# Transcript – Episode 4

00:00:10 Silvia Ceaușu

Welcome to the CBER Lunchbox podcast.

00:00:20 Silvia Ceaușu

I'm Silvia Ceausu. I'm a postdoc at University College London doing research in biodiversity conservation. Welcome to the CBER Lunchbox podcast.

00:00:29 Silvia Ceaușu

Today I'm chatting with Susanne Marieke Vogel, who is a postdoc at Aarhus University in Denmark. Before that, she obtained her bachelor degree and master degree at Wageningen University in the Netherlands, and her PhD degree from University of Oxford. We'll talk about her path to research ethics in conservation and her current work on human wildlife interactions.

Welcome!

00:00:51 Susanne Marieke Vogel

Thank you, well thank you for having me.

00:00:53 Silvia Ceaușu

We'll start with a few quick-fire questions just to unlock our spontaneity. So what is your favourite species?

00:01:01 Susanne Marieke Vogel

Oh, that for me is a difficult question. OK, I would say from all species, either barn owl, domestic cat or elephant.

00:01:11 Silvia Ceaușu

This is surprising, I was almost sure you're going to say elephant.

00:01:15 Susanne Marieke Vogel

Like most people, that's why it's very difficult, but I just I'm fascinated by barn owls and I really like cats. So which is also a bit contradictory; to like birds and cats.

00:01:27 Silvia Ceaușu

So what's your favourite field work location?

00:01:30 Susanne Marieke Vogel

Maybe the most life changing experience I had, or the most amazed I was by the field site was in Uganda. So I was working in northern Uganda. That made a big impact on me. But also yeah, I feel like every field work even in the Netherlands or any place is special to me and I it's really hard for me to choose because I think all different sites bring you something new, right?

00:02:01 Silvia Ceaușu

Why did you like Uganda so much?

00:02:04 Susanne Marieke Vogel

So that was where I did my master project and I think...

First of all, that I managed to get there and then to convince my supervisor to let me go there and and do the project I wanted to do. That was very special to me and then I met lots of amazing people and I feel like learning about the way people were living there really changed how I thought about the world and how I thought about science and conservation.

00:02:34 Silvia Ceaușu

Very tempted to ask you what was your master project?

00:02:37 Susanne Marieke Vogel

So I studied forest and nature conservation. So actually before I did that, I started with anthropology. Maybe I should even zoom a little bit back and go to high school where I had to figure out what I wanted to study. I decided I wanted to learn about elephant overpopulation, as I called it at the time, but maybe what I wanted to know was how can we combine caring about the species and wanting species to thrive in area? And also obviously people living there and people also dealing with the situation. And I got fascinated by the parks in South Africa where there was this high amount of elephants and people trying to figure out ways to deal with these high populations.

00:03:21 Susanne Marieke Vogel

And yeah, so I decided this human development, economic or anything that humans want from nature and then or from landscapes and then combine that with nature, conservation of endangered or vulnerable species. So that's why I decided I wanted to study anthropology to understand it from the human side.

00:03:40 Susanne Marieke Vogel

So I think... I figured out OK if if I want to work on how people can live with wildlife then I need to understand people right? But after a year I realised I want to even in my studies combine both perspective from the animal side and human side and at the university where I was studying it didn't really seem feasible.

00:04:01 Susanne Marieke Vogel

So I swapped the university to Wageningen University and then I also swapped my emphasis. So I studied mainly forest and nature conservation with a minor in what they call sustainable development or research use. Yeah, and so basically the whole time I wanted to combine those things and I figured out during my bachelors that it was crop consumption, or crop raiding, whatever you want to call it, that most inspired me to do research or to do my project.

00:04:31 Susanne Marieke Vogel

So I was looking for species and at the same time I was also at the time volunteering for Jane Goodall Institute in the Netherlands, basically raising funds for chimpanzee conservation, and through them I heard about this project in Uganda, where they had lots of issues with chimpanzee and attacking people so and eating crops. And I felt like it was a special moment where my interest and this volunteer work I was doing sort of on this title time were connecting so I got in touch with the organisation there and I asked OK, I'm willing to project to do a project and study things or get data that you need for your NGO and that's a bit how it happens.

