for having me, and it's been really a pleasure to be here and talk to you all.

1:13:34 Farah Ahmed

Thank you and the lots of climate justice advocates who are on the ground, who are writing explainers, particularly about carbon credit schemes. So, yeah, I'll try and take those out. Thank you all so much Manon, Victoria and Duk Hee, it was such a pleasure to chat to you and thank you to UP Projects for having us. I'll hand back over to Emma.

1:13:58 Emma Underhill

Thank you. Thank you so much. Farah, Manon, Duk Hee and Victoria. I think it's so important for us to have these conversations, and I really want to thank you all for being so generous with your responses and offering us so much to learn from. And a huge thank you to our audience as well, and for all your brilliant questions and apologies that they haven't all been answered. And we will make sure we share all the links to the various resources and references that have been made through the conversation. Thank you also to Sumayya, our brilliant BSL interpreter. And before you all go, I just wanted to mention that UP Projects are

really excited to be working with Duk Hee on their first public commission to take place in the UK. So we'll be sharing more details about that in the new year, and our next *Assembly* will be happening on the 12 February, which is looking at *Art in schools. how can we get culture back on the agenda?* So if you haven't booked a place, please do so, and if you don't receive our *Constellations º Assemblies* newsletter, there's a link in the chat, I believe, so please sign up to that as well. And we're trying to encourage more people to be able to have conversations and be sort of more active within the *Constellations* community. So we have set up the *Constellations º Exchange*, which is a group on LinkedIn, quite a few people have already joined. So please do have a look and join us if you'd like to, because it's a great way to continue conversations and keep sharing resources and further reading, there should be a link there in the chat as well for that. And finally, we always want to hear your feedback and listen to your thoughts on how we can improve our events. So please do take a little bit of time to fill out the survey. If you can, we'd be really grateful for that. So thank you so much for coming today and for joining us. Huge thanks to our brilliant speakers and also to our lovely production team at UP Projects, and hopefully see you at the next *Assembly*. Have a lovely afternoon. Bye.