00:05:15 Susanne Marieke Vogel

Of course there was lots of effort there and from both them and trying to get this. Basically I I showed up .... I feel like when I think back on myself at that time, I was not really prepared and I wasn't... I wasn't really sure. Of course I learned a lot about science, but I wasn't.... I think I just walked into it. Very open, like oblivious and open minded but. Yeah, just basically only when I arrived we started to figure out all the logistics and I was randomly getting rights to the places and the field site. Uh, and where I was going to stay, it was all very much undecided and it's such a contrast to do fieldwork now as a postdoc where I have all these people helping me figure out things beforehand and like everything has to be smooth and at the time it was...Yeah it was more like rock up and try and figure out how life goes over there.

00:06:09 Susanne Marieke Vogel

So of course I because I always was interested in combining with development studies and I had this anthropology focus I was very aware of where I was to some point where to of course there's people having issues with conservation and NGO's and being kicked out of parks and all that's … basically, the negative sides that's often forgotten when we think about saving the world or saving species. I knew or I was trained or studying that, but in a way coming to a place and having this mindset of OK, I can learn about how these people deal with these animals.

00:06:48 Susanne Marieke Vogel

So I was testing out epidemiological model on which crop types they have mainly had issues with chimpanzee and baboon. So I came there to learn right and that was my motivation but at the same time, I didn't. I wish I would have known more about how to be interacting with an NGO that also has a very nature conservation attitude, right? And an image, and I think at the moment I'm very much questioning my of my role in conservation science when I go to other countries.

00:07:20 Susanne Marieke Vogel

And am I even allowed to do this from like in general, like ethically, but also for myself? Do I even agree with me going somewhere and I feel like, yeah, I wish I thought more about that o I was talking more about.

00:07:33 Silvia Ceaușu

Yeah, I think this kind of thoughts are actually relatively recent in conservation, regarding the, you know, the ethical aspects of us conducting research there and....

00:07:46 Susanne Marieke Vogel

But but I feel like when when, when I was there I, of course you had these thoughts. And it's like also, during my PhD I had these thoughts and I was constantly very confused about having sort of a gut feeling what is right and what is wrong and then seeing things or being confronted with people that you should admire because they're more senior to you and they are from the organisations you are or the research groups you are inspiring to become part of.....so they are doing things or saying things that maybe feel wrong. And then how do you as a junior who has no knowledge who is completely dependent on these other people to live out your dream and how do you deal with this when there's not a conversation? And how do you deal with it when you're worried to be judged by them and you want to be an insider? But also you realise? Maybe I am an outsider.... I don't know. You're constantly you're playing with being outsider-insider and yeah, I feel like trying to create a safe space where you can talk about this and have self-reflection or reflexivity, or trying to together figure out in a dialogue how to deal with these questions I feel like that's something that's indeed very new, but I feel like the feelings were always there.

00:09:06 Silvia Ceaușu

So could you maybe give some examples of the situations that require more self-reflexivity from a researcher.

00:09:13 Susanne Marieke Vogel

Yes, of course. So for example, I think colonialism is not only in the roots of modern conservation. You are still confronted with it on a day-to-day basis, especially when you're doing fieldwork with maybe situations of racism or new colonialism. And I think it's not just always even in a way that people can claim it's accidental or they're just not aware of something like who gets to be on a paper who gets excluded from certain decisions or who eats with whom in the research camp. But I I think sometimes it's also very explicit, like I know of stories that me and my friends experienced where someone was told not to be friends with their field collaborator as and they were comparing the field collaborator to dogs and that they needed to be trained like the dogs. Or I heard of people who heard someone complain that they refused to shower in the same shower as the the staff of the research camp wherever they were doing research because they they would get diseases from the people.

00:10:17 Susanne Marieke Vogel

And it's also not just in fieldwork, right? So a few years ago I saw and someone receiving an award for their conservation efforts and at the acceptance speech the person mentioned that a group of people were the future of conservation in Africa and then behind their presenting person a map of the African country appeared with photos of only white men.

00:10:39 Susanne Marieke Vogel

So I think, yeah, I think we all have a job to inform ourselves, right? And so if we want to be part of this conservation movement to try and learn from, maybe the past and do a better job.

00:10:50 Silvia Ceaușu

So what was your PhD thesis about and what are you working on now?

00:10:55 Susanne Marieke Vogel

And my PhD thesis I think I called it something like How decisions lead to conflict. Which already the word conflict was very controversial. So I almost changed it, but basically I wanted to look at the the decisions that animals make. So in my case it was elephants foraging crops. And I was mainly looking at movement decisions and foraging decisions and the role agricultural fields and crops played in that and from the human side I was looking at why farmers chose to adopt or not adopt mitigation methods that were offered so I think what I saw at least a lot was NGO's or government bodies giving mitigation methods. So any strategy to try and reduce elephants coming into fields and eating crops. I was wondering why if we always we do these projects and we claim in these papers: oh, this is the solution to elephants eating crops, why isn't everyone then doing it?

00:11:58 Susanne Marieke Vogel

And yeah, I feel like that's what triggered the idea behind it and basically allowing the floor to the farmers themselves, to say what they wanted. And I think that's why we used ethnographic decision model. So that the ethnographic part was mainly them explaining in their own words. So we're trying to… yeah, see the methods that they were offered, were they actually the mthods they were asking for because people didn't really ask them what they were asking for, right? That was mainly the idea behind my PhD. So I think that's an idea that I was trying to think about human-elephant coexistence and maybe also how decisions play a role in it. Kind of linked to what I did my postdoc in. I did one postdoc I finished and now I'm doing my second. And in my first I was mainly looking at what makes an area suitable for elephants and rhino this time as well.

00:12:54 Susanne Marieke Vogel

But then also trying to integrate this human dimension with the ecological dimension. But for my current post doc I am looking again at human-wildlife coexistence, so a bit broader but in Maasai Mara so I am focusing on one case study or field site.

00:13:11 Susanne Marieke Vogel

And so maybe the main theme of my postdocs is trying to understand how, not just ecological factors determine where an elephant or a rhino or whatever species should be, but that it matters a lot what the people want that live there. So basically we're almost literally asking people, do you want to live with elephants? Do you want to live with rhino? And why do you want to live with conservation? And I feel like the answer to that, if it is no, then that should be accepted. Or if conservation organisations don't want that to be the answer, then they have to work and they have to make sure people actually want to live with these species. And I like how it's sort of turning around the idea that the humans are bad because… So the site where I work at the moment in my postdoc it is the Maasai Mara in Kenya and I don't know if you read, but a few years ago there ware all these papers about: oh, humans are the threat or the Maasai are the threat to the wildebeest, to the migration routes or to the parks?

00:14:14 Susanne Marieke Vogel

And I feel like it's such a strange narrative that the humans that are being put up with this wildlife, and in a way of course they benefit sometimes from tourism. But still we in quotation marks, force them to live with these animals. And if they don't want to, why, why would that be OK. I'm really into political ecology and trying to break apart these narratives for myself, also above myself and and yeah, I think… I find it fascinating to try and see: OK, there's this narrative. Where is it coming from? How could we try and look at it from a different angle.

00:14:47 Susanne Marieke Vogel

And right now my main idea is trying to see: OK, how can we merge, how can we make sure that the social side or the human side is also incorporated in the ecology, and how can we allow the opinion where should these animals be not to be only from scientists, but also from the people actually going to live with these species.

00:15:15 Silvia Ceaușu

I mean, there's this argument that biodiversity is important also for human benefits, and often these benefits are long-term and on large scale so, you know, it supports the resilience of ecosystems and stuff like that. And despite this this cost that that farmers or people who live with these species, despite this cost, there is a benefit of preserving biodiversity, you know, for long term wellbeing, how do you see this? Is there a way to balance this?

Because even if, if even if it's difficult at the moment to live with these species. It might be favourable to have these species preserved for their future benefits.

00:15:59 Susanne Marieke Vogel

But then, who is the one deciding this and who is the one observing this because it almost implies that us of scientists and maybe us Western scientists we can take this step back and we can look into the future and we have more knowledge and I feel like what we should actually be thinking is, these people, quotation marks again, or the people that are currently living with this wildlife, they have done that for many generations, most likely, and if anyone knows about the benefits of living with them, it's also them. And I feel like in my research, one of the things I like to do is play this sort of game that's called Living with Elephants and it's all about trying to give the floor not just for the issues, but also for the benefits, and there's many benefits that people see that I can't even think about, right? and I feel like…

00:16:52 Susanne Marieke Vogel

I think all people are rational, all people use different, multiple things that they take with them in their decision-making. It's not like we are the ones that have long-term perspective, we, scientists... Or we are the only ones with a long-term perspective and trying to look wholistically or integrated. I think the people that are actually living with the animals are much more complex in their decision making and their future perspective than we are having. And I think we can't assume that we know more or that we know better and that we are the only ones seeing the benefits of biodiversity, right? Because we are not even always the ones living… Like we can live a very isolated life over here, quotation marks, and living in Denmark, I can choose to live in my house, have no interaction with biodiversity, right? And I can imagine that's a happy life. But if you live in the Maasai Mara it's more unlikely that you can live a happy life without ever thinking about biodiversity.

00:17:57 Silvia Ceaușu

Tell me how you got into science. Have you always thought becoming a scientist?

00:18:02 Susanne Marieke Vogel

I feel like I never really thought about becoming a scientist. All the people… so basically all my friends, my close friends from primary school… I didn't go to the same level with them. So then all my new friends from school, they all went to university. I was just going to university and it was just a question of which topic? Yeah, and then after university, so I was the first one from my family to go to university so it was all new to me. But also my parents were learning about the whole system. And yeah…. I think we sort of did it together so I was super lucky to have lots of support from home and then in in university I think….I don't know….I didn't know what work it was going to lead to. I was hoping I would work for some cool organisation after.

00:18:49 Susanne Marieke Vogel

And then I think I was at the end of my bachelors when I was at the meeting with one of my favourite teachers who I really admired and he said….. so I was in the board of the Study Association board with him….. and he said something like.. that he was amazed or a bit disappointed that so many people that are in the study programme for nature conservation were not even considering going into science after, and I feel like that was the first moment, I was like, oh, you can go into science, and it was so silly because I was at the university, right? But it just felt like such a different world. And then even at the end of my masters, I was chating with friends and I remember her saying, oh, you should really do a PhD and I was thinking: me? No! I never really thought about it until she said that. And then, I don't know, I just never saw myself on scientist or even think I could be it or… Yeah, I, I think I had to deconstruct what I thought a scientist was and I think it was…uhm, male… And..

00:19:58 Susanne Marieke Vogel

But, but that was also silly, because there were also females teaching me. But most, the majority of the professors and the senior… They were male and…. maybe from a certain… Maybe in my head even my field was not science. Maybe it was more basically…. What's his name in The Big Bang Theory, Sheldon Cooper or like or maybe like Ross from Friends? I feel like whatever you see portrayed a scientist or called, labelled scientists, right? Because I don't even think that my professors necessarily would label themselves as scientists, but obviously they were. But I think yeah…. And in a way I feel and I still feel, maybe it's just me, but, I feel that scientists are maybe considered to be like an identity. Sorry, that science is your identity. I think maybe… That science, being a scientist, is considered to be an identity and it's 1 dimensional and it is atheist and it is very objective and in a way it defines your whole being. I think that's what I think is a scientist.

00:21:12 Susanne Marieke Vogel

And actually, I hope it's not. And maybe it's just my idea or my perception of what?

00:21:20 Silvia Ceaușu

So you feel that to become a scientist you kind of have to adopt this whole list of personal attributes?

00:21:30 Susanne Marieke Vogel

I feel instead of adopting things I feel like it's shedding things. I feel like I want to be a scientist that is considered to be complex and to consider it to be multidimensional and I have many layers and are… Like I want to… I want it to be OK to be a scientist and to be respected as a critical thinker and believe in God and have faith, as I do. And I want to be able to be respected.... I know I don't know why I keep saying respected, but I want to be able to be a scientist who's clear about her motivation or goals in her career, or at least in the projects I do and at the same time be OK to have a desire to have a family. And I feel like there's talk about these things. It seems to be, on paper, or it seems to be accepted, but in my head I'm still wondering, OK is there place for me as this… Is science open-minded enough to let in so much diversity that every person can think of themselves as a potential scientist no matter their background, no matter their ideas, no matter the things that they come with. Like the whole package, can people feel like their authentic self can have a place in science? I feel like… Yeah, I'm not so sure. I want to be sure but I'm not convinced yet. Let's say that.

00:22:59 Silvia Ceaușu

I see. So what would you say is the biggest challenge in being a scientist?

00:23:04 Susanne Marieke Vogel

The biggest challenge of being scientists… I don't know because I can only say for myself with my privilege and with my… Because I was very lucky and I think…… Like I was lucky with the people that I was surrounded with as a family, but also my teachers and I remember I was thinking about this topic and I remember thinking for myself: OK, if I wasn't told by all my teachers that I could do this, I would never have thought I could and I think there must be people out there who are very talented and could do great science, but they don't have that same luck, right? So I think they would have very different challenges. And personally for me my main challenge I think is, at the moment, it is trying to…. to live a full life. And like I'm asking myself lots of questions about science now, but also in the future. Like can I work from 9:00 to 5:00 and just my working hours and be a good scientist and get the kind of outputs that is desired of me for my function, right? And to be allowed to keep going? And can I be OK with all these short-term contracts and will I ever be able to have a long-term contract and as I said before, can I, will I ever feel like.. Because I just told you I believe in God, I sort of mumbled it in between, but before I told you, you didn't know, even though we worked together.

00:24:36 Susanne Marieke Vogel

So my colleagues don't know and for me it's something I keep very private at work at least, and I don't know…. It's not like I'm ashamed of it, but I do know that I worry of not being respected and I think I worry that it's not considered to be professional, so of course it's not part of my working life but to me it is very much of my way of thinking because both of my faith and my science it's about asking questions, not settling for easy answers and believing there's something to be found and like working hard to get that, and I think having this idea in my mind that it's not professional to be identified as a Christian or as a believer, and that is not professional, I feel like… before I feel at home in science, I need to be convinced that being professional scientist is doing a good job and also being kind and... Yeah, I feel like maybe being open-minded and be authentic and inclusive. I feel like I want that to be professional and I'm not so sure that it's considered to be professional in science now.

00:25:51 Silvia Ceaușu

On a more positive note, what is the best thing? Or the thing that you like the most about being a scientist?

00:25:59 Susanne Marieke Vogel

I love about science that I can think about questions that I've always been wondering, and actually I'm being helped with the knowledge and the materials and the facility to actually answer or trying to get a little bit of the answer. And I love how we can use our curiosity and we actually we are asked for a job is to try and find the answers to these questions. And I feel like it's such a privilege. Like for example, in my PhD, no, sorry, in my undergrad I had all these questions about elephant crop consumption and I was wondering OK, but why do they eat these crops? And then in my PhD I'm basically given all this money and all I had to do was trying to come up with the question, but I already had these questions. I always wondered what does this have to do with the nutrients? And then I was actually allowed to figure out with the help of my professors the methods to actually study this, and I feel like it's so amazing.

00:26:58 Silvia Ceaușu

Do you have any advice for people who might like conservation or might be passionate about certain species and they want to get into a PhD, they want to get into science or things like that?

00:27:09 Susanne Marieke Vogel

Yes… OK, because it's hard for me to speak to everyone, right and… because I know we all have, I was privileged to go to a great school and in that lens it's also easy to go into a good university and I know not everybody has that. So like the practical stuff, I'm not sure I actually can advise because I was also very lucky to be able to go to Oxford and just having that label, I know it opens doors for me. Even me having an English masters, because in Netherlands most masters are in English and that actually helped me because I couldn't go into my PhD programme almost because I didn't have the money to do this test and I was at the point where my old professor from my master thesis was going to offer to pay for this $300 test. And I think because actually in the end I didn't have to do the test because I did the English master. But I'm sure there's lots of countries where you don't have this and how can you, if you don't have the money, how can you pay for that test, right? At the time I was having five jobs, so it was also not easy to..

00:28:20 Silvia Ceaușu

Five?

00:28:20 Susanne Marieke Vogel

Yes, because after my masters I couldn't find a job actually. I couldn't find a job and then I got a PhD. So basically after the masters I couldn't find a job. I was a dog walker and I worked as a waitress and a coffee girl in a conference/hotel. And then I interviewed farmers on the phone. I did that throughout my studies. And then I also tutored chemistry and English. And I was a student assistant at university because I always loved teaching and I wanted to have this link with university. And I remember. OK, maybe this is not the answer to this story. But I remember how I got to this PhD. So maybe that's a good way to answer. So one point, because I was still going to university I don't know how I got into the library, but I was sitting there behind the computer and at one point I just got fed up. And I just typed in the words that I really wanted to have in my job because I didn't even wanted to do PhD necessarily and I just wanted to work with elephants apparently. So I typed in elephants, conflict, Africa. I feel like that …. And PhD at the time. So I didn't know… it’s very silly, but the first hit was this programme of three PhDs in Texas and then there was this one tiny line in the bottom that said: oh, and there will be one PhD student doing a PhD in animal ecology at Oxford University. And I never really thought about this university. I didn't really realise how difficult it was considered to go in, but I remember going out of that library room, going to the hallway, calling my mom, and I told her I'm going to do this. And she was like: you’re gonna do what? I was like: I am gonna do this PhD! It was not even part of the advertisement.

00:30:12 Susanne Marieke Vogel

So it was a bit… I feel like it's almost irrational, but I'm a very determined person, so I just decided. And then I did lots of stalking and I figured out who was going to be the supervisor of this PhD at Oxford. So I just emailed this man and I was like: hi, I'm going to do this PhD. So how do I get in? And then he told me: OK, you have to go and get into Oxford and then I have to go and be accepted by this NGO. So I just started doing those things and try to apply it. At one point I got in. And I didn't have the full funding because I was EU, not UK and then we had to try and find the funding. And there was lots of hassle at some point. I was offered a really big grant scholarship in the Netherlands, but then I had to pay it back and it was ten thousands of euros.

00:31:03 Susanne Marieke Vogel

And so I was contemplating whether to take that and then I was offered a job at the university, right? Like science….. public outreach science writing, and it was a really cool job and at my favourite university, so I was really excited to take that one. So I actually rejected the offer for the PhD, and then I just got one line back and it said: we have the money. Because the next day I was going to sign this new work contract, so something like: don't sign, we have the money. And it was so dramatic and I started calling this office and I was like: OK, they say they have the money, but I need a little bit more to turn out this other great job offer, right? So… And then they closed the office for the weekend so I just had no other option than to tell these new boss that I was going to have that I actually might be able to do the PhD. And because I always, I'm very TMI as you might have realised. So I told him already that I was trying to get this PhD and he still offered the job. So he's very kind. And then he was also very kind, saying: Oh no, this is a great opportunity, just wait what will happen and let me know, will sign it after the weekend. And then on Monday I had the call with them and actually they figured out how to get me full scholarship?

00:32:24 Susanne Marieke Vogel

And because a college, Pembroke College, was offering me a student scholarship and then I could do this PhD. So less than a month later, I think, I was there. I remember even… Because after my masters I had this advice from my supervisor from my bachelors, who I actually went to and I told him I want to do a PhD with you. And he said: I don't have money, sorry. But he told me to get a driver's licence because I actually didn't know how to drive because I never had the money. So that's also why I had the five jobs and my parents were actually at the time always helping me with lots of money because I couldn't afford my rent. And then I was taking all these driver’s licence and I failed my test a few times and I just I remember around this time I also failed the test. And then I had one week before I was going to move to the UK and I had to get my driver’s license. And I managed after the third attempt, I think. So actually it was very chaotic time but I feel like I was so lucky with all this help and also…Yeah, maybe being determined that helped maybe. Like for me the goal was to not necessarily do a PhD, but to do something that made me feel excited and happy, and I feel like I would also have been excited and happy doing this other job and I would have found a way…

00:33:47 Susanne Marieke Vogel

I think the things I also like about science is reading, it's learning, it's writing and I feel like maybe try not just to focus so hard on doing a PhD. Or try and focus on: OK what are the things that make me happy. And what are the things that I want to have in my job? And I'm still wondering should I be in science because I'm wondering, OK, the things that I value and things that I find important in life, can I get them in this job, right? Can I get that authenticity and inclusivity or diversity is the golden standard and not this objective, almost clinical way of living, and not having a life outside of science. That should not be the gold standard in my eyes, right? So I feel like having that and maybe…

00:34:34 Susanne Marieke Vogel

I think many people will be with me that there's bad stuff that can happen in science and maybe as a woman you also you don't always feel respected. And maybe it sounds like I have to give evidence right now, but it was common for me if I was teaching with a group of students and I was explaining something to someone that a guy would just show up and take over without any need for that. And I remember very, very clearly in my brain. This once happened. I just stood back and I was just standing in the back of the classroom again. And a friend was standing next to me and he was asking: are you just gonna let that happen? And I remember my answer to him was like: I'm just so tired. I don't even know, I was just tired that day, but I mean it was so common. You know it's, it is exhausting.

00:35:24 Silvia Ceaușu

So you were explaining something to the class and like some guy just…

00:35:27 Susanne Marieke Vogel

It was a specific student at a course. And this guy just takes over and I remember him asking. And my answer… I don't know, I was tired because it is tiring and you have to keep going and like maybe I should have spoken up and I sometimes did speak up and they've almost conflicts because the guys were not… But I just also I like that this story has this other guy also noticing because I feel like maybe with men or maybe with anyone who's sometimes seeing as the norm, it's hard to imagine… Like I'm also often the norm, right? But it's hard to imagine that it's actually happening and not just someone complaining or being difficult or… Yeah, and also for that I would say maybe know who you are, because I had to be very aware of that. That I was a good scientist. Also, I've been told behind my back that I was at the bottom of intelligence list. I was told the first week when I first started my PhD project, I was literally told by someone that nobody wanted me there, I shouldn't be there and the whole time I had to work with this person, I didn't feel welcome, obviously. So like there's lots of things, there's professors who we'll cross boundaries, and if you don't know where these boundaries are it's going to be very difficult afterwards because I feel like if I would have set my boundaries more clear beforehand, if I know that one professor has no strong impact on my career and me standing up to someone is OK, I feel like I would have had a more relaxed experience, maybe.

00:37:05 Susanne Marieke Vogel

I think maybe being a scientist or being in science or studying to be in science is not only about the science, it's also about you, grounding yourself, knowing yourself in confidence and also for me right now I'm trying to think: OK, the next step in my science career is going to be me helping other people, right? And teaching other people. And am I ready for that? So what I need to do is prepare myself and I'm reading books on like good management practises and also I feel like I'm also reading a lot on this topic we talked about earlier. And I think The Big Conservation Lie by John Mbaria and Mordecai Ogada I would recommend it to everyone interested in going to conservation because there's lots of things that we need to learn before, I think. And also, of course I'm learning at the same time… so doesn't have to be before, but it will save you lots of effort or lots of…. It’s better to learn from other people’s mistakes, I think, than make them all again yourself.

00:38:09 Silvia Ceaușu

And Google your dream job. That's another advice.

00:38:11 Susanne Marieke Vogel

Yes, Google it with very, very simple words.

00:38:16 Silvia Ceaușu

And have no problem with emailing people.

00:38:20 Susanne Marieke Vogel

Yes, yeah. And also, I don't know, be a bit crazy, maybe be a bit…. I don’t know… “bold” is the right word, but if you just feel this passion, like you feel like something is a good thing to do, or good thing to try, just… And because I'm very shy and like naturally, and I'm also really easily intimidated by dominant people, but just try and fake it til you make it.

00:38:49 Susanne Marieke Vogel

Try and like look at the people, that's what I'm trying at least, look at the people you admire and see: OK, what is it about them I admire and how can I get that. And for me, for example, a good scientist that people I look up to, they're not the ones with the great high impact papers or the ones that are in the spotlight. They are more the scientists that…. yeah, that that are actually making a difference, not just in their science and the topics they choose, but also in how they treat their students and the people around them and try and copy a bit. Maybe copy the people you admire.

00:39:26 Silvia Ceaușu

Oh, that's great advice, I think. That's great advice.

And as a last question, you mentioned a couple of times that you question yourself whether…. or you question whether it's possible to achieve a work-life balance as a researcher and if you can tell me more about how you deal with that or how do you try to achieve this balance between work and personal life?

00:39:51 Susanne Marieke Vogel

I think…. I think living very consciously helps and being scientist very consciously. And I don't mean that to sound like I do it perfect. But so for me, I value my scientific health or like my scientific career as highly or maybe less highly than my mental health and my physical health and my spiritual health and my relational health. And I think what I said before, like seeing myself as this complex and this diverse person because I feel like the moment I start to overwork or I work in the evenings or no weekends, there's no time and no space for those other things. And diminishing that time, actually, where I spend my time, that's where my priority should be, right? And I think the tricky thing is that I'm not sure if my way of doing it actually will allow me to get higher up in academia. But I feel like for myself I decided during my PhD that I don't want to be important and I don't want to be rich.

00:41:02 Susanne Marieke Vogel

Obviously, I was like I'm in the wrong career but I didn't have those as goals. But I feel like for me, just literally deciding that, this made me feel so more relieved that OK, I am in this, I want to do a great job in science. I know if I want to do a great job, I have to be in a good place because if I'm not taking care of my mental health or anything else, I know I can't do good science. So I see that very clearly. But at the same time, yes, uh, having decided I don't want to achieve fame or I don't want to achieve being a big name and I don't want to achieve becoming rich, I feel like it cuts off quite some opportunities maybe? Or like some things, but also it made me refocus and like remember what what it is about for me. And I remember at my viva, I told my assessors this, so at the defence of my PhD and then one of them said, OK, I think you should add that I don't want to be bored. So I feel like those are great goals in science.

00:42:07 Silvia Ceaușu

So what do you mean? So by not being an important person, you mean not a famous person, right?

00:42:14 Susanne Marieke Vogel

Yes, so I want to do important stuff or things that I think are important. Like I wouldn't spend so much time and so much of my energy and also obviously out-of-working-hours time, because I'm saying this, but I know, I think we all overwork because we feel passionate, right? So I want to do things I think are important. I think I'm also doubting if I should be in science, because if I feel like other people could do exactly what I'm doing, then I shouldn't be. For me, the highest goal is not to be in science, for me the highest goal is doing something that I think is important. And I feel like I make a joke like I don't want to be important ro don't want to be rich but it's for me to refocus. OK, what is science about? How much do I sacrifice if any of these other things, like my other types of health or parts of me are being sacrificed for this science goal, then I know what I'm gonna choose. And I feel like as long as I keep finding great supervisors and great supportive bosses and professors I work with, that actually tell me literally I value your other types of health as well, it's OK, you know, you need to take rest and you need to do these things, then as long as that happens, I'm happy. If there is a point where I feel like I'm not encountering these supportive people and I actually become overwhelmed by this sort of toxic behaviour of overworking, then I'm gonna go out, yeah, move on.

00:43:54 Silvia Ceaușu

I think the positive thing is that the number of supportive supervisors I, I think it's growing and the number of people in academia that understand the importance of a healthy life in all its aspects, not only in terms of number of publications and h-index…

00:44:15 Susanne Marieke Vogelh-

And I think, yeah, and I feel like we a lot of credit of that should go to maybe this mentality of including more diversity and I feel like including more diversity is not just hiring more diverse people. It is also making them feel at home, right? And I think we're starting to try and… Or I'm just talking like I've been in science forever, but I feel like whatever I'm seeing is that people are wanting to create this home and allow people to actually feel at home while being different. But I feel like we always have a very long way to go, and there's lots of things to learn but yeah, it's nice to encounter that at least.

00:44:54 Silvia Ceaușu

But you know, Susanne, now you were on a podcast, so you might not achieve your goal of not being famous.

00:45:04 Susanne Marieke Vogel

Well, I feel like... I think one of the things…. I wrote down some things I definitely wanted to mention. And one of the things I definitely want to mention is that I can sometimes maybe sound like I know lots of things, but actually I feel like I just know what I need to learn. Yeah, I feel like…. That's also one of the worries I had about the podcast because I'm sort of isolated in time, not isolated, but I'm taking in time and frozen in this time, and this seems to be my opinion. Well, actually my opinion is constantly developing and I'm learning so much from other people and what I'm reading, and it's almost scary, I think… Maybe I don't know if it's extra scary as scientists, but to be pinned down and we are asked these questions, your opinion, and your background….

00:45:54 Silvia Ceaușu

Great, thank you so much. This was a wonderful conversation and I hope to catch up again soon. Thank you very much for being here.

00:46:01 Susanne Marieke Vogel

You, yeah, thank you, thank you for having me.